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Discuss and evaluate the idea of conservatism.

Conservatism is a political idea that emphasizes the creation and maintenance of stable societies based upon a power hierarchy residing with a traditional class of leaders, which are usually a group of aristocrats and respects traditional values and institutions. This institution could be religion. It can also be referred to as a political view that is in favour of free enterprise, private ownership, and socially constructive ideas. Conservatism proponents strongly believe in individual identity, morals and values and the role of the government is only to uphold these values and maintain social order and status quo. Conservatism is wary of social change but does not completely avoid it. For change to occur, these actions are deliberated by these aristocrats, if this change is ideal and needed.

Principles of conservatism Conservatives operate by these principles.

- There exists a moral order. Moral truths are permanent and human nature is constant. Moral truths are usually got from religion for example, American conservatives normally base their arguments on morals got from Christianity.
- Belief in custom, law and continuity: As these customs have already been established, it enables people to coexist together.
- Principle of imperfectability: conservatives oppose the 'utopian view' conversant with liberalists. They believe there should only be a tolerably ordered, just and free society even though maladjustments and evil still lurk. This is because human nature might not be content under utopian governance and will rebel. Also, the term 'utopian' is relative. Conservatives believe by proper reform, tolerable order can be improved and maintained.
- Belief in freedom, free enterprise and private property: In conservatism, freedom and property are closely linked together. Conservatives strongly believe in individual liberty and owning of personal property can be a show of one's freedom. To them, a

more productive and economically stable community starts with an individual. Thus, they oppose communal sharing such as welfare state, national health care such as Medicare in America. They strongly believe in individual rights to amass wealth and such should not be taken from that individual through hidden taxes. To them, a better economy is based on economic freedom, free enterprise and private property rights. Conservatives strongly oppose communist looking reforms.

- Conservatism opposes involuntary collectivism: according to this ideology, individuals have the right to choose whether to take part in the community and should not be forced into social collectivism.
- Principle of permanence and change (progress): Change constantly occurs and this is not disputed. However, there is a need for interests, values to remain constant to ensure stability. Difference in interests and values tend to disrupt the state of things and shared value consciousness in that society. Hence the reason conservatives do not encourage multiculturalism.

CONSERVATISM IN THE UNITED STATES

The idea of conservatism is the base of the right-wing Republican party in the United States. The democratic party initially was driven by Conservative views until 1933 after the Great depression. The New deal was created and this ushered in economic relief programs initiated by the then Democrat President Franklin D. Roosevelt. This initiative seemed to go against economic conservatism – the belief in free enterprise, private ownership and individual selective collectiveness. Thus, many conservatives defected from the party to the Republican. Currently, in the US, the Republican party is the face of conservatism ideas and beliefs in the US.

Conservatives defer in the United States and are better divided into groups.

Fiscal and Liberal Conservatism: Prefer smaller governments with little influence on the economy. That is limited regulation, low taxes and free enterprise.

Social conservatism: It is the belief that traditional values are being threatened by secularism. That is, political decision making is less influenced by religion. Conservatives believe in moral standards and it is the role of the government to uphold that.

Paleoconservatism: The opposition of multiculturalism, selective isolation and restrictions to immigration.

CONSERVATISM IN THE UNITED KINGDOM

British Conservative views are reflected by the Tory (Conservative) Party. The party champions monarchy institutions, the Anglican church, property and social order. It draws its supporters largely from the rural landowners.

Tory party guiding principles are the promotion of private property and ownership. Britain recorded mass privatisation of government-owned industries and firms such as the British rail and Royal mail, in Tory-led governments.

Another guiding principle is to strengthen the military and thirdly, uphold the Christian Anglican beliefs.

CRITICISM OF CONSERVATISM

The conservatism belief that society is to be organised in the hierarchy of classes and controlled by aristocrats, goes against its idea of free will and freedom of property.

Nevertheless, the initial view goes against democracy.

Conservatism also believes in a structured and stable society but sees collectivism as voluntary. However, conservative governments themselves impose their values on their society, that is, it promotes value collectivism that it goes against.

It tends to shift towards authoritarianism: Liberalists have specifically argued against conservatism as conservatives tend to apply authoritarian measures to uphold their perception of social order.

As conservatives favour social uniformity to a high degree, all means of achieving this can involve coercion. In other words, conservatism has a tendency of moving towards authoritarianism.

Liberal conservatives oppose Paleoconservatists views as racist and unethical.

Progressives disagree with conservatives on terms of social service provision. Conservatives governments are more reluctant to provide social services as they are not into the idea of welfare sharing. They believe it should not be forced, an individual's wealth should not be taken (this is done in the form of taxes) to fund these services for those who cannot. For

instance, Dwight D Eisenhower led government was revolted against and President Eisenhower regarded as a communist agent by fellow Conservatives because he refused to repeal the New Deal. The New Deal was a series of financial reform and public projects enacted by President Franklin D Roosevelt after the Great depression. The New Deal placed emphasis on social services and government intervention on the once free economy.

Other political critics criticise the modern Conservative view and Conservative government for being 'permeated with racism, extremism and isolationism'.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Conservatism is a political and social idea based on the belief in stable societies based upon a power hierarchy with much respect for traditional values and institutions. These institutions could be religion. It can also be referred to as a political view that is in favour of free enterprise, private ownership, and socially constructive ideas. Conservatism operates with these established principles including the belief in law and customs, permanence and change and the strong belief that collectivism is voluntary thus, although not strongly, they oppose forced individual contribution to things such as social services. Conservatism is practised in countries such as the United States, States of the United Kingdom in right-wing political parties such as the Republicans in the US and Tory party in the UK. However, conservatives are criticised for their extreme views and their tendency to shift towards authoritarianism. Modern Conservatives have also been accused of going against Conservative principles in practice.

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