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COURSE: POL202

DEPARTMENT: POLITICAL SCIENCE

QUESTION: In not more than 5 (five) pages discuss and evaluate the idea of conservatism.

Conservatism is a political and social philosophy promoting traditional social institutions in the context of culture and civilization. The central tenets of conservatism include tradition, organic society, hierarchy, authority, and property rights. Conservatives seek to preserve a range of institutions such as religion, parliamentary government, and property rights, with the aim of emphasizing social stability and continuity. The more traditional elements reactionaries oppose modernism and seek a return to the way things were.

[Conservatism](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Conservatism) is a preference for the historically inherited rather than the abstract and ideal. This preference has traditionally rested on an organic [conception](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/conception) of society—that is, on the belief that society is not merely a loose collection of individuals but a living organism [comprising](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/comprising) closely connected, interdependent members. [Conservatives](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/Conservatives) thus favor institutions and practices that have evolved gradually and are [manifestations](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manifestations) of [continuity](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/continuity) and stability. Government’s responsibility is to be the servant, not the master, of existing ways of life, and politicians must therefore resist the temptation to transform society and politics. This suspicion of government activism distinguishes conservatism not only from radical forms of political thought but also from liberalism, which is a modernizing, anti- traditionalist movement dedicated to correcting the evils and abuses resulting from the misuse of social and political power. According to Quintin Hogg , the chairman of the British Conservative Party in 1959: "Conservatism is not so much a philosophy as an attitude, a constant force, performing a timeless function in the development of a free society, and corresponding to a deep and permanent requirement of human nature itself".

**FORMS OF CONSERVATISM**

1) Liberal Conservatism: Liberal Conservatism incorporates the classical liberal view of minimal government intervention in the economy. Individuals should be free to participate in the market and generate wealth without government interference. However, individuals cannot be thoroughly depended on to act responsibly in other spheres of life, therefore liberal conservatives believe that a strong state is necessary to ensure law and order and social institutions are needed to nurture a sense of duty and responsibility to the nation. Liberal conservatism is a variant of conservatism that is strongly influenced by liberal stances.

As these latter two terms have had different meanings over time and across countries, liberal conservatism also has a wide variety of meanings. Historically, the term often referred to the combination of economic liberalism, which champions unrestricted markets, with the classical conservatism concern for established tradition, respect for authority and religious values. It contrasted itself with classical liberalism, which supported freedom for the individual in both the economic and social spheres.

Over time, the general conservative ideology in many countries adopted economic liberal arguments and the term liberal conservatism was replaced with conservatism. This is also the case in countries where liberal economic ideas have been the tradition such as the United States and are thus considered conservative. In other countries where liberal conservative movements have entered the political mainstream, such as Italy and Spain, the terms liberal and conservative may be synonymous. The liberal conservative tradition in the United States combines the economic [individualism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Individualism) of the classical liberals with a [Burkean](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Burkean) form of conservatism (which has also become part of the [American conservative](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_conservative) tradition, such as in the writings of [Russell Kirk](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russell_Kirk)).

A secondary meaning for the term liberal conservatism that has developed in [Europe](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Europe) is a combination of more modern conservative and less traditionalist views with those of [social liberalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_liberalism). This has developed as an opposition to the more [collectivist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Collectivist) views of [socialism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Socialism). Often this involves stressing what are now conservative views of [free market](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_market) economics and belief in individual responsibility, with social liberal views on defence of [civil rights](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Civil_rights), [environmentalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmentalism) and support for a limited [welfare state](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Welfare_state). In continental Europe, this is sometimes also translated into English as social conservatism.

### 2) Libertarian conservatism: [Libertarian conservatism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian_conservatism) describes certain political ideologies most prominently within the [United States](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States) which combine [libertarian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libertarian) economic issues with aspects of conservatism. Its four main branches are [constitutionalism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutionalism), [paleolibertarianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleolibertarianism), [small government conservatism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/American_conservatism) and [Christian libertarianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_libertarianism). They generally differ from [paleoconservatives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paleoconservatism), in that they favor more [personal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Liberty) and [economic freedom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Economic_freedom).

[Agorists](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agorist) such as [Samuel Edward Konkin III](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samuel_Edward_Konkin_III) labeled libertarian conservatism libertarianism. In contrast to paleoconservatives, libertarian conservatives support strict policies such as [free trade](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Free_trade), opposition to any national bank and opposition to [business regulations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regulations). They are vehemently opposed to [environmental regulations](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Environmental_regulation), [corporate welfare](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corporate_welfare), [subsidies](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Subsidies) and other areas of economic intervention.

### 3) Fiscal conservatism**:** [Fiscal conservatism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fiscal_conservatism) is the economic philosophy of prudence in government spending and debt.

### 4) National conservatism**:** [National conservatism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_conservatism) is a political term used primarily in Europe to describe a variant of conservatism which concentrates more on national interests than standard conservatism as well as upholding cultural and ethnic identity, while not being outspokenly [nationalist](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nationalism) or supporting a [far-right](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Far-right_politics) approach.In Europe, national conservatives are usually Eurosceptics.

National conservatism is heavily oriented towards the traditional [family](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Family) and social stability as well as in favour of limiting [immigration](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Immigration). As such, national conservatives can be distinguished from economic conservatives, for whom free market economic policies, [deregulation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Deregulation) and fiscal conservatism are the main priorities. Some commentators have identified a growing gap between national and economic conservatism. National conservatism is also related to [traditionalist conservatism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Traditionalist_conservatism).

5) Traditional conservatism: Traditionalist conservatism is a political philosophy emphasizing the need for the principles of [natural law](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Natural_law) and transcendent moral order, [tradition](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tradition), [hierarchy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hierarchy) and [organic unity](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Organic_unity), [agrarianism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Agrarianism), [classicism](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Classicism) and [high culture](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/High_culture) as well as the intersecting spheres of loyalty.Some traditionalists have embraced the labels "[reactionary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reactionary)" and "[counterrevolutionary](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Counterrevolution)", defying the stigma that has attached to these terms since the [Enlightenment](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Age_of_Enlightenment). Having a hierarchical view of society, many traditionalist conservatives, including a few Americans, defend the [monarchical](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy) political structure as the most natural and beneficial social arrangement.