**NAME: OGUNSEYI SIMILOLUWA**

**DEPT: POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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**WHAT IS CONSERVATISM**

Conservatism to me simply means the commitment to traditional values and ideas with opposition to change or innovation, 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 first established use of the term in a political context originated in 1818 with François-René de Chateaubriand( French writer, politician, diplomat and historian who founded Romanticism in French literature. Descended from an old aristocratic family from Brittany, Chateaubriand was a royalist by political disposition. In an age when a number of intellectuals turned against the Church) during the period of Bourbon Restoration that sought to roll back the policies of the French Revolution. Historically associated with right-wing politics, the term has since been used to describe a wide range of views. There is no single set of policies regarded as conservative because the meaning of conservatism depends on what is considered traditional in a given place and time. Thus conservatives from different parts of the world—each upholding their respective traditions may disagree on a wide range of issues. Conservatives like to stick to ancient ways of doing things out of a combination of sentiment and pragmatism. Sentiment because they like the poetry of the past and pragmatism because they worry that abstract blueprints may produce disasters. Otto von Bismarck defined politics as “the art of the possible”, a phrase that was later revived by R.A. Butler, a British grandee. Winston Churchill said ruefully that he “preferred the past to the present and the present to the future”. Michael Oakeshott, a philosopher, said that to be a conservative “is to prefer the familiar to the unknown, to prefer the tried to the untried, fact to mystery, the actual to the possible, the limited to the unbounded, the near to the distant, the sufficient to the superabundant, the convenient to the perfect, present laughter to Utopian bliss”. Edmund Burke, an 18th-century politician who opposed the French Revolution, but supported the American Revolution, is credited as one of the main theorists of conservatism in Great Britain in the 1790s.

**INTELLECTUAL ROOTS OF CONSERVATISM**

Although conservatives sometimes claim philosophers as ancient as Aristotle and Cicero as their forebears, the first explicitly conservative political theorist is generally considered to be Edmund Burke. In 1790, when the French Revolution still seemed to promise a bloodless utopia, Burke predicted in his Reflections on the Revolution in France—and not by any lucky blind guess but by an analysis of its rejection of tradition and inherited values—that the revolution would descend into terror and dictatorship. In their rationalist contempt for the past, he charged, the revolutionaries were destroying time-tested institutions without any assurance that they could replace them with anything better. Political power is not a license to rebuild society according to some abstract, untested scheme; it is a trust to be held by those who are mindful of both the value of what they have inherited and of their duties to their inheritors. For Burke, the idea of inheritance extended far beyond property to include language, manners and morals, and appropriate responses to the human condition. To be human is to inherit a culture, and politics cannot be understood outside that culture. In contrast to the Enlightenment philosophers Thomas Hobbes, John Locke, and Jean-Jacques Rousseau, each of whom conceived of political society as based on a hypothetical social contract among the living, Burke argued that because the social contract as Burke understood it involves future generations as well as those of the present and the past, he was able to urge improvement through political change, but only as long as the change is evolutionary: “A disposition to preserve and an ability to improve, taken together, would be my standard of a statesman.”

Burke’s conservatism was not an abstract doctrine; it represented the particular conservatism of the unwritten British constitution. In the politics of his time Burke was a Whig, and he bequeathed to later conservative thinkers the Whig belief in limited government. This belief was partly why Burke defended the American Revolution (1775–83), which he believed was a justified defense of the traditional liberties of Englishmen.

Burke shocked his contemporaries by insisting with brutal frankness that “illusions” and “prejudices” are socially necessary. He believed that most human beings are innately depraved, steeped in original sin, and unable to better themselves with their feeble reason. Better, he said, to rely on the “latent wisdom” of prejudice, which accumulates slowly through the years, than to “put men to live and trade each on his own private stock of reason.” Among such prejudices are those that favour an established church and a landed aristocracy; members of the latter, according to Burke, are the “great oaks” and “proper chieftains” of society, provided that they temper their rule with a spirit of timely reform and remain within the constitutional framework.

Edmund Burke (1729–1797)

Shortly after Burke's death in 1797, conservatism revived as a mainstream political force as the Whigs suffered a series of internal divisions. This new generation of conservatives derived their politics not from Burke, but from his predecessor, the Viscount Bolingbroke (1678–1751), who was a Jacobite and traditional Tory, lacking Burke's sympathies for Whiggish policies such as Catholic emancipation and American independence (famously attacked by Samuel Johnson in "Taxation No Tyranny"). In the first half of the 19th century, many newspapers, magazines, and journals promoted loyalist or right-wing attitudes in religion, politics and international affairs. Burke was seldom mentioned, but William Pitt the Younger (1759–1806) became a conspicuous hero. The most prominent journals included The Quarterly Review, founded in 1809 as a counterweight to the Whigs' Edinburgh Review and the even more conservative Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine. Sack finds that the Quarterly Review promoted a balanced Canningite toryism as it was neutral on Catholic emancipation and only mildly critical of Nonconformist Dissent; it opposed slavery and supported the current poor laws; and it was "aggressively imperialist". The high-church clergy of the Church of England read the Orthodox Churchman's Magazine which was equally hostile to Jewish, Catholic, Jacobin, Methodist and Unitarian spokesmen. Anchoring the ultra Tories, Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine stood firmly against Catholic emancipation and favored slavery, cheap money, mercantilism, the Navigation Acts and the Holy Alliance.

Conservatism evolved after 1820, embracing free trade in 1846 and a commitment to democracy, especially under Disraeli. The effect was to significantly strengthen conservatism as a grassroots political force. Conservatism no longer was the philosophical defense of the landed aristocracy, but had been refreshed into redefining its commitment to the ideals of order, both secular and religious, expanding imperialism, strengthened monarchy and a more generous vision of the welfare state as opposed to the punitive vision of the Whigs and liberals. As early as 1835, Disraeli attacked the Whigs and utilitarians as slavishly devoted to an industrial oligarchy, while he described his fellow Tories as the only "really democratic party of England" and devoted to the interests of the whole people. Nevertheless, inside the party there was a tension between the growing numbers of wealthy businessmen on the one side and the aristocracy and rural gentry on the other. The aristocracy gained strength as businessmen discovered they could use their wealth to buy a peerage and a country estate.

Although conservatives opposed attempts to allow greater representation of the middle class in parliament, they conceded that electoral reform could not be reversed and promised to support further reforms so long as they did not erode the institutions of church and state. These new principles were presented in the Tamworth Manifesto of 1834, which historians regard as the basic statement of the beliefs of the new Conservative Party.

Conservative political parties vary widely from country to country in the goals they wish to achieve. Both conservative and liberal parties tend to favor private ownership of property, in opposition to communist, socialist and green parties, which favor communal ownership or laws requiring social responsibility on the part of property owners. Where conservatives and liberals differ is primarily on social issues. Conservatives tend to reject behavior that does not conform to some social norm. Modern conservative parties often define themselves by their opposition to liberal or labor parties. The United States usage of the term "conservative" is unique to that country

According to Alan Ware, Belgium, Denmark, Finland, France, Greece, Iceland, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom retained viable conservative parties into the 1980s. Ware said that Australia, Germany, Israel, Italy, Japan, Malta, New Zealand, Spain, and the United States had no conservative parties, although they had either Christian democrats or liberals as major right-wing parties. Canada, Ireland and Portugal had right-wing political parties that defied categorization: the Progressive Conservative Party of Canada; Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael and Progressive Democrats in Ireland; and the Social Democratic Party of Portugal.[85] Since then, the Swiss People's Party has moved to the extreme right and is no longer considered to be conservative

Let’s use Germany as example conservatism developed alongside nationalism in Germany, culminating in Germany's victory over France in the Franco-Prussian War, the creation of the unified German Empire in 1871 and the simultaneous rise of Otto von Bismarck on the European political stage. Bismarck's "balance of power" model maintained peace in Europe for decades at the end of the 19th century. His "revolutionary conservatism" was a conservative state-building strategy designed to make ordinary Germans—not just the Junker elite—more loyal to state and emperor, he created the modern welfare state in Germany in the 1880s. According to Kees van Kersbergen and Barbara Vis, his strategy was:

Granting social rights to enhance the integration of a hierarchical society, to forge a bond between workers and the state so as to strengthen the latter, to maintain traditional relations of authority between social and status groups, and to provide a countervailing power against the modernist forces of liberalism and socialism

Bismarck also enacted universal male suffrage in the new German Empire in 1871, He became a great hero to German conservatives, who erected many monuments to his memory after he left office in 1890.

More recently, the work of conservative Christian Democratic Union leader and Chancellor Helmut Kohl helped bring about German reunification, along with the closer European integration in the form of the Maastricht

Today, German conservatism is often associated with politicians such as Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose tenure has been marked by attempts to save the common European currency (Euro) from demise.

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