

NAME: MUSTAPHA MARDIYA

MATRIC NUMBER: 18/SMS09/060

LEVEL- 200 LEVEL

COURSE: POL202- POLITICAL IDEAS

ASSIGNMENT:

IN NOT MORE THAN FIVE(5) PAGES DISCUSS AND
EVALUATE THE IDEA OF CONSERVATISM

Meaning and nature of conservatism

Conservatism in a broad sense, as a social attitude, has always existed. It expresses the instinctive human fear of sudden change, and tendency to habitual action, CECIL for instance, contrasts “modern conservatism” with the “natural conservatism” from which it arises and depends on found “in almost every human mind”. Conservatism and its modernizing, anti-traditionalist rivals, liberalism and socialism, are the most influential political philosophies and ideologies of the post- enlightenment era. Conservatives criticize their rivals for making a utopian exaggeration of the power of theoretical reasons, and of human perfectibility. Conservative prescription are based on what they regard as experience rather than reason; for them, the ideal and the practical are inseparable. Most commentator regards conservatism as a modern political philosophy, even though it exhibits the standpoint of paternalism or authority, rather than freedom. As John Gay writes, while liberalism is the dominant political theory of the modern age, conservatism, despite appealing to tradition, is also a response to the challenges of modernity. The roots of all three standpoint “may be traced back to the crisis of the 17th century England, but crystallized into definite tradition of thought and practice only after the French revolution. It is contended both what conservatism is, and what it could or ought to be both among the public and politicians, and among the philosophers and political theorists.” Conservative” is a generic term for “right-wing viewpoint occupying the political spectrum between liberalism and fascism”, philosophical commentators offer a more distinctive characterization.

Many treat it as a standpoint that is skeptical of abstract reasoning in politics, and that appeals instead to living tradition, allowing for the possibility of limited, political reform, on this view, conservatism is neither dogmatic reaction, nor the right-wing radicalism of MAGARET THATCHER or contemporary American “Neo-conservatives”. Other commentators, however, contrast this” pragmatic conservatism” with a universalist ‘rational conservatism” that is not skeptical of reason, and that regards a community with a hierarchy of authority as most conducive to human well-being. Compared to liberalism and socialism, conservatism has suffered philosophical neglect, many deny that is an ideology, or even a political philosophy, regarding it instead as a disposition that resist theoretical expression- a “non- ideology” that attempts to avoid the error of ideologies, is it an ancient attitude, or one that developed only in

response to enlightenment rationality and its political products, liberalism and socialism? Is it a coherent position or does it, as many have argued, fail to distinguish what is worth conserving from what is not.

Types of conservatism

1. Cultural conservatism: is a philosophy that supports preservation of heritage of a nation or culture (or sometimes of language tradition) usually by the adaptation of norms handed down from the past.
2. Social conservatism: is a subset of cultural conservatism where the norms may also be morals (E.G. opposition to homosexuality, covering of women's faces). In Europe however, it usually refers to "liberal" conservatives, who support modern European welfare states.
3. Religious conservatism: seek to preserve the teaching of particular either by examples or by law. Religious conservatives may promote broad campaigns for a return to traditional values, or they may go the radical route looking to preserve a belief in its original or pristine form.
4. Fiscal conservatism is the economic philosophy of prudence in government spending and debt, arguing that a government does not have the right to run up large debts and then throw the burden on the taxpayer.
5. Paleo-conservatism is a moderate to extreme form of conservatism, popular in the Bible Belt states of the USA which emphasizes religious heritage, national and western identity, tradition, civil society, anti-interventionist policies and classical federalism. It specifically opposes illegal immigration, communism, authoritarianism, social democracy and entitlement programs.

Theories of conservatism

First, the aristocratic theory defines conservatism as the ideology of a single specific and unique historical movement; the reaction of the feudal –aristocratic agrarian classes to the French revolution, liberalism and the rise of the bourgeoisie at the end of the 18th century and during the half of the 19th century. In Mannheim's words, "modern conservatism is a function of one particular historical and sociological situation" liberalism is the ideology of the bourgeoisie,

socialism and Marxism the ideologies of the proletariat and conservatism the ideology of the aristocracy. Conservatism thus became indissolubly associated with feudalism, status, the ancient regime landed interest, medievalism, and nobility' it becomes irreconcilably opposed to the middle class, labor, commercialization, industrialism, democracy, liberalism and individualism. This concept of conservatism is popular among critics of the new conservatism, for, as Louis Hartz has brilliantly demonstrated, the United States lack of tradition, hence, the efforts of intellectuals and publicists to propagate conservative ideas in middle-class America must be doomed to failure. **Secondly**, the autonomous definition of conservatism holds that conservatism is not necessarily connected with the interests of any particular group, nor, indeed, is its appearance dependent upon any specific historical configuration of social forces. Conservatism is an autonomous system of ideas which are generally valid. It is defined in terms of universal value such as justice, order, balance, moderation. Whether or not a particular individual holds these values high depends not on his social affiliations but upon his personal capacity to see their inherent truth and desirability, conservatism, in this sense, is as Russell Kirk says, simply a matter of "will and intelligence"; the principles of conservatism are not confined to the interests of a single class, conservatism may be drawn from all classes and occupations. This theory of conservatism is obviously popular among the new conservatism. It implies not only that conservatism is relevant and desirable in contemporary America, but that it is the preferable political philosophy under any historical circumstances. **Third**, the situational definition views conservatism as the ideology arising out of a distinct but recurring type of historical situation in which a fundamental challenge is directed at established institutions and in which the supporter of those institutions employs the conservative ideology in their defense thus, conservatism is that system of ideas employed to justify any established social order, no matter where or when it exists, against any fundamental challenge to its nature or being, no matter from what quarter. The essence of conservatism is the passionate affiliation of the value of existing institutions. This does not mean that conservatism opposes all changes. Indeed, in order to preserve the fundamental elements of the society, it may be necessary to acquiesce in change on secondary issues. No person can espouse the conservative ideology, however, unless he is fundamentally happy with the established order and committed to its defense against any serious challenge. Conservatism in this sense is possible in the United States today only if there is

a basic challenge to existing American institution which impels their defender to articulate conservative value.

The question may be legitimately raised, what is gained by arguing over definitions? Are not all definitions essentially arbitrary, how is it possible to demonstrate the superiority of one to another, this argument is valid if no common assumptions exists among the conflicting theories such, however, is not the cases with the three definition of conservatism. They differ only with respects to the relations of conservatism ideology to the historical process. The aristocratic definition limits conservatism to a particular social class in a particular society. The autonomous definition permits the appearances of conservatism at any stages in history. the situational definition permits the appearance of conservatism at any stages in history. The situational definition holds that conservatism appears when challenges and defending social groups stands in a particular relation to each other. Yet all three approaches agree fundamentally as to the content of conservatism as an ideology: the substance of the value and idea in which conservatism believes Russell Kirk, for instances, criticizes Arthur Schlesinger Jr, for identifying conservatism with feudalism, but he agrees substantially with Schlesinger's statement of the essentials of the conservative ideology.

REFERENCE

1. the standard encyclopedia of philosophy(spring 2020 edition),Edward N.Zalta(ed.)
URL=<http://plato.standaard .edu/archives/spr2020/entries/conservatism>.
2. Samuel P Huntington, the American political science(conservatism as an ideology)
vol.51,No.2(jun 1957),pp454-473.