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**POL 202: POLITICAL IDEAS**

**27TH APRIL 2020**

**ASSIGNMENT**

**IN NOT MORE THAN FIVE PAGES DISCUSS AND EVALUAUTE 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. Conservatism seeks 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 element, reactionaries, oppose modernism and seek a return to “the way things were”.

The term conservatism is derived from the Latin word “conservare” meaning to protect or preserve from the French derivative “conservateur”. The term was first used in a political context in 1818 by Francois-Rene de Chateaubriand during the period of Bourbon Restoration that sought to roll back the policies of the French Revolution. Historically associated with the right wing politics, the term has 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. Conservatism generally refers to right-wing politics which advocate the preservation of personal wealth and personal ownership and emphasizes self-reliance and individualism. Conservatism in general are more punitive toward criminals, tend to hold more orthodox religious views, and are often ethnocentric and hostile towards homosexuals and other minority groups.

The beginnings of conservatism are usually traced back to the reaction to the events surrounding the French Revolution of 1789, although it can be argued the 16th century Anglican theologian Richard Hooker (1554-1600) was proposing something very similar two centuries earlier. The Anglo-Irish philosopher Edmund Burke is often considered the father of conservatism in Anglo-American circles. He argued forcefully against the French Revolution, especially in his “Reflections on the Revolution in France” of 1790 and was troubled in general by the rationalist turn of the enlightenment. He argued instead for the value of inherited institutions and customs, including the time-honored development of the state, piecemeal progress through experience and the continuation of other important societal institutions such as the family and the church, rather than what he called “metaphysical abstractions”. Burke also claimed that man is unable to understand the many ways which inherited behaviors influence their thinking, and so trying to judge society objectively is futile.

The old established form of British conservatism since the late 17th century was the Tory party, which generally reflects the attitudes of a rural land-owning class. In the 19th century, a new coalition of traditional landowners and sympathetic industrialists constituted the new British Conservative party. Benjamin Disraeli gave the new party a political ideology, advocating a return to an idealized view of a corporate or organic society in which everyone had duties and responsibilities towards other people or groups. The conversion of the British Conservative party into a modern mass organization in the 20th century was accelerated by the concept of Troy Democracy attributed to Lord Randolph Churchill. In the 1980s under the leadership of Margaret Thatcher, there was a dramatic shift in the ideological diversion of British Conservatism, with a strong movement towards free-market economic policies, although many saw Thatcherism as more consistent with a radical classical liberalism than classical conservatism.

In other parts of Europe, mainstream conservatism is often represented by Christian Democratic parties, which had their origins largely in catholic parties of the late 19th and early 20th century. They generally support market-oriented policies, The European Union and a strong defense, and usually gain support from the business community and white-collar professionals. However, their views on social issues tend to be more liberal than American conservatives, for example: Modern American Conservatism was largely born out of alliance between classical liberals and social conservatives in the late 19th and early 20th century. It comprises a constellation of political ideologies as well as support for a strong military, small governments, and states’ rights. It is mainly represented by the U.S. Republican Party exemplified by Ronald Reagan and George Washington Bush, and much of the conservative attitude is focused on the nation’s heartland, as contrasted with the more liberal cities and college towns.

Conservatism comes in various forms because different cultures have different values and in consequence, conservatism in different cultures have different goals. Many forms of conservatism incorporate elements of other ideologies and philosophies, and in turn, conservatism has influence upon them. These forms are:

**Liberal Conservatism**: This incorporates the classical liberal view of minimal government intervention in the economy. It suggests that individuals should be free to participate in the market and generate wealth without government interference. They 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 because individuals cannot be trusted to act responsibly.

**Conservative liberalism**: This is a variant of liberalism that combines liberal values and policies with conservative stances.

**Libertarian conservatism**: This describes certain political ideologies which combine libertarian economic issues with aspects of conservatism. This is especially applied in the United States where it is believed that the government should not play a major role in regulating business and managing the economy. They typically oppose efforts to charge high tax rates and to redistribute income to assist the poor. They argue that such efforts do not reward people who have earned their money through hard work.

**Fiscal conservatism**: This is the economic philosophy of prudence in government spending and debt. Edmund Burke argued that the government does not have the right to run up large debts and then throw the burden on the taxpayer in his Reflection on the Revolution in France.

**National and Traditional Conservatism**: This is a political term used primarily in Europe to describe a variant of conservatism which concentrate more on national interests than standard conservatism as well as upholding cultural and ethnic identity. National conservatism is also related to traditional conservatism, which is a political philosophy emphasizing the need for the principles of natural law and transcendence, moral order, tradition, hierarchy, organic unity, agrarianism, classicism and high culture as well the intersecting spheres of loyalty.

**Cultural and Social conservatism**: Cultural conservatists support the preservation of the heritage of one nation, or of a shared culture that is not defined by national boundaries. They hold fast to traditional ways of thinking even in the face of monumental change and they strongly believe in traditional values and traditional politics and often have an urgent sense of nationalism. On the other hand, social conservatists believe that society is built upon a fragile network of relationships which need to be upheld through duty, traditional values, and established institutions; and the government has a role in encouraging traditional values. Social conservatism and cultural conservatism are distinct but have some overlaps.

**Defining inequality**: This portrays conservatism as less of an attempt to uphold traditional institutions and more of a meditation on the felt experience of having power, seeing it threatened and trying to win it back. Some conservatists argue that they are seeking less to protect their own power than they are seeking to protect inalienable rights and promote norms and rules that they believe should stand timeless and eternal, applying to each citizen.

**Religious conservatism**: This principally applies the teachings of particular religions to politics, sometimes by merely proclaiming the value of those teachings and at other times, having those teachings influence laws. In some cases, conservative values are grounded in religious beliefs and conservatism seeks to increase the role of religion in public life.

**Paternalistic conservatism**: This is a strand in conservatism which reflects the belief that societies exist and develop organically and that members within them have obligations towards each other. These conservatives support neither the individual nor the state in principle, but are instead prepared to support either or recommend a balance between the two depending on what is most particular. It first arose as a distinct ideology in the United Kingdom and stresses the importance of a social safety net to deal with poverty, support of limited distribution of wealth along with government regulation of markets in the interest of both consumers and producers.

**Authoritarian conservatism**: This can also be referred to as reactionary conservatism. This talks about autocratic regimes that center their ideology around conservative nationalism, rather than ethnic nationalism, though certain racial components may exist. Authoritarian conservative movements show strong devotion towards religion, tradition and culture while also expressing fervent nationalism akin to other far-right nationalist movements.

**Paleo-conservatism**: This is a moderate 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.

**Neo-Conservatism**: This is the new conservative movement which emerged in the United states in opposition to the perceived liberalism of the 1960s. It emphasizes and interventionist foreign policy, free trade and free market economies and a general disapproval of counterculture.

**Bio-Conservatism**: This is a stance of hesitancy about technological development and skepticism about medical and other biotechnological transformations of the living world especially if it is perceived to threaten a given social order.

In conclusion, whether conservatism is understood as the ideological articulation of a reactionary tendency or to defend establishment and social privilege or merely a prudent manifestation of risk aversion and skepticism towards grand schemes for improving society, it has coalesced into a body of thought inseparable from the question of how to manage change.

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