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QUESTION

What is conservatism?

ANSWER

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”. Donald Trump is the leader of the conservative moment.

The first established use of the term in a political context originated in 1818 with Francois-Rene de Chateaubriad 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. 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 1970s.

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.
2. Fiscal conservatism- Fiscal conservatism is the economic philosophy of prudence of prudence in government spending and debt.
3. National and traditional conservatism- 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 or supporting a far-right approach.

Traditional conservatism is a political philosophy emphasizing the need for the principles of natural law and transcendent moral order, tradition, hierarchy and organic unity, agrarianism, classicism and high culture as well as the intersecting spheres of loyalty.

1. Paternalistic conservatism- Paternalistic conservatism is a strand in conservatism which reflects the belief that societies exists and develop organically and that members within them have obligations towards each other.
2. Authoritarian conservatism-Authoritarian conservatism or reactionary conservatism refers to autocratic regimes that center their ideology around conservative nationalism, rather than ethnic nationalism, though certain racial components such as anti-Semitism may exist.

Following the Second World War, psychologists conducted research into the different motives and tendencies that account for ideological differences between left and right. The early studies focused on conservatives, beginning with Theodor W.Adorno’s The Authoritarian personality (1950) based on the F-scale personality test.

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