

# Conservatism Core Ideas & Principles rework

## Key Terms

Noblesse Oblige	Empiricism	Tradition	Organic Society	Enlightenment
Pragmatism	Change to conserve	Human Imperfection	Stagflation	

## Human nature

### Imperfection

- Thomas Hobbes argued in Leviathan that 'Humans are driven by a perpetual and restless desire of power'
- Tradition, One nation and neo conservatives align with human imperfection but believe society can rectify errors and help individuals to change (examples being tough prison sentencing or even education reforms)
- New Right rejects inherent imperfection and argues that humans are capable of rationality
- Tough law and order is needed to curb this imperfection which can lead to acts of evil and violence
- Thomas Hobbes believed the individual should trade some freedom for state protection
- Oakeshott argues that society is organic and has intricate customs and traditions that provide consolation, comfort and happiness.
- Utopic ideas never work because perfect societies cannot be built by imperfect creatures
- Ayn Rand and Robert Nozick argue rationalism means that humans can make self serving decisions which best benefit them or their interests
- Edmund Burke argues abstract and rationalistic ideas are ill advised and ideas should be considered cautiously backed by empirical evidence

### Psychological Imperfection

- Humans are weaker and security seeking. This makes them dependent on social framework
- Hierarchical framework helps to allay this aspect of human imperfection. Position, roles and responsibilities are identifiable - an established and connected community.
- Natural Leaders will help to produce social peace and harmony
- Humans are naturally willing to defer to their beliefs

## Moral Imperfection

- Without law and order human will fall into socially disruptive behaviour
- Most humans lack innate moral value
- Society will disintegrate without a strong state

## Intellectual Imperfection

- Individuals are not rational
- Humans are unable to comprehend the complexities of the world
- Religion answers these questions of complexity

## Examples & Quotes

- Thomas Hobbes in Leviathan 'Humans are driven by a perpetual and restless desire of power'
- Oakeshott argues humans are 'fragile and fallible' but are capable of benevolence
- Hobbes' maxim, 'life is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'.

# Society

## Localism

- Conservatives believe that communities provide individuals with security, status and inspiration. At the same time they prevent the selfish individualism extolled by CL's

## Organic Society

- A healthy society requires all its constituent parts to be healthy and fulfilling a useful and proper role. Social peace is necessary to ensure this, shared values may prevent social conflict. Opposition to pluralism and diversity come from this

## Hierarchy

- Essential to organic society, equality between levels of a hierarchy is both impossible and undesirable. Superiors have a right and a duty to exercise authority over those beneath them. Duty and obligation are essential features of hierarchy. Noblesse oblige

## Empiricism

- Issues must be dealt with in a practical, evidential fashion. 'How it is' not 'how it ought to be'. This is in sharp contrast to progressive ideologies like socialism and liberalism

## Tradition

- 'Survived the test of time'
- They exist because they work, and we should preserve them (institutions, customs)
- Tradition gives people belonging, identity and cohesive ties with society, which in turn advocates for peace and stability
- Ayn Rand and Robert Nozick argue that the value of tradition was undermined with the rise of rationalism from the Enlightenment
- Michael Oakeshott argues secularism is a form of adopting rationalism

## Importance of Tradition

- By removing tradition, there is no barrier to unlimited tyranny. This argument was used by conservatives in the 20th century to explain and criticise the dictatorship of Stalin and the USSR. By destroying all existing social and political institutions, the Russian revolutionaries had paved the way for totalitarianism.
- Guides the nature and structure of politics for example the Houses of Commons and Lords are an extremely old but important institution for modern Britain. Changing it would be unnecessary and messy. Structure and Framework for society, acts as a guide for law, politics, economics and social behaviour
- Without traditions there could be no guarantees of anyone's rights. Freedoms or property because tradition is the basis of a stable society, Burke suggests that moving away from tradition as in the French revolution could lead to a disaster.
- Allowing the erosion of Traditional structures makes it easier to erode other important statutes like rights and health of society. Makes entering tyranny easier
- Traditions can act as a guide for future policy making as if the ways of the past were successful then why radically change what has already been working? Edmund Burke argued that tradition and customs are a better influence on moral beginnings than abstract ideas as these can easily influence the impressionable
- Tradition has moulded the political institutions in which British politics is conducted. Politicians have to act in accordance with political tradition to abide by the British Constitution, which is evolutionary in nature

## Examples & Quotes

- Society is a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead and those who are to be born' Edmund Burke

## Pragmatism

- practical experience over political theory and ideology
- Caution, moderation and 'change to conserve' rather than change for change sake
- Change can be accepted, but must be slow, evolutionary and peaceful.
- Humans are not capable of reason and are rational, and thus struggle to understand complexities of simple society, so favour practical and simple over grand and abstract

- Robert Peel Tamworth Manifesto 1834 argues conservatism is to be pragmatic and not reactionary. Peel enacted the Great Reform Act (1832) which gave middle class men the right to vote.

## Examples & Quotes

- 'To be a conservative is to prefer the tried to the untried' Michael Oakeshott
- 'A state without the means of some change is without the means of its conservation' Edmund Burke
- Robert Peel Tamworth Manifesto 1834 argues conservatism is to be pragmatic and not reactionary. Peel enacted the Great Reform Act (1832) which gave middle class men the right to vote.

## Organic Society

- Collective, if a human is isolated from society they will feel meaningless and unstable
- This isolation leads to crime, indecent behaviour and discontent
- Society is similar to a living organism; all have intricate organs which depends and work with each other to keep the body stable
- Hierarchy and authority is implied as humans are inherently non equal
- Edmund Burke, Thomas Hobbes and Oakeshott all believed once the state provides the necessary, then society will emerge and mature organically.

## Order & Authority

Purpose of the state is to provide order, security and law.

Without order there can be no liberty, no order can be enforced without law backed by authority

## Organic Origins

Here conservative thought differs from the Hobbesian notion of a 'government by consent'. Following processes of rational thought conservatives are more sceptical about states that arise from a rational discussion

Such states are likely to be normative, not empirical. Conservatives prefer a state that emerges gradually and unpredictably; an organic and pragmatic response to humanity's needs.

- Against codified constitutions.

## Ruling Class/Elitism

Conservatives are more comfortable with a hierarchical state which reflects the elitist society they endorse. The traditional conservative state is one that acknowledges the notion of a ruling class.

A class born and trained to rule.

They would be pragmatic - legislating when evidence induced was needed. This would avert social upheaval and revolution while maintaining wealth and power.

## Nation State

1850-1950 Conservatives tended to emphasise a state based on nationhood.

For all cons. The nation is a large community, enfolded all classes and therefore provided a natural basis for the state.

## Examples & Quotes

- Hobbes believed in the absolute monarchy, where Oakeshott and Burke favoured more liberal methods of government

## Paternalism

- The ruling class has a duty of care to those lower class who can't act in their own interest, ensuring a natural but healthy hierarchy (Noblesse Oblige)
- Disraeli's one nation conservatism was inspired by the idea of paternalism, encouraging reforms to allow the lower classes better quality of life, such as limited welfare, but kept the ruling class in power
- The Empire also adopts this, the idea that those conquered cannot look after themselves, or are incapable of leading modern lives, therefore we must teach them our way of society, under our rule.
- Michael Oakeshott was uneasy about paternalism as they were not empirical in nature
- Robert Nozick and Ayn Rand and neo-liberals do not see the need for state sponsored paternalism
- Nozick 'there are only individual people, different individual people, with their own lives'
- The idea of noblesse oblige also arguably prevents those from making mistakes, in which they can learn from and adapt, making them dependent on the state

## Examples & Quotes

- Neo-cons argued that the consequences of the paternalistic welfare created after WW2 were those trying to help those hopelessly dependant on the state, Margaret Thatcher pushed back one nation conservatism factions in the party for this reason
- Neo-Liberals argue state sponsored paternalism restricts negative freedom as individuals are obligated to pay tax to welfare they may not support.

## Property

- Property is inherited and respected and this should be the same for all other social and political institutions. For Burke property was an essential conservative foundation of society. All conservatives support this
- Property supports social hierarchy. To protect property people should also act supportive to the family.

# Traditional Conservatism

Traditional conservatives are committed to hierarchic and paternalistic values.

There are various strands of thought within all ideological movements. With regards to conservatism, the main division is that between the one-nation perspective and the New Right.

Traditional conservatism is relatively insignificant within the field of British politics. As the term clearly implies, traditional conservatism is the oldest format of conservative thought. Traditional conservatism is associated strongly with the concept of hierarchy. In order for society to function effectively, there must be some form of hierarchy. Individuals within society need to be aware of their place within and accept their duties accordingly. For instance, those who hold the highest status have a responsibility to look after those further down the social scale. Such ideas later developed into the concept of noblesse oblige, one of the fundamental ideas within the mindset of conservatism.

Traditional conservatism is rooted in a time when very few people had the vote. The ideas and values associated with traditional conservatives gradually evolved in order to respond to an expanding franchise. This led to the emergence of the one-nation school of thought. The key figure to consider here is Benjamin Disraeli; a man who did much to develop the party and ensure that it could reach out towards those enfranchised as a result of the Great Reform Act. Disraeli also did much to recast the party and broaden its appeal towards the rapidly-emerging bourgeois capitalists, a constituency that remains loyal to the Tories.

Roger Scruton, a British philosopher, was a self-described traditionalist and conservative. One of his most well-known books, *The Meaning of Conservatism* (1980), is on foreign policy, animal rights, arts and culture, and philosophy. Scruton was a member of the American Enterprise Institute, the Institute for the Psychological Sciences, the Trinity Forum, and the Center for European Renewal. *Modern Age*, *National Review*, *The American Spectator*, *The New Criterion*, and *City Journal* were among the many publications for which he wrote.

Phillip Blond, a British philosopher, has recently gained notoriety as a proponent of traditionalist philosophy, specifically progressive conservatism, or Red Toryism. Blond believes that Red Toryism would rejuvenate British conservatism and society by combining civic communitarianism, localism, and traditional values. He has formed a think tank, ResPublica.

The oldest traditionalist publication in the United Kingdom is *The Salisbury Review*, which was founded by British philosopher Roger Scruton. The *Salisbury Review's* current managing editor is Merrie Cave.

A group of traditionalist MPs known as the Cornerstone Group was created in 2005 within the British Conservative Party. The Cornerstone Group represents "faith, flag, and family" and stands for traditional values. Edward Leigh and John Henry Hayes are two notable members.

## How did the crises of the 70s effect traditional conservatism

### Post 1945 trad cons

- Keynesian economics
- State welfare
- Social liberalism

### Outcome

- Flabby & excessive welfare state
- Permissive society
- Weak country politically, militarily and morally
- Rapidly falling economy

### Neo-Lib thinkers

- Friedrich Von Hayek
- Milton Friedman
- British think tanks (IEA, ASI)

Extend individual freedom by rolling back the frontiers of the state, in order to make a free market economy. Economic growth & prosperity

- Reduction in tax
- Tighter control on government spending
- Deregulation and privatisation of nationalised industries
- End of dependency culture and expensive welfare state
- Neutralising obstructive bodies

### Neo-Con thinkers

- Irving Kristol
- Roger Scruton

Restoration of authority, national identity and a society guided by christianity

- Tougher approach on law and order, stiffer sentencing and greater police power
- Robust approach on military and national defence
- Less tolerant to immigration
- Anti permissive social policies and promotion of traditional family structures

### Ayn Rand

- Talented individual not ambitious governments, lay at the heart of any successful society
- Objectivism outlined in 'The virtue of selfishness' was the belief that we should all be driven by self interest and rational self fulfilment.

- Libertarian in terms of social matters, the right to choose applies to homosexuality and abortion. Small state needed to achieve this
- No liberty without order and security

## New Right Conservatism

New-Right conservatism is a marriage of neo-liberal and neo-conservative ideas, and includes elements of both neo-liberal and neo-conservative thinking.

The New Right is both economically libertarian and socially conservative.

## Thatcherism

Thatcherism, a key ideology of the New Right, was influenced by Milton Friedman and Peter Bauer. She also read 'The Road to Serfdom' by Friedrich Von Hayek.

### Milton Friedman

Governments should not be involved in the economy except for the four main functions

- Defence
- Law and order
- Necessary public works that private enterprise does not find profitable to provide
- Protection from members of the community who 'cannot be regarded as responsible individuals'

### Peter Bauer

Expands on Friedman's theory for a wider range of government functions

- Provision of health and education
- Management of monetary and fiscal system

### Bauer & Friedman economic policy

- Production, distribution and trade of goods and services best left to private enterprise
- Free market will regulate itself and lead to economic growth (West Germany, Japan, Hong Kong)
- Government planning fails to raise living standards

## More Information on the British New Right

Thatcher implemented a range of policies such as privatisation, deregulation and the sale of council houses. However, she was more willing to use the 'agents of the state' against those forces that opposed her than Conservative leaders in the one-nation mould. Thatcher chose to confront left-wing unions and local councils whereas figures from the one-nation perspective cautioned against such moves.



Thatcher was no libertarian either. A salient example to consider is Clause (or section) 28 which prevented local authorities from promoting homosexuality or presenting it within schools as an acceptable family unit. Clause 28 sought to uphold traditional moral values against the moral pollution that emerged from the permissive society of the 60s and 70s. Marriage is sanctioned by God as a union between man and woman for the procreation of a child, whereas homosexuality is contrary to such teachings. According to the New Right, the role of the state is to guide people towards the correct way to live.

Under David Cameron's leadership the Tories tried to rebrand themselves as a more socially inclusive party. Most notably, the Tory-led coalition government introduced same-sex marriage in 2012. This clearly reflects a social liberal stance on lifestyle issues. However, the Conservatives have also shown their traditionally authoritarian approach towards law and order. It is worth noting that Cameron called for "*exemplary punishment*" for those who committed offences during the 2011 riots. Moreover, since gaining an outright majority the Tory Party has introduced a number of anti-terrorism measures which have been labelled as draconian by civil liberties groups. In terms of its pragmatism, the government has even sought to reduce the level of public spending on the police as part of its broader austerity programme.

## One-Nation Conservatism

**One-nation conservatism**, also known as **one-nationism** or **Tory democracy**, is a paternalistic form of British political conservatism. It advocates the preservation of established institutions and traditional principles within a political democracy, in combination with social and economic programmes designed to benefit the ordinary person. According to this political philosophy, society should be allowed to develop in an organic way, rather than being engineered. It argues that members of society have obligations towards each other and particularly emphasises paternalism, meaning that those who are privileged and wealthy should pass on their benefits. It argues that this elite should work to reconcile the interests of all classes, including labour and management, rather than identifying the good of society solely with the interests of the business class.

### Traditional Conservative One Nationism

The desire for 'one nationalism' arose in the 19th Century as Conservative PM Benjamin Disraeli feared of growing economic divide led to 'two nations'. His solution was limited welfarism to help the poorest in society.

### Pressures of Industrialisation & Urbanisation

Rapid changes created huge problems on the poor and for local authorities

Crime, health, living and working conditions and the impact of increasing poverty meant traditional conservatism was unable to appease the masses demanding action.

### Radical political landscape

Revolutions and foreign ideologies affect those in the UK. Communist manifesto 1848, which posed a challenge to conservatives traditional organic, steady growth.

The Chartist movement, socialism, bonapartism were all indications needed to change conservatism.

### Importance of the nation

Nationalism originally associated with anti-imperialism and anti-monarchism, french revolutionaries often referred to as patriots. However nationalism was incorporated into conservative thought.

Embraced nationalism as a unifier based on empiricism and to unify the people against the others. Arguing all classes were all part of the common identity (british)

## Early One-nation conservatism

- Benjamin Disraeli drew from Burke, admiring Noblesse Oblige and tradition in institutions such as the Church of England
- Disraeli's ultimate goal was to make a secure society by reducing the tensions between the rich and poor (seen as the two nations), by renewing a sense of national identity and community
- Introduced social reforms to counter negative effects of capitalism and reduce social unrest, Second Reform Act (1867) which gave most working men the right to vote

## Later one nation conservatism

- 1957-63, Macmillan championed a conservatism that steered a course between traditional conservative laissez faire economics and Keynesian ideas, this has been followed by modern day PMs (for example government intervention, yet keeping tax low)
- David Cameron rebranded one nation conservatism as 'compassionate conservatism' and 'big society' designed to give more to the local communities
- Cameron and May accept Welsh and Scottish devolution yet are unionists and oppose independence proves the conservative value of 'change to conserve'

## Neo-Conservatism

### Main Ideas

- Underpinning a desire to reverse social fragmentation and a desire to uphold traditional morality and Law and Order for example the sexual Revolution of the 1960s led to immorality and thus should be opposed
- derived from Judeo-Christian culture, An organic society should be based on Christian values and traditional marriage. this has led to a sentiment of anti-lgbtq and anti-abortion ideology within the neo conservative movements of the 1980s
- While recognising a need for paternalist connections between the hierarchical rulers, many Neo Conservatives believe the welfare state which embodies paternalism had grown too large and therefore created a culture of dependency
- Neo conservative are societal authoritarians, preferring strict lawn order to solve social instability rather than reform and embracement. this is shown in Ronald Reagan's war on recreational drug use and advocacy of long and tougher prison sentences as a moral punishment and authoritarian deterrent
- Neo conservatism typically advocates a hawkish foreign policy and military interventionism. This is evident in Ronald Reagan's restoration of the "second Cold War" breaking the Peaceful detent previously forged by the president's Prior. This is also evidence with the Falklands war (1982) and the Gulf war (1990)

# Thinkers

## Thomas Hobbes

### Key Works

Leviathan (1651)

- Humans are needy, vulnerable and easily led astray, their drives are individualistic and not communal
- Without governments and social structures, humans would be forced to live in a state of violence
- 'State of war' where humans only care about self-preservation
- The solution to this state of war is a social contract between the individual and the authority (Monarch), which in turn gave legitimacy to passing legislation as seen fit
- Rationalistic idea; in return for individuals ceding freedoms, they would have protection as the rule of law would provide order (Knights would protect the surfs outside the castle walls in turn for providing their goods to the region and city from raiders and pillagers)

'Nasty, short and brutish' (referring to life without the state and authority)

'The passions of men are commonly more potent than their reason'

## Edmund Burke

### Key Works

Reflections on the Revolution in France (1790)

- Rejecting the enlightenment view humans are rational, instead imperfectible any attempt to create perfection is anti nature and against innate character.
- Burke's 'liberty, fraternity and equality'
- Society is but a contract between the dead and the living and those yet to be born. We must therefore construct civilisation by giving weight to our ancestors, ourselves and the unborn
- Burke goes so far as to claim the ruling classes are the only ones who can govern the country in a disinterested manner. They hold a paternalistic role to look after those lower than them (Noblesse Oblige)
- Burke also believed there was a natural hierarchy within society, and each component must play they part on a basis of a living organism

'All men have equal rights but not to equal things'

## Michael Oakeshott

### Key Works

On being conservative (1962)

- Human imperfections mean it is beyond the human capability to fully understand reality
- Faith in rationalism is misplaced as theories often oversimplify issues
- Critical of 'authority of his own reason' over experience
- Rationalism is worthless and humans should put faith in long standing customs rather abstract ideologies which never fully materialise anyway
- Governments should govern in the people's best interests, grounded with pragmatism and empiricism

'The man of conservative temperament believes that a known good is not lightly to be surrendered for an unknown better'

## Ayn Rand

### Key works

The Virtue of Selfishness (1964)

Atlas Shrugged (1957)

### Objectivism

- An atomistic society where individuals enjoy negative freedom
- Only when individuals comprehend the true nature of reality can they independently achieve self-realisation and self-fulfilment
- Individuals are rational and their highest moral purpose is the achievement of personal happiness
- Rejected human imperfection as espoused by most branches of conservatism
- Loathed organic society because the obligations demanded from individuals eroded freedoms
- Only moral purpose is to protect individual rights
- Individuals must maintain lives through their own efforts
- Right to maintain property and income without being taxed for welfare spending

## Robert Nozick

### Key Works

Anarchy, State and Utopia (1974)

- Initially influenced by John Locke's rationalism
- Self ownership of their bodies, talents and abilities
- 'Minarchist' government (minimal night watchman state)
- Nozick disagreed with the notion that the state had legitimacy to interfere in society based on hierarchical structures
- State had too much power over personal freedoms

'Taxation of earnings from labour is on a par with forced labour'

'The states claim to legitimacy induces its citizens to believe that they have some duty to obey its edict, pay its taxes, fight its battles and so on'

## Economy

- Conservatives support capitalism as they see inequality and hierarchy as natural and desirable. Burke was a robust supporter Adam Smith, father of laissez faire economics
- The conservative support for capitalism is more nuanced than liberalism's support for capitalism as conservatives worship order, stability and continuity
- Capitalism clearly supports an optimistic view of HN and the needs of the indiv. Capitalism is also a radical economic doctrine. Trad cons are therefore 'reluctant supporters' of capitalism
- any assault on capitalism is an assault on property, inequality, hierarchy and status quo
- Trad cons are sceptical of neo-lib view/belief that markets are most effective left alone
- Free markets are tempered by state intervention (protectionism). In this model, society and the economy are insured against the vagaries of the markets by state imposed tariffs and duties
- The protection of national producers and consumers was also consistent with trad cons emphasis on national identity and 'one nation'
- Trad cons in 20th C were also interested in Keynesian capitalism where state managed market forces in interest of full employment
- Trad cons, one nation cons, and neocons all believe tax should be used to fund state interventions in society, but the levels to which varies
- Private property and the right to purchase is a vital component of security and organic society.

Traditional	Classical liberal view of economic activity promoted by free markets
One-Nation	Keynesian economics, state intervention to bridge the divide of the 'two nations' (rich and poor)
New Right	Ambivalent (changes)
Neo-Liberal	Disapproval of big state politics and Keynesian economics
Neo-Con	Pragmatism (whatever goes best at the time)

# State

## Order and authority

To conservatives, the purpose of the state is to provide order, security and authority. Without order there can be no liberty and there can be no order until there are laws backed by firm authority. Stems from the fundamental conservative belief that the state proceeds society.

Here Con thought differs with the Hobbesian notion of a 'gov by consent' following processes of rational thought. Cons are sceptical about states that rise from rational discussion. Such states are likely to be normative, not empirical. Cons prefer a state that emerges gradually and unpredictably, an organic and pragmatic response to humanity's needs. Against a 'codified constitution'.

## Ruling class

Cons are more comfortable with hierarchical state, reflecting the elitist society they endorse. Trad Con state is one that acknowledges the notion of a ruling class, whose power is often aristocratic and hereditary rather than democratic. A class that was born and trained to rule

## The Nation State

1850 to 1950 cons emphasised state based on nationhood. Germany and Italy are examples of nations preceding state. UK and USA nation and state intertwined. Explains why British cons are less keen on EU political control

## Why is Neoliberalism a part of conservative ideology?

It is clear that Ayn Rand and Robert Nozick may contradict many traditional aspects of conservatism, for example Rand explicitly stated she was not a conservative and embraced homosexual and other rights of minorities, whereby Neo conservatives in the same time period rejected sexual Revolution. Nozick also argued the supremacy of the individual and the minimising of the state in all possibilities which goes against traditional conservative values of a strong authoritative state to ensure security

### Explanation

- Modern liberalism's ideas of an enabling state had usurped the classical liberal version of the minimal state, and due to the differences between Conservatives and modern liberals many Conservatives had adopted the ideas of classical liberal versions of the State
- in the 1970s the new right in the UK and the USA was a marriage of convenience between neoliberals and Neo Conservatives which focused on the efficacy of Free Market and a loving of collectivist big state ideas which were becoming ever present in modern liberal philosophy

- Neo Conservatives are sympathetic to rationalism inherent in free market economies but still informed by traditional conservative values such as pragmatism. this is true when considering George W bush's support of keynesian style intervention during the crisis of 2008.
- Another example of neo conservative pragmatism is the CARES act 2020 introduced by President Trump. The act was a \$2.2T economic stimulus bill in response to the economic damage caused by covid-19. This can therefore be a crossover with neoliberalism as the Liberal ideas of enhancing individual rights are shown by conservative economic intervention.