

Principles of Conservatism 1950-now

Foreign Policy

Communism is a world-wide threat to freedom, so the United States must maintain military pre-eminence, and contain its spread in all parts of the world—or roll back Soviet influence in Eastern Europe or Asia.

Since the fall of communism, neo-conservatives contend that the United States must use its power (military and otherwise, but not foreign aid) to democratize the world.

The Welfare State

Conservatives support a small government (small enough to drown in a bathtub, Grover Norquist says) committed to laissez-faire economics and non-intervention in people's lives.

Unions supported by the New Deal and the Great Society impede business procedures and profits, so they should be curbed.

The social programs of the New Deal and the Great Society and the Obama administration cost too much money, increasing the tax burden on ordinary Americans.

The welfare state privileges poor people and minorities, and taxes that support them impede the economic freedom of ordinary Americans. Freedom from want means equal opportunity, not freedom from poverty or insecurity.

Welfare undermines incentives to work, and results in a permanent underclass of people whose work ethic doesn't allow them to succeed in society.

Welfare constitutes an unfair redistribution of wealth from working people to lazy people, and it undermines incentives to maintain traditional families in the ghetto.

States Rights (devolution)

Because the Constitution is a compact of the states [a factually debatable assumption], and Article X reserves powers to the states, the Federal government needs to respect states rights, including the right to discriminate against certain groups of Americans.

Economics, Reaganomics

Large tax cuts, including reductions on high marginal tax rates and capital gains taxes, will help create jobs and bring prosperity to all. "A rising tide raises all boats." If the rich don't get richer, nobody will. [criticized as trickle-down economics].

The business of America is business. The profits and prosperity of corporations and businessmen will provide the economic growth that is the main aim of government economic policy.

Businesses operating in free markets are collectively smarter than bureaucrats trying to stimulate the economy or regulate businesses. Corporations, which are legally bound to increase shareholder value and not the public good, are more likely to increase the public good than government, which has "the general welfare" as its mission.

Left alone, the market will take care of most of our social and environmental problems.

Environmental protection and regulation is an interference with free enterprise, and ought to be curtailed.

Libertarianism

Government ought not to regulate individual behavior, or to prescribe morality.

Almost all government programs (especially taxation and regulation) threaten the liberty of individual Americans, and are a part of “the road to serfdom.”

Essential to individual liberty is the right, derived from the Second Amendment, to own guns without unnecessary restriction.

Overload/Unintended Consequences

While many liberal social programs are well-intended, they sometimes fail to achieve their goals, and often lead to unintended consequences.

Great Society liberalism had laudable goals (racial and gender equality), but liberalism went too far (affirmative action and the Equal Rights Amendment).

Failure to Secure Order and Authority

While Americans have a right to dissent, there are limits, and liberals have coddled dissenters (especially in the New Left and Black Power).

Law and order are essential elements of good governance, and the rise in dissent and protest is undermining authority and threatening social order.

Arrogance of Power

Liberal experts and bureaucrats haven't succeeded in curing the ills of poverty and racism and sexism, so we should stop funding such social programs. Conservatives believe in the imperfectability of people, and are less interested in trying to improve things by policy.

Ordinary people know what's good for them and their communities, and government shouldn't try to convince them otherwise. “You can spend your money than the government can.”

Liberals depict conservatives as stupid, paranoid, reactionary, and racist and it pisses us off.

Liberals think of themselves as a cultural elite enforcing liberal orthodoxy. Sometimes this ends up as “political correctness.”

Civil Rights

When liberals focus on justice for women and minorities, they forget to serve majorities of white middle-class people.

A “rights culture” has emerged that places too much emphasis on group rights, and not enough on individual responsibility.

Abortion (Roe vs. Wade 1973), Moral Order

There is an enduring moral order that human beings must follow.

Human life begins at conception, so abortion ought to be banned.

Liberal ideals and practices (abortion on demand, feminism, birth control, GLBT rights, separation of church and state) are undermining the traditional family and the morals of American society, as well as the custom, convention and continuity that conservatives cherish.