Conservatives ideas emerged in the early part of the 19th Century, in reaction to the pace of change both politically and economically.

**Origins and Development**

Conservatives ideas emerged in the early part of the 19th Century, in reaction to the pace of change both politically and economically.

British conservatism has drawn heavily on the Burkean idea of prudent change in order to conserve. Prudent change is meant as a willingness to confront realities, acknowledging the possible necessity of evolution in a given circumstance, without giving away too much. Conservatism is therefore both a conservative and a pragmatic philosophy.

European monarchies, horrified at the French revolution – seen as a threat to their own power and privilege – became increasingly entrenched in their conservatism and they defended hereditary principles and privilege, as well as autocracy with fervour. Conservatism, as a political philosophy, marginally adapted, to shifting political circumstances in the 1920s, and only made significant moves towards adopting liberal and progressive values after WWII. (Heywood, 2000)

Heywood (2000) also contends that in the United States a deeply liberal culture pervades despite occasional conservative ascendency. In other parts of the globe, conservatism is identifiable in different forms. For example in relation to former colonial states there is a mix of nationalism, conservatism and socialism. Such cultures often invoke hierarchy and tradition.

Conservatism has

**The Principles of Conservatism**

1790

The principles of conservatism were established by Edmund Burke in response to the French revolution in 1789. His work, _Reflections on the Revolution in France_ (1790), was deeply hostile to the emergence of abstract values encapsulated by the French Revolution, including equality, liberty and fraternity.

These values were, in Burke’s view dangerous for order, stability and tradition. Burke noted however that the French monarchy and nobility had brought about its own downfall by refusing to recognise the principle of change in order to conserve. Henceforth, conservatism was embattled by rapid economic, social and political change. As a result the old order was threatened.
Central Themes

The main central themes of Conservative Philosophy are as follows

1. TRADITION
Institutions such as the House of Lords or the Monarchy have stood the time and should not be discarded or subject to ill thought out reform which damages the continuity with the past that they give us and the stability that arises out of that continuity

2. HUMAN IMPERFECTION
Human beings, by their very nature, are incapable of perfection. Any attempt to perfect human beings, their social arrangements or their social institutions is bound to end in dismal failure and at worst could result in gross abuses of individual liberty

3. ORGANIC SOCIETY
Society is held together by the traditional ties of family and community. Traditional forms of authority (for example the church) and a sense of duty (for example to one’s school, one’s family or one’s employer) are what bind society together. The institutions of society or co-dependent in the sense that they all rely on each other to sustain themselves

4. AUTHORITY
A great emphasis is placed on the importance of authority. Authority derives from social position and is necessary and beneficial for the society as a whole. Those in authority are assumed to know how best to use that authority. They will use their authority responsibly and provide discipline and leadership which is beneficial for the society as a whole in using that authority. Those lower down the social order have a duty to accept the authority of those above them

5. PROPERTY
The ownership and control of property is a key conservative value. With it comes self reliance, self respect and a value for the property of others. It also encourages respect for law and order.
best and dangerous at worst

ORGANIC SOCIETY

The liberal and neo-conservative view of individuals as selfish and self-seeking is rejected. Rather, individuals are security and dependency seeking. They rely heavily on community, church, family and other means of drawing individuals together. Freedom is not seen in liberal terms but in terms of an acceptance of obligations of social value.

Authority, duty and loyalty bond society together. Society is not held together via rationalism but by allegiance to traditional ties such as religion, the family and the community.

Morality cannot be personal – this exemplifies excessive liberalism – reaction to the permissive society.

The law must have a moral and ethical dimension and must not simply be about upholding the law in favour of property and in defence of privilege.

Conservative opposition to immigration – seen as dilution of natural identity and culture. Conservatives therefore reject multi-culturalism and other forms of tolerance instigated by government which may be regarded as having the potential to provoke tensions within the host community.

Bound up with these ideas is the concept of nationhood and national sovereignty. There is a deep suspicion of forms of internationalism or supranationalism, most recently expressed in the tendency towards Euro-scepticism in the Conservative Party and other right-leaning parties.

AUTHORITY

Conservatives place great emphasis upon authority, which develops naturally, rather than through association a contract as maintained by liberals.

Authority in the conservative view comes from above and is both necessary and beneficial, providing for leadership and discipline, which are the cornerstones of the stable and orderly society.

Authoritarian conservatives view authority as absolute and immutable.

However there are limits to the exercise of authority within mainstream conservative thinking. Such limits arise out of the natural responsibility that comes with authority. Those in authority must exercise it responsibly and with wisdom.

Naturally occurring inequalities are essential for the maintenance of society. Those in leadership positions are there because they are a ‘natural aristocracy’ with capacities for leadership.

Inequality is functional for society because it follows from and serves the differential nature of society, each class performing its own essential functions contributing to the overall health of the system.

The state must ensure that along with rights comes responsibilities, and there is thus a strong paternalistic element in conservatism.

The minimal state envisaged by classical liberals, is rejected to some extent by some conservatives in favour of the strong state upholding public order with deterrence and where necessary punishment.

However the government should not be too strong and should remain limited in the extent to which it interferes in people’s lives. Oakeshott argued that politics was a bout limited government which was not designed to “make people good or even better”.

PROPERTY

Property possesses deep almost mystical significance for conservatives.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Conclusion</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>Arose out of the turmoil of the C17th and C18th. Edmund Burke was deeply hostile to the revolution in France and argued for tradition and continuity.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>The major core themes and values that Conservatives hold dear are tradition, the imperfection of human nature, organic society, traditional authority and the importance of private property</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Authoritarian Conservatism favours strict adherence to the authority of the government and the state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>One nation Conservatism owes its origins to Disraeli. Out of pragmatism it was better for the overall stability of society that the better off recognised an obligation to the less well off.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Paternalistic conservatism is a feature of one nation conservatism. There is a fundamental belief in paternalistic conservatism that conservatives should embrace ‘that which works’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>6</td>
<td>The Middle way - an approach with combines state intervention and ownership, welfare and economic planning with the free market</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Libertarianism is the view that each person has the right to live his life in any way he chooses so long as he respects the equal rights of others. The government has no right of interference in the freedom of choice of the individual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>The New Right - neoliberalism and neoconservatism. A blend of classical free market economics and authoritarian conservatism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9</td>
<td>Modern conservatism tends to ignore Gilmour’s maxim for travelling light. Conservative parties are increasingly ideological and much less pragmatic than their predecessors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Property ownership is a virtue, making individuals more self reliant. Property ownership creates stability in that those who own property are more likely to respect the property rights of others. The ownership of property brings with it respect for law and order.

Conservatives in the UK in the 1980s spoke of the promotion of a property owning democracy through privatisation of state assets and the wide scale sale of council homes.

The idea that property should be held in common ownership is an appalling one for conservatives because they believe it would lead to the breakdown of authority, order and stability.

However there is less laissez-faire emphasis on property rights. Conservatives believe that those who enjoy property must exercise the privileges it brings responsibly.

The rights of the property owning individual must be balanced against the needs of the society as a whole.

Inheritance of property safeguards tradition and authority.

Owners are the custodians for future generations.

The outbreak of the French Revolution in 1789 gave Burke his greatest target. He expressed his hostility in ‘Reflections on the Revolution in France’ (1790). The book provoked a huge response, including Thomas Paine's 'The Rights of Man'. Burke emphasised the dangers of mob rule, fearing that the Revolution’s fervour was destroying French society. He appealed to the British virtues of continuity, tradition, rank and property and opposed the Revolution to the end of his life.

EDMUND BURKE 1729-1797
“In government I cannot waste time having internal argument and debate”

Thatcherism was a distinctive blend of classical neo-liberal economics and neo-conservatism. One of the key features was the emphasis on authority.

A distinction should be made between authority based conservatism and authoritarian conservatism.

Authority based conservatism emphasises the natural and beneficial role authority plays in maintaining social cohesion whereas authoritarian conservatism displays absolutist tendencies.

Authoritarian conservatism can be traced back to Plato’s concept of the philosopher kings ‘The Guardians’ in whom absolute authority was invested.

De Maistre was a fierce critic of the French Revolution and wanted a return to the ancien regime of the Bourbons.

Society could only be bound together through the ‘throne and the alter’. De Maistre believed in the Divine Right of Kings.

Revolution or even reform would weaken these bonds, leading to a fragmentation of order and a concomitant reduction in stability.

Even despotic rulers should always be obeyed because even the merest of challenges to authority was dangerous.

Authoritarianism was entrenched throughout Europe, most notably under Tsar Nicholas I (1825-1855) who proclaimed the principles of

**Authoritarianism**
- a style of government favouring or enforcing strict obedience to authority, esp. that of the government, at the expense of personal freedom
- showing a lack of concern for the wishes or opinions of others; dictatorial

Gamble’s 6 Components of Thatcherism

1. Economic Liberalism
2. Monetarism
3. Anti-Corporatism
4. Individualism
5. Authoritarianism
6. Populism
Orthodoxy, autocracy and nationhood

‘orthodoxy, autocracy and nationality’

These were much more tried and tested means of ensuring stability than abstract principles of equality or liberty which in many ways were seen as unnatural.

Authoritarian conservatism persisted in opposition to liberalism, nationalism and socialism for much of the 19th C.

It even played a critical role in facilitating the demise of The Weimar Republic in Germany, where Conservatives ensured Hitler’s transition to power in an attempt to curb the rise of Bolshevism.

Conservative authoritarian regimes have made much use of the ‘will of the people’ as a guise to introduce autocratic role. Napoleon III in France established himself as Emperor claiming the will of the people gave him legitimacy to do so.

Authoritarian – populism sometimes fuses with nationalism, modernisation and religion for example in Iran under the Ayatollah Khomeini

One Nation Conservatism

Begins with Disraeli and his belief in the principle of social obligation and stands in stark contrast to the extreme individualism of liberal thinking. Disraeli wrote two novels expressing concern at the growing poverty of the industrial working class effectively coining the term one nation conservatism by default having written of the danger of the emergence of two nations – the rich and the poor.

Essentially this was a pragmatic philosophy, based on a fear that the poor would not simply accept immiseration and could revolt. Ultimately then care for the condition of the poor was in the longer term interests of the wealthy. Wealth and privilege brings with it obligations particularly to the poor – the price of privilege

Second Reform Act 1867

This philosophy has had a profound influence upon conservative thinking for over 150 years and is sometimes also called welfare Toryism

Pragmatism of the philosophy can also be seen by Bismark in Germany who initiated social reforms and welfarism to wean the working classes away from revolutionary ideas. Ideas of one nation Toryism were also accepted by Joseph Chamberlain and Randolph Churchill.
The Middle Way

Term 1st coined by Harold Macmillan in 1938 – the title of a book in which he advocated a form of planned capitalism

’a mixed system which combines state ownership, regulation or control of certain aspects of economic activity

As MP for the impoverished Stockton in the north east of England Macmillan had been profoundly influenced by the levels of unemployment and the misery for families that it had brought

The post war settlement/consensus, established by the Attlee governments of 45-51 enjoyed a broad measure of cross party support, though this is not to claim that there were no differences between Conservative and Labour thinking on the welfare state, nationalisation and the national health service.

During the 1950s paternalism and intervention became dominant values within the conservative party

Conservatives became increasingly familiar and comfortable with the extension of the state into economic and social life

Emergence of Butskellism or the Butskellite consensus, architects of which were the modern liberals Keynes and Beveridge

Interventionist policies were also adopted by Christian Democratic parties in western Europe after the war, championing for example the social market model which has been dominant throughout western Europe for most of post war period
Libertarianism

Conservatism has been informed by ideas of classical liberalism, specifically in the field of economic management and in the embrace of the individual and his liberty.

Such ideas are not new in Conservatism — such a strand of deeply liberal thinking can be traced all the way back to Burke. This libertarian conservatism has been most strongly felt in both the USA and in the UK.

Burke himself expressed a strong preference for free trade which was both natural and necessary and support for industrial capitalism, which though harsh for many, was the natural order of things and preferable to any alternative.

Disraeli paternalism and later the one nation governments of MacMillan pushed laissez faire ideas to the margins of conservative thinking. However they have periodically reasserted themselves emphasising self reliance and opposing the growth of state activity.

In the early part of the 20th century there was a backlash against Asquith’s liberal social welfare policies and again in the 1970s there was a backlash against the post war consensus, Keynesian orthodoxy and specifically the Welfare State.

In opposition Mrs Thatcher’s Conservatives, ably supported by a right wing press, launched and ideological attack on the principles of welfareism. In the early 1980s Rhodes Boyson famously commented that ‘...welfare saps the moral fibre of the nation...’

In office Mrs Thatcher’s conservatives launched an fiscal attack on the welfare state in the name of monetarism, individualism and self reliance.

Libertarian conservatism differs from liberalism in respect of their view on liberty and human nature. Social and moral responsibility should be left to the individual is a hallmark of liberalism which libertarian conservatives have some difficulty with.

This difficulty arises because Conservatives for the most part believe in a strong state and do not have sufficient faith in human nature to believe that individuals left to their own devices will always make pro-social choices.

Thus the attachment to economic liberalism in libertarian conservatism does not translate to liberal thinking of social and moral responsibility.

Instead the strong state and the disciplines of the free market act as a regulator of individual conduct to the extent that it ensures the overall stability of the system.

Thus the market acts as an invisible source of coercion, along side more visible sources such as the police or the courts.

Liberals favour government action to promote equality, whereas conservatives favour government action to promote order.

Libertarians favour freedom and oppose government action to promote either equality or order.
From 1945 onwards paternalism was the dominant strand in conservative thinking. Authoritarian Conservatism of the type seen under Franco in Spain collapsed in the mid 1970s as democracy took hold.

Conservatism had a long standing apprehension with welfarist forms of social democracy and the ‘long boom’ of the post war years seemed to confirm the ascendancy of ‘managed capitalism’.

However, new right ideas began to gain currency in the latter half of the 1960s and influenced Heath’s first two years in office between 1970 and 1972.

Central to this challenge was the rejection of the very notion of the ‘managed’ or ‘planned’ economy. State intervention was after all inversely related to economic success and freedom. Inefficiency was the norm in the most planned economies in the world (those in the Soviet bloc) which ultimately distorts the market.

The Liberal aspects of new right thinking are drawn from classical rather than modern liberalism. Restates the case for a minimal but strong state. State intervention was after all inversely related to economic success and freedom. Inefficiency was the norm in the most planned economies in the world (those in the Soviet bloc) which ultimately distorts the market.

The economic policies of both Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s were heavily influenced by such ideas. Both administrations allowed unemployment (the chief ill in a Keynesian world view) to rise sharply. Both administrations instituted tax cuts and cuts in social spending. Policies of privatisation were pursued not only in the UK but also in France. Nationalised industries are inefficient because they are not subject to the disciplines of the market. The activities of firms were also de-regulated.

Emphasis on neo-liberalism on negative rather than positive freedoms. i.e. the absence of constraint. Further welfarism is an attack on individual property rights. (Nozick, 1974). Welfare is a a major cause of social breakdown. It creates one – parent families and is of itself a cause of poverty. It reduces self reliance and initiative and creates a culture of dependency. It limits the freedom of those on welfare and those who contribute to welfare through their taxes.

Finally, welfare in fact exacerbates poverty as it robs people of their aspirations. Thus there is an economic and a moral case for reducing the activities of the state.

Conservatism has been the most electorally popular political philosophy of the 20th Century. In the 52 years since 1945 the conservatives have been in office 36 years in the UK.

It has shown it has great capacity to adapt and evolve and to challenge and defeat its principal ideological nemesis socialism.

Paradoxically as conservatism was principally defined by its antipathy to socialism how may it be defined in a post-socialist age?

If ‘rolling back the frontiers of the state’ results, as many have predicted a greater widening of inequality and there is no corrective role for the state in this regard might social exclusion result in the weakening of support for traditional forms of authority and free market economics itself.

Additionally with the ascendancy of the new right Conservatism as a creed has become increasingly ideological and in the words of Ian Gilmour, no longer ‘travels light’. This threatens its core ability to adapt to changing circumstances which as Edmund Burke pointed out with regards to states could imply that an inability to change translates into an inability to conserve.
Neo-conservatism

Freedom is seen in essentially economic terms – neo conservatism remains socially conservative and there is an emphasis on economic freedom accompanied by strict individual responsibility and social order.

Neo conservatives call for economic freedom along side the restoration of authority in social life. Gamble, 1988 calls this an attachment to the free economy and a strong state.

Neo-conservatism is in essence a reaction against the social liberalism of the permissive society. It does not allow for example for the possibility of a moral equivalence between heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

The strict moral standards of society should be championed and are often evoked in terms of ‘back to basics’ (John Major) or a return to ‘Victorian values’ (Margaret Thatcher) whilst in the United States organisations such as the Moral Majority stress family values – opposition to sex before marriage, abortion, homosexuality and the like.

Neo conservatives detect two principal dangers in permissive values. These are that freedom of choice in the moral realm may lead to immoral choices. Secondly moral pluralism and diversity threatens the cohesion of society – civilised standards would be impossible to maintain in a society of individuals were simply free to choose as they please.

Neo-conservatism is in essence a reaction against the social liberalism of the permissive society. It does not allow for example for the possibility of a moral equivalence between heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

The permissive society is a breeding ground for family breakdown, anti-social behaviour, crime, educational failure and a litany of other social problems. To counter this deterrence through tough punishment is required. In the United States this has led to the restoration of the death penalty and in the United Kingdom the largest ever prison population.

The period since the 1960s has seen a weakening of traditional respect for authority, principally as a result of permissiveness encouraging challenges to traditional forms of authority. The permissive society is a breeding ground for family breakdown, anti-social behaviour, crime, educational failure and a litany of other social problems.

To counter this deterrence through tough punishment is required. In the United States this has led to the restoration of the death penalty and in the United Kingdom the largest ever prison population.

The Marxist commentator Stuart Hall has called Mrs Thatcher’s brand of policies ‘authoritarian populism’ responding to a general sense of malaise in society over the collapse in standards. Thus the state needs to be strong in the moral sphere, providing guidance and deterrence in equal measure.

Another feature is resurgent nationalism or what Giddens has referred to as a civic religion acting as some form of social glue or cement binding society together. A decline in religious belief at least in the UK necessitates filling the void with some new religion. Patriotism and nationalism perform this function perfectly. Even politicians of the left such as Gordon Brown recognise the value of such appeals. He used the terms British, Britain, or Britishness no less than 73 times in his inaugural speech as Labour leader and Prime Minister.

Such appeals are also at the heart of the Euro-scepticism that influences the parties thinking and policies on the European Union.

Oliver Letwin (1992) has argued that neoliberalism and neo conservatism are compatible. Thatcherism consisted of the vigorous virtues which imply in economic terms rolling back the frontiers of the state but in moral or social terms greater intervention through more policer, tougher sentencing and the like.

Truly unfettered capitalism however, it may be argued place strains on society, through the inequities that arise. Further globalisation of markets dilutes national sovereignty.