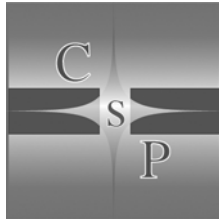


American Conservatism:
History, Theory, and Practice

American Conservatism:
History, Theory, and Practice

By

Brian Farmer



CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PRESS

American Conservatism: History, Theory, and Practice, by Brian Farmer

This book first published 2005 by

Cambridge Scholars Press

15 Angerton Gardens, Newcastle, NE5 2JA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Copyright © 2005 Brian Farmer

All rights for this book reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, without the prior permission of the copyright owner.

ISBN 1-904303-54-4

Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction	1
Chapter 2: American Political Theory, Values, and Beliefs	13
Chapter 3: Classic Liberalism	35
Chapter 4: Traditional Conservatism	47
Chapter 5: Libertarianism	71
Chapter 6: Conservative Extremism	83
Chapter 7: Colonial Conservatism	95
Chapter 8: Conservatism from the Revolution to the Civil War	133
Chapter 9: Conservatism in the Laissez-Faire Era	173
Chapter 10: Conservatism in the New Deal Era	225
Chapter 11: Conservatism in the Age of McCarthy	251
Chapter 12: Conservatism from Goldwater to Nixon	277
Chapter 13 Conservatism and the Reagan Revolution	307
Chapter 14: Conservatism from Bush to Bush	345
Chapter 15: Conservatism and George W. Bush	387
Bibliography	443

Chapter One

Introduction

The Continued Preeminence of Ideology

At mid-Twentieth Century, noted scholars Henry Aiken (1956), Daniel Bell (1960), and Morton White (1956) were arguing that ideology was no longer as important as it once was. What these scholars and others essentially argued was that rational analysis was taking the place of ideology in politics and that there had been an exhaustion of political ideas in advanced industrial democracies that had culminated in acceptance of welfare-State capitalism. There would still be political conflict for sure, but the basic idea that government intervention into the free market was necessary for steady and more even economic growth and that social action was a proper realm for government at least to some degree, had been accepted by all mainstream political parties. For example, in 1936, Democrat Franklin Roosevelt campaigned on continuation of the New Deal while his opponent, Republican Alfred Landon, essentially campaigned on continuation of the New Deal as well, with the exception that he professed that he could do it more efficiently and without deficits (Roark et al., 2005, 899). For the purposes here, whether the New Deal could be administered more efficiently and without deficits is beside the point. The fact is that both parties were essentially accepting the New Deal programs as within the proper scope of government responsibility, and major ideological divisions over the proper role of government had been minimized.

These ideological differences, however, were perhaps never quite as “minimized” as Aiken, Bell, and White inferred; rather, the public had so greatly accepted the New Deal during the Great Depression that all the Conservatives could do politically was go along with ideas that were fundamental violations of their ideology. The ideological underpinnings of conservatism would continue unreformed among a core minority in the Depression and World War II years only to be released with a vengeance later. Indeed, given the McCarthyism and anti-communist paranoia that gripped the Nation in the early post-war years, it is evident that Aiken, Bell, and White were somehow overlooking the right-wing anti-communist hysteria of the 1950s that immediately preceded their writings. At any rate, it

is difficult to consider the Cold War and McCarthyism and conclude that the Nation was experiencing “an end of ideology” in any real sense of the word. Instead, conservatives had acquiesced to the New Deal only due to its popular support, and liberals had jumped on to the anticommunist Cold War bandwagon for similar reasons, thus providing the outward appearance of ideological congruence, when in reality the old conservative/liberal divide was still raging underneath.

In contrast to the superficially closer ideological congruence of the two major Parties at mid-Twentieth Century, the appearance of ideological congruence of the two major Parties in the early Twenty-First Century appears to have greatly eroded. Furthermore, the policies of the Republican Party and conservatives in general in the United States since WWII (as will be demonstrated in the pages that follow) have been driven more by ideologies than by pragmatism and sound analysis, thus destroying the apparent ideological congruence that had developed from the Great Depression until the Vietnam War era. Furthermore, the ideologies that have driven America’s more recent “conservative revolution,” whether it be the “Reagan Revolution,” Newt Gingrich’s “Contract with America,” or the present “Compassionate Conservatism” of the George W. Bush administration, are ideologies that have been pursued repeatedly throughout American history. Thus, the “new conservatism” lacks little in real qualitative ideological difference from the conservatism of old. In other words, the ideology that recent conservatives have poured forth is merely old wine in new bottles.

For example, the doctrine of *laissez-faire*, preached so frequently in conservative circles, was the dominant conservative view in the era following the Civil War almost a century and a half ago. Liberals argue that the *laissez-faire* approach proved only to lead only to worker exploitation, income inequality, monopoly capitalism, unsafe products, and environmental degradation during the Gilded Age of late Nineteenth Century America. Liberals argue that *laissez-faire* capitalism is the world of company stores and company scrip, the world of Upton Sinclair, the world of Charles Dickens, and the world of great suffering for the masses. Consequently, conservative efforts to eliminate the role of government in the free marketplace are essentially efforts to return America to the Nineteenth Century when 1/3 of the meat packed in Chicago was unfit to eat, when the standard water supply for American factory workers was an open barrel, and when 50% of children died before the age of five (Farmer, 2003, 67). Hence, liberals argue that a return to *laissez-faire* is not a return to policy by sound analysis as the scholars of the 1950s argued, but instead is a return to a very old and historically discredited ideology.

Similarly, liberals argue that the church-state blend espoused by the Christian Coalition wing of American conservatism has proven itself to be flawed repeatedly throughout human history, whether one is discussing the Taliban in Afghanistan, the Catholic Inquisition of Medieval Europe, or the current views of the Southern Baptist Convention. Liberals argue that to blend Church with State is to return to the time before the American Revolution when colonists in Virginia were whipped for church transgressions and Puritans in Massachusetts were executed for witchcraft. It is a return to the days when scientists were threatened with death if their discoveries conflicted with the teachings of the leaders of religion, and citizens were condemned to death for “heresy,” or simply for thinking differently. Essentially, a return to a church-state blend is a return to the Eighteenth Century system that the authors of the Constitution abandoned. Liberals contend that those who espouse and preach these ideologies are essentially ignoring these lessons of history as well as empirical data and theoretical flaws in the ideologies themselves, thus the United States drifts toward ideologically-driven catastrophe. An investigation into the history of this ideological movement, known broadly as conservatism, that contemporary liberals in America so deplore is the subject matter of this book, but it will be left to the reader to determine whether the liberals’ criticisms are based on sound analysis of history, or on flawed ideological foundations of their own.

Ideology as a Political Guide

In most American government textbooks there is not a chapter dedicated exclusively to ideology. This omission is somewhat befuddling since Americans obviously are guided politically more by ideology than by facts and knowledge because in order to be guided by facts and knowledge, it is a prerequisite that one must first actually “know something.” One need go no further than “Jaywalking” on *The Tonight Show with Jay Leno* to come to the conclusion that most Americans are generally ignorant on political issues and know very little in terms of actual historical and political facts. Night after night, Leno asks some of the most basic questions such as: Who wrote the “Declaration of Independence?” or Who wrote the “Gettysburg Address?,” only to get responses such as “Britney Spears” or “Puff Daddy.” While it is true that Leno’s comedy is unscientific; empirical studies of public political and historical knowledge tend to support the same conclusion one might reach from watching Leno’s antics. In other words, when it comes to politics, Americans in general are seriously deficient even in some of the most basic aspects of political knowledge. For example, in a national assessment test in the late 1980s, only a third of American 17-year-olds could correctly locate

the Civil War in the period 1850-1900; more than a quarter placed it in the 18th Century. Furthermore, 14% credited Abraham Lincoln with writing the Bill of Rights and 10% credited Lincoln with the Missouri Compromise (which would have been quite an accomplishment for someone who was 11 years old at the time). Finally, 9% named Lincoln to be the author of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. While this knowledge of history is abysmal, performance on questions concerning current affairs yield equally poor results. In a 1996 public opinion poll, only 10% of Americans could identify William Rehnquist as the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court. During the 1980s, the majority of Americans could not correctly answer whether the Reagan Administration supported the Sandinistas or the Contras in Nicaragua and only a third could place Nicaragua in Central America (Schudson, 2000, 16).

This does not mean, however, that the American public necessarily knows less than their leaders. In 1956, President Eisenhower's nominee as Ambassador to Ceylon was unable to identify either the country's prime minister or capitol during his confirmation hearing. In 1981, President Reagan's nominee for Deputy Secretary of State, William Clark, admitted in his confirmation hearings that he had no idea how America's allies in Western Europe felt about having American nuclear missiles based there (Moore, 2002, 88). For his part, George W. Bush once referred to the Kosovars as "Kosovians," argued that the United States should "keep good relations with the Grecians" and confused a Slovenian foreign minister with the country of Slovakia (Miller, 2002, 198). Perhaps most revealing, however, was Bush's statement in *Glamour* magazine during the 2000 Presidential campaign where he confused the Taliban in Afghanistan, a regime against which he would later launch a war, with "some band" (Quoted in Miller, 2002, 199).

This is not to say, however, that American schools have gotten worse, or that Americans and their leaders are more ignorant than they have been in the past. In 1945, for example, 43% of Americans polled could name neither of their U.S. Senators. In 1952, only 67% could name the Vice President, and in 1945, only 92% knew that the President's term in the United States is set at four years (Schudson, 2000, 16). With this type of ignorance, it is perhaps surprising that Democracy in America has worked as well as it has. If there are so many Americans that are evidently ignorant of even the most basic historical and political knowledge (as the surveys suggest), then they must be making their political decisions based on something other than knowledge. The "something" that tends to serve as a guide in the absence of facts and knowledge is ideology.

Ideology

Ideologies are belief systems through which people view and interpret reality. In the words of Milton Rokeach (1972, 5), “Ideology refers to more or less institutionalized set of beliefs—the views someone picks up.” Ideologies are not reality, but instead produce simplified versions of reality for those that view the world through ideological frameworks. Ideology interprets and explains what is wrong with society in simplistic terms and provides simplistic prescriptions purported to solve all societal ills. In general, people are very good at identifying someone else’s ideology and noting the flaws in their precepts, but people may not even recognize that they themselves are normally just as ideological as others.

In the United States at present, there are scores of differing ideologies, some mainstream, and some on the political “fringe.” The fringe ideologies, such as Nazism, are easily recognizable as ideologies by the masses and generally scorned for their “heretical errors” and deviations from social mores and accepted norms. Consider, for example, the Lilleth character (the wife of Frazier) on the TV situation comedy *Cheers*. The Lilleth character is a satirical portrayal of radical feminist liberation ideology, an ideology that does exist as a political “fringe” ideology in the U.S. The character is humorous to many because the majority of viewers can readily discern the flaws and fallacies of an ideology that is not their own. Similarly, another fringe ideology that the majority of Americans readily recognize as an ideology is the radical black liberation ideology. Pop culture has parodied this ideology in innumerable ways, from Damon Wayans’ “Homey the Clown” character on *In Living Color*, to Chris Rock’s “Nat X” character on *Saturday Night Live*, the comedians have viciously lampooned an ideology that essentially holds (in the words of Rock), that “the white man did it to me.” The routines are humorous to many because the majority of Americans recognize the ideological flaws and they may have recognized approximations of those flaws in the ideologies of a real person with whom they are acquainted.

All ideology, however, is not so benign. If we consider, for example, the racist Nazi ideology of Germany in the 1930s, we will find that the ideology simplistically teaches that, “all of the world’s problems” are created by “subversive Jews” and other minorities. The simplistic solution of the Nazis in Germany during WWII therefore included the genocide of Jews and others that the Nazis considered societal “problems,” with the disastrous result that ten million people died in the Nazi death camps. Nazism, of course, is only a fringe ideology in the United States and therefore does not appear to be a dangerous force in American politics at the moment. It should be remembered, however, that Nazism was only a fringe ideology in Germany

as late as 1928. The fact that the Nazis came from political “nowhere” to assume power in Germany a mere five years later, and then overran virtually all of Europe within a dozen years, is a testimony to the mobilizing power of ideology. If American politics has become more ideological in recent years rather than more practical, then it has also become more dangerous.

Conservative Political Ideology

Samuel Huntington (1957) argues that conservatism is best understood not as an inherent theory, but as a positional ideology. According to Huntington, “When the foundations of society are threatened, the conservative ideology reminds men of the necessity of some institutions and the desirability of the existing ones” (Huntington, 1957, 455). Huntington contends that ideological conservatism arises from an anxiety that develops when people perceive valuable institutions to be endangered by contemporary developments or proposed reforms, and the awareness that perceived useful institutions are under attack then leads conservatives to attempt to provide a defense of those institutions.

Huntington (1957, 456) also explains that conservatism is an extremely situational ideology due to the different societal institutions in different societies at different times that people may desire to conserve. In the words of Huntington, “because the articulation of conservatism is a response to a specific social situation...The manifestation of conservatism at any one time and place has little connection with its manifestation at any other time and place.” In other words, conservatism is an extremely situational ideology and conservatives at one time or another have sought to conserve just about every institution ever invented, from monarchies, to aristocracies, to slavery, to tariffs, to free trade, to capitalism, to religion, to the defense of communism in the late 1980s in the Soviet Union.

Conservatism, however, is forced to be selective concerning what traditions and legacies must be retained and which ones may be discarded. In what Edmund Burke referred to as the “choice of inheritance,” one may expect disagreement even among conservatives as to which societal institutions are absolutely essential and must be preserved, which ones may be altered and how, and which ones should be abolished completely (Muller, 1997, 31).

In one diverse form or another then, conservative political thought has existed throughout recorded human history as different individuals and groups in different societies have at times desired to conserve selected societal institutions. For example, the Pharisees, Chief Priests, and Teachers of the Law mentioned so disparagingly in the Gospels of the New Testament were by Huntington’s definition conservatives bent on retaining long-

standing societal institutions against the new teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Similarly, some of the enemies of Mohammed in the 7th Century that preferred to retain existing traditions instead of the new teachings of Mohammed were certainly also conservatives.

The term “conservative” itself, however, dates to 1818 as the title of a French weekly journal, *Le Conservateur*, that was purposed to “uphold religion, the King, liberty, the Charter and respectable people” (Muller, 1997, 26). If President George W. Bush is inserted for the word “King,” and “Constitution” is inserted for the word “Charter,” then one may see that the fundamental elements of conservatism in France in 1818 are still present in the U.S. in the 21st Century. Other aspects of conservative thought that have remained constant throughout the centuries are presented below.

Transcendent Moral Order

In spite of the diversity of institutions that conservatives throughout the centuries have sought to defend, a set of assumptions and themes behind conservatism have endured. Among those is the assumption that there exists a transcendent moral order to which humans should attempt to conform society (Kirk, 1982, 17). Conservatism therefore tends to be skeptical of new and abstract theories that attempt to mold society to a new morality because the existing order arose and exists as it does due to its consistency with the transcendent and true morality. Consequently, any theory of a “new” morality represents “immorality” or it would have already emerged through the human experiences of the ages. In the United States of the Twenty-First Century, conservatism has therefore opposed the “abstract theories” of communism and socialism as well as feminism, civil rights, gay rights, “new age religions” and “liberal” welfare programs.

Negative View of Human Nature

Conservative ideologies typically emphasize human imperfections and depravity, especially those of common individuals. Typically, humans are viewed as naturally bad, selfish, uncooperative, untrustworthy, and incapable of honorable behavior unless coerced. Christian religious conservatives in particular tie the negative view of human nature to the doctrine of original sin in the Bible, and argue that human nature has been flawed ever since sin first came into the world in the Garden of Eden. In this perspective, it is impossible for humans to be good without divine assistance (Muller, 1997, 31). It is because of this belief in a flawed human nature that conservatives also view human attempts to create a “just society” through reason, as Plato prescribed in *The Republic*, as unrealizable. Thus, movements such as

“secular humanism” are viewed by conservatives as doomed to failure if not immoral as well.

Consistent with their theme of humans as flawed beings, conservatives typically argue that there are limits to human knowledge and this fact should act as a limit on attempts at societal innovation. Consequently, conservatives argue that governments of humans lack the wisdom and knowledge necessary to intervene in the free market in order to remedy poverty or inequalities without producing unintended negative consequences (Quinton, 1978, 17). Similarly, “ideal utopias” prescribed by subsequent philosophers (such as Karl Marx, for instance) are impossible. In the words of conservative political theorist Glen Tinder (1989, 23), “To pursue the ideal of perfect justice is to ignore our fallenness.”

Instead, conservatives argue that change, if it is merited, should take place gradually, come from experience, and occur within the bounds of existing customs and institutions. Societal change most certainly should not be derived from abstract theories contained in a prescriptive rule book. As such, conservatives distrust intellectuals, whether sociologists, political scientists, historians, psychologists, or economists, who would reform society based on intellectual arguments (Kirk, 1982, 13-20).

Focus on Order

Conservatives are skeptical of a society without constraints on the “fallen humans” and argue that institutional measures must be taken to ensure order. Conservatives can therefore be expected to clash with liberals over the expansion of rights and the utility of existing institutions (such as Church) that Conservatives view as necessary to control human passions and disorder. In the words of Edmund Burke in *Reflections on the Revolution in France*, “the restraints on men, as well as their liberties, are to be reckoned among their rights.” Burke therefore argued for retention of customary moral rules even if those rules had not been subject to rational justification. After all, flawed human reasoning would be unlikely to rationally determine definitively whether customary mores were rationally justified or not. Even if such things could be known, conservatives’ low regard for ordinary humans leads them to believe that most people would lack the time, energy, and intellect to reevaluate societal mores anyway. Therefore, conservatives argue that humans have a duty to abide by existing societal rules in most cases (Muller, 1997, 11). Edmund Burke argues that because the dissolution of the social order would also destroy the societal institutions by which human passions are restrained, the individual has no right to opt out of obligation to the State and community (Muller, 1997, 11).

In spite of the low view of common humans and the negative perception of human nature in general, in an apparent contradiction with their view of human nature, conservatives typically argue that there are elites (cultural, political, and economic) who know better than others and should make the decisions for society (Muller, 1997, 18). John Adams, for example, spoke of the existence of a “natural aristocracy” that anyone could join by virtue of merit or ability (Dunn and Woodard, 1991, 62).

Emphasis on History and Existing Institutions

Conservatives place a major emphasis upon history and the history of human institutions. For conservatives, the survival of a human institution throughout history, whether one speaks of religion, marriage, aristocracy, or the free market, proves that the institution itself must serve a human need (Kristol, 1983, 161). The need that is met by the institution, however, may not necessarily be the need for which the institution was created. For example, the practice of the burial of deceased human bodies may have arisen for purposes of sanitation; however, the institution of the funeral and burial serves the purpose of aiding the psychological well-being of the living. The fact that humans at any given time may not recognize the utility of existing institutions is a reflection of the human limitations of the institutions critics rather than the institutions themselves. The ongoing existence of the institutions themselves is sufficient to indicate their superiority in meeting human needs. Conservatives typically point to the family as the most important societal institution, but a major emphasis is also placed on religion. Conservatives typically defend religion under these pretenses and ignore the fact that religion from time to time throughout human history has been the cause of much discord and oppression. For conservatives, it is less important whether religion is true or false, and more important that it offers humans hope and thus helps to diffuse discontent that could disrupt the societal order (Muller, 1997, 13).

Skepticism of Altruistic Efforts

Conservatives typically oppose liberal moral “do-gooders” and scoff at the efforts of those who attempt to improve the lives of those less fortunate. In general, conservatives argue that such efforts only encourage laziness and dependency among the recipients. Furthermore, conservatives argue that such efforts have unintended and unforeseen negative consequences. For instance, a government welfare program that increases aid based on the number of children in a family may be designed to eliminate malnutrition, but would be expected by conservatives to lead to the birth of more welfare-

recipient children as people take advantage of the larger government stipend. Conservatives typically view income inequalities as legitimate and natural and therefore attempts at redistribution to the poor are not only “casting one’s pearls before swine,” but also a violation of the natural order (Muller, 1997, 18). This attitude is reflected in the Majority Opinion of Justice Brown in *Plessy v. Ferguson* in 1896 when Brown stated that “If one race be inferior to the other socially, the Constitution of the United States cannot put them upon the same plane.”

Role of the State

The role of the State in conservative thought is for security and the protection of property and the free market. Conservatives therefore emphasize a strong military and favor other coercive measures, such as police, to ensure order, the security of property, and the efficient operation of the free market. The State is also expected to protect and support the important societal institutions of Church and family.

Diversity of Conservative Ideology

As previously discussed, conservatism in general is an extremely diverse area of political thought, and American conservatism is no exception to this rule. While some facets of conservatism (as well as some individual conservatives themselves) are more ideological than others, it is certainly a fact that most American conservatives are driven by ideology rather than analysis, whether it be one coherent ideology or a combination of several. In the words of Winston Churchill concerning conservatism, “It is stirred on almost all occasions by sentiment and instinct rather than by worldly calculations” (Quoted in Manchester, 1983, 3). Similarly, Clinton Rossiter argues that the American conservative “feels more deeply than he thinks about political principles, and what he feels most deeply about them is that they are a gift of great old men” (Rossiter, 1982, 74). Consequently, if conservatism is primarily driven by ideology, then it is important to understand those underlying ideologies within the diverse body politic that make up American conservatism.

There are three dominant ideologies in the United States: Classic Liberalism, Traditional Conservatism, and Reform Liberalism (Contemporary Liberalism). These three ideologies form the core of the two major political parties and the ideologies are generally reflected in the major parties’ platforms and prescriptions. Classic Liberals and Traditional Conservatives tend to be Conservative Republicans, while Reform Liberalism is the dominant ideology in the Democratic Party. Conservatism

is also home to a pair of important fringe ideologies, Libertarianism and Conservative Extremism, that have become worthy of discussion as well in the post-Oklahoma City Bombing era. These ideologies and their contradictions will be discussed in greater detail in the following chapters.

Chapter Two

American Political Theory, Values, and Beliefs

American Values and Beliefs

The United States is a very pluralistic society with many diverse groups and beliefs. As such, there is perhaps no political issue where Americans display unanimity and there is no coherent set of beliefs that one could indisputably call “American political theory;” however, there are a number of areas where Americans exhibit general trends in opinion surveys and some of those trends are rooted in a long history of relatively consistent American political behavior. Among those consistencies during the period following World War II has been a penchant for conservatism in comparison to the world’s other developed democracies. In general, this American penchant for conservatism is often referenced in Europe as “American Exceptionalism.”

Roots of American Exceptionalism

The roots of this “American exceptionalism” can be found not only in the conservatism of the seventeenth century Puritans of Massachusetts Bay, but in the traditional conservative principles of Edmund Burke, the eighteenth century British conservative who recoiled at the disorder of the French Revolution and called for the continuation of the traditions and institutions of the past. Burke’s English conservatism, which migrated across the waters with the immigrants to the New World, was founded on six basic principles, including a deep suspicion of the power of the state, a preference for individual liberties over equality, a strong sense of patriotism, a belief in established institutions, traditions, and hierarchies, skepticism concerning the ideas of progress, and a preference for rule by elites. Americans in general tend to view all six of Burke’s principles more favorable than their European counterparts, thus resulting in Americans being more conservative than their European counterparts and therefore accounting for their “exceptionalism” (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, 13-14).

Fear of State Power and Tolerance for Inequality

Examples of American “exceptionalism” that conform to Burke’s six tenets of conservatism are abundant. For starters, Americans are far more fearful of a strong central government and socialism than Europeans, with lower taxes and lower central government expenditures (in spite of greater military spending) than their European counterparts, reflecting the Burkeian conservative preference for individual liberties. The American Constitution also contains a Bill of Rights, designed to protect individual liberties, that is absent from some European constitutions, including the “uncodified” constitution of the United Kingdom. The purpose of many of the rights granted in the Bill of Rights, such as the Third Amendment ban on the quartering of soldiers in the home and the Fourth Amendment protections against “unreasonable” search and seizure, is to limit the arbitrary use of government power. This fear of central government power in the United States exhibited by the authors of the Bill of Rights reflected an American tradition that has continued through the present in a manner that is truly exceptional by world standards. For instance, although his statement was most likely hyperbole, “Mr. Conservative,” Barry Goldwater, once spoke for millions of Americans when he stated, “I fear Washington and centralized government more than I do Moscow” (Quoted in Weisberg, 1996, 42). The European revulsion at the reelection of George W. Bush suggests that Goldwater’s perspective, which resonated with American conservatives, is inconsistent with the political views of most Europeans. Meanwhile, in the United States, even Democratic Party politicians in the U.S., such as Bill Clinton, who once proclaimed that “the era of big government is over” (Quoted in Harris, 2005, 221), must run against state power in order to get elected.

Reflecting their fear of state power, love for the free market, and disdain for collectivism beyond that of their European counterparts, the American government spends less as a percentage of GDP than the rest of the world’s developed democracies and Americans tolerate higher levels of income inequality, thus conforming to Burke’s suspicion of the powers of the state and preference for liberty over economic equality. The result of the American penchant for Burke’s conservatism is that the United States is the only developed democracy that does not have a system of fully socialized health care and it is the only Western developed democracy that does not have government-provided child support to all families. Japan and every European advanced democracy also provide paid maternity leave while the U.S. does not (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, 11-20). Perhaps American President Grover Cleveland best summed up the American attitudes in the 1890s when

he stated that “I do not believe that the power and duty of the General Government ought to be extended to the relief of individual suffering” (Quoted in Roark et al., 2005, 630).

President George W. Bush’s attitudes toward international institutions have tended to reflect a degree of similar skepticism. For example, as President, Bush has opposed American participation in any International Criminal Court, rejected parts of the Biological Weapons Convention, and opposed the Comprehensive nuclear Test-Ban Treaty and the Ottawa Land Mine Convention. Bush also withdrew the United States from the Kyoto Protocol on global warming and the 1972 Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty with the Soviet Union. Finally, when Bush was confronted with resistance in the UN to his plan to oust Saddam Hussein from Iraq militarily in 2003, he made it clear that the United States would do the job unilaterally if necessary (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, 296-298).

Pro-Business and Anti-Union

The United States is exceptional in comparison to Europe in the extent of its decidedly pro-business and anti-union culture. Perhaps President Calvin Coolidge said it best in the 1920s when he declared that “the business of America is business” (Quoted in Nash et al., 1986, 778). Unions in the United States historically have been connected in the minds of the public with “bomb-throwing radicalism” (the Chicago Haymarket riots of 1886), communist infiltration (the series of strikes that accompanied the Red Scare of 1919), and organized crime and violence (the celebrated disappearance of union leader Jimmy Hoffa in 1968) (Nash et al., 1986, 758). As a consequence of the anti-union culture (along with other economic shifts, such as the decline of American manufacturing), union membership in the U.S. was only 12.5% of the workforce in 2004, much lower than in most European countries and days lost to strikes in the U.S. are much lower than the European average (U.S. Department of Labor, 2005).

Individualism

Perhaps as important and salient as any other American trend is the fact that the U.S. is a very individualistic society. Essentially, the role of the individual in American society tends to take precedent over the State. This perspective grew out of the writings of not only of Burke, but of John Locke, from whom the founding fathers’ borrowed heavily in writing both the *Declaration of Independence* and the Bill of Rights. The Lockean individualist perspective grew out of the Age of Enlightenment and the struggle of the American Colonists in the 18th Century to release themselves

from Monarchical rule. Lockean individualism can be seen in countless facets of American society, from lax laws of incorporation, to expansive criminal rights, to the individualistic icons of pop culture (Bellah et al., 1985).

In general, Americans want to be able to conduct their business and their private lives without governmental interference. In this, Americans are not necessarily exceptional; however, it is the degree to which Americans will go to ensure that they are “let alone” that is indeed exceptional. Robert Bellah et al., (1985, 17) summed up the American individualist perspective by stating that Americans believe that “Anything that would violate our right to think for ourselves, judge for ourselves, make our own decisions, live our lives as we see fit, is not only morally wrong, it is sacrilegious.” As a consequence, murderers walk free on the streets in America because policemen violated their due process rights. Similarly, the air in Houston, Texas is the dirtiest in the country because the typically conservative Texas state government is so lax in enforcing environmental laws (viewed as government interference that violates the rights of people to do business) that air pollution in Houston is now worse than in cities much larger, such as Los Angeles (Ivins and Dubose, 2002, 107-110).

Also in Texas, laws requiring individuals to wear motorcycle helmets were repealed because such restrictions are viewed as violations of the right to personal choice. This is in spite of the fact that few would argue that it is safer to ride a motorcycle without a helmet. Instead, it is obvious that the prospect of millions of Texans riding around on motorcycles without helmets has a negative impact on society as a whole. After all, society as a whole will eventually pay indirectly for the medical bills for thousands of motorcycle riders who were injured while riding without helmets. Society will do so through the higher taxes needed to compensate for the increase in bad debts at county hospitals because of the increase in serious head injuries that necessarily follows the repeal of a motorcycle helmet law.

Texas, however, is not alone in its staunch individualism. Individualism is so pervasive in America that many popular heroes, both real and fictional, have strong individualist streaks. Movie and television police dramas, for instance, for decades have been dominated by individualistic police characters that must “do things their own way.” From Clint Eastwood’s “Dirty Harry,” to Peter Falk’s “Columbo,” to the ever-changing cast of “NYPD Blue,” the fictional police hero typically must work outside of standard operating procedures, if not from outside of society as a whole, in order to produce the results necessary for positive reform of society. The celluloid police hero is perpetually in trouble with the well intentioned and intelligent, but “by the book” lieutenant for gross violations of department rules, and it is common for the hero to even be suspended or voluntarily go

into temporary “retirement” so that he can continue to chase villains unrestrained by anti-individualistic rules.

As it is in American fiction, so it also is with American non-fiction heroes. Non-fictional individualists in America often enter politics and become Senators (ex-Vietnam-POW John McCain), Governors (ex-Navy Seal and Professional wrestler Jesse Ventura and actor and body builder Arnold Schwarzenegger), and even Presidents (ex-mercenaries and war heroes Theodore Roosevelt and Andrew Jackson). All of the above fit the mold of “Rambo” or “Dirty Harry” in that they tended to march to the beat of a “different drummer” and retained their individualistic attitudes after they moved into the public arena to attempt societal reform.

The American preference for individual liberties has also come to mean that the U.S. has a much more expansive right to bear arms than most other advanced industrial democracies, many of which outlaw handguns. In contrast, the Second Amendment to the American Constitution proclaims that “a well regulated militia being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms, shall not be infringed.” Handguns are therefore legal in some form or fashion in all fifty American states and the United States has a significant gun lobby that simply does not exist in many other developed democracies (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, 176-178).

At any rate, this elevation of the individual at the expense of the common good is very common in the U.S. and certainly more common in the U.S. than in Eastern societies. In Eastern cultures, such as in Japan and the Middle East, greater emphasis is placed on society as a whole rather than on the rights of individuals. These societies are known in political science terms as “holistic” societies where the common good tends to take precedent over the rights of individuals (Nakane, 1986, 1-22). Examples of holistic behavior include the Japanese Kamikaze pilots in WWII and the suicide bombers of al Qaeda. In both cases, it is certainly not the good of the individual suicide bomber that is elevated, since the bomber dies, but theoretically, the death of the suicide bomber benefits the societal common good. In the case of Japan in WWII, the sacrifices of the Kamikazes were intended to prevent an American invasion and thus preserve the whole of Japanese society. In the case of al Qaeda’s suicide bombers, the purpose is to please Allah and therefore benefit the common good through Allah’s blessings (White, 2001, 47-54). In either case, the suicide bomber is analogous to a honeybee that stings a human that threatens the hive. The bee dies shortly after the sting, but the death of that bee may save the entire hive if the threat is driven away. Americans, in contrast, tend not to have such a honeybee mentality, consequently, the Kamikaze attacks of WWII and the suicide-bombers of al Qaeda are very difficult for individualistic-thinking Americans to

understand, and the actions of such holistic thinkers in WWII, on 9/11/01, and in Iraq, have left Americans bewildered.

Self-Reliance

Another important facet of American individualism is self-reliance. Alexis De Toqueville (1835, 2001) in his classic work, *Democracy in America*, noted that Americans insist on always relying on their own judgment rather than on “received authority” in forming their own opinions and that Americans tend to stand by their own opinions regardless of the positions of authority figures. In other words, Toqueville argued that Americans tend to be “don’t confuse me with the facts, my mind is made up” type of people, or at least they were in 1831. This reliance on self and aversion to “received authority” helps create a situation where common persons can rise to high positions in America; however, it can also create a climate where common Americans distrust their political leaders and refuse to follow those with greater knowledge.

Individualism has another down side as well. Since Americans generally believe that individuals should rely on themselves rather than on society as a whole, among many Americans there is a lack of empathy for societal “losers” and a tendency to view the societal underclass as “those who have failed to take the necessary initiative to take care of themselves.” As a consequence, there is a social stigma associated with government aid to the poor or welfare. For example, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, an estimated 50% of Americans that qualified for government relief programs did not apply for relief in order to avoid the social stigma of being “on the dole” (Freidel, 1964, 15-16).

Individualist Conflict with Traditional Structures

A further problem with American individualism is that individualism often conflicts with traditional societal structures, such as church and family, which also have broad support in American society. For example, some American individualists choose to engage in sex outside of marriage, some abuse alcohol, some engage in homosexual relationships, some join nudist colonies, some smoke marijuana, and some pierce their bodies and get tattoos. Which of these activities are legitimate government interests and which are matters that should be left to individual discretion and choice are matters of debate, and exactly where such lines between government interests and individual choice should be drawn, there is no complete consensus.

Utilitarian View of Government

Another very American political belief related to individualism is the belief that politics and government are justifiable and honorable only to the extent that they improve the human condition. In this perspective, governmental institutions may be disobeyed or abolished if they overstep their bounds and disparage people's rights without a clear and present gain in the public good. These principles can be found in the *Declaration of Independence*, where Thomas Jefferson and the founding fathers claimed that the purpose of government is the preservation of rights and that any government that destroys such rights should be abolished. As such, individual liberties are only limited by clear cases of the public good and the rights of others. For example, the Second Amendment guarantees the right to bear arms; however, in the interest of what al Qaeda has proven is a clear case of the public good, the right has been forfeited at airports. Similarly, students may not exercise their rights to bear arms by pointing those guns at the professor because such activity violates the professor's (an individual's) rights to "life, liberty, and pursuit of happiness." In other words, the right of one person to keep and bear arms is curtailed where the rights of another begin.

Crime and Punishment

The U.S. is exceptional from other developed democracies in that it still implements the death penalty while advanced European democracies and even many developing nations do not. In fact, the only other advanced industrialized democracy to sanction the death penalty is Japan. Furthermore, the death penalty is banned (except in extreme cases such as treason) in 110 countries and the only countries that execute people on the same scale as the United States are China, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the Congo, none of which are generally considered world leaders in the protections of human rights. American "exceptionalism" in crime and punishment, however, is not limited to capital punishment, but extends from the death penalty to other forms of punishment as well. For example, the American incarceration rate is much higher than that in Europe, including five times the incarceration rate of the United Kingdom (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 300-302).

Values Politics

Reflecting Burkeian conservatism's belief in established institutions, traditions, and hierarchies, as well as skepticism concerning the ideas of progress, the U.S. is unique among industrialized democracies in that "values"

politics has supplanted the politics of income distribution and class as the greatest political divide. The U.S. is also decidedly the most religious of advanced industrialized democracies and it is “exceptional” in that religiosity is a better predictor of partisanship than income. There simply is no European parallel with the American Christian right that played such a pivotal role in the election of the Protestant Texan, George W. Bush, to the highest office in the United States (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, 11-12). What Bush’s election and the role of religious conservatives in the 2004 election demonstrate is that American conservatism is decidedly more concerned with Burkeian traditional societal structures, such as church and family, than their European counterparts.

President George W. Bush in particular is known for intermingling his faith with his politics in a way that causes Europeans and secular Americans to shiver, while simultaneously providing comfort to Evangelical Protestant Americans. For example, in 1999 at a debate leading up to Iowa’s Republican presidential caucuses, the Texas Governor and presidential candidate Bush named Jesus Christ as the political philosopher or thinker with whom he most identified, adding, “because he changed my heart” (Quoted in Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, 144). While secular Europeans are bewildered at such a statement and secular American liberals may scoff, conservative Americans generally reacted favorably and supported their “favorite son” for the Presidency over Democrat Al Gore, who was connected in the minds of many of America’s evangelical Christians with the sexual indiscretions of President Clinton. The election was so close nationally that it took 36 days and U.S. Supreme Court intervention for Bush to emerge as the winner, but among Protestant fundamentalists, he won in a landslide.

Patriotism

The U.S. is also “exceptional” in comparison to other advanced industrialized democracies for its patriotism. Europeans tend to be less patriotic than Americans, not because they do not love their homelands, but because patriotism in Europe has been associated with numerous wars, including WWI and WWII in the last century, that ravaged the continent. Compounding the difference between Europe and the U.S. in patriotism is the fact that more recently, it was the United States, not Europe, that suffered a devastating attack from outsiders. As a consequence, patriotism in the U.S. soared to abnormally high levels after the terror attacks of 9/11/01. Polls after the attacks revealed that 90% of Americans were “proud to be Americans” and conservative Republicans were even prouder than liberal Democrats (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, 299-300).

While it is true that the polls after the terror attacks may reflect only a short-term spike in patriotic attitudes among Americans, it is unquestionable that patriotism also runs deep in America over the long term, and it is especially acute among conservatives. For example, hyperpatriotism has developed even in traditional bastions of liberalism in the United States, such as the University of California at Berkeley. At Berkeley in 2003, conservative students established a newspaper entitled the *California Patriot* and celebrated the 34th anniversary of the hippie-associated People's Park riots of the 1960s by descending on the park in a noisy display of patriotism, where they waved flags, chanted "U.S.A." and sang the Star-Spangled Banner and other patriotic songs. These conservative students do not, however, represent an extreme deviation from the norm in the United States. Even under normal circumstances (without the effects of terror attacks) eighty percent of Americans respond in surveys that they are "very proud of their country." In no other developed democracy is the flag displayed more obsessively or the national anthem sung more frequently. Furthermore, sixty percent of Americans believe their culture superior to those in other countries as opposed to 30% in France, and 40% in Germany and the UK (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, 279, 299-300).

Militarism

The United States is also exceptional among developed democracies for its militarism, reflecting Burkeian conservatism's strong sense of patriotism and a conservative distrust of human nature. As a consequence, American military spending is more than all of the other countries of NATO combined and some 45% of the military spending for the entire world. The European Union's total spending on military equipment is approximately half that of the United States, and spending on military research and development in Europe is approximately a fourth that of the United States. As for the "China threat," China's entire military budget has been less than the annual increase in military spending under the conservative President George W. Bush. At the outset, Americans overwhelmingly supported George W. Bush's military invasion of Afghanistan and at the outset, displayed similar support for Bush's invasion of Iraq, while Europeans were generally much more apprehensive and much more favorable toward diplomatic solutions (Micklethwait and Wooldridge, 2004, 211, 245).

Wide-Open Spaces

Finally, the United States differs from its European and Japanese counterparts in its wide-open-spaces geography and the impact that that

geography has had on American politics. The great expanse of the United States not only allowed a certain degree of isolation during the early years of the Republic that could not be enjoyed by the Europeans, and thus shaped American politics differently, but the great expanse also allowed escape from the bonds of society into the individualistic frontier where authority was much less imposing. The frontier experience therefore nourished the spirit of conservative individualism and allowed that individualism to grow in the U.S. in a way that it could not in Europe and Japan. America's wide-open-spaces geography may also have had an impact on the development of American labor unions since workers had the option of simply moving to the frontier so as to avoid exploitation by management whereas their European counterparts did not. As a consequence, the American labor movement, and socialist tendencies in general, lagged behind those of their European counterparts.

American Conception of Equality

"Equality" in the American political mindset is a multifaceted concept that is among the most important in American political thought. Nevertheless, "equality" is another political area where Americans are "exceptional" in comparison to other advanced democracies in that Americans are willing to tolerate much greater economic inequality as long as they believe they have provided equality of opportunity.

The roots of the American views of equality arose out of the "age of enlightenment" that influenced American founders such as Thomas Jefferson and Ben Franklin. The American view of equality is reflected and shaped by Jefferson in the *Declaration of Independence* where he asserted, "all men are created equal." Although Jefferson's intention may have been merely to assert that the American people were equal to the English people at the time and therefore entitled to the same status under law, the concept has grown as the Nation has developed in its democratic journey. Obviously, Jefferson's "all men are created equal" was not as inclusive as it might sound, since it did not include blacks, and Jefferson himself was a slave owner, but later generations of Americans would take Jefferson's words at face value rather than limiting them to Jefferson's intentions and actions.

Alexis de Toqueville (1835, 2001) pointed out in his classic work, *Democracy in America*, that equality has a long tradition in America beginning with a great equality that existed among the immigrants that settled the shores of the original American colonies. In the words of Toqueville (speaking of New England), "the germs of aristocracy were never planted in that part of the union." Toqueville goes on to explain how the American laws of inheritance abolished the English tradition of primogeniture and installed a system where all children shared equally in

inheritance, thus eliminating the English economic system based on landed gentry and replacing it with a more merit-oriented system. When the experience of settling the American frontier, another great equalizer, is added to that already egalitarian culture, what emerged is a culture that is in some ways greatly egalitarian. One might argue that the very first successful English colony in America (Jamestown) began the trend toward egalitarianism due to an environment where everyone was equally starving and only 60 of 2000 immigrants survived from 1607-1609 (Brinkley, 2003, 35). The experience obviously obliterated some class barriers at Jamestown since 97% of the colonists were equally dead by 1609, and the threat of starvation clearly transcended any other class barriers.

Equality of Opportunity

Among the ways that Americans conceive equality is “equality of opportunity” (Fowler and Orenstein, 1993, 98). Americans generally believe that everyone should have an equal opportunity to succeed, especially in economic life. The concept of equal opportunity takes for granted that results will vary greatly depending on talent, drive, health, inheritance, and of course, just plain luck. The important thing is not that some will achieve more than others, but that all have the opportunity to achieve. It should be stressed that this equality of opportunity is only an ideal and never will be completely achieved in reality. Clearly some have a better chance at becoming millionaires or President than others, for instance, given that they might have a father that was a millionaire or President himself.

Political Equality

Another facet of equality stressed by Americans is “political equality” (Fowler and Orenstein, 1993, 98). The concept of political equality includes the rights of all people to participate in government and the political process. Political equality also includes equal treatment under law. Like equality of opportunity, political equality is an ideal that Americans strive toward; however, complete political equality remains elusive. For example, aggregate statistics reveal that black men typically receive harsher sentences for the same crimes as compared to other groups in society (Siegel, 1989, 488). Some of this inequity is undoubtedly tied to economics (although racism may still be a factor), and African Americans as a group still earn significantly less in income per capita than the general population. A lack of income translates into poorer quality lawyers, which evidently also translates into jail terms.

Equal Value of Each Human Life

A third major facet of equality in American political thought is the concept of the equal value of each individual human life. This concept is embodied in Jefferson's "All men are created equal," but it also has a basis in the Christian value-system that is so pervasive in American society that stresses the concept of "equality before God." Apostle Paul in Galatians 3:28 argued that, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." The point Paul was trying to make is that everyone is equal in the good Lord's eyes, regardless of gender, ethnicity, or economic status. Americans essentially adopted this Pauline view as evidenced by the current system for the rationing of human organs for transplants whereby organs for those who need transplants are not theoretically awarded to the highest bidder or to one ethnic or gender group over another, but are instead allocated based on who needs them the most. In other words, the heart patient that is closest to death is the one that goes to the top of the list for a transplant, regardless of ethnicity, gender, or economic status.

Equality of Condition

One aspect of equality that Americans in general clearly do not embrace is the concept of equality of condition. This is the essentially Marxist idea that all human beings, regardless of intellect, education, etc., should be equal in terms of their material possessions. Americans reject such an idea as "communist," but the idea itself did not necessarily originate with Marx. Plato, for instance, explained to his pupil Aristotle that within any organization, no one should earn more than five times as much as the lowliest worker. Similarly, early Christians in Jerusalem evidently adhered to equality of condition according to the book of Acts (2:44-45) where it is stated that they "had everything in common, selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need." The parallel with Marx's "from each according to his abilities, to each according to his needs" is perhaps uncanny. For emphasis, the writer of Acts even includes the story of Ananias and Sapphira (5:1-11) who deceitfully kept back a part of their property for themselves rather than donating it to the entire church community. The deceitful couple is then immediately struck dead by the Almighty for their selfish and anti-egalitarian actions.

Americans, in contrast, generally reject such "share the wealth" plans, believe that "life is what you make it," and do not see any problem with CEOs making hundreds of millions of dollars while others make minimum wage, as long as each had the "equal opportunity" to be wealthy. According