



# Conservatism Redefined: A Creed for the Poor and Disadvantaged

*Patrick Garry*

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After reaching high levels of public popularity in the 1980s and 1990s, political conservatism has become beset with criticism and disillusionment. As demonstrated by the 2008 election results, political conservatism has been blamed for an unpopular Iraq war, an economy nose diving into recession, and a barrage of high profile instances of corporate misbehavior.

This crisis in the ideological identity of and public confidence in conservatism is partly due to conservatism itself. Contrary to the intellectual vibrancy that characterized the 1980s and 1990s, political conservatism in recent years has become complacent and dormant. It has been more focused on simply protecting political power than on reexamining its philosophical principles and policy prescriptions. Because of this failure to continually reexamine, conservatives have allowed their ideology to slip back into various ruts caused by certain historical deviations from the conservative creed. These deviations, beginning in the early twentieth century, mischaracterized conservatism as a special-interest defender of the wealthy and corporate class. The deviations also allowed conservatism to be miscast as a political creed that advocates aggressive U.S. intervention in the affairs of foreign nations.

Perhaps because of all its successes, as well as the political influence it has been able to achieve, political conservatism in America has somewhat lost its foundational bearings. Its basic principles and ideological identity have been lost amidst the various political maneuverings and issues associated with partisan politics. Consequently, conservatives need to get their ideology back to a firm foundational setting, so as to allow it to once again provide a strong beacon of guidance to American society.

In this book, Patrick Garry attempts to provide a clear definition and ideological identity to conservatism—an identity that not only connects conservatism to the past, but allows it to position itself for the challenges of the future. With a concise simplicity, Garry provides a definition of conservatism that relies on two fundamental propositions. Garry also argues that the focus of conservatism needs to be redirected toward the interests of the poor and disadvantaged. As Garry argues, it is conservatism and not liberalism that offers the best hope for the poor and disadvantaged to prosper in America. This new focus of conservatism will allow conservatism to flourish as a governing ideology.

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