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February 12, 2016

Welcome to the “Neo” Takeover

With a presidential election in full swing, candidates and their supporters are out in full forces attempting to sway as many people onto the side of their candidate. They are showing why they are the prime person for the job, while attempting to rise above the others and show how their views and direction for the nation are best. These candidates display different views that argue about the role the government should have in the many different aspects of an American’s life. These views are the very foundation of the election process, as people are to decide based on these stances, not taking into account the candidates that win based on their name-sake. So with the United States being over 200 years old and holding elections that long, how have the few of these candidates changed? Have they really changed at all? In the past few years, American political culture has seen a candidate’s classical liberalist and conservative stances be taken over by new, or “neo,” conservative and liberalist ideas.

Classicals Explained

First off, what do these classical ideas look like? For classic liberalists, it comes down to one main thing: individual freedom. As John Stuart Mill said, “This liberty of each individual, follows the liberty, within the same limits, of combination among individuals’ freedom to unite, for any purpose not involving harm to others (Stuart Mill pg. 56).” Following the liberty people gain from being “free,” people have then have right to act however they please, only as long as it does not impede upon anyone else’s well-being. The government should allow people to go about their business in life, as long as that business is not hurting something else. People will govern themselves for the most part, as they will group together and get things done when they

need to be done for the greater good of society. When someone is wronged, the society as a whole should be able to see that, and bring the wronging party justice.

However, classic liberalists also realize men are not perfect and do need some regulation. James Madison states in *Federalist 51*, “If men were angels, no government would be necessary (Madison pg. 46).” That is where the classical liberalist’s role of government comes in. There must be equality, and the government must fight for it. Friedman shows some classical liberal theory when he writes, “A good society requires that its members agree on the general conditions that will govern relations among them, by some means of arbitrating (Friedman Pg. 102).” Friedman goes on to talk about how the government should be more of an umpire in a game, instead of the rule maker. The government is there to regulate, not dictate what happens among the people. This leads to markets that are freer of government regulations and more competitive among consumers/producers. Just as John Locke and Adam Smith talk about (pg. 23 & 35), people will decide what works in a society based on their work ethic and decisions. If they are free to make decisions, they will dictate what happens via participating or not participating in something. It all comes down to the individual being able to make their own decisions while supporting the greater good of the society.

Now comes the classical conservative. This political view is a patient one. “A conservative person is simply one who finds the permanent things more pleasing than Chaos (Kirk Online).” That being said by Russel Kirk, shows that the conservative view would be more resistant to quick changes in public policies, while supporting slower changes in policy. Society should not be governed by individual’s quick/temperate feelings and own self-interests, but an overall moral good. A conservative follows the ideas that this greater and enduring moral good is often attained in a slow manner, not by rash responses to society’s problems. Thus implying that

society should follow this overall order that is already governing the people within their morals, and not make quick changes that are based on a person's desire for quick equality or freedom. Edward Burke stated that, "Society requires not only that the passions of individuals should be subjected, but that even in the mass and body as well as in the individuals, the inclinations of men should frequently be thwarted, their will controlled, and their passions brought to subjection (Burke pg. 179)." In other words, people's desires while making policy decisions should be tested against this overall moral code. That moral code is what should drive people's decision making. Then change, if necessary, should be done not based on feelings alone, but have solid reasoning, while still being done in a more conservative manner.

Another main facet of conservatism would be a principle of imperfection among humans. Humans are not inherently good. They look out for what's best for themselves and go with it, that's why government is necessary. Thus, major, quick change becomes bad to the conservative, as that stems from man's inherent want to better himself. This principle also speaks to the reasoning behind diversity issues. Michael Oakeshott writes, "This is the product, not of 'human nature' let loose, but of human beings being impelled by acquired love of making choices for themselves (Oakeshott pg. 161)." Humans are inherently out for themselves, and that is what causes many problems in society, not simply human nature gone out of control. It is human nature by itself. Thus, conservatives call for government to help combat people's selfishness, while not intruding. That will cause more problems of inequality. Thus, society must slowly change and consult the inherent moral code, as it goes along.

The Modern Takeover

Now going back to the recent presidential race, are the modern candidates (as examples of all modern politicians) really practicing these classical views? To start off on the liberal side,

the current politicians considered to be “liberal,” support more action by the government and the setting up of governmental programs that help many. Seen best by the support of the Affordable Healthcare Act, recent liberals want to set up a system that helps all, by giving them healthcare at a reasonable cost. That requires larger government involvement, while giving people less control over their health care. It universalizes a certain industry throughout the society. With this and other programs that expand the government’s desire to help other in society being supported by modern liberals, or neo-liberalists, it can be seen that the principle of individual freedom from the classic liberalist has been overcome. A neo-liberalist view now is in support of programs that dictate the way society works in an attempt to help all of its members, while taking out some individual freedoms to do so.

Neo-liberalists also support policies that promote equality within the society, like affirmative action policies, that can also create limitations. “Affirmative action temporarily introduces moral purpose and public good into the market economy while restricting the play of free choice, so the solution to most of our contemporary ills requires public restraint of market freedom (Kramnick pg. 125),” wrote Isaac Kramnick when talking about the impact of certain policies. Yes, classical liberalists supported equality, but individual freedom was still the most important. They would not have agreed with the above view that individual freedom at times needs to be stomped out for the greater good of the society. To a neo-liberalist now, the balance of individual freedom and equality is a difficult one, but the positives from great equality are greater than those positives of individual freedoms. Thus, this neo-liberal view that fights for equality and help for all is seen in modern politicians more than the classical liberal (yes, it’s even more prevalent than the Libertarian party), and has taken over the modern, liberalist political view.

Let us not now forget about the conservatives. Are they not more resistant to change, so their ideology lasts longer? The conservative view is still seen today in some strains, but is no longer a mainstream view when looking at modern “conservative” political figures. These modern conservatives, or neo-conservatives, are not as different like their counterparts in the liberals. However, they are different in one main area: military ideologies. Classical conservatives are not all that concerned with creating a massive military that helps police the world. They are more interested in making sure their freedoms are secure, but did not always want to have a dominate military. Neo-conservatives on the other hand supports larger amounts of military spending. Irving Kristol writes in regards to neoconservative’s views that, “the United States will always feel obliged to defend, if possible a democratic nation under attack from nondemocratic forces, external and internal (Kristol pg. 227).” This neo-conservative view is exactly what is seen today among conservatives. For example, simply look at the Republican presidential candidates in 2016. They nearly all support massive militaristic actions against enemy militant groups. Kristol also helps show classical conservatism is being taken over by writing, “The older, traditional elements of the Republican party have difficulty coming to terms with the new reality (Kristol pg. 228).” This neo-conservative view is clearly the more prevalent view and has taken over as the dominant conservative view.

With conservatism now supporting larger military operations/spending and liberalism now supporting equality and programs that help society as a whole currently, it can be seen that the “neo” leanings of both ideologies have taken over. Politicians are now more likely to abandon the classical views and support the “neo” leanings, as they support polices aligning with these new views. While many seek election in the recent and upcoming election, political culture has shifted from classical views. These views have been taken over by the new and modern

leanings of the classical stances. These are in an effort by candidates to create a better society full of hope for today, tomorrow, and beyond.

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