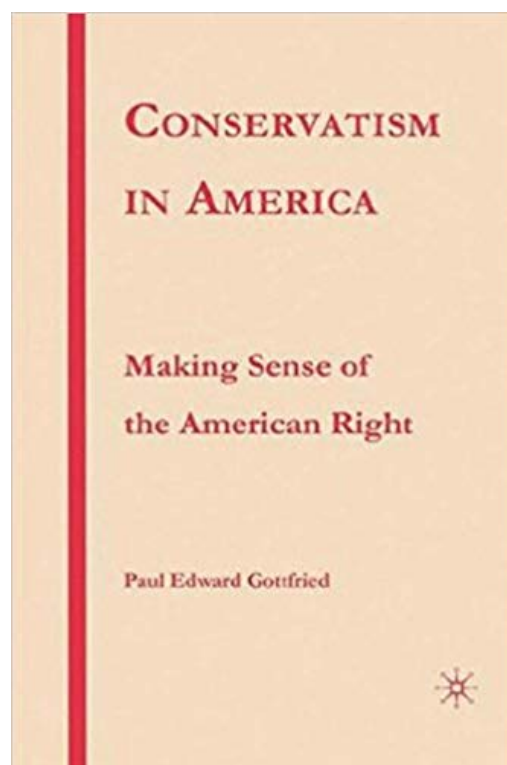


Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right *by* P. Gottfried



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Author: P. Gottfried

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This book argues that the American conservative movement, as it now exists, does not have deep roots. It began in the 1950s as the invention of journalists and men of letters reacting to the early Cold War and trying to construct a rallying point for likeminded opponents of international Communism. The resulting movement has exaggerated the permanence of its values; while its militant anti-Communism, instilled in its followers, and periodic suppression of dissent have weakened its capacity for internal debate. Their movement came to power at least partly by burying an older anti-welfare state Right, one that in fact had enjoyed a social following that was concentrated in a small-town America. The newcomers played down the merits of those they had replaced; and in the 1980's the neoconservatives, who took over the postwar conservative movement from an earlier generation, belittled their predecessors in a similar way. Among the movement's major accomplishments has been to recreate its own past. The success of this revised history lies in the fact that even the movement's critics are now inclined to accept it.



Reviews of the **Conservatism in America: Making Sense of the American Right** by P. Gottfried

Meztihn

Having been highly involved in politics for 30 years. And having a love of America superseding love of political party, I have been investigating the century long deconstruction of the GOP which has transitioned from being the 'PARTY OF THE CONSTITUTION,' to the party using constitutional/conservative rhetoric for public consumption, but whose voting records in congress and actions of governance are literal constitutional-schizophrenia that is in a nearly linear relationship with America's century long slide toward national-suicide. For me, this book provided more documentation of the GOP's past century of being increasingly infected with constitutional-deconstructionists/globalists sacrificing America at the altar of a 'new global order,' and has led to America's existing emaciated condition. Something only occurring due to GOP voters having lost their 'measure for true conservatism,' which is RESISTANCE TO CHANGE FROM THE ORIGINAL INTENT OF AMERICA'S AMENDED CONSTITUTION, instead of today's functional criteria which amounts to, 'just replace the democrat with a republican who uses conservative rhetoric and is approved by globalist Rupert Murdoch's Fox News Network pundits.' At present, democrat (socialists) destroy America at light-speed, and the GOP's infestation of conservative-impostor global-engineers destroy America slower and in different ways. To be sure, the GOP must be lawfully cleansed of the conservative-impostors who have been increasingly infecting it like a cancer since the early 1900's. Only then can constitutional government be restored, poisoned capitalism favoring specific large corporations be restored to true capitalism that allows small-business to thrive, our military be strengthened and our precious military personnel stop being abused by global-engineering conservative-impostors who are the international version of a 'fireman/arsonist,' and America's slide toward national-suicide be averted. Fascinating historical context in this read!

Hrguig

Paul Gottfried has, over the past twenty-five years, been one of the most astute and impressive writers on contemporary politics and society. His earlier volumes MULTICULTURALISM AND THE POLITICS OF GUILT and AFTER LIBERALISM have been significant contributions to the discussion of the nature of American (and European) society and the structures of authority---and how they came to be the way they are today. In this, his newest, volume, Gottfried analyzes both the history and "meaning" of what has been termed "American conservatism." Looking first at the older, pre-NATIONAL REVIEW "Right" of Robert Taft and others, he explores how publicists and others transformed that older "Right" into an anti-Communist "coalition" in the 1950s that, although it at least in part attempted to establish roots in a transatlantic Burkean tradition (with the work of Russell Kirk), soon found itself conflicted by divergent strains and impulses. The implosion of a formal Communist threat in the late 1980s and early '90s, and the influx of former Leftist/Trotskyite neo-conservatives in the 1970s and 1980s and their expropriation of the name "conservative," have transfigured what many people think of as the "Right" in America today, and the results have had extreme consequences both politically and socially.

Gottfried's analysis is fresh and his command of sources and knowledge of historical events and persons is quite impressive. Stylistic, this book reads quite well, unlike some dry-as-dust tomes.

In short, this is a book that demands attention from political scientists, historians, from journalists and observers both of American and European politics and society, and from those interested in not only what has taken place and what is taking place in the United States...but why.

Global Progression

Have you ever wondered how the label "conservative" ceased to denote a serious political philosophy and became the preferred self designation of media hacks? If you want a specific contrast: think Ayn

Rand vs. Ann Coulter! This didn't come about just because of the decline in American educational standards (although that is no doubt a related variable) but rather it is the end result of a premeditated political coup on the right. Paul Gottfried, who was an eyewitness to the process, has left us an account of how it was done and why.

This slender but data packed volume documents how representatives of the limited-government and traditionalist movements lost their positions, funding, and ultimately even their identity to a faction of crass Machiavellians who migrated into the conservative movement between the early Reagan years and the end of the Cold War. In a way it is hardly surprising that these genteel literary types were bested by battle hardened ex-Trotskyites fresh from the proxy wars of the left. The value of Gottfried's study is that he both memorialises and criticises the vanquished old right, ensuring that the epoch doesn't vanish down the memory hole, and that the cautionary lessons are laid out to be learned by whoever takes the time and effort.

The philosophical core of the book is Gottfried's implicit criticism of "value conservatism." Although he doesn't venture very far into the technical aspects of value-theory, enough is said to explain the tropism of "values" from presumed absolutes towards handy political slogans. The presumption of the old right was that "values" referred to a hierarchy of moral goods latent in the order of things, discovered, but not created by human minds. This is an implicitly theistic, or at least panentheistic, theory. Gottfried points out the rhetorical blunder of old right in resting its case on nominal rather than real values. By the time Russel Kirk and others started talking about "traditional values" the frame of reference had shifted (assuming it had ever been anywhere else) from absolute values to imputed values, that is to say: subjective evaluation of the sort that is used (legitimately) in economic theory. Unfortunately the appeal to imputed values in political rhetoric only encouraged the sort of value relativism that the old right claimed to be fighting. After that it was only a matter of time before some clever faction on the left realized that it could use this protean notion to insert its own agenda into the conservative program and take over the movement.

For that salient insight, as well as the documentation of nearly forgotten thinkers, this is a book to get and ponder upon. The only reason that I am giving it four rather than five stars is that there seem to be many loose ends in the text. Dr. Gottfried has a tendency to sally into criticism of other thinkers and then break off before making his own principles explicit. Perhaps he likes to hold his political cards close to his chest, or perhaps in his years of contention with the Straussians, their coy indirectness of expression has rubbed off on him. Whatever Gottfried's ultimate position may be, this is a book that should be read by paleoconservatives, libertarians, or anyone else who is interested in cognitivism in politics and curious about its decline in America.

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