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Prospects of A Conservative Environmental Philosophy *

Muhafazakâr Bir Çevre Felsefesinin Geleceği Üzerine

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ANAHTAR KELİMELE

Muhafazakar çevre felsefesi
Neoliberalizm
Doğa

ÖZ

Bu çalışmada, çevresel sorunların çözümünde sorumluluğu bireylere, onların örgütlerine ve özel girişimlere yükleyen muhafazakâr bir çevre felsefesinin gerekçelendirilebilirliğini inceleyeceğiz. Muhafazakâr yaklaşım, tehditlere yerel uyumu ve yerel çözümlerin değerlendirilmesini öngörür; radikal adımlardan kaçınır ve özellikle sorunların bir parçası hâline gelmiş, düzenlemelerin kaldırılmasına veya gevşetilmesine yol açar. Bu felsefenin temelinde, yerel toplulukların en yakın doğal çevrelerine olan bağlılığı yatar. Topluluklar, bu çevreyi temiz tutmak ve sürdürülebilir kalkınma imkânları sağlamak isterler; böylece bu alanı gelecek nesillere aktarabileceklerdir. Bu bağlılık, topluluğun yararına olduğu kanıtlanmış köklü kültürel ve ahlaki geleneklerle iç içedir. Muhafazakâr ekoloji yaklaşımı, hava kirliliği izinlerinin satışı yoluyla meta-para ilişkilerinin gelişigüzel yayılmasından ayrılır; zira bu uygulama vergi mükelleflerine gereksiz bir yük getirir, karanlık yapıları kazanç sağlar ve ulusal sanayinin gelişim imkânlarını sınırlar. Özetle, muhafazakâr çevre felsefesi küçük ve mütevazı adımlar atmayı öngörür; ancak bu adımlar, yaşadığı somut çevreyi kutsal sayan, geleneksel üretim ve toprak işleme yöntemlerini benimseyen, yaşadığı yeri temiz ve gelecek nesillere uygun biçimde korumak isteyen insanlar için tamamen anlamlıdır. Çevresel muhafazakârlık, her topluluğun, ulusal toplumun ve özgür bireylerin ve örgütlerinin kendi evini koruma amacıyla bağımsız karar alma hakkını ve egemenliğini savunur.

KEYWORDS

Conservative environmental philosophy
Neoliberalism
Nature

ABSTRACT

In our paper, we will analyze the prospects for justifying a conservative environmental philosophy that assigns the responsibility for solving environmental problems to citizens, their organizations and private initiatives. The conservative approach implies a local adjustment to threats and consideration of local solutions, avoids radical steps and leads to the repeal or loosening regulations, especially if they are part of the problem. At the base of this philosophy stands the attachment of local communities to their closest natural environment, which they want to keep clean and to provide opportunities for its sustainable development in order to pass it on to the next generations. This attachment is tied to well-established cultural and moral traditions whose adherence has proven beneficial for the respective community. The conservative approach in ecology is distinguished from the indiscriminate invasion of commodity-money relations through the sale of air pollution allowances, because it unnecessarily burdens taxpayers, brings profits to shady structures and leads to the limitation of opportunities for the development of national industry. We can summarize that the conservative environmental philosophy implies small and modest steps, but they are entirely in the interest of people who love a sacred concrete environment, the place where they live, traditional methods of production and cultivation of the land, and want to keep them their home clean and suitable for future generations. Environmental conservatism defends the sovereignty and the right to make independent decisions to protect one's home for each community, for the national society, and for free citizens and their organizations.

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1. Introduction

In our paper, we will analyze the prospects for justifying a conservative environmental philosophy that assigns the responsibility for solving environmental problems to citizens, their organizations and private initiatives. The conservative approach implies a local adjustment to threats and consideration of local solutions, avoids radical steps and leads to the repeal or loosening regulations, especially if they are part of the problem. At the base of this philosophy stands the attachment of local communities to their closest natural environment, which they want to keep clean and to provide opportunities for its sustainable development in order to pass it on to the next generations. This attachment is tied to well-established cultural and moral traditions whose adherence has proven beneficial for the respective community. The conservative approach in ecology is distinguished from the indiscriminate invasion of commodity-money relations through the sale of air pollution allowances, because it unnecessarily burdens taxpayers, brings profits to shady structures and leads to the limitation of opportunities for the development of national industry.

2. Findings and Discussion

The approach we defend opposes liberal projects to entrust the care of ecopolitics entirely to the state in its "night watch" function, which is supposed to protect people from harming each other (as an environmental Leviathan) and, as a result, leads to voluntarist decisions born of provoked panic for the future of the planet. There are enough examples of the campaign closure of coal plants without a clear prospect of replacing them with another source. Ridiculous policies to restrict livestock and poultry also make this list. The neoliberal establishment sees it as justified for rich and powerful countries to impose restrictions on everyone else's industrialization by making them pay much more for their carbon emissions. Poor countries are being shaken off several times in favor of the rich and powerful who have already used the lack of restrictions for their own industrialization, leading to negative effects on the natural environment. This is also the nature of some of the policies included in the "Green Deal", aimed at a circular economy and zero greenhouse gases by 2050. But the fact is that there is no global consensus around radical environmental measures and the process started with the Kyoto Protocol in the 90s now is declined. Even if Europe fulfills the environmental plans, it will not lead to a significant change in the state of the ecology on a global scale. Many big countries oppose these restrictions.

Today, we are witnessing a distortion of the foundations of normal life by propaganda, which relies on dubious data and tries to impose severe restrictions on economic and human development. The mechanism is known to us since the time of the global pandemic. We must say that corporate business has been preparing for a long time for the great transformation of the economy from relying on natural, but limited and expensive, resources such as oil and gas to

ecological production, from which countless riches are expected. In the 1960s, a group of politicians, scientists, economists created the Club of Rome, which in a 1972 report called "The Limits to Growth" (Meadows 1972), based on computer simulation, developed the ideological thesis that human productive activity threatens nature and depletes limited natural resources. They find the exponential growth of the population with a limited resource. The forecast is that by 2013 the resources of a number of precious metals and oil will be exhausted. In fact, it is a modernized version of Malthusianism, but based on some objective facts and aimed at seeking direct economic benefits by pushing policies in the interest of rich countries. The concept is presented in humanitarian pathos in the books of Aurelio Peccei (1976), but there it already begins to resemble a religious doctrine.

In 2007, the journalist Mark Lynas took the next step towards inciting panic with his book "Six degrees: our future on a hotter planet", in which he predicted that very soon our ecosystem will go into a state of chaotic disequilibrium (Lynas, 2007). "Lynas's book is truly frightening - writes the English philosopher Roger Scruton in *The Green Philosophy* - the reader closes the last page trembling and drenched in a cold sweat" (Scruton, 2019, 43). In it, as a journalist, he talks about his interviews with climate experts who tell him about global warming and describes his panicked experiences from what was told. The purpose of this kind of psychotherapy is to create a sensation and a wide response among readers and zombify them for radical environmental policies. We find similar content in Al Gore's book "An Inconvenient Truth" (2008) and the lover of all kinds of crises, Bill Gates (2021). In the debate, the UN joins the side of the proponents of the thesis of global "warming" by forming the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which disseminates the most alarming conclusions in its documents. The UN project on "sustainable development" and the "global goals of the century" was an ideological complement to this propaganda.

In a pattern already known to us from the period of the global pandemic, the voice of real science is silenced. Academic climatologists Patrick Michaels and Robert Balling Jr. in "Satanized Gases" (Michaels and Balling 2000) predict only moderate cyclical warming in the early 21st century, similar to the last third of the 20th century, but with beneficial effects on production of food and resource management. We are already living in such a period and we see that the predictions are justified. After such warming comes usually a period of cooling. The title of NASA climatologist Roy Spencer's book, "How Global Warming Hysteria Leads to Bad Science, Pandering Politicians and Misguided Policies That Hurt the Poor", is persuasive (Spencer 2008). Opinions critical of "global warming" are collected at <https://www.climatedepot.com/>. The scientists supporting negative opinions have worldwide academic authority and number more than 1,500. An important argument in favor of "global warming" was the so-called "ozone hole", but today it seems to be closing (Lecheva

2023). Left-wing environmentalists are missing their main point. However, we must say that we do not deny the deepening of environmental problems, only the globalization of panic reactions and attempts to impose policies based on bad science.

Global approaches to the problems of ecology do not lead to its solution. The countries that latched onto the Green Deal and defended the resulting draconian regulations may be a large minority, and self-imposed deprivations may prove ineffective. We see a good basis for conservative measures in the 1987 report of the World Commission on Environment and Development, chaired by Gro Harlem Brundtland, "Our Common Future", which, in response to the debate on the "limits to growth", highlighted the need for development, where attention is paid to environmental issues. There is also a perspective in the decentralization of energy provision, but with the active participation of local communities to build small water and wind plants, photovoltaic systems and to reject brutal external investors in the sector. In our country, many politicians built photovoltaic parks with the help of the EU and the state, and ordinary consumers pay the bill.

Conservative environmental philosophy excludes utopian global projects such as the „Green Deal“ or attempts to influence the weather and limit sunlight. It is based on the love and attachment of people from local communities to the surrounding nature of the place where they live. It is not an ideology, but a way of thinking in defense of the interests of citizens and their rights. It finds its justification in the promotion of traditional civic values - freedom, balance of interests, guaranteeing democracy through the work of representative institutions. It does not aim to reject the concern for nature conservation as a policy priority, but to make it more effective and in the interest of citizens and countries - not only the rich who profit from quotas of carbon trading, but also the poor trying to make their economic progress. Conservatism in ecology is a struggle for effective local solutions in the interests of people. All this excludes the Brussels model of imposing more and more regulations and restrictions on economic activity in the interests of selected oligarchic circles.

Conservative environmental philosophy wants us to listen to the voice of scientists, not to the propaganda of paid political pundits who defend corporate interests. It demands care and responsibility for the preservation of our immediate natural environment, in which man is born, lives, raises a family, works, and seeks happiness. This way of thinking excludes the ominous predictions that human activity can destroy our planet and it does not accept the imposition of environmental policies through decrees by bureaucrats who do not represent the citizens. Environmental justice cannot be achieved in the manner of communism through mandatory global measures. People can turn to recycling industries in areas where this is possible and effective.

An example of such a practice could be the desire of Eastern European countries, including Bulgaria, to defend nuclear

energy against voluntarism in the EU as an environmentally clean and the only adequate substitute for coal-fired energy production. To this we can add hydropower plants and the use of wind energy. But the financial burden for the transformation in energy consumption should not be borne only by citizens as taxpayers. Replacing "green" energies such as carbon or solar do not save humanity, but open a new path for development that hides many dangers.

The conservative environmental philosophy can rightly be criticized for replacing a global approach with a commitment by citizens to protect their own immediate environment, and for not being effective in confronting large-scale crises such as nuclear accidents or space disasters. It is also true that the imposition of regulations can sometimes prevent abuses. We can also add that experts often share different opinions and we can always find those in support of one thesis or its opposite. However, politically and economically motivated opinions dominate the propaganda of environmental activism.

The conservative approach requires turning to tradition and preserving the status quo. Let us recall that in the "golden" years of conservatism in the New Age, it was an ideology of the aristocracy that sought to resist revolutionary changes and the destruction of statehood. Conservatism is a fairly developed political doctrine that appears in European culture in various forms. It starts from an anthropological pessimism, presupposing the imperfection of man, the original sin, egoism and tendency to aggression, ruled by emotions and not by reason. A person pursues his interest, but derives it from what is embedded in community traditions, moral and religious values.

The moral or social order that will enable imperfect man to overcome what is wrong and be a disciplined member of a particular community is considered to be a problem of primary importance. Conservatives often refer in this context to the moral and social function of religion, which gives the individual a life orientation and worldview, as well as virtues to consider living among other people. The communal dimension of human life is seen as more important than the individual. Communities are understood according to the organismic metaphor – participation in them is the result of free contracts, as well as some values, rooted in tradition. They become harmonious wholes in which each individual can realize his life goals, which the given community sanctions as acceptable. These communities exhibit inequalities and hierarchies that are as natural as they are. Conservatism emphasizes man's obligations to his family, his community - and we can add - to his immediate natural environment. Things are bad when the freedom of the individual is unfettered by the tradition and rights of the community. Conservatives do not recognize absolute, timeless and universal rights.

Among the leading conservative minds we can point to Edmund Burke (1727-1797). According to him, society should be united by the mutual interest of people. Communities are fundamental to human flourishing, and the

best life begins in the "small places"—family, church, and local community—that orient people to virtues such as temperance and fortitude.

The first principle of any conservative policy, not only in the environmental sphere, is the refraining of the state from performing tasks that can be better performed by the citizens, by their initiatives and in defense of their interests in the protection of the territory they inhabit. This does not mean leaving things unchecked, but only controlling a rational division of labor between global and local environmental organizations, the state and civil communities. Conservatism advocates discipline and responsibility for consequences, especially in actions that may harm the environment. Undoubtedly, there are big problems that only the state and even associations of states can deal with, such as overcoming major production accidents, their prevention, limiting dangerous production. Today, the thesis of the "limits to growth" and the predictions of the Club of Rome have been disproved, but through financial measures to limit hydrocarbon emissions, the burden of environmental taxes is transferred to the people of poor countries, and this is unacceptable and immoral. These countries cannot be forced to close their production and buy "air" at exchange prices. Industrial greenhouse gas emissions rights often favor vested interests of environmental groups and industries, and this limits the prospects for research and development that could lead to emissions-free production.

It is particularly important to note that development is not sustainable if it relies on environmentally impure energy. But there is still no visible trend toward global clean energy that has even a small chance of being accepted by reconciling the various competing interests. Wind energy is a partial solution that can provide only a small fraction of the energy needed, but it also shifts the cost burden unfairly to consumers. It is not clear whether the production of batteries will not pollute nature much more than the extraction of natural resources. There is also no solution for the storage of obsolete photovoltaics and batteries. Carbon power plants can be too bulky compared to traditional sources. Manipulation for clean energies will not solve these issues. The use of energies must take into account the social cost, which is also part of the content of sustainable development.

So far, it looks that there is no alternative to nuclear energy in terms of environmental cleanliness and efficiency. With advanced electronic technology today, it is becoming more and more secure. However, there are too few serious players left in this sphere - the countries and companies that can build working nuclear power plants. Thus, we have another issue with possible consequences for the poor countries and those without capacity for building nuclear installations.

We would also add that policies are needed that encourage small producers in agriculture and the food industry. The countless regulations on special packaging, scary warnings of dangers, the elimination of traditional methods of food

production and their replacement with chemically processed substances must be eliminated. More producer markets are needed where they can freely sell their products prepared using traditional methods. Localization is the most reliable path to sustainable agriculture and natural food production. It is also a strong demotivating factor for outsourcing costs to external factors. Only in this way will the small producers be able to defend themselves against the big players and the dictates of the supermarkets, they will be able to sell natural products and profit from their work. A little protectionism and protection of native products will also contribute to the protection of nature and people's health.

With the negligible profit tax in our country, the big food chains export the huge part of their income, they bombard the consumer with low-quality mass products, worse than the ecological ones in Western countries. It is necessary to put these relations in order, for supermarket chains to make a greater contribution to the financial system, and to introduce advantages for the shops of small producers.

Air pollution control is also a problem. The car manufacturers' desire for excess profits is having an effect, leading to massive production, even though hybrids and electric cars are already being made in large volumes, mainly in rich countries. The increase in the prices of heating with electricity and gas, the result of the selfishness of traders and the sanctions, led to an increase in the consumption of wood and coal in winter. Sanctions only increased their profits. We are also against damaging shale gas production technologies. The state can introduce rules to limit the profits of these traders and help consumers.

3. Conclusion

We can summarize that the conservative environmental philosophy implies small and modest steps, but they are entirely in the interest of people who love a sacred concrete environment, the place where they live, traditional methods of production and cultivation of the land, and want to keep them their home clean and suitable for future generations. It is primarily an antidote to neoliberal policies that rely on the escalation of panic messages, restrictive policies, and burdening the state with extraneous functions. It supports the production of healthy foods, efficient and socially acceptable methods of energy production and use. Environmental conservatism defends the sovereignty of states and humans and the right to make independent decisions to protect one's home for each community, for the national society, and for free citizens and their organizations.

The principles of conservative environmental philosophy can become the basis for the inclusion of the most powerful countries, which are now skeptical of the neoliberal consensus on the restrictions of the "Green Deal" and the trading of carbon emission allowances. Concern for sustainable development cannot be an obstacle to the economic prosperity of countries, especially with a growing population. Ways of cooperation should be sought along

these lines of developed strengths and poor countries that want to rapidly develop their economic base.

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