

National Conservatism: A Statement of Principles

<https://nationalconservatism.org/national-conservatism-a-statement-of-principles/>

The following statement was drafted by Will Chamberlain, Christopher DeMuth, Rod Dreher, Yoram Hazony, Daniel McCarthy, Joshua Mitchell, N.S. Lyons, John O'Sullivan, and R.R. Reno on behalf of the Edmund Burke Foundation. The statement reflects a distinctly Western point of view. However, we look forward to future discourse and collaboration with movements akin to our own in India, Japan, and other non-Western nations. Signatories' institutional affiliations are included for identification purposes only, and do not imply an endorsement on the part of any institution other than the Edmund Burke Foundation.

We are citizens of Western nations who have watched with alarm as the traditional beliefs, institutions, and liberties underpinning life in the countries we love have been progressively undermined and overthrown.

We see the tradition of independent, self-governed nations as the foundation for restoring a proper public orientation toward patriotism and courage, honor and loyalty, religion and wisdom, congregation and family, man and woman, the sabbath and the sacred, and reason and justice. We are conservatives because we see such virtues as essential to sustaining our civilization. We see such a restoration as the prerequisite for recovering and maintaining our freedom, security, and prosperity.

We emphasize the idea of the nation because we see a world of independent nations—each pursuing its own national interests and upholding national traditions that are its own—as the only genuine alternative to universalist ideologies now seeking to impose a homogenizing, locality-destroying imperium over the entire globe.

Drawing on this heritage, we therefore affirm the following principles:

1. National Independence. We wish to see a world of independent nations. Each nation capable of self-government should chart its own course in accordance with its own particular constitutional, linguistic, and religious

inheritance. Each has a right to maintain its own borders and conduct policies that will benefit its own people. We endorse a policy of rearmament by independent self-governing nations and of defensive alliances whose purpose is to deter imperialist aggression.

2. Rejection of Imperialism and Globalism. We support a system of free cooperation and competition among nation-states, working together through trade treaties, defensive alliances, and other common projects that respect the independence of their members. But we oppose transferring the authority of elected governments to transnational or supranational bodies—a trend that pretends to high moral legitimacy even as it weakens representative government, sows public alienation and distrust, and strengthens the influence of autocratic regimes. Accordingly, we reject imperialism in its various contemporary forms: We condemn the imperialism of China, Russia, and other authoritarian powers. But we also oppose the liberal imperialism of the last generation, which sought to gain power, influence, and wealth by dominating other nations and trying to remake them in its own image.

3. National Government. The independent nation-state is instituted to establish a more perfect union among the diverse communities, parties, and regions of a given nation, to provide for their common defense and justice among them, and to secure the general welfare and the blessings of liberty for this time and for future generations. We believe in a strong but limited state, subject to constitutional restraints and a division of powers. We recommend a drastic reduction in the scope of the administrative state and the policy-making judiciary that displace legislatures representing the full range of a nation's interests and values. We recommend the federalist principle, which prescribes a delegation of power to the respective states or subdivisions of the nation so as to allow greater variation, experimentation, and freedom. However, in those states or subdivisions in which law and justice have been manifestly corrupted, or in which lawlessness, immorality, and dissolution reign, national government must intervene energetically to restore order.

4. God and Public Religion. No nation can long endure without humility and gratitude before God and fear of his judgment that are found in authentic

religious tradition. For millennia, the Bible has been our surest guide, nourishing a fitting orientation toward God, to the political traditions of the nation, to public morals, to the defense of the weak, and to the recognition of things rightly regarded as sacred. The Bible should be read as the first among the sources of a shared Western civilization in schools and universities, and as the rightful inheritance of believers and non-believers alike. Where a Christian majority exists, public life should be rooted in Christianity and its moral vision, which should be honored by the state and other institutions both public and private. At the same time, Jews and other religious minorities are to be protected in the observance of their own traditions, in the free governance of their communal institutions, and in all matters pertaining to the rearing and education of their children. Adult individuals should be protected from religious or ideological coercion in their private lives and in their homes.

5. The Rule of Law. We believe in the rule of law. By this we mean that citizens and foreigners alike, and both the government and the people, must accept and abide by the laws of the nation. In America, this means accepting and living in accordance with the Constitution of 1787, the amendments to it, duly enacted statutory law, and the great common law inheritance. All agree that the repair and improvement of national legal traditions and institutions is at times necessary. But necessary change must take place through the law. This is how we preserve our national traditions and our nation itself. Rioting, looting, and other unacceptable public disorder should be swiftly put to an end.

6. Free Enterprise. We believe that an economy based on private property and free enterprise is best suited to promoting the prosperity of the nation and accords with traditions of individual liberty that are central to the Anglo-American political tradition. We reject the socialist principle, which supposes that the economic activity of the nation can be conducted in accordance with a rational plan dictated by the state. But the free market cannot be absolute. Economic policy must serve the general welfare of the nation. Today, globalized markets allow hostile foreign powers to despoil America and other countries of their manufacturing capacity, weakening them economically and dividing them internally. At the same time, trans-national corporations showing little loyalty to any nation damage public life by censoring political

speech, flooding the country with dangerous and addictive substances and pornography, and promoting obsessive, destructive personal habits. A prudent national economic policy should promote free enterprise, but it must also mitigate threats to the national interest, aggressively pursue economic independence from hostile powers, nurture industries crucial for national defense, and restore and upgrade manufacturing capabilities critical to the public welfare. Crony capitalism, the selective promotion of corporate profit-making by organs of state power, should be energetically exposed and opposed.

7. Public Research. At a time when China is rapidly overtaking America and the Western nations in fields crucial for security and defense, a Cold War-type program modeled on DARPA, the “moon-shot,” and SDI is needed to focus large-scale public resources on scientific and technological research with military applications, on restoring and upgrading national manufacturing capacity, and on education in the physical sciences and engineering. On the other hand, we recognize that most universities are at this point partisan and globalist in orientation and vehemently opposed to nationalist and conservative ideas. Such institutions do not deserve taxpayer support unless they rededicate themselves to the national interest. Education policy should serve manifest national needs.

8. Family and Children. We believe the traditional family is the source of society’s virtues and deserves greater support from public policy. The traditional family, built around a lifelong bond between a man and a woman, and on a lifelong bond between parents and children, is the foundation of all other achievements of our civilization. The disintegration of the family, including a marked decline in marriage and childbirth, gravely threatens the wellbeing and sustainability of democratic nations. Among the causes are an unconstrained individualism that regards children as a burden, while encouraging ever more radical forms of sexual license and experimentation as an alternative to the responsibilities of family and congregational life. Economic and cultural conditions that foster stable family and congregational life and child-raising are priorities of the highest order.

9. Immigration. Immigration has made immense contributions to the strength and prosperity of Western nations. But today’s penchant for

uncontrolled and unassimilated immigration has become a source of weakness and instability, not strength and dynamism, threatening internal dissension and ultimately dissolution of the political community. We note that Western nations have benefited from both liberal and restrictive immigration policies at various times. We call for much more restrictive policies until these countries summon the wit to establish more balanced, productive, and assimilationist policies. Restrictive policies may sometimes include a moratorium on immigration.

10. Race. We believe that all men are created in the image of God and that public policy should reflect that fact. No person's worth or loyalties can be judged by the shape of his features, the color of his skin, or the results of a lab test. The history of racist ideology and oppression and its ongoing consequences require us to emphasize this truth. We condemn the use of state and private institutions to discriminate and divide us against one another on the basis of race. The cultural sympathies encouraged by a decent nationalism offer a sound basis for conciliation and unity among diverse communities. The nationalism we espouse respects, and indeed combines, the unique needs of particular minority communities and the common good of the nation as a whole.

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