

weaknesses of 'right wing' and 'left wing' politics. These terms are important to help define or parameterize a person's or party's political orientation, yet the principles underlying both the left and right wing concepts are not well understood and have been distorted by modern governments to further statist ideals. In fact the concepts have become corrupted to such a degree that in today's parlance a statist xenophobe like Hitler or Le Pen, promulgating nationalism, nationalization, social interventionism, and government ownership of private property, autarchic development and racist beliefs is referred to as right wing.

Such misconceptions have left many without a firm appreciation of what left-right means in political discourse and are thus easily manipulated by the media. This left-right terminology became prevalent during the French Revolution when the republicans in the French Assembly were seated to the Left and monarchists to the Right of the Assembly's speaker. Within this assembly on the right side sat the more conservative elements interested in protecting the ancien regime, and concerned with limiting government control over society. More radical anti-monarchists, and populists sat on the left, interested in granting control to the people and redrawing the map of societal development and wealth sharing. In between these two groups sat the centrist more liberally biased members willing to support the monarchy but willing as well to affect wide spread change to limit its power and enhance the control of government by the people. In such a setting, left-centre-right terminology had value and meaning.

During the 19th century the political struggle within the West over constitutional change and economic control (capitalism vs. socialism) added further credence and weight to the left-right categorisation. On the left were the socialists and communists and other radicals, convinced that public ownership of all economic productive resources was a pre-requisite for political and moral enlightenment. On the right were the conservatives defending, trade, limited democracy and private property rights. Between these two groups were reforming liberals and social democrats advocating a mixed socialist-capitalist society. During this period however, we begin to see that many on the left contained views that were extremely conservative and were shared

by some radicals on the right. For instance socialists during the 19th century did not believe in constitutional law, or political freedom putting them in their political orientation in the right wing absolutist camp, while economically they were left wing.

During the 20th century such discrepancies were further aggravated. During the rise of fascist ideology during the 1920s and 30s, the socialists in Europe spent an enormous amount of energy in convincing the media and the general layperson that fascists were not national socialists but right wing radicals. If one views for example the Nazi charter, various articles are directly socialistic in context and value. Nationalization of industry, economic autarchy, massive state control over all aspects of life, limitations on political freedoms, and media control as well as free education, free health care and guaranteed welfare all formed part of fascist ideology. On balance there is no difference in form, scope or implementation detail between fascism and socialism. Yet the image today still exists that nationalistic, xenophobic leaders who appeal to narrow minded chauvinist political, economic and philosophical ideals are right wing. This viewpoint is outdated and has profoundly altered modern political debate.¹⁹¹

The admixture of current confusion is further complicated by the misuse of the terms—liberal and conservative. Liberalism as used today depicts those on the left wing side of the spectrum who support a redistributive welfare state, as opposed to classical liberalism, which supports the opposite. Yet within the liberal camp there are those who advocate government enforced minority protection, the support of political correctness and prohibitions of hate propaganda. Some within the liberal group feel that freedom of speech is more important than defence of the above programs. Other factions within the liberal camp promote free trade, and conservative economic principles in order to facilitate wealth accretion and thereby fund increased welfare commitments. This faction is opposed by those who believe that any form of market deregulation leads to excessive capitalist control of society and a disregard for labour, environmental and social concerns and that government should increase its regulation of the market. Even given such a dichotomy of concerns it is fair to say that the