

Left and Right Wing Views

Introduction

Look at the following pictures. What political views are these people known for?



Do you know the difference between the 'left' and the 'right' in politics?

The Democrats adopted the donkey as their logo after Andrew Jackson was called a 'jackass' in his 1828 presidential campaign. The Republicans adopted the elephant after a political cartoon in 1874 showed an elephant scaring away the democratic donkey.

Checking understanding

For each of the following, discuss whether you feel it is a right wing view or a left wing view:

- 1 "Higher taxes help to redistribute wealth more fairly"
- 2 "The Government should not hinder business with too many regulations"
- 3 "People on welfare sponge off honest hardworking taxpayers"
- 4 "The Government should make sure minorities are protected"
- 5 "We need to be tough on criminals"
- 6 "Our party is progressive"
- 7 "Our country needs a strong military"
- 8 "We are proud of our country's ideals and heritage"
- 9 "A small government is better"
- 10 "Government should be involved in all areas of citizens' lives"
- 11 "We are pro-abortion and gay rights"
- 12 "We should limit immigration"

The Conservatives

Conservatives include the Conservative Party in the UK and the Republican Party in the US. As the name suggests, they believe in upholding traditional values and hold right-wing views on taxation, welfare and business. The Republican Party is sometimes seen as the choice of the strongly religious, while the Conservative Party in the UK is not strongly connected to religion.



The Liberals

Liberals include the Labour Party in the UK and the Democrats in the US. As their name suggests, they are more 'open' to progressive ideas. They hold left-wing views on taxation, social issues and the role of government. European liberals are more socialist in nature than their American counterparts.



The Libertarians

Libertarians are placed on the right of the political spectrum. They believe in protecting personal liberty as the ultimate goal and they believe in reducing the role of government to achieve this. They may or may not share the conservatives' beliefs in traditional values.



The Socialists

Socialists are the opposite of Libertarians - they believe in a greater role for government. Typically, they believe in nationalization - the government taking ownership of industries, banks and other normally privately-held institutions. They believe in co-operation or collectivism as opposed to individualism. Socialism has long been more popular in Europe than in the United States.



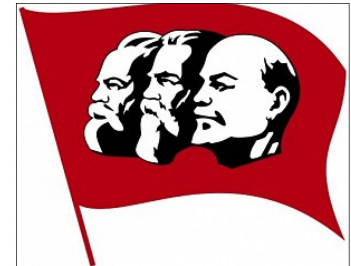
The Far Right

The Far Right is an extreme view of Right Wing ideals. Far Right governments are authoritarian, nationalist, often racist or discriminatory and promote the agenda of a particular group. A good example is Nazi Germany. Perhaps because of Nazi Germany, far right political parties tend to be extremely unpopular in Western Democracies.



The Far Left

An example of far left wing politics is Communism. Under Communism, ideally, there is no private ownership of property and the citizens of a country collectively own all means of production.



The Center

A political party is said to be in the 'center' when it has aspects of the left and right wing ideologies while resisting becoming either too far to the left or the right.

Learn More:

- <http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/visualizations/left-vs-right-world/>
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Left-right_politics
- http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Political_spectrum
- <http://www.wikihow.com/Tell-Whether-You're-Right-Wing-or-Left-Wing>
- <http://www.politicalcompass.org/analysis>

Extended Discussion

1 America basically has a two-party system where one party appeals to the right and one party appeals to the left. Would you say this is an effective system?

2 People sometimes talk about the 'religious right'. Why is religion associated with the right? Does religion have a place in politics?

3 Libertarians are staunch believers in smaller government. Do you feel that the government is too big or has too much power?

4 If there was no other choice, would you prefer to live under an extreme right-wing government or an extreme left-wing government?

5 Some people say that there is no difference between political parties and all politicians are to be mistrusted. What is your opinion of this point of view?

6 Nationalism and patriotism are associated with the right. Is patriotism a good thing?

7 Europe is often thought to be more socialist than the United States. For example, in some countries, healthcare and education are free (but taxes are higher). Would you like to live in such a system?

8 Do you think that Communism could ever be successful?

9 A common stereotype is that people become more conservative as they get older. Do you feel there is any truth to this? If so, why do you think this is?

10 Do you identify more with left or right wing ideas?

11 Do you feel that your country is truly democratic?

12 What changes would you like to see to the current system of government in your country?

