

“Far-Right” - Meaning

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Misuse

The term “far-right” is commonly used to describe a segment of the political spectrum. Many are labelled “far-right” for holding common, moderate, centrist views such as:

- Belief in a strong national identity, and patriotism.
- Support for Christian values and democracy.
- Opposition to uncontrolled immigration.
- Advocacy for a return to traditional social norms and values.
- Presenting themselves as members of the “common people” against perceived corrupt elites or outsiders.
- Opposition to globalism, including scepticism or outright rejection of international alliances.

However, the full meaning of “far-right” characterized by academics, historians, media and journalists, depicts those with extreme conservative or reactionary ideologies. It is clear from the following that the use of the label “far-right” is very often inappropriate to described those holding such common views. While there is some overlap of the two groups, they are not the same and the two groups should not be conflated.

Characterisation

Here are some key features and associations of the true far-right:

1. **Nationalism:**

Far-right movements often emphasize strong national identity, sometimes promoting nationalism to an extreme, including xenophobia and opposition to immigration.

2. **Authoritarianism:**

There is often a preference for a strong, centralized authority, sometimes at the expense of democratic institutions and processes. Far-right groups may support dictatorial leadership or the curtailing of civil liberties.

3. Traditionalism:

Many far-right ideologies advocate for a return to traditional social norms and values, which can include opposition to modern social changes such as gender equality, LGBTQ+ rights, and secularism.

4. Populism:

Far-right rhetoric frequently includes populist elements, presenting themselves as representatives of the “common people” against perceived corrupt elites or outsiders.

5. Racial and Ethnic Supremacy:

Some far-right movements explicitly promote the superiority of a particular race or ethnicity, leading to racist and exclusionary policies.

6. Anti-Globalism:

There is often a strong opposition to globalism, including scepticism or outright rejection of international alliances, trade agreements, and organizations.

The specific policies and attitudes associated with the far-right can vary significantly depending on the country and context. However, the unifying theme is the adoption of extreme conservative positions that resist progressive changes and often target marginalized groups.

Where did the label come from?

The labelling of political groups as “far-right” has evolved over time through a combination of academic analysis, historical precedent, and sociopolitical discourse. Here is an outline of how these labels have been assigned and developed:

1. Historical Precedent:

The term “far-right” originates from the French Revolution, where seating arrangements in the National Assembly placed the most conservative factions on the right. Over time, the term evolved to describe extreme conservative ideologies and movements. For example, in the early 20th

century, fascist movements in Italy and Germany were labeled far-right due to their authoritarian, nationalist, and reactionary policies.

2. Academic Analysis:

Political scientists and historians have systematically studied political ideologies, movements, and parties to categorize them along a left-right spectrum. This categorization is based on a range of factors, including economic policies, social values, and attitudes toward authority and tradition. Through peer-reviewed research, scholars have identified certain movements as far-right based on their characteristics and historical context.

3. Media and Public Discourse:

Journalists, commentators, and public intellectuals play a role in popularizing and disseminating political labels. Media coverage of political events and groups often adopts terminology from academic and historical analysis, thereby reinforcing and spreading the use of terms like “far-right.” Public discourse also reflects societal consensus and debate, further shaping these labels.

4. Self-Identification:

Some groups and individuals openly embrace the far-right label or related terminology (such as nationalist or traditionalist) to describe their own ideologies and policies. This self-identification can influence how they are categorized by others.

5. Government and NGO Reports:

Agencies and organizations involved in monitoring extremism and political violence often use established academic and historical criteria to label groups as far-right. These reports can influence public perception and policy.

6. Comparative Politics:

By comparing different political movements across various countries and historical periods, scholars have developed a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes the far-right. This comparative approach helps in distinguishing far-right ideologies from other conservative or right-leaning positions.

The labelling process is dynamic and often contested, reflecting ongoing debates within academia, media, and society at large about the nature and boundaries of

political ideologies.