

# “Friendly American Fascism”? Definitions and Terminology of Political, Economic and Social Realities

"It Doesn't Feel so Friendly Anymore". Political Anthology and Terminology

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*The United States is only one of many nations around the world that is experiencing a dramatic rise in fascist political movements. NeoFascist political parties have been achieving sizable minorities in several European countries over the past generation, and now America is experiencing the same phenomenon.*

*Hard right-wing political parties in America have been around forever, but they have always been numerically insignificant - until now.*

*Citizens who meet the definition of fascist have come out of the shadows in the US since Donald Trump started campaigning for president of the United States.*

Of course the current hysterical xenophobia (fear of foreigners - a cardinal sign of fascism) has developed strength ever since the United States military destabilized the entire MidEast with its illegal invasions that spawned the Syrian refugee crisis and caused millions of desperate war refugees to seek shelter in foreign countries that can't be expected to easily harbor all of them humanely.

Consider the hatred that must have been generated by America's state-sponsored terrorism in the MidEast, especially the daily acts of cruelty, inhumanity, bombings, massacres and assorted international war crimes that were committed by our soldiers (which have been covered up and gone unpunished).

And then consider America's obvious "we don't give a damn" attitude about the massive human suffering, and one can't claim to be surprised about the occasional acts of retaliatory violence that American officials and their media mouthpieces choose to call Islamic terrorism.

I have been observing the drift toward overt fascism in American for several decades now, but democracy in America has always been just strong enough to keep the movement from over-whelming our supposed democratic ideals.

I used to call what I saw happening to American politics and commerce "Friendly" American Fascism, because of the fake friendly smiles that I have seen on the faces of so many of our nation's proto-fascist leaders that are gradually trying to destroy our democracy.

The contrast from the perpetual frowns on the faces of the infamous Nazis that we loved to hate was striking. It is pretty easy to be deceived by the smiles on the faces of hard-right

wing politicians like Mike Pence, hard right-wing Supreme Court justices like Antonin Scalia, hard right-wing commentators on TV like Bill O'Reilly, hard right-wing Christian clergypersons like Pat Robertson and hard right-wing multibillionaires like the Koch Brothers, all of whom have been greedily gaining control over more and more of our political system, our courts, our cops, our churches, our media, our wealth, and our corporations. (At least the neo-fascist White Supremacists guiding things in Trump's White House [Steve Bannon and Stephen Miller] have unsmiling faces that truly reveal their inner fascist selves.)

Under the illusion of niceness displayed by the most of the un-elected usurpers in the Oval Office, they have been gaining control over the executive branch of government. But the US Senate's role in the friendly fascist rolling coup has been facilitated with the help of another unsmiling curmudgeon - Mitch McConnell.

Another brick in the wall was placed when corporations were granted the privileges (but none of the responsibilities) of personhood in the Supreme Court's Citizen's United decision. But when Christo-fascists in the Fundamentalist movement teamed with the neo-fascists in the Tea Party and took over the Republican Party, "Friendly American Fascism" wasn't so friendly anymore.

The frightening rise in bigotry, white nationalism, white racism, white supremacism, Christian supremacism, the KKK, authoritarianism, the tactics of our increasingly militarized police, voting rights pull-backs for non-white minorities, the vicious xenophobia, intolerance, homophobia, anti-intellectualism, and the obvious tendency for many voters to denigrate science and restrict the civil rights of others is, by definition, fascism.

Therefore it seems way past time for somebody to put down in writing some essential definitions to **de-mystify fascism** that we all should have learned in civics class (but didn't).

So below are a number of definitions of political, economic and social realities that I found online and abridged, including Wikipedia. I hope readers study it, take it seriously and re-read it as needed and perhaps pass it around to others.

The future of our democracy - not to mention the success of any political discussions readers may have with illiberal friends - may depend on it.

## **Political Anthology and Terminology**

**Left-wing politics:** supports social equality and egalitarianism, often in opposition to social hierarchy and social inequality. It typically involves a concern for those in society whom its adherents perceive as disadvantaged relative to others as well as a belief that there are unjustified inequalities that need to be reduced or abolished (by advocating for social justice).

The political terms *Left* and *Right* were coined during the French Revolution (1789-1799), referring to the seating arrangement in the *Estates General*: those who sat on the left generally opposed the **monarchy** and supported the revolution, the creation of a republic and **secularization** (against church involvement in government). Those delegates who sat on the **right** were supportive of the traditional institutions of the Old Regime. The word "wing" was appended to Left and Right in the late 19th century, usually with disparaging intent, and "left-wing" was applied to those

who were unorthodox or heretical in their religious or political views.

The term was later applied to a number of movements, especially **republicanism** during the French Revolution in the 18th century, followed by **socialism, communism, anarchism and social democracy** in the 19th and 20th centuries. Since then, the term *left-wing* has been applied to a broad range of movements including **civil rights** movements, **feminist** movements, **anti-war** movements and **environmental** movements, as well as a wide range of parties.

**Right-wing politics:** Although the **right-wing** originated with **traditional conservatives, monarchists and reactionaries**, the term extreme right-wing has also been applied to movements including **fascists, Nazis, and racial supremacists**. In the United States, the **right** includes both **economic and social conservatives**. In Europe, the Right includes **nationalists, nativists** (opposed to immigration) and **religious conservatives**.

**Democracy** (Literally “rule of the commoners”) is a system of government in which the citizens exercise power directly or elect representatives from among themselves to form a governing body, such as a parliament. Democracy is sometimes referred to as “rule of the majority”. According to political scientist Larry Diamond, democracy consists of four key elements: 1) a political system for choosing and replacing the government through free and fair elections; 2) the active participation of the people, as citizens, in politics and civic life; 3) protection of the human rights of all citizens, and 4) the rule of law, in which the laws and procedures apply equally to all citizens.

**Democracy** contrasts with forms of government where power is either held by an individual, as in an **absolute monarchy**, or where power is held by a small number of individuals, as in an **oligarchy** (rule by “the few”). Most governments have mixed democratic, oligarchic, and monarchic elements. Karl Popper defined **democracy in contrast to dictatorship or rule by a tyrant (tyranny)**, thus focusing on opportunities for the people to control their leaders and to oust them without the need for a revolution.

**Plutocracy** (from Greek *ploutos*, meaning “**wealth**”, and *kratos*, meaning “power, dominion, rule”) is a **form of oligarchy** that defines a society ruled or controlled by a small minority of the wealthiest citizens. Unlike systems such as democracy, capitalism, socialism, plutocracy is not rooted in an established political philosophy. The concept of plutocracy may be advocated by the wealthy classes of a society in an indirect or surreptitious fashion, though the term itself is almost always used in a pejorative sense.

**Liberalism** is a political philosophy founded on ideas of liberty and equality (**egalitarianism**). Whereas **classical liberalism** emphasizes the role of liberty, **social liberalism** stresses the importance of equality.

**Liberals** espouse a wide array of views depending on their understanding of these principles, but generally they support ideas and programs such as **1) freedom of speech, 2) freedom of the press, 3) freedom of religion, 4) free markets, 5) civil rights, 6) democratic societies, 7) secular governments, 8) gender equality, and 9) international cooperation**.

**Socialist political movements** includes a diverse array of political philosophies that

originated amid the revolutionary movements of the mid-to-late 1700s and of a general concern for the social problems that were associated with **capitalism**. **Socialist politics** has been both centralist and decentralized; internationalist and nationalist in orientation; organized through political parties and opposed to party politics; at times overlapping with trade unions and at other times independent of unions.

The term “**democratic socialism**” is often used to highlight its advocates’ high value for democratic processes in the economy. The term is frequently used to draw contrast to the political system of the Soviet Union, which operated in an authoritarian fashion. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels critiqued the economic dynamics of capitalism. For them “socialism” had come to signify opposition to capitalism and advocacy for a post-capitalist system based on some form of social ownership of the means of production. By the 1920s, social democracy and communism became the two dominant political tendencies within the international socialist movement. Socialism proceeded to emerge as the most influential secular political-economic worldview of the twentieth century.

**Socialist parties and ideas** remain a political force with varying degrees of power and influence in all continents, heading national governments in many countries around the world. Today, some socialists have adopted the causes of other social movements, such as **environmentalism, feminism, and liberalism**. **Conservatism** is a political and social philosophy that promotes retaining traditional social institutions in the context of culture and civilization. Conservatives seek to preserve institutions like the Church, monarchy and the social hierarchy as they are, emphasizing stability and continuity, while the more extreme elements called reactionaries seek a return to “the way things were”. Conservatism has been historically associated with right-wing politics.

**Fascism** is a form of radical authoritarian nationalism that came to prominence in early 20th-century Europe. The first fascist movements emerged in Italy during World War I before it spread to other European countries. Violently opposed to **liberalism**, Marxism and anarchism, fascism is usually placed on the far-right within the traditional left-right spectrum.

**Fascists** saw World War I as a revolution that brought massive changes to the nature of war, society, the state, and technology. The advent of **total war** and the total mass mobilization of society had broken down the distinction between civilians and combatants. All citizens were involved with the military in some manner during the war. The war had resulted in the rise of a powerful state capable of mobilizing millions of people to serve on the front lines and provide economic production and logistics to support them, as well as having unprecedented authority to intervene in the lives of citizens.

**Fascists** believe that **liberal democracy** is obsolete, and they regard the complete mobilization of society under a **totalitarian one-party** state as necessary to prepare a nation for armed conflict and to respond effectively to economic difficulties. Such a state is led by a strong leader—such as a **dictator and a martial government** composed of the members of the governing fascist party—to forge national unity and maintain a stable and orderly society.

**Fascism** rejects assertions that violence is automatically negative in nature, and **views political violence, war and imperialism** as means that can achieve national

rejuvenation. Fascist-leaning movements urge large budgetary outlays for war-making and “defense”.

**Political conservatism**, in most modern democracies, seeks to uphold traditional family structures and “values”.

**Cultural conservatives** support the preservation of the heritage of one nation, and they hold fast to traditional ways of thinking even in the face of monumental change. They believe strongly in traditional values and traditional politics, and often have an urgent sense of **nationalism**.

A **social conservative** wants to preserve traditional morality and social mores, often by opposing what they consider radical policies or [social engineering](#). Social change is generally regarded as suspect.

**Christian conservatives** principally seek to apply the theological teachings to politics, sometimes by merely proclaiming the value of those teachings, at other times by having those teachings influence laws. **Christian conservatives** typically oppose abortion, homosexuality, drug use, and sexual activity outside of marriage. For the past generation, many American Christian conservatives have been very active in politics, even envisioning a Christian theocratic state.

**Authoritarian conservatism** refers to autocratic regimes that center their ideology around conservative nationalism and even anti-Semitism.

**Authoritarian conservative movements** show strong devotion towards religion, tradition, and culture and were prominent in the same era as **fascism**, with which it sometimes clashed.

**Neoliberalism (neo-liberalism)** refers primarily to the 20th century resurgence of 19th century ideas associated with *laissez-faire* economic liberalism. These included privatization, fiscal authority, deregulation, free trade and reductions in government spending in order to increase the role of the private sector in the economy and society. These market-based ideas and the policies they inspired constitute a paradigm shift away from the post-war Keynesian consensus which lasted from 1945 to 1980. The implementation of neoliberal policies and the acceptance of neoliberal economic theories in the 1970s are seen by some academics as the root of the financial crisis of 2007-2008.

The term “**neoliberal**” was reintroduced in the 1980s in connection with Augusto Pinochet’s [fascist] economic reforms in Chile. Scholars now tended to associate it with the theories of economist Milton Friedman, along with politicians and policy-makers such as Margaret Thatcher, Ronald Reagan and Alan Greenspan. By 1994, with the passage of NAFTA and the Zapatistas reaction to this development in Chiapas, the term re-entered global circulation.

**Neoconservatism (NeoCon)** is a political movement born in the United States during the 1960s among conservative-leaning Democrats who became disenchanted with the party’s non-interventionist foreign policy. Many of its adherents became politically famous during the Republican presidential administrations of the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s.

**Neoconservatives** peaked in influence during the administration of George W. Bush, when they played a major role in promoting and planning the 2003 invasion of Iraq. Prominent neoconservatives in the George W. Bush administration included Paul Wolfowitz, Elliott Abrams, Richard Perle and Paul Bremer. Senior officials Vice President Dick Cheney and Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, while not identifying as neoconservatives, listened closely to neoconservative advisers regarding their aggressive foreign policy plans, especially the defense of Israel and interventions in the Middle East.

**Neoconservatives** typically advocate the promotion of American national interest in international affairs, including by means of military force.

**Libertarianism** seeks to maximize political freedom and autonomy, emphasizing freedom of choice, voluntary association, self-ownership and the rule of law. **Libertarians** share a skepticism of authority and state power. However, they diverge on the scope of their opposition to existing political and economic systems, often calling to restrict or to dissolve coercive social institutions, such as health care, social security, human rights.

Libertarians usually advocate laissez-faire capitalism and strong private property rights, such as in land, infrastructure, and natural resources. **Economic/social systems**

**1) Capitalism** is an economic system based on private ownership of the means of production and their operation for profit. Characteristics central to capitalism include private property, capital accumulation, wage labor, voluntary exchange, a price system, and competitive markets. In a **capitalist market economy**, decision-making and investment are determined by the owners of the factors of production in financial and capital markets, and prices and the distribution of goods are mainly determined by competition in the market.

Economists, political economists, and historians have adopted different perspectives in their analyses of capitalism and have recognized various forms of it in practice. These include free market capitalism, welfare capitalism and state capitalism. Different forms of capitalism feature varying degrees of free markets, public ownership, obstacles to free competition, and state-sanctioned social politics. The degree of competition in markets, the role of intervention and regulation, and the scope of state ownership vary across different models of capitalism; the extent to which different markets are free, as well as the rules defining private property, are matters of politics and policy. **Capitalism** has existed under many forms of government, in many different times, places, and cultures. Following the decline of mercantilism, mixed capitalist systems became dominant in the Western world and continue to spread.

**2) Socialism** is a range of economic and social systems characterized by social ownership and democratic control of the means of production; as well as the political ideologies, theories, and movements that aim to establish them. Social ownership may refer to forms of public, collective, or cooperative ownership; to citizen ownership of equity; or to any combination of these. Although there are many varieties of socialism and there is no single definition encapsulating all of them, social ownership is the common element shared by its various forms.

**Socialist economic systems** can be divided into both non-market and market forms.

**Non-market socialism** aims to circumvent the inefficiencies and crises traditionally associated with capital accumulation and the profit system. Market socialism, by contrast, retains the use of monetary prices and, in some cases, the profit motive with respect to the operation of socially owned enterprises and the allocation of capital goods between them. Profits generated by these firms would be controlled directly by the workforce of each firm or accrue to society at large in the form of a social dividend. The feasibility and exact methods of resource allocation and calculation for a socialist system are the subjects of the socialist calculation debate.

**3) Communism** is the philosophical, social, political, and economic ideology and movement whose ultimate goal is the establishment of the communist society, which is a socioeconomic order structured upon the common ownership of the means of production and the absence of social classes, money and the state.

**Communism** includes a variety of schools of thought, which broadly include Marxism, anarchism (anarchist communism), and the political ideologies grouped around both. All these share the analysis that the current order of society stems from its economic system, capitalism, that in this system, there are two major social classes: **the working class** (the proletariat) —who must work to survive, and who make up the majority within society—and **the capitalist class** (the bourgeoisie)—a minority who derives profit from employing the working class, through private ownership of the means of production, and that conflict between these two classes will trigger a revolution. The primary element which will enable this transformation, according to this analysis, is the social ownership of the means of production.

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