



The terms left wing or right wing refer to the set of beliefs and ideas that politicians like to follow. In a democracy different political parties have different views on different issues such as taxation, education, health, defence, law and the police.

In Britain today, the three big political parties sit in or close to the centre of the political spectrum. The Labour Party was traditionally the party for the workers and can be described as a left-wing party. The Liberal-Democrats have positioned themselves in the centre, while the Conservative Party can be described as a right-wing party. All three parties try to win as much support as they can, therefore they are not particularly extreme and tend to stay towards the centre of politics. All three parties support the ideas of freedom and democracy. Democracy has been successful in Britain for many years. However, there are extreme groups in Britain on both the left and right wing. These groups are not particularly popular and do not have any seats in Parliament.

In Germany in the 1920s and 1930s, proportional representation meant that even small, extreme parties won seats, even if they wanted to end freedom and democracy for ordinary people. On the far left-wing were the Communists who wanted to overthrow the government and create an equal society as had been tried in Russia in 1917. On the far right-wing were the Nationalists and the Nazis who wanted to scrap democracy and replace it with the rule of a one-man dictatorship. Between 1919-1923 Communists (e.g. the Spartacists in 1919 in Berlin and the Communists in Bavaria also in 1919) and Nationalists (e.g. the Freikorps under Wolfgang Kapp in 1920, and the Nazis in Munich in 1923) tried to destroy the democratic Weimar Republic, but both groups failed. Between 1924-1933 the extremists tried to win popular support through elections instead. Using clever propaganda, and preying on people's fears, both the Communists and the Nazis were very popular by the 1930s.

