**Political Science Terms**

**balance of power** the distribution of power in a system such that no one state may overwhelm others.

**bicameralism** A system of government in which the legislature is divided into two chambers, an upper and lower house.

**bill** A piece of legislation under consideration by a legislative body.

**bureaucracy** A type of administration characterized by specialization, professionalism, and security of tenure.

**checks and balances** A system of government in which power is divided between the executive, legislative and judicial branches of government, and these powers check and balance each other.

**coalition government** A parliamentary government in which the cabinet is composed of members of more than one party.

**coalition** An alliance between two or more political units in response to opposing forces.

**coercion** A form of power based on forced compliance through fear and intimidation.

**confederation** A federal system of government in which sovereign constituent governments create a central government but balance of power remains with constituent governments.

**consent** of the governed People's acceptance of the form of government under which they live.

**constituency** A electoral district with a body of electors who vote for a representative in an elected assembly.

**constitution** The fundamental rules and principles by which a state is organized.

**coup d’état** A forceful and unconstitutional change of government, often by a faction within the military or the ruling party.

**delegate** A representative role in which the individual subordinates his/her views to those of their constituents.

**devolution** A system of government in which the sovereign central government devolves (delegates) power to regional governments.

**diplomacy** A system of formal, regularized communication that allows states to peacefully conduct their business with each other.

**direct democracy** A system of government based on public decisions made by citizens meeting in an assembly or voting by ballot.

**Electoral College** The body which formally chooses the president.

**ethnic group** A group whose common identity is based on racial, national, or religious association.

**executive** A small group of elected officials who direct the policy process, and oversee the vast array of departments and agencies of government.

**extractive laws** Laws designed to collect taxes from citizens to pay for governing society.

**federalism** A system of government in which sovereignty is divided between a central government and several provincial or state governments.

**feminism** The belief that society is disadvantageous to women, systematically depriving them of individual choice, political power, economic opportunity and intellectual recognition.

**head of government** The person in effective charge of the executive branch of government; the prime minister in a parliamentary system.

**head of state** An individual who represents the state but does not exercise political power.

**human rights** Rights thought to belong to all people simply because they are human beings.

**ideology** A system of beliefs and values that explains society and prescribes the role of government.

**international law** The body of rules governing the relationships of states with each other.

**International Monetary Fund** An international organization created to prevent another collapse in the world monetary system through the stabilization of national currencies throughout the world.

**international relations** An area of political study concerned with the interaction of independent states.

**judicial activism** The willingness and inclination of judges to overturn legislation or executive action.

**judicial review** The power of the courts to declare legislation unconstitutional (ultra vires).

**judiciary** The branch of government with the power to resolve legal conflicts that arise between citizens, between citizens and governments, or between levels of government.

**legislature** A representative assembly responsible for making laws for society.

**legislature** The branch of government responsible for making laws for society.

**legitimacy** Belief in the "rightness" of rule.

**liberal democracy** A system of government characterized by universal adult suffrage, political equality, majority rule and constitutionalism.

**Magna Carta** (Great Charter) A document signed by King John in 1215, conceding that the king is subject to law.

**majority government** A parliamentary government in which the party in power has over 50 percent of the seats in the legislature.

**ministry** The entire group of MPs appointed by the Prime Minister to specific ministerial responsibilities.

**minority government** A parliamentary government in which the government party has less than 50 percent of the seats in the legislature.

**modernization** The gradual replacement of traditional authority with legal authority.

**monarchy** Form of government in which a single person rules under the law.

**multipolar** A system of actions involving several states.

**national interest** Interests specific to a nation-state, including especially survival and maintenance of power.

**nationalism** The feeling of loyalty and attachment to one's nation or nation-state, and strong support for its interests.

**plebiscite** Another term for an advisory referendum.

**political party** An organized group that makes nominations and contests elections in the hope of influencing the personnel and policy of government.

**political philosophy** An area of political study based on historical, reflective and conceptual methods.

**politics** A process of conflict resolution in which support is mobilized and maintained for collective action.

**power** The ability to get other individuals to do as one wants them to do.

**privatization** The sale of government-owned assets or activities to the private sector.

**proclamation** The announcement of the official date a new law will take effect.

**referendum** A decision on policy proposals by a direct vote of the electorate.

**residual powers** Those powers in a federal system of government not explicitly allocated in a constitution.

**separation of powers** The separation of powers between executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government.

**society** A self-sufficient group of individuals living together under common rules of conduct.

**sovereign** The highest or supreme political authority.

**subjects** Members of a society who are not involved in the political process of that society.

**unitary system** A system of government in which a single sovereign government rules the country.

**unwritten constitution** An uncodified constitution established through traditional practice.

**veto** The authorized power of a president to reject legislation passed by Congress.

**violence** The utilization of physical force or power as a means of achieving ends.

**welfare state** The provision for redistributive benefits such as education and health services by the state.

**World Trade Organization** An international organization created to provide the ground rules for international trade and commerce.