ROUTLEDGE KEY GUIDES

Politics

The Key Concepts

Lisa Harrison, Adrian Little and Edward Lock

POLITICS

Politics: The Key Concepts is an up-to-date and broad-ranging introduction to the terms that lie at the heart of political discourse. Entries are drawn from areas such as political theory, international politics, political science and methodology. As well as explaining core, established principles, this informative guide explores some of the more complex, topical and contested concepts from the world of politics. Concepts covered include:

- Capitalism
- Class
- Identity
- Institutionalism
- Referendum
- Marxism
- Pluralism
- Postmodernism
- Socialism
- Constructivism.

In an accessible A–Z format with helpful cross-referencing and suggestions for further reading, *Politics: The Key Concepts* is an invaluable reference for all students of politics, international relations and related courses.

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POLITICS

The Key Concepts

Lisa Harrison, Adrian Little and Edward Lock

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PREFACE

This *Key Concepts* text has been written with several aims in mind. First, we have sought to avoid an approach which treats political theory, political science and international relations as distinct fields. Whilst it will be clear from each entry that not every concept relates to each of these 'themes', we did want to show that these concepts are used and discussed in different normative and empirical contexts. Increasingly, such concepts take an 'international turn' which generates new priorities, questions and considerations.

Second, we wanted to offer readers something of substance to grapple with. General textbooks often offer short definitions before choosing specific case studies for comparative analytical purposes. What is offered here is different to a politics dictionary or comparative politics textbook. We have selected political concepts which are 'contested'. By this we mean there is no agreed simple definition, but in fact these concepts lie at the heart of much political argument. Whilst we are unable to give full and exhaustive explanations, what we will do is highlight the main sources of antagonism, and in particular whether there have been paradigm shifts.

Third, we have chosen the examples to reflect our own experience of teaching to incorporate the concepts which we believe students find most challenging. Where relevant, each concept is cross referenced to other related entries. We have not designed this text with a specific course or module in mind but hope that students undertaking a range of politics and international relations degrees will find it a helpful reference point throughout their studies. The inclusion of further reading suggestions will direct readers to more detailed and advanced debates.

Finally, we would like to thank all those colleagues, friends and family who have supported us in producing this book. In particular we would like to thank the two research assistants who worked with Adrian at the University of Melbourne, Sana Nakata and Ben Glasson.

LIST OF KEY CONCEPTS

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ANARCHY

Literally, the term 'anarchy' describes an absence of **authority** within a community. Imagine a country or city with no government, no laws and no police and you are imagining an anarchic community. This is a foreign notion to most of us, as we live in **nation-states** with clearly defined hierarchical structures of authority. In simple terms, we can think of these as communities in which one person or institution – such as a monarch or government – has authority over others. In reality, however, most countries have complex hierarchical structures in which political authority is distributed and shared amongst an array of different levels of government and types of institution.

Indeed, anarchy has been a historical rarity within political communities, which raises the question of why it might be an important concept in the fields of political science and **international relations**. First, the concept of anarchy has an important place in political philosophy. Several of the political philosophical texts that have had a major influence on the design of democratic governments – including works by John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and Jean Jacques Rousseau – incorporate descriptions of what anarchy might look like in the context of efforts to justify certain models of political order. Hobbes (2010), for example, described human life in an anarchic system – or what he and others termed the 'state of nature' – as being 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short', and he used this pessimistic vision as a means of supporting his argument that a strong central government – a 'leviathan' – was necessary to preserve order in human life. More generally, ideas about how people might behave under conditions of anarchy were used by political philosophers in their efforts to define the necessary features of a successful and legitimate model of government.

Second, it has often been argued that one of the defining features of the international political system is that it is anarchical. Again, to make this claim is to argue that there is no institution (or person!) that holds authority over the members of the international political system (which are often considered to be nation-states). The key reason for this is that nation-states are deemed to possess **sovereignty**. Sovereignty is a legal principle that asserts, amongst other things, that each nation-state ought to be subject to no external source of authority. It is because of the sovereign independence of each nation-state, therefore, that the international system has traditionally been held to exist in a state of anarchy. This claim is important for a number

of reasons, not least because it is this claim that has been used to justify the independence of the field of international relations (IR) from the broader discipline of political science (Linklater 1990; Wight 1966). If political scientists focus on the analysis of the hierarchical forms of politics that exist within nation-states, scholars of international politics claim expertise in the analysis of the qualitatively distinct form of politics that takes place in the anarchic international system.

Realists, in particular, have stressed the importance of the concept of anarchy by highlighting the implications that follow from the lack of a central source of authority within the international system (Mearsheimer 2001; Morgenthau 1993; Waltz 1979). Realists have contended that the absence from international politics of anything like a nation-state's central **government** results in the absence of many of the features of political life that a central government might provide. Perhaps the key general point made by realists is that because there is no central authority within the international system, its members are forced to look after themselves. Put simply, there is no international police force or ambulance service to protect or care for the members of the international political system should they find themselves in trouble. This is the reason that realists consider **war** to be a constant possibility within international politics; under anarchy there is simply no authority figure that can be relied upon to prevent it.

Realists also suggest that the absence of any world state or government means that there is no authority that can enforce either international laws or agreements between states. Realists have long doubted the effectiveness of international laws regarding, for example, the prevention of war, not because they are unworthy but because there is little to stop an aggressive nation-state that is intent on breaching them (Morgenthau 1993). Similarly, realists are pessimistic regarding the possibility of widespread cooperation between states (Waltz 1979). Because, within an anarchic system, there is no authority capable of enforcing contracts, nation-states must always be wary that the agreements they reach with others do not leave them open to exploitation. Finally, realists also question the importance of the international institutions that have been created in order to serve some of the functions that, within a hierarchic political system, would be carried out by the central government (Mearsheimer 1994/5). The very claim that the international system is anarchic implies that institutions such as the United Nations, World Trade Organization and World Bank do not possess authority and,

therefore, are relatively powerless and unimportant within international politics.

For realists, anarchy is considered to be a fact of international political life, and one that statesmen would do well to appreciate. Scholars from other schools of thought within IR have challenged this position, however. English School theorists, while acknowledging the importance of anarchy, have argued that we live in an international society rather than an international system (Bull 2002; Linklater and Suganami 2006). If an anarchical society may lack a central source of authority as realists suggest, English School theorists contend that members of such a society may nevertheless develop common values, construct international institutions and abide by international rules and laws. Constructivists too suggest that the implications of anarchy are not set in stone, arguing that 'anarchy is what states make of it' (Wendt 1992). This claim is meant to highlight that what international anarchy means for nation-states is socially constructed and that while the meaning of anarchy may well have been constructed in terms of danger, uncertainty and self-interest in the past, this does not make this meaning natural or inevitable. Finally, Critical Theorists and Poststructuralists have sought to highlight the continued political role that the claim regarding the anarchic nature of international politics plays. This claim serves to legitimise the autonomy of sovereign states and the authority of their governments even as it delegitimises the authority of and roles played by international institutions and non-state actors (Ashley 1988; Cox 1981; Linklater 1990).

Finally, while much of the discussion above has focused on the problems associated with anarchy, there have been some who have advocated it as a desirable, legitimate political model (Proudhon 2007 [1840]; Wolff 1998). The argument in favour of anarchism is twofold. On the one hand, proponents of anarchy take exception to the suggestion that anarchy can be equated with disorder and chaos. As English School theorists of international relations have suggested, an anarchic society can be ordered by rules, but such rules must be created and enforced only through collective decisions that reach consensus, and not merely by an authoritative institution or individual. On the other hand, proponents of anarchism argue that a political community that lacks structures of authority is one where individual autonomy and responsibility are maximised.

Further reading: Ashley 1988; Mearsheimer 1994/5; Powell 1994; Waltz 1979; Wendt 1987; Wolff 1998.

ARMS CONTROL

An arms control agreement is an agreement – often but not necessarily between **nation-states** – designed to control the development, possession or use of weapons. 'Control' is an important if somewhat ambivalent term here, because although we might assume that the universal purpose of arms control agreements is to reduce the number of weapons possessed by states, this is not necessarily the case. Indeed, the practical terms of such agreements may vary widely, ranging from the banning of the development or possession of any and all weapons (total disarmament) to the prohibition of the use of only certain weapons and only in specific places or situations. The formality and scope of arms control agreements also vary. An arms control agreement may take the form of an informal agreement between two states or it may consist of a formal treaty, ratified by a great many states and supported by an international institution. The most obvious example of such a formal and extensive arms control agreement is the nuclear non-proliferation treaty (NPT), signed by 168 states and supported by the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) which is based in Vienna, Austria.

While the specific form and content of arms control agreements may vary, they are generally made with either or both of two intentions in mind. The first of these is the limitation of the potential costs of war; the second is the limitation of the likelihood of war. To use an arms control agreement to limit the potential costs of war is to follow a simple logic: if people (or countries) possess fewer weapons, then war between them will cause less harm. Unsurprisingly, this model of arms control has most frequently been employed in relation to weapons of mass destruction (WMD), such as chemical, biological and nuclear weapons (Blix 2008). Take, for example, the Strategic Arms Reduction Treaties (START) signed between the United States and Russia. Through these agreements, the most recent of which was ratified in 2011, the two countries have agreed to reduce the number of nuclear warheads possessed by each from tens of thousands to fewer than 2,000. While this form of arms control agreement has typically focused on WMD, efforts have also been made in the post-Cold War era to reduce the numbers of small arms and light weapons (Rogers 2009).

The alternative objective pursued through the use of arms control agreements has been the reduction of the likelihood of conflict. Unfortunately, however, considerable disagreement exists regarding what causes **war** to occur. This matters greatly because unless we understand why wars happen we will be unable to determine how

arms control agreements might make war less likely. For example, some have argued that total disarmament – the abolition of all weapons – would reduce the likelihood of war because it would both delegitimise violence and make preparation for war more difficult. Others argue, as the saying goes, 'if you want peace, prepare for war'. This saying rests on the belief that the only sure way to prevent others using force against you is to threaten them with even greater force. The tension between these positions persists. On the one hand, disarmament remains a goal advanced by various politicians, policy makers and peace activists, and on the other, many states continue to live by the maxim noted above and spend considerable sums on the development of their military capabilities.

If efforts to achieve total disarmament have a less than impressive historical record, those that seek to limit the occurrence of war through the achievement of less extensive arms control objectives have been more successful. Such arms control agreements arguably have reduced the likelihood of conflict in either or both of two ways. On the one hand, many arms control agreements have concentrated on controlling the development and use of specific types of weapons, where those weapons have been deemed to be particularly likely to destabilise peace between states. On the other hand, arms control agreements may have reduced the likelihood of war not by their practical effects on the use and deployment of weapons, but instead because of the nature of the process that states must go through to reach such agreements.

Let us start with the first of these: arms control agreements that are designed to control the development, deployment and use of particular types of weapons that are deemed to be most likely to destabilise peace and so encourage war. Arms control agreements of this type may be diverse in character, and may preclude signatories from researching and developing technology that would give them a decisive advantage in battle, stockpiling weaponry that is offensive (rather than defensive) in nature, or deploying weapons or weapons systems in particular geographical or spatial regions. One can find specific examples of each of these types of agreements having been used in the past century; what is common to all is that they are designed to promote **peace** by limiting the likelihood of war.

The criticism that is sometimes made of such agreements is that, if they are to be constructed, a considerable level of cooperation must be achieved within relationships that are already characterised by mistrust and tension. States within the relationship must shift from the competitive pursuit of advantage to the mutual recognition of the

dangers of war and the cooperative pursuit of stability and peace. If tensions between states are already high, achieving this shift would seem to be very difficult. This has led some to believe that arms control is likely to be least effective when it is most necessary and most successful in instances where it is not really needed.

It is at this point that the final function of arms control mentioned above becomes relevant. Arms control agreements are not merely important in terms of the practical outcomes that they produce; they are also significant as processes that are undertaken by states. The key point made by scholars and practitioners here is that trust is something that can be built over time, and the negotiation of arms control treaties is a practice that states can engage in so that they can build such trust. In this light, the specific terms of such agreements – the types of weapons that they ban or the limitations that they impose on signatories – are less important than are the processes that states must go through to produce such agreements. If previously warring states can initiate arms control discussions they may be able to build upon this limited cooperation to construct relations of mutual respect and trust in the future.

Further reading: Larsen and Wirtz 2009; Quinlan 2009; Sidhu and Thakur 2006; Williams and Viotti 2012.

AUTHORITY

The term authority describes either the right to be obeyed, or the capacity to have one's decisions or orders obeyed, without the need for coercion or persuasion. As such, the term is closely related to the concept of **power**, understood to be the capacity for one actor to get another to do something that they otherwise would not do. The crucial distinction between power in general and authority in particular, is that authority is not dependent upon the use of threats or incentives. Thus, a thief armed with a gun may threaten a person and force them to give up their money or a fraudster may use trickery to persuade a person to hand over their cash, but neither of these instances would seem to involve authority. A **government**, on the other hand, can take a citizen's money without recourse to persuasion or threats because they are deemed to have the authority to collect taxes.

However, the definition above actually incorporates two quite different understandings of 'authority', and the differences between these are important. The distinction here rests on whether we think of authority as a **right** to have orders obeyed or as the capacity to

have orders obeyed. And this distinction is important. After all, we may accept that a police officer has the right to be obeyed even though they may not always be obeyed in fact. Alternatively, a dictator may always be obeyed in fact even though many might dispute the idea that they possess a right to be obeyed. Authority is therefore a term used in two different ways. On the one hand, it is sometimes used normatively as a term that describes what should happen and who should be obeyed. On the other hand, it is sometimes used empirically as a term that describes what actually happens and who actually is obeyed.

To define it as a right to be obeyed reminds us that we typically think of authority as a product of legal or institutional rules. A country's laws, the most important of which is often the constitution, define who has the right to exercise authority and what the scope of that authority is. The constitution of the United States, for example, gives certain areas of authority to the president and certain areas of authority to the Congress. Similarly, most organisations and institutions are built around rules which, amongst other things, dictate who has the right to be obeyed. In a company, for example, a manager tends to have authority over those they are managing. The scope of that authority tends to be limited to work-related matters only; your boss is unlikely to have the authority to tell you what to eat for dinner.

When we think of authority as a right to be obeyed, we often link it to another important concept, that of **legitimacy** (Beetham 1991; Peter 2008). In an ideal sense, we might assume that only those whose occupation of a position of power is consented to by a majority can hold authority – the legitimate right to be obeyed by others. In more practical terms, however, we often rely on institutional and legal structures and rules to determine who should have authority and who should not. In other words, it is common today within both states and international and non-state institutions, for authority to be vested within bureaucratic structures, where whoever occupies certain institutional positions gains authority over others merely by doing so. Thus, for example, we obey a police officer because of their identity as a police officer; we may know little or nothing about the individual person who occupies that role.

This is by no means the only understanding of legitimacy, however, and therefore legal and institutional rules are not the only sources of authority. This is necessary if we accept that authority can exist outside of formal legal and institutional orders. That this matters is clear in a number of ways. First, we often speak of a parent exercising authority within a family, or a person exercising authority

within an informal club or group, and when we do so we are tacitly accepting the claim that authority is not always tied to formal legal rules. Second, given the comparative weakness of formal legal or institutional rules governing the realm of international politics, we would not be able to use the concept of authority when speaking of international relations unless we conceive of authority as not being necessarily tied to such rules. That we do speak of authority in the international sphere is clear (Orford 2011), and thus we must understand authority as existing in forms other than those associated with the government of a political community.

But what other forms of authority might exist? Max Weber (1968) famously identified three different forms of authority, the first of which he described as legal-rational authority. It is legal-rational authority that most closely corresponds to the vision of legitimate authority discussed above. Weber goes on to discuss two other forms of authority, however, those being associated respectively with tradition and charisma.

Traditional authority is that form of authority that is derived from custom or tradition; long-standing practices that, over time, become embedded within society to the extent that they generate certain forms of obedience from people. This form of authority is often thought of as a historical relic, often being associated with the hereditary right to rule of medieval monarchs; when one monarch died, authority was transferred to their heir. Traditional authority may, in practice, continue to play an important role in society. In many countries, the authority of the government rests in part on traditional notions of nationalism and patriotism as well as on the legal-rational-bureaucratic structures that operate within states. In the international arena, it has been traditional for great powers to exercise some authority over those states that surround them and that constitute their so-called 'spheres of influence'. However, there is no doubting that tradition is a less frequently accepted justification for the exercise of authority in the contemporary era, where we tend not to think that someone should be obeyed today just because they have been obeyed in the past.

The final form of authority noted by Weber is charismatic authority; authority which stems from the characteristics of an individual rather than from traditional or legal-rational rules or structures. This form of authority can operate in a number of ways but is understood by those following Weber to rest on the 'gift of grace or exceptional magnetism' (Nye 2008: 37) that causes people to obey a particular individual. There is no doubt that charisma is important in the

political systems of many states today. The near permanent media coverage of politics and politicians in developed states means that image and presentation are almost as important (if not more important) as experience and policy stance. Political leaders who lack charisma can find it very hard to maintain popularity and authority. Alternatively, those who run for office already having celebrity status, and Arnold Schwarzenegger must be a prime example here, have a significant advantage in terms of winning office and in exercising authority once in office. As is the case with traditional authority, however, while charismatic authority clearly matters in society today, it is rarely seen as generating a legitimate right to be obeyed.

Further reading: Lincoln 1995; Peter 2008.

BALANCE OF POWER

The balance of power is a concept that has been of central interest to scholars of international affairs for many years. This concept is most strongly associated with the international relations (IR) theory of **realism**. This is because the concept of the balance of power is closely connected to those of **power** and **security**, both key concerns of realist scholars. Despite its centrality to the discipline of IR, the 'balance of power' remains a somewhat ambiguous term whose meaning varies depending on the context in which it is used. At least three different usages of the term 'balance of power' are evident in IR literature. While it is important to understand these different usages of the term, the three remain interrelated as we shall see below.

First, the term is used *descriptively* to depict the distribution of power amongst states in a particular period of **international relations**. The most common means of describing the distribution of power within a particular system is to note the number of 'great powers' – the most powerful states – within that system. A system in which three or more great powers dominate international politics is described as a multipolar system, meaning that power within that system is concentrated around multiple 'poles' or powerful states. Alternatively, an international system may be described as being bipolar, where power is shared amongst two great or superpowers, or unipolar, where a single state dominates international politics. The international system during the Cold War is the preeminent example of a bipolar order, with power shared between the United States and the Soviet Union. The post-Cold War international system is often described as being (or having been) a unipolar one due to the dominant position of the United States. The key point here is

that – at least in terms of the descriptive usage of this concept – to understand what the balance of power is at a particular point in time one must measure the relative power of states and determine which one or more of those states is/are most powerful.

Second, we can also understand the balance of power as an *explanatory* concept; that is, as a concept that helps us explain certain features of international politics. It is in this sense that scholars have argued that there is a relationship between the balance of power and the stability of the international system. This is not to say that scholars agree as to the nature of this relationship, however. One prominent argument has been made by Kenneth Waltz (1979). Waltz argued that when the power of the key states in the international system is balanced (i.e. all great powers are relatively equal in terms of their wealth and military capabilities), the international system will be stable. It was for this reason that Waltz saw the Cold War era, in which power was shared between the US and the Soviet Union, as being a particularly stable era in international politics. Others have challenged this claim, and argued that an imbalance of power is most likely to promote peace, pointing to the apparent absence of war between great powers since the ending of the Cold War and the rise to dominance of the US (e.g. Wohlforth 1999). In both of these cases, the balance of power is used to explain key features of international politics.

Finally, the term 'balance of power' is sometimes used in a *prescriptive* manner; that is, as a guide to policy for nation-states. In general, this advice centres on the need for states to balance the power of those who might threaten them. To balance the power of another is to generate equal or greater power, with power generally being understood in military terms. The rationale for this policy advice is that by balancing the power of others, one can be sure of being able to deter or defeat any threats. Balancing as a strategy can be implemented through domestic policies aimed at enhancing the military capability of a state as well as through foreign policies designed to build alliances with other states, and there are many historical examples of states taking either or both of these courses of action. For example, if we look at the patterns of nuclear weapons development, we can see evidence of states responding to the nuclear weapons programmes of their rivals with programmes of their own. The Soviet Union quickly sought to develop nuclear weapons following the United States' efforts in this field, as did Pakistan after India's explosion of a nuclear weapon in 1974. Alternatively, the use of alliances to balance power is commonly associated with European international

politics during the nineteenth century and, in particular, with British foreign policy in this period. During this era, Great Britain allied itself with a number of European states so as to preserve a balance of power within Europe and thereby preclude the possibility of a single state rising to threaten Britain's imperial might.

More recent interest in the concept of the balance of power has centred on the current position of the United States, seen by many as having held a uniquely powerful position in world politics since the end of the Cold War. A key question has been whether or not other states are likely to adopt balancing strategies against the US and, if so, what form those balancing strategies might take. Steven Walt (2005) has argued that we are likely to see a state (such as China) or a coalition of states attempt to balance the power of the United States. Others have made the argument that such balancing has indeed been taking place and will continue to do so, but it has taken a new form; that of soft balancing (see Pape 2005 and Paul 2005). The concept of soft balancing has been developed to highlight the non-military means that states can use to counter the power of their rivals. It has been used to highlight how states might challenge the dominance of the US without engaging in costly military spending or the creation of formal alliances. However, some remain convinced that the power advantage held by the United States is so great that no other state can or will try to balance against it (Brooks and Wohlforth 2008).

Further reading: Ikenberry 2002; Keohane 1986; Paul et al. 2004; Sheehan 1996; Waltz 1979, 2008.

BUREAUCRACY

Bureaucracy is a concept which is applied to a particular group (such as a civil service) but may also be understood as a process of decision making and administration. It is a core feature of modern states and its function is one factor which assists in distinguishing democracies from autocracies. Bureaucracy describes the organising principles behind the effective functioning of institutions. Indeed, it is argued that a modern political system cannot operate without a bureaucracy as the volume and breadth of politics is too great – the broader the range of public service, the greater the need for bureaucracy. Beetham (1996) makes the distinction between the study of bureaucracy as a type of political system compared with as a system of administration.

For Weber, bureaucracy was (i) located in a central place, which has been critiqued from a Marxist perspective that places greater emphasis on the *function* of bureaucracy in a class society, and (ii) equated to

efficient administration, though this notion of efficiency has been challenged by others. Weber developed the idea of convergence thesis, that is all political states become alike in terms of bureaucratic organisation, regardless of political ideology (the most obvious distinction being between capitalist and communist regimes).

Theorising about bureaucracy was a priority of Max Weber who identified several core features: (i) bureaucracies operate a clear hierarchy; (ii) they are salaried; (iii) status is linked to the position, not to the person; (iv) appointment should be by skill not patronage; (v) decision making is formalised; and (vi) their function is to collect data to develop technical expertise. There are three important themes for exploration from a political standpoint. The first relates to the question of whether a bureaucracy should be representative, and if so, of whom? Second is the concern surrounding how much 'power' a bureaucracy should hold; indeed, how easy is it to distinguish clearly between agenda setting, decision making and policy implementation? As a consequence of this we proceed to the third question – accountability.

Bureaucracy and representation

For Weber, large-scale bureaucratisation was a democratising development – talent replaces nepotism and patronage – but also a self-perpetuating one: 'The process of democratization, which had succeeded in levelling traditional distinctions of social rank, had created a more powerful authority system in their place. The only way for the subordinate to moderate its control was to create an organization of their own (interest group, trade union, political party) which would be subject to the same process of bureaucratization in its turn' (Beetham 1996: 54).

Beetham (1996) goes on to distinguish between professionalised representatives (the politicians selected by democratic processes) and professionalised advisers/implementers. For some considerable time it has been the intention of liberal democracies to professionalise the profile of bureaucrats and the Northcote-Trevelyan Report (1854) was central to facilitating this in the UK. As a result, it is possible to question whether we can distinguish a 'bureaucratic class'. However, ability and political neutrality do not necessarily go hand in hand. In France and the USA, for example, some administrative appointments are direct political appointments (such as the French *chef de cabinet*). Under the pre-reform Soviet system, a whole raft of bureaucratic appointments was decided by *Nomenklatura*

(party approval). Thus, the autonomy of a bureaucracy can be manifested in different ways.

It is also argued that bureaucracies lend themselves to self-preservation and expansion (Niskanen 1971) which unchecked generates oversupply and 'big government'. Such wide-scale managerialism was a target of the New Right in the 1980s, epitomised by the reforms of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative administration in the UK (Tonge 1999). Most recently, research has focused upon the concept of policy networks – particularly with the emergence of governance at the supranational level (such as the 'eurocrats' of the European Commission).

Bureaucracy and power

A key issue is the extent to which bureaucrats remain distinct from political decision makers. As bureaucracies are not directly elected their function is to offer expert advice and to implement policy once decisions have been made. Whilst this distinction may be a clear one in principle, it is much more challenging to evidence in the everyday practice of politics. Indeed, the continuity offered by career civil servants can provide some stability after a radical change in government which sees relatively amateur politicians taking over the reins of power. It may come as little surprise that the UK civil service was described as 'Britain's ruling class' at one point (Kellner and Crowther-Hunt 1980).

Beetham identifies a third usage of the term bureaucracy, referring specifically to the process of *public* administration. The 1980s marked a shift in interest towards the concept of New Public Management (NPM) which influenced attitudes towards bureaucracy in states such as the USA, UK, Australia and New Zealand and which challenged the appropriateness of 'big government'. The priority became one of efficient service delivery. NPM is founded upon a tension between two interests, traditional value-based bureaucratic models and market-driven consumerist models which privilege performance and delivery. This was exemplified in the UK in the 1990s when the then Home Secretary clashed with the prison service over 'responsibility' for an outbreak of prisoner escapes (Woodhouse 1993).

Bureaucracy and accountability

So where does accountability for 'bad policy' ultimately lie? '[Bureaucrats'] concern for policy is in the first instance with its feasibility – whether it can be implemented and how – more than

acceptability. But they take no responsibility for the policy itself; their responsibility is that of the subordinate, to accept what representatives decide or approve as their instruction' (Beetham 1996: 93).

The main challenge when assessing politics in practice, according to Beetham, is separating ends from means: what if the bureaucrats seek to influence by presenting biased information? What if implementation is flawed? A bureaucracy is often perceived as being resistant to change – hence, the tendency for ideological clashes which typified the UK Conservative administration from 1979–97. J. Q. Wilson (1989) states that bureaucracy as a concept has come to enshrine negative connotations: inflexibility, lack of accountability, inefficiency. As Ball and Guy Peters succinctly state: 'there remain some obstacles to democratic control, such as the permanence of many public servants, their expertise, and the size, complexity and secretive nature of modern bureaucracies' (2005: 240–41).

Further reading: Wilson 1989; Beetham 1996.

CAPITALISM

The key elements of what we now know as capitalism began to emerge in the eighteenth century and it is frequently associated with the work of Adam Smith in particular. However, it is in the nineteenth century that we see the development of the form of industrial capitalism that would become dominant alongside the liberal democratic state, industrialisation and urbanisation in many Western societies. Although the emergence of capitalism was primarily seen as a development of the economic system, arguably it has become a much more contentious *political* phenomenon since its inception. Many of the fault lines of twentieth-century political theory were in response to arguments about the nature of the capitalist system, ways in which its outcomes could be ameliorated, techniques of managing its interface with the state to enable it to work efficiently and so forth.

The theory of capitalism is usually associated with Smith's work, in particular *The Wealth of Nations* published in 1776. Here he argues that the operation of the economy should reflect the prevalence of individual self-interest, that the role of the state in the economy should be minimal and that free trade is a key determinant of economic growth. Moreover, he argues strongly in favour of the division of labour and deregulation of the labour market to enable greater competition. Not surprisingly, these ideas were resurrected with the emergence of neo-liberalism as an economic and political programme in the 1970s and 1980s. Although twentieth-century economists such

as Hayek and Friedman were often cited as the theoretical mainstays of neo-liberalism by advocates of Thatcherite or Reaganite political agendas, Smith was often deployed to reinforce these perspectives, especially in support of the 'invisible hand' of the **market** as a more desirable regulatory tool than the state.

The assumptions underpinning capitalist forms of economic organisation are based around the centrality of economic growth, the pursuit of profit and the desirability of capital accumulation. These values are reinforced by a faith in the distribution of goods through supply and demand and, in particular, the disciplinary regulation of demand as the primary generator of economic competition and efficiency. Clearly, this model of economic organisation requires the production of tradable commodities and a system of exchange and property ownership that enables the acquisition of goods. Beyond these basic principles, however, the social and political ramifications of these kinds of economic arrangement have caused considerable controversy.

Karl Marx is renowned for his critique of capitalism and of course his work continues to resonate with opponents of capitalism today. His critique was multifaceted, ranging from a focus on the alienation that emanated from the capitalist division of labour in his early work through to discussion of the inevitable demise of capitalism and the establishment of a communist society, to a more technical engagement with the economics of capitalism in the three volumes of *Capital*. In Marx's work then, the deleterious impact of the capitalist economy on wider society is the primary focus as well as analysis of the ways in which the economic agenda of capitalism will ultimately lead to its downfall. A key doctrine of **Marxism** is that capitalism creates its own gravediggers in the shape of the industrial working class.

The neo-liberal agenda that came to dominate several influential Western societies such as the USA and UK in the latter part of the twentieth century was underpinned by a range of assumptions about the nature of capitalism, the primacy of markets and the need to protect them from state interference and **bureaucracy**. Neo-liberals argued that capitalist systems were the most efficient form of economic distribution if **market** mechanisms were able to operate relatively untouched by state interference. This extended to general opposition to the state and the way in which it managed a wide range of public services including welfare, education, housing and health. Unfettered capitalist markets, on the other hand, were promoted as the generators of the greatest wealth in society as a whole which, although mainly acquired by the already wealthy, would 'trickle down' to the less affluent parts of society. This form of capitalism was

deemed to be much more effective in distributing wealth than a system where the state intervened in such a way as to prevent markets operating efficiently in the first place. So, for neo-liberals, a desirable capitalist system was one where the state would not regulate economic relationships through attempting to redistribute wealth and provide public services (beyond the minimal levels required to maintain public order).

There are many variants of capitalism despite the tendency of many of its critics to discuss it in terms of a singular system. So, while it might be a useful shorthand for analysis of the kinds of general principle outlined above, it is perhaps more fruitful to specify particular types of capitalism in any kind of critical analysis. In particular, it is worth differentiating alternative models to the neo-liberal system which became so dominant in the USA and the UK in the 1980s. While neo-liberalism remains a powerful set of ideas within global capitalism (especially after the global financial crisis), it is not the only formation of capitalism in the contemporary world. Indeed, the emergence of neo-liberalism was primarily as a critique of an alternative model of capitalism, the Keynesian welfare state (KWS), which had dominated the Western world in the post-Second World War period. The KWS was a means of alleviating **market** failure and the iniquitous outcomes that capitalism delivered through state management of the economy in such a way as to generate sufficient resources to maintain the welfare system. However, other capitalist societies have also had much more interventionist state mechanisms, such as those which have traditionally pertained in Germany, Scandinavia and Japan (Hutton 1996). So, while capitalism is a useful shorthand term for a broadly construed form of economic organisation, in terms of critical engagement it is more useful to engage with the strengths and weaknesses of particular capitalist systems.

Further reading: Friedman 1962; Hayek 2009; Hutton 1996; Keynes 2007; Marx 1970; Smith 1981.

CITIZENSHIP

The concept of citizenship is commonplace in contemporary political **discourse**. However, its theoretical roots can be traced back to Ancient Greece and the idea of the value of civic participation in democratic societies. Although its popularity has waxed and waned historically, the post-Second World War period is one in which the varied fortunes of the concept have been encapsulated. In this phase

we have seen the concept move from being the centrepiece of theoretical assumptions about the welfare state, through a ferocious neo-liberal backlash, only to return to the forefront of political debate in new forms at the end of the twentieth century.

As a theoretical concept, citizenship is closely tied to discourses of **rights**. As such, it is not surprising that it has been such a central concept in liberal **democracy** given the primacy of **rights** claims and the rule of law in contemporary liberal formations. Indeed, many liberal models of **justice** rely upon the ideas of **individual rights** as the basis of social order, and therefore the concept of citizenship is vital because it confers full membership of the state and a combination of rights to guarantee that status. This generates a number of questions, however. For example, if citizens are to be provided with certain rights, how are these rights to be reciprocated? In other words, what can we expect from individuals in return for the status that citizenship provides them with? Do rights automatically generate obligations and responsibilities? A different set of questions emerges around the meaningfulness of rights as a guarantor of citizenship: can rights, by themselves, provide status? Are rights merely formal entities that ultimately fail to deliver in complex, practical social environments? Or must they be accompanied by a range of socio-economic provisions that enable recipients to enjoy their rights?

In the period following the Second World War, the work of the British sociologist, T. H. Marshall (1991), became synonymous with the modern concept of citizenship. For Marshall, the idea of citizenship invoked three separate types of citizenship **rights**: civil, political and social. His argument was that if these three kinds of rights were taken together, they would provide equal status and full membership of society for all. By civil rights, Marshall was referring to the kinds of civil freedom (of speech, for example) which had developed since the eighteenth century. Political rights (including the right to vote and to stand for office) had been acquired by many people in the nineteenth century. And Marshall then argued that it was with the acquisition of social rights through the formation of the welfare **state** in the twentieth century, that we begin to see a meaningful and substantive concept of citizenship emerging. This position was very much representative of the 'middle way' approach to post-war social democracy which was supposed to resist the extremes of communism in the Soviet bloc and **capitalism** in the West. In short, it was imagined as a way of ameliorating the tension between **markets** and the state and using them together to realise social objectives. Undoubtedly, it was an optimistic vision of what the concept of citizenship could achieve.

Its drawbacks included the focus on the formal *status* of citizenship as dependent on **rights** instead of attempting to address social inequalities more directly and substantively.

Marshall's notion of citizenship encapsulated the concept in the period from 1945 until the 1960s, but by then the beginnings of a neo-liberal backlash were starting to emerge. This backlash was encapsulated by the elections of the Reagan and Thatcher governments in the US and UK respectively, in which the notion of using the resources generated by markets to fund generous social welfare provision was anathema. Underpinned by the economics of Hayek and Friedman, these governments set out on an agenda of **market** liberalisation which had as a corollary an assault on governments intervening in markets to redistribute wealth and provide for social **rights**. This agenda was moving from a notion of citizenship rights being imagined in terms of unconditional entitlement to a system where conditionality was the watchword in terms of social provision. As Marshall's theory of citizenship was based on the idea of the tripartite system of **rights** being taken together, an assault on one set of those rights – that is, social rights – was an assault on the concept of citizenship as a whole.

The dominant position that neo-liberalism assumed in several liberal democracies at the end of the twentieth century meant that social democrats began to use other concepts such as social inclusion as a way of driving their agenda. Moreover, other theorists began to demonstrate the ways in which the concept of citizenship needed to be more reflective of feminist perspectives (Lister 1997). The heavy focus on **rights** was therefore reduced especially in the context of processes of **globalisation** which raised questions about the capacity of the state to meet its obligations towards its citizens. Debates on citizenship become more focused in areas beyond the **nation-state** (Bellamy 2000). The shift towards a reconceptualisation of social **justice** on a global level therefore became a more fundamental problem than a mere recognition of how states grant **rights**. This was all the more pertinent in an era when challenges such as migration and the displacement of people and climate change have such an obvious impact on the way in which we conceive the subject of democratic citizenship. The question of who are 'the People' has never been more pertinent or taxing.

To some extent then, the model of citizenship proposed by Marshall has been superseded in different ways by debates around marketisation and **globalisation**. While liberal rights claims remain highly significant in liberal democracies, the kind of social protection afforded by the

model of citizenship has been eroded. This requires a recasting of the concept of citizenship to engage more concretely with the notion of social **justice** on a global scale.

Further reading: Bellamy 2000; Lister 1997; Marshall 1991.

CIVIL SOCIETY

The concept of civil society has a long history in political thought (in the work of G. W. F. Hegel, for example) but in the last twenty-five years it has re-emerged and become a central element of contemporary political **discourse**. Modern politics abounds with discussion of civil society, especially as many governments in liberal democracies pursue strategies to involve (or give the appearance of involvement to) groups and organisations that are not formally part of the state. Used in this way, civil society usually refers to a range of bodies including pressure groups, charities, trade unions, churches, non-governmental organisations and social movements that operate in a space between the state and the **individual**. The re-emergence of civil society in the last twenty-five years coincides with increased debate about the level of **democracy** in the liberal democratic state and the need to ensure that there is greater acknowledgement of political voices that are sometimes marginalised from formal political institutions and the sphere of the state.

So the relationship between civil society and the state is fundamental to historical and contemporary understandings of the concept. The more recent arguments have developed in part through the communitarian critique of **liberalism** (Taylor 1995; Walzer 1992). These arguments recognise that civil society is always an elusive concept because the boundaries of the state and its sphere of influence are never settled and agreed upon. Indeed, there is potentially considerable overlap between civil society and the state as many civil society actors are at times involved in processes and decisions that run under the auspices of the state. So it is always difficult and controversial to establish firm dividing lines between these two entities as if they are entirely distinct. Nonetheless, the normative argument for strengthening civil society invokes the increased opportunities for participation and civic virtue that civil society can afford in the ways that formal political and state institutions cannot. Thus, for its advocates, civil society is a space for alternative voices and a more transformative politics that can reinvigorate the political system.

The re-emergence of civil society as a prominent concept in liberal democratic politics ironically has its roots in the communist regimes

of the post-Second World War Soviet bloc. In the 1980s, as opposition grew against those communist regimes, it fermented in civil society groups given the control of the state by the governing communist parties. Although it was argued that these societies had no flourishing civil society, its resilience against the state became clear as forms of opposition were forged. In particular, the Solidarity movement in Poland is widely regarded as an exemplar of this kind of civil society activism against the state. As the success of these forms of activism spread throughout Eastern Europe, civil society was widely credited with being a key to the organisation of democratic societies rather than the strong state **bureaucracy** which had characterised those communist regimes.

It is for this reason that the concept of civil society re-emerged in democratic theory in the late 1980s and 1990s. While clearly not as openly restrictive as communist societies, theorists such as John Keane (1988) began to argue that liberal democracies also required an invigoration of civil society if they were seen to be fully democratic. This argument suggested that civil society was required to **balance the power** of the state and to make governments and state bureaucracies more accountable. Such a process would enable more open and diverse debate because the structures of civil society were more amenable to a multiplicity of political voices than the more procedural, rule-bound nature of formal political institutions. This normative argument in support of civil society tends to overestimate the extent to which civil society is distinct from the state and other socio-political institutions such as market mechanisms but it has become central to discourses of democratisation, both in developing democracies and societies with a much longer history as democratic societies. As such, civil society has become firmly entrenched as a central element in any democratic society.

From the mid 1990s a new debate began to emerge in relation to the possibility of a global civil society. This debate reflected the growing prominence of **globalisation** in the political literature and a growing sense of the internationalisation of political issues, e.g. poverty, warfare, the environment and so forth. Thus, advocates contended that where issues were thought to transcend the boundaries of **nation-states** and their interests, there was a case for the recognition of international organisations and their work. Theorists such as Mary Kaldor (2003) see a need for greater accountability and **democracy** on the global stage. However, part of the problem with the concept of global civil society is the absence of a global state to play off. Certainly, there are institutions which 'govern' the global political

environment but they are not necessarily clear counterparts to an institutionally conceived civil society on a global scale.

One further issue in the recent literature on civil society has been a number of arguments which challenge the dominant normative theories of civil society which tend to promote it as a democratic good. Here, for example, we see discussion of the idea of 'bad civil society' (Chambers and Kopstein 2001) in which it needs to be recognised that many of the groups involved in civil society are not necessarily involved in activities which might be thought of as progressive in liberal democratic societies such as inciting racial hatred and homophobia. Moreover, there needs to be greater recognition that civil society movements themselves have mixed records on governance and accountability. So, while civil society has great potential as a counterbalance to state power, we should be careful not to present it as an entirely wholesome contributor to democratic societies.

Further reading: Chambers and Kopstein 2001; Kaldor 2003; Keane 1988; Taylor 1995; Walzer 1992.

CLASS

Class is a significant political concept, especially as it appears in Marxist theory and in political sociology. In general, it refers to a form of social stratification in which people are divided according to their place in the labour market. Sociologically, the type of work an **individual** performs conveys a place on a socio-economic hierarchy which then gives greater power to the wealthy, higher social classes and much less to those with less skilled work, or little or no work at all. Class here alludes to the collective experiences of groups of **individual** workers. The stratification of society by social class is significant because class inequalities tend to reproduce with this greater or lesser status reflected in inequalities around educational achievement, health, housing and so forth. These inequalities were a driving force behind the emergence of labour and trade union movements in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and informed the development of socialist political parties. While class became a less common **discourse** in politics in the late twentieth century, it remains a significant form of social stratification and its impact is still keenly felt in many areas of social life.

As it emerged in the work of Marx and Engels (1985), social class was identified as the major form of social division or stratification in capitalist societies. This occurred because the working class was exploited through the division of labour by the dominant classes.

Although they accepted some variations within their model of social class, Marx and Engels contended that society was effectively divided between the bourgeoisie (the owners of the means of production) and the proletariat (the working class). These categories were not merely descriptive of a particular era but instead played a fundamental role in historical development, as the formation of a communist society required the working class to attain consciousness of their exploitation and rise up and throw off their chains.

For Marx, then, the course of history was effectively a long history of class struggle which provided the dynamic of social change and development. In capitalist societies the working class was alienated from both each other and the product of their labour but Marx nevertheless believed that capitalism had created its own gravediggers. Such was the nature of the division of labour and the polarisation that it created, that the alienated working class would become increasingly class conscious. Ultimately, the proletariat would rise up and overthrow their oppressors, the bourgeoisie. The result would be the formation of a communist society which would be classless and provide the culmination of historical progress.

Not surprisingly, this depiction of the nature of social class in capitalist societies and its political import has been the subject of considerable criticism (although aspects of it continue to harness considerable support in Marxist circles). Critics have pointed to the more nuanced and complex constitution of social class in modern societies, the overly determinist model of class conflict that **Marxism** often deploys, the myriad other social inequalities and divisions which also divide and structure society and so forth. While there is little disagreement about the significance of Marx's theory of class, there is much less consensus on its predictive capacity or its applicability to contemporary capitalist societies. One example of these critical neo-Marxist approaches is André Gorz's theory of the neo-proletariat ('the non-class of non-workers') which he characterises as unemployed or underemployed and which is not capable of uniting in common cause to fulfil the historical role that Marx and Engels identified (Gorz 1980). More conservative commentators such as Charles Murray (1994) identified the emergence of an underclass below the traditional proletariat in the latter part of the twentieth century. This underclass is portrayed by conservatives as a threat to modern society as its members have become dependent on the welfare state, thereby draining resources and limiting the capacity of the **market** to generate resources which would trickle down through the strata of society if there was less state intervention in the economy.

In contemporary sociology class remains a pivotal concept, although these days it is more usually treated as one among several stratifying dynamics in modern society rather than the sole determinant of social structure. So, although it remains prominent, class is less likely to be as privileged in sociological debates today than in the heyday of **Marxism**. Therefore more attention is being paid to the ways in which class interacts with other factors, such as **gender** and ethnicity, to understand the intersecting forms of division and inequality. However, what remains undeniable is that social class continues to have a fundamental impact on life chances in the contemporary world and therefore it remains a concept of considerable political import.

Further reading: Gorz 1980; Marx 1992; Marx and Engels 1985; Murray 1994.

CLEAVAGE

Societies are often divided by competing interests – be they based upon social class, religious affiliation, ethnic or linguistic differences. The pattern of such cleavages lends itself to understanding the process of political competition – particularly in relation to elections and party systems – and the extent to which a political system enjoys stability or conflict. We can see, for example, that the political party system in Northern Ireland is distinctive to that which has evolved in Great Britain. Whilst the latter has historically evolved from class divisions (with the emergence of nationalist parties in the early twentieth century), in Northern Ireland the key divide has been religious, with parties such as Sinn Féin representing Catholic interests and parties such as the Democratic Unionist Party representing Protestants.

The role of political cleavages in party system formation was established in the famous work of Lipset and Rokkan (1967), who trace party systems formation to the organisation of long-established social conflicts. Lipset and Rokkan identified four key cleavages which emerged from two revolutionary periods: the national revolutions of the early nineteenth century resulting in centre–periphery and state–church cleavages, whilst the industrial revolutions of the late nineteenth century resulting in rural–urban and worker–employer cleavages.

At that point, religion and social (economic) class were shown to have a significant influence upon the party systems which prevailed across Western Europe (Mair 2006). This is not to imply that a political state can only experience one type of cleavage, and it may be the case that the political scene is subject to cross-cutting cleavages.

For example, in Belgium the linguistic Flemish–Walloon divide largely coincides with the Catholic and Protestant cleavage. Yet, whilst this seminal work appeared relevant for much of the first half of the twentieth century, its appropriateness has undergone something of a challenge. In some cases cleavages have waned in significance. This can be seen in the Netherlands where the once heavily religious political party system has become less evident; a catalyst being the merger of several religious parties into the Christian Democratic Appeal in 1972 (Caramani 2008; see Table 1).

One challenge to the perceived dominance of cleavages was the concept of 'catch-all' parties as theorised by Kirchheimer (1966) which mapped the process by which parties sought to broaden their appeal to a dominant 'middle ground' of voters, representative of a coalition of core interests, whose popularity could be relied upon to form long-term majority government (and such parties coincided with the increased professionalisation of political parties). In the case of Western Europe, once-Catholic parties have now positioned themselves as the centre-right, and socialist/communist parties have tended to position themselves as more moderate social democrats. Whilst both caste and religious divisions have been clear de-markers in Indian society, the post-Independence party system was dominated by the catch-all Congress Party well into the 1970s. More recently, a plethora of regionalist parties have established themselves, and the federal organisation of this large state has led to multidimensional party systems.

A more recent challenge has been the so-called 'end of ideology' theory in which the modernisation of society is seen to complicate traditional social divisions, facilitating cross-cutting interests and blurring the boundaries of established cleavages. Yet modernisation may not mark the demise of cleavages *per se* for we have witnessed the emergence of 'new' cleavages, such as the rise of the new far right 'protest' and environmental parties. These younger organisations are often referred to as 'niche' parties. Elsewhere, cleavage-fuelled party

Table 1 Examples of political parties originating from socio-political cleavages

centre–periphery	**state–church**
Bloc Quebequois: Canada	Christian-Democratic Union: Germany
Plaid Cymru: Wales	Austrian People's Party: Austria
rural–urban	**worker–employer**
Finnish Centre Party: Finland	Labour Party: Great Britain
National Country Party: Australia	PSOE: Spain

systems continue to thrive, the continent of Africa providing a prime example, where ethnic divides are strongly evident (Mozaffar and Scarritt 2005).

See also: **party systems**

Further reading: Scarrow 2010; Caramani 2008.

COLONIALISM

In theory, the term 'colonialism' describes the practice by which a community of people occupy territory over which they previously had no control. For example, it may be that, at some point in the future, human beings decide to colonise one of the other planets or moons in our solar system. Throughout history, however, practices of colonialism have tended to be directly linked to those of imperialism, as people's efforts to occupy and control foreign territories have also involved the exercise of control over the existing populations of those territories. In such instances, the difference between colonialism and imperialism has been minimal. Certainly, colonialism implies the creation of colonies – and thus the relatively direct control of original inhabitants by the colonialists – whereas imperialism may involve less direct means of control. In both cases, however, what has been of great historical significance has been the control and exploitation of one people by another.

While practices of colonialism and imperialism have been employed repeatedly throughout history as different empires have risen and fallen, when most academics speak of colonialism today they will be referring to that which occurred during the rise of the European empires that were constructed between the fifteenth century and the early twentieth century. These **empires**, constructed in what are now Latin America, Africa, the Middle East and South and Southeast Asia, were constructed for two broad reasons. The first and most important of these was to enhance the wealth and **power** of the imperial state. The second reason that was often stated by imperial powers (though often, perhaps, in an attempt to hide the self-interested nature of their behaviour) was to promote civilisation and **culture** amongst the 'barbarous' peoples of the world. By the Second World War, many parts of Africa and Asia had been occupied and colonised by one or other of the great powers.

The description above may paint 'colonialism' as a concept that is of historical significance only. This is not the case, however; even though many of the imperial possessions of the European powers have since gained independence, the process of decolonisation has proven to be a

long and difficult one and therefore remains of contemporary relevance. This is partly because processes of colonisation proved to be so brutal and disruptive to the peoples and communities affected. As a result, many of the communities that gained independence during the twentieth century have faced a number of challenges in their attempts to escape the systems of imperialism and colonialism in which they were ensnared.

First, imperial domination tended to destroy existing forms of social and political order, and it has often been impossible for peoples to reconstruct that traditional order after the withdrawal of the imperial power. This destruction took a number of forms. Colonies were reorganised geographically, either for the purposes of administration by a particular imperial power or as a result of agreements between such powers on where the limits of their respective empires should lie. Colonies were also reorganised socially and politically; traditional structures of power and **authority** were often destroyed so that authorities loyal to the imperial power could be put in place and so that resistance to imperial rule could be suppressed. Furthermore, imperial powers often used brutal **violence** to repress whole peoples in order to preserve their control and maximise their economic gain.

A second challenge to any return to traditional models of **society** and politics was the fact that decolonisation in the twentieth century occurred in a context in which modern notions of **nationalism** and sovereignty tended to shape how decolonising peoples constructed their newly independent societies. This occurred partly due to the fact that many independence movements were led by individuals who had spent a great deal of time in European states and had significant knowledge of such ideas regarding political community (Mohandas Ghandi was educated at University College London while Ho Chi Minh was educated in Paris and lived in the US and UK). In addition, however, the tendency of newly independent societies to take the form of nation-states was also partly a product of external pressures. By the mid-twentieth century, the **sovereign** nation-state was the accepted norm by which the legitimacy of political communities was judged. As a result, there was great pressure on those engaged in independence movements to advocate the creation of this particular type of political community, something that effectively ruled out a return to pre-colonial forms of society and politics.

As is noted above, decolonisation has often proven to be a very challenging and lengthy process to undertake. A number of steps must be taken if decolonisation is to be achieved successfully, and achieving such success has not always been possible. The first step to

decolonisation must be the successful transfer of sovereign authority from the imperial state to its colonial possession. This sometimes appeared a quick and easy process, as when the British and French, faced with economic decline, allowed some African states to gain independence in the early 1960s. In other cases, decolonisation was more visibly a long and bloody process. The Vietnamese fought for nearly two decades against the French and then the United States in order to gain independence. Bloody conflicts also occurred as a result of the efforts of Algeria to gain independence from France and those of Malaya to gain independence from Britain (White 1999).

Once political autonomy has been granted, the next stage is the construction of a stable and secure nation-state. This is by no means easy. Nationalism often proved to be a very powerful political tool in terms of generating support for an independence movement. At times, however, the sense of national cohesiveness that existed during the struggle against the imperial state proved hard to maintain, especially in newly formed states that incorporated people of different ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The result has been that some newly independent states have struggled to maintain stability after having successfully expelled their colonial oppressors. Zimbabwe, Sierra Leone and Rwanda are all post-colonial states that have struggled to maintain stability due in part to the continued impact of colonial practices (Freund 1998).

Finally, the actual point at which decolonisation is reached can sometimes be difficult to identify. If decolonisation marks the ending of a colonial power's formal possession of a territory, then we can simply ask on what date sovereignty was handed over by that power. If, however, decolonisation requires the withdrawal of all forms of power by an imperial state, then identifying the end of colonial rule is not so easy. This is because many imperial states maintained both interests in and power over their prior colonial territories (Charbonneau 2008). Furthermore, their previous masters do not always exercise power directly over ex-colonial states. Some have referred to the continued economic dominance of ex-colonial states, which is sometimes carried out by multinational corporations rather than national governments, as a form of neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism (Hardt and Negri 2000). All this implies that decolonisation is an ongoing process that requires cultural as well as political and economic change.

Further reading: Betts 2004; Bhabha 1994; Fanon 1990; Loomba 2005; Page 2003.

COMMUNITY

The idea of community is one of the most contested concepts in the social sciences. In many respects it typifies what Gallie (1955) calls 'essentially contested' concepts. The lack of conceptual clarity and the continuing disagreement over its meaning and implications help to explain the great variety in political and everyday community **discourses**. However, this variation also makes it a rather elastic concept that can be articulated and manipulated in many different ways. Given the positive connotations associated with community, it is not surprising that political actors have taken advantage of its elusiveness to use the term in sometimes unsophisticated fashion.

The founder of modern theories of community is the nineteenth-century sociologist Ferdinand Tönnies (1955) who explained the concept in terms of small-scale, face-to-face relations. These relations were to be distinguished from the broader notion of modern society, especially as it was developing in the context of industrialisation and urbanisation. A variation on this theme emerged with the theories of association linked to emerging socialist theories and new **liberalism** in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The dominant understanding that emanated from these early discussions of community was primarily a geographical construct entailing membership of a local community or at least an entity that enabled direct, face-to-face engagement between members as opposed to the level of state and society. This view is still prevalent but the understanding of community it invokes is often criticised for popularising a rather romantic and nostalgic vision of a past which probably never existed (Hughes 1996).

The concept of community is imbued with a range of normative assumptions about the benefits of face-to-face relationships as opposed to rampant individualism or the bureaucratic machinery of political institutions such as the state. Nonetheless, the common usage of the language of community often invokes images of community at a national or international level. This suggests that multiple understandings of community exist and indeed that the relations and values alluded to in community discourses may be 'imagined' (Anderson 1991). One response to this is to suggest that we should relinquish the pursuit of tight definitions of community and instead consider them as objects for social scientific analysis purely on the basis that people believe in the idea of community and that it matters to them.

In a more philosophical register, the idea of community was also prominent in debates from the 1970s to the 1990s between liberals/individualists and so-called communitarians. Reacting to the publication

of *A Theory of Justice* by the influential liberal John Rawls (1971), communitarianism was a label given to a diverse group of thinkers including Michael Sandel, Alasdair MacIntyre, Charles Taylor and Michael Walzer. Despite their differences, this group of theorists was often categorised together to represent a critical backlash against the individualist approach of Rawls. Rawls based his argument around a hypothetical scenario which imagined social relations and a **social contract** constructed on the basis of how unencumbered **individuals** who did not know the advantages and disadvantages they would be endowed with in life (behind a 'veil of ignorance') would think and behave. Communitarian approaches rejected this on methodological grounds suggesting that no individual was ever actually behind a veil of ignorance or unencumbered. Instead, they argued that people are embedded in complex social, cultural and community contexts which both structure choices and affect motivations. Ultimately, in their different ways, these theorists suggested that this invalidates the metaphor that Rawls employed in his 'original position'.

In recent years the main interest in community has shifted from philosophical argument to more applied social and political debates. Both community and association have emerged as by-products of the resurgence of interest in **civil society** over the last twenty years. Both political theorists and practitioners have renewed discussion of space and organisation that are not explicitly imbued with the perceived strengths and weaknesses of the state or the **market**. This has provided an environment in which community has once again become a topic of popular concern.

In practical terms this has seen the label communitarian move from the space of philosophy to describe actors in the fields of social and public policy who encourage the renewal of community as a way of invigorating contemporary society (Etzioni 1997; Tam 1998). This new communitarianism has proved highly popular with politicians especially those of a social democratic persuasion such as Bill Clinton and Tony Blair, who sought to repackage centre-left politics in a post-statist light. In this vein community became a key concept in the development of the 'Third Way' in the 1990s and 2000s (Buckler 2007) and was applied in many fields including health ('care in the community') and law and order ('community crime prevention').

Community remains a highly contested concept in modern social and political debates but an extremely popular idea in the political vernacular. The communitarian approach advocating a stronger role for community in processes of social inclusion is still a highly influential account. However, we are also witnessing the emergence of a

new, more critical literature which points to the exclusionary dimensions of community and the ways in which the promotion of community entails greater social conflict (Little 2002). Thus, despite its definitional elusiveness, community will remain a vital part of the modern political lexicon.

Further reading: Anderson 1991; Buckler 2007; Etzioni 1997; Hughes 1996; Little 2002; MacIntyre 1981; Rawls 1971; Sandel 1982; Tam 1998; Taylor 1990; Tönnies 1955; Walzer 1983.

CONSTITUTIONS

Constitutionalism is experiencing a renaissance in the twenty-first century. A mainstay of political analysis in the late nineteenth/early twentieth centuries, embedded within the legal-institutional focus of political research, it fell out of popularity for some time. However, recent interest has been spurred by two core developments, (i) the development of newly democratised political systems (for example, across Africa, Asia, Latin America and most recently Eastern Europe) and (ii) the call for 'constitutional reform' in well-established democracies, where a perception exists that political engagement is suffering due to failures in constitutional tradition to 'keep up with the times'. Between 1989 and 1999 eighty-five constitutions were introduced thanks to the emergence of post-authoritarian states.

King (2007: 3) describes a constitution thus: 'the set of the most important rules and common understandings in any given country that regulate the relations among that country's governing institutions and also the relations between that country's governing institutions and the people of that country'. Constitutional studies focus on the sets of rights, powers and regulations which formalise the relationships between the state, political organisations (commonly classified as executives, legislatures and judiciaries – the branches of power) and individual citizens; this is the rule of law. The core function(s) can be defined in different ways: (i) to limit the power of government (Friedrich 1950; Hayek 1960) and (ii) to define the structure of government – the procedure for law making and decision making (Sartori 1994). Constitutions are frequently developed as a result of regime change or the achievement of independence – examples include Germany's Basic Law (1949), the Italian Constitution of 1948 and the revised constitution in South Africa in 1999.

If we are to limit, or constrain, government, this implies that citizens have **rights**, and as such it is not uncommon for constitutions to embody some form of Bill of Rights (such as in the USA). The remit

of the constitution is to implement 'due process'. Furthermore, rights can take two forms: (i) negative freedoms (such as freedom from persecution) and (ii) entitling freedoms (which establish entitlements such as the rights to employment or healthcare). Garner et al. (2009) draw attention to the more challenging aspects of constitutional implementation, particularly in those Islamic states which practise Sharia law.

Traditionally, constitutionalism has focused upon the operation of formal rules (as established by laws, legal decisions, customs and conventions) and a dichotomy was identified between 'written' and 'unwritten' constitutions. This is actually a misnomer which refers to the more accurate distinction between codified and uncodified constitutions. Examples of the former are the constitutions of the USA, Germany's Basic Law and Australia, whilst uncodified constitutions exist in the UK, New Zealand and Israel. It is argued that a benefit of an uncodified constitution is that it is easier to revise, should the need emerge. Although the US constitution was established in 1787 (and inaugurated two years later) change is uncommon; it has been subject to only twenty-seven amendments (the most recent in 1992). In contrast, despite the radical political changes which were initiated by the introduction of devolution in the UK in the late twentieth century this did not require constitutional upheaval.

How do we ensure that constitutions remain relevant, fair and facilitators rather than blockers to the process of political development? The opportunity to carry out constitutional review is important for several reasons: what was intended may not occur in practice, what sounded fair on paper may actually lead unintentionally to injustice, and fundamentally societies can change. What may have seemed right a century ago may not be appropriate today (consider how the increase in international terrorism has influenced debates surrounding freedom and security, for example). As such, many states install institutions referred to as supreme courts (USA, India, Australia, Canada) or constitutional courts (Germany, Russia). In addition, some states allow for constitutional reform by **referendum**, such as in the case of Australia, Spain and Japan. Hague and Harrop (2010) suggest that judicial activism in the arena of constitutions has increased of late, partly stimulated by the complexity of international laws which create tensions between the national and supranational level, but also as a response to the need to deal with political corruption.

See also: **rights; separation of powers**

Further reading: Hague and Harrop 2010: chapter 13.

CONSTRUCTIVISM

Within the fields of political science and international relations, constructivism is best known as an approach to the study of international politics. However, it is important to note that constructivism is not a 'theory' of international relations in the same way that **realism** is. Instead, constructivism consists of a number of propositions regarding the nature of social reality and the manner in which it can be studied (Kratochwil 2008). These propositions give us a markedly different understanding of international politics compared with that advanced by, for example, realists.

Realists argue that international politics is defined primarily by the distribution of material resources, especially military capabilities and economic wealth (Waltz 1979). The purpose of international relations (IR) scholarship, according to realists, is to measure the effect of these material resources on the behaviour of states. Realists tend to take the existence of **nation-states** for granted, and assume that state leaders act rationally by responding to the material constraints and opportunities that they encounter.

Constructivists argue that the reality of international politics is far more complex than this. On the one hand, they argue that the material capabilities examined by realists and others only impact on the behaviour of people and states because of the meaning that is ascribed to them (Wendt 1995). An oft-used example that illustrates this point is that the USA would respond very differently to the development of nuclear weapons by Canada than it would to the development of such weapons by Cuba. This variation in response could not be explained in terms of the material properties of the weapons possessed by the two states (which would be largely identical). Instead, it could only be explained in terms of the different meanings that would be attached to these events by policymakers in the USA. The claim made by constructivists is that the objects of which material reality is composed (such as tanks and guns) have no natural and inherent meaning; instead their meaning is socially constructed.

On the other hand, constructivists also emphasise the importance of intangible elements of social reality, such as norms, identities and **cultures**. Constructivists have sought to demonstrate the importance of these non-material factors by showing through their research how they influence the behaviour of people and nation-states. Thus, scholars have analysed, for example, how certain international norms have served to discourage states from developing nuclear weapons (Tannenwald 1999). Other scholars have concentrated on explaining

how identities influence the behaviour of members of certain communities (Barnett 1996). Still others have demonstrated how the cultures of certain communities shape the way in which they do certain things, such as use military force (Kier 1997).

Constructivists have sought to demonstrate that factors such as an individual's identity or a community's culture are not natural or inherent features of reality but are instead socially constructed (see, for example, Doty 1996). Thus, constructivists are not merely concerned with demonstrating how a socially constructed reality influences the behaviour of individuals (and therefore nation-states). They are also interested in examining how identities, norms and cultures are constructed and reconstructed through the everyday practices of individuals. Thus, constructivists are interested in both agency and structure (Wendt 1987). More precisely, they argue that the two are 'mutually constituted'. In other words, while social reality (such as the meaning we attach to a particular material object) is constituted (or constructed) by what agents say and do, the possibility of meaningful action and, therefore, agency is dependent upon the constitutive effects of social structures.

When applied to the realm of **international relations**, the propositions of constructivism challenge the vision of IR presented by realists (and others). Constructivism challenges the taken-for-granted notion that nation-states are natural and inevitable communities of people and emphasises their socially constructed nature. Constructivism also challenges the assumption that all nation-states are essentially rational, unitary actors. Instead, constructivism asks us to investigate the identities and cultures of particular nation-states and to consider how those social structures shape the behaviour of citizens and policy makers. Furthermore, constructivism challenges the assumptions regarding international **anarchy** that are central to neo-realism and neo-liberalism. Alexander Wendt (1992), a well-known constructivist, famously stated that 'anarchy is what states make of it'; that is, the meaning of anarchy is socially constructed rather than natural.

The claim that much of reality is socially constructed is important politically as well as analytically. To the extent that realism suggests that the international system is inherently anarchic, it also suggests that there is little or no potential to change this feature of international politics (Kratochwil 1993). Indeed, one of the foundations of realism's dominance within the field of IR has been its claim to have uncovered timeless features of international politics, features that have always and will always characterise the nature of the international system. By highlighting that features of international politics, such as the identities of states and the anarchic structure of the international system, are

socially constructed, constructivism holds open the possibility that they may be reconstructed and thereby altered.

However, this openness to the possibility of change results in constructivists facing certain questions and challenges. Perhaps the key question here relates to the purpose of IR scholarship. Because they acknowledge the possibility of change in international politics, and because they argue that the practices of individuals – including those of scholars! – are crucial in causing such change, constructivists are forced to consider whether their scholarship should be directed towards the mere explanation of international politics or, instead, the promotion of change within it. This places constructivism at the centre of a broad divide within IR between positivist scholars whose lodestone is objectivity and post-positivist scholars whose scholarship is self-consciously normative and political in focus. Constructivists have not neatly fallen on one or the other side of this debate, meaning that this approach to IR is diverse in its response to questions regarding the purpose of scholarship (Adler 1997; Hopf 1998; Wendt 1999).

The major challenge faced by constructivists is that of developing an understanding or explanation of international politics that is capable of accounting for the potential for change that is implicit within the propositions of constructivism. To recall, the notion of mutual constitution mentioned above suggests that social structures constitute and regulate the behaviour of agents and that the practices of agents serve to construct (and might, therefore, reconstruct) social structures. Theorising the processes through which social structures and agents influence international politics thus remains an incredibly difficult thing to do. This challenge, often referred to as the agent-structure problem, pervades the social sciences, but it is a particularly pressing problem for constructivists given their claims regarding the mutual constitution of agency and structure.

Further reading: Fierke and Jorgensen 2001; Guzzini 2000; Guzzini and Leander 2006; Klotz and Lynch 2007; Wendt 1999.

COSMOPOLITANISM

This term refers to the belief that human beings do or should belong to a universal form of community; that is, a community that includes all human beings. Although it has its roots in Ancient Greek thought, in recent years the concept has become increasingly visible and increasingly important within the disciplines of politics and international relations. One is most likely to encounter this term within subfields of politics and international relations such as political philosophy

and global ethics and in the context of debate regarding issues such as human rights, the environment, poverty, peace and conflict and global governance. 'Cosmopolitanism' is most often contrasted with the principle of 'communitarianism', which assumes that the communities in which individuals reside ought to be limited in scope, as nations and nation-states have traditionally been understood to be.

Cosmopolitanism is a term that can be understood and used in a number of different ways. First, it is often used to describe a philosophical position regarding how the world ought to be. Second, the term is sometimes used to describe an actual political project; one that is driven by the desire to put in place the political structures that would allow the formation of a universal or global political community (a cosmopolis). Third, the term is used at times to describe an empirical phenomenon, namely, the ongoing globalisation of world politics that has produced a more 'cosmopolitan' world. Although these different usages interlink, it is worth considering them separately.

Cosmopolitanism as a philosophical or normative position describes a particular set of views regarding how the world ought to be. As noted above, the central idea within cosmopolitanism is that human beings ought to form a single global community. To be human, it is argued, is to possess certain rights and responsibilities, and it is these that should form the basis of such a cosmopolis (Singer 2002). Disagreement exists, however, as to the nature and extensiveness of such universal rights and obligations, as well as to the political implications that follow from them. We can witness such disagreement within the context of discussion over human rights. Much of the human rights agenda can be seen to be grounded in a cosmopolitan philosophical position, but there remains real disagreement regarding the scope and extent of the rights that are to be recognised and, especially, regarding the extent to which certain states or institutions should hold a responsibility or duty to protect and enforce such rights when they are threatened.

The cosmopolitan position is most widely accepted, perhaps, when it comes to an issue such as genocide. The cosmopolitan position with regard to genocide is that all people have a right to life, that genocide represents a particularly egregious breach of this right, and that the international community should bear a responsibility to intervene – militarily if need be – to prevent genocide from occurring (Evans 2008). However, once we turn away from this most severe of examples, disagreement often arises as to the legitimacy of certain claims regarding the universal nature of particular rights. Communitarians doubt the legitimacy of such universal claims for a number

of reasons (McKim and McMahan 1997). First, they contend that such claims may threaten the autonomy of distinctive political communities as well as the particular configurations of rights and responsibilities that those communities may value. Second, and on a similar note, communitarians have argued that the promotion of human rights is in part a projection of what are predominantly Western understandings of rights onto other parts and peoples of the world. Finally, communitarians worry about the potential for conflict in a world where military intervention becomes justified on more and more grounds (Jackson 2000).

Cosmopolitans are aware of these criticisms and concerns; this is clear if one examines some of the literature that treats cosmopolitanism as a political project, one commonly understood in terms of the development of global **governance**. Scholars such as David Held et al. (2010) have argued that global governance is necessary in today's world due to processes of globalisation. However, such scholars are not unaware of either the potential obstacles to the development of systems of global governance or to the potential criticisms of such forms of governance. Thus, while these and other scholars seek to highlight the need for stronger mechanisms of global governance, they also examine how such systems might be created through processes that take note of cultural, religious and other forms of difference between peoples. Most obvious here are the attempts by scholars to articulate ways in which systems of global governance might be **democratised** so that those governed retain some capacity to influence those who do the governing.

The importance of democratising systems of global governance is particularly apparent when considering the third notion of cosmopolitanism described above; that which sees it as an empirical judgement about how the world already works. In this sense, the argument is less about how the world should be or what might be done to create global governance; instead the argument is that we actually live in an increasingly cosmopolitan world (Beck 2006: 9). This argument can sometimes be made on seemingly trivial grounds, as in the suggestion that one is cosmopolitan to the extent than one travels widely and enjoys food, music or films from many parts of the world (Appiah 2006: xiii). But there is a serious side to this: more people travel, trade and communicate more frequently and more widely across the globe than ever before.

This has certain effects. On the one hand, increasing global interaction does make people more aware of the similarities and the differences that people around the world share, perhaps even to the

extent that some individuals consider themselves as global rather than merely national citizens. On the other hand, systems of global governance, such as global rules and institutions, have emerged in response to this increased interaction. Thus, there are many areas of life that are shaped by rules and institutions that operate across states rather than merely within them.

Yet there remains a relatively widespread dissatisfaction with how such systems of global governance operate and the extent to which they exclude the voices of 'ordinary' people. Political institutions such as the United Nations (UN), may be criticised due to the undemocratic nature of certain decision-making bodies (such as the UN Security Council) whereas some global economic and financial institutions, most notably the World Trade Organization and World Bank, are criticised for serving the interests of wealthy states and peoples while the poor continue to be exploited. In both cases, the answer advocated by cosmopolitan scholars is the democratisation of global institutions, as well as the continued development of a global civil society that can provide the legitimate foundation for global governance.

Further reading: Brown and Held 2010; Evans 2008; Held 1995, 2003, 2010; Jackson 2000.

CRITICAL THEORY

Critical theory has become one of the most influential strands of contemporary political thought although it contains myriad variations and emphases. James Bohman explains that critical theory must be 'explanatory, practical and normative all at the same time' (Bohman 1996: 190). As such, it usually contains some kind of diagnosis of problematic ideas and structures, identification of how these problems operate in the real world, and a vision of how things could be organised in a better way. So, the label 'critical theory' – though very widely used without a great degree of specificity – usually describes approaches to social science research that share these three qualities. Its origins very clearly lie in critical forms of twentieth-century **Marxism** but in recent decades it has been adapted and adopted by a range of feminist, Marxist, environmental, post-colonial, critical, race and queer theorists who can all be described as belonging to the critical theory tradition.

'Critical theory', more specifically, has its origins in a branch of Western **Marxism** associated with the work by the Frankfurt School scholars at the Institute of Social Research who came to prominence

in the 1920s and 1930s. It was comprised of mainly German scholars though with the rise of Nazism several key figures emigrated to the USA and subsequent critical theory scholars have been located around the world.

Max Horkheimer was the founding scholar of this tradition and he outlined the social inquiry undertaken by the Institute for Social Research as: interdisciplinary, encompassing empirical research and with an emphasis on a Marxist analysis of economy and **class** as central to understandings of society. The interdisciplinary dimension of the Institute's programme was notable and the work of early theorists including Horkheimer, Adorno and Benjamin has been deeply influential on disciplines such as sociology, philosophy and cultural studies as well as politics. While the programme of the institute was clearly influenced by the Marxist tradition, most of the key theorists associated with the Frankfurt School were critical of key elements of **Marxism** that they experienced, including economic determinism and Soviet-style communism.

From this basis, the critical theory tradition has had a varied influence in later generations of theorists. Herbert Marcuse, inspired by Freudian accounts, was prominent in the counter-cultural movement in the USA in the 1960s and became known as the 'father of New Left'. Claus Offe became a prominent neo-Marxist critic of welfare **capitalism** in the 1980s, turning a critical eye to both the limitations of the social democratic welfare state model and the critical neo-liberal perspectives that were emerging at that time.

Perhaps most notably of all, Jürgen Habermas has become one of the most prominent social and political philosophers in the world. Habermas focused increasingly on the normative dimension of critical theory and his theory of communicative action laid the ground for his subsequent prominence as one of the primary advocates of deliberative **democracy**. Deliberative **democracy** (and variants thereof) have become commonplace in procedural theories of **liberalism** that seek normative solutions to the limitations of prevailing liberal democratic political institutions based on **representation**, political parties, parliaments and so forth. Latterly, Axel Honneth has also attained considerable attention for his advocacy of a politics of recognition which was juxtaposed with a politics around redistribution in a significant debate with Nancy Fraser.

While these differing strands of work have emanated from theorists associated with the Frankfurt School, the unifying sentiment underpinning these analyses is the pursuit of a politics around human emancipation. For this reason, the primary ethos of critical theory has

been described as an intention 'to liberate human beings from the circumstances that enslave them' (Horkheimer, quoted in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Online*).

Further reading: Benjamin 1978; Bohman 1996; Held 1980; Honneth 2007; Horkheimer 1931, 1937; Horkheimer and Adorno 1997; Marcuse 1937, 1964; Offe 1985.

CULTURE

Raymond Williams, a key scholar in the field of cultural studies, once wrote that culture is 'one of the two or three most complicated terms in the English language' (1983: 160). Like several of the terms discussed in this book, culture is an 'essentially contested concept', meaning both that it can mean different things when used in different contexts and that the different ways in which it can be used can have important political implications. In other words, people disagree regarding what culture means and such disagreement is unlikely to be resolved. The result of this is that we have to appreciate a range of different understandings of this concept and think carefully about which meaning may be most relevant when we confront the term in our reading or when we use the term ourselves.

To try and clarify some of the meanings of the term 'culture' I will draw upon the three-part classification produced by Williams (1992; see also Jones 2006: 17). Williams distinguishes between 'ideal' culture, 'documentary' culture and 'social' culture. This is by no means the only way of classifying different understandings of this term, but it does capture some of the most common and important ways in which it is used.

According to Williams (1992: 41), when used to refer to an ideal the term 'culture' describes 'a state or process of human perfection, in terms of certain absolute or universal values'. Here, culture is understood as an ideal towards which human beings and communities might progress or evolve. This is not an understanding of culture which all would accept, however. For some, the idea that there is a set of 'absolute or universal values' against which all human beings and communities might be measured is both misleading and politically dangerous. Indeed, we can see the dangers of this vision of culture when we remember that various attempts at empire building and domination have been justified on the grounds that those doing the dominating were more 'cultured' than were those being dominated.

Williams' (1992: 41) notion of 'documentary culture' is one with which we are probably more familiar; it treats culture as 'the body of

intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded'. According to this definition, to study culture one must examine the works of art and books in which human experience is recorded. This definition also corresponds to the common practice of labelling as 'cultured' someone who is knowledgeable about literature, art and music. This also hints at a further distinction that is sometimes drawn between 'high' and 'low' culture, where the phrase 'high culture' describes classical art, literature and music whereas 'low culture' refers to the popular forms of the above. 'High' and 'low' cultures have sometimes been presumed to be the preserves of the upper and lower classes respectively. Today, this distinction is less commonly used, yet people often identify works of literature, art, music and film as examples of culture.

Williams' third conception of culture, that of 'social culture', is perhaps the most important in academic terms, because it is that which is most often used by academics seeking to examine the role of culture within politics and international affairs. For Williams (1992: 41), 'social culture' refers to 'a description of a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutions and ordinary behaviour'. By advancing this vision of culture, Williams made two important contributions to contemporary academic approaches to the study of culture. The first of these was that he showed that culture is an essential element of *all* social life. All human societies and all ways of life embody culture. The suggestion that one can study the culture of any particular 'way of life' is an important one; as we shall see, it has led to the analysis of culture in all sorts of political and international contexts.

The second important point regarding Williams' notion of 'social culture' is that it depicts the content of culture in a manner that differs significantly from the first two models. In the ideal model of culture, culture consists of 'absolute or universal values' regarding what a civilised society should look like. In the documentary model of culture, culture consists of such things as artworks and written texts in which human experience is recorded. According to the social model, culture consists less of values or of material works of art and instead of 'the context in which people give meanings to their actions and experiences' (Tomlinson 1991: 7). More precisely, this understanding sees culture as the 'socially shared knowledge' (Wendt 1999: 141) which allows meaningful action to take place. It is culture in this sense that allows us to understand the meaning of any number of things: kicking a ball into a net as a 'goal'; saying 'I do' as a wedding vow; or marking a card and dropping it in a box as an instance of 'voting'.

Why is this final model of culture so important to academics? Put simply, while (social) culture makes meaningful behaviour possible, it also serves to regulate human behaviour. For example, if you want to play football, get married or vote in an election, you have to observe certain rules. The result of this is that culture produces patterns in human behaviour, and patterns are of great interest to social scientists. Because of this, the social model of culture has been employed by a great many academics in their attempts to identify and explain patterns of behaviour in many areas of social life.

The concept of political culture, for example, has been employed by academics in order to study the way in which culture structures political practice. Early examples of this research sought to argue that different **communities** had different political cultures, and that differences in those cultures could explain why some states tended to support **democracy** while others had a tendency to develop authoritarian **governments** (Almond and Verba 1963). More recently, political culture research has turned away from the categorisation of different types of cultures and towards the analysis of how particular cultures constrain and enable political behaviour (Baker 1990).

In international relations, where culture has also gained importance, the concept has been employed in the analysis of strategic and security-related practices. In strategic studies, the concept of culture has been used to explain why certain states tend to approach the use of military force in particular ways (e.g. Kier 1997), how cultural differences between states can impact on military cooperation (e.g. Meyer 2006) and how culture might shape conflict in the international system (Huntington 1996). In security studies the concept of culture has been employed to examine why different communities understand security in different ways (e.g. Katzenstein 1996) and to demonstrate how certain practices serve to constitute the meanings of security and insecurity within particular communities (e.g. Weldes et al. 1999).

Further reading: Harrison and Huntington 2000; Katzenstein 1996; Weldes et al. 1999.

DEMOCRACY

Democracy has taken on many forms in political theory and practice in its long history. Originating in Ancient Greece as a system which embraced political **equality** and encapsulated it in direct forms of participation for all citizens, it has gravitated through a variety of systems into a rather different form of representative democracy evidenced in

modern liberal capitalist societies. The notion of a distinction between participatory and representative democracy has informed much of the democratic theory literature in the last 100 years, but in the last twenty years we have witnessed the emergence of new forms of democratic theory, such as deliberative democracy, which combine elements of participation and **representation**. Nonetheless these new imaginings of democratic renewal through deliberation have equally been challenged by those who either refute the theoretical underpinnings or doubt the possibility of practically applying it.

Political participation is a commonplace notion in democratic theory and invokes the idea of the people exercising their sovereign role in decision-making processes. However, participation can take on many forms from the formal (like **voting**) to the informal (e.g. engaging in political discussion in a public forum). In the Ancient Greek model participation was understood in formal and direct terms. This involved citizens – a category that was strictly limited – discussing issues together face to face and voting accordingly. Many subsequent arguments in democratic theory have questioned the workability of such a direct model of participation in much more complex societies than the Greek city-states which are much more populous and internally differentiated. Thus, while it is important to recognise the democratic origins of participation, it does not follow that democratic participation necessarily has to be direct.

A second important tradition in democratic theory is republicanism, a theory which also placed participation in the spotlight (Arendt 1958). The republican understanding of democracy, reflected in the Florentine city-state, values participation for the very specific reason that it represents the power of the people as a collective actor against arbitrary **authority**. Here participation is seen as a virtuous activity in which people exercise their freedom from control by assumed or imposed leaders. In this sense republicanism is imbued with certain normative expectations that individuals will not be animated by mere self-interest but that instead they are involved in participation to decide upon the common good.

The emergence of complex modern societies following the Enlightenment and the revolutions in the USA and France witnessed a shift in democratic practice towards greater **representation**. Nowadays representative democracy is often understood as the primary form of democracy in the world (Dahl 1989). Nonetheless, representative democracy is controversial because political institutions vary enormously in different countries and this has a direct impact on what it is that representatives represent. For example, representatives can be

understood to be representing the beliefs or the interests of their constituents which can lead to very different outcomes. Moreover, representatives are simultaneously involved in the **representation** of their political party. Thus, although **representation** and democracy are often spoken of together, they are not necessarily coterminous.

Within representative democracy there have been many debates about the precise nature and limitations of representation. Pluralist theories have questioned the capacity of representative systems to encapsulate the multiple voices of diverse constituencies and argued for processes whereby a wider number of minority groups have access to decision-making power (Dahl 1956). Fears of majority domination are also evident in elite theories which renew the suspicion of the masses and their capacity to govern well (originally outlined by Plato). Unlike pluralists, elite theorists argue against the dispersal of power and instead advocate democracy run by (competing) skilled and knowledgeable elite groups (Wright Mills 1956). Thus, while undoubtedly the most prominent institutional form of contemporary democracy, **representation** has come in for considerable criticism for the potential shift in emphasis away from participation and the limited enshrinement of political **equality**.

In recent years these limitations have inspired the rise of forms of deliberative democracy which seek to reintroduce more direct forms of political participation. Taking inspiration from ideas such as the town hall meeting and European coffee shops as spaces for direct discussion of political issues, deliberative democrats advocate the development of institutions that enable full discussion of matters among those affected with a view to the establishment of a rational consensual decision (Habermas 1996a, 1996b). Unlike Habermas, some less ideal-driven deliberative democrats who are much more attuned to the likely conflict and dissensus that may emerge in such decision-making processes have put forward ideas of 'discursive democracy' (Dryzek 2000; Young 2000). Deliberative democrats have also been challenged by so-called radical democrats (Little and Lloyd 2009) who point to the continued existence of relations of power in deliberative models and the exclusionary potential of the prioritisation of rational consensus.

It can be seen that the origins of democracy in the conceptual terrain of political **equality** and the distribution of power to the people has generated many different ideas and institutions of democracy. While the idea of the 'rule of the people' is rhetorically powerful, it opens up a range of questions when it comes to application and implementation in political practice. While the trajectory in modern states had been

towards more indirect forms of democratic government, the last twenty years has witnessed a renewed strength in theories which want to reintroduce and strengthen the participation dimension of the democratic equation.

Further reading: Arendt 1958; Dahl 1956, 1989; Dryzek 2000; Habermas 1996a, 1996b; Little and Lloyd 2009; Wright Mills 1956; Young 2000.

DEMOCRATISATION

The term 'democratisation' describes the process by which **democracy** is produced. Throughout the twentieth century the subject of democratisation has become increasingly important and increasingly controversial. It has grown in importance for at least two reasons: on the one hand, the spread of the formal model of representative democracy has been unprecedented (Huntington 1991); on the other, the consolidation and development of substantive democracy has, in many parts of the world, been limited (Diamond 2008). Democratisation remains controversial primarily due to recent attempts by the USA in Iraq and Afghanistan to promote democracy, in part through the use of military force (Caraley 2004). These two points give rise to at least two questions. First, why have so many people around the world sought to promote democracy? Second, how can democracy be promoted or constructed?

Before turning to these questions, however, it is worth briefly noting the ambiguity that surrounds the concept of democracy and, therefore, the term 'democratisation'. This uncertainty is important because it impacts on our ability to determine whether or not democratisation has occurred. One may argue that, on a formal level, the existence of free and fair elections is enough to constitute a democracy. On the other hand, one might argue that for substantive democracy to exist much more is needed: legal and political rights to freedom of association and speech that make public engagement in politics meaningful; a strong civil society that encourages individuals to actually engage in the political process; and an electoral system that ensures that all major groups within society feel adequately represented by government.

The point of highlighting the varied understandings of the term 'democracy' is to illustrate our understanding of the extent to which democratisation has occurred in world politics and will depend heavily on which vision of democracy we have in mind. As is noted above, if we take a formal view of democracy as a political system in which

citizens vote in elections, then we will see that democratisation has occurred throughout most of the world during the past half century. Of particular importance in encouraging this trend has been the ongoing process of decolonisation that took place throughout the twentieth century and, in particular, the collapse of communism following the demise of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s. Today, there are very few countries in which rhetorical support for democracy and the 'will of the people' is absent, suggesting that the popular status of democracy is almost unassailable. Even North Korea, a state often described as a totalitarian dictatorship, is formally labelled by its government as a *Democratic* People's Republic.

When considered in more substantive terms, democratisation has been somewhat less successful in the world (Carothers 2002). On a positive note, one source (www.freedom-house.org) suggests that the number of 'free states' increased from fifty-seven (around a third of all states) in 1986 to ninety (around half of all states) in 2006. On a more pessimistic note, despite the near universal rhetorical support for democracy, slightly more than half of the states in the world lacked substantive democratic systems and structures in 2006. This implies that early triumphalism regarding the spread of democracy was premature at best: democratisation has, in some cases, been a superficial process with limited practical consequences.

Why is this of such great concern? To understand this, we have to ask why it is that further democratisation is sought. Two arguments are most relevant here. The first has to do with the perceived domestic advantages that follow from a democratic system of government. There is no doubting that democracy is supported by a great number of people around the world because they perceive it to be a particularly legitimate form of political system. It is worth noting that this may not always have been the case. After all, the idea that government should operate for and on behalf of the people is one that has distinct historical roots (most notably, perhaps, in the French and American revolutions of the eighteenth century). Today, however, there are a great many organisations – domestic, transnational and international – that actively promote democratisation throughout the world.

A second reason that democratisation is sometimes promoted is that it is widely believed that democratic states are relatively peaceful (Doyle 1986a; Fukuyama 1989). This is what is known as the 'democratic peace thesis'. According to one version of this argument, democratic states are less prone to use force than are non-democratic states.

While some might doubt this claim, the more restricted argument that democratic states almost never employ force in their relations with other democratic states does seem to receive greater empirical support. As a result there has been, especially but not only in the USA, widespread support for the idea that by engaging in the democratisation of states throughout the world, the cause of peace can be advanced.

If it is widely (though not universally) accepted that democratisation is desirable, there remains the major challenge of understanding how it can best be undertaken. Great controversy has emerged in recent decades, particularly due to the apparent willingness of successive US administrations to seek to use military force to encourage democratisation. Iraq is perhaps the primary example of this, as the Bush administration used arguments about the benefits of democratising Iraq in order to justify the US invasion in 2003. Doubts about the effectiveness of democratisation by force have since grown, and these doubts have been intensified by the obvious challenges that the USA has faced in its efforts to encourage the democratisation of Afghanistan. The difficulty of promoting democracy has been increasingly recognised, as has the necessity of putting in place the prerequisites of successful democratisation, such as **security**, stability, **development** and a strong **civil society** (Diamond 2008).

Finally, it is worth noting that the relevance of the concept of democratisation is by no means limited to debate regarding national politics in developing states. Indeed, the lack of democracy – sometimes termed a democratic deficit – has been identified as a serious problem within both developed states and regional and global institutions. Within developed states, further democratisation has been called for by those who see current models of representative democracy as offering too little scope for individuals to engage in politics. In international institutions the democratic deficit is sometimes even greater (Held 1995). Considerable scope for political engagement exists within the European Union (EU), yet this is both unsatisfactory for some who demand greater involvement for citizens of European states in EU decision making, and comparatively rare in terms of how international organisations are organised. Most, like the United Nations, offer little if any scope for the representation of 'ordinary' people. It is in such institutions and in the structures of global **governance** more broadly that many have called for further democratisation.

Further reading: Carothers 2004; Cox et al. 2000; Diamond 1999, 2008; Huntington 1991.

DETERRENCE

At its heart, deterrence is a very simple concept and one that may be applied in many areas of life. To deter someone is to use a threat of harm to prevent another from taking a certain course of action. If a policeman shouts 'freeze or I'll shoot!', they are seeking to deter someone from moving. While this concept can be applied elsewhere, however, it is most frequently referred to within international relations (IR). When IR scholars speak of deterrence they are generally referring to a situation where one **nation-state** uses the threat of military force to discourage another from doing something. A simple example of such a strategy would be where State A uses a threat of the use of military force to deter State B from invading the territory of State A. In the context of IR, therefore, deterrence is generally regarded as a military strategy (and so can be compared to other military strategies such as defence or compellence).

Although deterrence represents a strategic option that is available to any state possessing military armaments, the importance of this concept increased vastly as a consequence of the invention of nuclear weapons (Gray 1999a). The destructive potential of nuclear weapons made strategies relying on the threat of harm particularly viable. Given that the successfulness of a strategy of deterrence rests (to some extent) on one's ability to threaten another with an *unacceptable* level of harm, and because even a single nuclear attack on a major city would likely kill tens of thousands of a state's citizens, it is easy to see why the threat of nuclear attack might form an effective means by which such a strategy might be employed.

Deterrence, and nuclear deterrence in particular, became a central feature of the Cold War. The United States and the Soviet Union each sought to deter the other from aggression by threatening the other's annihilation. The fact that each possessed (at the height of the Cold War) tens of thousands of nuclear warheads meant that these were not idle threats. The resulting situation became known by the phrase 'mutual assured destruction' (MAD) because an act of aggression by either state would, in all likelihood, lead to the destruction of both.

The consequences of MAD continue to be debated. For some, MAD helped to ensure stability and to prevent the occurrence of a Third World War (Howard 1994–95). For others, the risks associated with this 'balance of terror' far outweighed the supposed benefits of nuclear deterrence (Payne 2001). At the heart of this debate lies the problem of determining whether or not a strategy of deterrence has or has not been successful. On first inspection, this does not seem to

present much of a challenge. If A sought to deter B from taking a particular course of action and if B did not in fact take that course of action, then surely A's deterrent strategy worked? Unfortunately, things are not as simple as they seem. The challenge here is that while we may be sure that B did not take a particular course of action, it remains very difficult to demonstrate conclusively *why* B did not take that course of action. B may never have even considered to behave in an aggressive manner and A's concerns (and their deterrent strategy) may have been unwarranted. This is a vital issue for strategists because if a deterrent strategy had no influence on B's decision then A might not be able to rely upon deterrence being a successful strategy in the future. This is one of the defining paradoxes of theories of deterrence: if deterrence works then nothing happens, and it is incredibly difficult to prove why something has not happened (Gray 1999b).

What adds to this problem is that while the requirements for a successful strategy of deterrence are quite simple to state in theory, they are far more difficult to apply in practice. The four commonly recognised requirements of deterrence can be summarised by the terms rationality, communication, capability and credibility. Let us consider each in turn. First, if a strategy of deterrence is to work, the actor being deterred must be rational. This point seems self-evident, but defining 'rationality' is harder than it may at first seem. The key assumption here is that one's deterrent threat will only work if B (the actor being deterred) bases their decisions on the weighing of costs and benefits that might accrue from a particular course of behaviour. If A is to be certain that a strategy of deterrence will be successful, they must also be certain, firstly, that B is capable of accurately comparing such potential costs and benefits and, secondly, that B values their safety more than the gains that they might make through an act of aggression. It is because we can easily imagine situations where either of these claims might not hold that the assumption of rationality is a potentially hazardous one.

On the one hand, decision making is rarely as mechanical as this model of cost–benefit analysis suggests. People make mistakes and information regarding future costs and benefits may be incomplete. On the other hand, people from different cultures may make decisions in different ways or they may value different things. A religious fundamentalist who believes in the existence of an afterlife may respond very differently to a threat of death than might an atheist. This aspect of deterrence has been particularly important in the contemporary era in which world leaders such as George W. Bush have

argued that the leaders of certain 'rogue' states are irrational and therefore that deterrence will not work against them.

Second, cultural differences may also challenge the ease with which a deterrent threat is communicated. Clear communication would seem to be important because if B does not understand either what it is that A wishes them not to do or what it is that A has threatened to do, they may undertake the proscribed course of action. Because difficulties can arise in the translation of even relatively simple phrases, and because A may wish to proscribe general forms of behaviour rather than a precise course of action, communication within the context of deterrence can be harder than we might initially imagine.

The third requirement of a successful deterrent strategy is that B must believe that A has the capability to deliver on their threat to cause B an unacceptable level of harm. In an era in which highly destructive nuclear warheads can be mated with ballistic missiles that allow one to attack targets thousands of kilometres away, this aspect of deterrence would appear to be relatively uncomplicated. Things become more complicated, however, when one considers the use of deterrence against an adversary that also possesses nuclear weapons. A key concern for each of the superpowers during the Cold War was how many nuclear warheads would be enough to deter the other. Of concern here was the possibility that one superpower would launch a 'first strike' against the other, effectively disarming it and preventing it from carrying out its deterrent threat. As a result, the superpowers stockpiled thousands of nuclear weapons so as to ensure that, should they be attacked, they would maintain a 'second-strike capability' – an ability to strike back if attacked – and therefore an effective deterrent (Walton 2008: 324–5). On the other hand, the possibility of a state creating a system to defend against a nuclear strike also complicates evaluations of capability. States such as China and Russia worry that if the USA builds a national missile defence system, their ability to deter the USA from behaving aggressively will be diminished (if not demolished) because they may not have the capability to carry out any deterrent threat that they might make.

Finally, we reach the most complicated requirement for a successful strategy of deterrence: for B to be deterred it must believe that A's threat is credible or, in other words, that if B undertook the proscribed course of action A would in fact carry out its threat (Schelling 1966). It is at this point that we must confront the central challenge associated with pursuing a deterrent strategy; the successful use of such a strategy ultimately rests on B's expectations or beliefs about what will happen in the future. If B undertakes the course of action

proscribed by A, deterrence has failed and – except in relation to A's use of deterrence in the future – it matters little whether or not A carries out its threat against B. For deterrence to be successful, B must *believe* that A would carry out the threat and, as a consequence of this, choose not to take the proscribed course of action in the first place. The challenge for A, therefore, is to demonstrate to B not only its ability to carry out a particular threat but also its willingness to do so. How does one convince another that they would carry out a certain threat – especially one so extreme as to consist of a massive nuclear strike – and how can one ever be certain that the other actor really believes in the credibility of one's threat? To understand the difficulty of answering these questions is to understand the complexity of deterrence.

Further reading: Freedman 2003, 2004; Gray 1999a, 1999b; Sagan and Waltz 2002.

DEVELOPMENT

The controversy surrounding the concept of development is belied by its apparent simplicity: the term describes a process of growth of the capacities of a **nation-state**. We can understand why this concept arouses controversy, however, when we consider what is implied when the concept is employed within international politics. Put simply, when we speak of a particular state's level of development we implicitly assume that we have some universal standard by which this can be judged. Controversy surrounds the question of where such standards have come from and how legitimate it is to apply them universally (Escobar 1995). We shall return to this issue later in this entry after first considering some of the different ways in which the term development is used and measured.

One of the most common usages of this term is in the drawing of distinctions between developed and undeveloped, underdeveloped or developing states. This division is also referred to as that between the global north and the global south (Adams 1993). What these distinctions recognise is the inequality that exists within the world in terms of economic wealth and in terms of many other indicators of well-being that are themselves linked to standards of wealth. A state's level of development is measured in a range of ways, such as the growth in its gross domestic product (GDP), its GDP growth per capita, its average income per capita, the percentage of the population living below the poverty line (of US$1.25 per day), life expectancy rates, child mortality rates and levels of adult literacy.

Importantly, the use of different measures leads one to different conclusions regarding levels of development. Take the case of Nigeria, for example. Using GDP growth as a measure may suggest that Nigeria has enjoyed rapid levels of development in the past decade, as it achieved nearly 6 per cent growth in GDP per annum between 2001 and 2008 (UNDP 2009: ix). Yet deeper analysis of equality and poverty in Nigeria suggests that this national statistic has not resulted in significant improvement in the lives of many Nigerians. Put simply, national growth rates can hide increasing levels of inequality within states. More recent efforts have therefore sought to combine a range of key indicators of development levels. A prominent example of this is the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) Human Development Index (HDI) which incorporates measures of life expectancy, educational attainment and income (UNDP 2010). It is worth mentioning, however, that even this more complex measure of development must be used with care as it can hide significant variation of development standards within states.

Changes in the way underdevelopment is measured have corresponded to a shift in attitudes regarding what constitutes successful development and, therefore, regarding what the goals and the means of development policy ought to be. The orthodox view, grounded in a neo-liberal vision of economics, was that successful development policy ought to lead to the creation in developing countries of modern, competitive industrial economies. It was thought that economic measures such as trade liberalisation and 'structural adjustment' policies that sought to reorganise the economies of developing states would, in the long term, produce economic growth that would trickle down to improve the wellbeing of the majority of society.

This approach was criticised on a number of grounds (Pogge 2008). First, and as is noted above, while certain states did enjoy rapid growth, the added wealth did not appear to trickle down to 'ordinary' people. Second, the implementation of the orthodox vision was heavily dependent on Western experts, most notably those operating within the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF). By doing so, this approach downplayed the importance of indigenous voices and gave the concept of development an imperialistic tone. Finally, economic growth in some states – and China represents an example of this – has come at considerable cost in terms of the wellbeing of citizens and that of the environment.

Such criticisms have resulted in limited but important changes in the way that development policy is formulated and implemented. A greater focus has been placed on the need for growth that directly

improves the wellbeing of the poorest parts of society. There is also a growing sense that economic development policy ought to be driven by domestic actors rather than by economic analysts in Washington (the home of the headquarters of both the IMF and World Bank). Furthermore, since the 1992 United Nations Conference on the Environment and Development, also known as the Rio Summit (as it was held in Rio de Janeiro), a consensus appears to have emerged regarding the need for sustainable development that does not achieve growth at the expense of the environment.

For many, this broadening of the development agenda represents an important step forward in the promotion of human wellbeing (World Bank 2002). Increasing the level of participation of peoples in the development process, reducing the influence of external experts and promoting the use of grass-roots, bottom-up movements to promote development all are thought to aid in the creation of sustainable and legitimate development policies. Some remain sceptical regarding the likely effectiveness of such measures and somewhat cynical regarding the means that are employed to promote development (Kiely 2006). The success of contemporary development efforts is empirically questionable, and debate continues regarding how best to measure development and poverty. Furthermore, some doubt the very desirability of development policy, seeing it as a means of projecting around the world a culturally specific set of ideas and values even as it claims to free people from the chains of poverty (Duffield 2007).

Further reading: Adams 1993; Haynes 2008; Payne 2005; World Bank 2002.

DISCOURSE

The ordinary, traditional meaning of discourse refers to discussion about a subject undertaken in conversation or written prose. This meaning is retained in the French use of *discours*, which is literally translated as 'speech' or 'talk'. However, as it has developed in social and political thought, the term 'discourse' describes areas of expert knowledge that are composed of texts and speech and adhere to specific structures of language and meaning.

In this sense, discourse can be understood as a coherent body of knowledge, which can in turn be a site of analysis that seeks to reveal structures of language and meaning, and the practices within these structures that constitute the subjects and objects of knowledge. Hegemonic discourses refer to dominant paradigms of knowledge, while counter-discourses operate against, and in reaction to, these dominant paradigms. Discourse is a way of making statements identifiable and

understandable on a particular topic. Therefore, the discourse that becomes established around a particular issue becomes part of the governing paradigm of that topic in ways that can make the articulation of alternative approaches difficult.

Perhaps the most significant contributor to the emergence of discourse as a distinctive political phenomenon was the philosopher Michel Foucault. In his post-structuralist analysis, Foucault examined the historical emergence of a number of the dominant discourses in modern society. This method of studying the particular ways in which the governance of contemporary life had emerged was labelled 'genealogy' and Foucault applied the method to the development of several discourses – madness, criminality and sexuality – in which labels of deviance were applied to those seen to be afflicted with particular disorders.

For Foucault, discourse extends past language to broader rules that govern individual and social life, what he describes as 'discursive practices' which are: 'a body of anonymous, historical rules, always determined in the time and space that have defined a given period, and for a given social, economic, geographical or linguistic area, the conditions of operation of the enunciative function' (Foucault 1972: 131). He defines discourse as 'a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation' (Foucault 1972: 131). Discourse, in this sense, can only be made sense of through understanding the **power** and knowledge that are embodied, often covertly, in the discursive paradigm that is used. Stuart Hall has defined Foucault's definition of discourse as: 'a group of statements which provide a language for talking about – ie. a way of representing – the knowledge about a particular topic at a particular historical moment' (Hall 1996: 201).

An alternative to Foucault's critical, post-structuralist account of discourse has been Jurgen Habermas' theory of discourse ethics. Taking a normative approach to the question of discourse, and with a view to his theory of communicative action, Habermas is concerned with delineating the appropriate rules of political discourse to enable fair and appropriate decision making to take place. Discourse ethics then are imagined as a set of rules to govern the manner of political interaction. Unlike Foucault, Habermas has an explicitly normative project that views discourse ethics as a means for realising his ideal vision of deliberative **democracy**.

For Habermas, this project is primarily concerned with a way of translating his metaphorical ideal speech situation into a practical ethos to form the basis of models of deliberative **democracy**. While Habermasian discourse ethics contain a number of structural conditions

that shape the spaces in which political interaction takes place, this approach concentrates on the communicative element of discourse rather than the broader social practices (and attendant structures) in which communication is inscribed. Typically, Foucauldian discourse analysts criticise Habermasians for failing to give sufficient attention to structures of power and how they affect discourse as well as not taking seriously the way in which discourses are inscribed in social and political practices as well as rules of language.

The notion of discourse has also appeared in more empirically driven forms of political research whereby the terms in which political debate is conducted are subjected to quantitative analysis. While this mode of analysis has often been undertaken in isolation from either the Foucauldian or Habermasian understanding of discourse, it arguably provides a useful empirical counterpart which can complement either approach. Therefore, while the focus on the construction of knowledge and its embodiment in discourse tends to be critical of particular discourses, it is also focused on the ways in which discourse is used in institutions and systems and therefore should not be seen as antithetical to empirical political analysis. Indeed, the critical discourse analysis approach explicitly focuses on the ways in which discourses operate in institutional settings (Fairclough 2001).

Further reading: Fairclough 2001; Foucault 1972; Habermas 1984; Hall 1996.

EMPIRE

In general, the word 'empire' describes a realm over which **power** is exercised. If used loosely, this realm may take almost any form, as in when a business leader speaks of their economic 'empire'. In politics and international relations, the term is used a little more restrictively to refer to a certain type of political arrangement; one where a particular political community gains **authority** over one or more other communities. The example of the Roman Empire illustrates this point. Within this empire, Rome ruled over a great many people from distinct political, ethnic and religious backgrounds. As we will see, however, disagreement is possible regarding how we should define both the purpose of empire and the means by which imperial power is exerted. The term can therefore be used to refer to quite different formations of power, ranging from the formally defined British Empire that dominated the world throughout much of the nineteenth century to the current neo-liberal global economic and financial order 'led' by intergovernmental organisations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF), World Trade Organization and World Bank.

One of the key reasons that the term 'empire' remains of importance today has to do with the ongoing impact within international politics of the four or so centuries of (predominantly) European imperialism. The era of European imperialism arguably began in 1492, the year that Columbus led the first Spanish expedition across the Atlantic. This early wave of European Imperialism was led by Spain, Portugal, Great Britain, France and Holland. Later, in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Great Britain expanded its empire in competition with a new range of states including Germany, Italy, the USA and Japan (Hart 2003). Most if not all of these formal empires ended during the twentieth century as decolonisation led to the sovereign independence of many previously colonised peoples (Springhall 2001).

But how have empires that were dissolved decades or even centuries ago continued to impact on international politics today? Some of the effects of European imperialism are easy to identify. For example, consider the prevalence today of the Spanish and Portuguese languages on the South American continent, a fact that can be traced back to the imperial domination of that continent by two relatively small European countries during the fifteenth, sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Or, to take another example, examine a map of the world and compare the borders of various long-established European states with those of some of the post-colonial states within regions such as Africa and the Middle East. Take the almost geometrical borders of Jordan, for example, which are the product of a deal made in the early twentieth century between the British and French regarding the division of their imperial possessions in the Middle East. This pattern is repeated throughout many parts of the world, where administrative decisions taken by imperial powers determined the ongoing geographical boundaries of states.

This may appear a somewhat superficial point to make until one considers the practical effects that the definition of borders may produce. In parts of Africa, for example, borders created to suit the administrative and economic interests of imperial powers served in the destruction of existing forms of community and the creation of new ones. This sometimes involved incorporating peoples of different ethnicity, language and religion within newly formed states, something that continues to pose challenges to the stability of some states today. Furthermore, this physical reorganisation of space was only one of the forms of violence exercised upon the peoples of such imperial possessions. Economic exploitation, such as that of parts of India by the British Empire, led at times to severe poverty and even starvation

and death, sometimes on a massive scale. Social reorganisation led often to the demise of traditional structures of authority; something that has caused problems for post-colonial communities seeking to (re)construct forms of social and political order. Finally, one cannot ignore the extensive and at times brutal use of physical violence by imperial states in both their invasion and occupation of their respective possessions.

A final source of control exercised over many colonised peoples was less tangible than the direct use of military force, but just as harmful. This source of control took the form of the norms and values promoted by many imperial powers. Often, these norms served to justify imperialism on the grounds that the imperial power had a responsibility to spread some version of 'civilisation' to the barbarous masses. This type of argument has been used repeatedly to justify imperialism, both at home and amongst the populations of those being colonised. For the citizens of the imperial powers, such representations have been used to explain the right (and responsibility) of their nations to rule over others; for the colonised, they have been used to explain the necessity of their servitude. Scholars such as Edward Said (1991, 1994) have done much to demonstrate the persistence of such values and norms (even long after formal imperial ties have been cut), as well as the great harm that such ideas can cause.

In addition to the continued relevance of the European empires of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the term 'empire' remains relevant to at least two contemporary areas of debate. On the one hand, the concept of empire has been injected into debates regarding globalisation. Critics of globalisation have pointed to the spread of neo-liberal economic policies and values throughout the globe and described this process in imperial terms (Petras and Veltmeyer 2007). Such criticism suggests that the representatives of institutions such as the World Bank and IMF who, especially in the 1960s and 1970s, actively sought to promote such policies and values, were acting in an 'imperialistic' manner. Of particular concern to such critics was the employment of language that mirrored that of imperialism: neo-liberalism was treated as being universally applicable and it was deemed the responsibility of those in Washington (where several key international economic and financial organisations are located) to help the underdeveloped peoples of the world reach a sufficient level of modernity and economic advancement (Köse et al. 2007).

The concept of empire has also risen to prominence within the context of debates regarding US foreign policy, especially since the terrorist attacks on the USA in 2001 and the consequent wars in

Afghanistan and Iraq. Again, the term 'empire' has been used by those critical of US policy, those who wish to emphasise the expansion of the power of the USA, the increasing number of US military bases on foreign soil, and the promotion, sometimes through the use of military force, of US values (Bacevich 2002; Johnson 2004). Interestingly, however, the use of the term 'empire' was not restricted to those who opposed US power and policy. Some loud and influential voices emerged in the early 2000s and suggested that the USA held both the opportunity and the responsibility to construct a new American global order. And like European proponents of empire before them, these individuals argued that empire had much to offer those over whom power would be exercised: international order, peace and stability and the promotion of 'universal' values of liberty and **democracy** (Kagan and Kristol 2000; Boot 2002).

Further reading: Arnason and Raaflaub 2010; Bacevich 2002; Doyle 1986b; Hobsbawm 2010; Said 1991.

EQUALITY

While in ordinary parlance equality merely refers to the sameness of two separate entities, in politics the concept of equality relates specifically to the treatment of individuals in law and political life. In particular, the political use of the term tends to focus on the fair (or just) distribution and allocation of primary social goods to reflect the parity of status of a group of **individuals**. An alternative account emanates from **Marxism** which promotes the idea of equality between different social **classes**. This approach emphasises the collective nature of social disadvantage and the dangers of being drawn into an individualistic account of inequality.

Within these broad understandings, however, lie many different theoretical interpretations of equality, all of which have profound implications for the organisation of practical politics. One of the most important formations is the idea of moral equality articulated by philosophers such as Immanuel Kant which is predicated on the idea that 'all men are born equal' (Kant 1983). From this foundation, moral equality implies that all individuals have an equal moral status that emanates from their shared humanity. On account of their equal moral status, individuals are therefore entitled to equal treatment in **law** and politics. This perspective has also had a profound influence on **discourses** of **human rights**.

While this view of equality is highly influential, the implications for the organisation of political structures and institutions generate

considerable debate. For example, a purely formal instantiation of this understanding of equality may translate into the idea that everyone with equal characteristics should be treated equally in law. This idea can be traced to Ancient Greece where philosophers such as Aristotle (1968) argued that equality meant treating 'like cases alike'. However, this formal concept of equality has been criticised for failing to give rise to substantive practical forms of equality because it does not adequately account for the different capacities or talents of **individuals** or the social context in which these formal **rights** must be realised.

By the middle of the twentieth century then, theories of equality were dealing much more explicitly with how equality is actually experienced. These more substantive forms of equality tried to take account of the different starting points from which individuals engaged in wider society and envisaged ways in which the outcomes of attempts to recognise similar status needed to be more equal. It was this kind of approach which informed the development of the welfare state in Western capitalist societies in the post-World War II period. The implicit conceptualisation underpinning these developments was that formal equality of opportunity was insufficient to address the unequal starting points of individuals and therefore that the attempt to achieve more equal outcomes might necessitate unequal treatment, particularly in the redistribution of wealth.

Since the publication of *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls in 1971, however, debates in political philosophy on the nature and extent of equality have become closely tied up with conceptualisations of **justice**. Rawls' theory of justice is premised upon two major principles. The first of these is the principle of 'fair equality' that requires that 'each person is to have an equal right to the most extensive basic liberty compatible with a similar liberty for others' (Rawls 1971: 60). This principle of equality relates to civil and political freedoms that are to apply to all citizens equally.

Rawls' second principle is known as the difference principle. This relates to social and economic inequalities which 'are to be arranged so that they are both (a) reasonably expected to be to everyone's advantage, and (b) attached to positions and offices open to all' (Rawls 1971:60). In operationalising this principle Rawls suggests that inequality is only justifiable where it is to the benefit of everyone. These principles form the basis of the Rawlsian model of distributive justice.

The Rawlsian model has been subject to numerous criticisms from others within the liberal tradition as well as those working from communitarian or Marxist perspectives. However, the most notable critique in terms of the notion of equality is probably the work of

Amartya Sen (1999). Along with Martha Nussbaum (2001), Sen has since championed the 'capabilities' approach as an alternative to earlier theories of equality. The 'capabilities' approach is focused more on positive freedom, or the 'freedom to achieve'.

Equality remains a highly contentious concept in politics and international relations. It has taken on a new dimension with the emergence of processes of **globalisation** in the last thirty years. These suggest that it is no longer sufficient to talk about equality within the boundaries of the **nation-state** but that a perspective needs to be developed to properly account for the situation of the global south.

Further reading: Aristotle 1968; Kant 1983; Nussbaum 2001; Rawls 1971; Sen 1999.

ETHNOCENTRISM

The study of politics generally relies on the study of one or more cases in order to develop explanations, theories and models, a process known as comparative politics. These can then be 'tested' in other scenarios (geographically or across time) in order to confirm, refine or refute. Yet it is recognised that not all political concepts and explanations 'travel' – that is to say, that norms and practices are not universal but are subject to cultural expectations and traditions. To this end, early studies of social science (particularly ethnographic and sociological) have been subject to accusations of ethnocentrism; that is, the researcher views and reports what they observe through their own subjective lenses which lack appropriate justification. For example, the assumption that the Western liberal democratic model is the ideal model of **government** is ethnocentric. At its worst, ethnocentrism borders on racism, assuming that a particular culture or value system is superior. Concerns regarding ethnocentrism are predominant in particular sub-disciplines, for example, the field of development studies. The challenge of ethnocentrism has led some to revisit 'classic' anthropological studies.

Ethnocentrism as a concept was first employed by Sumner (2002) in the early years of the twentieth century, notifying a superior sense of 'us' compared with 'others' who are lacking in rationality, intelligence and general worldliness. Levinson (1950) further developed the definition in an attempt to distinguish ethnocentrism from basic prejudice – the latter being a hostility towards a particular group (be it on grounds of race, sex or sexuality) whilst the former is a more general outlook which can generate feelings of both negativity and

positivity – thereby privileging particular actions and ideologies on the basis of stereotypes. To this end we see an overlap with studies in the field of psychology.

By examining Rorty's (1994) three theses on **liberalism**, Cruickshank (2000) argues that Rorty operates an 'ethnocentrism'. For example, Rorty's first thesis on politics is ethnocentric because it proffers a justification of political systems based upon relative social standards; such a lack of a universal norm has negative implications for communication. Kam and Kinder (2007) suggest that the reordering of US policy in response to the events of 9/11, and the American public's response to policy redirection derives, in part, from ethnocentrism. By analysing relevant responses in the 2000–02 National Election Study (such as attitudes towards federal spending on security, action towards hostile states, contributions to foreign aid and public support for the president), Kam and Kinder found that, after partisanship, ethnocentrism was correlated to attitudes towards the war on terrorism. They were furthermore able to claim that ethnocentrism was not merely a proxy for conservatism because respondents who were ethnocentric did not support other, Republican, policies (such as tax cuts). As such: 'Ethnocentrism is a deep human habit, an altogether commonplace inclination to divide the world into ingroups and outgroups, the former characterized by virtuosity and talent, the latter by corruption and mediocrity. Support for the war on terrorism, undertaken against a strange and shadowy enemy, should come disproportionately, we propose, from Americans possessed of an ethnocentric turn of mind' (Kam and Kinder 2007: 321).

See also: **culture; identity**

EXECUTIVE

One of the core features of **democracy** is the principle of the 'separation of powers'; that is, no individual shall be all-powerful. Montesquieu (1969) defined such a separation as branches of government and identified three core branches – the legislature, judiciary and executive. In modern democracies a key focus is the extent to which these branches are entirely separate entities (as in the USA and France) and the extent to which there may be an overlap of personnel (as in the UK). It is practice in the UK that members of the government (executive) are drawn predominantly from the ranks of the House of Commons, with a smaller constituent being appointed from the House of Lords (both strands of the legislature).

The function of the executive is decision maker, rather than law maker, the latter strictly speaking being the remit of the legislature, though in reality this distinction is not so clear cut. The executive is the core of government, typically presidents and ministers, prime ministers and cabinets. Hague and Harrop (2007: 329) argue that: 'Governing without an assembly or judiciary is perfectly feasible but ruling without an executive is impossible'. It is the power of the executive which distinguishes democracies from dictatorships – in a democracy there will be some limit on executive power (enshrined by the separation of powers) but in a dictatorship there is little or no accountability – and where constitutional, judicial and legislature controls exist they are generally ineffective.

Executives can be classified in two ways: presidential government and parliamentary/cabinet government (though this is not to imply that presidential systems are cabinet-free). Hague and Harrop (2007) identify the key features of parliamentary government as: (i) the legislature and executive are organically linked in the sense that they may have overlapping membership and the former may curtail the latter via a no-confidence vote; (ii) the executive is collegial. The historic principle of *primus inter pares* ('first among equals') is the traditional view of cabinet government, with the prime minister holding equal status to fellow cabinet colleagues. As a result, the latter part of the twentieth century has witnessed some debate surrounding the 'presidentialisation' of cabinet government in the UK, with the Thatcherite style of government providing a catalyst; and (iii) there may be a ceremonial head of state often distinct from prime minister/premier/chancellor. Heads of state may either be inherited (such as in the UK, Spain and the Netherlands) who reign but do not rule, or elected presidents (such as in Ireland and Israel via direct or indirect elections). In the case of the latter: 'The prime minister, usually appointed by the president, is responsible for day-to-day domestic government but the president retains an oversight role, responsibility for foreign affairs and can usually take emergency powers' (Hague and Harrop 2007: 344).

As time has progressed, the remit of executives has become increasingly complex: 'The increased scope of modern governments has been partly the result of technological changes, but a significant factor in the twentieth century in major political systems has been the totality of modern wars' (Ball and Guy Peters 2005: 221). This has resulted in what might be termed a 'decline of parliaments' thesis in Western Europe, characterised by dominant executives managing strict political party discipline, whilst legislative power is simultaneously challenged by

the authority of the European Union (Raunio and Wiberg 2008). Similarly, presidents and prime ministers are readily evaluated as 'strong' or 'weak' on the basis of ability and personality; the latter can get some post holders through tricky scenarios which might otherwise bring the less charismatic down.

In post-communist states in Central and Eastern Europe the division of executive powers between the president and the prime minister and cabinet has been far from unproblematic, with clashes/power battles occurring in Poland, Slovakia, the Czech Republic and Romania (Goetz and Margetts 1999). Ball and Guy Peters (2005) point to a different type of executive in non-democratic regimes. Dominant individuals were common in communist regimes despite the nominal claim that power was held by 'the party' or council – think Stalin in the Soviet Union or Ceausescu in Romania, and Kim Jong-Il in North Korea – referred to as the 'cult of leadership'.

See also: **government; presidentialism**

Further reading: King 1985; Neustadt 1980.

FEDERALISM

The *type* of government suitable for a **nation-state** will be determined by a number of factors. Two key components are (i) geographic size and (ii) socio-cultural homogeneity of the population (including linguistic, religious and ethnic similarities and differences). Federalism has long been recognised as an appropriate system for managing large geographic areas where there is a desire to disperse power across a number of authorities due to the complex and diverse nature of the population. Size was the key driver for federalism in Australia, and eight of the ten largest states in the world operate a federal system (Garner et al. 2009). Furthermore, it has at certain historical junctures been adopted as a safeguard against potential exploitation and dictatorial forces, as was the case in the USA and West Germany in the 1940s. It can be a pragmatic attempt to create a stronger sum of weak components and offers a practical defence to potential external threats. Federalism 'affects the working of the party system, the operation of pressure groups, the relationships between assemblies and executives, the status of the judiciary and the organization of the bureaucracy' (Ball and Guy Peters 2005: 59). It is, however, not a guarantee of stability and compromise; for example, the communist Yugoslav federation succumbed to ethnic conflict and civil war, initiated by Serb aggression.

It is not just the sharing of power (as in decentralisation, devolution and consociation which a unitary state is free to reverse) but also the sharing of sovereignty; the federal/national government cannot abolish the regional/state level as the divisions are enshrined constitutionally. The sub-national authorities retain a degree of autonomy – usually over what are classified as domestic issues, such as welfare, local taxation and infrastructure – whilst national government retains control over national security. The federal association in Switzerland was established in the mid-nineteenth century (uniting linguistic and religious divisions), and the process has since been adopted in Germany. Federalism can be implemented to 'bring together' pre-existing interests (for example, the USA, Canada, Australia) or, less frequently it is employed to 'hold together' a widening of interests at the regional level. Belgium is an example of the latter – it formally became a federation in 1993.

> The world is paradoxically exhibiting simultaneously increasing pressures for integration and for disintegration. Because federalism combines a shared government (for specified common purposes) with autonomous action by constituent units of government that maintain their identity and distinctiveness, more and more peoples have come to see some form of federalism as the closest institutional approximation to the multinational reality of the contemporary world.
>
> (Watts 1998: 118)

Federal states are small in numeric terms (twenty-two) but large in terms of reach, encompassing 40 per cent of the world's population (Hague and Harrop 2010). Operationally, the sub-national units engage with the policy-making process via representation in the upper chamber. For example, in the USA each of the fifty states is represented by two senators, regardless of geographic spread, relative population size or economic power. Where there is a demand for 'special rights' (on the basis of ethnic/cultural differences) then the autonomy of each state may vary; this system of asymmetrical federalism applies to Quebec in Canada (see Watts 1998).

Perhaps the arena is which the concept of federalism is most deeply contested in contemporary politics is in regards to the EU. The transition from the European Community to the EU in 1992 ensured that there are traits of federalism in the way it functions. This said there are still features of the EU which distinguish it from federalism as it operates at nation-state level, for example, free movement and a single

currency are only partial features, there is no direct taxation or common military and the institutional governance structure is not bicameral (Hague and Harrop 2010: 281).

Hague and Harrop (2010) distinguish between dual and cooperative federalism. Dual federalism is typified by the USA – the constitutional compact serving the core link between otherwise independently functioning national and state governments. However, the modern state of politics renders this model unrealistic in the twenty-first century, the threat of international conflict and global economic interdependency being prime reasons. Cooperative federalism is very much the 'European model', a commitment to unity despite regional disparities which seeks to rest decision making at the lowest level – a process known as subsidiarity.

Rubin and Feeley (2008) take an alternative view to this organisational definition and state that federalism is a matter of political identity. 'People's individual commitments in the political realm, their sense of who they are and where they belong, will determine the descriptive reality and the prescriptive necessity of federal arrangements' (Rubin and Feeley 2008: 167). They highlight the importance of geographic concentration for political identity; whilst the francophone linguistic minority of Canada is predominantly based in Quebec and is therefore the beneficiary of special rights, the same is not the case for Spanish-speaking groups in the USA, they are spread across numerous states. Furthermore, Rubin and Feeley explore examples where linguistic distinctiveness has spurred federalism (such as the examples of Canada and Belgium) but suggest there are many additional examples of linguistic diversity where federalism has not been proposed as a political system (such as China and Cameroon).

> Language often matters a great deal to people and is often the basis on which one group within a nation demands partial autonomy, but it cannot be treated as an externally observable cause of federalism. It will only lead to demands for autonomy when it possesses a particular meaning for its speakers, specifically a meaning that establishes them as a separate group that defines itself as connected with a particular geographic region.
>
> (Rubin and Feeley 2008: 183)

See also: **cleavage; government; identity; separation of powers**

Further reading: Elazar 1994; Rubin and Feeley 2008; Watts 1998, 1999.

FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign policy can be relatively easily defined; it represents 'the sum of official external relations conducted by an independent actor (usually a state) in international relations' (Hill 2003: 3). If we follow tradition and assume that nation-states remain the key independent actors within international politics, then foreign policy represents all of the relations that a **nation-state** maintains with other actors that lie beyond its borders. The validity of this definition appears to be confirmed by the fact that most if not all state governments incorporate something akin to a ministry or department of foreign affairs, an institution that is generally headed by a foreign minister or secretary of state. Thus, foreign policy would appear to be a key area of responsibility for any government and one that can be clearly distinguished from other such areas of responsibility which might be grouped under the broad label of 'domestic policy'.

This seemingly simple definition masks a good deal of complexity. Somewhat oddly, perhaps, we can uncover a first area of uncertainty regarding what foreign policy is by examining the meaning of the term 'domestic policy'. In real life, we rarely speak of 'domestic policy', and tend instead to refer to its component parts, such as education policy, transport policy or economic policy. These areas of policy are defined in terms of the subject matter that they address; so, financial policy deals with the **governance** of financial practices like the lending of money and financial institutions such as banks. Foreign policy, on the other hand, is a term that tells us nothing about the subject matter of that policy. Policy regarding any subject matter, so long as it is directed towards actors outside of a state's borders, constitutes foreign policy.

In practice, when we refer to foreign policy we tend to have in mind a narrower set of practices that we might collectively refer to as 'diplomacy' (Barston 1996; Eban 1998). This term describes the communication that takes place between the official representatives of nation-states as well as the formal institutions that carry out this practice and the rules that govern it. Diplomats – ambassadors and the like – act as mouthpieces for their respective nation-states/governments and are generally stationed in embassies which are located within foreign countries. The practices of diplomats are governed by an array of very important rules, such as those which guarantee them autonomy and protection within the countries in which they are stationed (Bull and Watson 1982). The reason for such rules, and for the exalted position in which ambassadors tend to be held, is that the

maintenance of diplomatic channels of communication between states has long been seen as one of the foundations of a functioning international political order.

Although diplomats discuss a broad range of issues in their day-to-day practices, it is the great issues of **war** and **peace** that are most often associated with diplomacy (and with foreign policy more generally). Indeed, it may be true that the key issues that must be addressed by a nation-state's foreign policy are those relating to the management of hostilities between itself and its adversaries and the forging of alliances with friendly states. Thus, for example, when one thinks of US foreign policy in recent years, instances such as the invasion of Iraq, the attempts to build a coalition in the War on Terror and the tense relations between the USA and states such as Iran spring to mind.

Although they are certainly very important, war and peace are not the only issues addressed within the context of foreign policy. Indeed, the vast majority of foreign policy decisions relate to other issues, issues that may be less dramatic in nature but which are equally important to our daily lives. Economic issues have long been of great importance within the context of foreign policy, be they to do with international trade, global finance or foreign aid. Foreign policy is involved, for example, when China seeks to expand its access to foreign sources of oil, or when South Africa seeks to diversify its sale of raw resources to foreign countries. Law and order issues are also important within the context of foreign policy, especially given the growth of transnational terrorist and criminal organisations (Berdal and Serrano 2002). The forced and unforced movements of people also touch upon foreign policy, as is evident in the policies of states such as Britain and Australia (Castles et al. 2014). Indeed, **globalisation** has resulted in a world in which – at least within developed nation-states – a great many areas of life are touched on by international factors and forces.

Neither are diplomats the only actors involved in the implementation of foreign policy. Because nation-states interact with one another regarding such a large and diverse array of issues, foreign policy is designed and implemented by a wide range of actors. Clearly, heads of government often play a role, as is easily appreciated when one considers the importance of the relationship between George W. Bush and Tony Blair in the lead up to the Iraq War of 2003. Logically, a state's foreign minister will also play a key role in the making of such policy, but so too will the heads of other departments within a government. Furthermore, given the breadth and complexity of foreign policy, important elements of the design and implementation of foreign policy will fall under the control of

civil servants operating under the purported authority of elected officials (Hill 2003: chapter 4).

The implications of this growth in the diversity of foreign policy are twofold. On the one hand, the divide between domestic and foreign policy has become increasingly blurred, leading some to refer to 'intermestic policy'; that area of policy that relates to both the international and domestic fields (Bloomfield 1982). On the other hand, the range of individuals and institutions involved in the making of foreign policy within many nation-states has grown to such an extent as to challenge the unity that is presumed by the definition above, which refers to the making of foreign policy by an 'independent actor'. Indeed, it is not uncommon, especially within large nation-states such as the USA, for different institutions within a single nation-state to pursue uncomplementary and even contradictory foreign policy objectives. Given this point, it may be better to think of a nation-state's foreign polic*ies* rather than a single foreign policy.

The final factor that complicates the seemingly simple definition advanced above is the fact that it is not just nation-states that operate as independent actors and conduct external relations within international politics. The EU, for example, is an international (supranational?) institution that conducts foreign policy independently of its member states. It is represented by a senior EU official, the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (Bretherton and Vogler 2006). Perhaps more controversially, it is possible to argue that even large multinational corporations are powerful and independent enough to exercise something like foreign policy powers. Thus, the range of issues covered by foreign policy and the range of actors engaged in its conduct highlight the complexity of this apparently simple concept.

Further reading: Allison and Zelikow 1999; Hill 2003; Hudson 2007; Smith et al. 2008.

GENDER

In empirical political research utilising survey methods, there has been a historical trend of asking questions about gender when in fact what is being requested is information about biological sex. Sex refers to the distinction between men and women, whereas gender refers to the much more complex distinction between male and female, masculinity and femininity. Such labels are social constructions that carry with them expectations of norms and behaviours. 'Gender also expresses the effects of relationships between and among women and men. These relationships are manifested in differences of political power, social

roles, images and expectations resulting in recognised characteristics of masculinity and femininity that differ over time and across cultures' (Lovenduski 2005: 7).

This distinction is as important to political debate as the contribution of concepts such as social **class**, religion and **culture**, as feminists argue that across political systems the formal distribution of power has historically and cross-culturally entrenched patriarchy; that is, masculine norms and cultures are privileged. Indeed, for some time political researchers have questioned why the extension of the franchise to women across virtually all political systems throughout the twentieth century has failed to result in (i) equality of descriptive representation in many formal institutions, which in turn may impact upon (ii) substantive representation – the extent to which women's concerns are adequately addressed in the policy process.

A core interest for feminist researchers is the extent to which the **state** constructs gender relations, though not all strands of feminism agree on the role of the state. For example, liberal feminists argued for reform of the state from 'inside', whilst radical feminists are 'outside' in the sense that they view the state as essentially and congenitally patriarchal (Kantola 2006). Typical of the liberal approach, for example, are analyses as to whether welfare systems are equitable in their support for men and women, mothers and fathers, workers and carers. To what extent does society 'frame' social roles in terms of gender-based assumptions (Okin 1989)? In contrast, radical feminists have rendered state reform as futile, instead stressing the centrality of gender and sexuality.

Studies of the function of gender in politics focus on two core areas: political theory and empirical analysis. Traditional political theory has been critiqued for its gendered assumptions, for example, the works of Hobbes, Locke and Rousseau all make reference to the frailties of women (feminine courage, lack of reasoning and sound judgement). Hence, feminist political theorists have examined the principles of **justice**, seeking to influence the policy process. Within empirical analysis gender has underpinned discussions concerning 'the way in which politics is done'. For example, some studies have focused upon the presence, or otherwise, of women in key political offices, though discussions of a gendered politics go beyond mere physical representation but raise questions as to whether there exists a politics of difference; that is, does a feminised political system look less hierarchical and more caring?

Within both approaches there has also been a critical querying of the definition of 'politics' which goes beyond the formality of

governments and **voting**, to more informal activity and relationships (Okin 1979; Phillips 1998). This has generated debates regarding the 'public' and 'private' spheres of politics; the former being recognised as predominantly male populated and defined, whilst the latter is predominantly female populated but still subject to gendered discourses which are male defined.

Krook and Mackay (2011) identify a significant tidal wave of institutional change and redesign since the latter years of the twentieth century which has impacted upon gender relations and gender **equality**. This has led to the prolific growth in the analysis of gender and political recruitment and **representation**, social welfare, democratic transition, multilevel governance and international law. A recent development in political analysis has been the concept of gender mainstreaming – assessing the implications of policies and laws for men and women. Whilst the term can be traced back to development studies in the 1970s, the concept took on important significance following the United Nations conference on women in Beijing in 1995. Walby (2005: 453) describes gender mainstreaming as 'a leading-edge example of the potential implications of globalisation for gender politics', though the transnationality of this approach can create tension in relations to the extent to which equality and sameness are achievable. As Walby (2005: 454) states, it 'is a global initiative but is not evenly developed globally'. As such, we must be careful not to isolate gender from other identity-forming attributes, particularly class and ethnicity. To assume all women (or all men) have a shared experience would be naïve.

See also: **citizenship; equality; identity; representation**

Further reading: Kantola 2006; Phillips 1995; Okin 1979; Walby 2005.

GLOBALISATION

Globalisation is a term that became widespread in the academic literature in the 1990s and has had a significant bearing on political debate thereafter. It alludes to a wide range of phenomena that is characterised by an increasingly international dimension that transcends the modernist preoccupation with the **nation-state**. Globalisation suggests that international links and connections have not only expanded but also that they have deepened to the extent that the capacity of nation-states to manage their own affairs has become much more questionable. Globalising tendencies are not just the concern of politics but also extend to a range of economic, social and cultural sites of increased

transnational interconnectedness. Indeed, it is in the sphere of the global economy that the globalisation thesis has had its most strident articulation (Ohmae 1999). However, a number of commentators have articulated critiques of the 'hyper-globalisation' thesis which suggests that the demise of the traditional understanding of the nation-state has been exaggerated (Hirst et al. 2009).

While the impact of globalisation has been felt most acutely in the last twenty-five years and it has become commonplace in social scientific debate, its historical trajectory can be traced back over centuries (Scholte 2000). Therefore, the novelty of the phenomena described under the globalisation thesis is a matter of some contention as is the extent to which it marks out a qualitatively new dimension in social, political and economic life. However, in more descriptive terms, globalisation refers to a shrinking of the world whereby the cultural practices of everyday life reflect the diminution of boundaries leading to a cultural sense of a borderless world. Of course, in practical political terms, nation-states and the borders around them remain highly significant on the global stage. However, they are increasingly joined and challenged by international actors and organisations from **pressure groups** and **civil society** on a global level through to transnational governance bodies (Held and McGrew 2007a).

The economic dimension is widely held to be the most important driver of globalisation as the world has experienced significant increases in global trade and the development of a number of international bodies designed to manage the reduction of barriers to trade, such as the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade, the World Trade Organization and the International Monetary Fund. Additionally, there has been substantial growth in bilateral free trade agreements designed to reduce impediments to the further expansion of trade and the capacity of national governments to manage their economies. This has been accompanied by a growth in foreign direct investment and a corollary increase in the power of transnational corporate actors to drive patterns of growth in the global economy rather than potentially more accountable political actors.

This economic dimension of globalisation is usually seen as the primary manifestation but processes of cultural uniformity and homogeneity are also reflective of the expansion of specific cultural practices from the 'West' which potentially undermine a wide range of more traditional cultural practices in other parts of the world.

Just as globalisation shifts the boundaries of political and economic decision making and accountability so it also changes the space in which opposition to the downside of globalisation is articulated.

Oppositional movements, non-governmental organisations, pressure groups and other civil society actors have increasingly been organised on a global scale or, at the very least, have concerned themselves with issues that are seen to be increasingly globalised in nature. The issues of critical concern such as climate change, supply chains, health scares and so forth cannot be contained within traditional political structures, which means that modes of opposition have also had to organise on a transnational level (Held and McGrew 2007a).

In political terms, the globalisation debate has focused on the decline of the nation-state, the reconfiguration of politics around transnational networks and flows and the emergence of a number of transnational political bodies, such as the European Union, which call into question the traditional location of **sovereignty** within the nation-state (Bellamy 2000). This has a profound effect on the ordering of politics on the global scale with increasing question marks over the capacity of nation-states to act as sites of legitimate political **authority**. This questioning of authority filters through into all domains of the state with new kinds of demands in all areas including social welfare provision, **human rights**, criminal justice, environmental regulation and so on. This is evident in the emergence of a number of bodies which challenge the legitimacy of agencies organised at the level of the nation-state such as the International Court of Justice and the International Criminal Court (Scholte 2008: 1490).

Perhaps the most significant element of globalisation as a challenge to contemporary politics is the increased flow of people through various forms of displacement and the difficulties that nation-states face in managing migration, refugees, asylum seekers and the populist backlashes that have emerged in many countries. There is little sign that this pattern will dissipate given the continued existence of the causes of migratory pressures so it appears likely to remain one of the most significant issues in contemporary global politics.

Further reading: Bellamy 2000; Held and McGrew 2007a; Hirst et al. 2009; Ohmae 1999; Scholte 2000, 2008.

GOVERNANCE

The term governance describes the action of governing; that is, the institutions and processes through which the behaviour of people within a community is regulated, managed and ordered. This is important because it highlights that while governments certainly engage in governance, it is not the case that all governance must necessarily be carried out by formal governments. Thus, for example,

corporate governance refers to the practices and processes involved in the governing of a company, something carried out by executive officers, boards of directors and other institutional structures. This helps us appreciate that, while processes of governance operate in most if not all organisations and communities, different types of institutions implement those processes and they operate in different ways.

Given what has been said above, it is clear that the concept of governance is of relevance to many different types of people. Those studying business, for example, will no doubt engage with debates about the principles that define good corporate governance. In the realms of politics and **international relations** (IR), however, the concept of governance is particularly important for two reasons. In political science, the concept has risen to importance during the past few decades as a result of the changes that have occurred in the ways that the governments of many developed countries operate. Within IR, the growth of the role of international institutions and rules has given rise to debates about processes of 'global governance'. The relationship between the two areas of investigation is that each is concerned with what has been termed the decline or retreat of the **state** (Strange 1996), and the growth of alternative structures and processes through which the governing of people occurs.

Let us start with the changes that have occurred within many developed states during the past three or four decades. Generally speaking, this period has been characterised by a reduction in the range and extent of the services that are directly provided by the state. Crucially, this does not mean that services such as healthcare, education or social welfare have disappeared; instead, there has been a trend towards the direct provision of such services by non-government and corporate organisations, and the indirect governing of these areas of activity by governments. The result is that governance, at least in some fields, now involves complicated networks of interaction by multiple types of actors. Take healthcare, for example. In the post-Second World War era it was not uncommon for governments to provide healthcare services directly to their people. More recently, however, many governments have reduced this role, relying instead on a network of private companies (like health insurance companies), non-governmental organisations (charitable groups providing support services) and government organisations (publicly funded hospitals) to provide healthcare services.

The effects of these changes are complex. On the one hand, they have resulted in a changed role of **government**. Rather than governing populations directly, where government employees implement changes in government policy, governments have tended to

play a regulating and managing role, where their policies shape the context in which other agents – corporations and non-governmental organisations – operate. On the other hand, these changes have altered how citizens access services and understand their relationship with government. Citizens engage with, and often choose between, a broad array of service providers, and responsibility for the quality of those services is now shared between service providers and the governments that seek to regulate them. In general, therefore, processes of governance have grown increasingly complex, as has the role of government within them.

Some, particularly those who subscribe to neo-liberal ideology, which suggests that governments are ineffective and inefficient providers of services, have encouraged the changes described above. This ideology, often associated with the governments of Margaret Thatcher in the UK and Ronald Reagan in the USA, promotes the idea that private institutions, especially corporations, provide better services than do governments because they are more attentive to the needs of 'customers' as that is how they can generate profits. Critics of neo-liberal ideology link the privatisation of public services to a growing gap between rich and poor and to declining standards of social services, arguing that the move from government to governance has reduced the capacity of citizens to hold responsible those who control the provision of services.

Within countries, responsibility for governance has shifted from governments to networks of public and private actors. At a global level, patterns of **authority** have also shifted, giving rise to interest in the emergence of global governance. Clearly, there is no world government, but as we have noted above this does not rule out the possibility of global governance; instead, global governance is carried out by a complex network of institutions. Some are intergovernmental organisations (organisations made up of **nation-states**), others are transnational non-governmental organisations (that operate across states but that do not represent nation-states as such), and others are loose networks of individuals or organisations.

The importance of global governance has risen during the past two decades and, as a result, the number and density of international and transnational organisations has grown. There are a number of reasons for this growth. First, the ending of the Cold War gave rise to increased hopes regarding the potential utility and effectiveness of international institutions in general. Second, ongoing processes associated with globalisation have both given rise to a growing need for global rules and institutions and made possible the global interaction

between people and organisations that allows processes of governance to operate. Finally, the emergence of a range of problems, ranging from financial crises and the challenge of global poverty to the threats posed by environmental degradation and nuclear proliferation (Held et al. 2010), have made apparent the need for solutions requiring regional and global forms of cooperation and governance.

Yet while some conceive of the growth of global governance as an inexorable, even a natural process, disagreement exists regarding its desirability. Some are highly critical of existing structures of global governance, and for a number of reasons. Broadly speaking, such criticism has to do with the classic political problems of who has **power** and how that power is used. On the one hand, there has been considerable scepticism regarding existing systems of global governance due to the fact that they have failed to provide solutions to a range of key problems facing the world. Observing the failure of global financial regulators to prevent the 2008 financial crisis, and the inability of the Copenhagen climate change conference to achieve substantive outcomes, people may wonder whether existing systems of global governance are sufficient.

On the other hand, critics are sceptical of global governance because they believe it creates a political system in which the very few have considerable power over the many. Some see power centred in the USA, noting that its predominant role in international organisations such as the World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF), especially when combined with its global military might, allows US interests to be pursued through structures of global governance. Others view current systems of global governance as concentrating power in the hands of business leaders and corporations that are thought to comprise an economic elite. Finally, and especially with regard to the European Union, there are those who see regional and global systems of governance as threatening both national political structures and the democratic systems of accountability that such structures embody.

Proponents of global governance do not ignore these problems, but they do argue that the only solution is to improve systems of global governance rather than to demolish them. One of the major areas in which improvement is advocated is with regard to the democratisation of global governance (Held 1995). What this might mean in practice is less clear. For some, democratisation might entail the reform of voting mechanisms in institutions such as the UN and IMF so that all nation-states gain equal representation in decision making. For others, democratisation would require the opening up of global

governance, both in the sense of making more transparent its processes and effects and in terms of making those engaged in global governance electorally accountable to the people of the world. In general, however, it is hoped that the democratisation of global governance might make this system more legitimate and encourage it to address key global issues that require attention.

Further reading: Held 1995; Karns and Mingst 2009; Peet 2009; Williams and Little 2006; Woods 2006.

GOVERNMENT

Government is a general term used to describe a body (or bodies) of **authority** but also the process by which decisions are made. A general distinction is made between democratic government and authoritarian government, though it would be simplistic to suggest that the divide is a clear binary one. Even within democratic regimes government is constituted of both elected and non-elected groups, with the latter in particular dealing with law enforcement and policy implementation (such as the judiciary and **bureaucracy**). Thus we have seen the label 'core executive' emerge as a term to encompass all the organisations and procedures involved in decision making and implementation. The latter twentieth century marked a shift from reference to govern*ment* towards gover*nance*. The former focuses on the structure of decision making whilst the latter focuses on the process. This is significant in an increasingly international political system where decision making may, but does not exclusively, include formal governments (see **governance**).

As we have progressed from city states, fiefdoms and feudal states so there has been a desire to limit government via the principle of the **separation of powers**. The case for government was made by Hobbes (2010) – human nature, Hobbes argues, is intrinsically cruel, competitive and destructive. Government (referred to as a 'commonwealth' by Hobbes) is the mechanism by which to control this anarchical self-destruction. The eighteenth-century philosopher Montesquieu identified a link between the physical span of state territory and the type of government in operation (such as republican, monarchical or despotic): 'A large empire supposes a despotic authority in the person who governs … a monarchical state possesses modern territory, but it is natural for a republic to have only a small territory otherwise it cannot long subsist' (cited in Ball and Guy Peters 2005: 45), though this simple link between regime type and territory is no longer so apparent.

Aristotle proceeded to classify governments based upon two criteria: (i) the number who govern; and (ii) the 'interests' that government look after (e.g. self-preservation versus a common good), although Huntington (1991) is critical of such neat and unambiguous classification. Nevertheless, as a general rule of thumb Aristotle distinguished between:

- government by individual – monarchy being the 'genuine' form, tyranny being an undesirable form;
- government by the few – aristocracy (rule by the virtuous), oligarchy (rule by the rich);
- government by the many – polity (rule by a collective middle class), democracy (rule by the poor and self-interested) (Hague and Harrop 2010: 7–8).

Clearly such classifications have been revised given historical developments, democratisation and social change. Hague and Harrop (2010) suggest three broad categories are now more appropriate:

- liberal democracy – representative, limited government underpinned by individual rights and regular political competition. Checks and balances are articulated and operate effectively;
- illiberal democracy – powerful government where there is limited respect for individual rights and political competition may be subject to bias and corruption;
- authoritarian regime – government is all-powerful and above the law. Very little, if any, attempt to foster political competition or participation. Lack of independent institutions (such as a free media) to ensure that there is accountability.

Yet even in democratic systems the extent to which power is concentrated or shared can vary. Under presidential government, executive power is located in the hands of the role, and the president is not accountable to the legislature. In contrast cabinet government and prime ministerial government ensure executive power is shared. It has also become increasingly common throughout the twentieth century to refer to party government; that is, the frequent operation of elections contested by organised political parties underpinning the democratic context.

Müller (2008) distinguishes between unified and divided government, an American conception. The former refers to a symmetry in political party control of at least one chamber of congress and the position of president. A unified government is likely to experience a

much smoother policy-making process that is less likely to endure vetoes. However, the same principles can be applied to semi-presidential systems (legislature and cabinet relations to the president) and parliamentary systems (relations between the cabinet and parliamentary majority).

In the case of parliamentary systems it is more common to distinguish between majority and minority governments. As no party won a majority of parliamentary seats in the 2010 General Election in the UK, David Cameron had the option of a minority government – knowing that virtually all bills would fail due to the size of the opposition – or to negotiate a coalition with other parties (which he succeeded in doing with the Liberal Democrats). This compares to his Conservative predecessor John Major who won the 1992 General Election with a slim majority of twenty-one seats, though this was effectively wiped out by resignations, defections and death so that on occasion he had to bargain with Northern Irish MPs to win parliamentary votes. In contrast, the sizable parliamentary majorities secured by Margaret Thatcher in 1983 and 1987 and Tony Blair in 1997 and 2001 (respectively 144, 102, 179 and 167 seats) ensured that, in terms of voting at least, opposition was limited.

See also: **executive; opposition; separation of powers**

Further reading: Elgie 2011; Müller 2008.

HEGEMONY

Hegemony is a complex and potentially confusing term. It derives from the Greek word 'hégemonía', which is usually translated as meaning 'leadership', and while it may loosely be employed to describe any instance of dominance or leadership, it is most often used within the disciplines of politics and international relations in either of two specific ways. The first of these is more commonly evident in **international relations** (IR) literature, where the term is employed to describe a situation where one country – the hegemon – has an overwhelming power advantage over others. The second usage of the term 'hegemony', which is evident within both political science and IR, can be traced to the work of Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci, whose definition is subtle and complex. Importantly, while both usages of the term describe power relationships, they differ considerably in their explanation of what it is that allows one actor to exercise power over others.

Let us start with the simpler of the two understandings of hegemony, one that is most evident in the work of realist scholars working

in the field of IR. For such scholars, hegemony represents a particular distribution of power resources within the international system, and power resources are considered to be those material things that generate wealth and military might (Gilpin 1981: 29). Thus, in a hegemonic system, one state – the hegemon – holds a preponderant share of economic and military resources. But why is this important?

On the one hand, hegemony is held to be important by realist scholars to the extent that it generates order in international politics. The rationale behind this claim is relatively simple: a hegemonic state is likely to possess both an interest in maintaining order (because it preserves their position of power within the system) as well as the resources needed to do so. The two examples of such hegemonic orders most frequently referred to in the IR literature include, first, that dominated by the UK in the nineteenth century (the pax Britannica) and, second, that dominated by the USA in the post-War era (the pax Americana). In both cases, the dominant state developed and maintained international order through the operation of formal (and informal) systems of rules, rules that they enforced through their use of economic and military strength. On the other hand, hegemony matters because of what can happen when a hegemonic state declines in power. Hegemonic transition theory seeks to explain what can happen when hegemonic orders decline, suggesting that tension and conflict are particularly likely when the dominance of a hegemonic state is challenged by a rising state.

Despite agreement that hegemony matters in international politics, not all agree with the realist interpretation of this term. Liberal scholar G. John Ikenberry (2001, 2011) has presented an alternative understanding of the term in his work on American hegemony. Ikenberry argues that the USA has been, since the end of the Second World War, a liberal hegemon. While Ikenberry argues that this hegemony has produced order, he believes that American hegemony has rested on both its material capabilities and upon the institutional structures that it helped to put in place after the Second World War. A key implication of this is that liberal hegemony is dependent at least partly upon the consent of other countries, and not merely on the dominant power resources possessed by the USA. Other scholars, such as Noam Chomsky (2003), accept the dominant role played by the USA in world politics but are sharply critical both of the motivations behind this dominance and of its effects. In particular, Chomsky highlights the economic exploitation – rather than merely the provision of order – that hegemony produces, as well as the diverse structures of power that underpin hegemony.

These more complex notions of hegemony, in which it rests not only on material power (wealth, military force, etc.) but also structures of institutions and ideas, move us towards the understanding of hegemony advanced by Antonio Gramsci (2010). As a Marxist writing in the 1930s, Gramsci was interested in demonstrating and overcoming the inequalities produced within capitalist economic systems. Marx had argued that such inequality would cause the working class (the proletariat) to seek to overthrow the capitalist order and replace it with something more just. The intellectual problem that Gramsci noted was that in Italy (and in other Western European states) the working classes not only seemed unaware of the inequalities produced by capitalism, they also appeared to actively support this system. Gramsci adopted the term 'hegemony' to describe the forms of power used by those who owned the means of production (the bourgeoisie) to generate the consent of the proletariat. In this sense, therefore, 'hegemony' describes the exercise of a particular form of power rather than just an imbalance of power between two or more actors. But what are the characteristics of this form of power?

The crucial point made by Gramsci was that exercising hegemonic power involves more than just the use of threats and incentives to keep people in line. Thus, the exercise of power required more than merely the possession of material resources like money and military force. Instead, hegemony rests on the manipulation of the very beliefs of people; hegemonic power shapes how people understand their interests and does so in a manner which encourages them to actively consent to relations of power that may well serve to constrain and exploit them. Since Gramsci employed this notion of hegemony in the context of his study of politics within nations, others such as Robert Cox (1981) have employed it in the context of world politics. The continued use of Gramsci's conception of hegemony is perhaps explained by its apparent importance for, if it exists, this would seem to be a supreme form of power; one that is largely invisible to those that it affects. However, this also makes it extremely difficult to examine empirically, which may explain why not all scholars agree with Gramsci's definition of hegemony.

Further reading: Gilpin 1981; Howson and Smith 2008; McNally and Schwarzmantel 2009.

HUMAN RIGHTS

The notion of human rights is frequently articulated in contemporary **law** and politics. These **discourses** of human rights often imply a

settled and consensual definition of what they entail. However, in practice, there are several different facets to the concept that relate to the alternative ontological foundations from which each model of human rights is developed. For example, these foundations may be argued as God-given, natural or positivist in nature. Moreover, human rights discourses have their roots in the work of a number of different theorists (mainly within the liberal tradition) including Locke (1960) to Paine (1998) to Rawls (1999) and beyond. So it is important to recognise that the terminology of human rights is often used to mean many different things. Generally speaking, however, human rights are usually seen as a means by which the basic freedoms of **individuals** can be protected from abuse by other individuals or institutions (including those of the state). Human rights are accorded to all individuals irrespective of **gender**, **class**, ethnic or racial background, religion, creed, culture, nationality, **sexuality** or any other means by which discrimination could take place.

Human rights are generally understood to be attached to individuals and tend to be considered as universal in that they apply to all human beings equally. Importantly, these rights are usually conceived as being inalienable which means that they cannot be negotiated away or surrendered by consent. Thus, even where a **social contract** is in place whereby individuals agree that the state can legitimately exercise **authority** over a group of people, that does not mean that the state could act in ways which undermine basic human rights. So, while human rights are deeply rooted in **liberalism**, we can see they might be interpreted differently by social contract and utilitarian liberals (Beitz 2009; Buchanan 2010; Shue 1996).

Many aspects of human rights are deeply contested. This is partly due to their differing roots but it also relates to the ways in which the politics of human rights has developed over many years. Thus, for example, we can point to at least three generations of human rights discourse. While human rights were primarily articulated as civil and political rights, this developed into claims of social, economic and cultural rights in the second phase while, in the third generation, we have witnessed claims for group rights (for example, for future generations) and environmental rights. Moreover, the international dimension of human rights has become increasingly important as they are frequently articulated as a set of international norms expressed in international treaties. These include the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

Discourses of human rights have been criticised by political theorists in a number of ways. For example, there has been disagreement about which **rights** qualify as *human* rights and the universalist approach to this question has been challenged by both cultural relativists and communitarians. On this account, the suggestion that rights are universal (which is usually articulated in terms of the normative concerns of Western **liberalism**) is in fact a liberal conceit. Moreover, the individualist basis upon which human rights are usually understood to exist has been criticised by advocates of group rights.

Aside from these theoretical concerns, there have also been more practical arguments about the enforceability of human rights. The issue here is that human rights have to be written into domestic laws in order for **individuals** to legally enforce them. At the same time, however, sovereign states cannot be forced to protect human rights or even to incorporate them into domestic law. This speaks to the complexity and procedural difficulties of individuals taking human rights concerns to international courts and the fact that these international courts can only make recommendations or pressure sovereign states to enforce their decisions. At the same time states have used human rights norms embedded in international law as a basis to invade and use military force against other countries which are deemed not to be meeting their human rights obligations under the auspices of '**humanitarian intervention**'.

The ubiquity of the concept of human rights means that it is likely to remain a mainstay of political debate for the foreseeable future. In light of increased **globalisation**, it is predicted that it will become a source of ever greater contention as the inconsistency of domestic and international laws continues to be exemplified by practical experiences across the world.

Further reading: Beitz 2009; Buchanan 2010; Locke 1960; Paine 1998; Rawls 1999; Shue 1996.

HUMANITARIAN INTERVENTION

Humanitarian intervention (HI) is a term that is typically used to describe a variety of types of operation involving the intervention within a **nation-state** by external actors for a range of humanitarian reasons. The types of operation covered by the term range from basic peacekeeping operations in which an external force is tasked with monitoring a ceasefire, all the way to complex operations involving short-term objectives such as the making and enforcing of peace between parties at **war**, and long-term objectives such as conflict resolution, reconstruction and **development**.

The other elements of the definition presented above require some elaboration. The term 'intervention' describes action by an external actor within the borders of a sovereign state. The external actor may be another state, a coalition of states, an international or non-governmental organisation or some combination of the above. Finally, the term 'humanitarian reasons' is a loose one that is generally used to distinguish HI missions from those designed to advance the interests of the intervening state(s). While HI has become an increasingly common practice within **international relations**, it remains a controversial one. Indeed, every element of the definition provided above is a source of some disagreement or controversy. Thus, disagreement exists regarding the conditions in which intervention might legitimately occur, who might possess the authority to initiate and engage in intervention and what objectives might legitimately be sought by an intervening force.

The first area of controversy mentioned above has to do with basic questions of whether or not it is legitimate to engage in intervention at all and, if so, when. To appreciate why this issue is important, one must turn to that most important of principles within international politics: **sovereignty**. The principle of sovereignty is central to international politics because it defines the boundaries of nation-states and demands that the **governments** of such states be subject to no external sources of **authority**. The near universal acceptance of sovereignty within international politics has led to the acceptance of a further principle, that of non-interference. Put simply, the rulers of sovereign states gain autonomy from external sources of authority in exchange for their agreement – in principle if not in practice – to avoid interfering in the internal affairs of other nation-states. It is easy to see why HI is controversial in this light. Because it involves intervention within a state's borders by some external actor it is potentially inconsistent with the notion of non-interference and, therefore, with the principle of sovereignty.

Importantly, HI is not inherently inconsistent with sovereignty. For HI to remain consistent with the principle of sovereignty, however, it must only be undertaken with the express consent of the state or states in which intervention is to take place. After all, there is nothing preventing a state from asking for external assistance. Early instances of peacekeeping, such as the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (2010) in 1948, followed exactly this model. In such instances, small, unarmed forces intervened within war zones at the behest of the parties involved and after those parties had agreed to a ceasefire. The purpose of such forces was generally to monitor the

terms of the ceasefire, to act as a neutral third party who both of the previously warring parties could trust.

While such forms of HI still occur, the type of mission typically undertaken by interveners has altered considerably (Durch 2006). Today, HI operations more often take place in response to conflict within rather than between states. Most importantly, such operations sometimes take place without the consent (or with only the reluctant consent) of the leaders of the relevant state. To acknowledge the legitimacy of such practices involves crossing a distinct line, because to suggest that HI can be employed within a state without the consent of the state's leaders is to treat sovereignty as a qualified rather than an absolute principle (Jackson 2000; Wheeler 2000). In other words, it is to state that while states can enjoy a sovereign right to non-interference in most circumstances, there are instances in which an external actor can overrule the principle of sovereignty and intervene within their borders. Once this line is crossed – and it has been crossed in international politics – further questions and potential areas of controversy emerge regarding who can authorise intervention and for what purpose.

The question of who can authorise HI operations is an important one, but one which, at least until 1999, appeared to have a single answer: the United Nations (UN) (or, more specifically, the UN Security Council (UNSC)). The UN charter is ambiguous in this sense, upholding both the principle of non-interference in the sovereign affairs of its member states and the rights of the UNSC to engage in mediation between conflicting parties and authorise interventions for the sake of international peace and stability. In 1999, however, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) intervened in Kosovo without the authorisation of the UNSC. The UNSC had debated the issue, but Russia and China, both permanent members of the council and each possessing the power to veto decisions, opposed the intervention. Key NATO members, and especially the leaders of the USA and the UK, argued that the intervention was justified on humanitarian grounds due to the atrocities being committed by Serb forces. The legitimacy of this instance of HI and the capacity of organisations other than the UN to authorise intervention remain contested.

This contestation has much to do with the final area of controversy to be discussed here, that regarding the objectives that are to be pursued. As was noted above, one of the key sources of justification for HI operations is that they are directed towards the pursuit of humanitarian ends and not towards the pursuit of the national interests of the states involved. One of the objections to broader forms of HI operations raised by states such as China and Russia has been that

such operations have been carried out by states pursuing a distinctly Western agenda. Thus, for example, operations such as the recent UN intervention in the Sudan (United Nations Mission in the Sudan 2010) are designed to do much more than merely end fighting and prevent the committing of atrocities; they also have within their mandate the objective of fostering democratic political institutions. For proponents of such missions, the achieving of democratic reform represents a vital part of any responsible intervention because it is seen as a means of promoting conflict resolution and political development, thereby limiting the potential for violence to break out in the future. For its detractors, however, this agenda is one of cultural imperialism, where Western values are promoted at the expense of the sovereign independence of states and/or peoples.

One of the more prominent attempts to address the controversy and consequent uncertainty regarding the future of HI has been the development of the concept of a 'responsibility to protect' (R2P). The concept of the R2P emerged from a report produced by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) (2001), which was set up by the Canadian government as a first step in the political process of reaching some measure of international consensus on HI (Evans 2008). This report argued that states possess a responsibility to protect their citizens but that, in instances where they are unwilling or unable to meet this responsibility, this responsibility passes to the international community. While this basic position merely restates some of the assumptions operating behind many existing HI operations, the ICISS report went on to try to identify in some detail guidelines regarding when HI was justified and how HI operations ought to be conducted. This report served to generate further debate and some measure of support within the international community, especially amongst non-governmental organisations. While the growth of some support for HI is important, the two problems identified above remain: expansive HI operations are notoriously challenging to implement and states remain wary of promoting the general idea of HI for fear that it will be exploited by those seeking to hide their pursuit of the national interest behind the language of humanitarianism.

Further reading: Bellamy and Williams 2009; Fortna 2008; Jackson 2000; Wheeler 2000.

IDENTITY

In everyday usage, identity is an expression of individual personality. So **individual** identity is composed of characteristics that may

differentiate one individual from others. However, part of the composition of individual identity are characteristics including ethnicity and race, sex and **gender**, religion, nationality, language and so on. In political terms, however, these characteristics cannot be merely seen as descriptors attached to individuals. Each of these characteristics also constitutes group identity and has therefore been expressed in forms of identity politics. The politics of identity is closely related to arguments for a politics of difference and a politics of recognition.

From this foundation we can begin to see how controversial identity is as a political concept. Identities are not settled and coherent phenomena and they may vary, change and conflict within individuals let alone within groups. Identities are relational entities that may be more or less important depending on the context. Our identity may well be more concretely defined by our perception of who we are rather than who we actually are. Moreover, the meaning of identity is negotiated intersubjectively in the sense that one's race, sex or nationality does not determine individual identity. Indeed, insofar as individual identities are composites of a range of different sources of meaning, then it is not possible for identity to be understood in terms of determination by a particular characteristic. Depending on the setting, individuals may emphasise different dimensions of their identities.

There is a clear tension between this emphasis on sources of group identity and the 'unencumbered self' of **liberalism** (Sandel 1984). Nonetheless, identity is also linked to the pursuit of individual freedom and social **justice**. The *politics* of identity arises from claims that individual experiences of injustice are shaped by these particular characteristics which, when shared by a social group, are the basis of broader injustice and oppression. In Western liberal democracies, this politics emerged in the social and political movements amidst the upheaval of the late 1960s. For this reason it can be argued that the politics of identity has an 'emancipatory logic' (Kenny 2004: 4).

One of the primary theorists of the politics of identity, Iris Marion Young, explores this oppression of social groups in *Justice and the Politics of Difference* (1990). This work highlights again the tension that identity understood in terms of groups and difference presents within liberal political thought. Charles Taylor (1992) links identity to a politics of recognition as the basis of justice. This focus on recognition of identity and difference marks Taylor's approach from theorists such as Nancy Fraser (1997) who conceive justice in terms of the distribution and redistribution of social goods. For Fraser, the focus on identity in the politics of recognition drew attention away from the

continued significance of social **class** as the key structural determinant of individual experiences of justice.

Critics of the politics of identity have suggested that it relies too heavily on essentialist understandings of identity and has failed to comprehend the socially constructed underpinnings of these essentialist characteristics. On this account identity politics is criticised for paying insufficient attention to the differences *within* as well as between identity groups. There are few clearly defined groups with fixed populations and coherent cultural practices. Instead, individuals are better understood as 'complex, culturally and socially constructed agents' (Kenny 2004: 30). A different approach is the theory of intersectionality which highlights the overlapping segments of aspects of identity (Yuval-Davis 2011).

Post-structuralist critics such as Judith Butler (1999) highlight the multiplicity of identities that contribute to individual identity and the dynamic politics of identity that can ensue. For Butler, the performance of identity is pivotal and structured by established social understanding of what a performing identity might mean. For this reason, the politics of identity is as much about transgression for Butler whereby individual actors can subvert and challenge dominant social norms.

Further reading: Butler 1999; Fraser 1997; Kenny 2004; Sandel 1984; Young 1990; Yuval-Davis 2011.

IDEOLOGY

Ideology is a deeply contested concept in the academic study of politics. It has also been prominent in popular political parlance albeit translated in somewhat pejorative terms that perhaps do not do justice to its theoretical significance. Whereas, at its broadest, ideology refers to a 'system of ideas', it is commonplace in everyday political life to see it used to label opinions which are considered to be ill thought through, partisan and programmatic. In practice, it is a much more complex phenomenon than this, although it contains multiple specific and often intertwined meanings. Terry Eagleton, for example, itemises sixteen definitions in circulation including 'the process of production of meanings, signs and values in social life', 'ideas which help to legitimate a dominant political power', 'the indispensable medium in which individuals live out their relations to a social structure', 'semiotic closure' or an 'action-oriented set of beliefs' (Eagleton 1991: 1–2).

The pejorative understanding of ideology owes much to the idea that it serves to shroud and mystify political reality by casting events

in the light of an ultimate goal based upon a particular way of life or set of institutions. This is linked to the notion of 'false consciousness' – often linked to the Marxist theory of ideology – whereby people get sucked into particular outlooks on life propagated by those with **power** even though those perspectives may be potentially harmful for them. On this account, people do so because ideological accounts of social, political or economic structures have misled them from reality and therefore affected their capacity to formulate political programmes that would serve them better. In the Marxist literature this is sometimes used to explain the ways in which bourgeois ideology has been used to prevent the proletariat rising up to fulfil their revolutionary role.

In the 1980s and 1990s in particular, the study of political ideologies became one of the most widespread means of introducing students to some of the key concepts in political theory (Heywood 2003; MacKenzie 2003). This approach tended to present ideologies as relatively coherent, contained and consistent bodies of ideas that typically had four main functions. First, they described the present state of affairs with a particular focus on the social relations between individuals and the role of the state. Second, they theorised how these structuring formations in society were arrived at. Third, they usually described a more desirable state of affairs that could replace existing arrangements. Fourth, they often outlined the ways in which individual and/or collective agents should structure their political activities to make these alternative arrangements a reality. However, on a closer reading (MacKenzie 2003), many ideologies were deeply divergent and contested bodies of thought so that, where there might have been agreement on one particular dimension (for example, the problematic structures that need to be addressed), there was often disagreement on one of the others (such as how to move from one set of conditions to the ideal alternative).

In the 1990s then, a much more nuanced approach to ideology came to the fore. One of the major contributors to this reassessment was Michael Freeden, who developed a 'morphological' understanding of ideology in his book *Ideologies and Political Theory* (1998). According to this account, ideologies were dynamic entities that were constantly developing in response to the changing social and political circumstances that they tried to make sense of. For Freeden then, ideologies were relational, conceptual or semantic systems. This entails that the meaning of each component term in an ideology is dependent upon the other terms of the system and subject to change over time. Ideologies comprise privileged, 'core' concepts and secondary, 'peripheral'

concepts. Ideological contests involve attempts to monopolise the meaning of terms and to reject alternative definitions. In his later work in the *Journal of Political Ideologies*, Freeden (2004) explained how ideologies were far from the coherent entities that earlier theories had suggested. In fact, they were ambiguous, indeterminate and inconclusive.

Over the last ten years then, there has been a distancing of the study of ideology from the pejorative sense of the term even though this conception of ideology as mystifying political reality still dominates popular usage of the term. The more sophisticated theorisation of political ideologies has enabled commentators to make better sense of the ways in which sometimes rather different political theories and objectives can coalesce under the same ideological category. Thus, rather than seeing ideologies as cohesive or uniform bodies of ideas, increasingly they are regarded as assemblages of different conceptual devices which, while sometimes coherent, are often contradictory or paradoxical.

Further reading: Eagleton 1991; Freeden 1998; Heywood 2003; MacKenzie 2003.

INDIVIDUAL

The idea of the individual originally denoted the smallest component of a larger arrangement. In political theory, however, the individual now generally refers to a defined, separate entity, as in the liberal conception of the person. In this sense there has been a shift from the foundation as the smallest unit to a much more significant focus in politics on the individual as the basic and most fundamental unit. Therefore, it has moved from being a component in the composition of the political to being the primary political unit from which a range of political concepts such as **legitimacy**, authority, consent and contract find their justification. Importantly, then, the idea of the individual is a concept that has been imbued with considerable power in political discourse as the fundamental unit on which politics is constructed in distinction to earlier eras when collectivist understandings of politics was at the fore.

Historically, the idea of the individual has been particularly evident in liberal political theory although, in the latter part of the twentieth century, it has also found keen advocates in conservative politics after the neo-liberal turn characterised by Reaganism and Thatcherism. While the individual has a significant role in other political ideologies such as **socialism** and **anarchism**, it is within the broad field of

liberalism that it tends to be advocated as the foundational unit of society. As such, it is often juxtaposed with collectivism and ideologies focused on broader social groupings or society as a whole as the main unit of analysis.

There are several important variants of individualism in political theory. One important sense – derived from France – focuses on the post-Revolutionary sense of individualistic pursuits corrupting a stable, functioning social order. Another relates to the uniqueness of the individual, as typified by the German Romantic valorisation of individual (often artistic) genius. A third meaning came to prominence with Protestantism, which endowed the individual with a direct relation to the transcendent, replacing the hierarchical mediation of the direct connection individuals have with God. However, arguably the most significant use of the individual in political theory is from the **social contract** tradition typified by Hobbes and Rawls amongst many others. In this variant the individual is pivotal because the legitimacy of the state is based upon the actual or hypothetical consent of free individuals to governing institutions exercising authority over them.

These various meanings have often been in evidence when the idea of the individual is articulated in practical politics. For example, in one of Herbert Hoover's 1928 US presidential campaign speeches, he juxtaposed the 'rugged individualism' of the US system to the 'paternalism and state socialism' of Europe. Hoover's term has since been adopted by conservatives and libertarians in arguing for limited government (Lukes 2006: 1–2). This has influenced the agendas of numerous prominent political actors such as former Australian prime minister, John Howard, and most famously, former British prime minister, Margaret Thatcher, who stated that there was no such thing as society, just individuals and their families. These examples demonstrate the way in which the idea of the individual has typically been used by conservative politicians to distinguish their position from collectivist approaches associated with social democratic welfare statism.

Importantly, individualism has also had a substantial impact in methodological terms. Methodological individualism is that mode of social-scientific explanation that seeks the fullest account of phenomena through recourse solely to the qualities, beliefs, desires and actions of individual actors. Introduced by Max Weber (1978), it is often opposed to methodological 'holism'. However, confusion arises when the method is taken for a normative claim for individual autonomy which can lead to constructions of politics around perceptions of what the rational choice of individuals would be in a

given situation were they not constrained by a range of social and cultural structures and constraints.

Further reading: Lukes 2006; Weber 1978.

INSTITUTIONALISM

Political scientists often disagree about key causal explanations of political behaviour and outcomes, not just in a broad approach sense but also in relation to the significance of what is referred to as 'structure and agency'. In deciding the relationship we ask key questions, such as 'to what extent are we independent political actors who make our own political decisions?' (agents); 'are we part of a broader structural force in which we are driven to behave in particular ways?' (structures). The study of politics involves much more than studying the actions and beliefs of individuals, or even individuals acting as groups (such as protesters or voters). Much of what occurs in politics does so as a result of institutions and their actions, such as the branches of **government**, **bureaucracy** and the mass media among others.

Clearly, institutions are not 'empty vessels', they make decisions and take actions because they consist of people who hold some **authority** to behave in a particular way. What is important, according to institutionalism, is that these patterns of behaviour are more than the collective of individual actions; indeed we can identify norms and cultures of institutions which persist regardless of the personnel who hold decision-making positions. As such, the position within an organisation is more important than the individual who fills that place because it can shape behaviour. It is the impact of the institution, but importantly also the interaction between the institution and the individual, which are both of interest (March and Olsen 1984). We then see reference to 'institutionalised' behaviour such as institutional racism.

Historically, institutionalism (what we now refer to as 'old' institutionalism) focused on formal political organisations. The principal features of this approach were: (i) an understanding of the driving forces of official and unofficial rules; (ii) a focus on organisations and context (such as government typologies) rather than individuals; and (iii) a strong emphasis on a conceptual approach driven by legal and sociological studies (resulting in a strong link to subdisciplines such as public administration and constitutional studies). It is the combination of the rules and the contextualised organisation which mapped the institutionalist explanation, such as 'the Whitehall Village' as an explanation of the civil service in the UK. As a result, a proliferation of studies focused on the practices of local government and other administrative

bodies: 'An institution is a formal organization, often with public status, whose members interact on the basis of the specific roles they perform with the organization. In politics, an institution typically refers to an organ of government mandated by the constitution' (Hague and Harrop 2007: 86).

As a dominant paradigm, old institutionalism waned in popularity from the 1930s when greater attention was paid to the value of behaviouralism and rational choice theory. Peters (1999) claims that old institutionalism had a tendency to be normative in its approach, privileging established democracies as models of 'good government'. Furthermore, it was characterised by an inductive approach, which was too static in responding to changes in power relations.

Institutionalism was 'reborn' in the late 1970s and 1980s as an influential paradigm (hence the title 'new') as a result of the work of March and Olsen (1984) and Evans et al. (1985) among others. This rekindled interest was sparked by the desire to explain widespread liberal democratic reforms – especially the restructuring of the welfare state (new public management) and the fragmentation of the state – hence, coinciding with the move from studying government to **governance**. The organisations and rules of interest stretched beyond government bodies and written laws to also focus upon informal rules and compliance procedures, conventions and customary practices. According to Lowndes (2010), new institutionalism differs from its predecessor approach in that it is more deductive (theory testing) than inductive.

Keynesianism persisted in the early 1970s in Britain because it was embedded in the working practices of the treasury civil service. In an attempt to explain the political economic shift from Keynesianism to monetarism Hall (1992) examined the role of a number of organisations and rules (financial markets, the trade union movement, the press and electoral competition) which would have been overlooked by traditional institutionalism due to their lack of formality. Hall identifies three key processes (changes in the world economy, the clash between social and political interests and competing interpretations of the economy) which facilitated this policy turn, which was only possible after trade union power declined and financial markets increased in power and journalists converted to monetarism.

There has been a gradual spread of institutionalism towards non-governmental bodies, such as political parties and to more informal political institutions, to some extent facilitated by international politics and the development of transnational cooperation, through structures

such as the European Union, hence the development of network analysis as a subfield of political research.

See also: **bureaucracy; government**

Further reading: Lowndes 2010; Peters 1999; Schmidt 2005.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The term international relations (IR) is used to describe both an academic discipline and the real-world subject that is studied by those within that discipline. Typically, but by no means always, academics use capital letters when referring to the discipline and lower case letters when referring to the subject matter itself. Thus, 'International Relations' refers collectively to the academics who study international politics, the books and journal articles published by those academics and the various institutions engaged in the study of IR and the publication of scholarship. Alternatively, 'international relations' is a term used loosely to refer to the political actors, processes and institutions that operate in the 'international' realm. In short, International Relations scholars study international relations, just as biologists study biology.

While the distinction between these two uses of the term IR may be clear, the term 'international' itself warrants further attention. This is an important term for a number of reasons. First, the term is of analytical importance because it serves to distinguish between two forms of politics: (i) 'domestic' politics – which is presumed to occur within **nation-states**; and (ii) 'international' politics – which is presumed to take place between nation-states. (Indeed, this is the literal meaning of the term inter-national politics.) This analytical distinction highlights a second reason for the importance of the term 'international'. If international politics is qualitatively distinct from 'normal', domestic politics, then it follows that the development of knowledge regarding the former requires a different form of expertise to that regarding the latter. In other words, the assumption that international politics is different to domestic politics also serves to legitimate the separation of the discipline of political science from that of IR.

What serves to distinguish international from domestic politics? One important answer to this question has been provided by realism, a prominent approach to the study of international relations. Kenneth Waltz (1979), a key realist scholar, has suggested that the major difference between domestic and international politics has to do with the type of order in which each takes place. For Waltz, one of the

defining features of domestic politics is that it takes place within a hierarchic order; one in which a single, overarching source of political **authority** – loosely referred to as 'the state' – is recognised. International politics, on the other hand, takes place within a political order characterised by **anarchy**, understood in terms of the absence of an overarching source of political authority.

According to this perspective, whether a political system is hierarchic or anarchic matters hugely, because it shapes the type of actors that will take part in that politics as well as the practices of, and relationships between, those actors. Put simply, the presence of an overarching source of authority (in the form of a government) makes life within a political system relatively stable, peaceful and predictable. This is because the state can do such things as create and enforce laws, regulate the conduct and transactions of individuals and use its authority and its monopoly on the legitimate use of force either to prevent individuals from using violence against one another or to punish those that do. As Thomas Hobbes (2010) suggested, the hierarchical order within domestic politics makes possible the security of citizens and the pursuit of the good life.

The international realm, on the other hand, has typically been held to constitute a realm of insecurity and **violence**, largely due to the absence of a source of authority such as a world government. Because the principle of **sovereignty** effectively precludes the possibility of a world government, nation-states must operate in a political realm in which there is no higher authority that can protect them if they are weak or provide for their welfare should they encounter difficulty. In this light, international laws are deemed weak because there is no world government to enforce them, and inter-state cooperation is thought to be risky because there is no one to adjudicate breakdowns of agreement or enforce each state's contractual obligations. As a result, the realist vision of international relations is that the best that nation-states can hope for is some basic measure of **security**, something best supplied through the possession of military capabilities.

This traditional view is not without its critics, however. Such critics view the sharp distinction between the hierarchic order of domestic politics and the anarchy of international politics with some scepticism, arguing either that this distinction has never been overly accurate or that contemporary changes have rendered it markedly less so. The first of these positions implies that the distinction between anarchy and hierarchy is overstated. English School scholars such as Hedley Bull (2002) and constructivists such as Alexander Wendt (1999) have argued that international politics appears far more ordered than

realism would suggest. Though the claims linked to these two theories differ significantly, with English School theorists emphasising the importance of an international society and constructivists focusing on the role of culture, each acknowledges the importance of social structures that go some way towards regulating the behaviour of states. Thus, both argue that, despite the absence of some form of world government, the realm of international politics is more predictable and peaceful than realists have made out.

The second of the sources of criticism of the traditional distinction between domestic and international politics starts from the position that while this traditional perspective may once have been accurate, contemporary changes render it untenable. It is the growing popularity of this perspective that has resulted in the increasing use of alternate terms to that of 'international politics', such as 'global politics' (Heywood 2011) or 'world politics' (Baylis et al. 2011). The changes to domestic and international politics that have occurred are perhaps best captured by the term '**globalisation**'. Globalisation describes the increasing interconnectedness of human life due to the ever growing ease and speed of communication and transportation (Held and McGrew 2007a).

One of the consequences of globalisation has been to complicate any neat distinction between the domestic and the international. Economic issues, for example, are often influenced by a range of local, national, regional and global factors and addressing them requires interaction and cooperation between a vast array of governmental, non-governmental and intergovernmental organisations. One of the other consequences of globalisation has been the creation of intergovernmental organisations that are tasked with managing issues of regional or global import. The creation of such institutions undermines the claim that the international system is anarchic because, while such organisations do not constitute a world government, they do engage in some measure of global **governance**, exercising authority in international politics over and above nation-states. What we may be seeing emerge, therefore, is a layered global political order in which multiple systems of authority overlap and in which it is no longer possible to distinguish the domestic from the international.

Further reading: Baylis et al. 2011; Brown and Ainsley 2009; Heywood 2011.

JUSTICE

There are many different ways of conceptualising justice but, in its ordinary meaning, the term suggests behaviour and treatment of an

individual that is fair, reasonable and justified. When translated into politics, however, we find that it is articulated around different demands such as procedural justice, moral conceptions of justice and distributive theories of justice. While the concept has a long history, the discussion of justice in political philosophy is epitomised by the publication of John Rawls' seminal *A Theory of Justice* in 1971.

Procedural understandings of justice refer to mechanisms of legal justice such as stable and consistent laws and processes that apply to all citizens equally. In **law**, justice is sought as a way of redressing legal wrongs (which may also be moral wrongs). In this sense there is a retrospective dimension to this version of justice in trying to amend or compensate for transgressions. Justice is something that can be 'done' so that we can claim after rectification that 'justice has been served'.

Moral concepts of justice focus more on the fair treatment of individuals as an entitlement that arises from the equal moral status of all persons. Leading from this, many theorists of justice have attempted to build on this perspective to make a case for distribution or redistribution. In order to make this case, these theories will often go beyond the more individualistic concerns of moral theories to articulate a vision of social justice.

John Rawls' *A Theory of Justice* is such a theory of distributive justice, based as it is in the view that the fair distribution of social and economic goods is essential for individual justice in political communities. For Rawls, that fair distribution is based upon a hypothetical contractarian notion of distribution, whereby individuals behind a 'veil of ignorance' would choose a basically equal distribution of resources on entering into society.

Several later theorists have taken issue with the Rawlsian perspective and accused it of giving an inadequate account of individual needs and experiences of justice. On this view, a just society cannot merely focus on issues of distribution or redistribution as a way of rectifying injustices. Thus, theorists such as Charles Taylor and Axel Honneth have advanced theories of recognition that they argue are better placed to give a more substantive conception of justice (Fraser and Honneth 2003; Thompson 2006). Other commentators, such as Iris Marion Young (1990), have contended that distributive justice overlooks the power structures that determine the distribution of social goods so we need to move beyond theories focused on first principles of distribution.

In recent years there has been a growing focus on issues of global justice (Risse 2012) which has grown out of analysis of both the magnitude of inequalities between the global rich and the global poor

and the globalised nature of the processes which give rise to these inequalities (Pogge 2002). These approaches are concerned with not only identifying and establishing cases for justice on a global level, but also the re-imagination of the kinds of institutions that might be needed to address these concerns. The implication of these approaches to global justice are that the state has a very limited capacity in dealing with the outcomes of global markets and therefore that we should consider the development of new types of political institutions which have a more expansive reach.

A further relevant approach stemming from a more global consideration of where standards of justice need to be applied is the 'capabilities approach' developed by Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2011). This approach focuses on human development, what people are able to do and what opportunities are provided to enable them to achieve. As such it provides a more nuanced account of the complexity of practical debates over justice than theories which concentrate on abstract distributive models of justice.

Further reading: Fraser and Honneth 2003; Nussbaum 2011; Pogge 2002; Rawls 1971; Risse 2012; Thompson 2006; Young 1990.

LAW

Whilst it may seem sensible to argue that law is a topic distinct from the study of politics, this is not the case as it is closely related to the concept of legitimacy. A contentious issue, particularly within the realm of political philosophy, is the distinction between law and morality. The requirement that law should be rooted in some form of moral system can be traced back to the debates of Plato and Aristotle, and continue in contemporary society in regard to **human rights**.

For Poggi (2008: 88) law has two functions: (i) to repress anti-social behaviour and (ii) to allocate access to resources for competing groups and individuals. He adds that in the West it has a third function, which is as underwriter to the process of **government** (what might be termed public law). The general consensus among liberal democracies is that the law should be 'above' politics. Whilst law is made by one branch of government (the executive) in a democratic system, it should be implemented and upheld by a different branch of government (the judicial system – courts and police forces). This is what is referred to as the Rule of Law, in which individuals should be treated fairly and with equity. In non-democratic systems such a distinction may not be clear, either because the separation simply does not exist or because of corruption in which the Rule of Law is abused for

financial or safety reasons. However, even in liberal democracies the Rule of Law is at times questioned – particularly in relation to the treatment of non-citizens such as immigrants and asylum seekers – a subject which can at times be problematic for international diplomacy.

Empirically, an area in which law impacts directly on political analysis is the legal framework of constitutionalism. Unsurprisingly, the growth of international politics has led to a debate over international law – in terms of both its potential remit and the effectiveness of implementation – for example, can sovereignty be compromised by the implementation of international law? What are the penalties for breaking such laws?

Democracies do differ in terms of the judicial branch – particularly when it comes to the process of judicial review. In the USA, for example, the supreme court does at times lock horns with the **executive**, particularly after a change in administration. For some time, concern has been expressed in the UK that the law lords – the highest domestic court of appeal – sit in the House of Lords, a potential overlap of interest between the legislature and judiciary. The 'conflict of interest' concern was raised in 1998 when Lord Hoffman was one of five deciding judges in the case of former Chilean dictator Pinochet, who faced an extradition plea by the Spanish Government. Hoffman had known links to Amnesty International and was viewed, in the eyes of some, as lacking impartiality.

As a result of potential bias and overlap, on 1 October 2009 judicial authority in the UK was transferred away from the House of Lords to a supreme court, which is now explicitly separate from both government and parliament. In contrast to supreme courts, constitutional courts (a common feature across Europe) tend to restrict their remit to more political issues surrounding legislative interpretation. Such courts (established in West Germany in 1949 and France in 1958) focus on the protection of democracy and limiting the potential revival of dictatorship, so in Germany, for example, several political parties (on the far left and far right) have been banned as 'unconstitutional' under Basic Law Article 21 (2).

See also: **constitutions; equality; human rights; justice; separation of powers**

LEGITIMACY

Legitimacy is one of those political concepts which can be explored from both a normative and empirical perspective. As a normative concept we employ legitimacy in assessing whether an individual or

organisation has an entitlement to be obeyed. It can be argued that legitimacy offers a far more effective form of control (by upholding obedience) than physical force. 'In particular, individuals do not obey the law simply because they are compelled to do so but because they are persuaded of its necessity, utility or moral value … Indeed, many would argue that enduring stability in any social order is dependent primarily on the order's legitimacy rather than its legal system' (Armstrong and Farrell 2005: 5).

Empirically, we see legitimacy utilised by political actors in justifying their right to govern. It consists of two key components: (i) a legal right to **authority**, which is a technical issue; and (ii) a valid recognition by others of the right to make particular decisions – the former can exist without the latter, as was demonstrated by the apartheid laws which operated in South Africa. However, in a modern liberal democracy we would expect the disintegration of the latter to act as a catalyst by which to challenge the former – an example would be UK political convention which states that a vote of no confidence in the House of Commons necessitates the resignation of the government. Such votes brought down the Conservative government of Stanley Baldwin in 1924 and his Labour successor Ramsay MacDonald, and more recently the Labour government of James Callaghan in 1979.

The contested nature of the concept of legitimacy in the arena of international relations is well documented (Bjola 2005) and is central to debates on international ethics and **humanitarian intervention**. Legitimacy debates are key, for example, to discussions of the Just War theory. The complex relationship between legality and legitimacy is examined by Falk (2005), who identifies key historical junctures which have provoked debates, such as the demise of the German Weimar Republic and more recently the massacre of Srebrenica which preceded the 1999 Kosovo War. In relation to the latter, Falk (2005: 39) states: 'In effect, the NATO intervention was viewed as illegal because of its irreconcilability with the UN Charter prohibition on non-defensive force, yet legitimate because of its effective response to an imminent humanitarian catastrophe.' Both Bjola (2005) and Falk (2005) empirically test the concept of legitimacy as applied to the Kosovo case and the 2003 Iraq War.

Armstrong and Farrell (2005: 3) state: 'major wars periodically generate crises of confidence in international society about the legitimacy of military force as an instrument of world politics'. As a result of major conflicts those in authority have invoked the 1949 Geneva Convention and the United Nations Charter to establish principles on

who may employ force, how and when. The concept of legitimacy loomed large during the 2003 Iraq War, specifically over the **rights** of the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) to use force (which was supported by both the US and British governments). The conflict was legitimised by those in favour on the need to disarm Iraq of its weapons of mass destruction, the existence of which never materialised and was based upon flawed intelligence. A key consideration for Armstrong and Farrell is the extent to which legitimacy principles contain temporal and spatial dimensions – are they fixed or can they change over time, and are they universal or can they be regional?

See also: **authority; democracy; hegemony; rights**

Further reading: Armstrong and Farrell 2005; Bjola 2005.

LIBERALISM

Liberalism is a broad and diverse tradition of Western political philosophy. Within its many variants, there tends to be a focus on a combination of liberty (or freedom), individualism, **equality** and universalism. For example, many liberals prioritise **individual** freedom and emphasise the equal moral qualities of all human beings. Therefore, they tend to argue that any limits to be placed upon liberty (in particular by the state) must be justified according to an appeal to liberal principles of **justice**.

A primary focus of liberal thought is the relationship between the individual and the state. Because the state tends to act in ways that restrict the freedom of individuals, liberalism seeks to understand the conditions under which such infringements can be deemed to be legitimate. One of the key theoretical manoeuvres employed in this theorisation of state legitimacy is the idea of the **social contract**, whereby a hypothetical mechanism is imagined in which individuals consent to the limitations placed upon their freedoms by the state.

Classical liberalism emphasises negative freedoms and a non-interventionist state and these principles have been employed in various ways by later developments in liberal thought such as utilitarianism and libertarianism. The latter is often linked to the emergence of *laissez-faire* **capitalism** with its emphasis on the unregulated freedom of the **market**.

More modern forms of liberalism have placed greater focus on positive freedom and, as a result, a more interventionist role for the state. Sometimes referred to as 'new liberalism', this approach concentrates on the need for social welfare within a market economy. In order to maximise and/or equalise freedom, it contends that the state

has a legitimate role in the distribution of social goods. The implication of this perspective is that the unequal outcomes of an unregulated market need to be rectified and that the state is required to address the unjust distribution of social goods among equal individuals.

The differences within liberalism can partly be explained by the different understandings of where individual freedoms emanate from. For classical theorists such as John Locke, liberalism has natural foundations with individual freedoms developing from God-given qualities that are present in the state of nature. In this Lockean state of nature, individuals were conceived as equal, rational and self-preserving with regard to life, health, liberty and possessions. Locke's liberalism therefore permits limits on freedoms so that 'all men may be restrained from invading others' rights, and from doing hurt to one another' (Locke 1988).

Alternatively, some models of twentieth-century liberalism, such as the work of John Rawls (1971), emphasise human reason as the basis upon which individuals negotiate the limits on their freedoms in exchange for a just society with social institutions that reflect these liberal principles of **justice**. For Rawls, the political **legitimacy** of the state is a separate question from a question of justice such that state power can be legitimate without being just. For this reason, liberalism must offer more than a theory of political legitimacy; it must also offer a theory of just social institutions. The Rawlsian concept of justice is guided by his two principles of justice and his hypothetical 'original position' in which an individual placed behind a 'veil of ignorance' whereby they have no knowledge of their place within a social hierarchy, will choose the principles of justice that ought to govern the social institutions of their political community.

These variations help to explain the diversity within liberal conceptions of justice. Utilitarian accounts such as that of John Stuart Mill (2010) prioritise 'the greatest happiness of the greatest number' whereas theories of distributive justice emphasise the fair distribution of social goods across individuals. Rawls employs a 'difference principle' that justifies unequal distributions of social goods only if the worst off in society are not further disadvantaged by it.

Thus, not surprisingly, while there are multiple variations within liberal thought that engender internal dispute, there are also multiple criticisms of liberal doctrines from other perspectives. For example, political philosophy in the latter part of the twentieth century was characterised by a long debate between liberals and communitarians, who were largely critical of the universalist and individualist methods employed by liberals (MacIntyre 1988; Sandel 1982; Taylor 1989). Similarly, following the proclamations of the triumph of liberalism

and the 'end of history' (Fukuyama 1991), a new series of debates emerged between liberals who promoted equality and universalism on the basis of *sameness* and critics, especially multiculturalists, who emphasised the need for the promotion of equality and universalism to be based on respect for *difference*.

Despite the existence of influential liberal feminists, another important source of critique of liberalism has come from feminists who question liberalism for either being 'gender blind' or for attending only to the concerns of white, middle-class women. These critiques suggest that liberalism depends too heavily on a problematic separation of the public and private spheres (Pateman 1988) or that it is inadequate in addressing the power structures of patriarchy in society.

Ultimately, liberalism is the most prevalent and influential tradition in Western political thought but, given its many variations and internal debates, it continues to generate an enormous critical literature. At the same time, then, liberalism is both the most important model of contemporary political theory as well as the most criticised.

Further reading: Fukuyama 1991; Locke 1988; MacIntyre 1988; Mill 2010; Pateman 1988; Rawls 1971; Sandel 1982; Taylor 1989.

MARKET

Since the 1980s the idea of the market has become common parlance in politics. Part of the reason for this was the emergence of governments promoting free market economics in two of the most powerful countries in the world, the USA and the UK. Under the leadership of Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher respectively, these countries pursued radical experiments in neo-liberal economics, although the extent to which they were able to undertake a concomitant rolling back of the frontiers of the state is much more questionable.

There are two main senses in which the term market is employed in political science and political theory. In the first, the more orthodox sense, the term denotes a (notional or actual) structure that enables buyers and sellers to exchange goods, services or information. The second stands for the universalisation of market principles across wider geographical spaces as well as into other, traditionally non-commercial spheres. Examples include the use of market metaphors for the conduct of liberal-democratic politics ('consumer democracy'), policy (public choice theory), but also extending into such fields as the intellectual sphere (the 'marketplace of ideas') and courtship (the 'marriage market').

In theoretical terms the idea of the market is most famously associated with the philosopher, Adam Smith, although it was expropriated in the twentieth century by proponents of neo-liberal thinking, drawing in particular on Friedrich Hayek (1994), Ludwig von Mises (1949) and Milton Friedman (1962). These economists sought to generalise the principles of *laissez-faire* market economics into the political sphere. Democratic actors are akin to buyers or sellers in a market, their needs and aspirations convertible into a money-like medium of exchange, their social and political freedom grounded in a non-interventionist state. As such, in the hands of politicians, the promotion of the market was as much concerned with a critique of the Keynesian state and the post-Second World War social democratic settlement as it was about the capacity of notionally free markets to distribute goods effectively. As the promotion of the market increased and expanded in the 1980s and afterwards, critical accounts of the market began to lament the 'commodification' of hitherto sanctified aspects of life.

At the other end of the political spectrum, **Marxism** has understood the market to be undercut by internal contradictions, the reckoning of which is to be overcome either through natural 'laws' of history or through strategic revolutionary action. **Capitalism**, through the commodity fetish and the extraction of surplus value produced by human labour, sows the seeds of its own destruction. Perhaps the chief flaw in Marxist accounts is that they struggle to provide cohesive theories of the more complex relations between the state and the market that have become near ubiquitous since the New Deal (Polanyi 1975).

In either sense, markets are not reducible to the classic supply–demand curves of economics textbooks; they operate within institutional and legal frameworks and involve acutely political questions of **justice**, freedom and **equality** (Herzog 2013: 3). Other commentators have pointed to the limited utility of talking about 'the market' as a singular entity when in fact there are multiple markets each operating in differing and idiosyncratic ways. In this sense the debate in the 1980s about the state or the market was a dramatic oversimplification that was as much about political and economic rhetoric as it was about sophisticated theoretical engagement.

While the regimes of Thatcher and Reagan did not last beyond the 1980s, their legacy continues through the work of disciples of their political agendas and the fact that many parties on the left have shifted their political agendas in recent years to accommodate the dominance of liberal notions of the market. In this sense there has been something of a victory for the free market crusade which animated the 1980s.

On the other hand, the power of the state did not wither in the USA or the UK and it is fitting that one account of the Thatcher years named it the period of 'the free economy and the strong state' (Gamble 1988). A more serious challenge to the capacity of the state has been the **globalisation** of the free market agenda and the difficulties **nation-states** now have in managing their own economic affairs in isolation from the rest of the world.

Further reading: Friedman 1962; Gamble 1988; Hayek 1994; Herzog 2013; Macpherson 2011; Polanyi 1975; von Mises 1949.

MARXISM

Karl Marx (1818–83) is regarded as one of the most influential figures in political theory in the nineteenth century and his work had a fundamental bearing on the course of the twentieth century. Like many German thinkers of his time, Marx's work was indebted to the philosophy of Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, which he used to formulate a theory of human emancipation based upon a central historical role for **class** struggle. While there have been many competing variants of Marxism (and the disputes within the tradition have often been vitriolic), they are generally based on a materialist interpretation of history centred upon a socio-economic class analysis.

Marx's analysis of the emergence of industrial **capitalism** was grounded in his political and economic thought, best exemplified by (with Friedrich Engels) *The Communist Manifesto* (1985 [1848]) and the first volume of *Capital* (1981 [1867]). In these works he explained the history of the world as a history of the exploitation of the weak by those who control the surplus of society's total economic output. Capitalism represents the apogee of this oppressive relation, and the point at which the contradictions of class relations will reach breaking point, ushering in, through revolution, a stateless and classless society.

In *Capital*, volume 1, the mode of production of capitalism is analysed as an integrated totality. Marx begins with the commodity, before moving to money, capital and then to labour power. It is the transformation of the latter, through the system Marx describes, into a commodity itself that constitutes the signal achievement of capitalism: the exploitation and alienation of the wage labourer (Marx 1981). Commodity fetishism is the means by which the social relations between people appear as the relations between the products of their labour: commodities. Commodity exchange comes to stand as a schema of social relations *per se*.

The separation of the economic and political realms is a cornerstone of classical Marxist theory. In pre-capitalist societies worker exploitation (and the extraction of surplus value) was achievable through, for instance, the exercise or threat of feudally authorised **violence**. Capitalism, while offering a putatively free environment in which the worker can enter contracts of wage labour, exerts a 'silent compulsion' that enchains the worker to their capitalist master. Legally and politically free to choose where and how to dispose of his or her energies, the worker nevertheless is denied direct access to the means of production. Material, rather than political, compulsion ultimately forces the worker to sell his or her labour power to the capitalist owners of the means of production. It is this, as Wood notes, that enshrines the autonomy of the state and the apparent 'naturalisation' of bourgeois labour–capital relations (Wood 1981).

Despite his influence in Germany in particular in the nineteenth century, Marx's political impact reached its height during and after the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 in Russia. This was followed later by other revolutionary enterprises inspired by variants of Marxist thought including the Mao Tse-Tung-led Chinese Revolution of 1949, Fidel Castro's Cuban Revolution culminating in 1959, and the August Revolution of 1945 in North Vietnam. In each instance, the applicability of Marx's writings to actual historical conditions necessitated theoretical revision. Marx had predicted that capitalist industrialisation would precede **revolution**, yet in none of these examples was that the case. Instead, the revolutionary impetus derived from the disaffected peasant classes and/or specific, localised political events.

At one point during the twentieth century, almost one third of the global population lived in political systems that were at least nominally Marxist. And many capitalist societies such as France have often featured communist political parties adhering to some form of Marxist doctrine which have had considerable influence. Yet by the 1990s, with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the triumphalist assertion of the inherent superiority of democratic capitalism, Marxist-inspired politics reached a low point with commentators such as Francis Fukuyama (1991) proclaiming the 'end of history' with the defeat of communism by capitalism and liberal democracy.

While inextricable from its political arm, academic or theoretical Marxism has displayed tendencies to develop under its own steam. Western Marxism, exemplified by György Lukács (1971), Antonio Gramsci (1992), Louis Althusser (1990) and the Frankfurt School (or

critical theory), has downplayed economic analysis and pursued the more philosophical and cultural elements of Marxian thought.

Further reading: Althusser 1990; Fukuyama 1991; Gramsci 1992; Lukács 1971; Marx 1966, 1981; Marx and Engels 1985; Wood 1981.

MILITANCY

Militancy is a political concept entwined within the classification of specific types of organisation and behaviour. We often see it applied in the case of direct action groups and fundamentalist movements. Underlying debates about militant action are disputes regarding the legal and justified nature of such activities. Often the militant will engage in unlawful activity but does so on the basis that the **law** is part of a wider flawed system of inequality and injustice. Think of the activities of the Women's Social and Political Union (Suffragette) movement whose members committed many public order offences. Similarly, members of the civil rights movement in the USA were prepared to defy rules such as bus segregation which had been based on ethnic identity – Rosa Parks being a famous example.

In attempting to define civil disobedience, Rawls makes a key distinction between the concept and militancy. 'The militant, for example, is much more deeply opposed to the existing political system. He does not accept it as one which is nearly just or reasonably so … In this sense militant action is not within the bounds of fidelity to law, but represents a more profound opposition to the legal order' (Rawls 1991 [1971]: 107–8).

Militancy is a much-used term which is applied to a range of interests and organisations which uphold very different beliefs. What does unite them is their opposition to those in **authority** and the upholding of the status quo. As such militants use a range of tactics – often very publicly displayed and at times illegal – to raise awareness as a catalyst for political change. At the heart of militant acts lies the desire to resist and/or disrupt. Militancy as a label has long been associated with particular trade unions in the second half of the twentieth century in the UK, which were seen as prone to striking, particularly in the coal mining industries of Scotland and Wales. The use of militancy in feminist movements has itself been the source of much discussion, with many arguing that **violence** itself is a patriarchal act and therefore antithetical to a feminist cause.

Heywood refers specifically to militancy as displayed by religious fundamentalists. He argues that their militancy derives from the fact that religion not only has core values and beliefs, but there is a sense

that they have a 'divinely ordained purpose' (2003: 302). In addition to this there is a clearly identifiable 'other' or opposition – this may be a rival religion but is increasingly a rejection of Westernisation and the values this represents.

See also: **justice; violence; war**

MODERNITY

Modernity is a descriptive term that is used to identify a particular historical period from the sixteenth century onwards and it also feeds into the idea of modernism as a broad tradition of thought covering that period. The time of modernity is frequently identified with the Enlightenment and the emergence of the Age of Reason in Western Europe. Modern societies are also related to the processes of industrialisation and urbanisation in nineteenth-century Europe and the emergence of the modern **nation-state**.

The period of modernity was characterised by a shift away from pre-modern doctrines and sources of political **authority** (Connolly 1988). Thus, where hitherto knowledge and authority were thought to be derived from divine sources and were construed in terms of different religious faiths and beliefs, modernity sought to ground knowledge in rationality, objectivity and truth claims. Modernity came to be understood as an era of scientific knowledge as opposed to the faith-based creeds which had previously held sway. This shift from a focus on religion to a focus on science also facilitated the rise of industrialisation, nation-states, **colonialism** and empire building, as well as capitalist, economic structures.

The emergence of modernity is related to some of the classical works in modern political thought including Hobbes, Rousseau and Kant. In *Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes maintained God and faith as the divine sources of truth and knowledge but linked this to the exercise of human reason (Hobbes 2010). Jean-Jacques Rousseau (2002) maintained that God appeared in the state of nature but that modern society had departed from this realm on the basis of the **social contract**. For Rousseau, too, the exercise of human reason was required in order to connect to God's will. However, the key figure associated with the emergence of modernist thought was Immanuel Kant, especially in relation to the thesis expounded in *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*

Modernist thinking is often associated with the emergence of political **ideologies** as a way of understanding theories of political progress. Most of the ideologies that cohered in the eighteenth and

nineteenth centuries were formulated as grand narratives of knowledge, history and **society**. That is, they outlined differing visions of the good society and plotted pathways to achieving them through the application of reason and science. Modernist thought usually focuses on fixed, foundational truths and it is often characterised by structural and materialist explanations of society.

In the last two decades of the twentieth century a new challenge emerged for modernist thought in the shape of emerging forms of postmodernism. **Postmodernism** sought to challenge the possibility of establishing foundational truths and thus questioned the validity of political theories that attempted to articulate visions of the good society and pathways for achieving it. The conditions of modernity were also challenged by the changing social and economic structures of the late twentieth century, such as the development of the so-called post-Industrial society (Bell 1973; Kumar 2005). Most contemporary discussions of modernity are now preceded by a qualifier of some kind such as 'late modernity' (Giddens 1991) or 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000) to indicate that conditions in the twenty-first century are more fluid and unsettled than was the case in the heyday of modernity.

Further reading: Bauman 2000; Bell 1973; Connolly 1988; Giddens 1991; Kant 1997; Kumar 2005; Rousseau 2002.

MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism can be used as both a descriptive term and to refer to a particular movement and debate in contemporary political theory. In the descriptive sense, multiculturalism describes the plurality and cultural diversity within most countries today. However, while the label of multiculturalism has been developed relatively recently, arguably many countries in the world (including the USA, Australia and the UK) have been populated by many different cultural, religious and ethnic groups for a long time. In this sense, the use of multiculturalism as a descriptor is not necessarily a new phenomenon.

A further descriptive dimension of multiculturalism refers to the various policies that have been implemented by governments to respond to cultural diversity. This approach focuses on the elimination of policies or practices that might be held to be discriminatory because they reflect the cultural interest or practices of dominant groups. Although they vary considerably, typically these are policies that value cultural diversity over assimilation.

In theoretical terms, multiculturalism emerges in part out of **liberalism**, especially given liberalism's commitment to plurality and **equality**. However, multiculturalism is often regarded as a critique of liberalism because it challenges the view that the liberal commitment to equality should be experienced through the status of universal **citizenship**.

Liberal egalitarianism emphasises equality of opportunity in multicultural liberal societies. Brian Barry (2001), for example, acknowledges that cultural minorities should not be disadvantaged on account of their difference in a liberal society, but nor should their cultural difference be a basis for special remedies and treatment.

This liberal egalitarian approach can be contrasted with Will Kymlicka's (1995) argument for group-differentiated rights. He argues for group-differentiated rights on the basis that equality can only be realised if it is recognised that different groups have different needs and goals. For Kymlicka, this differential treatment is nonetheless consistent with the goal of equality in liberalism.

A different rationale for multiculturalism is provided by Charles Taylor. He views an **individual's** cultural identity (and difference) as important for dignity and a 'vital human need' (Taylor 1992). Thus, where Kymlicka views respect for different cultural groups and values as the pivotal issue in multicultural politics, Taylor emphasises the importance of cultural identity itself for individuals. Equality, then, must not be about sameness but about respect for difference.

One further variant to note is Bhikhu Parekh's advocacy of a practical, pragmatic version of multiculturalism (Parekh 2002). Parekh rejects monist views of culture as homogeneous but still recognises the importance of culture as a source of communal identity. In terms of applying multiculturalism in **law**, he argues for a 'rule and exemption' approach whereby certain cultural groups may be exempt from specific laws if they are thought to undermine respect for that culture.

A useful example here is the legislation that prohibits the carrying of offensive weapons in the UK (except for specific sporting uses for weaponry and so forth). Parekh argues that this discriminates against observant Sikhs whose religious practices involve the carrying of a ceremonial dagger. In pragmatic terms, especially in certain settings such as those of hospital workers, Parekh suggests that small daggers can be worn – for example as forms of jewellery – that can satisfy the demands of the religion without constituting a risk to people in hospitals. Sikhs are also the subject of numerous other useful examples such as the special turbans worn by members of the Metropolitan Police in London instead of regular helmets. Liberal critics like Brian

Barry argue that such 'rule and exemption' approaches are unnecessary because Sikhs would only be discriminated against if there were rules saying that Sikhs cannot join the police or Sikhs cannot ride motorcycles (another well-known example based on the legislation requiring motorcyclists to wear protective helmets).

The key debates and contentions around multiculturalism then centre on the capacity of liberalism to accommodate cultural difference as long as those differences are consistent with liberal values. This is sometimes described as a 'thin' conception of multiculturalism. However, different tensions emerge when differences result in fundamental disagreements within a country between liberal and illiberal values. A 'thick' conception of multiculturalism is one that attempts to value and maintain cultural diversity even in the face of these divisions.

One area where these matters have become particularly contentious is in relation to feminism, especially where some cultural practices are viewed as inconsistent with the liberal freedoms that have been achieved through decades of feminist politics. For commentators such as Susan Moller Okin (1999), the question is one of whether multiculturalism is bad for women, and many feminists argue that protecting illiberal and patriarchal oppression in defence of 'culture' is deeply problematic and a retrograde step for women.

Further reading: Barry 2001; Kymlicka 1995; Modood 2013; Parekh 2002; Taylor 1992, 1995.

NATIONALISM

Nationalism is a concept that is central to both politics and international relations. This is so because this concept has helped to define the **nation-state** which, despite the challenges posed by **globalisation**, remains the most important form of political community in world politics. The term nationalism has been defined by Ernest Gellner as 'primarily a political principle, which holds that the political and the national should be congruent' (Gellner 2006: 1). This definition suggests that nationalism is a type of political project or ideology, but Gellner's suggestion that nationalism 'holds that the political and the national should be congruent' will only make sense if we understand two other concepts: those of the sovereign state and the nation.

Put briefly, the sovereign state is a type of political community characterised by the following features: its boundaries are territorially defined by geographical borders; a single source of **authority** is acknowledged within that territory; and that authority is not subject to any external sources of authority. A nation, on the other hand, is a

form of community wherein membership tends to be defined through reference to certain common traits, such as place of birth, ethnic or cultural identity, language or religion. These types of political community differ from one another: the former is defined in terms of territory whereas the latter is not, and the former is supported by a legal principle – that of sovereignty – whereas the latter is not. Because they are different in form, the existence of one does not require the existence of the other. Thus, there exist states that encapsulate many nations, and there are nations whose members live in a variety of states.

In recognising that nations and states are not necessarily congruent, we can better understand Gellner's definition of nationalism: nationalism is a political project that calls for the alignment of a national community with a sovereign state. Understanding the concept of nationalism provokes two questions: first, why might people pursue a nationalist political project and, second, how might they do so?

Perhaps the best way to answer the first of these questions is to examine the historical emergence of nationalism, which occurred during the eighteenth century and which became most apparent in the context of the French Revolution (Hobsbawm 1992). In this context, nationalism was driven by the desire to overturn two existing and overlapping forms of political authority. On the one hand, the French Revolution was directed towards the overthrowing of the French monarchy. As in other absolutist monarchies in Europe, political power in France prior to the revolution was concentrated within a small elite: the aristocracy in general and the King in particular. During the revolution, nationalism was employed to challenge the presumed right of this elite to rule the people of France. Instead, the idea was asserted that all people within France were in some way equal, in that they all shared a common **identity** as members of the French nation.

On the other hand, nationalism was also used to challenge the universal claims to authority by religious institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church. Such institutions claimed some measure of authority over all of the people of Christian Europe. The principle of nationalism, however, asserted the importance of nationality over membership of a religious community. Thus, while nationalism promotes a common identity amongst members of a nation, it also emphasises the differences between people of different nationality.

Together these two ideas provide a powerful rationale for linking **sovereignty** and nationality. If members of a national community share a common bond and if they are fundamentally different to

people of other nationalities, then it makes sense that they ought to form their own political community and manage their own political affairs. In other words, nationalism provides a justification for national self-determination. This remains a key principle in international relations: it was central to the emergence of the international states system in Europe and it has been central to the spreading of the political model of the sovereign state throughout the globe. Thus, people around the world have used nationalism as a means of undermining **empire** and promoting decolonisation.

To say that people have 'used' nationalism raises the second of the questions noted above. However, to ask how people use nationalism also highlights an important area of controversy surrounding understandings of this concept. The controversy centres on the question of whether nations are natural or constructed forms of community. Most nationalist movements have trumpeted the notion that their respective national communities are forged by deep historical bonds. Thus, the use of nationalism tends to be associated with the promotion of historical narratives that identify key moments in a nation's past – points of origin, so-called 'golden eras', periods of threat and victimisation – and the employment of national symbols – flags, anthems and commemorative sites. All of these tools are used to capture the distinctive features of a nation. What is particularly important, however, is the emphasis on the historical age and continuity of the nation, for both imply that people are naturally and inevitably members of their respective nation.

However, to say that nationalism has proven to be a powerful **ideology** in world politics is not to say that it captures an inherent truth about political community. Indeed, the idea that people are naturally members of a particular nation has been challenged by academics. This challenge has resulted from the fact that it is very hard to find any commonly agreed upon means of scientifically defining nations. None of the factors mentioned above – ethnicity, **culture**, language or religion – can universally be relied upon to help us define the nations that exist in the world. Thus, while nationalism is a potent political ideology, the question of what makes a community a nation is very hard to answer.

The alternative understanding of nations and nationalities is that they are socially constructed (see **constructivism**). Benedict Anderson famously argued that a nation is 'an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign' (Anderson 1991: 6). Some of the features of this definition have been confronted above. A nation is a form of political community and it is understood

as being limited; that is, no nation has been conceived as incorporating all human beings as members. Anderson's definition also highlights the links between nationalism and sovereignty. What is more controversial, however, is the suggestion that a nation is an 'imagined' form of community. What Anderson means by this is that, even in the very smallest of nations, no one person will actually know all of the other members, and yet there remains a deep bond between these members. This bond rests on the shared understandings of a nation that its members share. Importantly, therefore, to say that a nation is an imagined community is not to say that it is not real; nations exist because they are imagined or understood in a manner shared by their members.

Whether nations are historically given communities or products of social construction, there is little doubt that nationalism has played a key role in the history of politics and international relations. What is at doubt is the future role of this ideology (Archibugi et al. 1998). Some have argued that globalisation poses a great threat to nationalism as the increasing intensification of human interaction can deconstruct the bonds that people share with other members of their nation. Others highlight the ethno-nationalism associated with conflict and violence – particularly in Eastern and Central Europe in the 1990s – as evidence of the continued potency of national attachment (Ignatieff 1994). Still others have highlighted the diverse forms of nationalism that exist. Thus, a distinction is often drawn between ethnic nationalism, which construes the nation along ethnic and/or cultural lines, and civic or liberal nationalism, wherein a sense of national community is forged through the identification of shared political values (Smith 1998). As well as helping to clarify the concept of nationalism, this distinction is important because it implies that nationalism may change in form, which means that it may continue to play an important role in politics long into the future.

Further reading: Gellner 2006; Guibernau and Hutchinson 2001; Hobsbawm 1992; Smith 2010.

OPPOSITION

Within competitive political systems, particularly in those with well-developed party systems, it is common to see both formal and informal oppositions, the latter being represented by any groups or organisations which seek change in policy or those in power. The right and opportunity to form organised opposition was one of the core requirements for **polyarchy**, as articulated by Dahl (1972).

Many political systems recognise an 'official' opposition – as in the UK – where the second largest party holds 'shadow' ministerial positions, and positions such as Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition are formalised by statute. Whilst the concept of 'opposition' is undoubtedly well established it is not one which has, in its conceptual form, generated much analytical discussion. For example, we see many studies of political parties when they are out of power which seek to map the journey from electoral defeat through to rebranding (in terms of policies and personnel) and eventual reclaimers of the crown (hence the many texts which sought to explain the phenomenon of New Labour in Great Britain). However, 'opposition … is a concept which is necessarily relative to that of power upon which political action centres and around which political science moulds itself' (Parry 1997: 457). This led Blondel (1997) to query whether a framework for the analysis of opposition was in fact achievable. 'One might therefore seem entitled to draw the conclusion that the only way to discover the true character of opposition is by examining first government, rule, authority, or state' (Blondel 1997: 463).

Parry notes that political landscapes have shifted considerably since the late 1960s and the works of Dahl, Ionescu and de Madariaga, as these pre-dated Huntington's (1991) third wave of democratisation. Notably, what was once tolerated as dissent in **civil society** in authoritarian regimes has now transformed into formalised opposition parties.

Blondel (1997) critiques Dahl's (1966) six criteria for comparing opposition by suggesting that they effectively restrict themselves to the analysis of political parties. To address this, Blondel developed a framework of four scenarios to account for political opposition – three applicable to liberal democracies and the fourth to authoritarian regimes (478). The first two focus on the number of decision centres: where there is one decision centre a two-party system will emerge, as was the case in twentieth-century Britain. A federal system is an example of more than one decision centre and, according to Blondel, will experience factionalised opposition. In authoritarian regimes, or more specifically when they start to collapse, the opposition may be a spark which ignites change but it is not the fundamental reason for change itself. This latter scenario, or specifically the role of parties in non-competitive regimes, is further examined by Franklin (2002) in a review of twenty-four countries. Franklin notes considerable variance in the incidence of contentious actions by political opposition which 'can best be explained by variances in the levels of repression and by

opportunities created by external criticism of the government's human rights record' (Franklin 2002a: 522).

See also: **polyarchy**

Further reading: Blondel 1997; Dahl 1966; Franklin 2002a.

PARTY SYSTEMS

In most political systems political ideas are formalised into political party organisations, especially when direct elections are a key feature of the political process. Garner et al. (2009: 255–60) describe political parties as 'ubiquitous' – even in non-democratic regimes – and identify seven core functions: legitimation of the political systems; mobilisation of voters; representation; structuring the popular vote; aggregation of diverse interests; recruitment of political representatives; and formulation of options for public policy. Whilst some political parties are short lived in their existence, many enjoy a state of longevity and it is these which tend to embody the party system. Such political parties exist through continued popular support, but on the basis that there are notable **cleavages** within society – such as **class**, race and religion – which are likely to appeal to voters.

Political parties can also be distinguished in relation to origin. Those emerging from grass-roots activism and mobilisation are referred to as mass parties. This is a common feature of many socialist parties which emerged from trade union movements from the late nineteenth century onwards. In contrast, cadre parties emerge from within a political organisation, with emphasis upon key individuals (or elites) who are held in social esteem. Many conservative parties emerged as cadre parties (Webb 2000). The second half of the twentieth century witnessed the dominance of 'catch-all' parties, where the importance of ideological purity was downgraded to focus on the more pragmatic cause of capturing and maintaining the median vote. As party membership has stilted, and in many countries declined, parties have become increasingly professionalised, focused on media communication and candidate centric – what are termed cartel parties.

Hague and Harrop (2007: 244) identify three types of party system in liberal democracies: (i) dominant party systems – one party holds power, though may be in coalition. This applies to the Liberal Democratic Party in Japan and the African National Congress in South Africa; (ii) two-party systems – two major parties compete in a one-party government system – the United States is typical with the domination of the Democrats and the Republicans, despite other

parties winning occasional seats; (iii) multi-party systems – there is a combination of large and small political parties elected on a regular basis and coalition government is common – examples are Italy and Germany.

This said, Sartori (1976: 119) suggests that party counting in itself is an inadequate approach. This, he states, is just one of two 'heterogeneous continua' (p. 281) where the political system pivots on a party system – there are competing parties but a pattern of government formation which is influenced by voter choice and electoral system. This is different to the party-state scenario characterised by a hegemonic party and absence of a competitive system. 'Even more than countries, parties copy, learn from and compete with each other … Similarly, the rules affecting all parties, such as legal regulations and the electoral system, exert an influence across the board. They shape the party system as a whole (Hague and Harrop 2007: 244).

Even dominant parties are not ensured endless security. This was demonstrated by the Christian Democrats in Italy which, despite being the dominant party in coalitions in the post-war period, collapsed spectacularly in the mid 1990s. Similarly, system types may change – Canada's two-party system has emerged as a multi-party system. One reason why party systems change is the emergence of 'new' party families – this was the case with the emergence of environmental parties from the 1980s, and also the radical/far right from the 1990s. In some countries these parties remain minor parties in terms of popularity, whilst in others they are popular enough to enter governing coalitions (e.g. the Greens entered into government in coalition with the Social Democrats in Germany in 1998 and the FPÖ in Austria in 2000).

Whilst changes will occur for very specific reasons in each country, Mair et al. (2004) map out several broad and comparable changes in electoral markets which have challenged established parties. These include social structural changes which have particularly impacted upon parties derived from centre-periphery and class cleavages, structural dealignment and declining party identification – in which voters lose their identity with a 'natural party' and thus electoral volatility increases, changes in relation to 'what matters' to voters – the rise in post-material value orientations, the emergence of new parties which leads to alternative options for coalitions and electoral pacts and a widespread cynicism with political actors and organisations which, rightly or not, are seen as corrupt, self-serving and out of touch. Mair et al. (2004) note some common responses from political parties to these challenges. These include organisations which are

more professionalised and centralised with an increasing focus on leadership, and parties which are more fleet of foot to the need to change and form alternative alliances.

See also: **cleavage; political participation; voting**

Further reading: Mair et al. 2004; Scarrow 2010.

PEACE

Peace is often treated as an ideal that all people and societies do (or at least should) strive for, and yet it remains a contested concept. As a result, while there is a long history of scholarly writing and political activity related to this concept (Cortright 2008), disagreement remains regarding its meaning and its relationship to the concept of **violence**. This is important because how we understand peace impacts upon the various political activities that are undertaken in pursuit of it.

Perhaps the most common understanding of 'peace' equates it to the absence of 'direct' violence, direct violence being the intentional use of physical force by one person or group against another. Understood in this way, we may describe the period between the two world wars as being characterised by peace, or we may call for a return to peace in a nation-state stricken with civil war. This is what is often referred to as a 'negative' conception of peace; 'negative' in that peace is not defined by its positive characteristics but instead in terms of the absence of direct violence. Understood in this way, the pursuit of peace is synonymous with the abolition of **war**. However, for many this definition remains inappropriate and incomplete. For example, during the Cold War, the USA and the Soviet Union engaged in mutual deterrence which, according to some, prevented war. To equate this situation – in which nuclear Armageddon was a constant threat – with the notion of 'peace' was not deemed sufficient by many.

It was in response to the limitations of the negative conception of peace that the concept of 'positive peace' was created. Johan Galtung (1969) was, if not the first, then perhaps the most influential scholar to seek to construct a distinction between 'negative' and 'positive' forms of peace. For Galtung, 'positive peace denotes the simultaneous presence of many desirable states of mind and society, such as harmony, justice, equity, etc.' (Webel 2007: 6). In this sense, peace is understood as something much more than the mere absence of violence; it requires the presence of a range of 'states of mind and society'. To students of politics and international relations, it is the 'states of society' that are required to create positive peace that are of

most importance and, as we shall see, producing some of these states of society is quite demanding.

The growing appreciation of the importance of positive as opposed to negative peace has mirrored a change in practices associated with the promotion of peace both within **nation-states** and within international politics more broadly. One way that we can gain an appreciation of this point is by examining the changing nature of United Nations (UN) peace missions during the past sixty-five years. By doing so, we can see a move from missions designed to promote negative peace through the prevention of war to missions designed to promote positive peace through, amongst other things, conflict resolution, nation-building, democratisation and economic development.

The traditional model of UN peacekeeping emerged in the immediate post-war era. This model is exemplified by the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), which carried out a peacekeeping mission in the aftermath of violence between India and Pakistan over the accession of Kashmir. This peacekeeping mission began after a ceasefire agreement had been reached, and the purpose of the mission was merely to observe the military behaviour of both sides and to report on this behaviour as impartially as possible to the Secretary-General of the UN (and to the UN Security Council). This mission sought to stabilise rather than resolve the conflict between India and Pakistan and accepted as legitimate and necessary the mutual use of military force to promote national security.

In the past twenty years, however, peace missions have expanded in size, budget and mandate, and underpinning these changes has been a more positive conception of peace. A useful example of this expanded model of peace missions was the UN Mission in the Sudan (UNMIS). UNMIS originated in 2005 following the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement between the Sudanese Government and the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Movement. UNMIS was a much larger operation than UNMOGIP with a much larger budget. More importantly, its mandate manifests a very different understanding of the concept of peace than does that of UNMOGIP. This mandate required UNMIS forces to monitor the ceasefire, but it also identified a broader set of requirements. These included assisting with disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of combatants; engaging in a public information campaign regarding the peace process and the role of UNMIS; encouraging national reconciliation (in a process that is inclusive of women); helping to construct a police service and judiciary capable of supporting long-term peacebuilding;

and promoting **human rights** and the respect for the rule of law within Sudan (United Nations Mission in the Sudan 2010). In this case, peace is seen less as the mere absence of violence and more as requiring the presence of desirable states of society. These include the demilitarisation of the opposing sides, the reconciliation of the conflicting parties and the promotion of values and institutions associated with **democracy**.

Further reading: Cortright 2008; Galtung 1996; Galtung et al. 2002; Samãddãra 2004.

PLURALISM

Pluralism is a term used to describe the situation of multiple and diverse positions co-existing within a political system or **community**. Its opposite is 'monism', which holds that there is or should be a single truth that guides a particular society or societies and thus advocates a specific desirable way of life. Pluralism became a significant perspective in the social sciences in the 1950s in the USA, especially through the work of theorists such as Robert Dahl (Dahl 1956, 1974) who contended that the USA was governed by multiple elites rather than a single source of **power**.

The descriptive or empirical idea of pluralism is used to explain a plurality of ideas within a debate or a political system. However, and more importantly, it also has an important normative dimension in which pluralism is defended as a valuable and desirable aspect of a political system. Pluralism is both present (empirically) and valued (normatively) in democratic political systems, as it allows many **individuals** and groups to compete for power on the basis of their differing ideas. Pluralism is also important for **postmodern** theories that are suspicious and critical of foundational truths. Pluralism, in this context, operates as a reminder that there is no single truth and that there is always a multiplicity of possible meanings. In this vein, theorists such as William Connolly (1995) refer to an ethos of pluralisation.

A further substantive approach to pluralism has been developed by theorists of value pluralism. This concept was developed by the philosopher Isaiah Berlin and arose from criticism of the idea that there are objective methods that lead to 'truth' and the denial of all other possibilities (Berlin 2013). This conception of pluralism regards the value systems of individuals as equally valid and, therefore, equally legitimate. On this basis governments cannot justifiably restrict individuals who act according to their values. Critics have accused this concept of pluralism

as relativist whereby it becomes impossible to make judgements between competing perspectives.

Moral pluralism refers to questions of whether or not morals are, in fact, plural (that is, many and diverse) or whether these many and diverse morals can be reduced to one or a few moral positions (monism). Most pluralists reject the view that these perspectives can be reduced to a single overarching value although it is clear that, in the case of utilitarianism for example, it is possible to accept a multiplicity of different values in the world but still retain a focus on a particular 'super value' like happiness to make judgements between competing positions.

The political rather than purely philosophical implications of pluralism are highlighted by theorists who focus not just on the empirical existence of multiple values but on the fact that, in practice, these values may be incommensurable with one another (Gray 2000; Horton and Newey 2007). This idea goes beyond the incomparability of values where there is no objective measure by which to judge differing claims. Incommensurable values are those where it is not possible to hold both values to be true at the same time, that is, where one set of values is in direct competition with the account given in another set.

While values can be incommensurable in a weaker or stronger sense, it is obvious that the political ramifications of incommensurability are stronger than where we merely understand pluralism as encompassing a plurality of values. In terms of political action, incommensurability entails decision making that will favour one side or another of a dispute and makes it much harder for institutions to be presented as objective or neutral. For this reason it is important to go beyond the mere existence or normative advocacy of plurality and to examine political techniques for managing it.

Further reading: Berlin 2013; Connolly 1995; Dahl 1956, 1974; Gray 2000; Horton and Newey 2007.

POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

It is frequently argued that one of the necessary attributes of a democratic system is to provide opportunities for political participation. For Birch (2007) the concept of political participation is not as complex as that of political **representation**. Political participation takes many forms. Debates have focused on three key areas: (i) what types of participation are most popular; (ii) who participates; and (iii) why have trends in participation changed over time?

As part of their study of political **culture**, Almond and Verba (1963) argued a civic culture should demonstrate a faith in political participation. Not only should participation occur, but it should play *a meaningful role*. This contrasts to authoritarian regimes which operate elections but for only a single political party; how meaningful is participation in such a case? In a civic culture citizens are more likely to respect and accept political decisions if they have been offered the opportunity to have an influence upon who the decision makers are.

Birch (2007) identifies the core examples of political participation as being: (i) voting in elections/referenda; (ii) canvassing/campaigning in elections; (iii) joining political groups (such as political parties and **pressure groups**); (iv) demonstrating (which can include joining a strike); (v) civil disobedience (such as refusing to pay taxes – a good example was the failure of the community charge in the UK). This form of political participation can lead to **revolution**; and (vi) participation in consultation (by engaging in e-petitions and deliberative juries).

Why should each member of a large, complex democratic regime bother with political participation when they are a tiny voice in a large crowd? Birch draws attention to the normative aspects of political participation; that is, we see it generally as being a good thing, a duty of **citizenship** and a key character of **human rights** (especially the legitimised elements). Indeed, there is concern generated when participation declines below an expected level (the most common example being a decline in electoral turnout). Explanations of why citizens participate can be divided into two broad categories.

Instrumental arguments focus on the link between political interest and political participation. It has frequently been noted that the 'average citizen' has only a limited interest in political issues, and that a certain level of political apathy will always prevail (a trend noted by American political scientists Berelson, Lazarsfeld and McPhee in the 1950s). In fact too much interest and activism may be bad for the functioning of modern democracies, a view exemplified by the Thatcherite belief that some forms of participation were bad for effective government – she disliked pressure groups as she argued this was an overload. Thus, 'populist theories of democracy involved unnecessary and unrealistic assumptions about the political interest, knowledge and rationality of the average citizen' (Birch 2007: 147).

However, it is certainly not the case that patterns of participation are distributed evenly within democratic societies. Repeated studies have shown correlations between political participation and education, income and social status. It could be argued that those most

likely to benefit from political change are precisely those least likely to engage. This approach, in which participation is a 'cost' in order to secure a benefit, is in line with the theories developed by the likes of Bentham and James Mills – the so-called utilitarians. In fact, it could be argued that most forms of political participation do not maximise the time and effort that goes into them.

Some theorists reject the utilitarian approach and instead see participation as a beneficial, what might be referred to as developmental, activity in itself. We can see this in the rational choice approach – citizens participate for reasons other than an observable short-term return. Riker and Ordeshook (1968) argue that voting generates an emotional satisfaction that we have performed a civic duty. Olson (1965) considered the logic of collective action and the benefits that are derived from the costs of group membership (e.g. trade unions and pressure groups). In addition to the view that participation fulfils civic duty, it is also argued that it may help overcome feelings of isolation; we are naturally social animals and some forms of political participation facilitate this.

Political participation is not exclusive to democratic regimes, though whilst it carries an element of choice in liberal democracies the same is not necessarily the case in non-democratic regimes. In contrast, they may attempt to present a façade of participation or demand regimented demonstrations of support. In totalitarian regimes we also witness regimented participation. Far from discouraging participation, this is an attempt to engineer large levels of participation (though low in quality). For example, Hitler encouraged mass membership of the Hitler Youth movement, as was the case of the Little Octobrists in the Soviet Union – the aim was to socialise the young into accepting the political regime.

As opposed to social movements, the intention is not to influence politicians/governments. Think of the Chinese Government's response to the pro-democracy demonstrations in Tiananmen Square in 1989. Whilst patron–client networks exist in all regimes, they are particularly strong in authoritarian systems. They are 'traditional, informal hierarchies' (Hague and Harrop 2007: 172) between high-status patrons and low-status clients. So, political actors are able to control the votes and political actions of clients in exchange for jobs, contracts and guarantees of personal safety – an example being Zimbabwe.

What is happening to political participation in democracies? When attempting to classify levels of political participation, it is useful to refer to Milbrath and Goel's (1977) classification of American society and involvement in conventional politics, which borrows from the

language of Roman contests. Milbrath and Goel identified three core groups: (i) gladiators – activists who engage in political campaigns (5–7 per cent). They are typically well-educated, middle-class, middle-aged, white men. There is often a link between political resources and political interest, and the formal substantive under-representation of women, it is argued by some, is so widespread because women are less likely to possess the relevant resources despite their level of interest; (ii) spectators represent 60 per cent of the population – they observe the political environment (primarily through engagement with the political mass media) but rarely engage politically beyond voting; (iii) apathetics – this group is unengaged in formal politics (approximately 30 per cent of the population). Just as gladiators are not typical of the population, the same applies to apathetics, who often have poor education, live in inner-city, poor areas and belong to minority cultures.

It should be noted that some democracies implement compulsory **voting**. Australia, Belgium and Italy are examples and turnout in the most recent elections respectively compares favourably to democracies with non-compulsory voting such as Germany, the UK and Canada.

Beyond the act of voting in elections, political participation is generally more concentrated. For example, political party membership is generally a minority activity, and has important implications for how those seeking election can canvass and campaign. Initial concerns were expressed in the 1950s that strong social movements were an indicator of weak democracy or instability (Kornhauser 1959). However, a transition occurred in the 1960s/70s (epitomised by the civil rights movement and anti-Vietnam movement in the USA, for example) with the rising popularity of social movements. More recent examples include (i) in Belgium the 1996 White March involved 325,000 (sparked by widespread unhappiness with a public investigation into child murder); and (ii) the 2000 fuel tax protests in the UK. As such, we distinguish between issue movements (e.g. anti-war in Iraq) and interest movements (e.g. trade unions). Norris (2002) argues protest activism is now part of the mainstream.

A question raised at regular intervals is whether we have a 'crisis' in political participation. Robert Putnam (2000) has revisited the concept of civil society and its role in promoting effective democracy. Putnam coined the phrase 'social capital' to explain the potentially damaging impact of declining sociability in the USA – epitomised by the concept of 'Bowling Alone'. 'Because participation is an option rather than a requirement, it is unlikely ever to be equal; and because inequalities in participation are rooted in social differences in resources and interest,

the active minority will remain unrepresentative of the passive majority' (Hague and Harrop 2007: 168).

Further reading: Norris 2002; Rokkan 2009; Whiteley 2012.

POLYARCHY

'Polyarchy' is a term associated with the political scientist Robert Dahl in his explanation of **pluralism**: 'polyarchies are regimes that have been substantially popularized and liberalized that is, highly inclusive and extensively open to public consultation' (Dahl 1972: 8). It is a practical attempt to operate a democratic 'ideal' – that is, rule by the people – when 'the people' are many and reside in a large political state that is increasingly complex in its day-to-day operation. Democratically selected power holders act on behalf of the population but are held accountable via regular, competitive elections. The role of the state is perceived to act as a broker between competing interests in the allocation of scarce resources.

Heywood (2007) suggests there is good reason why the term polyarchy is favourable to liberal democracy – liberal democracy is a rather idealistic term which embodies particular normative expectations, and not surprisingly then, regimes may from time to time fall short of operating all those ideals effectively. So, for example, would an election in which a small level of electoral fraud occurs (a not uncommon occurrence) render an entire political system 'undemocratic' as a result? 'Polyarchies can be thought of as systems in which the institutions necessary to the democratic process exist *above a certain threshold*. In the *real* world, polyarchy is the best *approximation* to democracy, but by *ideal* standards it will *always* be the runner-up. Thus for Dahl the question is not how democratic are democracies, but how democratic are polyarchies?' (Jordan and Maloney 2007: 16).

The concept of polyarchy does not focus exclusively on the electoral process. **Political participation** takes place beyond the ballot box and as such a 'liberal democracy' must allow for alternative means of political expression and organisation – the tolerance, and legal protection, of **opposition** is key here. To this end, a polyarchy also requires **pressure groups**, rights to expression of opinion and access to a reasonable level of political information. A polyarchy is epitomised by the type of political regime that emerged in what Huntington (1991) referred to as the first and second waves of democratisation, the first wave occurring between 1828 and 1926 (in the USA, the UK and France, for example) and the second wave between 1943 and 1962 (such as in Italy, Japan and India). Thus polyarchies may be practically

organised in different forms – classic examples being the majoritarian democracies following the Westminster model (as in Canada or New Zealand) or pluralist democracies such as federal states (such as the USA and India).

Whilst the routes of access to **power** and influence need to exist, there is also a recognition that power and influence may not be equally shared. Some citizens will participate more than others because they have greater resources – be this financial, skills and knowledge based, or related to levels of political efficacy. For example, much research on the selection of political candidates highlights the pre-requisite importance of activism in social, economic and political networks (prompting the cliché 'It's not what you know, it's who you know'). To this end interest groups are often labelled as 'insider' or 'outsider' groups – the latter relying on tactics such as demonstrations and publicity-seeking events to harness public attention (such as the group Fathers4Justice). The former rely on their connections to business and the corridors of power to influence agendas, but do so far from the public gaze (such as the Confederation of British Industry). Dahl (1972: 23) himself argues that, as suffrage is extended, political leadership will statistically become less representative.

The necessary (though not necessarily sufficient) features of polyarchy as identified by Dahl (1972: 2) are for citizens to (i) formulate their preferences, (ii) signify their preferences and (iii) have these preferences assessed without 'discrimination'. In order to meet this, the state must implement three guarantees:

1. to formulate preferences requires: freedom to join organisations and express opinions; the right to vote, to compete in elections and to access sources of information;
2. to signify preferences requires (in addition to the guarantees listed above): free and fair elections and open access to running for office;
3. to have preferences assessed without discrimination requires (in addition to the guarantees listed above): government in the hands of elected officials.

In response to these indicators, Coppedge and Reinicke (1990) developed a polyarchy scale, arguing that there are degrees of polyarchy. This approach highlighted the challenge faced by 'weighting' variables – are fraudulent elections more of a concern than a lack of a free press (Coppedge and Reinicke 1990: 56)? In addition, they highlight that the guarantees of polyarchy should be viewed in

tandem with experience of regime stability – the consolidation of a polyarchic state having a much better impact on the quality of political life. In his case study of Korea, Gray (2008: 114) argues that polyarchy is neither static nor impervious to challenge from below. This is demonstrated by a rise in anti-American sentiment and electoral success for the political left. Predominantly represented by a small sector of students and radicals in the 1980s, this became a much broader feature of Korean civil society by the early part of the twenty-first century.

Jordan and Maloney (2007) explore Dahl's claims regarding polyarchy with specific reference to the democratic contribution of interest groups. A key question for them is the extent to which interest groups represent collective shared interests in which opinion flows up to the leadership, or whether they are a modern day example of 'chequebook participation' in which members pay a membership fee but then leave the leadership reasonably free to behave as it so chooses – as justified by a former interest group director: 'we have always regarded ourselves not as an organization that is run by its membership but an organization supported by its members' (Jordan and Maloney 2007: 179). In doing so they identify a normative assessment of interest groups, where 'good' groups are seen as bottom-up driven organisations, but 'self-interested' groups are seen as financially driven. The importance for the latter is to have members, not necessarily to always hear what they say.

See also: **pressure groups; political participation; representation; voting**

Further reading: Dahl 1972; Gray 2008.

POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is a critical reaction to the rationality and forms of knowledge arising from **modernity**. Formulated in opposition to the dominant analytical tradition of Anglo-American philosophy, it is characterised by its abandonment of truth as the basis of a progressive politics and rejection of grand narratives of the good society and how to achieve it. For this reason, postmodernism is often thought to be anti-foundational (Marchart 2007).

As a descriptor of **society**, postmodernism refers to the emergence of a much more contingent, unsettled and disorderly social order rather than the certainties around which modernity was seemingly organised. It rejects material understandings and explanations of society with some variants (especially post-structuralism) focusing

more on **discourse** and language. The label 'postmodern' also refers to important shifts in art, architecture, literature and film.

Key theorists associated with postmodernism include Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault. Lyotard's *The Postmodern Condition* (1979) investigates the structures and practices of language in forming knowledge. He is well known for his definition of postmodernism as 'incredulity toward meta-narratives' (1979: xxiv). From this basis he rejects grand ideological formations because they fail to grapple with the basic contingency of language and its role in the establishment of institutions and systems.

In terms of a 'method' of postmodernism the most important contribution is Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction as a means of analysing language and texts (Derrida 1976). In this approach Derrida focused upon the function of a text in the construction of meaning rather than the meaning itself. Although Derrida's early work had its greatest influence in philosophy, literature and cultural studies, his later output dealt much more explicitly with political themes and in particular debates around **law**, **justice**, **democracy** and **cosmopolitanism** (Derrida 2001).

Michel Foucault's work is often understood as postmodern, though he rejected such a characterisation. Foucault viewed modernity as an 'attitude' rather than a historical era and therefore declared himself to be uninterested in a 'postmodern' era. Nonetheless, his post-structuralist work is clearly a critical reaction to **modernity** and adopts anti-foundational techniques such that his work can clearly be seen to be part of the postmodernist tradition (Foucault 1980). Importantly, Foucault's work demonstrates how claims to truth are intertwined with structures of social power.

Although postmodernism has become highly influential in the humanities and social sciences, its influence on politics has been less direct, not least because it has been thought to be either unwilling or ill prepared to engage in a mode of theorising that could provide a basis for social and political action. Such is its propensity to be sceptical about all political arguments that some critics, such as Jurgen Habermas (1990), have argued that postmodernism is 'irrational'. Not surprisingly, postmodernism has also faced criticism from defenders of traditional modernist ideologies who maintain that the possibility of progress towards a vision of the good society is achievable.

Postmodernism has also been criticised for its supposed relativism insofar as its rejection of truth claims and disclosure of power in the operation of language arguably gives it little basis to make judgements between competing arguments. For critics, this creates the danger of

being unable to take a stance against offensive or injurious claims and language because there is no standard from which to mount opposition (Rorty 1989). While in abstract philosophical terms this critique might have some merit, post-structuralists do mount their critiques in order to challenge existing and traditional modes of **power** and **authority**. So, while postmodernism might shun normative arguments in favour of deconstruction, this should not blind us to the practical foundations of the work of theorists like Foucault and, indeed, the political activism of key postmodernists including, most notably, Derrida.

Further reading: Bauman 1992; Derrida 1976, 2001; Foucault 1980; Habermas 1990; Lyotard 1979; Marchart 2007; Rorty 1989.

POWER

Power is perhaps one of the two most complicated concepts to come to grips with when studying politics and **international relations**. One of the primary reasons for this is that we refer to this concept so often in our everyday lives that it is easy to assume that its meaning must be clear. One look at the academic literature on the concept of power tells us a very different story; those who have tried to rigorously examine and define this concept have found doing so incredibly difficult (Haugaard 2002). One result of this is that the concept of power is understood and used in many different ways, even within the realm of politics and international relations (IR). Indeed, one of the few points upon which academics who study power can agree is that the concept is 'essentially contested'. This means not only that there is no single definition that captures the essence of the concept of power; it also suggests that disagreement is likely to continue regarding this concept because of the political implications that the usage of the term holds.

Before considering some of the different understandings of this concept, it is worth discussing briefly why the usage of the term 'power' remains politically contested. This has much to do with the fact that in our common-sense usage of the term, we often associate it with the concepts of causality and responsibility (Morriss 1987). On the one hand, for example, if we speak of A having exercised power over B, we often imply that A caused B to do something. On the other hand, if we speak of A having caused B to do something, we may find ourselves attributing responsibility for the outcome of this event to A. What all this means is that our understanding of what power is will hold implications with regard to who we think has

caused certain outcomes in political life and, therefore, who we hold to be responsible for their occurrence.

Because of the essentially contested nature of the concept, the purpose of this entry cannot simply be to provide a clear definition of what the term 'power' means. Instead, it must be to highlight some of the different ways in which this term has come to be understood within the disciplines of politics and IR. In addition, it is also the purpose of this section to highlight some of the key debates that have arisen regarding this most divisive of terms.

A good starting point for a discussion of 'power' is the understanding of the term advanced by Robert Dahl (1961), who argued that power involved A getting B to do something B would otherwise not do (though Dahl uses the terms C and R instead of A and B). This understanding of power is important partly because it corresponds to our everyday use of the concept, but it is also useful because it highlights an important feature of power, namely that it is a quality of relationships and not something that should be understood as a mere possession of an individual person or actor. A can only be understood as being powerful in relation to some other actor. Beyond this, Dahl's definition represents a useful starting point because it prompts us to ask a further set of questions in seeking to elaborate and/or clarify what we mean by the term 'power'.

First, there is the question of what enables A to get B to do something they otherwise would not have done. In other words, what is it that makes A powerful? On the one hand, this question directs us towards the examination of the resources or capabilities that are employed by A when getting B to do something they otherwise would not have done. These resources may be many and varied. In domestic politics, many might argue that power is possessed by those with wealth or those who occupy positions of **authority**. In international relations, **realists** (such as Hans Morgenthau (1993) and John Mearsheimer (2001)) have long associated military capability with power, though Joseph Nye (1990, 2004) has also highlighted the importance of 'soft power' resources. On the other hand, questions about what makes a particular actor powerful are also questions about the context in which power is exercised. This is a very important point, because it warns us against attempting to identify general power resources; resources that can be used to exercise power regardless of the context (Baldwin 1979, 1989).

A second question, or rather, set of questions, has to do with how we identify when and where power exists and is utilised. This is important in terms of the academic study of power, but it also holds

implications regarding how we think about power more generally. One area of debate regarding this question has been between those who seek to measure power in terms of outcomes and those who seek to measure power in terms of potentiality. Each of these approaches to the measurement of power has its advantages and disadvantages. The former is easier to employ in the analysis of power because it implies that, in a given contest between A and B, whichever achieves their desired outcome must be the more powerful. Often, however, we want to know who is powerful in order to assess their potential importance in the future, rather than merely so that we can determine who was responsible for certain past events. This leads us to adopt the latter approach to the measurement of power. This approach holds its advantages but power as potentiality is incredibly hard to measure. Scholars seeking to adopt this approach tend to turn back to the consideration of the power resources that may potentially be used in the exercise of power.

A further question that Dahl's definition of power prompts is whether power should be understood in zero-sum terms. Very briefly, dividing a cake between two is a zero-sum game, in which the volume of cake available is fixed and, therefore, the more cake one person receives, the less is available for the other. Dahl's definition (and his empirical research) implies that the 'quantity' of power available is also fixed and that, in a power relationship, one actor's gain is another actor's loss. Put in Dahl's terms, if A is powerful then, by definition, B is not. While this understanding of power may appear commonsensical, there are many scholars who have argued that power should be understood differently (Arendt 1970; Barnes 1988; Parsons 1963). Thus, a number of scholars have argued that power does not simply exist; it must be created. What this implies is that there need not be any fixed 'volume' of power in the world and, therefore, that power need not be understood in zero-sum terms. Power may be a productive force, one that allows consensual behaviour and the pursuit of collective goals. This may be linked with the distinction between the notions of 'power over' and 'power to'. Dahl's understanding of power is consistent with the former of these: A exercises power over B. Scholars such as Barnes (1988) and Arendt (1970), however, conceive of power as a capacity for action; a capacity to achieve certain things such as the common good.

A final question raised by Dahl's definition has to do with whether or not we must necessarily think of power as a property of individual people. An alternative, and one that has been examined by a number of scholars, is to consider power as a structural property, a property of

societies rather than of individuals. Lukes (2005), amongst others, has highlighted this point by noting that power relations (A's power over B, for example) tend to be constituted or made possible by pre-existing social structures. An example might be the power that A, a police officer, holds over B, a motorist: A can exercise power over B by getting B to pull over. However, this relationship is itself constituted by prior social structures, such as those that constitute the relationship between the police (as lawful agents of state power) and the citizenry (as law-abiding members of society). Structural forms of power may regulate the behaviour of people (by making them abide by certain laws, for example) but it also serves to constitute the identities of individuals (as police officers, for example) and their relationships to others.

What we can see, therefore, is that there is a variety of understandings of power, some of which are incompatible with one another. Furthermore, these different understandings of power have different political implications, a result of which is that we are unlikely to ever achieve consensus regarding which is 'best'. Perhaps the most appropriate way to think about power, therefore, is to consider what purpose the term is to play within the context in which it is (to be) used.

Further reading: Barnett and Duvall 2005; Berenskoetter and Williams 2007; Haugaard 2002; Lukes 2005.

PRESIDENTIALISM

Presidential systems are one form of democratic regime, often seen as a suitable alternative to parliamentary systems. In some political systems large sections of power lie in the hands of one person – the president – who heads the **executive** and decision making. Such a system operates in the USA – though this is not to imply that this personal power is consistent in its reach and impact as it may vary over time, depending on personality and issues. Presidential and semi-presidential regimes account for approximately half of the democracies in the world (Colomer and Negretto 2005).

Hague and Harrop (2007: 329) identify four features of presidential government: (i) directly elected with a fixed term of office (this is very different to those states which have a ceremonial president, such as Germany); (ii) steers and appoints government; (iii) there is a distinct and non-overlapping membership of the executive and legislature; and (iv) the president serves as head of state. Stepan and Skach (1993: 3) compare what they refer to as 'pure' presidential regimes

with 'pure' parliamentary regimes. The former are characterised by a 'system of mutual independence' (the chief executive and the legislature have a fixed electoral mandate which is the source of their legitimacy, respectively), whilst the latter are characterised by a 'system of mutual dependence' (the chief executive relies on majority support from the legislature and the former can dissolve the latter resulting in an election).

A positive feature of presidentialism is its appeal to **democracy** – a directly elected president has the mandate of the country, rather than of a specific constituency. This notion of representativeness is further explored by Colomer and Negretto (2005) with particular reference to Latin American democracies. As the role of president is a singular role holder, candidates logically cannot be elected by a proportional electoral system. As a result, many presidential elections are run over rounds, enabling a multitude of candidates in the first round but typified by a 'run off' between the two most popular candidates to ensure a majority preference can be articulated (as occurs in Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Dominican Republic, El Salvador, Guatemala, Peru and Uruguay, for example). 'This means that, in the worst of the cases, the elected president will be considered at least a lesser evil by many of the voters and therefore can expect to find significant popular and political party support to try to build a consensual political majority around his or her proposals' (Colomer and Negretto 2005: 68–9).

Whilst the separation of powers between the legislature and executive may be desirable, it can be the case that ideologically opposed executives and legislatures lead to political deadlock. Furthermore, regimes referred to as 'illiberal democracies' tend toward presidential rather than parliamentary systems with a focus on strong executive power (e.g. Putin in Russia, states in Latin America). Linz (1990) noted a key peril of presidential systems is the fostering of 'personality politics' which benefits the experienced. Whatever the strengths and weaknesses of a formal presidential system, there is a growing recognition that key features are creeping into some parliamentary systems. Presidentialism is not to be confused with presidentialisation, the belief that in some cases prime ministers have become more powerful, to the cost of cabinet and government authority. Critics say this is unfounded – it is merely a mirage created by political journalism which finds it easier to focus on personality rather than the more complex detail of policy. However, others would point to the growth of personal offices (the prime minister's office as opposed to departments in the UK, for example) which reinforce the belief that prime ministers are becoming

president-like – a label frequently attached to both Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair in the UK.

Stepan and Skach (1993) questioned the rationality of many new democracies in their decision to pursue a presidential system path, instead suggesting parliamentary systems are shown to be better suited to democratic consolidation. This is because: parliamentary systems facilitate a greater prevalence of effective political parties; the greater opportunity for executive/legislative deadlock in a presidential system debilitates the effective implementation of policy programmes; ministerial continuity is higher in parliamentary systems ('ministers in presidential democracies have far less experience than their counterparts in parliamentary democracies' (1993: 16)); and presidential systems appeared more susceptible to military coups.

Could it be that Stepan and Skach were noting trends that were regionally and spacially specific (given that the time frame for analysis tended to cover the new democracies of Latin America and Eastern Europe)? Fukuyama et al. (2005) have evaluated presidentialism in 'third-wave' democracies in East Asian countries (such as Indonesia, the Philippines, Taiwan and South Korea). Each case has witnessed a crisis of legitimacy for its president. Fukuyama et al. reinforce Linz's observation that emerging presidents are often charismatic and personable, but also note that the presidential system has enabled effective opponents to emerge far more expediently than would be the case in a parliamentary system: 'What one thinks of the ultimate merits of presidentialism thus depends on what one thinks about the urgency of political change in a given country' (Fukuyama et al. 2005: 103).

See also: **authority; democracy; executive; government; separation of powers**

Further reading: Colomer and Negretto 2005; Linz 1990; Stepan and Skach 1993.

PRESSURE GROUPS

The term 'pressure group' (also referred to as interest groups) refers to a collective of rather diverse organisations in terms of structure, objectives and political power. Specifically, a pressure group exists to represent a view point or sectoral interests and is commonly distinguished from a political party by the fact that it does not contest elections. This said, pressure groups frequently align themselves with political parties if there is a perceived shared interest (for example,

many trade unions are affiliated to the UK Labour party and in the USA the National Rifle Association has close links with the Republican party). To this end pressure groups within democratic regimes contribute towards our understanding of **political participation** and offer an opportunity for political engagement in between the normal electoral cycle, and indeed engagement by those excluded from voting (such as those below the age of enfranchisement).

The primary focus of pressure groups is to influence government policy making, and in the case of sectoral groups (such as trade unions) to protect and promote the interests of members in a broad sense. Raising public attention to particular concerns and perceived injustice is a further characteristic (rural/urban movements). As such, the existence of pressure groups is of interest to those examining social capital (Putnam 2002).

Serious academic study of pressure groups in the USA and UK emerged in the 1960s, with Latham (1965) identifying the US political system as a basic struggle between such groups. Ball and Guy Peters (2005: 141) state: 'The study of organized groups has now been incorporated into wider analyses of the distribution of political power and the nature of the state, with some contemporary network theories arguing that the interactions of interest groups are the crucial element for understanding governance.'

Recent academic debates have focused on the opportunities for 'virtual' campaigning. The ability to contact and lobby via email can overcome very practical obstacles such as geographic spread. Important questions which can be asked are: (i) how powerful are pressure groups? and (ii) are they good for democracy?

The classification of pressure groups

In examining the political power of pressure groups authors are prone to employing the insider/outsider categorisation. An insider group will have access to corridors of power and the ear of those in authority. This applies to certain professional concerns such as the British Medical Institute and the Confederation of British Industry. Such groups do not require a high public profile in their campaigning, unlike outsider groups which strive for the 'oxygen of publicity' in order to push their concerns into the public's attention, such as anti-war protesters and the pressure group Fathers4Justice. An environment in which political influence is an eagerly sought, restricted commodity is as relevant to appreciating the 'success' of pressure groups as to so many other elements of political analysis. An alternative form of classification asks 'in

whose interest?' Here we employ an issue/sectoral categorisation. Groups established to represent specific types of employees are referred to as sectoral – trade unions being by far the most frequent example. Personal motivation for associating with these different types will vary, for example, trade union membership is often perceived as a form of 'insurance policy' rather than driven by a desire to achieve a particular policy. In the UK, many of the largest pressure groups are generally perceived as being 'non-political', with membership linked to discounts and service access, even though such organisations may lobby on specific legislation. Writing in the 1970s, Olson (1965) emphasised the large number of business lobbies which had emerged in the USA.

Are pressure groups a 'good thing'?

Those advocating a **pluralist** approach to power emphasise the positive contribution that pressure groups make to the democratic process. On the other hand, there are those that promote the 'overload' thesis; pressure groups are detrimental to effective government by placing specific and isolated demands on policy makers. The 'overload thesis' was the approach adopted by the Conservative administration elected in the UK in 1979 and marked a break in approach from the corporatist era of the 1960s and 1970s, in which powerful sectoral groups (trade unions) were regular visitors to the political debating table. Furthermore, for every issue group there is likely to be a similar organisation demanding the exact opposite (such as the pro- and anti-hunting lobbies). Others consider the internal organisation of pressure groups, suggesting a lack of democracy in terms of their hierarchy. 'Interest groups are not election-fighting organizations; instead, they typically adopt a pragmatic and often low-key approach in dealing with whatever power structure confronts them … their activity is pervasive in liberal democracies … In authoritarian regimes, however, interests are articulated in a less public, more spasmodic and sometimes more corrupt fashion' (Hague and Harrop 2007: 209). However, such **legitimacy** issues may not be restricted to authoritarian regimes. In the latter part of the twentieth century, the practice of lobbying became associated with immoral and at times illegal political practice. In the USA legislation (in the form of the American Federal Regulation of Lobbying Act 1946) seeks to add transparency to the lobbying process.

A concern is what 'membership' means exactly – are pressure group members the 'gladiators' as identified by Milbrath and Goel (1977) in their attempt to classify levels of political engagement? Not

necessarily. Pattie et al. make reference to 'cheque-book' participation in which pressure group engagement is little more than paying a subscription. Furthermore, 'the organisational structure of such groups militates against mass democratic participation in policy formation and implementation' (2004: 268). The inherently anti-democratic nature of pressure groups is highlighted by Doherty in his examination of the changing nature of British environmentalism, which split into distinct factions in the 1990s. Referring to the strategy of Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace, he states that:

> Although those joining FoE and Greenpeace may have sought to take political action, the increased income and political bargaining power of both organizations has induced a degree of caution about their earlier radicalism. Greenpeace has always kept a tight control on protest actions carried out in its name … Paying a supporter's fee did not entitle a Greenpeace supporter to take action in Greenpeace's name.
>
> (Doherty 1999: 278)

Further reading: Watts 2007.

PUBLIC OPINION

> But public opinion deals with indirect, unseen, and puzzling facts, and there is nothing obvious about them.
>
> (Lippmann 1991: 27)

'Public opinion' is a crucial concept in the positivist empirical exploration of political behaviour and attitudes. Obvious sub-disciplines which engage with this concept are those which focus on elections and **voting**, political communication and policy making/implementation. Key debates have emerged which focus on (i) the ontological debate as to whether 'public opinion' exists, (ii) the methodological concerns regarding how we identify and 'measure' public opinion and (iii) studies which examine the extent to which public opinion can be influenced.

We can make a distinction between the 'uses' of public opinion. For example, public opinion is a measure commonly featured in the mass media as an indicator of what matters, who is up and down in a political and non-political sense. In contrast, private polling is employed by political parties to test out policy proposals and advertising campaigns.

Does 'public opinion' exist?

To have faith in the term public opinion requires an acknowledgement of the idea that there is a common interest (though this is not to be confused with the theoretical concept of public interest). 'The very term "public opinion" presupposes that there is a general social will that is open to empirical discovery' (Marsh 1979: 269).

Political opinion polling began in the USA – large-scale surveys of US presidential elections began in 1916 – and regular polling in the UK began in the 1930s. Today's leading polling companies are Gallup, ICM, Ipsos-MORI, Populus and YouGov. Public opinion is typically investigated by survey. Initially this was heavily focused on postal and face-to-face surveys but more recently they are operationalised by telephone and the internet.

Lippmann's 1922 study claimed that, in relation to the study of politics, 'the public' were neither knowledgeable nor competent enough to decide on matters of public policy (cited in Broughton 1995: 16), suggesting that policy making should be the realm of experts and elites. King et al. (2001: 283) highlight the fact that some issues are complicated and 'are not ones that most people have thought about very much or have settled views about'. In cases like these, question wording can, and does, have a considerable impact on the responses that interviewers get. It is far from clear in these cases whether what is being tapped can reasonably be called 'opinion' at all. 'One sign of such rickety opinions is the marked instability that frequently characterizes responses given by the same individuals to the same questions asked at intervals sufficient to minimize the trivial stability lent by memory' (Luskin et al. 2002: 456). One response to such concerns is the methodological development of techniques such as citizens' juries (Kenyon et al. 2003), deliberative polling (Luskin et al. 2002) and focus groups.

Broughton (1995) states that public opinion can be measured in terms of four dimensions: intensity, stability, salience and latency.

1 Intensity: the strength of opinion. This tends to be strong on moral issues, e.g. abortion, but weak on others.
2 Stability: trends in public opinion tend to change over time, especially in a policy area where there is limited knowledge. If we agree with Lippmann (1992; cited in Broughton 1995), we need to appreciate that the general public will have a limited understanding of many aspects of public policy. King et al. cite electoral reform as a good example of an issue lacking stability. For the

majority of people opinion is not fixed; there is no underlying attitude which influences responses.

3 Salience: this aspect is linked to the idea of issue stability and relates to how an issue affects a person.

4 Latency: this reflects an underlying opinion which is derived from other, more direct, responses.

Can we 'measure' public opinion?

The development of political opinion polling has gone hand in hand with developments in methodological techniques, for example, accurate sampling depends on the accuracy of sampling frames. We must not neglect the 'snapshot' element of opinion polling. We cannot expect a poll to be anything more than a reflection of that opinion among those people at that time. Opinion may be consistent and stable but we cannot assume it is always the case. In order to be able to have confidence in claims about the stability or otherwise of public opinion we need to use panel surveys, in which the same people are surveyed on numerous occasions over a period of time, which in itself can be methodologically problematic (Harrison 2001: 44).

The core methodological challenges when investigating public opinion are that: (i) opinion polls cannot establish causal relationships; and (ii) opinion polls may be unable to take into account the context of a person's beliefs. The language used may influence responses. Typically, opinion polls use closed questions and the options available may influence how people respond. In the 1997 UK General Election, for example, ICM asked voters about voting intention and named the party alternatives. This appeared to increase the level of support for the Liberal Democrats compared with a similar question that did not name the parties (Curtice 1997: 454).

Can public opinion be influenced?

Arguably, the industry of political marketing and communication would not exist if it was felt that public opinion could not be influenced. A particular concern may be that the polls actually influence voting behaviour – is there such a factor as the 'bandwagon effect', in which someone with no clear party alignment may use polling information to determine their own vote? To this extent, some countries ban the publication of opinion polls in the run up to general elections; these include two days before the election in Canada,

five days before the election in Spain, seven days before the election in France and Italy and two weeks before the election in Portugal.

Despite the rules in France, Maarek (2003) claims that opinion polls played a significant role in the 2002 French presidential election, when the socialist Prime Minister Lionel Jospin did not secure enough votes in the first round to proceed to the final vote. One reason for this may be the fact that a number of fringe parties exist in France and their supporters are less willing to express their voting preferences when asked by pollsters compared with voting via a secret ballot (the 'spiral of silence' effect; Noelle-Neumann 1984). As a result, 'a poll-induced complacency' emerged amongst the Jospin campaign team (Maarek 2003: 22).

Further reading: Luskin et al. 2002; Moon 1999.

REALISM

Realism is perhaps the most prominent theory of **international relations** (IR). While this theory is often traced back to the writings of various historical figures, including the Greek historian Thucydides, the Italian writer Niccolò Machiavelli and the English philosopher Thomas Hobbes, realist IR theory as such emerged in the post-Second World War era and dominated the discipline until the latter years of the Cold War. Although it has often come in for criticism (Keohane 1986), and although a number of alternative theories have since emerged to challenge its dominance, realism remains one of the most important theoretical approaches to IR.

The emergence of realist theory can best be understood as a reaction against prevailing understandings of international politics. In particular, early realists such as E. H. Carr (2001 [1939]), Hans Morgenthau (1993 [1948]) and George Kennan (1984 [1951]) developed their ideas in order to challenge what they took to be the idealism or utopianism of the liberal approaches to IR that had been influential in the inter-war years. According to realists, it was this idealism or utopianism that had been partly responsible for the adoption by certain states of policies that led to the Second World War. The name 'realism' should be understood in this light; these early realists saw themselves as pragmatists who understood the 'realities' of international politics and who could therefore offer better advice than their well-meaning yet unrealistic predecessors.

Realist theory is grounded on a number of key tenets, such as a belief in the inherently competitive and conflictual nature of international politics, an acceptance of the importance to states of their

national interests and a tendency to analyse international political events largely in terms of the concept of **power**. Since its emergence in the post-War years, however, realism has expanded and changed, and there are now various 'branches' of the theory that are commonly identified. Perhaps the most important division within this school of thought is that between the classical realism advocated by scholars such as Carr and Morgenthau and the structural or neo-realism advanced by, amongst others, Kenneth Waltz (1979). While these alternative branches of realism share some important features, their differences are also worth consideration (Waltz 1990).

What is distinctive about classical realism is its emphasis on human nature as a basic driver of politics and international affairs. Morgenthau (1993: 4) put this point most clearly, stating that politics is governed by objective laws that have their roots in human nature. Morgenthau's argument was that, by their very nature, human beings – and therefore **nation-states** – pursue their interests which can best be understood in terms of power. The point here is fairly simple: human beings want certain things (interests) and they need to employ certain means (power) in order to pursue them. Furthermore, it is because the interests of people often clash that political life tends to be characterised by conflict and competition. Carr (2001) made a similar point, highlighting that tension should be expected to emerge within a political system between those states that benefited from the status quo (satisfied powers) and those that were disadvantaged by it (revisionist powers).

Neo-realism presents a similar vision of international politics – as being characterised by conflict and competition – but it does so without relying on assumptions about human nature, assumptions that are seen by many as being overly simplistic and deterministic (Waltz 1959). Instead, the starting point for neo-realist theory is the structure of the international political system which, because it lacks an overarching source of **authority**, they characterise in terms of **anarchy**. Kenneth Waltz, who is generally regarded as the person most responsible for constructing this 'new' version of realism, argues that the anarchic nature of the international system helps us to explain both the recurrence of **war** in international politics and the tendency of states to engage in certain types of behaviour, such as the formation of balancing alliances.

According to Waltz (1988), war has occurred frequently within international politics not because people or states are evil or warlike, but because international anarchy gives rise to what is termed the **security** dilemma. In an anarchic system, states are likely to prioritise

their pursuit of security over that of other national goals. Furthermore, given the lack of an international legal system or police force, they are forced to help themselves rather than relying on other actors to provide for their defence. How, then, does a state know that it is secure? The only way that they can do so, according to neo-realists, is to measure their power relative to that of other states. If they are powerful, then they will be able to protect themselves; if they are weak, they are in danger. The implications of this argument are many, not all of which can be considered here, but the basic lesson for states that neo-realism suggests is that they can best ensure their security by preserving and, where possible, enhancing their own power.

It is with regard to this final point that some division has emerged within neo-realist ranks. 'Defensive realists', and Waltz especially, have argued that the primary objective of states will be security, while 'offensive realists' such as John Mearsheimer (2001) have argued that it is power itself that states will seek above all else. The distinction between the two may seem mild, but it is important. If states seek security above all else then we might expect them to avoid risking what they have in the pursuit of more power. If only power matters, then states are likely to be very aggressive and to seek expansion through war whenever the possibility to do so emerges. In short, if we follow Waltz we see a world where war is a constant possibility but **peace** may be achieved for long periods of time, if and when a **balance of power** emerges between the major powers. If we follow Mearsheimer, we should always expect war to be just around the corner and peace to be a rare and fragile feature of world politics.

As represented above, the distinction between Mearsheimer and Waltz would seem to result from their different understandings of the implications that follow from international anarchy. Alternatively, however, we could see the positions of Waltz and Mearsheimer as differing in terms of their expectations of what it is that states want. In this sense, the debate between offensive and defensive realists has followed a recent trend in realist theory. This trend has seen realist scholars move away from neo-realism's strict focus on the structure of the international system and add a concern with regard to the role of nation-state-level factors. In particular, 'neo-classical realists' have argued that realism needs to combine the analysis of structure with that of nation-level factors (Lobell et al. 2009). Such scholars have examined how domestic-level factors within particular nation-states impact upon either their mobilisation of power resources or their pursuit of security.

Further reading: Brown et al. 2004; Donnelly 2000; Guzzini 1998; Waltz 1990; Williams 2005.

REFERENDUM

A referendum offers an alternative form of direct electoral participation. In liberal democracies elections by and large occur to elect the personnel for legislatures and/or **executives**. In contrast, a referendum takes place to resolve a specific issue or question. Referenda are used with varying degrees of frequency. Butler and Ranney (1994) distinguish between countries that have institutionalised referenda (such as Italy and Switzerland) and those where referenda occur on an ad hoc basis (such as the UK). The outcome of a referendum may be mandatory or advisory. In the latter case it is unlikely that a **government** will initiate a referendum which it would 'lose' (when, for example, public opinion appears to fly in the face of government political direction). This was not the case with the referendum held on the Liberal Democrat-supported move to an alternative voting system in the UK in 2011, which was lost by a 'no' vote of 68 per cent on a turnout of 42 per cent.

A consultative referendum may be initiated by the executive, as has been the case in the UK with referenda being held on continued membership of the European Community (1976) and devolution for Scotland and Wales (in both 1979 and 1997) and independence for Scotland (2014). In other countries a citizen-initiated referendum may be generated via initiative – effectively a petition generated from within the electorate – as is the case in New Zealand and Switzerland. These are examples of rejective referenda – seeking public opinion on proposals as yet to come into force. An abrogative referendum (as utilised in Italy) enables citizens to overturn/repeal existing legislation (LeDuc 2002). Several American states employ recall elections in order to remove unpopular elected officials. Such a case was the recall of Democratic Governor Gray Davis in California in 2003, eventually replaced by Republican Arnold Schwarzenegger (Hague and Harrop 2007: 199).

In addition is the concern that frequent elections will lead to voter fatigue. De Vreese (2006) explores the implications of referendum for political party reputation, suggesting that large centrist parties often struggle to persuade their supporters to follow their recommendations, though this does not apply to smaller, more ideological parties. Furthermore, parties have to work hard during referendum campaigns as voters often make their decision late in the campaign: 'contingent upon the topic of the referendum and previous experience with referendums' (de Vreese 2006: 586). Butler and Ranney (1994) identify four main categories of referendum: (i) constitutional issues; (ii) territorial issues; (iii) moral issues; and (iv) other issues (see Table 2).

Table 2 Examples of referendum by Butler and Ranney categories

Country	Year	Referendum type
France	1962	Constitutional - direct election of the president
Spain	1980	Territorial - increased autonomy for Galicia
Switzerland	1985	Moral - 'right to life'
New Zealand	1992	Constitutional - electoral reform
Zimbabwe	2013	Constitutional - a number of clauses including limitations to presidential power

A hitherto unprecedented series of referenda took place between March and September 2003, when nine countries held accession referendums on whether or not to join the European Union. This provided an unparalleled opportunity to test theories of referendum behaviour with comparative cases (Szczerbiak and Taggart 2004). Whilst eight of the countries demonstrated high levels of support for accession (66 per cent and above), the levels of turnout varied considerably (90 per cent in Malta to 45 per cent in Hungary). Results in earlier referendums also influenced process in later elections, for example, in Poland voting was extended over two days to facilitate the threshold of a 50 per cent turnout for the outcome to be accepted.

Ball and Guy Peters (2005: 169) point to some limitations of referenda: (i) a government may not see them as binding; (ii) outcomes may be influenced by question wording and timing; (iii) not all interested parties may have access to equal resources to campaign effectively; and (iv) what may be complex political issues are inevitably reduced to the form of a simple question. This said, referenda can act as genuine tools of education, facilitating wide-scale debate among the general public on an otherwise little-discussed issue.

See also: **political participation; voting**

Further reading: Butler and Ranney 1994; LeDuc 2002.

REPRESENTATION

Modern political systems operate via representation – we have come a long way since the city states of Ancient Greece in which the direct participation of citizens was the norm. As Ball and Guy Peters (2005: 160) state: 'The complexity of modern political systems and the complexity of the issues with which they deal may make the assumptions of direct democracy, primarily that the citizens can and should make good

policy choices through voting in referenda, increasingly questionable.' Hence, Dahl's development of the concept of **polyarchy**.

Birch (2001) chooses to explore political representation in relation to the 'disputes' which surround the concept in its practical application. These disputes take on four core questions:

1 Who should be represented? Often these debates focus on sectoral or social groups. Whilst Birch suggests this dispute has largely been resolved in democracies due to universal franchise, we can still see a focus upon the 'representativeness' of legislatures – should they represent society in terms of demographic characteristics such as age, sex or ethnicity? This 'microcosm representation', as Birch labels it, is to his mind utopian considering that legislatures rely upon volunteers who need to demonstrate specific skillsets in an occupation that is notably insecure (Birch 2001: 97).
2 How should representatives be chosen? The common distinction is between election and appointment. Not all political representatives are elected or appointed by merit. Early proponents of representative democracy include Tom Paine in *Rights of Man* in the late eighteenth century, and by the early twentieth century Schumpeter was reflecting on the limited value of direct representation.
3 How should representatives behave?
4 Are representatives the mandated 'voice' of their constituents, or can they act as independent judges of the public interest? This relates to Pitkin's (1967) 'paradox of representation', in which she examines the extent to which someone absent physically (e.g. not present) can be recognised in a different sense.

Norris (1996: 184–5) identifies dominant models of representation, including:

1 The party government model: voters choose between party platforms, the case in many proportional representation systems across Europe which are characterised by high degrees of party discipline.
2 The district delegate model: Norris refers to this as common in Anglo-American democracies. Representatives act as agents of a geographic constituency, though the extent to which British MPs adopt this model, as opposed to the party government model, is open to debate.
3 The social representation model: the emphasis here is on the extent to which a legislature 'looks like' its electorate. Debates have historically focused on the representation of religious minorities and

social class, but more recently on the underrepresentation of women and ethnic minorities. However, there is some debate (see Birch above) regarding how precise such representation can be, particularly in more heterogeneous political societies.

Birch (2001) further identifies the functions of representation, and identifies these as being:

- A mechanism for political recruitment: organised mass political parties have effectively become the vehicle for representation in most modern democracies; the example of a successful 'independent' activist who lacks the support of a structured political network is rare.
- Providing the venue for voluntary participation: this is closely related to the first function in relation to the holding of regular and free elections: 'personalities can be assessed, issues can be aired, records criticized, and policy options debated' (Birch 2001: 100). We should note that in some countries there is compulsory voting and debates exist both in support and in rejection of the benefits of this (Saunders 2010; Hill 2011). Alternative mechanisms for representation as participation – such as **pressure groups** – are discussed in more detail elsewhere.
- Government responsiveness and responsibility: here, there is an interesting balance between the need to react to **public opinion** but also to implement effective and prudent policies. The Thatcherite style of leadership was one which often self-justified the latter, over the populist approach of the former. The rights and wrongs of the war on Iraq are a more recent example.
- Ensuring political accountability occurs: in a democratic system, a government's effectiveness as a responsible and responsive organisation will be tested by its electorate (or selectorate). Regardless of whether we expect our politicians to be populist or a representative in the Burkeian sense, there will be regular opportunities to reinstate or remove from office.

See also: **democracy; legitimacy; party systems; political participation; pressure groups; separation of powers; voting**

Further reading: Birch 2001; Pitkin 1967.

REVOLUTION

Revolution is a contested political concept which can refer to both an ideal type but also to a specific turn of events. In the case of the latter,

it generally implies some fundamental change, often (but not essentially) as a result of violent political change (Heywood 2007). Calvert (1996) traces its historical emergence to the era of the Italian Renaissance. Often cited historical examples include the 1688 'Glorious Revolution' in England, which witnessed the installation of a constitutional monarchy, and the 1789 French Revolution – a far more violent affair. Revolutions involve a mass uprising, therefore the opposite in nature to the overthrow of power epitomised by a small elite group which characterises a coup d'état.

If we consider revolution as an 'ideal type' we can note that **Marxist** theories use the concept in a very specific way – it refers to fundamental social change resulting from a change to the economic system, the eventual achievement being a 'classless society'. However, a review of the many revolutions which have occurred across history show that this utopia has yet to be achieved. For example, the 1917 Russian Revolution succeeded only in replacing the elitist power of the tsar with the authority of the Bolshevik (Communist) party. In contrast, non-Marxist theories tend to focus on the transformation of the political system. This may be because the 'system' is destabilised and unable to effectively manage competing demands – as characterised by many of the revolutions in the former Soviet Union/Eastern Europe in the dying embers of the twentieth century. A structural approach to explaining revolutions characterises the work of Skocpol (1979). Whilst previous attempts to explain revolutions had focused very heavily on the behaviours of those involved, she added a layer of explanation which evaluated state relations, both between groups internally and between states.

Goldstone (2014) suggests two great visions shape our view of revolutions. The 'heroic' vision is the bottom-up approach where the masses overthrow the ineffective old regime – epitomised by the historic developments in America, and as de Tocqueville suggested was the case in eighteenth-century France. The alternate vision is the rise of the mob which leads to chaos. Goldstone (2014) attempts to debunk some popular myths surrounding the causes of revolutions, for example, they are more likely to occur in middle-income countries than amongst the very poor (who lack the resources to revolt). Also, the process of modernisation *per se* is not sufficient to spark a revolution, though the undermining effects modernisation may have on a regime may be.

Revolutions do require a change to the status quo. They are often prompted by a groundswell of dissatisfaction with those in **authority**, generating a **legitimacy** gap. For example, revolutions result from

rising expectations (see, for example, Gurr 1970) which fuel rebellious behaviour when increased demands cannot be met by the state. In many cases the established leadership is perceived as perpetuating inequality – because it is either ineffective and out of touch or corrupt. Goldstone (2014) states that theorists generally agree on five common elements which act as the catalyst for revolution: economic strains, alienation among elites, a sense of injustice, an effective narrative of injustice (what might be called a 'new ideology') and international sympathy/support. This said, there is rarely a 'perfect storm' in which all these elements emerge concurrently, and as such it is important to appreciate that an event will push a state into the necessary condition of instability (such as large-scale protests which the regime is unable to effectively quell).

This said, revolutions are not inevitably violent (as demonstrated by the Orange Revolution in the Ukraine), and therefore a useful definition is as follows: '*Revolution* is the forcible overthrow of a government through mass mobilization (whether military or civilian or both) in the name of social justice, to create new political institutions' (Goldstone 2014: 4).

See also: **legitimacy; violence; war**

Further reading: Goldstone 2014; Nepstad 2011; Skocpol 1979.

RIGHTS

Rights are a common feature of many variants of liberal thought and the concept is frequently articulated in everyday forms of politics. A right is an entitlement to have or do something (a positive right) or an entitlement *not* to have something done to you (a negative right). While rights are a staple element of some forms of liberalism, some rights have also been criticised by liberals. Though supportive of individual legal rights, the late eighteenth- and nineteenth-century utilitarian, Jeremy Bentham, famously described natural rights as 'nonsense on stilts'. So it is important to recognise that all claims to rights are not the same and their foundations can vary quite significantly.

Traditionally, rights are usually understood as being held by **individuals**. However, in the late twentieth century influential arguments in political philosophy have suggested extending them to groups in certain circumstances. For example, there have been strong suggestions that indigenous communities may enjoy a right to self-determination which would permit separate governing structures and processes from the broader political **community** within

which they are located. This right is distinct from an individual right to self-determination which implies a right to individual autonomy and decision making. These distinctions have been articulated most influentially by Will Kymlicka in his work on 'group-differentiated rights' (Kymlicka 1995).

Rights are usually seen as having a natural or positivist foundation. Natural rights are often conceived along the lines suggested by John Locke's state of nature where they are viewed as God-given or existing prior to society (Locke 1960). Positivist models of rights on the other hand see them as emerging from a particular social practice (Hart 1955; Raz 1994). Whether or not rights are construed in natural or positivist terms, or indeed whether or not they are ascribed to individuals or groups, they can be seen to have a moral or legal character. While legal rights are written down in legislation, case law or treaties, moral rights do not need to be codified to be claimed or defended (although this makes them much more difficult to enforce).

Moral rights are therefore more likely to have a natural foundation because they arise *a priori* to a social community. Because of this *a priori* nature, moral rights are often regarded as inalienable. However, some rights can be both moral and legal. A good example here is the notion of **human rights** which are usually expressed as inalienable moral rights. When they are documented in international conventions and treaties however, they also become legal rights.

All claims to rights demand recognition as they ask something of those around the rights holder (or claimant). These can be either negative or positive rights; they still demand to be respected and enforced. However, rights are not always recognised, respected or enforced and, indeed, it could be argued that **discourses** about rights are articulated most prominently when they are thought to have been breached.

Rights can also be seen as relational insofar as quite often claims to rights are thought to bring into play other political concepts, most notably duties or obligations. So, in many practical political arguments, rights are thought to have a reciprocal link with duties where to claim them is to recognise a duty to act or behave in particular ways. This approach is often discussed in relation to **citizenship** and the social rights that are afforded to citizens through the welfare state. Commentators from a range of political perspectives have suggested that the social right to welfare should be accompanied with responsibilities to do certain things (like seek work or do community service of one kind or another).

Rights are frequently expressed in everyday political engagements but often with a lack of definition or a clear sense of what makes a

particular action or entitlement a right (as opposed to some other form of claim against whoever or whatever it is made). This everyday usage of rights accompanies the very specific political and legal implications of rights which make them fundamental to contemporary political debates. Taken together, the legal and everyday interpretations of rights make them one of the most powerful discursive constructions in contemporary politics.

Further reading: Dworkin 1978; Hart 1955; Kymlicka 1995; Raz 1994.

SECURITY

Security – being or feeling safe from harm – remains one of the central concepts within the discipline of **International Relations** (IR). More particularly, while in the domestic political realm actors are often thought to pursue some version of 'the good life', in the international political realm it has been security that has long been identified as the most important objective of actors. Traditionally, IR scholars, such as Stephen Walt (1991), have deemed the **nation-state** to be the most important actor within international politics. As a result, security has generally been defined in terms of 'national security'; the territorial and political integrity of the nation-state. Furthermore, it has been held that the most notable threat to a particular state results from the military capabilities (or armaments) of other states. More recently, however, traditional definitions of security have been questioned on two grounds: first, in terms of their fixation on the state as the only important actor in international politics and second, in terms of their assumption that the military capabilities of states are the only source of insecurity which actors in international politics may face.

The resulting debate regarding the meaning of security has led to the emergence of a variety of different understandings of the concept. This variation can be understood in terms of both the referent object of security studies – the actor whose security is to be analysed – and the sources of insecurity that are to be examined. On the one hand, some scholars have begun to shift their focus from the security of the state to that of other actors (or referent objects) in international politics. Some have shifted their analysis to a level 'above' the nation-state by examining the security of regions (Meyer 2006) or even that of the global environment as a whole (Dalby 2002). Others have shifted their analysis to a level 'below' that of the state by examining the security of regimes (Ayoob 1995), societies (Buzan 1991) or even individual human beings (as is evident in relation to the concept of

'human security' (Thomas 2000)). In general, this expansion of the number and type of referent objects studied by scholars has been referred to as the 'deepening' of security studies.

At the same time as this deepening has taken place, the 'broadening' of security studies has also occurred. The term 'broadening' refers to the increase in the number and type of the sources of insecurity that are identified by scholars. Thus, the field of security studies has witnessed a growing concern regarding threats other than that posed by military force. These alternative 'threats' include issues such as transnational crime, environmental degradation, the spread of disease and even such challenges as malnutrition and economic inequality. The result of the deepening and broadening of security studies has been its expansion to include the analysis of threats ranging from the global threat of climate change to the threat of famine as faced by individual human beings.

Despite this variation, all is not chaos within the field of security studies; there remain within this field some prominent understandings of what 'security' means. One such understanding of security is that associated with the realist school of IR theory (indeed, this represents the traditional conception of security as discussed above). All variants of **realism** encompass both an emphasis on the state as the most important actor within international affairs and an assumption that warfare represents a perpetual problem. On the one hand, classical realists such as Hans Morgenthau (1993) contend that warfare represents a perpetual threat due in part to the self-interested nature of human beings. This vision of human nature has been asserted by classical realists to be a timeless and unchanging feature of international politics. Given the prevalence of insecurity, classical realists have tended to prescribe the pursuit of military power by states, advising policy makers that if they want peace they must prepare for war.

Neo- or structural realists, such as Kenneth Waltz (1979), while sharing the pessimism of classical realists regarding the inevitability of warfare, have avoided relying on assumptions regarding human nature. Instead, they have sought to explain the causes of war in terms of the anarchic structure of the international system. According to neo-realists, warfare can emerge despite the absence of aggressive individuals or states. Instead, the occurrence of warfare remains perpetual due to a problem often described as the 'security dilemma'. The security dilemma emerges, it is argued, due to the **anarchic** nature of international politics. In a system with no overarching source of **authority**, states cannot assume that their security will be provided for by anyone other than themselves. As a result, each state must measure its security

by comparing its military capabilities with those of other states. Therefore, the anarchic international system provides states with an incentive to improve their security by increasing their military capabilities relative to other states. The dilemma that arises is that one state's pursuit of military power and security leads inevitably to the reduction of the security of surrounding states (whose relative military strength declines as that of the first state rises). Thus, the mutual desire for security gives rise to competition which can lead to war, despite the fact that none of the states involved initially sought more than their own security (this is why it is referred to as the security 'dilemma'). For neo-realists, the best that can be hoped for is the emergence of a **balance of power** between states, as this prevents any state from gaining military superiority over others.

This traditional (realist) approach to security studies has been challenged by various scholars, such as Ken Booth (2005) and Barry Buzan (1991), who instead advocate an approach labelled critical security studies (CSS). While this category of scholars remains quite varied, proponents of CSS tend to criticise traditional approaches for two important reasons. First, critical scholars argue that traditional approaches misunderstand many of the most important sources of insecurity that exist in the world. In particular, such scholars criticise traditional approaches for assuming that the state should be the focus of analysis because it provides security for the individual human beings who live within it. Instead, critical scholars argue that, at least in many developing parts of the world, it is the state (by which they mean the government) that is the primary threat to the wellbeing of citizens (consider recent events in Burma, for example). The second criticism that many critical scholars advance is that, far from merely providing an objective account of security and insecurity, traditional approaches to security studies actually serve to reinforce the authority of the state. By doing so, it is argued, such approaches legitimise the use of force by states even when that force is used against a state's own citizens. In this sense, critical scholars such as Keith Krause and Michael Williams (1997) argue that our theories regarding the meaning of security serve to socially construct the reality of international politics, including the sources of insecurity and injustice within it.

Recognition of the first of these criticisms (i.e. that traditional approaches have ignored key sources of insecurity) has led critical scholars to encourage the broadening and deepening of the field of security studies. In doing so, such scholars have sought to highlight the varied forms of insecurity that individuals, societies, states and, indeed, the world face in the twenty-first century. Recognition of

the second of the criticisms mentioned above (i.e. that traditional approaches to security studies have reinforced injustice within international politics) has led critical scholars such as Ken Booth (1991) to argue that if insecurity is socially constructed, then it can be reconstructed along more just lines. In short, where traditional understandings of security assert that the problem of war between states is timeless and unchanging, critical accounts of security acknowledge the possibility of achieving progress towards a more secure (and just) future.

Further reading: Buzan et al. 1998; Krause and Williams 1997; Terriff et al. 1999; Walt 1991.

SEPARATION OF POWERS

The separation of powers is a doctrine of liberal politics intended to restrict the concentration of **authority** with the hands of an individual or unaccountable small group. It is associated with the work of Locke and Montesquieu and famously enshrined within the US political system, and has become a model replicated by many other congress systems, as in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, South Korea and Taiwan, for example. The separation occurs between branches of authority, labelled as legislatures, executives and the judiciary. If each operates independently but keeps the others in check then an abuse of power should be avoided. To this end Article 1 Section 6 of the American Constitution excludes office holders in one branch from operating in the other two branches. Such a distinction does not always occur in the UK, for example, where members of the executive sit alongside members of the legislature in Westminster – the prime minister is also a sitting member of parliament (MP). Presidents are directly elected, prime ministers are not.

Legislatures are embedded within modern constitutions as a defence against executive tyranny. They vary in size and generally reflect the size of the population, though Hague and Harrop note that power and size are not equated; indeed, larger assemblies are often the least powerful as they are unable to act cohesively. Polsby (1975) distinguishes between *arena* legislatures (for example, the Chinese National People's Congress, which is large and meets infrequently) and *transformative* legislatures (such as the American Congress which is very powerful). The key functions of legislatures are: (i) **representation**; (ii) deliberation (Edmund Burke famously declared upon being elected the MP for Bristol in 1774 that his role was to deliberate as a member of parliament, not to merely represent local

prejudices); and (iii) scrutiny and legislation (to approve, amend or reject the bills which are formulated by **government**).

A further distinction can be made between between (i) unicameral legislatures, these are the norm and some smaller democracies have moved from bicameralism to unicameralism (for example, New Zealand, Denmark, Sweden and Iceland) and (ii) bicameral legislatures (for example, the UK, USA and Germany). Bicameralism is particularly found in **federal** systems, as the 'second chamber' is the voice of the component states. This, according to Hague and Harrop (2010), is strong bicameralism (e.g. Australia), whereas in weak bicameralism the lower house is more powerful. In a bicameral system the role of the upper chamber is one of checks and balances, it is often less subject to party politics than the lower chamber; rather it is a collection of specific interests/experts who are less inclined to follow a party whip. The role of one is scrutiny and to reduce the opportunity for knee-jerk legislation. Even in democracies an upper chamber does not require direct election, and in many cases representatives are selected by indirect election (e.g. through regions) or by appointment.

The function of the **executive** is to govern. The key distinction in democratic regimes is between presidential and parliamentary executives, and an exploration can be found elsewhere, though it is worth noting that in a separation-of-powers system the legislature has no control or oversight of the executive's policy agenda. In a parliamentary system the legislature can vote down the executive with motions of no confidence or censure. The American Supreme Court has the power of judicial review and checks that acts by either the executive or legislative are within the remit of the constitution. Stone Sweet (2008) argues that this American model of judicial review is a more concrete practice compared with the European model of constitutional review, which is more abstract.

See also: **constitutions; executive; federalism; government; presidentialism**

SEXUALITY

While sexuality was once traditionally seen as a purely natural, biological realm, it has become a matter of considerable political significance since the late 1960s. Moreover, its emergence as an important political issue has also had implications for fields including **culture**, economics and **law**.

The political significance of sexuality began to emerge as a theme with the emergence of new social movements as a political force in

the 1960s. These movements brought to light the narrowness of the traditional political agenda and the inability of political parties to mobilise policy around some of the pressing concerns in everyday life. They pointed to the exclusion of some people and their concerns from the political mainstream and as such highlighted an array of overt and covert forms of discrimination.

A watershed moment in the gay liberation movement occurred in June 1969 at the Stonewall Inn in New York's Greenwich Village. Patrons fought back against persistent police intimidation at the popular gay bar. Subsequently, a broader politics around cultural issues of recognition began to emerge and the movement made inroads in the final decades of the twentieth century, with the increasing 'normalisation' of LGBTI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex) identities. Legal and political recognition, while generally lagging behind, has progressed significantly (in most Western nations, at least) due primarily to causes raised by the movement.

Although the politics of sexuality has generated a diversity of forms of political engagement, the key theoretical engagements around the theme of sexuality have included those by Sigmund Freud, Michel Foucault, Judith Butler, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. For example, we can see how Freudian psychoanalysis broadens sexuality to include all forms of bodily pleasure (Freud 1953) and places the libido at the core of human motivation and behaviour.

The work of Michel Foucault has been particularly influential with his notable three-volume study of sexuality in the Western world which aimed to historicise the construction of subjectivities through individuals' sexualities and the shifting **discourses** and practices that accompany them (Foucault 1990). This shed fresh light on the ways in which political responses to sexuality have been constructed and the contingency of the beliefs and practices that have led to the marginalisation of certain sexual identities.

This concern with political identity provides the inspiration for Judith Butler's examination of the constitution of sexual (biological) and gendered (social) identity through everyday performances of socially accepted norms (Butler 1999). Butler argues from an anti-foundationalist, post-structuralist perspective, emphasising the contextual, situated nature of such taken-for-granted categories as desire, sex and **gender**. Moreover, her work has emphasised the importance of transgression against social expectations of the performance of gender identities as a mode of political transformation.

An enlarged concept of desire and human reproduction, seen as central to production in general, informs the work of Gilles Deleuze

and Félix Guattari (Deleuze and Guattari 1983). They analyse the ways in which desire has been colonised by the institutions and discourses of **modernity**.

While the politics of sexuality remains controversial, many of its concerns have become the substance of mainstream debate in a way that was difficult to imagine in the 1960s. Many Western societies have witnessed debates on gay marriage in recent years which, while often involving contributions that hark back to traditional and/or discriminatory attitudes, mark the ways in which these concerns are no longer peripheral to the core concerns of politics. Moreover, we have also seen considerable discussion within sexual politics about variations within gay and lesbian movements and, in particular, debates on the specific role of transgenderism within sexual politics.

These developments demonstrate the increasing awareness of the public, political importance of issues that were once seen as the private concerns of individuals. This, if nothing else, highlights the considerable shifts that have taken place in the politics of sexuality since the late 1960s. In more general terms, queer theory has become an identifiable strand of contemporary social and political thought that is applied well beyond the realm of debates about sexuality alone.

Further reading: Butler 1999; Deleuze and Guattari 1983; Foucault 1990; Freud 1953.

SOCIAL CONTRACT

The idea of the social contract is a cornerstone of some variants of liberal thought. It is a hypothetical tool for establishing the **legitimacy** of political **authority** in liberal society. In many pre- and early modern political theories the right of monarchs to govern in absolutist fashion was thought to be God-given. However, with the emergence of **liberalism** came a need to legitimate the authority of the state in other ways. So, from this foundation, we can see that social contract theory emerged from a liberal understanding of free and equal **individual** citizens who can only be considered to be ceding their freedom to the state through consent rather than coercion.

A social contract perspective requires a statement of the original 'state of nature' before human beings enter into political society. Perspectives on the state of nature vary markedly and inform the ways in which political philosophers have designed the social contract which marks that entry of individuals into political society. It is the existence of that hypothetical contract between individuals and the

state which brings about the legitimacy of the political authority that the state exercises in governing its citizens.

The historical figures who are usually invoked in discussions of the social contract are Thomas Hobbes, John Locke and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. For Hobbes (1991: 62), the state of nature is uncivilised and dangerous, a state of war where men are enemies and life is 'nasty, brutish and short'. This pessimistic view of the state of nature leads Hobbes to an expansive view of the legitimacy of the state to restrict individual freedom. Moreover, he suggests that individuals will agree to these quite restrictive powers because this is the only way to avoid a state of constant enmity and war. Importantly, then, for Hobbes, the social contract is only between the citizens who collectively hand over power to the sovereign. The sovereign is not a party to the contract (Russell 2004: 573). The sovereign's power is potentially unlimited and critics such as Russell point to the ways in which this could lead to totalitarian regimes.

John Locke also viewed the state of nature as anarchic and in need of order. His social contract was designed to preserve and protect man's natural **rights**, especially his right to private property. For Locke, each man is free to consent to the state's power over his person and his property and free to refuse, which could lead to conditions of **revolution**. However, this contractual moment only appears to exist at the moments when new governments are being formed after serious social and political upheaval, such as revolutions.

In contrast to Hobbes and Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau romanticises the state of nature and regards modern civilisation as corrupt and imperfect. Famously, he claimed that 'Man is born free; but everywhere he is in chains'. So, for Rousseau, the social contract should be designed so that individuals only submit to laws and restrictions of their own choosing. Contrary to the Hobbesian account, then, Rousseau's social contract retains individual freedom by expressing the political authority of the state in terms of individual free will.

In addition to these classical versions of social contract, we can also highlight the contemporary work of John Rawls as an exemplar of social contract theory. Rawls' theory of **justice** as fairness is predicated upon a hypothetical 'original position' in which rational individuals stand behind a 'veil of ignorance', in which they are unaware of their own characteristics that they will enter society with and thus how their particular characteristics will be valued or not. From this original position, Rawls imagines how the rational individual would deliberate about the best principles of justice to govern the social and political **community**. Rawls contends that the rational

individual would choose two main principles. First, they would prefer a principle of **equality** and second, a difference principle whereby there could be acceptable inequalities as long as no one was made worse off in that distribution.

While social contract theorising such as that of Rawls has been exceptionally influential, especially in contemporary Anglo-American analytical philosophy, the idea of the social contract has also faced considerable criticism including from thinkers like Ronald Dworkin, who questions whether a hypothetical contract can be considered a contract at all, and others who argue that an individual is never free to deny consent.

Further reading: Dworkin 2002; Hobbes 2010; Locke 1960; Rawls 1971; Rousseau 1993; Russell 2004.

SOCIALISM

Socialism is a complex political ideology with a rich and diverse history. It has had a major influence on the realms of political theory and political practice over the last 200 years in particular. While it is a highly diversified tradition, its core concern can be viewed as an overriding concern with egalitarianism. However, the pursuit of **equality** can mean many different things depending on the field to which it is applied. Thus, different socialists have pursued various forms of egalitarianism from legal and political **equality** to social and economic **equality**. Moreover, there has been a constant debate through the history of socialism as to the best means of trying to achieve these objectives.

Historically, socialist thought has moved from the preoccupation of total **equality** of human beings to equal but differentiated treatment, to the Marxist formula of 'from each according to his capacity, to each according to his works' (Goodwin 1992: 108). Economic **equality** is not purely a matter of distributive justice but concerns the fair apportioning of input to the productive side of the economy. For some, nationalisation of industry is the fundamental condition of such **equality**, although socialists disagree as to the extent of public ownership. The welfare state, as the agent of redistribution and the guarantee of basic minimum standards of living, is another essential ingredient, although some socialists more influenced by revolutionary **Marxism** have viewed the welfarism of modern social democrats as evidence of capitulation to the forces of **capitalism** and a willingness to accept the 'crumbs from the capitalist table'.

Historical variants of socialism include utopian socialism, revisionist or 'evolutionary' socialism, and a violent revolutionary dictatorship of the proletariat. Utopian socialism is associated with Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen, although the label was ascribed by later socialists such as Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels to indicate the movement's naivety. Marx opposed such naivety, which would see a voluntary transition to socialism should enough people be peaceably persuaded of its merits. He viewed socialism as an inferior stage of communism, 'still stamped with the birthmarks of the old society' (Marx 1966).

Revisionist socialism, as espoused by Eduard Bernstein, eschews revolutionary action in favour of democratic and legislative means (Bernstein 1961). It became and remains the dominant form of political socialism in the world today. Yet since the end of the Cold War, ostensibly socialist parties such as the British Labour Party (and its Australian counterpart) have found themselves jettisoning core socialist creeds – notoriously the nationalisation of industry. This has often brought elements of the socialist movement in political parties into conflict with its supporters in the trade union movement.

This is perhaps best represented by the contentious emergence of Third Way politics (Giddens 1998) at the end of the twentieth century, in which prominent political actors such as the British Labour Prime Minister, Tony Blair, sought to shift the policies of their parties away from some of the sacred cows of socialism to embrace a much more centrist political agenda. At the heart of this strategy was a pursuit of political acceptability that involved a commitment to traditional socialist objectives whilst relinquishing opposition to liberal economics. This approach has spread to socialist parliamentary parties in several countries, although it remains highly contentious as to whether it amounts to a betrayal of socialist principles or the only way to articulate a form of socialism that meets the overarching imperatives of globalised liberal capitalism.

Further reading: Berki 1975; Bernstein 1961; Crick 1987; Fourier 1971; Giddens 1998; Marx 1966, 1981; Owen 1993.

SOCIETY

The **state** is a political organisation which covers a territorial region and a process of governing. Society is the collective of groups (subjects and citizens) which constitutes the governed. It is this relationship between society and state – either empirically or ideally – which forms the basis of political ideologies. It is impossible to effectively

understand and debate fundamental concepts such as freedom, **rights** and obligations without discussing the function of society and the limitations of power. Whilst society may hold no interest for the hermit who resides in a cave, in the modern world we recognise that **individuals** belong to social, economic and political groups and networks – these groups are the key primary constitutive element of society (a core principle of **pluralism**).

An important philosophical question relates to the extent to which a society merely represents a collection of individuals. Here we refer to the divide between individualism and collectivism. The utilitarian approach of Bentham and Mill, for example, saw human nature as being motivated by self-interest – individuals will always act in a selfish way – and such a premise influenced the thinking of classical liberalism and the new right. The function of the state in this scenario is to judge the 'greatest happiness' principle, where the majority interest predominates. An example of the individualist approach was the Thatcherite mantra 'there is no such thing as society, only individuals and their families', and new right theorists such as Robert Nozick and Charles Murray have argued for a 'rolling back of the state' in terms of welfare provision. In contrast, collectivism places emphasis on the benefits of individuals working together – a core theme of socialist thinking.

An important question for political analysis is the extent to which society is consensual: to what extent is there a state-wide agreement on political issues? If there exists a high level of social consensus then this, in practice, should make governing easy – there are common beliefs and goals to be addressed. As society becomes less consensual, the process of governing becomes more complex. There are competing demands to be heard (and represented) and this becomes more complicated as societies reflect divisions in relation to ethnic and religious identities and economic interests (see **cleavages**).

A common distinction in explanations of political processes (such as the pluralist approach) draws on the distinction between the state and **civil society**. Civil society usually refers to a range of bodies including pressure groups, charities, trade unions, churches, non-governmental organisations and social movements that operate in a space between the state and the individual. In many advanced liberal democracies a twenty-first-century malaise has emerged in regard of trust in, and respect for, professional politicians and the institutions which they represent. As a result, we have seen a decline in traditional forms of political engagement (such as political party membership and electoral turnout) in favour of civil society engagement. Authoritarian regimes

are often characterised by weak civil society, unorganised and disengaged. A strong civil society is a desirable characteristic of a healthy liberal democracy, although the latter twentieth century was marked by academic debates regarding the decline of some historically robust traditions.

SOVEREIGNTY

The concept of sovereignty is central to the study of both politics and **international relations** because it serves to define the nature of, and the boundaries between **nation-states**. In formal terms, 'sovereignty' is a legal principle that emerged in Europe during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 (Shinoda 2000). As a legal principle, it has two key elements. First, rulers of sovereign states should suffer no domestic equals and second, they should accept no external superiors. In other words, in a sovereign state there should be one source of political **authority** and that authority should be supreme.

We can quickly see why this principle is crucial to both politics and international relations. From a domestic perspective, sovereignty implies that the citizens of a nation-state owe their allegiance to a single source of authority. That authority may be embodied by a monarch (such as the Queen of Great Britain), traced to a legal principle or document (such as the Constitution of the USA) or vested in a deity (as is the case in theocratic states such as the Islamic Republic of Iran). In each case, what is important is that, despite the likely existence of multiple institutions and political parties, political authority is formally held to emerge from a single source.

From an international perspective, it is the principle of sovereignty that serves to constitute a world of nation-states which are formally equal to and independent of one another. This has a number of important consequences. On the one hand, the principle of sovereignty implies that states have a formal right not to suffer intervention from others. While this is not a right that all states have enjoyed in practice, it remains an important principle of international law, and one that is explicitly endorsed within the United Nations charter. On the other hand, it is also the principle of sovereignty that produces **anarchy** within international politics. This is so because sovereignty, when strictly applied, precludes the existence of an international institution or world government that might exercise authority over sovereign nation-states.

To appreciate the impact that sovereignty has on our lives, it helps to know that politics has not always been organised in this manner

(Buzan and Little 2000). Prior to the development of the principle of sovereignty, individuals within Europe owed their allegiance to multiple, overlapping sources of authority. They may, for example, have owed a portion of their harvest to a local feudal lord, military service to a prince or king and religious obedience to the head of a church, such as the Pope. The development of the principle of sovereignty gradually eroded these complex and overlapping structures of authority, replacing them with a system of sovereign states. Indeed, sovereignty was intended to help end the conflict (most notably the Thirty Years' War) that this pre-sovereign political system was thought to encourage.

Sovereignty may have been designed to limit conflict but it certainly did not end it. The principle of sovereignty suggests that rulers ought to enjoy absolute authority within their territory, but also that they ought to acknowledge the authority of other rulers within their respective territories. In other words, if rulers and governments applied sovereignty strictly, then they ought also to abide by the principle of non-interference. This has clearly not been the case: history is replete with examples of rulers interfering in their neighbours' affairs. On the one hand, this might lead us to consider states' support for the principle of sovereignty as mere hypocrisy. On the other hand, this also highlights that sovereignty is a political concept and that the extent to which it is applied will be influenced by a range of other factors and issues.

One factor that clearly influences the application of sovereignty is **power**. Put simply, while sovereignty is a legal principle that gives states certain rights, powerful states are likely to be most capable of protecting and enjoying such rights (especially in an international system characterised by anarchy). Weak states may have to suffer interference in their affairs by others merely because they are not powerful enough to protect their autonomy (Jackson 2000). The notion that great powers typically enjoy 'spheres of influence' highlights this point. This notion suggests that great powers are likely to exercise significant control over the nation-states that surround their borders, as the USA has historically done within much of the western hemisphere. In practice, therefore, the sovereignty of great powers has often been preserved at the expense of that of the small states that surround them (Krasner 1999).

A second factor that influences the application of sovereignty might broadly be termed **globalisation**. The term globalisation describes the increasing interconnectedness of global politics, a process that has been driven by the increasing speed and ease of communication and

transportation. Globalisation poses a clear challenge to state sovereignty because interconnectedness reduces the capacity of rulers to exercise absolute authority over their states (Stiglitz 2003). On the one hand, globalisation has resulted in the growth of states' dependence on one another. For example, because of their reliance on energy supplies, a number of European states are dependent on Russia and its exports of natural gas. On the other hand, globalisation has also encouraged states to cooperate with one another on more and more issues. Such cooperation, especially when it is institutionalised through the formation of international organisations, involves states relinquishing certain aspects of their sovereignty (Chayes and Chayes 1998). Thus, the many states that ratified the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty agreed to relinquish their sovereign authority regarding choices relating to the development of nuclear weapons. Crucially, globalisation affects states both large and small. Indeed, powerful states with developed and complex economies are likely to find their sovereignty qualified in a great many ways by the processes of globalisation.

A third and final factor that has influenced the application of sovereignty in contemporary world politics is the growing acceptance that rulers' rights to sovereignty ought to be matched by certain responsibilities towards their citizens (Evans 2008). This point has most clearly been made by those calling for recognition of a responsibility to protect (R2P). This principle, which emerged from a report produced by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (2001), asserts that while states possess the primary responsibility to protect their citizens, that responsibility passes to the international community if and when states cannot or will not exercise it themselves. To the extent that it is endorsed by the international community, the R2P poses a significant qualification to the principle of sovereignty. It identifies a set of circumstances in which states cannot expect to enjoy a right to non-interference. Indeed, it not only justifies humanitarian intervention by external actors when a state fails to protect its citizens, it places a responsibility on the international community to carry out such interventions.

Further reading: Buzan and Little 2000; Evans 2008; Krasner 1999; Stiglitz 2003.

THE STATE AND THE NATION-STATE

Contemporary politics, both domestic and international, remains fundamentally shaped by the idea that the nation-state is the most important form of **community** within which people live. Used

loosely, the term is synonymous with the word 'country', and so we are used to seeing people refer to, for example, Indonesia, France and Argentina as nation-states. The term warrants unpacking, however, because this rather simple usage hides a good deal of complexity. In order to appreciate this complexity we need to do two things: first, we need to clarify our understanding of the two elements incorporated in this concept and, second, we need to note the varied ways in which this concept has been employed in different historical contexts.

It is important to distinguish between the two elements of the concept of the 'nation-state' because the terms 'nation' and 'state' refer to quite different things. The first of them – 'nation' – refers to a group of people, where membership of that group tends to be defined through reference to certain common traits. Disagreement does exist regarding what these traits are or can be; some hold that such traits are ethnic or cultural in form, while others argue that adherence to a set of political values can lead to the formation of a nation. In either case, the idea suggests that people have a natural or powerful connection to a particular group, and that such a group ought to have political independence from other such groups.

The term 'state' is often used in two ways. On the one hand, it is used loosely to refer to the **government**. This allows us to distinguish between the state and other sectors of a political community, such as the market or **civil society**. Used in this way, the term refers to the institutions and individuals who represent the government (ranging from parliaments and presidents, to civil servants and agents of the state such as police). This usage also mirrors the conceptual divide drawn between the public and the private, one that suggests that there are some (public) areas of life that are appropriately governed by the state, and others (the private realm) which ought to be free of government interference. On the other hand, this term is used to describe a type of political community that is formally defined in terms of the principle of **sovereignty**. This legal principle states that each territorially defined sovereign state ought to be ruled by a source of **authority** that is subject to no internal competitors and no external superiors. One's membership of a sovereign state tends to be more formally defined than does one's membership of a nation; often we use the notion of **citizenship** to define our membership of a state (or states).

The term 'nation-state' conflates these two different forms of community into a single concept, yet this is easier said than done. It is worth noting that these two elements emerged historically at different points in time. Sovereignty is often traced to the treaties signed after the Peace of Westphalia in 1648, whereas the ideas of nationhood

and **nationalism** are more often traced to, amongst other things, the French Revolution of 1789 (Hobsbawm 1992). This is important because it is entirely possible to have a nation that is not formally recognised as a sovereign state (such as the Kurdish nation) or a state whose citizenry is not comprised of members of a single nation (such as the UK, in which people of multiple nationalities – Scottish, Welsh and English, for example – coexist). Indeed, there are relatively few examples throughout the world of sovereign states whose borders neatly encompass the members of a single nation.

Unpacking the concept of the nation-state helps us to understand the term's meaning but it also highlights that what we know today as a nation-state is a form of political community that has developed over a lengthy historical period. It is worth asking both how nation-states have changed over time and in what ways they might change in the future. The origin of nation-states begins with the origin of the sovereign state, arising as it did more than a century before the development of nationalism occurred. The essence of statehood in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries was the capacity of a central source of authority to exercise control over a given territory. Thus, Max Weber (1948: 77–8) famously defined the state as possessing a monopoly on the legitimate use of violence. The key functions of a state during this era are often understood to be the raising of taxes and the preparation for and engagement in **war**.

The rise of nationalism in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries changed this relationship and so changed the nature of political community itself. Nationalism, as demonstrated so clearly in the context of the French Revolution, involved the construction of political communities in which all individuals were held to be members of a national community and to owe loyalty to that community. This ideology forged a bond between people and government that has since become associated with the principle of citizenship, which asserts the rights of individual citizens before government. Linked to this has been a change in the responsibilities of government with regard to citizens. Starting in the nineteenth century, but expanding considerably in the twentieth century, nation-states became concerned with far more than taxation and war; they became 'welfare states' whose function was to provide for the social, economic and physical wellbeing of their citizens (Pierson and Castles 2006).

Nation-states have not always looked as they do today but, equally importantly, even today not all nation-states look alike. There are numerous terms used to categorise nation-states, and many of these terms help us to appreciate the multitude of functions and

responsibilities that we expect political communities to meet. The distinction between 'developed' and 'developing' states makes reference to the level of economic activity and organisation within states, and it implies that we expect modern nation-states to be effective managers of their domestic economies. The usage of the term 'failed states' highlights that we expect our governments to meet minimum standards in terms of the provision of various education, social care and law and order services. The notion of 'rogue states' highlights a further expectation: namely that legitimate nation-states will meet the norms and rules of the international community. The key point here is that the 'nation-state' has become a complex form of political community that is expected to serve a broad range of functions.

Finally, it is worth noting that forms of political community continue to change. On the one hand, **globalisation** continues to challenge the capacity of nation-states to exercise authority over and provide services for their citizens (Held and McGrew 2007b). This is most evident, perhaps, in the area of economics, where globalised economic and financial structures restrict the capacity of states to exercise autonomy and, perhaps more importantly, to fulfil their responsibilities to their citizens (Strange 1996). Thus, when capital is withdrawn or corporations pull out of developing countries, there may be little if anything that their governments can do in response.

On the other hand, while the sovereign autonomy and powers of nation-states may be declining, other forms of political institutions and community are emerging. Thus, supra-national organisations, such as the European Union, have emerged, exercising authority over multiple nation-states but also forging new understandings of political community whose boundaries extend beyond those associated with either nationality or citizenship. At the same time, transnational and sub-state organisations and communities have emerged that sometimes work in conjunction with, and sometimes compete with existing nation-states. It is important to note that the consequence of these and other processes has not been the complete demise of nation-states, which remain as the most important single type of political community (Sørensen 2004). Instead, these processes have continued to change what nation-states are, both in terms of the functions that they serve and the communities that they represent.

Further reading: Hay et al. 2006; Holton 2011; Jackson 1990; Pierson and Castles 2006.

TERRORISM

Terrorism is usually defined as an act of **violence** against a civilian or government target intended to provoke fear or political or social change. This is an open-ended definition which helps to explain why it is such a prominent term in contemporary politics and why accusations of terrorism abound. The origins of terrorism are usually traced back to the time of the French Revolution and, in particular, the Jacobin enforcement of the revolutionary regime between 1793 and 1794 (the 'Reign of Terror'). It is interesting that in this case the violence was directed at 'enemies of the people' and of the new state, rather than against an oppressive regime (Combs 2011). This understanding of terrorism has become commonplace in contemporary popular usage although it is a blurred space in which the line gets drawn, sometimes arbitrarily, between 'state terrorism' and an extension of the legitimate use of violence by military and police forces.

One distinction between antecedent forms such as tyrannicide and religiously motivated terrorism that has existed since ancient times is that the Jacobin Terror employed systematic and indiscriminate violence in its intimidation of political subjects (Chaliand and Blin 2007). So it is this systematic dimension that often distinguishes terrorism from other forms of political violence.

While, in the nineteenth century, anti-regime activists in Russia launched bombings and assassinations aimed at the czar, the imperial house and government officials, political assassination as a technique of terrorism began to rise around the beginning of the twentieth century. By the post-Second World War era, terrorism had spread and adopted a variety of forms and was employed by nationalist groups in their anti-imperial struggles. Domestic terrorism expressing violent disagreement with official policies sprung up in groups ranging from extremist Israeli Jews to radical counterculture activists such as the Weathermen in the USA. White supremacist groups opposed to racial integration and affirmative action policies engaged in terrorism in the USA in the 1980s (Kushner 2003).

The September 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon marked a dramatic increase in the exposure – actual and rhetorical – of Western societies to terrorism. Thus, while the event did not mark a quantitative increase in terrorism, its symbolic significance and the sheer scale of the damage and loss of life ensured that the idea of terrorism became recognised across the world. The US response, under the George W. Bush administration, was to declare a 'War on Terror' in its pursuit of the perpetrators and their

backers. This has embroiled the question of political violence in larger questions of **globalisation**, geopolitics, energy **security** and religion. At the same time, advanced technical means potentially available to terrorists – from global communications infrastructure to nuclear, chemical and biological agents – has heightened the actual and potential threat they may pose. Moreover, the term 'terrorism' has been turned back on the USA by critics who have challenged the subsequent interventions in countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan.

Discursively, the term 'terrorism' has played a powerful ideological role, employed by those seeking to legitimate 'rational' forms of rule. Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) sought to discredit the revolutionaries even before the Terror as destructive brutes eschewing reason and politics in favour of baser instincts. This pejorative understanding prevails in contemporary usage and serves to obfuscate some of the many causes of political violence by grouping them together under a singular heading. Explanations for terrorism have ranged from social, political and economic phenomena to cultural, psychological and religious rationales.

Disagreement prevails as to the effectiveness of terrorism as a political strategy. For some, it has not been particularly effective at achieving its purported ends. Official responses often use the label 'terrorism' to discredit regime opponents and to galvanise support for existing policies. That said, the accession into government of many of those labelled 'terrorist' in the past would suggest that, in some contexts at least, these strategies have been partially successful (even if that is not to say they were all morally vindicated).

Further reading: Burke 2001; Chaliand and Blin 2007; Combs 2011; Kushner 2003; Laqueur 1987.

TRANSNATIONALISM

While the term 'transnationalism' refers to a type of activity – loosely speaking, interaction across political borders – that has been a routine part of world politics for centuries, it is primarily in the past fifty years that the term has risen to prominence within the fields of political science and **International Relations** (IR). We can better understand why this is, and what types of activity the term 'transnationalism' refers to, if we contrast it with a related term, that of 'internationalism'. This latter term is understood as referring to the interaction of sovereign nation-states, as carried out by the formal representatives of those states (that is, their **governments** and diplomatic representatives). 'Transnationalism', on the other hand, describes interaction that takes place

across countries' borders, but that is not carried out by the formal representatives of those countries. Such interaction takes many forms, ranging from tourism, to trade, to terrorism.

Non-state interaction across borders has occurred throughout history, yet the discipline of IR paid relatively little attention to it until the late 1970s. Prior to this, much IR research tended to adopt a state-centric position; that is, one in which the **nation-state** was deemed to be the most important (if not the only) type of organisation in world politics. The interaction between private individuals and companies that did occur across borders was not considered pivotal in terms of the shaping of outcomes in international politics. Since the 1970s, however, transnationalism has steadily grown to become an important concept within the academic study of world politics.

The reason that transnationalism has been of growing importance in the past half century is twofold. First, transnationalism has grown in importance as a result of the ongoing processes associated with globalisation. **Globalisation**, understood as the increasing intensity and frequency of human interaction across the globe, has been driven by the development of communication and information technologies. These technologies have made transnational interaction cheaper and easier, and there is now more of it than ever before. Second, transnationalism has grown in importance, particularly within the fields of political science and IR, because increased transnational interaction threatens the coherence and validity of two of the foundational political forms that have traditionally dominated world politics: **sovereignty** and nationalism. Let us consider each in turn.

Two IR scholars, Robert O. Keohane and Joseph S. Nye, Jr. (1977), famously noted the challenge that transnationalism poses to the sovereign authority of states. The two sought to highlight the limitations of realism, the dominant theoretical approach within IR at the time, by highlighting the ways in which transnational interaction – especially economic interaction – tended to make nation-states less likely to consider using military force against each other. In such situations, transnationalism caused the interests of one state to become entwined with those of the other. Thus, rather than being independent and autonomous actors, states had become increasingly interdependent, a result of which was that the use of force by one against the other would negatively affect both. If such interdependence was evident in the 1970s, today it is an ever present feature of world politics. Transnational economic and financial interaction has increased the interdependence of states, as the recent global financial crisis made so evident.

If transnationalism has reduced (though by no means negated) the autonomous authority of sovereign states, it has also undermined the coherence of nations, and therefore the presumed primacy of nationalism. Nationalism has been a powerful ideology in world politics; one that asserts that people's allegiance to a political community ought to be based on nationality. However, increased levels of migration, combined with increased transnational activity amongst diaspora communities, have complicated both the relationship between nationalism and state sovereignty and people's experiences of nationality as identity. Migration clearly challenges the idea that people of a particular nationality ought to live in an autonomous political community; instead, members of many nations are dispersed throughout the world and live in a great many different sovereign states (Castles et al. 2014). Furthermore, migration and the intermingling of nationalities have complicated people's understanding of their national identities. In many countries, individuals can trace family connections to many different nations and locations around the world. In these and other ways, transnationalism has complicated our understandings of **identity** and political community.

However, transnational interaction has also led to the emergence of distinct political and social arenas in which people pursue a range of objectives. A useful collective label for these arenas is that of global or transnational **civil society** (Florini 2000). This label describes the complexity of networks produced through transnational interaction, as well as the norms and rules that serve to govern this area of activity. There are many different types of network, ranging from those of non-governmental organisations addressing, for example, **development**, environmental and **human rights** issues, to networks of terrorist and militant groups pursuing complementary strategic objectives. Furthermore, the growth of transnational activity and organisation has been accompanied by the growth of the normative, legal and institutional structures through which these can be governed. Thus, there is a correspondence between the growth of transnationalism and the emergence of global **governance**.

Further reading: Guarnizo and Smith 1998; Vertovec 2009.

VIOLENCE

In its common usage, the term 'violence' refers to the inflicting of harm through the use of physical force upon another person or persons. The term therefore covers a range of types of behaviour: we might point to a person punching a stranger in a pub, a parent beating

a child, a clash between protesters and police or even a major military conflict between two states as instances of violence. Not all of these examples of violence have always been considered 'political', however, and it is therefore worth examining how understandings of the relationship between violence and politics have changed over time.

One of the typical starting points for discussions of this issue is the idea of a 'state of nature'; a natural and pre-political model of human behaviour that is used to illustrate the importance and effects of political community. Thomas Hobbes (2010) described one of the most famous visions of this 'state of nature', which he represented as constituting a **war** of all against all. This vision presumes that violence is an inherent feature of human life and that, if one were to remove all political restrictions, life would be 'solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short'. This is by no means the only vision of the state of nature but it has proven to be an influential one, a point we can appreciate if we examine one of the classic interpretations of the **nation-state**: that advanced by Max Weber.

According to Weber (1991: 78), 'the state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory'. This suggests three things about the state and its relationship to violence. First, that there is a clear link between political **power** and the use of force. The emergence of the state is presumed to have resulted in part from the capacity of one individual, group or party to gain a superior capacity to use force within a certain geographical area (although Weber also argued that the possession and exercise of physical force must be grounded in an authority possessing **legitimacy**). Second, and following Hobbes, this also suggests that it is through the concentration (within the state) of the capacity to use violence that the use of violence amongst ordinary citizen is limited. In short, domestic peace prevails because of the capacity for the state to both create laws prohibiting the use of violence between citizens and to enforce them, through the use of force if need be.

A third point suggested by Weber's argument is that there is a clear distinction between domestic politics and **international relations**. As is noted above, violence is suppressed in domestic politics because the state holds a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. In the international realm, however, states exist in a state of **anarchy**, which is understood to mean that there is no world government that can possess a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Those who hold to this position, many of whom are realists, therefore liken the life of nation-states in international politics to that of people in Hobbes'

state of nature. Like Hobbes, such scholars treat violence as an inherent feature of human interaction; they therefore assume that violence in general, and war in particular, will be inherent features of international politics (Morgenthau 1993).

This vision of violence is not shared by all, and a number of criticisms can be made of it. The first of these concerns the assumption that violence is a natural and inevitable part of human nature, one that can be suppressed only through the concentration of the capacity to wield physical force in some overarching authority (Arendt 1970). There is no doubting that violence has been a common feature in human history, yet for every human relationship in which violence is used, there may be many more from which it is absent. A key alternative position here suggests that violence is as much a product of society and culture as it is of human nature. This is an important argument because it suggests that the limitation or prevention of violence may be achievable through social practice and the promotion of a culture of non-violence, a point that Mohandas Gandhi famously made. This point is also important because it challenges the idea that domestic peace is only to be found under the threat of force imposed by a potentially violent state. For many in the world, the greatest source of violence in their lives may well be the state; to suggest that alternative solutions to the problem of violence exist other than the acceptance of a strong state is to challenge the presumed right of states to impose violence upon their citizens (Kaldor 2007).

A second criticism concerns the assumption that violence naturally prevails in international politics. Alexander Wendt adopts a position similar to that described above and argues that whether or not international politics resembles a Hobbesian state of nature is not a product of human nature and/or the anarchic nature of the international system. Instead, Wendt (1992) argues that 'anarchy is what states make of it', and that different **cultures** of international politics might prevail. Again, this suggests that attitudes towards violence and its use are culturally produced and that shifts in culture might reduce the use of violence.

A final criticism of the vision of violence presented above is that it is too restrictive in terms of what counts as a violent act. Underpinning the basic definition with which this entry begins are the following assumptions: that violence constitutes a *physical* act, that violence causes *physical* harm and that such harm is caused *intentionally* and *directly*. The suggestion that violence is only ever physical in nature may be questioned. On the one hand, verbal bullying, while not directly physical in nature, may result in the indirect causing of

physical harm. On the other hand, physical violence may cause very severe psychological trauma without causing serious physical harm. We might well use the term 'violence' when speaking of either or both of these examples, suggesting that violence need not be physical in nature.

Additionally, the well-known peace researcher Johan Galtung (1969, 1990), has done much to challenge the idea that violence must be direct and intentional. Thus, while accepting that an act such as one person striking another does constitute a form of violence, he argues that this is only one such form: 'direct violence'. To this, Galtung adds the concept of structural violence, which describes the causing of physical harm indirectly through the structured practices of a society. For example, social structures (such as institutionalised racism) and economic structures that promote exploitation may cause poverty in certain sections of a community. Because poverty reduces both quality of life and life expectancy, Galtung (and others) would label this a form of structural violence. If structural violence is important within states, it is equally important in the international realm. Radical differences in life expectancy and quality of life between developed and developing states, while perhaps not directly or intentionally caused by wealthy states, are thought of by many as products of global structural violence.

A final point worth noting is that these different understandings of violence cannot easily be reconciled. The restrictive definition with which we began has a long pedigree within political science, yet it can appear less relevant today where complex processes of **globalisation** can indirectly lead to many forms of harm and suffering. Alternatively, the expansive definition of violence with which we ended may be applicable in many more cases, but it does threaten to become an overly broad concept that can be used to describe almost any cause of almost any form of harm. Thus, while there may be no single 'correct' definition of violence, each of those discussed above has its strengths and weaknesses.

Further reading: Bufacchi 2007; Galtung 1969; Lawrence and Karim 2007.

VOTING

Whilst **political participation** may manifest itself in different forms (ranging from the legitimate to illegal, and low effort to high intensity), voting is recognised as the most widespread form of political engagement. A democracy minimally requires that citizens have an opportunity to choose among rival candidates in regular elections,

preferably by secret ballot. This is not to imply that only democratic regimes hold elections, rather those held in authoritarian regimes serve a different purpose – they are rarely fair or competitive. Voting occurs in regular elections (in selecting national and local governments, for example), or via ad hoc consultations (in the case of **referendums** and plebiscites; see Table 3).

Entitlement to vote has changed over time. Minimum age has now become the predominant qualification – gradually replacing wealth and property qualification in many democracies. In most democracies suffrage was granted to women at various times in the twentieth century. *How* voting occurs depends upon the electoral system in operation. Each electoral system has two key components: (i) the process by which a voter expresses a preference (or number of preferences) and (ii) the seat allocation system – the method by which preferences are translated into representation. A simple plurality system requires voters to put a cross by their preferred candidate, whilst proportional representation allows a variety of permutations – such as a rank order of preferences or multiple votes. Institutional engineering in the form of electoral system reform and the 'third wave' of democratisation have contributed significantly to debates on voting patterns and preferences (Bowler et al. 2005: 4; see Table 4).

Table 3 Examples of election types

	Examples of regular elections	Examples of ad hoc elections
USA	Presidential elections are fixed term (every four years)	Recall elections (to remove elected officials during the fixed electoral cycle)
UK	Historically, Westminster elections must be held every five years but could be held sooner. Two such elections were held in 1974 and the norm was for four-year electoral cycles. As a result of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011, general election dates are fixed at five-year intervals	Referendum on EC membership in 1975; referendums on devolution to Scotland and Wales were held in 1997; Scottish voters voted in the Scottish independence referendum in September 2014 – this included sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds
New Zealand	Parliamentary elections are fixed term (every three years)	A citizens-initiated referendum on the question 'Should a smack as part of good parental correction be a criminal offence in New Zealand?' took place in 2009

Table 4 Examples of voting systems

One vote for preferred candidate/ party list	UK Westminster elections	US presidential elections	UK European parliamentary elections
Candidates ranked in order of preference	Ireland – all elected institutions	Australian Senate	London mayoral elections
Multiple votes (e.g. one for a candidate, one for a party list)	Scottish Parliament	Welsh Assembly	German Bundestag

This has led those who study voting behaviour to examine the extent to which voters are honest or strategic voters, i.e. does a voter always select their preferred candidate/party or may they vote strategically to minimise the chances of their least favoured candidate/party winning (Cox 1997)? It has long been argued, for example, that first-past-the-post elections discriminate against small parties, particularly when they do not have geographically concentrated support. Voters in multi-vote systems are known to split-ticket vote, where the parties selected with the first and second vote differ (Johnston and Pattie 2002). In such cases, parties may be strategic in deciding on which type of ballot to put candidates forward. For example, in both the 1999 and 2003 Scottish Parliament elections, the Scottish Green Party chose to contest the regional seats only, and did not place candidates in the constituency seats.

The analysis of voting behaviour has focused not just on *who* we vote for, but also *how* we choose who to support. To this end, a range of theories have attempted to explain voting behaviour trends (in free elections at least). These can be summarised as sociological models, party identification models and rational models, though there is no consensus as to a universally applicable theory of voting (Evans 2004).

Further research questions have focused on the reason why voters choose to vote – or abstain. Is this related to specific types of election and are there patterns of long-term abstention? It should be noted that some countries impose compulsory voting. Franklin (2002b) claims that compulsory voting increases turnout by about 6–7 per cent. In those countries where voting is not compulsory, evidence consistently shows a correlation between turnout and education, income and social status, leading to the suggestion that it is often those with the most to gain from democratic participation who in fact participate the least. An additional trend has been a wide-scale decline in turnout – this

coincides with a process of partisan de-alignment – where the average voter experiences a weakening of bonds with parties/candidates and a more general decline in trust in, and respect for, those in elected office. A study of eighteen industrial democracies provided evidence of an association between declining turnout and changing patterns of group mobilisation, specifically where union and labour parties are in decline (Gray and Caul 2000). This suggests, for those with a rather peripheral interest in politics, it may be necessary for formal structures to 'get the voters out'.

In contrast, institutional explanations of turnout give privilege to the impact of compulsory voting laws (unsurprisingly), proportional representation electoral systems and unicameralism as indicators of high turnout levels (Jackman 1987). To this list Keman (2002) adds weekend polling, importance of the election (in terms of national and second-order elections) and voter characteristics (such as age, income and education). Such explanations may initially explain why turnout is higher in certain democracies, but not why it declines, which is more likely a feature of political trust (political trust is often fragile in young democracies after prolonged periods of authoritarian rule). This said, 'The mystery of declining turnout remains unsolved' (Goldstein and Ridout 2002: 22).

In authoritarian regimes elections exist but often operate under a lack of opposing parties or electoral corruption. Despite electoral law reform in the late 1970s and early 1980s, elections in China continued to be dominated by the Communist Party of China, although voter abstention is now more tolerated; this in itself offers a form of protest voting (Chen and Zhong 2002). This said, political corruption is widespread in China (Manion 2006).

In Zimbabwe, ZANU-PF (led by Robert Mugabe) has manipulated elections to maintain power. Zimbabwe operates, in principle, a multi-party system, with elections to the assembly, the senate and a directly elected president, but in reality ZANU-PF has benefited from better resources (such as rally holding and access to the media), manipulation of electoral registration and opportunities to intimidate voters using violence and repression: 'In the minds of ZANU-PF … elections are but annoying, internationally required obstructions to their rightful monopoly on power … violence is seen as legitimate in elections' (Booysen 2009: 152).

See also: **political participation; public opinion; referendum; representation**

Further reading: Evans 2004; Farrell 2001; LeDuc et al. 2010.

WAR

Most people would assume that the meaning of the term 'war' is clear; that is, that we would know a war when we saw one. Despite such assumptions, the development of a clear and precise definition of this term has remained elusive. Broadly speaking, war involves the clashing of the armed forces of two or more parties. Traditionally, three further points have supplemented this simple definition. The first of these, at least since the end of the eighteenth century, is the assumption that the parties involved in war are **nation-states**. The second is that wars are fought for political reasons, something that serves to distinguish them from 'mindless' violence and from the use of violence by persons or groups for 'private' purposes, such as financial gain (Clausewitz 1976; Gray 1999b). The third supplement to this definition is that individual conflicts are generally only regarded as 'wars' if they result in at least 1,000 battle deaths.

There is little doubt that this definition is consistent with some prominent historical examples of warfare, such as the two world wars. In each of these wars, millions of battle deaths occurred as the world's great powers deployed their immense military resources against one another. Furthermore, the great powers were clearly engaged in conflict for political reasons, such as the dominance of Europe or East Asia and the preservation and expansion of national **power**.

While such examples readily come to mind, it does not take much effort to identify examples of conflict that, although generally regarded as wars, do not meet the requirements stated above. The Falklands War of 1982 certainly involved military conflict between two nation-states, but less than 1,000 battle deaths occurred. The Cold War between the USA and the Soviet Union did not actually involve direct military conflict between the two. More generally, while interstate war remains the dominant model by which warfare is understood, the last half of the twentieth century witnessed far more intrastate or civil wars than interstate wars. Such wars involve military struggles for power within a nation-state rather than conflict between nation-states. Thus, while the standard definition of war does capture some of its features, the diversity of warfare as it is practised escapes the seemingly neat boundaries marked out by this definition (Kaldor 2006; Smith 2005).

Such definitions of warfare remain important, however, because of the rules and norms that have historically governed the conduct of those engaged in war. These rules and norms serve to regulate such things as the use of certain types of weapons (for example, the Chemical Weapons Convention), the treatment of civilians and prisoners

of war (for example, the Geneva Conventions), the carrying out of so-called war crimes and even the types of war in which states may legitimately engage (as captured by the concept of 'just war' (Walzer 2006)). Such rules and norms may not always be upheld – one can identify examples where most of the rules mentioned above have been breached – but in practice, parties engaged in war have often adhered to them. In this context, being able to define what is and is not a war is important because it helps one to identify which rules and norms ought to be applied.

The diversity of warfare has not only made the task of defining the term 'war' difficult, it has also complicated the task of analysing why wars occur (Suganami 1996). Kenneth Waltz (1959) famously suggested that there are three general types of causes of war. The first of these suggests that wars occur because of the nature of human beings. In other words, it is claimed that the aggressiveness or selfishness of human beings drives the societies in which we live to engage in warfare.

A second claim is that it is particular types of nation-state that cause wars. During the Cold War, those in the American camp often argued that communist states were most likely to engage in aggression due to the universal pretensions associated with communist ideology. Conversely, those in the Soviet camp argued that it was capitalist states that were driven to engage in war because of their economic need for ever larger markets. Similar claims continue to be made, with debate emerging regarding whether dictatorships or democracies are more aggressive.

Finally, neo-realists such as Kenneth Waltz (1979) and John Mearsheimer (2001) have argued that war remains a constant possibility in international politics because there is no international authority that can prevent it. On the one hand, this suggests that international **anarchy** permits war, even if it does not represent the specific cause of each war. On the other hand, scholars have argued that the anarchic nature of the international system actually encourages war because it traps nation-states within the **security** dilemma, whereby they feel that the only way to achieve security is to dominate other states (Booth and Wheeler 2007).

Even if it remains difficult to define or explain war, we can note some general trends in terms of its occurrence. The first such trend has been the notable decline in wars between great powers. Once the dominant form of warfare, military conflicts between the great powers have reduced in number to the extent that some now suggest

that this form of warfare is obsolete (Mandelbaum 1998/9). Why might this be the case? The advent of nuclear weaponry may have caused the demise of great power war by allowing the great powers to use **deterrence** to prevent the outbreak of war. Alternatively, it may be that **globalisation** has led to such high levels of interdependence amongst states that warfare between the great powers is now simply too costly for governments to contemplate. Finally, it may be that the decline in the prevalence of great power war represents a product of the gradual democratisation of the great powers. The argument here, often referred to as the democratic peace thesis, is that a state that is a **democracy** will be less likely to engage in war because its government depends upon the support of those who are most severely affected by conflict; namely, the populace (Doyle 1997).

A second trend evident in warfare has been a rise in the importance of intrastate war. Such wars are fought for a variety of reasons, but most involve one or more parties challenging a central government for control of either the entire nation-state or some part of it. The fact that, during an intrastate war, government forces are challenged militarily by opposing forces highlights the relative weakness of those governments. Intrastate wars have become more prominent since the mid-twentieth century, partly due to the decline of interstate war and partly due to the lack of effective **arms control** mechanisms and the consequent proliferation of armaments. It is because of the proliferation of armaments in general, and small arms and light weapons in particular, that non-state groups have been able to purchase the military resources necessary to effectively challenge the **power** and **authority** of state governments.

A third trend in warfare represents a by-product of these two former trends; it involves the increase in the frequency of conflicts involving developed states (especially great powers such as the USA, UK and France) and either weak states or non-state actors (Kaldor 2006). Because such conflicts tend to take place between relatively strong actors and relatively weak actors they are sometimes referred to as asymmetric wars. The importance of such wars has risen for at least two reasons. On the one hand, developed states have increasingly recognised that globalisation has increased the interconnectedness of the world and, because of this, instability in the developing world can threaten the interests of those living in developed states, a point that was amply demonstrated by the terrorist attacks of 11 September 2001 in the USA. On the other hand, a growing awareness in the developed world of the suffering caused by intrastate war has led to

an increase in the frequency of developed states' intervening in civil wars (Bellamy 2009). As a result of this trend, **humanitarian intervention** and **peace**-support operations have become some of the more prominent functions of the military forces of many developed states.

Further reading: Baylis et al. 2007; Freedman 1994; Kaldor 2006; Keegan 1998; Mahnken and Maiolo 2014; Smith 2005.

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