

**Concepts and
Terminology -
Academic English for
Political Science**

Political terms

- Political terms are often as obscurely understood by the person who uses them as by the person who is puzzled in hearing them used.
- Sometimes, as in the case of **Marxism**, the task is made easier by the existence of a definite and articulated theory, which the dictionary articles need only condense into appropriate form.
- In other cases (and this is particularly true of the main items of conservative thought) the **absence** of theory presents a peculiar difficulty.

- **Political thought**, unlike mathematics, is **permeable** to its own explanation. A sociology of political belief will not leave its subject unaffected.
- No exposition of modern political thought can avoid encroaching on those disciplines – economics, sociology and political science – which have political thought as part of their subject-matter.
- Both the **language and the art of politics** are **formed and reformed** under pressure from these disciplines, **borrowing their concepts**, their theories, their truths and above all their confusions in the compulsive search for self-justification.

sources

- Robertson, David. (2002). *The Routledge Dictionary of Politics*. London/New York: Routledge.
- Scruton, R. (2007). *The Palgrave Macmillan dictionary of political thought*. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Absolutism

- The **theory and practice of absolute *government**, i.e. government which is not *limited by any *agency internal to itself. Absolute government should be distinguished from absolute *power.
- Power is always contained, limited or diverted by other powers within the state; but government can be absolute even without possessing absolute power. It is so whenever there are no constitutional *checks and balances, so that no exercise of government can be criticized or opposed in the *name of government*.

Absolutism

- Sometimes, as in the European absolutism of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, this
- Power may be used in order to limit the concentration of power in bodies that are not themselves sovereign, such as the nobility, the church, or the empire. Sometimes it may be used to eliminate *opposition and to establish a complete *dictatorship, as with Hitler and Stalin.
- Absolute rule may vest in an individual, an *office (absolute monarchy), in a party (*democratic centralism), or in a system of administration (classical Chinese *bureaucracy).

activism

- The German *Activismus* was used at the end of the First World War to denote the active engagement of *intellectuals in political transformation. 'Activists' are distinguished by the extent of their involvement in politics, and by the methods that they are inclined to sanction in pursuit of transformation, rather than by the nature of their views.
- They are not necessarily *extremists, nor are they necessarily opposed to constitutional forms of political change. *Sorel, however, defended activism in terms that also sanction extremism, arguing that activism is a necessary part of any serious political standpoint, since doing is everything, and thought only a *rationalization of what is done. On such a view it is incoherent to present a recipe for, or exhortation to, political transformation in advance of the attempt to precipitate it.
- Activism becomes essential to politics, and, Sorel thought, essentially violent.

Anarchism

- Anarchism is a political theory based on two propositions: that society does not need government, and that no government is legitimate unless truly, and in detail, consented to by the individuals governed. Its history is long and confused, and the other political attitudes held by anarchists have ranged from far right to far left in the political spectrum. The common denominator of anarchists is an alienation from the existing structures of government and society.
- The earliest serious anarchist thinkers were 19th-century writers such as Proudhon (1809–65) and the French theoreticians of **syndicalism, who** began to develop ideas about founding a society without government. However, anarchist elements can be found in many social theorists. One good example is **Marx, whose doctrine that the state will ‘wither away’ under communism has clear affinities with anarchist goals.**

- Theoretically, anarchism rests on the moral assumption that freedom is an absolute value and that no one should ever be obliged to obey authority without having freely consented to do so. Empirically it rests on a set of assumptions about the possibility of organizing genuine voluntary associations dedicated to co-operative work and mutual aid. These assumptions seem more plausible where no great degree of industrial sophistication is involved, and there has often been a rather idealistic aura of peaceful rurality about anarchist theories.
- Despite this there are important connections between anarchist theory and the more general theories recommending **direct democracy and industrial democracy. The sort of commitments to extreme egalitarianism and total** liberty that characterize anarchism have been taken over by radical socialist and Marxist groups, or, in more moderate versions, by exponents of industrial democracy. Anarchism of a form has had a re-birth at the beginning of the 21st century as political activists in many Western countries have begun to demonstrate against **globalization and capitalism, often using violent** means.
- Much of the opposition is clearly anarchist in that it does not urge the creation of some rival, perhaps a socialist, economic system, but concentrates entirely negatively on attacking the existing forms. Anarchist groups have been prominent among those involved in sometimes violent protests during several international meetings of government leaders.

Anti-Semitism

- Anti-Semitism, in political terms the discrimination against or persecution of Jews, is nowadays associated in most people's minds with **Hitler's Germany**. In fact it has a very much longer history, has had some political importance in most Western societies, and is by no means a spent force. The historical origins of anti-Semitism are complex and date back to the Middle Ages and beyond.
- Most European nations practised some form of discrimination against Jews, more or less intermittently and with varying degrees of clerical approval, for centuries before 19th-century anti-Semites, and later the **National Socialist** party, changed the emphasis of anti-Semitism from religious to racial hatred. To Hitler the Jews constituted an international conspiracy and exercised the real power in all the nations opposed to Germany, whether capitalist or communist.
- Modern anti-Semitism is a common element in right-wing political creeds for a largely functional reason: such creeds base much of their appeal on **nationalism and an ideal of national unity that denies the existence of** important conflicts within the nation. It is a common feature of societies, from the level of the playground to international relations, to have a group of 'outsiders' against whom others can unite; **racism often characterizes the** selection of this group. In a political system such a group might be blamed for the social ills that might otherwise be attributed to the rulers or the social system. These reflexes can exist in both right-wing and left-wing systems, as evidenced by Nazi and Soviet anti-Semitism.

Balance of Power

- An important concept in the description of international relations, but also of uncertain meaning. It may refer: (i) to a policy on the part of states that deliberately aims to prevent the preponderance of any one state or *bloc, and to maintain approximate equilibrium in military potential; (ii) to an observed principle of international politics,, whereby any state which threatens to increase its power becomes at once subject to increases in countervailing power from potential belligerents; (iii) to a political system characterized by a particular configuration of power relationships.
- A distinction is usually made between *multipolar equilibrium, and simple or bipolar equilibrium. In the first a balance may be maintained either peacefully (e.g. through economic rewards and punishments), or through the use of force (as when a troublemaker is made to confront the coalition of the remaining states: e.g. the War of the Grand Alliance, 1688–97). Since the First World War critics of the European multipolar balance have often claimed that a multipolar balance eventually becomes a bipolar balance of competing alliances, thus precipitating an arms, race, and war. Defenders of the multipolar balance have attributed the long periods of peace in Europe to its existence.

Balance of Power

- Balance-of-power theory rests on the idea that peace is more likely where potential combatants are of equal military, and sometimes political or economic, power. In the classic period of balance of power, which ran roughly from the end of the Napoleonic wars to the beginning of the First World War, there were always several countries of roughly equal power, none of which could guarantee to defeat a coalition of the others.
- The key to the balance of power maintaining international stability was that there were no ideological or other constraints on which powers could join others: any coalition was possible because all the members of the system, principally France, Britain, Russia, Austria and Prussia, had essentially similar internal politics and general ideologies.
- Thus if any one country became ambitious, or seemed to be enhancing its power, others would shift alliances to redress this potential imbalance. It should be noted that advocates of the balance of power never thought it would prevent war altogether, the intention was more that wars, if they broke out, would be fought in a limited way until the balance was restored. It was the preservation of the system, and of the identity and autonomy of the actors, that was the aim. Thus the problem of the First World War was not that it occurred, but that it was fought in such a way, and for so long, that it destroyed, rather than preserved, the system.
- The **cold war, by dividing countries between capitalist and communist**, made this shifting of alliances impossible. To keep the theory alive refinements were made to the theory. Balance was still possible in a two-headed, or **bipolar, system, mainly because the development of weapons of awesome** destruction had led to a 'balance of terror'.
- **Arms races become particularly** characteristic of bipolar balances of power, as the fluid system of offsetting alliances is removed. The development of blocs of countries around the two **superpowers, particularly in Eastern and Western Europe, was supported by** the introduction of a further refinement, multipolarity. With the collapse of the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe, the diminution of the power of the Soviet Union itself and the possible diminishing role of the USA in the defence of Western Europe balance-of-power theories are likely to return to favour not only as explanations, but also as prescriptions.

Bolshevik

- The Bolshevik movement was one branch of the revolutionary movement in pre-1917 Russia. It originated from the split at the Second Congress of the All-Russian Social Democratic Labour Party (RSDLP), held in 1903 in Brussels and London, when the movement broke into two, the **Mensheviks ('minority')** arguing for a less violent solution to Russia's problems.
- The Bolsheviks ('majority'), from whom developed the **Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)**, were led by **Lenin, who advocated a tightly-controlled** revolutionary party. Under his leadership the Bolsheviks developed the doctrine of the necessity for the masses to be led by the communist party (the **vanguard of the proletariat**), and for a **more or less lengthy period of** centralized state control over the people after a revolution before any democracy could be entertained (the **dictatorship of the proletariat**).
- **When the** first revolution of 1917 broke out in Russia, the Bolsheviks (now actually a minority among Social Democrats) were not immediately very powerful, and a moderate line, with which the Mensheviks could accord, was initially taken.
- However, the Bolsheviks were a far better disciplined and organized group, as well as being more ruthless, and in October 1917 they took power in a **coup d'état, destroyed the liberals and the Mensheviks, and set about creating the** party-controlled and centralized Russian state that lasted until the early 1990s.
- Thus was produced, especially after **Stalin took control, Marxist-Leninism**, the hard-line version of **Marxism that the Mensheviks then, and many** modern Marxist scholars now, see as a repudiation of much that **Marx himself** had argued for.

Bourgeois

- In its original French usage the word 'bourgeois' was used to distinguish the upper classes of the cities from either the urban lower orders, or anyone from a rural background, however noble or lowly. As a consequence the **aristocracy**, which has tended to have more influence on social attitudes even after its political demise, made the word a pejorative one, precisely because rich town dwellers were aristocratic society's most serious political, economic and social rivals.
- Bourgeois has a series of technical or semi-technical usages. The most important is the **Marxist use. Here the bourgeoisie is a specific class, those** who rose with and helped develop **capitalism and thus took power from the** feudal aristocracy. They were, on the whole, urban, and they were rich, but lacked the initial legitimacy of the aristocracy, and indeed were once a revolutionary force. With some authors, arguably **Marx himself, the creation** of a bourgeoisie is a necessary stage in history: until the bourgeoisie exists and creates the economic and social conditions of capitalism, world historical progress cannot lead on to the ultimate **class revolution**.

- Whether derived from the Marxist tradition or otherwise, the identity of this group has been accepted by historians, novelists and journalists since the early 19th century at least. In this more general usage, however, much precision has been lost. For example, in its general usage there is scarcely a more bourgeois figure than the middle-class professional, a doctor or lawyer, with a relatively luxurious life style.
- Yet in Marxist theory such people, not being owners and controllers of the means of production, are actually marginal in class relations, and are ultimately doomed to be crushed by the true property-owning bourgeoisie just as are the workers. As a brief definition of its position in Marxist thought, the bourgeoisie is a class, partially corresponding with the middle class, or upper-middle class of Anglo-Saxon terminology, whose social attitudes are characterized by **conservatism and fear of its own potential** political insecurity, but is dominant in both running the economy and polity, and in setting standards of decent behaviour.

Capitalism

- At its most simple and value-free, the term capitalism is used to describe any economic system where there is a combination of private property, a relatively free and competitive market, and a general assumption that the bulk of the work-force will be engaged in employment by private (non-governmental) employers engaged in producing whatever goods they can sell at a profit. Capitalism has its own **ideology and economic theory, like all politico-economic systems**. The original theory of capitalism was essentially that an *Capitalism* entirely free market of small-scale entrepreneurs, hiring individual labourers at the minimum possible cost, would produce the maximum output, at the cheapest possible price given the cost of the other inputs necessary for production. This is often called the 'perfect competition model' of economics.
- One aspect of this model is to require government neither to own any productive enterprise, nor to regulate or control the economy in any way. However valid or otherwise this simple model might be, current understanding of capitalism focuses on two ideas; production for profit, and the existence of private property which is only partially controlled by the state. To believers in capitalism (which, with some reservations, means all the major parties of the United Kingdom and USA, most parties in Western Europe and the Old Commonwealth, and, since the downfall of the communist governments between 1989 and 1991, most political movements in Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union), this form of economic organization provides the greater likelihood of maximizing economic performance and defending political liberty while securing something approaching **equality of opportunity**.
- In fact there are no pure capitalist economies, and the functioning of modern economies is more a matter of a sliding scale from minimum to maximum private property and regulation. In many economies, Britain's being a prime example, the government, including local government and other public services, employs so large a proportion of the work-force as to make it impossible not to wield enormous influence. Furthermore, the 19th- and early 20th-century experience of completely unregulated economies led to such disasters, and such inequalities, that regulation has been common even in the USA, which is the country most ideologically committed to capitalism. A particular problem of capitalism is that unregulated industries often become monopolistic, with the resulting need for anti-trust legislation to maintain competitiveness.

charisma

New Testament Greek: a gift of divine grace. Term used by *Weber to denote a kind of *power over others which is also perceived as *authority by those subject to it. The holder of charisma may be a human being, in which case his authority might be interpreted in terms of a myth of his divine mission, insight, or moral attributes. Alternatively, it is sometimes said, charisma can attach to an office, in which case it may be associated with an idea of that office as enshrining the history, legitimacy and mystery of a social order. Weber distinguishes charismatic from traditional and legal-rational kinds of authority. However, it is not clear how far the 'charisma of office' can be detached from the disposition to feel the power of, and attribute authority to, traditions and systems of law. *See* *routinization.

coercion

coercion

Any force or threat of force that reduces the freedom of an action, so that, in performing it, an agent acts less freely than he might have done, although not unintentionally. (You can be *forced* to do something which you do not do intentionally, but coercion is essentially a constraining of intentional action.) In law physical coercion makes an act legally ineffective, moral coercion does not. This reflects a distinction that we need to make, between forces that **interfere* with freedom by removing it, and those which merely narrow the range of autonomous choice.

Followers of **Kant* would not regard moral coercion as a form of coercion, but as a form of **influence*. A person, can either be influenced by reasons, in which case he retains his identity as a moral agent and the freedom that is inherent in it, or else he cannot, in which case he has lost freedom and moral integrity together. As Kant's position shows, the philosophical definition of coercion is hard to provide. The criminal law, for example, ought not to be a system of coercion, for if it were, it could never be freely obeyed; the truly autonomous agent ought then to choose to defy it. One way of looking at it is to say that the law is *two* systems, one of **authority*, which influences the rational agent to obey the law, another of **power*, which coerces the agent not so influenced to act in accordance with it.

class struggle

class struggle

According to *Blanquism and to much *socialist theory, the class *conflict that is the driving force of history being at the root of all major change in law, institutions, morality and religion.

*Marxists see the class struggle as intensifying under capitalism to the point of *revolution, when the whole social order is overturned in the interests of a rising class. According to this theory the class struggle is always a reality in capitalist society, but is not

always apparent to its participants, since antagonistic *class consciousness may not arise, the *bourgeois devices of *legitimation sufficing to establish an uneasy acceptance of the **status quo*. By contrast with the Marxist position, *Weber saw the principal class struggle as that between creditors and debtors, with the conflict under capitalist conditions between employers and workers as merely a special case. On this view the rising class seeks always to expropriate those to whom it is indebted, while the established class seeks to sustain the law that would guarantee repayment.

dictatorship

- In the Roman Republic a dictator was a magistrate with extraordinary powers, appointed in times of civil or military crisis. He was nominated by a consul on the recommendation of the senate and confirmed by the Comitia Curiata. The office lasted for six months, but was usually laid down when the crisis was passed: other magistrates were subject to the dictators.
- No dictator was chosen after 202 BC, but Julius Caesar assumed dictatorial powers for ten years in 46 BC, and shortly before his assassination was given them for life.

dictatorship

- Hence, a system of government in which one person, office, faction or party is empowered to dictate all political action and compel obedience from all other citizens.
- The term is not truly Distinct in modern usage from 'despotism', although possibly it has the added implication that the ruling agent is active in commanding things, and not merely obstructive in resisting them.

détente

- *French*: the reduction of tension between states. The term has been used largely in connection with relations since the late 1960s, in which a policy of *peaceful coexistence was professed by both parties, and seemingly
- pursued, through arms limitation talks and the Helsinki Accord, 1975, on security and cooperation in Europe.

Fascism

- The term fascism is derived from the *fasces of ancient Rome, a bundle of rods with a projecting axe symbolizing unity and authority*, which was adopted by Benito **Mussolini for his new Italian political movement in the 1920s.**
- **The** other important fascist parties created in the years between the First and Second World Wars were those led by Adolf **Hitler in Germany and General Francisco Franco in Spain. Fascist governments were also installed in much of** central Europe before and during the Second World War.
- As the full name of Hitler's party (the National Socialist German Workers' Party) suggests, some appeal to working-class solidarity, of a largely **populist nature, was common to** most fascist movements. (The creator of the British Union of Fascists, Oswald Mosley, had been a junior minister in a Labour government.)

- There is no coherent body of political doctrine that can be attributed to fascism because all fascist movements were opportunistic, and depended on demagogic exploitation of local fears and hatreds to whip up public support.
- The most common themes were **nationalism**, **often expressed in essentially** racist tones as a way of building national unity in the face of class divisions, **anticommunism** and a hatred and contempt for democracy—even if its institutions had been used to gain power.
- This latter view was usually linked to a well developed theme of the need for firm leadership, the appeal being to the strong man (*Duce in Italian, Führer in German and Caudillo in Spanish*) who would solve a country's problems as long as he was given loyal and unquestioning obedience. Post-war outbreaks of fascism have been few, and unsuccessful, and the tendency to assume that any right-wing group, especially if it has *Fascism*

Geopolitics

- The term geopolitics was coined at the end of the 19th century by a Swedish geographer, popularized by a British geographer, Halford Mackinder, early in the 20th century, and became notorious during the 1930s when it was used by Nazi strategists in Germany.
- Not surprisingly it fell out of use for some time after the Second World War, but returned with a rather different meaning in the 1980s and subsequently remained in use. Originally it was an essentially deterministic concept, suggesting that the developments of international politics were largely determined by geographical factors such as land and
- resource distribution, sea and waterways and so on.

geopolitics

- Mackinder popularized his concept of 'The Heartland Thesis' by which powers at the centre of large land masses were bound to dominate the politics of their region unless peripheral powers actively coalesced and fought against them.
- The idea thus proved attractive to many in Nazi Germany, arguing that the country represented the relevant heartland of the Eurasian land mass. Such a theory not only seemed to justify German aggression as somehow or other natural, but it also justified it on the grounds that the peripheral countries would inevitably join forces against Germany—it was a version of the long-held German fear of being overcome by surrounding alliances

globalization

The process whereby barriers to trade, to the movement of populations, to the spread of information, disinformation, lies, truths and enquiries, to scientific knowledge and mass-produced ignorance – in short anything produced by or embodied in people – are rapidly being broken down. The causes of globalization are many, but obviously technological advances in *communication, transportation, and marketing have been crucial, as well as the implosion of regimes such as that of the *USSR which depended upon freezing populations, industries and ideas in a posture of xenophobic resistance to externally motivated change. The rise of *multinational business and *transnational institutions, the erosion of *local cultures and markets by migrations, the universal desire of people for freedom, opportunity and prosperity, not to speak of the growing *entropy of modern societies, have all made a contribution.

Some welcome globalization, as one aspect of the 'creative destruction' celebrated by *Schumpeter – the process that destroys old and dysfunctional systems and customs, and creates the conditions in which innovation can begin. Others welcome it as the *end of history, or as the beginning of a new and universal civilization, based on Western ideas of freedom, individuality and mobility. Others abhor it as the enemy of *tradition, *local custom and the gentle institutions of people who live close to the soil. Others still abhor it as a confidence trick practised by the multinational corporations in their desire to appropriate the resources of the *developing world. One aspect that tends not to be commented upon, is the contribution made by globalization to the *shadow economy, and also to the rise of international *terrorism, itself in a certain measure part of that shadow economy.

Ideology

- Ideology is a difficult, but frequently-used, concept in the social sciences, and one that has endless submeanings in both academic and everyday discussion.
- The simplest definition is probably given by a translation of the German word *Weltanschauung*, which is often used as though intertranslatable with 'ideology'.

- This translation would render 'ideology' as 'world-view', the overall perception one has of what the world, especially the social world, consists of and how it works. An ideology, and most students of ideology would want to say that we all had one, though often without realizing it, is a complete and self-consistent set of attitudes, moral views, empirical beliefs and even rules of logical discourse and scientific testing. However, ideologies, which tell us what we should or do want, and how to achieve these goals, are often held to be highly relative, and even purely subjective.
- Thus a 15th-century bishop, 19th-century mill owner and 20th-century Russian soldier are all expected to see the world in crucially different ways that might not ever be capable of reconciliation. Not only would they all have different values, they would have different and incompatible explanations for why they valued what they valued.

Imperialism

- Imperialism is the policy or goal of extending the power and rule of a government beyond the boundaries of its original state, and taking into one political unit other nations or lands.
- There are variations in the extent to which the imperial power assumes administrative and political control for the states that make up the empire; some retain degrees of independence and identity, while others are subsumed entirely into the institutions of the imperial state.
- Neither is it necessary that an empire has any specific form of central government, though there must be one central and ultimately overwhelming force, otherwise it is more likely to be an alliance, league or loose federation.
- The British Empire at its height was a constitutional monarchy, but Queen Victoria had lost most of the power of the previous English monarchs, and the Empire was essentially a parliamentary one.

Iron Curtain

- The iron curtain was a much used term which referred to the outer limits of the Soviet Union's sphere of control, behind which secrecy often made it difficult for the West to obtain reliable information, from the immediate postwar years until the collapse of Soviet **hegemony in Eastern Europe in the late 1980s**.
- It is normally attributed to Winston Churchill, the British prime minister during the Second World War, but was in fact used as early as 1920 and, prophetically, by the Nazi Joseph Goebbels, to describe the Soviet dominance over Eastern and South-Eastern Europe which would follow a
- German surrender. The concept was also partly geographic, delimiting the actual frontiers of Soviet dominated Eastern Europe, but just as much metaphorical, because other countries, with no geographical continuity, like Cuba *Iron Curtain Iron Law of Oligarchy* or North Korea, came to be described as 'behind the iron curtain'.
- The geographical meaning was dominant because it did describe a very real situation where extensive border fortifications were erected, the most notorious being the Berlin Wall, to keep the citizens of communist countries in, rather than to keep aliens out. The idea was extended later by references to the 'bamboo curtain' to describe a similar self-imposed isolation by the People's Republic of China.

legitimacy

A power is exercised illegitimately if there is no right to its exercise; otherwise it is exercised legitimately. Thus the crucial concepts in understanding legitimacy are those of *power and *right.

The main question that has occupied political thinkers is that of the legitimacy or otherwise of powers exercised in the name of the state, or of government. What gives a state the right to exercise such powers over the citizen, and which of the powers so exercised are rightly exercised? These questions are related to that of *political obligation: what obliges the citizen to obey the state? (Right and *obligation being 'jural correlatives': *see* *jural relations.) Expressing the question in terms of legitimacy emphasizes the *agency of the state, and questions that agency directly.

It is necessary to distinguish four questions:

(i) What makes a government, or the powers exercised by a government, legitimate? This is a question of political philosophy – identical in content, if not in emphasis, to that of political obligation.

(ii) What makes people believe a government to be, or accept it as being, legitimate? This is a question to which politician, however sceptical or indifferent they may be towards the first question, will always give their attention. If a people have the rooted belief that only democratic election, say, or only hereditary succession, confers legitimacy, they can be governed in some other way only by force.

legitimacy

(iii) What is the legal determination of legitimate power? This is a question of law, perhaps of *positive law, the answer to which may vary from state to state. Thus a directive from the Crown *empowers* (i.e. confers legitimate power upon) its recipient in UK law. An exercise of power, if **ultra vires*, is by this criterion illegitimate. By extension, in *international law, the legitimate government may be distinguished from the illegitimate, by legal rules. These rules may in fact fly in the face both of the true grounds (if there be any) for legitimacy (question (i)), and of the true sentiments of those destined to accept the result (question (ii)).

(iv) What is the legal determination of legitimate succession to power? This 'hereditary' idea of legitimacy is the one most frequently discussed in practical politics. Thus democratic election is recognized by the US constitution as the legitimate means of transferring the executive power to a new President (in normal circumstances). But clearly the powers conferred by the constitution are not themselves made legitimate just because they are, in this sense, legitimately transferred. It might still be argued that the exercise of power over such and such a territory in accordance with this constitution is a violation of right (for example, the right of the original inhabitants of the American continent). Likewise, worries about 'legitimate succession' to the ruling house of the UK are not likely to impress someone who believes that monarchical government constitutes an illegitimate exercise of power.

Mass Media

- The media are the methods of mass communication and entertainment, which have developed into vital political forces with the advent of virtual total adult literacy and extensive ownership of television and radio sets in the developed world; in the countries of the European Union, for example, more than 95% of households have televisions. It might appear that literacy, with its concomitant development of large circulation newspapers, ought to have had a major impact on political attitudes, but it is possible that the greatest impact has been on the conduct of election campaigns.
- The spread of broadcasting, above all of news and current affairs, has given an immediacy to distant events that can also influence political opinions. Serious concern has developed over the ability of such media to be used as methods of social control and political influence.
- There is, however, little firm evidence that, for example, election broadcasts have much direct effect upon political choice in liberal democracies. In the 1979 British general election it was estimated that only 5% of voters read even the free party literature delivered to each household. The mass readership, and the mass television audience, are not especially interested in political information or debate, and their greater availability do not seem to have increased the demand.

Mass Media

- Most countries have set up controls, of varying seriousness and severity, on the political bias of the broadcast media, though any extensive control of the print media is usually interpreted as unfair interference, or even as a denial of freedom of speech.
- Left-wing parties in some countries have argued for a greater control of newspapers because they are seen as tools of the ownership.
- For example, the British Labour Party claimed that the mass circulation newspapers, almost exclusively controlled by pro-Conservative Party interests, had an undue influence over the result of the 1992 general election.
- Such arguments are seldom heard in systems, for example in countries like Sweden, where direct party ownership of the press is common. Italy used to be a similar case, but now demonstrates, if anything the opposite since the media millionaire Silvio Berlusconi has used his dominant media position to create an entire personal political party which has twice lead him to the prime ministership.

- Enormous power is at times attributed to the media and, when they can, politicians eagerly spend very large advertising budgets on print space and air time, but it is unclear that this, or the editorial content of newspapers and broadcasts in a relatively free mass media system that is free of **censorship**, has any significant effect on political behaviour.
- Most research on the topic shows that people select a newspaper because it generally supports the political line they already favour, or for apolitical reasons. None the less, the ability of the media to 'frame' an issue, by selective concentration on certain aspects and by following or creating stereotypes may have considerable impact. However, the wise politician will always seek to keep the media content, particularly at the local level and where there is a strong tradition of investigative journalism.

manichaeism

manichaeism (or: manichaeism)

A form of *gnosticism founded by Mani, and originating in Persia in the early days of Christianity. Manichaeans founded their religion on a metaphysical doctrine: the division of the world between light and darkness, the first representing the forces of good, the second those of evil. The world itself, suspended between these two principles which are in eternal conflict, offers to the individual soul a path to salvation. The soul must throw off its attachment to matter (i.e. to the body, which issues from the principle of darkness), and ascend towards the light, which is the substance of the spirit and of God. The sect spread rapidly and caused numerous heresies within the Christian church, the most striking being that of the Albigensians in thirteenth-century Provence: *see* *crusade.

The term 'manichaeism' has been appropriated to name any all-embracing doctrine which sees the world in terms of a fundamental division and opposition between two irreconcilable forces, one good, the other evil; e.g. certain naive forms of *progressivism and *utopian socialism. The actual religion of Mani was, however, apolitical and ascetic in tendency.

Nationalism

- Nationalism is the political belief that some group of people represents a natural community which should live under one political system, be independent of others and, often, has the right to demand an equal standing in the world order with others.
- Although sometimes a genuine and widespread belief, especially under conditions of foreign rule, it is equally often a symbolic tool used by political leaders to control their citizens.
- Some political leaders have made use of nationalism by stressing national unity and focusing on threats from those who are clearly 'foreign' or 'different' to disguise or to execute otherwise unpopular policies. At its simplest nationalism contrasts with internationalist movements or creeds, and means a stress on local, at times almost tribal, identities and loyalties. Whether one sees nationalism as natural and desirable, or as a threat to world peace or rational organization, is almost entirely a subjective value.

- In fact the doctrine of nationalism, although widely acknowledged, cannot be very clearly defined (see **nation and nation state**).
- The racial, cultural and historical affinities normally associated with nationality might better be ascribed to **ethnicity, as the structure of nations and nationality** has frequently been artificially, or at least deliberately, created by politicians and governments.

newspeak

Term introduced by George Orwell, in his *dystopian novel, *1984*, to describe the imaginary language of a totalitarian state, in which words and syntax are remade so that only orthodox thoughts may be expressed by means of them. Orwell was consciously satirizing the language of the bolsheviks, some of whose terms appear in this dictionary (e.g. *agitprop, *Comintern). The word 'newspeak' is now more widely used, in order to describe the peculiar distorted syntax that emerges when people speak and write in conditions of totalitarian or rigidly bureaucratic control. Called 'wooden language' in both French and Russian, it has been analysed by Françoise Thom (*La Langue de bois*, 1987, translated as *Newspeak*, 1989), who emphasizes the following features:

newspeak

(i) abstraction: it is not individuals which act, but 'forces', 'classes' or 'tendencies' (such as 'deviationism', 'rightism' etc.);

(ii) pan-dynamism: everything is in motion, and all reports of the world concern progress, reaction, revolution, crisis, liquidation etc;

(iii) *manichaeism: the subject matter is divided between good and evil, with 'no middle road';

(iv) the recourse to organic metaphors: the world is seen in terms of growth and decay, corruption and birth;

Ostpolitik

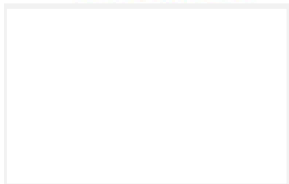
- German: East policy. The West German policy, initiated by Chancellor Kurt Kiesinger in 1966, and emphasized afresh by Chancellor Willy Brandt in 1970, of attempting to end hostile relations with the Soviet bloc by agreements to renounce the use of force, to recognize *de facto borders*, and to encourage trade and cooperation.
- The policy was a forerunner of **détente*.

Politburo

- Technically the Politburo, the Political Bureau of the **Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU)**—or **other communist party organized along** Soviet lines—was just a committee in permanent session of the irregularly meeting Party Congress, no more than, for example, the National Executive Committee of the British **Labour Party**.
- **In practice the Politburo was as near** as the Soviet Union came to having a **cabinet, a body continuously directing** policy and making all urgent, and many day-to-day, decisions. Its exact role and power, as well as its membership, varied enormously over the period from 1917 to 1991.
- Under **Stalin it hardly met, while under Khrushchev it was** more or less a rubber stamp for his decisions, being packed with his men. (When Khrushchev was overthrown, this was achieved by a majority forming against him not in the Politburo, but in the Central Committee of the party, a much larger and less controllable body.) After Khrushchev's time it became more representative of the various forces and interests in the Soviet Union and

Political Culture

Political culture was a popular technical term in political science during the **behavioural** revolution, and, though it suffered a decline in academic popularity for some time, had re-emerged as a vital analytic concept by the end of the 20th century. Basically a 'political culture' is the totality of ideas and attitudes towards authority, discipline, governmental responsibilities and entitlements, and associated patterns of cultural transmission such as the education system and even family life. The importance of all these factors, and the reason for linking them together into one portmanteau concept, is that they give an overall profile of how people are likely to react to political matters. Thus a classic study into political culture across several countries, *The Civic Culture*, showed that some societies seemed to transmit a general distrust for authority, and to create very low levels of political hopefulness in their citizens, while others, rightly or wrongly, bred citizens who felt they could trust politicians and that they themselves had a fair say in determining policy and political decision



ritual

An action which follows a repeatable pattern, which has the sanction of *custom, and whose meaning is symbolic, even though it cannot usually be captured by what the agent may say in explanation of it. Ritual tends to be inflexible, or resistant to change, and to be understood as compelled by a moral, or spiritual command that it would be sacrilegious, or at least outrageous, to disobey. Ritual is often thought to be an essential instrument of social cohesion, since it unites people behind a common form of action saturated by social significance. Hence the importance of ritual in military and civil institutions, in trade union gatherings, coronations, and trials.

Although psychologists sometimes misleadingly call the routine activities of animals 'rituals', it is arguable that only a rational being could feel the intimation of transcendent significance that provides the motive of ritual behaviour.

secularization

The transfer of *authority from religious institutions to secular bodies. Secularization has both a subjective and an objective aspect. The first involves the gradual disappearance of religious thought, feeling and imagery from the understanding of worldly things, so that religion either ceases to exist as an independent force, or else is confined to an abstract worship of the transcendental. As a result people experience the obligations, transactions and institutions of everyday life in terms that make no reference to the divine. This may be evident, e.g., in relations between the sexes, which some religions view as *sacramental; it is also evident in the gradual decline in the felt significance of non-consensual grounds of *political obligation, such as *piety and *obedience. Some have even argued that the associated secularization of political theory has been the most momentous of the intellectual changes which brought about the modern consciousness (e.g. J.N. Figgis: *From Gerson to Grotius*, 1916).

The objective aspect of secularization consists in the process whereby religious offices, institutions and ceremonies are extruded from public life – in education, law-making, administration and government. Conservatives sometimes oppose this objective secularization, on the assumption that the subjective secularization that would warrant it has not occurred, or is undesirable, or is precipitated by objective secularization. In *Islamic states this sentiment is very strong, and desecularizing movements abound; some argue that this is because the complete secularization of Islamic institutions of government would leave no remainder. See *secular government.