A IS FOR...

AFRICAN UNION

101 KEY CONCEPTS IN POLITICS AND INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

UEA
University of East Anglia

SCHOOL OF POLITICS,
PHILOSOPHY, LANGUAGE
AND COMMUNICATION
STUDIES

WELCOME

Politics and International Relations today are about as exciting as they have ever been! In the last couple of years alone, we have witnessed the unexpected rise of Donald Trump to become American **president**; a Brexit referendum leading to the UK's potential departure from the **European Union**; continuing efforts at international **diplomacy** around North Korea's nuclear weapons programme; acts of **terrorism** in London, Manchester, Paris, Florida, Christchurch and beyond; profound debates around **gender, equality**, and **justice** sparked by movements such as #MeToo and Extinction Rebellion; and anxieties around the **power** of prominent social media corporations, and the implications of this for individual **rights**.

Although undoubtedly exciting, these developments are often also confusing. What exactly is a president, and how does a president differ from a prime minister? What do powerful philosophical words like equality, rights or justice really mean, how do they relate to each-other. What is gender, and why might it matter socially or politically? And, what distinguishes terrorism from other types of violence such as warfare or forms of criminality?

A is for... African Union is designed to help you answer those questions. In it, we have asked academic experts who teach on Politics and International Relations at the University of East Anglia to provide short introductions to some of the most important concepts across our subjects. Not only do these concepts form an important part of the A Level IB curricula, they are also – we think – some of the most important ideas shaping the world around us today. Each definition is accompanied by two questions for you to think about, research, discuss and debate. Whether you are writing an essay, revising for an exam, preparing for a class, considering studying these subjects at university, or simply interested in these issues, we hope you find this book interesting and helpful. We enjoyed writing it!

NB: Words in bold can be found within this dictionary

WHAT COULD YOUR UEA JOURNEY MEAN?

CONTENTS

A.

AFRICAN UNION

The African Union, established in 2002 and successor to the Organisation of African Unity (OAU) which existed since 1963 and the era of decolonisation.

It is a regional International Organisation with a membership of 55 African states, whose role is to engender pan-African co-operation and a Pax Africana, in the areas of peace, security and economic development. Its headquarters are in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, and it is run by a Council of Representatives and a Pan-African Parliament with plans for a central bank and a single currency.

The African Union has replaced the OAU's principle of "non-interference" with that of "non-indifference", adhering to the maxim that conflicts must be settled before prosperity can be reached. This opens the way for taking action to bring about peace and development in accordance with the United Nations and in co-operation with other international actors and organisations such as the European Union.

The African Union has had a mixed record of successes and failures. The reasons for this include the great diversity of political regimes and levels of economic development among its members, the many inter-state and civil wars afflicting the African continent, as well as a lack of resources and internal cohesion within the organisation.

? THINK ON...

Q1: How has the African Union handled conflicts like Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo or Rwanda?

Q2: How does the African union interact with region-specific african international organisations like the Southern African Development Community (SADC), or the Economic Community of West African State (ECOWAS) in military matters, or matters of economic development?

ANARCHISM

'Anarchy' is often used to name a state of disorder, chaos or lawlessness. For the student of political ideologies this is misleading. It would be better to think of Anarchism as proposing the absence of 'ordering', the abolition of what it sees as the unnatural and unjustifiable division of people into the rulers and the ruled. What Anarchists advocate is not disorder but the dismantling of hierarchical order and the end of the domination which, they think, must necessarily be the outcome of putting some above others.

Anarchist political thought, then, begins as a radical critique of political authority. For example, Noam Chomsky, a prominent North American political activist, writes: "That is what I have always understood to be the essence of anarchism: the conviction that the burden of proof has to be placed on authority, and that it should be dismantled if that burden cannot be met" (*Noam Chomsky, Language and Politics, p. 775*). The nineteenth-century anarchist Proudhon was even more uncompromising: 'To be GOVERNED is to be watched, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, regulated, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, checked, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right nor the wisdom nor the virtue to do so...'. *(Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century, pp. 293-294).*

For Anarchists political authority is intrinsically suspect, always a kind of intrusion into social life and not justified by any natural condition or characteristic. Indeed, often they propose that it is just this kind of order, not its absence, that introduces chaos and violence into the world. For them, the abolition of such rule will not lead to disorder but to the re-emergence of the 'natural' or 'spontaneous' organization of social groups or institutions. Natural mutuality and sociability should, anarchists such as Kropotkin argue, be the basis of social order not something alien and imposed upon us by the State.

While often pacifistic the association of anarchists with violence is not entirely unjustified. Their opposition to systems of rule and domination, their desire to overthrow them and their conviction that all rule is by its nature violent has sometimes led anarchists to endorse violence as a means of political change. This may be 'direct action' against an authority, or through 'propaganda of the deed' – forms of spectacular action which demonstrate the power of resistance, or it might be through provoking authority to react in order to demonstrate the oppression inherent in the system.

Today, anarchist ideology comes in many forms and can seem to belong to both the left and the right. Where some anarchists see private property as central to domination, 'anarcho-capitalists' think of the possession of property as part of the natural condition of free individuals and of 'the market' as a way in which free individuals exchange their forms of property. They see any state regulation of the economy as a form of domination to be opposed.

Different again are 'green' anarchists who link the domination of people with the domination of nature, especially its conversion into things to be bought, sold and owned. For these anarchists, anarchical egalitarian forms of collective social organization are a precondition for resolving ecological challenges. There are also anarcho-syndicalists who focus on the abolition of domination in the work place and its replacement by forms of occupational self-governance.

Anarchism comes in different forms, some collective and some individual and sometimes allied to other kinds of political demands about equality and freedom. But in all cases it represents a fundamental challenge to claims about the right or authority of some to rule over others. In this respect it is a central component of our tradition of political thought.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Is anarchism a distinct ideology or more like an 'attitude' allied to other ideological and political positions?

Q2: Is 'natural' social order possible in large-scale and complex societies?

ANARCHY (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

Anarchy – in the context of international relations – refers to the idea that there is no overarching authority within the international system. Where political life within a country is usually governed and policed by representatives of the state – from presidents and prime ministers, through to judges, police officers and so on – no similar structure of power exists

at the global level. As the academic John Mearsheimer famously put it (using American terminology): if states get into trouble there is no 911 number for them to call.

The consequences – and even the existence – of international anarchy, however, are hotly debated. For political realists (see realism), the lack of any single authority forces states to suspect and fear one another, and therefore to prioritise their own survival. Others – such as liberals (see liberalism) – argue we should not neglect the range of international institutions, norms, rules, laws, and so forth that make global politics more predictable and cooperative than we might otherwise fear. Others still – such as constructivists – argue that the important question is not whether or not the global realm really is anarchical. Rather, what matters is whether key actors within global politics such as states believe it to be thus. This is because how states understand or interpret the international realm will determine how they behave.

THINK ON...

Q1: Is global politics anarchical?

Q2: What alternatives might there be to international anarchy – and would these be more or less desirable?

ARAB LEAGUE

The League of Arab States, or Arab League, is a regional International Organisation established in 1945, and host to 22 member-states. It is situated in North Africa and the Middle East, comprising states that are Arabic speaking and with Muslim majorities, even though language and religion are not prerequisites for membership. Its headquarters are in Cairo, Egypt, and it is led by a Council of foreign ministers with an Arab Parliament. The Arab League's purpose is to strengthen relations and co-ordinate the activities of

members – who are seen to be linked by commonalities in religion and culture – toward a common good, thus safeguarding their sovereignty and independence. Although members of this organisation often have too disparate economic and political interests and viewpoints for it to have a cohesive persona as an international actor, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict was its chief unifying cause until the Arab Spring which the League officially supported, despite the diversity of its members' regimes (which include notoriously oppressive regimes).

THINK ON...

Q1: How can an organisation such as the Arab League effectively address conflicts between its members, if it operates by a principle of non-interference?

Q2: Can the Arab League ever be a strong or influential international actor given that it consists of countries which are regionally dispersed and economically and politically diverse?

ASEAN

ASEAN – abbreviated from the Association of South East Asian Nations – was originally formed of five member-states (Indonesia, Philippines, Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand), with the broad aim of cooperation in order to increase productivity and prosperity in the region. It also sought to resist the increasing influence of communist powers such as the USSR and China, as well as the region's former European colonisers. Following the collapse of communism at the end of the Cold War, ASEAN incorporated key emerging economies, such as Vietnam and Myanmar, and grew to a membership of 10 countries. In that sense, it has now become a bastion of regionalism within a dynamic East Asia. However, due to the ASEAN Charter's adherence to principles of tolerance and non-intervention, encapsulated
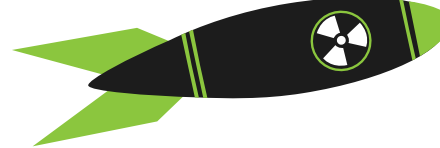
by the concept of 'The ASEAN Way', ASEAN has often been criticised for being little more than a talking-shop, or as a cover for the political authoritarianism of its member states. ASEAN is increasingly integrated in terms of politics, economics and security, but this allows for fiscal policies, information sharing and security regimes that – critics argue – have tended to protect domestic elites, facilitate the suppression of human rights, and entrench chronic inequality across South East Asia.

THINK ON...

Q1: How might the ASEAN charter be revised in response to rapid changes in the Asia Pacific region?

Q2: How does ASEAN compare to the european union in terms of politics, economics and security?

AUTHORITARIANISM

In politics and IR, authoritarianism refers to systems of government that are characterised by centralised power and little freedom. Power can be concentrated in a single party or a single leader or in a small group of leaders. Opposition and civil liberties are generally suppressed, though they may still be formally allowed under law. In countries such as the UK, before parliament was created and given powers, the King would have been an authoritarian ruler. Recently, the term authoritarianism has been used to refer to leaders who may have been elected, but are reporting to tactics such as repression, intimidation, corruption and even violence to maintain power. Control over the media is often a key characteristic of these regimes, as an important means of silencing opposition. It is not always, however, clear whether a specific country or a leader falls completely into this category, and leaders rarely describe themselves as authoritarian. Often the term is used to criticise regimes or leaders by giving a reference point against which one can measure – for example, we might say a leader or country is 'leaning towards authoritarianism'. It can be thought of the opposite to liberal democracy. Famous authoritarian leaders include Benito Mussolini (Italy), Augusto Pinochet (Chile), and Kim Jong-Un (North Korea).

THINK ON...

Q1: What conditions might lead to the end of authoritarianism in a country?

Q2: How does authoritarianism link to modern capitalist and globalised economic systems?

B.

BACKBENCHER

A backbencher is a politician who is one of the representatives in a legislature, and usually (but not always) elected. A backbencher will typically be a member of a political party but without any role in the cabinet or shadow cabinet. As a result, their key responsibility is to represent their constituents and to take part in general parliamentary business. This means that they will be able to vote on proposed laws, propose revisions to them, contribute to debates, and perhaps also serve in select committees. In the United Kingdom, backbenchers have traditionally been thought of as a less important part of the parliamentary process because power is usually characterised as residing with the Prime Minister and cabinet. However, it is important to remember that any government or opposition is reliant on the support of their backbenchers to remain in power. Party whips are therefore usually deployed to ensure that backbenchers give their support, and to make party leaders aware of the concerns of backbenchers. Since the mid-twentieth century, backbenchers have become increasingly rebellious and less likely to support the government in power. This means that their support cannot always be taken for granted – as we have seen in the developments around Brexit.

THINK ON...

Q1: What role do backbenchers play in the democratic process?

Q2: Where does the power balance lie between backbenchers and the government today?

BALANCE OF POWER

A core concept of International Relations theory, the balance of power is also a concept with multiple contending approaches. In more mechanistic approaches it describes the distribution of material power (such as economic and military strength) within the international system. Some scholars argue that, under conditions of international anarchy, power balances form naturally, as states seek to protect themselves from any one state becoming too powerful and threatening their independence or survival. States may seek to balance against each other 'internally' by increasing their own capabilities (building up military strength, for example) or 'externally' by pooling resources (for instance by joining alliance systems). Thus we see similar processes recurring throughout history, such as arms races, or alliance systems balancing off against each other until the international system stabilises (examples include Athens-Sparta in the Peloponnesian War in Ancient Greece, or NATO and the Warsaw Pact in the Cold War).

Within the international system, there are a number of different ways in which power might be distributed or balanced. These include bi-polar systems which have two main centres of power or 'poles', as in the Cold War confrontation between the Soviet Union and the United States, and multi-polar systems which have more than two poles, as in the nineteenth century 'Concert of Europe'. When power is in balance we often see periods of relative stability, but when the balance of power shifts as existing powers decline or new powers emerge, we can see periods of instability, conflict and breakdown in international order. The unification of Germany in 1871, for example, created a big shift in the balance of power and was a contributory factor in the two World Wars that followed.

It is also possible, however, to see the balance of power not as a natural or mechanistic phenomenon, but as the deliberate object of statecraft, where power balances are seen by leaders as desirable which therefore leads states to shift their policies and alliances to achieve them.

THINK ON...

Q1: What historical configurations of the balance of power can you think of?

Q2: Are we moving towards a more multi-polar balance of power today?

BELT AND ROAD INITIATIVE (BRI)

China's Belt and Road Initiative (BRI), otherwise known as One Belt One Road, is the official catch-all term used to describe China's grand development strategy, championed by head of state, Xi Jingping, who now has the power to rule for as long as he is capable of sitting in office. The BRI claims to emulate the ancient Silk Road that linked China to Asia, Europe and the Rest of the World, but in fact incorporates an even larger area, accessed via the Belt which is overland, and the Road, which is actually a web of international sea-lanes.

The BRI involves the targeted investment of hundreds of billions of dollars, mostly into infrastructure projects, by China in countries as a far apart as Poland, Djibouti, and Indonesia. Funded primarily via loans from the Chinese government-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB), the BRI embodies efforts by Beijing to sustain China's continued economic rise and strategic expansion. As such, many International Relations analysts see the BRI as representative of an attempt by China to supplant the USA as the World's dominant power. However, from Sri Lanka to Pakistan and beyond, the BRI has already encountered problems of corruption and mismanagement, and its ultimate success remains far from assured.

THINK ON...

Q1: Does the BRI represent a threat or an opportunity to the international community?

Q2: Does the BRI offer a sustainable model for development?

C.

CABINET

The cabinet is a collection of politicians who are appointed by the Prime Minister to steer the government. The Prime Minister will usually, although not always, appoint MPs from her/his own political party. Each cabinet member will be given a ministerial role which provides them with responsibility to run a department of government. The cabinet will meet regularly to discuss government policy and issues as they arise. The practice of 'collective responsibility' is commonly thought to be important for the functioning of government. This involves the Prime Minister and all ministers publicly defending the actions of each other and their policies. The Prime Minister will often appoint politicians to the cabinet who served as 'shadow ministers' before the government was elected. However, 'reshuffles', in which the Prime Minister might sack and replace ministers can take place at any time. A Prime Minister will usually remove ministers if they prove disloyal or have been seen to be ineffective in their role. Care is needed, however, as Prime Ministers will often need to ensure that different wings of their party are represented in the Cabinet in order to prevent their own position as party leader coming under threat.

THINK ON...

Q1: What is collective responsibility and is it really honoured in practice?

Q2: Where does the balance of power lie between the prime minister and the cabinet?

CAPITAL/CAPITALISM

'Capital', 'capitalism', 'capitalists' are terms that have come to englobe so many meanings. This creates confusion. The French historian Braudel reminds us that the term 'capitalist' emerged in the mid-17th Century, meaning 'handlers of money, providers of investment.' Like 'capital', the word 'capitalist' remained associated 'to the idea of money, of wealth for its own sake' up until the 18th Century. 'Capitalism', however, is a more recent word, not used by Marx and not yet brought into the Marxist model of political economy. As Braudel and others have shown us, 'capitalism' is a political word which is loaded with meanings that are mixed up with contemporary processes and produce new connotations. It is therefore difficult to keep the word 'capitalism' under some form of control; perhaps this difficulty reflects the liquid, fluid, often unseen and obscure nature of capitalism itself.

Therefore, Braudel suggests separating 'capital' – a tangible reality such as assets involved in building a factory – from 'capitalist', a person who inserts capital into the processes of production (in this case the factory), from 'capitalism' – the political and economic system in which this constant activity of insertion is carried on. Individual capitalists are people who have a large amount of capital invested in business and who benefit from the system by making increased profits and adding to their wealth. Systems of capitalism vary according to regulations made by states. So, for instance, does the state tax wealth accumulation to redistribute through social services? Or does the state privilege inherited wealth, so that some families become increasingly wealthier than the rest of society?

THINK ON...

Q1: Anti-capitalists view capitalism as inhuman, anti-democratic, unsustainable and exploitative. Do you agree?

Q2: Do you think the state should play a central role in a capitalist system?

CHECKS AND BALANCES

Admirers of the British political system in the eighteenth-century praised what they saw as a balanced mixture of different regime types. Rather than being dominated by one person (as in an absolute monarchy), a single small group (as in an aristocracy) or the people (as in a democracy), the British regime included a monarch, a House of Lords, and a House of Commons. Those checks and balances in the British constitution, however, have since largely disappeared, with power becoming concentrated in a democratised Commons. The idea of checks and balances was nonetheless influential on the writers of the U.S. constitution. They designed a federal government with three separate branches: the executive (the President), the judiciary (the federal courts), and the legislature (Congress, which was itself divided in two, with both the Senate and the House of Representatives). The power of each of these separate branches of government is supposed to balance the power of the others while also "checking" them by blocking decisions where necessary. To become a federal law, for example, a bill must separately pass both houses of Congress, be signed by the President, and not be ruled unconstitutional by the courts.

THINK ON...

Q1: Why did checks and balances largely disappear from the British constitution while remaining in the U.S. constitution?

Q2: Would checks and balances be part of your ideal constitution?
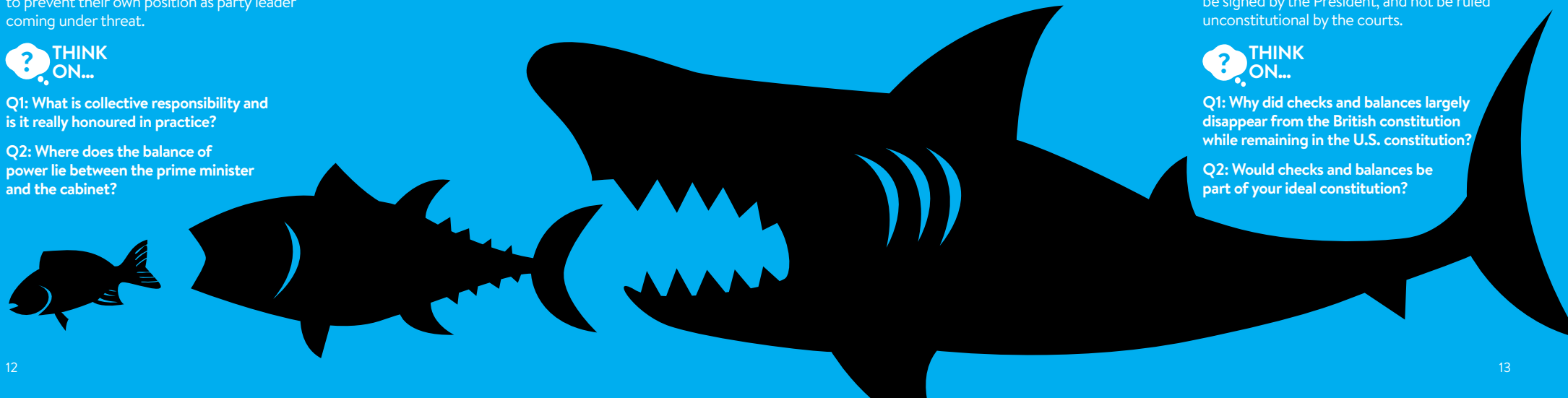
COMPARATIVE POLITICS

Comparative politics is an approach to studying politics that involves comparison, usually between different types of political system, as a way of developing generalisations about the world. For example, if we wanted to know whether trade unions were powerful, rather than simply studying trade unions in Britain we might want also to look at how they seek to influence policy in the USA, France, or states in Latin America or Africa. Comparing political systems has many immediate advantages for students and researchers. First, we learn more about the world. Second, we notice that characteristics of our own country which we might have thought 'normal' are not so in a global perspective. For instance, we might conclude that trade unions are not very powerful if we look solely at the UK or USA, but if we look at the General Confederation of Labor (CGT) in France or the Tunisian General Labor Union (UGTT) then we might realise this is not always the case. Third, comparative research also allows us think about whether there are generalisations we can make about how politics works. For example, by looking at different countries, we might conclude that trade unions are stronger when there is a political crisis – or when a left-wing government is in power. This, in turn, might increase our ability to explain political dynamics.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Why does the UK's A Level syllabus primarily focus only on the UK and USA? Should it?

Q2: Can we meaningfully generalise about politics across countries?

CONFLICT

Conflict is organised and sustained political violence between two or more armed groups. Traditionally the discipline of International Relations focused on inter-state conflict; organised violence between two or more governments, for example, World War II. This focus reflected the formal establishment of International Relations as a subject studied at universities in the aftermath of World War I. Inter-state conflict does not, however, dominate the contemporary international system as it might have done in the twentieth century. Intra-state war is currently the primary form of conflict in world politics. This is organised violence between armed groups which might include representatives of a government and one or more non-state actor, for example, the Syrian civil war. As the situation in Syria demonstrates, whilst intra-state conflict occurs primarily within the territory of a single state, the conflict often spills over into bordering states and draws attention from other international actors.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Do you think we will see a major inter-state conflict in your lifetime?

Q2: Why has there been a shift from inter-state to intra-state conflict?

CONSERVATISM

Conservatism is a political ideology most clearly characterised by a commitment to order and to custom or tradition. According to Conservatism, without external guidance people are likely to act in ways that are destructive, either of themselves or of those around them. It is essential, therefore, that society provide rules for behaviour, and that these be enforced clearly and consistently. Consequently, Conservatism is often strongly supportive of organised religion (which sanctifies an unambiguous moral code) and of a system of law and order in which punishment is a visible and fearful deterrent. Tradition and custom are important for Conservatives for similar reasons. On the one hand doing things the way we have always done them, because we have always done them that way, is an ordered framework within which people's choices and actions are guided and constrained. On the other hand, custom represents the slowly evolving 'wisdom of the generations', established through the endless trial and error of history. For Conservatives custom is therefore certain to be better than the inventions or ideas of mere individuals who know only the present-day and, who, given the frailty and venality of human nature, are likely to be either unwise or motivated by desire for power, glory, wealth and the like.

Critics claim that appeals to human nature and to custom are just ruses to protect the status quo, and that Conservatism really offers a defence of those already in power from critical challenges to their authority. Such critics might point to the way in which Conservatism often imagines a tradition at variance with the complexity of histories of change and contestation, one which emphasises the natural hierarchy of some people over others rather than the destructiveness of that hierarchy and the resistance of previous generations, often for good reason.

Conservatism can be a very adaptable ideology. It changes over time and its precise form varies between countries. Conservatives may, for example, identify the monarchy and nobility as traditional sources of authority to be protected from liberal reforms; but they have also identified free markets and economic competition as vital sources of discipline. In recent decades Conservatives in Europe and America have often emphasised cultural traditions more than political and economic matters. They have been particularly concerned with the liberalization of social and legal rules about marriage, gender roles and sexuality. Some Conservatives have been especially concerned to assert the distinctiveness of national/ethnic culture and what they see as the disorderly effects of immigration and multiculturalism. Indeed, the growing convergence of moral, economic and nationalist conservatisms is a key feature of contemporary politics.

? THINK ON...

Q1: How important is the maintenance of traditional social roles for the stability of political communities?

Q2: Can order and equality be compatible?

CONSTRUCTIVISM (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

Constructivism is a theory that has become prominent within International Relations and other Social Science/Humanities subjects, and one which is heavily influenced by the focus upon language within contemporary European philosophy. Its influence within International Relations emerged in the 1980s but did not really have much of an impact until the end of the Cold War. This was because constructivism's focus on how our social world is constructed through language seemed to offer an explanation of why the USSR collapsed from within, when (neo)realism and (neo) liberalism failed to predict its collapse.

Both of those alternative, earlier, theories focused on the material dimensions of state power: the size of a state's military or economy. These could be observed and measured, as (neo)realism and (neo)liberalism's empiricist methodology required. But constructivism countered that ideas and identities were a crucial element in how and why states and other actors behave in certain ways. Rather than being rational and self-interested actors, we as individuals and states care about how others see us and have a sense of how we ought to behave.

From such a perspective, norms – standards of appropriate behaviour for actors with a given identity, as argued by Katzenstein – are a far better explanation for state behaviour than material capabilities or interests. Instead of seeing states as rational and self-interested actors, constructivism argues that states do not rationally calculate their interests and act accordingly; rather, their behaviour is shaped by how they think they ought to behave. Conventional constructivists explore how norms develop, spread and shape state identity. Critical constructivists focus on how certain narratives or discourses are constructed and how they enable certain

actions. For example, how was it possible for the United States of America to construct her identity as the leader of the free world when she was actively undermining democracy throughout Central and South America? For critical constructivists, it is not that identity and interests are opposed to one another: that a state wants to invade another state but cannot because it doesn't want to look bad in the eyes of the international community, say. Rather, that interests are refracted through the prism of identity, and vice versa. There is a constant interplay between who we think we are and how we see our interests.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Do you think states act rationally at all times?

Q2: Do you think that states want to live up to a particular identity?

COUNTER-TERRORISM

Counter-terrorism refers to the range of activities employed to address the threat of terrorist violence. Such activities are extremely diverse. Defensive measures, for instance – such as security barriers outside potential targets – seek to deter attacks or to reduce the harm an attack might cause (while risking displacing those attacks to other, 'softer', targets). Offensive measures – such as assassination attempts – in contrast, seek to terminate terrorist organisations or campaigns by removing important leaders or charismatic figureheads. As this suggests, the instruments of counter-terrorism vary a great deal and can be: legal – involving the passing of new laws and the use of the criminal justice system to prosecute terrorist suspects; militaristic – drawing on military force in campaigns or 'wars' against terrorism or terrorists; political – for instance, in diplomatic activities intended to end terrorist campaigns; and social

– as in counter-radicalisation initiatives which are intended to prevent people from becoming terrorists in the first place.

Counter-terrorism has typically been undertaken by states, although the range of actors involved now includes: international organisations such as the United Nations and NATO; private entities such as financial institutions; professionals – such as teachers and health-workers; and even ordinary citizens who are often encouraged by posters and advertisements to report suspicious behaviour. Analysts of terrorism typically believe that a range of counter-terrorism measures is often necessary, and that these measures will vary from context to context: countering the Provisional IRA, for instance, might need different techniques to those used in countering Boko Haram. How one believes terrorism should be countered likely depends on two issues. First – how one thinks of the problem of terrorism itself: is it a military threat, a political threat, or a criminal issue? And, second, one's moral and political commitments: is it legitimate, for instance, to use violence against violent actors?

? THINK ON...

Q1: What is a better way to address terrorism: diplomacy or military action?

Q2: Why is countering terrorism such a difficult task?

CRITICAL THEORY

Criticism is at the core of 'Enlightenment' thinking. The scientific method proposes a series of 'tests' for claims about the natural world, whereby those claims which do not pass the test are duly criticised as false or unproven.

Advocacy of such powers of reason – of the human mind to understand the processes that govern nature, including our own human nature – naturally extends to the social realm, and to the view that moral or political propositions can also be assessed in terms of their rationality. For the eighteenth-century German philosopher Immanuel Kant, this meant subjecting public institutions to a 'tribunal of public reason', requiring them to justify themselves, their policies and practices with reference to universal and shared standards of reason. In this sense, whenever we ask government, or journalists, or academics or our teachers to explain themselves to us, we are asking them to show how that what they do or say is logical, based on facts and in accordance with moral principles.

Critical Theory refers to a particular version of this idea. It recognises and supports the overall aim of the Kantian style of thinking – that authorities can and should be held to account and assessed by common standards of reason. However, it also proposes that society at present, far from being rational, is systematically unreasonable. Inequality – particularly the domination of the rich over the poor – gives some the power to control knowledge and to police reason in ways which protect the status quo. Where some might say that Reason must be dispassionate and neutral, Critical Theory says that it cannot be neutral as to the importance, the necessity, of the conditions which enable reason to flourish: it is rational to want a rational society.

Accordingly, Critical Theory sees reason as necessarily committed to bringing about those conditions and specifically to emancipation - freedom from domination. Critical Theory, then, must combine being explanatory (showing how things are) with being normative (assessing how things work in the light of a more general standard or norm) and also practical, in that it assists in action to change

D.

the state of things. Furthermore, it must be self-critical in the sense that it tries to be alert to ways in which it might itself be distorted by the effects of the unequal, dominated society, of which it is a part. Indeed, understanding the ways in which thinking is shaped by society, is a way of both criticizing that society and of developing the kinds of thinking which might begin to shake free of it. In this respect, thinking which is not critical of the present state of society, is not in fact rational at all.

THINK ON...

Q1: Can thinking about society and culture be neutral?

Q2: Is criticism necessarily destructive of things, or can it be a way of creating something new?

CULTURE

The Welsh academic Raymond Williams called 'culture' one of the most difficult words to define. It is also a contested concept, meaning that any usage of the term is open to debate. Generally, we can think of culture in two ways, one narrowly defined and one more broadly defined. Narrowly, culture is a set of artistic and aesthetic practices or products, such as a play,

a film, a museum exhibit, or a book. Although previously popular, efforts to distinguish 'high' from 'low' culture – Shakespeare from Superman, perhaps, or Puccini from punk music – are often criticised as elitist and guilty of reproducing artificial hierarchies.

We can also, however, think of culture much more broadly as a 'way of life.' This is a more anthropological definition, and may include ways of eating, dressing, and worshipping. While it is tempting to believe specific places or communities have specific cultures – 'Japanese culture', 'gay culture', and so on – ways of life are typically less homogeneous than they appear from the outside. They are also, of course, subject to change and transformation. On top of these understandings, there is also the concept of political culture, which is a term used to refer to characteristics or values of society that help to shape a particular political system.

THINK ON...

Q1: Where does culture end and 'everything else' begin?

Q2: In what ways might a state's culture impact its politics and political systems?

DEMOCRACY

Democracy is a form of political rule that involves, in some way, the participation of ordinary people in the political process. The word 'democracy' is Greek in origin and comes from *demokratia* meaning 'people power'. Very broadly speaking, there are two types of democracy. The first type involves a direct role for people in decision-making, who themselves also make up government, this is referred to as Direct Democracy. The system used in 5th century BCE Athens is a well-known example of this type of democracy, in which Ancient Athenian citizens made decisions about issues as diverse as taxation and declarations of war. The second type of democracy involves people electing representatives, who meet and who form a governing body on the behalf of those people, such as Parliament in the UK or Congress in the USA, this is known as Representative Democracy. For most of its history, democracy has suffered criticism including by prominent philosophers such as Plato and Edmund Burke, who thought of it as chaotic, inherently unstable, (therefore) a threat and, so, undesirable. Only since the end of World War Two has democracy become widely regarded as a desirable form of political rule as well as 'a good thing', although many states around the world today remain, in some way, undemocratic.

THINK ON...

Q1: Why do people disagree about what democracy 'is'?

Q2: Is democracy 'a good thing'?

DIPLOMACY

In International Relations diplomacy is the art of communication and negotiation between international actors. It is an instrument of foreign policy that is utilised by international actors to achieve their policy objectives through peaceful means. To be successful, diplomats must assess the compatibility of their objectives with those of their negotiating partners, and consider the power available to each to achieve their aims. Historically diplomacy occurred between sovereign states and was conducted by professional diplomats from foreign ministries. In the contemporary era, various political entities conduct diplomacy, for example, international organisations such as the United Nations and non-governmental organisations such as the Red Cross. Primary activities for diplomats include treaty negotiations, trade agreements, international summits and alliance negotiations.

THINK ON...

Q1: Can you think of any examples of successful diplomacy?

Q2: What do you think makes for effective diplomacy?
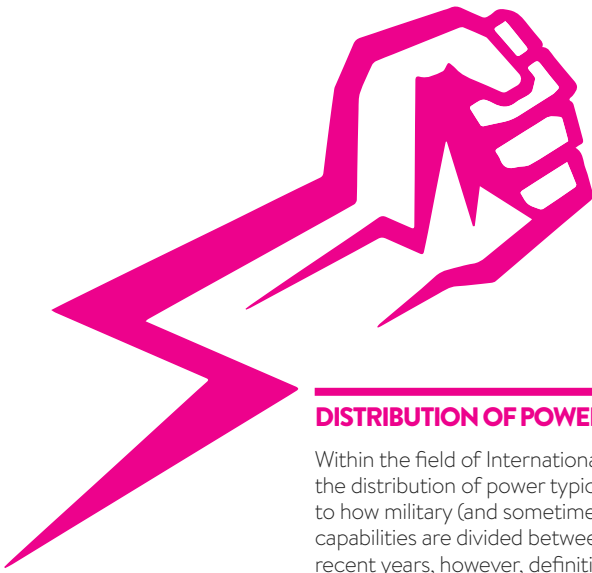
DISABILITY

Disability is a term which is relatively new to political science and this relates to significantly changed understandings of what we understand by the term disability itself. Since the 1970s, initially in the UK and the USA, the term 'disability' has been redefined radically by disabled people themselves. Increasingly, disability refers to a form of social oppression rather than a straightforward description of physical or psychological attributes of a particular individual. So, one is disabled by social structures, and social and environmental arrangements (for example by contemporary arrangements in the world of work or by inaccessible building design) that are imposed upon one rather than by one's physical and psychological attributes or 'impairments', as they are now designated. Using this and similar definitions, social movements of disabled people have demanded from governments social and political change favourable to disabled people and aimed at eradicating disability.

THINK ON...

Q1: In what way is disability a political issue?

Q2: What is the difference between disability and impairment?

DISTRIBUTION OF POWER

Within the field of International Relations, the distribution of power typically refers to how military (and sometimes economic) capabilities are divided between states. In recent years, however, definitions increasingly incorporate non-state actors and entities that hold significant influence in relation to each other and to states – as well as to less tangible processes, such as 'globalisation'. Powerful economic actors, including multinational corporations, financial bodies and extremely wealthy individuals, as well as sub-state or trans-state groups such as ISIL, Al Qaeda and web-based syndicates, all affect the distribution of power in this broader sense.

While many of these entities have a negative image, power is not necessarily always distributed in such a way as to cause harm. Relative increases of power held by philanthropic individuals or nongovernmental organizations, for example, can have a positive impact upon foreign as well as domestic policies. Domestically, the distribution of power normally refers to the separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial branches of government. Changes in everything from our global financial system, to war and peace are largely dependent on how power is distributed among all these actors and entities.

THINK ON...

Q1: What is currently the most important issue in terms of changes to the distribution of power among states?

Q2: How could power be more evenly distributed within the international system?

E.

ECOLOGISM

Ecologism is a political ideology which explicitly recognises the intrinsic value of the environment and contends that it should be taken into account in economic, social and political systems. In contrast to understandings that see the natural world as a resource to be exploited for the benefits of human development, ecologism insists on the inherent connectedness of humanity and nature. Various civilisations and cultures have recognised the interconnectedness of humans with their environment. However, ecologism specifically designates the range of ideological positions that developed in reaction to industrialisation. The development of ecologism from the 1960s onwards has gone hand in hand with the emergence of the environmental movement and other 'new social movements' such as feminism and anti-war protests.

There are different forms of ecologism, from 'shallow' to 'deep green'. In its shallower version, ecologism argues that economic growth is compatible with the protection of the environment, and that environmental destruction can be mitigated by more environmentally-friendly policies. This position has often been encapsulated in the concepts of 'green growth' and 'sustainable development'. In its most radical version, deep green ecologists contend that the preservation of nature is an imperative that should be placed above human development.

Deep green ecologists adopt a fully eco-centric approach. This involves placing the environment at the centre of our moral universe, with humans representing only one species among others, and rejecting anthropocentrism – i.e. those ideologies that place humanity at the centre – altogether. In-between these two poles are hybrid approaches such as 'social ecology', 'eco-feminism' or 'eco-socialism', which link current environmental degradations to existing social structures such as social hierarchies, capitalism or patriarchy.

THINK ON...

Q1: Is environmental protection compatible with economic growth?

Q2: Should we prioritise human needs over the environment and animal welfare?

ECONOMIC AND MONETARY UNION (EMU)

The Economic and Monetary Union (EMU) is a policy area of the European Union (EU), created by the Maastricht Treaty, and signed by the then 12-member states of the EU (now 28) in 1992. The EMU includes the Euro, a common currency for 19 of the 28 EU member states, as well as a set of laws and regulations governing economic cooperation within the Eurozone and EU.

The Maastricht Treaty initiated the process of establishing the Euro, which only Denmark and the UK opted out from initially. The Euro became a reality in 1999 and the first coins and bills came into circulation in 2002. A European Central Bank (ECB) was also established to manage the single currency. Its functions include determining money supply in the Eurozone (the amount of physical and virtual money available), setting interest rates (the cost of borrowing money) for the whole area, and keeping inflation (general price levels) low and stable.

As part of the EMU, member states have also committed to coordinate more closely their macro-economic policies, notably their public deficit and debt levels. Rules were first established in preparation for the Euro (the so-called 'Stability and Growth Pact' of 1997), and reinforced in the wake of the financial crisis from 2010 onwards. Some countries with high levels of debts, such as Greece, Ireland or Spain, have benefited from financial support in exchange for stringent austerity reforms (the so-called 'bailouts'), while the European Commission has been given enhanced powers to monitor national budgets and macro-economic policies.

THINK ON...

Q1: Is the Euro beneficial or detrimental to members of the Eurozone? and which ones?

Q2: Is the Euro effective and democratic?

ELECTIONS

Elections are a mechanism for deciding who should represent a collection of people. They also, in turn, shape the composition of the government. Elections are one practice that is essential if a country is to be classified as a democracy because they help to ensure that the public is able to choose who represents them. Unfortunately, even though elections are held in almost every country in the world, the way in which they are conducted often fall short of democratic ideals (see: electoral integrity).

In modern times elections tend to involve citizens casting their votes at polling stations using paper ballots. These practices were designed to ensure that an individual's vote was secret – and that they could not therefore be intimidated. However, there is increasing experimentation around the world, including with the use of postal voting and internet voting. There can also be considerable variation
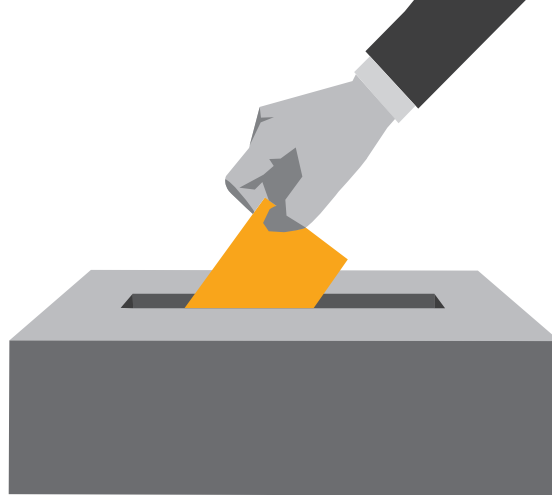
in who, in practice, is allowed to vote in an election. It is most common for countries to set a legal requirement to be 18 years old. But this is higher in some instances, and has been as low as 16 in some elections in Scotland, Norway and Austria in recent years. Following the counting of the results, political representatives are announced (according to the rules specified in the electoral system) and a new government may be formed.

THINK ON...

Q1: Why are elections so essential for democracy?

Q2: Does the holding of elections ensure that government is representative of the people?

ELECTORAL INTEGRITY

Elections are held in nearly every country around the world at either national or sub-national level. This has been the result of a broad trend of democratisation that has taken place in waves over several centuries. This pervasiveness does not mean that all elections are free or fair, however. They might still give an advantage to one party or candidate – and citizens might not vote for many understandable reasons. This is because elections can be undermined by problems such as the banning of opposition political parties, electoral fraud at the ballot box, and administrative challenges such as lengthy queues at polling stations.

An election with electoral integrity is therefore an election which avoids these and other problems. There is no precise consensus on what constitutes electoral integrity, however. For some, electoral integrity may be said to be upheld when a country holds elections in line with the standards which are set out by the international community in international law and treaties. For others, it is more important that democratic ideals such as inclusiveness are upheld.

THINK ON...

Q1: How would you define a free and fair election?

Q2: How well run are elections in the country that you live?

EMERGING ECONOMIES

The concept of countries 'emerging' refers to a vision of the global economy arranged in a hierarchy of wealth and power amongst states. In this view, some countries are 'fully developed', usually we refer to these as the 'Industrialised economies' of North America and Western Europe. Others, instead, are classified as 'developing' or maybe even 'lesser/least-developed-countries' (LDCs) with low income. There is a narrow focus in such understandings on development as measured by economic growth indicators and levels of industrialisation. This creates an impression that all countries will develop in the same way becoming like European and North American countries; that they will, in effect, 'catch up.' The basic belief behind the term 'emerging economies' is that countries can change their position to move from being an LDC to one of middle income status, becoming eventually 'like us' – advanced economies. They are then said to be 'emerging'.

This is not the first time concepts such as this have been used to describe global difference and patterns of unequal economic development. During the Cold War, the world

was analytically divided into 'First', 'Second' and 'Third' worlds. The First world was comprised of allies aligned around the USA's capitalist-led organisation of the market, while the Second was the Soviet Union and its communist allies. The Third world was largely Africa, Middle East and South America. While this terminology is now out of fashion, the world it depicts – one of uneven development shaped by global capitalism – continues to exist. Since the end of the Cold War it is more frequent to talk about developing countries and emerging powers. What are they 'emerging' into? They are emerging into greater wealth, higher Gross Domestic Product (GDP) through higher industrialisation, increased manufacturing, and possibly becoming the factories of global production. This is expected to have positive impacts on wage earnings, as well as better health and life expectancy for populations in what we now call the Global South.

Emerging powers, therefore, refers to a cluster of countries whose economies have undergone rapid transformation. They have changed their position in the global economy and have more political power in the international arena. The clearest examples are the Asian Tigers of the 1980s and, of course more recently, China. While China claims that it is still a 'developing country', common agreement is that it is no longer an 'emerging' economy as it is second only to the USA globally. China is investing in Africa where many of the world's fastest 'emerging economies' – such as Ethiopia – are situated.

THINK ON...

Q1: In a world of global capitalism, can all countries 'emerge' and move to the top echelon or do other countries already at the top have to 'descend'?

Q2: Will a world of emerged powers be a more equal world in terms of global wealth amongst countries and populations?

EMPIRE

Simply put, empire is a political unit built around a single sovereign authority – such as England/Britain – which exercises violent control over other territories and peoples through annexations or other forms of domination. Yet, over the last century we have seen a remarkable and radical process of decolonisation and transition from a world in which empires – Roman, Persian, Ottoman, Mongol, Chinese, Holy Roman, British, and so on – had been the dominant forms of political organisation, to one made up of sovereign nation-states. As such, is it reasonable to ask if the age of empires is over?

Critical thinkers, such as Hardt and Negri, argue that empire has not actually disappeared as a form of global control. Rather, we need to understand empire in new ways. They argue that a new form of empire emerged in the twentieth-century under an American-led global capitalist expansion accompanied by US military capacity. Many of the tenets of this new American order were internationalised or globalised in the international architectures erected following World War Two including organisations such as the United Nations. In this context, sovereignty is increasingly re-scaled from the nation-state to the level of the global, and has come under the direction/domination of wealthy, highly influential and powerful elites. There are new analyses coming to the fore which see China's new Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) as a new form of empire, too, although this interpretation is denied by Beijing.

? THINK ON...

Q1: We are entering the Asian Century; will we be living under a new form of empire by 2100?

Q2: Are sovereign nation-states the final form of political organisation across the globe? Or could the world revert to governance through empires?

ENVIRONMENT

In its most basic meaning the term environment refers to the 'surroundings' of a person, group or object. However, when we talk about the environment, we often mean the 'natural environment', that is the natural world – in its totality or in a specific geographical area – including living things such as plants and animals, as well as non-living things such as the atmosphere, soil and water. The term is generally defined in relation to, indeed in opposition to, humans and human activities.

This separation between humans and nature is constitutive of modern western thought. In certain narrow conceptions, the environment designates 'wilderness' or pristine nature. However, there are very few places on Earth, if any, that haven't been shaped in one way or another by human activities. In broader conceptions, the environment encompasses human elements such as agricultural land and pastoral landscapes. In wider understandings, the environment includes all elements on earth including urban areas and human infrastructures (the 'built environment').

Since at least the industrial revolution, humans have had a growing and wide-ranging impact on the environment, including through dangerous climate change, massive biodiversity losses and the overexploitation of natural resources. From the 1960s onwards, the environmentalist movement has grown in number and influence and pressured governments and international organisations to tackle environmental degradation. Human impacts have reached planetary scale and many geologists and social scientists now use the term 'Anthropocene' to label our geological epoch (*Anthropos* is Greek for human). The Anthopocene characterises the era when humans have had dramatic impacts on the Earth's geology and ecosystems. The influence of humans is such that it has led some to question the very distinction between humanity and the environment since they are so deeply interconnected.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Can humans be distinguished from the natural environment, or are they just one species among others?

Q2: Is humanity at risk of extinction as it is destroying its environment increasingly rapidly?

EQUALITY

Put simply, equality is fairness in terms of wealth, opportunities, legal rights and freedoms, as well as social status. In addition to realizing this – at least to a greater extent – between nation states within the international system, global equality also needs to consider environmental well-being and access to clean air, drinking water and living space. In this sense, equality is often viewed as a normative term, meaning that it is something that should be considered a goal for policymakers, organizations and individual citizens to aim for. Equality has been an important concept for several political theories including socialism, Marxism and feminism.

Neo-Marxist and post-Colonial theorists have argued that the international system is chronically unequal because powerful states (typically former colonial powers) have historically exploited weaker, poorer states in order to gain an unfair advantage. On top of this, they now continue to sustain their position by setting the rules of the game for international trade, industry and finance in their favour. According to most internationally recognised indicators, inequality between states has decreased in the last two decades, but inequality within individual states has increased dramatically.

? THINK ON...

Q1: How might greater equality between developed and underdeveloped states be achieved?

Q2: To what extent do states have a responsibility to ensure equality among their citizens?

EUROPEANISATION

Europeanisation refers to the gradual adaptation and adoption of European Union processes, procedures and methods of public administration by new member states, in the process of assimilating the body of rules, regulations and obligations assumed through membership. In a practical sense, this harmonises and creates equivalence in instruments and the modus operandi for smoother accordance between EU institutions, official bodies, committees, etc, with those of member-states. By extension, it also implies the spreading of underlying norms and values, as well as notions of best practice. With more countries signing association agreements or launching membership applications, or merely engaging in closer trade, and cultural relations with the EU, Europeanisation also manifests itself as the spreading of these norms and ways of operating further afield, furthering the role of the European Union as an international actor and a normative power.

THINK ON...

Q1: Is Europeanisation a positive influence on new member-states and what are its advantages and its disadvantages?

Q2: Is Europeanisation only a matter of practical expediency or is it having a long-term effect in realising a deeper, more substantial integration among EU member-states?

EUROPEAN UNION (EU)

The European Union is an international organisation involving collaboration among states in Europe that is often held up as an example of multi-level governance. It began as a mechanism for loose cooperation among six states in the form of the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), the aim of which was to bind countries more closely economically in order to prevent future conflict between them. In 1957, with the signing of the Treaty of Rome, it became the European Economic Community (or EEC), the core of which was the Common Market.

The idea was that member states would share borderless trade in goods and services grounded in common standards, but it also bound states together around common principles such as human rights and democratic governance. In 1993 with the Maastricht Treaty the EEC became the European Union which involved increased cooperation on defence, justice and home affairs as well as co-decision making. This co-decision making makes the EU different from other regional arrangements in which only states represented by their governments participate in decision making. This is because citisens are also directly represented in decision making by the European Parliament.

The European Parliament – which is housed in Brussels – elects the Commission that leads the civil service arm of the European Union. Laws are thus made by both the European Parliament and the European Council, which includes the heads of state of all the member states. Although critics argue that the European Union erodes national sovereignty, EU laws only cover certain things upon which harmonisation between member states has been agreed, while many fields of policy are left to the discretion of member states. Over the years the EU has gradually grown from the original 6 member states. The biggest enlargement took place in 2004, when several countries from Central and Eastern Europe that had been in the Communist block joined the Union. There are presently twenty-eight members of the European Union.

THINK ON...

Q1: How does the EU interact with third countries or other regional unions?

Q2: What are the consequences of the UK's expected exit from the eu?

EXECUTIVE

The executive is the organisation at the head of government in any given country. Executives are usually responsible for proposing new laws (and might even be able immediately to put them into effect) and providing overall political leadership for the country.

The exact form that an executive takes can vary by country, as does the power that is held by this organisation. In some countries the executive is a president. A president is a directly elected official who usually assumes office for a fixed term. In the USA, for example, the president is elected through an electoral college system, upon which they take office for a fixed term of four years. The US President is able to issue executive powers over some policy areas which have the binding force of law. They are also involved in the law-making process with the Senate and Congress, and primarily responsible for the relations of the United States with foreign nations.

In a parliamentary system, the executive is made up of the prime minister and the team of ministers that they appoint called the cabinet. The prime minister is usually the leader of the largest party in the legislature following a general election. In the UK their powers, in addition to appointing ministers to run government departments, include shaping the legislative agenda and maintaining relationships with other countries and the international community. Other executive systems include semi-presidential systems, where there is both a directly elected President and a Prime Minister, as is the case in France. In some non-democratic states the executive might be the monarch or a military ruler.

THINK ON...

Q1: Is a presidential or parliamentary system the most democratic?

Q2: Who is more powerful? A president or prime minister?

F.

FEMINISM

Feminism is both a political ideology and a set of social movements. It is also an approach to thinking about and researching the world that focuses on the different ways in which life is gendered. There are many definitions of feminism, but a widely used one is from the American academic and activist bell hooks: "Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression" (Feminism is for Everybody: Passionate Politics, p.1). It is common to see feminism discussed in terms of 'waves' or types. One such type is liberal feminism. Influenced by the ideas and values of liberalism, liberal feminism is based on the idea that all individuals – regardless of gender – are of equal moral worth. A liberal feminist view is that women's subordination is a result of the unequal allocation of rights in society, and that this can be remedied by a reformist programme of legal and social change.

Contrast this to radical feminism which offers a far more fundamental critique arguing that gender inequality is systematic, institutionalised, and pervasive. For a radical feminist, gender is the deepest social cleavage. Existing institutions and ideas from such a perspective – from Parliament to heterosexual marriage to workplace norms and practices – are fundamentally biased against the participation and interests of women. Oppression by patriarchy can therefore only be challenged by a gender revolution, one which transforms personal, domestic and family life, as well as social, economic and political relations.

THINK ON...

Q1: How has feminism changed over the years?

Q2: Why are you – or why are you not – a feminist?

FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign policy is the combination of diplomatic, economic and military measures enacted by a government and its associated financial and security arms in its relations with external states and other entities. In this regard, it may differ substantially depending upon whether it is directed towards an ally or a rival state. Typically, foreign policy is informed by some kind of doctrine or ideology, which guides efforts to coordinate the above elements strategically.

For instance, in the past two centuries the United States has mostly followed the Monroe Doctrine, which guards against any perceived significant intervention into the affairs of North, South and Central America from outside the continent. Another example would be Japan's post-World War II Yoshida Doctrine, which explicitly separated political and economic spheres in its dealings with other regional states. Foreign policy is usually designed and implemented as an attempt to pursue what are taken to be a state's national interests. These typically include aspirations such as the pursuit of economic growth, military security, and international prestige.

THINK ON...

Q1: How would you characterise contemporary British foreign policy?

Q2: What areas other than diplomacy, military strategy and economic policies may be important in foreign policy formation?

FRATERNITY/SOLIDARITY

"Fraternity" is included alongside "liberty" and "equality" as one of the three values in the motto of post-revolutionary France. In other contexts, such as in the six principles listed as underlying the EU Charter of Fundamental Rights, the gender-neutral term "solidarity" is used instead. Both terms describe an ideal in which society is seen not as a collection of isolated individuals pursuing their own self-interest, irrespective of others.

Rather, society is seen as a unity in which each person shares the interests of everyone else. Solidaristic political and economic policies are therefore designed in a way that acknowledges individuals' dependence on one another and on society as a whole. The ideal of solidarity plays a key role in left and centre-left ideologies from Communism and Socialism to Christian Democracy and Catholic Social Justice. It is often evoked in criticisms of more individualistic ideologies such as libertarianism, neo-liberalism, and laissez faire capitalism.

THINK ON...

Q1: Is the value of social solidarity in conflict with the value of individual liberty?

Q2: Should our contemporary politics be more solidaristic?

FREEDOM

Freedom is fundamentally the ability of individuals to act independently, in accordance with their own free will. Within any given political system, this is often associated with the right to partake in representative democracy, for example by voting for accountable parties and leaders, and assumes an absence or minimum of direct interference in an individual's life by the state or other authorities.

This includes the ability to move, live and work in any location. Freedom in the international system typically refers to the ability to conduct political, social and economic relations without fear of external military intervention or escalation. In addition, freedom can be understood to mean a state's capacity to defend its sovereignty, for example by enacting legal, fiscal and economic policies independently of large institutions or organizations to which it belongs. Examples might include individual member-states' responses to the European Union, International Monetary Fund or World Trade Organization.

THINK ON...

Q1: Does the European union amount to a system of governance that promotes freedom?

Q2: Does the welfare state increase or decrease the freedom of citizens?

G.

G7/8

The Group of 7/8 is a loose International Financial Institution, which evolved as an intergovernmental politico-economic forum, among the eight most highly industrialised countries: US, Japan, Canada, Germany, France, the UK, Italy and Russia. These states together account for more than 50% of the world's wealth. It actually started as the consultation forum G7, with Russia joining in 1997 before its subsequent suspension in 2014 due to the annexation of the Crimea. The European Union as a single international actor also attends the G7/8 annual meetings between heads of states, without being a full member.

The G7/8 is an influential body as its members are also members of other important International Organisations (eg. EU, NAFTA, APEC) and as such achieve much cross-pollination in attitudes and policies in world economic affairs. The G7/8 also acts as a sponsor/funder of major international development initiatives such as the African Union's New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD), launched in 2001.

? THINK ON...

Q1: As an influential organisation, is the make-up of the G7/8 really representative of today's industrialised world?

Q2: How binding or influential are the G7/8's deliberations?

G20

The global financial crisis of 2008 pointed to the inadequacy of the G7/8 to manage global finance and ensure development for the Global South. In November 2008, a new group of G20 leaders – Argentina, Australia, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, India, Indonesia, Italy, Japan, Republic of Korea, Mexico, Russia, Saudi Arabia, South Africa, Turkey, UK, USA and the European Union – met in Washington to reform international finance. The collapse of global finance was an immediate catalyst to enlarge the G7/8 to a group more representative of the world, and not uniquely composed of Western powerhouses and their allies such as Japan. However, a problem quickly emerged, one which is at the centre of global governance: how do we obtain optimal decision-making in large groups? And how do we make sure that the interests of the marginalised and voiceless are represented at these highest instances?

In the area of global finance, around which the G20 has conducted most of its work, we can see that the new group has strengthened the cooperative and multilateral (comprising many countries) dimensions of financial regulation. However, there has also been a simultaneous retreat from the centralised regulation of finance to national and regional levels of governance. This reflects both effective cooperation in a world of mobile capital (a world in which money can move internationally without constraint) and a desire for countries to try to regulate the movement of money further at a national or regional level.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Does the G20 really represent a transformation in international governance, signalling a break with the established power formation built around the USA?

Q2: Can the G20 prevent a backlash against globalisation?

GENDER

Broadly speaking gender refers to the socially produced characteristics associated with the state of being a man, a woman, or neither of these categories. Second wave feminists fought to separate 'gender' from 'sex'. They believed 'sex' referred to a set of fixed biological characteristics associated with being male or female; while 'gender' was a set of socially and culturally constructed behaviours and expectations associated with a particular sex. So, masculinity has historically often been associated with strength, rationality and action, while femininity has historically often been associated with weakness, emotion and passivity. This is why individuals are often (still) expected and encouraged to act in certain ways from playing with specific toys, to wearing particular types of clothing, to working in specific occupations.

Academic theorists working within fields such as gender studies and queer theory in the 1990s sought to complicate these assumptions by dismantling the 'sex/gender binary'. As opposed to conceiving of gender as cultural and sex as biological, scholars such as Christine Delphy and Judith Butler argued that sex – as well as gender – has no existence outside of culture. The decision to divide bodies into two sexes only became commonplace in the nineteenth century, and the 'facts' used to organise bodies into those categories have been much debated. Therefore, Butler et al argue that the decision to assign bodies a particular sex is based more in culture than in any kind of biological 'certainty'.

? THINK ON...

Q1: How do we become socialised into particular gender roles?

Q2: Why might it be useful to think about gender and sexuality together?

GLOBAL FINANCE

Many people find finance confusing and difficult to understand. This is unfortunate, because the financial crisis of 2008/2009 showed us that finance is hard to ignore, as such a crisis can throw the entire global economy into a downward spiral, provoking recession for the poor and rich alike. The International Monetary Fund (IMF), for instance, argued that the financial crisis had pushed 53 million more people into extreme poverty by 2010.

So, what exactly is finance? One way to understand finance is to see it as a relationship of debt and credit. Companies need loans to invest in new factories, or to expand into new markets. They borrow money on capital markets. Governments need money to build new airports or schools and they do not have enough in revenues. They can borrow from banks, borrow on money markets, or sell treasury bills to their citizens. You might decide to buy a house and need a mortgage as you don't have all the money needed to pay for the house. You will borrow from a bank, building society, etc. All these are forms of finance. All of these individuals will need to pay back to the companies or people from whom they borrowed. They will pay a rate of interest – which is essentially the cost of the borrowed money.

Financial crises can take place for many reasons. The 2008 crisis was partly the outcome of mixing good debt with 'bad' debt from people who were unable to repay their mortgage loans. Financial companies were able to sell more of this 'mix' to other companies who were willing to buy them and wait for repayment. The problem is that no one knew where the so-called toxic debt had ended up, and so the entire house of cards crumbled down. In a world of global finance, where debt and credit is processed around the world, this crisis impacted people from New York to Liverpool to Indonesia and South Africa. The challenge is that finance is one of the most difficult areas of globalised economy to regulate. A lot of people make a lot of money buying and selling money, and those people are often closely connected to political power.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Do you think your personal financial activities are vulnerable in a world of global finance?

Q2: Does democracy help citizens hold financial actors more accountable?

GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

We live in an interdependent world. Public policy challenges or threats (depending on how you see issues of international security, economics and environmental well-being) have a habit of spilling over the borders of the nation-state irrespective of ideas of national sovereignty. Take the 1986 Chernobyl nuclear disaster, for example. Much of western Europe was contaminated by the radiation cloud, causing major public and animal health issues for many countries beyond the Soviet Union.

Similarly, rivers such as the Danube and Rhine flow through several countries acting as conduits for public water supply, as well as trade and tourism, delivering jobs but with the unwanted bi-product of pollution. And so, the need for multilateral cooperation is recognised. As a third example, consider the fear spawned by states who see others building military capacity and therefore seek to match each other in arms races to maintain their balance of power.

These dilemmas that come with living in an interdependent world can only be solved through bi-lateral or multilateral alliances, agreements, regimes, regulation and/or protocols. Indeed, it is the willingness of states to enter into such arrangements and mostly to comply with these that arguably constitutes global governance, rather than the international organisations per se. Of course, the key difference between the laws of the nation-state and international law is that the former is enforced by governing institutions – the Police, military, judiciary, and the state's legal right to the use of force.

International law, treaties, regimes and protocols, in contrast, rely mostly on the willingness of the parties to comply: it is a form of 'soft law'. Nevertheless, although the notion that the nation-state has ultimate authority within its borders may have some truth, the idea that sovereignty is absolute in the contemporary world is a fiction. Nation states are subject to humanitarian intervention and human rights

norms for example, through United Nations declarations such as on the Responsibility to Protect and a whole range of other international treaties and agreements on issues from security to trade to environmental protection, to social and cultural life.

Global governance is arguably not so much achieved by hard power (which is how realists would interpret world order) as it is by a society of states shaping the conduct of international affairs through rational debate, established forums, and a willingness in most cases to comply with international norms and agreements (this would be a constructivist interpretation of world order). The emergence of a United Nations system from 1945 onwards sought to address international security through collective security and a UN Security Council in which the most powerful nations were recognised as having the key role in maintaining the peace.

The World Trade Organisation, World Bank Group, and International Monetary Fund sought to avoid the global financial and monetary crises which had plagued the inter war years. And latterly the UN Environment Programme and International Panel on Climate Change has also sought to address the third great dilemma facing humanity. Global regimes and organisations are supported through a complex infrastructure of regional organisations (such as NATO, ASEAN, the African Union and the European Union) but non-governmental organisations (NGOs) too play a key role, as eyes and ears, expertise, and often with campaigning zeal to challenge the status quo and take forward solutions to address the evils of poverty, war, inhumanity, inequality and insecurity through collective international action.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Is the UN fit for purpose? (and if not, why not).

Q2: Why do states usually comply with international agreements in the absence of coercion?

GLOBALISATION

The concept of globalisation emerged as a crucial one in the late 1980s. It describes the processes by which economic, political, and social phenomena become increasingly globally interconnected. Economic globalisation refers to expanding global trade and the rise of transnational corporations such as Toyota, Nestle, or General Electric. In politics and international relations, globalisation also means the creation and effects of global level governance institutions such as the United Nations and the World Bank, or the ways in which increased global connection has transformed diplomatic and military relations between nation states. Socially, globalisation can mean increased rates of human migration or increasing global cultural exchange evidenced, perhaps, by the global popularity of Gagnam Style, Bollywood movies, and 'Big Mac' burgers.

There is debate as to the extent of globalisation – which may be more prominent in some regions of the world than others – as well as disputes over its history, given that people, ideas and things have been moving across national borders since before there were nation-states. Most writers agree that rather than being a new phenomenon, there have been historic periods of relative globalisation and deglobalisation: phases of communities and places becoming more or less interconnected. Indeed, one key contemporary issue is whether we have reached the end of the most recent phase of globalisation or not.

THINK ON...

Q1: How do we best define globalisation?

Q2: Is globalisation a desirable phenomenon? Is it now in retreat?

GLOBAL POLITICAL ECONOMY (GPE)

Global Political Economy (GPE) refers to the academic discipline, also known as International Political Economy (IPE). As with the shift from 'International Relations' to 'global politics', the increasing use of the phrase 'global' in this context has encouraged scholars to look at a variety of actors and not only the nation-state. In other words, we are interested in how non-state actors such as Greenpeace impact on issues such as climate change by, for instance, stopping the drilling of oil in the Arctic.

Essentially political economy is the study of relations between societies, politics, and economic actions/formations such as markets. Political economists do not believe that economic markets operate independently of human desire, power, culture, values, intention and prejudices. In fact, they argue that markets are wholly human and do not exist as an independent phenomenon. Because human beings are not as rational as economists would have us believe, we study how politics, power, war, greed, justice, cooperation, altruism and the like all shape economic actions and outcomes.

Political economists also analyse and investigate how markets, and big players therein such as transnational companies like Walmart and Shell, in turn influence global and national politics and processes. There is, Marxists argue, an energy of dialectics, of constant movement, interaction, confrontation, and inevitable change in the relationship. Just think about the rise of China and how its national economy was built around policy from Beijing. This does not mean that the Chinese Communist Party controls everything to do with the Chinese national economy and foreign affairs. But it does show us that there is not one form of political economy: China has more of a state-led and directed capitalism whereas the USA has a national economy in which the state is expected to play a lesser role.

THINK ON...

Q1: Is globalisation propelled by states, by individuals, or by businesses?

Q2: In what ways does culture influence how economics is carried out?

GLOBAL POLITICS

Global politics refers to the range of activities and outcomes within the international system. These include dynamics of war and peace: for instance, what causes conflict, and can we prevent it? But the term also expands much further than this to incorporate issues such as migration, disease epidemics, poverty, famine, environmental degradation, and the flows of finance and trade in goods and services. The phrase global politics is sometimes used in place of the more traditional term "international relations" by writers who are sceptical about the latter's state-centric implications. This is for two reasons. First, because "global politics" encourages us to consider and take account of actors other than states (or nations) in understanding complex issues such as climate change. And, second, because it also allows us to look at actors – e.g. religious communities or social classes – and issues – e.g. gender-based violence or transnational crime – that cut across national boundaries.

THINK ON...

Q1: Which, if any, of the following are issues of global politics: sexual harassment, climate change, recreational drug use, terrorism?

Q2: Based on the above, how far would you stretch the term 'global politics'?

GLOBAL SOUTH

From US President Truman's 1949 Inaugural Address, in which he spoke about 'underdeveloped areas' in need of Western aid, to more contemporary ideas of 'emergence' and 'the Global South', there has been a litany of terms and concepts used to describe macro social, economic and political divisions across the globe. One way of visualising this is to divide the world into the Global North, referring to the former 'First' and 'Second' worlds, and the Global South, referring to the former 'Third' world. However, where states such as Russia, for instance, really belong in such an imaginary is open to question.

Yet, the term Global South is more than this new configuration based on 'development-oriented' aims and policies: it has become a more political labelling that brings together a South-South allegiance around a shared history of colonialism and imperialism from the so-called 'advanced' industrialised nations. Ideas of South-South allegiance are, however, not new, and were witnessed by earlier calls, for a New Economic International Order (NEIO) amongst postcolonial countries in the 1970s.

THINK ON...

Q1: Is it important – for policy, politics, livelihoods, to analytically separate the globe according to economic differences?

Q2: Do our maps of the world (whether on paper or in our heads) reflect the world or produce it?

H.

HOUSE OF COMMONS AND HOUSE OF LORDS

The House of Commons is the lower house of the UK Parliament and legislature. In the 2017 Parliament it was made up of 650 seats. Each parliamentarian is directly elected to serve one geographical constituency from across the UK. They are elected through a first-past-the-post electoral system. The party that has the most seats in the House of Commons usually forms a government. The most famous part of the UK's House of Commons is the The Commons Chamber with its distinctive green benches. The Commons Chamber has many purposes but the most important is to debate proposed laws.

In order for new laws to be passed they need to be voted on in the House of Commons and the House of Lords before they are put before the Queen for royal assent. The Commons also provides an opportunity to hold the government to account for its actions. Each Wednesday lunchtime, while Parliament is in session, the Prime Minister will face questions from the Leader of the Opposition and other parliamentarians. These confrontations are widely broadcast on TV and are often seen as a test of Prime Ministerial and government effectiveness. The House of Commons has faced criticism from several sources over the years. One important criticism is that the MPs who are elected tend not to be representative of the wider public in terms of their previous occupation, gender, ethnicity and socio-economic status. For example, only 32 per cent of MPs elected to the 2017 parliament were women, 7 per cent were LGBT, 8 per cent were non-White, and 3 per cent were formerly manual workers.

The House of Lords is the upper house of Parliament. In 2018 it was formed of 782 parliamentarians. Historically, these were bestowed their title through a hereditary system. Although some hereditary Lords remain on a short term basis, the Chamber is now mostly appointed by the Prime Minister of the day through an Appointments Commission. Any proposed laws must be passed by both the House of Commons and Lords before it can become law. It is also a chamber where questions can be asked of government ministers thereby holding government to account.

THINK ON...

Q1: Does the UK Parliament effectively scrutinise government?

Q2: Do the Lords or Commons need to be reformed?

HUMAN NATURE

Human nature consists of the characteristics that all members of our species have regardless of their history, upbringing, or culture. Although there is evidence of similar behaviours among primates and other social animals, politics – for instance – might be seen to be a specifically human phenomenon. Indeed, Aristotle defined human beings as distinctively "political animals." Disagreements among political ideologies are often grounded in disagreements about human nature, or disagreement over whether there is a single human nature at all. While some deny that there are any characteristics innate to all human beings – because human beings vary so much – others insist that universal features of human nature imply that there must be universal political principles. Theories of universal human rights, for example, are often defended as being grounded in human nature, guaranteeing that our innate needs are met, and our inherent capabilities are allowed to develop.

THINK ON...

Q1: Are there any characteristics that are truly fixed and innate for all human beings?

Q2: Is it possible to defend universal political values like human rights without reference to a theory of human nature?

HYBRID REGIMES

The term hybrid regimes is used to refer to systems of government that do not quite fit the category of liberal democratic, but are also not completely totalitarian. They may have been at one time liberal democracies and changed, or they may be transitioning to more democratic system after a period of totalitarian rule. Sometimes called 'illiberal democracies', these countries usually have elections that involve some element of actual competition among political parties. But such elections may also be characterised by irregularities in the process and/or imbalances in the resources needed to contest – such as access to media – that the outcome is predictably skewed in favour of the incumbents. This is why such regimes are also often referred to as 'electoral authoritarian' or 'competitive authoritarian' systems. Some scholars would argue that rather than there being clear categories, there is a spectrum from somewhat flawed democracies where there remains some freedom and potential for a change in political leadership, to essentially authoritarian regimes that simply hold elections from time to time to solidify power and hold up pretences. Examples of hybrid regimes might include Russia and Venezuela.

THINK ON...

Q1: What are the conditions need to make elections really democratic?

Q2: Other than the conduct and contestation of elections, what other characteristics should we look at for signs of hybridity?

I.
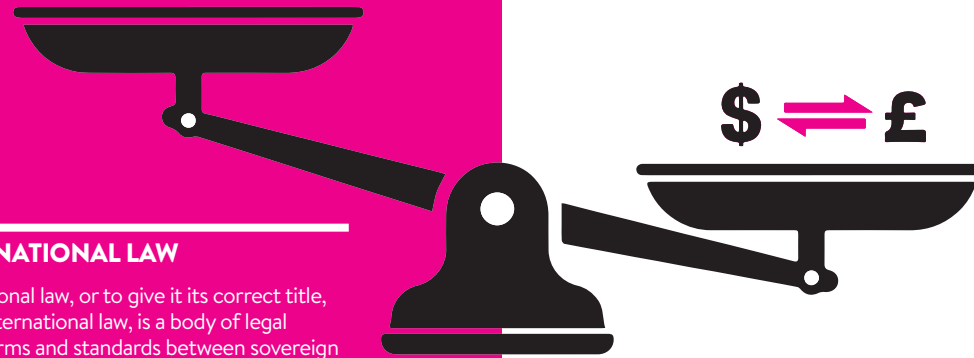
INTERESTS

For some accounts of politics, interests are fundamental. They are thought to explain why people, institutions or states do what they do. All action, it is suggested, is intended to promote or protect the interests of the actor; that is, to benefit them first and foremost. The idea of interest-driven behaviour can be contrasted with, on the one hand, action motivated by principle or, on the other hand, choices which are made on the basis of preferences. Acting on principle suggests acting in ways that may not serve the actor's interests, but may benefit others – perhaps through altruistic behaviours such as volunteering for non-profit organisations. Those who see preferences as the basis of action argue that we cannot draw a distinction between what people choose and what may be in their interest. The Brexit debate illustrates these different positions. For some the debate has been fuelled by the competing interests of the leavers and the remainers. For others, the debate was about rival principles of 'sovereignty' and 'community'. And for yet others, it was about whatever people preferred, irrespective of whether they would be 'objectively' better off as a result. With the rise of identity politics, questions have arisen as to whether our identity determines how we view our interests; or whether it is our interests that produce our identity.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Is a person the best judge of their own interests?

Q2: Does it make sense to talk about people's 'real' interests, and to use this as grounds for denying them their preferences?

INTERNATIONAL LAW

International law, or to give it its correct title, public international law, is a body of legal rules, norms and standards between sovereign states. Treaties are by far the most common source, distantly followed by custom. Although international law today works through states agreeing (or not) to certain ways of ordering global politics, international law emerged out of relations between European states, kingdoms, empires and other forms of political organisation which developed and hardened into custom.

In the 1960s, a subset of customary international law developed known as jus cogens (latin: compelling law). This relates to those rules so important that no state can derogate. Only the most serious offences have this status: torture, piracy, aggression.

International law matters, in part, because what started out as a convenient way to organise international relations now restricts states' freedom of action. Although most states obey most international law, states do also ignore or interpret it in ways that further their interests. This latitude exists because international law is large and complex, and legal norms and standards may be unclear. It should always, therefore, be remembered that international law was made in a particular context. Contemporary international law bears the imprint of American values and interests. This is because the United States actively developed and shaped international law in the wake of World War II, and continues to expend considerable resources shaping its future.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Is international law a tool of the powerful or of the weak?

Q 2: Why should states that have had little role in the development of international law abide by it?

INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND (IMF)

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) is a Washington D.C.-based organization, ostensibly designed to adjust and stabilise international exchange rates, to support sustainable economic growth, and to reduce poverty. At the national level, it works by evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of a given economy. It then typically provides conditional funds to enact a series of prescribed policies, supposedly in-line with that evaluation. These are known as structural adjustment programs (SAPs), which usually aim for relatively low inflation rates and a more open domestic market. The most common outcomes of the SAPs are deregulation, privatization, and cuts to government spending. These outcomes often result in extreme hardships for large sections of the population concerned. Given its lack of transparency, unequal quota system for determining policymaking decisions (which is loosely based on the strength of members' economies), and heavy American influence as part of a triumvirate of financial institutions (IMF, World Bank and WTO), the IMF has been heavily criticised for acting in the interests of powerful governments and corporations, at the expense of local industries and impoverished nations.

? THINK ON...
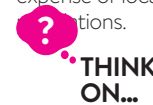
Q1: Why might greater access and openness to a country's domestic market, often demanded by the IMF, have negative impacts?

Q2: How could the IMF be reformed to make it fit for purpose in the 2020s?

INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS

International Organisations are institutional bodies which have been formed by states wishing to achieve consultation, co-operation or even integration, in one or more sectors of activity (economic, political, military, security, religious, cultural) in order to organise themselves and rules of engagement in their chosen areas. International organisations provide structure to the international system by identifying, formulating and subscribing to common values and rules of conduct in international relations. They do this alongside states, non-governmental organisations and multiple other actors. International organisations emerged and mushroomed in the 20th century, chiefly as a result of WWI and WWII, in part out of a common desire to forge collaboration and avoid future war. An International Organisation must have at least 3 member-states, permanent headquarters, a budget contributed to by all members, and elected officials from at least 3 members who rotate and ensure representativeness of members. Its aims must be truly international. It can be global (such as the United Nations) or regional (such as the European Union, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or the African Union), and it must have a rule book (Charter, Constitutions, etc.). International organisations vary considerably in terms of size, purpose, contiguity of parts, and depth of co-operation or integration.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Do regional international organisations contradict or promote globalisation?

Q2: Why do states often bypass the rules of international organisations of which they are members? Why do they get away with this?

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

The term international relations is used in two different ways. Capitalised – so, written as "International Relations" – the term refers to an academic field of study. Used in this way, International Relations is typically traced to the aftermath of the first world war when universities in the United Kingdom and beyond began teaching the subject. This post-war context was vitally important in setting the subject's earliest research agendas which tended to focus on the causes and avoidance of war. Although formally around 100 years old, the discipline has always taken inspiration from authors writing many decades and even centuries ago such as Thucydides, Machiavelli, Karl Marx, and Thomas Hobbes.

Written without capital letters – so, "international relations" – the term typically refers to the dynamics and events of global politics. These include matters of war, peace and security, but extend much further than this to incorporate issues around the global economy, the global environment and beyond. Using the term 'international relations' in this way is seen as problematic by some writers, however, as it encourages us to reduce global politics to the interactions of nations (or, usually, countries) – and therefore to neglect the role of other actors such as multi-national corporations (MNCs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs), and international governmental organisations (IGOs).

? THINK ON...

Q1: How useful is the term 'international relations' today?

Q2: How important are non-state actors in world politics?

INTERNATIONAL SOCIETY

An international society differs from the more mechanistic concept of international system because it is based upon the common norms and inter-subjective understandings that emerge from the interactions of states over time.

In the classic definition found in the work of Hedley Bull and Adam Watson, "...a group of states (or, more generally, a group of independent political communities) ... do not merely form a system, in the sense that the behaviour of each is a necessary factor in the calculations of the others, but also have established by dialogue and consent common rules and institutions for the conduct of their relations, and recognise their common interest in maintaining these arrangements" (*The Evolution of International Society*, p.1).

An international society is a 'second order' society, meaning that its members are states, rather than individual persons. It is also recognised that modern international society has a very specific character, in that the key norm that forms its foundation is that of the political sovereignty of states. This creates what Bull called an 'anarchical society', meaning that there is no over-arching authority above the level of the state.

It is important to note that the norms, rules and institutions that regulate the conduct of states in international society evolve and change over time. Past accepted practices and norms included slavery, wars of dynastic succession, and imperialism. But today, such norms no longer inform acceptable practice by states, while new norms, such as equality of people and human rights, are reshaping international society.

? THINK ON...

Q1: How does the concept of international society differ from that of international system?

Q2: Can you think of ways in which the norms within international society have changed over time?

INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

At its broadest, the concept of an 'international system' consists of a set of interacting political units. The concept has a mechanistic quality: it describes the arrangement and interaction of units within a structure. Traditionally conceived as a concept to capture and describe the dynamics of the interactions of states, the international system serves as a starting point for much theorizing of world politics. So, for example, in Kenneth Waltz's neo-realist book *Theory of International Politics* he conceives of the international system as a structure of anarchy (lacking any overarching political authority or world government) in which the interacting units are states. This spare definition allows him to pick out recurring patterns in these interactions, such as the formation of balances of power in different historical periods.

But the concept is very much contested. More recent approaches broaden out the type of units within the international system to include other actors, such as International Organisations or Multi-national Corporations. These approaches are sometimes referred to as 'mixed actor models'. Other approaches push the concept back far into history before the birth of the modern state system. This allows us to include city-states, city-leagues and empires and opens up the possibility of comparative studies of international systems in world history. Such studies show us, for instance, that for much of history the organizing structure in the international system was hierarchical rather than anarchical.

? THINK ON...

Q1: What political units would you include in the international system today?

Q2: How have international systems in the past looked different to the modern international system?

J.

JUSTICE

The definition of justice has long been one of the central issues in political philosophy. Plato's book *Republic*, which is often considered the first major work of political philosophy in the Western tradition, is devoted precisely to this question. While Plato acknowledges that many believe justice to involve giving each their due, and millennia later philosopher John Rawls defined justice as "fairness," these definitions do not tell us anything substantive about justice, since they leave open the question of what each of us deserves as our fair due. This large question, however, can be divided into several smaller, more manageable questions, each of which involves a distinctive form of justice. Distributive justice, for example, focuses on what share of economic goods each of us deserves to have, while legal justice focuses on the characteristics of a fair code of law, and retributive justice focuses on the punishments due for various crimes.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Do justice and fairness require treating everyone equally?

Q2: Does distributive justice require socialism or a social welfare state, or is it compatible with free markets and capitalism?

L.

LIBERALISM

Liberalism is a political ideology characterised by a commitment to liberty, equality, and individual rights. Although the term "liberalism" became widely used only in the nineteenth century, the ideology itself has earlier roots, and received its classical formulation in the late-seventeenth century work of English philosopher John Locke. Today, while liberals generally support freedom of speech, freedom of religion and electoral democracy, they disagree on economic policy. Confusingly, in the United States, "liberals" are in favour of redistributive policies, while in Europe the term is used for those who oppose such policies. Both of these economic positions can legitimately be described as liberal insofar as both are intended to protect individual rights. While "classical liberals" (liberals in the European sense) believe in strong individual property rights, "modern liberals" (liberals in the American sense) believe individual rights are best protected by a social welfare state.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Some have claimed that, with the decline of communism, liberalism is now enjoying unchallenged ideological dominance worldwide. is this correct?

Q2: Which form of liberalism better upholds the values of liberty, equality, and individual rights: free-market 'classical' liberalism or redistributionist 'modern' liberalism?

LIBERTY

"Liberty" is included alongside "equality" and "fraternity" as one of the three values in the motto of post-revolutionary France. The definition of liberty (or freedom, as it is also called) is one of the central questions of political philosophy. While many different competing conceptions of liberty have been identified, Isaiah Berlin's distinction between negative liberty (freedom from outside interference) and positive liberty (freedom to do something) has been particularly influential. For instance, while we all might be free in a negative sense to purchase a brand-new Ferrari in the sense that doing so is legal, our salaries might mean we are not free – in a positive sense – to do so.

Alternatively, while there might be no formal constraints on women standing for parliament in the contemporary period, the culture, norms and expectations of Westminster, for instance, might mean that (some) women are prohibited or discouraged from doing so. One particularly important version of positive liberty is autonomy, or self-legislation: the freedom to commit oneself to laws or principles of one's own choosing. All forms of liberty can apply either to individuals or to collectivities such as states and other political units.

? THINK ON...

Q1: How might individual liberty come into conflict with the liberty of sovereign states?

Q2: How might the value of liberty come into conflict with the values of equality and fraternity or solidarity?

M.

MARXISM

Marxism refers to the body of thought derived from the writings and political practices of Karl Marx (1818-1883). Marx developed a thorough critique of the capitalist system in his book *Das Kapital*, including an attack on dominant liberal modes of economic thinking. Marx argued that history was driven by class struggle, and that capitalism was a system of exploitation, whereby the fruits of the labour of the working class were appropriated by a largely parasitic class of capitalists. Marx viewed capitalism as an extraordinarily dynamic productive system that was destined to spread around the entire world, but one that also contained so many internal contradictions and injustices that it was bound to collapse in time, and usher in a fairer society where the means of production would be commonly owned.

In the twentieth-century an array of working-class political movements inspired by Marxist ideas tried to put them into political practice, although it is highly debatable whether the use of Marx's philosophy in the communist experiments of the Soviet Union and Mao's China, for example, were faithful to his approach. In the West, scholars continued to develop Marx's philosophy and critique of capitalism in different ways to the Marxist-Leninist interpretations, which came to be broadly known as Western Marxism.

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989 led many (although by no means all) to believe that Marxist ideas had lost their potency, although there has been a strong revival of Marxist thinking in the wake of the 2008 global financial crisis. This crisis has focused attention on some of Marx's key ideas about the growth of inequality, poverty and injustice under capitalism, and his arguments about capitalism's fundamental instability and crisis-prone nature.

Marx's broad framework of ideas has been taken forward in many different directions and continues to inspire critiques of capitalism and socialist visions today, across different academic disciplines and political movements.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Do you think that Marxist ideas are still relevant to understanding contemporary society?

Q2: Is history driven by class-struggle?

MEDIA

Media and politics are today seen as intimately and inextricably linked. All forms of media – from traditional 'broadcast' media to contemporary social media – are used by politicians and political movements to communicate their message, and the political power of media corporations has become a concern of policy makers and political activists. Although research in political science now examines the political influence of media, it was not always like this. While there were exceptions, many 20th century politicians were suspicious of the media, and political science was relatively slow to realise the media's importance.

The change in perception has focused on a range of issues and questions. Much of the attention is placed on the form and effect of political communication: on how parties and other political actors make use of traditional and social media to deliver their message and to persuade voters to support them. But there is also concern with how media help to set political agendas, and whose interests are reflected in those agendas. It is important, though, in studying how media and politics interact, not to overlook the politics of media regulation. Media are more than the devices that carry political information and opinion: the televisions, newspapers, tablets, mobile phones we all use to consume news and entertainment. Media are created by the legal frameworks and infrastructures that allow those media to function.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Is there significant political difference between social media and traditional media (newspapers, television) in the way citizens are informed and engaged?

Q2: Do you think that you are influenced by the media?

MEDIATISATION

The term mediatisation is used to describe a change in how politics is understood and communicated. It suggests that politics, in becoming increasingly dependent on media, takes on the habits and conventions of media. One example of this trend is the 'personalisation' of politics. This refers to the idea that political parties are no longer the key actors in electoral politics. Instead, the focus is on the leader, and on their personality and their personal life as much as their policies. This is seen as a consequence of mediatisation. The media, it is said, work with a different 'logic' to that of traditional politics.

Where the latter works with large, public organisations, the media focus on the intimacies of the individual. To be successful in this world, parties have to adapt by focusing ever more attention on their leader. And those leaders are increasingly schooled in the skills of media performance. Something similar is seen to happen in government, where policies are designed to win media coverage and approval. Mediatisation has shifted the emphasis onto presentation rather than implementation.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Does the increasing focus on the personality and personal life of politicians enhance or damage democratic politics?

Q2: Do the media determine what counts as a 'good' political leader?

MIGRATION

Migration refers to the movement of people from one place to another. International migration involves the movement of people across state borders, from one country into another. International migration is normally governed by sovereign states, according to their own preferences, laws and rules. The regulated movement of people normally happens through visa programmes and falls under three broad categories: economic movement (work and student visas), family-based movement (spousal and family reunification visas) and humanitarian movement (refugee visas and asylum applications).

At times, sovereign states are unable to regulate the movement of people. This often coincides with humanitarian disaster – whether natural such as environmental disasters or health epidemics – or man-made such as war, conflict, genocide and persecution. In these cases, dealing with large scale movements of people falls to international organisation in the form of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. The office of the UNHCR was created in 1950, in the aftermath of World War II and is the main authority that deals with the forced movement of people internationally, including refugees, internally displaced persons and other people who have been forced to leave their homes or countries.

THINK ON…

Q1: Why is international migration so politically contentious?

Q2: Given that the UNHCR must rely on the cooperation of host states, is this organisation capable of dealing with large-scale movements of people effectively?

MILITARY POWER

Many commentators, especially those in the realist school of International Relations, believe that military capacity is the most important form of power in the international system. Military power enables states to protect their territory from external aggressors, and provides them with the means to aggressively pursue and protect their interests internationally. Assessing military power though is difficult. The traditional approach to military power is to think in terms of capabilities. Key factors would include the size of the armed forces, their training and discipline, and their access to advanced forms of military weaponry.

However, such 'bean-counting' only tells us potential military power and does not predict outcomes in practice. The United States exerts global military dominance. Yet, its difficulties in conflicts in Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan demonstrate that preponderant military capability does not necessarily translate into successful outcomes. Recent decades have also seen a debate on whether economic power is now more important to states than military might due to the growing trade links between nations which have made the use of force costly and perhaps, therefore, less rational.

THINK ON…

Q1: How should we assess a state's military power?

Q2: Is economic power now more important than military power in global politics?

MOVEMENT-PARTY

The term movement-party is a new addition to our political vocabulary and points to the attempt to bridge the less formal and more participatory politics of social movements with the more rigid, top-down organization of parties. The forming of relationships between movements and parties, however, is not an entirely new one: many past labour movements developed into social-democratic, socialist or communist parties.

For the past forty years social movements have been challenging the role of parties as bearers of social change, since traditional parties have one primary objective: to be elected. Contemporary movement-parties try to move beyond the world of formal politics and – in so doing - often try to be less hierarchical and more bottom-up in their organisation and decision-making.

THINK ON…

Q1: What are the problems in trying to bring together movements and parties?

Q2: Can you give examples of contemporary movement-parties and explain how they are different from traditional parties?

MULTICULTURALISM

Multiculturalism is the idea that multiple cultural communities, with different values and traditions, can and should exist within a single political unit. It stands opposed both to ethnic nationalism, which insists that citizens be united by a common heritage, and assimilationism, which incorporates people of different heritages only on the condition that they integrate into the dominant culture. As global migration increases, the debate between defenders of multiculturalism and its critics is becoming central to political discourse worldwide.

While multiculturalism can be defended in terms of fairness and tolerance, it can be criticised as in tension with universal values such as human rights and gender equality. The philosopher Susan Okin raised the provocative question, "Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?" This issue remains a key point of disagreement among feminists today given the existence of potentially different norms, practices and expectations relating to gender amongst communities.

THINK ON…

Q1: Is multiculturalism bad for women?

Q2: Is multiculturalism in conflict with the values of social and political solidarity?

MULTI-PARTY SYSTEM

As opposed to systems with one or two parties, a multi-party system is one in which three or more are seen as having the potential to participate in government. Multi-party systems are generally the result of an electoral system that is proportional, that is, one in which the share of a party's parliamentary seats closely matches the share of its share of electoral votes. Such systems are more frequently found in parliamentary systems prevalent in continental European Democracies.

However, party-systems can change; for example, the UK two-party system shifted toward a three-party system in 2010, with the success of the Liberal Democrats, and the inability of any party to gain an outright majority in either the 2010 or 2017 election may signal a shift toward 'multipartism'. Such a shift provides opportunities for greater political influence to previously marginalised parties – such as the Green Party, the Democratic Unionist Party, and the UK Independence Party.

THINK ON...

Q1: What are the benefits of having a multi-party system?

Q2: What processes can lead a party-system to move from a two, or a one party system to a multi-party system?

N.

NATO

The North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) is a military alliance founded in 1949, in the aftermath of WWII, to continue, in peace-time, the Euro-American (Western) alliance which had built up in the war. It was based on the 1947 Dunkirk Treaty and the 1948 Brussels Treaty and aimed at safeguarding the peace and security of its members, the area of Europe and of America North of the Tropic of Cancer. Its membership, aside from Canada and the United States, has risen from 14 to 26 European nations, because of a significant eastward enlargement after the Cold War. Its political headquarters are in Brussels and its military headquarters (SHAPE) in Mons, Belgium.

Its structure comprises a Council of Representatives (defence and foreign ministers), a Secretary General, a Parliamentary Assembly, and numerous committees. Best known for its Article 5 which states that "an attack against a member-state shall be considered an attack against them all", the organisation is run according to a Charter. Since the dissolution of the Soviet Union, NATO – which had hitherto focused its defence on the threat of communism and the Eastern bloc – restructured and realigned its aims, concentrating on perceived new threats such as terrorism and foreign conflicts. It has also become actively involved in several "out of area" operations, including in the former Yugoslavia, Libya, and Afghanistan, occasionally causing controversy regarding its motives and legitimacy of intervention.

THINK ON...

Q1: What is the relationship between NATO interventions in conflicts and United Nations' authorisation to intervene?

Q2: Is there a continuing need for NATO today when the previously perceived chief 'enemy', the Soviet Union, no longer exists?

NON-STATE ACTOR

Non-state actor is a term widely used in International Relations to mean any actor that is not a state. The rather vague term reflects that the discipline of International Relations traditionally focused on the state, as the most important actor in world politics. Yet changes in global politics in the twentieth century mean that states are no longer the only, or even arguably the most important, actors.

Non-governmental organisations (NGOs) such as the Red Cross and Greenpeace exert influence on the world stage. Transnational corporations (TNCs), such as Amazon and Google, are richer than many states and have widespread political influence. Many states also feel more threatened by global terrorist organisations such as ISIS rather than other states. To reflect these developments the discipline of International Relations is now concerned with a broad range of non-state actors.

THINK ON...

Q1: Who do you think are the main actors in global politics?

Q2: How much power and influence do you think transnational corporations such as Facebook hold on the world stage?

P.

PARLIAMENT

Parliament is the legislative body of government. In democracies, members of the legislative body are elected in free and fair elections. Ideally, parliament should serve three purposes: representation, legislation, and oversight of government. Democratic parliaments vary in the degree to which they fulfil their functions; all parliaments play a secondary role to government when it comes to legislation, some are more representative of specific groups/interests than others, and some have more powerful 'tools' to hold the government to account. In some countries, members of parliament can serve in government as well, while in others there is a clear separation between the executive and the legislative branch.

Non-democratic countries also have parliaments. Most of them are even elected in some limited way. Why? In these countries, leaders use the parliament to better control competing elites, and to allow for conflicts to be resolved (and economic spoils to be divided) in an orderly manner. Parliaments also serve to signal that the leader enjoys popular support and legitimacy.

THINK ON...

Q1: What type of parliamentary representation is better? Should members of parliament 'listen to the voters' or not?

Q2: Why do members of parliaments talk so much? Is anyone listening?

PARLIAMENTARY SCRUTINY

Parliamentary scrutiny, also known as legislative oversight, is the ability of legislative assemblies to monitor, examine, and critically assess the policies, actions and spending of the executive. Common oversight tools include questions, hearings, interpellations, the ombudsman, committees, and commissions of inquiry. In some cases legislators use their scrutiny powers to bring about change in the policies of government, while in others, these mechanisms can be used for electoral purposes, for example to show concern for constituencies or demonstrate the government's faults. While we generally think of opposition legislators (those who are not members of parties supporting the government) as more likely to scrutinise the government, parliamentarians from government-supporting parties also use them. Thus, measures of parliamentary s crutiny are considered an essential component of legislatures' power and independence.

THINK ON...

Q1: Why is parliamentary scrutiny so important?

Q2: Does parliamentary scrutiny have `teeth'? When can it have an impact on political processes?

POLARITY

Polarity focuses on the distribution of power in the system, be it the international system or a specific region. As not all states have equal power, a system is likely to be dominated by one or more great powers, or 'poles', which shape the dynamics and stability of that system, as well as the behaviour of other states. International Relations theory identifies three main distributions of power that can exist. Firstly, in a unipolar system, there is only one dominant power – one pole. There are no feasible rivals, and no other actor has the power to challenge the hegemon. Many analysts argue that the international system has been unipolar since the fall of the Soviet Union, as no great power has had the capability to challenge the United States.

Secondly, in a bipolar system, there is a distribution of power among two great powers, for example during the Cold War. Finally, in a multipolar system, there is a distribution of power amongst at least three great powers, who are themselves roughly equivalent. There are important questions today of whether we are moving towards a multipolar world with the re-emergence of Russia as a great power, as well as with the rise of China, India, Brazil and others.

THINK ON...

Q1: Are we moving to a multipolar world?

Q2: Which system of polarity do you think would be the most stable: unipolar, bipolar or multipolar?

POLITICS

Traditionally the study of politics has been the study of how governments work, focusing on topics including elections, parliaments, political leadership, administrative bureaucracy, and the exercise of coercive power within a given geographical territory. But in fact politics occurs at all levels, from the formation of labour unions to local government, from the workings of national governments and trans-national organisations to the relationships between states—as in 'geopolitics' or 'global politics'. Indeed, when feminists in the 1960s coined the slogan, 'the personal is political', they were saying that even a family unit raises political questions, about 'who does what?', 'who gets what?' and 'who decides?'. Such understandings help us to realise that politics is far more expansive than simple questions of how elections are won and lost.

When ordinary people talk of 'my politics' they often mean something like their core beliefs about how things should be run or their 'political ideology'—be that left-right, authoritarian-libertarian, multiculturalist-nationalist, multilateralist-unilateralist, progressive-conservative, consumption-preservation. In fact, the political universe is filled with a vast array of objects and entities, and encompasses everything from political speeches, political parties and political ideologies to political corruption and even political assassinations. Moreover, politics is becoming endlessly fragmented into different kinds of politics based on the particular interests and experiences of different social groupings—think of 'class politics', 'racial politics', 'gender politics', and 'the politics of identity'.

Many see politics as the sum of all formal and informal processes by which those seeking to partake of power conduct their seeking. Others describe politics as simply another name for public discourse (including in the media and on the Internet) about who should wield power and what they should do. There is also a lively debate within democratic theory between those who see the politics of deeply divided states as essentially deliberative and those who see it as agonistic: this debate raises questions of the desirability of conflict and/or consensus within political life.

Turning to politicians, whilst at the start of the 20th century Max Weber wrote about professional politics 'as a vocation', today some political scientists claim that we live in an 'anti-political age', meaning that levels of trust in, and approval of, politicians has reached an all-time low. This includes a rejection of the very idea of professional politicians. In the 2016 US presidential race, for example, Donald Trump said of Hillary Clinton that she had 'the wrong kind of experience'. Taken to an extreme we might even end up accepting Plato's assertion that 'Only those who do not seek power are qualified to hold it.' Indeed, in ordinary language we sometimes use the term 'political' as a derogatory remark—as in 'I stopped going along to my cake baking club because it was all getting very political'. But notice that even articulating these views about the evils of politics seems to be a political act of sorts. Indeed, Aristotle believed that politics is a 'master science' because human beings are innately political and because politics pervades all aspects of human activity.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Is identity politics a good thing?

Q2: Are human beings naturally political?

POLICY

A policy is a course of action, a plan, or a strategy. In politics we generally discuss public policies – those policies which are created by public authorities (such as various forms of government), although policies can also exist privately – for example, policies at workplaces or in organisations from cricket clubs to trade unions. Public policy refers to actions taken (or not taken) by governments in order to accomplish certain goals or aims. It is typically employed to describe domestic policy within the state, as the counter-part to foreign policy in which the state projects itself outwards.

Often you hear of policy talked about in relation to a particular sector, such as health policy or education policy. We study policies, and the process of making policies, to try to make sense of the decisions public authorities make – who, what, where, why, and how. Although the word implies coherence, policies can be, and are often, messy, and can be difficult to identify.

? THINK ON...

Q1: In what ways are policies and power connected?

Q2: How democratic is public policy-making?

POSTCOLONIALISM

Postcolonialism means different things in different contexts. The term can refer to the historical period in the aftermath of Western colonialism. It can also refer to the recognition of the effects of subordination and political domination on states and people subject to colonial governance; and, indeed, to the study of the ongoing effects and legacies of colonialism in politics, culture and society.

The first understanding – of postcolonialism as an event in history – refers to processes that largely took place in the second half of the twentieth century. It refers, specifically, to the dismantling of colonial empires and the recognition of the right to self-determination, which was formally adopted in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in 1966. Countries that were European colonies became independent at this time, including India in 1947, Ghana in 1957, Algeria 1962 and so on. These countries became effectively 'post'-colonial at this moment of new sovereignty

In political theory, postcolonialism refers to the academic study of the political and cultural effects of colonialism. Postcolonial theorists seek to recognise the embedded effects of subordination, and to deconstruct and destabilise Western-dominated epistemologies and ideologies that are founded on the exploitation and subordination of non-Western peoples. In this sense, the term refers to the material, ideational, legal and spatial legacies of colonialism: approaching postcolonialism not as a switch but a process of becoming.

Viewed thus, a country and a people cannot simply revert to some idea of how they would have been had they not been colonised; postcoloniality means, for example, dealing with the foreign systems of law set up in that country, and coming to terms with the terrible residues of racial discrimination. It also involves attempting to put in place new policies of development that hope to undo centuries of exploitation. How do these countries redress, for example, the injustices of stolen land that became part of liberal economic markets with new owners protected in law? This problem is at the centre of debate in contemporary South Africa. Or what happens to claims by indigenous peoples of North America who continue to live on reserves? As this suggests, postcolonialism is aligned to the study of race and ethnicity, diasporic politics and transnationalism.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Should former colonial powers be held accountable for historical injustices, and – if so – how?

Q2: Given the ongoing effects of colonialism evident in racism and ongoing exploitation, will the process of decolonisation ever be complete?

POSTMODERNISM

Postmodernism is a body of thought that ranges across disciplines from politics, philosophy and sociology to literary and critical theory. It is also a set of creative and artistic practices characterised by the rejection of formal norms and the re-purposing of aesthetic materials to new contexts, often in unusual combination. Finally, postmodernism may also be used as a form of historical periodisation: to describe the time after modernity.

Postmodernism can best be summarised in the French sociologist Jean Francios Lyotard's formulation as a "scepticism to all metanarratives". This is the suggestion that we should be very cautious about accepting arguments that claim to represent the whole or absolute truth of the world. This would include certain variants of Marxism, religious fundamentalism, scientism, liberal universalism, fascism, patriarchal gender orders, and so on. Instead, we should look at the underlying assumptions of such narratives or stories about the world, and accept that while some of these ideas might be useful (while others are simply dangerous), no single unifying perspective can adequately describe the world or organise human experience of it.

A deeply contested and often polarising term, Postmodernism is frequently mischaracterised as a rejection of "truth" and an amoral belief that anything goes, a critique usually emanating from those who are heavily invested in a single world view. Undoubtedly, some proponents of postmodernism have taken problematic "anything goes" positions, but this is usually simply poor scholarship. More often, the arguments made against postmodernism on these grounds are the result of mis-readings (or deliberate, oppositional misunderstandings) of complex theoretical work.

? THINK ON...

Q1: What are the dominant metanarratives in contemporary politics? how might a sceptical approach allow us to see things differently?

Q2: Why might postmodern perspectives be seen as so threatening to particular groups of political actors?

POVERTY

Poverty can be divided broadly into two categories: relative poverty and absolute poverty. Relative poverty refers to the poorness of one individual or group of individuals in comparison to others, whereas absolute poverty describes those who fall below a given universal standard. These are both typically defined by factors such as lack of financial wealth, inadequate access to satisfactory nutrition and healthcare, and the absence of a range of opportunities and experiences – including those that might facilitate social mobility.

Relative poverty rates are growing throughout most countries globally, as a function of protracted neoliberal fiscal and economic policies and the resulting increase in disparity. This is illustrated, for example, by the fact that in the United States – the World's wealthiest country – the richest 1 per cent of the population own more than 40 per cent of the wealth while the bottom 80 percent share less than 7 per cent. Absolute poverty is, conversely, being reduced, particularly in Asia, but according to the UN's own statistics, even if the income threshold is set as low as US$2.25 per day, almost one third of the World's population still lives in absolute poverty.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Why is poverty so uneven, both within states and across the international system?

Q2: How should we address relative and absolute poverty: locally, nationally, internationally?

POWER

Power is a core concept in politics and international relations. It refers to the capacity to affect the actions or attitudes of others (whether people or states). Where power is located, how it is exercised, and with what consequences, are often taken to define the discipline of political science. During the 1950s and 1960s, there was an intense debate about power in the United States. Was the country dominated by a centralised military-industrial complex, or was power to be found in multiple competing groups? More contemporary debate about the idea of power has been influenced by Steven Lukes' *Power: A Radical View* (1975), in which he suggests that power has three dimensions.

The first is captured by overt conflict between rivals, in which the powerful wins. The second dimension involves a covert exercise of power, in which the powerful, among other things, set the agenda over which conflict subsequently takes place. The third dimension of power is to be detected in the capacity of the powerful to eliminate conflict by shaping people's preferences in ways that serve the interests of the powerful. Lukes' approach has itself been much discussed and criticised, with Michel Foucault's (1980) view of power as a component of all social relations, and as taking multiple forms, being one of the most canvassed alternative perspectives.

? THINK ON...

Question 1: How can you tell whether someone is being manipulated by a powerful other?

Q2: Who is the most powerful person in the UK?

PRESIDENT

President is the name of the head of state in a republic: that is, a state without a monarch and in which the people are considered to be free. The powers and functions of presidents vary. In some states, such as the Republic of Ireland, though elected by the citizens, it is a largely ceremonial role. In France the President has considerable power, including the power to appoint the prime minister, but must nevertheless work with the legislature. In the United States, however, the president is head of the executive branch of government but constrained by both the court and the legislature.

In all cases, Presidential power derives from a mixture of clear constitutional prescription and more ambiguous symbolic power. Presidents may, like monarchs, be able to cultivate an image or a persona and a legitimacy deriving from their direct election by the nation as a whole. The US Presidency, for example, has been called 'The Rhetorical Presidency' in reference to the fact that it involves delivering a lot of key speeches (the Inauguration, the State of the Union address, speeches on occasions of national mourning). These are occasions when the President may represent the nation to itself and seek to shape the sense of purpose or direction of the country. In the twentieth-century and today, when mass media are such an important part of the organization of a political community, the power of a President to project themselves onto the national stage – performing a role that excites, entertains or energises people – may be the most important power of all.

? THINK ON...

Q1: What advantages does a presidential system have over constitutional monarchy such as that found in the United Kingdom?

Q2: Is symbolic authority as real as legal/constitutional authority?

PRESSURE GROUPS

Pressure groups are organisations that seek to influence public policy. Unlike political parties, they typically promote a single cause or focus on a narrow issue area. Pressure groups are sometimes distinguished from interest groups on the grounds that the latter promote the interests of its members (for instance trade unions or professional associations such as the Royal College of Nursing), whereas the former may act on behalf of others (perhaps children or animals). A distinction is also made on the basis of the group's proximity to power. Pressure groups can be seen to stand outside or apart from the political process, whereas interest groups tend to operate from within.

The study of pressure groups has been closely allied to the study and legitimation of democracy in complex, industrialised societies. It has been suggested that pressure groups allow a diverse society to register its multiple needs and demands. The competition of these groups for influence and resources provides for the effective expression of 'the people'. Critics have, though, argued that pressure groups do not emerge in every case that there is a cause that needs or deserves to be registered. Not all interests have their associated pressure group, with groups like the elderly and the unemployed losing out to those who might have the money, time and expertise to form a pressure group.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Why might democracy be better served by pressure groups than political parties?

Q2: Why might some issues, causes or interests never reach the political agenda if we rely on pressure groups alone to bring them to attention?

R.

RACE

Historically, race referred to the ways in which human beings were organised into groups based on a set of similar physical characteristics. We've moved on from essentialist and biologically determinist understandings of race and instead, contemporary definitions emphasise the social over the 'biological'. Indeed, when we look at some historical 'biological' accounts, what we're often seeing is social history. For example, it was once argued that race was 'genetic', and geneticists developed a theory of racial taxonomies at the level of DNA. It is now commonly understood that there are no concrete genetic boundaries and that there is more variation within racial groups than there is across racial groups.

For Achille Mbembe, a distinguished Cameroonian philosopher, the birth of the racial subject – and therefore of Blackness – is linked to the history of capitalism: the Black slave of the 16th century became the first racial subject. Through this process, the human was commodified as s/he was sold to work on the plantations, generating profit for a new form of transnational capitalism. Race was invented as a category to disqualify some people from humanity, judging them as different, 'lesser', childlike, savage. Race stripped those people of their human subjectivity and transformed them into objects to be bought and sold on the market.

While race might have begun as a creation – as a fiction of Europeans at the service of mercantilism, colonialism and imperialism – it was certainly made real. Race, today, exists for us as an invented category that we re-enact in our everyday lives, politics and policies. Systemic racism evolves as we – individuals and societies – adopt and accept these classifications. We often partake in this process even if we do not consider ourselves racist. This is because systemic racism is often veiled, hidden in calculations, performed through language, text, symbolism that we have to learn to render visible and think critically about. Consequently, contemporary definitions of race recognise that racial identities (including whiteness) are very much a product of social and political interests and norms, and reinforced through everyday practices.

? THINK ON...

Q1: How does racism manifest in contemporary society?

Q2: Is it possible to be non-racist?

RADICALISATION

'Radicalisation' is a relatively new term, and refers to the processes that lead an individual toward engagement in either political extremism or terrorism. Such processes are often seen to have a personal dimension – in that an individual may be susceptible to the influence of extremist ideas – perhaps because of their own life experiences; and a social aspect in that radicalisation is often seen to take place in specific settings such as prisons or places of worship, involving other individuals such as charismatic preachers or friendship groups. Ideas of radicalisation have become increasingly prominent in Western states and underpin counter-radicalisation initiatives such as the UK Prevent Programme.

The term 'radicalisation' is a controversial one for several reasons. First, the scientific evidence that such a process exists is very limited, leading to considerable academic debate about its value as a framework for explaining the causes of terrorism. Second, the term has tended to be used primarily to describe 'Islamist' or 'jihadist' forms of extremism – although it is increasingly employed in the context of the far right. This potentially obscures the political – rather than religious – nature of such groups and their motives, and risks contributing to the stigmatisation of Islam or Muslims as particularly vulnerable to political violence. Third, the term is used in quite different ways, and the distinctions between radicalisation, terrorism and extremism are seldom clear-cut. And, fourth, many critics are sceptical about counter-radicalisation programmes which have increasingly permeated other areas of social life (such as education, healthcare and community cohesion), and may contribute to the alienation of individuals and communities.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Is terrorism a product of radicalisation?

Q2: How – if at all – should governments try to counter radicalisation?

REALISM (INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS)

Realism in International Relations (IR) assumes that nation states are embedded within an anarchic system within which each state seeks to further its national interests. Anarchy – in this sense – is the opposite of hierarchy, rather than the opposite of order. Realism can be divided into classical and structural varieties. Classical Realism assumes that human nature is essentially 'bad' – or at least Machiavellian – causing leaders to compete for military and economic power with which to wage war against other states. Because of this, international politics tends to be conflictual and characterised by the permanent possibility of war.

Structural Realism (or Neorealism) argues that the international system is governed primarily not by the agency of leaders, but by the structure of the system itself. In response to this structure – and the lack of any overarching authority constraining and protecting state behaviour - states may seek to form alliances or rivalries. If an enduring balance of power can be found, as it was in the Cold War, the international system can be stabilised, at least temporarily. The Neoclassical strand combines views of the two above perspectives, and defensive and offensive versions of each school within Realism. These are more and less optimistic, respectively, about avoiding conflict in the longer-term. Despite criticisms, Realism remains a core IR theory, and Realpolitik tends to dominate national policymaking.

THINK ON...

Q1: How relevant is realism as a theory of international relations today?

Q2: Can realism account for the global impact of political ideas and ideologies?

REGIONALISM

Regionalism is the tendency for nation-states or groups of states to co-operate, or even integrate, voluntarily. This may involve forming regional International Organisations in order to achieve outcomes together which would not be possible by working independently. Regionalism is based on the premise that entities which are located in a particular regional area are likely to share similar types of economic, social and political development, history, geographical and climatic conditions, economic and security needs and concerns. The success of a regional International Organisation is determined by the size of the regional area it occupies, the geographical location and the proximity of the constituent parts.

So, for a potentially optimal regional IO, the region concerned should be large, rich and diverse enough to secure a good standard of living for its members, and without undue dependence on outsiders. Regionalism can take many forms including political consultation bodies such as the Council of Europe, Free Trade Areas such as NAFTA, and Monetary Unions such as the European Union. Regionalism is sometimes perceived as promoting globalisation, but more often than not, it is perceived as a defence against globalisation, giving states an opportunity to stem globalisation by recouping collectively, some of the state powers eroded by globalisation.

THINK ON...

Q1: What makes the European Union a more successful project in regionalism than the British Commonwealth?

Q2: Is regionalism an exercise in enhancing protectionism or competition between different parts of the world?

RELIGION AND POLITICS

The Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, which brought to an end the Thirty Years Wars, established the principle of 'cuius regio , eius religio' – who's the region his the religion – whereby rulers determined the religious belief of their citizens. While this established the principle of national sovereignty it also lay the seeds for an eventual separation of religion from the public sphere into the private – making it a matter for one's personal life rather than to determine or influence political decision making. Religion in western Europe became largely ceremonial and called upon to support policy decisions determined by secular leaders. The Enlightenment encouraged rational thinking and religion was subsequently marginalised as irrational or at least inappropriate within a policy making context.

The secular – or non-religious – nature of much Western political thinking was largely uncontested throughout much of the 20th Century until a sudden awakening that for much of the rest of the world religion still plays an intrinsic part in day to day lived realities. The emergence of a highly politicised Christian Right in the United States in the late 1970s in response to the legalisation of abortion and challenges to traditional values, the Iranian Revolution in 1979, violent responses in the United Kingdom to the publication of Salman Rushdie's book *Satanic Verses*, and the events of 9/11, all obliged Western politicians and academics to recognise the continuing relevance of religion in politics and international relations. Religion at one level involves belief systems, customs and practices. At another level it is about how those shared beliefs and practices work in a lived experience and, for politics and international relations students, how this then impacts on political or global political processes and actions from terrorism to peace-making, and elections to activism.

THINK ON...

Q1: To what extent should religion be kept out of the public sphere?

Q2: Can religious actors make a positive contribution to solving disputes?

S.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY

Representative democracy is form of political rule involving the election of some persons by other persons. Those who are elected contribute to and make decisions in legislatures, such as Parliament in the UK or Congress in the USA, on behalf of those who elect them. Representative democracy is frequently contrasted with direct democracy; an alternative form of political rule that dispenses with elected representatives altogether.

Typically, although not always, the persons elected to the legislative assemblies are members of political parties. They are widely thought of as representing the interests of those who elect them. The legislatures can consist of one or two chambers with each chamber representing a different interest, such as the House of Commons and the House of Lords in the UK, or the House of Representatives and the Senate in the USA. Some representative democracies, however, have uni-cameral assemblies, such as New Zealand and Israel.

THINK ON…

Q1: Does democracy need representatives to function?

Q2: How representative are our elected representatives?

RESPONSIBILITY TO PROTECT

Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a principle which was adopted by all the members of the United Nations in 2005. It followed a report by the same name, drafted by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, set up by the Canadian government. R2P is a commitment to take appropriate action where there are cases of crimes against humanity, war crimes, ethnic cleansing or genocide.

Traditionally, international law has recognised the sovereignty of state borders as paramount, but following the atrocities committed in Rwanda and in the former Yugoslavia in the 1990s, which saw the international community unable or reluctant to react, international norms began to shift towards recognising that humanitarian intervention is as valid as the need to protect sovereignty. International law, however, took a little longer to catch up. According to R2P where a government is unable to protect its people from atrocities, or is responsible for inflicting such atrocities, the international community has a moral obligation to intervene, via, or according to the authorisation of, the United Nations. Measures can range from humanitarian aid, diplomatic means and sanctions, to military intervention as a last resort.

THINK ON…

Q1: Why was R2P invoked in the intervention in Libya, but not in Syria?

Q2: Does any state or international organisation have the right to intervene using the R2P principle?

RIGHTS

Rights are moral, legal, or political entitlements—that is, claims that some can legitimately make on others. Rights are grounded in rules that these others must follow; every right claimed by someone corresponds to a rule that someone else is responsible for obeying. Rules that some must refrain from doing something *to* others establish negative rights, entitlements to be left alone in some way. Rules that some must do something *for* others establish positive rights, entitlements to some sort of good or service. Both individuals and groups can claim to have rights. While there is no doubt that the laws of particular states establish legal rights, there is considerable debate whether there are any natural or human rights that are valid independent of any code of law.

THINK ON…

Q1: Are there any natural human rights?

Q2: Is there something objectionable about political arguments that focus on rights rather than on their corresponding rules and responsibilities?

SECURITY

The idea of security is a key one within International Relations. The concept traditionally referred to the absence of external threats – usually the risk of war – to one very specific actor: the state. This is the idea of 'national security'. In the 1990s, an alternative concept of 'human security' was put forward to challenge the traditional understanding. Advocates of this approach argued two things. First, people – not states – should be our main focus when we think about and seek to provide security. Second, the main challenges to human security are rarely related to military power. Indeed, threats like disease pandemics, poverty, famine, and domestic violence are far more likely than war to endanger the lives and well-being of people around the world.

A more recent – 'constructivist' – challenge takes issue with both of these approaches. In this view, security is not seen to be a real condition at all. Instead, it is a label that is applied to political issues such as irregular migration or terrorism that could just as easily be understood as matters of social or criminal policy. Importantly, from this perspective, when such issues are thought of as 'security' issues, they tend to be dealt with through very exceptional responses: think detentions and treatment of prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, or curfews to deal with the Ebola pandemic. Here – in contrast to the above approaches – security is seen as a 'bad' thing because it interrupts normal political life, and not a desirable condition upon which normal life depends.

THINK ON…

Q1: Is security a good thing?

Q2: Are human and national security complementary? Does more of one lead to more of the other?

SELF-DETERMINATION

Self-determination refers to the ability of a given set of actors or citizens to determine their own political administration. It is typically realised by the formation of an independent government, which claims the right to rule over a designated geographical area, or sometimes over a particular population. Moves towards self-determination are usually driven by historical claims to a distinctive national identity or heritage, often one that existed prior to annexation, colonization or incorporation into a larger political entity. Following the break-up of the former Soviet Union, and then the break-up of the former Yugoslavia, for example, a wave of new countries were created under the banner of self-determination.

However, from Scotland to Okinawa, there are also numerous examples of unsuccessful attempts at gaining greater self-determination. At the same time, despite varying degrees of global recognition, entities such as Taiwan, Kurdistan and Shan Province (Myanmar) continue to operate largely autonomously, with a high degree of self-determination. In these cases, and many others, the right to self-determination remains a hotly contested issue, and continues to be a central cause in dozens of conflicts within the international system.

THINK ON...

Q1: What gives a given population the right to self-determination?

Q2: How might the weakening of (national) state power and the hollowing out of governments around the world affect moves towards greater self-determination?

SOCIAL MOVEMENT

The term 'social movement' refers to the coming together of diverse actors (as individuals, groups, and/or organizations) in order to bring about some form of social change. Typically, the change sought is one to make society more inclusive, democratic, equal or just. A social movement must have some duration, its organization can be formal or informal, and it may engage in diverse forms of collective action including demonstrations, sit-ins and forms of civil disobedience. Social movements are different from labour movements in that their demands may include but are not restricted to wage and working conditions improvement.

THINK ON...

Q1: Are social movements a purely contemporary phenomenon?

Q2: If you think of environmental movements, what do you think they have achieved in the past few decades?

SOVEREIGNTY

Sovereignty is a concept of political theory that can be defined as the ultimate and exclusive authority within a political community or territory. A distinction is often made between internal (or domestic) sovereignty, and external (or international) sovereignty. Domestically, the principle of 'popular sovereignty' is a core principle of modern democracies. In feudal times, the 'sovereign' was a term used to designate the King, whose authority over his subjects and legitimacy was ultimately derived directly from God. In modern democracies, sovereignty lies with the citizens who are endowed with the ability to self-govern inasmuch as they have collective and final authority over common rules.

Decisions are legitimate not because they are 'God's will', but because they represent the 'will of the people', which endows them with authority and legitimacy. Elected politicians are charged with taking decisions and making the law, but the final authority ultimately lies with the citizens, whom those politicians are supposed to represent, and to whom they are accountable. In practice, however, popular sovereignty is often limited by external constraints – such as international rules or economic forces – as well as internal constraints – such as constitutional rules and human rights.

Externally, the concept of sovereignty is closely associated with to the nation-state: the political community of people living on a territory delimited by set borders. In the modern state system which emerged in the 17th century, each state has final authority over its national territory, which it rules without interference from other states or external authorities. 'State sovereignty' is a core principle of international law. In practice however, this principle is often called into question – when a country intervenes militarily in another country for instance, or when decisions taken by one country affect other countries' ability to rule themselves.

THINK ON...

Q1: Can the people really be considered as sovereign in currently existing democracies?

Q2: Does being a sovereign state mean being free from all external interferences?

STATE

Although everyone has an idea of what the state is, and everyone encounters the state on many occasions, from using state funded services such as schools or the healthcare system, to using national roads and to paying taxes, it is an institution that is especially difficult to define. The most commonly-accepted definition is the one of German sociologist Max Weber, who famously argued that 'a compulsory political organisation with continuous operation will be called "a state" as its administrative staff successfully upholds the claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force in the enforcement of its order' (*Economy and Society: An Outline of Interpretive Sociology*, p.54). If we follow this definition, core to the nature of the state is the existence of an autonomous bureaucracy, the state administration.

The second essential feature of the state is its monopoly on the exercise of legitimate rule-making within its territory, including through violence. It is the state that makes and enforces laws, and their implementation is guaranteed by the judicial and police systems, while the maintenance of order and security is guaranteed by the army. Only the state is legitimate in using violence to preserve social order. The state is defined in opposition to 'society', the public in opposition to the private. However, where the state stops and society starts is blurry and the object of theoretical disputes. Theorists also disagree about the functions of the state and whose interests it represents.

In today's world, states rule virtually the entirety of the planet. Yet, for most of human history the state as an institution didn't exist, at least in its modern forms. For instance, societies of hunter-gathers can be considered stateless societies. The emergence of the state is usually dated from the transition from the nomadic subsistence of hunter-gatherers to settled agrarian societies, with their complex agricultural systems, religions, and armies.

The modern state however, as an institution claiming sovereignty as the ultimate political authority over a bounded territory, is often dated to 16th century Europe, with the development of 'absolutist states' endowed with bureaucracies, taxation capacities, standing armies, clearly delineated borders, and diplomatic relations with other states. From the late 18th century onwards, states have been associated with emerging national cultural communities, sharing common languages and cultural norms, called 'nation-states'. More recently, with the development of welfare systems (providing healthcare, pensions and so forth) in the 20th century, the term 'welfare-state' has been coined to characterise those new state forms.

THINK ON...

Q1: Is the state the same thing as the government?

Q2: Is the state a form of political organisation worth preserving?

SUPREME COURT

A supreme court is the highest court within a nation-state and many, but by no means all states have one. The role of a supreme court can vary from state to state often due to whether a state follows the common law tradition (for example, the USA and the UK) or the civil law tradition (for example, France and Germany). In the common law tradition, the role of a supreme court is to act as the final court of appeal or court of last resort in hearing appeals on cases that have passed through trial courts lower in the hierarchy.

One of the best-known supreme courts is the United States Supreme Court, the findings of which are binding on all lower courts. For example, the court's decision in the case of Roe v Wade involving a woman's right to an abortion was binding on all lesser US courts. The picture is more complex in the civil law tradition where, in some instances, court decisions are not binding on lower courts.

THINK ON...

Q1: Can the activities of supreme courts be thought of as political?

Q2: Could we do without supreme courts?

T.

TECHNOLOGY

Technology and technical change have been at the centre of politics in the modern era. The creation and management of systems of transport, for example, have long dominated the political agenda, as have debates about nuclear weapons and nuclear power. More recently, it has been the internet, and its implications for political practice and policy, that has highlighted the importance of technology to politics. But to observe technology's presence and importance in politics is only the beginning of the story. A central question is how politics and technology are linked. One answer draws on the image of Frankenstein's monster. Here, technology is seen as a human creation that humans themselves no longer control. It controls them. At best, they adapt to the 'demands' of technology; at worst, they are crushed by it. A quite different answer is given by those who see technological change as driven by social and political needs and interests. Technology serves those with power, who use it to further their particular goals. Between these two answers sits the view that technology is both driven by, and drives, politics.

THINK ON...

Q1: Does the increasing use of artificial intelligence suggest that technology now dictates to us, rather than the other way around? If so, is this a problem?

Q2: Does control of technology require a greater role for experts, and a lesser role for politicians and the people?

TERRORISM

Terrorism typically refers to the use of violence by non-state actors – such as the Provisional Irish Republican Army, al Qaeda or the Red Army Faction – in order to influence an audience in some way: perhaps voters, political leaders, or potential recruits. It is this reduction of victims to their instrumental value that makes terrorism, for many people, so distinct from other forms of violence (such as war or violent crime) – and so reprehensible. Opponents of this dominant understanding argue that states, too, can commit acts of terror (for instance in the fire-bombing of Dresden during World War II), and that failing to acknowledge this is politically and academically problematic.

The understanding of terrorism as a non-state activity and as intrinsically wrong is a relatively recent one. Previous uses of this word – from its emergence in the French revolution, to its adoption by nineteenth century anarchists – lacked these connotations. This historical transformation of meaning is one reason why terrorism has been so notoriously difficult to define. Another is that the term's powerful associations mean it is so open to political abuse. No-one, today, self identifies as a terrorist. Instead, we tend to reserve the term for the actions of our enemies. As the famous adage puts it: 'one person's terrorist is another person's freedom fighter'.

Traditionally, the academic study of terrorism has focused on a small number of core questions: what is terrorism (the question of definition); what causes terrorism (the question of causation) and how can we prevent/counter/address the threat of terrorism (the question of response). The recent emergence of 'critical terrorism studies' has seen an attempt to challenge this paradigm by asking more explicitly political questions around how certain types of violence get thought of as terrorism (while others do not), and why we believe terrorism constitutes such a serious threat, when the statistics tend to suggest otherwise.

THINK ON...

Q1: Can states commit acts of terrorism?

Q2: Is terrorism worse than other forms of violence?

U.

UNITED NATIONS

The United Nations is the most global International Organisation, with 193 member-states. It was founded in 1945, during the closing stages of WWII with a commitment, "to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war, which twice in our lifetime has brought untold sorrow to mankind". Its rule-book is contained in its Charter and the Universal Declaration on Human Rights. Its headquarters are in New York, and its main bodies are: The Secretariat (and Secretary General), the General Assembly (1 member - 1 vote), the Security Council (15 members of which 5 are permanent with veto power: the US, China, Russia, UK, France, and 10 are non-permanent, rotating biennially), the Economic and Social Council, the Trusteeship Council, and the International Court of Justice, as well as a plethora of agencies such as UNICEF, WHO, UNESCO, ILO, UNHCR, and the FAO.

The UN forges dialogue, peace, security, social and economic development and environmental protection, and strives to eradicate poverty and disease. Contrary to popular belief that most of the UN work revolves around peace-keeping and peace-making, three times as much of its budget, contributed to by all member nations according to ability, is spent on development and humanitarian aid programmes, such as the UNDP. All regional International Organisations, (NATO, EU, etc.), recognise the primacy of the UN, and legitimacy of their own military interventions requires a Resolution by its primary decision-making body, the United Nations Security Council. The structure, role, representativeness and effectiveness of the United Nations in today's world re constant subjects of controversy in international relations.

THINK ON...

Q1: Can the united nations enforce its decisions/resolutions?

Q2: How can the united nations' security council be reformed to better reflect today's world?

W.

WAR

War is a form of organised violent conflict involving two or more actors. Those actors might be states – in the context of inter-state wars, such as World War I or the first Gulf War. Or, they might include a range of non-state actors such as communities, criminal groups, terrorist organisations, or private security corporations.

The causes of war are heavily contested within the subject of International Relations, and were nicely summarised according to three levels in Kenneth Waltz's book, *Man, The State and War*. Thus, on one level, war might be seen as an inevitable outcome of human nature or desires. Alternatively, the origins of war might be found in how we organise political life: democratic states, for instance, are sometimes seen to be less warlike than others, at least under certain conditions. Or, we might put the blame on the international system which encourages states to fear – and perhaps pre-empt - potential rivals. Although war is typically viewed negatively – and the discipline of International Relations emerged, in large part, as an attempt to explain and therefore prevent it – war, or the threat of war, is often seen as interesting because it has been so vital in shaping social, political, and cultural life. This includes through inspiring technological innovation, as with the emergence of the internet; or facilitating social change as with the legacy of World War I on gender relations in countries like Britain.

? THINK ON...

Q1: What, in your view, are the main causes of war?

Q2: Will we ever see an end to war?

WORLD ORDER

The notion of 'world order' encompasses attempts to identify the very broadest ordering principles of political life. It is thus highly contested, and a variety of perspectives are possible based upon the political and intellectual commitments of those attempting to define it. Henry Kissinger, in his book *On World Order* (2015) argues that, at its broadest, world order may describe the concept held by a civilization about the nature of just arrangements and distributions of power applicable to the entire world. In practice such a definition would always be contested by the diverse cultures and civilizations that exist, and therefore no universally held definition of world order exists in this sense. The closest we have today to a form of world order is founded upon the generally accepted principle of the norm of territorial state sovereignty. This allows for multiple and diverse forms of political life to exist within the universally accepted framework of state independence, and provides a basic framework for peaceful co-existence. In this sense, a form of world order is maintained despite the absence of any ordering authority.

? THINK ON...

Q1: What principle do you think should inform world order?

Q2: What threats and challenges are there to the current form of world order?

WORLD TRADE ORGANISATION (WTO)

The WTO emerged as a fully-fledged International Financial Institution in 1995, succeeding the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) which had existed since 1947. Following the GATT model of regular conferences, the WTO members' ministers meet at least once every two years, while their ambassadors meet regularly, to discuss matters relating to promoting free trade and free competition, and eradicating protectionism.

The WTO is the flagship of neo-liberal economics and globalisation and has a dispute settlement procedure for members to refer transgressions to free trade, and to resolve matters before resorting to trade wars. The WTO has 164 members, with China joining in 2001 after significant reforms to liberalise its economy. The WTO and globalisation are frequently criticised – including via demonstrations like those of the Anti-Globalisation Movement accompanying its meetings – for perpetuating the circulation of the world's wealth among its richest members, while poor and developing countries are effectively "frozen out" by the uneven playing field and hostility to aid policies as contravening free competition. Several disputes handled by the WTO have become notorious, initially between the WTO's biggest economic players, the EU (which is a full member), the US and Japan, such as the "Banana dispute" and the dispute regarding GM foods.

? THINK ON...

Q1: Do regional trade agreements comply with or contravene WTO rules?

Q2: Could a wto settlement have averted the trade war between USA, EU, and China, over steel tariffs?
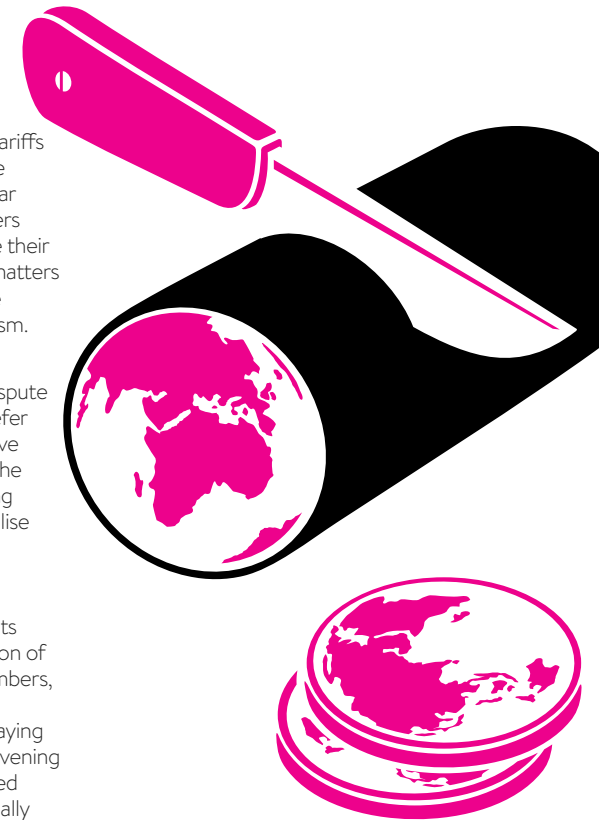
DEGREES IN THE SCHOOL OF POLITICS, PHILOSOPHY, LANGUAGE AND COMMUNICATION STUDIES

BA Politics
BA Politics and Digital Cultures
BA International Relations
BA International Relations and Politics
BA International Relations and Modern Languages
BA International Relations and Modern History
BA Broadcast and Multimedia Journalism
BA Culture, Literature and Politics
BA Society, Culture and Media
BA Politics (with a Foundation Year)

Visit our course pages for more information

*www.uea.ac.uk/political-social-international-studies/
undergraduate-degrees*

CONNECT WITH US

twitter.com/Politics_UEA
facebook.com/SchoolOfPoliticalSocialAndInternationalStudies
Visit our Eastminster blog www.ueapolitics.org

CONTACT

T +44 (0) 1603 592149
E ppl.schooloffice@uea.ac.uk

TEF Gold