

A List of Mostly Used Political Terms

abdication

voluntary resignation from office by a queen or king. The most famous abdication in recent history came in 1936, when Britain's Edward VIII abdicated the throne because the British establishment would not permit him to marry Wallis Simpson, an American divorcee.

abrogation

the repeal of a law, treaty, or contract, either by mutual agreement or unilaterally.

absolutism

theory of absolute government. Power can be vested in an individual (as a dictator), an office (as a monarchy), a party, or a government administration. The government is not restricted legally by any other government agency. Thus absolute government can lead to absolute power vested in one individual-e.g., a dictatorship.

academic freedom

the right of a professor at a university to pursue his research and publish his findings, whether popular or controversial, without political or any other kind of pressure being put on him or her.

accord

a diplomatic agreement that does not have the same binding force as a treaty, but is often treated as such, e.g. the Camp David accord signed between Israel and Egypt at Camp David in 1978; the accord between Israel and Jordan in 1994. The term can also refer to any agreement reached by two conflicting parties.

accountability

the extent to which people are held responsible for their word and actions. For example, an employee is accountable to his boss; a congressperson to his constituents, and a U.S. president to the people as a whole.

acculturation

the process by which people adapt to or adopt a culture that is not their own.

Achilles' heel

a defect, weakness, or point of vulnerability. Based on the Greek myth of Achilles, a warrior in ancient Greece. While being dipped in the waters of immortality, he was held by his heel thus making this the one part of his body that was mortal. He was eventually killed in the Trojan War by a wound in the heel.

acid test

a crucial test of the value of something or someone. A politician might face the acid test of his popularity in an election. The term is also used in accounting as a measure of a company's abilities to pay immediate liabilities.

act of state

the actions of a government for which no individual can be held accountable.

activism

getting involved in political affairs, by such actions as running for political office, taking part in demonstrations, getting support for issues. Often used to refer to the activities of grass-roots protest movements, as in animal rights activists, etc.

adjournment

the suspension of business for a specified time.

adjudication

the hearing and deciding of a legal case in a court of law.

administration

the management of institutional or governmental affairs; a term for the government itself and its policy-makers; as in the Clinton administration; the period in which a government holds office; as in the Persian Gulf war took place during President Bush's administration.

adversary system

the system of law in which a case is argued by two opposing sides: a prosecutor who tries to prove that the defendant is guilty and a defender, who argues for the defendant's innocence. The case is then decided by an impartial judge or a jury. The U.S. and Great Britain operate under the adversary system.

aegis

any power or influence that protects or shields, as when nations take part in peackeeping operations under the aegis of the United Nations, or humanitarian missions under the aegis of the Red Cross.

affidavit

a declaration in writing signed and sworn to under oath.

affirmative action

the giving of preferential treatment to women and minorities in business and education to redress the effects of past discrimination. Affirmative action began in the 1960s; it has benefited hundreds of thousands of minorities and helped in the creation of an African-American middle-class. The number of women in professional and managerial jobs has also increased considerably as a result of affirmative action. However, during the 1990s affirmative action has become a contentious issue. While the bulk of minorities and civil rights leaders still support it, many conservatives claim that it amounts to "reverse discrimination." Supreme Court decisions in 1995 limited the scope of affirmative action programs in business and education. In 1997, California banned preferential treatment for minorities or women in state hiring practices.

affluence

wealth or riches.

affluent

wealthy; an affluent society is one in which there is an abundance of material or consumer goods. The term affluent society was popularized by economist John Kenneth Galbraith in 1964, and it is often used to describe the U.S. and other flourishing Western societies.

agenda

things to be done. Often used to describe political platforms, as in the Republican (or Democratic) agenda, meaning the policies each party hopes to pursue and enact.

aggregate demand

the total demand for goods and services in an economy, including demands for consumer goods and investment goods, the demands of local and central government, and of other countries for exports.

aggregate supply

the total supply of goods and services in an economy, including imports and exports, that is available to meet aggregate demand.

aggression

applied to belligerent actions by one state against another; as in Iraq committed an act of aggression when it invaded Kuwait in 1990.

agitation

in a political sense, refers to keeping an issue or a debate constantly before the public; as in there was considerable agitation for political reform in China in the late 1980s. Usually used to refer to opposition to the status quo (in communist countries, those who campaigned for human rights would often be referred to as agitators by the government.)

agitprop

originally set up as the Department of Agitation and Propaganda by the Central Committee of the Communist Party of the USSR. Later usage came to be more general, involving activities that encouraged acceptance of left-wing ideology.

agrarian

relating to land or agriculture.

ahistorical

unrelated to history.

aide-de-camp

an officer who serves as confidential assistant and secretary to a higher ranking officer, such as a general.

alien

a visitor or resident in a nation of which he or she is not a citizen.

allegiance

joining together in pursuit of mutual interests; as, the alliance of the U.S., Britain, and the Soviet Union defeated the Nazis in World War II.

alliance

joining together in pursuit of mutual interests; as, the alliance of the U.S., Britain, and the Soviet Union defeated the Nazis in World War II. The term can also refer to domestic politics, as an alliance of liberal interest groups is fighting to preserve affirmative action policies against conservative opposition.

altruism

unselfish concern for the welfare of others.

ambassador

the highest ranking diplomatic officer, who acts as personal representative of one state to another.

amendment

a change in a document made by adding, substituting or omitting a certain part. The U.S. constitution has 26 amendments, adopted after the original ratification of the constitution. Amendment can also refer to a change in a bill while it is being considered in a legislature.

amnesty

an act by which the state pardons political or other offenders, usually as a group. In 1977, for example, President Carter granted an amnesty to all Vietnam draft evaders. Amnesties are often used as a gesture of political reconciliation. In 1990, the ruling Sandinistas in Nicaragua declared an amnesty for over a thousand political prisoners as a prelude to a general election. Amnesties also sometimes occur after a change of government or regime.

anarchism

a doctrine that advocates the abolition of organized authority. Anarchists believe that all government is corrupt and evil. Anarchism was a force in nineteenth century Russia, associated with Prince Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) and Mikhail Bakunin (1814-76). Types of anarchism range from pacifism to violent revolution. American President William McKinley was assassinated by anarchists in 1901. However, anarchism has in general not been a prominent force in American political history. ("Anarchism- a doctrine that advocates the abolition of organized authority. Anarchists believe that not only is all government corrupt and evil, but also that any institution based on hierarchy or power is equally corrupt (e.g., religion, the family, etc.) While most often anti-capitalist, there are pro-capitalist strains. Anarchist theory was developed in 19th century Europe, largely by the Russians Prince Peter Kropotkin (1842-1921) and Mikhail Bakunin (1841-76) and the Frenchman Pierre-Joseph Proudhon. (1809-1865).

anarchy

the absence of government; disorder, chaos in a society.

annexation

the act by which one state takes possession of another state or territory, usually a smaller one, without the consent of the party being taken over. For example, in 1938 German troops invaded Austria and annexed it. The citizens of Austria thereby became subjects of Germany.

anthropology

the study of humankind; often used to refer only to the study of primitive peoples.

Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty (ABM)

a landmark arms control agreement signed in 1972 by the Soviet Union and the U.S., this treaty limited antiballistic missiles to two sites of 100 antiballistic missile launchers in each country. In 1974 this was reduced to one site.

anti-clericalism

opposition to the influence of organized religion in state affairs. The term was applied particularly to the influence of the Catholic religion in political affairs.

anti-communism

opposition to communism. Anti-communism was the defining mark of U.S. foreign policy during the Cold War, which sought to check Soviet expansion around the globe. In domestic politics, being seen as "tough on communism" was often a litmus test for American politicians; anything less was to court electoral disaster. Anti-communism reached an extreme during the McCarthy era, in the early 1950s, when Senator Joseph McCarthy led an unscrupulous witchhunt to root out alleged communist sympathizers in U.S. government service.

anti-Semitism

hostility towards Jews. Anti-semitism is as old as Christian civilization. Jews were despised because, according to Christian belief, they had rejected Christ and continued to practice a religion that was not the true one. During the nineteenth century anti-Semitism became racial rather than religious. Jews were persecuted for being Jews, not for practising a particular religion. Anti-semitism was found throughout nineteenth century Europe, particularly in Russia, Germany, and France. Russian anti-semitism reached a peak in the period 1905-09, with an estimated 50,000 victims. But anti-Semitism reached its peak in Nazi Germany in the 1930s and 1940s. Jews were held to be inferior to what Nazis described as the Aryan master race. Jews were held as the scapegoat for all the ills suffered by the Germans. They were deprived of all their civil rights, banned from trades and professions; their property was confiscated. The persecution culminated in Adolf Hitler's "final solution," which was the attempted destruction of the entire Jewish race. Six million Jews were slaughtered in concentration camps during World War II. This was more than one-third of the Jewish population of the world. After the war anti-Semitism continued in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union, although not with anything like the intensity that it had had in Nazi Germany. See also Holocaust.

anti-trust laws

federal and state laws designed to restrict monopolistic business practices that interfere with free trade. These are thought necessary to protect the public interest (from price-fixing, for example.)

apolitical

not concerned with politics. The term might be used to describe someone who does not care to vote, or to a nonpartisan organization. Fast Times is an apolitical newsmagazine, in that it is not affiliated with any political party.

apologetics

a branch of theology that deals with the reasoned defense of Christianity.

apologist

someone who writes or speaks in defence of a belief, faith, doctrine. If someone wrote in defense of the Vietnam War, for example, he would be an apologist for that war.

appeasement

giving in to unreasonable demands or threats out of weakness or stupidity. In political discourse appeasement has a very negative connotation. It harks back to the buildup to World War II, when Britain and France did nothing to check German rearmament and aggression, particularly the Nazi occupation of the Sudetenland in Czechoslovakia in 1938. Since World War II Western politicians of all stripes have done everything possible to avoid having the term applied to their actions or policies in the international arena.

appropriation

money used to pay for government-approved expenditures.

arbitrary

derived from opinion, random choice, or chance. When people speak of an arbitrary decision they usually mean an unfair one, one that is not based on logic, standard rules, or accepted customs.

arbitration

settlement of labor disputes in which each side agrees to accept the decision of an arbitrator, who is a kind of judge appointed because of his acceptability to both sides. Sometimes the arbitrator may be a group, or a panel, rather than an individual.

archives

the place where public records and documents are kept, and also the documents themselves.

aristocracy

a government that is controlled by a small ruling class. Also refers to that class itself, sometimes called simply the upper class. The aristocracy may owe its position to wealth, social position, or military power, or another form of influence or training. These attributes are usually inherited.

armistice

ending of hostilities; as in the armistice of November, 1918, marked the end of World War I.

arms control

any international agreement that limits the type and number of weapons or armed forces. Arms control played a major role in superpower politics during the 1970s and 1980s, and a number of nuclear arms control agreements were signed by the United States and the Soviet Union. These were the Anti-ballistic Missile Treaty (1972) the First Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (1972), the Second Strategic Arms Limitation Treaty (1979), the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (1987), the First Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (1991) and the Second Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty (1993). In 1994, the U.S. had about 14,900 nuclear weapons, down from the record number of 30,000 in 1967, and the Russians had about 29,000. See also disarmament.

arraignment

a court hearing in a criminal case during which the defendant is informed of his or her rights and is required to plead guilty or not guilty.

Association of Southeast Asian Nations (

promotes economic cooperation amongst member countries which include: Brunei, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. ASEAN also encourages cultural development, promotes peace and stability in southeast Asia, and cooperates with other international organizations. The headquarters is in Jakarta, Indonesia.

atavism

reversion to an earlier type; resemblance to remote ancestors.

Attorney General

the highest legal officer in the United States, who heads the Justice Department, and is chief legal advisor to the president. Each state also has an attorney general.

austerity

severity or harshness. Often used to describe economic conditions; as, the Polish people are undergoing a period of austerity as the economy makes a transition from communism to capitalism.

autarchy

political self-rule; complete independence, particularly economic self-sufficiency, in which through government controls a nation's economy (or a group of nations) is isolated from the rest of the world. During the Cold War the Soviet bloc practised economic autarchy, trading only within itself.

authoritarian

a form of government in which a large amount of authority is invested in the state, at the expense of individual rights. Often power in authoritarian systems is centered on a small group of autocratic leaders Usually used in a negative sense.

autocracy

a government in which almost all power rests with the ruler. The Soviet Union under Stalin, Iraq under Saddam Hussein, are examples of autocracies.

automation

in industry, the performing of routine tasks by machines that were formerly done by humans; any manufacturing system in which many of the processes are performed automatically or controlled by machinery.

autonomy

a limited form of self-government. In the U.S. states have a certain autonomy, which allows them to make their own laws regarding local matters. In international affairs, the Palestinians have been promised autonomy in Gaza, formerly occupied by Israel. Autonomy does not usually extend to control over foreign affairs.

balance of payments

a statistical record of all the economic transactions between one country and all other countries over a given period. The transactions include goods, services (including investments) private and governmental capital, and gold movement.

balance of power

the concept that world peace is best served when no one power in any region gains sufficient military strength to dominate other states in that region. The term was first used to describe European statecraft in the nineteenth century. Keeping the balance of power on the European continent was a cornerstone of British diplomacy-the concept being that if one power or coalition of powers got too strong, the weaker states would make an alliance to combat it. Alliances therefore were not a matter of ideology but of simple pragmatism; they would continually shift to maintain the balance of power. In that way an equilibrium was maintained which discouraged wars. After World War II the idea of the balance of power was in some ways superceded by what was termed the "balance of terror," but balance of power diplomacy is always present in one form or another. For example in the 1980s, the U.S. supported Iraq in its war against Iran because it did not want Iran to become the dominant power in the region. Strengthening Iraq maintained the regional balance of power. Balance of power politics is also a factor in the U.S.'s decision to normalize relations with Vietnam. A strong Vietnam, it is believed, will act as a check on the hegemony of China in the region.

balance of terror

the phrase was coined by British prime minister Winston Churchill (1874-1965). It refers to the situation during the Cold War, when both the United States and the Soviet Union had the capacity to destroy each other with nuclear weapons. In the event of war, the destruction on both sides would have been so huge that neither side was prepared to risk starting such a conflict. A balance of terror existed. The doctrine of MAD (Mutual Assured Destruction) was a later variant of the idea of the balance of terror.

balance of trade

the balance between what a country spends on imports and what it earns by exports. A favorable balance of trade is when revenue from exports is greater than expenditure on imports.

balanced budget

a budget in which expenditure is equal to, or not greater than, income. In the 1990s, there has been growing concern about the federal budget deficit, and a proposal for a constitutional amendment that required the federal government to balance its budget annually passed the House of Representatives in 1995. It was, however, defeated in the Senate. Some economists argue that an unbalanced budget may not always be bad. Sometimes it is necessary to go into debt to ensure a stable future. For example, almost all states have laws that require them to balance their budgets each year, but they will issue bonds to finance large projects that are not within their annual budgets.

balkanization

to break up into small, hostile units, as happened to the Balkan states (Yugoslavia, Bulgaria, Greece, Albania, Turkey and Romania) after World War I. A more recent example occurred in Lebanon during the 1980s, when the country split up into many warring factions with no central authority. The term "Lebanonization" was for a while used as the equivalent of balkanization.

ballistic missiles

long-range missiles that are mechanically guided only on the first part of their flights, after which they move under the force of gravity only, i.e. they become free-falling objects as they approach their target. Ballistic missiles are accurate and fast. They can cross an entire continent in thirty minutes and have great destructive power.

ballot

a printed piece of paper on which a voter indicates his or her preference from a list of individual candidates or parties; the act of voting or the entire number of votes cast at an election.

barter

to exchange goods or commodities without the use of money.

belligerency

the term belligerent is used to refer to countries that are at war. International law grants to groups involved in an insurrection in their own country the status of belligerency, which means they are given the rights and obligations of a state to the extent that this is necessary for the prosecution of the civil war.

bias

an inclination or prejudice that prevents objective judgment of something, as in hiring practices showed a bias against minorities.

bicameral

two separate legislative chambers.

bicameral government

a government that consists of two legislative bodies rather than one. The U.S. has a bicameral system, since both the House of Representatives and the Senate have to approve a bill before it can become law. All U.S. states have bicameral legislatures, with the exception of Nebraska, which has a unicameral system.

big stick

to carry a big stick is when an individual, group, or nation backs up their demands with a credible threat of force or some other pressure that is sufficient to get the other party to accede to their wishes. The term was coined by President Theodore Roosevelt who said that a nation, like a man, should "tread softly but carry a big stick."

bilateral

involving two parties; as in a bilateral trade agreement between the U.S. and Japan.

bilateralism

joint economic or security policies between two nations. Bilateralism may refer to trade agreements, or to military treaties and alliances. It also refers to cooperation between allies.

bill of rights

any bill that lays out the rights of individuals vis a vis the state. The Bill of Rights refers to the first 10 amendments to the U.S. constitution, which lay out individual liberties. Thomas Jefferson wrote to James Madison in 1787 that "A bill of rights is what the people are entitled to against every government on earth, general or particular; and what no just government should refuse, or rest on inference."

bipartisan

in American political discourse, refers to policies that have the support of both Democrats and Republicans. Bipartisanship is often most apparent in foreign policy, in which it is considered advisable for the country to present a united front.

black consciousness

a movement that emerged in the U.S. in the 1960s, on the heels of the civil rights movement that began in the 1950s. It refers to the cultivation among blacks of their own distinct cultural identity, and the realization that being black was something they could be proud of. Black consciousness tended to reject white liberal thinking about racial issues and set out to chart an independent course for black social and political progress. Black consciousness was linked to the movement sometimes known as "black power" that also emerged in the mid-1960s. Black consciousness was also a strong force in South Africa in the 1960s and 1970s, as part of the growing opposition to the system of apartheid.

black market

illegal trading in goods, at prices that are higher than the legal or usual prices. In many countries in which consumer goods are scarce, a black market forms a kind of underground economy through which people get what they want if they are prepared to pay the price.

blacklist

in the early twentieth century, a list maintained by an employer of workers who had joined unions and thus should not be hired. Such blacklists were made illegal in 1935. Blacklist now refers to any list by any organization of individuals whom it disapproves of and

whom it may take punitive measures against. In 1984, for example, it was disclosed that the United States Information Agency had maintained a blacklist since 1981 which contained the names of liberal Democrats and others deemed unsuitable by agency officials. The list was destroyed.

bloc

a grouping of individuals, groups, or nations who work together to achieve common objectives. A bloc can be economic, military, or political in nature. For example, the countries of Eastern Europe under communism were referred to as the Eastern bloc; the 12 countries that make up the European Community form a trading bloc; a group of legislators from different parties might come together on a certain issue and form a bloc to vote on that issue.

block voting

when multiple votes are cast by one group, on behalf of its members.

blockade

any military action by sea or air designed to isolate an enemy and cut off his supply and communication lines. In 1962 the U.S. instituted a naval blockade of Cuba (although it was called a "quarantine") in response to the presence of Soviet nuclear missiles in that country.

Bolshevism

synonymous with communism. The term comes from the Russian word *bolshinstvo*, which means majority, and referred to the party lead by Lenin (leader of the communist revolution in 1917), after it won a majority of votes at the Russian Social-Democratic Party conference in 1903. Used in the West in a derogatory sense.

bourgeois

used by Marxist theorists to describe anything associated with capitalists, including manufacturers, merchants, and small business owners such as shopkeepers. These groups were the opposite of the proletariat, or working people. Bourgeois has come to refer simply to the middle classes, those between the upper classes and the working classes on the social scale. The term is often used in a derogatory sense to refer to anything conventional, respectable, etc., as in "bourgeois values."

boycott

to refuse to do business with an organization or nation, as when the Soviet Union boycotted the 1984 Olympic Games in Los Angeles. Also refers to a refusal to buy or sell something, as when, say, consumers are urged by an interest group to boycott a particular manufacturer's goods.

breach of the peace

a violation of the public peace, as in a riot. Also refers to any disorderly conduct. See also secondary boycott.

brigandage

theft or robbery.

brinkmanship

in political diplomacy or negotiation, the art of taking big risks, even to the brink of war, in the hope that the adversary will back down. Brinkmanship can be a way of testing an adversary's resolve. In 1994 Iraq massed troops on the Kuwaiti border, testing U.S. response-this was an act of brinkmanship on the part of Iraq's Saddam Hussein. Hussein backed down, and withdrew the troops when it became clear that the U.S. would mobilize to repel a possible invasion of Kuwait. Much of brinkmanship consists of bluffing, but it can be a dangerous game to play if either side misinterprets the moves of the other.

budget

a statement of estimated income and expenditure over a given period for an individual, group, government or organization. If revenues exceed expenditures, there is a budget surplus; if expenditure is greater than revenue, there will be a budget deficit.

bureaucracy

the administration of a government; all government offices taken together; all the officials of a government. The term is often used in a negative sense, when someone wants to point the finger at perceived inefficiencies or incompetence. Large bureaucracies are often seen as inflexible, with too many rules and red tape, making them unresponsive to the real needs of people.

business cycle

the general pattern of expansion and contraction that businesses go through. In terms of the national economy, the existence of business cycles means that a period of growth is usually followed by a recession, which is followed by a recovery.

by-election

an election to fill an office that has become vacant before its scheduled expiration date. If a Congressman dies in office, for example, a by-election would be held to fill the seat.

by-laws

laws made by local authorities; regulations made by social or professional associations.

cabinet

an advisory committee to a president or prime minister, formed by the heads of government departments.

cadre

the nucleus around which a permanent military unit can be built, such as a cadre of officers. Also refers to the most dedicated members of a political party.

caliphate

the office or rank of caliph (meaning ruler), in a Moslem country. The term derives from the title taken by the successors of Mohammed, the founder of Islam.

canon law

the laws that govern a Christian church organization.

canvass

to solicit votes; to examine carefully, as in to canvass public opinion.

capital

a city that is the seat of government of a state or nation; money used in business, where it refers to the wealth or assets of a firm. Capital is one of the three main factors of production, the others being land and labor.

Capitalism

an economic system in which the means of production, such as land and factories, are privately owned and operated for profit. Usually ownership is concentrated in the hands of a small number of people. Capitalism, which developed during the Industrial Revolution, is associated with free enterprise, although in practice even capitalist societies have government regulations for business, to prevent monopolies and to cushion domestic industries from foreign competition. Opponents of capitalism say that the economy should be organized to serve the public good, not private profit. Supporters say capitalism creates wealth, which creates jobs, which create prosperity for everyone.

capitulation

the act of surrendering or submitting to an enemy; a document containing terms of surrender. The term can also be used in a non-militaristic sense, as in, say, "the liberal members of the party felt that the president's policy was a capitulation to pressure from the right."

carpetbagger

an outsider. The term was originally applied to politicians from the Northern United States who went to the South after the civil war to try to exploit the unstable situation there for their own profit. (They often carried all their belongings in a carpetbag.) Now used to refer to a politician who runs for office in a state or other district that is not his home.

carte blanche

a signed paper, intentionally left blank so that the bearer can fill in whatever he pleases. To give someone carte blanche is to give them complete power to decide something, or to name their own conditions or terms.

Carter Doctrine

the doctrine enunciated by President Jimmy Carter in 1980, stating that "An attempt by any outside forces to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America, and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force." The Carter Doctrine, although it was not formally invoked, was put to the test after Iraq invaded Kuwait in 1990. The resulting Persian Gulf war in 1991 showed that the U.S. did indeed regard the attempt by a belligerent country to gain control of more than its allocated share of the region to be an assault on the vital interests of the U.S.

caste

an exclusive, often hereditary, class or group. Hindus in India live in a caste system, with four distinct classes, or castes, who traditionally are not allowed to mix with each other.

casus belli

an act or a situation that justifies a declaration of war. The Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941 was the casus belli that brought the U.S. into World War II.

caucus

a private meeting of members of a political party to plan action or to select delegates for a nominating convention; also refers to distinct groups, either official or unofficial, in Congress, as in the Black Caucus in the House of Representatives.

censorship

the prevention of publication, transmission, or exhibition of material considered undesirable for the general public to possess or be exposed to. This can include the censorship, in the national interest, of military secrets, or of obscene material. One of the important public debates of 1995 is whether there should be censorship of material published on the Internet, the global network of computers.

census

an official count of the population of a district, state, or nation, including statistics such as age, sex, occupation, property owned, etc. In the U.S., a census is held at the end of every ten years.

centralization

the administration of a government by a central authority. Centralization, understood as the concentrating of power or authority in the hands of the state, is often associated with socialist or communist systems.

centrism

a political position that is neither left nor right but which occupies the middle ground. President Clinton's reelection strategy may well be centrist in essence, since the Republican challenger, whoever he may be, is likely to espouse the cause of the right, leaving the middle ground open to be claimed by the incumbent.

chain of command

the order in which authority is wielded and passed down. A military chain of command would extend from the most senior officers in an unbroken link down to the ranks.

character assassination

an unrelenting series of attacks on a person's character, often employing exaggerated, distorted, or even false information. When used in political races, character assassination is a tactic designed to take attention away from issues and place it on the opposing candidate, who is portrayed as being unfit for office.

charisma

in political speech refers to a person's flair and personal magnetism, his or her ability to inspire voters. Charismatic candidates exude charm and power; they excite people and can persuade them to be devoted to their cause. To say a politician lacks charisma is virtually to say he is dull. Examples of charismatic leaders include President John F. Kennedy and Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

charter

the laws, including the powers and organization, granted to a city by the state legislature; the constitution of an international body, such as the United Nations.

chauvinism

an unreasoning and aggressive kind of patriotism. Also refers to any contemptuous attitude to another race, nation, or sex, as in male chauvinism.

checks and balances

a mechanism that guards against absolute power in any governing body by providing for separate governing bodies having equal power. Power is equitably distributed or balanced amongst the various branches of government (e.g., legislative, judicial, executive) and provisions are made for checking or restricting too much power in any one office. The system of checks and balances is a major part of the American system of government provided by the Constitution to prevent any person or persons or sector of government from gaining too much power. The system emphasizes the interdependence of various forms of government. It operates among the judicial, executive, and legislative branches of government as well as between state and national governments.

Christian Democrats

political parties in several countries in Europe, including Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, and the Netherlands. Christian Democrats are usually Roman Catholics, and have had considerable influence on political policies in the above countries since the end of World War II, particularly in the area of social reform.

church and state

the U.S. constitution provides for the strict separation of church and state. The First Amendment states that "Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof." Opponents of the movement to introduce prayer into public schools argue that such a provision would violate the constitutional separation of church and state.

citizen

a person who is a member of a state or nation, either by birth or naturalization. Anyone born in the U.S. is a U.S. citizen and is entitled to full civil rights.

civil disobedience

refusal to obey laws. This tactic is most effective when used by fairly large groups as a way of getting unjust laws changed. Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and his followers in India mounted many campaigns of mass civil disobedience in their campaign for independence from Britain. The American civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, led by Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-68), used the same tactic. Civil disobedience is usually passive and nonviolent, aimed at bringing injustices to the attention of lawmakers and the public at large. See also nonviolence.

civil liberties

the freedoms people have a right to in a society. They consist mostly of freedom of movement and association; freedom of religion, and freedom of expression. The idea of civil liberties is deeply embedded in the United States; it is enshrined in the Bill of Rights.

civil rights

rights granted by a state to all its citizens. In the U.S. this refers to the rights enshrined in the constitution and Bill of Rights. Civil rights prevent the government from intruding on personal liberties.

civil service

all nonmilitary employees of the government.

civil war

a war between different factions, whether geographical or political, within one state or nation.

civilian

anyone who is not in military service.

civitas

a Latin term meaning citizenship.

clan

a close-knit social group held together by ties of kinship (as in clans in the Scottish Highlands) or other common interests. Sometimes writers refer to large or well-known political families as clans—the Kennedy clan, etc.

class

a number of people or things grouped together; a group of people that are linked together because of certain things held in common, such as occupation, social status, economic background: ruling class, middle class, working class, etc.

class struggle

conflict between different classes in a society. The idea of class struggle held an important place in Marxism. Karl Marx divided society into two broad groups: the capitalists, or bourgeoisie, and the proletariat, or workers. Their interests were inevitably opposed, according to Marx, because one group (the proletariat) was always being exploited by the other (the bourgeoisie), so that capitalist society was a constant struggle between them. Marx believed that eventually the proletariat would triumph and a new classless society would emerge. The idea of class struggle, as with other main tenets of Marxism, holds much less appeal worldwide now than it has done for most of this century, because of the general failure and collapse of Marxist systems around the globe.

classical economics

the dominant theory of economics from the eighteenth century until superseded by neoclassical economics in the twentieth century. It is associated with Adam Smith's *Wealth of Nations* (1776) John Stuart Mill's *Principles of Political Economy* (1848), and the work of David Ricardo (1772-1823), who were the first to systematically establish a body of economic principles. The basic idea was that the economy functioned most efficiently if everyone was allowed to pursue their own self-interest. Classical economics therefore favored *laissez faire*; the primary economic law was that of competition. See also Keynesianism; neo-classical economics.

clemency

leniency or mercy to an offender or enemy.

closed shop

a business in which all the employees must be members of a labor union. The closed shop is most common in the printing, transportation and construction industries. The Taft-Hartley Act of 1947 made the closed shop illegal for firms engaged in interstate commerce.

closure

also called cloture, the term refers to the process by which a filibuster can be ended in the Senate. A motion for closure requires the votes of three-fifths of the Senate, i.e. 60 votes.

coalition

a combination of parties or states. For example, in 1991 a U.S.-led international coalition defeated Iraq in the Persian Gulf war. Domestically, coalitions can be made up of many organizations which band together to pursue a particular cause, as for example the Christian Coalition is a coalition made up of many different Christian organizations for the purpose of influencing public debate on moral affairs. There can also be legislative coalitions, in which legislators team up with others to advance a particular issue or piece of legislation, even though they may not be of the same party or agree on any other issues.

code

a systematically organized set of laws, such as the criminal code, the civil code.

codification

the act of arranging laws in a code.

coercion

the use of force or other powerful means of persuasion to get someone to do something. Often used to refer to government by force.

coexistence

a tacit agreement between two or more groups, parties, nations etc., that are in fundamental disagreement or conflict, that they will not go to war. Coexistence is not quite the same as peace, because the parties remain wary of each other and often hostile, but they accept that widely different ideologies and social systems can exist without those differences alone being a cause for war. Coexistence was a phrase often used during the Cold War, when it was a preferable alternative to the U.S. and the Soviet Union incinerating the entire world in a nuclear holocaust.

cohort

a group of soldiers. Also refers to an assistant or colleague.

Cold War

the struggle between the U.S. and Western Europe against the Soviet Union and its Eastern European allies. It involved confrontation but no actual "hot" warfare. The Cold War began in the 1940s when the U.S. believed it was imperative to check Soviet expansionist designs on Western Europe. It reached its height during the 1950s and 1960s, when the threat of nuclear annihilation hung over the world, particularly during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962. The Cold War made itself felt all over the globe; it was as if the entire world was divided into two units, East and West. No small regional Third World conflict was insignificant. The U.S. backed any regime that was anti-communist; while the Soviets tried to expand their influence anywhere they could, from Cuba and Central America to the Middle East and Africa. The Cold War eased slightly during the 1970s as a result of the U.S.-Soviet policy of *détente*. It finally began to wind down in the late 1980s. In 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev had come to power in the Soviet Union and had begun his policies of *glasnost* (openness) and *perestroika* (restructuring). The Soviet Union and the U.S. agreed to wide-ranging arms control measures. Then when communism crumbled in Eastern Europe in 1989, without resistance from Moscow, U.S.-Soviet relations warmed dramatically. By 1990, the Cold War was virtually over. Many claim that the U.S. won the Cold War because of the massive U.S. arms buildup during the Reagan administrations of 1981-89. The Soviets knew they could not match this and so had to come the bargaining table. Others say that the Soviet Union would have been forced to reform anyway, because its economic system was so inefficient.

collaboration

working with another person, or with many others, on a project, such as a literary or scientific endeavor. Collaboration also refers to cooperating with an enemy.

collective

any enterprise in which people work collectively, such as collective farms in Russia and China.

collective bargaining

negotiations about terms of employment (wages, hours, etc.) conducted between an employer and the representatives of a group of workers, usually a labor union.

collective responsibility

the responsibility born by everyone who participates in a decision to abide by that decision and be responsible for its consequences. Britain applies the doctrine to its cabinet, which is collectively responsible to parliament for its decisions.

collective security

an agreement by participating nations that they will take joint military action against any nation that attacks any one of them. NATO and the Warsaw Pact are examples of collective security agreements.

collectivism

refers to all economic and political systems that emphasize central planning and group, as opposed to individual, endeavor. Thus socialist and communist societies are collectivist. The theory of collectivism emphasizes the value of cooperation under, usually, authoritarian leadership. The efforts of the individual matter less than the goals of the group as a whole.

collectivization

the transfer of something from private to public ownership. For example, the establishment of communism involved the collectivization of land and private property.

collegialism

a theory that the church is an organization equal to and independent of the state, with authority resting in its members.

colonialism

a theory that the church is an organization equal to and independent of the state, with authority resting in its members.

colonization

the establishment of a colony. Sometimes this involves moving a group of people from the colonizing state into the area to be colonized, usually to solidify control and to facilitate administration of the area.

colony

a territory that is ruled by another state. Hong Kong, for example, was a colony of Great Britain until 1997, when China took over responsibility for it. Many colonies have a limited amount of self-government.

Cominform

the Communist Information Bureau, set up in 1947 to coordinate the activities of communist parties in the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, France, and Italy. It was dissolved in 1956, on the initiative of the Soviet Union, in an attempt to reassure the West about Soviet intentions.

Comintern

The Communist International, also known as the Third International. The Comintern was founded in Russia in 1919, with the purpose of promoting revolutionary Marxism. As such, it encouraged revolution in capitalist countries. It was dissolved in 1943, during World War II, to ease the fears of Russia's Western allies.

comity

rules of etiquette in international relations that do not have the force of law but make international relations smoother.

commercialism

the methods of commerce and business. Sometimes in social commentary the term is used in a negative sense, as when a writer bemoans the commercialism of our society, which is said to squeeze out moral or spiritual values, or the conducting of business (i.e. the making of money) where it is not appropriate—such as the commercialism involved in the O. J. Simpson trial, for example.

commissar

formerly the title of Soviet administrative officers, particularly the heads of government departments. The term was dropped in 1946 in favor of minister.

common good

the welfare of all. See also commonwealth; national interest; public interest; social welfare.

common law

the legal system of most English-speaking countries, including the U.S, based on custom, habit, and precedent. Common law is supplemented by statutory law, which is established by legislation. The distinction between common law and statutory law has become blurred in modern times, because much of common law has been converted into statutes.

Common Market

see European Community.

commonwealth

similar in meaning to common good. The term originated in seventeenth century political thought. The idea was that all members of a society had certain common interests which contributed to the good of all (originally called the "common weal") and which they should therefore pursue and protect.

commune

the smallest territorial district in some European countries. More commonly used to denote a small group of people living communally, working together and sharing proceeds, etc.

Communism

the political system under which the economy, including capital, property, major industries, and public services, is controlled and directed by the state, and in that sense is "communal." Communism also involves a social structure that restricts individual freedom of expression. Modern communism is based on Marxism, as interpreted by the Russian revolutionary leader Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924). See bolshevism; Communist manifesto; dialectical materialism; Leninism; Marxism; Marxist-Leninism.

Communist Manifesto

one of the most influential documents in modern history, the appearance of which marked the birth of modern socialist theory. Published by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels in 1848, the manifesto began by declaring that the history of all societies was that of class struggle. It then described the history of the rise of the bourgeoisie, who had developed the system of production and distribution on which capitalism was based. But in doing so they had created an entirely new class, the proletarians, who possessed no land, wealth, craft or trade, and so were forced to labor in the factories of the bourgeoisie. The proletarians were driven into a

ceaseless struggle with their oppressors, who were always exploiting them because of capitalism's need for ever cheaper production. But the proletariat, or workers, were destined to win the struggle. The last passage of the manifesto became famous. "The workers have nothing to lose but their chains. They have a world to win. Workers of all lands, unite!"

competition

rivalry. In economics, it refers to a situation in which two or more companies vie for business; if for example, there is competition between sellers for a limited number of buyers, this will tend to bring down the price of the commodity being sold. Buyers can also compete with each other; the result is usually that prices go up. Competition is a cornerstone of the free enterprise system, and extends itself into all areas of U.S. society: people vie for the best university places, the best jobs, etc. According to this idea, competition provides the spur for people to succeed and to excel.

competitiveness

in political speech, competitiveness often refers to the need to make sure that U.S. goods and services are on a par with or better than those of its foreign competitors. Commentators often point out in this respect that we live in an increasingly competitive world.

compromise

a settlement in which each party gives up something, or makes a concession, for the purpose of reaching an agreement. It also refers to something that is midway between two things. Someone once said that politics is the art of the possible; it might also be said that politics is the art of the compromise. Politicians constantly have to make compromises to keep the widely different groups that make up society, and who all have their own interests to defend, satisfied. Without compromise it is difficult to reach agreements and keep government running.

conciliation

the process of getting two sides in a dispute to agree to a compromise. The conciliator is a third party not involved in the dispute. The agreement has to be voluntary; the process of conciliation, unlike arbitration, does not compel the disputants to accept the proposed solution.

confederation

a group of states which join together to execute some government functions, such as the conduct of defense or foreign policy, but remain independent, sovereign states. The U.S. was a confederation from 1778 until 1787, after which it became a federation.

conflict of interest

a situation in which a person's private interests are in conflict with the public interest that he is entrusted with representing. For example, if a legislator has investments in a certain business, and that business stands to benefit or lose by a particular piece of legislation, he is involved in a conflict of interest. He may choose to declare this conflict and abstain from voting. If he does not, he runs the risk of later being accused of unethical conduct.

congress

a representative assembly, such as the U.S. Congress. In the U.S., Congress consists of the House of Representatives and the Senate. Congress also refers to the two-year period which starts on January 3 each odd-numbered year, in which each particular Congress holds its meetings and debates. Thus one can speak of the achievements of, say, the 92nd Congress, or the 101st.

conscientious objector

someone who refuses to serve in the military for religious or moral reasons. They may believe, for example, that it is wrong to fight or kill, under any circumstances.

consensus

agreement. In politics, consensus refers to occasions when there is broad agreement on specific issues and / or the overall direction of policy, either between political parties or in public opinion, as, say, in 1993 there was a consensus among Democrats and Republicans about the need for health care reform. Consensus politics, the seeking for the middle ground on the assumption that society has shared values, is the opposite of politics driven by sharp ideological confrontation.

consent of the governed

the idea that a just government must be based on the consent of the people who live under its jurisdiction. Government must be an expression of the popular will. This concept is found in the writings of theorists from the seventeenth to the nineteenth century, especially John Locke, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, and John Stuart Mill. Locke's work influenced the Founding Fathers, and the Declaration of Independence states that "governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it."

conservatism

a political philosophy that tends to support the status quo and advocates change only in moderation. Conservatism upholds the value of tradition, and seeks to preserve all that is good about the past. The classic statement of conservatism was by the Irishman Edmund Burke, in his *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), in which he attacked the French Revolution. He compared society to a living organism that has taken time to grow and mature, so it should not be violently uprooted. Innovation, when necessary, should be grafted onto the strong stem of traditional institutions and ways of doing things: "it is with infinite caution that any man ought to venture upon pulling down an edifice which has answered in any tolerable degree for ages the common purposes of society."

conservative

a person who supports conservatism. Naturally, those who are most conservative are usually those who have most to conserve, such as those who own wealth and property, or who are otherwise privileged, and thus have a stake in the disposition of things as they are. A conservative tends to be for the free market in economic affairs, and against what he calls "big government"-an excessive federal bureaucracy that intervenes in a wide range of social and economic areas. Conservatives prefer a kind of individualistic self-

sufficiency. On social issues conservatives are pro-family, anti-abortion, and in general support traditional moral values and religion. Conservatives usually favor a strong military.

conservative parties

political parties that advocate conservatism. In the U.S., the Republican party is more conservative than the Democratic party, and although the Democrats have traditionally had a conservative wing (based in the South) in the last two decades much of it has joined the Republicans. The current trend in the Republican party is towards greater conservatism.

consortium

an association or partnership of states or companies. Often used of an association of bankers.

conspicuous consumption

refers to consumption of goods or services that is mainly designed to show off one's wealth. The term was coined by Thorstein Veblen in the 1890s, who said that all classes in society, indulged in conspicuous consumption, even the poor (who, like the wealthy, sometimes buy something that is not essential and which is beyond their means). According to Veblen, the way to decide whether a certain item belongs in the category of conspicuous consumption is to ask, "whether, aside from acquired tastes and from the canons of usage and conventional decency, its result is a net gain in comfort or in the fullness of life."

conspiracy

planning and acting together in secret, especially for an unlawful purpose.

conspiracy theory

the idea that many important political events or economic and social trends are the products of conspiracies that are largely unknown by the public at large. Conspiracy theorists often assume that the political authorities are involved in massive deceptions and cover-ups to disguise their actions and intentions. Official versions of events are regarded with suspicion. Conspiracy theories are probably as old as human society itself. The one that has gripped the public imagination like no other claims that President John Kennedy was killed not by a sole assassin acting alone, but by a conspiracy involving (take your pick) the Mafia, the Cubans, the CIA, the military-industrial complex. Conspiracy theories have also flourished around the assassinations of Robert Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr, in 1968. Many members of the citizens' militias that have received so much publicity since the the April, 1995, bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City harbor conspiracy theories. These theories claim that the U.S. government, in cooperation with the media, international bankers, and the United Nations, is somehow orchestrating a plot to establish a tyrannous New World Order that will enslave America.

constitution

a document that describes the fundamental legal and political structures of a state. A constitution may be written or unwritten.

constitutional government

a form of government in which a constitution details the powers available to each branch of government, and the rights of the individual in relation to the government. Any action by the government that it not in accord with the constitution is considered illegitimate.

constitutional law

the law that governs relations between the state and the citizens of a country.

constitutional monarchy

a system of government in which the head of state is a hereditary king or queen who rules through a constitution.

constitutionalism

government according to a constitution. The term also refers to the branch of political science that deals with the theory of constitutional government.

consul

an official appointed by one country who lives in another country and assists his country's nationals with their business dealings.

consumer

in economic terms, someone who consumes goods and uses services. Consumer is distinguished from producer, since a consumer uses the goods or services to fulfill his or her needs, not to produce more goods.

consumer activists

people who are active in protecting the interests of consumers by pressing for higher standards of safety, healthfulness, truth in labeling, and customer service among producers of consumer goods.

consumption

in economics, the terms refers to the using up of goods or services, as opposed to production. It also refers to the amount used up.

containment

refers to the policy of the U.S. that began in 1947 and continued throughout the Cold War. It aimed to contain communism within its existing limits. This could either be through military means, as in Korea and Vietnam, or through technical and economic assistance to noncommunist countries. See also Cold War.

contempt of court

obstructing the business of a court; disobeying a court order; acting in such a way as to undermine the dignity or authority of a court.

contract

a legally binding agreement between two or more people. Also refers to the document that describes the terms of the contract. There was much publicity in 1994 about the book contract signed by House Speaker Newt Gingrich with a prominent publisher: the contract would have spelled out what each side agreed to do: Gingrich to write the book by a certain date, the publisher to pay him a certain percentage of royalties from sale of the book.

corporation

an organization of people bound together to form a business enterprise or any other stated function. A quarter of U.S. business firms are corporations, but over three-quarters of all sales are through corporations. Ownership shares of a corporation are sold to buyers, but shareholders do not get much direct say in how the corporation is run. Another distinguishing characteristic of a corporation is the principle of limited liability, under which owners of corporations are not liable for debts of the firm.

cosmopolitan

belonging to the whole world, not just one locality or nation. A cosmopolitan person would be at home in many countries; a cosmopolitan city would be one in many different nationalities congregated.

cost-benefit analysis

a comparison between the cost of a specific business activity and the value of it. A cost-benefit analysis is not limited to monetary calculations, but attempts to include intangible effects on the quality of life. For example, say there is a proposal to build a new factory in a town. The factory may bring economic benefits, but what if also gives off toxic emissions? In a cost-benefit analysis, the increase in jobs and other economic activity that the factory would bring has to be measured against the possible damage on the health of the community.

Council for Mutual Economic Aid

was set up in 1949 by Eastern European countries, as a counterpart to Western Europe's Organization for European Economic Co-operation. Comecon exists to co-ordinate the various national economies to provide, for example, adequate raw materials, and also to facilitate co-operation in science and technology.

counter-culture

the term given to the youth movement of the 1960s, which rejected many aspects of mainstream American culture. The counter-culture had both a political and a personal dimension. Politically, it was left-wing. Counter-culturalists loathed the concentration of power and resources in the military-industrial complex, they opposed the Vietnam war, they espoused the causes of minorities, and tried to create a new social order based on cooperation not competition. The counter-culture was strongly anti-authoritarian. It also promoted ecological awareness, feminism, and utopianism. In their search for personal fulfillment, counter-culturalists tried to expand their minds through drugs and meditation; sex and rock music was added to the mix to create a personal ethos of abandonment to a kind of Dionysian freedom. The movement petered out in the early 1970s, and the term counter-culture had fallen into disuse, until it was revived in 1994 by House Speaker Newt Gingrich, who accused the Clinton administration of embodying counter-culture values, implying that those values were at the root of America's malaise.

counter-revolution

the overthrowing of a revolution and the return to the social order that preceded it. A famous series of counter-revolutions took place throughout Europe in 1848. After revolutions had overthrown monarchies and autocrats all over the continent, a conservative backlash restored the ousted monarchies and aristocrats to power.

coup d'etat

a sudden revolution in which control of a government is seized by force. Also means a sudden stroke of policy.

court martial

a military court convened for the trying of military personnel for military offenses.

covenant

a binding agreement. In law, a covenant is a writing, under seal, containing the terms of agreement between two parties. A covenant may also be a clause containing a subordinate agreement or stipulation in a deed. Another meaning of covenant, although not used often, is international treaty, such as the Covenant of the League of Nations in 1919.

credibility

believability. In political discourse it sometimes refers to a politician's standing with the electorate. If he is perceived to have broken many promises, for example, his credibility will be low. He will have what is sometime known as a "credibility gap". The same applies to international relations. If a country's policies are always changing, little credibility will be given to each new position adopted.

criminology

the study of crime and criminals.

criterion

a standard of judgment; any rule, principle, law, or fact by which a correct judgment may be formed. The plural is criteria. If someone wishes to apply for Medicaid, for example, they must meet certain criteria before they can be eligible.

cult of personality

the term refers to authoritarian regimes in which the enormous power of the leader is reinforced and enhanced by exaggerated propaganda centered on him personally. The leader's picture is everywhere, on billboards, in public squares and buildings; he is supposed to be the embodiment of wisdom and compassion and courage and leadership—a true father of the country, possessing almost superhuman powers. The term was first used in 1956 by the Russian Communist Party when it denounced Josef Stalin for indulging in a personality cult when he was in power, from 1924 to his death in 1953.

cultural revolution

refers to the period of social and political upheaval in China between 1965 and 1968. The cultural revolution was a massive attempt to reassert the principles of revolutionary Maoism (the doctrine associated with the Chinese leader, Mao Tse Tung) and teach them to a new generation of Chinese. Any elements in the communist party that were considered liberal, or influenced by the model of Russian communism under its then leader, Nikita Khrushchev, were denounced. There were massive party purges. A personality cult of Mao emerged. Revolutionary fervor was whipped up by groups known as Red Guards; writers, economists and other intellectuals were criticized and denounced. Schools and colleges were closed, as thousands of urban teen-agers were sent to work in the

countryside. The cultural revolution had run its course by 1968. In ensuing years, many of the measures promoted by the cultural revolution, particularly those which were based solely on ideology rather than practical utility, were gradually eased.

curfew

a time, usually in the evening, after which it is forbidden to appear in the streets or in public places. Curfews are sometimes imposed by an occupying army in a city in order to maintain its control, but in unstable countries in times of great upheaval, the legitimate authorities may impose a curfew as a way of maintaining public order.

currency

refers to legal tender that is "current," that is, it is in circulation as a medium of trade and exchange.

currency convertibility

the right to exchange the currency of one country, at the going rate of exchange, for that of another. This enables a person to carry out a transaction in a foreign market whilst using the currency of his own country, which the seller can then convert to his own national currency. Currency convertibility is an essential element of world trade.

dark horse

someone in a race (including a political race) who is not well known and whose chances of winning are considered slight, except by a few.

de facto

Latin phrase meaning by the fact of; in fact, whether right or not. For example, if a revolution has just taken place in a country, the new government will be the de facto authority, i.e. the actual, existing authority, regardless of whether they have any legal claim to the position. De facto is the opposite of de jure.

de jure

Latin phrase meaning from the law; by right. The opposite of de facto.

dead heat

a tie. When contestants in a race finish in exactly the same time. A political dead heat would be when, say, two candidates or parties show exactly the same level of support in an opinion poll, or when two parties in an election win the same number of seats or poll the same percentage of votes.

deadlock

when something comes to a standstill because of pressure from two equal but opposing forces, as when a jury is unable to reach a verdict.

decentralization

the breaking up of central authority, and the distribution of it over a broader field, such as local authorities. Decentralization is an idea that is currently driving national politics: both parties are advocating a reduction in the powers of the central (i.e. federal) government, and the distribution of many of those powers to the states.

default

failure to do something, such as pay money due (a country might default on its loan payments, for example), or appear in court when required to.

deficit financing

the practice of deliberately operating with a budget deficit, financed by borrowing. The purpose of deficit financing is to stimulate the economy by increasing government spending, which will increase purchasing power and create more jobs. In the U.S., the era of deficit financing may be coming to an end, as both parties are committed to balancing the federal budget within the next decade. There has not been a federal budget surplus since 1969.

deflation

a reduction in economic activity in an economy, marked by falling prices and wages (or a slowing of the increase), less employment, and less imports. Deflation marks the downturn in a business cycle. It can be produced by raising taxes, increasing interest rates, or cutting government spending. Deflationary policies may be pursued to improve the balance of payments by reducing demand, and so reducing imports.

defunct

no longer existing. The Soviet Union, for example, is a defunct organization.

delegate

a person authorized to act for others; a representative. To delegate means to give someone the authority to act as one's agent or representative.

delegation

a group of delegates, often representing a larger group.

demagogue

a person who tries to win political support by playing to people's fears and prejudices, trying to build up hatred for certain groups. Adolf Hitler, who stirred up the masses by telling them the Jews were responsible for German ills, was a demagogue. In the U.S., Senator Joseph McCarty (1908-1957) who led a witch hunt for communists in the U.S. during the 1950s, was also a demagogue.

democracy

government by the people; the rule of the majority. There is no precise definition of democracy on which all could agree. Even communist countries tend to call themselves democratic, and the mere fact that a government is elected by a majority of the popular vote does not of itself guarantee a democracy. A broad definition might include the following points (based on Thomas R. Dye and L. Harmon Ziegler's book *The Irony of Democracy*): Participation by the mass of people in the decisions that shape their lives; government by majority rule, with recognition of the rights of minorities; freedom of speech, press, and assembly; freedom to form

opposition political parties and to run for office; commitment to individual dignity and to equal opportunities for people to develop their full potential.

demographics

pertaining to demography, which is the science of statistics such as births, deaths, marriages, racial composition, etc. in a population. Political scientists study changing demographics in a community and analyse how that might affect voting behavior, etc. An example of such a change is the city of Los Angeles, which in the 1950s and early 1960s was almost exclusively white, but has now become one of the most multicultural cities in the country. Its demographics have changed dramatically.

deport

to send out of the country. An illegal immigrant, for example, may be deported if he cannot prove he has a right to stay in the country.

depression

in economics, the term refers to a prolonged slump in business activity, leading to low production, little capital investment, mass unemployment and falling wages. The worst depression in American history lasted from 1929 to 1933.

desegregation

the elimination of segregation by race in schools and public places. In the U.S. desegregation began in 1954, with the Supreme Court ruling in the *Brown v. Board of Education* case that "Separate educational facilities are inherently unequal." Although it faced plenty of opposition in the South, desegregation gathered strength through the Civil Rights movement that began in 1955 and reached its peak in the mid-1960s.

despot

a tyrant; a ruler with absolute power.

despotism

rule by a despot; the methods of a despot.

destabilize

to make unstable, or insecure. Often used in a political sense about a government or a nation, especially when the destabilization is deliberately created by dissidents or rebels within a country, or by agents of a foreign power that want to disrupt or overthrow the government. The U.S., like many governments, has done its share of destabilizing, notably in Chile in the early 1970s, when it engineered the fall of the Marxist government there.

détente

the easing of strained relations between states. In recent history the term is applied to relations between the Soviet Union and the U.S. in the 1970s, that led to increased trade and arms control agreements. Détente ended with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

deterrence

a defense policy in which a country ensures that it has sufficient military power to deter a potential enemy from making an attack. Deterrence is fundamental to U.S. policy, and underlies all the arguments about the need to keep the military strong. The greatest deterrents are considered to be nuclear weapons. Although they have existed since 1945, they have never been used since the end of World War II. The mere possession of nuclear weapons is sufficient to deter an enemy, because, unless a country's entire nuclear arsenal could be wiped out by a first strike, the destruction caused by the inevitable retaliation would be too great a price to pay. The doctrine of deterrence through nuclear weapons is a paradox: weapons of mass destruction have kept the peace.

devaluation

reduction in the value of a nation's currency in relation to other currencies. Devaluation usually takes place because of an emergency, such as a balance of payments deficit in which the value of a country's imports is far greater than the value of its exports. Devaluation has the effect of boosting exports (because they are cheaper in terms of foreign currencies) and reducing imports (because they are more expensive in terms of foreign currencies).

devolution

the redistribution or delegation of political power away from a centralized body to a lower, often regional, authority.

dialectic

originally meant the art of argument, a method of logical inquiry that proceeded by question and answer. The idea of dialectic was developed by the nineteenth century German idealist philosopher Hegel into a way of understanding all natural and historical processes: everything conformed to a dialectical process of thesis, antithesis and synthesis. One thing produces from within itself its own opposite or negation, and from the conflict between the two emerges a synthesis. Hegel's idea of dialectic was adapted by Karl Marx to form dialectical materialism, the foundation of Marxist doctrine.

dialectical materialism

the central theory of Marxism, which Karl Marx adapted from the idealist philosophy of Hegel. Marx applied Hegel's theory of dialectic to political and economic history. Capitalism (thesis), produced its opposite socialism (antithesis) from within itself, by means of the proletariat, out of which eventually emerged a communist society (synthesis). Marx believed this to be an inexorable law of history. See also dialectic; Marxism.

dictatorship

a system of government in which power is concentrated in the hands of one person, the dictator. Dictatorships are rarely benevolent and often have scant regard for human rights. The classic dictatorships in the twentieth century were those of Adolf Hitler (1889-1945) in Germany, Benito Mussolini (1883-1945) in Italy, and Josef Stalin (1879-1953) in the Soviet Union.

dictatorship of the proletariat

a Marxist concept that was in fact first formulated before Karl Marx (1818-83), by a Frenchman, Auguste Blanqui (1805-81). It refers to an interim period immediately after the proletariat (the working class) has triumphed over the bourgeoisie (capitalists). The rule of the proletariat then gives way to the classless, or communist society.

diehard

someone who is extremely reluctant to relinquish his opinions or beliefs, even when they are outmoded. Today there are probably many diehard communists in Russia, or in the U.S. there are diehards who still believe in racial segregation.

diminishing returns

a principle of economics that states that if one factor of production is increased while others remain fixed, the resulting increase in output will level off after a time and then decrease. In other words, if a company decides to employ more workers but does not increase the amount of machinery it will eventually reach the point of diminishing returns, where the addition of each new worker will add progressively less to output than did the previous additions. To avoid diminishing returns the optimum relationship between all the factors of production at any given time must be evaluated.

diplomacy

the methods by which relations between nations are conducted.

diplomatic immunity

special rights given to diplomats, including immunity from the laws that operate in the country to which they are assigned.

direct action

when a group acts to achieve its goals without going through the accepted channels of communication or decision-making. If a group of workers, for example, goes on strike without the support of their union, or commits acts of sabotage, they are taking direct action.

direct democracy

democracy in which the people as a whole make direct decisions, rather than have those decisions made for them by elected representatives. A referendum is a form of direct democracy, as is the practice of recall, by which an elected official may be voted out of office between elections if enough people sign a petition to remove him and then win the subsequent vote. A novel version of direct democracy was introduced into the American political scene by Ross Perot, when he ran as independent candidate for president in 1992. Perot proposed that some national decisions could be arrived at directly by the people through the use of electronic "town meetings." The idea arose because of widespread public dissatisfaction with the performance of Congress, which in the eyes of many was out of touch with the country as a whole.

directive

an executive order or general instruction.

dirty linen

in political speech the term refers to secrets such as sordid infighting, or outright scandal, that political parties would sooner keep secret. Displaying dirty linen in public is to have the less savoury aspects of one's life put on public view. The British Royal Family, for example, has not had much success over the last few years in keeping its dirty linen private. (The marital woes of Prince Charles and Princess Diana, for example.)

disarmament

reduction of armaments. Attempts have been made to reduce arms ever since the end of World War I. A disarmament conference was held in Geneva from 1932-34, but no agreement was reached. After World War II the United Nations established committees on disarmament and formed a Disarmament Commission in 1952. Talks were held from 1955 to 1957 on banning nuclear weapons. From the 1960s there was some limited success, including the nuclear Test-Ban Treaty (1963) and the nuclear Non-proliferation Treaty (1968). In the 1970s, as a result of the policy of détente between the U.S. and the Soviet Union, more treaties were signed, limiting the increase of nuclear weapons (see arms control). Further treaties in 1987, 1991, and 1993, reduced the superpowers' stock of nuclear weapons. However, they did nothing to alleviate the continuing danger of nuclear proliferation. And as far as conventional armaments are concerned, the idea of disarmament seems no more than a visionary dream. Between 1988 and 1990 the arms trade was the world's biggest industry. Many developing countries, among them Brazil, India, Egypt and both Koreas, were by 1990 among the world's top arms producers and exporters. In the Third World, the concept of arms control or disarmament simply does not exist.

discrimination

treating a person differently and unequally because of race, gender, country of origin, color, age, physical handicap, or other factors. The existence in the U.S. of equal opportunity laws aims to prevent or redress discrimination in the workplace.

displaced person

a person who has had to leave his own country as a result of war or persecution.

dissident

one who dissents, or disagrees. In political speech, the term refers to a person who protests injustices or abuses perpetrated by the government of his country. Dissidents are common in totalitarian or communist countries. Many Chinese dissidents are imprisoned or persecuted for advocating democracy, as were Russian dissidents such as Andrei Sakharov in the Soviet Union under communism. Some dissidents, such as Lech Walesa of Poland, and Vaclav Havel of the Czech Republic eventually win their battles against the state and, in these two cases, become presidents of their countries.

divide and rule

the practice of keeping power by making sure that enemies are always kept divided and therefore too weak to mount an effective challenge. The Roman Empire perfected the strategy of divide and rule, and the British Empire employed the same tactic.

divine right

the terms usually refers to the divine right of kings, a medieval belief that the king was appointed by God to rule, and this divine right was passed on by hereditary alone. The belief had virtually died out by the end of the nineteenth century, except among a few diehard groups.

division of labor

a method of production on which modern industrial economies are based. It relies on specialization. Each worker performs only one, often very narrow task, in the production process. The division of labor is considered to be more efficient than other methods, in that workers do not waste time changing tasks, and can acquire more skill by specialization. The disadvantages of the division of labor is that work often becomes repetitive and boring, especially when the division of labor is carried to extremes, as in the modern auto plant, where tasks can be as narrow as the repeated tightening of nuts and bolts, all day, every day.

doctrinaire

theoretical and impractical. A doctrinaire person may have many theories for the regeneration of society, but will attempt to apply them rigidly, without allowing them to bend to fit particular circumstances.

doctrine

something taught as the principles or creed of a religion or political party. Similar in meaning to dogma. Doctrine also refers to certain foreign policies, such as the Monroe Doctrine or the Carter Doctrine.

dogma

a doctrine or belief, as laid down by an authority, such as a church. Also means an arrogant assertion of an opinion. When someone states his fixed beliefs and opinions and will not evaluate them objectively or listen to any counter-argument, he is speaking dogma.

dogmatism

rigid adherence to dogma; arrogant assertion of opinion, whether facts or evidence support it or not.

domestic

pertaining to one's own country. Thus, a government will have a domestic policy dealing with policies within its own borders, and a foreign policy for everything outside those borders.

domino theory

an idea current during the Cold War that justified U.S. support of South Vietnam against invasion by communist North Vietnam. The theory was that if one southeast Asian state went communist, others, such as Laos and Cambodia, would follow, giving the communists much greater influence. Sometimes used today to describe the spread of Islamic fundamentalism.

double jeopardy

the law that says a person cannot be tried twice for the same offense. It is part of the Fifth Amendment, which states that "No person shall . . . be subject for the same offense to be twice put in jeopardy of life or limb."

draconian laws

severe or cruel laws. The phrase refers to Draco, a ruler of ancient Greece in the 7th century B.C., who imposed a severe code of laws on the city of Athens in 621. In political speech today, for example, a government that is facing social unrest or rebellion might take Draconian measures to restore order.

drawback

money collected as customs duty on imported goods and then refunded when the goods are sent out as exports.

due process

legal procedures designed to protect the rights and liberties of individuals. In the U.S., due process refers to the constitutional requirement that "no person shall be deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law." In practice it means that someone accused of a crime must be given a fair chance to present his own case.

dumping

in economics, a term that means selling a product in large quantities abroad for a lower price than it fetches in the domestic market. Usually this is done to dispose of a surplus, and to gain a competitive advantage with foreign suppliers.

dyed-in-the-wool

unchangeable, from the process of having yarn dyed before being woven, which makes it retain its color better. One might refer to someone for example, as a dyed-in the-wool conservative, meaning that he is never likely to change his conservatism.

dynasty

a succession of political rulers who belong to the same family. Dynasties are less common now than they used to be in the days when hereditary monarchs held sway, but in some countries power is still passed on by a ruler to another member of his family. Sometimes even in a democracy powerful political families seem almost to attain the status of a dynasty. Examples include the Kennedys in America, the Bhuttos in Pakistan, and the relatives and descendants of Mahatma Gandhi in India

earmarked

to set aside for a special purpose, as when in a budget, funds are earmarked for certain projects.

ecclesiastical

pertaining to church matters, as in ecclesiastical courts, ecclesiastical history, etc.

ecology

the branch of biology that deals with the relation between living things and their environment. Ecology is an important political issue today, although it is usually comes under the umbrella of "environmental" issues. These include the human-made destruction of the environment (cutting down of rain forests, thinning of the ozone layer, for example) which in the opinion of environmentalists constitute a grave threat to life on earth. See environmental protection; greenhouse effect; ozone layer; toxic wastes.

economic growth

the increase in a nation's production of goods and services, often measured annually in the Gross National Product (GNP). In 1994, for example, the economic growth rate of the U.S., in terms of the GNP, was 4 percent, which is considered a fairly high rate of growth.

economic warfare

conflict between nations over economic issues, that results in each side taking action against the other, to raise tariffs, restrict imports, or boycott the others' goods.

economics

the science of the allocation of limited resources for the satisfaction of human wants.

economy

the entire system of production, distribution, and consumption of goods and services in a country.

ecumenical

universal. Used in reference to cooperation, understanding and unity between different churches, as in the ecumenical movement.

ecumenism

the ecumenical movement within Christian churches, which has been a notable feature of Christianity over the last 30-40 years. Also refers to the cultivation of greater understanding and tolerance between different religions.

egalitarianism

the doctrine that advocates equal political and social rights for all citizens. As such, egalitarianism is enshrined in the U.S. constitution. It does not mean that all people should be equal, but that they should all have equal opportunity.

election

the process by which public or private officials are selected from a field of candidates by the marking of ballots in a vote.

electorate

all the people in a district that are eligible to vote in elections.

eleventh hour

the last moment; only moments before it would be too late, as in, "the arrival of the U.S. cavalry at the eleventh hour saved the settlers from an Indian attack."

elite

an exclusive, carefully selected group or class, usually small, which possesses certain advantages, either of wealth, privilege, education, training, status, political power, etc. One might refer, for example, to the governing elite of a country, or to the U.S. marines as an elite force.

elitism

the doctrine that advocates leadership by a select group or elite. Elitism is not something that any U.S. politician would openly advocate, since it runs counter to the democratic ideal. However, it often proves a useful term when one politician wants to snipe at another one. For example, If a politician appears to be advocating a policy that denies equal opportunity for all, he might be accused by his opponents of elitism.

emancipation

setting free from slavery or oppression, as in the Emancipation Proclamation, a declaration by President Abraham Lincoln that became effective in 1863, that all the slaves who were in the Confederate States, who were in rebellion against the United States, were free men.

embargo

a government-imposed ban on trade with a specific country. For example, the U.S. has a trade embargo on Cuba; a similar embargo imposed on trade with Vietnam was lifted in 1994. Sometimes an embargo can be imposed on a particular commodity only, as when the U.S. imposed a grain embargo on the Soviet Union as a protest against the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979.

embassy

the official residence and offices of an ambassador in a foreign country.

embezzlement

the act of fraudulently taking for oneself money or goods that have been entrusted to one's care.

emeritus

retired from service but retaining a rank or title, as in professor emeritus.

emigration

going to live permanently in a country other than one's own.

eminent domain

the right of a government to take private property for public use, even if the owner refuses consent, provided that adequate compensation is paid. The right is described in the Fifth Amendment of the constitution, which says, "nor shall private property be taken for public use, without just compensation."

empire

a state that unites many different territories and peoples under one rule, as in the Roman Empire, the British Empire. Often the territories are spread widely apart across the globe, and do not possess the same constitutional status as the "mother" country.

enclave

an area that is surrounded or enclosed by territories that belong to another country. The area of Nagorno-Karabakh, for example, is an Armenian enclave within the state of Azerbaijan (and is the cause of a long-running war.) The term can also be used when a country or territory is divided along sectarian grounds. One might speak for example, of a Roman Catholic enclave within largely Protestant Northern Ireland.

entente

an international agreement or alliance. A famous entente was the Entente Cordiale, signed between Britain and France in 1904; another was the Triple Entente, an alliance between Britain, France, and Russia, which grew out of the Entente Cordiale and lasted until 1917.

entrepreneur

someone who sets up a new business undertaking, raises the money necessary, and organizes production and appoints the management. The entrepreneur bears the financial risk involved, in the hope that the business will succeed and make a profit.

environmental protection

the preservation of natural resources. In 1969 the National Environment Policy Act of 1969 stated that such protection is the responsibility of the federal government, and it was with this in mind that the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was formed in 1970. Since then a network of environmental laws has been passed, covering such areas as the quality of air and water, toxic wastes, endangered species, and pesticides. See also greenhouse effect; ozone layer; toxic wastes.

envoy

a person sent by a government to a foreign country to conduct diplomatic business. An envoy ranks below an ambassador.

equal opportunity

the idea, which enjoys a broad consensus in the U.S., that opportunities in education, employment or any other field, should be freely available to all citizens, regardless of race, gender, religion, or country of origin, or any other factor that could be used to discriminate against someone. The Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), which was created in 1964, promotes equal opportunity in hiring, promotion, wages, and all other aspects of employment.

equal pay

the principle that pay should be according to the work done, not according to who the worker is. In other words, women who perform the same tasks, demanding the same skill and level of responsibility, as men should receive the same pay. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 prohibits discrimination in the workplace regarding pay, based on gender.

equilibrium

in economics, the term refers to a stable economic condition in which all significant variables remain constant over a period of time. For example, a market will be in equilibrium if the amount of goods that buyers wish to purchase at the prevailing price is exactly matched by the amount that the sellers wish to sell at that price. There is then no reason for the price to change, which it would do if either of the variables (supply or demand) were to alter.

equity

the capital, or assets, of a firm, after the deduction of liabilities.

establishment

the group that holds power in any section of society, political, military, academic, religious. The establishment is much broader than a political party or social class; it is usually conservative, upholding traditional ways of doing things; to outsiders, some establishments can seem like closed, secretive, elusive "clubs."

ethics

the study of standards of conduct and moral judgment.

ethnic

someone who is a member of an ethnic group (a group distinguished from others by race, customs, language, etc.), particularly a member of a minority group within a larger community. The U.S. is composed of a large number of ethnic groups. The extent to which an ethnic group should subordinate its heritage in order to become an "American" is a controversial issue in the 1990s. Sometimes ethnic groups that are comparatively recent arrivals in the U.S., largely those from Asia and Africa, are accused of clinging on to their ethnic heritage and refusing to become assimilated into mainstream culture, unlike earlier, largely European immigrants, have done. Such is the thinking behind the right-wing demand that English should be the official language of the U.S.- to prevent the nation losing its coherence and breaking down into a patchwork quilt of ethnic groups. Ethnic divisions have an influence on U.S. politics, not only with the obviously highly charged issue of racism against blacks and Hispanics, but more subtly, as when a politician will give a twist to a policy to win favor with a particular ethnic group. For example, when President Clinton agreed to grant a visa to Gerry Adams, leader of Sinn Fein, which has close links to the terrorist organization the Irish Republican Army, critics accused him of doing so merely to win the support of Irish-Americans.

ethnocentrism

belief in the inherent superiority of one's own cultural, ethnic, or political group.

ethos

the characteristic attitudes, beliefs, and habits of a group, as in, say, the conservative ethos of hard work and self-reliance.

Eurocommunism

communism in Western Europe, particularly in France and Italy, and with the exception of Britain, has gained more of a foothold than it has in the U.S. Western European communist parties tend to be more democratic than their Eastern European or Russian counterparts, and have some measure of genuine public support. They have also tended to pursue policies that are independent of Moscow, particularly in the wake of the Russian invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. The term Eurocommunism became current in the 1970s.

European Community (EC)

The EC has 15 members, including Belgium, Denmark, France, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, and the United Kingdom. For over 40 years, member countries have been developing common policies on a wide range of issues such as agriculture, environment, trade, labor practices, research and development. In 1993, all barriers were removed to the

free flow of trade, goods, services and people between all member countries, which made the EC the largest trading bloc in the world. Another step towards European unity was taken in 1998, when the EC created a European Central Bank. In 2002 eleven member countries will adopt a single currency, the euro. Membership of the EC is open to any European democracy. The presidency of the EC rotates every six months among member nations; summit meetings are held every June and December in the host country. Headquarters for the EC is in Brussels, Belgium. The EC has many institutions, including the European Parliament, which has 518 delegates from the member countries. It meets each month for one week in Strasbourg, France. It keeps watch over EC activities, and supervises such organizations as the European Atomic Energy Commission (Euratom).

euthanasia

the act or method of causing death painlessly, as an act of mercy to someone suffering from an incurable disease. Euthanasia is illegal in the U.S., but it is a controversial issue in America today. More and more people are believing that they should have the right to decide, if they are suffering from an incurable and eventually fatal illness, when and how they should die. Publicity for euthanasia has been generated by Dr. Jack Kevorkian (christened "Dr Death" by the media) who has helped over a dozen terminally ill people end their lives. There has not yet been a definitive court ruling over whether such "assisted suicides," as performed by Kevorkian, are legal or not.

evangelical

strictly speaking, the term refers to anything that is contained in the four gospels in the New Testament, or to the Protestant churches that emphasize salvation by faith rather than good works. But nowadays the term is also used more loosely, often simply to describe a "born again," or fundamentalist, Christian.

evangelism

a zealous effort to spread the word of the gospel, i.e. the beliefs of Christianity.

ex officio

Latin term meaning because of one's office. It means that if, for example, someone is on a committee as an ex officio member, he is on the committee because of the office he holds, rather than because he was elected or otherwise appointed to the committee.

executive privilege

the privilege extended to the executive branch to withhold certain information from Congress or the courts. The need to withhold may be to preserve the confidentiality of communications within the executive, or to serve the national interest. Throughout U.S. history, presidents have invoked executive privilege, although the concept is not explicitly stated in the constitution. The privilege was restricted by the Supreme Court in 1974, after President Richard Nixon invoked it in the Watergate scandal. The Court ruled that executive privilege could not be applied to prevent evidence being supplied in a criminal case. In 1998, President Bill Clinton invoked executive privilege in an attempt to prevent his aides testifying before a grand jury in a criminal inquiry. As in 1974, the courts ruled that executive privilege must give way to the needs of a criminal case.

exile

the banishing of someone from his homeland for a specified period, or for life; the person who is so banished. Exile is not as common a punishment as it was before modern times. But exile is still the frequent fate of deposed dictators, who would otherwise have to face charges in their own land. Sometimes they choose voluntary exile rather than face the consequences of their rule. In 1994, the military rulers of Haiti chose to go into exile rather than resist a U.S. invasion.

expansionism

the policy of expanding a nation's territory or sphere of influence. The term usually has a negative connotation, suggesting that a nation has its eyes on more than its fair share of things, as in Soviet expansionism.

expatriate

someone who has renounced his citizenship of the country in which he was born and has become a citizen of another country.

exploitation

taking advantage of something for one's own use or benefit, especially in an unethical manner. Thus an employer who pays unreasonably low wages or makes unreasonable demands on his employees is guilty of exploitation. In Marxist theory exploitation refers to the making of profit (by capitalists) from the labor of others (the proletariat).

export

the sending of goods or services to a foreign market for the purpose of selling.

expropriation

the confiscation of private property by the state, often without adequate compensation. This was often done by communist regimes. Another example: when whites in South Africa in the 1990s realized that there would soon be a black government in power committed to land redistribution, many feared that this might lead to the expropriation of their property (a fear that has not proved justified.)

extradition

the giving up by one nation of a person accused or convicted of a crime to another nation where the offender is to be tried or, if already convicted, punished.

Fabianism

the socialist ideas outlined by the Fabian society, a group founded in Britain in 1884. It rejected violent revolution, arguing that socialism would come about through the ballot box after a long period of political evolution.

faction

a group within an organization (often within a political party) that has different goals than those of the party as a whole, and seeks to promote those goals. James Madison warned against what he saw as the dangers of factions when he defined the term: "A number of citizens, whether amounting to a majority or minority of the whole, who are united and actuated by some common impulse or

passion, or of interest, adverse to the rights of other citizens, or to the permanent and aggregate interest of the community." In modern political speech, faction does not necessarily have a negative connotation, however. It can mean simply subgroup, as in the moderate (or liberal, or conservative), faction in a political party.

fait accompli

a French phrase that means literally an accomplished fact. A fait accompli refers to something that is already done, making any debate over it useless. In politics, an executive might simply go ahead and make a decision, perform an action, initiate a policy, as a way of bypassing potential opposition. He can then present his actions as a fait accompli, so wrong-footing his opponents.

fascism

a nationalistic, authoritarian, anti-communist movement founded by Benito Mussolini in Italy in 1919. Fascism was a response to the economic hardship and social disorder that ensued after the end of World War I. The main elements of fascism were pride in the nation, anti-Marxism, the complete rejection of parliamentary democracy, the cultivation of military virtues, strong government, and loyalty to a strong leader. Fascists wore a uniform of a black shirt and used a greeting derived from ancient Rome of the outstretched arm. Mussolini's Black Shirts (as they were known) seized power in 1922. A movement modeled on fascism, Germany's National Socialism (Nazism) also began its rise in the 1920s. In 1936 in Spain, General Francisco Franco's fascists seized power and precipitated a three-year civil war, with Franco victorious. Italian fascism collapsed with the death of Mussolini and the end of World War II. Although since then there have been South American military regimes that have adopted some of the terminology and concepts of fascism, fascism in its classic form is considered to have died with Mussolini. Sometimes the term is used now as a term of abuse, triggered by any real or imagined outbreak of authoritarian thought or behavior.

featherbedding

refers to a labor union practice of limiting work or output in order to preserve jobs. Featherbedding may result in the employment of unnecessary workers.

federalism

the system of government that operates in a federation.

federation

a state made up of a number of subdivisions or individual states, which share power with the central government. Each of the smaller units retains control of many aspects of its own affairs, but grants to the larger political unit the power to conduct foreign policy. The relationship between the states and the central, or federal government, is laid down in a constitution, which cannot be changed without the consent of a specified number of states (in the U.S. it is two-thirds). The United States is a federation, as are Australia and Canada.

fellow traveler

someone who goes along with a specific belief without openly endorsing it. Often used in respect of communism, about those who are not members of the communist party but who support its cause. Fellow travelers may lie low because they do not want to risk the consequences of associating with dangerous or unpopular beliefs. The term is used in an accusatory way: calling someone a fellow traveler is a hostile comment.

feminism

see women's movement.

feminist

one who supports the beliefs and goals of feminism. A feminist is usually a woman, but a man can be a feminist too.

feudalism

a medieval form of social economic and political organization. Feudalism had a pyramidal structure. At its head was the king; below the king was a hierarchical chain of nobles, down to the lords of individual manors-the manor being the basic social and economic unit. The lords leased land to tenants, offering them protection in exchange for military and other services. Society was thus knit together in a network of obligation and service. The lowest part of the pyramid was occupied by serfs, who were obliged to cultivate the land belonging to their lord. There was thus no mobile middle class in feudalism; social rank was fixed by inheritance and could not be changed. When at the end of the Middle Ages a middle class did begin to emerge, it marked the beginning of the end of feudalism.

fiat

an order or decree issued by a legal authority. A fiat may be of an arbitrary nature, as, for example, when it is used as an instrument of government by an authoritarian regime that is not compelled to have laws approved by a legislative body. Government by fiat may be the last resort of a regime that has no legitimate mandate to rule.

fifth column

a treasonous group or faction who give support to an enemy. For example, a nation might be successfully fighting an external enemy, but then be undone by the appearance of a fifth column within their midst. The term dates from the Spanish Civil War (1936-39), in which four columns of rebels attacked Madrid, while rebel contingents within Madrid organized a campaign of sabotage and uprisings. They became known as the fifth column.

figure-head

someone who is nominally in a position of authority but who holds no real power.

filibuster

holding up legislation or other business in the U.S. Senate by organizing continuous speeches in opposition so that no vote can be taken. It needs 60 Senators to vote to end a filibuster. In 1995, the nomination of Dr. Henry Foster for Surgeon-General was defeated by a filibuster in the Senate. Filibusters are often used by minority groups, to offset their numerical disadvantage.

fireside chat

the term has its origins in the radio addresses given by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the 1930s. Roosevelt aimed for informality, to convey the impression that he was speaking directly to all the American people, grouped around their own firesides. The term can be used today when a contemporary president or any politician attempts to do a similar thing.

fiscal policy

the use government makes of its taxing and spending powers to achieve particular ends, such as the rate of growth of the money supply, the amount of the budget deficit or surplus. Fiscal policy includes decisions about what level of taxation, and what type of taxation (direct, like income tax, and indirect, like sales tax), to impose.

foreign policy

the objectives pursued by a state in its dealings with other states, and the methods and course of action used to pursue them. P. A. Reynolds, in *An Introduction to International Relations*, defines foreign policy as "The range of actions taken by varying sections of the government of a state in its relations with other bodies similarly acting on the international stage . . . in order to advance the national interest."

fourth estate

the press, and other media. The term was first used in England in the eighteenth century. Estate means the same as class, the other three being nobility, commoners, and clergy.

franchise

a privilege granted to an individual or a corporation by a government to operate a business. The term also refers to a practice in the retail trade where a company (the franchisor) gives another company (the franchisee) the right to operate under the franchisor's name. The advantage for the franchisee is that they can have immediate name recognition for their business (particularly if the franchisor is nationally known). The franchisor gains by expanding their business with the minimum of capital.

free enterprise

the economic system that is fundamental to capitalism. The means of production are privately owned and decisions regarding producing and pricing are governed by market forces. i.e., prices are regulated only by free market competition. There is only minimal government intervention.

free market

economic transactions that are conducted under the conditions of a free enterprise, market economy, i.e. one that is controlled only by forces of supply and demand. See also supply and demand.

free trade

international exchange of goods without government regulation, such as tariffs, quotas, exchange controls, subsidies to domestic producers, etc. The principles of free trade hold that a country which is efficient at producing a given product will profit from exporting it to countries which are less efficient at producing it. In return, such a country can use the wealth it gains for exports to buy goods and services that are being more efficiently produced elsewhere. When each country focuses on what it does best, market forces of supply and demand organize distribution for maximum economic growth, and consumers benefit from lower prices. In 1995 the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) marked a new leap towards worldwide free trade. Tariffs will be cut by an average of 40 percent in the 124 participating countries.

front organizations

organizations that provide respectable cover for subversive or criminal activities. The mafia, for example, conducts many of its operations under cover of apparently respectable businesses, which serve as front organizations.

fundamentalism

the term is usually applied to a certain kind of religious conservatism, whether Christian, Muslim or other, that takes the words of the Bible, or other sacred text, as literal truth, and advocates the adherence to Biblical (or Koranic) prescriptions and values in social and political life, as well as private life. Christian fundamentalists, for example, advocate the teaching in schools of what they call creation science, which asserts that the Biblical account of the creation of the world in the Book of Genesis is literally true and can be read as real history and real science. Critics accuse fundamentalists of intolerance and censorship; fundamentalists reply that they merely wish to return the country to its roots in Christian civilization and Christian moral values.

gag rule

any order from a court, or other authority, not to discuss something. For example, the administration of President George Bush (1989-1993) instituted a gag rule that disallowed federally-financed family-planning clinics from informing their patients of the availability of abortion services. (The rule was lifted by the Clinton administration in 1993.)

general strike

a strike that is not limited to one trade or industry, but involves several, and is sufficiently widespread to paralyze the economy. In U.S. history, general strikes occurred in the early days of unionism but were generally short-lived, and diminished as labor unions became more practiced and successful at negotiating with employers. The general strike has been a more effective weapon in Europe. In Britain in 1926, for example, a general strike involving miners and transportation workers brought the country to a standstill for nine days.

genocide

the systematic killing of a whole people. The term was first applied to the Nazi attempt to exterminate the Jews during World War II. It has been applied more recently to the war in Bosnia, where the Serbs have been accused of practicing genocide against the Muslim population, and to ethnic conflict in Rwanda in 1994, which resulted in the killing of thousands of members of the Tutsi tribe by Hutus. Another example in history would be the killing of an estimated 600,000 Armenians by the Turks in 1915. See also Holocaust.

geopolitics

the influence of geographic factors on international politics. These include size, location, natural resources, topography, and terrain. To give just a few examples of geopolitical considerations: the Middle East, as a main route between east and west has always been considered of great strategic importance, and since the discovery of oil in the region it has become even more so. Topography has historically been important for Britain, because as an island it could not be conquered except by the sea. Therefore it built up the biggest navy in the world, which also encouraged trading and the acquisition of overseas territories, which led to the development of the British Empire. Geographic influences on foreign-policy-making tend to be stable over time and change only slowly.

gerontocracy

a government controlled by old men.

gerrymander

to deliberately and unfairly arrange voting districts to favor one party or group-usually by those who are in power and want to preserve it. However, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 encouraged a new kind of gerrymandering-it has been called "affirmative gerrymandering"-the rearranging of electoral districts so that they contain a large percentage of minorities, and so greatly increase the chance that a minority candidate will be elected to office. This sometimes results in Congressional districts of unusual shapes that have (so opponents of the practice argue) no justification, since they are spread wide geographically, and do not constitute a real community with common interests. "Affirmative gerrymandering" was upheld by the Supreme Court in 1977, but in June, 1995, the Supreme Court ruled that such gerrymandered districts were unconstitutional.

globalization

usually used to refer to the emergence in recent years of a global economy based on the principle of free trade. Trade agreements such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the Uruguay Round of the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) accelerated this process. Advocates of globalization say it ensures growing prosperity for everyone; doubters say that some groups and nations will be at a disadvantage, and also point to the downside of economic interdependence, as witnessed by the ripple effect created by the Asian economic crisis that began in 1997. Still other experts are concerned that economic globalization gives too much power to multinational corporations, at the possible expense of human rights and democracy.

gold standard

refers to a monetary system in which the unit of currency is equivalent to a given amount of gold; currencies can be converted into gold at a fixed price; and gold is usable as a currency. The gold standard has not been in operation in any country since the 1930s, as a result of the worldwide disruption caused by the Great Depression. In other words, the value of the currency is not related to the value of gold on the free market.

good offices

the means by which a state that is not party to a dispute may be a channel for suggestions by others for a settlement, but does not get otherwise involved.

Gordian knot

in Greek legend, an oracle revealed that a knot tied by King Gordius of Phrygia could only be undone by one who was destined to become the ruler of all of Asia. Alexander the Great tried to untie it but failed, after which he cut it with his sword. The phrase now refers to any perplexing or apparently insoluble problem, and to cut the Gordian knot refers to finding a quick solution. So the Republican proposals to balance the federal budget by 2002 might be described as attempts to cut the Gordian knot of the budget deficit.

graft

to use public office for private gain; to take advantage of one's position to make money. When House Speaker Newt Gingrich revealed that he had accepted a \$4.5 million book advance shortly after becoming Speaker, he was accused in some quarters of graft. (He later rejected the advance.)

grandstanding

the term refers to a deliberate attempt to win applause from an audience. In political speech, a politician might be accused of grandstanding when he makes statements or speeches that are designed to win quick applause from the public, or certain sections of it, but which do not contribute substantially to the matter under discussion (although the politician will undoubtedly deny that he is grandstanding: he is, of course, making serious and constructive proposals.)

greenhouse effect

sometimes called global warming, it is caused by atmospheric pollutants, mostly from the burning of fossil fuels (like the gasoline in automobiles) that form a barrier in the upper atmosphere which traps the heat being radiated from the earth. Since the heat cannot escape, temperatures at the earth's surface begin to rise, creating changes in the earth's weather patterns.

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gross national product (GNP)

the value of all the goods and services produced by a country in a one-year period. GNP is used as a means of assessing the condition of a nation's economy.

guerrilla

a person who practices guerrilla warfare.

guerrilla warfare

the term guerrilla comes from the Spanish, meaning skirmishing warfare. Guerrilla warfare is when a small band of irregular soldiers, which would be no match the enemy in a conventional battle, wages war by making surprise attacks on enemy supply lines, etc.

guild

an association for the promotion of mutual interests or for mutual aid, as in a writers guild, etc. Guilds arose in medieval times, when men of the same craft or trade would group together to uphold standards and protect each other.

habeas corpus

a right that safeguards a person against illegal imprisonment. Habeas corpus is a Latin phrase that means literally "you must have the body." It refers to a writ that requires a person to be brought before a court to establish whether he is being detained legally.

hack

a worker for a political party, usually at a fairly low level of the organization, who is unquestioning in his loyalty to the party. Also refers to someone hired to do writing, often of a routine or uninspired nature.

hard currency

currency that has a stable value in international exchange and is therefore freely convertible into currency of other countries. The opposite is soft currency, which is subject to exchange controls. Hard currency serves as an international currency.

head of state

in a presidential system, the head of state is the president himself, who is considered to be the symbolic embodiment of the nation. In parliamentary systems, the head of state is not the prime minister but a figure considered to be above politics and representing the nation as a whole. In these systems the head of state may have mainly a ceremonial function, as in present-day Germany and Israel. In a constitutional monarchy, the king or queen is the head of state-their real power may be limited but their symbolic power may be great.

hegemony

authority or influence. Usually used to refer to international affairs, to describe the dominance of a specific country, as in the nineteenth century was the period of British hegemony; the post-World war II era was one of U.S. and Soviet hegemony.

hierarchy

an organization with people ranked in order of grade, rank, etc. An executive, for example, would be high in the company hierarchy; a sales clerk would be low in that hierarchy.

holocaust

the systematic extermination in gas chambers built in concentration camps of 6,000,000 Jews by the Nazis in World War II. The Holocaust was the most terrible example of genocide in modern history, perhaps in the entire history of the world. It marked the only time that the resources of a large industrial state have been dedicated to rounding up, transporting and killing so many people in such a short space of time, for no reason other than the victims' race. Jews were gathered from all over Europe for the slaughter; in one two-month period in 1944, 438,000 Jews were shipped to Auschwitz alone. This is what awaited them: "The victims, unsuspecting, walked to the gas chambers under the blank and baleful gaze of the SS, and then were turned into smoke that blackened the skies, and a stench so awful and pervasive that Lyon [a survivor, Gloria Lyon, who was taken to Auschwitz when she was fourteen] lost her sense of smell for nearly five decades after." (From Newsweek, on the fiftieth anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz.)

hostage

someone who is held against his will, as a bargaining counter or as security. For example, in the 1980s, terrorists in the Middle East took Westerners hostage frequently, hoping to use them as a bargaining counter to win the release of Arab prisoners in U.S. and Israeli jails. And in May, 1995, when Serb forces in Bosnia took U.N. soldiers hostage, they tried to use them as security, hoping to prevent an attack by NATO forces.

human rights

Human rights were defined in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which was adopted by the United Nations in 1948. It was a historic step brought about in response to the horrors of World War II. Article 1 of the declaration states, "All human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights. They are endowed with reason and conscience and should act towards one another in a spirit of brotherhood." Article 2 states, "Everyone is entitled to all the rights and freedoms set forth in this Declaration, without distinction of any kind, such as race, color, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status." President Jimmy Carter's administration (1977-81) made human rights an important aspect of American foreign policy; those countries that violated human rights were less likely to have good relations with the U.S. than those who observed those rights. Human rights continue to be an important factor in U.S. relations with the rest of the world. Today, for example, the debate over U.S. relations with China revolves around China's poor human rights record, and whether this is reason enough to cancel China's Most Favored Nation trading status with the U.S.

humanitarian

an individual or organization devoted to promoting the welfare of humanity, especially to relieve pain and suffering. Thus the Red Cross is a humanitarian organization; sending aid to starving people is a humanitarian act.

iconoclastic

literally, refers to the breaking or destroying of images. Thus an iconoclastic person is one who attacks or ridicules society's traditions or traditional institutions and cherished beliefs when he feels they do not live up to their ideals, have become corrupt or have outlived their usefulness. Martin Luther, who founded the Reformation by denouncing abuses in the Roman Catholic church, was a classic iconoclast.

idealism

the belief that politics should be governed by high ideals, based on the perception of how things should be rather than how they actually are. The term usually suggests impracticality, something that does not take into account the inherent imperfections and limitations of human nature and society.

ideology

the political doctrine of a party or group, as in communist ideology.

immigration

the movement into a new country of a person who is not a citizen of that country, to live there permanently.

impeachment

an accusation of misconduct brought against a person holding public office. The House of Representatives has the sole power to bring charges of impeachment, and the Senate has sole authority to try the case. Conviction requires a two-thirds majority. President Richard Nixon (1913-94) resigned as president in 1974 rather than face impeachment over his part in the Watergate scandal. The only U.S. presidents to be impeached was Andrew Johnson in 1868 and William Jefferson Clinton in 1998. Johnson was acquitted by the Senate. The case against President Bill Clinton followed a report by independent counsel Kenneth Starr that accused Clinton of perjury, obstruction of justice, witness tampering, and abuse of power. These were in relation to Clinton's affair with former White House intern, Monica Lewinsky. Those who supported impeachment of Clinton claimed that any violation by the President of the laws of the country are an impeachable offense, since the President takes an oath to uphold those laws. Others argued that perjury by itself does not rise to the level of a "high crimes" or "misdemeanors" that, according to the Framers of the constitution, was the sole justification for the impeachment of a president.

imperialism

the policy that aims at building and maintaining an empire, in which many states and peoples, spread over a wide geographical area, are controlled by one dominant state. Imperialism is the opposite of the principle of self-determination, which is the more generally accepted creed today. As such, although imperialism has existed from the times of Alexander the Great, it is not currently fashionable. Much of the twentieth century history of the Third World, for example, is of the dismantling of the legacy of nineteenth century European imperialism.

implied powers

powers that are not stated explicitly in the U.S. constitution but can be inferred, based on the interpretation of the powers that are expressed.

import

to bring goods or services from a foreign country into one's own country for purposes of sale. The opposite of export.

import quota

a form of government control over the number of imported goods. It may apply to a specific nation only, or to all imports of a certain item. It is designed to protect domestic industries.

in vogue

fashionable. If a political idea is considered in vogue, it simply means that a lot of people are currently talking about it and advocating it.

inalienable right

a right that is derived from natural law, a God-given right that cannot be taken away. The Declaration of Independence states that "all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among them are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness."

incentive

something that acts as a spur to action. In economics, for example, a system of incentive pay, in which wages are based on production, rather than a fixed rate per time, may improve output. Salesmen who work on commission are also on an incentive system.

income tax

a tax levied by the government, at federal and state level, on personal and corporate incomes. Its main purpose is to finance government operations.

incomes policy

any government policy that exerts some kind of control over wages and prices. This is usually done to keep inflation down, and can take various forms: a wage freeze; voluntary controls; voluntary controls where the government sets a norm; a wage norm backed up by extra taxes on companies that exceed it.

incorporation

the creating of a corporation by going through the legal formalities. Applicants must apply for a charter, which is issued by the state, and which sets forth the powers, rights and privileges of the corporation. Also refers to the application of the protections of the Bill of Rights to the states, a process also known as absorption. See also corporation.

incrementalism

a cautious type of decision-making, often used in budgeting, in which a limited range of gradual changes to a given policy are discussed, and then tested by implementation one at a time. Incrementalism can be frustrating to those who want radical change, because it means that governments tend to carry on the policies of their predecessors with only small deviations.

independent counsel

also known as special prosecutor. An independent counsel is appointed on the recommendation of the Attorney General to investigate possible wrongdoing by senior officials in the executive branch, including the president. The appointment itself is made by a panel of three federal appellate court judges. A special prosecutor is considered necessary to avoid a conflict of interest that might

otherwise occur if the case was investigated by Justice Department prosecutors. The current independent counsel statute was created as part of the Ethics in Government Act of 1978, following the Watergate scandal in 1974. In 1998, in the wake of independent counsel Kenneth Starr's four-year investigation of President Clinton, the statute has been criticized for allowing prosecutors too much power. The independent counsel law expires in 1999, unless Congress chooses to renew it.

indexation

a policy in the government pegs wages and unemployment benefits, etc., to inflation rates. As prices go up, so do wages. Countries that have tried indexation have often found that it drives up inflation even higher.

indictment

a document submitted by a grand jury to a court, accusing an individual of a specific crime.

individualism

the idea that the individual should be allowed to shape his or her own destiny, without having governments interfering and deciding on their behalf what is in their interests. Individualism is the opposite of totalitarianism, in which individuals are subordinate to the state. Individualism developed in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries: the Founding Fathers all believed in individualism, which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights. The free enterprise economic system is also based on the idea of individualism: if everyone pursues their own interests, the community as a whole will flourish.

indoctrination

instruction in or teaching of dogma, doctrine, principles, or beliefs. The term is usually used in a negative sense, to imply a rigid absorption of ideas or theories, without critical evaluation or intelligent thought or discussion.

industrial revolution

the industrial and technological changes that started in England around 1760 and spread rapidly to other countries. The industrial revolution laid the foundations of the modern industrial system. Its main features were the invention of new machinery, which led to large-scale factory production; the rise of industrialists who headed large enterprises; the rise of a wage-earning class; the expansion of trade; the growth of cities and the depopulation of the countryside.

industrialization

being industrialized, that is, to establish or develop industrialism.

INF Treaty

Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces Treaty. This was an arms control agreement signed by the U.S. and the Soviet Union in 1987. Both sides agreed to eliminate intermediate- and short-range nuclear missiles from Europe. The agreement was ratified by the U.S. Senate in 1988.

infidel

a person who does not believe in any religion; an unbeliever. Someone who adheres to a religion different from one's own, particularly if that religion is non-Christian (similar to pagan). Now almost always used in a derogatory sense.

infiltration

penetration, in the sense of troops penetrating enemy occupied territory, or of spies getting a foothold in a hostile organization, or, in an totalitarian society, the spreading of new political ideas which may be perceived as subversive by the authorities.

inflation

an economic situation characterized by steadily rising prices, and falling purchasing power. It is in part caused by wage rates increasing faster than productivity.

infrastructure

the structure that underlies and makes possible all economic activity in a country. Infrastructure includes utilities, and communications and transportation facilities. Sometimes the term is extended to include such assets as the level of education among a country's citizens, as well as their industrial and administrative experience and skills.

injunction

a legal order from a court that prevents an individual or group from carrying out a certain action.

insurgence

a revolt or uprising, as in, there was an insurgence in Mexico at the beginning of 1994.

insurgent

rebelling against the government or other form of political authority.

insurrection

rebellion or revolt, similar to insurgence.

integration

the opposite of segregation, integration means encouraging the free and equal mixing of different races, in education and public places. Integration in education was ordered by the Supreme Court in the Brown v. Board of Education case in 1954.

intellectuals

similar to intelligentsia, those who are perceived by themselves and by others as forming an intellectual or learned class. Karl Marx thought that the support of at least some members of the intellectual class was necessary for a successful socialist revolution. It is sometimes claimed that American society is on the whole suspicious of intellectuals, because intellectualism smacks of elitism, which is contrary to the American democratic tradition. It is a rare politician who admits to having intellectual interests; the down-home, man-of-the-people image is considered a better vote-getter.

interest

a group of people with a common cause, as in business interest; extra money paid for the use of money that is lent; benefit or advantage, as in it is in his interest to go.

interest group

a group that lobbies for the interests of its members. This activity is protected by the First Amendment, "the right of the people peaceably to assemble and to petition the government for redress of grievances." Interest groups mediate between individuals and the state. They may promote their interests by working to elect officials who are sympathetic to their cause. They may make donations to election campaign funds, for example—a practice that has recently come under fire, as the public perception has grown that many elected officials are virtual prisoners of special interest groups. Others say that the activities of many different interest groups that influence policy are a healthy sign of a pluralist system. See also lobby.

intermediate-range missiles

missiles that can carry nuclear warheads over a distance of 600–3,000 miles. These include U.S. cruise missiles (range of 1,600 miles) and Pershing II missiles (range of 1,100 miles.) The numbers of these missiles was greatly reduced by the INF treaty in 1987.

International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA)

UN agency which works for the acceleration of the peaceful use of atomic energy in order to create peace, health and prosperity throughout the world; it encourages research and development on the peaceful uses of atomic energy. Headquarters is in Vienna, Austria.

International Court of Justice (ICJ) of

the principal judicial organ of the United Nations, sometimes known simply as the World Court. Its jurisdiction covers cases that are submitted to it by U.N. members; it gives advisory opinions and renders judgments. The Court has 15 judges, elected by the General Assembly and the Security Council, for 9-year terms. It sits in The Hague, Netherlands.

international law

rules, principles and conventions that govern the relations between states. International law has been built up piecemeal through agreements, tribunals, international conferences, long-established customs. There is no international law-making body, as such, and national governments themselves decide whether they will adhere to the principles and conventions of international law. The Statute of the International Court states the basis on which international law rests, and on which it adjudicates in cases brought before it: "(a) international conventions, whether general or particular, establishing rules expressly recognized by the contesting states; (b) international custom, as evidence of a general practice accepted as law; (c) the general principles of law recognized by civilized nations."

International Monetary Fund (IMF)

the IMF was established in 1946, with 39 members. Membership now stands at 182 countries, which includes all the major countries of the world. Each member contributes to a pool of funds which are made available, under certain conditions, to countries that need temporary help. The United States, with the world's largest economy, contributes most to the IMF, providing about 18 percent of total quotas (about \$35 billion); Palau, which became a member in 1997, has the smallest quota, contributing about \$3.8 million. Financial assistance is usually accompanied by requirements designed to get the recipients' economy onto a more secure footing. The goal of the IMF is to keep currencies stable so that financial weak spots do not unbalance the world economy or allow individual nations to go bankrupt.

internationalism

the belief that the greatest possible cooperation between nations in trade, culture, education, government, etc. is the best way to build peace. This is the opposite of isolationism and nationalism. In the twentieth century the founding of the League of Nations (1919) and the United Nations (1945) were great steps forward for internationalism. See also isolationism; nationalism.

intervention

interference of one state in the affairs of another, as in the question should the U.S. intervene in Bosnia?

interventionism

the policy that advocates intervention in the affairs of other nations in specific instances or as a general principle. Intervention can be military, as when the U.S. threatened to invade Haiti in 1994, or humanitarian, as when the U.S. led a mission to Somalia in 1992.

investment

in terms of economics, investment is the spending of money on capital equipment, such as factories or machinery. In a more general sense, investment refers to purchasing an asset which can produce more money (buying shares, for example), or to any expenditure that involves a temporary loss in the hope of future benefit.

invisible hand

a term coined by Adam Smith in his classic text, *The Wealth of Nations* (1776). The idea is that if everyone in a society is pursuing their own economic self-interest, an "invisible hand" ensures that they will also be serving the interests of society as a whole. Self-interest is equated with universal interest. Such a notion is at the heart of the free enterprise system. Smith's phrase is that a person guided by self-interest will be "led by an invisible hand to promote an end which was no part of his intention."

iron curtain

a phrase made famous by British prime minister Sir Winston Churchill, in a speech at Westminster College, Fulton, Missouri in 1946, when he said, "An iron curtain has descended across the continent." The iron curtain divided democratic Western Europe from the communist Eastern bloc, consisting of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe.

Islamic fundamentalism

a movement designed to return Moslem countries, many of whom are ruled by secular governments, to a system of government based on the principles of the Koran. Islamic fundamentalism made its first impact in recent history in 1979, when it was responsible for the overthrow of the Western-backed Shah of Iran, replacing him with a virulently anti-western government that was strongly influenced by conservative Islamic clerics. Islamic fundamentalists oppose the Westernization of their countries because they believe it undermines the traditional religious values of their society. They want to install Islamic law, shari'a, under which, for example,

alcohol would be outlawed, and sexes would be segregated in the workplace. Islamic law is also known for its harsh penal code, including the amputation of hands and feet of criminals. Islamic fundamentalists are currently waging a civil war against Algeria's secular government; fundamentalism is also a force in Egypt and amongst the Palestinians, where militant Islamic groups such as the Islamic Jihad and Hamas are dedicated to overthrowing the peace process between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization. There is a widespread fear in the West that Islamic fundamentalism in its militant form could become a strong destabilizing force in Europe, North Africa and the Middle East. Some even suggest that now that the Cold War is over, Islamic fundamentalism has replaced the Soviet Union as the greatest danger to the West. This is an extreme view, and ignores the diversity amongst Moslem groups, not all of whom are a threat to Western interests.

isolationism

the policy of detaching one's country as much as possible from international affairs. American foreign policy in the nineteenth and early twentieth century, and then again between the two world wars, was dominated by isolationism. It was made possible by America's relative physical isolation, with oceans on either side of it. This policy was abandoned after World War II, in part because of the decline of British power, the rise of the Soviet Union, and the technological revolution in weaponry that rendered the U.S. vulnerable to attack as never before. In today's interdependent world it would be hard to imagine a situation in which America, or any major power, could pursue a pure isolationist policy. However, in recent years isolationist tendencies have surfaced in some right-wing quarters, under the guise of a lack of support for the United Nations, and opposition to American participation in it.

ivory tower

used figuratively to refer to a place cut off from the real world. If a professor at a university, for example, comes up with a controversial idea to solve some social problem people will be quick to say that he lives in an ivory tower and does not understand the nature of the real world.

Jacobinism

the political doctrines of the Jacobins, a society of revolutionary democrats in France during the time of the French Revolution (1789-1794). The term can be used to refer to any political radicalism.

Jeffersonian democracy

refers to the principles held by President Thomas Jefferson (1743-1826), some of which, such as the belief in the inalienable rights of the individual and the hatred of despotism, can be found in the Declaration of Independence, of which he was the principal author. Jefferson's ideal was an agrarian society, made up of self-sufficient farmers, under the leadership of natural aristocrats by means of republican institutions. Jefferson disliked industrialization and the growth of big cities. He also preferred a weak federal government, with authority vested in state and local government, as a protection against government abuse of power.

jihad

an Arabic term meaning "striving" or "effort" in the service of God, which was applied to political conquest on behalf of Islam. Thus a jihad is a holy war.

jingoism

aggressive and warlike patriotism. Usually used in a derogatory sense. A politician might advocate a jingoistic foreign policy, but he would not call it that—a task which would be left to his opponents.

judicial review

the power of the Supreme Court to decide whether a law is constitutional or not.

judiciary

the branch of government, and the system of courts, that interprets the law.

junta

the term for a military government.

jurisdiction

the right of a political or legal authority to exercise that authority over a territory, subject or person, as in the case came under the jurisdiction of the district court.

jurisdictional dispute

a dispute between government bodies over which one has authority over a particular area, for the providing of services, taxation, or prosecution in a criminal case.

jurisprudence

the science of law, or a system of laws.

just war

a war which is supported by the overwhelming majority of people in the country that is fighting the war, because they believe that they are in the right. World War II is considered a just war, because it was universally known amongst the U.S. and its allies that Nazi Germany was evil. The war in Vietnam in the 1960s and 1970s would not generally be referred to as a just war, because the lines between good and evil were not so easy to determine

Keynesianism

the economic theories of John Maynard Keynes (1883-1946), and his followers. The Englishman Keynes's best known work was the General Theory of Employment, Interest and Money, published in 1936 at the height of the Great Depression. Keynes shifted the attention of economists from microeconomics to macroeconomics. Much of his book is on the causes of unemployment. Keynes stated that the economy had no self-balancing equilibrium that resulted in full employment, as classical economics insisted. On the contrary, it could be in equilibrium at less than full employment (the first time this theory had been proposed). Keynes believed it was therefore the job of government to stimulate spending through deficit financing to ensure full employment. Keynes's theory was

vastly influential. Since then governments have tended to accept a responsibility to provide full employment-although they have not always been successful in doing so. See also classical economics; neo-classical economics.

keynote

the main point in a lecture or discussion, as in the keynote of the President's address was the importance of moral values.

kitchen cabinet

the closet advisors of a president or prime minister. A kitchen cabinet may well consist of people who are not members of a formal cabinet. They may be close friends or cronies of the president, who trusts and values their advice.

labor movement

organized labor unions in the U.S., and their history. At the turn of the century, only about 3 percent of the country's labor force belonged to unions. Up to the 1930s, unions were actively suppressed by employers. Workers inclined towards organizing were often fired and blacklisted, and sometimes even beaten up or locked out of the plant. The courts often ruled that union attempts to increase wages and influence working conditions through strikes and picketing were illegal. But membership grew nonetheless, especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s. By the 1960s, over 30 percent of the labor force was unionized. Since then membership has declined, in part because of the decline of highly unionized industries such as railways and the clothing trade, and the increase in white-collar workers, who have less of a tendency to organize than blue-collar workers. By 1990, the percentage of the labor force that was unionized dropped to about 18 percent. The political influence of the labor movement has declined accordingly.

labor union

an organization of workers that negotiates collectively with employers over wages, working conditions, etc.

laissez-faire

a guiding principle of free enterprise systems, laissez-faire is a French phrase which literally means "let do." It refers to the belief that government should not intervene in the conduct of trade and industry. Proponents of laissez-faire argue that the principle promotes freedom and economic growth.

lame duck

someone who is ineffectual or helpless. Sometimes used of an office holder who is nearing the end of his term of office and either is not seeking, or is not eligible for, another term. His authority is considered to be considerably eroded. For example, when President Lyndon Johnson announced in 1968 that he would not seek his party's nomination for president, he became a lame duck president for the remaining months of his term.

landlocked

encompassed by land, i.e. without a sea coast.

landslide

an overwhelming victory in an election. Of recent U.S. presidential elections, those in 1980, 1984, and 1988 can be considered landslides, because the Democratic candidates carried only a few states in each case, and were thus "buried" under a landslide.

law and order

the condition existing in a society when the vast majority of the population observes the generally established rules of conduct. Traditionally "law and order" has been a rallying cry for conservatives, especially at election time, who want tougher measures to deal with crime and criminals.

layman

someone who is not a member of a profession, or who is not an expert on a specific topic, as in, to the layman, the language of lawyers can be unintelligible.

leadership

those who hold the positions of power in a party, government, legislature, etc.; the ability to lead-not only to be able to manage people and institutions, but to show others a path and inspire them to want to follow it. Societies going through periods of uncertainty often bemoan the lack of leadership, and long for a "strong leader," but in many cases they get more than they bargained for-dictators of all stripes may be "strong leaders" but that doesn't mean that they leave their societies better than they found them. Former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger recently made a distinction between the modern political leader and those of a former generation, such as Sir Winston Churchill: "The political leaders with whom we are familiar generally aspire to be superstars rather than heroes. . . . Superstars strive for approbation; heroes walk alone. Superstars crave consensus; heroes define themselves by the judgment of a future they see it as their task to bring about. Superstars seek success in a technique for eliciting support; heroes pursue success as the outgrowth of inner values." See also statesman.

League of Arab States (LAS)

also known as the Arab League; member nations include: Algeria, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Qatar, Republic of Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen Arab Republic. The LAS works toward peace in the Arab region, promotes cooperation amongst members in military, health, communication, and cultural matters. The headquarters is in Tunisia.

lease

a contract in which one party gives to another the use of property, such as land or buildings, for a specified time for a specified payment.

left-wing

on the left of the political spectrum. The term can include communism, socialism, or liberalism. It originated in the seating arrangements in nineteenth century European parliaments, where the conservatives would sit on the right side of a semi-circle (as

seen from the point of view of the presiding officer, often the king) and the socialists on the left. The more radical the group, the further to the left they sat. Left-wingers advocate generous spending on the welfare state, vigorously promote the rights of women and minorities, are suspicious of high spending on defense, tend to be internationalist in outlook, favor government controls on the free market system, and generally favor social welfare over business interests. In the U.S. the left-wing is not a major factor in national politics, as far as elections are concerned. The Democratic party has some left-wing adherents, but it tries to minimize their influence when election time comes round, since in the U.S., left-wing policies are generally vote-losers. Left-wing groups however, often form powerful interest groups that do exert influence on particular issues. See also communism; liberal; liberalism; Marxism; socialism.

leftist

a person or group that adheres to the left-wing on political issues. Often used to describe insurgents, as in leftist guerrillas.

legalism

strict adherence to the letter of the law, or to bureaucratic red tape, to the exclusion of all else, including common sense.

legalistic

the same as legalism.

legality

the condition of being legal; in conformity with the law.

legislation

laws enacted by a legislature; also the process of making laws.

legislator

a person who is a member of a legislative body, elected to represent the interests of his constituents.

legislature

the branch of government that is responsible for making laws. In the U.S., as laid down by the constitution, only Congress can make laws.

legitimacy

the attribute of a government that came to power through legal means; the state of being sanctioned by law.

legitimation

making something lawful, or allowable, or acceptable, as in the invitation to speak at a prestigious conference gave legitimation to his controversial views.

leisure class

any group of people who do not have to work for a living, or who work very little and have time for leisure and recreation. Despite predictions in the 1950s and 1960s that new technology would mean that people would have to work less hours, this hasn't happened: Americans now spend more time working than they did several decades ago. The leisure class has not got any bigger.

Leninism

the modern form of Marxism as developed by Vladimir Ilyich Lenin (1870-1924). Lenin led the uprising that overthrew the Russian government in the October Revolution of 1917. He applied Marxism to the new kinds of capitalism that had developed since Marx's day, such as the increasing concentration of capital in larger organizations of producers. Lenin believed that the constant search for raw materials, driven by the need to make a profit, resulted in imperialist policies that led to recurrent wars. The state was merely a tool of the ruling class and therefore had to be destroyed. One of the distinctive aspects of Leninism was the creation of the party, a disciplined group of revolutionaries who would act as the vanguard of the proletariat. Lenin did not believe that capitalism would collapse merely through the weight of economic forces-there had to be a catalyst, and this was the party. Through the party, Lenin justified extreme measures for seizing and consolidating power, and laid the basis for the authoritarianism that transformed the Soviet Union into a dictatorship and kept all power in the hands of the communist party (where it remained until as recently as 1991). Thus the original Marxist idea that the state would gradually wither away turned out to be the opposite of the truth-the power of the state continued to grow and grow.

Leninist

an adherent of Leninism.

liaison

a linking up or connecting to, so as to coordinate activities, especially of a military nature.

liberal

in political speech now in the U.S. a liberal is a person who believes it is the duty of government to ameliorate social conditions and create a more equitable society. Liberals favor generous spending on the welfare state; they exhibit a concern for minorities, the poor, and the disadvantaged and often see these conditions as a product of social injustices rather than individual failings. This also applies to crime and juvenile delinquency, where liberals are as concerned with removing the social causes of such behavior as they are with detection and punishment. Liberals also tend to be concerned about environmental issues, the defense of civil liberties, and do not favor excessive military spending. The label of liberal is something that many politicians now seek to avoid, since it is out of keeping with the public mood. In the presidential campaign of 1988 George Bush used this to telling advantage, labeling his Democratic opponent Michael Dukakis a liberal, and making the term sound subversive and un-American. President Clinton tried to distance himself from traditional liberalism in his campaign of 1992, calling himself a New Democrat instead. See also liberalism.

liberalism

in the nineteenth century in Europe, the great age of liberalism, the term stood for freedom from church and state authority and the reduction of the power of royalty and aristocracy, free enterprise economics, and the free development of the individual. Liberalism advocated freedom of the press, religious toleration, self-determination for nations. It was liberalism that established parliamentary

democracy. The Founding Fathers might be termed liberals. In the twentieth century, liberal parties were caught in between conservatives and socialists and their influence declined. Today, liberalism stands for something rather different than it did in the nineteenth century (more government rather than less government). See also liberal.

liberation

freedom, emancipation; often applied to the freeing of a people after enemy occupation (the liberation of France in 1944, for example). Revolutionary movements sometimes call themselves liberation movements-meaning liberation from an oppressive government. Liberation can also simply mean the gaining of equal social and economic rights, as in the women's liberation movement, now more usually called feminism.

libertarianism

the belief that government should not interfere in the lives of citizens, other than to provide police and military protection. Libertarianism cannot easily be placed on the left-right scale that is usually used to analyze political philosophies. Libertarians are strong supporters of capitalism and free trade and yet also tolerant on social and lifestyle issues, which are considered none of the government's business. The basic philosophy is "live and let live." For example, libertarianism would remove the ban on consensual activities, often called "victimless crimes," such as drug use and prostitution, which do not harm the person or property of another. A Libertarian Party was formed in 1971 and regularly contests presidential elections, winning nearly half a million votes in 1996.

liberty

freedom, particularly from any unnecessary restraints imposed by governmental authority. Liberty was one of the slogans of the French Revolution ("Liberty, equality, fraternity") and it has proved a rallying cry ever since. It is central to America: liberty is one of the inalienable rights described in the constitution ("life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness"), and it has always been what America sees itself as standing for, as, for example, in President John F. Kennedy's inaugural address in 1961, when he said "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe to assure the survival and the success of liberty."

lien

a legal term which refers to the claim a lender has on someone's property, as security in the event of nonpayment of a debt.

limited government

the clarion call of the mid-1990s in the U.S., a limited government is one that does not have enormous power. Such a government is in fact provided for in the constitution, with its methods of checks and balances. However, many argue that over the last three decades the federal government has become too big, taking on more responsibilities and powers than the constitution intended, and created a huge bureaucracy that is unresponsive to public needs. It is this that has led to calls for a more limited, smaller, central government.

limited war

a war in which a nation does not use all the military or economic resources it possesses. The war in Vietnam was for the U.S., a limited war, with only gradual increases in force being applied, and the military being held back by political considerations. The Persian Gulf War in 1991, in which massive and overwhelming force was used, was still a limited war because at no point did the U.S. consider using nuclear weapons, nor, it seems, did the Iraqis use the chemical weapons they apparently possessed. Limited war is the opposite of total war. See also total war.

lobby

similar to interest group, a lobby is any individual or group that attempts to exert an influence over legislation or other government action. Lobbyists come from all sectors of society: business, professional, labor, farm, education, church, consumer associations. The practice of lobbying, according to its advocates, give ordinary people a voice in government; but those who argue that special interest groups are too powerful say that lobbying hinders democracy, because what is good for the special interest may not be good for the country as a whole.

local government

any government that is not state or federal, such as county, city, town, village.

logistics

the branch of military science that deals with the movement, supplying and quartering of troops.

Machiavellian

one who adopts the principles of Niccolo Machiavelli (1469-1527), a Florentine political theorist who advocated the use of duplicity and cunning in political affairs. Machiavelli thought man was naturally evil and was best governed by the use of fear and force: "Whoever desires to found a state and give it laws, must start with assuming that all men are bad and ever ready to display their vicious nature." An unscrupulous and crafty strategy was acceptable because the ends justified the means.

macroeconomics

a branch of economics that is concerned with the overall picture of the economy, with aggregates rather than individual parts. Macroeconomics deals with data such as the level of employment, Gross National Product, economic growth, balance of payments, inflation, etc., rather than with individual companies or markets, which is the province of microeconomics.

magistrate

a judge of a minor court.

majority

more than half of a given thing, as when a political party has the largest share of seats in a legislature; also means being of full legal age, as in she reaches her majority on her next birthday.

Malthusian

refers to the theory of Thomas Malthus, an eighteenth century British clergyman and professor of political economy, whose Essay on the Principle of Population (1798) developed the theory that the world's population tended to grow faster than its food supply. If the population continued to increase, there would be mass starvation. Malthus thought that famine, poverty, and war were natural checks against population growth and should not be alleviated by misguided compassion. Malthus also advocated restraint on the size of families. Although Malthus was proved incorrect as far as Western industrial society is concerned, the dramatic world population growth in the twentieth century, and the fact that some Third World nations cannot feed their rising populations, has led to a renewed interest in Malthusian theories in some circles.

mandate

an order or command; the wishes of constituents expressed to a representative. Politicians usually like to maintain that they have a mandate for the policies they pursue, which gives the policies the legitimacy that they need. When politicians win elections by big margins they tend to assume they have a mandate, and are sometimes thereby more bold in pursuing their goals than they might otherwise be. Some of President Clinton's opponents have questioned whether Clinton has a firm mandate from the people because he was elected president in 1992, and then again in 1996, with less than fifty percent of the vote (to which Clinton supporters might reply that he has more of a mandate than any other candidate in either election).

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manifesto

a public statement of beliefs or plans by a government or other group, such as the communist manifesto.

maritime law

a collection of laws, built up by custom over centuries, that relate to shipping. Maritime law deals with such matters as registration, license, and inspection procedures; with contracts regarding insurance, carrying of goods and passengers, towage, supplies.

market

the buying and selling of goods and commodities, in a marketplace. This has nothing to do with a particular location-it refers only to the conditions where buyers and sellers can conduct business together. A market results whenever the forces of supply and demand operate.

market forces

refers to the mechanism by which basic questions of buying and selling are answered, such as the quantity of goods to be produced, the price they are to be sold at, etc., when this takes place without government intervention. If, for example, a supply of certain goods suddenly becomes scarce (say a fruit crop is badly affected by the weather), the law of supply and demand will ensure that the price for those goods goes up, and this is an example of market forces at work.

martial law

rule of a state by the military, usually as a temporary measure, caused by an emergency. The term can also refer to a period of harsh rule by a military regime that is not sanctioned by popular vote or the nation's constitution. For example, for much of the 1980s, Pakistan was placed under martial law by the military dictator, General Zia ul-Haq.

Marxism

the theory developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, which became the official doctrine of communism. According to Marxism, the key to how society operated was economics; all other aspects of society, such as politics and religion, were conditioned by the economic system. Under capitalism, society was divided into two classes: the capitalists who owned the means of production and distribution, and the workers, or proletariat, whose labor was exploited by the ruling class. Marx saw history as a dialectical process in which two opposing forces (thesis and antithesis) generate a third, synthesizing force. According to this view, capitalism would eventually break down because of its own contradictions and this would lead to the proletarian revolution and the establishment of the classless society. In the later part of nineteenth century Marxism was adopted by labor and socialist movements in Europe. In the twentieth century Marxist governments came to power in Russia and Eastern Europe, and in varying guises, in Asian countries such as China, North Korea and Vietnam, in Cuba, and in some African countries. In none of these countries did the state eventually wither away and a classless society replace it. On the contrary, Marxist societies were characterized by large and inefficient bureaucracies and had all the trappings of a police state. After the collapse of Soviet and Eastern European communism in 1989 and 1990, Marxism remained a viable system in only a few countries.

Marxism-Leninism

the term was first used by Stalin in 1924: it referred to the interpretation of Marxism by Lenin, which became the official Soviet ideology during the rule of Stalin, and beyond. It included the doctrine, developed from Lenin, that the absolute power of the communist party had to be maintained during the interim period of the building of socialism. However, much communist ideology was so adapted by Stalin that some of it bore little relation to Marx's or Lenin's original thoughts. For example, it was Stalin, not Marx or Lenin, who proclaimed "socialism in one country" (the idea that socialism could succeed in Russia without the assistance of worldwide revolution). See also Marxism; Leninism.

Marxist

a believer or expert in Marxism.

mass hysteria

when irrational, or wild and uncontrollable behavior spreads rapidly through a crowd, or through a section of society. The notorious Salem witch trials in seventeenth century Massachusetts, in which innocent people were put to death, was an example. So was the mass panic that spread in a number of American cities in 1938, when a radio broadcast of Orson Welles' adaption of H. G. Wells's novel *The War of the Worlds*- about the invasion of earth by Martians-was misinterpreted as a genuine news report of a real event.

mass media

the media that reaches huge numbers of people: television (over 99 percent of American homes have one) and the press. Of the two, television is probably the most important, since over two-thirds of the public say that television provides most of their views about what is going on in the world. The same percentage say that television is their most trusted news source. This fact gives a lot of power to the major TV networks, regarding what they report and how they report it.

masses

the vast majority of people in a given population; the common people.

massive retaliation

part of the concept of deterrence during the Cold War. The policy of massive retaliation meant that any nuclear attack on the U.S. would be met by an overwhelming nuclear response. The belief was that knowledge of this policy would deter the Soviet Union from launching a first strike.

materialism

putting the highest value on the acquisition of wealth and consumer goods rather than in developing a spiritual or moral life. In philosophy, materialism is the doctrine that describes matter as the only reality-even mind and feelings can be explained in terms of matter.

matriarchy

a society that is dominated by women, the opposite of patriarchy. Also refers to a society or tribe where inheritance is passed down through the female line.

mayhem

in law, the offense of deliberately maiming a person.

McCarthyism

to accuse a person, or a number of persons, of subversive activities by the use of smears and half-truths, and without any supporting evidence. The term alludes to Senator Joseph McCarthy (1908-56) who claimed in 1950 that he had the names of 57 "card-carrying" communists in the State Department. He produced no evidence, but continued his witch hunt against alleged communists for several years, using it as a means of attacking leading Democrats and intellectuals. McCarthy was censured by the Senate in 1954, but not before his demagogery had sent a wave of fear, known as the "red scare," through American society.

media

all the means by which news is disseminated in society: newspapers, magazines, television, radio. Conservatives often claim that the media is biased against them (a charge that would be hard to prove), and this dissatisfaction has in part led to the phenomenon in the last couple of years of "talk radio," call-in shows which are heavily dominated by right-wing hosts and contributors. The U.S. has been called the world's first "media state," in which the media dominates the political process. Because of the decline in political party organizations, politicians now take their message straight to the people via the media. Elections can be won or lost by paid TV advertising campaigns; "media events," designed to showcase the candidate and his wares, are carefully orchestrated. But the media has imposed its own laws on political discourse. Speeches, instead of being full of carefully-argued substance, are geared to 10-second "sound bites" for the evening news; a politician's "image" is everything, and is carefully crafted by media-savvy experts. The result is often a media-packaged candidate whose real nature and political convictions are hard to determine.

mediation

the use of an independent party to help settle a dispute between two other parties. Mediation is sometimes used in labor disputes or in international disputes. Unlike in arbitration, the disputants enter into no agreement to accept the suggestions of the mediator.

mercantilism

a school of economics in the eighteenth and nineteenth century that was directly opposite to the school of classical economics. Unlike the laissez faire classicists, mercantilists believed in government action designed to encourage the flow of gold and other precious metals into the country.

mercenary

a person who offers his services for pay, and does not have any personal adherence to the cause he represents. Usually used of a mercenary soldier, but can apply in other fields as well.

meritocracy

a society in which power is wielded by those who deserve it, based on their talents, industry, and success in competition, rather than through membership of a certain class or the possession of wealth, etc. America prides itself on being a meritocracy, an equal opportunity society; the ideal of a meritocracy is often cited today by those who oppose affirmative action programs.

messianism

a doctrine that is inspired by the prospect of the imminent arrival of a messiah, a savior, who will lead his people to freedom.

methodology

the science of methods; a system of methods.

microeconomics

a branch of economics that deals with the individual parts of an economy, rather than the aggregate, which is the sphere of macroeconomics.

military-industrial complex

the extremely close political, economic and bureaucratic relationship that exists between the Pentagon and its network of defense contractors. The phrase was coined by President Dwight Eisenhower in his farewell address in 1961, when he warned that "In the councils of government we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist." Because of the huge amounts of money (and large numbers of jobs) involved, the military-industrial complex has a profound influence on the nation's security policies.

militia

an armed force of citizen soldiers. Originally, militia systems were based on the idea that every citizen was obliged to serve his country; George Washington's army consisted of 41 percent militia. The other justification for a militia is that it safeguards the country against the possibility of gross abuse of power by a government or professional army. The Second Amendment of the U.S. constitution states, "A well regulated Militia, being necessary to the security of a free State, the right of the people to keep and bear arms shall not be infringed," a clause that is hotly debated today by gun control advocates and their opponents. The state militia were replaced in 1916 by the National Guard. However, the 1990s has seen a resurgence of interest in the idea of a citizen's militia, and many states now have such organizations. Some of them are dominated by right-wing patriots and believers in conspiracy theories, who believe the U.S. government is becoming a tyranny and they must take steps to defend themselves against it before it is too late.

millenarianism

the term originally referred to the Christian belief that Christ would return, and in this Second Coming, he would establish his thousand year reign (the millenium), which would be followed by the Last Judgment of all humanity. The term is now used in a wider sense to describe a certain form that this belief has taken in Christian sects and movements. Norman Cohn, in his classic book, *The Pursuit of the Millenium*, describes the following beliefs that millenarian movements profess: Salvation is thought to be collective (that is, to be enjoyed by the faithful as a group); it will be realized on this earth, not in an other-worldly heaven; it will come soon, probably within the lifetime of the believers; it will utterly transform all life on earth to perfection; and it will be miraculous, in that it will be accomplished by supernatural agencies. Millenarian sects and movements flourished at various times in Europe from the eleventh to the seventeenth century. Elements of millenarian beliefs are found in many Christian churches and movements today, and some "New Age" groups profess similar beliefs, often shorn of their Christian jargon.

minimum wage

the lowest hourly rate that an employer must pay an employee. Federal law mandating a minimum wage was first enacted in 1938, when the rate was set at 25 cents an hour. It is currently \$4.25 an hour. In 1995, President Clinton proposed an increase of 90 cents, to \$5.15, to be phased in over two years. He pointed out that under the current minimum wage a full-time worker would still fall under the official poverty level. Republicans in general oppose a rise in the minimum wage, arguing that it would lead to job losses by prompting factories to move to countries with even lower wages, such as Mexico. Independent analysts say that in 1995, the minimum wage hit a 40-year low in terms of real buying power.

minority

less than half. The Senate minority leader, for example, is the leader of the party that has less than fifty percent of the seats in the Senate. Minority also refers to ethnic or racial groups in a society, when they form part of a large society. A Native American, for example, is referred to as a minority, as are Native Americans collectively. The same applies to blacks, Hispanics, and other ethnic groups.

mixed economy

an economy in which elements from the free enterprise system are combined with elements of socialism. Most industrial economies, now including those in the post-communist world, are mixed economies. Even in the U.S., that bastion of capitalism, some enterprises, such as the Post Office, are publically owned, and private business is subject to many federal regulations.

mobilization

the process of calling up the armed forces in preparation for war.

moderate

not extreme. Moderate political policies are those that occupy the middle ground, between the right and the left, and that do not try to effect fundamental societal change. As such, moderate is the opposite of radical.

modus operandi

Latin phrase meaning manner of working, as in the modus operandi of an army, an organization, a political system.

modus vivendi

Latin phrase meaning "manner of living," which is used to describe informal arrangements in political affairs, as in the two sides reached a modus vivendi regarding the disputed territories. They may not agree, but they have worked out a way of living with their differences.

momentum

the impetus of something that is already moving. In election campaigns, politicians always strive for momentum—a good performance in one presidential primary, for example, will give them momentum going into the next one.

monarchy

form of rulership whereby a queen or king, empress or emperor holds absolute or limited power, usually inherited. In this century most European monarchies have become constitutional or limited, meaning political power is vested in elected officials and the monarch's duties are largely ceremonial. Such monarchies often represent a strong symbol of national identity in the people's minds. In some countries of Africa, the Middle East, and Asia monarchs still continue to hold absolute power.

monetarism

the economic school that places growth in the money supply as central to economic planning.

money supply

the amount of money in an economy, made up of circulation currency and demand deposits (checking accounts) in commercial banks (the latter make up three-quarters of the money supply). It does not include U.S. government deposits. The total amount of money supply results from the interaction of banks, the Federal Reserve, business, government, and consumers.

monism

the doctrine that only one ultimate being exists. Thus Judaism, Christianity and Islam are monistic religions.

monopoly

exclusive control of something. In economics, it refers to exclusive control of a commodity or service in a given market-which usually leads to higher prices for the consumer. Monopolies are not common in American industry, partly due to anti-trust laws. The term also refers to an exclusive privilege, granted by the state, of engaging in a particular business or providing a service.

Monroe Doctrine

a U.S. foreign policy that opposes European intervention in the political affairs of the Western hemisphere. It was first laid down by President James Monroe in 1823, who stated that "the American continents, by the free and independent condition which they have assumed and maintained, are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonization by any European powers. . . . We should consider any attempt on their part to extend their system to any part of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." In return, the U.S. agreed not to interfere in the internal affairs of Europe. The Monroe Doctrine was at the center of debate regarding U.S. involvement in World War I and World War II, and was also invoked during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, when the Soviet Union installed nuclear missiles in Cuba-a violation of the Monroe Doctrine. However, analysts claim that the Monroe Doctrine is now declining in importance.

moralism

a doctrine that prescribes a code of ethics but does not link it to religion.

muckraking

a journalist who exposes conduct or practices that are against the public interest. Modern day journalists who expose malpractices prefer to be called "investigative reporters." Referring to a character from Pilgrim's Progress, President Theodore Roosevelt first applied the term to early 20th century reporting practices, calling them the "men with the muckrakes." He criticized them for focusing exclusively on corruption without providing a positive outlook for social problems.

mudslinging

the practice of trying to discredit political opponents by spreading lies, distortions, and innuendo about them. Mudslinging is part of what is today called "negative campaigning," and by many accounts has been on the rise in recent election campaigns, although it has existed as long as politics has.

multilateralism

pertaining to several sides. It can refer to international trade between more than two countries without discrimination between them, or to international diplomatic accords or treaties between more than two states. It is multilateralism, for example, when the U.S. consults with its European allies before making important foreign policy decisions, so that a unified position may emerge.

multinational corporations

corporations that have operations in more than one country. A U.N. report estimated that multinationals were responsible for 20 percent of industrial production in the non-communist world (this was before the fall of communism in Eastern Europe).

multiple warheads

several warheads (the part of the weapon that carries the explosive charge) on one strategic missile. Multiple warheads are also referred to as MIRVs, for multiple independently targetable reentry vehicles. Each warhead can be guided to a different target. The creation of multiple warheads in the 1980s made the nuclear balance between the superpowers more unstable because it made a first strike more attractive. Al Gore explained how the thinking went: "If the U.S.S.R. and the U.S. have three missiles apiece and that's their total arsenal, and each missile has six warheads, then the nation launching a first strike can launch one missile and put two warheads there, two there, and two there [Gore hits three paper cups on a table]. In the aftermath, the aggressor has two thirds of its forces remaining, and the victim has none." (Quoted in *The Power Game*, by Hedrick Smith.)

multipolar

having many poles. The term is often used to refer to the post-Cold War world, which is multipolar rather than bipolar, meaning that there are now many centers of global power rather than just two (the U.S. and the Soviet Union.)

municipal law

local legislation; also refers to the national law of a country, as opposed to international law.

Muslim Brotherhood

a fundamentalist Islamic group that is a political force in several Arab countries. In Egypt it is the largest opposition party in the National Assembly; in Jordan the Muslim Brotherhood was brought into the government by King Hussein after it won 33 of 80 seats in parliament in 1990.

Napoleonic law

often considered the chief legacy of Napoleon Bonaparte, the Code Napoleon (Napoleonic law) came into effect in 1804 and remains the law of France. It is a collection of legal principles, in five sections: the Civil Code, the code of civil procedure, the code of criminal procedure and penal law, the penal code, and the commercial code. The Codes were based on common sense rather than any legal theory. According to the Cambridge Modern History, "the Codes preserve the essential conquests of the revolutionary spirit-civil equality, religious toleration, the emancipation of land, public trial, the jury of judgment. . . . In a clear and compact shape, they presented to Europe the main rules which should govern a civilised society."

- nation**
a large group of people bound together by common tradition and culture and usually language. Sometimes used synonymously with state, but this can be misleading, since one state may contain many nations. For example, Great Britain is a state, but contains the English, Scottish, Welsh, and part of the Irish nations. Iraq is a state, but contains three distinct nations: the non-Arab Kurds, the Shi'ite Muslims in the south and the Sunnu Muslims who hold power in Baghdad. And single nations may be scattered across many states, as was the case with the Jewish nation which existed in many states before the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, and is now the case with the Kurds. See also nation state.
- nation state**
usually used to describe the modern state, but strictly speaking applies only when the whole population of a state feels itself to belong to the same nation. This is certainly more the case now than it was in the nineteenth century and earlier, when large empires, such as Austria-Hungary, were states but contained many nations. But many states today still contain many nations (partly because of the arbitrary way that the borders of states were redrawn after both World Wars, and by the colonial powers as they withdrew from Asia and Africa), and with the rise of nationalism that has followed the fall of communism, this has been one of the main reasons for instability in states such as the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia.
- national debt**
the total amount that the national government owes.
- national interest**
the real interests of the country as a whole. To determine what is in the national interest a community needs common agreement on its goals and the extent to which any proposed action contributes to those goals. This is not always easy to obtain. As P. A. Reynolds states in *An Introduction to International Relations*: "The words, 'the national interest' are among those most frequently to be heard from the lips of politicians. Many of them, if pressed, might be hard put to say with precision what the words mean, still less to define the criteria by which the interest is to be determined. The term commands such obedience that to claim an act to be in the national interest immediately, if sometimes spuriously, increases the act's acceptability; and consequently groups in all polities endeavour to identify with the national interest."
- national liberation**
usually refers to the freeing of a country from colonial rule, or from oppressive rule of any kind. Wars to accomplish this end are often called wars of national liberation; guerrilla groups (usually leftist) that fight to overthrow their governments sometimes call themselves national liberation armies.
- nationalism**
excessive, narrow patriotism; the belief that the promotion of one's own nation as a culturally distinct and independent entity is more important than any international considerations. Nationalism flourished during the nineteenth century, which saw the rise of the nation-state, and the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian and Ottoman empires, which were composed of many nations. Since the demise of communism, which held national identities in check, nationalism has again become one of the chief driving forces in world affairs, and is at the root of many wars.
- nationalization**
the act by which government takes over a business enterprise or service that has formerly been privately owned. Opponents of nationalization say it is inefficient because it leads to overcentralization, and is costly. Supporters say that nationalized industries are easier to coordinate and can be expanded more easily and efficiently.
- natural law**
the eternal law that governs the entire universe, instituted by God, present in humans, and which should be the basis on which human society rests. Humans can deduce what natural law is through their reasoning power, and their innate moral sense of what is right. Theorizing about natural law and its application in society goes back to Plato and Aristotle. Natural law is contrasted to statute law, which are those laws that are enacted by human authority.
- natural rights**
similar to what the framers of the U.S. constitution called "unalienable rights," those rights that are given to humans by God or nature, such as life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness. The Bill of Rights (the first ten amendments to the constitution) embody this concept of natural rights, which was given modern formulation by English, French and American thinkers in the seventeenth and eighteenth century.
- naturalization**
the conferring of citizenship on a person who was formerly an alien, that is, a citizen of another country.
- negotiation**
discussion; bargaining to reach an agreement.
- neo-classical economics**
an economic theory that built on the foundation laid by the classical school of Adam Smith and David Ricardo. Neo-classical economics, developed in the twentieth century, retained a belief in the value of a free market economy but also developed a theory of prices and markets that did not depend on the classical theory that the value of a good depended on how much labor it incorporated. Neoclassicists argued that price was dependent solely on the forces of supply and demand. See also classical economics.
- nepotism**
the practice of appointing relatives to positions for which others might be better qualified. In 1961 President John Kennedy feared that when he appointed his brother Robert Kennedy as Attorney General he would be accused of nepotism.
- neutrality**

legal neutrality under international law is granted to a country that has renounced all war in favor of permanent neutrality. Switzerland, Sweden, Austria, and Ireland are examples of such countries, although they are permitted to defend their borders if attacked. See also nonaligned.

New Deal

the far-reaching social and economic programs enacted during the first and second terms of President Franklin Roosevelt. The New Deal was inaugurated in 1933, to overcome the Great Depression. Unemployment relief was increased, industry and agriculture were revitalized, and large public works and other programs which eventually gave employment to ten million people were set up. Unemployment dropped from 17 million to 7 million. The banking system was also reformed, and in 1935 the Social Security Act was passed, giving security to the working population. The New Deal aroused some opposition at the time as "creeping socialism," but its main provisions have endured.

New Left

a radical movement in American politics that began in the mid-1960s and had run its course by the early 1970s. The New Left grew out of dissatisfaction with Democratic liberalism, which was perceived as not fully embracing the civil rights movement or being fully committed to ending poverty. New Left theorists decided that liberals were no more in favor of change than conservatives. The escalation of the war in Vietnam was another factor that gave rise to the New Left, which supported the Vietnamese, as it did the Black Panther movement at home. Both were seen as allies in the global struggle against racist imperialism.

New Right

the term arose during the 1979s to describe a new type of conservatism that placed the highest values on social issues, and pressed for constitutional amendments permitting prayer in schools and banning abortion. The New Right lost some momentum in the 1980s but it is now a potent force once more, in the form of the Christian Coalition and its supporters. Opponents claim that the New Right, or radical right as it is sometimes called, is intolerant of all views but its own. Supporters say they are trying to guide a country that has lost its way back to its moral and spiritual foundations.

Nihilism

from the Latin word , nihil, meaning nothing. Nihilism was an intellectual movement in Russia in the nineteenth century. Nihilists rejected everything in existing society, all authority, all accepted values, traditions and social institutions. They wanted to destroy everything in order to build a new society in which the absolute freedom of the individual was paramount. Nihilists have been compared to the beatniks of America in the 1950s.

Nobel Prize

Royal Swedish Academy of Sciences awards Nobel prizes to individuals who make outstanding contributions in Literature, Economics, Medicine, Physiology, Physics, and Chemistry in Stockholm, Sweden. The Norwegian Nobel Committee awards the Nobel Peace Prize to an individual who has made an outstanding contribution to world peace in Oslo, Norway. The first prize was given in 1901; thereafter, Swedish scientist and inventor, Alfred Nobel, established a trust fund for the prizes. The Nobel Prizes are announced on October 21, the anniversary of Alfred Nobel's birthday; prizes are awarded on December 10, the anniversary of his death. Headquarters is in Stockholm, Sweden.

nobility

high social rank, especially that which is inherited, or which is conferred by title; the body of nobles in any society.

nomads

people who have no permanent home but who constantly move about in search of food and pasture. Nomadic tribes are found in parts of Asia and Africa.

nomination

the naming of a candidate by a party as their representative in an upcoming election; an appointment by the executive branch of the U.S. government of a person to fill a particular office, subject to the confirmation of the Senate.

Non-Aligned Movement

an organization of over 100 different countries whose members do not belong to any military alliance (such as NATO or the Warsaw Pact). The movement was founded by Prime Minister Nehru of India, and Presidents Tito of Yugoslavia, and Nasser of Egypt as a vehicle for non-aligned countries to come together to solve problems without benefit of military alliance. Its members represent the full spectrum of political systems from democratic to one-party communist forms of government including countries such as India, Pakistan, Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Cuba, Egypt, most African and some Latin American countries. A summit is held every 3 years with the host country providing a chairman for the 3-year period until the next summit meeting. The Coordinating Bureau of Foreign Ministers meets more often. The headquarters is the host country.

non-intervention

the principle that a nation should not interfere in the internal affairs of another during peacetime. The principle is often little adhered to, especially in regions which a great power regards as its own sphere of influence. See also Monroe Doctrine.

non-proliferation

not multiplying. The term is used to refer to restrictions on the spread of nuclear weapons. There is a Non-Proliferation Treaty on nuclear weapons that was signed in 1968 by 115 nations and has now been signed by 140. However, India, Pakistan, and Israel, all states with nuclear capability, have not signed. India and Pakistan both conducted tests of their nuclear weapons in 1998, causing new fears of nuclear war. Also, since the breakup of the Soviet Union in 1991 there have been several incidents in which materials used to make nuclear weapons have been smuggled out of Russia and into Europe, leading to new concerns about proliferation.

nonaligned

nonaligned countries choose not to align themselves with any kind of military alliance or bloc. They hold to such ideals as expansion of freedom in the world, replacement of colonization by independent countries, and greater cooperation amongst nations. See also Non-Aligned Movement.

nonconformist

a person who does not act in accordance with established beliefs or practices, especially in connection with an established church.

nonpartisan

not affiliated with any political party.

nonviolence

the policy of pursuing political goals through peaceful protests involving large numbers of people. Nonviolence as a weapon of protest has been advocated by the great Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy, and was put into action by Mahatma Gandhi (1869-1948) and his followers in India in their campaign for independence from Britain. Nonviolence, coupled with civil disobedience, was also a main plank of the American civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, led by Martin Luther King Jr. (1929-68). Nonviolence can be effective because it carries a moral authority that violence does not, and so can often win widespread sympathy for the protesters. See also civil disobedience.

normalization

return to a standard state or condition. In political speech it refers to when a state brings its relations with another state back to normal after a period of rupture, as when the U.S. decided to normalize its relations with Vietnam in 1995.

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)

a military alliance signed in 1949 by 16 countries: Iceland, Norway, Denmark, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Turkey, Italy, Belgium, Netherlands, France, United Kingdom, Germany, Luxembourg, United States, and Canada. The purpose of NATO is the joint defense of all of its members and the peaceful coexistence with all nations; it regards an attack upon any one member as an attack upon all members. NATO organizes joint defense plans, and military training and exercises. The North Atlantic Council (NAC) is the principal organization of NATO which has permanent representatives from the 16 member countries; it has several committees such as the Defense Planning Committee (DPC) which meet on a regular basis. Headquarters is in Brussels, Belgium. In 1994, NATO agreed to accept new members, and in 1997 formal invitations were issued to Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic. This expansion of NATO must be ratified by a two-thirds majority in the U.S. Senate, and by the other 15 member countries, by April, 1999.

nuclear family

refers to the five countries that openly possess nuclear weapons. These are the United States, Russia, Britain, France, and China. Sometimes referred to as the nuclear club. However, other countries possess nuclear weapons but have not openly acknowledged the fact. These include India, Pakistan and Israel. Some other countries, such as Libya, Iran and North Korea, are thought to have secret programs to develop nuclear weapons.

obscenity

something that is indecent and offensive. Obscene material is usually of an explicit sexual nature. A current national debate concerns the proliferation of obscene material over the Internet, and whether it should be censored. Those who oppose censorship often cite free speech, although in 1957 the Supreme Court ruled that obscenity was not protected under the First Amendment. However, one of the problems is that a workable definition of obscenity is hard to come by. Is something obscene, as some argue, if it violates "community standards"? But this begs the question of which community one is talking about, since standards are not uniform throughout the country, nor, perhaps, are they so within different segments of the same community.

obsolescence

in economics, a reduction of the life of capital assets, such as machinery, by improvements in technology or economic changes, rather than through natural wear and tear.

oligarchy

a political system that is controlled by a small group of individuals, who govern in their own interests.

oligopoly

control of goods or services in a given market by a small number of companies. An example is the U.S. auto industry, in which three major manufacturers account for over ninety percent of the output of passenger cars.

olive branch

figurative expression referring to any peace offering from one person or group to another.

ombudsman

a public official who is appointed to investigate complaints by individuals about the activities of government agencies.

omnibus bill

from the Latin meaning "for all," an omnibus legislative bill contains many miscellaneous provisions, as in the omnibus budget bill that Republicans hope to push through Congress in the fall of 1995.

open society

a society, such as the U.S. and most European countries, in which individuals have freedom of movement and there are no restrictions on travel to and from other countries; public buildings and officials are relatively accessible, secrecy is at a minimum and there is a free flow of information. The opposite of a closed society, such as Albania and North Korea, which do not permit free travel or open intercourse with other countries.

opportunism

in politics, the practice of adapting one's actions to gain any short-term personal advantage that may be available, but without regard for principle or long-term consequences.

opposition

the party or parties in a legislative body that are against the party or parties that control the legislature.

oppression

severity, especially when practiced by a government that puts too heavy burden upon its citizens, in terms of taxes or unjust laws.

Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)

an international, intergovernmental organization with 24 member countries; promotes policies designed to achieve the rapid economic growth, employment, and standard of living in member countries, encourages sound economic expansion of world trade on a multilateral, nondiscriminatory basis in accordance with international obligations. Holds annual ministerial meeting every May in Paris, France where its headquarters is located.

Organization of African Unity (OAU)

membership consists of independent African states. OAU works to promote solidarity amongst members, improve the quality of life in Africa. Headquarters is in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.

Organization of American States (OAS)

created in 1948 to defend the sovereignty of the nations of South and North America; OAS also is involved in the settlement of disputes and promotion of economic and cultural cooperation in the region. Headquarters is in Washington, DC.

Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)

Members are the oil producing nations from the Middle East, Asia, and South America. OPEC coordinates the policies of members and determines the best means to safeguard their interests such as ensuring the stabilization of international oil prices. Headquarters is in Vienna, Austria.

orthodoxy

the generally, conventionally accepted principles or beliefs of a religion, or political party; the usual view.

ozone layer

ozone is a form of oxygen that is found in the earth's upper atmosphere. The ozone layer screens out harmful ultraviolet radiation from the sun. In recent years, holes have started to appear in the ozone layer, which are attributed to widespread use of chlorofluorocarbons (CFCs), commonly found in spray cans, refrigerators, and air-conditioning units. Damage to the ozone layer is expected to result in a variety of problems, among them an increase in skin cancer.

pacifism

the doctrine that holds that war is never justifiable and that all disputes between nations should be settled peacefully. Probably the most powerful statements in favor of pacifism this century were written by Russian novelist turned Christian anarchist, Leo Tolstoy, in tracts such as "Bethink Yourselves," written to protest the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05.

pact

a broad term that refers to an international agreement, such as the Nazi-Soviet pact in 1939.

pan-African

the movement that aspires to the unification of all Africa, a federal arrangement that would result in a kind of United States of Africa, and which would be based on African traditions. Pan-Africanism began in earnest in the early 1900s, and gathered momentum in the 1950s as African countries began to win their independence from colonial rule. In 1963 the Organization of African Unity (OAU) was founded, and it has since been the primary continent-wide African organization. But over the last thirty years, much of the steam has gone out of pan-Africanism. Ethnic, regional, and ideological barriers have been too great, and many of the newly independent African countries have been reluctant to contemplate surrendering their sovereignty to an all-African federation. In elections in South Africa in 1994, the Pan-African Congress performed poorly.

pan-Arab

the movement toward Arab unity, associated with the name of Gamel Abdel Nasser, who was president of Egypt from 1956 to 1970. Nasser made Egypt into the dominant Arab power and in 1958 he spearheaded a union between Egypt and Syria, hoping eventually to unite all the Arab nations under his leadership. But Iraq resisted and Syria withdrew from the union in 1961. Although the Arab world is still divided, for decades the Arab nations have been trying to achieve the political unity among themselves envisioned by Nasser. In spite of the many differences between the nineteen Arab nations, the Arabs feel themselves to be united by a common language, Arabic, and by their Islamic culture, which permeates all aspects of daily life.

pan-Islamic

a mainly nineteenth century movement that aimed at uniting all Muslims. Pan-Islamism made some progress in India but it failed in 1914, when the Indian Muslims failed to rise up in support of a proclamation by the Muslim Ottoman Empire of a Holy War against the Christian British occupiers. However, in recent years, the idea of a pan-Islamic movement has found renewed vigor in Islamic fundamentalism, which is unified in its opposition to the Westernization of Islamic societies.

panacea

a cure-all, as in the government did not present its proposals as a panacea, but as a first step to tackling certain social problems.

paramilitary

forces that work along side of, or in place of, regular military forces. Often they do not have any official sanction and act in secret. Some of the citizens' militias that have recently sprung up in the U.S. are paramilitary organizations.

parity

equality. In political discourse, the term is employed in a variety of contexts: employment parity (when the makeup of a company's workforce is the same as the makeup of the population as a whole in its region); racial parity (when economic status of racial groups is equal); wage parity (the requirement that workers in certain occupations receive the same pay as workers in another, specified occupation).

Parliament

the name was first given to the British legislature, which dates back to 1275, and has since been adopted in many other countries. Countries with parliaments operate under the parliamentary rather than presidential system. The government is formed by the party that has a majority of seats in parliament. The government then controls the legislature, until such time as it lose its majority, usually in an election, but sometimes also by a vote of confidence.

parochialism

thinking in small, local, narrow ways, opposed to universalism.

participatory democracy

a system of government in which individuals and interest groups are involved directly in decision-making.

partisan

adhering to one party or another in a debate or on an issue, as in , the debate was dominated by partisan politics.

partition

the division of a country into parts. This happened, for example, in Ireland in 1922, when the country was divided into the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland; and in Germany in 1945, when it was partitioned into West Germany and East Germany.

party

see political party

party line

the official doctrine or platform of a political party. The term is often used in a derogatory sense, implying a rigid adherence to party policy, as in communist bureaucrats always had to toe the party line.

party platform

the statement of beliefs and program of action that a political party proposes to take. It is issued at the party's national convention.

passive resistance

another term for nonviolent campaigns of civil disobedience. See nonviolence; civil disobedience.

passport

a document issued by a government to its citizens, that grants an individual the right to travel abroad, confirms his identity and that he or she is a citizen of the country that issues the passport. A passport is required for foreign travel; it entitles the bearer to the protection of his own country.

paternalism

governing or controlling a group, either employees or citizens of a state, in a way that suggests a father dealing with his children. In the U.S., employees generally resent being subject to paternalism, because it smacks of charity and condescension. They would rather be treated like equals and negotiate their own agreements. Other cultures, notably Japan, may feel differently about paternalism.

patriarchy

a society that is dominated by men. In anthropology, the term refers to a form of social organization in which the father is the head of the family or tribe, and descent and kinship is through the male line.

patrician

a person of high social rank; an aristocrat.

patrimony

something that is inherited, especially relating to property.

patriotism

love of one's country and loyalty to it, especially in relation to other countries.

patronage

jobs and other favors that an elected or appointed official is able to bestow on his political supporters.

peaceful coexistence

a phrase that was frequently used during the Cold War, to refer to the idea that even though the Soviet Union and the U.S. had differing social systems and were in an adversarial relationship, they could still exist together without resorting to war. The phrase could also be used for any situation in which rivals need to work out a "live and let live" arrangement.

peer

a member of the nobility, especially in Britain; an equal, as in being tried by a jury of one's peers.

people's democracy

the term used by communist governments to describe their political system, which does not resemble Western democratic systems.

people, the

the general public or the electorate in a state; the masses; the body that in theory holds the ultimate power in democratic societies, whose will should be expressed by government.

per capita

for each person, as in per capita income increased last year.

permanent revolution

persona non gratis

Latin phrase meaning a person who is not acceptable or unwelcome. If a diplomat is declared persona non grata, he must leave the host country.

petit bourgeois

a member of the lower middle classes.

philosopher king

the idea that the ruler of a country should also be the wisest person. This idea goes back to Plato's Republic. Plato's ideal ruler emerged from an elite group, formed out of the highest talent and given the most thorough training. This was training in the abstract disciplines of mathematics, science and philosophy-up to the age of 35. There was no practical training in the administration of affairs. The philosopher ruler would prefer not to have to rule, since he was devoted to the study and cultivation of wisdom-he served the state out of a sense of duty. (Plato thought that anyone who wanted power was de facto unsuited for it.) Today we might think of this as an elitist and undemocratic system of selecting a leader, and question whether such abstract training would fit a man for the task of practical politics.

pigeonhole

refers to the killing of a bill by a Congressional committee when it refuses to vote on whether the bill goes for consideration to the House of Representatives or the Senate. Pigeonholing is a frequent practice.

plank

any of the principles contained in a party political platform, as in welfare reform is a major plank of the Republican agenda.

planned economy

an economy that is controlled by the central government, which sets goals, priorities, production schedules, prices, etc. Planned economies are characteristic of socialist societies. Mistrusting the capitalist system of laissez faire, which results in social injustices, they attempt to promote the public good by manipulation of economic forces. As the economies of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe under communism reveal, however, planned economies are rarely as prosperous or as efficient as those which embrace free enterprise. Sometimes called a command economy.

plebiscite

a vote of all the people in a territory or country on an important issue, usually a matter of national sovereignty. Sometimes voters are presented with a choice between continuing to be ruled by the existing power, choosing independence, or some other course, such as annexation. In 1935, for example, the region of Saar chose to remain part of Germany rather than become part of France.

plenipotentiary

a person invested with full authority to act as a representative of a government.

pluralism

government carried out by a process of bargaining and compromise between a variety of competing leadership groups (business, labor, government, etc.). Advocates of pluralism claim that it best serves the democratic ideal in a complex modern society, in which individual participation in every act of decision-making is impractical. According to pluralism, individual rights and interests are protected by a sort of extra-constitutional checks and balances: No single group holds the dominant power position, power is always shifting, and individuals can have influence on policy-making through being active in one of these power groups. Some claim that America is such a pluralistic society; other theories say that pluralism is in fact a myth and American society is elitist.

plutocracy

government by the wealthy; or a group of wealthy people who control or influence a government.

pocket veto

the process by which the U.S. president may veto a bill by not signing it. A bill normally becomes law ten days (excluding Sundays) after it is submitted to the president for signature, if Congress is still in session. If Congress adjourns within that ten-day period, without the president having signed the bill, the bill is killed. A pocket veto cannot be overridden by a two-thirds vote in the Senate, as is the case with other presidential vetoes.

point of order

a question raised at a formal meeting about whether the action being taken is within agreed rules about how business is to be conducted.

polarization

showing two contrary directions and tendencies. In political speech, the term has come to refer to the process by which two sides in a dispute or a political issue move steadily further apart so that no rational solution or dialogue seems possible. One could say for example that American politics today is undergoing a sharp polarization due in part to the divisive and shrill tone of much public debate. When one side makes a provocative or extreme point, the other side finds itself responding in kind in order to be heard, so a polarization is set in motion.

police power

the power of a state to regulate the actions of individuals and society as a whole in order to protect and promote the general welfare, including public health, safety and morals.

police state

a state in which the police, particularly the secret police, have wide and arbitrary power to survey, harrass and intimidate the citizenry, who are denied their civil rights and cannot protest thier treatment or seek redress through the normal administrative or judicial channels of government. Such is the case in totalitarian societies, which rule by force rather than law.

political

that which pertains to affairs of state, to government and its institutions.

political access

the ability to gain the attention of people in positions of influence in the political world. Gaining political access is the main function of lobbyists.

political asylum

the granting of refuge by a state to an individual who has fled his country because of persecution.

political capital

the sum total of potential political influence that a politician builds up, by doing favors to others, supporting another lawmaker on a key issue, etc., so that when the time comes he can draw on this reservoir of capital, because others will be indebted to him.

political party

a political organization that puts up candidates at elections who support the party's policies and attempts to win power so that it can put its policies into operation.

political realism

see realism

political theory

the study of the philosophy of the state and of government, or of a particular idea relating to it.

politician

a person who participates directly in politics (usually party politics) as candidate for or holder of public office. Politicians often rate low in public esteem, as lacking integrity ("they'll promise anything to get elected"), but many politicians would say this is an unfair characterization of them. They would point out that many of them are motivated by a genuine desire for public service, and that they have to work in an imperfect system that demands flexibility and a willingness to compromise if anything is to be accomplished.

politicization

the giving of a political character to something. For example, if a debate over some previously non-political issue becomes divided along party political lines, this would be a politicization of the debate.

politics

the process of government; the study of government.

populism

the term was originally used to describe political movements in Europe at the end of nineteenth century that appealed to the rural poor. In the U.S. the Populist Party was formed in 1890 as a protest movement by farmers and laborers; it functioned until 1908. The term is now used to describe mass political movements, or a party platform that purports to represent a populist sentiment, usually understood as the collective voice of the ordinary person on social and economic issues.

pork-barrel

a "pork-barrel" project is a publically funded project promoted by a legislator to bring money and jobs to his or her own district. The "pork" is allocated not on the basis of need, merit or entitlement; it is solely the result of political patronage, the desire of legislators to promote the interests of their own district, and thereby build up their local support. In 1998, Senator John McCain (R-AZ) claimed that \$10 billion in pork barrel projects was being allocated in that year's appropriations bills. Many of the projects McCain declared to have no valid national purpose were in the home states of senators who happened to sit on the Appropriations Committee.

possession

any territory belonging to an outside country.

post mortem

happening after death. Can be used figuratively, as in, party leaders held a post mortem discussion about the reasons for their defeat.

pragmatic

dealing with things in a practical, "whatever works" manner, rather than relying on ideology or other theoretical considerations.

preamble

an introduction to a law or constitution that describes its purpose.

precedent

in law, a judicial decision that serves as a guide for future decisions in similar cases. Can also apply to administrative decisions made by the executive branch of government.

prejudice

a preconceived idea, usually unfavorable, about something, or an adverse judgment about someone or something, either in ignorance of the facts or direct contradiction of them, as when a person exhibits a prejudice against a specific racial group.

prerogative

special exclusive powers, as for example, the powers that are vested only in the presidency and not in the legislature. The exclusive powers of a monarch are referred to as the royal prerogative.

president

the chief executive and head of state in a republic; an officer who presides over a legislative body. For example, the Vice-President of the U.S. is also the president of the Senate.

pressure group

the same as interest group: an organized lobby, not directly affiliated with a political party, that puts pressure on elected officials to further the interests of its members. See also interest group; lobby.

prestige

renown or reputation based on excellence of achievement, as in Nelson Mandela's prestige results from his lifelong dedication to justice in South Africa.

price controls

government control of prices to keep the cost of living down. It most usually happens in time of war, but there also instances in peacetime: in 1971 in the U.S. all prices were frozen for 90 days as a measure to fight inflation.

primary elections

elections held to nominate a candidate for a particular party at a forthcoming election for public office. Voters may only vote in the primary held by his own party (except in the case of a "crossover" primary.) Primaries developed in the early twentieth century as a way of making the selection of candidates more democratic, rather than relying on the judgments of party leaders.

prime minister

the leader of the government and head of the cabinet in parliamentary systems. The prime minister is also the leader of his political party.

prior restraint

the power to prevent publication of something, or to require approval of it before publication. In most cases, prior constraint is unconstitutional, prohibited under the First Amendment which guarantees freedom of the press. There have been exceptions in cases of the publication of obscenity.

privacy

the U.S. constitution guarantees the right to privacy, and the Privacy Act of 1974 contains measures that safeguard the individual against government misuse of personal information. The act also gives the individual the right to find out what personal information is stored by any federal agency. ** NOTE: The following email was recieved from Mr. Chet Leech: "In your dictionary, the term privacy is defined as a right that is guaranteed by the Constitution. The Fourth Amendment, sometimes interpreted to mean we have a right to privacy, in no way guarantees or explicitly states that there is a guarantee and does not even use the word privacy. Through Fourth Amendment jurisprudence, the courts have determined that there are certain rights we are entitled to, but in it's broadest sense, privacy is not one of those rights." Fast Times thanks Mr. Leech for his remarks and welcomes other comments regarding all items on its website.

private enterprise

a cornerstone of the free market, capitalist system, the term refers to those businesses that are owned by individuals rather than some level of government.

private sector

that part of the economy that is made up of business enterprises owned by individuals or groups of individuals, and also includes consumer expenditure for goods and services. It is in contrast to the public sector. In the U.S. the private sector accounts for about four-fifths of the economy.

privatization

the returning of a publically owned enterprise, whether a business or a service, to individual ownership. The opposite of nationalization. Supporters of privatization claim that private ownership in a competitive market promotes efficiency and improves service.

pro choice

refers to those individuals and groups who support the idea that a pregnant woman has a right to choose whether she will give birth to the baby or have an abortion.

pro life

the name given to the individuals, and the social movement, that oppose abortion rights.

probate

a legal term referring to the process through which the genuineness of a will is ascertained.

probation

the suspension of the sentence of a person who has been convicted of an offense, on the condition that he or she commits no further crimes and reports to a probation officer at regular intervals.

probe

an investigation by an appointed committee into alleged corruption or illegal activities.

productivity

output of goods and sevicees. It can be measured in terms of labor productivity (output per worker, for example) or of capital.

proletariat

the Marxist term for the working class, meaning in particular those workers who own nothing but their labor (unlike artisans, who may own their own machinery or tools).

propaganda

a latin word that was first used by Pope Gregory XV in 1622, when he established the Sacred Congregation of Propaganda, a commission designed to spread the Catholic faith worldwide. Since then propaganda has taken on a much broader meaning, and refers to any technique, whether in writing, speech, music, film or other means, that attempts to influence mass public opinion. Propaganda was used by both sides in World War I to demonize the enemy and so make the war more acceptable at home. It was refined by the totalitarian societies that emerged between the two world wars in Russia, Germany and Italy. For example, Leni Riefenstahl's film, Triumph of the Will, which recorded Hitler's Nuremberg rallies, was a masterpiece of propaganda for the Nazi regime (and is still used for propogandist purposes by white supremacy groups). Propaganda is also used in democratic societies, although it is rarely called that-except by those who oppose its content or message. Any group that advocates its cause with the intent of influencing opinion might be said to be practising propaganda-especially if its methods are blatantly biased or misrepresent facts.

proportional representation

an electoral system that awards seats in a legislature on the basis of percentages of the vote won, not on the "first past the post," winner-takes-all system that operates in the U.S. In other words, if a party polls a certain percentage of the vote, they are

guaranteed the same percentage of seats in the legislature. Advocates of proportional representation, which operates in some European countries, say it is a fairer system than winner-takes-all, because in the latter system a party can win a considerable number of votes and get only a paltry number of seats for their efforts. Opponents of proportional representation say it makes for weak, minority government. So many parties are represented that no single party has an overall majority, so governments tend to be made up of coalitions of many parties, which undermines their capacity for decisive, unified action and firm leadership.

prosecution

the conducting of a lawsuit; the party that initiates and conducts criminal proceedings in court.

protectionism

the practice of protecting domestic manufacturers from foreign competition by the imposition of tariffs and quotas on imported goods.

protectorate

a state that is not fully independent, and is under the protection of a larger state, which typically handles foreign affairs and defense.

Protestant work ethic

the concept developed by sociologist Max Weber that linked the growth of Protestantism to the rise of capitalism. Protestantism, particularly Calvinism and related Puritan doctrines, claimed that worldly success was a sure sign that a person belonged to those who were "saved." If a man prospered, it showed that he was divinely favored, so a "work ethic," emphasizing duty, hard work, and thrift, evolved. This individualistic ethic coincided with an economic phenomenon that was also individualistic: the growth of private capital, and the emergence of capitalism. Weber linked the two together as cause and effect.

protocol

a document that records the basic agreements reached in negotiations prior to the final form in which the agreement appears. Protocol also refers to the diplomatic manners that apply in ceremonial and formal business between states (seating arrangements at dinners, procedures at conferences, etc.)

providence

the beneficent operation of divine will in human affairs. Also means skill in management; foresight.

provocation

incitement; the cause of resentment.

proxy

someone who acts on behalf of another (in filling out an absentee ballot, for example.)

public interest

the common good or welfare of all. In practice it would be difficult to find complete agreement on what is in the "public interest." Once one gets beyond generalities and platitudes (it is not in the public interest to allow drunk drivers on the highway) one comes up against differences in the values people hold; sometimes by appealing to the public interest politicians try to universalize what are merely personal beliefs and values (or the interests of a section of the community) that may not in fact find common assent. See also national interest.

public morals

commonly accepted standards of right and wrong in a community.

public opinion

a generally held attitude toward a particular issue in a community, as in public opinion favored a reform of the health care system. Public opinion, which can be evaluated through public opinion polls, acts as a check on what it is possible for a government to do. For example, public opinion is strongly opposed to the sending of American ground troops to Bosnia, which is one reason such an option has not been seriously considered. The problem with public opinion is that on some issues it can be easily manipulated by the mass media.

public opinion poll

a survey taken of a representative cross section of the general public to determine its views on a particular matter. Public opinion polls today are conducted for almost every conceivable topic-from the respondents' political allegiances to their views of the O. J. Simpson case. Although the statistical methodology that underlies polls has become increasingly sophisticated, they are of varying accuracy. Often subtle changes in the wording of a question can produce very different results, and on some matters, people may be reluctant to be fully honest with the interviewer.

public ownership

ownership by some level of government of a business enterprise, as opposed to private ownership, in which an individual or individuals are the owners. When a government takes over the running of a business or industry it is called nationalization.

public sector

that part of the economy that involves, or is controlled by, federal, state, or local government, as opposed to the private sector. The public sector accounts for about one-fifth of the total economy of the U.S.

public works

construction projects for public use, such as roads and bridges. Sometimes a government will take recourse to such measures in times of economic recession, as a form of "pump priming,"-the belief that borrowing money and spending it on the wages and materials needed for public works will improve the economy. Public works were a major part of the New Deal in the 1930s that pulled the U.S. out of the Great Depression.

puppet regime

a regime that is controlled by the government of another state. For example, Vichy France, which refers to the French government after France fell to the Germans in World War II, was a puppet regime, since it was subservient to Germany.

- purge**
to get rid of party members and other citizens who are not toeing the official party line, or who are perceived as a potential or actual threat. Purges are usually associated with totalitarian societies: The Soviet Union under Stalin had massive purges, as did China under Mao Tse Tung.
- pyrrhic victory**
a victory in which the victor pays too high a price to make it worthwhile. The phrase comes from the victory of Pyrrhus, king of Epirus, over the Romans at Asculum in 279 B.C., in which he lost a large part of his army.
- quid pro quo**
a Latin phrase meaning one thing for another; tit-for-tat. For example, during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962, President John Kennedy gave a personal (although not official) pledge that the crisis could be defused by a quid pro quo: If the Russians removed their missiles from Cuba, the U.S. would within a few months remove its own missiles from Turkey.
- quisling**
a traitor or collaborator, after Vidkun Quisling, a Norwegian who was a Nazi sympathizer and revealed state secrets about Norwegian defenses to German agents in 1940, six days before the German occupation of Norway began in World War II. Quisling served as a puppet prime minister during the war; he was executed in 1945.
- quorum**
the number of members of a legislature, or of any organization, that have to be present before official business may be conducted.
- racism**
the discrimination against a person or group solely because of their race. Any political doctrine that claims the superiority of one race over another.
- radical**
favoring fundamental change in society. Traditionally radicalism has been identified with the left, but radicals can be on the right too. Some would argue that in America today the radical agenda is that of the right rather than the left, although conservatives would say that special interest groups like feminists and gays are pushing a radical agenda. Radicalism has a long history in Europe from the eighteenth century on; in America it was advocated by Tom Paine.
- raison d'etat**
French phrase meaning a reason of state. A reason of state is something that is of vital importance to the state, which justifies the action that a state may perform in regard to it, but which usually cannot be made public at the time.
- raison d'etre**
a French phrase meaning the reason for a thing's existence. The raison d'etre of the American civil rights movement was to secure equal rights for black people; the raison d'etre of the U.S. military is to defend the nation.
- rank and file**
in military usage, refers to the main body of soldiers in an army, excluding the officers. The term also applies to the ordinary people who form the main part of any group, as in the party rank and file supported the most conservative candidate.
- ratification**
the formal adoption of a treaty by a state, by a vote of its legislators. For example, the GATT treaty had to be ratified by the Senate before it became binding on the U.S. The term also applies to approval by the states of constitutional amendments.
- rationing**
the control by a government of the right to purchase essential goods, when those goods are scarce. Usually used as a wartime measure to ensure that everyone has at least a minimum supply of essentials.
- raw materials**
materials in their natural state that are used in manufacturing to create something else. Raw materials become of political importance when their supply is obstructed or threatened, as happened in 1990, when Iraq's invasion of Kuwait threatened to put a sizable portion of the world's oil supplies in unstable hands.
- reactionary**
resisting progress; wanting to go back to the old ways of doing things, even if those ways are no longer appropriate. Usually used in a derogatory sense. People rarely describe themselves as reactionaries. But someone who thinks of himself as a conservative may be a reactionary to his opponents.
- Reagan Doctrine**
The name given to a policy pursued by President Ronald Reagan, of American support for anti-communist revolutions. Reagan announced in his state of the Union address in 1985, "We must not break faith with those who are risking their lives on every continent . . . to defy Soviet-supported aggression and secure rights which have been ours from birth . . . Support for freedom fighters is self-defense." The Reagan administration advocated this policy for three main reasons: Anti-communist rebels should be supported because they were fighting for an end to tyranny; if they were defeated their countries would fall under Soviet domination; it was necessary to back anti-communist rebels because defending freedom was a long-established American tradition. The policy was applied to rebel movements in Afghanistan, Angola, Cambodia, and Nicaragua.
- realism**
that which deals with the facts, with things as they are, not with idealistic notions of what they might or should be. Practical rather than visionary or imaginative. In politics, realism is similar to realpolitik in meaning.
- Realpolitik**

German term now used in English that means politics based on strictly practical rather than theoretical or idealistic notions, and practised with a hard or cynical edge, without any sentimental illusions. Realpolitik is power politics; the practitioner of realpolitik pursues the interests of his own group or country ruthlessly; he expects the other side to the same.

rebellion

armed resistance to authority or government, similar to revolution.

recession

usually defined as a contraction in the Gross National Product that lasts six months or longer. A recession might be marked by job layoffs and high unemployment, stagnant wages, and reductions in retail sales, and slowing of housing and car markets. A recession is much milder than a depression, and is often considered a normal part of the business cycle. The last recession experienced by the U.S. was in 1991 and 1992. Voter discontent with the economic recession was in part responsible for the defeat of George Bush in the presidential election of 1992.

red herring

something irrelevant that is used to confuse or take the attention away from the something else. The politician who is asked an awkward question may introduce a red herring into his answer, to divert attention away from the awkward issue. The term comes from the use of red herrings in hunting, to distract the hounds.

redistribution

reallocation by a government of the wealth of a nation. This is usually done by taxes and welfare benefits-high taxes for the wealthy finance benefits for the poor. Redistribution is one of the central tenets of the welfare state, and of socialism.

referendum

a national or local vote on a single issue. Most U.S. states require referendums on amendments to the state constitution.

reform

a change or modification of something that already exists.

refugee

a person who has been driven out of his homeland by war or natural disaster and who seeks safety in another country.

regime

refers to a method or system of government; is often used to refer to a military government, or to a government that lacks legitimacy.

regimentation

making people think and act in the same manner. Regimentation is a characteristic of totalitarian societies.

regionalism

policies that recognize the distinctive character of different regions in a country, and allow them some autonomy over their own affairs. Regions, for example, can be distinctive due to language, culture, and history.

rehabilitate

to restore the good name or reputation of, as in former President Richard Nixon spent many years after he resigned over the Watergate scandal trying to rehabilitate his reputation. In sociology, the term is used to refer to restoring a criminal to a condition in which he can return to society and refrain from committing further crimes.

rehabilitation

the act of rehabilitating or state of being rehabilitated. Rehabilitation is one stated purposes of the U.S. prison system, which is why in most states the system is run by a department called the Department of Corrections. The tension between the need to punish and the need to rehabilitate has always been present in the prison system, and the balance fluctuates from time to time. Currently, because of public fear of crime, there is a swing toward the idea of punishment and retribution (in 1995, for example, the state of Alabama restored chain gangs), and against rehabilitation through programs such as jobs and education. This is in spite of several studies which show that the availability of educational programs reduces the recidivism rate.

reparations

payments demanded of the losers in a war by the victors as compensation for damage suffered, usually to civilians and property. For example, heavy reparations were exacted by Britain, France, and the U.S. from Germany after World War I.

repatriation

the sending back of a person to his country of origin, as in the repatriation of prisoners of war.

representation

that which is performed by a representative, delegate, or agent, especially a representative in a legislature.

representative government

a system of government in which the people elect agents to represent them in a legislature.

repression

in politics, refers to crushing of dissent, crackdown on a rebellion, or similar, as in writers and intellectuals fought against government repression.

reprieve

to delay the punishment of, particularly with reference to capital punishment; to give temporary relief to.

reprisals

retaliation taken in revenge for some injury suffered, as in, the government decided to take reprisals against the country responsible for terrorist acts.

republic

the form of government in which ultimate power resides in the people, who elect representatives to participate in decision-making on their behalf. The head of state in a republic is usually an elected president-never a hereditary monarch. A republic is founded on the idea that every citizen has a right to participate, directly or indirectly, in affairs of state, and the general will of the people should be sovereign. The U.S. is a republic.

retaliation

revenge or reprisal, on a tit-for-tat basis. Retaliation is the repaying of an attack by an enemy with an attack on him.

retroactive legislation

legislation that applies to a specified period before the legislation was passed, as well as to the present and future.

reverse discrimination

the term is used by those who oppose affirmative action programs, who say that the effect of such programs is no longer to end discrimination against blacks but to discriminate against whites.

revisionism

the drastic reevaluation of an accepted theory or doctrine, or historical event or person. A revisionist historian for example, might offer a completely new view of a highly revered figure that shows him in a negative light, or vice versa. President John F. Kennedy and Sir Winston Churchill are two historical figures who have recently been subjected to revisionist treatment by historians.

revolution

a rebellion in which the government is overthrown, usually by force, and a new group of rulers takes over. Sometimes the whole social order is overthrown. Can also refer to any large-scale change in society, as in the Industrial Revolution.

revolutionary

a person who advocates or instigates a revolution; that which causes a drastic change in society.

rhetoric

the art of persuasive and impressive speaking or writing. Can also mean speech or writing that is elaborate or showy or insincere.

right to work

state laws that prohibit collective bargaining agreements made between employers and unions from including the closed shop, or any clauses that mandate union membership for employees.

right-wing

on the far conservative side of the political spectrum, the opposite of left-wing. Right-wing politics usually favors: a free enterprise system in which business is unfettered by government regulation; a strong military; does not favor much spending on social services, and is "tough on crime." The term right-wing can include authoritarians and reactionaries. See also conservative; reactionary.

riot

a violent public disturbance by (in law) three or more people.

royalty

kingship; the office of king or queen; a royal person or persons.

rubber stamp

to approve something in a routine way, without giving the matter much thought.

rule of thumb

a rule about the performing of an action that is based on practical experience rather than theoretical or scientific knowledge. Any way of doing something that works, whether it is technically "correct" or not.

ruling class

the group of people, as a class, that holds power in any society.

sabotage

intentional obstruction or destruction of organized activity.

sacred cow

any principle or thing that is regarded as being beyond attack, or untouchable. For example, in current political debate about balancing the federal budget, Social Security is considered a sacred cow, and no politician would dare risk proposing to cut it.

sanctions

punitive measures, usually taken by several countries in concert, designed to put pressure on a country to change its policy. The U.N., for example, has put economic sanctions on Serbia in order to deter it from supporting the Bosnian Serbs in the war in Bosnia. Sanctions may be economic (banning trade, for example) or diplomatic (withdrawal of relations). They are usually imposed because a country is considered to be in violation of international law.

sanctuary

a place of refuge or protection, where a person is immune from punishment by the law.

satellite country

a country that is in effect, although not in name, controlled by another, usually larger country. Before the fall of communism, the countries of Eastern Europe were satellites of the Soviet Union, that is, they could not pursue any economic, social or foreign policies that the Soviet Union did not approve of.

scarcity

an axiom of economics is that there are not enough resources to go around. There is always a situation of scarcity in that there are less goods available than there are people who want them (even if there are plenty of goods, there are always people for whom the goods are too expensive). In this sense, economics is the science of the allocation of scarce resources.

secession

the act of seceding, or withdrawing (from some organized entity such as a nation), as when Slovenia and Croatia decided to secede from Yugoslavia in 1991.

secondary boycott

a boycott in which one of the parties involved attempts to exert an influence over a third party. Usually this is when a labor union, in a labor dispute, attempts to put pressure on an employer who is not directly involved in the dispute, in the hope that this will eventually produce pressure on the employer directly involved. Most secondary boycotts are illegal under the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947. See also boycott.

secret ballot

a vote that takes place in secret, that is, one where the voter does not have to disclose for whom he voted.

sect

a religious group that breaks away from a mainstream church. The Branch Davidians, for example, are a sect. Can also refer to any group of people that have a common philosophy and common leadership.

sectarian

characteristic of a sect; devoted to a sect. The term is often used to refer to conflicts where religious allegiances play a large factor, as in sectarian violence in Northern Ireland.

secular

not connected with religion or the sacred, as, for example, a secular education would be one that is not based on religious teachings or principles.

secularization

the process of becoming secular; the separation of civil or educational institutions from ecclesiastical control.

security

something that gives protection or safety. National security, for example, relates to policies that provide for effective national defense against an external or internal threat.

sedition

plotting or rebelling against, or stirring up resistance to, a government.

segregation

the separation of people in society-in schools, the workplace, and public places-on the basis, usually, of race. The system of apartheid in South Africa was based on the principle of segregation, and segregation was the norm in the American South until the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s brought it to an end.

self-determination

the principle that no nation should in peacetime interfere in the internal affairs of another nation. The principle is not always adhered to, particularly when a great power considers that a particular country falls within its sphere of influence. See also non-intervention.

separation of powers

a system of government in which the three branches of government-executive, legislative, and judicial-are independent of each other. Each has powers that the others cannot impinge upon. The doctrine was first formulated in the eighteenth century by the French philosopher Montesquieu. The Founding Fathers thought that the separation of powers, which is the system of checks and balances that is enshrined in the constitution, was the best way to prevent tyranny.

separatism

a movement by a region or territory or ethnic group to break away from a country of which it is a part. Since the fall of communism separatism has broken out in many regions in Europe, as groups of people with a distinct cultural identity have sought to free themselves from the larger nation that formerly contained them.

servitude

the state of being in slavery or bondage. It can also mean compulsory service or labor, such as a prisoner may undergo as punishment.

short-range missiles

missiles that can carry nuclear warheads over a distance of 300-600 miles. The numbers of these missiles was greatly reduced by the INF treaty in 1987.

show trials

trials held in totalitarian societies that are a travesty of justice and a mockery of a fair trial. The defendants are certain to be convicted, whether guilty or not, the trial merely serving as a pretext to dispose of them, and a warning to others. The most notorious show trials were held in the Soviet Union under Stalin from 1935 to 1938, in which many of Stalin's fellow revolutionaries and Russian army leaders were charged and convicted of treason. Historians doubt whether any of them were in fact guilty.

shuttle diplomacy

first used to describe former U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger's personal role during the period following the 1973 Yom Kippur War when he was helping to negotiate a disengagement agreement between Israel and the defeated armies of Syria and Egypt. Shuttle diplomacy is now widely used to describe a process whereby a diplomat, envoy, or other negotiator from one nation personally travels back and forth (i.e. "shuttles") between different states that are in conflict and meets with the leaders of each side in an attempt to broker a ceasefire or forge some other diplomatic solution. Recent examples of U.S. shuttle diplomacy include the work of U.S. Middle East Coordinator Dennis Ross in 1995 and 1996, who "shuttled" many times between Israeli leaders and those in the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization) in an attempt to further the Middle East peace process. Other instances include the attempts in 1998 of U.S. envoy Richard Holbrooke to bring peace between Yugoslavia and its secessionist rebels in Kosovo province.

In November 1998, U.S. envoy Anthony Lake practiced shuttle diplomacy when he traveled back and forth between Ethiopia and Eritrea in an effort to end a border conflict.

silk stocking district

an area where wealthy, aristocratic people live.

silver-tongued

eloquent and persuasive. Used of politicians or others who have persuasive oratorical skills.

sit-down strike

a strike in which striking employees take possession of the employer's property (machinery, etc.) and prevent it from being used.

sitting on the fence

refusing to take a stand one way or another. Politicians are often accused of sitting on the fence when, nervous of offending powerful interests on both sides of an issue, they try to avoid stating a clear position one way or the other.

skinheads

skinheads, so-called because of their shaven heads, originated in England, but are now found worldwide. Most of them are aged between 13 and 25. Many groups of skinheads espouse a crude form of nationalism, and have been responsible for thousands of incidents in Europe and North America of beatings, fire-bombings, and race-baiting. Many skinheads, who tend to hang around in small groups, are linked to other political right-wing groups, and to each other, through shared music (a form of rock called "oi", originating in England) and skinhead magazines.

social contract

the political theory that a state and its citizens have an unwritten agreement between them, a social contract into which they voluntarily enter. In the theory of Thomas Hobbes (1588-1679), such a social contract was necessary to lift mankind out of a primitive "state of nature" in which life was "nasty, brutish and short." Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712-1778) also postulated an original state of nature before there was organized government, but for him it was an idyllic, carefree condition. The state became necessary as individual inequalities developed, but the only social contract that would not corrupt mankind was one based on direct democracy in which the general will was the basis for law.

social Darwinism

the evolutionary theories of the natural historian Charles Darwin (1809-18820), especially the idea of the "survival of the fittest" and "natural selection," applied to the sphere of human society. Social Darwinists, who in America were associated with the British philosopher Herbert Spencer, advocated an extreme form of laissez faire economics, and supported individualism to the extent of opposing compulsory free education.

social justice

a situation in which all individuals and groups in a society are treated fairly and equally, regardless of race, gender, or any other factor that could be used to create situations of injustice.

Social Security

the Social Security Act was passed in 1935; it established a national social security service, which included benefits for the elderly, unemployed, and also aid to the states for the care of the old, dependent children, and the blind. At first benefits were for private sector employees only, but in the 1950s Social Security was extended to self-employed, state and local employees, household and farm workers, and members of the armed forces and clergy. Disability insurance was added in 1954. In 1965 Medicare, which provided health insurance for those over 65, and Medicaid, which provided health care for the poor, were added. In 1972 a law was enacted that linked Social Security benefits to the rise in the cost of living. The result has been that over the last two decades Social Security has taken up more and more of the federal budget, but current proposals to balance the budget leave Social Security mostly exempt from cuts, the exceptions being Medicare and Medicaid, which are slated for sizable reductions.

social services

services provided by the government to improve social welfare for those who need it, such as the elderly, the poor, the disabled, and children. Services might include insurance, subsidized housing, health care, family allowances, food subsidies.

social stratification

the layering of a society, in the sense that some people will be above others in the social scale, in terms of class, income, education etc. For example, societies in which a class system is strongly present can be said to be highly stratified.

social welfare

the well-being of the community. Social welfare is an intangible; it is hard to quantify. It cannot be measured in terms to the quantity of goods and services available, because this is to equate welfare with material abundance. Social welfare is not the same as standard of living. The utility of something, the ability of a good or service to satisfy human want, will vary from person to person. A more accurate evaluation of social welfare would have to be something like a quality of life index, and include such things as environmental factors (quality of air and water), social indicators like levels of crime and drug abuse, availability of essential services like education and hospitals, and other non-material factors like religious faith. The more diverse the community the harder it is to evaluate social welfare, since different groups may place widely varying values on different aspects of community life.

socialism

a political system in which the means of production, distribution and exchange are mostly owned by the state, and used, at least in theory, on behalf of the people. The idea behind socialism is that the capitalist system is intrinsically unfair, because it concentrates wealth in a few hands and does nothing to safeguard the overall welfare of the majority. Under socialism, the state redistributes the wealth of society in a more equitable way, with the ideal of social justice replacing the profit motive. Socialism as a system is anathema to most Americans, although many social welfare programs like Medicare and Medicaid (once derided by their opponents as "socialized medicine") and Social Security are socialistic in effect, since they are controlled by the government and effect a

measure of income redistribution that could not happen if market forces were the sole factor in the economic life of society. See also communism; Leninism; Marxism. The following comment was contributed by Fast Times reader Blake Thomas: Socialism

socialization

the process by which individuals adapt themselves to the norms, values and common needs of the society.

society

any group of people who collectively make up an interdependent community.

sovereign

one who exercises supreme power in state—a king or queen; also means independent of others, as in a sovereign state.

sovereignty

independent political authority, as in, those who oppose their country joining the European Community fear the loss of national sovereignty to a central, European body. Also means the quality of being supreme in power or authority, as in sovereignty was vested in the National Assembly.

speculation

the practice of buying something (usually securities, commodities, or foreign exchange) at a fairly high risk for the purpose of selling the same thing later for an above average return.

sphere of influence

areas in which another state wishes to exert its influence so that no hostile government or ideology can take root there. For example, the U.S. regards Central America as coming within its sphere of influence, which accounts for its attempt during the 1980s to overthrow the communist Sandinista regime in Nicaragua. Before its demise in 1991, the Soviet Union regarded Eastern Europe as its sphere of influence, which is why it felt justified in invading Czechoslovakia in 1968 when that country appeared to be adopting more liberal policies. By and large, each superpower accepted the validity of each other's clearly defined spheres of influence, although there were many areas where spheres of influence were disputed.

stagflation

in economics, high unemployment and inflation taking place at the same time.

standing orders

the rules for parliamentary procedures that apply to all sessions until changed or repealed.

Star Wars

see Strategic Defense Initiative

stare decisis

a Latin phrase which literally means "Let the decision stand." It refers to a legal doctrine that emphasizes the binding force of precedents. If there is a legal precedent, that precedent should be followed in all similar cases.

START

Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty I was signed in 1991 by the U.S. and the Soviet Union. It provided for a one-third reduction of nuclear missiles, over a seven-year period. It was the first treaty to mandate reductions in nuclear weapons by the superpowers. START II was signed by the U.S and Russia in 1993. It called for both sides to reduce their long-range nuclear weapons to one-third of then current levels within ten years, and to eliminate land-based multiple warhead missiles.

states' rights

in the U.S. system of government, the rights that are given to the states rather than the federal government. Often the phrase states' rights is used by people who feel that federal policies are interfering with their own rights. Opponents of the civil rights movement in the 1950s and 1960s, for example, invoked the idea of states' rights to block federally-mandated desegregation.

statesman

a person who shows great wisdom and skill in the handling of the affairs of government. Being a political leader does not of itself make a statesman, and few would attain to such a designation without internationally acknowledged wisdom in foreign affairs. Statesmen are often perceived as being above the partisan fray of politics, able to discern, and having the courage to articulate, what the real long-term interests of a country are. See also leadership.

status

condition or position with regard to law, as in his status was that of a legal alien; position or rank, as in his high status in the academic world was unchallenged.

status quo

the existing state of affairs, at any given time, as in "people opposed to the proposed changes fought to maintain the status quo."

statute

in the broad sense, any law or rule. More specifically, a statute is a law enacted by legislation.

steering committee

a committee within a legislative body that facilitates the passage of legislation, by arranging the order of business, mobilizing votes, etc.

stimulus

an aspect of fiscal policy, in which a government creates more spending power in the economy by reducing taxes or increasing its spending.

storm in a tea cup

a big fuss about a small matter.

straddle the fence

to adopt an ambiguous position on an issue, in the hope of winning support from both sides.

Strategic Defense Initiative

also known as S.D.I. and Star Wars. S.D.I. was announced by President Ronald Reagan in 1983. It was designed to create a completely new form of national defense, through the creation of a defensive shield around the United States, which would allow incoming nuclear weapons to be destroyed by laser guns before they hit their target. Reagan believed that S.D.I. could put an end to nuclear weapons by making them useless. However, many experts were certain that S.D.I. could not possibly work at all; others said it could not protect the entire U.S. population and would merely force the Soviet Union to aim more nuclear warheads at the U.S. But in spite of these concerns, the Reagan administration committed large resources to the development of S.D.I., and it was an important factor in negotiations with the Soviet Union during Reagan's two terms of office. (The Soviets opposed the development of S.D.I.) The administration of President George Bush (1989-1993) was less enthusiastic about Star Wars, and the idea gradually was dropped, especially since the end of the Cold War made a nuclear attack on the U.S. less likely. It was revived in 1995 by Republican senators, who say that the threat of nuclear proliferation is such that it warrants more research into the development of a land-based missile defense system.

strategy

the science of planning military operations, as in U.S. strategy during the Persian Gulf War. Also used more loosely to refer to any form of planning for action, as in the President's strategy for the election campaign.

straw vote

an unofficial vote that is used to either to predict the outcome of an official vote, or to gauge the relative strength of candidates for office in a future election. For example, long before the Republican caucuses take place in 1996 for the selection of a nominee for president, straw votes will have been conducted in various states. A good showing in a straw vote can give a candidate a boost, but does not necessarily predict later success.

strawman

a weak argument or opposing point of view that is set up by a speaker so that he can knock it down easily and appear to win an argument or debate. Sometimes a strawman may represent an exaggerated position that none of the speaker's opponents is in fact advocating-but the speaker hopes that his listeners do not know this.

strike

the withdrawal of labor by a group of workers, acting collectively, in order to achieve some goal such as higher wages or better working conditions, or to resist management proposals for changes that they oppose.

structural unemployment

job losses caused by major shifts in the economic environment, and which are hard to alleviate. For example, if the coal mining industry in a country is in a long-term decline, it will create structural unemployment: a body of workers who are not easily retrained, centered in particular areas, where new industry cannot be quickly introduced. Structural unemployment is distinguished from short-term fluctuations in unemployment caused by workers moving between jobs.

subpoena

a writ ordering a person to appear in court.

subsidy

a grant made out of public funds to support some private enterprise that is considered to promote the public good. A current debate in the U.S. is whether the government should continue to subsidize the arts, through organizations such as the National Endowment for the Humanities.

subsistence

means of support or livelihood; means of living. People who have enough only to cover basic needs are considered to be living on a subsistence income.

subversive

tending to undermine, disrupt or overthrow something already established, as in lawlessness and violence are subversive of public order. A subversive individual or group is one that tries to undermine the existing form of society or government.

succession

the assumption of an office, after the previous incumbent's period of authority expires, for whatever reason (incapacity, resignation, death). Also refers to the order in which persons will replace a king or president if those figures are no longer able to perform their functions. For example, in the U.S., the Vice-President is first in the line of succession to the presidency; the Speaker of the House of Representatives is second. In Britain, Prince Charles is first in the line of succession to the throne.

suffrage

the right to vote. Democratic societies are characterized by universal suffrage, which means that all adult citizens have the right to vote. The U.S. has had universal suffrage since 1920, when the Nineteenth Amendment was enacted, that extended the right to vote to women.

summit diplomacy

meetings between the heads of governments of major powers that discuss the relations between them. During the Cold War, summit diplomacy developed as a major means by which the U.S. and the Soviet Union tested each other and tried to reach a rapprochement, or at least understanding of each other's position, on a variety of issues. Summit meetings were dramatic and comparatively infrequent events, and the hopes and fears of the world often seemed to hang on the outcome. Since the end of the Cold War, the importance of such summit meetings have vastly decreased-when President Clinton meets with Russia's President Boris Yeltsin, for example, it seems only a routine matter.

superpower

a superpower is a state that is powerful economically and militarily, that can act influentially over most of the globe, that can influence the behavior of other states and maintain that influence for an extended period of time, and can also take effective action on its own, without needing the consent of other nations. In the post-World War II era there have been two superpowers, the United States, and the Soviet Union. Since the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991, the U.S. is the only state that could be called a superpower. However, as the 1990s has shown, even a superpower faces restrictions on what it can do to accomplish its goals. The U.S. felt compelled to assemble an international coalition to fight the Persian Gulf War in 1991, rather than go it alone. And from 1993 onwards, the U.S. has not been able to influence the course of the war in Bosnia. It has not even been able to impose its will on its own European allies. This is partly due to the end of the Cold War: now there is no longer a Soviet Union as a common enemy, more nations feel free to pursue their own course, without reference to Washington. And in spite of the fact that the U.S. is the sole standing superpower, the political world is now multipolar rather than bipolar: other powers are on the rise, such as Japan and Germany, whose status as economic superpowers gives them an increasing influence in world affairs.

supply and demand

the economic mechanism that operates in a free enterprise system, and that is responsible for prices, based on the assumption that sellers want to sell at the highest price they can, and buyers want to buy at the lowest possible price. If something is in heavy demand but short supply, prices will go up, and vice versa. A rise in price will reduce demand and expand supply, and vice versa (i.e. a fall in price will expand demand and contract supply.) Prices tend to stabilize at the level where demand equals supply.

surplus value

the difference between a worker's wages and the value of the goods he produces. According to Karl Marx, surplus value was a measure of the exploitation of the worker by the capitalist, i.e. the worker contributed more than he received, and the profit went to the employer.

symposium

a conference organized for the discussion of a particular subject.

syndicalism

a form of socialism that aimed to combine public ownership of the means of production with the elimination of central government. This was to be accomplished through the labor movement, which would overthrow the government; labor unions would then become the fundamental element in the new society. Syndicalism originated in Europe during the 1890s, and had some influence up to World War I; the movement petered out in the 1920s.

syndicate

an association between two or more companies to carry out a joint enterprise that requires large capital, often to establish control of a particular market.

synthesis

the putting of two or more things together to create a whole, as in the bill before Congress represented a synthesis of many different proposals.

taboo

a prohibition or restriction that results from tradition or custom.

tariff

a surcharge placed on imported goods and services. The purpose of a tariff is to protect domestic products from foreign competition.

taxation

a compulsory payment levied by a government on its citizens to finance its expenditure. It can either be levied on income or as a surcharge on prices (sales tax). Income tax is a direct tax (everyone who earns a certain amount has to pay it); a sales tax is indirect tax (affects only those who buy the taxed goods.)

territorial waters

waters over which the jurisdiction of the adjacent state is extended. including seas, bays, rivers, and lakes.

terrorism

the pursuit of a political aim by means of violence and intimidation. Modern terrorism emerged in 1968 with the hijacking of an Israeli El Al plane by Palestinians in Algeria. Terrorism has since become one of the most frequent and powerful means of waging war. In the 1980s, there was a total of almost 4,000 incidents worldwide, which was up by one-third from the 1970s. The number of deaths from terrorism doubled in that period. In the 1990s there has been a decrease in terrorist incidents worldwide. But also in that period, the danger from terrorism in the U.S. has increased, including the bombing of the World Trade Center, New York, in 1993. In 1995, the U.S. suffered the worst terrorist attack in its history, when 167 people were killed by a bomb placed by terrorists outside a federal building in Oklahoma City. Two anti-government Americans were convicted of the crime. In 1998, international terrorism flared up again, with bombings of U.S. embassies in Kenya and Tanzania, incidents which were quickly followed by U.S. attacks on terrorist targets in Sudan and Afghanistan.

terrorist

a person who advocates or takes part in terrorist acts. However, the definition is not as simple as it looks. One man's terrorist is another man's freedom fighter, and yesterday's terrorists have a habit of becoming today's statesmen. Robert Mugabe, President of Zimbabwe, led a terrorist campaign to establish black majority rule in what was then white-ruled Rhodesia in the 1970s. Menachem Begin, prime minister of Israel from 1977 to 1983, had been a terrorist seeking to expel the British from Palestine in the late 1940s. Yasir Arafat, who was behind numerous acts of terrorism committed by the Palestinian Liberation Organization in the 1970s and 1980s, is now the recipient of a Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in reaching a peace agreement with Israel.

theocracy

a state or government which is run by priests or clergy. A recent example of a theocracy is Iran immediately after the overthrow of the Shah in 1979, when the Ayatollah Khomeini gained power. Theocracies are becoming more common as Islamic fundamentalism grows in strength.

third party

can refer either to a minor party, such as the Socialist Party or the Libertarian Party, whose support is so small that it has no significant effect on a national election, or to a party that presents a viable alternative to the Republicans or Democrats. During the late eighteenth and nineteenth century, there were a number of powerful third parties in American politics. The Greenback Party, the Union Labor Party, and the Peoples' Party, for example, forced the major parties to pass significant antimonopoly and labor legislation. In 1912, Theodore Roosevelt's Progressive Party split the Republican vote and helped the Democrats win back the White House. In 1996, Ross Perot's Reform Party won 7 percent of the vote in the presidential election. However, in modern times third parties have had no success in breaking the two-party system, and often complain that restrictive ballot access requirements in many states are designed by the major parties to keep them off the ballot.

Third World

the impoverished or developing countries of the world, made up mostly of of Asian, African, and South American countries.

torture

the deliberate infliction of extreme physical pain. For much of Western history, torture has been an accepted way of eliciting information, or compelling a confession or simply as punishment. It was used in ancient Greece and Rome, and in European societies up to the eighteenth century. In the U.S., torture was banned in the constitutional rejection of cruel and unusual punishment; and in the nineteenth century European nations decisively rejected the use of torture as a legal procedure. However, in the twentieth century torture has been used by totalitarian and authoritarian regimes around the globe, and it has not, even today, been eradicated.

total war

a war that threatens the very existence of a nation, and in which every available weapon is used. Also means a war in which all the economic resources of the nation are mobilized as part of the war effort. This concept was developed in the nineteenth century; it applies to both world wars of this century. Total war, in the sense of using all available weapons, has been virtually unthinkable in the nuclear age, as it would result in the destruction of both sides.

totalitarianism

a system of government where the ruling authority extends its power over all aspects of society, and regulates every aspect of life. Totalitarian states maintain their existence by a combination of methods, including secret police, the banning of opposition, and control of the media. Everything in society is shaped to serve the ends of the totalitarian state. Education, for example is rigidly controlled, so as to socialize youth into the desired political attitudes. Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union were the classic examples of totalitarian states.

toxic wastes

waste matter produced in industrial or technological processes that is harmful to humans and the environment.

trade union

an organization of workers who do similar jobs. A trade union exists to take collective action on behalf of its members in negotiations with employers over wages, working conditions, etc. Trade unions are usually composed of skilled or semiskilled workers who have learned a craft.

treason

betrayal of one's country. In the U.S. constitution treason is defined as making war against the U.S. (by a U.S. citizen) or by giving aid and comfort to the enemies of the U.S.

treaty

a formal, binding international agreement that may cover issues including the regulation of trade, the making of peace, or the forming of military alliances. In the U.S., all treaties proposed by the executive branch and negotiated with a foreign country must be approved by a two-thirds majority in the Senate. The treaty is then ratified by the President.

tribunal

a court or other body that is empowered to hand down decisions.

truce

a temporary or short-term cessation of hostilities.

Truman Doctrine

a policy enunciated in March, 1947, by President Harry Truman, when he pledged U.S. support for "free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures." If America failed to do this, said Truman, world peace would be endangered. The speech referred in particular to U.S. aid to Greece and Turkey.

trusteeship

a commission by the United Nations to a country to administer a region, which is known as the trust territory. The trust territory is not a colony-the idea is that it should be developed so that it can eventually assume complete independence. For example, the Trust Territory of the Pacific Islands, administered by the U.S.

tyranny

despotism; unjust, oppressive rule. James Madison (1751-1836) defined the recipe for tyranny as the accumulation of all power and authority, including executive, legislative and judiciary, in the same hands. The U.S. constitution contains checks and balances to ensure that the conditions for the creation of a tyranny cannot appear.

underground

political or military opposition that cannot come out in the open. Often happens in times of war, when a country is occupied by an enemy, as in the French underground during World War II.

unemployment rate

the measure of how many unemployed people there are, as a percentage of the available workforce.

unilateral

involving one side only. Thus when Zimbabwe (then known as Rhodesia) made a unilateral Declaration of Independence from Britain in 1965, it meant that the Declaration was made by only one party out of the two parties involved, i.e. Britain was not part of the agreement.

united front

refers to a situation in which several groups or individuals who have some differences of opinion patch them up in order to deal with others, as in the union leaders put aside their differences and presented a united front to the employers.

United Nations (UN)

The UN was established after World War II to solve international disputes that threaten world peace and security. The UN also works to protect human rights; promote the protection of the environment; help the advancement of women and the rights of children; fight epidemics, famine, poverty. It assists refugees, delivers food aid, combats disease and helps expand food production; makes loans to developing countries and helps stabilize financial markets. The UN has six main organs, all based in New York, except the International Court of Justice, which is located at The Hague, Netherlands. The General Assembly is the main deliberative body. All 185 member states are represented in it, and each has one vote. Decisions are usually taken by simple majority. Important questions require a two-thirds majority. The 15-member Security Council has primary responsibility for maintaining peace and security. China, France, Russia, the United Kingdom and the United States are permanent members. The other 10 are elected by the Assembly for two-year terms. Other UN organs include the Economic and Social Council, the International Court of Justice (also known as the World Court) and the Secretariat. In addition, there are 14 specialized agencies. The UN is playing an increasing role as peacekeeper in conflicts around the globe. Since 1948, it has carried out more than 40 peacekeeping operations

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

provides aid and development assistance to children and mothers in developing countries. The headquarters is in New York.

United Nations Commission on Human Right

established by the UN Economic and Social Council to promote human rights worldwide; tries to solve problems around such issues as the death penalty, freedom of religious beliefs, and racial discrimination. Headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland.

United Nations Economic and Social Council

aims to promote higher standards of living, full employment and economic and social progress in member nations. It issues reports and make recommendations on a wide range of economic, social and cultural matters.

United Nations Educational, Scientific a

aims to promote collaboration among nations through education, science and culture. The U.S. withdrew from Unesco in 1985, because of its alleged anti-Western bias. Headquarters is in Paris.

United Nations Secretariat

the office of the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the chief administrative officer of the U.N. He has the power to bring to the attention of the Security Council any matter that he considers a threat to world peace. The current Secretary-General is Boutros Boutros-Ghali. He recently said that the achievements of the fifty years' of the U.N.'s existence has been to create a workable international system: "We bring hope to the international community."

universalism

the theological doctrine that all people, rather than the selected few who belong to a particular faith, will eventually find salvation in God.

usurpation

the seizing of something, usually a position of power or authority, that is not rightfully one's own. When, for example, the military in Haiti overthrew the democratically elected government of Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991, it was an act of usurpation.

usury

the loaning of money at an excessively high rate of interest.

utilitarianism

a political philosophy developed in England in the nineteenth century, by thinkers such as Jeremy Bentham and John Stuart Mill, which says that the duty of government is to promote "the greatest good for the greatest number." This could be accomplished by actions which promoted pleasure and avoided pain (these being the two things that human were ruled by). Pleasure was not defined in hedonistic terms; being of service to others, for example, could be classified as a "pleasure."

utility

in economics, the ability of a good or service to satisfy human want. It is therefore a psychological thing and cannot be measured in absolute terms. Goods that have utility for one person may not have for another. And goods that have utility for one person at a certain time may not have it at another time.

utopia

an imaginary place in which the social and political system is perfect: all citizens have all their needs met in an ideal way. The term refers to a book, Utopia, by Sir Thomas More, published in 1516, although other writers, from Plato on, have described the ideal society. Utopia can also refer to any scheme designed to create an ideal society, and it can sometimes be used to imply that something is well-intentioned but completely impractical.

vanguard

the foremost part of an advancing army. Used figuratively to refer to being opinion leaders. The Republicans might claim, for example, that since they captured the House and Senate in the elections of November, 1994, they are in the vanguard of social policy and change.

Vatican Councils

major pronouncements of the Roman Catholic church about the nature of the faith. The first Vatican Council was held in 1869-70. It declared the personal infallibility of the pope when speaking *ex cathedra* to be a dogma of the church. The second Vatican Council, 1962-65, was notable for its ecumenical and liberalizing spirit. It made a more positive evaluation of the value of other faiths: they could also be channels for God's grace; salvation could be attained by non-Christians.

vendetta

prolonged bitter hostility.

veto

to cancel or make void (legislation, etc.) The president of the U.S. has a veto power over legislation that Congress passes to him for signing.

vicious circle

a situation in which the solution to one problem merely gives rise to another problem, and the solution to that problem leads back to the first problem, often in a more acute form. An example might be a woman who suffers from domestic violence. In order to solve the problem she leaves her husband, but then she finds herself with another problem: where to live, how to survive. The solution may force her back to her original situation. She is trapped in a vicious circle.

vigilante

self-appointed individual or group that takes on the responsibility for maintaining law and order in a community, when the normal channels have become ineffective. Vigilante groups have been a feature of life in the troubled areas of Northern Ireland, for example, for over 20 years.

visa

an endorsement on a passport that shows that the holder has a legal right to enter a specific country.

voxpopuli

a Latin expression meaning "voice of the people", with implications that popular sentiment is theoretically at one with the divine will. It was usually thought to have occurred during times of crisis when the voice or opinion of the people was made manifest or became evident; monarchs have been dethroned, governments toppled, and revolutions started in the name of voxpopuli.

war crime

a crime against humanity, such as deliberate killing of civilians or mistreatment of prisoners, committed during a war. The most notorious example of war crimes in recent history are those committed by Nazi Germany during World War II. In 1946, at the Nuremberg Tribunal in Nuremberg, Germany, 24 leading Nazis were tried by the victorious allied powers for war crimes. Nineteen were found guilty and 12 were sentenced to death. The subject came up again in the context of the 1992-95 war in Bosnia, where atrocities perpetrated by Serbs against Moslem civilians led to war crimes charges being brought against Serb leaders.

ward heeler

a low-level political functionary in a ward. A ward is a district of a city or town for administrative or voting purposes. Heeler is an allusion to a dog that obeys its master when called to heel. A ward heeler might solicit votes for his party or perform small tasks for his political bosses. The term is used contemptuously, implying that the ward heeler is a subservient hanger-on of politicians more important than himself.

warhead

the head, or front section, of a weapon such as a torpedo, rocket or other projectile that contains the explosive charge, as in nuclear warhead.

Warsaw Pact

the military organization of Eastern Europe signed in Warsaw, Poland in 1955, by Albania, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland, Romania and the Soviet Union. It was a communist counterpart to NATO. Warsaw Pact members were bound to assist each other in the event of an attack on any one of them. Albania withdrew in 1961. The Warsaw Pact collaborated in the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968—the only time it took military action. The Pact was ended as a military alliance in 1991, when the demise of communism and the end of the Cold War made it superfluous.

ways and means

the financial resources of a government. For example, the Ways and Means Committee of the House of Representatives, which considers everything relating to the raising of revenues.

welfare

public financial or other assistance (food stamps, for example) given to people who meet certain standards of eligibility regarding income and assets.

welfare state

a state which supplies a large number of social services to its citizens, as a right, without requiring them to pay directly for them.

westernization

the adopting of Western habits, customs, forms of government and social organization, often applied to Third World countries seeking to modernize and industrialize their economies. Westernization can have a backlash, however, if it is done too quickly or without respect for local culture. A classic example is Iran under the Shah, who from 1953 to the 1970s tried to westernize the country but only succeeded in igniting Islamic traditionalists against him.

whip

The term is derived from fox-hunting in England. It was adopted by political parties in the British parliament, and the U.S. borrowed the term from the British. A whip is the legislator responsible for enforcing party discipline or strategy; he assists the leadership in managing its legislative agenda. Part of the whip's responsibility is to keep track of legislation and try to ensure that all members are present when an important vote takes place, or if not, that a "pairing" arrangement is made with the opposing party. The majority whip is the whip of the party that controls the House or Senate; after the majority leader, he is the senior party figure in each house. The same applies to the minority whip.

white elephant

something that is of little use or profit, especially something that is maintained at great expense. Some in Britain argue that the Falkland Islands, which Britain retained possession of after a war with Argentina in 1822, are a white elephant, because they cost a huge amount of money to defend, and yet they are very small and have only a tiny population.

women's movement

the modern women's movement began in the 1960s, when it was known as the Women's Liberation Movement. It arose out of the civil rights movement, when women began to perceive that like an oppressed minority, they too needed to take radical action to secure their rights. The National Organization for Women (NOW) was created in 1966, and remains one of the spearheads of the women's movement, which attempts to promote the progress of women in all spheres of life. Discrimination in employment is a key issue, and feminists have sought to promote the principle of equal pay for equal work or for work of equal value. Discrimination in education has been eased by the passing in 1972 of Title IX of the Educational Amendments, which banned discrimination based on sex in educational activities and programs funded by the federal government. The women's movement also promoted the Equal Rights Amendment (which failed to be ratified in 1982), and has fought to legalize abortion and keep it legal. Other issues, such as sexual harassment, rape, and domestic violence against women have also been successfully pushed to the forefront of national awareness by the women's movement.

working class

industrial workers, and others, skilled and unskilled, who work in manual occupations, as a class. In Marxist thought, the working class is referred to as the proletariat.

World Bank

formally known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development; its purpose is to promote economic and social progress in developing nations by raising productivity; it lends funds, provides advice, stimulates outside investments. World Bank funds come primarily from money raised in the world capital markets. Headquarters is in Washington, DC.

world government

the goal of some internationalists for centuries. William Penn, the founder of the Quakers, had a plan for a world government, as did the eighteenth century German philosopher Immanuel Kant. The world rule of the proletariat also plays a part in Marxism. But the idea of one world government has never been a serious possibility; the strength of nationalism and the rivalry of different economic and social systems would seem to make it impractical. In spite of this, conspiracy theorists today believe that a plot to create a world government, involving the United Nations, international bankers, and sections of the U.S. government, is well advanced.

World Health Organization (WHO)

international health agency of the UN which promotes the highest level of health care for all peoples. WHO emphasizes health care for developing nations by helping them develop new technologies and utilize existing ones. Headquarters is in Geneva, Switzerland.

xenophobia

irrational dislike of foreign people and foreign things.

yardstick

standard of comparison. For example, in the debate over health care reform in 1993, the Canadian health care system was sometimes used as a yardstick to evaluate the American system and the proposed reforms.

zealot

fanatic; a person who is extremely partisan. Adolf Hitler was a zealot, so also, by most people's reckoning, was the Ayatollah Khomeini.

Zeitgeist

A German word now commonly used in English. It means literally spirit of the times, and refers to prevailing currents of thought and feeling in a society. For example, an aspect of the Zeitgeist of America in the 1990s is disillusionment with and distrust of political institutions.

zero-sum

a situation in which a gain for one must result in a loss for another.

Zionism

a movement that began in the nineteenth century for the return of the Jews to Palestine. Started by a Hungarian Jew, Theodor Herzl (1860-1904), Zionism was, and is, held together by the belief that the Jews worldwide are all descendants of the ancient Hebrews, and therefore share a common nationality by virtue of their link to the historical kingdom of Israel. Nineteenth century European anti-Semitism helped to strengthen Zionism, and during World War I, the British (who ruled Palestine after World War I) supported the idea, which led to the Balfour Declaration in 1917, which favored the creation of "a Jewish national home." When Israel was established in 1948 Zionism took on a new coloring, to indicate support for Israel by Jews outside the Middle East. Israel's enemies claimed, and still do, that Zionism seeks to perpetuate Israeli rule over Arabs in the occupied West Bank, which Israel seized from Jordan in the war of 1967. Zionism was condemned as a form of racism and racial domination by the U.N. General Assembly in 1975. Supporters of Zionism point out that Israel is a democracy, where Arabs-including Christians and Moslems, as well as other ethnic

groups such as the Druse and the Circassians-are granted the right to vote, freedom of religious expression, and other civil liberties equal to those guaranteed to the Jews.