Political philosophy and current political issues
Political Philosophy and current political issues (worldwide)


- States and Statehood
- Trade, Money and Markets
- Regions and Regionalism
- Development and Inequality
- Arms and Arms Control
- Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Intervention
- Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict
- Religion
- Migration and Refugees
- Environment
- Media and Communications Technology
- Transnational Crime and Corruption
- Terrorism

Conclusion (including the linkages between the above topics)

Debates on the constitution:

Do we still need the Monarchy?
Has Prime Minister Major been replaced by President Blair?
United Kingdom or federal Britain
The Belfast Agreement: as good as it gets or worst of all possible worlds?
A people’s Europe: federal or pragmatic?

Debates on government:

Should the civil service become fully politicised?
Local government: could mayors make a difference?
Quangos: are they unloved and misunderstood?

Debates on democracy:

Are the media the enemy of democracy?
Would fixed-term Parliaments enhance democracy?
Should citizenship education be compulsory?
Towards a more representative democracy: referendums or electoral reform?
Should political parties be funded by the state?

Debates on issues:

Law and order: is toughness the only answer?
Is high taxation the price of a civilised society?
Globalisation: is it good or bad for Britain?
Feminism: a politic success or economic disaster?
Is politics still class based?
Reforming the welfare state: benefit or burden?
The environment: our world in danger or Green scaremongering?
Relevant political disciplines:

(History + economics + journalism)
International Relations / International Politics
Political Science
Peace and Conflict Studies
Foreign Policy Studies
Political Philosophy and Ethics (& Political Theory)
Current approaches and areas of concern in political philosophy:

**Conceptual analysis:** power, sovereignty, freedom, equality, justice, legitimacy

**Studying the works of major figures:** Plato, Hobbes, Locke, Rousseau, Marx, etc.

**Main ideas (or doctrines):** liberalism, socialism, conservatism, communism, fascism, or more recently, communitarianism, citizenship, republicanism, feminism, multi-culturalism

**Current concerns**, e.g. in ‘Political Theory in Transition’ Ed. Noel O’Sullivan, Routledge 2000
The concept of the individual
(The nature of the individual and his/her relation to society)

Communitarianism and its legacy – Andrew Mason

Identity, diversity and the politics of recognition – Morag Patrick
Citizenship, democracy and the nature of the political in conditions of social diversity
(The concept of citizenship and such closely related issues as the kind of democratic order appropriate to it, in conditions of diversity, e.g. feminism, multi-culturalism)

The new feminism – Andrea Baumeister

Cultural diversity and the limits of liberalism – Matthew Festenstein

Citizenship beyond the nation state – Richard Bellamy

For an agonistic model of democracy – Chantal Mouffe

Power, authority and legitimacy: a critique of postmodern political thought – Noel O’Sullivan
The significance of national and global contexts
(The significance for contemporary politics of the increasing importance of global, at the expense of national and local contexts)

Nationalism and political theory – David Archard

Globalisation, the nation state and political theory – Paul Hirst

The borders of (international) political theory – Chris Brown
The nature and limits of political theory
(Revisions to the prevailing conceptions of political theory, if it is to regain its capacity to illuminate the contemporary world)

Political theory and the environment: the grey and the green (and the in-between) – Andrew Dobson

Political theory in retreat? Contemporary political theory and the historical order – Paul Kelly

Theorizing political theory – Bhikhu Parekh
Proposed topics:
The nation-state and Nationalism – abroad and at home

Ethnic Conflict – abroad and at home

The politics of identity and agonistic pluralism
The state – a political association that establishes sovereign jurisdiction within defined territorial borders and exercises authority via a set of permanent institutions.

Key features:

• It exercises sovereignty – absolute and unrestricted power in that it stands above all other associations and groups in society.

• State institutions are recognisably ‘public’ in contrast to the ‘private’ institutions of civic life.

• The state is an exercise in legitimation – its decisions are usually accepted as being binding on its citizens.

• The state is an instrument in domination – it possesses the coercive power to ensure that its laws are obeyed and that transgressions are punished – the monopoly of the means of ‘legitimate violence’.

• The state is a territorial association within geographically defined borders.
The nation
The word nation is from the Latin *nascinatio*, meaning to be born. Nations are shaped by a collection of cultural, political and psychological factors:

- **Culturally**, a nation is a group of people generally bound together by a common language, religion, history and traditions – although, of course, individuals exhibit significant differences.
- **Politically**, a nation is a group of people who regard themselves as a natural political community with a desire to establish or maintain statehood.
- **Psychologically**, a nation is a group of people distinguished by a shared loyalty or affection in the form of *patriotism*. However, such an attachment is not a necessary condition for membership – even those who lack national pride may still recognise that they ‘belong’ to a nation.
Yael Tamir defines a nation as a ‘community conscious of its particularistic existence, exhibiting self-awareness of its distinctiveness which is expressed in its culture’. Each member of the nation must share an ongoing commitment to participate in a critical debate about the nature of the national culture.

An alternative view is: ‘A nation is a society united by a common error as to its origins ....... and a common aversion to its neighbours’ (Huxley & Hadden).
**Sovereignty**
Sovereignty, in its simplest sense, is the principle of absolute and unlimited power, but a distinction is commonly made between legal and political sovereignty.
- Legal sovereignty refers to the supreme legal authority, as defined by law.
- Political sovereignty refers to unlimited political power, that is, the ability to command obedience, which is typically ensured by a monopoly of coercive force.
The nation-state
The nation-state is both a form of political organisation and a political ideal.

- In the first case it is an autonomous political community bound together by the overlapping bonds of citizenship and nationality, within a specific territory; it is an alternative to multinational empires or city-states.
- In the latter case the nation-state is a principle, reflected in Giuseppe Mazzini’s (1805-72) goal: ‘Every nation a state, only one state for the entire nation.’
Nationalism
Nationalism can be broadly defined as the belief that the nation is the central principle of political organisation. As such, it is based upon two core assumptions:
• Humankind is naturally divided into distinct nations
• The nation is a political community in the sense that it is the most appropriate, and perhaps the only legitimate, unit of political rule.
**Governance** (areas in which citizens have a democratic vote)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local</th>
<th>County/Federal State</th>
<th>Nation-state</th>
<th>Supra-national</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Parish/Town councils</td>
<td>County councils</td>
<td><em>Government (Executive)</em></td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Town Mayor</td>
<td>City Borough councils</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Wider forms of ‘governance’ (with or without democratic accountability)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local</th>
<th>County/Federal State</th>
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<td>Town Mayor</td>
<td>City Borough</td>
<td>Parliament</td>
<td>European Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Police force</td>
<td>House of Lords</td>
<td>World Trade Org.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Judiciary</td>
<td>NATO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Welfare</td>
<td>Armed Forces</td>
<td>Int. Maritime Org.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Hospital Trusts</td>
<td>Stock Exchange</td>
<td>Int. Money Markets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quango’s</td>
<td>Quango’s</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Trade Unions</td>
<td>Trade Unions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private Companies</td>
<td>Lobbyists</td>
<td>Lobbyists</td>
<td>Int. Labour Org.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Companies</td>
<td>Multi-national Corporations</td>
<td>MNC’s</td>
<td>Lobbyists</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local Charities</td>
<td>NGO’s</td>
<td>NGO’s</td>
<td>MNC’s</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NGO’s</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
QUANGO’s
The word ‘quango’, began life in the late 1960’s meaning ‘quasi-autonomous non-governmental organisation’. In the 1970’s it was transformed into ‘quasi-autonomous national governmental organisation’

Source: ‘Debates in British politics today’ Ed. Lynton Robins & Bill Jones
With reference to expressions such as, ‘Taking back control from the EU’, how important do you think ‘nationalism’ was in the Brexit debate?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Victims</th>
<th>Deaths</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1943-57</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Chechens, Ingushii Karachai</td>
<td>230,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1944-48</td>
<td>USSR</td>
<td>Crimean Tatars, Meskhetians</td>
<td>57,000-175,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950-77</td>
<td>China</td>
<td>Tibetans</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1959-75</td>
<td>Iraq</td>
<td>Kurds</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1962-72</td>
<td>Paraguay</td>
<td>Ache Indians</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963-64</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Tutsis</td>
<td>5,000-14,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1963</td>
<td>Laos</td>
<td>Mee Tribesmen</td>
<td>18,000-20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-66</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>Chinese</td>
<td>500,000-1 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1965-73</td>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>Hutus</td>
<td>103,000-205,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>Nigeria</td>
<td>Ibo in North</td>
<td>90,000-30,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1966-84</td>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>Indians</td>
<td>30,000-63,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1968-85</td>
<td>Philippines</td>
<td>Moros</td>
<td>10,000-100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1969-79</td>
<td>Equatorial Guinea</td>
<td>Bubi Tribe</td>
<td>1,000-50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971</td>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>Bengalis of Eastern Pakistan</td>
<td>1.25-3 million</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1971-9</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Karamajong, Acholi, Lango</td>
<td>100,000-500,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-79</td>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>Muslim Cham</td>
<td>90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1975-98</td>
<td>Indonesia</td>
<td>East Timorese</td>
<td>60,000-200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1978</td>
<td>Burma</td>
<td>Muslims in border regions</td>
<td>Not available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1979-86</td>
<td>Uganda</td>
<td>Karunanajong, Nilotic Tribes, Bagandans</td>
<td>50,000-100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Kurds, Bahais</td>
<td>10,000-20,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1983-7</td>
<td>Sri Lanka</td>
<td>Tamils</td>
<td>20,000-10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992-5</td>
<td>Bosnia-Herzegovina</td>
<td>Mainly Bosnian</td>
<td>200,000 Muslims</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>Tutsis</td>
<td>500,000-1 million</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Good governance

Good governance: the exercise of political, economic and administrative authority in the management of a country’s affairs at all levels.

- It is participatory, transparent and accountable
- It is effective, equitable and promotes the rule of law
- It promotes political and economic priorities based upon a broad consensus in society
- The voices of the poorest and most vulnerable are listened to in decision-making over the allocation of resources
- The acceptance of opposition and competitive politics, with checks and balances.
Box 8.1 Major peacebuilding strategies for world society in the aftermath of protracted and violent ethnic conflict

- Restoration of basic services (water, power, health care, etc.) and government functions
- Assisting with return of refugees and internally displaced persons
- De-mining and mine-awareness training
- De-militarization – includes demobilization, decommissioning of weapons, reintegration of combatants into society
- Changes to administration of justice and improvements to judicial systems – includes the de-militarization and the reform and retraining of police
- Electoral reform and election monitoring
- Social and economic development
- Promoting respect for human rights through education, training and monitoring (includes protection of minorities and other social groups)
- Creating a culture of peace through education, prejudice reduction, peace museums, etc.
- Promoting reconciliation through dialogue; may involve truth commissions and/or other investigative bodies
- Creation of a free and fair media
- Capacity-building and community development to empower all sections of society
Box 8.2 Principles of consociational democracy

Lijphart believes that stable, democratic government is possible in multi-ethnic societies, but argues that for this to happen elites should reject majoritarian principles and adopt four key consociational ideas. These are:

- **Grand coalition.** Governments should be composed of representatives from all the major ethnic groups. Lijphart argues that this is the most important of the four principles.
- **Proportionality.** A certain number of seats in Parliament and public office should be allocated to minority ethnic groups on the basis of their population numbers.
- **Mutual veto.** All major ethnic groups should be able to stop or delay legislation that they believe will seriously affect their interests.
- **Segmental autonomy.** Wherever possible power should be devolved so that those regions of a state where an ethnic minority is in fact the majority can have considerable local autonomy. This would include federal arrangements.

*Source: Lijphart (1977).*
Rational consensus in a pluralist society
(Rawls – consensus through citizens’ agreement in ‘justice as fairness’. Habermas – consensus through agreed institutions and procedures)

Value pluralism is the idea that there are several values which may be equally correct or fundamental, and yet in conflict with each other. In addition value pluralism postulates that in many cases, such incompatible values may be incommensurable, in the sense that there is no objective ordering of them in terms of importance.
(Contrast with value monism and moral relativism.)

Agonism (from Greek ἀγών agon, "struggle" - not to be confused with antagonism) is a political theory that emphasizes the potentially positive aspects of certain (but not all) forms of political conflict. It accepts a permanent place for such conflict, but seeks to show how people might accept and channel this positively. For this reason, agonists are especially concerned with debates about democracy. The tradition is also referred to as Agonistic pluralism.
How relevant do you think an agonistic pluralist approach is to the situation in Northern Ireland?
In the light of our discussions should we promote civic education and, if so, what form should it take?