

Volume

1

THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF

POLITICAL SCIENCE

George Thomas Kurian, EDITOR IN CHIEF



James E. Alt
Simone Chambers
Geoffrey Garrett
Margaret Levi
Paula D. McClain
ASSOCIATE EDITORS

Prepared with the assistance of the American Political Science Association



A Division of SAGE
Washington, D.C.

Boycott

To *boycott* is to abstain from or act together in abstaining from using, buying, or dealing with as an expression of protest or disfavor or as a means of coercion. The term is derived from a campaign of ostracism on Captain Boycott, leveled by the Irish Land League in 1840. After refusing to lower tenant rents, the Irish Land League, whose mission was to ensure fair rents for all, organized all workers to cease granting services to Captain Boycott, such as selling goods in stores, delivering mail, and harvesting his land. This ultimately resulted in his isolation and forced him to leave his position in Ireland to return to England.

Boycotting continues to be seen by many as an effective strategy, and it is employed in many forms. Most forms of boycott are short term and used to rectify a single event of injustice. However, some forms of boycott are long term and are used as part of larger organizational or structural form of protest. Examples include systematic *disinvestment*, such as the international call for the withdrawal of businesses from South Africa during the Apartheid era and the call for consumers to purchase items based on fair trade.

See also *Collective Action and Mobilization; Trade Diplomacy.*

..... JEFFREY N. CARROLL

Brinkmanship

In international politics, *brinkmanship* refers to the calculated escalation of threats against adversaries to achieve foreign policy aims.

The term was introduced by U.S. Secretary of State John Foster Dulles, who advocated such a policy against the Soviet Union, defining it as “the ability to get to the verge [the brink] without getting into the war.” It is a challenge in the form of a credible threat, whether real or perceived, designed to compel an adversary to back down or to deter it from pursuing an undesirable course of action. It also may involve a deliberately created crisis to generate political or military leverage over an opponent.

Brinkmanship is an important (if sometimes implicit) component of bargaining models of war, and has parallels to hostile bargaining models in economic theory, such as in the widely cited “ultimatum game.” Soviet and U.S. nuclear policy during the early decades of the cold war, culminating in the 1962 Cuban missile crisis, displayed elements of brinkmanship. Crises that never erupt into full-scale conflicts are often cited as instances of brinkmanship, although it is often difficult to separate the influence of actor choices (e.g., deliberate threat escalation) from other factors like the relative capability of the states involved.

See also *Cold War; Diplomacy; Negotiations and Bargaining.*

..... VSEVOLOD GUNITSKIY



King John signs the Magna Carta in 1215. The Magna Carta set a precedent for limited government and established the traditional rights of English subjects.

SOURCE: The Granger Collection

British Political Thought

The British tradition of political thought represents a complex puzzle of intellectual history. Admirers like the French political commentator Baron de Montesquieu praised the British monarchy and its system of checks and balances as the very pinnacle of freedom in his 1748 *Spirit of the Laws*, whereas less than a half-century later critics like British political writer and activist Thomas Paine and many of the American revolutionaries portrayed the British system as the abyss of tyranny. The irony, however, is that even those most vehemently critical of the British system of government have appealed to principles within the British tradition itself to justify their objections. Even so, these institutions and ideals have not been effortlessly achieved. They are the end products of centuries of struggles and settlements—religious and secular—that have shaped the contours of present-day Britain and left an indelible imprint on modern concepts of liberty, constitutionalism, and representative government. Both in terms of its practices as well as its principles, Britain is responsible for some of the greatest accomplishments in Western political theory.