

General Certificate of Education
June 2008
Advanced Level Examination



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
Unit 8 Government and Politics – Synoptic Module

GOV8

Friday 20 June 2008 9.00 am to 11.00 am

For this paper you must have:

- a 12-page answer book.

Time allowed: 2 hours

Instructions

- Use black ink or black ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is GOV8.
- Answer **both** questions in **either** Section A **or** Section B **or** Section C **or** Section D.
- Do all rough work in the answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.

Information

- The maximum mark for this paper is 80.
- The marks for questions are shown in brackets.
- You will be marked on your ability to use good English, to organise information clearly and to use specialist vocabulary where appropriate.

Advice

- You are advised to read through the examination paper before you attempt the questions.
- You are advised to spend the same amount of time on each question.

SECTION A: POWER

If you choose this Section, answer Question A1 **and** Question A2.

When answering the questions that follow, you may wish to refer to the extract below but you do not have to do so. However, your answers must present material drawn from the range of your studies in Government and Politics.

A1 ‘Power without authority is might without right.’ Discuss. (40 marks)

A2 ‘Freedom is only secure when power is dispersed.’ Discuss. (40 marks)

Power and Liberty

The essence of constitutional government is limited government, which preserves freedom for individuals. This is held to be necessary because there can never be any guarantee that rulers will not exercise power in their own self-interest. Most political thinkers have agreed that power tends to corrupt. The French thinker Montesquieu, writing in the eighteenth century, believed that the key to British liberty lay in a separation of powers. The idea of dispersing the power of the state between various institutions so that they may curb each other's actions is based on the theory that there are three distinct functions of government, each of which can be entrusted to a separate institution. Montesquieu followed Locke in arguing that the best safeguard of freedom was to ensure that those making the laws (the legislature) should not also be those with the responsibility for implementing them (the executive). Similarly, those enforcing the laws (the judiciary) should be independent. The founding fathers of the American Constitution were deeply impressed with the doctrine, and today the executive (President), legislature (Congress) and judiciary (Supreme Court) are not only separate, but also have extensive powers over each other; the Constitution imposes checks and balances.

However, Montesquieu was wrong about the British constitution. In the nineteenth century Walter Bagehot was to stress that its ‘efficient secret’ was not a separation but a fusion of powers through the Cabinet – heading both the executive and the legislature. Moreover, the growth of a range of administrative tribunals means that the executive acts widely in a judicial capacity and, through the practice of delegated legislation, is also able to make laws. To increase the fusion the judiciary can ‘create’ laws through the doctrine of precedent. Consequently, there is little scope for applying checks and balances.

Source: adapted from J KINGDOM, *Government and Politics in Britain*, Polity Press, 2003

SECTION B: PARTICIPATION AND REPRESENTATION

If you choose this Section, answer Question B1 **and** Question B2.

When answering the questions that follow, you may wish to refer to the extract below but you do not have to do so. However, your answers must present material drawn from the range of your studies in Government and Politics.

B1 ‘In a pluralist society, political participation goes well beyond the ballot box.’ Discuss. (40 marks)

B2 ‘Modern parties seek to govern but no longer seek to represent.’ Discuss. (40 marks)

Representation and Class

As class has declined in significance (though some political scientists have contested this) so class dealignment appears to have contributed to partisan dealignment. In 1964 about 80% of British voters had a partisan identity. By 1983 the proportion had dropped to around 70%. However, those expressing a strong identity virtually halved in number, from 43.4% in the period 1964–70 to 22.8% in the period 1974–92. Unlike in the USA, where a decline in party identification was marked among young voters, the decline in the UK has been fairly uniform across the electorate. Voters no longer associate with their natural class party. Parties can no longer take for granted, to the extent to which they did in the middle decades of the century, the support of a large block of strong party identifiers. The extent of partisan dealignment is reflected in greater electoral volatility, apparent in voting behaviour since the 1960s. The concept of party identification has some relevance but has a number of limitations. Nonetheless it remains a useful concept. As voters become more sensitive to more short-term influences, so parties have to work harder to retain or improve upon existing levels of support.

These developments alter the nature of the relationship between the voter and the parties. Less able to appeal to voters on the grounds that they will represent them in traditional class terms, parties must seek eye-catching policy initiatives and other inducements such as tax concessions. As a result, citizens wishing to be represented in politics must turn to other forms of political expression and organisation.

Source: adapted from P NORRIS, ‘Party Identification’ in J RAMSDEN (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Twentieth-Century British Politics*, Oxford University Press, 2005

Turn over for the next section

SECTION C: POLITICAL CULTURE

If you choose this Section, answer Question C1 **and** Question C2.

When answering the questions that follow, you may wish to refer to the extract below but you do not have to do so. However, your answers must present material drawn from the range of your studies in Government and Politics.

- C1** ‘The political attitudes and beliefs of individuals are shaped by numerous factors.’ Discuss. (40 marks)
- C2** To what extent can modern governments expect to find deference, consensus and homogeneity amongst their citizens? (40 marks)

Political Culture and Terrorism

Some political scientists would link changes in political participation with a broader change in political attitudes and behaviour, or what is sometimes described as political culture. It used to be argued that Britain had a political culture characterised by moderation, political tolerance and respect for the law. Almond and Verba, in a study published in 1965, suggested that Britain enjoyed substantial political participation, social trust and civic organisation. More recent analysis suggests that this culture has changed. Social trust, and more specifically trust in government and politicians, has declined markedly. There is now less readiness to defer to authority. There has been a corresponding reduction in traditional forms of political participation, perhaps offset by a rise of participation in direct action and an increasing resort to illegal and violent behaviour.

Of course, the Northern Ireland ‘problem’ meant that illegal and violent behaviour was not entirely absent in the UK from the 1960s, but this was confined to a specific problem concerning the unity of the UK. It did not signal any fundamental change in political culture. The more recent developments concerned a wider range of issues. The anti-poll-tax campaign, which saw large numbers of ordinary citizens taking to the streets in angry demonstrations, culminated in a high profile protest in London, which did much to signal the cultural change. Animal rights activists showed themselves willing to take extreme action. Those opposing airport and motorway extensions were openly defiant of the law and willing to put themselves at risk in pursuing their cause. Truck drivers and farmers combined in action calculated to bring gridlock to Britain’s motorways. As the government prepared to mount an invasion of Iraq, millions of citizens descended upon London. While this was a peaceful demonstration, it was the largest the city had ever witnessed and suggested a degree of cultural change and a nation increasingly ill at ease with its political system. The extent of the cultural change was chillingly highlighted on 7 July 2005, when suicide bombers struck at the heart of the nation’s capital. Events led government ministers to argue for laws restricting civic freedoms which had seemed so secure in earlier decades.

Source: first paragraph adapted from R LEACH, B COXALL and L ROBINS, *British Politics*, Palgrave Macmillan, 2006

SECTION D: CONTINUITY AND CHANGE

If you choose this Section, answer Question D1 **and** Question D2.

When answering the questions that follow, you may wish to refer to the extract below but you do not have to do so. However, your answers must present material drawn from the range of your studies in Government and Politics.

- D1** ‘Within all political systems, reformers favouring change will come into conflict with traditionalists favouring continuity.’ Discuss. (40 marks)
- D2** ‘Changes in a political system may require more than institutional reform.’ Discuss. (40 marks)

Continuity and Change – Illusion and Reality

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The extract shows how British society has changed but questions whether Britain has really become more democratic. It suggests that although reforms are embraced, in reality, they remain basically unchanged.

Source: adapted from A SAMPSON, *Who Runs this Place? The Anatomy of Britain in the 21st Century*, John Murray, 2004

END OF QUESTIONS

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