**Politics Concepts Checklist**

**Representation and Democracy Key Concepts and language**

**Democracy** – *system of government based upon consent and the will of the people. May be direct (Self-governance/self-rule (Athens, Paris Commune), or more often Representative (Representative bodies, fair and free regular elections, element of competition between parties and policies)*

**Direct Democracy –** *see above. Also Referenda (Devolution, AV, Elected Mayors, Scottish Independence, Brexit Referendum, June 2016 etc). Also involves recall, initiatives. Used widely in the USA at state level and Switzerland. Impractical to have genuine direct democracy in modern political systems with large population – therefore Rep. Dem may be supplemented with* ***devices of DD.*** *No separate class of professional politicians. Self-governance.*

**Representative Democracy –** *Representative democracy is type of democracy where there are fair, free & regular elections to a range of representative bodies. (Westminster HOC, Local Authorities, Devolved Parliaments and Assembles, directly elected Mayors, The European Parliament). Under the Fixed Terms Parliament Act (2011) elections to the Westminster Parliament (House of Commons) must take place every 5 years. The last such election took place in May 2015. Elections are Based on near universal suffrage, where there a few exceptions to the right to vote (Under 18, prisoners, Peers in General Elections). Elections also take place to other representative bodies including the devolved Parliaments and Assemblies (Last elections in 2016) or the European Parliament (Last elections in 2014). There are also a range of different electoral systems (FPTP, AMS, STV) to produce different balances of representation. Representative democracy involves participation which is Limited, infrequent and brief. Elections provide peaceful means of transition between governments.*

**Liberal Democracy –** *both LIBERAL & DEMOCRATIC FEATURES. Democratic features as per above. LIBERAL FEATURES. Distribution of power and party competition, constitutional checks and balances, rule of law, tolerance, pluralism and diversity, free press, civil liberties and freedoms. (Human Rights Act, 1998)*

**Parliamentary Democracy** – *regular fair and free elections to a representative body in this case parliament and specifically the HOC; rests upon notions of popular consent, electoral legitimacy, strong MP constituency link and provides a balance between elite professional rule and popular participation. Parliament is said to represent the balance of opinion in the country following an election. Parliament has sovereign powers but there are also checks, balances and constraints placed upon it. Government is drawn from parliament and accountable to it.*

**Democratic Legitimacy –** *lawful exercise of power based on ‘right’ to exercise power. Based on rule of law and is a crucial source of political stability. Usually conferred by election and the securing of a mandate (popular consent). Could be conferred by constitutional legitimacy. e.g. Brown replacing Blair (2007), Major replacing Thatcher (1990) or May replacing Cameron (2016). Constitutionally this is legitimate without an election in the British System of Government.*

**Mandate –** *permission or legitimacy to govern. Usually secured via election and popular consent. Manifesto commitments are seen to be given a mandate when the party proposing them gains a parliamentary majority. Mandate may come into question under minority governments, coalition, confidence and supply arrangements or informal agreements between parties when there is no overall majority. Mandate is assumed through clear decisive majority in parliament and plurality of the vote. A Party does not require 50% support of the electorate to claim a mandate. (NB – no party since the war has achieved 50 of the popular vote).*

**Referendum** – *popular vote on a YES/NO basis on some binary issue such as Scottish Independence or IN/OUT referendum on the EU. Single issue. Requires Act of Parliament to be held – e.g. Scotland and Wales (Referendums) Act 1997. Advisory rather than binding due to parliamentary sovereignty. Often low turnout (AV 41%, Wales Devolution 50.4%) but sometime high – GFPA 1998 (81%) or Scottish Independence (85%). Significant increase in the use of Referenda since 1997. Often held on issues of constitutional significance, but not always. May be used to settle in party disputes (EEC under Wilson, 1975, Cameron over Brexit 2016) or coalition differences (AV-2011) or disputes between regional government and central government (Scottish independence).*

**Recall –** *the process whereby a popular vote is held within a constituency to remove a sitting MP between elections. Recall of MPs Act 2015. This can take place where a sitting MP is imprisoned or suspended from sitting in parliament by the speaker for more than 21 days. A petition is raised in the MPs constituency and more than 10% of constituents must sign to trigger a by-election. The recalled MP can still take part in the by-election. Constituent trust over their elected representatives following the expenses scandal in 2009 appears to be the trigger for this reform. Jacob Rees-Mogg and Zac Goldsmith were particularly critical of the restrictive way in which government had enacted this legislation.*

***Democratic Deficit*** *– a circumstance, or set of circumstances, in which democracy is seen to be failing. There are many aspects of the UK’s system which could be said to amount to a democratic deficit. HOL; FPTP\*; Apathy and low turnout; lack of political education and understanding; remote and unaccountable EU; Absence of difference between the parties; Corruption in high office; biased media/judiciary; Unelected Head of State; Insider PG dominance and corporate dominance over Government*

***Simple Plurality*** *– the general principle for electing MPs and forming governments. An MP does not need a majority of his/her constituents votes to be elected, merely more than any other single candidate. Similarly, governments are often formed on the basis of a plurality of the vote e.g. Conservatives 2010, 36.9% – more than any other party but NOT a majority. FPTP then often translates this into a majority of seats.*

**Political participation** *– there are a number of modes of political participation. 1. Voting in elections to elect representatives to a variety of representative bodies. 2. Voting in a referendum. 3. Joining a pressure group and taking part in a range of pressure group activities. 4. Spontaneous participation. 5 Citizen Juries. 6. focus groups. 7. joining a political party, volunteering, canvassing, attending constituency meetings, participating in leadership elections.*

**Pressure Groups Key Concepts and Language**

**Sectional Pressure Groups** – *exists to advance or protect the (usually material and/ or economic) interest of its members. Sectional groups defend personal interests, have closed membership (meaning only certain individuals may join) and it benefits members only. An example is the Unite trade union or the CBI.*

**Promotional Pressure Groups** – *cause groups who are altruistic (don’t benefit themselves) and campaign on behalf of an issue. Open membership (anyone can join) – Charities (Oxfam, Save the Children) Environmental Groups (Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth, Plane Stupid)*

*Welfare groups (Shelter, Child Poverty Action Group, Age Concern). Mostly but not exclusively outsiders.*

**Pluralism –** *refers to the distribution and the diversification of power within the political system in different hubs/centres – regional, local, national, international) Pluralism is characterised by a wide spread of power. In the political process, pluralism promotes a forum for debate and scrutiny between competing groups in society. In regards for citizens to participate in the political process, pluralism allows individuals to be represented by various parties, pressure groups or new social movements. In the UK there are an estimated 7000+ pressure groups, a clear expression of a diverse distribution of power. This can be seen due the reason that in an ideally pluralist democracy, groups have more or less equal access to the political process.*  *Pluralism implies a range of groups and pressure groups are both sectional (trade unions and business groups) and promotional (environmental and welfare groups) representing a plurality of groups, causes and issues.*

**Insider groups** –  *tend to have a closer relationship with the government with direct access to Ministers and therefore hold more influence over government policies and decisions. Groups that hold this Insider status rarely turn to forms of illegal or direct action as this is seen as unnecessary for achieving their aims. Instead they enjoy frequent contact and consultation with Ministers, Civil Servants and Parliament. IPGs ordinarily consist of a small and limited amount of members, most of which are hidden from the public eye. Example of this would be the BAA, BBA, CBI, NFU, BMA*

**Outsider Pressure Groups –** *little or no government contract or government accessibility resulting in outsider pressure groups resorting to methods of direct action such as demonstrations protests, lobbying, leafleting etc. some of which could be illegal. They also do not have the favour of being consulted by the government on policies and decisions which could relate to the group and its members.* *The groups that are excluded from the policy processes are those which try to influence the government policy from the outside like the Animal Liberation Front (ALF), Plane Stupid or UKUncut. Overall elitism assumes that there is a ‘power struggle’ in political activity with winners and losers. Elitism contradicts pluralist theory, where pressure groups promote a more even distribution of power*

**Elitism –** *Elitism is the theory that political power is concentrated in the hands of the few, an elite. Power is held to be narrowly concentrated in the hands of wealthy corporations, privileged social classes and professional politicians and bureaucrats who share a similar usually conservative social outlook. Power is thus exercised in the self-interest of the elite. Elite groups enjoy frequent contact and consultation with Ministers, Civil Servants and Parliament. IPGs ordinarily consist of a small and limited amount of members, most of which are hidden from the public eye. Example of this would be the BAA, BBA, CBI, NFU, BMA. Former Cameron advisor Steve Hilton has criticised the lack of democracy and corporate dominance over government and parliament. Insiders commonly have access to huge financial resources and legal expertise. Corporate donations to political parties- hedge funds estimated to have donated £47m in five years to the Conservative Party.*

**Pressure groups and political parties** –  *pressure groups aim to exert influence on government externally, whereas parties seek to exercise power through obtaining representation in representative bodies such as parliament. Parties do this by putting candidates up for election, in hope of gaining representation and forming, or taking part in government as occurred in the 2015 General Election. Another difference is that Pressure groups, whether sectional or promotional, have a narrow or single issue focus whereas parties put forward manifestos and a wide range of issues of public policy ranging from education, health, welfare, the economy, defence and foreign policy.*

**Political participation** – *one of the main functions of pressure groups. Pressure groups have become increasingly important agents of political participation. Mainly outsider groups seek to exert influence on the government by mobilizing popular support through movements such as; petitions, demonstrations, marches and other forms of political protest. An example of political participation was the demonstration on tuition fees in December 2012, organized by the National Union of Students. Also in December 2010 there was a sit-in in Top Shop organized by UKUncut. Pressure groups can mobilize public participation through petitions. The Hillsborough Justice campaign launched a petition through the GOVUK website which eventually obtained 154,202 signatures forcing the government to release all the documents relating to the disaster. March for Women January 2017. RMT South East Rail Strikes January 2017. Junior Doctor Strikes Autumn 2016.*

**Political Parties Key Concepts and Language**

**Adversary politics –** *form of politics that is characterised by deep ideological conflicts between major parties; parties offer rival ideological visions and policies. Thatcher’s radical 1983 manifesto The Challenge For Our Times contrasted starkly with the 1983 Labour Manifesto A New Hope For Britain – unilateral nuclear disarmament, withdrawal from the European Community, further nationalization and increased investment in the welfare state, in contrast to the anti-interventionist and pro-nuclear stance adopted by the Conservative Party. (Arguably 2015 election – Labour under Miliband – Energy price freezes, mansion tax and ending non-dom preferential zero tax).* ***2016 Example*** *– The Election of Jeremy Corbyn as Labour leader (leftist background) reveals deeper splits between the main parties than has been the case for 30 years. Corbyn was against Syrian intervention, the Conservatives were largely pro intervention. Corbyn is a unilateral nuclear abolitionist whilst the Conservatives are committed to upgrading Trident.*

**Functions of parties –** *In a democratic system,* ***parties put up candidates up for election,*** *in the hope of gaining representation and ultimately forming (or participating in) government. Representation is often seen as the primary function of parties in liberal democracies. The three main parties fielded nearly 2000 candidates in the 2015 General Election. Labour gained 232, the Lib Dems 8 and the Conservatives 331 seats.* ***Also policy formulation*** *in the hope of obtaining a mandate for government – parties develop programmes through party forums, annual conferences and, most importantly, in election manifestos, formulating coherent sets of policy options that give the electorate a choice of goals and provide the winning party with a mandate. Other functions include acting as vehicles of representation and participation and political communication with the electorate*

**Consensus politics –** *A consensus is a general agreement that nevertheless allows for disagreement on matters of emphasis or detail. Consensus politics refers to a form of politics in which major political parties subscribe to broadly similar or overlapping goals and principles. An example of consensus politics is the Post-Thatcherite consensus that developed in the 1990’s, first under party leader Neil Kinnock, as the Labour Party undertook a comprehensive policy review which abandoned policies such as unilateral nuclear disarmament and the commitment to withdraw from the European Community, and accepted many of the policies of the Conservative governments under Thatcher and Major. This was most especially apparent under Blair’s New Labour with its emphasis on lightly regulated markets, PFI and tougher policies on law and order. (Post war Consensus could also be used but is perhaps a bit dated). It could also be argued that just as Labour was forced to adapt to Thatcherite policies, Cameron was forced to modernise the Conservatives in response to three successive General Election defeats. Under Corbyn there is an acknowledgment that the UK must leave the European Union and the result of the referendum should be respected. There is likely to be a significant House of Commons majority in favour of triggering Article 50. Similarly, there was widespread support for the Armed Intervention in Iraq in December 2015.*

**Left wing** – *those ideas associated with a desire to introduce change into the political system to engineer a ‘better society’. Moreover, left-wing ideas are based on fundamental ideas of equality through economic intervention, wealth redistribution and welfare. Left wing ideas will always favour the group solution and the collective, as they in general are optimistic about humanity and feel that the status quo is to be challenged not confirmed. Another idea associated with socialism is collectivism in ownership of industry and other modes of production. This is most often exhibited in the form of nationalisation or public ownership but could manifest itself in the collective ownership of land, or the formation of industrial cooperatives or the advocacy of mutualism.*

**Right Wing –** *Right-wing political ideas emphasise authority, the desire to resist sudden, violent or radical change and a widespread acceptance of the status quo, as they emphasize the need for stability and order in society, fearing that changes are dysfunctional and destabilizing. Those who hold right-wing ideas will favour the individual and private enterprise.* *Right-wingers wish to ‘roll back the state’ and support a free-market or unregulated capitalism. This could apply to introducing the Health and Social Care Act 2012 which encourages privatisation of the NHS or the 2013 flotation of Royal Mail on the stock market. Also cultural cohesion around issues of national identity. Those on the right are resistant to immigration as they believe it threatens cultural homogeneity, cohesion and identity, especially if immigration appears to lack tight controls.*

**Socialism –** *covers beliefs ranging from revolutionary communism to reformist social democracy. The central idea of socialism is, however, that people are social creatures who are bound together by a common humanity, based on the defining traditional values such as fraternity; bonds of comradeship and sympathy between people, and cooperation; believing in a preference of people working together rather than competing with one another. Equality, in social, political and economic circumstance. Whilst political and social equality are relatively easy to promote (if not achieve) economic equality seems stubbornly resistant to progress. Past “solutions” such as redistribution through taxation and welfare provision or nationalisation have been largely ineffective in reducing wealth and income inequalities.*

**Liberalism –** two contrasting traditions: *Classical liberalism and modern liberalism. Classical liberalism believes in a minimum state and a free –market economy. Individuals are viewed as strongly self-interested and self-reliant creatures. Clegg’s Orange Book Liberals are a grouping within the Liberal Democrats who strongly advocate free market economic policies and Thatcher was likened to a 19th Century Liberal more often than she was a Conservative.*

*Another idea of liberalism is Individualism – the individual is of supreme importance, implying an emphasis on rights or entitlements, a policy that develops from individualism is the HRA 1998. As part of the Coalition Agreement for Stability and Reform the Lib Dems along with the Conservatives scrapped Labour’s proposals for Compulsory ID cards which they saw as an unwarranted intrusion by the state on the liberty of the individual.*

**Conservatism** – *a political philosophy with many strands ranging from traditional One Nation Conservatism through to Thatcherism. At the heart of conservative philosophy is a mistrust of the state and a belief in the free market. Conservatives are keen to privatise, deregulate and cut taxation and public expenditure. This can be seen in the privatisation of Royal Mail in 2013 and the austerity measures and benefit caps introduced by the last Conservative led coalition and the current Conservative majority government (12 seat majority) first under Cameron and Now May – this was reduced following the Richmond By – Election where the Liberal Democrats regained the seat from the Conservatives. They also place a heavy emphasis on the primacy of the individual and believe in self-reliance. See right wing ideas.*

**Factionalism –** *Political parties are said to be “broad churches.” By this it is meant that contained within each political party are distinct groupings of likeminded people. No party is wholly internally united and each grouping or faction within the party may have quite distinct ideas, policies and ideological leanings that differentiate them from other factions within their own party. In the Labour Party for example there are distinctions between Blue Labour, New (Purple) Labour and the Left Wing Campaign Group of MPs. There are also bitter divisions between the Blairite group Progress and the Corbynite support group Momentum whilst within the Conservative Party there is the anti-European Bruges Group, the 2020 Group (aligned around David Cameron’s Modernisation strategy) and the Thatcherite No Turning Back Group.*

**ELECTORAL SYSTEMS- Key Concepts and Terms**

**Doctrine of the mandate –** *The doctrine of the mandate is the most influential theory of representation in modern politics. It is based on the idea that, in winning an election, a party gains a ‘popular’ mandate that authorizes it to carry out the policies on which it fought the election. These are the policies that are contained in election manifestos. This implies that it is the party, rather than individual politicians, that carries out representation. Politicians serve their constituents not by thinking for themselves (as in the trusteeship model) or being delegates (doing what their constituents wish), but by remaining loyal to their party and its policies.*

**Elections**

***Ensure representation*** *– first, they create a link between government and the people. This helps ensure that constituent’s concerns and grievances are properly articulated and addressed. Second, the establish a more general link between the government of the day and public opinion – elections give the people final control over the government.*

***Upholding legitimacy*** *– elections play a crucial role in maintaining legitimacy. Legitimacy is important because it provides the key to maintaining political stability. It ensures that citizens recognise that they have an obligation to obey the law and respect their system of government. Elections uphold legitimacy by providing a ritualised means through which citizens ‘consent’ to being governed: the act of voting*

**Mandates and manifestos** *A mandate involves being given the right to govern – that is an ‘instruction’ from the electorate that gives an authority (a political party for instance) the right to act in a particular way. A manifesto is a set of promises made by a political party to the electorate. This gives the electorate a guide when it comes to voting. A mandate is often claimed by a political party if their party wins a majority of seats. They will argue that the electorate appear to have supported their manifesto and thus they have been given the right to govern. Of course the question of the mandate is complicated in situations where no party wins an overall majority.*

**Party system** – *A ‘party system’ is the description of a political system indicating approximately how many political parties gain significant representation and influence. The nature of party systems varies from single-dominant-party systems, two-party systems, through to multi-party systems. It could be argued that there are a number of party systems operating in the UK. For general elections to Westminster there -may now be a multi-party system, given the likelihood that Labour, Conservative, Liberal Democrat and the SNP all compete for power. After 2010 Westminster operated with a ‘two-and-a-half party system’, and prior to that it was a two party system. This demonstrates the degree to which the system is currently in flux.*

**Elections & democracy –** *Democracy is about choice and elections provide that choice. Democracy is about all citizens having an equal input and say in choosing representatives – in elections we all have one vote. Elections are the best mechanism for democracy, given the impracticality of direct democracy. Elections are free for all to contest and stand in… All that is required is a deposit (£500 in general elections). Election campaigns enhance democracy by educating and informing the public. A significant number of elections are on offer in the UK, providing choice and an opportunity to influence the agenda.*

**Proportional representation** – *This is a principle (not a particular system) which emphasises that seats won by a party in a parliament should be in direct proportion to votes cast for that party. For instance, if the Labour Party wins 35% of the vote it should win 35% of the available seats in a parliament. Some electoral systems come much closer to satisfying this principle. Closed Party List and Single Transferable Vote for instance are often considered to be proportional systems because of the relatively proportional outcomes they tend to produce.*

**Additional Member System –** *It is a hybrid system, i.e. a combination of two systems running side by side. A proportion of the total seats in the Parliament or assembly operate on the basis of first past the post. In Scotland and Wales this is about two thirds of the total seats. The other third of the seats are elected on the basis of a regional list system (see above). There is a variation in Scotland and Wales. The regional list seats are not awarded proportionally. There is a ‘differential top‐up’. This means that parties which do less well in the constituency elections, are awarded more than their proportional share in the regional list seats. This counteracts the distorting effects of the first past the post section. The result is a broadly proportional outcome overall. The method for deciding which parties win regional top‐up seats in the regional legislatures is known as the d’Hondt system. Firstly, party list votes are added together from each of the constituencies making up the region. These totals are then divided by the number of seats each party has won ‐ plus one. The party with the highest resulting total elects one Additional Member, and this process continues until all the regional seats have been filled.*

**Parliament Revision Key concepts and language**

**Sovereignty/Parliamentary Sovereignty –** *the cornerstone of the British Constitution. AV Dicey “only parliament may make or unmake law and no body or institution is recognised as having the right to set aside the will of parliament.” 1. Only parliament may make or unmake law. 2. There is no limit to the scale or scope of parliament’s legislative capacity. 3. No parliament may bind a successor parliament. 4. Government is drawn from parliament and accountable to it. Considerable debate about the extent to which these apply following the growth of executive power, EU membership, Devolution, the Human Rights Act (1998) and economic globalisation.*

**Parliamentary Government –**  *a system of governance in which the government is able to command a majority or the continued confidence of the House of the Commons in the event it is the largest party, but short of an overall majority. There is a fusion of powers between the legislature and the executive. The government is derived from parliament and accountable to it under the doctrine of parliamentary sovereignty. The supremacy of parliament is sometimes referred to as the Westminster Model. The government is drawn from parliament and accountable to it.*

**Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011 –** *passed by the Coalition Government to ensure stability. This removes the PM’s discretionary power of dissolution and now an election can only be called between the fixed terms under very limited circumstances which are that a government loses a confidence motion and cannot form a new government within 14 days which commands the support of the house. If any potential alternative party or leaders cannot do likewise then parliament is dissolved and an election is called.*

**Functions of parliament –** *legislative; deliberative; representative; budgetary; scrutiny; recruitment and training ground for members of the executive.*

**Scrutiny** – *the process whereby the government legislative proposals (bills) or policies are closely examined by parliament through a variety of mechanisms. These are PMQs and MQs; Debates and Emergency Debates; Correspondence with Ministers; adjournment debates and 10 Minute Rule Bills; Amendments; Legislative Committees; The Backbench Business Committee; Departmental Select Committees; The Liaison Committee; Confidence Motions; Rebellions (from the Government’s own backbenchers) and the scrutiny role of the House of Lords including amendments and the delaying power.*

**Backbencher –** *all MPs who are not either part of the Government or the Shadow Ministerial team for the opposition. Backbench MPs are expected to support the party to which they belong in the division lobbies though many do not.*

**Legislative (Public Bill/Standing) Committees** – *Committees made up of MPs from all sides of the House responsible for piloting legislation through the HOC. They have an in-built government majority in proportion to the majority in the House. The Opposition may table amendments to bills but no more than about 0.5% are accepted by the government. There are also clause selection and time limit mechanisms (Kangaroo and Guillotine)*

**Departmental Select Committees** – *pretty powerful committees comprised of backbenchers from all sides and chaired by very independently minded MPs. They are nonpartisan and are often very critical of government and departmental policy and operations. They have the power to call for persons or papers and Andrew McKinley MP once described DSCs as “the high court of parliament” The DSC criticised government policy on Arms procurement and the TSC criticised George Osborne over budget leaks in 2012, stating that such leaks were corrosive of good government.*

**Backbench Business Committee** – *established by the Wright reforms of 2009 to help backbenchers have more influence of the parliamentary timetable and to have an impact on the debates and the votes that take place in the House of Commons.*

**Whip System –** *a system of party control over backbench MPs. The Whips are charged with maintaining party discipline and loyalty, quelling rebellions and staving off government defeats. they are an essential tool of party management in the House of the Commons. The opposition also has whips. Legislative committee members are whipped to ensure support for the government bill as it progresses through parliament.*

**Executive Control Mechanisms –** *devices deployed by the government to ensure that opposition scrutiny does not become so effective that it limits the government’s ability to steer its own destiny. The government seeks to evade scrutiny and exercise its own degree of control over parliament, despite being in theory accountable to it.*

**Rebellions –** *these occurs when a significant number of backbenchers in the governing party threaten the government’s majority on a vote in the House of Commons. They refuse to support the government’s policy. 119 Conservative MPs rebelled over the Same Sex Marriage Act in 2013 and 92 rebelled over proposed Lords reform in 2012. Tony Blair suffered a rebellion of 139 Labour MPs over the war in Iraq 2003, but parliament still voted for the war as a whole with the help of support from Conservative MPs. Rebellions do not necessarily lead to defeat (Iraq and Same Sex Marriage) but sometimes do result in government defeat (Lords Reform 2012; 90 Detention without charge (2005). Small rebellions can be significant if the government has a very small majority (John Major 1992-1997 (21) and David Cameron (2015-2020 (12).The last Parliament (2010-2015) was particularly rebellious (37% of commons votes produced a rebellion compared with 28% under Blair and Brown). Conservative Backbencher Peter Bone voted against the government 150x in the 2010-2015 parliament. There was a threatened rebellion which derailed George Osborne’s plans for a 1.3bn cut in disability benefits.*

**PM and Cabinet Key concepts**

**Cabinet –** *22-24 Secretaries of State who each (with some exceptions) take charge of a government ministry or department. Each is appointed by the PM under the power of patronage, and each can be removed in a reshuffle. Cabinet as a whole endorses rather than creates policy.*

**Cabinet government –** *the theory that cabinet as a whole decides upon and co-ordinates policy. The PM is simply first amongst equals. Cabinet debates, formalises and co-ordinates policy for the whole of the government. It also organises party management in parliament. It provides a reminder that, despite the growth in prime ministerial power, no PM can survive if he or she loses the support of the cabinet. It is kept alive by the fact that the prime ministers’ authority is linked to the backing he or she receives from the ‘big beasts’ of the cabinet, some of whom may enjoy such widespread support within the government and party that they are effectively ‘unsackable’. However, Cabinet meetings are often infrequent. There is less debate in Cabinet overall. Cabinet discussion is often dominated by a top-down approach from the PM and No.10.. Devolution, the HRA, the European Union and other developments such as the normalisation of the use of Referenda have limited the role of Cabinet.*

**Collective responsibility –** *Cabinet is jointly responsible for the whole of government policy. If a minister is unable to support government policy, then he or she is obliged to resign from the government.*

**Coalition Government –** *The Coalition Agreement for Stability and Reform in 2010 was necessitated by the failure of the Conservatives to obtain a majority in the 2010 General Election. This somewhat weakened Cameron’s position as PM. He was forced to share power with his Deputy Nick Clegg (who had a veto over Lib Dem appointments to the government and cabinet). All policy had to be agreed by the QUAD. (Cameron, Clegg, Osborne, Alexander)*

**Cabinet Office –** *supports the Prime Minister and ensure the effectives running of government. Ensures the effective development, coordination and implementation of policy. Blair was criticised heavily for fusing the cabinet office together with the PM’s political office thus (according to critics like Kavanagh) “politicising” the civil service.*

**Cabinet Committees** – *According to Hennessey these are “the engine room of government”, the forum in which the real decision making power lies. According to former Chancellor Lawson (The View from Number 11) Cabinet is merely the forum for approving decisions “already taken elsewhere.” Blair chaired more than half of all Cabinet Committees during his premiership indicating a desire to tightly control policy formulation. Under coalition Clegg was allocated the chair of a significant number of cabinet committees.*

**Core executive –** *Smith (1999) –  A complex theory of the distribution of power within central government. Rejects simplistic notions of Prime Ministerial power in favour of the idea that power is a variable distributed amongst a number of key actors at the heart of government and that power flows variably over time between the PM, the cabinet, cabinet committees, PM Office, Cabinet Office, party and parliament. The Core Executive is the network of institutions at the centre of British Government including the Prime Minister, the Prime Minister’s Office, the Cabinet, the Cabinet Office, Cabinet Committees, the Bank of England, the individual Departments of State [among which the Treasury, the Home Office and the Foreign Office are the most significant], senior MPs and even, perhaps the representatives of major insider pressure groups. Political decision making involves on-going negotiation among some or all of these groups each of which have powers of different kinds. Although the PM may often appear to be the most significant individual within the Core Executive there will be many times when s/he will have to negotiate a preferred outcome and will certainly not be able to impose it.*

**Prime ministerial government –** *emerged with Crossman in the 1960s who claimed that there had been a transformation of Cabinet Government into Prime Ministerial Government. Consistent with the idea that post war PMs had gradually become more and more powerful to the point where they were much more than merely ‘primus inter pares.” The core feature of this view is that it is the PM, and not the cabinet, who dominated both the executive and parliament. This happens because the PM is both head of the civil service and the leader of the largest party in the commons.*

**Primus Inter pares –** *Latin for First Amongst Equals suggesting a more or less equitable balance or distribution of the power of the cabinet and the power of the PM. Term was coined by Bagehot in 19th Century but the theory is seen as largely outdated.*

**Presidentialism –** *Foley’s Presidential Thesis (1993). Took the idea of PM dominance and further developed it into his presidentialism thesis. Under this thesis there has been a growth of ‘spatial leadership’, a tendency towards ‘populist outreach’, increasingly personalized election campaigns, the adoption of personal mandates, wider use of special advisors. and a strengthened Cabinet Office.*

**Spatial leadership –** *This partly means that Prime Ministers have presented themselves as “outsiders” to the main thrust of government, Thatcher reminding us that she was a grocer’s daughter, and Major emphasising his humbler background and limited formal education.* *Blair similarly was very good at projecting himself as not being part of the Labour party or beholden to the unions. Thus in particular Thatcher hoped to convert the Conservative Party to her version of New Right ideology much as Blair wished to replace the ideology of “Old Labour” with that of “New Labour”. We may also see early evidence of this tendency in David Cameron’s attempts to change Conservative Party ideology in the direction of “Compassionate Conservatism”.*

**Populist outreach –** *the ability to connect directly with the electorate and appear to be the figurehead of the country. Blair particularly (and Cameron to a lesser degree) was very capable in this regard. He managed to appear to be above party and parliament.*

**Political leadership –***Foley argues that modern politics places much greater emphasis on leadership roles, and he draws on US experience to show how this tendency has crossed the Atlantic. Blair came to power in the Labour Party in 1994, and at once proceeded to stamp his imprint. Major, at this time was suffering badly from an impression of being indecisive and weak. The 1992 election, which many thought Labour could and should have won, had a traumatic and continuing effect on Blair and the party, making them fear that poll leads reflected ‘soft’ vulnerable support which the Conservatives could destroy with their campaigning abilities. Having established such a theme of superior leadership, it was natural that Blair should seek to fulfil his opposition rhetoric when in office and to establish credentials for the second term. Maybe also he has been concerned to negate the constant challenge of Gordon Brown through assiduous cultivation of his leadership position.*

**Constitutional flexibility –** *PMs take advantage of the relative flexibility of the UK’s uncodified constitution to shape the Office of the PM to their own political advantage. Blair for example fused the Cabinet Office with the Political Office, issued orders in council which allowed Powell (Chief of Staff) and Campbell (Director of communications) to issue instructions directly to civil servants.*

**Individual responsibility –***A minister has both role responsibility and personal responsibility. Role responsibility means that the minister is responsible for what happens within his or her own department. Personal responsibility applies to the conduct of the minster*

**Power –**  *Royal powers: Patronage and Prerogatives WAR, PEACE, TREATIES AND FORMERLY THE POWER TO DISSOLVE PARLIAMENT. The powers of patronage refer to the ability to appoint ministers and award peerages.  The UK’s Uncodified constitution makes the powers of the office ELASTIC but there are a number of* ***Countervailing forces****: Cabinet, Party management, Public opinion, Core executive, Events and Coalition. The PM’s ability to exercise his or her powers depends upon a number of factors.*

**Authority –** *Prime Ministerial authority is usually enhanced by a general election victory.*

**Constitutions Key concepts**

**Constitution –** *Heywood’s (2000) definition can’t really be bettered. Here it is. “A Constitution is a set of rules that seeks to establish the duties, powers and functions of the various institutions of government, regulate the relationships between them and define the relationship between the state and the individual.”*

**Role of a constitution –** *A constitution is, most simply, the rules that govern the government. Just as government lays down rules for society through the laws it makes, so a constitution establishes a framework of rules which are meant to check or constrain government.*

**TYPES OF CONSTITUTIONS –** *Codified and uncodified constitution; Unitary and federal constitution; Rigid and flexible constitution; Monarchical and Republican; Parliamentary and Presidential*

**Uncodified Constitution –** *A constitution which has a variety of different sources, which has evolved over time and which has not been formally codified into a single source document or entrenched. Such constitutions (The UK being the most obvious example) are flexible and in the words of Phillip Norton (1982) are in a permanent state of flux. In countries which codify the constitution it is this document which is normally seen as the foundation of the political system, but in the UK the constitution is subordinate to the principle of parliamentary sovereignty.*

**Features of uncodified Constitutions –** *The constitution is not authoritative. Constitutional laws enjoy the same status as ordinary laws. States that have un-codified constitutions therefore have single-tier legal systems with no form of higher law. Un-codified constitutions are not entrenched. The constitution can be reflected in the UK in the principle of parliamentary sovereignty, through which parliament can make, unmake and amend any laws it wishes, including laws that affect the constitution. Un-codified constitutions are not judiciable. In the absence of higher law, judges simply do not have a legal standard against which they can declare that the actions of other bodies are ‘constitutional’ or ‘unconstitutional’*

**Codified Constitution-** *A constitution which has been formally codified into a single source document and which is then entrenched, thus making constitutional amendment difficult to achieve. The most cited example is of course the U.S.A. constitution which has only been amended 27 times in more than 200 years. Debates about the relative merits of codification and entrenchment are the most common debates concerning constitutions focusing around the strengths and benefits of codification and an absence of codification. In short which is the better system and why.*

**Features of a codified Constitution –** *In a codified constitution, the document itself is authoritative, in the sense that it constitutes ‘higher’ law – indeed, the highest law of the land. The constitution binds all political institutions, including those that make ordinary law. This gives rise to a two-tier legal system, in which the constitution stands above statute law made by the legislature.*

*The provisions of the constitution as laid out in the codified document are entrenched, in the sense that they are difficult to amend or abolish. The procedure for making and subsequently changing the constitution must therefore be in some way more complex or difficult than the procedure for making ordinary law.*

*As the constitution sets out the duties, powers, and functions of government institutions in terms of ‘higher’ law, it is judiciable. This means that all political bodies are subject to the authority of the courts, and in particular, a supreme or constitutional court.*

**Sources of the UK constitution –** *the UK constitution has multiple sources which have developed over time. The process of constitutional innovation and reform has increased significantly over the past 18 years. There are 7 separate sources to be dealt with by a separate paragraph, as follows.*

**Statute Law – *Acts of Parliament –****Bill of Rights 1689, Habeas Corpus 1679, Parliament Acts, 1911 & 1949, Scotland Act, 1998, Wales Act, 1998, House of Lords Act 1999, Human Rights Act (1998 / 2000), Constitutional Reform Act 2005, Freedom of Information Act 2000, Fixed Term Parliaments Act (2011) and Wales Devolution Act (2011), Recall of MPS Act 2015, Investigatory Powers Act 2016*

**Common Law –** *comprised of judicial interpretation and the Royal Prerogatives*

**Judicial Interpretation *–*** *Establishing precedent where parliament has not legislated*

**Royal Prerogatives *–*** *Powers of Prerogative and the Powers of Patronage*

**Conventions –** *Customs which have evolved because they fit the system i.e. the Prime Minister should be drawn from the House of Commons, or that the Government should resign after losing a vote of no confidence in the House of Commons.*

**Works of Authority** Not strictly sources of the constitution but rather sources of clarification or authority on how the constitution works**–** *E.G. Hansard, A.V. Dicey’s Rule of Law or Bagehot’s The English Constitution.*

**EU / Treaty Law –** *The Treaty of Accession, 1972; The Single European Act, 1986; The Maastricht Treaty, 1992; The Amsterdam Treaty, 1997; The Nice Treaty, 2002. The Lisbon Treaty 2009*

**Parliamentary Sovereignty –** *The essence of parliamentary sovereignty as defined by AV Dicey (1952: 39):*

*“The principle of Parliamentary sovereignty means neither more nor less than this, namely, that Parliament has, under the English Constitution, the right to make or unmake any law whatever: and further that no person or body is recognised by the law of England as having a right to override or set aside the legislation of Parliament.”*

**Principles of Parliamentary Sovereignty –** *The government is drawn from Parliament and accountable to it; Only parliament may make or unmake law (legislation); There is no limit to the scale or scope of parliament’s legislative capacity and it may therefore make laws on any matter of its choosing; No parliament may bind, or limit the actions of, a successor parliament.*

**Constitutional Reforms since 1997 –** *Devolution (Scotland and Wales Acts 1997 and Wales Act 2011) Human Rights Act (1998/2000); House of Lords Act (1999); Elected Mayors; Freedom of Information Act (2000); Judicial reform (Constitutional Reform Act 2005); Fixed terms Parliament Act (2011); Commons backbench reforms (Wright Reforms 2009); The use of e-petitions on Downing street website. Recall of MPs Act (2015)*

**Democratic renewal –** *the idea that the UK suffers from a democratic deficit and that constitutional reform could remedy this to produce 1. greater decentralisation of power; 2 improved accountability of politicians both elected and unelected; 3. Increased Participation of the electorate in the political process 4. More open Government; 5. More security of rights protection*

**Constitutional Conservatives** – *those who are most opposed to the idea of any further constitutional reform. Many constitutional conservatives do not believe that the constitutional reforms of the past 18 years have improved the system and they think it has led to greater instability. Many would like to see some of these reforms (e.g. the HRA) repealed.*

**Constitutional radicals –** *Those (mainly in the Liberal Democrats and certain pressure groups) who do not believe that the past 18 years of constitutional reform and innovation have been insufficiently radical, and that the UK needs wholesale rather than piecemeal constitutional reform. They have adopted a maximalist approach – full codification for the constitution of the UK with full federalism and an entrenched Bill of Rights for the UK.*

**Constitutionalism –** *the belief and practice of exercising power according to the established principles of the constitution and the rule of law. Those exercising power are subject to the rule of law and are not above it.*

**Unitary constitution –** *A CONSTITUTION THAT CONCENTRATES SOVEREIGN POWER IN A SINGLE BODY OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENT, FOR EXAMPLE THE PARLIAMENT OF THE UNITED KINGDOM WHERE PARLIAMENTARY SOVEREIGNTY IS THE CORNERSTONE OF THE UK’S POLITICAL SYSTEM.*

*This established the constitutional supremacy of central government over provincial or local bodies. This is achieved by vesting sovereignty in the national legislature, meaning that it can create or abolish, strengthen or weaken, all other institutions. In the UK, this is reflected in the fact that Parliament possesses, at least in theory, unrivalled and unchallengeable, legislative authority. Devolved assemblies and local authorities do not, therefore, enjoy a share of sovereignty.*

**Federal constitution –** *A CONSTITUTION THAT IS BASED ON THE PRINCIPLE OF SHARED SOVEREIGNTY, IN THAT THERE ARE TWO RELATIVELY AUTONOMOUS LEVELS OF GOVERNMENT, THE NATIONAL/FEDERAL AND THE REGIONAL/STATE.*

*Federal constitutions divide sovereignty between two levels of government. Both central government and regional government possess a range of powers that the other cannot encroach on. Many argue that devolution has create a ‘quasi-federal’ structure within the UK government. However, Parliament, as a sovereign body, retains the right to abolish the Scottish Parliament.*

**quasi-federalism –** *However it is worth noting that the Scottish parliament retains certain powers (devolved matters) in which the UK Parliament has no say. It has no say because the Scotland Act 1998, devolved these matters to the Scottish Parliament. This has led to what some commentators have referred to as a quasi-unitary or a quasi-federal constitution.*

**pooled sovereignty** – the sharing of sovereignty between a core centre and a periphery: the most commonly quoted example of pooled sovereignty is the European Union with its emphasis both on Supranationalism and subsidiarity.

**elective dictatorship –** *a term first coined by Lord Hailsham in 1976, expressing the concern that an elected government with a working majority and an effective whips office is effectively a five-year dictatorship. This echoes Benn’s concerns that Parliamentary Sovereignty was in fact an elaborate myth or legal fiction disguising executive dominance over and arrogance towards parliament. The situation may be compounded by the FPTP electoral system which produces majority governments on a minority share of the vote.*

**Judiciaries Key Terms**

**Judiciary –** *refers to the senior levels of the UK Judiciary including the High Court (108 Judges), the Court of Appeal (37 Judges) and the Supreme Court (12 Judges). These courts hear civil and criminal cases and appeals, applications for judicial review and often settle the law in landmark cases.*

**judicial independence –** *the idea that the judiciary is free of political interference and that they can make their decisions in accordance with their judicial oath “without fear or favour”. They cannot be easily removed from office, their pay is guaranteed by the consolidated fund, judicial appointments are no longer made under the PMs exercise of patronage (instead they are made by the independent Judicial Appointments Commission) and the Constitutional Reform Act 2005 formally separated the Law Lords from legislature creating a wholly independent Supreme Court. Politicians must not comment on matters which are subject to proceedings before the courts.*

**Judicial neutrality –** *the idea here is that judges are free from political bias. They apply and interpret the law in a neutral way and have no bias or interest in a particular outcome of any case. Judges should not openly engage in party political matters and should not allow personal or political preferences to influence their decisions.*

**Civil liberties –** *the Liberal idea that democracies are characterised by certain rights, freedoms and civil liberties; the main civil liberties include political rights (voting; candidacy; joining parties and pressure groups – freedom of association); freedom of movement; rights of protest; social rights (abortion; homosexuality); freedom of conscience; property rights; freedom of expression. The judiciary play an important role in upholding these rights against arbitrary exercises of power.*

**Rule of law –** *Based on AV Dicey’s ideas that: a) No one is punishable except in breach of the law; b) everyone has recourse or access to the law c) no-one is above the law; d) there should be no bias in the outcome of a judicial decision*

**Constitutionalism –** *rules based governance and behaviour. Also distribution and separation of powers; checks and balances; pluralism and toleration; In Locke’s words “power should act as a check unto power.” Governance should be in accordance with constitutional principles and there should be no arbitrary exercise of power.*

**Checks and Balances –** *Closely related to Montesquie’s ideas of the formal separation of powers. The tendency of the state to aggregate more power unto itself and to become tyrannical needs to be resisted at all times. Formal checks and balances within the political system and a distinct separation of powers between the legislative, executive and judicial branches is the best way of achieving this.*

**Declaration of incompatibility –**  *Legislation which contravenes the provisions of The Human Rights Act (1998) may be declared incompatible with this Act and sent back to parliament for reconsideration and amendment. The small number of declarations of incompatibility made by the Judiciary is indicative that Parliament legislates carefully and takes the HRA into close consideration when drafting legislation.*

**Judicial review –** *the process whereby an executive action/ministerial decision or that taken by other public bodies such as local authorities, public corporations or the police can be legally challenged in court on the grounds that the government minister, department or other public body has exceeded the lawful powers available to them or that the decision amounts to an unreasonable one, or was in any event procedurally unfair. As government departments and other public bodies increasingly rely upon statutory instruments the number of judicial reviews (legal challenges by individual citizens, charities or pressure groups has also increased significantly)*

**Judicial Inquiries –** *these are launched by the government when some aspect of public policy or other conduct has gone so seriously wrong that it merits a full judicial investigation into all the facts and the evidence surrounding the policy or the event. They are open inquiries and their findings are published by the Judge heading the Inquiry. Most notable inquiries have been the Hutton Inquiry, The Scott Inquiry, The Leveson Inquiry, the Saville Inquiry and the Chilcott Inquiry.*

**Parliamentary sovereignty –** *In the UK system, parliament is the cornerstone of sovereignty. Acts of Parliament therefore cannot be challenged in the courts except where they contravene Community Law (In which case the ECJ can strike them down) or where they are found to be incompatible with the Human Rights Act. The judiciary have very limited powers to review Acts of Parliament. One of the principles of Parliamentary sovereignty is that parliament has the capacity to make any law whatsoever including the power to unmake law. This is why it is possible for the Conservative government to scrap the Human Rights Act if it chooses to do so.*

**Human Rights Act –** *1998, implemented October 2000. Created for the first time the power of the Judiciary to refer Acts of Parliament back to parliament for amendment where an Act passed by parliament is deemed incompatible with the HRA. The Act has been very controversial. (See below)*

**Social representation / Lack of –***this refers to the idea that the senior judiciary are part of the same white, male, upper middle class, privately educated conservative elite that dominates parliament, the civil service, business and the senior military. Griffith – The Politics of the Judiciary, argues that their social composition and their conservative values make them “strikingly homogenous” with these other dominant groups in society and that this explains their conservative disposition and hostility to minority rights, trade unions and civil service service whistle-blowers.*