

Question Bank: Source Questions Unit 1

1. Using the source, evaluate the view that the UK is suffering from a participation crisis. *In your response you must compare the different opinions in the source and use a balance of knowledge and understanding both arising from the source and beyond it to help you analyse and evaluate. (30)*

Turnout at elections

Low turnouts in UK elections and referendums have become a serious cause for concern. Many argue that democracy will decline if people do not participate in large numbers. One proposed solution is to introduce compulsory voting. This has been done in Australia and turnouts there are now above 90%. Compulsory voting reflects the idea that voting is a civic duty, so we can justify forcing people to vote. It is also probably true that larger turnouts will produce a more representative electorate. As things stand in the UK, it is the elderly who vote in large numbers, while the young tend to stay at home. This distorts the outcome of elections and referendums.

Falling turnout has accompanied a significant reduction in party membership and increasing disillusionment with party politics.

However, it can also be said that low turnouts are not as important as we think. Those who do not vote, it could be said, have voluntarily opted out of the democratic process. It may also be said that non-voters are likely to be ignorant about political issues. It is also true that wider political activity is actually on the increase. What is happening is that increasingly large numbers of people see pressure group activity and participation in social media campaigns as more meaningful forms of activity.

2. Using the source, evaluate the view that group activity undermines democracy in the UK. (30)

Liberal democratic governments favour disproportionately the interests of well-funded, well-organised pro-capitalist pressure groups because governments depend for their very survival on the profitability and efficiency of private capitalism, on which in turn levels of employment, living standards and economic growth depend. Furthermore, most pressure groups, apart from trade unions, are joined mainly by relatively affluent middle-class people and most pressure group leaders [who may not be chosen by especially democratic methods] are even more likely to be middle class. It has also been argued that the existence of so many pressure groups persuades people to believe that they have influence when in fact they have very little. From the 1970s theorists influenced by the New Right ideology argued in particular that the trade unions had excessive powers which they used to weaken the economy via damaging restrictive practices, inflationary wage demands and strikes, and that welfare-oriented pressure groups such as Shelter and the Child Poverty Action Group raised unrealistic expectations of increased spending which, when they were not met, served only to undermine confidence in government.

In the theoretical framework of democratic pluralism states are assumed to be neutral arbiters [or impartial referees] evaluating the claims of a vast number of possibly competing pressure groups in accordance with the national interest. Whereas political parties represent the general interests of voters across a range of issues, pressure groups provide for the representation of citizens' views on particular issues relating to their own personal well-being [sectional groups] and/or to their particular causes for concern [promotional or cause groups]. As a result of the resources at their disposal pressure groups can represent individuals more effectively than they could do themselves, a point which may be especially relevant to more disadvantaged individuals such as the poor or the disabled and to minority groupings such as immigrants. It is possible that pressure groups can address controversial issues which political parties might initially seek to avoid and likely also that as new issues reach the political agenda new pressure groups can be formed to address these issues. Pressure groups enable their members and supporters to participate more fully in the political process on a continuing basis between general elections and this is likely to enhance political understanding and thereby to strengthen support for the liberal democratic system as a whole.

Source: an academic report on pressure group influences

3. Using the source, evaluate the view that representative democracy is superior to direct democracy.

In your response you must:

- **Compare the different opinions in the source.**
- **Consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.**
- **Use knowledge and understanding to help you analyse and evaluate.**

It is natural to assume that direct democracy is the purest form of political system that can exist. After all, it represents the ultimate form of government by consent and, at the same time, it means that the majority rules. It is also to be expected that the people are more likely to respect decisions they have made themselves. It does however, have some illustrious critics. In classical Greece, the philosopher Plato argued that it would give rise to the rule of the rabble-rousing dictators who would be able to sway opinion through great speeches and appeals to popular emotion. Today we see echoes of this in the way the tabloid press often treats referendum campaigns. In nineteenth-century England, the great liberal thinker John Stuart Mill referred to the 'tyranny of the majority' and, like Plato, feared that the average citizen, lacking much education, would not act rationally and would be ignorant of the issues presented to them. Mill and his fellow nineteenth-century liberals supported representative democracy. This was for several reasons.

First, they argued that elected representatives would be able to use their superior judgement in the interests of the people and would be able to arbitrate between the interests of the majority and those of minorities. Second, they believed that this compromise would satisfy the liberal desire to ensure that all sections of society are considered in political decision making.

Third, they had little faith in the people's ability to reach rational decisions.

It is hardly surprising, therefore, that representative democracy has now become the norm in modern liberal-based political systems. Nevertheless, there are now signs that direct democracy is creeping back into fashion. In the UK, considered to be the original cradle of representative democracy, governments are increasingly resorting to referendums, the modern form of direct democracy. Referendums are often used to settle constitutional issues and occasions when government itself is unable to resolve an issue without excessive conflict.

Question Bank: Essay Questions

Types of democracy

1. Evaluate the view that direct democracy is superior to representative democracy (30)
2. Evaluate the view that direct democracy should be used more often in the UK system. (30)
3. Evaluate the view that direct democracy is preferable to representative democracy? (30)

The health of British democracy

1. Evaluate the view that the UK remains a genuine pluralist democracy. (30)
2. Evaluate the view that the UK political system is democratic. (30)
3. Evaluate the view that power in the UK is dispersed successfully. (30)

Reforming British democracy

1. Evaluate the view that the UK system of representative democracy remains in need of improvement. (30)
2. Evaluate the view that reforms to the political system have improved the UK's system of representative democracy. (30)
3. 1. Evaluate the view that the UK political system needs further reform to make it more democratic? (30)

Political Participation

1. Evaluate the view that democracy in the UK is suffering from a participation crisis. (30)
2. Evaluate the view that the UK is suffering from a 'participation crisis'? (30)
3. Evaluate proposed reforms to increase political participation in the UK? (30)

Pressure group activity

1. Evaluate the view that pressure groups are successful due to their ability to generate mass support. (30)
2. Evaluate the view that pressure groups enhance democracy in the UK.. (30)

Rights protection in a democracy

1. Evaluate the view that judges, rather than politicians, are better able to protect and defend rights in the UK. (30)
2. Evaluate the view that rights are effectively protected in the UK. (30)
3. Evaluate the view that democratic rights are protected in the British political system. (30)

Question Bank: Source Questions

- 1 (b) This source is adapted from information on the Parliament website about the party system and information on the 'Vice magazine' UK website focused on minority parties.

The party system

Political parties have existed in one form or another since at least the 18th century, they are an essential element of UK politics. Since the Second World War, all the Governments in the UK have been formed by either the Labour Party or the Conservative Party. This did differ in 2010 when the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats formed a coalition government. The major parties capture the main issues of the day and present choice. Furthermore, the current electoral system favours few parties in the race to govern.

Minority parties

'Minority parties' are those that sit outside the traditional big three (Labour, Conservative and Liberal Democrat Parties) and have had power over Parliament for over a century. A significant shift has taken place in politics in recent years, with more people questioning the 'Establishment of Westminster' and looking to parties like the SNP, Plaid Cymru, the Green Party and UKIP.

In 2015, UKIP and the Greens obtained 5 million votes between them, also the SNP reached 56 seats of the 59 available in Scotland, becoming the third largest party in the House of Commons. Minority parties are enjoying success and recognition. A secure victory is now not the expected norm for either Labour or Conservative Parties, they now have much to fear and much to lose from a range of minority parties who are gaining ground.

The voter has little to choose between when looking to the major parties. In terms of policy, there is little that separates the major parties and all the policy they produce is similar, with battles over style as opposed to substance. By contrast, many of the minority parties present a fresh approach to politics.

(Source: from www.parliament.uk – used under Open Parliament Licence v3.0 and adapted from: The New Wave: Minority Parties – SNP, Plaid Cymru and the Green Party http://www.vice.com/en_uk/video/the-new-wave-minority-parties)

Using the source, evaluate the view that the major parties still remain the dominant force in UK politics.

In your response you must:

- *compare the different opinions in the source*
- *consider the view and the alternative view in a balanced way*
- *use a balance of knowledge and understanding both arising from the source and beyond the source to help you to analyse and evaluate.*

(30)

2. Using the source, evaluate the view that Labour has returned to its original ideological position. *In your response you must compare the different opinions in the source and use a balance of knowledge and understanding both arising from the source and beyond it to help you to analyse and evaluate.* (30)

There are two ways to view the 'Corbyn revolution' which emerged within the Labour Party in 2015. Some argue that this is a return to the roots of the Labour Party. Many of Corbyn's ideas were forged in the 1970s and 1980s when he was a young party member and when such ideological figures such as Tony Benn, Ken Livingstone and Michael Foot were prominent in the party. His proposals for the state ownership of the railways and state control over utility industries come straight from that era. He also believes in the power of the state to create greater economic equality and to curb the excesses of capitalism.

Others see it as a temporary insurgency. Many new supporters who voted for Corbyn in the leadership elections are seen as Marxist 'entryists'. For such critics the legacy of Tony Blair and New Labour is where the modern Labour Party is and should position itself. They point out that most Labour voters are actually moderate and that the majority of Labour MPs and peers do not support Corbyn. They support more centrist policies on taxation, welfare, and the role of the state,

It remains to be seen whether Labour can survive this split and indeed, which ideological position will prevail.

3. Using the source, evaluate the extent to which two-party dominance has declined in the UK. *In your response you must compare the different opinions in the source and use a balance of knowledge and understanding both arising from the source and beyond it to help you to analyse and evaluate.* (30)

Two-Party dominance in the UK				
Election Year	Conservative seats	Labour seats	Third-Party seats	% of seats won by two main parties
1979	339	269	11	95.8
1983	397	209	23	93.3

1987	376	229	22	93.0
1992	336	271	20	93.2
1997	165	418	46	88.4
2001	166	413	52	87.8
2005	198	356	62	85.6
2010	307	258	57	86.9
2015	331	232	56	86.7
2017	316	259	62	88.4

4. Using the source tables, evaluate the view that there is little in common between Conservative and Labour Party policies and ideas. You may also draw on your knowledge of developments and changes since 2015. *In your response you must compare the different opinions in the source and use a balance of knowledge and understanding both arising from the source and beyond it to help you to analyse and evaluate.* (30)

Conservative manifesto policies, 2015
Make migrants wait four years before they can claim certain benefits.
Stop migrants from claiming child benefit for dependents living outside the UK, and remove those that have failed to find work after six months.
Eradicate the deficit by 2018 and secure an overall budgets surplus by 2019-20
Achieve the above by spending cuts, not tax rises, while raising NHS spending
Extra £2 billion into frontline health services across the UK
In England, everyone would be able to see a GP seven days a week by 2020
An income tax cut for 30 million people by 2020
No increases in VAT
Hold a referendum on Britain's membership of the EU by 2017

Protect foreign aid budget
Replace Trident
Create 3 million apprenticeships to be paid for by benefit cuts

Labour manifesto policies, 2015
Stronger border controls to tackle illegal immigration with 'proper' entry and exit checks
'Smarter' targets to reduce low-skilled migration but ensure students and high-skilled workers are not deterred.
Employment agencies to be stopped from only recruiting abroad; higher fines for employing illegal immigrants.
Get the current budget into surplus and the national debt falling 'as soon as possible in the next Parliament'; no additional borrowing for new spending.
An extra £2.5 billion a year about the Conservative plan for the NHS
Patients in England would get a GP appointment within 48 hours and wait no longer than a week for cancer tests and results.
Scrap the Health and Social Care Act and end 'creeping privatisation' of the NHS
Reintroduce the 50p top rate of income tax for earnings over £150,000
Cut income tax for 24 million people by bringing back the 10p rate, paid for by scrapping the married couples' tax allowance.
Bring in a 'mansion tax' on properties worth over £2 million, to raise £1.2 billion
A tax on bankers' bonuses
Push for reform of EU and prevent Britain from 'sleepwalking towards exit'
Guarantee a job for under 25s unemployed for over a year and adults unemployed for more than two years.
Commit to holding a strategic defence and security review every five years.

5. Using the source, evaluate the extent to which the funding of parties should be controlled and reformed. *In your response you must compare the different opinions*

in the source and use a balance of knowledge and understanding both arising from the source and beyond it to help you to analyse and evaluate. (30)

The issue of party funding has been controversial in the UK for many years. From the 1970s onwards it was becoming apparent that there were three problems emerging in this field. The first was the escalating costs of running a party, not least the cost of campaigning in elections. The second was the growing disparity between how much the established parties- Labour and Conservatives- could afford compared with smaller parties.

Small parties, already disadvantaged by the electoral system, now suffered from a huge funding gap. The third issue was the growing practice of business and individuals making sizeable donations to parties in the hope and expectation of favourable policies and even the prospect of being given an honour. In a tit-for-tat blame game, Labour accused the Conservatives of being bribed by big business while the Tories pointed out that Labour was heavily reliant on funding from trade unions.

Although there have been some reforms, including greater transparency over large donations, there has been no serious attempt to reform the system in recent times. The key issue revolves around the possibility of state funding of parties. This is a practice quite common in other parts of Europe. It is, though, highly controversial. Supporters say it will stop the abuses of large donations and will create greater equality between parties. Critics, however, point out that parties are private organisations and there can be no justification for taxpayers funding them. There is also the problem of how to distribute state funds: which parties should receive help and in what proportions?

If state funding is rejected, the remaining answer is to reform the regulations. The most popular idea follows the American system where there is a limit on the size of individual donations. This seems an obvious step, but there are ways round it, as the American experience indicates. Driving funding underground through over-regulation, it is argued, will only encourage corruption.

Question Bank: Essay Questions

Political Parties

- Evaluate the view that political parties should be state funded. (30)

Established Political Parties

- Evaluate the view that the Labour Party has abandoned traditional socialist policies? (30)
- Evaluate the view that the Labour Party remains true to its traditional values and principles. (30)
- Evaluate the view that the Labour Party has remained true to its traditional principles. (30)
- Evaluate the view that the Conservative Party has abandoned Thatcherism? (30)
- Evaluate the view that the modern Conservative Party may be described as a 'one-nation' party.
- Evaluate the view that the modern Conservatives policies do not conform to the traditional ideas of the party. (30)
- Evaluate the view that the Labour and Conservative parties differ on economic issues.
- Evaluate the view that the policy differences within parties are as significant as the differences between them?
- Evaluate the view that there a policy consensus between the major UK parties
- Evaluate the view that the main political parties in the UK are fundamentally liberal parties.
- Evaluate the view that the main UK parties support liberal ideas.

Party Systems

1. Evaluate the view that the UK is still a two-party system?
2. Evaluate the view that 'minor' parties have had little impact on political argument and debate in contemporary Britain.
3. Evaluate the view that small political parties are having an increasingly important impact on UK politics
4. Evaluate the view that small parties have an impact on UK politics today.

Political Parties in context

- Evaluate the view that policies or other factors determine how well parties perform at elections.
- Evaluate the view that the main UK parties are dominated by their leaders.
- Evaluate the view that the influence of the media is the most important factor that determines the success or failure of a political party
- Evaluate the view that the media can influence support for political parties.

Essay questions:

Unit 3.1

Evaluate the view that First Past the Post should be replaced by a proportional system. (30)

Evaluate the view that the UK electoral system is no longer fit for purpose. (30)

Evaluate the view that the benefits of First Past the Post outweigh their weaknesses. (30)

Evaluate the view that the Westminster Electoral system should be reformed. (30)

Evaluate the view that AMS is a better electoral system than FPTP. (30)

Evaluate the view that strong and stable government should be the aim of an electoral system. (30)

Evaluate the view that FPTP is the most effective electoral system for promoting representative democracy. (30)

Unit 3.2

Evaluate the view that referendums should be used more widely in British politics (30).

Evaluate the view that referendums undermine representative democracy.

Evaluate the view that referendums cause more harm than good. (30)

Evaluate the view that referendums are only called for internal party-political reasons. (30)

Unit 3.3

Evaluate the view that the devolved parliaments have suitable electoral systems. (30)

Evaluate the view that the electoral systems used in the UK have created a multiparty system. (30)

Evaluate the view that proportional systems create more consensus politics. (30).

Unit 4:

Evaluate the extent to which general elections in the UK are lost by the government rather than won by the opposition.

Evaluate the extent to which social factors determine voting behaviour.

Evaluate the view that media support is the most important factor for a political party to achieve success.