

The History & Politics  
Department invites you to...

# WASHINGTON D.C.

YEAR 13 TRIP

23-27 OCT 2023

Deadline for sign ups  
September 2022

Visits to include...

- **WHITE HOUSE**
- **CAPITOL BUILDING**
- **LIBRARY OF CONGRESS**
- **SUPREME COURT**
- **NATIONAL MALL**
- **MARTIN LUTHER KING JR.  
MEMORIAL**
- **NATIONAL MUSEUM OF  
AFRICAN AMERICAN HISTORY  
AND CULTURE**



19 pandemic? Have there been any changes in cabinet? What have the devolved powers of Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales done differently?).

**This write-up needs to be a minimum of one page, and a maximum of two pages long. Please be ready to be submit this work during your first lesson in September.**

### **Task three**

Choose one news item to read about over the course of the summer holidays on one of the following topics, which make up your studies on UK politics:

- Democracy and participation
- Elections and referendums
- Political parties
- Pressure groups
- European Union

Complete a write-up of this issue/news item. You will need to detail what debates surround the topic in question, and why this issue is being reported about in the media (i.e. what protests have been carried out this year by UK pressure groups? How successful have Boris Johnson and Keir Starmer been in leading the two main political parties in the UK? Where does the UK stand in the new EU-UK partnership following Brexit?)

**This write-up needs to be a minimum of one page, and a maximum of two pages long. Please be ready to be submit this work during your first lesson in September.**

***Optional: What could I be reading to broaden my knowledge and understanding of the subject?***

1. *Why Politics Matters: Making Democracy Work*, Gerry Stoker
2. *Why We Hate Politics*, Colin Hay
3. *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy*, Joseph A. Schumpeter
4. *If Only They Didn't Speak English: Notes from Trump's America*, Jon Sopel
5. *Prisoners of Geography*, Tim Marshall

**For much, much more, please see our attached 'Beyond the Classroom' document!**

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**WHY CHOOSE**

**POLITICS**

**A-LEVEL?**

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Lively, relevant, controversial...

There's no denying that A-Level Politics is one of the most interesting and engaging qualifications you can choose.



## HOW CAN I GET INVOLVED?

The study of Government & Politics has never been more relevant; in an era of 'fake news' you will be equipped with the skills necessary to determine fact from fiction. Studying Politics will allow you to navigate a world of ceaseless arguments and limitless information with confidence.

Politics is a non-traditional discipline, only available to study formally in the Sixth Form. Studying Politics at A-Level and/or university can lead on to a wide range of future careers. These include consultancy, law, government, politics, charities, military, academia, media, or teaching. The enrichment opportunities at Berkhamsted reflect the fact that many of our students go on to study humanities and arts degrees, before embarking on an exciting variety of vocations.

Politics students are well supported in tackling the academic curriculum, particularly through the online resources we have access to. These include *The Financial Times*, *The Week*, and *Politics Review*. All students also have a subscription to *Prechewed Politics*, a dedicated online platform that links contemporary case-studies to the A-Level syllabus in an accessible way.

Beyond the classroom, our students have launched Berkhamsted's own current affairs blog, [The Cross Bencher](#), which brings you a round-up of all things newsworthy. To complement articles published on the site, students involved have gone on to present their ideas on key topics at the school's Crawford Society, as well as in Senior School assemblies.

The department hosts half-termly film evenings, screening a range of titles that are relevant to the A-Level course. Students are encouraged to [read](#) widely beyond contact hours, and we hold frequent debates, both informally in lessons and after-school in a *Question Time* style format. Those looking to demonstrate their academic potential to universities are well supported in essay writing competitions, such as the [Cambridge RA Butler Prize](#). Furthermore, the department has selected several students to attend the [Young Political Leaders Programme](#) hosted by UCL.

In the Sixth Form, the Politics enrichment opportunities are designed to enhance your A-Level studies, prepare you for university, and empower you for your working life beyond education. We look forward to seeing you in Year 12!



## WHAT DO OUR STUDENTS SAY?

*'A fantastic course taught with passion in a dynamic way by the teachers.'*

*'The Politics Department has been the best of any of my subjects in their use of OneNote, which I have found extremely helpful for my way of learning.'*

*'The course was a perfect balance between the three main topics and lessons are always taught in an engaging way.'*

*'I've most enjoyed exploring modern examples from the news and applying them to what we are learning about in the classroom.'*

*'While it was a little tough at the start, it was easy to take on board feedback and improve.'*

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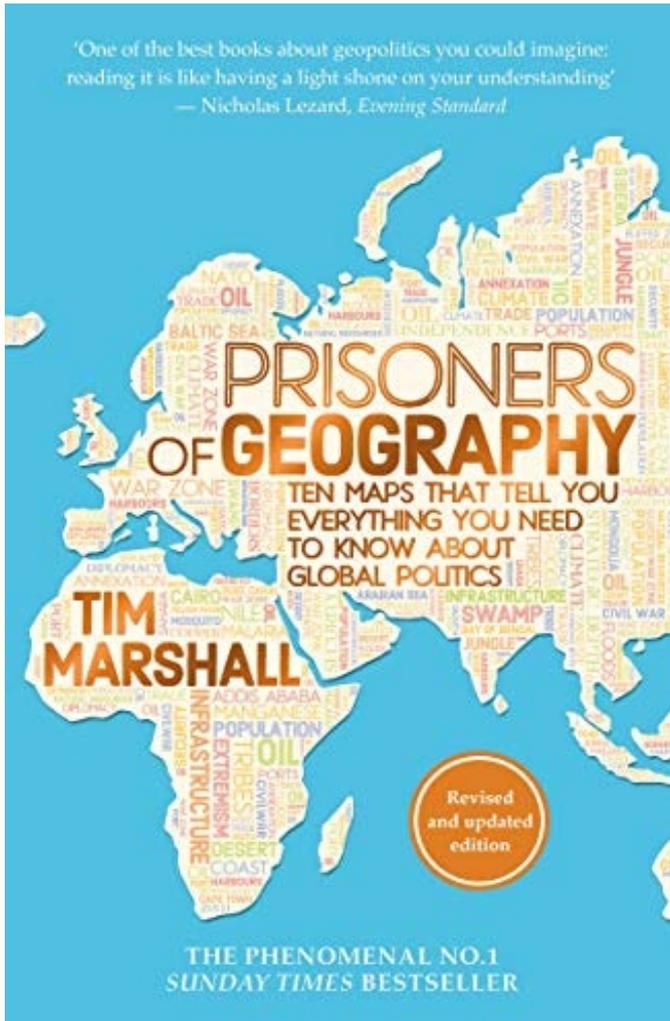
BERKHAMSTED POLITICS  
DEPARTMENT



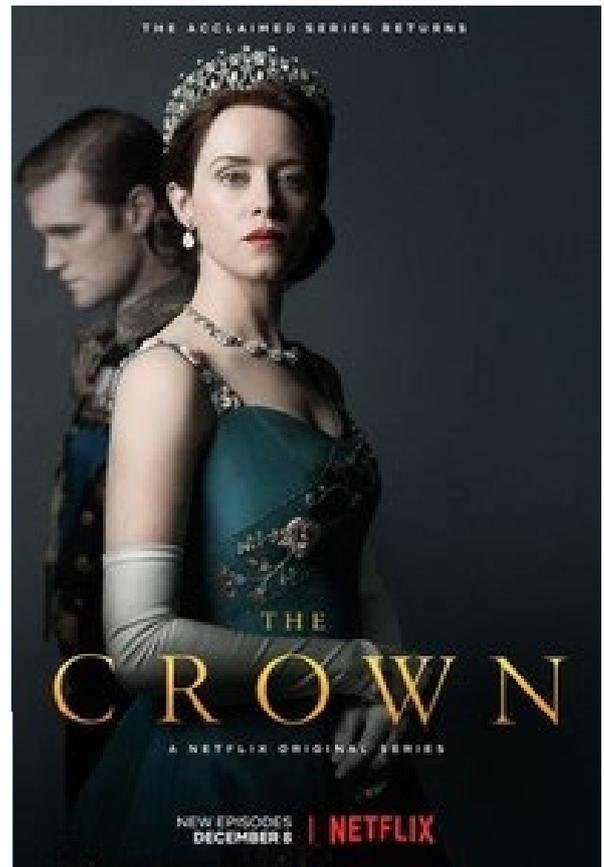
*'An investment  
in knowledge  
always pays the  
best interest.'*

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN

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*Follow the royals throughout a series of political rivalries in this Netflix original. Claire Foy or Olivia Coleman?*

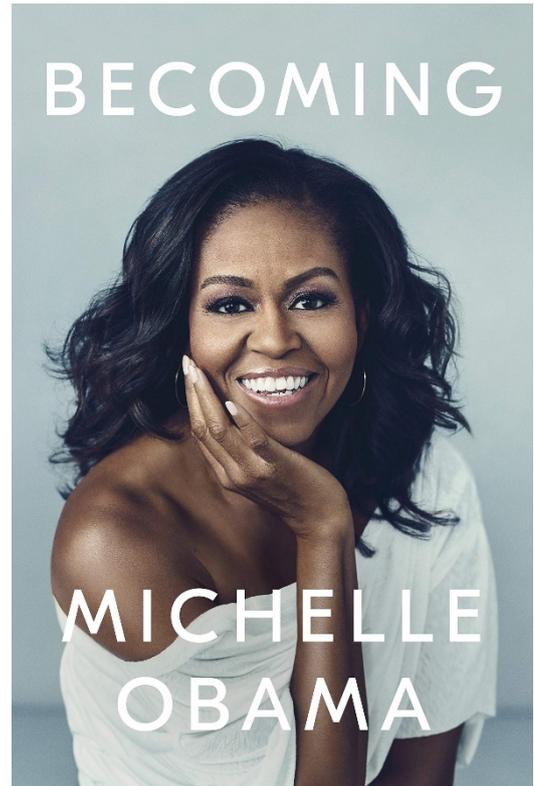
*Join Jon Sopel and Emily Maitlis on the 2020 campaign trail.*



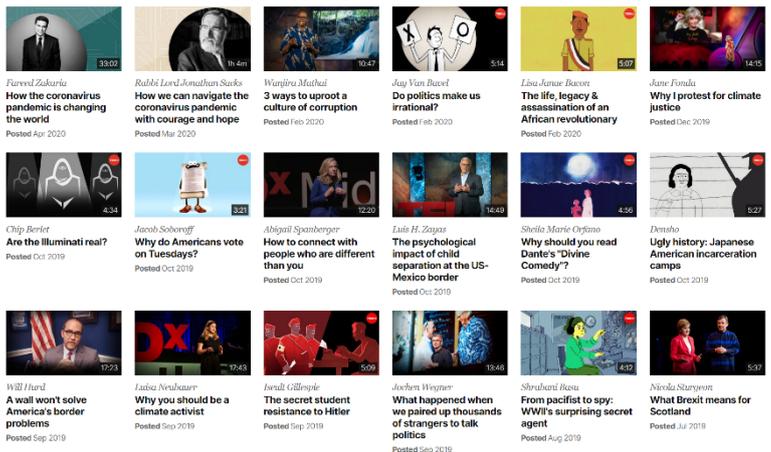
**AMERICAST**



*The former First Lady's memoir sold so well, it inspired Netflix to take her story of Becoming to screen.*



*Ben Affleck stars in this historical thriller set during President Carter's administration. The film is based on the CIA covert rescue of US hostages from Iran in 1979.*



**VIDEO**



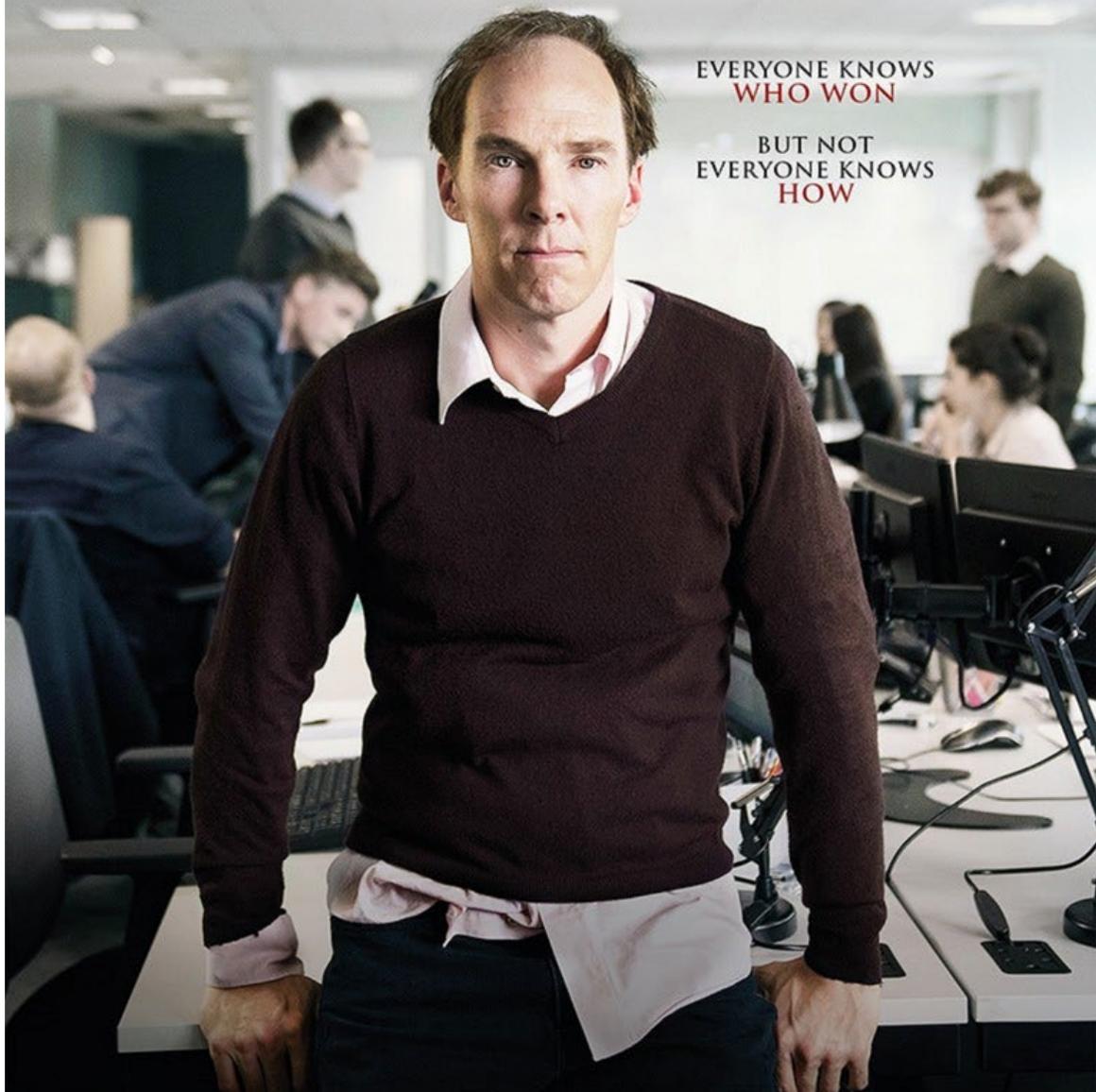
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BENEDICT CUMBERBATCH

# BREXIT

THE UNCIVIL WAR



EVERYONE KNOWS  
WHO WON

BUT NOT  
EVERYONE KNOWS  
HOW

*Benedict Cumberbatch plays political strategist Dominic Cummings (credited with putting Barnard Castle on the map) in this drama about how the Brexit vote was won.*



*This docudrama follows the story of a GCHQ employee who leaked secret information to the press about an illegal operation designed to push the UN into sanctioning the 2003 invasion of Iraq.*

*Laura Kuenssberg examines some of the most significant political scandals of the noughties and considers why the population feels growing mistrust towards those in power.*



*Helen Mirren and Michael Sheen play monarch and Prime Minister in this 2006 historical drama.*

*A collection of over 50 essays written by women from all walks of life. Reese Witherspoon describes it as, 'Brilliant, hysterical, truthful and real.'*

LIKE MEN GET  
MAKE JOKES  
HAVE FUN LIKE M  
WEAR MAKE-UP  
**FEMINISTS** HAVE  
**DON'T** MAKE JOK  
**WEAR** LIKE MEN



**PINK** GET MARRIED  
*and other lies* HAVE F

AMAZING WOMEN ON WHAT  
THE F-WORD MEANS TO THEM

CURATED BY

scarlett curtis





*We think this is one of the most powerful documentaries on Netflix, exposing the racial inequalities in the US prison system. BAFTA and Emmy agree, naming it Best Documentary in 2016.*

**'Essential'** Marlon James, Winner of the Man Booker Prize 2015

**Reni Eddo-Lodge**  
**WHY I'M  
 NO LONGER  
 TALKING  
 TO WHITE  
 PEOPLE  
 ABOUT  
 RACE**

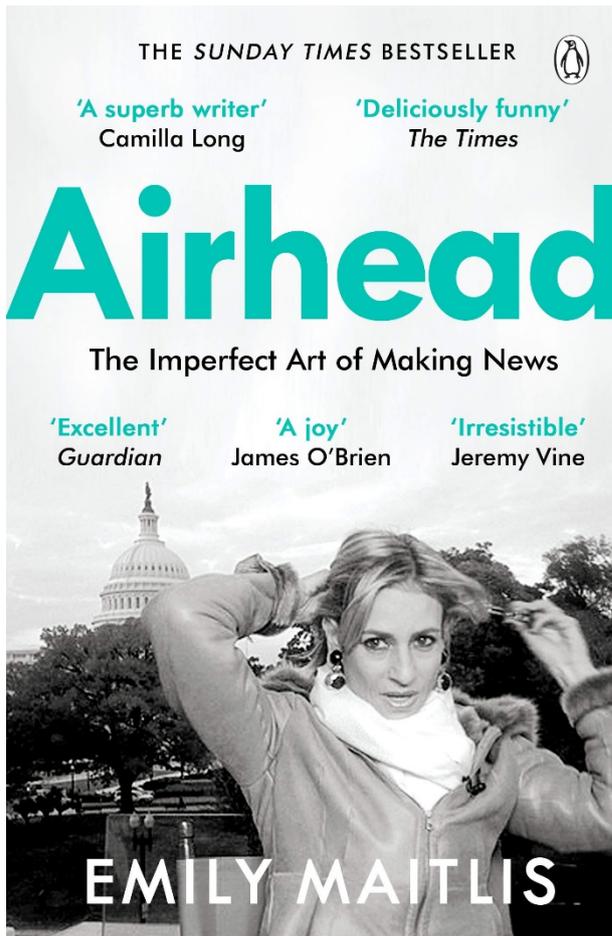
THE KALLIPEDS  
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*'Glorious and provocative.'* *'Timeless and accessible.'* *'Begging to be written.'*

*How much do you know about the man behind the scenes of George W. Bush's administration? Christian Bale is Dick Cheney in Vice.*



*Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez takes on the establishment in one of the most shocking political upsets in recent American history in this Netflix documentary.*



*Interested in a career in journalism? The chief presenter of BBC Newsnight vividly chronicles the pains and perils of news television. Airhead now includes a new chapter on Maitlis' infamous interview with Prince Andrew.*



*'After Sandy Hook, we said never again.' A fascinating [interactive online resource](#) made by Vox that tracks gun violence in America.*

*'At the heart of Washington, there is a circus. It's raucous, noisy and full of clowns.'*

*BBC North America Editor takes you on a tour of the West Wing in his books on Trump's America, and yes, we're told a third one is on the way.*

From the bestselling author of *If Only They Didn't Speak English*

# JON SOPEL

# A Year

at the

# Circus

*Inside Trump's White House*



UPDATED WITH A NEW CHAPTER

# JON SOPEL

# If Only They Didn't Speak English



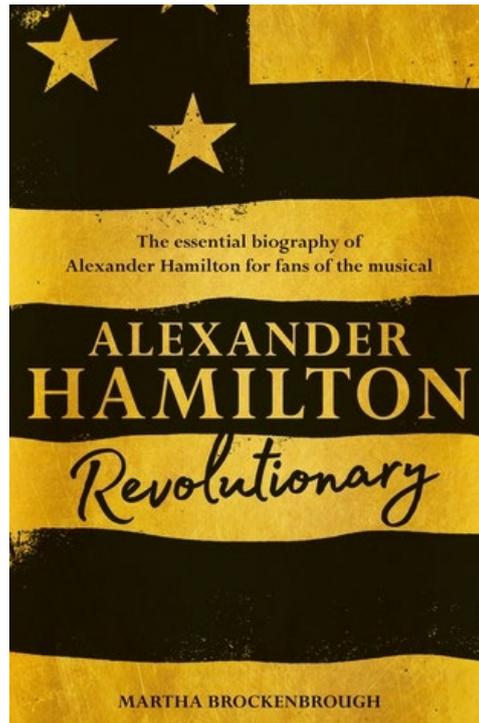
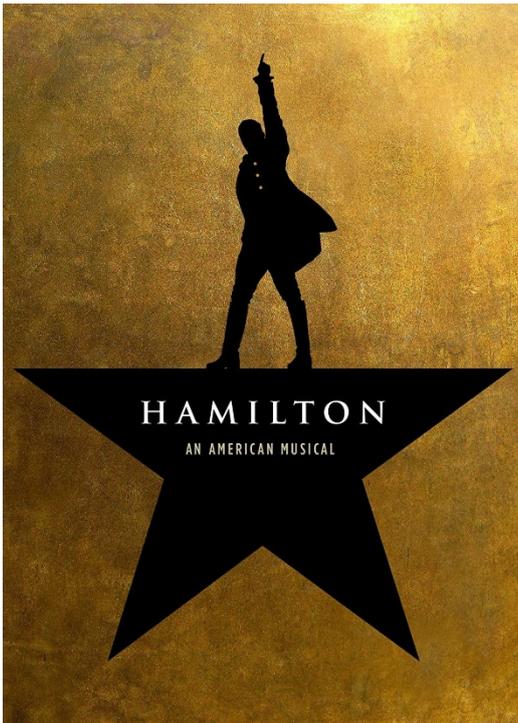
Notes from  
Trump's America

'Jon Sopel may be the sanest man in America'  
BILL BRYSON



# THE CROSS BENCHER

*Both books have been reviewed on [The Cross Bencher's Bookshelf](#) if you want to know more.*

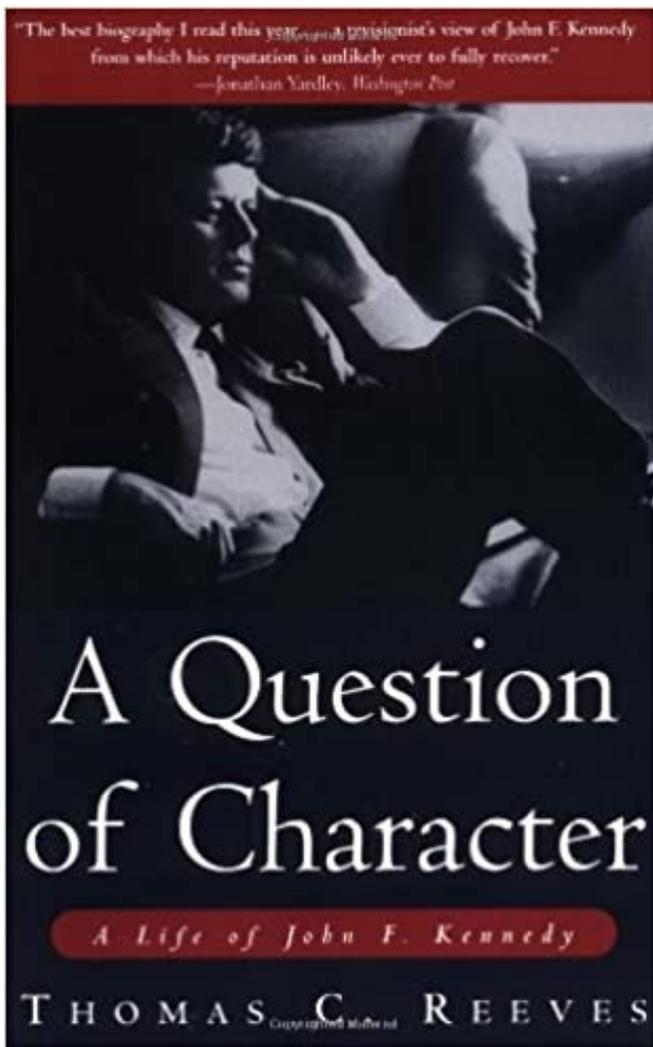


*If Broadway and the West End are off the cards, this biography of the brilliant but flawed Founding Father is the next best thing.*

*Felicity Jones stars in this incredible story of how one lawyer overturns a century of gender discrimination. Set in marble halls of the US Supreme Court, the 87-year-old Ruth Ginsburg herself makes a cameo appearance in the final scene.*



*For anyone who wants to relive 2016 through the eyes of our former Prime Minister.*

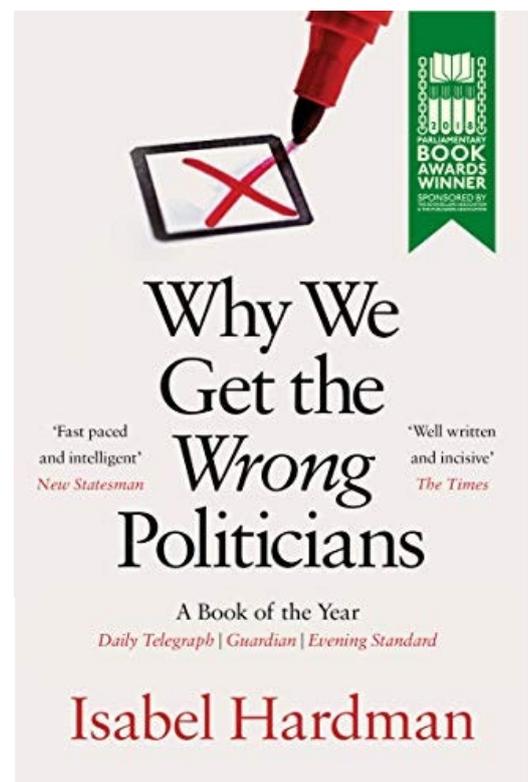


*This miniseries tracks the lives of the 'royal' Kennedy family, including many of the political triumphs and tragedies they experienced during the Cold War era. Pair this with Reeves' book that he claimed, 'finally exploded the Kennedy myth.'*



*For more on 'The Donald', tune in to The Washington Post's podcast.*

*'A vital and compelling read for anyone interested in the way our political system does or doesn't work.'*



# Streep Hanks



A Steven Spielberg Film

# The Post

Music by John Williams Produced by Amy Pascal, p.g.a. Steven Spielberg, p.g.a. Kristie Macosko Krieger, p.g.a.  
DREAMWORKS PICTURES Participant media #ThePost ThePostMovie.com Written by Liz Hannah and Josh Singer Directed by Steven Spielberg

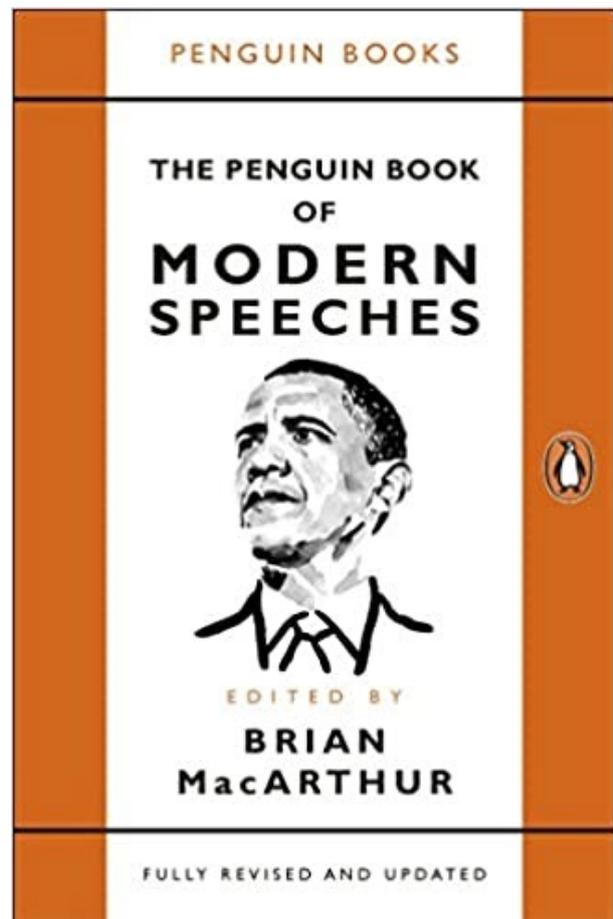
*Meryl Streep and Tom Hanks. What's not to love?*

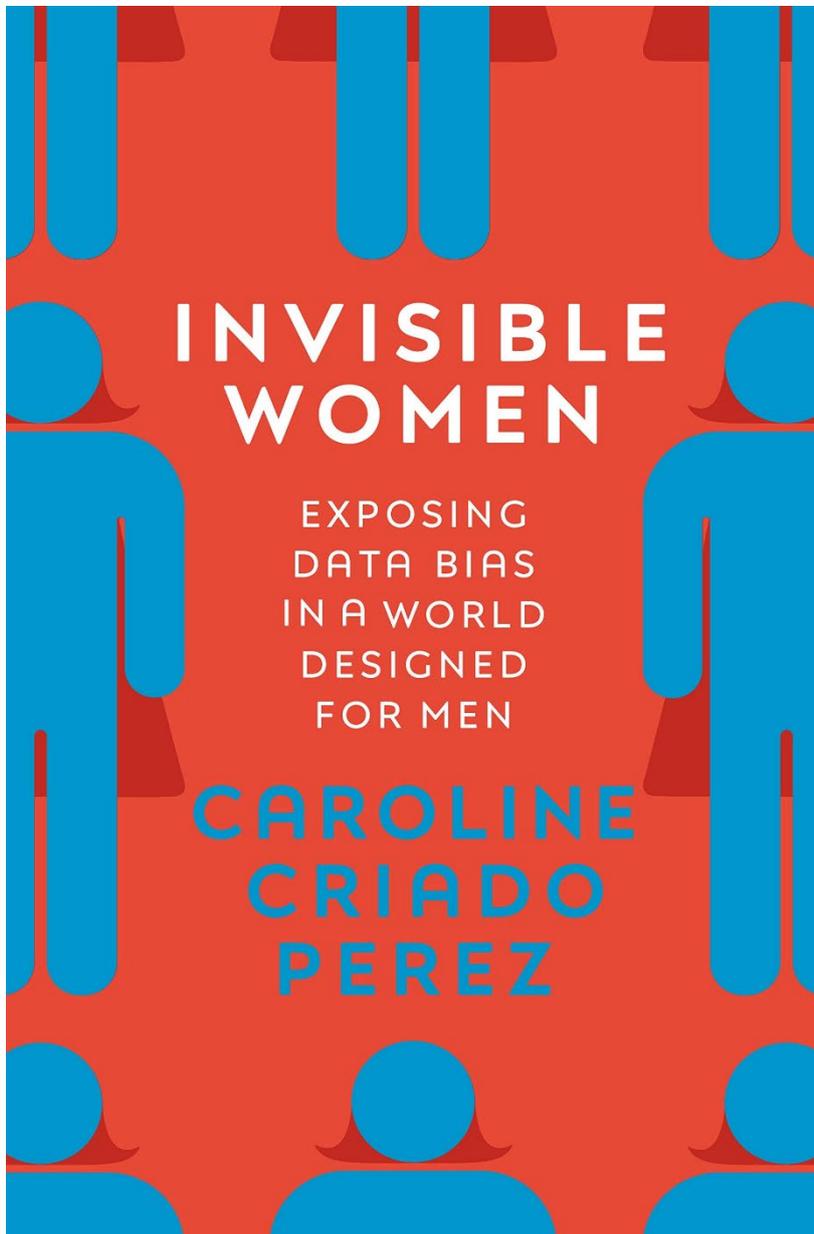
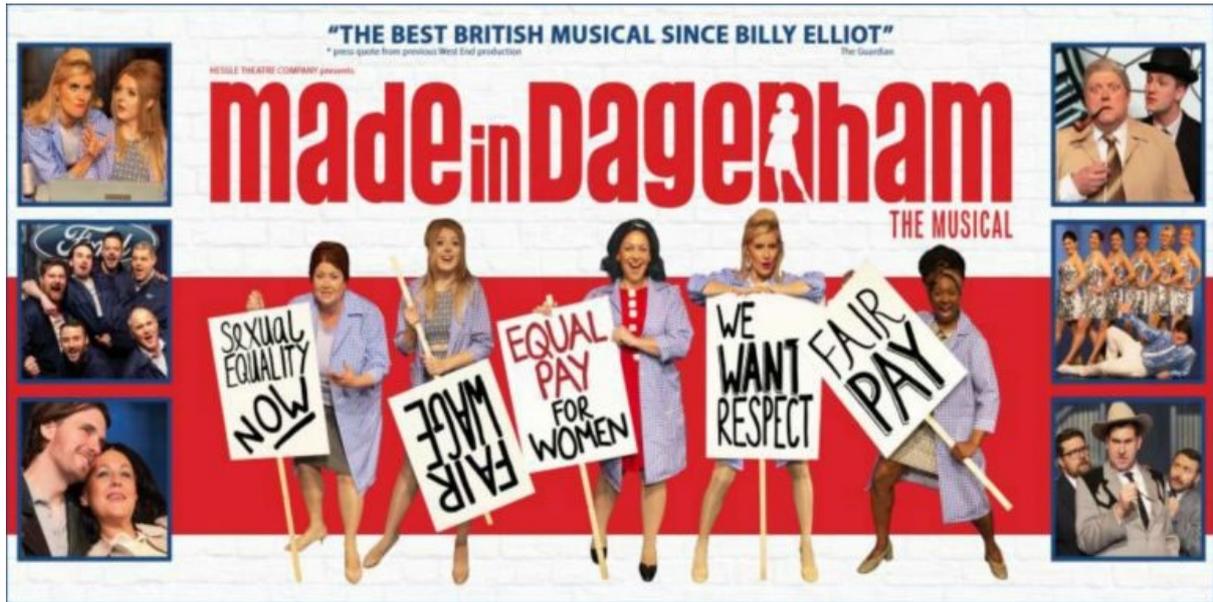


*The journalists who talked us through Brexit are back to help us once again in navigating uncertain times ahead as the COVID-19 pandemic takes hold in the UK and beyond.*

*One dream really can change the world, as is the case in Selma.*

*Fancy yourself as an orator? Pick up this Penguin Book of the classic speeches from modern history for inspiration.*





*How has women's position in society changed over the past century?*

*Follow women in their struggles for the vote, equal pay and an equal place in society from film to stage to page.*



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'BEYOND THE  
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## UNDERSTANDING POLITICS

Whenever you begin the study of a new academic subject, it is usual to be introduced to the nature of the subject itself. This happens for two main reasons. First, you need to know what the study of the subject is going to involve. If you like, you need to know what 'you are in for'. Second, it is helpful to be introduced to some of the basic ideas and concepts of the subject, the building blocks for later understanding. This section therefore looks at:

- ▶ What is politics?
- ▶ What is government?

### WHAT IS POLITICS?

Although the question 'What is Politics?' has sometimes stimulated fierce debate and disagreement (whole books have even been written on the subject), politics has a clear basic character. Politics can be defined as follows:

Politics is the activity through which people make, uphold and revise the general rules under which they live.

At first sight, this definition is simple and straightforward. However, when looked at further, at least three other questions emerge:

- ▶ In what sense are these rules 'general'?
- ▶ Why are such rules needed?
- ▶ How are these rules made and upheld?

#### What are 'general' rules?

General rules are rules that affect how we interact more widely with other members of society. In other words, they are the rules that affect how we behave within the community, rather than how we behave in our personal life; that is, within our families or just with close friends. This highlights an important distinction in politics: the difference between 'public' life and 'private' life. Public life is the realm of politics. It deals with issues that affect all members of the community, such as law and order, the economy, defence, social welfare, and so on. Private life, by contrast, is an arena in which we are, or should be, free to act as we wish. It includes, for example, decisions about who to marry, what to buy, religious belief, and so forth. However, this is where problems begin. Quite simply, there is no agreement about the proper balance between public and private life.

### Why are general rules needed?

General rules are needed because of the problem of **conflict**. Politics, in short, exists because people disagree. If everybody had the same views and opinions, and agreed about how their society should work, there would be no politics. In a world of universal harmony and agreement, people would not need rules to guide their behaviour or the behaviour of others. They would 'naturally' know what to do, and how and when to do it. Sadly, such a society does not exist, and probably never has. Most basically, people disagree about how the wealth and other resources in society should be distributed – they disagree about who gets what. However, politics is not just about conflict. It is also about finding ways of resolving conflict, ways of allowing people with different opinions, wants and needs to live together within the same society. This is what the 'general rules' of society seek to do.

### How are the rules made?

As we shall see later, the general rules in society are made in different ways depending on the system of government in existence. Each of these systems nevertheless has one thing in common. They each operate on the basis of power. Power is a vital ingredient of politics. It is the factor that determines who gets what, when and how. If politics is a struggle over scarce resources, power is the means through which the struggle is conducted. However, authority is often more important in politics than power.

In the classic formulation advanced by the German sociologist, Max Weber, there are three types of authority:

- **Traditional authority** (based on history and the belief that something has 'always happened')

**Conflict:** Competition between opposing forces, based on the existence of different opinions, wants and needs.

### Focus on ... POWER AND AUTHORITY

**Power**, in its broadest sense, is the ability to achieve a desired outcome, sometimes seen as the 'power to' do something. This includes anything from the ability to keep oneself alive to the ability of government to achieve economic growth. In politics, however, power is more commonly understood as a relationship; that is, as the ability to influence the behaviour of others, usually through rewards or punishments. This implies having 'power over' other people. (See Types of power, p. 5.)

**Authority** can most simply be defined as 'legitimate power'. Whereas power involves the *ability* to influence the behaviour of others, authority operates through the *right* to do so. Authority is therefore based on an acknowledged duty to obey, rather than the use of punishments and rewards. In this sense, authority is power cloaked in legitimacy or rightfulness. Nevertheless, power and authority are often used in tandem, and examples of authority being used in the absence of power (such as the monarchy) are rare.

- Charismatic authority (based on personality)
- Legal-rational authority (based on formal and impersonal rules).

All political systems try to turn power into authority, and they do so through a quest for legitimacy. As legitimacy (p. 27) establishes a 'right to rule' that encourages citizens willingly to obey the state, it is crucial to the maintenance of political stability. But some political systems are more successful in building legitimacy than others.

### WHAT IS GOVERNMENT?

Politics and government invariably go together. The subject, after all, is called Government and Politics. But why are the two linked? Government can be defined as follows:

Government is a set of institutions through which the general rules of society (usually called laws) are made and enforced.

In other words, government is the machinery through which politics operates. Its central features are the ability to make collective decisions and the ability to enforce them. A form of government can therefore be identified in almost all social institutions: families, schools, businesses, trade unions, and so on. As far as the government of a society is concerned, government consists of three parts. These parts are responsible for:

- ▶ Making laws – legislation
- ▶ Carrying out laws – execution
- ▶ Interpreting laws – adjudication.

Although all systems of government set out to ensure 'ordered rule', they do this in very different ways. Government, therefore, has taken a wide variety of shapes and forms. Two ways of classifying different forms of government are on the basis of how powerful government is and who controls the government.

### How powerful is government?

The issue of government power – and how far government can affect ordinary citizens – highlights the difference between limited government and authoritarian government. In the case of limited government (as the terms suggests), government operates within a framework of checks or constraints. These are meant to protect individual freedom by preventing over-mighty government. The main ways of limiting government power are through constitutions (rules that govern the government itself) and by fragmenting government through the creation of a number of institutions which can

### Focus on ... TYPES OF POWER

Power is exercised whenever A gets B to do something that B would not otherwise have done. In this sense, it refers to 'power over' people. However, A can influence B in a variety of ways.

Stephen Lukes (2004) identified three types of power:

- Power as *decision-making* – the ability to affect the content of public policy (what governments actually do)
- Power as *agenda-setting* – the ability to influence the issues and proposals that are discussed (what is on, or off, the political agenda)

- Power as *thought control* – the ability to shape popular beliefs, values and ideas (what people think).

It has become increasingly common to distinguish between 'hard' power and 'soft' power, especially in international or global politics:

- *Hard* power is the ability to exert influence through the use of threats or rewards, e.g. the use of military force or the control of jobs and investment.
- *Soft* power is the ability to exert influence through attraction rather than coercion, e.g. the use of film, radio and TV to affect people's values and aspirations.

check one another. On the other hand, authoritarian government imposes rules on the people regardless of checks or limitations. In effect, authoritarian governments can do whatever they wish. Such governments have usually been seen as a recipe for tyranny and oppression.

### Who controls the government?

The issue of control over government highlights the difference between democracies and autocracies. In the case of democratic government (more fully discussed in Chapter 2), power lies with the people. Government is meant to be carried out by the people. In practical terms, this means that government is based on the principle of elections – those who hold government power are chosen through a process of regular and competitive elections. This is designed to ensure that government acts for the people; that is, in the public interest. At the other extreme is autocratic government, a form of government in which all power is held by one person. **Autocracy** usually goes hand in hand with **authoritarianism**. Examples of such regimes include absolute monarchies, empires and dictatorships of various kinds. By the same token, limited government and democracy are often found together, most commonly in the form of so-called liberal democracies. Liberal democracy (see p. 6) has become the most popular type of regime in the modern world. By 2003, 63 per cent of countries, accounting for about 70 per cent of the world's population, exhibited some of the key features of liberal democracy. The UK is often seen as a classic example of a liberal democracy. However, as we shall see later, some critics regard it as an untypical, or incomplete, liberal democracy.

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**Autocracy:** Literally, self-rule; rule by a single person who exercises his or her power in an arbitrary manner.

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**Authoritarianism:** The practice of rule 'from above'; government that is imposed on citizens regardless of their consent.

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**Key concept ... LIBERAL DEMOCRACY**

Liberal democracy is an indirect and representative form of democracy (see p. 28). In a liberal democracy, the right to rule is gained through success in regular and competitive elections, conducted on the basis of political equality ('one person, one vote'). Liberal democratic regimes attempt to combine the 'liberal' goal of limited government with a 'democratic' commitment to elections and popular participation.

The core features of a liberal democracy are:

- Free, fair and regular elections that respect the principle of **universal suffrage**
- Competition for power between a number of candidates and a number of parties
- Guaranteed civil liberties and individual rights
- Constitutional government based on formal, usually legal, rules
- A healthy **civil society**, in which the media is free and groups enjoy independence from government
- A capitalist or private-enterprise economy.

**UK POLITICS IN CONTEXT**

Having gained a general understanding of the nature of politics and government, we now need to turn our attention to the UK. In particular, we need to see what is distinctive about how government and politics work in the UK. Politics does not take place in a vacuum; it is shaped by a wide variety of factors – historical, social, cultural, international, and so on. Each political system therefore operates in a different context, and it is this context that makes the political system distinctive, even unique. What is the context of UK politics?

**HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

This brief historical overview highlights three important developments that have helped to shape the modern UK:

- ▶ Crown and Parliament
- ▶ The rise of industrialisation
- ▶ Politics since 1945.

**Crown and Parliament**

The UK has had an unusually stable and peaceful political history. Wars and revolutions have rarely visited British shores, unlike much of continental Europe. The exception, however, is an important one. The English Revolution

**Universal suffrage:** The right of all adult citizens to vote (however 'adulthood' is defined).

**Civil society:** A 'private' realm in which individuals and groups enjoy independence from government; civil society includes businesses, clubs, families, and so on.



**Map 1.1** The UK

## Focus on ... THE GLORIOUS REVOLUTION

The Glorious Revolution refers to a series of events that took place in 1688 and 1689, which led to the exile of James II and the accession to the throne of his daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange. However, William and Mary agreed to be monarchs of a new kind: they were constitutional monarchs who accepted that they ruled within constraints established by Parliament.

The Act of Settlement, 1701, for example, established that Parliament could alter the succession to the throne.

The Glorious Revolution was (arguably) the key moment in Britain's constitutional history:

- It provided the basis for the principle of parliamentary sovereignty (see p. 189), through which Parliament came to exercise unlimited legal authority.
- In establishing the idea of representative government, it laid the grounds for the later spread of democracy in the UK.

of the 17th century is often viewed as the first modern political revolution. Ideas that surfaced during the English Revolution helped to influence the American Revolution of 1776 and the French Revolution of 1789. The English Revolution was a struggle for power between the monarchy and Parliament. It commenced with the outbreak of a civil war in 1642 and led to the execution of King Charles I in 1649. A brief republic was then formed under the military dictatorship of Oliver Cromwell, 1649–60. Cromwell's death nevertheless weakened the republic and eventually the monarchy was restored, under Charles II. This period of political upheaval and civil strife ended in the Glorious Revolution of 1689, which established a new relationship between the Crown and Parliament, and provided the basis for Britain's later constitutional development. The English Revolution threw up radical political ideas of many kinds, even communist and anarchist political thinking. However, its enduring legacy, in Britain and elsewhere, was the establishment of the ideas of individual rights and representative government.

### The rise of industrialisation

The UK was the world's first industrialised state. The Industrial Revolution started in the mid-18th century and by the mid-19th century it had made the UK the 'workshop of the world', producing two-thirds of the world's coal, half its steel, half its cotton goods and virtually all its machine goods. Industrialisation changed Britain internally and externally. Internally, it transformed the class structure, producing a rising middle class of industrialists and business men, and a growing industrial working class. This, in turn, created powerful pressure to widen political participation beyond the narrow ranks of the aristocracy or upper classes. A consequence of this was the Great Reform Act of 1832, which started the process through which the right to vote was expanded until universal adult suffrage was eventually

achieved when women gained equal voting rights in 1928. The advance of democracy in the 19th century helped to establish the UK's parliamentary system of government, by making ministers accountable to Parliament rather than the monarch. Externally, industrialisation made the UK the world's leading economic power, a fact that fuelled imperial expansion during the late 19th century. By 1918, the British Empire included about one-quarter of the world's population.

### The post-1945 period

The political and ideological twists and turns of the post-1945 period are examined much more closely in Chapter 5. However, it is helpful to have an overview of such developments at the outset, as they affect many aspects of the contemporary political scene. UK politics since the Second World War has usually been divided into four distinct periods:

- ▶ The post-war consensus: 1945–79
- ▶ Thatcherism: 1979–97
- ▶ The post-Thatcherite consensus: 1997–2010
- ▶ The age of austerity: since 2010.

Although such divisions are simplistic and, in many ways, misleading, they nevertheless help to illustrate some important trends in post-1945 UK politics. From this perspective, the post-war period has been defined by two radical, reforming governments:

- ▶ Clement Attlee's Labour governments, 1945–51
- ▶ Margaret Thatcher's Conservative governments, 1979–90.

### The post-war consensus

The Attlee Labour governments established a new approach to economic and social policy-making. They sought to 'roll forward' the state, and they did this in a number of ways. Major industries, such as coal, steel, gas, electricity and shipbuilding, were nationalised. The economy was 'managed' by the government with the aim of ensuring steady growth and full employment using **Keynesian** techniques. The welfare state was expanded, with the creation of a comprehensive system of social security and the National Health Service (NHS). These policies aimed to promote social justice and to establish general prosperity, in line with the principles of social democracy (see p. 125). The fact that the Conservative Party was quickly converted to a broad acceptance of these social-democratic policies led to a period of consensus politics in the 1950s and 1960s. This is sometimes seen as the period of **Butskellism**, highlighting the extent to which the major two parties agreed on key economic and social priorities.

**Keynesianism:** An economic strategy (developed by J. M. Keynes) in which growth is stimulated by allowing government spending to exceed tax revenues, so creating a budget deficit.

**Butskellism:** A term made up from the names of the Conservative chancellor R. A. Butler and the Labour leader Hugh Gaitskell, indicating an overlap in party policies.

**Thatcherism**

The social-democratic consensus nevertheless started to break down in the 1970s, as the economy began to suffer from renewed economic problems, notably rising inflation and growing unemployment. The clearest break with post-war social democracy, however, came with the election of the Thatcher Conservative government in 1979. Although the ‘Thatcher revolution’ only took shape gradually during the 1980s, its hallmark was the attempt to ‘roll back’ the state. This meant reversing many of the social-democratic reforms of the earlier post-war period. Industries that had been nationalised were privatised. Low inflation rather than full employment became the main goal of economic policy. Attempts were made to reform the welfare state, to increase efficiency and to tackle what was seen as the problem of ‘welfare dependency’. What quickly became known as ‘Thatcherism’ (see p. 126) amounted to a counter-revolution against the values and policies of the social-democratic period. Its main theme was an emphasis on market competition and faith in self-reliance and personal aspiration.

**The post-Thatcherite consensus**

However, the election of Tony Blair and so-called New Labour in 1997 brought about a further shift in the direction of post-war politics. Although this shift was not as radical as those brought about by the Attlee and Thatcher governments, it was nevertheless significant. In styling his party as ‘New’ Labour, Blair had indicated that the Labour Party had no intention of returning to the post-war social democracy of ‘Old’ Labour. Instead, it built on Thatcherism in accepting the need for a greater emphasis on markets, competition and enterprise. But this was not simply a continuation of Thatcherism by other means. Important changes were made. For example, the Blair government initiated a series of major constitutional reforms and, especially after 1999, introduced unprecedented increases in government spending, in particular in health and education. These changes, moreover, were not just confined to the Labour Party. Just as Thatcherism had helped to transform Labour in the 1980s and 1990s, so the success of ‘Blairism’ after 1997 appeared to stimulate a process of change within the Conservative Party. Blair’s blend of free-market policies and continued welfare provision came to be broadly accepted by the Conservatives particularly once David Cameron (see p. 131) became party leader in 2005. This resulted in a ‘post-Thatcherite’ consensus in UK politics, in which all the major parties seemed to be competing for the overcrowded political ‘centre ground’.

**The age of austerity**

The May 2010 general election and the formation of a coalition between the Conservatives and the Liberal Democrats, with Cameron as prime minister, nevertheless marked the beginning of an important new phase in post-war

**Table 1.1** Elections and outcomes since 1945

Election	Government	Prime Minister	Majority	Turnout
1945	Labour	Clement Attlee	147	73%
1950	Labour	Clement Attlee	6	81%
1951	Conservative	Winston Churchill	16	83%
1955	Conservative	Anthony Eden	59	77%
1959	Conservative	Harold Macmillan	99	79%
1964	Labour	Harold Wilson	5	77%
1966	Labour	Harold Wilson	97	76%
1970	Conservative	Edward Heath	31	72%
1974 (Feb)	Labour	Harold Wilson	-32	79%
1974 (Oct)	Labour	Harold Wilson	4	73%
1979	Conservative	Margaret Thatcher	44	72%
1983	Conservative	Margaret Thatcher	143	73%
1987	Conservative	Margaret Thatcher	100	75%
1992	Conservative	John Major	22	78%
1997	Labour	Tony Blair	178	71%
2001	Labour	Tony Blair	166	59%
2005	Labour	Tony Blair	65	61%
2010	Con-Lib Dem	David Cameron	77	65%
2015	Conservative	David Cameron	12	66%
2017	Conservative	Theresa May	-8	69%

UK political history. This could apply in at least two respects. In the first place, the Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition speedily embarked on the most radical programme of public spending cuts for a generation, leading some to believe that it was carrying out a wholesale restructuring of the state that was, in some respects, even more radical than that carried out under the ‘Thatcher revolution’ of the 1980s. This programme of cuts, ushering in what Cameron called an ‘age of austerity’, can be traced back to political divisions that started to open up in response to the dramatic deepening of the global financial crisis in 2008 and the onset of a sharp recession, the most severe since the 1930s. The Brown Labour government (2007–10) had responded to the financial crisis by carrying out the semi-nationalisation of a clutch of ailing banks, and also tried to revive growth through a Keynesian-style policy of ‘fiscal stimulus’, which allowed the budget deficit, badly affected by declining tax revenues, to expand to record levels. Cameron and the Conservatives, however, responded to the mounting debt crisis in increasingly Thatcherite terms, making the need for a swift and robust reduction of the budget deficit the cornerstone of their economic strategy.

Second, since 2010, UK politics has been structured ideologically by rival approaches to deficit reduction. Although differences between Labour and the Conservatives over the deficit should not be overstated, and certainly pale by comparison with the full-blooded adversary politics of the 1980s, real economic choices re-emerged in the UK in the run up to the 2015 general election. The Conservatives showed, through a continuing emphasis on reducing public spending, a determination to further shrink the state. Labour, for its part, placed a stronger emphasis on defending the public services and was more willing to borrow to invest, particularly in infrastructure projects. Cameron's victory in the election appeared to settle the matter in favour of the former strategy, but Theresa May, who succeeded him in July 2016, following the 'Leave' victory in the EU referendum (see p. 83), quickly indicated a preference for a less ideological approach to economic policy. An unresolved debt problem and the economic impact of Brexit (see p. 204) nevertheless limited her options in this area.

**SOCIAL CONTEXT**

At almost every level, politics is linked to society. Social factors affect how we vote; party policies and ideas are tailored to the make-up of society; and, to a large extent, political conflicts reflect underlying social and economic tensions.

**The decline of class?**

A social class is, broadly, a group of people who share a similar social and economic position. A common way of distinguishing between different social classes is on the basis of occupation. Official government statistics in the UK distinguish between the social classes shown in Table 1.2.

**Table 1.2** Social classes in the UK

Class A	higher managerial and professional workers
Class B	middle managers and professionals
Class C1	clerical workers
Class C2	skilled manual workers
Class D	semi-skilled and unskilled workers
Class E	unemployed, pensioners and people unable to work

During the 1950s and 1960s, UK politics appeared to be all about social class. Middle-class voters (A, B and C1 voters) tended to support the Conservative Party, and working class voters (C2, D and E voters) tended to support Labour. This, in turn, shaped the ideas, values and cultures of the main two parties and ensured that UK politics was a battle between conservatism and socialism.

However, since the 1970s the UK's class system has changed in significant ways. The size of the traditional working class has roughly halved, going down from two-thirds of the electorate in the 1960s to about one-third. On the other hand, the professional middle class has steadily grown, and now accounts for almost 40 per cent of the electorate. Class divisions have also been blurred by factors such as the expansion of home ownership, the decline of trade union membership and the general spread of individualist and materialist values. This has nevertheless occurred despite little evidence that the UK is becoming a more socially equal society. Social mobility levels have declined since the late 1970s, and the UK has witnessed a growing gap between the rich and the poor since the 1980s. Indeed, in 2016 the UK was rated as the fifth most unequal country by income against 30 other developed states.

**Gender and politics**

The political importance of gender was established by the emergence of the women's movement in the 1960s and early 1970s, and the growth of **feminism**. The main object of feminist criticism was the exclusion of women from public and political life, and certainly from senior positions in political parties, businesses and the unions. Key reforms that have taken place include the legalisation of abortion in 1967, the introduction of equal pay legislation through the Sex Discrimination Act 1975 and the creation of an Equal Opportunities Commission. Two underlying trends have nevertheless been significant. Since the late 1970s there has been a steady increase in the number of working women, who now outnumber men in the economy as a whole, and a 'gender' gap has opened up in education whereby girls out-perform boys at every level in the educational system. On the other hand, sexual equality is still a long way from being achieved. Men continue to dominate senior positions in all professions, companies and political bodies; and, despite legislation, women's pay still lags well behind men's pay. In 2016, the gender pay gap for all employees, full-time and part-time, stood at 18 per cent.

**A multicultural society?**

Race and **ethnicity** first became significant in UK national politics as a result of increased immigration in the 1950s and 1960s from the country's former colonies. The number of refugees and asylum seekers arriving in the UK rose steeply during the 1990s due to political conflict and civil strife in various parts of the world, notably the former-Yugoslavia, Afghanistan, Iraq and parts of Africa, with asylum applications averaging over 37,000 a year. Further immigration was driven by the expansion of the EU in 2004 and 2007. Just how multicultural is the UK? The 2011 census revealed a country that is decreasingly white and British: England's ethnic minority grew from 9 per

**Feminism:** A commitment to an improvement in the social role of women, usually reflected in a sense to promote sexual equality.

**Ethnicity:** A sense of loyalty towards a particular population or territorial area; ethnic bonds are cultural rather than racial.

cent of the total in 2001 to 14 per cent. However the biggest single increase was the number of people claiming mixed-ethnic background, which had doubled to around 1.2 m. However, some areas are substantially more multicultural than others. Almost half of all ethnic minority Britons live in London, which has a unique ethnic and cultural mix that makes it genuinely a 'global city'.

Although the UK has never practised an official policy of **multiculturalism** (unlike countries such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand), since the 1980s it has broadly been accepted as an approach to the issue of cultural diversity. This has been reflected in an emphasis on equality and diversity in education and in public life generally, and in campaigns against discrimination and **racism**. Race and ethnicity were nevertheless kept on the political agenda from the 1990s onwards by the issue of asylum, and by 9/11 and the 'war on terror' generally. More recently they have been entangled with rising concern about immigration, sometimes linked to opposition to EU membership.

## THE UK, THE EU AND THE WORLD

Although the **nation-state** continues to be the main focus of political activity, all states are affected by their external environment. Indeed, it is widely argued that, in the modern 'global village', what goes on in one country is increasingly affected by actions and decisions taken in other countries or by a range of increasingly influential international organisations. In the case of UK politics, we can identify a European context and a global context, although the former is in flux due to the 2016 referendum vote to leave the EU.

### Brexit and beyond

The victory for the 'Leave' campaign in the EU referendum, held on 23 June 2016, was the most important political decision made perhaps since 1945. Since the UK's joining what was then the European Community in 1973, it has been impossible to discuss UK politics except within a European context. Although the first decade of the UK's membership had been characterised by inertia and disappointment, as far as the EC's integration agenda was concerned, this changed significantly during the 1980s and 1990s. The Single European Act, adopted in 1986, provided for the construction, by January 1993, of a single market in which goods, services, capital and people could move freely, significantly accelerating the process of economic integration in Europe. The transformation of the European Community into the European Union, through the passage of the 1992 Maastricht treaty (officially the Treaty on European Union), marked the birth of a political union with common citizenship rights, and (for most member states) monetary union in the form of the euro. These and other EU treaties affected UK politics in a number of ways. For example:

- ▶ A growing body of legislation was made by EU bodies, particularly the European Commission
- ▶ European law was recognised as 'higher' than the UK statute law, meaning that Parliament was no longer legally sovereign
- ▶ The European Court of Justice became the highest court of appeal, not the UK Supreme Court.

Nevertheless, the UK's relationship to the 'European project' was always problematic. The UK remained the 'awkward partner'. The UK's dealings with the EU were sometimes characterised by a level of acrimony, especially during the Thatcher period, that did not apply in the case of other member states. Moreover, the UK did not participate fully in all aspects of the EU; 'opt-outs' had been negotiated for the UK on the Schengen Agreement (which scrapped border controls between member states), monetary union (the introduction of the euro), and the Social Chapter, although this last one was abolished in 1997. Underlying these difficulties was the fact that significant elements in both of the major parties of government struggled to come to terms with the very idea of EC/EU membership. In the 1970s this mainly applied to the Labour Party, but, from the 1980s onwards, Euroscepticism became an increasingly potent force within the Conservative Party (see p. 224). Indeed, when, in January 2013, David Cameron committed his party to holding a referendum on EU membership, it was largely in an attempt to bring the Conservative civil war over Europe to an end. What he gave too little attention to, however, was the possibility that the referendum might result in Brexit.

Although the 2016 referendum resulted in a 'Leave' victory, it was far less clear what leaving the EU would mean for the UK. This was not just because it will take years, if not decades, for the full ramifications of Brexit to become apparent, but also because no one, at the time of the referendum, knew the terms under which the UK would leave the EU. These terms would only emerge in the post-referendum period, through a two-stage process. First, the UK government, under its new prime minister, Theresa May, had to formulate the UK's bargaining position for subsequent negotiations with the EU. This would include, not least, developing proposals related to the balance between continued access to the European single market and restricting freedom of movement.

Second, once the UK had officially notified the European Council of its intention to leave the EU, as set out in Article 50 of the Treaty on European Union, formal negotiations with the EU would begin. These negotiations have to be concluded within two years, unless the European Council agree to an extension. A separate, but no less important, process of negotiation will also take place with various non-EU states, intended to replace agreements made with the EU with bilateral deals made only with the UK.

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**Multiculturalism:** The belief that different cultural groups have the right to respect and recognition; a positive approach to cultural diversity.

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**Racism:** Prejudice or hostility towards others based on their ethnic or racial origins.

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**Nation-state:** A state in which the population has a shared national identity, based (usually) on the same language, religion, traditions and history.

**Table 1.3** Key dates in British political history

1066	Norman conquest
1215	Magna Carta sealed (see p. 33)
1265	Simon de Montfort convened first British Parliament
1536–42	Union with Wales
1642–49	English Civil War
1688	The Glorious Revolution (see p. 8)
1707	Union with Scotland
1801	Legislative union with Ireland
1832	Great Reform Act (beginning of the expansion of the franchise) (see p. 36)
1914–18	First World War
1918	Votes for women (middle-class women over 30)
1922	Irish independence (Northern Ireland remained in the UK)
1928	All women given the right to vote
1939–45	Second World War
1947	Independence of India and Pakistan
1952	Queen Elizabeth II succeeds to the throne
1957–70	Independence of most of the UK's colonies
1973	The UK joins the European Economic Community
1979	Margaret Thatcher wins first of three elections
1982	The Falklands War
1991	The Gulf War
1997 (May)	Tony Blair wins first of three elections
1997 (Sept)	Referendums in Scotland and Wales support devolution
1998	Referendum in Northern Ireland approves the Good Friday Agreement
2003 (Mar)	Beginning of the Iraq War
2005 (July)	7/7 terrorist attack on London
2008 (Sept)	The global financial crisis deepens
2010 (May)	David Cameron forms Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition
2014 (Sept)	Referendum on Scottish independence
2015 (May)	Cameron gains first Conservative majority since 1992
2016 (June)	'Leave' victory in EU referendum (see p. 83)
2016 (July)	Theresa May becomes prime minister
2017 (March)	Article 50 of Treaty on European Union triggered
2017 (June)	Conservatives form minority government

Most of these will be in the field of trade, and it is widely accepted that many of these deals will take much longer than two years to negotiate.

Whatever else Brexit ultimately means, two images of the UK's post-Brexit future can be discounted:

- ▶ The first is that, despite the rhetoric sometimes used by the 'Leave' campaign in the run-up to the referendum, the UK will not become a sovereign, independent state, in the sense of gaining (or regaining) full control over its own political, economic and strategic destiny. Aside from debates about whether sovereign statehood, in a political sense, has ever been realistic, international relations in the modern world are characterised by inescapable interdependencies, thanks largely to the interlocking nature of the global economy. This implies that Brexit means not replacing interdependence with independence but, rather, swapping one pattern of interdependence for another, albeit a significantly less formalised one. Links, for example, to the USA and possibly China are thus likely to become more important as a result of leaving the EU.
- ▶ The second image of a post-Brexit UK is one in which a firm divide is established between the UK and the EU. Although leaving the EU will undoubtedly widen the UK's sphere of independent decision-making, it will not, and cannot, lead to a disengagement from the EU, which, apart from anything else, seems certain to remain the UK's major trading partner. Regardless of the terms under which the UK withdraws from the EU, Brexit will lead to a continuing, if significantly altered, relationship with the EU. As Norway and Switzerland both demonstrate, being a non-EU state does not mean operating 'outside' the EU, even though it does mean operating outside the EU's decision-making framework.

**Global context**

The UK's world role has declined significantly since 1945. Once one of the 'Big Three' (the USA, the Soviet Union and the UK) that resisted Nazi aggression in the Second World War, the UK lost influence during the 'superpower era' and as a result of de-colonisation in the post-1945 period. In the famous words of the former US Secretary of State, Dean Acheson: 'Britain had lost an empire but failed to find a role'. The enduring theme in the UK's post-1945 foreign policy is the so-called 'special relationship' between the UK and the USA. The special relationship with the USA was not a relationship of equals, however. The USA was the 'coming power'; the UK was the 'going power'. This was clearly demonstrated by the humiliation of the Suez Crisis in 1956, when UK troops were withdrawn from Egypt once the USA indicated that it did not support the joint UK, French and Israeli invasion. The Falklands War of 1982 only went ahead because of covert political and technical support that was provided by Washington.

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**Superpower:** A state with overwhelming nuclear military capacity and global territorial influence; the term is usually reserved for the USA and the Soviet Union.

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**'Special relationship':** A strong and close relationship between the UK and the USA, supposedly based on language, cultural similarities and common support for the values of capitalism and representative government.

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The fall of the Soviet Union in 1989–91, and the emergence of the USA as the world's only superpower, has only strengthened Atlanticist tendencies in UK foreign policy. This was reflected, for instance, in the strong support that Blair gave to the USA in the aftermath of 9/11 and, in particular, in the UK's involvement in the 2003 Iraq War. The progress of this war has nevertheless presented future UK governments with the challenge of how to maintain the special relationship without merely becoming an instrument of US foreign policy. However, Cameron's role in advocating **humanitarian intervention** in Libya in 2011 showed that the UK's foreign involvements are now not necessarily dependent on US global leadership.

World politics, however, has changed in important ways in recent decades. Instead of countries acting as separate and independent entities, they have increasingly been enmeshed in a web of interconnectedness. National borders have therefore become less significant. This process is usually called globalisation (see below). Economic globalisation has created, to a greater or lesser extent, an interlocking global economy. Economic developments on the other side of the globe can therefore have a dramatic and almost immediate impact on the UK. Most obviously, this applies in the case of stock market crashes, which ripple through global financial markets as quickly as computer screens are able to register price changes. A further aspect of this is cultural globalisation, often fuelled by the so-called information revolution, the spread of satellite communication, telecommunications networks, information technology and the Internet, and global media corporations. This has greatly increased people's awareness of, and interest in, political developments in other parts of the world. A final 'face' of globalisation is political globalisation, reflected in the growth of **global governance**. The

### Key concept ... GLOBALISATION

Globalisation is the development of a complex web of interconnectedness that means that our lives are increasingly shaped by events that occur at a great distance from us. The central feature of globalisation is that geographical distance is of declining relevance. Territorial boundaries, particularly those between nation-states, have also become less important; states have become 'permeable'.

Globalisation has taken three contrasting forms:

- *Economic* globalisation is the absorption of national economies into a single global economy
- *Cultural* globalisation is the process whereby cultural differences between nations and regions tend to be 'flattened out'
- *Political* globalisation reflects the growing importance of international bodies and organisations.

**Humanitarian intervention:** Military intervention in the affairs of another state for humanitarian rather than strategic reasons.

**Global governance:** The capacity of international bodies such as the UN, NATO, the World Bank and the WTO to co-ordinate world affairs and influence the actions of states.

World Trade Organization (WTO), for instance, has become a particularly controversial institution through its role in promoting free trade.

Globalisation has affected UK politics in a variety of ways. For example:

- ▶ Business group power has increased as major corporations have been able to relocate production and investments more easily.
- ▶ Increased global competition has created pressure to cut business taxes, reduce welfare spending and increase the flexibility of labour markets.
- ▶ There had been a tendency for all major parties to favour neo-liberal or free-market economic ideas, although this was less pronounced in Labour under Miliband and firmly ceased to be the case once Corbyn became Labour leader in 2015.
- ▶ Issues such as climate change and global poverty have become more prominent, helping to create influential protest movements.

## UK POLITICS: AN OVERVIEW

### THE WESTMINSTER MODEL

The UK has traditionally been viewed as the classical example of 'Westminster model' government. It is a model that it has exported, to a greater or lesser extent, to other countries, especially former colonies. The Westminster model is so called because Parliament is central to the constitutional structure of the UK, and Parliament is located at Westminster. Most importantly, government governs in and through Parliament. Government is drawn from Parliament (all ministers must be MPs or peers) and it is accountable to Parliament (Parliament can remove ministers, individually or collectively). UK government is therefore parliamentary government (see p. 219). The focal point of political conflict in the UK has traditionally been the House of Commons (the elected chamber of Parliament), where the government does battle with the opposition.

### Key concept ... WESTMINSTER MODEL

The Westminster model is a form of government in which there is a 'fusion' of power between the executive and the legislature. Although all forms of parliamentary government are sometimes called 'Westminster systems', the Westminster model goes further in concentrating government decision-making within a single body (Parliament or, in practice, the House of Commons). The main battleground of politics in the Westminster model is between the government (composed of the leaders of the largest party in the Commons) and the opposition (composed of the second largest party in the House of Commons).

The Westminster model in the UK is upheld by a number of factors:

- ▶ The UK's uncodified or 'unwritten' constitution means that Parliament is legally supreme: it can make, unmake and amend any law it wishes.
- ▶ Ministers are accountable to, and removable by, Parliament.
- ▶ The 'first-past-the-post' voting system usually creates strong, single-party government.
- ▶ The unelected House of Lords has weak powers and cannot effectively challenge the Commons.
- ▶ Local government is firmly subordinate to central government.
- ▶ There is a limited role for judges, who certainly cannot challenge Parliament's authority.

However, since the 1980s, a variety of developments have tended to move the UK political system away from its traditional focus on the 'Westminster village'. New political arenas and processes have developed to complement or compete with the party-political battle in the Commons. The UK political system therefore has become increasingly complex and pluralised. This has occurred not least through the constitutional reforms that were introduced by the Labour governments 1997–2010, and those introduced by the Conservative-led coalition 2010–15 (see Chapter 7). The most important of these trends include the following:

- ▶ As prime ministers have become more 'presidential', they have distanced themselves from Parliament and their party.
- ▶ Before the advent of the Brexit process, European integration had allowed a growing range of policies to be made by EU institutions, rather than national governments.
- ▶ Devolution to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has meant that important decisions are increasingly made by devolved bodies, not by the Westminster Parliament.
- ▶ The removal of hereditary peers from the House of Lords has encouraged the Lords to be more assertive in challenging the Commons, with a growing prospect of more radical reform.
- ▶ The wider use of referendums has allowed the public to take decision-making authority away from Parliament.
- ▶ More proportional electoral systems have been introduced for devolved and other bodies, with the Westminster electoral system coming under greater pressure.
- ▶ Judges have been more willing to challenge ministers and even question Acts of Parliament.

## KEY THEMES IN UK POLITICS

Two major and interconnected themes have emerged in contemporary UK politics. These themes link the various chapters and parts of this book. They are:

- ▶ The decline of civic engagement
- ▶ The changing constitutional structure.

### Declining civic engagement

Concerns about civic engagement in the UK have largely arisen from the fact that fewer and fewer people are bothering to vote. The 2001 and 2005 general elections saw the lowest turnout levels (at 59 per cent and 61 per cent, respectively) since 1918. Although the turnout rose in the 2017 general election to 69 per cent, this remains low by historical standards. In the case of 2005, the combination of a low turnout and declining support for the Labour Party meant that only just over one-fifth of the electorate voted for the government of the day. Further evidence of growing apathy and a disillusionment with conventional politics, sometimes called 'anti-politics' (see p. 46), can be found in a steady decline in the number of people joining political parties (although trends in the Labour Party, the

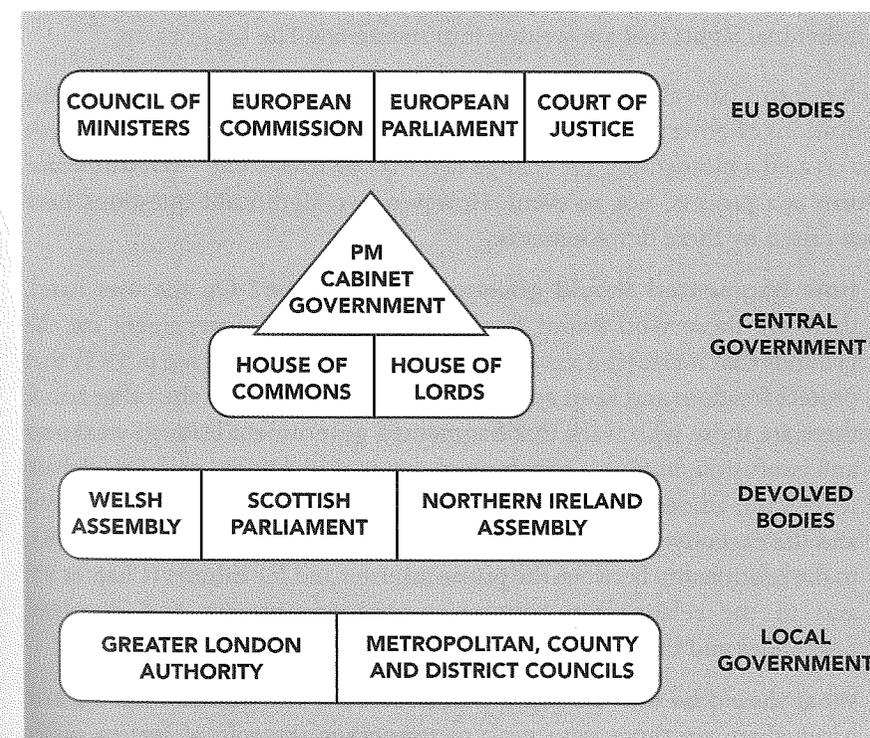


Figure 1.1 The UK political system

democrats and the SNP suggest that this may have been reversed (p. 15), and in opinion polls that show falling levels of trust in the government and in politicians generally.

Issues and how they can be countered are themes that link the chapters throughout the book. These chapters consider the so-called 'participation' in UK politics and the idea of democratic renewal in the UK (Chapter 2); the nature of elections (Chapter 3); the nature of party politics, and the ideas and policies of the major parties (Chapter 5); and the role and significance of interest groups (Chapter 6).

### Changing constitutional structure

UK politics is currently in an unusual state of flux. Since 1997, the UK political system has changed more rapidly than at any time since the 17th century. Devolved assemblies have been introduced, creating a kind of 'quasi-federal' structure within the UK. The process of reforming the House of Lords has been started, and, having been started, the pressure has grown for further reform (although major obstacles stand in its way). Referendums have been more widely used, leading to the expectation that future constitutional changes will be approved directly by the people and not just by Parliament. Proportional voting systems are now widely used in different parts of the UK. The Human Rights Act 1998 has given the UK, for the first time, a framework of individual rights that are written into statute law. The list goes on.

Such reforms have already changed the relationships between and among the institutions of government in significant, and permanent, ways. But they have also created a momentum for change that may be irresistible – constitutional reform is a process, not an event. However, two significant questions have been raised by these developments:

- **How fragmented should government power be?** On the one hand, there are those who favour fragmented or divided government on the grounds that it creates a network of checks and balances (see p. 195) that protect freedom and keep government 'off our backs'. On the other hand, there are those who warn that fragmented government leads to weakness and confusion, leaving a government that is at war with itself. This debate is relevant, amongst other things, to the relationship between Parliament and the executive, and between the Lords and the Commons (Chapter 8), to the relationship between the prime minister and the cabinet (Chapter 9), and to the relationship between central government and devolved assemblies and the EU (Chapter 11).
- **What should be the relationship between law and politics?** On the one hand, there are those who wish to strengthen the role of law, in order to ensure that government power is not abused and, in particular, that

individual rights and civil liberties (see p. 288) are protected. On the other hand, there are those who argue that politics should always take precedence over law, quite simply because politicians are elected whereas judges are both unelected and socially unrepresentative. This debate is relevant, amongst other things, to the nature of the constitution and the idea of a codified constitution (Chapter 7); and the role of the judiciary and the possibility of a UK bill of rights (Chapter 10).