

General Certificate of Education
June 2007
Advanced Level Examination



GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS
Unit 4 Comparative UK/USA Government

GOV4

Friday 22 June 2007 9.00 am to 10.30 am

For this paper you must have:

- an 8-page answer book.

Time allowed: 1 hour 30 minutes

Instructions

- Use blue or black ink or ball-point pen.
- Write the information required on the front of your answer book. The *Examining Body* for this paper is AQA. The *Paper Reference* is GOV4.
- Answer **Question 1** and **one** other question.
- Do all rough work in the answer book. Cross through any work you do not want to be marked.

Information

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

Advice

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

Answer **Question 1** and **one** other question.

Each question carries 40 marks.

1 Study the extract below and answer parts (a) to (c) which follow.

Prime-Ministerial and Presidential Government

In both parliamentary and presidential systems, allegations have arisen in recent decades concerning the unjustifiable increase in the power of the chief executive. In the UK this argument appears under the ‘elective dictatorship’ and ‘prime ministerial power’ school of thought. Commentators such as Hailsham and Crossman have argued that the prime minister’s control of Parliament, party and Cabinet, and the media dominance and personalisation of UK politics, all amounted to a rejection of traditional collective Cabinet government. In its place an ‘elective dictatorship’ and a ‘British presidency’ have arisen.

At much the same time, political historian Arthur Schlesinger was popularising the idea of the ‘imperial presidency’ in the USA, arguing that modern presidents had not only usurped power within the executive branch, but also damaged the traditional *checks and balances* provided by Congress.

Both arguments contain some truth, but both may have been presented in a one-sided manner by their supporters. Allegations about the increase of personal power and control were nothing new in the UK. Margaret Thatcher was not the first Prime Minister to enjoy party discipline in the House of Commons, to decide the election date or to dominate the attention of the media. Also, her departure from 10 Downing Street in 1990 did not suggest ‘prime ministerial power’, nor did the premiership of John Major as he was forced to ask his party to ‘back me or sack me’ in 1995. Likewise in Washington, talk of the ‘imperial presidency’ soon gave way to talk of the ‘imperilled presidency’ as presidents struggled to dominate the political agenda, get their legislative proposals enacted into law and, in the case of Clinton in 1998, survive an impeachment process.

Each argument appears to be debatable and both prime ministerial and presidential power ebbs and flows according to circumstances and personalities. The age of ‘presidents’ in Downing Street and ‘emperors’ in the White House may be something of an illusion.

Source: adapted from A J BENNETT, *A2 US & Comparative Government & Politics*, Philip Allan Updates, June 2004

- (a) Explain the term *checks and balances* used in the extract. (8 marks)
- (b) Using the extract and your own knowledge, compare how secure the US President and the UK Prime Minister are from being removed from office. (12 marks)
- (c) ‘The power of both Prime Minister and President varies according to circumstances and personalities.’ Discuss. (20 marks)

Answer **either** Question 2 **or** Question 3 **or** Question 4.

- 2 'Defining citizens' rights in a constitution protected by the judiciary is one thing, safeguarding them in practice is another.'
Discuss with reference to the protection of citizens' rights by the judiciary in the US and the UK. *(40 marks)*
- 3 To what extent, and why, can it be argued that the US Constitution is too rigid and difficult to change whereas the UK Constitution is too flexible and easy to change? *(40 marks)*
- 4 How far can it be argued that, compared with the US Senate, the UK House of Lords is a mere 'talking shop'? *(40 marks)*

END OF QUESTIONS

There are no questions printed on this page