

Government and Politics
Advanced Subsidiary
Unit 2: Governing the UK
Sample Assessment Material
Time: 1 hour 20 minutes

SECTION A

Answer EITHER Question 1 OR Question 2

1. Study the sources below and answer the questions that follow.

Source 1

‘For too long the big political decisions in this country have been made in the wrong place. They are not made around the Cabinet table where they should be, but they are taken on the sofa in Tony Blair’s office. No notes are kept and no one takes the blame when things go wrong. That arrogant style of government must come to an end. I will restore the proper process of government. I want to be Prime Minister of this country not a President.’

(Source: David Cameron, *The Times*, 5 October 2006)

Source 2

‘The Cabinet is the committee at the centre of the British political system. Every Thursday during Parliament, Secretaries of State from all departments as well as other ministers meet in the Cabinet Room in Downing Street to discuss the big issues of the day. The Prime Minister chairs the meeting, selects its members and also recommends their appointment as ministers to the monarch. The present Cabinet has 23 members (21 MPs and two peers). The Secretary of the Cabinet is responsible for preparing records of its discussions and decisions.’

(From a modern textbook)

1. (a) What criticism is David Cameron making of Tony Blair’s style of decision making in Source 1?

(5)

(b) Explain the main functions of the Cabinet.

(10)

***(c)** To what extent have UK Prime Ministers become ‘Presidential’?

(25)

(Total 40 marks)

2. Study the source below and answer the questions that follow.

Source 1

A powerful coalition of judges, senior lawyers and politicians has warned that the Government is undermining the civil liberties citizens have taken for granted for centuries and that Britain risks drifting towards a police state. One of the country's most eminent judges has said that undermining the independence of the courts has frightening parallels with Nazi Germany. Lord Ackner, a former law lord, said there was a contradiction between the Government's efforts to separate Parliament and the judiciary through the creation of a supreme court, and its instinct for directing judges how to behave. He cautioned against 'meddling' by politicians in the way the courts operate. "I think it is terribly important there should not be this apparent battle between the executive and the judiciary. The judiciary has been put there by Parliament in order to ensure that the executive acts lawfully."

Lord Lester QC, a leading human rights lawyer, expressed concern that the Government was flouting human rights law and meddling with the courts. The senior barrister remarked that judges had now replaced MPs as the defenders of basic civil liberties. "People used to look to their MPs as the first port of call to deal with any perceived injustice by the executive. Now there is an increasing tendency for people to look to the judges to protect their liberties", he said.

(Source: From an article, 'Judges liken terror laws to Nazi Germany', by Marie Woolf, Raymond Whitaker and Severin Carrell, published in *The Independent*, 16 October 2005)

2. (a) According to the source, how is the protection of civil liberties being undermined? (5)
- (b) Explain how judicial independence is achieved. (10)
- *(c) To what extent have civil liberties in the UK been eroded? (25)
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SECTION B

Answer EITHER Question 3 or Question 4.

EITHER

*3. How effective is Parliament in checking executive power? (Total 40 marks)

OR

*4. Should the UK's constitution remain un-codified? (Total 40 marks)

