

NINTH  
EDITION

# Politics UK

Edited by  
Bill Jones, Philip Norton and Oliver Daddow

ROUTLEDGE





# POLITICS UK

This revised and updated ninth edition of the bestselling textbook *Politics UK* is an indispensable introduction to British politics. It provides a thorough and accessible overview of the institutions and processes of British government, a good grounding in British political history and an incisive introduction to the issues and challenges facing Britain today, including the European referendum and Brexit.

The ninth edition welcomes brand new material from seven new contributors to complement the rigorously updated and highly respected chapters retained from the previous edition. It delivers excellent coverage of contemporary events including a new chapter on Euro-scepticism and the European referendum, an assessment of the performance of Labour's leadership, the trials and tribulations of the Liberal Democrats and UKIP, and the evolving devolution debate in Scotland, led by the Scottish Nationalist Party.

Features of the new edition include:

- **Britain in context** boxes offering contrasting international perspectives on key themes in British politics
- A comprehensive 'who's who' of politics in the form of **Profile** boxes featuring key political figures
- **And another thing . . .** pieces containing short articles written by distinguished commentators including Kate Pickett, Richard Wilkinson, Mark Garnett, Sir David Omand and Sir Simon Jenkins
- An **epilogue** analyzing the turbulent state of UK politics following the European referendum

With chapters written by highly respected scholars in the field and contemporary articles on real-world politics from well-known political commentators, this textbook is an essential guide for all students of British politics.

**Bill Jones** joined the Extra-Mural Department at Manchester University in 1972 as the person in charge of politics and government, serving as Director 1987–92. He was Vice Chair and Chair of The Politics Association 1979–85, being made a Life Fellow in 2001. In 2006 he took up a part-time teaching position at Liverpool Hope University being made a professor in 2009. Bill also occasionally broadcasts on radio and television. He now lives in retirement in Beverley, East Riding, continuing with his writing and teaching adult classes for the University of the Third Age.

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*Politics UK* provides a comprehensive and accessible account of the core institutions and mechanics of government, continually placing these in a conceptual context that urges the reader to assess critically the state of Britain today. Its palatable style will appeal to all students of politics, and is an indispensable introduction to the discipline's core tenets. This revised edition triumphantly reflects on the contemporary issues of the day and, with the uncertainty to the political climate that Brexit brings, is a must on all British politics reading lists.

**Dr Sarah Cooper**, *Lecturer in Politics,  
University of Exeter, UK*

*Politics UK* provides a solid foundation on the key concepts and themes of British Politics for undergraduate students at an American university. My students often begin their course with a cursory knowledge of British politics and thus I need a textbook that immerses them without overwhelming them – and *Politics UK* delivers exactly that. The material within each chapter of this edited volume provides the most substantial overview of British politics available while remaining accessible to students new to the subject. Of particular note are the inclusion of numerous charts, tables, figures and photographs that let my students 'see' British politics. In terms of comprehensive coverage, appropriate level of writing, helpful supplemental material and timely coverage of contemporary events, there is no better textbook on the market.

**Professor Neal Glen Jesse**, *Department of Political  
Science, Bowling Green State University, USA*

A truly comprehensive and authoritative guide on British politics written by some of the most astute commentators and political scientists on the subject. Up-to-date, well written, great for students starting out and useful for old hands wanting to check their facts.

**Professor Keith Dowding**, *Department of  
Political Science and International Relations,  
Australian National University, Australia*

# POLITICS UK

Ninth Edition

Bill Jones, Philip Norton and  
Oliver Daddow

With contributed material by Colin Copus, Byron Criddle, Russell Deacon, David Denver,  
Anneliese Dodds, Wyn Grant, Kevin Hickson, Michael Holmes, Danny Rye and Ben Williams

And concluding articles by Mark Garnett, Sir Simon Jenkins, Sir David Omand, Kate Pickett,  
David Sanders and Richard Wilkinson



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**For Carolyn**

Bill Jones

**For my students**

Philip Norton

**For mum**

Oliver Daddow



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# GUIDED TOUR

The ninth edition of **Politics UK** is packed with features expressly designed to enhance your understanding and enjoyment of British politics. Here are just a few:

## CHAPTER 1

### The changing context of UK politics and key concepts in the study of politics

Bill Jones

“There has never been a perfect government, because men have passions; and if they did not have passions, there would be no need for government”

— Voltaire, *Politique et législation*

#### Learning objectives

- To explain how the context of British politics has undergone drastic change over the past decade: world economic crisis, growth of extreme ideas and parties, the EU Referendum.
- To establish some understanding of the discipline of political science to enable understanding the rest of the book.
- To discuss the nature of politicians and the reasons why they choose their profession.
- To explain and illustrate the concept of politics and how political ideas often rest on assumptions about human nature.
- To explain the importance of certain further core concepts which enable us to understand political activity.
- To provide a brief overview of topics covered in the book.

28 Politics UK Part 1 Context

War, how to tie Germany into an institutional framework that would allow it to recover economically and politically without becoming once more an aggressive, expansionist power capable of destabilising the continental landmass of Europe? Throughout the history of integration in western Europe economic means were used for political ends. The assumption behind this ‘functionalist’ approach to integration (Haas 1958) was that creating interdependence between nation-states was a sound way of helping them see how damaging the selfish actions of one state can be to a whole community of states. Furthermore, by working together and pooling sovereignty in international institutions, states could achieve together what they would not be able to achieve alone. Their influence would be magnified by being part of a collective.

For many years after 1945, a succession of UK Labour and Conservative governments decided to remain aloof from Europe’s integrationist experiments, seeking to build a national foreign, economic and security strategy on the UK’s global not European connections (Cozzini 2012). Despite giving rhetorical support to the general idea of a ‘United Europe’, Westminster politicians were cautious about involving the UK in a project they worried could potentially create a supranational political union that would damage UK sovereignty. The UK finally joined the European Economic Community (EEC) in 1973 under the Conservative government of Edward Heath, following two failed applications in the 1960s. First, Conservative Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in 1961, then Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson in 1967, were rebuffed by French President Charles de Gaulle. He vetoed their attempts to take the UK into the EEC on the grounds, as he saw it, that the UK’s ‘insular’ identity and history, along with its ties to the US and the Commonwealth, especially on the economic side, made it a bad fit with the European project (de Gaulle 1963).

The UK did not entirely neglect continental projects when they took intergovernmental form. It was a founder member of the intergovernmental Council of Europe, established in May 1949 with nine other states: Belgium, Denmark, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway and Sweden (Figure 2.3). In September 1959 the European Court of Human Rights was established in Strasbourg to ensure that

states met the obligations they signed up to on joining the Council.

In the UK, support for the Council of Europe was cross-party and came from such influential figures as wartime leader Winston Churchill (The Churchill Society undated b) and Labour’s Foreign Secretary at the time of its establishment, Ernest Bevin, who said it would inspire ‘something new and hopeful in European life’ (Bevin 1949).

However, when supranational or ‘European level’ control was the order of the day for integration projects, UK policymakers were much more sceptical, as Leave messaging in the 2016 referendum made abundantly clear. For example, the Clement Attlee Labour government of 1945–51 decided not to take the UK into the European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC). Formally created by the Paris Treaty of April 1951,

#### PROFILE

##### Clement Attlee (1883–1967)



Leader of the Labour Party for two decades, 1935–55, and served as Prime Minister 1945–51, having been Deputy Prime Minister in Winston Churchill’s national coalition government during the Second World War. The Attlee governments are best remembered for putting in place a large-scale nationalisation programme in the UK and for founding the welfare state, including such enduring institutions as the National Health Service (NHS). Attlee largely left foreign policy in the hands of his ebullient Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin (1881–1951). Attlee led a government that was intent on progressive reform domestically and was unwilling to cede influence to European level structures. On the UK approach to European integration Attlee expressed a popular sentiment from the time: ‘we’re semi-detached’ (cited in Marshall 2015: 221). The Prime Minister did, though, take a close interest in UK moves to develop an independent nuclear weapon and worked hard to help found post-war international security architecture such as NATO. Attlee and Bevin have been called ‘Cold Warriors’ every bit as frequently as their Conservative peers from the time (see for instance Taylor 1996). Attlee’s reputation on this count is challenged in Smith and Zametica (1995:5). The post-1945 Labour governments are therefore credited with doing the legwork on the UK’s extra-European national strategy on foreign and defence policy that was to endure at least until the UK’s entry to the EEC.

Figure 2.3 Aims of the Council of Europe  
Source: Council of Europe (2005)

- to protect human rights, promote democracy and the rule of law;
- to promote peace and to encourage the development of Europe through co-operation and democracy;
- to coordinate democratic states in Europe by fostering political, legislative and constitutional activities;

Each eye-catching chapter opens with a set of **Learning objectives**, listing the topics covered and outlining what you should understand by the end of the chapter.

**Profile** boxes, found throughout the book, focus on particular individuals who have helped develop our understanding of what politics is, or who have played a significant role in British politics. A list of these profiles is shown on page xx.

The UK is a major global political, diplomatic and economic actor by virtue of its imperial history and diplomatic ties, its globally focussed economy and the City of London's position as a leading financial centre and its voice in the key international organisations responsible for maintaining global order. With such a vast web of connections have come real and lasting debates about the most appropriate role in the world for the UK. These discussions around UK foreign policy were particularly pronounced since decolonisation after the Second World War, giving way to a period of closer involvement by Britain with the process of European integration. The 2016 decision to leave the European Union (EU) and pursue Brexit has given a new intensity to the debate. As the EU referendum debate highlighted, some suggest Britain should safeguard its national interest by working more closely with its partners in the European Union. Others, especially those at the top of the Theresa May government, argue that Britain should continue to think and act globally, particularly by cultivating the 'special relationship' with the United States, by reinvigorating ties with the Commonwealth nations and by developing new strategic connections with rising powers such as Brazil, Russia, India and China. This chapter puts the debate about the UK's world role into historical context, assessing different ways of understanding the UK's international power and the changing ways in which UK leaders have conceptualised and justified a 'great' role for the UK in the global arena.

Introduction

GLOSSARY

- 101 Groups** set up in 2012 by Conservative MPs loyal to David Cameron, aiming to ensure party unity. Take name from number of Conservative MPs needed for outright Conservative victory at next general election (assuming planned boundary changes took place).
- subaltern politics** a theory popularised by (among others) Professor S.E. Finer in the 1970s which portrayed politics as Westminster as a gladiatorial combat between Labour and the Conservatives with disastrous consequences for the national interest.
- affiliated** the way in which an organisation associates itself with a political party by paying a fee and gaining influence in the party's affairs. In Britain, a number of trade unions are affiliated to the Labour Party; members pay the 'political levy' which makes them affiliated members of the party.
- Bismarckian welfare system** an occupationally based system of social policy provision where the amount of transfer payments relate to individual's previous economic status.
- Black Labour** Group of Labour Party academics who argue Black Labour will lack credibility until it has its own ideas for tackling the national deficit.
- block vote** the system under which affiliated trade unions cast votes at Labour Party conferences and in party elections. Unions cast votes on the basis of the numbers of members paying the political levy. These votes may or may not reflect the views of union members.
- Blue Collar conservatism** formed by group of Conservative MPs in 2012, designed to reconnect Conservative Party with working class voters.

BOX 1.6

BRITAIN IN CONTEXT

Conceptual dissonance

The former publisher and infamous fraud, Robert Maxwell, once wrote a series of hagiographic studies of East European leaders which sold extremely well in their own countries but showed a strange disinclination to fly from the shelves anywhere else. In the book he wrote about the notorious Romanian leader, Nicolae Ceausescu (1918–89), Maxwell, in an interview incorporated into the text, asks 'Mister President, tell me, why do your people love you so?' This question and its unperturbed reply illustrate the fact that different people have different takes on commonly understood ideas. Maxwell, driven by the self-interest of selling copies in Romania, probably knew the man was a vicious autocrat. Ceausescu in turn probably genuinely believed he was loved, as his famous lack of incomprehension indicated when crowds in front of his palace began angrily to interrupt one of his interminable speeches in 1989, a short time before he was deposed and shot. Both men, totally absorbed in their own false worlds, no doubt perceived the world differently from the people they exploited. But such 'conceptual dissonance' tends to occur between nations as well as between different kinds of people.

Another example of conceptual dissonance is provided by the difference between Western and Muslim societies. In East European leaders which sold extremely well in their own countries but showed a strange disinclination to fly from the shelves anywhere else. In the book he wrote about the notorious Romanian leader, Nicolae Ceausescu (1918–89), Maxwell, in an interview incorporated into the text, asks 'Mister President, tell me, why do your people love you so?' This question and its unperturbed reply illustrate the fact that different people have different takes on commonly understood ideas. Maxwell, driven by the self-interest of selling copies in Romania, probably knew the man was a vicious autocrat. Ceausescu in turn probably genuinely believed he was loved, as his famous lack of incomprehension indicated when crowds in front of his palace began angrily to interrupt one of his interminable speeches in 1989, a short time before he was deposed and shot. Both men, totally absorbed in their own false worlds, no doubt perceived the world differently from the people they exploited. But such 'conceptual dissonance' tends to occur between nations as well as between different kinds of people.

In many cases this flows from the vastly different histories experienced by countries. France, for example, has never quite recovered from its 1789 revolution founded upon the great ideas of 'Liberty, Equality and Fraternity'. Consequently, new arrivals to France have become citizens of the republic on an equal standing with everyone else. Such legal even-handedness is wholly admirable, one might think, but in the autumn of 2005 its limits were exposed when French leaders, especially Jacques Chirac (President of France 1995–2007) seemed to refuse to believe that the young men of the Muslim faith, many of them North African provenance, who were rising in the suburbs of Paris and other big cities, suffered from severe racial discrimination and disproportionate economic hardship. So deeply ingrained was this belief in equality that no separate social statistics were available regarding France's constituent minorities. They were just the same as there were no separate figures.

The USA, created in the heat of a revolution against the perceived tyranny of George III, places huge stress on the need for democracy. This helps explain why the USA elects far more public officials than the UK; for example, judges, as well as mayors and sheriffs, are widely elected in America but not in the UK. It might also explain why President George W. Bush and his advisers believed so passionately in disseminating democracy in the Middle East. They believed it would lead to greater moderation, acceptance of the West and happiness for the Arab citizens concerned. For a long while it seemed this assumption had tragically misfired in the case of Iraq, invaded in 2003, whereupon it descended into chaos for several years. US troops withdrew in 2011 but returned in 2014 to assist the Iraq government in fighting ISIS, a struggle which, at the time of writing (2017) has seen the jihadist forces weakened and on the defensive.

Throughout the text you will find emboldened **Key terms and phrases**: you can find full definitions of these in the **Glossary** on page 669.

Towards the end of chapters you will find the **Britain in context** feature, which looks at the issues covered within a chapter in the context of global politics. This engages you by providing a useful comparative angle on the key issues in British politics.

Chapter summary

This introductory chapter explains that politics is about the management and resolution of conflicts about what people want to do and achieve. It looks at the career of politicians and seeks to explain career motivations as well as attendant dangers. The study of the subject focuses on how this process is performed, especially the way individuals relate to the state. Key concepts in the study of politics are explained including power, authority, equality, representation, democracy, freedom, democracy and social justice.

Discussion points

- Why do you think people go into politics and make it their life's work?
- Think of a typical political scenario and analyse it in the way demonstrated in the chapter.
- Which interpretation of equality and social justice seems most appealing to you?
- How have the 2007–9 economic crisis and the Brexit vote changed British politics?

Further reading

Crick's classic work (2000) is invaluable reading, as an accompaniment to this book, as is Doreger (1966). Leftwich (1984) is worth reading as an easy-to-understand initiation, and Laver (1983) repeats study too. Kenwick and Swaburn (1989) is useful on concepts, though Keywood (1994) is by any standards a brilliant textbook. Asford et al. (1997) is also well worth looking into. Riddell (1993) is both highly perceptive and very entertaining – a must for anyone wondering if the subject is for them. O'Rourke (1992) is a humorous but insightful book. Michael Moran's book (2011) offers a subtle and authoritative introduction. For a stimulating book on the possible future direction of our polity, see Colin Crouch's *Post-Democracy*. Those seeking a short, concise yet comprehensive book on UK politics, I'd recommend my own *British Politics: The Basics* (Routledge, 2016).

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Discussion points

- Social class is still the predominant characteristic of British society. Discuss.
- Is it still meaningful to talk about Britishness given the increased diversity of British society?
- What is meant by the 'decline' of the British economy, and can it be cured?
- Who is to blame for Britain's current relative economic malaise?

Further reading

There are a number of historical studies of post-war Britain. On society see A.H. Halsey and J. Webb (eds) *Twentieth Century British Social Trends* (Macmillan, 2000). On politics see D. Childs, *Britain since 1939: Progress and Decline* (Palgrave, 2002). On society and politics see Andrew Marr, *A History of Modern Britain* (Pan/Macmillan, 2009). On the issues concerning economic decline see A. Gamble, *Britain in Decline* (Macmillan, 4th edition, 1994); C. Bernstein, *The Myth of Decline: The Rise of Britain since 1945* (Palgrave, 2004); and R. English and M. Kenny (eds) *Rethinking British Decline* (Macmillan, 1999).

On the politics of class see A. Adonis and S. Pollard, *A Class Act: The Myth of Britain's Classless Society* (Hambro Hamilton, 1997). On race see J. Solomon, *Race and Racism in Britain* (Palgrave, 2003). A provocative study of the 'underclass' is Chavis: *The Demonisation of the Working Class* (Verso, 2012) by Owen Jones.

For discussions of contemporary economic and social problems see A. Gamble, *The Spectre at the Feast* (Macmillan, 2009); W. Hutton, *Blow and Blows* (2011); R. Wilkinson and K. Pickett, *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone* (Allen Lane, 2009); and S. Lansley, *The Cost of Inequality* (Gibson Square, 2012). For a recent statement from a Conservative perspective, see J. Norman, *The Big Society* (University of Buckingham Press, 2010).

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Useful websites

The government's National Statistics Online ([www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html](http://www.ons.gov.uk/ons/index.html)) is an invaluable source of statistical information. This fact-checking website is also useful for verifying government data. <http://factcheck.org>

Annual editions of *Social Trends* are published online at [http://data.gov.uk/dataset/social\\_trends](http://data.gov.uk/dataset/social_trends) and the British Social Attitudes Survey is available at [www.britishtaxi.com/ons](http://www.britishtaxi.com/ons).

Recent 'British Social Attitudes' survey information (2015) can be found at: [www.britishtaxi.com/uk-facts-report-sheet-social-attitudes-13/welfare.aspx](http://www.britishtaxi.com/uk-facts-report-sheet-social-attitudes-13/welfare.aspx)

This government website also provides useful and up-to-date population data. [http://web.archive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160109160709/www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dep17778\\_409222.pdf](http://web.archive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20160109160709/www.ons.gov.uk/ons/dep17778_409222.pdf). Do also these two websites:

- [www.agric.gov.uk/Documents/EN-GIB/racethets/1/Lane\\_Life\\_UK\\_Abschep.pdf#st=oe](http://www.agric.gov.uk/Documents/EN-GIB/racethets/1/Lane_Life_UK_Abschep.pdf#st=oe)
- [www.countrymeters.info/en/United\\_Kingdom\\_\(UK\)/population\\_2014/](http://www.countrymeters.info/en/United_Kingdom_(UK)/population_2014/)

See also recent census information: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-20868565](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-london-20868565)

This government website also provides useful and up-to-date income data. <https://www.ons.gov.uk/economy/grossvalueadded/bulletins/regionalgrossvalueadded-incomeapproach/december2016>

For economic data and reports see the Institute of Fiscal Studies (IFS) website [www.ifs.org.uk](http://www.ifs.org.uk) and comparative data is available from the Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) at [www.oecd.org](http://www.oecd.org)

**Chapter summaries** consolidate the ideas and topics covered in the chapter and are followed by **Discussion points** that prompt you to consider and develop your own responses to various political issues.

You will also find annotated suggestions for **Further reading** and **Useful websites** at the end of each chapter.

## AND ANOTHER THING . . .

## Towards a more equal society

Richard Wilkinson and Kate Pickett

Since the financial crash of 2007/8, inequality has emerged as a central political issue. In 2014 President Obama said it was "the defining challenge of our time." Pope Francis (2013) said, "Inequality is the root of social ill." And Ban Ki-Moon, when UN Secretary General, said "Social and economic inequalities can tear the social fabric, undermine social cohesion and prevent nations from thriving. Inequality can breed crime, disease and environmental degradation and hamper economic growth" (2013).

The reduction of inequality within and between countries is now the 10th of the UN's 17 sustainable development goals. One hundred, ninety-three countries have signed up to these goals, which are intended to "transform our world". But so far there is little sign that the income gaps between rich and poor are narrowing. The 2017 *Sunday Times* Rich List showed that the richest 1,000 people in Britain had a combined wealth of £658 billion. This total increased by a staggering £82.5 billion during the previous year alone. The Equality Trust calculated that the income alone would be enough to pay the nation's adult social care bill for 4 years or the fuel bills of every household in the UK for the next 2.5 years.

There is clearly more than enough money to pay for good public services and avoid hardship – if it were in the right place. The Trussell Trust reported that, during the year 2016/17, food banks gave out over 1 million three-day emergency food supply packs to people in crisis who had been referred to them. As well as tearing the social fabric and undermining social cohesion, inequalities in income and wealth cause economic instability and acts as a roadblock to the transition which has to be made to environmental sustainability (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010).

**The impact of inequality**

Social and economic inequality increases the power and importance of social hierarchy and class, making social status more important (Wilkinson and Pickett 2017; Layte

and Whelan 2014). As a result, a long list of problems more common further down the social ladder – in poorer neighbourhoods for instance – are much more common in societies with larger income differences between rich and poor (Wilkinson and Pickett 2019; Wilkinson and Pickett 2006; Wilkinson and Pickett 2007) (Figure 1). What happens is that problems which are related to low social status within our societies get worse when social status differences are increased by larger income differences. The only surprise is that, although the impact of inequality is most severe lower down the social ladder, outcomes are also affected to a lesser extent among a large majority of the population. That is because inequality damages the social fabric of the whole society – increasing social divisions, status insecurity and status competition (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Layte and Whelan 2014). Indeed, it is because a large majority of the population – not just the poor – are affected by inequality that the differences in the performance of more and less equal societies are so large. The scale of the differences varies from one health or social problem to another, but they are all between twice as common and ten times as common in more unequal societies compared to more equal ones.

Although in the rich, developed countries, income inequality is related to indicators of health and social wellbeing, levels of average income (GDP per capita) are not. Reducing inequality is the most important step these countries can take to increase population wellbeing. In the developing and emerging economies, both greater equality and improvement in standards of living are needed for populations to flourish.

A large and well-established body of evidence shows that very large income differences within countries are damaging. Analyses include both cross-sectional research and studies of changes in income distribution over time. There is a particularly large body of evidence linking greater inequality to worse population health. Hundreds of studies show that life expectancy is longer, and mortality lower, in more equal societies (Wilkinson and Pickett 2010; Babones 2008; De Vogli et al. 2004; Kondo et al. 2009; Pickett and Wilkinson 2015a); rates of infant mortality, mental illness and obesity are two

Each part concludes with a thought-provoking feature entitled **And another thing . . .** These articles are authored by leading political thinkers and commentators who take a sideways glance at some of the key issues under debate in contemporary British politics.



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# PREFACE

Politics is an exciting subject. We, the authors, are naturally biased in thinking it offers students very special attractions. It is a subject you digest with your breakfast each morning; its complex canvas is painted in the daily newspapers, on radio and television and on all sorts of social media; by the evening new details have been painted in and the picture subtly, sometimes dramatically, changed.

Politics is unpredictable, dynamic; it affects us, it is about us. In one sense the canvas *is* us: a projection of ourselves and our aspirations, a measure of our ability to live together. Given what can happen when it goes wrong – a ruler like Pol Pot or Saddam Hussein, for example – politics is arguably the most important focus there is in the study of the human condition. In his 2016 memoir *Speaking Out*, Labour politician Ed Balls wrote:

Whatever else may have changed in the last two decades, politics is still essentially the same beast. People put forward ideas, they try to win the arguments, they try to gain trust. Sometimes you win and sometimes you lose, and when it's the latter, politics is just as unforgiving as it's ever been. And in the end for all its bizarre moments and terrible misjudgements, it is still a noble calling, still a pursuit of important causes, still a profession which needs, more than ever, the best and the brightest to join in the years and decades to come.

We tend to agree with these sentiments and hope that this volume on the politics of the United Kingdom does the subject some kind of justice. This book is designed to provide a comprehensive

introduction to British politics for both the general reader and the examination candidate. With the latter group in mind, we fashioned a text for the first edition that was unusual by British standards. When we studied A-level politics all those years ago, the transition from GCSE-level to A-level was quite difficult. This was hardly surprising, because many of the A-level texts were the same as those we went on to study at university, partly because of shared assumptions about A-level and university students. It was believed that we should be treated as mature intellects (good), but also that it was up to us to extract meaning from the texts which, in the name of standards, made few concessions to our possible unfamiliarity with the subject (not so good). In these circumstances it is hardly surprising that so many aspiring university students gave up before the intrinsic interest of the subject could capture them.

Things have improved since then, and in the world of textbooks, remarkably so. Syllabuses have become much wider and now embrace stimulating new areas such as political sociology and current political issues. This has helped authors produce more interesting work, but a revolution has also taken place on the production side. *Politics UK*, when it came out in 1990, was arguably the first book to embrace the American approach of providing a comprehensive course textbook with a plethora of new features such as photographs, diagrams, tables and illustrative figures.

Since then most of our rival textbooks on British politics have adopted similar styles and, if imitation is the highest form of flattery, we are greatly flattered. The book has moved through eight successful editions, albeit with changing publishers,

and this is the ninth. The key features of this new edition are as follows:

- The fourth edition was comprehensively ‘Europeanised’: each chapter was looked at and amended to take account of the EU impact and influence – all this material has been accordingly updated for the ninth edition.
- ‘Updating’ means covering developments over the four years since the last edition, of course – including the 2010 election – but older examples are still cited in some cases; there are continuities in British politics, and the whole of the postwar period is used as a kind of laboratory in which political behaviour is observed.
- Many of the chapters in this ninth edition have been completely rewritten, and all chapters not rewritten have been comprehensively updated up to, where possible, summer 2017.
- A new chapter has been added on Euro-scepticism and its eventual progress towards Brexit as this theme has dominated politics since the last edition. The chapter on the EU and UK from the eighth edition has been retained: the UK’s relationship with the EU remains a major feature of UK politics, and students need to understand these complex connections.
- The book contains an alphabetical Glossary defining all the key terms highlighted in the text.
- The comparative approach to politics has become increasingly popular over the last decade and, while this is not expressly a comparative text, we have included a ‘Britain in Context’ box for each chapter which provides a limited version of this kind of input.
- The book’s presentation has been augmented by the inclusion of many tables and diagrams from the quality press. The comment and debate at the end of each major part have been written, as before, by distinguished guest writers. This time they are:
  - **Sir David Omand**, former MOD civil servant and Director of GCHQ before becoming Permanent Secretary at the Home Office and later the Cabinet Office.

- **Professor David Sanders**, from Essex University has published widely on British politics including voting behaviour, economic and foreign policy.
- **Mark Garnett**, well-known author on British politics and academic, who is Senior Lecturer at the University of Lancaster.
- **Sir Simon Jenkins**, distinguished journalist (Editor of *The Times*), columnist (currently *The Guardian*) and author of many books on British history.
- **Professor Richard Wilkinson** is a distinguished social epidemiologist who has been attached to the Universities of Nottingham, London and York. His ground-breaking study in international inequality, *The Spirit Level*, was co-authored with his colleague Kate Pickett.
- **Professor Kate Pickett**, Professor of Epidemiology at the University of York and a National Institute for Health Research career scientist. She co-founded The Equality Trust with Richard Wilkinson.

The chapters on Parliament in this book have always been authoritative and up to date; they are even more so since Philip Norton became a member of the House of Lords himself in 1998. For this ninth edition, we have also to boast of Anneliese Dodds, author of our chapter on social policy who was elected a Labour MP in 2017 and is currently a member of her party’s Shadow Treasury team. We have to thank those reviewers who commented so usefully on draft chapters of this book and thereby helped to improve them. We hope teachers and students find the book as useful and stimulating as previous editions.

Thanks are due to all the contributors and to the long suffering staff at Routledge who have proved remarkably helpful and professional, especially Andrew Taylor, Rebekah Jenkins and Sade Lee who have been central to the book’s preparation and have dealt with all the problems of coordinating busy academics including late submissions, with great patience and good humour.



Philip Norton



Bill Jones



Oliver Daddow





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## Figures

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Figure 2.2 from UN Security Council: functions and powers, [www.un.org/docs/sc/unsc\\_functions.html](http://www.un.org/docs/sc/unsc_functions.html)

Box 2.1, Winston Churchill, from Pajor Pawel/Shutterstock

Figure 2.3 from Aims of the Council of Europe [www.coe.int/aboutcoe/index.asp?page=nosObjectifs](http://www.coe.int/aboutcoe/index.asp?page=nosObjectifs), 2012

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Figure 5.1 from Policy Exchange (2005) *The Case for Change*, May 2005. Reproduced with permission

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# PART 1

CONTEXT

# CHAPTER 1

## The changing context of UK politics and key concepts in the study of politics

Bill Jones

“ There has never been a perfect government, because men have passions; and if they did not have passions, there would be no need for government ”

Voltaire, *Politique et legislation*

### Learning objectives

- To explain how the context of British politics has undergone drastic change over the past decade: world economic crisis, growth of extreme ideas and parties, the EU Referendum.
- To establish some understanding of the discipline of political science to enable understanding of the rest of the book.
- To discuss the nature of politicians and the reasons why they choose their profession.
- To explain and illustrate the concept of politics and how political ideas often rest on assumptions about human nature.
- To explain the importance of certain further core concepts which enable us to understand political activity.
- To provide a brief overview of topics covered in the book.





## A political scene transformed

### Impact of world economic crisis 2007–9 and Brexit vote, June 2016

The purpose of this opening chapter is to introduce the subject of politics and explain some of its central concepts. But first of all it seeks to explain the extreme volatility and rapidly changing nature of recent UK politics.

Since the turn of the last century, and especially since the 2007–8 world economic calamity, the crisis in economics has evolved into something approaching a crisis for democratic government itself. Research by the McKinsey Global Institute (July 2016) revealed that 65–70% of people in advanced economies suffered an earnings freeze 2005–14: in the US the figure was 81%, in UK 70%. 'In the UK the real wages of the typical (median) worker fell by about 10% between 2008 and 2014' (*The Times*, 15th November 2016). Furthermore the number of workers facing 'precarious' employment rose in 2016 to 7.1 million, up from 5.3 million in 2006 (*The Guardian*, 16th November 2016). The frustrations of this economically threatened group, exacerbated by the continuing soaring enrichment of the top percentiles, expressed

themselves in symptoms which included: an increasing volatility in political opinion, a collapse of trust in democratic institutions, a growth of political apathy and abstention, a collapse in support for traditional centre ground parties and a tendency to support the idea of a strong decisive leader who ignores the balance and cautious consultation of democratic processes.

One of the UK's leading journalists, Jonathan Freedland, has analysed these developments with some acuity in his essay 'Welcome to the World of Trump' (*The Guardian*, 19th May 2016).

He focuses on the USA but argues the malaise is now present throughout western Europe.

If two decades of globalisation have had their winners and losers, it is, brutally, the losers who are rallying to the populist flag – though that flag comes in stripes and colours that vary from country to country. . . . While the richest 10% of US society became 75% richer 1998–2013, working class Americans saw their net worth decline in that period by a staggering 53%.

The American Dream, whereby hard work earned according to the rules, no longer seems to equal success and comfort. 'Squeezed economically, the world around them increasingly

unrecognisable, these are the voters who believe both [US] parties and therefore the system have failed. And so it makes sense to turn to someone entirely outside it – someone who promises to smash it to pieces'. He notes the appeal of both Donald Trump on the right and Bernie Sanders, the Vermont Senator who (astonishingly) succeeded in making 'socialism' for a few months of 2016 at least, part of the mainstream American political conversation. He notes social research showing 44% of Americans respond to psychological surveys as 'authoritarian', a tendency activated when under stress caused by the threat of change. The economic crisis and liberalising changes to the culture like gay marriage, not to mention the threat of ISIS, may all be feeding into simplistic desires for a 'strongman' to cut through the toils of bureaucratic government and 'solve' such problems. A measure of the potency of these influences is the fact that Trump, of course, went on to win the presidency in November 2016.

Over in Europe, similar tendencies are observed: support for the left – Syriza in Greece, Podemos in Spain; support for the right – Marine le Pen in France, Victor Urban in Hungary, the Danish People's Party, the Sweden Democrats, the True Finns, the Swiss People's Party and strongman Recep Erdoğan in Turkey. In the UK, of course, we had the UK Independence Party (UKIP) led by beer-drinking, fag-smoking populist Nigel Farage, supported by angry mostly poorly educated white working-class voters, similar to Trump's US supporters. UK's manifestation of this anger – some called it a 'working-class revolt' – was the extraordinary Leave decision in the EU Referendum, 23rd June 2016. Despite the emphasis of the Remain campaign on economic arguments, Leave won with an effective – though some claim shameful – emphasis on immigration. It seems as if a new element has been added to UK political thinking: a 'closed' and 'open' spectrum relating to other countries which cuts across the more widely used left-right one (see Box 1.2 on 'post-democracy' and Chapter 7 for a full analysis of Brexit).

Anger is directed at several possible 'villains': the political elite of both main parties; the corporate world which continues to enrich itself during recessions and refuses to pay a fair share of taxation. Freedland concludes:

Whether it is tax avoidance, globalisation – in the form of free trade, outsourcing and mass migration – the even greater challenge of climate change, or the ever widening gap between the [richest] 1% and the rest, democracy has come to look impotent, unable to protect people from the mightiest forces confronting them. In Europe, Farage and Le Pen play on similar rage at migration, Farage making the case that British democracy has vanished – with power over the nation's borders shifting not to the corporate boardroom, but to Brussels.

## Fall-out from Referendum campaign and result

Freedland was writing before the 23rd June UK vote on membership of the European Union, which most commentators assumed would result in a majority for Remain, the campaign for which was led by David Cameron, George Osborne and most of the business world plus a majority of all MPs. After a bitter and turbulent campaign (see Chapter 7 for a full analysis), the result was a narrow 51.9% for Leave and 48.1% for Remain: 'Brexit'.

In the wake of this, British politics seemed to suffer a temporary nervous breakdown. The most prominent leader of the successful Leave campaign was expected to take over in Downing St once Cameron resigned in the wake of his defeat. Instead his fellow campaigner, Michael Gove appeared to engineer the collapse of Boris Johnson's campaign, of which amazingly he was the manager, through a rather transparent plot whereby he made his own bid for the top job. Gove's comeuppance occurred when his bid was not supported by his fellow MPs, and he dropped out after two rounds of voting. The winner was the uncharismatic Theresa May, the long-serving Home Secretary who, while ostensibly supporting Remain was suspected of Leave sympathies and was perceived as being a 'safe pair of hands' by MPs and activists alike. When her opponent, the Leave advocate Andrea Leadsom, dropped out of the race, May became Prime Minister on Wednesday, 13th July 2016. Many expected May, in the wake of such a narrow decision, to seek a deal with the EU, which leaned as close as possible to the existing relationship ('Soft Brexit'). However, she did the opposite, refusing to explain her thinking and appearing to favour a complete break from Brussels ('Hard Brexit').

Meanwhile the Labour Party was apparently imploding. After the 2015 election Ed Miliband had resigned, and in the ensuing leadership contest, the candidate who caught the imagination of the membership was veteran 'hard left' rebel, Jeremy Corbyn. As leader he initially struggled to make much impression despite some good by-election results. A long-time opponent of the EU, he supported Remain, but most of the Parliamentary Labour Party (PLP) thought his performance lacked conviction and they passed an overwhelming vote of no confidence in him on 28th June. Corbyn went on to win the challenge mounted by Owen Smith and remained in power to lead his party against Theresa May in the surprise snap election she called in April 2017.

## Election of 8th June 2017

This development was not linked directly to the Brexit vote, despite May's claim that it was necessary to prevent opposition

parties frustrating her plans to fulfil voters' Brexit instruction; she therefore needed an increased 'mandate' and majority to carry out her and the nations' objectives. In reality her plans had sailed through virtually unopposed. A more credible explanation for her calling an election was that the opinion polls showed a massive 20 plus point Tory lead over Labour plus a soaring personal poll lead for May herself over Corbyn. Moreover, close colleagues were urging her not to miss this open goal to virtually eliminate Labour for a generation. In

the wake of her announcement, the Conservative-supporting *Daily Mail* led with the headline, 'Crush the Saboteurs'. The aim was to rally the country behind Brexit but, as with the 2016 Referendum, voters can answer a different question. Remain voters – 48% of the electorate after all, were not inclined to support May, and remarkable things happened during the campaign. May's advisers, convinced by polls that their boss was a 'winner', designed a presidential campaign, focusing on the PM and downplaying her party. Unfortunately

### BOX 1.1

## Populism explained

I don't blame people for voting for him [Trump], or for Brexit: these are responses to a twisted, distrusted system. Elections captured by money, lobbyists and the media; policy convergence among the major parties, crushing real choice; the hollowing out of parliaments and other political institutions and the transfer of their

powers to unaccountable bodies: these are a perfect formula for disenfranchisement and disillusion. The global rise of demagogues and outright liars suggests that a system nominally built on consent and participation is imploding.

Source: George Monbiot, *The Guardian*,  
25th January 2017

### BOX 1.2

## A 'post-democracy' future?

The political scientist and commentator Colin Crouch, formerly at Warwick University, has coined the idea of 'post-democracy' (2004) as a destination towards which he thinks our politics is heading:

A post-democratic society is one that continues to have and to use all the institutions of democracy, but in which they increasingly become a formal shell. The energy and innovative drive pass away from the democratic arena and into small circles of a politico-economic elite.

(Crouch 2013)

Crouch doesn't claim we currently live in a post-democracy society but that we are 'moving towards such a condition.'

1 He does discern however, a 'post-industrial society' and the problems a displaced working and 'underclass' have in forming a 'group identity' and find a political party to represent them.

2 Globalisation has given huge power to trans-national business groups and supranational unions – like the EU – taking decisions which national democracies can no longer control.

3 Political parties have reacted by adopting similar policies, adapted to the globalised world.

4 Privatised firms are immune to democratic control, are dedicated to profit making and have no sense of serving the community.

In consequence voters have felt impotent and have begun to shun their right to vote. Xenophobic populist parties have sprung up to exploit these despairing feelings as corporate elites increasingly make decisions favouring private profit.

Crouch thinks the social media offer an opportunity for the disenfranchised groups to reclaim their democratic voice and urges them to campaign for specific issues.



for them her performance was anything but presidential: she insisted on mouthing political platitudes ad nauseam and refused to debate her opponents face to face on television. By contrast Jeremy Corbyn now came into his own. A lifelong campaigner, who relished meeting people, he addressed huge ecstatic crowds of mostly young people and generated huge momentum not captured by the pollsters – which persisted in showing large Tory leads – until the sensational exit poll, obtained for the media by ace psephologist John Curtice from Strathclyde University. This indicated that, far from increasing her majority, she had actually lost seats, and Corbyn increased his by some measure. George Osborne, summarily sacked by May when she became PM, declared, with obvious pleasure, that his nemesis was a ‘dead man walking’, but she was not done yet. Hugely weakened, she eventually struck an agreement with the 10 strong Protestant Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) of Northern Ireland to support her on key votes. In exchange the DUP won £1 billion extra funding for their region, to the fury of other UK regions and UK taxpayers in general. At the time of writing this is where the political situation remains: a fragile coalition surviving under the leadership of a gravely, possibly fatally, weakened leader. As Mao Tse-tung observed, ‘We live in interesting times.’

So, as this opening summary has sought to show, the ‘usual rules’ of UK politics seem to have been suspended in recent years. The new ‘closed’ and ‘open’ spectrum relating to attitudes towards other countries cuts across the more widely used left–right one; ‘closed’ thinking has been encouraged by the populist tendencies led by UKIP and others more in the mainstream like Boris Johnson. Where this injection of turbo-charged volatility will take democratic countries, and the UK in particular, is the subject of much speculation. Playwright and political commentator David Edgar suggested, interestingly, that European populism peaked in early 2017 with election results for far right Geert Wilders in Holland, France’s National Front leader Marine le Pen falling way below expectation. Moreover, in Britain itself UKIP virtually unravelled in the June 2017 General Election (Edgar 2017). But for students of politics the business of making sense of what is happening continues and for that process certain key questions as well as ways of analysing society, assist understanding. The following sections seek to explain how.

## The concept of politics defined and discussed

Politics is far from being a popular area of activity; politicians rank below those modern pariahs estate agents, in some opinion polls. They are often held to be, among other failings: self-serving, venal, dishonest, power-obsessed people who are

more likely to be a danger to society rather than its salvation. Politics, and its politicians, have changed over the years, both in its practices and the way it is regarded. Long before the **democratic** era, it is fair to say, politicians were mostly people who had seized control by force and exercised it in their own interests. **Power** was often used merely to reflect the will and the glory of the chief conqueror and the changing nature of his whims.

Since those days a number of changes have occurred:

- 1 Rulers who are interested only in power for themselves have become a recognised phenomenon against whom society must protect itself. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher, argued that ‘man is by nature a political animal’ who required a robust system of law to be kept in check. He also argued that government was best undertaken by a relatively disinterested group of well-educated men: in effect, a stratum of cultured gentlemen. Framed in 1787, the US Constitution was explicitly designed to counter the possible excesses of arbitrary rule.
- 2 Two groups, long assumed to be excluded from the governing class – the very poor (originally slaves) and women – are no longer regarded as incapable of voting responsibly, though neither is as well represented in government as their numbers would merit. Because these groups often derive so little from the systems under which they live, they can end up not participating and adopting anti-social attitudes and behaviour (see section above for how this can be perceived in present-day political turbulence).
- 3 Democracy – or a system whereby every citizen is entitled to some kind of say in their own government – has become widely accepted as desirable, especially in developed countries in Europe and North America and, increasingly, in large parts of the rest of the world. However, it does not follow that every country will prove successfully receptive to democratic politics, as the modern instances of chaotic attempts to introduce democracy to Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate. Nor does it follow that voters, even in well-established democracies, will especially value their own system of government, as declining turnout figures in the UK in recent decades make clear.

### Defining politics

What precisely did Aristotle mean when he said man is by nature a *political* animal? The word is much used, and most people think they know what it means, but usually they cannot give a clear explanation. A typical reply might be that it is concerned with: ‘Political parties, you know, Labour and Conservatives’. Clearly this is factually correct, but it does not take us very far towards a definition as many things have

connections to political parties. No, to extract a clear definition we have to examine what things occur when 'politics' is definitely present.

For example, the following 'news items' can all be said to involve 'politics' at some level:

- 1 Father seeks to influence soccer manager to give his son a place in the team.
- 2 Chancellor ignores union claims for increased salaries.
- 3 Oil prices continue to rise as war spreads in Middle East.
- 4 Thousands demonstrate in favour of climate change measures.

The first example illustrates that politics operates at a 'micro' level; we speak of the 'politics' of the family or 'small groups'. The second is drawn from the mainstream of what we regard as 'political': a government minister taking a decision on something.

From these and the other two examples it can be seen that 'politics' entails:

- a strong element of conflict and its resolution;
- a struggle for scarce and finite resources; and
- the use of various methods of persuasion or pressure, to achieve a desired outcome.

So, if we can move towards a definition, it might be constructed as:

Politics is a process that seeks to manage or resolve conflicts of interest between people, usually in a peaceful fashion. In its general sense it can describe the interactions of any group of individuals, but in its specific sense it refers to the many and complex relationships that exist between state institutions and the rest of society.

## Politicians and their ambition

'Politics is a spectator sport', writes former Tory MP, the late Julian Critchley (1995: 80). An enduring question that exercises we spectators is 'Why are they doing it?' The great eighteenth-century man of letters, Dr Johnson, in his typically blunt fashion, said politics was 'nothing more nor less than a means of rising in the world', a comment which the 2009 scandal of MPs exploiting their expenses allowances might seem to validate. But we know somehow that mere self-interest is not the whole truth. Peter Riddell, formerly a columnist at *The Times*, in his wonderfully perceptive book *Honest Opportunism* (1993), looks at this topic in some detail. He quotes nineteenth-century Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli, who perhaps offers a more rounded and believable account of his interest in politics to his Shrewsbury constituents:

There is no doubt, gentlemen, that all men who offer themselves as candidates for public favour have motives of some sort. I candidly acknowledge that I have and I will tell you what they are: I love fame; I love public reputation; I love to live in the eye of the country.

(Riddell 1993: 23)

Riddell also quotes former Chancellor of the Exchequer F.E. Smith, who candidly gloried in the 'endless adventure of governing men'. He also includes former Conservative Deputy Prime Minister Michael Heseltine, whom he once heard, irritated, asking at one of Jeffrey Archer's parties in 1986: 'Why *shouldn't* I be Prime Minister then?' (Riddell 1993).

### BOX 1.3

## What does government do?

Leading British sociologist and adviser to former Prime Minister Tony Blair, Anthony Giddens, explained what government does in terms of representing diverse interests in the country and providing a publicly protected forum for the reconciling of such interests. It also provides a variety of public functions in the form of welfare payments to the needy and, through the police, security from theft and

attack. It regulates markets in the interests of the public and guards against the growth of harmful monopolies. It provides a system of law, educates the young, builds roads, railways and other infrastructure. It also engages with other countries and regulates trade.

Source: Giddens (1998: 47–8)