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Pearson Edexcel Level 3 GCE

Politics

Advanced

**PAPER 2: UK Government and Non-core
Political Ideas**

Wednesday 5 June 2024 – Afternoon

Time: 2 hours

Source Booklet

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SECTION A

UK Government

Source 1(a)

Source 1(a) explores the role of the unelected House of Lords in UK democracy.

The House of Lords plays a key role in our constitutional system.

The Lords performs an essential role as a revising chamber, providing detailed scrutiny of legislation and government activity. Increasingly, the Lords has become a key check on government, challenging legislation that has passed easily through the Commons. The Lords can do this because of its unelected nature. The key features of an appointed House are greater independence, the absence of a government majority, its expertise and the greater amount of time members can dedicate to legislative scrutiny.

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Source 1(a) continued.

Reforms to change the membership of the House of Lords from appointed to elected may upset the existing constitutional balance. Firstly, an elected Lords may have the same issues as the Commons weakening its ability to check the government. Secondly, a clash could develop between the Commons and an elected Lords over whether the Commons or the Lords is more legitimate.

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Source 1(a) continued.

The unelected House of Lords is completely indefensible.

The House lacks the democratic mandate to do its job effectively. The House is not full of specialists, but is stuffed full of party donors, lobbyists, and wealthy, well connected individuals. Appointments have been increasingly numerous and inappropriate, with many new peers rarely contributing to the work of the House. The presence of hereditary peers and religious representatives is not suitable in a modern democracy. Also, attempts to limit the size and cost of the 800-member chamber have had little impact.

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Source 1(a) continued.

The Lords must have electoral legitimacy to do its job well. It should be much smaller and should more accurately represent the regions and nations of the UK whilst keeping the same powers. Then the Lords can play its key constitutional role of ensuring that there are effective checks on the power of government without challenging the authority of the Commons.

Source 1(b)

Source 1(b) looks at how effective constitutional reform has been since 1997.

Devolution was introduced by the Labour Government of Tony Blair and has been extended by the governments that followed. Devolution can be seen as a success in delivering the decentralisation of power and greater democracy. The Scottish Parliament, Welsh Senedd and the Northern Ireland Assembly retain majority support. Although some places do not want to have city mayors the Metro Mayors look set to stay.

Devolution can be seen to have failed in its main objective; to rebuild enthusiasm for the UK and limit calls for independence. Since Brexit, devolution seems even more unsettled. The devolution process is unequal, unfair and provides no clear representation and voice for England.

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Source 1(b) continued.

Different electoral systems have been introduced for devolved bodies increasing their legitimacy. However, voter turnout has been an issue. The Elections Act 2022 introduced voter ID to tackle voter fraud and build trust in elections but is seen by others as tackling a non-existent problem and may have a negative impact on voter turnout.

The Human Rights Act 1998 has helped develop awareness and protection of rights and acted as an effective check against over powerful government. However, the Human Rights Act has remained controversial, with some politicians and parts of the media arguing that human rights are being used to protect the rights of terrorists and dangerous criminals. They argue that reform is needed, so there is a proper balance between the rights of individuals, national security and effective government.

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Source 1(b) continued.

The Constitutional Reform Act 2005 created a separation of powers and more effective checks and balances in the UK constitution. However, the Supreme Court has been criticised for overstepping its role and becoming too political; whilst judicial review is needed, some see judicial review as being overused.

Source information:

Source 1(a)

(Source: <https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/comment/labour-house-of-lords-reform>)