

# *The Think Tank*

May 2025

Issue 81

*Up-to-date analysis of  
exam-relevant issues  
for A Level Politics*



# KEMI

# THE TORIES IN OPPOSITION

**Plus!** Affirmative Action in DEI   **Key Ideas of Anthony Giddens**  
US vs UK Party Unity   **African Union**   Top Ten Intelligence Blunders

# Springboard 1

**‘While we are... questioning whether it's strong enough or whether it should be watered down, young people are at harm, and young people are losing their lives.’**

▲ Digital safety campaigner Esther Ghey has warned against any move to weaken the Online Safety Act. Ghey's campaign follows the tragic murder of her daughter, Brianna, by two fellow students, one of whom had been exposed to content promoting violence online. The legislation is reportedly under review amid efforts to negotiate a UK-US trade deal, following concerns raised by Vice President JD Vance that it poses a threat to freedom of speech in the UK. However, the government denies that any proposed changes are linked to trade discussions.

## Discussion Points

1. Is Keir Starmer's meeting with the creators of *Adolescence* an example of political media, or simply symbolic?
2. Should the government intervene in regulating online spaces to protect vulnerable even if doing so risks curbing freedom of expression?
3. If the UK government softens the Online Safety Act due to US trade pressure, does it lose legitimacy?

**‘What society... young people... into the... hatred a...’**

▲ Prime Minister Starmer's commitment to tackling radicalisation was highlighted with Jack Thorne's *Adolescence*. The film, featuring a 13-year-old boy watching 'manly' videos, has drawn huge viewership and sparked a national debate on digital spaces. The government has promised to address the issue with new safeguards to protect potentially harmful content.

# Springboard 2

**‘My fellow Americans, this is Liberation Day ... For decades, our country has been looted, pillaged, and plundered by nations near and far, both friend and foe alike ... In a few moments, I will sign a historic executive order instituting reciprocal tariffs on countries throughout the world ... With today's action, we are finally going to be able to make America great again, greater than ever before.’**

## Discussion Points

1. What impact will Trump's tariffs have on globalisation?
2. Are Trump's tariffs a sign that the structure of the global political system is moving?
3. In what ways should the UK respond to tariffs from the USA?

◀ Trump's 2nd April announcement of a sweeping new foreign policy, introducing wide-ranging tariffs and rivaling immediate trading partners with retaliatory warnings.

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## A Word from the Editor

Before the next issue, there are local elections in England, so rather than focus on this issue's content, you can see below – I'd like to give you a short guide to what's coming up!

It's important to distinguish local elections from national elections. With so many seats up for grabs – 1,600 councillors, six mayors, and one MP to be elected – parties can often spin results as a victory or a defeat, bad as it could have been'. They also don't give a representative picture of the UK's political landscape, as councils are contested at different times, and local issues or personalities can dominate.

For instance, where I live in Bristol, there are no council elections this year, but there is a Combined Authority election. The previous (Labour) holder, Cllr Ian Norris, had already stood down because he was an MP last July, but he was recently charged with rape, which politically might hurt Labour's chances of being a new candidate. In previous elections were held under the supplementary voting system, first-past-the-post, which makes it difficult to predict, and a five-way split has been recorded by the BBC.

Most of the seats being contested were last up for grabs in 2021, at the height of the Conservative Party's then unusually good results for an incumbent government (and even led to then opposition leader Boris Johnson's resignation). While Labour's national polling might be a cause for worry for the governing party, the Conservatives are likely to lose. Suburban and rural constituencies tend to have Liberal Democrats (currently polling relatively well) look likely to take more votes from Labour's left.

Some things to look out for:

- The new Greater Lincolnshire mayoralty which Reform are targeting and may well win.
- The Runcorn and Helsby by-election, which is a stretch – Reform were a distant second in the last election, surprising.
- Liberal Democrats and Greens stand to do very well, taking swathes of seats from the Conservatives.
- Labour and Conservatives in general are likely to do badly (in terms of vote share and the chance of winning) but will no doubt claim that it could have been worse.

We welcome feedback and contributions at [SamFrancis@PublishMe.uk](mailto:SamFrancis@PublishMe.uk).  
If you have any ideas for the magazine, or articles you'd like to write, please get in touch.

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# KEMI BADEN SIX MONTH

Facing a re... and an insurgent Reform, the Conservative Party's leader after a... have a difficult time. Moyra Grant assesses how Badenoch is getting



The role of Leader of the Opposition has been called the worst job in politics – hard graft but with none of the power and prestige of government. In Kemi Badenoch's case, it also involved taking over a party which had just suffered its worst ever election defeat. She became Conservative leader in November 2024 (at the second time of trying), defeating Robert Jenrick in the party members' ballot by 57% to 43% on a 72% turnout and making history as the first black woman to lead a major UK party. She is on the right of her party, a thorough-going Thatcherite who supports free-market, 'small state' economics combined with 'anti-woke' social conservatism. A wealth of adjectives have been used to describe her leadership style, including forthright, bold, combative, confrontational and abrasive.

## PARTY LEADERSHIP

Badenoch's shadow cabinet includes three of her rivals in the leadership contest – Jenrick, Priti Patel, and Mel Stride, who previously chaired the Treasury select committee and is therefore well-placed for his scrutiny role as shadow chancellor. The more 'one-nation' leadership competitors, James Cleverly and Tom Tugendhat, rejected job offers. In total, Badenoch has given jobs to 87 MPs – 72% of the now much-depleted parliamentary party. In January she made the unusual – perhaps unwise and probably impossible – commitment that she would not reshuffle her front-bench team at all before the next general election. This has already riled some of her backbenchers and junior postings who see their ambitions for future promotion thwarted.

On the economy, Badenoch favours cutting taxes, welfare and public spending (and her team criticised Chancellor Rachel Reeves' welfare cut for 'not going far enough'). However, a recent poll found that 59% of 2019 Conservative voters prioritise tax cuts while 52% cited reducing NHS waiting lists as their top priority.

In her evidence session at the Post Office inquiry, Badenoch slated the constraints of the 'government machine' and civil service red tape, saying, 'The burden of regulation is not the rule of law' – although, in fact, the

regulations are usual that the UK may have on Human Rights and they stop the UK from Some Conservatives of the traditional 'party' sees many laws them

On foreign affairs, a referendum and in 20 EU as 'the greatest eve of the United Kingdom' 'a lot of Brexit has no former PMs Johnson a plan for growth'. She and migration failures deliberately to disa previous Conservative On immigration, she numbers, with integra culture and a shared 'moral clarity in dea suggested that the 'golden opportunity' (which she as forme achieve); but she has Ukraine, supporting Zelensky a 'hero' after the C

**'All of Western civilization will be lost'**

Badenoch's 'cultural' political identity for w... speak... bloc... Reco... genc... build... zones outside abort... vote to extend same Ireland. In a recent spe politics and climate ac

She said in March tha meet its net zero targe Conservative govern

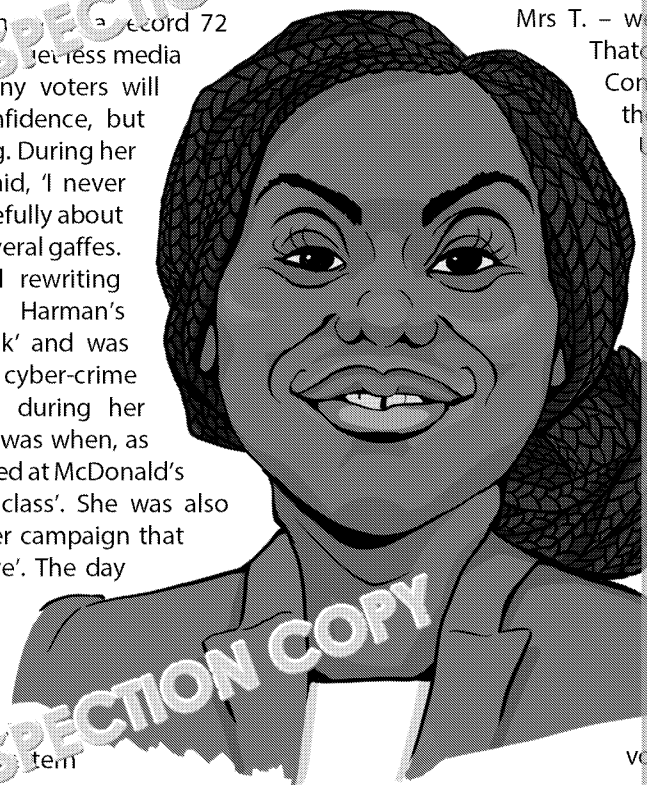
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this policy U-turn came a month after she and her family had a £14,000-worth holiday as guests of Tory donor, climate sceptic and chair of Net Zero Watch, Neil Record.

The leader always plays a key role in shaping their party's image and popularity among voters, especially in the modern era of 'presidentialism' in UK politics. Badenoch has pulled the Conservative Party further to the right in an attempt to forestall the growing threat from Reform UK, who currently have four seats in the Commons. The problem here is that she loses votes instead to the Liberal Democrats on the left – who have a record 72 seats in 2024 but who have attracted less media attention than the Conservatives. Many voters will admire Badenoch's self-confidence, but others may find it off-putting. During her leadership campaign she said, 'I never have gaffes – I think very carefully about what I say'. She has made several gaffes. She admitted hacking and rewriting senior Labour MP Harriet Harman's website in 2008 as a 'prank' and was reported to the UK's cyber-crime reporting centre. She said during her leadership campaign that it was when, as an A Level student, she worked at McDonald's that she 'became working class'. She was also accused of saying during her campaign that maternity pay was 'excessive'. The day after her leadership win she provoked anger by saying that Partygate had been 'overblown'. She was widely ridiculed for saying in a recent speech that 'the liberal western civilization' had 'failed'. To tell the Conservatives they didn't get back into power. In February, both she and Starmer were rebuked by top judge Lady Sue Carr for (during PMQs) criticising a judge over an immigration ruling – which, said Carr, conflicted with their duty to uphold the rule of law and respect judicial independence.



## EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION?

As a new leader, Badenoch said that her party has two responsibilities: 'to hold this Labour government to account' and 'to prepare over the course of the next few years for government'. (Her leadership campaign was called 'Renewal 2030', which she anticipates will be her first full year in government.) She has been vigorous in criticising Labour, describing their plan to impose inheritance tax on £1m+ farmland as 'Labour's cruel family farm tax' and describing Reeves' Budget statement in March as an 'emergency budget' when it could have been sponsored by the 'pompic'. However, her performance as MP and as an MP have been criticised by many of her own MPs. Her speeches have been under-researched, over-scripted and missing open goals – allowing PM Starmer often to remind her that whatever she was being angry about had actually happened when she herself was a minister, and even to say patronisingly that she 'hasn't quite done her homework'.

## CONCLUS

The key to being a success across to voters as 'PM' March found that only a view of Badenoch. The donors, the media and Badenoch is impatient and tedious – aspects of he scathingly, 'The most doesn't like sandwiche

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Most Conservatives see the threat as coming from Labour, not the Lib Dems. But the party's recent fracturing in March may have given

Meanwhile, as Kemi B...

### Discussion Point

What qualities make

### Exam-style Question

- Evaluate the view now more driven than by principles
- 'Party leaders are outcomes of UK govt' evaluate this state

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# 300 Words & an Es

## Pressure Group Me

A student explores the methods of two pressure groups and how they influence government.

Many factors may influence a pressure group's success or failure in influencing government policies: the type of group, its relationship with the government, how much media coverage and public support it has, and the methods it employs. Here we'll look at pressure group methods.

Different types of group may often operate in different ways. 'Insider groups' may be able to sit around a table with ministers and officials and quietly persuade them to implement the group's aims and policy proposals. 'Outsider groups' lack those close contacts with decision-makers and instead often engage in 'direct action' including demonstrations, marches, strikes and stunts. For example, the climate action group Just Stop Oil (JSO) has gained much publicity for its eye-catching and disruptive tactics. It recently announced an end to these, saying it has won its demand for the government to promise no new oil and gas licences. However, JSO members have also won some lengthy prison sentences.

Insider/outside groups may, of course, change status with a change of government, and may change their tactics accordingly – for example, the National Farmers' Union in the 2024 general election.

'Promotional/cause groups' may have millions of supporters, but mere size is no guarantee of success in influencing governments. By contrast, 'protective/sectional/interest groups' have finite membership numbers – but even small sectional groups can wield considerable power and influence if their members have significant skills, resources or sheer determination to protect their own interests.

The diverse methods of pressure groups may be legal or illegal, peaceful or violent, and popular or counter-productive. Insider groups, unsurprisingly, usually employ peaceful and legal methods; and, even if outsider groups resort to law-breaking, it is rarely violent. However, recent public order laws have criminalised an extensive range of pressure group activities, and have been described by Amnesty International as 'an assault on the rights of peaceful protest'.

An original student essay written for The Think Tank

'The success or failure of pressure groups to influence government policy is mainly determined by the methods which they employ.' Analyse and evaluate this statement. **AQA-style (25 marks)**

Evaluate the view that the success of a pressure group is determined by the methods it uses to influence government.

The source focuses on the methods used by pressure groups to influence government policies. I shall argue here that the success of these groups does not depend on the methods they use, but on the group's ability to win public support. I shall evaluate the view that the success of a pressure group is determined by the methods it uses.

British political scientist David Colclough's typology of 'insider' groups is based on the closeness of their relationship with policymakers. The National Farmers' Union, for example, was an insider group for many years of Conservative governments, maintaining former farmland from inheritance tax. The Labour government's imposition of the tax (although at half the rate of the previous government) over £1 million in instalments over 10 years led the NFU to resort to 'outside' tactics, including long convoys of lorries to Westminster to a halt, and disrupting conferences. The Opposition and media were persuaded the government should scrap the tax. Outsider groups are more participative than insider groups, but the paradox that the more powerful a group is, the less powerful it is, is often the case. Here, the group to the government.

Just Stop Oil (JSO) is a promotional outsider group, and sometimes illegal. It has used protests, throwing paint, interrupting sporting events, and other unusually – being

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Extinction Rebellion and Insulate Britain) in the Public Order Act 2023 which imposed new restrictions on protest rights, and several JSO members have been jailed. However, the group had legal wins in court when it challenged the 'inadequacy' of the Conservative government's net zero strategies in 2022 and 2024. It used the services of the Good Law Project – a pressure group of what some former Conservative MPs described and decried as 'activist lawyers' who specialise in judicial review cases against executive policies, with limited success. Labour's 2024 manifesto did not to issue new licences for oil and gas fields, which JSO has credited as a win – and they have recently announced that they are ceasing direct action and 'hanging up the hi vis'. Here, it seems that the different methods used by the group did have different and decisive impact.

Trade unions are largely outsider groups under Conservative governments. However, the British Medical Association (BMA), a professional trade union for UK doctors, is unusual in mostly being ranked as an insider group with policymakers of both main parties. For example, its intensive lobbying helped to secure the ban on smoking in public places in 2007. However, the group took prolonged industrial action through 2023/24 over doctors' pay and conditions of work. The Conservative government persistently refused to meet with them. Instead, PM Sunak introduced a 'minimum service level' to oblige some public sector union members to work during strikes or face dismissal. Labour called it the 'sacking doctors bill' and promised to repeal it, as well as promptly settling the BMA dispute after the general election. This suggests that the decisive factor was less the method of protest employed by the pressure group and more its changed relationship with a new government.

As the source points out, protective groups often have more power and influence than promotional groups because their members have control over their own key skills and resources (sometimes even a monopoly – for example, to practise as a solicitor you must be a member of the Law Society). Air collectors – e.g. in Birmingham – can withdraw their labour, and bankers – whose pressure group is UK Finance – can withdraw their capital. Promotional groups, however, may exercise disruptive power but otherwise they tend only to have persuasive influence on public opinion. Examples: the Stop the War Coalition in 2003 held the biggest march in UK history (reportedly two million people) against the war in Iraq – but they did not stop the war. A People's Vote petition to

rejoin the EU, signed by millions of people, was equally unsuccessful. 'mere size is no guarantee of success for governments'. These

The source, finally, notes that the methods which have added to the success of the peaceful protest in Sentencing and Conviction (SC) are restricted demonstrations which cause noise, disruption and damage – so, potentially leading to maximum sentences. Under this law, JSO has a record of violent 'conspiracy' to block roads. The police powers to shut down protests start. Under this law, the group broke open the door to a place of worship – in 2019, though they could just have arrested six young people. Demand who had to change – because, so the future possible disruption was widely criticised by the public and – as the source says – as the source as Amnesty International 'authoritarian'. The peaceful pressure groups, although insider groups, around a table with the government of pressure group should therefore the main factor in government policies.

#### Examiner's Comments

There is comprehensive material here, with contrasting case studies as well as other sources. It addresses different methods and their varying degrees of success, as well as references to methods such as judicial review. It adds balance to the analysis of argument and evidence. The introduction and end of each paragraph

AO1: 10

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# THE KEY IDEAS

## ANTHONY GIDDENS

With Starmer's Labour presenting another nuanced version of a socialist party – and some vowing to ditch the label – it's a great time to examine the ideas of the architect of the 'third way'.

### WHO IS ANTHONY GIDDENS?

Anthony Giddens (born 1938) is widely regarded as the architect of 'third way' politics in the UK. Although, in origin, this was the label given to the 'new' Labour ideology under PM Tony Blair from 1997 to 2007. Its ideological influence on Labour waned over the following years – especially under the 2015–2020 leadership of radical socialist Jeremy Corbyn – but it might be making a comeback in some of PM Keir Starmer's ideas and policies.

Giddens – a British sociologist, former Director of the London School of Economics and currently a member of the Lords – is a 'neo-revisionist' whose key book *The Third Way: The Renewal of Social Democracy* (1998) shaped Blair's ideas and policies for 'new' Labour. While 'revisionism' describes the rightward shift of post-war social democracy away from radical and revolutionary socialism, 'neo-revisionism' – a revision of the revision – describes the further rightward move of the 'third way' in the 1990s to a qualified endorsement of free-market capitalism, although Giddens has called it the 'progressive centre-left' in UK politics. The 'third way' label is intended to signify a new middle way between left-wing and right-wing ideas and principles, to embrace the realities of post-industrialism (the decline of heavy industry) and globalisation ('increased interconnectedness across the world of capital, economies, politics, cultures and communities').

In summary, the 'third way' was a pragmatic mix of market capitalism with centre-left social policies, rights with responsibilities, and individualism with communitarianism – plus some social authoritarianism in law and justice. In electoral terms it was highly successful, giving the UK Labour Party an unprecedented three-term tenure, after being out of office for almost 20 years due to the waning popularity of post-war social democracy in the face of faltering economies and demographic changes – notably the shrinkage of the traditional, blue-collar working class in a deindustrialised economy.

### GIDDENS' KEY IDEAS

#### The 'new mixed economy'

Giddens has asserted that 'socialism is dead as an economic doctrine'. He rejected Marx's analysis of human progress through class conflict and class struggle, and argued that the extensive neo-liberal privatisation and deregulation of the economy were in fact a success – indeed, he saw many benefits to the flexibility of capitalism to innovate, adapt and generate 'increased productivity' and the creation of wealth for the common good. However, he said that the attendant defects of free-market economics – such as increased inequality, unemployment, private monopolies and poorer public services – should be alleviated by 'utilising the dynamism of markets, but with public

interest in mind'. Far from rejecting socialism as orthodox, Giddens argued that a vigorous capitalist system required efficient social redistribution to support industries and services, and that the focus should be on securing greater economic growth, which would necessarily entail some form of state intervention. Giddens rejected 'old-style socialism' at all costs' which, he argued, would stifle efficiency and growth. He advocated incentives to effort and innovation, but in combination with the dubious neo-liberal

#### Communitarianism

This is Giddens' idea of a balance between individualism and collectivism and neo-liberalism. He argued that we have roles and responsibilities in society, and also the personal incentive to succeed. This was the 'third way' rhetoric – the 'middle way' he called it – employs a balance of individualism and social inclusion', 'right to work', not a hand-out'. He argued that capitalism and individualism were empowering and productive, but they had a 'corrosive' effect on society and added an egoistic sense of fairness which undermined public policy. To this end, he advocated individualism by endorsement, but in combination with

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Blair's memorable mantra in 1996 was 'education, education, education'. This was the product of Giddens' argument that, rather than the state owning or regulating businesses and industries, it should invest in the 'human capital' of education and skills to spur self-empowerment in the 'knowledge economy'.

The word 'socialism' was conspicuous by its absence in Labour's 1997 manifesto. 'New' Labour instead introduced very 'third-way' policies: 'public-private partnerships' in health care and education; and PFIs – 'private finance initiatives' – where private companies built and owned new infrastructure such as hospitals and leased them to the state (a policy which turned out to be hugely expensive for the state in later years). There was, however, an 8% increase in public spending under Blair, as well as some old-school social democratic policies such as the successful 1999–2010 Sure Start programme of holistic (health, employment, education and parenting) support for poor families. However, third-way economics also resulted in greater economic inequality.

**PM KEIR STARMER - THIRD**

After a hiatus during 14 years of Conservative governments – and five years of Labour Party leadership by democratic socialist Jeremy Corbyn – the third way might now be emerging in PM Keir Starmer's ideas and policies. Some of this government's most controversial legislation – cutting the winter fuel allowance for pensioners, maintaining the Conservatives' two-child benefit cap and limiting the eligibility of long-term sick and disabled people for 'personal independence payments' (PIPs) – have been framed by Starmer not only as budget savings but as moral initiatives to encourage a shift 'from welfare to work' – not a new idea. Some of his unhappy MPs seem prepared to rebel on the party's forthcoming plans, while the SNP has gone so far as to call them 'a new era of austerity cuts'.

## CASE STUDY I: BREXIT

The UK left the European Union in 2020 following a narrow 'Yes' vote in the 2016 referendum. This was due to arguments that the EU threatened the UK's sovereignty and ability to control its own borders and immigration. This issue has since become more controversial and less polarised. In the face of ongoing economic problems and rising immigration, both main parties officially supported 'Remain' in the referendum but have since staunchly supported the UK's 'hard' Brexit including the departure from the single market and customs union.

Giddens was critical of the 'divisive' referendum and held his party together, pro-EU, arguing that the EU actually increases the world rather than lose it through the world as part of a single one the EU as a fruitful partnership and also as a valuable or 'hyperdiversity' as a reform of EU institutions participation for its citizens.

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1. How new and distinct is the 'third way'?
2. Can there be a 'third way' between socialism and capitalism?

- 'A retreat from continuing feature analysis and evaluation reference to the studies have studied.
- To what extent have abandoned social

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# RACE-BASED AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

in the USA: 1965-2025

As the new Republican establishment rails against DEI (Diversity, Equality and Inclusion), affirmative action, a policy rooted in Lyndon B Johnson's 1965 executive order, is being dismantled.

Race-based affirmative action came out of the civil rights campaigns of the 1950s and 1960s. With Democrats President Kennedy, who first used the term affirmative action in 1961, and then President Johnson taking the lead.

Affirmative action may be defined in basic terms as *any measure employed to correct or compensate for past or present discrimination, or to prevent discrimination occurring in the future*. Affirmative action initiatives have been used in employment, housing and education to try to give minority groups equality of opportunity.

The initial argument was that simply ending discrimination through legislation is not enough to ensure equal treatment and opportunity and to achieve true equality in society.

Those groups who have suffered discrimination and been disadvantaged in the past have to be helped to gain equality and guaranteed better opportunities in areas such as education and employment – this is the only way they can be compensated for centuries of disadvantage and discrimination.

Johnson in 1965 asserted that *it is not enough just to open the gates of opportunity. For our citizens must have the ability to walk through those gates*. As far as Democrats were concerned, the 'false dawn' of the rights guaranteed by the 'Reconstruction Amendments' (13<sup>th</sup> abolished slavery, 1865, 14<sup>th</sup> guaranteed citizenship, 1868, and 15<sup>th</sup> guaranteeing the right to vote regardless of race or previous servitude, 1870) could not be allowed to happen again. Jim Crow laws, bolstered by the Supreme Court (SCOTUS) in rulings such as *Plessy v Ferguson* (1896) and *Williams v Mississippi* (1898), ensured that segregation and discrimination persisted. 100 years after President Lincoln's 1863 Emancipation Proclamation supposedly delivered equality and freedom, Martin Luther King in 1963 still saw it as a 'dream' that equality and freedom might one day be realised.

Having worked hard to persuade Congress and push through the 1964 Civil Rights Act and 1965 Voting Rights Act (basically a much-needed repetition of the 13<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments!), Johnson was adamant that this was followed by tangible action and that *not just equality as a right and a theory but equality as a fact and equality as a result*. Race-based affirmative action was born.

## THE DEBATE IN FAVOUR

Initially the argument was simple: that affirmative action is needed to ensure true equality is achieved – the view first highlighted by Kennedy and Johnson as outlined above. Once programmes had been put in place the argument moved on to its merits: it works and should

therefore continue, and not be a step towards social regression. The figures for minority representation before affirmative action initiatives prove that disadvantaged and less educated Americans lose their ground more than white people to lack of capital such as opportunity and low (pre-1965 period) standards. Poorer communities are quick to fall behind and still live in poorer conditions despite opportunities achieved. Without affirmative action, a large gap in educational attainment and higher education has persisted since the 20<sup>th</sup> century and is still needed. Racial profiling is a persistent problem, proving that discrimination is still commonplace. Measures to penalise bias are needed. Both of these issues have persisted since all African Americans since the end of discrimination are still

Plain and simple, it is not fair. Affirmative action favours one group over another. It uses race to compensate for another group. It is the view that it is compensation for discrimination, not discrimination, and today's white Americans are potentially face discrimination.

These feelings are perceived to be too right. Affirmative action does not benefit those who are the beneficiaries of affirmative action, i.e. black Americans. Barack Obama's children have more privilege in education than that of Barack Obama. Affirmative action is no longer necessary. The civil rights rulings and legislation of the USA of 2025 is a different world to the USA of the 1950s.

Partly undermined by the end of discrimination (e.g. racial segregation), the argument that it was needed involved gathered some support. For example, that affirmative action met expectations, e.g. an African American

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an elite university to ensure the institution meets its quota – this is not to say they are capable of meeting the demands once enrolled. It also potentially provides opportunities for the undeserving – why try hard if artificial preference will guarantee success? Affirmative action is bad for the recipients – making progress through preferential treatment rather than individual merits is bad for the group's self-esteem and confidence. Affirmative action can also inspire the negative attitudes and racism that it is designed to remedy – resentment of being reverse discrimination and the view that non-Americans can only succeed through preferential treatment.

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION INTO THE 21<sup>ST</sup> CENTURY

Affirmative action has remained a hot topic in US politics since its inception, especially in relation to education. Views are not clear-cut and can seem contradictory, with most Americans in favour of programmes designed to increase the number of minority groups in universities but opposed to minorities being given preferential treatment. This has also been the majority view of SCOTUS. This seemingly contradictory view can be explained as follows:

Affirmative action has been viewed as unconstitutional if it is too rigid, i.e. if it is achieved through strict quotas in which the race of the applicant has been the decisive factor regardless of previous achievement or anything else. (*Gratz v Bollinger* (2003) ruled it unconstitutional because it was too mechanistic.) However, affirmative action which considers race as one aspect (and not the only one) gains more public support and has been ruled constitutional by SCOTUS (*Grutter v Bollinger* ruled it constitutional because it used a more individualised approach).

In basic terms, from 1980 up to 2016 was – it is wrong to give a university place to a member of a minority group over a white student if they are getting the place simply because they are a minority regardless of anything else, simply to meet a racial quota (even if the white student has higher grades, etc.). However, it is okay to give a minority a place over a white student if they have comparable credentials but the minority group is under-represented in the university compared to the state population of that group.

To make it even simpler – race as the only factor to meet a racial quota = bad/unconstitutional; race as one consideration to improve representation of a group if necessary = good/constitutional. *Fisher v University of Texas* (2016) reiterated this conclusion.

## WHERE FROM HERE? 2016-PRESENT

Affirmative action is no doubt now under threat. A second Trump administration and a conservative SCOTUS are dismantling the programmes and initiatives that have been bringing fairness, equality and opportunities to all Americans – to all regardless of race and other characteristics. While race-based affirmative action is not always the named 'issue' for the Trump administration, the overall assault on DEI (Diversity, Equality and Inclusion) initiatives as 'illegal and immoral discrimination' includes race-based affirmative action. The argument has definitely shifted back to it being blatantly

unfair and regarded as dangerous – it is the administration for a range of agencies and Washington in January 2021. California were blamed for ensuring meeting quality and competence is being

After the addition of a conservative majority to SCOTUS in *Students for Fair Admissions v Harvard* and *Grutter v Bollinger* and the view that race as one factor in admissions is a race-based affirmative action which violates the 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment with other rulings which have been overturned in the last few years. *Shelby County v Holder* (2013) ruled that the need for some southern states to use pre-clearance procedures for voting rights which immediately led to the reversal of *Dobbs v Jackson Women's Health Organization* (2022) which reversed *Roe v Wade* (1973) and the right of women rather than to be part of a broader conservative agenda to continue even further. In his concurring remarks in *Shelby County v Holder* (2013) Justice Roberts said 'cases we should reconsider the process precedents, including *Bergesell v Hodges* (1980) marriage nationwide and for race-based groups and for race-based groups wide open to be 'reconsidered' will be hoping that SCOTUS do not see the whole picture and other DEI initiatives in *Alito* saw *Roe v Wade* start.' ■

### Discussion Questions

1. Do the rulings mentioned in this section evidence a shift in the views of politicians sitting on SCOTUS?
2. Is it fair that nine justices are now to interpret the Constitution for 300 million people?

### Exam-style Questions

A direct question on race-based affirmative action would never be asked in the ISA. However, you could be asked to choose alternative approaches to the civil rights topic. Here are some good examples of broader 'rights' questions.

1. Explain and analyse the impact of the Supreme Court ruling in *Shelby County v Holder* (2013) on the judiciary in the US and evaluate this impact.

*Richard Lawton is a teacher*

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# PARTY UN

## in the US and the UK

*Graham Goodlad asks why the main US political parties are less internally united*

Both Edexcel and AQA US Politics papers require you to compare American and British political institutions, organisations or processes. In each case, you will have to answer a question which asks you to refer to one of three comparative theories – rational, cultural or structural. These are analytical tools for comparing the way that the various features of a political system function. The theories are summarised in the box insert.

This article examines the factors that explain the differing levels of unity and discipline in the main US and UK political parties. Why are the Republican and Democratic Parties in the US Congress generally less united than the UK Conservative and Labour Parties? It is true, of course, that there are competing factions in the two main UK parties. In the May-Johnson era, for example, right-wing Conservative MPs formed the pro-Brexit European Research Group and the Covid Recovery Group, challenging the authority of the party's leadership. The left-wing group Momentum has been critical of several policies of the Starmer government.

It is also true that Republican and Democratic parties are more strongly opposed to each other than at any time in US political history. This is due in part to the polarising effect of Donald Trump, who enjoys the strong loyalty of his own followers while arousing the keen hostility of the opposition. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the US parties are generally less cohesive than their UK counterparts.

### Leadership and discipline

The different nature of leadership in the two countries helps to explain why US parties are usually less united. A sitting president is the leader of their party. However, except when a presidential candidate has been chosen during an election year, such as Donald Trump in March 2024, there is no single recognised leader of either party in opposition. The key figures in the House and Senate also have leadership roles. At present, the two leading Democratic Party politicians are Chuck Schumer, the minority party leader in the Senate, and Hakeem Jeffries, his equivalent in the House of Representatives.

By contrast, in the UK there is a single person who leads the Conservative or Labour Party in both the country and Parliament. Kemi Badenoch was elected Conservative leader by party members in November 2024 after Rishi Sunak stepped down. This difference can be explained by

the **structural theory** of political systems, unlike in the UK, where the leadership of major parties is more concentrated. Only a serving MP can be a party leader. As a result, there is greater unity in the UK. Party leadership is more diffused across the party in the US.

Party discipline is stronger in the UK than in the US. Developed whipping systems are used more than in Congress. This is illustrated, for example, by Boris Johnson's resignation of the Conservative Party and removal from office in the run-up to the December 2019 general election. Whipping is weaker in the US. This is because of the **structural theory** which means that Rep-

**A member of Congress is more likely than a UK MP to be swayed by constituency interests**

State by Trump in 2024, many have resigned their seats. This means that most MP's are not in government. The Minister's patronage power is weaker. They serve in government because it points to the future. They seek appointment to

### Policy

UK parties are organised around a programme in Parliament. The electorate in a major election is expected to abide by the party's policy. Parties face criticism for not doing so. For example, Keir Starmer's Labour Party on a pledge not to raise taxes when the October 2024 election is held on employers.

By contrast, national parties are not significant in the US. Each state has its own policy platform. They rarely meet at national level. The **party convention** is a choice of presidential candidates. Policy is not of major

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focus much more on the candidate's personality. In 2020, Trump simply declared that if re-elected, he would continue to enact his 2016 policy platform. This is admittedly an extreme example – but something that would be unthinkable in UK politics.

Another factor is that a member of Congress is more likely than a UK MP to be swayed by constituency interests, which can sometimes override party loyalty. In July 2017 Trump was unable to pass a bill that would have 'repealed Barack Obama's Affordable Care Act' because of opposition from three senators from states with high proportions of voters who benefited from the Democrats' policy. The Republican senators were Susan Collins (Maine), Lisa Murkowski (Alaska) and John McCain (Arizona). Pressure from a powerful pressure group, such as the National Rifle Association, may also wield significant influence in determining the re-election prospects of a member of Congress. The NRA publicly rates candidates on their support for gun rights.

External influences of this kind are less important in UK parliamentary politics. Party loyalty frequently overcomes MPs' dislike of policies put forward by their leaders. For example, in July 2024, only seven Labour MPs voted against the Starmer government's decision to retain the **two-child benefit cap**, despite its widespread unpopularity within the parliamentary party and the wider Labour movement. The **cultural theory** is relevant in explaining this difference as there are stronger local and state loyalties in the US than in the UK.

The nature of the US and UK party systems reinforces these differences. The US has a two-party system, whereas in the UK, although Labour and the Conservatives usually alternate in government, there is a wider choice of parties for voters. At the July 2024 general election, 72 Liberal Democrats, five Reform UK and four Green MPs were elected. There is little prospect of an equivalent scenario in the US. The two main US parties are 'big tents' which arguably contain a wider range of ideological views than their UK counterparts. During Joe Biden's presidency, Democrat members of Congress ranged from left-wing progressives like Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a sponsor of

the Green New Deal, to right-wing Republicans in the party. His opposition to the Democrats' 'Build Back Better' bill was so strong that he might even join the Republicans. Biden ended his term as an

#### Party conventions

are held in an election year, for presidential and vice-presidential nominees.

**Separation of powers** – executive, legislative and judicial government – each has its own powers and responsibilities. The US has a more extreme version of this concept than the UK, with the three branches, usually the executive and legislative, usually being more intermingled – a feature of the UK's system.

**Two-child benefit cap** – a Conservative government has sought to limit the amount of child benefit that parents can claim. The cap is £13.44 per week. The Conservative government has claimed that this will save £3.6 billion over the next five years. The cap is expected to be introduced in 2025.

#### Discussion Questions

1. Is the presidential system the main reason for the differences between the US and the UK? Why or why not?
2. What are the consequences of the party whip system in the UK? How does it differ from the party whip system in the US?

#### Exam-style Questions

- Explain and analyse the differences between the US and the UK party systems. How could these differences be explained using the cultural theory? Why are the US parties less united than the UK parties?
- Analyse the reasons for the differences between the US and the UK party systems. Why are the US parties less united than the UK parties? *must consider the cultural theory and comparative theory*

*Dr Graham Goodlad teaches Politics at the University of York and is a co-author of the Pearson Politics textbook for the second edition of which*

### The three comparative theories

**Rational theory:** shows how individuals acting in a political system act in the rational way to win power or to pursue their policy goals.

**Cultural theory:** shows how individuals' behaviour is conditioned by their shared ideas, beliefs and values, such as a political party.

**Structural theory:** shows how political institutions and their formal procedures

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# African UNION

Continuing our series on regionalism in the world today, Dominic Gledhill and Finlay Cartwright take a look at the African Union.

An escalating humanitarian crisis in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has renewed international attention on the role the African Union plays in promoting peace and diplomacy across the continent. The M23 rebel group, reportedly backed by the neighbouring Rwandan government, has captured key cities in the DRC's eastern regions, triggering widespread human rights violations and the displacement of hundreds of thousands of civilians. Given the Union's primary objective to 'promote unity, solidarity, cohesion and cooperation' among African nations, concerns have been raised regarding the institution's capacity to resolve conflict. An analysis of the origins and structure of the African Union can offer valuable insight into the sources of these shortcomings, as well as potential reforms that could improve the Union's impact.

The African Union (AU) emerged from the previous Organisation of African Unity (OAU), which was formed when many African nations achieved their independence from European powers in the 1960s. The earlier group sought further decolonisation in Africa, for instance by supporting resistance movements in apartheid South Africa and Rhodesia. Some member states also argued for greater African integration – a step towards a unified African nation.

The primary problem that the OAU faced was its policy of non-interference with the affairs of its member states. This led to the organisation turning a blind eye to human rights abuses committed in countries such as Uganda. It was also undermined by divisions, with some African states taking different sides in the Cold War, and international interference continuing to undermine African governance.

In 1999 the OAU announced its intention to become the African Union in an effort spearheaded by the Libyan dictator Muammar Gaddafi. The aim was to promote greater economic integration among African nations, following the model of the European Union. The AU also dropped the previous policy of 'non-interference', instead favouring 'non-indifference' and an intention to prioritise human rights over the interests of rulers.

## Structure

Modelled on the structure of constituent institutions, the heads of government act as the key decision-makers, said to bear similarities to which European heads of state.

There is also an African Court of Justice and a panel of experts for oversight and can provide advisory opinions. Unlike the European Parliament, the AU is not directly elected by the legislatures of member states. The AU's directly elected parliament, the African Union Assembly, of this remain out of the AU's formal structure. The AU has non-democratic structures.

In addition, the African Union has a Commission of the European Communities, the African Union equivalent of the European Commission, implementing the objectives of the AU. There is also an African Court of Justice, an amalgamation of the European Court of Human Rights and the African Court of Justice.

The AU splits the continent into five regions for ease of administration. The AU has a strong institutional structure in Western Africa, for example, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS).

In 2013, the AU adopted a new development programme. Modelled on the EU's development goals, the AU aims to achieve that the institution has been in existence for 50 years. These include political integration, economic growth, and securing peace and stability. To achieve these goals in 2030, the AU has launched the Speed Railway Network, the African Union Passport. The AU's powers has also become more visible.

The AU was made a permanent institution in 2023, becoming the first supranational organisation in Africa. This marked an important step in the continent's collective development. The AU's functional approach to policymaking actor of the AU mirrors EU structures. The AU's authority that underpins the AU's elections are a key source of its authority as a supranational institution. The African Parliament is an independent body of national parliaments.

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## Effectiveness

Despite efforts to revive political coordination between African nations, the AU continues to struggle with problems of institutional weakness. The bloc is under-resourced and insufficiently integrated into the politics and civil society of member states to have the same kind of impact as an organisation like the EU. A lack of coherent leadership, and fragmentation of aims between member states, have been highlighted as critical obstacles to greater cooperation.

Integration is undermined in part by elites in some African nations, jockeying external forces in order to maintain the status quo. The presence of both failed states and fragile states at risk of failing throughout the continent also reduces the incentives of integration for more highly developed African nations.

Compared to its predecessor, the AU has taken a more assertive stance on unrest and violence among its member states, in line with its stated policy of 'non-indifference'. Several members of the bloc have been suspended after democratically elected governments were overthrown. In recent years, Mali, Sudan, Burkina Faso, Niger and Gabon have all had their membership paused following military takeovers. However, the AU's response to the current DRC crisis has faced criticism for its perceived lack of effective intervention. Responding to the deteriorating situation, the AU convened an emergency session of the Peace and Security Council (PSC) in February. While the PSC expressed concern over the escalating conflict, the council struggled to make meaningful diplomatic progress due to Rwandan President Paul Kagame's defiant response to allegations of support for rebels, claiming he'd 'spit in the face' of anyone attempting to intervene. The AU's attempt to balance respect for national sovereignty with the need for collective action in the face of human rights abuses underscores ongoing difficulty it faces in fulfilling its mandate to promote peace and cooperation.

Additionally, the AU has to date failed to establish its intended peacekeeping force, the African Standby Force, which would be tasked with direct intervention in conflict zones to prevent fighting. The failure to make progress on this aim is partly due to a lack of resources, but also internal disagreement over how and when such a force should be deployed.

The AU has also not been successful at reducing dependence on foreign powers. Two-thirds of the AU's budget is funded from non-African sources, with fewer than 40% of member states making annual contributions to the organisation. Peacekeeping missions are funded almost entirely by the European Union, while the AU has also become dependent on Chinese funding over the last decade. The AU's headquarters in Ethiopia was both funded and constructed by China, as a gift from the Asian nation.

Nevertheless, renewed integration has been a priority in negotiations within the bloc on the establishment of a Free Trade Area, or AfCFTA, which would link economies much more closely and improve economic relations across the continent. It is hoped this will reduce barriers to trade and continental infrastructure.

In conclusion, the AU faces a complex context of the continent's needs but simultaneously a lack of aspiration. Though its goals and its goals are ambitious, the AU remains constrained by a deficit, and lack of clear leadership, crises such as that in the DRC, tension within all supra-national sovereignty and to successfully fulfil its mandate. The AU's dependence on external powers and democratic legitimacy



Residents of a camp in eastern DRC fleeing conflict.

### Discussion Points

1. Why is reducing conflict a priority for the African Union?
2. To what extent is the AU's weakness of its own resources a barrier to its effectiveness?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the European Union and the African Union?

### Exam-style Questions

- Examine the effectiveness of the AU in achieving its stated aims.

*Dominic Glover is a freelance journalist. Finlay Cartwright is a Political Science student.*

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# 20 Questions

Twenty hints to test your knowledge or to play 'twenty questions' with a class



1. I am a British male politician.
2. I grew up in Surrey.
3. My father was a toolmaker.
4. I am named after the founder of the party I now lead.
5. I was the first in my family to graduate from university.
6. I studied law at Leeds University.
7. I completed my postgraduate studies at Oxford.
8. I worked as a barrister after leaving university.
9. My legal work included acting against the death penalty.
10. In 2008 I was appointed Director of Public Prosecutions.
11. I led prosecution on high-profile issues such as the 2011 riots.
12. I received a knighthood in 2014 for services to law and justice.
13. I was elected to Parliament in 2015 as a Labour MP.
14. I was appointed to the Shadow Cabinet as a junior minister.
15. I resigned from the Cabinet in 2016.
16. I was made Shadow Brexit Secretary in 2016.
17. In this role I advocated for a second referendum.
18. I ran for the Labour leadership in 2020, winning the election.
19. As leader I have moved my party to the centre-ground.
20. In 2024 I led the Labour Party to a landslide victory and became Prime Minister.

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## **Profile: JD Vance**

**Ideology:** National Conservative    **Nationality:** American  
**Career:** 50<sup>th</sup> Vice President of the United States

### **Personal Profile**

JD Vance was born in 1984 in Ohio on the edge of Appalachia, a region often associated with economic decline and cultural hardship. Vance has been open about his difficult childhood, characterised by poverty, abuse, and his mother's struggles with drug addiction.

Vance joined the United States Marines as a military journalist in 2003, before training to become a lawyer at Yale. During his studies, Vance was encouraged to write about his experience and his mobility – reflections that would become his bestselling memoir, *Hillbilly Elegy*. The book propelled him into the national spotlight, with many reviewers suggesting that Vance's account of rural decline could help explain a growing national rejection of a perceived 'Republican elite', culminating in Trump's presidential victory in 2016.

Following a brief stint as a venture capitalist, Vance was elected as Governor of Ohio in 2022. Initially a vocal critic of Trump, Vance flipped his position, becoming Trump's running mate in the 2024 election.

Vance has been a polarising figure in office, known for his opposition to abortion. His abrasive approach to foreign policy has attracted criticism from President Zelensky whether he had 'said thank you once?' for Vance's claim that Europe's greatest security concern was 'the international backlash'.



People have lost their faith that if they work hard, they can get ahead, if they play by the rules, then they can result in positive outcomes.

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# TOP 10

## Intelligence Blunders

Finlay Cartwright and James Walker rate the most egregious security failures and their consequences.



### 1. MIKE WALTZ AND 'SIGNALGATE'

Anyone in a group chat with their mates knows just how important it is to be careful about who gets added – one wrong addition and your most embarrassing secrets are out. Everyone knows this... except, apparently, Mike Waltz, Trump's freshly appointed National Security Advisor. Back in March it was revealed that Waltz had made a shocking tech blunder: he accidentally added *The Atlantic's* editor-in-chief, Jeffrey Goldberg, to a Signal group chat. But this wasn't just any chat – oh no – this was the chat being used by Trump's closest political allies to organise military strikes against Houthi rebels in Yemen. For obvious reasons, military intelligence is normally only communicated through highly protected channels. Signal, on the other hand, is a publicly available messaging app with headquarters in California. Goldberg, stunned by what he was witnessing, leaked the chaos unfold... then published everything to the press. The fallout? A **media frenzy** dubbing the incident 'Signalgate', with critics lambasting the administration's lax security protocols. Although Waltz has taken 'full responsibility', he has so far resisted calls for resignation.

### 2. THE FALKLANDS FIASCO

When Lord Carrington woke up on 2<sup>nd</sup> April 1982, the last thing he was expecting to read in the morning paper was this: British territory had just been invaded for the first time in 40 years. (The last time? Nazi Occupation of the Channel Islands during WWII!) Despite clear warning signs and intelligence reports suggesting that tensions were rising, the British government failed to take the threat seriously. Soon after Argentine forces invaded the small, remote Atlantic islands with barely any resistance, the British public were stunned, viewing it as a direct attack on territorial sovereignty. Although Lord Carrington, Foreign Secretary at the

time, had little involvement, the incident outraged British media. The stunning Westminster fallout, demonstrating ministerial responsibility, however, the invasion provided an opportunity. Plagued by a tumbling approval rating, one of the most dramatic moments in British history, reeling from the invasion had never even heard of the struggle from struggling leaders.

### 3. FROM CAMBRIDGE FIVE

In what might be one of the most and influential – in intelligence history, five well-known British spies with Marxist sympathies were recruited by the KGB as double agents. The Cambridge Five, as they were known in MI6, the Foreign Office, over decades, they passed on sensitive information undermining Western interests during the Cold War. When the ring of spies was exposed, the shockwaves through the community, shattered the American trust – a major blow. What went wrong? Basically, the intelligence community, staffed by Oxbridge types at the time, was complacent and failed to challenge the status quo. Turns out, wearing a trench coat

### 4. THE OCTOBER 7TH

On 7<sup>th</sup> October 2023, Hamas launched its assault on Israel's territory since the 1948 war, citing Israeli settlers in Gaza as justification. Hamas launched a surprise assault killed 1,195 Israeli citizens taken hostage. The failure in border security, how easily militant groups can operate in tandem with multiple internal and external sources, come to be seen as a stark intelligence failures. Complacent and lacking **groupthink**, admitted by *The Guardian*, a belief that senior

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couldn't fathom an attack of such scale was possible. Israel's retaliatory military campaign in Gaza has, so far, resulted in over 50,000 Palestinian deaths. Herzi Halevi, Israel's top general, became the most senior Israeli figure to resign in the wake of the intelligence failure, and more are expected to follow once investigations conclude. The lesson? No amount of tech or firepower can replace a willingness to **challenge the status quo**.

## 5. CLAPPER'S CONFESSIONAL

During a 2013 Senate hearing on the United States Intelligence Community, Senator Ron Wyden posed a deceptively simple question to then-Director of National Intelligence, James Clapper: 'Does the National Security Agency (NSA) collect any type of data at all on millions or hundreds of millions of Americans?' A simple yes or no question under oath – what could possibly go wrong? 'No, sir', Clapper responded, unknowingly setting the stage for a particularly embarrassing set of events. Turns out, **Clapper was lying through his teeth**. One can only imagine his face three months later, when leaked documents from former intelligence contractor Edward Snowden hit the headlines, revealing in excruciating detail, just how extensively the NSA had been spying on Americans. IZ's snoops. So, what possessed Clapper to perjure himself so publicly? In his testimony, he claimed he'd **forgotten**. Clapper later admitted he 'simply didn't think' of the NSA's mass phone data collection programme – a bit like a surgeon 'simply forgetting' to stitch up a patient, or a firefighter 'forgetting' to turn on the hose. Not exactly reassuring. Needless to say, Congress was not amused. Though Clapper resisted calls to resign, his reputation was permanently tarnished, with Snowden later citing Clapper's lie as a key reason he chose to blow the whistle.

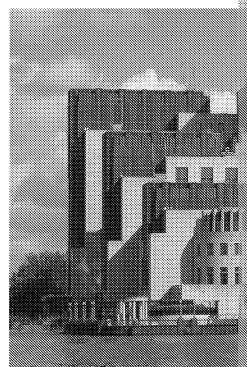
## 6. HOW TO ALMOST START WWII

How, at the height of the Cold War, did the USSR manage to sneak nuclear-armed missiles into Cuba – just 90 miles from Florida? The answer is... complicated. Or at least... partly. In October 1962, the US discovered Soviet nuclear missiles in Cuba, and the world held its breath. The kicker: by the time the sky was clear enough for American spy planes to finally confirm the missile sites, they were practically ready to launch. The US believed the Soviets wouldn't dare move offensive missiles onto the island, but they were wrong. Khrushchev gambled, Kennedy

panicked, and for 13 days the world stood on the edge of nuclear war – the closest modern history has come to global annihilation. No one could predict the scenes, the CIA scrambled to get the intel. What did the US learn? The Soviets had a complete satellite network of entire surveillance planes flying over Cuba in good weather! Not to mention the unreliable plane flying over Cuba for reconnaissance, making it clear that a major power could not be trusted.

## 7. MINISTERS, MINISTERS

In 1961, John Profumo, Minister of War – thought of as a charming, well-connected, and well-flirting with 19-year-old models – was accused of a problem: Keeler was a Soviet naval attaché. The problem was sharing a mistress. Profumo lied to Parliament, claiming there was no affair. Spoiler alert: it came out, the scandal was a disaster, but as a national field day. Profumo was forced to resign. The government took a hit, and Profumo was forced to resign. Macmillan cited 'ill health' (but



The SIS building at Vauxhall, London, on the River Thames. It is the headquarters of the British Intelligence Service.

## 8. DODGY DOGS AND DEADLY COMRADES

In 2003, Prime Minister Tony Blair stood in Parliament with a dossier in his hand. He claimed, with great confidence, that Iraq had weapons of mass destruction (WMDs) that could be used to threaten the world. This was the key justification for the invasion of Iraq to the British public. None of it was true. The dossier was a misrepresentation of fact.

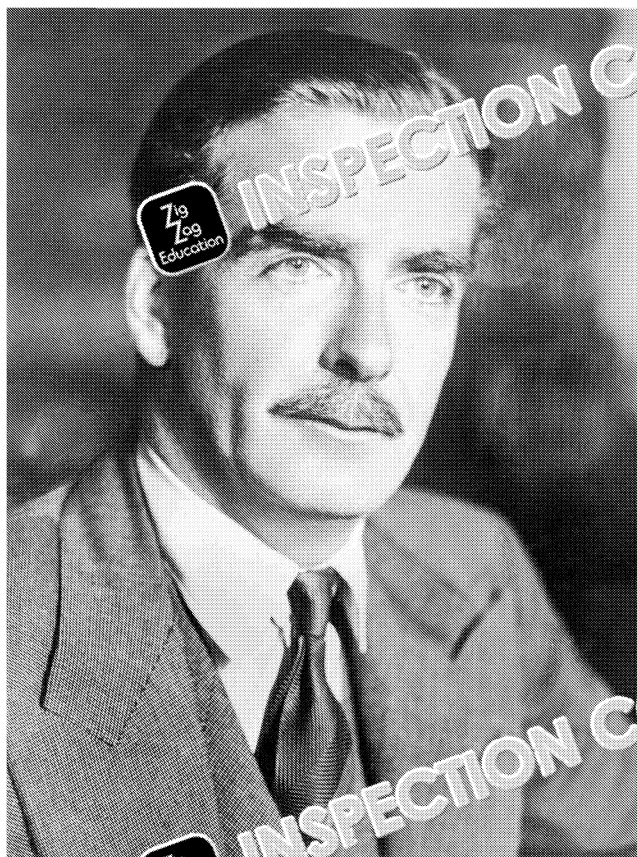
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The Iraq war dragged on until 2011, costing thousands of lives and eroding trust in government. Blair's reputation never recovered. His legacy? Not education or the Good Friday Agreement, but taking the UK into a war based on phoney evidence.

## 9. THE CRISIS THAT SANK BRITAIN'S GLOBAL SWAGGER

In 1956, Egyptian President Gamal Abdel Nasser nationalised the Suez Canal, a vital trade route long controlled by Britain and France. Outraged, the UK, France, and Israel cooked up a secret plan: Israel would invade Egypt, and Britain and France would sweep in under the guise of peacekeeping. But they made a huge oversight – they didn't tell the Americans. When the plan kicked off, the US and Soviet Union both threatened escalation. Faced with global backlash, a tanking pound, and zero support from Washington, the UK was forced into a humiliating withdrawal, leading to total foreign policy embarrassment. Prime Minister Anthony Eden resigned two months later, and Britain's days as a world superpower were officially over.



Anthony Eden was Prime Minister for a brief few years, and the Suez Crisis (above) was its defining moment.

## 10. THE GUILL

In the early 1970s, Willy Brandt was busy reshaping West Germany's foreign policy with *Ostpolitik* – a bold approach to the Eastern Bloc. Meanwhile, in France, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Georges Pompidou were dealing with the aftermath of the May 1968 protests. In West Germany, Konrad Adenauer's successor, Ludwig Erhard, was facing mounting political trust issues, and his resignation wasn't directly responsible for the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Finlay Cartwright and  
ZigZag Education.

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