



United Kingdom Report

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Sustainable Governance
Indicators 2017

Executive Summary

Due to the “leave” result in the 23 June referendum on UK membership of the European Union, 2016 has been a political watershed for the United Kingdom. Although formally only consultative in nature, it has been interpreted as politically binding and has set in motion a process expected to be transformative in the governance of the country. In some respects, despite the enormity of the coming changes and the many challenges it will pose, the system of governance has coped well. The elevation of Theresa May to the prime ministership, and the many associated ministerial changes happened quickly and with few obvious complications or difficulties in the conduct of government. As is usual when there is a change of leadership during a parliament, rather than at a general election, some shifts in government priorities were quickly announced, including the reconfiguration of ministerial responsibilities to deal with Brexit.

Yet in other respects, the referendum result has drawn attention to shortcomings in governance, not least the inadequate thinking-through of so momentous a decision and the lack of planning for a vote to leave. It also laid bare a number of polarizing political and geographical tensions, both in society and within the existing party system. Negotiating Brexit will necessitate extensive legislation and has exposed weaknesses in the political system, as it struggles to chart a way through unknown territory, while defining the country’s preferences. Although the government seems to have accepted the popular verdict (repeatedly asserting that “Brexit means Brexit”) and has vowed to make the best of it, there are evident splits at the top of government, with some ministers identified as supporters of a clean break and tough limitations on EU migrants, while others stress the need to retain as much access to the single market as possible. Even the integrity of the UK is under threat if Brexit leads to new demands for independence in Scotland, while there are concerns about how to avoid a hard border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland for fear of reigniting sectarian conflict. These developments portend a period of uncertainty likely to be challenging for the sustainability of governance.

Although the economy proved after the referendum to be more resilient than feared and the labor market remains buoyant, there are vulnerabilities associated with weak productivity and macroeconomic imbalances. The new

Chancellor of the Exchequer has announced a marginally slower pace of fiscal consolidation, partly to allow for more (and much needed) investment in infrastructure and housing, but also because economic growth is forecast to be slower over the next two years. Nevertheless, the long-term fiscal position is sustainable, helped by monetary policy remaining very loose.

Integration policy is another area affected by the referendum outcome. The anti-immigration rhetoric during the campaign and a spike in hate crimes exposed social tensions, and raised questions about the governance of the multinational and multi-ethnic reality of modern Britain. Evidence that a very high proportion of newly created jobs have been filled by immigrants, alongside the reliance of many sectors of activity, including health and care (widely perceived as being core state functions in the UK welfare state) highlights the key governance dilemma that the UK both needs and wants to limit immigrants. There are also threats to the successful higher education system from EU nationals being deterred, whether as staff or students, or to the City of London as a crucial export industry.

With political attention and government resources unavoidably focused on Brexit over the last year, other dimensions of sustainable governance have had lower salience. A decision was, at long last, taken on building a new London runway, although some doubts linger about whether it will go ahead. However, the momentum behind decentralization of governance, including plans for a “Northern Powerhouse” to rebalance the economy spatially, has slowed, calling into question the localism agenda promoted over recent years. Some changes in mechanisms of governance, such as the mix of cabinet committees, have taken place, but for the most part governance capacities have been characterized by continuity.

Key Challenges

Managing the consequences of the Brexit referendum - both internally and externally - will undoubtedly be the dominant governance challenge over the coming years, requiring delicately interlinked developments in almost every aspect of the British system. An evident danger is that the demands of dealing with Brexit will be so great that other policies are neglected, with the implication that the government will have to reserve sufficient time for pressing domestic issues.

While, in many domains, the UK's recent policy performance has remained good, risks have to be recognized. More needs to be done to curb macroeconomic imbalances and to boost productivity growth, while investments in infrastructure and housing have to be increased. Some core social services, especially health and social care, are under growing pressure, both financial and organizational, and solutions will require additional spending on these services. Although contrary to the political philosophy of the government, raising additional tax revenue may be necessary to reconcile additional spending with the medium-term pursuit of fiscal consolidation. With signs that inflation is picking-up, managing the transition to a less loose monetary policy will require attention to its impact on the high debt of both consumers and the public sector.

A major political challenge will be to sustain a parliamentary majority to support the course chosen by the prime minister toward EU exit. Like the new prime minister, a majority of MPs were nominally in favor of the "remain" position before the referendum, but with a "leave" vote in some two-thirds of constituencies in England, the expectation is that parliament will not seek to thwart Brexit. Even so, and despite the weakness of the main opposition parties, the government has only a small majority and is vulnerable to rebellions, not least by former ministers in the Cameron government. This could make for difficulties when contested decisions have to be taken. Greater transparency from the prime minister and some of her most senior ministers would help.

A related challenge is the definition of what is to be achieved in negotiations, both with the rest of the European Union and with other trading partners. The government chose to delay triggering article 50 of the EU Treaty to start the exit process and has been slow to set out its aims, resulting not only in uncertainty, but also antagonizing its EU partners. In part, this is because it proved harder than expected to interpret a referendum decision, which highlighted a range of cleavages across the UK that will take time and effort to reconcile. The onus is, nevertheless, on the government (and especially the prime minister), to speed-up and to be clear about her aims. Notwithstanding the wide scope of the coming change, the devil is likely to lie in the detail and there will be a need to mollify regional and sectoral interests. A particular challenge will be how to accommodate the political fact that Scotland voted clearly for "remain," prompting calls for a second Scottish independence referendum.

Changes in the administrative structure of the government (the setting up of two new departments charged with coordinating Whitehall planning on Brexit and formulating new trade policy, respectively) have injected an element of

uncertainty into the administrative process. Care will be needed to limit friction between ministers, as well as between politicians and civil servants, if the many complex changes in prospect are to be achieved.

Politically, the government needs to be more sensitive to the 48% of voters wishing to remain in the European Union. More generally, the significant shifts of recent years in political allegiances pose democratic challenges. Although Corbyn, the Labour Party leader, decisively overcame a challenge to his position over the summer, the consensus is that the opposition to the government is weak and often ineffective. This makes it all the more important to maintain media scrutiny of government and to avoid some of the more extreme proposed curbs on press freedom. The engagement of other societal actors in governance may also need to be strengthened, despite the apparent reluctance of business, in particular, to express strong views.

Policy Performance

I. Economic Policies

Economy

Economic Policy
Score: 8

The UK economic framework was substantially reformed after 1979 in a market-friendly direction and most of these reforms were maintained after the election of the Labour government in 1997, albeit with some rebalancing toward labor interests – notably through the introduction of a minimum wage. The UK economy grew steadily from the early 1990s up to 2007, but hindsight suggests that the underlying economic model depended too much on consumer demand and on an increasingly risk-prone financial sector.

Because of the financial sector's increased share in the economy, the United Kingdom was badly hit by the financial crisis, which began in 2007. As a result of the financial crisis, revenue from taxes on the banking and consumer sectors fell, while public expenditure increased due to rising social security costs and government support for failing banks. In contrast to many EU partner countries, the government was relatively quick to respond to problems in the financial sector. Consequently, the provision of credit has roughly returned to pre-crisis levels. The change in government in 2010 led to the adoption of an economic policy framework ostensibly focused on budgetary consolidation, but in reality the squeeze on public spending has been less than is often claimed because the government chose to exempt key areas, such as health care spending. The corollary, especially as service charges on government debt increased, was that cuts in other areas of public spending had to be even deeper. As a result, these cuts have been very political, and have led to a reshaping of the structure and role of the state. While initial assessments of the strategy were predominantly critical, the situation has improved in recent years. GDP growth was at a rate of 2.1% in the second quarter of 2016 and employment has reached another all-time high at 31.8 million people employed. However, the current account deficit reached a new high of 5.4% of GDP in 2015, which is the highest in the EU. This is indicative of the continuing export weakness of the UK economy,

attributable at least in part to weak demand from the euro zone - the UK's largest export market. The uncertainty caused by the referendum result was widely expected to lead to a deterioration in the economy, but subsequent data suggest the economy has been more resilient than forecast. There are also concerns that the robust GDP performance has been driven mainly by consumer demand and that private debt is still high, sustained by very loose monetary policy.

Labor Markets

Labor Market
Policy
Score: 8

After a period of remarkably good and stable labor-market performance in which the rate of unemployment was below that of the euro zone and the OECD average, conditions in the United Kingdom deteriorated in the wake of the 2008 crisis and the ensuing economic downturn. Underlying weaknesses (such as the comparatively high degree of working age inactivity linked to the high number of claimants of disability-related benefits) came to the fore, and the unemployment rate rose to its highest rate since the mid-1990s. But after labor-market flexibility was increased through deregulation and the lowering of secondary-wage costs, the unemployment rate fell significantly from 8.3% at the end of 2012 to now 4.9% in September 2016. In fact, recent labor market performance has been so robust that the new government has declared full employment an official government objective. The UK labor market continues to attract substantial numbers of economic migrants.

However, the increase in employment has come at the cost of weakness in real wages. Furthermore, wages have only recently returned to their pre-crisis levels, partly because of a moderating effect of immigration. An increase in the national minimum wage to the level of the so-called living wage has been announced (£7.20 since 1 April 2016 for people over 25 and scheduled to rise more rapidly than average wages over the coming years), which is expected to reduce sharply the de facto subsidy to employers provided by tax credits. There has also been criticism of other facets of labor market flexibility. For example, the topic of zero-hour contracts gained substantial attention during the general election, though research has indicated that a sizeable proportion of people employed on zero-hour contracts are happy with their contracts (Brinkley, 2013). Although the rate of youth unemployment had fallen to 13.1% by September 2016, it is still more than double the overall unemployment rate of 4.8% and six percentage points above Germany, but much lower than the other major economies in Europe. Consequently, integration of young people into the UK labor market could be improved. However, the UK does well in retaining older workers in the labour market, with an employment rate for those aged 55-64 of 62%, compared with an EU average of 54%

Citation:

Brinkley, I. (2013) "Flexibility or insecurity? Exploring the rise of zero-hours contracts" London: The Work Foundation

<https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/zero-hours-contracts>

Taxes

Tax Policy
Score: 7

The United Kingdom has a progressive income-tax system. The balance between direct and indirect taxes is reasonably fair, as measured in terms of horizontal equity. The system is, however, very complex. In relation to vertical equity, there are too many opportunities for tax avoidance, with the results bordering on evasion for the rich. Property taxes are high and have been increased for purchases of high value houses, but labor taxes are low compared with many other EU countries. The financial crisis and the ensuing economic downturn sharply reduced tax revenue with the squeeze on wages contributing to a lower yield from income tax. However, overall tax revenue has risen in the past years and is projected to be sufficient to continue to narrow the public deficit over the course of the current parliament. A risk factor is, though, that the potential costs of leaving the European Union are still unclear and therefore not calculable yet.

Citation:

World Economic Forum 2015: The Global Competitiveness Report 2015-2016.

Budgets

Budgetary Policy
Score: 7

The United Kingdom is a highly centralized state. As such, central government has considerable control over budgetary policy. Most public spending is directly or indirectly controlled by the central government, with few other influences compared to, for example, federal countries. This also means, however, that the central government has to shoulder the blame if things go wrong.

Under the previous Labour governments, the "golden rule" of UK fiscal policy was to limit deficit spending to investment over the business cycle. However, public spending as a proportion of GDP increased during the 2000s and, in hindsight, was too pro-cyclical. In 2009, adherence to fiscal rules was abandoned to cope with the consequences of the crisis. There is now a fiscal council, the Office for Budget Responsibility, and fiscal rules, including provision for surpluses in "good times," are being entrenched in a new Charter for Budget Responsibility.

Due to uncertainty about the economic consequences of leaving the European Union ("Brexit"), the government has postponed its goal of achieving a budget

surplus by the fiscal year 2019 to 2020. Instead, a small increase in government debt is now forecast for the next two years before coming down again. While the public budget deficit has fallen from 10.2% of GDP in 2009 to 2010 - the postwar peak - to 3.4 % of GDP in the fiscal year of 2015 to 2016. According to the latest European Commission forecasts, it remains the highest in the EU after Croatia, Greece and Spain in nominal terms, and the highest in cyclically adjusted terms. Nevertheless, low interest rates and the extensive purchases of public debt by the Bank of England through its quantitative easing program has saved the UK from paying a high price for the period of high debt, with debt service payments only marginally higher than during the 2000s. Among the economies of the larger EU countries, public debt in the UK is now a little below that of France and Spain, and well below that of Italy. Yet, it is projected to be 20 percentage points above Germany's in 2016. Assuming that interest rates (at a record low 0.25% since 15 July 2016) remain low and the government sticks to its budgetary plans, the UK's fiscal policy is financially sustainable.

Citation:

European Commission Spring Forecasts 2016 (ec.europa.eu/economy_finance/eu/countries/uk_en.htm)
HM Treasury Autumn Statement 2016

(https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/571559/autumn_statement_2016_web.pdf)

Research and Innovation

R&I Policy
Score: 8

The United Kingdom's tradition of being an active player in research and innovation dates back to the Industrial Revolution. The country's clusters of pre-eminent universities have for a long time played an important role in linking cutting-edge academic research with industries such as biotechnology or information and communications technology (ICT). Performance has been weaker in terms of overall R&D spending, which continues to fall well short of EU targets, as well as in the conversion of innovation into sustainable, large-scale production, which holds the potential for long-term profitability. However, it is important to emphasize that the UK economy does not have the industrial base to support a large-scale R&D effort, so it is necessary to look at other indicators, such as ICT spending (which matters more for service industries), to better understand trends in innovation in the UK.

Over the decades, attempts have been made by successive governments to improve this situation, for example, by targeting weaknesses in technical education on various levels. Recent government initiatives have focused on extending tax credits for R&D, setting up regional Technology and Innovation Centres (TICs), investing in digital infrastructure and new university research facilities, as well as establishing Innovate UK to promote economic growth

through science and technology. There is also a current debate about the degree to which the United Kingdom should seek to attract highly skilled immigrants, which has been muddied by a broader attempt to curb immigration that is having some effect on the willingness of foreign students to come to the United Kingdom.

There is an ongoing debate about the degree to which the UK should seek to attract highly skilled immigrants and some fears have surfaced about whether this will deter highly qualified researchers. Universities have expressed concerns about future access to EU funding and participation in collaborative research projects, but there has been no clear message from government about whether the UK will continue to participate in EU programs after Brexit. Public science budgets have, nevertheless, been largely protected.

While the optimism expressed in the Innovation and Research Strategy, launched in 2011, and the sums involved are considerable, a long-term perspective and indifferent results from previous initiatives necessitate caution.

Global Financial System

Stabilizing Global
Financial Markets
Score: 7

The City of London is home to one of the world's main financial hubs. Consequently, governments in the United Kingdom have traditionally tried to protect the interests of the City of London against more intrusive regulation whether national, European or global. Governments have often argued that the special characteristics of London as a financial center are not given sufficient attention by Brussels in particular. The Libor scandal of 2012 over the fixing of market interest rates, as well as other instances of market abuse, contributed to a reduction in public support for the financial sector and increased public pressure for tighter financial regulation.

At the international level, successive governments have taken a prominent role in attempts to improve the international regulatory framework through international bodies, such as the Financial Stability Board (chaired by the governor of the Bank of England) and the Bank for International Settlements, as well as through the prominent role of the Bank Governor in the European Systemic Risk Board. The United Kingdom has had substantial influence on EU financial reforms, both through government action and in the form of initiatives from the City of London.

The outcome of the Brexit referendum has created some uncertainty about UK positions on financial regulation.

II. Social Policies

Education

Education Policy
Score: 7

The Cameron government continued the marketization strategy pursued by the previous coalition and Labour governments. It pursued a policy of liberalizing school regulation to enable non-governmental organizations – such as foundations, businesses and parent-teacher corporations – to set up their own schools, while also strengthening government powers to intervene in “failing” schools and turn them into sponsored academies. The core of this policy was to improve performance by boosting inter-school competition, as measured by performance tables administered by the regulator, Ofsted.

Ongoing programs, such as Pupil Premium, are designed to simultaneously improve educational outcomes and strengthen social cohesion by encouraging well-performing schools to accept disadvantaged children. However, the socioeconomic composition of many of the UK’s schools still poses a significant challenge for students from disadvantaged and immigrant backgrounds. A Children’s Commission on Poverty inquiry indicated that inter-school competition has increased financial costs for pupils and their families, as many schools try to stand out by introducing fancier uniforms, new textbooks or extravagant field trips. Education has been among the areas largely protected from public spending cuts. Prime Minister May announced plans for new grammar schools, state run secondary schools subject to selection on academic grounds, but considered by many in the UK to be contrary to social mobility. However, May’s announcement has not yet been put into action.

In the higher education sector, the substantial increase in tuition fees, from £3,300 to levels now in excess of £9,000 per year, has been contentious. However, so far, there has been no discernible effect on overall student enrolment rates or on access to higher education for students from poorer backgrounds. British universities are concerned that the departure of the UK from the European Union will be damaging, especially if accompanied by a clampdown on EU migrants. Fears that students from other EU countries will be deterred from applying to what is a highly successful sector, that EU nationals will be put off from working in British universities and that participation in EU research programs will become harder have led to demands from university leaders for a “soft” Brexit. There have been reports of EU consortia being reluctant to include British researchers in new research proposals.

Citation:

WEF ranks quality of UK education system as 21th in Global Competitiveness Report 2015/16 (CH 1st, GER 10th, USA 18th, F 30st).

<https://www.theguardian.com/education/2016/jul/12/uk-scientists-dropped-from-eu-projects-because-of-post-brexite-funding-fears>

Social Inclusion

Social Inclusion
Policy
Score: 7

A traditional system of social class has long been a feature of British society. Since 1997, successive governments have sought, through a variety of policy instruments and initiatives, to overcome these divisions and to promote social mobility and inclusion. In his short second term as prime minister, David Cameron followed a classic one-nation conservatism policy that aimed to make the United Kingdom “a place where a good life is in reach for everyone who is willing to work and do the right thing,” which echoed the “welfare to work” policy approach of the previous coalition and Labour governments. His successor, Theresa May, followed this path by declaring her “mission to make Britain a country that works for everyone” in her first statement as prime minister in July 2016, although with a slightly more leftist spin. It remains to be seen how this rhetoric will coagulate into social policy.

However, while applauding a sharp reduction in child poverty and an increase in the enrolment rate of students from disadvantaged backgrounds in tertiary education, the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission’s latest State of the Nation report also observed that “progress to date has been too limited and too slow.” The report noted the persistence of divisions around various social criteria, including class, geography and race. Although the UK’s Gini coefficient has fallen significantly, a common phenomenon after a grave recession, it remains relatively high compared to other OECD countries and the distribution of wealth has become more unequal. While youth unemployment had fallen to 13.1% by September 2016, it is still more than double the overall unemployment rate of 4.8%. A policy innovation has been the creation of a social mobility index.

Overall, the proportion of “NEETs” (people who are not in employment, education or training), continued to decline, but is still high in some of the less affluent cities. In addition, the average income of young people has started to lag behind the average income of other working-age population groups. A chronic shortage of affordable housing has further exacerbated the situation of low-income households in the more prosperous metropolitan areas across the south-east of England. This shortage has made it especially difficult for young people to get on to the housing ladder.

Despite persistent economic inequalities, the United Kingdom has a relatively good record in promoting the inclusion of disadvantaged groups and ethnic minorities, and also has a relatively good record on gender equality. There has been a discernible social shift against forms of discriminatory language or action, with a number of public figures being ostracized as a result of inappropriate comments. Legislation allowing same-sex marriage came into force in 2014. While reservations regarding multiculturalism and anti-immigrant sentiments remain common, immigrants tend to be more socially integrated than in many other countries. However, the anti-immigrant rhetoric of some “leave” campaign messaging, and widely reported attacks on immigrants and social minorities in the aftermath of the Brexit referendum testify to the persistence of hostile attitudes in some quarters.

Citation:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/485928/State_of_the_nation_2015__foreword_and_summary.pdf https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/532793/Main_text_SFR22_2016.pdf

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/social-mobility-index>

<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/statement-from-the-new-prime-minister-theresa-may>

Health

Health Policy
Score: 7

The National Health Service (NHS) remains a cornerstone of the United Kingdom’s universal welfare state and is widely regarded as a core public institution. However, the decentralization of clinical commission groups, which has affected all 8,000 general practices in England, has been controversial. Most health care provided by the NHS is free at the point of delivery. However, there are charges for prescriptions and dental treatment, though specific demographic groups (e.g., pensioners) are exempt from these charges. There is a limited private health care system.

While patient convenience may not be a central focus of NHS provision, attempts have been made to improve local health care by creating Health and Well-Being Boards to bring together representatives from all social services as well as elected representatives. The NHS’s quality as measured by the Human Development Index (HDI) health index is very high (0.931). The financial position of many hospital trusts is rather precarious and has been the subject of growing concern over the last year, with more hospitals struggling to maintain standards

As a universal service, the NHS scores very highly in terms of inclusion. The Health and Social Act 2012 now also allows patients to choose a general

practitioner without geographical restrictions. Quality is generally high. However, input and outcome indicators of health care, such as how quickly cancer patients are seen by specialists or the incidence of “bed-blocking” (i.e. where complementary social care is difficult to arrange and so patients are kept in hospital), vary considerably across localities. A report by the Commission on the Future of Health and Social Care in England recommended that health and social care services should be much more closely integrated, but there has, to date, been little improvement.

The NHS is invariably at the center of heated public debates. Lately, the debate has been sparked by the changes in the 2016/17 tariff, which regulates public funding for patient treatment and staff salaries. The tariff changes have shifted and reduced the public payment to clinics and acute trusts – private hospital operating companies commissioned by the Department of Health. These changes contradicted many existing business models and aggravated the funding crises of several major acute trusts. There has also been a long-running dispute over the pay and working conditions of junior doctors, which has led to strikes. The protracted dispute between the government and junior doctors concerns government attempts to achieve full 7/24 operation in response to concerns that treatment at weekend was of lower standard, but the government’s plans have still not come to fruition. Nevertheless, UK health care remains way above average on an international scale.

Citation:

http://www.kingsfund.org.uk/sites/files/kf/field/field_publication_file/Commission%20Final%20%20interactive.pdf

Families

Family Policy
Score: 8

Over the last twenty years, policy initiatives to improve the work-life balance and opportunities for women’s participation in the labor-market have included expanding the provision of childcare facilities extending maternity leave and the introduction of paternity leave. More recently, there have been public calls for companies to increase the number of women on their board of directors, while the possibility of introducing quotas for company boards has been raised.

The Cameron government had emphasized the Troubled Families program, established in 2011. The program aims to help families in precarious situations with personal mentoring and support from local social workers. However, a recent evaluation from the National Institute for Economic and Social Research revealed mixed results. The increased spending apparently did not result in any statistically significant betterment in the living conditions of the supported families, though at the same time the subjective reporting of the supported

families did improve.

Cuts in welfare spending, associated with the central policy of reducing the budget deficit, have negatively affected some core family policy measures, especially for single mothers who rely disproportionately on social benefits.

Citation:

National Evaluation of the Troubled Families Programme

Pensions

Pension Policy
Score: 8

The United Kingdom has a three-pillar pension system in which the second (employer-based) is the mainstay. Private pension funds were hardest hit by the financial crisis as investment yields fell, and some needed capital injections from employers. However, this has not had a significant effect on the incomes of those already retired. New entrants into private pension schemes are being offered less attractive terms than their predecessors. The Pensions Act 2010 will increase the state pension age to 66, from 65 for men and 60 for women, by 2020. Certain reforms have shifted pressure from pension funds to individual pensioners. These reforms will change the pensioners' living conditions substantially in the years to come. However, compared with many other countries, the UK public pension system is fiscally sustainable and guarantees the maintenance of a minimum income for pensioners through a "triple lock" of raising the basic state pension by the highest rate of inflation, average wages or 2% per annum. The Cameron government had pledged to maintain this policy and the May government seems intent to maintain this course, despite some criticism about the growing burden on the "millennial" generation.

The United Kingdom used to have a comparatively high degree of poverty among the elderly, but this has improved as pension provision has expanded, an increase in the proportion of pensioners owning mortgage-free properties and through specific additional payments, such as winter heating. The overall figures disguise some inequalities among groups of pensioners. For example, lifelong housewives fare much worse than those who have the benefit of adding occupational or private pensions to their income from the state pension system. Most pensioners are, however, on reasonably comfortable incomes. If anything, recent debate has been about cutting some of the fringe benefits of better-off pensioners, such as free bus travel, because of fears about an undue burden on younger generations.

Integration

Integration Policy
Score: 6

Due to the country's colonial history, the United Kingdom has a large share of ethnic minorities (approximately 14% of the population), and integration has long been an important area of government policy. However, while the Human Rights Act 1998 and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 imposed the general duty to promote race equality on all public authorities, the United Kingdom has not developed a formal integration program. The focus has been more on the protection of minorities than on the integration of migrants, but that is because the United Kingdom has a preference for multiculturalism. There are both regional and ethnic differences in integration, with some cities and smaller towns having concentrations of populations of distinct ethnic groups, and tensions over access to public housing and public services in localities where recent immigrants have concentrated.

The Equality Act 2006 merged three existing bodies (including the Commission for Racial Equality) into a new Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). The EHRC is an umbrella organization, which attempts to enforce integration and equality across several dimensions, such as ethnicity. In recent years, attempts to create a national narrative around "Britishness" were aimed at changing from an ethnocentric concept of citizenship to a more civic one. Despite the anti-immigration narrative of the UK Independence Party and the tensions associated with the refugee crisis (particularly concerning the refugee camp near Calais), in high-profile cases (e.g., cases involving celebrities or police officers) where racist language was used, the perpetrators have been roundly condemned .

Attempts to increase diversity in parliament have been promoted by both major parties. As a consequence, public life reflects society more today than it did two decades ago. However, in public bodies, such as the police, concerns remain that minority ethnic groups are under-represented.

During the referendum, there was anti-immigrant rhetoric and a subsequent 42% surge in hate crimes, prompting the United Nations to condemn the violence and express its deep concern about the rise of "divisive, anti-immigrant and xenophobic rhetoric" in the UK's mainstream political discourse. Other bodies such as the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) or Human Rights Watch have expressed similar concerns. It is, however, important to stress that British society remains broadly hostile to discrimination.

Citation:
National Police Chiefs' Council Report 08. Jul 2016.

United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination: CERD/C/GBR/CO/21-23.

European Commission against Racism and Intolerance: ECRI Report on the United Kingdom, 4 October 2016.

Safe Living

Safe Living
Conditions
Score: 8

Objectively speaking, citizens of the United Kingdom have enjoyed improved security over the last 15 years as the crime rate has dropped significantly and consistently (although it continues to be relatively high in absolute terms when compared to other OECD countries). This is not reflected, however, in increased subjective perception of security, since British citizens (probably influenced by media reporting) perceive crime to be on the rise. The issue thus remains in the public spotlight, and cuts in the budgets of the Home Office and the Ministry of Justice – in line with overall budget cuts to fight the deficit – have therefore been politically contentious. The most recent figures do, nevertheless, suggest a further fall in crime, although questions have been raised about whether “new” crimes like cybercrime are being adequately recorded. Moreover, even in higher crime areas, there are few signs that citizens consider the environment to be unsafe.

The coalition government abolished some of the harsh counter-terrorism laws introduced by earlier Labour governments in an attempt to correct the balance in favor of civil rights. A new National Crime Agency started work in the autumn of 2013 as a central body for crime fighting. Certain high-profile revelations of police malpractice, including the recently exposed falsification of records in the Hillsborough football disaster of 1989, have led to disquiet about police behavior, but have not conspicuously undermined confidence.

The 2015 Conservative government – and its Home Secretary Theresa May – reformed the police disciplinary and complaint system to improve trust between citizens and the police. Furthermore, it has made the Police Federation subject to the Freedom of Information Act to improve transparency in the police force.

There is continuing concern about terrorist threats, accentuated by the renewed difficulties in the Middle East and the evidence of the involvement of UK-born jihadis. There is concern about the threat posed by returning fighters from the Middle East, which has led to an increase in resources for the security services. There are occasional briefings from these services about “plots disrupted.”

Global Inequalities

Global Social
Policy
Score: 8

Despite regular objections from politicians, the UK has been one of the few countries, which has maintained a commitment to devote 0.7% of GNI to foreign aid. In 2015, only Sweden, Norway, Luxembourg, Denmark and the United Arab Emirates did the same. Under the coalition government, this spending was ring-fenced against cuts and the recent spending review has reaffirmed the commitment.

Development assistance spending is coordinated by the Department for International Development, whose work is scrutinized by the newly created Independent Commission for Aid Impact.

In general, the United Kingdom is a proponent of open markets and fair access for developing countries, although an attempt in the late 1990s to espouse an ethical trade policy was subsequently quietly dropped.

However, although the UK government has ring-fenced international development aid, this generosity has not been extended to the millions of refugees who, escaping war and poverty, have arrived in Europe over the last year. The UK government has repeatedly refused to shelter any refugee who had already made it to Europe and was reluctant to take more than a few hundred vulnerable children following the closure of the Calais “jungle.” Instead, the UK government has offered to accept 20,000 refugees from camps in Syria over the next five years. Compared to the number of refugees already living in the overcrowded registration and aid facilities of other European Union countries, 20,000 is very little. While politically understandable in the context of the EU referendum and recent general election results, this position contrasts sharply to the otherwise generous approach to international aid policy.

III. Environmental Policies

Environment

Environmental
Policy
Score: 7

Environmental goals were ostensibly close to the heart of both governments led by David Cameron. Yet, some critics have expressed dismay at cuts in subsidies for green energy, and an increase in government support for natural gas fracking and nuclear power. The latter reaffirmed in the decision to proceed with a new reactor. The coalition government (2010-2015) set itself the goal of becoming

“the greenest government ever,” and its Conservative successor government has not noticeably changed tack. However, worries about the cost of living led the government to suspend automatic increases in fuel duties for seven years in succession, and there have been rumblings of discontent over the 2008 Climate Change Act, which forms the legislative foundation for climate-change policies. In many areas, the Cameron government continued previous government’s initiatives. For example, market-based environmental policy mechanisms, and a planning system designed to preserve and protect “green belts” around major conurbations. The “eco towns” initiative of the former Labour government, promoting low carbon emissions, renewable energy, expansive green space and high recycling rates, was substantially scaled back due to spending cuts.

After taking over from Cameron in July 2016, Prime Minister Theresa May dissolved the Department of Energy and Climate Change, which had existed since 2008, merging into the newly established Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy. This step has been harshly criticized by environmentalist groups. In her keynote speech at the Conservative and Unionist Party Conference, Prime Minister May did not mention any environmental topics beyond the planned ratification of the Paris Climate Agreement.

Much environmental policy is still determined by the European Union (e.g., the Water Framework Directive or the Biodiversity Agenda) beyond which there is little space for nationally specific initiatives. After “Brexit,” some divergence from the European Union could occur, although there is no reason to believe that the UK will renege on big issues such as the Paris climate accord. Renewable water resources have never been an issue for the UK, although utility companies are being encouraged to reduce leaks and improve sewerage. Forestry policy is a devolved competence. In England there is Forestry Commission, which has responsibility for both trees and biodiversity.

Global Environmental Protection

Global
Environmental
Policy
Score: 8

Under the Conservative governments of John Major (1990-1997), there was a policy shift and the United Kingdom became one of the foremost advocates of environmental protection standards in the European Union. The UK ratified the Kyoto Protocol. Although the government remained skeptical about global environmental protection regimes, even though they were consistent with nationally pursued policies.

The United Kingdom has consistently pursued environmental protection and the reduction of carbon emissions. The previous coalition government continued the carbon emissions targets for 2020 set by the preceding Labour government. The new Conservative government is likely to maintain this approach. The

Conservative government has announced plans to deregulate the permission process for the construction of on-shore wind farms to raise the UK's share of renewable energies, although it also supports relaxing regulation on fracking for natural gas.

Prime Minister May pledged to ratify the Paris climate change deal by the end of 2016 and the government duly did so at the Marrakech COP 22 summit in November 2016.

Quality of Democracy

Electoral Processes

Candidacy
Procedures
Score: 9

In the United Kingdom, procedures for registering candidates and parties can generally be considered fair and without regulatory discrimination. The process of registration is uncomplicated, and the information required is offered by the state and easily accessible. No restrictions or regulations exist on party programs, but there are regulations limiting the choice of party name, which must not be obscene, offensive or misleading. The party emblem should also avoid these qualities. Registration as a candidate requires a deposit of £500 and the support of at least 10 voters. Support from a party is not necessary, as candidates can run as independents, and many candidates do take advantage of this provision. Very occasionally, a candidate standing on a single issue achieves election, even in national elections.

Members of certain groups are not allowed to stand for election, namely those in the police, the armed forces, civil servants, judges and hereditary members of the House of Lords who retain a seat there. While this may be considered reasonably necessary in a democracy (although no such restrictions are in place in many similar democracies), it seems harder to justify the exclusion of people who have undergone bankruptcy or debt relief restriction orders because this is tantamount to a second punishment for financial mismanagement and thus discriminating against them.

Media Access
Score: 7

The media play a central role in political campaigning, and the importance of coverage has further increased in recent years through the rise of social media and the internet. Television remains the most important medium for campaigning in general elections. Paid TV advertising is prohibited for political parties, who can only advertise in newspapers. However, major parties are granted a certain amount of free time for TV advertising, a concession that is not available to minor parties and which could be construed as a deterrent to them. Coverage on television is fair and balanced, and policed by Ofcom, the industry regulator. Broadcasters are required to be balanced in their coverage of parties, especially at election time. No such restrictions exist for the print industry and indeed there is strong tradition of partiality, especially by some newspaper groups that are prominent in national political life, visible once more during the

Voting and
Registrations
Rights
Score: 9

referendum. There is therefore a marked imbalance between print and broadcast.

In general elections, British, Irish and qualifying citizens of Commonwealth countries can vote. In local and devolved parliament/assembly elections, EU citizens resident in the UK can also vote. Entitlement to vote thus extends beyond British citizenship. However, the aforementioned nationalities can vote only if they have leave to remain in the UK.

In order to be entitled to vote, voters must be on the electoral register, which is maintained by local authorities and updated annually. The Electoral Registration and Administration Act 2013 also introduced individual electoral registration, which is intended to improve the security of the registration process. Registration statistics show regional and social discrepancies. There has been some concern that in certain localities where a significant proportion of the population do not speak English as a first language the registration process has been abused. Sporadic complaints are made about excessive (and possibly manipulated) use of postal votes.

A restriction on the right to vote in national elections applies only in three cases, namely criminal imprisonment, mental disability, and membership either of the House of Lords or the royal family.

Party Financing
Score: 6

The Electoral Commission oversees all political financing in the United Kingdom. The commission is an independent institution set up by parliament, which publishes all its findings online to make them easily accessible. Although all donations above a certain threshold must be reported to the commission, the fact that political parties are largely dependent on donations for their ever-increasing spending on national campaigns has repeatedly led to huge scandals in the past. There have also been highly publicized cases where individual party donors have been rewarded by being granted honors. Changes have also been made to prevent donations from individuals not resident in the United Kingdom. Although these cases have generated considerable media interest, there is not much evidence that donations have influenced policy.

In 2011, the Committee on Standards in Public Life published a report recommending a cap of £10,000 on donations from individuals or organizations. This recommendation was welcomed, at the time, but has not been introduced.

Contributions from party members or local associations (through local fundraising) are relatively minor, though still useful to parties, compared to the amount parties receive from institutional sponsors (trade unions in the case of the Labour Party, business associations in the case of the Conservative Party)

Popular Decision-Making
Score: 4

and individual donors. There is also some state financing of parties (known as “Short Money” after the politician who initiated it in the 1970s), which will be cut following the latest government expenditure review. The previous coalition government pledged to reform party financing, but made no substantial progress on the issue. The Conservative government elected in 2015 passed a Trade Union Act, which includes new restrictions on trade union financing for political parties. This will reduce the Labour Party’s income.

It may seem a strange thing to say in 2016, but referendums play little role in UK governance. They are rarely called in the UK, although they have been used in a handful of cases in recent years. Referendums also only follow a government decision, rather than a citizen initiative. In addition, they are always the result of a specific legislative initiative, not a routine process. The legal foundations for calling a referendum and binding the government to its outcome are weak, as the results are not legally binding. Though the outcome of the Brexit vote shows that they can become politically decisive and may lead to major changes in the UK’s political system. Despite their lack of constitutional standing, referendums in the UK have a de facto influence on policy decisions, but this is rather ad hoc. The consultation announced on a second referendum on Scottish independence could result in a fresh test of direct democracy.

Referendums are often more a part of politics and agenda setting than a structural part of the UK’s policymaking process. The central government may use a referendum to unite the population behind a controversial position and by that silence their critics for good. Tony Blair’s devolution referendums in 1997 and 1998 or David Cameron’s referendum to keep the traditional “first past the post” voting system in 2011 are good examples, as was the 1975 referendum which was used by then Prime Minister Wilson to counter opponents of the EU in his party. By contrast, in the 2016 referendum, a majority of voters declared their wish to leave the European Union against the advice of the leaders of the mainstream political parties, although several leading figures in these parties, in and out of government, opposed their party lines.

Citizens can, via an online petition, call for a parliamentary debate on any topic. A recent high-profile example called for Donald Trump to be banned from entering the UK. However, the House of Commons is not obliged to agree and even such high-profile proposals can be ignored.

Access to Information

Media Freedom
Score: 7

In the United Kingdom, television channels both in the public and the private sector are required by law to be politically neutral. The public regulator, Ofcom, oversees the sector. No such requirement exists for print media. The BBC, the main public-service broadcaster, is financed by a television license fee, which is

effectively a poll tax. It is overseen by a board of governors and enjoys almost complete political independence. However, recent scandals may have weakened the BBC's standing, although there is as yet little evidence of that in its behavior, and it remains the case that TV and radio journalists often subject government and opposition politicians to very tough interviews. Politicians of all persuasions frequently accuse the BBC of bias, arguably highlighting the fact that it is outside political control. The aftermath of the News of the World scandal in 2011 (which led to the Leveson Inquiry and its 2013 report) exposed the overly close relations between politicians and the press. After a lively debate on whether stricter press regulation should be adopted to prevent excessively intrusive journalism, a new consensus seemed to emerge that formal regulation should not be introduced and the government has proved to be uneasy about acceding to demands for tougher statutory regulation.

Security reasons are sometimes given for restricting press freedom. For example, the government actively prevented the Guardian newspaper, using heavy-handed measures, from publishing classified information obtained following Edward Snowden's disclosure of the global surveillance programs run by the U.S. and UK. Although the public outrage following Snowden's leaks has since calmed, the relationship between the UK press and government has been tarnished by these incidents. The journalists' resistance against intimidation and their reporting of government surveillance practices are a shining example for civil journalism. Several media actors have expressed concerns about the libel laws in the aftermath of the 2013 Defamation Act, which was meant to protect freedom of speech.

Media Pluralism
Score: 7

The strong concentration of newspaper ownership has long been a feature of the United Kingdom's media market and that continues to be the case. The BBC as a public-service broadcaster has a dominant position, especially with regard to broadcast and online news. There is a long tradition of powerful individual owners, such as Rupert Murdoch (News Corporation), dating back to the 19th century. This coexists with a lively regional newspaper scene. However, regional newspapers have little influence in terms of national opinion.

The electronic media and television market, in contrast, is much more balanced and also required by regulation to be politically neutral.

The support of the Murdoch media empire has been considered politically crucial over the last two decades. The firm has been very influential particularly in terms of the UK's position toward European integration. Following the News of the World scandal and the enquiry into corporate standards at News Corporation, Murdoch's influence may have been weakened, but that of the Daily Mail Group remains strong. In addition, the Leveson Inquiry has demanded higher diversity in ownership and tighter regulation on media

Access to
Government
Information
Score: 9

mergers, both of which (if enacted) could also work toward more diversity of opinion. The press, collectively, has strongly opposed attempts to circumscribe the freedom of opinion, and the matter remains unresolved.

The United Kingdom has a long tradition of official secrecy. However, in recent years successive governments have very actively tried to capitalize on the transparency and cost-savings potential of making government information available online. Together with the Freedom of Information Act 2005, this has contributed to easier access for citizens and, often in a very high-profile way, the media. The restrictions on what information can be provided under the Freedom of Information Act (cost limits; national security restrictions; state financial interests) are largely in line with the respective regulations in other countries. More recently there has been a debate about restricting the right to freedom of information. However, the former head of the civil service and the Cabinet Office minister responsible for the civil service have both opposed any restrictions on access, although former Prime Minister Tony Blair, whose government introduced the Freedom of Information Act, has said that he regrets doing so.

The United Kingdom has also been at the forefront of making government data available for commercial use and citizen inspection (“open data”). Recent efforts to simplify and render government information more accessible have seen the replacement of a profusion of web sites with a single government portal (www.gov.uk) and it is clear that the government now regards the provision of information as a high priority. It is noteworthy that the UK is now mentioned internationally as a leader in open government and access to data. In the World Justice Project’s 2015 Open Government Index, the UK ranked 8 out of 102 countries, behind the Nordic countries, the Netherlands, New Zealand and Canada.

Citation:

<http://worldjusticeproject.org/open-government-index/open-government-around-world>

Civil Rights and Political Liberties

Civil Rights
Score: 6

In the United Kingdom, civil liberties have long been protected despite the absence of a written constitution and an accompanying bill of rights. The country thus shows that effective protection is possible if support for civil rights is firmly rooted in society and therefore is expected of the government of the day. However, UK citizens have been afforded additional rights of protection from the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). Events of the last decade such as terrorist attacks have also demonstrated that the balance between state

interests and individual rights can be more easily tilted if there are no institutional protections at hand. Various anti-terrorism acts (2000; 2001; 2005; 2006; 2008) have given the UK government more and harsher instruments to fight terrorism. For most citizens, these anti-terrorist measures are not an issue, but for the very small minority that they affect, they can be a source of dismay. In the past, governments had objected to rulings from the ECHR, to the extent that some government ministers advocated a UK withdrawal from the court. The absolute national sovereignty of British courts was a crucial argument to the campaign to leave the European Union.

While courts and public pressure have from time to time succeeded in stopping practices like the indefinite detention of non-nationals, the state has usually succeeded in reintroducing them after some time under a different name, for example when replacing “control orders” with “terrorism prevention and investigation measures.” However, it does so under quite intense media scrutiny. The files leaked by former U.S. National Security Agency (NSA) subcontractor and system administrator Edward Snowden disclosed a degree of digital surveillance in the United Kingdom that far exceeded expectations. The Government Communications Headquarters (GCHQ), with its Tempora and MUSCULAR programs, as well as the NSA/GCHQ PRISM joint venture, tracks and evaluates a very large share of national and international electronic communications. But despite the initial media outcry, public opposition to these programs has been relatively mild. Furthermore, wider society is well aware of the proactive tradition of its national intelligence services, and criticism tends to be limited outside the context of libertarian pressure groups. The most sustained opposition today comes from communication firms whose servers were hacked by government agents to access private data.

In October 2016, the investigatory power tribunal, which is the only court that hears complaints against the intelligence agencies (i.e. MI5, MI6 and GCHQ), ruled that the mass collection of private data as committed by the security services between 1998 and 2015 failed to comply with Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights and was therefore illegal. Although the government has announced plans to replace the Human Rights Act with a new Bill of Rights, it is unclear what will change and how court decisions based on EU law will be made when the UK leaves the EU.

The House of Lords is currently debating the investigatory powers bill, the so-called snoopers charter, which aims to set clear legal standards for electronic and digital mass surveillance for the first time. However, until then, 17 years of unlawful spying makes a clear case for an infringement of civil rights.

Without a written constitution and the protection it affords, citizens of the United Kingdom have no fundamental rights in the sense of enjoying special

protection against the powers of the executive and parliament. Citizens' rights in the United Kingdom can thus be said to be residual and negative in nature. Citizens can do anything not expressly prohibited by law, but there are no positive rights to assert against the government unless the government concedes them. In practice, UK citizens enjoy considerable freedoms, although the police have recently acquired powers to constrain protests. Even so, demonstrations do take place.

Since disputes about political liberties always arise over contested issues, UK citizens have little recourse within the political system, especially when compared to continental European political systems. The Human Rights Act of 1998 (HRA) represented an attempt to create a "higher law" to which all other laws must conform. It offers individual and minority rights, and empowers judges to hold the executive to account and review acts of parliament. But its effectiveness is constrained by the fact that the government can temporarily annul the HRA, if it considers this necessary for the benefit of the country, and it remains contested.

The relative informality of civil rights in the United Kingdom is often justified by the strong tradition of a fair and open public discourse, which forms the very heart of the United Kingdom's political identity. Some elements of the Brexit campaign, not least the murder of Jo Cox, may have cast doubt on this, although the strong public and political reaction to this tragedy highlighted a national determination to defend civil liberties.

Non-discrimination
Score: 7

Over the last 15 years, measures to combat discrimination have entered the political agenda, the statute books and, perhaps most tellingly, have become cultural norms. Starting with the Race Relations Act 2000, all public authorities have been obliged to promote race equality and tackle discrimination. In 2006, this was extended to cover gender and disability discrimination. The Equality Act 2010 has added further areas, such as age, gender identity, pregnancy and maternity, and religion or belief. Political pressure is being exerted to add "caste" in order to fight discrimination still common in the Asian community. The legal framework is therefore very robust in countering discrimination and has had a significant impact on social attitudes, with the result that incidents of discrimination are rapidly and loudly condemned.

But while the state has made a serious attempt to end discrimination and abolish inequalities by reacting to a number of scandals in, for example, the police force with its alleged "institutionalized racism," negative attitudes toward minorities still surface occasionally, including some of the rhetoric in the 2016 referendum campaign. Relatively minor incidents on the football field become headline news and the mainstream view is very strongly anti-discriminatory, to the extent that even populist political parties appealing to indigenous groups have to be

very careful to avoid any hint of overt racism or other forms of discrimination. The perception that the indigenous population is crowded-out by from public services and social housing has contributed to concerns about the impact of immigration, on which right-wing political forces and the right-wing press are capitalizing. There is still a massive imbalance in the national DNA database (40% of the black male population is registered, but only 13% of Asian males and 9% of Caucasian males), and anti-terrorism laws sometimes entail racial profiling, but these phenomena are motivated primarily by security concerns, not explicit discrimination.

Rule of Law

Legal Certainty
Score: 7

In the United Kingdom, the government and public administration apparatus act in line with legal provisions. This is facilitated by the government's extensive control over the legislative process, which enables the government to alter provisions if they constitute a hindrance to government policy objectives. Media and other checks on executive action deter any deviation.

Nevertheless, current political events around the United Kingdom's planned withdrawal from the European Union have led to some uncertainty about how it will unfold. A "Great Repeal Bill," which will in the first instance bring all legislation derived from the European Union back into the UK legal order is promised. A dispute about whether the executive is entitled to trigger Article 50, which would begin the process of leaving the European Union, or has to secure the approval of parliament is now before the supreme court. Somewhat paradoxically, this shows the executive being bound by law.

Judicial Review
Score: 8

The United Kingdom has no written constitution and no constitutional court, although the supreme court fulfills this function. Consequently, the UK has no judicial review comparable to that in the United States or many other European countries. While courts have no power to declare parliamentary legislation unconstitutional, they scrutinize executive action to prevent public authorities from acting beyond their powers. A prominent example was the ruling of the High Court of Justice in November 2016 that the British government must not declare the United Kingdom's separation from the European Union without a parliamentary hearing. The United Kingdom has a sophisticated and well-developed legal system, which is highly regarded internationally and based on the regulated appointment of judges.

Additional judicial oversight is still provided by the European Court of Human Rights, to which UK citizens have recourse. However, as a consequence of several recent high-profile ECHR decisions overturning decisions made by the UK government, some political figures called for the UK's withdrawal from the court's jurisdiction even before the referendum. The role and powers of the

ECHR in the British legal system in a post-EU United Kingdom remain unclear.

In recent years, courts have strengthened their position in the political system. In cases of public concern over government action, public inquiries have often been held. However, implementation of any resulting recommendations is ultimately up to government, as the public lacks legal power. Judge-led inquiries tend to be seen by the public as having the highest degree of legitimacy, whereas investigations by members of the bureaucracy are prone to be regarded more cynically. Many such inquiries tend to be ad hoc and some drag on for so long that there is limited public awareness of the subject by the time their final reports are published. The extensive delay in publishing the Chilcot inquiry into the Iraq war, finally made public only in July 2016 several years after it was supposed to be completed, was widely criticized by the government, media and citizen groups.

Appointment of
Justices
Score: 7

The judicial appointments system reflects the informality of the constitution, but it has undergone substantial changes in recent years, which formalize a cooperative process without a majority requirement. Since the Constitutional Reform Act 2005, the powers of the Lord Chancellor have been divided up. Furthermore, the supreme court of the United Kingdom has been established, which replaces the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords and relieves the second chamber of its judiciary role. The queen appoints 12 judges to the supreme court based on the recommendation of the prime minister who is advised by the Lord Chancellor in cooperation with a selection commission. It would be a surprise if the prime minister ignored the advice or the Lord Chancellor or selection commission or the queen ignored the recommendations of the prime minister. The queen has a formal, ceremonial role and she is bound to impartiality. In contrast, the Lord Chancellor has a highly influential role and consults with the legal profession.

There is no empirical basis on which to assess the actual independence of appointments, but there is every reason to believe that the appointment process will confirm the independence of the judiciary.

Corruption
Prevention
Score: 8

The United Kingdom is comparatively free of explicit corruption like bribery or fraud, and there is little evidence that explicit corruption influences decision-making at national level. Occasional episodes arise of limited and small-scale corruption at local level, usually around property development. The delinquents of recent scandals in UK politics mostly acted within the law. However, these scandals point to a continuing gap between politicians' attitudes and the public's expectations. Regulations against corruption have already been formalized to strengthen them, with the 2004 Corruption Bill consolidating and updating regulations into one law. On most international comparisons, the UK comes out with strong scores.

The MPs' expenses scandal of 2009 provoked a call for more transparency in this field, but is an example of an informal "British" approach to the political problem of not wanting to raise MPs' salaries. Instead, there was a tacit understanding that they could claim generous expenses. The rules were tightened very substantially in the wake of the scandal, and an independent body was set up to regulate MP's expenses. Codes of practice, such as the Civil Service Code and the Ministerial Code, have been revised (the latter in October 2015, following the election) and are publicly available. The volume of material published has been overwhelming, with examples range from lists of dinner guests at Chequers (the prime minister's country residence) to details of spending on government credit cards. The most recent report (December 2015) from the independent adviser on ministerial interest appears to present a clean bill of health and notes that no reason to investigate any breaches of the ministerial code since 2012.

At a more subtle level, influence based on connections and friendships can occur, but rarely with direct financial implications. However, some regulatory decisions may be affected by the exercise of such influence.

Citation:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/468255/Final_draft_ministerial_code_No_AMENDS_14_Oct.pdf

Governance

I. Executive Capacity

Strategic Capacity

Strategic Planning
Score: 9

Although the United Kingdom has one of the most centralized political systems and is one of the long-established liberal democracies in the world, the resources directly available to the prime minister are relatively limited compared with those available to other heads of government. Formally, there is no prime ministerial department to provide strategic planning or advice, although the Cabinet Office provides an important coordinating role across government and its head, the cabinet secretary, attends cabinet meetings. The cabinet secretary is also the head of the civil service, after the two roles were separated under the previous coalition government, and chairs the quarterly Projects Commissioning Board. The Projects Commissioning Board works closely with the Economic and Domestic Affairs Secretariat (EDS), established in summer 2015, which fosters future and innovative projects. A substantial effort has been made since 2010 to modernize the civil service, including its strategic capacity, with a cabinet-level minister taking the lead. A civil-service reform plan was launched in 2012 and will be led by the Cabinet Office under the new government. Establishing policymaking as a profession is one of the stated goals, a task that will have potentially long-term consequences for steering capability and strategic capacity.

At a political level, a special advisory unit has supported all recent prime ministers. George Freeman, Conservative MP for Mid-Norfolk, has led the current unit, the Prime Minister's Policy Board, since shortly after Theresa May became prime minister in July 2016. Special advisers and civil servants staff these advisory units. The remit of Number 10 Policy Unit is defined by the prime minister, but tends to focus on strategic political and policy decisions.

In 2012, the prime minister and deputy prime minister established a dedicated Implementation Unit within the Cabinet Office, charged with driving

implementation in areas deemed to be of high priority and now reinforced by the creation of implementation task forces to oversee the delivery of policy initiatives. All government departments have been required by the new government to produce single departmental plans, which serve both to define their strategic objectives, and to enable them to be monitored more effectively.

Citation:

https://civilservicelearning.civilservice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/twelve_actions_report_web_accessible.pdf

Institute for Government (2014) Whitehall Monitor 2014 A data-driven analysis of the size, shape and performance of Whitehall (<http://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/IFG%20-%20Whitehall%20Monitor%202014.pdf>)

Scholarly Advice
Score: 8

Non-governmental academic experts played an important role in conducting independent reviews of central government policy or strategy during the post-1997 Labour governments. They have worked on the economics of climate change (Sir Nicholas Stern), the future of the pension system (Lord Turner), a review of health trends (Sir Derek Wanless) and fuel poverty (Sir John Hills). Established academics have also served in decision-making bodies such, as the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of England since 1997 when the Bank of England was made independent of government. These academics have thus been given substantial influence over core decisions. Most government departments solicit external studies on policy-relevant issues and are supported in doing so by a new Cabinet Office team called Launchpad. The reports are subject to normal procurement rules, typically with a restricted call for tenders.

When the coalition government took power, the change altered the political orientation of the experts consulted. However, a further shift in practice was due to the commitment to what is known as open policymaking (OPM), under which policymakers are called on to actively seek broader inputs into the policy process. The traditionally strong influence of think tanks has continued, but those of the left-leaning variety (e.g., Institute for Public Policy Research, Policy Network) have been replaced by more conservative-minded ones (e.g., Bow Group, Centre for Policy Studies). The interactions are transparent, but occur at various stages of the policy process and are often initiated by the think tanks themselves. What appears to have changed is the underlying approach to OPM toward emphasizing not just evidence-based policymaking, but also identifying new and better policy solutions.

There are also many informal channels through which government consults or is briefed by individual academics who have expertise in specific areas. These channels are often more influential than more formal consultation processes.

One recent example was the review of the balance of competences between the EU and the national level, in which several government departments made very extensive attempts to engage with academics. Civil servants are routinely involved in academic events, and benefit from professional policy training and the Trial Advice Panel. The Trial Advice Panel, which consists of experts from within government and academics, supports civil servants to design experimental and quasi-experimental assessments for programs and interventions.

An alleged instruction from the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to the London School of Economics to exclude non-UK citizens from offering advice on Brexit negotiations was found to be based on a misunderstanding.

Interministerial Coordination

GO Expertise
Score: 9

The primary coordinating role is undertaken by the Cabinet Office, which has expertise in all areas of government since Cabinet Office officials commonly worked in other departments before. According to its website, the Cabinet Office has over 2,000 staff, is responsible for the National Security Council and is central to “making government work better.” The Cabinet Office’s Economic and Domestic Secretariat is responsible for coordinating policy advice to the prime minister and the cabinet, and the attached Parliamentary Business and Legislation (PBL) Secretariat provides advice on legislation and supervises progress made by bill drafting teams. The head of the Economic and Domestic Secretariat is also responsible for the Implementation Unit and the operation of the Implementation Task Forces, which oversee the implementation of government policies, and coordinates between ministers and public officials. Implementation Unit staff are policy experts from the civil service with good ministerial networks and excellent substantive expertise. The role of the Treasury in putting pressure on departmental spending also contributes to interministerial coordination.

GO Gatekeeping
Score: 9

The Conservative government, in power since 2015, faces fewer difficulties than its predecessor, because there is no longer a need to coordinate between two different political parties. During the coalition government, 2010 to 2015, a complex mechanism had to be set up to ensure bipartisan approval and consistency with the coalition agreement. Since the return of a majoritarian government in May 2015, the situation has returned to the pre-2010 status quo. The Cabinet Secretariat, the most important political unit within the Cabinet Office, sets the agenda for cabinet meetings and prepares a forward program, which is agreed by the prime minister. The Cabinet Secretariat may contact ministerial offices to request that a minister makes a presentation, presents a paper or raises an issue orally. The prime minister is thus in a very strong position.

Citation:

Constitution Unit 2011: Inside Story: How Coalition Government Works (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/constitution-unit/research/coalition-government/interim-report.pdf>). Royal Holloway Group 2012: A partnership of unequals: Positional power in the coalition government, in: *British Politics* 7 (4), 418-442.

Line Ministries
Score: 9

The Cabinet Office is at the center of policymaking. Since the May 2015 general election, all line ministries are required to prepare single departmental plans (SDP), building on a process already launched during the previous coalition government. As explained by John Manzoni, the Chief Executive of the civil service appointed in October 2014, these SDPs are intended to bring together inputs and outputs, clarify trade-offs, and to identify where departments and the cross-departmental functions need to work together to deliver the required outcomes.

The creation of implementation taskforces, working alongside cabinet committees, is intended to strengthen the central oversight of policy proposals.

Cabinet
Committees
Score: 9

The importance of cabinet meetings and committees increased under the previous coalition government, because of the need to ensure fair representation of both coalition parties. In addition, a powerful coalition committee, chaired jointly by the prime minister and deputy prime minister, existed. The latter became redundant when the new Conservative government won power in May 2015. A number of other committees, such as a committee on banking reform, were also discontinued. However, the creation of implementation taskforces alongside conventional committees has meant a net increase in numbers. Since the change of prime minister in the summer of 2016, two noteworthy innovations are the establishment of the European Union Exit and Trade Committee and the Economy and Industrial Strategy Cabinet Committee, both of which are chaired by the new prime minister. Additionally a committee on social reform was created. This evolution is characteristic of the UK government's tendency to create new committees rapidly in response to shifts in political priorities.

Since the Conservative government of Edward Heath (1970-1974), it has become an established norm that decisions settled in cabinet committees are not questioned in full cabinet unless the committee chair or the prime minister decide to do so.

Ministerial
Bureaucracy
Score: 8

The interministerial coordination of policy proposals is an official civil service goal. However, problems of capacity and capability in this area have been revealed by surveys undertaken within the civil service. Examples of civil service disruption are, on the one hand, the Civil Service Reform Plan of 2012 and, on the other hand, the coalition's spending cuts, which have hit parts of the

ministerial bureaucracy very hard and led to considerable job cuts. Relations between the civil service and the government have been affected, but the situation does not seem to have had a great impact on the efficiency of policy-proposal coordination. As explained above, the Cabinet Office assures coordination at the level of officials.

There are concerns that the workload required to deliver Brexit will undermine coordination within government.

Informal
Coordination
Score: 9

Informal coordination was a hallmark of the Labour governments under Tony Blair (1997 to 2007). However, informal coordination was reduced during the Labour government of Gordon Brown (2007 to 2010) and largely abolished under the coalition government (2010 to 2015), because of the need for avoiding tensions within the coalition. Having returned to one-party government in May 2015, it was expected that informal forms of coordination would become more common again. The divisions within the governing Conservative Party, including among senior ministers, over the aims and likely “red lines” in negotiating the UK’s future relations with the EU could make informal coordination across government harder to achieve. Though there is no clear evidence that this is the case yet. The Government Hubs program is a novel efficiency measure to pool the coordination of different departments under one roof.

Citation:

Collaborative Civil Service: <https://civilservice.blog.gov.uk/2016/04/28/a-model-for-a-more-collaborative-civil-service-the-estate-strategy-in-action/>

Evidence-based Instruments

RIA Application
Score: 9

The reduction of regulation costs has been a long-standing policy goal of successive governments. Regulatory Impact Assessments (RIAs) have to be prepared for all legislation, which affects businesses, charities and voluntary bodies, to assess the benefits and burdens of the planned measure. Academic research has questioned the impact of these assessments as their results are not systematically integrated into the decision-making process, but they are certainly applied.

Citation:

Dunlop, Claire A. et al. 2012: The many uses of regulatory impact assessment: A meta- analysis of EU and UK cases, in: Regulation & Governance Vol. 6 23-45.

Quality of RIA
Process
Score: 8

The Regulatory Policy Committee (RPC), a body established in 2009 and independent since 2012, is responsible for quality evaluation and impact assessment. The RPC provides feedback to the Reducing Regulation Committee,

a sub-committee of the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs, on the quality of the analysis and evidence presented. The RPC does not actively solicit input from outside the government department concerned, but is open to submissions from other stakeholders on the impacts of proposed regulation. Transparency and guidance is provided on the government website (gov.uk) detailing how to contact the RPC. The government invites direct comment on the process in an effort to engage citizens and, perhaps more importantly, businesses. To reduce regulatory costs for businesses, the government committed to a Business Impact Target (BIT). There is a one-in-three-out principle for new regulations, with information regularly updated online.

Sustainability
Check
Score: 10

In the United Kingdom, the whole RIA process aims to provide support for sustainable policymaking. The assessment is based on a wide range of different indicators, including social, environmental and ecological. However, economic indicators seem to be the most important. The assessments analyze the impact of regulation over several time periods (i.e. short, medium and long term), and they attempt to take into account external shocks and irregular developments.

Societal Consultation

Negotiating Public
Support
Score: 7

The United Kingdom has less of a tradition, compared to many other EU countries, of systematically incorporating civil society organizations into the decision-making process. Nevertheless, a significant effort has been made since 2010 to make government more open. This effort has led to a substantial increase in policymaking transparency and has included systematic efforts to consult a range of actors. However, the extent to which social partners are formally engaged in the policymaking process continues to be less than in many other western European countries. The previous coalition government established a “Compact” to govern civil society engagement in the policymaking process in England, under the auspices of a (junior) Minister for Civil Society. Civil society is also listed as one of the responsibilities of the Minister for the Cabinet Office. The UK was a founding member of the Open Government Partnership, as part of which it is committed to producing a national action plan to engage with civil society. The current plan detailed a range of commitments. According to a recent self-assessment, some three-quarters of these commitments have already been achieved or scheduled, though 27% of these commitments are behind schedule. Impact assessments are one means by which consultation has been enhanced, with drafts circulated to stakeholders before being finalized. Feedback on these drafts considered before decisions are taken on whether or not to proceed with the policy change under review. In 2014, some 650 public consultation processes took place, all described on the gov.uk website. In addition, a range of Advisory Boards solicit input into the policymaking process in areas such as migration and social security. Given the pluralist nature of the UK system of interest groups and

associations, it can be difficult to identify which organization would be competent and legitimized to speak on a certain issue. However, through initiatives such as the “Policy Lab,” set up in 2014, the Cabinet Office has established a catchy approach to open policymaking. The former prime minister, David Cameron, introduced the idea of the “Big Society” in the 2010 general election campaign and pledged to transfer power from central to local government, while encouraging people to volunteer for social work and support civil cooperation. This agenda has had some success, with a 2011 act reinforcing local governments’ rights to engage in independent initiatives.

The 2016 Brexit referendum was unusual in negotiating public support. As had happened in the only previous EU referendum in 1975, members of the government and parliamentarians taking the governing Conservative Party whip were given the right to be leading members of the “leave” campaign, even though the official government position was to support “remain.”

Citation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/compact-the-agreement-between-government-and-the-voluntary-community-sector> <https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/about/>

<http://www.opengovernment.org.uk/about/ogp-action-plans/#section-3>

Policy Communication

Coherent
Communication
Score: 6

Compared with the culture of secrecy of earlier decades, government has become much more open in the United Kingdom in recent years. This is due to a combination of the Freedom of Information Act passed by a Tony Blair-led Labour government, and a willingness to use the internet to increase transparency and open up government. The government website (www.gov.uk) provides extensive information on government services and activities, and has been redesigned to be more user friendly. It is also a single gateway website, which aims to facilitate greater coherence in line with the government communications plan.

Government communication around the divisive issue of UK membership of the EU was deeply divided and this lack of coherence is still apparent as the government struggles to explain its stance to the public. Developing a clear government message will be a crucial task for the new prime minister, Theresa May.

Citation:

OPM Approach: <https://openpolicy.blog.gov.uk/> is an open site with short articles on the OPM approach

Implementation

Government
Efficiency
Score: 8

The United Kingdom’s political system is highly centralized. For example, there are no “veto players” outside of the central government who could challenge or undermine the government’s core policy objectives. There is no written constitution and no constitutional court to challenge government decisions directly and effectively. However, there is provision for judicial review, something the government is currently trying to limit given its extensive use in recent years. The devolution of certain powers to Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland has meant that some national policy goals are subject to decisions at the subnational level over which the central government has only limited powers. In particular, the influence of the Scottish parliament, based in Holyrood, has increased substantially following the close outcome of the Scottish Referendum and the massive gains made by the Scottish National Party across Scotland in the last UK general election.

Historically, problems in achieving policy objectives have mainly arisen through intra-party disunity and parliamentary party rebellions. Even under the exceptional coalition government, Premier Minister David Cameron had more trouble controlling his own party’s right-wing than dealing with the demands of the junior coalition partner, the Liberal Democrats – until the United Kingdom returned to its traditional one-party government in 2015.

Since David Cameron’s resignation, his successor, Theresa May, has been constrained by having to accommodate similar divisions. Some of her most vocal opposition has come from “remainers” and former government ministers with the Conservative Party, most visibly around Brexit. With only a small working majority in parliament, she faces limitations on her ability to implement her preferred strategy, not just in relation to Brexit, but also in achieving other new priorities.

Ministerial
Compliance
Score: 9

The prime minister has traditionally had more or less absolute power to appoint politicians to government positions. She can thus use this power of patronage to earn the loyalty of backbench MPs and to ensure that ministers stick to the government agenda. Despite occasional leaks, the collective responsibility of cabinet is a well-entrenched doctrine and standards of behavior are recorded in the Ministerial Code. The prime minister’s power is partly dependent on the incumbent’s political strength and calculations by their party as to their future electoral success (which is directly linked to their own job security). Party whips also play a key role in passing legislation and thus in supporting the government, and – although Conservative MPs elected since 2010 are sometimes considered to be more prone to rebellion – any MPs with strong political ambitions have to be wary of being branded as mavericks. However,

Monitoring
Ministries
Score: 9

this label has become significantly less stigmatizing over the past years.

The tight integration between the Prime Minister's Office and the Cabinet Office enables prime ministers to be effective in determining the strategic direction of the government. Through Treasury Approval Point processes, the Treasury has long had an important monitoring role, which goes beyond the role of finance ministries in other countries. Decision-making is concentrated in strategic units and in informal meetings. Ministers have to reveal their preferences in cabinet meetings, cabinet committees and bilateral meetings with the prime minister or chancellor. Consequently, monitoring is relatively easy for the core executive, also by means of the single department plans.

Several additional monitoring and coordination measures introduced under the coalition government have since become obsolete with the return to a one-party government. However, some recent initiatives have reinforced central oversight, including the merger of the Major Projects Authority and Infrastructure UK into the Infrastructure and Projects Authority, which reports to both the Cabinet Office and HM Treasury. An initiative on Financial Management Reform launched in 2014 has been evaluated as a success by the Institute for Government.

Citation:

Whitehall's Financial Management Reform:

https://www.instituteforgovernment.org.uk/sites/default/files/publications/IfG_FMR_Cima_briefing_paper_WEB_2.pdf

Monitoring
Agencies,
Bureaucracies
Score: 7

The United Kingdom was an early adopter of delegating civil-service work to executive agencies in order to improve performance and reduce costs, which has been going on since the early 1990s under the Next Steps Programme. There is, moreover, an expectation that the departmental minister takes responsibility for any agencies that the ministry oversees but no expectation that the minister will have to resign if problems arise in an agency. The ongoing Civil Service Reform also seeks to introduce new instruments of performance control and individual accountability, for example, through guidance, such as *Managing Public Money*. The Cabinet Office has recently revised its guidance on public service reviews and issued a code of good practice for partnerships between departments and arm's length bodies.

Nevertheless, problems have arisen. After repeated criticism, the UK Border Agency, which is responsible for the entry and management of foreign nationals, was taken back into the Home Office to improve transparency and political accountability. It still attracts some negative headlines and there are evident stresses arising from the management of prisons by private contractors. Several child-abuse scandals revealed shortcomings in the monitoring of local-level entities, including local childcare, youth and police services. To some extent,

quality control bodies – for example, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for the police – provide safeguards through setting standards. However, some public agencies have been heavily criticized. For example, the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee has been very critical of HM Revenue and Customs, the tax collection agency.

Citation:

Elston, Thomas 2011: Developments in UK executive agencies: re-examining the disaggregation – re-aggregation thesis, Paper presented to the Governance of Public Sector Organisations study group at the 33 rd Annual Conference of the European Group for Public Administration, Bucharest, 7th – 10th September 2011.

Tailored Reviews:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/570290/Tailored_Review_Guidance_v1.1_Nov_2016.pdf

Code of Good Practice: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/partnerships-with-arms-length-bodies-code-of-good-practice>

Task Funding
Score: 7

Within the United Kingdom, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have devolved governments, which have responsibility for major public services, such as health care and education. England has no devolved government, though local authorities in England have responsibility for a more limited range of public services, including schools. The central government exercises tight control over the finances of the devolved governments and local authorities in England. The bulk of local authority revenue in England comes from central government grants, even the rate of property tax is controlled centrally. As a result, local authorities have been among the hardest hit by government spending cuts. Given the absence of a written constitution, there is no mechanism to govern the allocation of funds to finance these devolved tasks. As such, any decisions about funding is subject to political and administrative negotiations through formula-based need assessments. Agreements such as the “Barnett Formula” for Scotland, Wales and England provide some stability of funding. However, despite their recent reaffirmation, these agreements could change if a future government decides that fiscal consolidation requires severe spending cuts.

The Scotland Act 2012 gave the Scottish Administration new taxation and borrowing powers. After the close outcome of the Scottish Referendum and as a result of the Smith Commission’s Report, the new Conservative government announced the devolution of further tax powers – including income tax powers – to the Scottish parliament. The details of additional borrowing powers for the Scottish parliament are currently being negotiated.

The new government has announced a reform of local governance. This would mainly include a decentralization of decision-making, monitoring, and spending

powers to local mayors (an office which is quite unusual in the United Kingdom). Challenges are sure to arise in relation to task funding

The Welsh Assembly has far less fiscal discretion, but central government has agreed that borrowing powers should also be devolved to the Welsh assembly and agreed on a fiscal framework. A new settlement for Northern Ireland has also been under discussion for quite some time, but agreement had not been reached at the time of writing. A debate on financial matters in England must also be expected. Some new infrastructure initiatives, housing and “growth deals” for England were announced in the government spending plans unveiled in the November 2016 Autumn Statement.

Citation:

Scully, Roger/Jones Richard Wyn 2011: 7. Territorial politics in post-Devolution Britain, in: Heffernan, Richard et al.: *Developments in British Politics 9*, Basingstoke and New York

Smith Commission Report:

http://www.smith-commission.scot/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/The_Smith_Commission_Report-1.pdf

Autumn Statement 2016: <https://www.gov.uk/government/topical-events/autumn-statement-2016>

Constitutional
Discretion
Score: 7

A distinction must be made between local authorities of England, on the one hand, and the Scottish parliament, the National Assembly of Wales and Northern Ireland Assembly, on the other hand. The devolved governments of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland enjoy considerable autonomy from central government, in contrast to the strong restrictions on local authorities in England. In recent years, the trend has been reversed through measures stemming from the 2011 Localism Act. These measures substantially increased local authorities’ decision-making and spending powers over, for example, health care, skills training, transport, employment support, physical infrastructure investment and housing. In addition, the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016, in what can be seen as a limited push toward English devolution, established directly elected mayors for combined local authorities in England and Wales, so-called metro mayors. Eight elections for metro mayors will be held in 2017. The devolved parliaments in Scotland and Northern Ireland have ruled against creation of directly elected mayors.

The establishment of a directly elected mayor in England or Wales normally follows a local referendum, although neither Leicester nor Liverpool held a popular vote. However, in the majority of cases, voters opposed the establishment of a new mayoral office, and one even revoked an existing office (in Stoke on Trent 2009). In November 2016, 17 cities had directly elected mayors, including London. Further, there exist several indirectly elected mayors with comparable political powers and many localities have a purely ceremonial Lord Mayor.

The political weight of these subsidiary authorities varies strongly and the substance of mayoral offices in the traditionally centralized political system of the United Kingdom is hard to measure. The number of mayors is clearly increasing, but remains remarkably low in comparison to the total number of authorities. However, several of the largest and most important cities of the country (e.g., London, Bristol, Greater Manchester and Liverpool City Region) have directly elected mayors. Notably, the Greater London Authority is headed by its mayor, the Rt. Hon. Sadiq Khan, and culturally and politically can almost be seen as a federated state within the United Kingdom.

An evaluation by the Council of Europe notes a general satisfaction with recent developments in the UK, but expresses concern about funding and “the limitation of local authorities’ discretion to manage local affairs through the intervention by various ministries of the central government.”

The Scottish parliament and the Scottish government have become major political actors, especially through the Scotland Act 2016. Although the powers of the Scottish parliament are revocable by central government, they should be considered permanent for political reasons. The Welsh and Northern Irish parliaments have considerable autonomy, granted for instance in the Wales Bill. However, these powers differ in degree from those held by the Scottish parliament, although new financial powers are being devolved, such as the proposed introduction of a Northern Ireland rate for corporation tax. Even if some decisions by the Scottish government have antagonized central government, the central government has not intervened.

Guide to Localism Act:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/5959/1896534.pdf

House of Commons Briefing paper SN05000 2016 – Directly-elected mayors:

<http://researchbriefings.parliament.uk/ResearchBriefing/Summary/SN05000>

National Standards
Score: 7

There are supposed to be national standards for service delivery by local authorities or the parallel networks of agencies for specific policies such as the trusts running health care, but recent scandals have shown that implementation can be unsatisfactory and thus that there can be “postcode lotteries” in standards. Recently, the Care Quality Commission, a body designed to oversee the quality of health and social care, was criticized for a lack of transparency. A subsequent report by the National Audit Office found that, while there had been considerable improvements, shortcomings still needed to be addressed.

Although central government has the capacity to ensure national standards on this issue, it does not always do enough to “watch the watchers.” All members

of the civil service are pledged to a range of codes (such as the Civil Service Code, the Directory of Civil Service Guidance) to ensure national standards in performance, conduct and delivery. In 2012, the Standards Board for England – which has scrutinized civil service commitments to the codes since 2000 – was abolished. The central government has encouraged local authorities to set up regional standards boards. This is in line with the Localism Act 2011, which changed the powers and scrutiny of local government in England. The ongoing Civil Service Reform, which started in 2012, established a new range of national standards, especially in skills, accountability, transparency and diversity, as recorded in the New Public Appointments Governance Code.

Citation:

HM Government 2012: The Civil Service Reform Plan; <http://resources.civilservice.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/Civil-Service-Reform-Plan-acc-final.pdf> <https://www.nao.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/Capacity-and-capability-to-regulate-the-quality-and-safety-of-health-and-adult-social-care.pdf>

Adaptability

Domestic
Adaptability
Score: 7

The organization of ministries in the United Kingdom is a prerogative of the prime minister, and traditionally the precise division of tasks between ministries apart from the classic portfolios of foreign policy, defense, the Treasury, and the Home Office has been subject to considerable change. There is some evidence for international and supranational developments playing an important role in these decisions on UK government structures, a clear example being the creation of the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) with an explicit remit to engage in international action to mitigate climate change, although it has since been subsumed within new ministries following the change in prime minister in 2016. New cabinet committees have been set up, such as a committee on Syrian refugees in 2015. There have also been developments leading to new cross-departmental structures. The establishment of the National Security Council was a response to security-related issues, while the creation of a cross-governmental joint energy unit was motivated by the Ukraine crisis.

The United Kingdom has in some areas been an early, and sometimes enthusiastic, proponent of norms and practices that have been championed by international bodies, including those overseeing financial stability and transparency in government. The Open Data Charter and the Open Government Partnership (in which the United Kingdom plays an active role) were agreed under the United Kingdom's G8 presidency. The UK is an acknowledged leader in open government and ranked 1 out of 92 countries in the 2015 Open Data Barometer.

International
Coordination
Score: 6

Perhaps reflecting the prevailing UK attitude to “Brussels” before the decision to leave the European Union, there has been some resistance to policy recommendations from the European Commission, including the country-specific recommendations associated with EU semester process, unless they accord with government priorities like tax avoidance and establishing trade links. There is less resistance to recommendations from, for example, the IMF, even when the recommendations of the IMF and EU are similar. European integration has led to procedural changes allowing central government to intervene early in the European policy-formulation process.

The United Kingdom has long played a leading role in coordinating international initiatives and the country’s imperial legacy has contributed to its active stance on international commitments. It has led global responses in recent years, for example, in efforts to eradicate poverty in Africa, coordinate the EU response to the Ebola outbreak, promote reform in the financial sector, and combat climate change and corruption.

As a permanent member of the U.N. Security Council, the United Kingdom is very active in the United Nations in security matters and also plays a prominent, but sometimes polarizing, role in NATO. Government structures, such as the National Security Council, ensure consistency.

However, following the decision to leave the European Union, the United Kingdom will have to rethink its role in the world, especially among its European neighbors. There is a risk that the demands on governance capacity of dealing with the various levels of negotiation will distract attention from wider global concerns. To this extent, domestic politics may be inhibiting international coordination.

Organizational Reform

Self-monitoring
Score: 8

Flexibility and informal meetings are a key feature of the government system, enabling it to respond in a way uniquely tailored to the situation at hand that has always been valued highly and is an essential constituent of prime ministerial government in the United Kingdom. Nevertheless, the Cabinet Office in particular has a remit to monitor the government’s functioning and does so through a range of mechanisms, which have been reinforced by recent civil service reforms, particularly civil service management procedures. A key change introduced by the new government is the introduction of the more wide-ranging “single departmental plans,” which replace the use of business plans. These single departmental plans set clear priorities for departments, encompassing manifesto commitments, critical business-as-usual activity, and efficiency and productivity initiatives. In addition, self-monitoring occurs through implementation task forces (a 2015 innovation which complements

cabinet committees), regular assessments of progress by the Civil Service Board chaired by the Cabinet Secretary and a new so-called shadow civil service board. The shadow civil service board is composed of junior civil servants and charged with assessing specific projects and advising senior management. In response to critiques from Select Committees and the Institute for Government, the government revised its guidance on the Machinery of Government, placing greater emphasis on the importance of senior leadership and accountability.

This self-monitoring has been bolstered by a renewed commitment to open government and the public release of data. Executive monitoring is complemented by media scrutiny, parliamentary committees, various policy-specific statutory bodies and independent organizations, such as the Institute of Government. The Institute of Government stated that its task of monitoring central government was facilitated by the availability of data, “the fact we can produce this report supports that.”

Citation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/organisations/civil-service/about/our-governance#civil-service-board> <https://civilservice.blog.gov.uk/2015/07/29/clarifying-our-priorities-single-departmental-plans/> <https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/cabinet-committees-and-implementation-taskforces-membership-list>

Institutional
Reform
Score: 8

As mentioned above, the organizational flexibility of both the core executive and the distribution of tasks to specific ministries is a core characteristic of the UK system of government. Cabinet reorganizations and new institutional arrangements have often been the prime minister’s weapon of choice to improve government performance. However, such reorganization can also be motivated by intra-party politics or public pressure, and it is difficult to systematically evaluate the success of specific measures in enhancing the strategic capacity of the government. Recent civil service reforms have also served to enhance strategic capacity, while various open data initiatives have increased government transparency.

Very substantial changes in governance do occur, with recent examples including the restoration of a lead role in financial supervision to the Bank of England, the alteration of the basis for financial regulation, and a shift in the balance between state, market and external agencies in the delivery of public goods.

The proposed separation of the United Kingdom from the European Union will test the system’s ability to reform and adapt. The creation of the new Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy is a first attempt to ensure modern industrial strategies after Brexit.

II. Executive Accountability

Citizens' Participatory Competence

Policy Knowledge
Score: 7

The UK government provides considerable information to its citizens through detailed websites, both at the core-executive and the ministerial level. This flow of information has been enhanced in recent years. These websites contain general information, progress reports and statistical data. As part of its online material, the government makes some effort to ensure that citizens use this information by targeting specific groups. For example, a digital voter registration toolkit was developed in conjunction with a single-parent charity, while the “Rock Enrol!@” pack was designed to engage young people. The most important source of knowledge for citizens is TV broadcasting, followed by newspapers and radio.

According to an opinion poll by Ipsos MORI in 2010, 53% of those asked said that they had “a great deal” or “a fair amount” of knowledge about politics, while 47% answered that they had “not very much” knowledge or knew “nothing at all.” The share of those claiming knowledge has risen over the previous decade by about 10 percentage points, indicating a subjectively better understanding of politics by citizens in the United Kingdom. A telling figure is that the proportion of citizens voting in certain television talent competitions is higher than in many national elections.

Citation:

Ipsos MORI 2011: Knowledge of Politics 2003-2010

<http://www.ipsos-mori.com/researchpublications/researcharchive/2757/Knowledge-of-Politics-20032010.aspx?view=wide>

Legislative Actors' Resources

Parliamentary
Resources
Score: 6

MPs have relatively few resources at their disposal in terms of personnel capable of monitoring government activity. Parliamentary parties have few additional resources and therefore can provide little support. In addition, if a party is in government, a substantial part of their MPs will be (junior) members of the government and therefore not too keen to monitor themselves.

Parties in opposition are granted some public funds to hire additional researchers to fulfill their duties of controlling the government. But in terms of resources

this is still not much compared to those the governing parties can call on through the ministerial bureaucracy.

Citation:

European Parliament / Directorate-General for Research 2000: Comparison of organizational and administrative arrangements in EU national parliaments; http://edz.bib.uni-mannheim.de/daten/edz-ma/ep/00/budg110_en.pdf

Obtaining
Documents
Score: 8

The “Osmotherly Rules,” updated in October 2014, define the rights of select committees to obtain government documents. Although published in a Cabinet Office document, like many internal parliamentary rules, they are informal and cannot be legally challenged. However, documents are rarely held back and will thus be made available to committees. Only in very specific, pre-defined circumstances are documents withheld from select committees. There are occasional disputes with government over the provision of specific information, and committees will then have to order the production of government documents. Their rights are thus not formally limited, but there is sometimes a political struggle between the committee and the government, although the struggle is usually mediated by the fact that the government party also has the majority on the committee, and party-political motives thus rarely come into play. Freedom of Information requests can additionally be used to obtain documents, but this does not include documents that affect national security or public interests. The media reinforce parliamentary scrutiny through their strong influence and the keen interest they take in committee findings that challenge the serving government.

Citation:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/364600/Osmotherly_Rules_October_2014.pdf

Summoning
Ministers
Score: 8

Ministers can be summoned to parliamentary committee hearings, but they cannot be forced to attend, because ministers have to be MPs or members of the House of Lords, and MPs cannot be forced to attend any meeting. However, the Osmotherly Rules recommend that ministers accept invitations to a hearing as an act of respectful courtesy, and thus ministers will usually accept an invitation to a hearing in a select committee. It would be headline news and damaging to the minister in question if they refused to appear before a committee on anything remotely controversial, although the answers given to committees can be bland. Ministerial questions in plenary sessions of parliament complement the work of committees, and can be quite sharp in tone. The prime minister and key aides traditionally refuse to appear before select committees, but have appeared before the Liaison Committee, which is composed of the chairs of all the other committees.

Summoning
Experts
Score: 10

Parliamentary committees may summon expert witnesses who will usually provide any evidence willingly. Should they decline to do so, committees then have the power to order a witness to attend, though this would be exceptional. Committees also often employ experts as specialist advisers.

Committees may also summon actors involved in an issue being investigated by a committee. Examples include the examination by the Treasury Committee (in February 2009) of the deposed chairmen and chief executives of the Royal Bank of Scotland and HBOS following the public bailouts of their banks, of press barons in the context of the Leveson Inquiry into phone hacking by journalists, and of the entrepreneur Philip Green regarding the pension deficit of the BHS store chain.

Task Area
Congruence
Score: 7

Every government department is shadowed by a committee in the House of Commons (20 at the time of writing). The remit and number of committees adapts to reflect changes in the makeup of the government. House of Lords select committees focus on broader topics and are less directly matched to departmental task areas, but cover important areas. One example is the Science and Technology Select Committee, which in turn has subcommittees that cover specific topics, such as the implications of autonomous mobility or the possible meaning of the withdrawal from the European Union for universities' staff policies.

However, the capacity of committees to monitor effectively is limited due to a lack of resources and limited continuity in membership (e.g., the House of Lords rules oblige members to be rotated off a committee after four years, although from direct observation of the work of its committees this does not seem to weaken them). Also, the number of reports they issue massively exceeds the time available on the floor of the House to debate them and, despite increased efforts by the committees to publicize them, not all reports achieve much media coverage.

Audit Office
Score: 10

The National Audit Office (NAO) is an independent office funded directly by parliament. Its head, the comptroller and auditor general, is an officer of the House of Commons. The NAO works on behalf of parliament and the taxpayer to scrutinize public spending and is accountable to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC).

Ombuds Office
Score: 8

The system of ombudsmen has been expanded over the last years. There are now four different ombudsmen that handle complaints about the civil service in each country within the United Kingdom, namely the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, Northern Ireland Ombudsmen and Commission for Local Administration in England. Further, there is a Parliamentary Health and Service Ombudsman (PHSO) who mainly deals with complaints concerning the National Health Service in England and a

Housing Ombudsman who looks at complaints about social housing. However, all ombudsmen's offices are limited in staff, resources and access to information. For example, ombudsmen have no formal power to see cabinet papers.

A parliamentary consultation in 2015 recommended the merger of ombudsmen into one integrated office of the Public Service Ombudsman (PSO).

Citation:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/public-service-ombudsman>

Media

Media Reporting
Score: 8

The main TV and radio stations in the United Kingdom – especially those like the BBC that operate under a public charter – provide an extensive array of high-quality news services. Government decisions feature prominently in this programming, and information and analysis on government decisions are both extensive and held to a high standard. There is substantial competition for viewers, in particular between the BBC, ITV, Sky and Channel 4. In addition to news programs, all provide in-depth analysis programs on politics and policy in a variety of formats. The Today Programme on BBC Radio 4 is well known for its highbrow political analysis and scrutiny, and often sets the tone for political debates. Newsnight is the flagship political-news program on TV.

The style of interview on these programs is often explicitly not deferential, and even quite confrontational – especially toward ministers. This is justified by the need to hold politicians and especially government ministers to account. Local radio and press also have a tangible influence within their localities and an increasing number of people resort to online services, most notably BBC Online, as a source of information on government.

Scandals both in the private sector (News of the World) and the public sector (BBC) may have cost some credibility but have so far had no recognizable influence on the functioning of the media system as a whole. Despite political pressure, The Guardian newspaper played a crucial role in the global surveillance disclosures of 2013 and was awarded the 2014 Pulitzer Prize for its efforts.

Parties and Interest Associations

Intra-party
Democracy
Score: 6

A distinction needs to be made for all major parties between the election of the leader, on which party members have a say, and the selection of other personnel

or decisions over major issues, for which there are generally much more restrictive procedures. The selection of parliamentary and local council candidates usually involves local party members. Annual party conferences notionally have a major role in settling policy positions, but in practice it is party leaders that have the most significant role.

The Conservative Party restricts decision-making to party members. In most cases, a number of selected delegates participate in the most important personnel and issue decisions. Central party influence over candidate selection has varied in recent years. David Cameron introduced a “priority list” with at least 50% women and significant representation from ethnic minorities, from which all target seats and Conservative-held seats were supposed to be selected. In the run-up to the 2010 election and in the wake of the parliamentary expenses scandal, this requirement was relaxed. After the general election, selection rules reverted to the post-2005 procedure. The party leader is elected by a poll of all party members, who choose from a shortlist of two candidates nominated by Conservative Party MPs.

The Labour Party also restricts decision-making to party members, although trade union influence remains strong. In most cases, a number of selected delegates participate in important personnel and issue decisions. Central party influence over local candidate selection has varied. Since 1988, there has had to be at least one woman on every shortlist. Since 2001, candidates require the approval of the central party’s head office prior to selection by their respective constituency Labour Party. Some political allies of the current leader, Jeremy Corbyn, favor a return to mandatory reselection, which would increase the influence of the left-wing within the party and is therefore highly contested.

The Labour Party’s selection process for party leader was changed prior to the election of Jeremy Corbyn. Previously the old electoral college voted for the party leader. The college consisted of the parliamentary Labour Party, constituency Labour parties, and the trade unions and affiliated organizations. Each group had one-third of the total vote. Since the procedural change, the choice is now based on a “one member, one vote” system. In addition, “registered supporters” can pay £3 to be entitled to vote as well. The winning candidate must secure at least 50% of the vote. Consequently, the election process can take several rounds, as the candidate with the fewest votes after each round drops out, and their second preferences are redistributed to the remaining candidates, until the winning candidate has reached the required quorum. However, Corbyn won more than 50% in the first round. While the new procedure massively increased party membership and participation in the leadership election, the distribution of indicated preferences between party members, members of affiliated organizations and registered supporters varies

considerably. Registered supporters appear to be much further to the left of party members or members of affiliated organizations. Furthermore, in the wake of the Brexit result and accusations that Corbyn had not campaigned effectively enough for “remain,” a repetition of the Labour Party leadership election, which result in another clear victory for Corbyn, has raised questions about the representativeness of the newly enlarged membership in the party leadership election. It has also accentuated doubts about the electability of the Labour Party, reflected in recent opinion polls.

The Liberal Democrats restrict decision-making to party members. In most cases, all party members have the opportunity to participate in the most important decisions and choice of personnel. Lists of candidates and agendas of issues are fairly open. The populist UK Independence Party also limits its leadership election to party members, but had difficulty choosing a successor to Nigel Farage with the first elected successor resigning after just 18 days.

Association
Competence
(Business)
Score: 7

Major business associations propose practical policy solutions, which are rooted in a realistic assessment of the circumstances in which they will be carried out. Until recently, the polarization between the major parties had diminished, especially in the field of socioeconomic policy matters. However, this is again widening. Even so, and especially with the Brexit decision, there is little incentive for business associations or trade unions to engage in wishful thinking if they want to be taken seriously in the national policy discourse. However, some economic interests do propose somewhat more provocative ideas.

The UK’s forthcoming withdrawal from the European Union has led to some more assertive stances both from business (concerned especially about threats to its EU market access and curbs on skilled immigrant workers) and unions (notably around protections deriving from EU rules). Some business groups are, however, more concerned about what they perceive as excessive regulatory burdens associated with EU membership. Although British business associations are divided over Westminster’s political ties to Brussels, access to the single market is at the very heart of Britain’s economic interest, namely their world leading financial and insurance industries. Overall, the influence of economic interest groups is relatively low-key, though not insubstantial.

Association
Competence
(Others)
Score: 8

The United Kingdom has a tradition of close scrutiny of policy proposals. The quality and realism of policy proposals determines the degree to which any interest group is taken seriously in the country’s national political discourse and there are many NGOs that have had a tangible impact on policy thinking. Green interest groups in particular have helped to shape the policies of successive governments. There are vocal campaigners for rural interests, while both sides of the migration debate have been nourished by interest groups.

There is an abundance of NGOs with often-narrow policy agendas that tend to be pushed forward without much consideration of the wider ramifications of the pursuit of their issue. By the same token, the diversity of such bodies allows a wide range of proposals to obtain a hearing.

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