

The Language of Politics

You may get asked direct questions on these terms in the exam!

What is politics?

1. Brainstorm key term
2. Read handout *Why do we bother with politics* highlighting anything you might add to (1)
3. Write a short paragraph explaining what politics is

the ability to make someone do something Power they would not normally have done

1. Read the section on Power on the handout *The Language of Politics* highlighting key terms
2. Having read that think of all the different types and sources of power you can money; legitimate authority; repressive power; power of knowledge/information/influence

agreeing, legitimate use of power
Authority

- What are the three different sources of Authority according to Max Weber? – give an example for each

Traditional - power for a long time
- monarchy - Queen

Charismatic - strong character
- Hitler

Legal-Rational - a particular role demands power
- David Cameron - PM

the supreme form of authority in a state Sovereignty

1. What is sovereignty?
2. Who or what has sovereignty in the UK is this true for the USA? Parliament
3. Explain why your definition of sovereignty may not work in practice?

Sovereignty - Dictatorship

if no 1, may become dictatorship
narrow line dividing the two
① accountability
scrutiny
legitimacy
representativeness
checks and balances.

→ geographical, political
The State and the Nation

people, cultural ties → language, tradition

- What is the difference between these two terms?
- What is the difference between the State and the Government?

→ paid role within Parliament

↓
Cabinet, junior ministers

1.2 The Language of Politics

Be clear about what these **concepts** mean. They could appear in any of your answers and it's important to use them correctly. Look at this list, and try to define each one before you read any further. Check your answers with this section to see how close you've come.

Power - Authority - Sovereignty - State - Nation - Democracy

1. Power

This is often described as the ability to make someone do something they might not otherwise have done, to achieve a desired outcome. I might make you do something because I'm greedy, or for your own good. The most obvious way is to use force, or coercion. I might use persuasion if I'm clever enough, or rich enough, or I might try to manipulate you. Or I might simply have the power over you because of my role, such as a policeman. Power is what matters in effective politics. As a politician in the UK, I would probably want to persuade you, because I want you to vote for me next time. If I have to, I could use the law against you if you didn't cooperate. For a long period of time Hitler held absolute power in Germany. His methods were a combination of each of the above. But as we'll see, without authority, power is not so likely to last.



2. Authority

→ force someone to do something

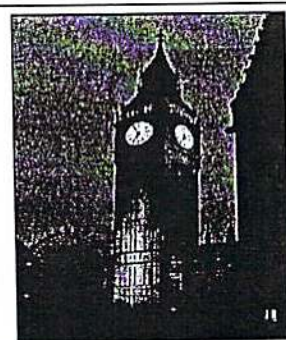


Max Weber 1864–1920

In the UK, we try to conduct politics without coercion. We enable others to have power over us by agreement, because we believe that's the sensible way to get things done. This is called the legitimating of power, and it's known as giving authority. The German sociologist Weber identified 3 main sources of authority – (1) Traditional, where an institution has had power for a long time e.g. the monarchy, or the House of Commons. (2) Charismatic, where we give authority because of strong character or personality. (3) Legal-Rational, where we give authority because we decide that a particular role demands power e.g. the Prime Minister. We agree to bestow authority, and try to control it by saying 'If we don't like the way you're using your power, we'll vote you out at the next elections.' Authority, then, is the **legitimate** use of power. It is usually difficult to maintain power in a democracy without some form of authority. A dictator with no authority is very likely to be removed sooner or later.

3. Sovereignty

It's important to make decisions about how much authority each role has within the State. We agree that the Prime Minister, for example, has more authority than the deputy Prime Minister. Somewhere, however, there should be someone or something with the highest authority, under which everyone else works, and we call this sovereignty. This might not be a person. It might be a set of rules, like the US Constitution, that everyone agrees to follow, including the President. In the UK, we claim that Parliament is sovereign. It has been given the highest authority to make the laws. Sovereignty, then, is where the supreme form of authority lies in a state. Remember, as with most things in politics, that it doesn't always work neatly in practice.



4. The State and the Nation

Try not to confuse the 'state' with the 'government' or with the 'nation'. To put it simply, the modern idea of a state is a geographical and political unit. Those who are born there are usually citizens of that state. It is a unit that can make the laws within its boundaries, and decide what behaviour it will allow. The government is a group of people who work within the state. Governments will come and go, but the state will remain the same unless something happens like a war, when it might expand or be taken over. It is not the same as a nation, which may be people who see themselves tied by factors like language, religion, common history and culture. The Jewish state is Israel, for example, but there are members of the Jewish nation all over the world. Think of other examples.