Mastering

British Politics

Macmillan Master Series

Accounting	French 2
Advanced English Language	German 1
Advanced Pure Mathematics	German 2
Arabic	Human Biology
Banking	Italian 1
Basic Management	Italian 2
Biology	Japanese
British Politics	Manufacturing
Business Communication	Marketing
Business Law	Mathematics
Business Microcomputing	Mathematics for Electrical and Electronic
Business Administration	Engineering
C Programming	Modern British History
Chemistry	Modern European History
COBOL Programming	Modern World History
Commerce	Pascal Programming
Communication	Philosophy
Databases	Photography
Economic and Social History	Physics
Economics	Psychology
Electrical Engineering	Science
Electronic and Electrical Calculations	Social Welfare
Electronics	Sociology
English as a Foreign Language	Spanish 1
English Grammar	Spanish 2
English Language	Spreadsheets
English Literature	Statistics
English Spelling	Study Skills
French 1	Word Processing

Mastering

British Politics

Third edition

F. N. Forman
and
N. D. J. Baldwin

MACMILLAN

© F. N. Forman 1985, 1991

© F. N. Forman and N. D. J. Baldwin 1996

All rights reserved. No reproduction, copy or transmission of this publication may be made without written permission.

No paragraph of this publication may be reproduced, copied or transmitted save with written permission or in accordance with the provisions of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988, or under the terms of any licence permitting limited copying issued by the Copyright Licensing Agency, 90 Tottenham Court Road, London W1P 9HE.

Any person who does any unauthorised act in relation to this publication may be liable to criminal prosecution and civil claims for damage.

First edition 1985 reprinted four times

Second edition 1991 reprinted four times

Third edition 1996

Published by

MACMILLAN PRESS LTD

Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire RG21 6XS
and London

Companies and representatives
throughout the world

ISBN 978-0-333-61626-0

ISBN 978-1-349-13493-9 (eBook)

DOI 10.1007/978-1-349-13493-9

A catalogue record for this book is available
from the British Library.

10	9	8	7	6	5	4	3	2	1
05	04	03	02	01	00	99	95	97	96

Typeset by Tek-Art, Croydon, Surrey.

To the memory of
J. F. R. F. and D. A. M. B.

Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	xi
<i>Preface</i>	xiii
<i>Acknowledgements</i>	xvi
I The political and electoral context	1
1 British political culture	3
1.1 Key characteristics	3
1.2 Other significant features	9
1.3 The European context	11
1.4 Conclusion	13
2 The evolving constitution	15
2.1 Key characteristics	15
2.2 Views of the constitution	17
2.3 Pressures for change	22
2.4 Conclusion	26
3 The electoral system	29
3.1 The system today	30
3.2 Criteria of assessment	37
3.3 The debate	41
3.4 Conclusion	42
4 Voting behaviour	45
4.1 Groups in the electorate	46
4.2 Main influences on voting	54
4.3 Continuing uncertainties	60
4.4 Conclusion	65

II Sources of power, pressure and opinion	69
5 The political parties	71
5.1 Origins and historical development	71
5.2 Ideological principles	72
5.3 Political functions	83
5.4 National organisation	85
5.5 Constituency activities	94
5.6 Conclusion	98
6 Pressure groups	101
6.1 Classification of groups	102
6.2 Main functions	104
6.3 Channels of influence	106
6.4 Organisation and power	107
6.5 Involvement in politics	113
6.6 Conclusion	118
7 The Media	121
7.1 The current situation	121
7.2 The problems of the press	126
7.3 The problems of the electronic media	134
7.4 The media and politics	140
7.5 Conclusion	143
8 Public opinion	147
8.1 The formation of opinion	148
8.2 The sources of opinion	151
8.3 The effects of opinion	158
8.4 Public opinion in context	161
8.5 Conclusion	166
III Parliament	169
9 The Monarchy	171
9.1 Origins and historical development	171
9.2 Powers and functions	175
9.3 Financing the Monarchy	184
9.4 The Monarchy, the media and the public	186
9.5 Conclusion	188
10 The House of Lords	190
10.1 Origins and historical development	190
10.2 Composition	194
10.3 Powers and functions	197
10.4 The work and impact of the Lords	202
10.5 Proposals for change	204
10.6 Conclusion	207

11 The House of Commons	209
11.1 Composition	209
11.2 The power of the Commons	215
11.3 Main functions	223
11.4 The progress of reform	230
11.5 Conclusion	233
 IV Central Government	 237
12 Prime Minister and Cabinet	239
12.1 Historical development	239
12.2 The Cabinet and its support	240
12.3 Prime Ministerial power	247
12.4 Cabinet government	254
12.5 Conclusion	260
13 Ministers and Departments	263
13.1 The structure and work of Departments	264
13.2 The role of Ministers	271
13.3 The problems of Government	276
13.4 Conclusion	279
14 The Civil Service	282
14.1 Composition and functions	282
14.2 Key issues	286
14.3 Methods of control	294
14.4 Executive Agencies and beyond	297
14.5 Conclusion	303
 V Other Public Institutions	 307
15 The Public Sector	309
15.1 Public corporations	310
15.2 Regulation and control	313
15.3 Privatisation and its consequences	315
15.4 Non-Departmental public bodies	323
15.5 Other public bodies	327
15.6 Prospects for the public sector	333
15.7 Conclusion	335
16 Local Government	338
16.1 Structure and personnel	338
16.2 Powers and functions	344
16.3 Financial arrangements	347
16.4 Central-local relations	351
16.5 Methods of central control	354
16.6 Whither local government?	357
16.7 Conclusion	362

17 The Legal System	366
17.1 Criminal justice	367
17.2 Civil justice	370
17.3 Judicial appeal	373
17.4 Citizens and the state	375
17.5 The role of the police	382
17.6 Administrative law	385
17.7 Conclusion	392
 VI Democracy in Britain	 397
18 Britain in Europe	399
18.1 Historical background	399
18.2 Legal and constitutional implications	402
18.3 Political and institutional impact	409
18.4 Possible future developments	417
18.5 Conclusion	421
19 Policy and decision making	425
19.1 Stages in the process	426
19.2 Key aspects	434
19.3 Strengths and weaknesses	438
19.4 Possible improvements	440
19.5 Conclusion	443
20 British Parliamentary democracy	445
20.1 The conditions of democracy	445
20.2 Essential characteristics	446
20.3 Other significant features	449
20.4 Signposts to the future	453
20.5 Conclusion	455
Appendix: How Britain voted in 1992: constituency by constituency	457
<i>Name index</i>	459
<i>Subject index</i>	464

List of Figures

1.1	Map of the British Isles	5
2.1	Classic view of the Constitution	19
2.2	Governmental view of the Constitution	20
2.3	Empirical view of the Constitution	21
3.1	Example of a ballot paper	32
3.2	Voting by party in 1992	34
4.1	How Britain voted in 1992, region by region	51
4.2	Profile of the electorate in 1992	52
4.3	Profiles of some typical voters	54
4.4	Electoral volatility in 1992	63
5.1	Party policies at the 1992 General Election	79
5.2	Conservative Party organisation	87
5.3	Labour Party organisation	90
5.4	Liberal Democrat Party organisation	93
6.1	Pressure group involvement in politics	114
7.1	Main national newspapers, February 1995	123
7.2	The electronic media in Britain: a simplified chronology	125
8.1	The flow of public opinion	148
9.1	British Monarchs since the Norman conquest	174
9.2	Functions of the Monarchy	183
9.3	The Royal Family's working year	184
9.4	Cost of the Monarchy	185
10.1	Composition of the House of Lords	194
10.2	Political affiliation in the House of Lords	196
10.3	Sessional statistics, 1950–51 to 1993–94	203
10.4	The work of the House of Lords, 1950–51 to 1993–94	203
11.1	Typical party 'whips'	219
11.2	Functions of the House of Commons	224
12.1	Prime Ministers since Robert Walpole	241
12.2	Cabinet Committees: October 1995	243
13.1	The structure of central Government (July 1995)	265
13.2	Cabinet Office and Office of Public Service	266

14.1 Civil Service staffing levels	284
14.2 Executive agencies (in December 1994)	298
15.1 The composition of the private sector	309
15.2 Privatisations since 1979	317
15.3 The new regulatory framework	322
15.4 The network of ministerial patronage	325
15.5 Departmental Committees of Inquiry November 1990–May 1995	328
16.1 The structure of local government	339
16.2 Average hours per month councillors spent on council duties	343
16.3 The distribution of local government responsibilities	345
16.4 Local government expenditure and income	348
16.5 Actual and proposed local authority boundaries	359
17.1 The Court system	368
18.1 Greater Europe: the European Union widens	403
18.2 The European decision making process	411
19.1 The policy and decision making process	426
How Britain voted in 1992: constituency by constituency	457

Preface

This book is a general introduction to the British system of government and politics. It is an attempt to convey clear information about every significant aspect of the subject and to facilitate an understanding of the British political system and contemporary British politics.

Britain and the world have changed considerably since the second edition was published in 1991. Sterling has left the Exchange Rate Mechanism of the European Monetary System. Financial markets have demonstrated their awesome power in a world of unimpeded capital movements. There has been a notable increase in the influence of the mass media and in Britain relations between the media and the party in office have been unusually hostile. The role of the judiciary and the courts at national and European level has grown largely at the expense of national Governments and Parliaments. More generally, the British nation-state – like its counterparts on the Continent of Europe – has had its traditionally dominant position eroded both by the growing competence and jurisdiction of the European Union and by the insistent claims and pressures from the ‘nations’ and localities within its own borders.

Perhaps most significant of all, British society and social attitudes have changed since the era of Margaret Thatcher in that ideas of community and partnership have come back into fashion with powerful, but as yet uncertain, effects upon both the process and the outcome of British politics. Equally, there is evidence of growing public cynicism, sometimes bordering upon contempt, for what happens in Whitehall and Westminster as well as a noticeable preference for local or private action.

One of the clear consequences of these developments has been to place constitutional issues firmly back upon the British political agenda after a period of about two decades when economic and social questions seemed more pressing. Another consequence has been the unavoidable need to conduct any sensible analysis of the British political system within its European and global contexts. Insular perspectives and analysis are no longer particularly useful or instructive in a world of global media and global markets.

Within the compass of a single volume it is not possible to provide a detailed description and analysis of all the topics covered. Readers who wish to delve more deeply into any particular aspect of the British political system should refer to the suggestions for further reading at the end of each chapter.

Part I deals with the political and electoral context within which the process of British politics takes place. *Chapter 1* considers British political culture, which is defined as the historical, cultural and attitudinal setting within which British political institutions have to function. *Chapter 2* discusses the evolving constitution by describing the key characteristics and analysing some of the leading interpretations of constitutional developments in Britain. *Chapter 3* describes the electoral system and assesses its strengths and weaknesses in the eyes of academics and politicians alike. *Chapter 4* deals with voting behaviour by identifying the most significant groups in the electorate, the main influences upon voting and some continuing uncertainties about the future.

Part II considers the sources of power, pressure and opinion within the British political system. *Chapter 5* deals principally with the two main political parties by considering their ideological principles, political functions, national organisation and constituency activities. *Chapter 6* reviews the main functions, organisation and power of pressure groups, and analyses the nature and extent of their involvement in the political process. *Chapter 7* looks at the increasingly significant role of the media, and assesses the nature and extent of their influence upon the political system. *Chapter 8* considers public opinion by seeking to explain its formation, sources and effects upon British politics.

Part III describes the history, activity and significance of the traditional institutions which constitute Parliament in Britain. *Chapter 9* reviews the powers and functions of the Monarchy, the ways in which it is financed, and its troubled relations with the media and the public. *Chapter 10* on the House of Lords touches upon the history of the institution before dealing with its composition, powers and functions, as well as the various proposals for reform. *Chapter 11* describes the composition, powers and functions of the House of Commons before briefly reviewing the progress of reform.

Part IV deals with the main components of central Government in Britain. *Chapter 12* examines the machinery of Cabinet government before going on to analyse the power of the Prime Minister and the role of the Cabinet. *Chapter 13* describes the structure and work of Departments, considers the role of Ministers and reviews some of the key problems of central Government. *Chapter 14* deals with the civil service by describing its composition and functions, reviewing the key issues and methods of control, and examining the executive Agencies and their implications for the future of the civil service in Britain.

Part V is concerned with the other public institutions in the British political system. *Chapter 15* deals with the public sector, notably the problems which have been posed by the public corporations in the past and the issues which have been raised more recently by the theory and practice of privatisation. It also focuses upon some topical issues raised by non-departmental public bodies and other forms of largely unaccountable public administration. *Chapter 16* describes the structure and composition, powers and functions of local government before going on to consider the vexed relations between central and local government and the various attempts by the centre to achieve greater control over the localities. It also considers some of the implications for all forms of sub-national government of current proposals for constitutional reform. *Chapter 17* considers the legal system, but concentrates especially upon the changing relationship between citizens and the state, the role of the police and the impact of administrative law. It also makes reference to the growing influence of European law upon the British legal system.

Part VI considers some broader and more philosophical issues relating to Britain's

changing role in Europe, the process and outcome of policy and decision making, and the nature and limits of democracy in Britain. *Chapter 18* looks at the increasingly complex and significant impact of the European Union upon the course of politics in Britain. *Chapter 19* deals with the process of policy and decision making in British central Government by identifying the main stages in the process and analysing some of the key aspects and possible improvements. *Chapter 20* concludes the book with a few synoptic observations about the essence of British Parliamentary democracy.

As in previous editions, many people have helped in the preparation and development of the text. We would particularly like to thank Suzannah Tipple for her constant encouragement and support, and Keith Povey for his editorial assistance. We must record our gratitude to those who have read and commented upon various chapters in this third edition: Charles Anson, Mary Baber, Sir Robin Butler, Lord Lawson, Lord Merlyn Rees, Richard Mottram, Sir Patrick Nairne, Professor Philip Norton, Chris Pond, Professor Rod Rhodes, Peter Riddell, Michael Welsh and David Willetts. Our thanks are also due to the excellent staff in the Library of the House of Commons who were courteous and helpful as usual.

Any insights achieved in this edition – and indeed in earlier editions – owe a great deal to those mentioned and to many others too numerous to list on this occasion. Any errors of fact or opinion are, of course, entirely our responsibility.

London and Wroxtton
December 1995

F.N. FORMAN
N.D.J. BALDWIN

Acknowledgements

The authors and publishers wish to thank the following for permission to use copyright material: The Economist for Fig. 9.4 from *The Economist*, 25 January 1992. Copyright © The Economist 1992; Financial Times for Fig. 18.1 from *Financial Times*, 9 December 1994; Guardian News Service Ltd for Fig. 16.3 from *The Guardian*, 3 May 1994; The Controller of Her Majesty's Copyright Office for Crown copyright material; The Independent for Figs. 15.4 and 16.4 from *The Independent*, 14 May 1995, 29 March 1995; Times Newspapers Ltd for Fig. 4.1, graphic, 'How Britain Voted: Region by Region', *The Sunday Times*, 12 April 1992, Fig. 4.3, table, 'Portrait of the Electorate', *The Sunday Times*, 12 April 1992, Fig. 4.5, graphic, 'How 11.1 Million Voters Changed Their Mind', *The Sunday Times*, 12 April 1992, and Fig. 5.1, 'What the Parties Stand for', *The Sunday Times*, 15 March 1992. Copyright © Times Newspapers Ltd 1992; and Fig 9.3, table, 'The Royal Family's Working Year', *The Times*, 1 January 1994. Copyright © Times Newspapers Ltd 1994. Every effort has been made to trace all the copyright-holders, but if any have been inadvertently overlooked the publishers will be pleased to make the necessary arrangement at the first opportunity.