British politics

VOCABULARY PRACTICE
ADVANCED | C1

Name: _____ Date: _____

1 Match each advanced term with its definition.

1 parliamentary sovereignty ____	**a** the principle that Parliament has supreme legal authority, unchecked by any other body
2 collective responsibility ____	**b** the convention that cabinet ministers publicly support all government decisions or resign
3 constitutional convention ____	**c** an established, unwritten practice governing the operation of the constitution
4 statutory instrument ____	**d** secondary legislation allowing ministers to make detailed rules without a full parliamentary vote
5 political capital ____	**e** the accumulated public trust and support a politician can draw upon to pursue difficult policy
6 realignment ____	**f** a substantial, lasting shift in party support or political allegiance among voters
7 devolution settlement ____	**g** the formal arrangement defining which powers are transferred to a devolved government
8 subsidiarity ____	**h** the principle that decisions should be made at the most local level practical
9 executive overreach ____	**i** the government exceeding its proper constitutional authority
10 anti-establishment sentiment ____	**j** widespread public distrust of traditional political institutions and elites

2 Choose the most precise term for each context.

1 Parliament's supreme, unchecked legal authority is parliamentary sovereignty / judicial supremacy.

2 The convention that ministers publicly back all decisions is collective responsibility / individual dissent.

3 An unwritten constitutional practice is a constitutional convention / a written statute.

4 Secondary legislation made without a full vote is a statutory instrument / a primary act.

5 Accumulated public trust enabling difficult policy is political capital / financial capital.

6 A lasting shift in voter allegiance is realignment / a temporary blip.

7 The government exceeding its proper authority is executive overreach / judicial restraint.

8 Widespread distrust of political elites is anti-establishment sentiment / institutional confidence.

3 Match the verbs with the noun phrases to form academic collocations.

1 invoke ____	**a** parliamentary sovereignty
2 relinquish ____	**b** a constitutional convention
3 exercise ____	**c** executive authority
4 erode ____	**d** public trust
5 codify ____	**e** political capital
6 challenge ____	**f** devolved powers
7 expend ____	**g** a devolution settlement
8 consolidate ____	**h** parliamentary authority

4 Complete the analysis with terms from the box.

anti-establishment sentiment | collective responsibility | constitutional convention | devolution settlement | executive overreach | parliamentary sovereignty | political capital | realignment | statutory instrument | subsidiarity

Constitutional scholars examining British governance emphasise 1 _____, the principle that Parliament holds ultimate legal authority unchecked by any codified constitution. This authority is nonetheless constrained in practice by 2 _____, unwritten but widely respected norms governing how power is actually exercised. Ministers operate under 3 _____, publicly supporting cabinet decisions or resigning, a convention that maintains government cohesion despite internal disagreement. Critics periodically accuse governments of 4 _____ when using a 5 _____ to bypass full parliamentary scrutiny for significant policy changes. Devolution has complicated traditional sovereignty further, as each 6 _____ defines a distinct balance of powers between Westminster and regional government, guided loosely by the principle of 7 _____, that decisions should sit at the most appropriate local level. Politicians must spend accumulated 8 _____ carefully when pursuing unpopular but necessary reform, particularly amid rising 9 _____ that has fuelled broader electoral 10 _____ across the political spectrum in recent years.

5 Read the text and answer the questions briefly.

The tension between sovereignty and devolution

Constitutional scholars note a persistent tension between parliamentary sovereignty, the doctrine underpinning the UK's constitutional order, and the practical reality of devolution, which has transferred substantial powers to regional administrations. In principle, Westminster retains the legal authority to override devolved decisions or even abolish devolved institutions entirely; in practice, doing so without regional consent would likely provoke serious constitutional and political crisis, given the political capital already invested in devolution settlements. This gap between formal legal authority and practical political constraint illustrates a broader feature of the uncodified constitution: many of its most significant limits operate through convention and political consequence rather than enforceable law, making the system flexible but also, critics argue, vulnerable to erosion during periods of executive overreach.

1 What tension do constitutional scholars note? _____

2 What does Westminster retain in principle regarding devolved decisions? _____

3 What would likely happen in practice if Westminster tried to override devolution without consent? _____

4 What does this gap illustrate about the uncodified constitution? _____

5 How do many of the constitution's most significant limits operate? _____

6 What do critics argue this makes the system vulnerable to? _____

6 Replace the words in bold with a precise term or collocation.

1 Parliament holds ultimate, unchecked legal authority. _____

2 Ministers publicly supported every cabinet decision or resigned. _____

3 The government was accused of exceeding its proper constitutional authority. _____

4 There was a lasting shift in voter allegiance across the political spectrum. _____

OVER TO YOU

Write a 160-190 word critical commentary on how parliamentary sovereignty and devolution interact within the UK's constitutional system, distinguishing observation from inference.

[ ] Use at least twelve target expressions. [ ] Include four academic collocations. [ ] Maintain a precise, balanced register.

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ANSWER KEY

1 Advanced terms

1 a 2 b 3 c 4 d 5 e 6 f 7 g 8 h 9 i 10 j

2 Precise terms

1 parliamentary sovereignty 2 collective responsibility 3 a constitutional convention 4 a statutory instrument 5 political capital 6 realignment 7 executive overreach 8 anti-establishment sentiment

3 Academic collocations

1 a invoke parliamentary sovereignty 2 f relinquish devolved powers 3 c exercise executive authority 4 d erode public trust 5 b codify a constitutional convention 6 h challenge parliamentary authority 7 e expend political capital 8 g consolidate a devolution settlement

4 Analysis

1 parliamentary sovereignty 2 constitutional convention 3 collective responsibility 4 executive overreach
5 statutory instrument 6 devolution settlement 7 subsidiarity 8 political capital
9 anti-establishment sentiment 10 realignment

5 Reading - suggested answers

1 Between parliamentary sovereignty and the practical reality of devolution.
2 The legal authority to override devolved decisions or even abolish devolved institutions entirely.
3 It would likely provoke serious constitutional and political crisis.
4 That many of its most significant limits operate through convention and political consequence rather than enforceable law.
5 Through convention and political consequence rather than enforceable law.
6 Erosion during periods of executive overreach.

6 Precise terms and collocations

1 parliamentary sovereignty 2 collective responsibility 3 executive overreach 4 realignment

Over to you

Answers will vary. Look for conceptual precision, evidence-aware reasoning and balanced evaluation.