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Politics and policies

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From mass media and political communication to the different layers of the UK government, all these factors shape how politics flows throughout the country and how the public's needs are met. Starting with the political parties, each uses different communication styles to reach its unique audiences. We see that the Labour Party relies heavily on social media to engage younger voters and drive support through disciplined messaging. Meanwhile, the Conservatives benefit more from right-leaning newspapers and place strong emphasis on issues such as national security. The Liberal Democrats, by contrast, depend more on local media, using a more localized approach to communication. All parties rely on mass media to increase accessibility and engagement, especially among young people, but this also introduces negative effects such as misinformation and internal divisions. Moving on to the different layers of government, the national government can respond quickly during major crises but maintains significant central authority that can limit regional decision-making. Devolved governments offer more tailored authority to their specific regions yet face setbacks in resources and coordination; similarly, local governments provide more community-focused services but face greater restrictions due to their smaller scale. Overall, there is a fine line between how the different parties and layers of government operate, yet they all ultimately aim to ensure their views and the public's needs are effectively represented.

The Labour Party is the UK political party most active on social media, with “over 80% of the electorate” using these platforms regularly (Digital Resources – the Labour Party, 2024). Having more digital ads and social media posts makes sense for the Labour Party, since they are more likely to reach their audience there rather than through newspapers and television. Beyond the way they advocate for their beliefs and opinions, they also have a disciplined approach to how they produce these posts, ensuring “consistency with the agreed political strategy, campaign plans, narratives, scripts, and key messages” and sticking to a small number of talking points (Title & Director - Communications, n.d.). These moves are calculated to ensure their biggest points are communicated first, no matter the debate or event, allowing them to emphasize key opinions. The Conservative Party, by contrast, takes a different approach, widely using newspapers for political advantage. Sources such as the “Daily Mail, Daily Telegraph and Daily Express have been overwhelmingly positive for the Conservatives in their choice and portrayal of front-page stories,” helping the Conservative Party gain media coverage (Abernethie, 2024). Having supportive media is a significant advantage. While the Conservatives leverage right-leaning newspapers to amplify their messages, they also focus on framing key political issues, particularly national security, through targeted communication to appeal directly to voters' concerns. Similar to Labour's disciplined approach to cost-of-living messaging, the Conservatives ensure their messaging on national security is consistent, emphasizing that “only

the Tories could keep Britain safe” (Landale, 2024). In contrast, the Liberal Democrats take a more localized approach, tailoring communication to specific communities through local media and grassroots campaigns, targeting audiences through “newspaper, magazine, TV channel, radio station or website” coverage (Building & Maintaining Good Relations with the Media, 2024). This ensures they engage viewers on a communication and engagement level rather than purely persuasion. While these strategies advance party agendas, there are drawbacks. Mass media enables individuals to have a voice in government and allows parties to run campaigns on a larger scale, increasing political engagement. Most parties maintain a strong social media presence, providing a centralized space for the public to access party views and opinions. The growing use of social media particularly engages younger generations, exposing them to political issues and encouraging participation. A recent poll by the Electoral Commission found that “nearly half of young people in the UK trust social media as a source for political information”; however, these advantages are accompanied by potential drawbacks (Nearly Half of Young People Trust Social Media on Politics, 2025). Despite this trust, the public relies on social media “despite the fear of misinformation,” making it challenging for parties to communicate accurate messages (Nearly Half of Young People Trust Social Media on Politics, 2025). This environment also magnifies internal divisions, as disagreements visible online can damage the reputations of both individual members and the party as a whole. For example, during the 2010–2015 coalition, the Liberal Democrats promised to oppose tuition fee increases, but when the Conservatives supported raising them, the Liberal Democrats “appeared to mishandle the unity/distinctiveness dilemma experienced by all coalition parties,” losing public trust (Dommett, 2013). Overall, mass media and political communication are powerful tools for sharing information, but they can also distort it. Media channels often lean toward particular parties, making it difficult to determine if information is accurate. Consequently, while these tools allow parties to amplify their message, audiences must critically evaluate sources to determine their reliability.

Much like the political parties, the different layers of the UK government each bring their own strengths and weaknesses to the political system. At the National level, the government sets nationwide policies, passes laws, and manages the overall direction of the country. The national government has multiple advantages to its system, but one of the main ones is its quickness to respond during times of national crisis. Especially during the energy price surge following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine “the UK national government has taken steps to respond to nation cost-of-living pressures, introducing a package of measures to help families pay less for energy and access cheaper deals, showing how it can act decisively on broad economic challenges,” showing how fast they are able to stabilize essential services in times of need (£40 Billion Spent Protecting Families and Businesses from Energy Costs, 2023). Its times like these that the national government needs to respond with ease and quickness, however with this comes limitations. Although there is lots of power to in “Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland, the UK national government still holds significant central authority, which has limited the ability of local regions to make autonomous decisions that meet their specific needs” making it hard to come to

a decision that benefits everyone (Response to the Devolution APPG Inquiry on the Role of Central Government in Making a Success of Devolution in England, 2020). This isn't only about the lack of power within the national government, however how this “system of government leaves devolved bodies with limited power and resources,” that can prevent the devolved governments from responding effectively (Warner et al., 2024). Therefore, it's hard to get everyone's opinions and wants across, but that's why there are policies in place to get as close as we can to a decision. While the national government plays this broad and centralized role, the devolved governments represent the next layer in the system—one that shifts decision-making closer to regional communities and focuses on more tailored, localized priorities. Then, we get into the devolved government that gives the regions the chance to make more specified policies and public services in order to get a better approach to government. This structure allows these areas greater flexibility by giving them more options in how they operate, from being able to have “control over issues such as transport, housing, skills, and planning, local leaders can better align policies with the area's economic strengths and challenges,” allowing for more focus on centralized issues that matter most to their communities (Canty, 2024). Through this increased authority, devolved governments provide a much stronger voice for smaller regions that are often overlooked within national debates, ensuring that their concerns, priorities, and unique challenges are properly represented. As a result, people in these areas are given more influence over decisions that directly impact their daily lives. However, although the option of devolved government empowers these regions, it does not mean every area will have the necessary “coordination between places in tackling ‘national’ issues, such [as] cross-country rail investment,” and other large-scale responsibilities that require collaboration beyond a single region (Canty, 2024). In many cases, gaining the power but lacking the infrastructure, resources, or interregional cooperation needed to use it effectively can ultimately hurt a region more than help it. This is because authority without adequate support may lead to policies being poorly implemented, misdirected, or not used to their full potential. Therefore, even when power is devolved, its success depends on whether regions have the means to exercise it in a way that creates meaningful and lasting improvements. The local government is the same when it comes to giving power to smaller regions. For the local government, they are able to mold their services to be specified for that community's needs. This allows for the smaller communities, again, to be heard because “without effective communication between national government and local councils, much of this untapped potential, especially in areas outside current devolution priorities, could be lost,” so at the end of the day it's about letting the local communities focus on their specific needs instead of making decisions for the regions as a whole (A Force for Growth: Spotlighting the Role of Councils in Enabling Inclusive Economic Growth, 2025). Highlighting how local authorities are positioned in a way to understand and respond to the specific needs of their communities, something a central government cannot always achieve. The local government allows for the chance to have higher living standards because “National government cannot deliver on its ambition to deliver high living standards in every part of the UK without local councils,” which shows that local government plays a crucial role in improving everyday

life for their communities (A Force for Growth: Spotlighting the Role of Councils in Enabling Inclusive Economic Growth, 2025). However, even though the local government allows for a more specified approach to their areas, this doesn't mean they are able to do so to their full potential, because being local government means not getting as much funding as the other layers of government. There are restrictions on how much funding and opportunities the local government can take to grow their economy from how “local authorities cannot borrow to finance day-to-day spending, and so they must either run balanced budgets or draw down reserves,” making an even bigger debt to themselves (Atkins & Hoddinott, 2020). Ultimately, while local governments make decision-making more localized in order to fill the needs of their community, it's not unlikely for them to be cut short on funds that could meet the needs of the population they serve.

In conclusion, political parties use different aspects of the media to target their specific audiences, while the various layers of government work through different mechanisms to address everyone's needs and opinions. Each operates through its own strengths, limitations, and communication strategies, yet all share the responsibility of serving the public and navigating an increasingly complex political landscape. Political parties, in particular, adopt different marketing approaches: the Labour Party with its disciplined digital messaging, the Conservatives with traditional right-leaning press, and the Liberal Democrats with an emphasis on localized outreach. This demonstrates that not all communication methods work equally well for every party. Similarly, the layers of government possess varying degrees of political power designed to balance national cohesion with regional autonomy. Ultimately, whether information flows through social media, newspapers, or local councils, the goal remains to ensure that people's voices are heard, their needs are recognized, and political decisions are made with consideration of the diverse communities across the UK. Together, these strategies illustrate the delicate balance between communication and governance, highlighting both the opportunities and the challenges inherent in modern British politics.

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