

Conservatism

Political parties are a vital part of the UK's representative democracy. A political party is a group of people drawn together by a similar set of beliefs (ideology) even if they do not have identical views – on some issues they may be deeply divided. Most parties aspire to form a government and adopt an agreed programme of policy commitments, linked to their core ideas.

Right wing: supporting the status quo – for little or no change. Supporters of right-wing parties (often known as conservatives) stress the importance of order, stability, hierarchy and private property.

Centre right = mainstream Conservative.

Thatcherite/New Right Conservatism – more right.

Right = strong support for free markets, no state intervention, low levels taxation, weak protection for workers, Anti EU, in favour of 'hard Brexit', limited welfare state with caps on total amount of benefits available and tougher criteria for claiming, anti-immigration, opposed to multiculturalism, traditional attitude to moral and lifestyle issues, stress on patriotism and national interest.

Political parties perform a number of functions within a democratic system.

Representation: Main function of parties is to represent the views of people with a certain set of beliefs. Those who have a broadly right-wing outlook have historically been drawn to the Conservative party. This representative function could be performed by lots of individuals or pressure groups, but the value of parties is that they bring order to the political system.

Participation: In order to win power or influence, parties encourage people to participate in politics – to vote, join a party and to support it through funding to get its message across. Parties vary in how far they allow their members to shape party policy, but all the main UK parties have procedures that involve members in selecting candidates to stand for local and national elections, and in choosing the party leader.

Recruiting office holders: For a small number of people, party membership leads to recruitment as candidates for public office and thus participation in the UK's representative democracy. Parties also have the right to reject or 'deselect' candidates who fail to live up to their expectation so that they cannot stand for that party in any upcoming election. Before the 2015 general election, Conservative activists in Thirsk and Malton (in North Yorkshire) and South Suffolk did not allow the sitting MPs to stand again as candidates.

Formulating Policy: Parties generate policies that embody the ideas for which they stand. At a general election they put these proposals before the electorate in a manifesto, a document setting out their programme for government. At the 2015 general election the NHS was important – the Conservatives promised to give people access to their GP 7 days a week. Parties have an educative function, by communicating and explaining their ideas to the public (although they do this to win popular support, so are likely to distort opponents' policies in their own interests).

Providing government: The winning party at a general election has the opportunity to form a government. That party controls the business of parliament, with a view of passing its manifesto