

MODULE 2

APPENDIX

Crime and Political Parties



Appendix: Module 2

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This appendix was written by the A level politics teacher who helped draft the first two modules. The text has not been fully edited, nor is there a web version. His intention was to use it for teaching his own A2 Politics syllabus for the synoptic paper.

Introduction

Law and order is one of the key battlegrounds in any British election. The government of the day will try to portray itself in the best light possible, pointing out that things are getting better, that things aren't as bad as they were under the last government, or that things would be a whole lot worse without its initiatives and actions. However, governments must perform a fine balancing act, stressing on the one hand that things are getting better and on the other that they refuse to be complacent. Opposition parties in contrast will try to diminish the government's achievements and emphasise that crime is 'out of control' (no matter what the reality). The opposition must persuade the electorate to give it an opportunity to 'crack' crime, because it has the answers or at the very least will try harder than the present incumbents.

Given the importance of the law and order issue to the electorate, the government must take the issue seriously. However, the government has a problem in that it could be deemed to have been unsuccessful in cracking crime while crime still exists—even though its eradication is an unfeasible policy goal. Moreover, even if the statistics demonstrate that crime is falling overall, the government could be perceived to have failed if serious and heinous crimes are on the increase. For example, the 2002-03 recorded crime figures demonstrated that crime overall fell by roughly 3 percent (after statistical adjustment) but also that the number of rapes and murders increased notably. Unsurprisingly, many newspaper headlines focused on the sensational but negative aspects, while the government tried hard to accentuate the positive.

It is no wonder that many people's perception of crime trends contrasts with the official figures—as we saw in detail in the previous lesson.

Box 1: Examples of Headlines following Release of July 2003 Crime Figures

Daily Express – **British Crime Explosion**

The Sun – **A Nation Stalked by Fear**

Daily Mail – **Rapes Rise by 27% as Crimes of Violence Soar**

The Daily Telegraph – **Violent Crime up 20% as Police Solve Fewer Cases**

A Brief History of Party Positions on Law and Order

Historically, the major political parties had differing views about the causes of crime and thus the way offenders should be punished. Views on law and order related back directly to fundamental perspectives on human nature. These differing positions formed the core of each party's ideology.

The Conservative Party traditionally had a somewhat pessimistic, or some would say realistic, view on human nature: namely, that people are flawed, greedy and easily corrupted. Thus one of the state's primary roles is to secure law and order, providing a strong deterrent to citizens who may be considering breaking the law and punishing severely those who do. Such a view largely rejects other explanations for the causes of crime and focuses on individual responsibility. Not all poor people steal, so those who do must have *chosen* to. Criminals need to take responsibility for their actions and receive appropriate punishment, which should also deter others from following such a course of action.

The Labour Party has a more positive, or perhaps optimistic, view of human nature that regards individuals as essentially law-abiding. However, this view suggests that people are more likely to break the law when social circumstances are difficult. People do not steal because they are in some way evil, they steal because they are poor. The social environment is thus in some way responsible for crime. Crime, in this view, is a symptom of deeper social problems.

The Liberal Democrats' attitude towards crime and crime prevention is similar to the traditional left-wing view that underlying social causes need to be addressed, and the emphasis is on rehabilitation of offenders rather than punishment.

These viewpoints have influenced policy over the years to a large extent. The Conservatives fought the 1979 general election with considerable focus on law and order. Margaret Thatcher and her party felt that increasing industrial unrest threatened the legitimacy of the state. Law and order needed re-establishing. This led to a policy phase that has been identified by Benyon and Edwards (1997) as 'restoring the rule of law'. Policies between 1979 and 1987 sought to re-impose the legitimacy of the state by getting tough on lawbreakers and punishing them for their crimes. An example of this approach was the 'Short Sharp Shock' administered to young offenders during the early years of the Thatcher government. Youths were interned in army-style boot camps, where they were subjected to a strict disciplinary regime in an attempt to change their behaviour. Furthermore, more powers were given to the police—such as greater stop and search powers (so-called *sus-laws*)—to readdress the perceived imbalance between criminals and their victims.

A second phase followed in 1987, which has been described as 'enlisting the community' (Benyon and Edwards, 1997). This approach followed a softer line, focusing more on the rehabilitation of offenders and alternatives to prison. For example, fewer people were sent to prison and instead given 'community service' and Neighbourhood Watch schemes were set up around the country.

A third phase was adopted in 1993. This approach, under Home Secretary Michael Howard, was 'back-to-basics law and order'. Howard pleased Conservative conferences by claiming that 'prison works', arguing that criminals can't commit crime while locked up and that harsh sentences deter others. An example of the back-to-basics approach was the 1994 Criminal Justice and Public Order Act, which created new crimes such as trespass and aggravated trespass, aimed at new age travellers, ravers, hunt saboteurs and environmental protestors. Section 60 of the act also gave the police further powers with regard to stop and search.

By the time the Labour Party returned to power in 1997 after 18 years, Tony Blair had already established that its policy was to be 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'. As the phrase suggests, this strategy focuses both on understanding and ameliorating those factors that can lead individuals to commit crime *and* on punishing individuals that commit the crimes. Earlier left-wing or socialist approaches to crime and punishment were perceived to have focused overly on the environmental factors that can encourage crime and insufficiently on judging criminals and seeking retribution for their actions. The strategy

concentrated on reducing poverty, unemployment and educational underachievement and on the rehabilitation of offenders to lower crime levels.

Successive Conservative leaders found little difficulty in labelling such an approach as 'soft on crime', which the old Labour Party found hard to rebuff. Thus, New Labour's emphasis on getting tough on crime, as well as the causes of crime, can be seen as a wily electoral response to a difficult political issue. Being tough on crime and criminals allows politicians to regale wrongdoers and castigate their actions. Home Secretaries can launch into rhetoric-laden speeches threatening and damning offenders, which is perhaps unsurprising given that the majority of people and certainly most tabloid papers seem to prefer the tough on crime approach.

SECTION A

Read the following article and answer the questions.

'Crime is falling - because prison works'

observer.guardian.co.uk/crimedebate/story/0,12079,1001972,00.html

Q1 As of July 2003, how many people were incarcerated in Prison?

- A **74,000** B 174,000 C 64,000 D 69,612

Q2 What is the name of the Government policy designed as an alternative to prison?

- A care in the community B **intensive supervision** C surestart D anti-social behaviour orders

Q3 Between what years did the Conservative Government follow an anti-prison policy?

- A 1990-1995 B 1988-1995 C 1990-1993 D **1988-1993**

Q4 According to the BCS, crime fell by what percentage between 1995 and 2001/02?

- A 15% B 25% C **35%** D 50%

Q5 When criminals cannot commit crime because they are in prison this is called the?

- A **incapacitation effect** B incarceration effect C interment effect D incompetence effect

Q6 What is the deterrent effect?

- A to rehabilitate B **to discourage through fear** C to reflect on past deeds D to exact retribution

Q7 How many offences per year on average are committed by offenders with drug problems?

- A 140 B **257** C 275 D 175

Q8 How many prison places will be needed by 2009 according to Home Office projections?

- A 91,000 B 131,000 C 19,000 D **109,000**

Q9 According to the article, which is more effective in the short run?

- A doing nothing B being tough on the causes of crime **C being tough on crime** D blaming the opposition

Q10 Who is the current Home Secretary?

- A Gordon Brown **B David Blunkett** C Michael Howard D Jack Straw

Now read the following article and answer the questions below

‘How tags make offenders toe the line’

observer.guardian.co.uk/crimedebate/story/0,12079,882546,00.html

Q11 What is a curfew?

- A a type of police dog B a social worker **C a deadline for being indoors** D an alarm bell

Q12 What is the ISSP?

- A Intensive Superior and Surveillance Programme B Interesting Supervision and Surveillance Programme C Intensive Supervision and Surveillance People **D Intensive Supervision and Surveillance Programme**

Q13 At whom is the ISSP aimed?

- A juveniles** B oaps C women D men

Q14 Which government department is responsible for Law and Order?

- A Prime Minister's Office **B Home Office** C Ministry of Defence D The Treasury

Q15 How many more hours of activities each week will a participant on ISSP engage in than those serving custodial sentences?

- A 15 hours B 26 hours **C 11 hours** D 20 hours

Q16 What was the increase in the number of young people in custody between 1992 and 2002?

- A 1,328 B 2,609 C 6,083 **D 1,281**

Q17 Which of the following is not included in an ISSP?

- A education and training B learning behavioural skills C meeting victims of crime **D sewing mail bags**

Q18 According to the article, how many juveniles are enrolled on the schemes?

- A 50 B 2,609 C 1,328 **D 3,243**

Q19 What are the financial savings of this scheme compared to custodial sentences?

- A. £15,000** B. £6,000 C. £21,000 D. £27,000

Q20 Which of the following bodies are not mentioned in the article?

- A. Youth Justice Board B. Youth Offending Service C. Youth Justice Service D. YMCA



What do you think?

Can you summarise the arguments that

- 1 'prison works' and that
- 2 focusing on the 'causes of crime' is a better approach?

Draw on the answers to the above questions to aid you.

(These type of responses have been required in Short Answer Questions from the A level paper)

SECTION B

The Labour Party has introduced a large number of initiatives to 'crack crime'. Some of the more significant ones are listed below—with links to articles and web sites for those students who wish to explore the initiatives in more detail.

Q1 The Labour Government says it is being 'tough on crime and tough on the causes of crime'. Looking at its initiatives in turn, can they be described as being tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime, or both? In one or two sentences, explain why you came to that conclusion in each case.

Labour's Crime Policies include:

Increasing the number of police officers

www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,924340,00.html

The Street Crime Initiative – focusing on reducing street muggings

www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,3605,1007663,00.html

Changes in the Criminal Justice system – end to double jeopardy, trial by jury to end in complicated fraud cases politics.guardian.co.uk/homeaffairs/story/0,11026,998590,00.html

Longer sentences

politics.guardian.co.uk/homeaffairs/story/0,11026,950972,00.html

Home detention curfews - electronic tagging

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/guidhdc.html

Massive expansion of CCTV

Attempts to provide greater education in prisons to aid rehabilitation

Restorative justice – offenders meeting victims to apologise and hear the victim's thoughts

www.guardian.co.uk/leaders/story/0,3604,1007030,00.html

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/justice/victims/restorative/index.html

Crime Reduction Partnerships – Local bodies including police, councils and schools working together to combat crime www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/guidcrp.html

Reclassification of drugs – cannabis to be 'decriminalised'

Community Support Officers - Local Street Wardens

www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,639734,00.html

www.pm.gov.uk/output/Page3574.asp

Increase in the DNA database

www.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,3604,984752,00.html

www.pm.gov.uk/output/page1079.asp

New Deal for Communities – An attempt to regenerate run down estates www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/NDC

Sure Start – Compensatory education. Giving children from deprived areas extra education in their early years.
www.surestart.gov.uk/

Suggestion for on the spot fines for anti-social behaviour – Tony Blair's initiative to march 'yobs' to cashpoints on a Saturday night. Not deemed practical.

Halving the time it takes to get a persistent young offender into court – A key target to speed up criminal justice

Local child curfews – Designed to get unsupervised children off the street.

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/guidlcc.html

Anti-social behaviour orders – Gets individuals banned from areas that they have been offending

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/guidasbo.html

Final warning scheme – Replaces cautions. More severe. www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/guidfws.html

Intensive supervision and surveillance programmes – Close supervision of young offenders. Seen as an alternative to prison

[www.youth-justice-](http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/YouthJusticeBoard/Sentencing/IntensiveSupervisionAndSurveillanceProgramme/default.htm)

[board.gov.uk/YouthJusticeBoard/Sentencing/IntensiveSupervisionAndSurveillanceProgramme/default.htm](http://www.youth-justice-board.gov.uk/YouthJusticeBoard/Sentencing/IntensiveSupervisionAndSurveillanceProgramme/default.htm)

Parenting orders – Schemes developed to help parents cope with difficult and challenging children

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/guidpar.html

Referral orders – Young offenders referred to trained volunteers who decide how the offender should repay their debt to society. www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/dgyot.htm#Introduction1

Detention and training orders – Locks up young offenders for up to 12 months followed by period in anti-crime programme in the community www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/guiddto.html

Youth inclusion programmes and splash schemes – Youth crime goes up in school holidays, thus a scheme to get youngsters involved during those periods. www.crimereduction.gov.uk/youth15.htm

www.culture.gov.uk/global/press_notices/archive_2002/dcms93_2002.htm?month=May&properties=archive%5F2002%2C%2Fglobal%2Fpress%5Fnotices%2Farchive%5F2002%2F%2C

Action plan orders – Intensive programme of targets designed to keep youths away from crime.

www.homeoffice.gov.uk/docs/guidapo.html

Withdrawing child benefit from parents of tearaway teenagers – Under discussion

Fixed Penalties – Fines for anti-social behaviour. Pilot schemes under way

www.guardian.co.uk/guardianpolitics/story/0,3605,956207,00.html

Plans to allow juries knowledge of previous convictions where relevant

Planned introduction of Identity/Entitlement Cards

Q2 In conclusion, in your opinion is Labour being tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime? Use evidence to support your answer. (Write no more than one page.)

Q3 Using the Conservative and Liberal Democrat web sites (www.conservatives.com, www.libdems.org.uk) , what are their policies on crime? Fill in the table below. You may use the information from the activity above for the Labour policies (www.labour.org.uk). (You might not be able to find answers for each box, but do try)

	Labour	Conservative	Liberal Democrats
Prisons			
Police			
Youth justice			
Drugs			
Sentencing			
Rehabilitation			
Causes of crime			

Q4 What are the similarities and differences between the three main parties on law and order? (Write no more than one side)

SUMMARY

- You have learned about the past Conservative Government's law and order policies.
- You have knowledge of the current Labour Government's crime policies and initiatives.
- You have evaluated, with evidence, whether Labour is tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime, or both.
- You have studied the arguments that Prison Works and that electronic tagging works.
- You have researched the Conservatives' and Liberal Democrats' crime policies, compared them to Labour's, and judged whether there is consensus or conflict on this issue.

Exam Questions

You should now be able to answer all of these essay questions which have or may come up in A level Politics exams.

1. Has the Labour Government since 1997 been 'tough on crime, tough on the causes of crime'?
2. To what extent has there been continuity in Law and Order Policy since 1990?
3. Assess the similarities and differences between the parties in the area of Law and Order
4. To what extent is there consensus between the major parties on the issue of law and order?
5. 'Law and Order Policy was the subject of fierce party conflict in the 1980s and early 1990s, but since the mid-1990's, there has been a growing consensus over the issues.'
6. Explain and evaluate this statement.
7. Why is Law and Order an issue in British Politics?

Short answer question

What arguments have the major political parties deployed concerning the effectiveness of prison sentencing since 1992?