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| **Top key terms**   |  |  | | --- | --- | | **Executive** | **Cabinet** | | **Government department** | **Minister** | | **Prime Minister** | **Royal prerogative** | | **Secondary legislation** | **Presidential** | | **Majority government** | **Prime Minister’s office** | | **Coalition** | **Patronage** | | **Cabinet reshuffle** | **Bilateral** | | **Committees** | **Collective responsibility** | | **Confidence vote** | **Free votes** | | **Individual ministerial responsibility** | **Devolution** | | **Key debates**   * Powers of the PM vs cabinet * What are the core functions of the executive? * Increasing powers to the PM – prerogatives, appointments to Lords, appoint senior judges etc * Primary vs secondary legislation * Impact of small and large majority in the House of Commons * Backbench rebellions – how can they undermine the power of the PM * Presidential vs PM powers * How can a PM be removed? * Primes inter pares * Limits on the powers of the PM/cabinet | **Summary**  The executive and power of the prime minister has changed over time. Depending on the strength of the prime minister, dictates how much they can control the cabinet and thus set the agenda. Strong leaders, e.g. Thatcher and Blair are seen as Prime Ministerial and indeed Presidential whereas Brown, Major and May are seen as having a cabinet government, in which the cabinet controls the Prime Minister. Factors of influence include the majority in the commons, the media, the opinion of the nation and events. Key areas of focus include – Poll tax, Falklands War, constitutional reforms, Iraq and the EU referendum – all of which change power. No PM has monopolised power, they can lead not command and direct rather than dictate policy. |
| **Case study – difficulties for PM**   * Harold Wilson – social reform – Divorce 1969, abolition of the Death penalty, decriminalised gay sex, legalised abortion due to large gov. maj. * Wilson – tension within the party –small maj. Oct 1974 = ungovernable. * Thatcher – 1990 – few allies in cabinet – weakness exploited and she resigned – unpopular, poll tax and weak economy * Blair – Iraq war * Cameron – coalition and the EU referendum – resignation * May – damaged authority due to poor election, divisions within party, scale of challenges inc. Brexit. | **Case study – Presidential PM**   * Thatcher – trade unions broken up and strikes crushed. Less use of cabinet and more to advisers. * Thatcher – majority – 70 seats 1983 due to Falklands war * Blair – inner circle, kitchen cabinet and sofa government. Large majs and pursued the third Way with investment into welfare state and constitutional reform. * Blair – Northern Ireland and devolution | **Exam questions**   1. British Prime Ministers have become too powerful. How far do you agree? 2. Evaluate the extent to which the executive is less powerful in relation to Parliament. 3. Evaluate how far the power of the executive has been undermined by constitutional reforms since 1997 |