

# WORKBOOK

PEARSON EDEXCEL A-LEVEL

# Politics **2**

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS OF THE USA  
AND COMPARATIVE POLITICS

- ✓ Build confidence with practice questions structured by Assessment Objectives
- ✓ Prepare for assessment with exam-style questions



Mark Rathbone

# The main characteristics of US federalism

Federalism divides power between the national government and the state governments. Yet the Constitution does not define this relationship clearly and does not even mention the words ‘federal’ or ‘federalism’. This has allowed some flexibility in the relationship between the federal government and the states, which has gone through several stages over the past 230 years: **dual federalism** (1791–c.1900), **co-operative federalism** (c.1900–54), **coercive federalism** (1954–69) and **new federalism** (1969–89).

Practice questions?

### AO1 Knowledge and understanding

**13** Summarise the features of EITHER dual federalism OR coercive federalism. 3 marks

### AO2 Analysis

**14** Explain in your own words the reasons why the US Constitution adopted a federal structure for the government of the USA. 4 marks

**15** Explain in your own words the reasons why there was a move away from coercive federalism towards ‘new federalism’ between 1969 and 1989. 4 marks

## AO3 Evaluation



**16** Evaluate the reasons why power transferred from the states to the federal government under presidents George W. Bush and Barack Obama.

**6 marks**

### Worked example

The main reason is that two major national crises required national solutions: the 2001 terrorist attacks and the 2008 financial crisis were too extensive to be dealt with by individual states alone, leading Bush to establish the Department of Homeland Security (after 9/11) and Obama to inject £800 billion into the economy (during the financial crisis). In the case of Bush, this was enhanced by deliberate efforts to increase presidential power, notably the more frequent use of signing statements.

The need for nationally applied standards was an additional reason, for example Bush's No Child Left Behind Act (2001), which obliged schools to conform to federal standards.

All these factors were confirmed by key Supreme Court judgements, which tended to uphold federal government power: ACA Cases (2012) upheld President Obama's healthcare reforms, and *Arizona v USA* (2012) affirmed immigration as principally a matter for the federal government.

A03 The most important reason is given in the first sentence.

A02 The answer is developed through analysis of why this factor was crucial in causing power to flow to the federal government.

A01 Factual examples are deployed throughout to support the argument.

A03 A distinction is made between the different reasons under Bush and under Obama.

A03 Secondary reasons are added, establishing a hierarchy of causation.

## Interpretations and debates around the US Constitution and federalism

This section draws together many of the arguments about the US Constitution and federalism studied in this chapter, to allow you to evaluate key constitutional debates. Political scientists debate the extent to which the US system of government still fulfils the aims of the Founding Fathers, and they seek to evaluate both the strengths and weaknesses of the US Constitution and its impact on modern US government. Another area of debate is the extent to which the USA remains a truly federal system today. Underlying many of these issues is the key question: How democratic is the USA's system of government?

### Practice question



## AO3 Evaluation



**17** Evaluate the view that federalism remains an effective feature of the US system of government today.

**5 marks**

*Copy the table below onto an A4 sheet of paper, enlarging it to fill the whole sheet. In the left-hand column, fill in evidence that federalism remains effective; in the right-hand column, fill in evidence that it is not. In the space at the bottom, write your conclusion as to whether, on balance, federalism remains effective or not.*

Evidence that federalism remains effective	Evidence that federalism is ineffective
Conclusion:	

**Paper 3 Section C**

All of these exam-style questions require you to demonstrate AO1 (knowledge and understanding), AO2 (analysis) and AO3 (evaluation) in your answers.

- 1** Evaluate the extent to which the efforts of the Founding Fathers to set limits on federal government power are still effective. You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

30 marks

40

*Write a plan here, then use a separate sheet of paper to answer the question in full.*

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- 2** Evaluate the view that the separation of powers is a recipe for gridlock and weak government in the USA. You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

30 marks

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*Write a plan here, then use a separate sheet of paper to answer the question in full.*

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- 3** Evaluate the view that checks and balances between the three branches of the federal government work effectively. You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

30 marks

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*Write a plan here, then use a separate sheet of paper to answer the question in full.*

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- 4** Evaluate the extent to which bipartisanship still exists in the US system of government today. You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

30 marks

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*Write a plan here, then use a separate sheet of paper to answer the question in full.*

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- 5** Evaluate the extent to which the USA's system of government is democratic. You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

30 marks

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*Write a plan here, then use a separate sheet of paper to answer the question in full.*

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- 6** Evaluate the view that the US Constitution is outdated and ineffective. You must consider this view and the alternative to this view in a balanced way.

30 marks

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*Write a plan here, then use a separate sheet of paper to answer the question in full.*

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