Interview Prep

Key Term Definitions:

Authoritarian = favouring/enforcing strict obedience to authority at the expense of personal freedom  
Totalitarian = a system of government that is centralized, dictatorial - requires subservience to state  
  
Political Theories:

**Thomas Hobbes** – 1588: people in a ‘state of nature’ before government. Equal but with different views which lead to conflict. Rejected divinely ordained hierarchies and replaced them with ideas of individual equality – through central authority – to regulate imperfect individuals.   
Led to calls of separation of church and state.   
  
**John Locke** – 1632: in a state of nature we are all equal, but unlike Hobbes, Locke saw individuals as reasonable and tolerant and therefore able to develop a social contract and solve conflict. No need for one autocratic governance or a monarchy. People can settle their own disputes with the aid of government. Idea of universal natural law, commands to: avoid war, educate their children, look after the poor, only take what is necessary.   
Locke said wealth can be used to create more wealth but it must also be used for the common good.   
  
**Adam Smith** – 1723: the judgements of ordinary people are sound and they should be free to make them, this will ensure harmony and prevent conflict.   
The government had a role to play in preventing conflict, but it should leave business to people who understood it, and business people should be kept away from government.   
Smith believed that the ‘invisible hand’ of economic forces directed interactions between people.  
Division and specialisation of labour, the market is efficient if it is free and unimpeded. Created the theory of classical economics.  **Edmund Burke** – 1729: followed Adam Smith in believing in the free market and reduced role of the state. He believed in the aristocratic elite to decide what policies were best led him to defend the role of representative MPs – would have been horrified at the idea of whipping.   
Many MP’s quote Burke today in defence of why they defied the party whip.   
Questions of direct and representative democracy. Arguments for and against.   
  
**Margret Thatcher** – 1925: Believed in the virtues of thrift, hard work and self-reliance and a traditional social morality.   
Combination of a radically reduced state, reduce power of the trade unions, more centralised state, larger role for the free market to provide services and the promotion of entrepreneurship whilst having a traditional foreign and defence policy.   
  
**Tony Blair­** – 1953: ‘New Labour’ reconciled competitive capitalism with a social equality agenda and developed ideas of the rights and responsibilities of individuals. Focus on social liberties and minority groups was a focus.   
Devolution of domestic policies to Scottish Parliament and Welsh Assembly, achieved peace in N. Ireland, freedom of information act, human rights act, removal of hereditary peers, BofE had monetary policy committee, broad focus on education and health spending, Gordon Brown’s Golden rule of balances spending so no deficit (blown apart after 2008 crash).  
Intervention in Bosnia and Kosovo, prevented a genocide, intervention into Afghanistan and Iraq.

History of Political Britain:

**The Magna Carta** (1215) – The King should be subject to the same law as the civilians. Established the common rule of law across the UK.

**The British Constitution –** it is unwritten so it has been allowed to evolve as society changes. Has three main parts to it: common law, statute law, constitutional conventions.   
Common law: through judges and the legal system the law is established.   
Statute law: acts of parliament which are passed by the House of Commons.  
Constitutional conventions: rules which are widely accepted but not formalised. Such as, if a Prime Minister loses a general election they should resign.

**The English Civil War** (1642-1651) – there were three English Civil Wars.   
Conflict between King Charles I and Parliament. After many years of intermittent conflict in August 1651 Charles II was defeated by Oliver Cromwell at the Battle of Worcester.

**The Decline of the British Monarch and Parliamentary Reforms** –   
Set up and established the representational democratic system of which we have today.   
Votes for women in the Equal Franchise Act 1928, working class men could vote, lobbying, petitions.

**The First World War** – there were 16.5 million deaths, 37.5 million injured.

**The Second World War** – over 60 million dead.

**Post-War Consensus** – Governments between 1945 and 1980 had alignments of Labour and Conservatives despite their obvious ideological differences; polices included were:  
belief in welfare, foundation of the NHS, nationalisation of Public Utilities, social security, introduction of nuclear weapons, universal education, foundation of NATO.

**Recent Conflicts** –   
Afghanistan in 2001-2014: following 9/11 the USA invaded Afghanistan to remove terror training camps and to capture leadership responsible. Within a few weeks the Taliban government had been toppled and replaced by the US. British forces have been engaged in a rebuilding and counterinsurgency mission until the end of 2014, but still involved diplomatically.

Iraq in 2003-2010: invasion of Iraq ordered by Tony Blaire. There was widespread public and political unease. Within a month of invasion Saddam Hussain’s government was toppled and a void of instability and chaos ensued. The majority Shia population who had been relatively oppressed until then were initially jubilant.   
Sunni = 90% of all Muslims (ISIS are comprised of Sunni Islamists).   
The crisis worsened as Rory Stewart writes about; long-term deficiency, quagmire theory, consultants not experts.

**Britain and the UN** –   
Britain is a member of the general assembly, the Security Council and the world court.   
Britain is a member of NATO and in the G8.

**Devolution** – threats to break up the Union between the Kingdom is threatened, Scottish nationalism is strong and shows no signs of abating.