**Evaluate / Analyse the effectiveness of Parliamentary representatives in holding the Government to account.**

**To what extent is the government/executive more powerful than the legislature/parliament?**

**To what extent are the powers of the PM limited?**

**Analyse the importance of the Prime Minister/Executive in decision making in the UK.**

**You should refer to parliamentary representatives in Scotland, the UK, or both in your answer.**

**Key points to know**

The difference between the parliament and the executive:

Parliament/Legislature- H of C, H of L, and the Monarch-It is the highest legislative authority in the UK. It has responsibility for checking the work of government and examining, debating and approving new laws.

Executive/Government- Prime Minister, his cabinet and the Queen-runs the country. It has responsibility for developing and implementing policy and for drafting laws.

As accountability in the parliament has been an essential and key component of the UK parliament since it was established, it is vital that numerous measures are taken in order to ensure that these principles are met. For instance, Prime Ministers Questions. PMQ’s allow MPs to deliver questions to the PM which aim to embarrass or damage the reputation of the current government, any new controversial laws or disadvantageous statistics can be covered and debated between the PM and an MP. A prime example of this happening was in Sept 2015 when Jeremy Corbyn made his PMQ debut as Labour leader. He highlighted the Conservative party’s failure in relation to improving social housing as well as the £8billion NHS crisis thus bringing the government to account for its actions, making the media portray it in a negative light. This shows that MPs can be very effective in bringing the government and its actions to account; because whilst a majority government makes it difficult for the opposition and puts it at a disadvantage, things such as reputation and the public’s view of the actions taken by the government are quite substantial when it comes to electing a new government or keeping the old one.

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| Parliament is effective in holding Gov.t to account  PMQ –  This is the opportunity for MPs to ask the Prime Minister (or ministers during normal question times) questions on a weekly basis. This means that they can hold the government to account by asking controversial and topical questions that need to be asked. It can affect party popularity and how the leader is viewed.  The leader of the opposition gets to ask the PM several questions.  -In his 2010 autobiography, former PM Tony Blair called PMQs ‘the most nerve-wracking experience in his Prime Ministerial life’, showing its ability to unnerve and control the PM to some extent.  For example, in 2011 opposition leader Ed Miliband caught David Cameron out over the reduction of support for 7,000 cancer patients. His questions and knowledge exploited one of the Prime Ministers few weak spots his haziness over the detail and desire to be a caring conservative. This can show the PM as being uninformed and weak. This could lead to dissent from the backbenchers which could threaten the government’s position to implement key changes as backbenchers may not fall into line and vote with them.  For example, in 2015 opposition leader Jeremy Corbyn asked David Cameron 6 times to explain the effect of introducing working tax credit. This was one factor which led to the governments u-turn as there was a public outcry which had the potential of destabilising the position of the government. | Parliament is not effective in holding Gov.t to account  PMQ – This can be a platform for the government to show how well they are running the country. The speaker can control who asks questions which takes control from the MPs trying to ask questions. The vast majority of questions are not chosen so MPs will receive written replies instead.  In addition, most questions are already seen by the PM and he has help from civil servants and aides to answer the questions. A skilled PM can answer in a manner which can deflect the question and can show the government in a good light and allow them to justify their decisions and keep a positive public perception, especially on the run up to elections.  The chief whip of the government can also force an MP from the government’s party to ask a question which will make the government look good. |

Analyse the effectiveness of Parliamentary representatives to hold the government to account. (20 marks)

Point- One way that parliamentary representatives can hold the government to account is by utilising Prime Ministers questions time.

Explain- Prime Ministers question time allows MPs to answer questions which aim to embarrass or damage the reputation of the current government; any new controversial laws or disadvantageous statistics can be covered and debated between the Prime Minister and an MP.

Example- For example, in 2015 Jeremy Corbyn asked the prime minister the same question about the abolition of working tax credit 6 times. The Prime Minister at that time David Cameron continued to deflect the question showing that the government was struggling to justify their actions.

Analyse- This highlights the effectiveness of PMQ to hold the government to account. In this case, the media led this story which caused the public to backlash against the government. The government cannot afford to look heartless or to be acting against the best interests of the people that they are serving and this PMQ showed that to be the case. The government had to go against their own agenda to cut the welfare budget and change its plans because of the negative publicity generated by this PMQ. A further example of the effect of PMQ was in May when a number of MPs attacked the government’s stance to stop the number of child refugees entering the country. The government had to backtrack and allow councils to find homes for unaccompanied refugee children after David Cameron was embarrassed by numerous MPs including the SNP leader in Westminster Angus Robertson.

Link-This effectively shows the impact of PMQ to hold the government to account. MPs can be very effective in bringing the government and its actions to account; because whilst a majority government makes it difficult for the opposition and puts it at a disadvantage, things such as reputation and the public's view of the actions taken by the government are quite substantial when it comes to electing the new government or keeping the old one.