

# The Environment of Politics

- One Crown but five nations
  - United Kingdom
    - Great Britain and Ireland created in 1801.
    - Great Britain, the principal part of the UK was divided into England, Scotland and Wales.
      - Wales
      - Scotland
      - Northern Ireland
        - The remainder of Ireland rebelled against the Crown in 1916 and a separate Irish state with its capital in Dublin was recognized in 1921.

- British Empire
- Commonwealth
  - Antigua and Australia to Zambia and Zimbabwe differ from each other in many ways including their commitment to democracy.
- Special relationship with U.S.
- Britain's world position has declined
- European Community (1957) now the EU
  - Britain did not join until 1973.
  - Created more policy challenges: beer in metric units or a British pint

- A union: a political system having only one source of authority, the British Parliament.
- National identity – UK is a multinational state.
- Historically, Scotland and Wales have been governed by British Cabinet ministers accountable to the Westminster Parliament.

In May, 1999, a Scottish Parliament with powers to legislate, tax, and spend was first elected to sit in Edinburgh.

- 129 seat Parliament
- Mixed system: first past the post and proportional ballots.

Welsh Parliament (1999)

- 60 seat Welsh Assembly; Mixed system

Northern Ireland is the most un-English part of the UK

- Formally a secular polity
- National identity questions: Catholics and Protestants
- In turmoil since 1968; IRA
- British policy in Northern Ireland erratic
- Good Friday Agreement

# Historical Evolution of British Politics

- **Magna Carta(1215)** – King John agreed to consult the nobles before he made important decisions, in particular regarding taxes.
- Limited government – restrictions on the monarch began with the Magna Carta.

- **English Civil War** (1640s) – civil war between the supporters of King Charles I and Parliament (Roundheads).
- Roundheads won, Charles I is executed
- **Oliver Cromwell** leads during this time until Parliament reinstates the monarch (Charles II)
- **The Glorious Revolution** (1688) – officially established Parliament as the ruling body of Great Britain. The agreement signed between William & Mary and Parliament was known as the **Bill of Rights**

## ■ **Industrial Revolution**

- Great Britain evolves from feudal society to one dominated by colonial mercantilism
- Imperialism
- Trade

# Country Biography

**Population:** 59.6 million

**Territory:** 94,525 sq.  
miles

**Year of Independence:**  
12<sup>th</sup> century

**Constitution:** unwritten;  
partly statutes, partly  
common law and practice

**Head of State:** Queen  
Elizabeth II

**Head of Government:**  
Prime Minister Gordon  
Brown.

**Language:** English, plus  
about 600,000 who  
regularly speak Welsh and  
60,000 who speak the  
Scottish form of Gaelic

## Religion:

**Anglican:** 26.1 million

**Roman Catholic:** 5.7 million

**Presbyterian:** 2.6 million

**Methodist:** 1.3 million

**Other Christian:** 2.6 million

**Muslim:** 1.5 million

**Hindu:** 500,000

**Sikh:** 330,000

**Jewish:** 260,000

**Other:** 300,000

**No religion:** 8.6 million

**Did not state a religion:** 4.4  
million



# Political Beliefs & Values

- Through 1960s British political culture characterized by:
  - Trust
  - Deference to authority and competence
  - Pragmatism
  - Harmony
  - High voter participation

# “Politics of Protest”

- 1970s and beyond: altered views
  - Less supportive of collective consensus
  - Support for free market economy
  - Decreasing support for labor unions
  - Increased violence in Northern Ireland
  - Thatcherism
  - New Labour (Third Way)

□ **Representation of the People Act of 1884:** electorate is further expanded to make sure that majority of electorate is working class

□ **Women's Suffrage:** all women over the age of 28 and all men over 21 granted the right to vote in 1918. By 1928, all women over 21 allowed to vote.

# Collective Consensus

- ❑ Began during WWII with Churchill's emphasis on putting class differences aside in order to work together to defeat Germany
- ❑ Churchill headed an all-party coalition government during WWII (He was originally elected as a Conservative)
- ❑ The spirit of collective consensus continued beyond the war well into the 1960s.

- ❑ Both Labour and Conservative parties supported the development of the modern welfare system.
- ❑ **Beveridge Report** – adopted by both parties during the war made all citizens eligible for health, unemployment, pension, and other welfare benefits.
- ❑ **National Health Service (1948)** – created under the leadership of the Labour Party