

The political system of Great Britain

The United Kingdom is a political union made up of four constituent countries: England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and several overseas territories including Gibraltar and the Falkland Islands.

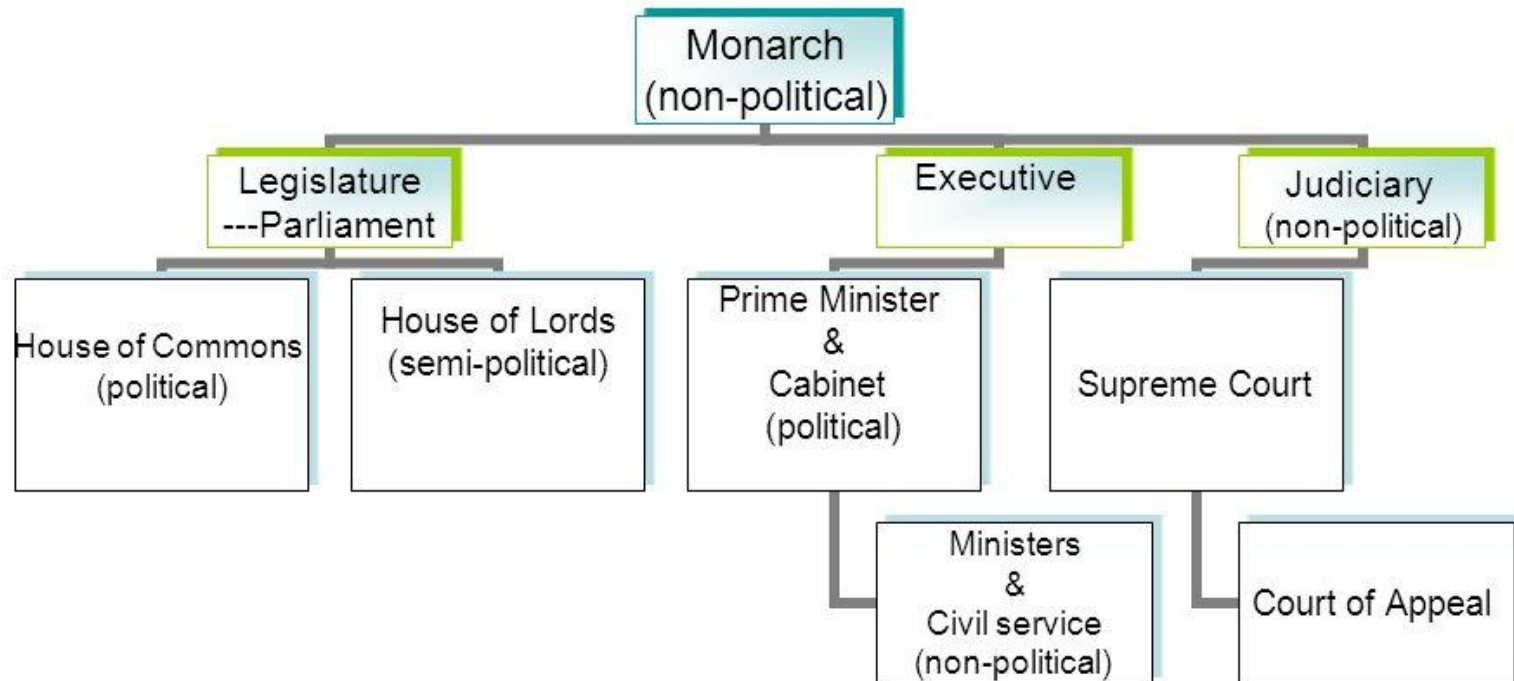
The UK is a highly developed country, a member of the group of eight (G8), member of the European Union (EU), is a founding member of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO), the United Nations (UN), where it holds a permanent seat in the Security Council.

The UK has close relations with such EU nations as France and Germany, and, of course, with major Commonwealth countries (former British colonies): Singapore, South Africa, Australia and New Zealand. The relations between the USA and member nations of the Commonwealth of Nations are sometimes called “the special relationship”, meaning the warm political, diplomatic, historic and cultural relationship.

Britain is a parliamentary democracy that can be seen through free elections, freedom of speech and open and equal rights in the eyes of the law.

Britain still does not have a written constitution. And the law has never been brought into a single document.

A 1 Basic Structure of UK Central Government



Currently Queen Elizabeth II , is the head of state while the prime minister of the United Kingdom, currently Theresa May , is the head of government.

There are three powers in the UK: Executive power is exercised by the British government, on behalf of and by the consent of the monarch, as well as by the devolved governments of Scotland and Wales, and the Northern Ireland Executive. Legislative power is vested in the two chambers of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the House of Commons and the House of Lords, as well as in the Scottish parliament and Welsh and Northern Ireland assemblies. The judiciary is independent of the executive and the legislature. The highest court is the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom.



Queen Elizabeth II



Theresa May

The Crown

The British monarch is the chief of state of the United Kingdom. Though Queen Elizabeth II takes little direct part in government, the Crown remains the fount in which ultimate executive power over government lies. These powers are known as royal prerogative and can be used for a vast amount of things, such as the issue or withdrawal of passports, to the dismissal of the Prime Minister or even the declaration of war. The powers are delegated from the monarch personally,

in the name of the Crown, and can be handed to various ministers, or other officers of the Crown, and can purposely bypass the consent of Parliament. The head of Her Majesty's Government, the prime minister, also has weekly meetings with the sovereign, where she may express her feelings, warn, or advise the prime minister in the government's work



EXECUTIVE POWER

The United Kingdom Government The monarch appoints a Prime Minister as the head of Her Majesty's Government in the United Kingdom, guided by the strict convention that the Prime Minister should be the member of the House of Commons most likely to be able to form a Government with the support of that House. In practice, this means that the leader of the political party with an absolute majority of seats in the House of Commons is chosen to be the Prime Minister. If no party has an absolute majority, the leader of the largest party is given the first opportunity to form a coalition. The Prime Minister then selects the other Ministers which make up the Government and act as political heads of the various Government Departments. About twenty of the most senior government ministers make up the Cabinet and approximately 100 ministers in total comprise the government. In accordance with constitutional convention, all ministers within the government are either Members of Parliament or peers in the House of Lords



HM Government

The Prime Minister and the Cabinet

The Prime Minister is the most senior minister in the Cabinet. They are responsible for chairing Cabinet meetings, selecting Cabinet ministers (and all other positions in Her Majesty's government), and formulating government policy. The Prime Minister being the de facto leader of the UK, he or she exercises executive functions that are nominally vested in the sovereign (by way of the Royal Prerogatives).

LEGISLATIVE POWER



HOUSE OF COMMONS

The House of Commons is the lower house of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. The Commons is an elected body consisting of 650 members known as Members of Parliament (MPs).



HOUSE OF LORDS

The House of Lords also known as the House of Peers, is the upper house of the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Like the House of Commons, it meets in the Palace of Westminster. All members of the House of Lords (excluding 90 hereditary peers) are appointed. The membership of the House of Lords is drawn from the peerage and is made up of Lords Spiritual and Lords Temporal.



JUDICIARY POWER

The United Kingdom does not have a single legal system due to it being created by the political union of previously independent countries with the terms of the Treaty of Union guaranteeing the continued existence of Scotland's separate legal system. Today the UK has three distinct systems of law: English law, Northern Ireland law and Scots law. Recent constitutional changes saw a new Supreme Court of the United Kingdom come into being in October 2009 that took on the appeal functions of the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords. The Judicial Committee of the Privy Council, comprising the same members as the Supreme Court, is the highest court of appeal for several independent Commonwealth countries, the UK overseas territories, and the British crown dependencies



Political parties

The system of political parties in the UK appeared in the 17th century. At first, there were two parties: Tory (the party that supported the King) and Whigs (who supported the Parliament). The word “tory” means “an Irish robber”. A “whig” was a Scottish preacher who could preach moralising sermons for several hours.

Now the main British political parties are:

- * The Conservative Party
- * The Labour Party
- * The Party of Liberal Democrats

Since 1945 the British Government is constantly represented by two political parties: Conservative (who are called “Tory” by their opponents) and Labour (called “Whigs”).

In 1988 the Liberal Party made an alliance with Social Democrats and the Party of Liberal Democrats was formed.

The proportional representation system in the UK means that all political parties, small and large, are represented in the government according to the proportion of votes they receive.