

BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM

- 1 The history of British politics**
- 2 The governmental model**
- 3 The branches of government**
- 4 The English monarchy**
- 5 The Privy Council**
- 6 British Parliament**
- 7 Political parties**

1 The history of British politics

- **Situation over the last 800 years:** British government has been breaking down the monarch's former power (800 years)
- **Result:** struggle has produced bitter conflicts on governmental, social and religious levels
- **Modern situation:** the real authority in the British governmental and political system now rests with the **Prime Minister**, as it had once belonged predominantly to **the monarch**.

The governmental model

The governmental model is usually described as:

1) a **constitutional monarchy**

2) a **parliamentary system**

The governmental model

- **the monarch** still has a role to play on some executive and legislative levels

BUT it is **Parliament** which possesses the essential legislative power, and the government of the day which governs

The governmental model

The correct constitutional definition of Parliament is the 'Queen-in-Parliament'

Result: all state and governmental business is carried out **in the name of the monarch** by the politicians and officials

The governmental model

- In constitutional theory, the British people hold the **political sovereignty** (верховная власть) to choose their government, while Parliament, consisting partly of their elected representatives in the Commons, possesses **the legal sovereignty** to make laws.
- **The monarch** is formally the head of 1) **the executive**, 2) **the legislature** (законодательная власть) and 3) **the judiciary** (судебный)

The branches of government

The legislature

the House of Commons

the House of Lords

formally the monarch

IS

the supreme law-making body

The branches of government

The executive

comprises

the sitting government and its Cabinet
government ministries or departments
headed by ministers or secretaries of state
formally the monarch

The branches of government

The judiciary

consists of

the judges of the higher courts
formally the monarch

The English monarchy

- **Succession** to the throne is still **hereditary**, but only for **Protestants** in the **direct line of descent**
- **The continuity** of the English monarchy has been interrupted only by **the Cromwell republic** of 1649-1659
- there have been **different lines of descent** who governed Britain

The British monarchy

Queen



ELIZABETH II

The British monarchy



The British monarchy

The monarch has a number of roles, and serves formally as:

- 1) head of state
- 2) head of the executive
- 3) head of the judiciary
- 4) head of the legislature
- 5) commander-in-chief of the armed forces
- 6) supreme governor of the Church of England

AS A RESULT

The British monarchy

- all **ministers** and **officials** of the central government are the monarch's servants, and **judges, military officers, peers** (пирэ), and **bishops of the Church of England** swear allegiance to the Crown

The British monarchy

- In spite of **these roles**, **the monarch** acts only **on the advice** of political ministers

The monarch can not

- make laws
- impose taxes
- spend public money

The British monarchy

- The monarch still performs some important executive and legislative duties :
 - 1 The summoning, opening and dissolving of Parliament
 - 2 Giving Royal Assent to bills
 - 3 Appointing government ministers and other public figures
 - 4 Granting honours
 - 5 Holding audiences with the Prime Ministers
 - 6 Giving pardons to some convicted criminals
 - 7 Fulfilling international duties as the head of state

The Privy Council

- **Privy** (тайный, сокровенный; скрытый; конфиденциальный)

PRIVY COUNCIL **used to be** a small group of royal advisers at court

TODAY its main role is to advise the monarch on a range of matters

The Privy Council

- **Life membership** of the council is given by the monarch, on the recommendation of the Prime Minister.
- There are about **380 Privy Councilors** at present.

The Privy Council

A full council is usually only summoned:

- on the death of a monarch;
- when there are serious constitutional issues;
- or occasionally when a Commonwealth Heads of State Conference is held in London

The Privy Council

- the most important task of the Privy Council today is performed by its **Judicial Committee** which serves as the final court of appeal

British Parliament

- **British Parliament** consists of:
 - the House of Lords
 - the House of Commons
 - formally the monarch

It assembles as a unified body only on ceremonial occasions, such as the State Opening of Parliament by the monarch in the House of Lords

British Parliament

- Parliament has a maximum duration of **five years**
- The maximum has sometimes been prolonged by special parliamentary legislation on occasions of national emergency like the two World Wars

British Parliament

House of Lords

consists of

the Lords Temporal and the Lords Spiritual

The Lords Spiritual are the Archbishops of York and Canterbury and twenty-four senior bishops of the Church of England

British Parliament

The Lords Temporal

consist of

- (1) hereditary peers and peeresses who have kept their titles;
- (2) life peers and peeresses, who have usually been created by political parties;
- (3) the Lords of Appeal (Law Lords), who become life peers on their judicial appointments

British Parliament

- 1,200 members of **the House of Lords**
- Peers receive no salary for their parliamentary work
- **The House** is presided over by the Lord Chancellor
- **the Lord Chancellor** is a political appointee of the sitting government,
- **the Lord Chancellor** sits on the Woolsack (or stuffed woollen sofa) as Speaker (Chairman) of the House and controls the procedure and meetings of **the House**

Chris Grayling has been the Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice since 2012



British Prime Minister – DAVID CAMERON



British Parliament

- Attempts to reform **the House of Lords** were made several times during the 20 century. **The Parliament Act** of 1911 removed from the House of Lords the power of **veto a bill**. Instead the Lords could delay a bill up to two years. Now it is one year.

British Parliament

The House of Commons

- consists of **Members of Parliament (MPs)** who are elected by the adult suffrage of the British people
- 650 MPs
- 10% are women
- 523 parliamentary seats for England
- 38 parliamentary seats for Wales
- 72 parliamentary seats for Scotland
- 17 parliamentary seats for Northern Ireland

British Parliament

The House of Commons

- Britain is divided for electoral purposes into constituencies or geographical areas usually containing about 60 000 voters each of which returns one elected MP to the House of Commons.

Political Parties

- The great majority of the MPs in the House of Commons belong to either the **Conservative** or the **Labour Party**, which are the main political parties. This division emphasizes the continuation of **the traditional two-party system** in British politics, in which power has alternated between two major parties.

Political Parties

The Labour Party

- traditionally gathers its support from the trade unions, the working class, the middle-class . Its electorates have always been in south Wales, Scotland, and the Midland and northern English industrial cities.

Political Parties

the Conservative Party

- the party's support comes mainly from business interests and the middle and upper classes
- the party's strongholds tend to be in southern England

Smaller political parties

- **have some representation in the House of Commons**
- **among these have been:**
 - the Liberals and Social Democrats;
 - the Scottish National Party;
 - Plaid Cymru (the Welsh National Party);
 - the Protestant Northern Irish parties of the Official Unionists,
 - the Democratic Unionists and the Ulster Popular Unionists;
 - the Social Democratic and Labour Party (moderate Roman Catholic Northern Irish party);
 - Sinn Fein (Republican Northern Irish party).
 - the Greens
 - Communist Party