

UK Chapter 1 : The Constitution



UK before: an absolute monarchy and monarch was head of state.

UK now: alliance between crown and parliament. The monarch is detached from politics and a symbol with powers limited by the constitution. The parliament is the most powerful body of the UK.

Constitution : set of laws that defines and regulates the overall regulation of a state. It defines the balance of the different institutions that regulate states (mainly 3 branches)

Uncodified Constitution : unwritten constitution made of old texts and acts, but also conventions. Example of text can be the **Bill of Rights 1689** originally created to prevent a catholic to become king (UK was protestant).

2 principles of constitution: *rule of law* (everyone is equal under the law, no king can imprison someone for no crime), *sovereignty of parliament* (parliament >>> any other institution in UK)

No separation of powers, no check and balance in the UK. Legislative and executive branches have merged, the judiciary branch is independent with *judicial review* (Supreme Court can say that an institution is doing something against the constitution).

1215 Magna Carta : first time monarch's powers are limited.

1679 Habeas Corpus : arbitrary arrest.

1689 Bills of Rights : sovereignty of parliament.

1832 Great Reform Act : vote for the middle class (kinda rich white men).

1928 Equal Franchise Act : vote for women

- The House of Commons is the only democratic chamber, because it's elected.
- Brexit : how will the UK manage without EU's laws ? Answer : Devolution.

UK Chapter 2 : The Monarchy



Different dynasties :

- (1066 - 1154) *House of Normandy*: French reign over England with William the conqueror.
- (1154 - 14th century) *House of Plantagenet*: King John, signed Magna Carta (1215) and limited the monarch's powers.
- (14th - 16th century) *House of Tudor*: Henry Eight went from catholic to protestant to divorce his wife.
- (16th - 17th century) *House of Stuart*: William III, Mary II forced to sign Bill of Rights

(1689).

- (17th - 18th century) *House of Hanover*: Victoria era with colonialism, racism, poverty.

Symbols of Monarchy: *royal coat of arms* (3 lions for 3 nations and mention of God); Elizabeth III held an *orb* (godly power), *specter* (temporal power), *crowd*, *national anthem* in relation to god.

The Monarch is Head of State, Commonwealth, Armed forces, Church of England and Scotland. The monarch's *powers (conventions)*:

- 1) royal assets, approve a decision as a convention.
- 2) dissolution of parliament by the PM's order
- 3) meets up once a week with the PM to give "advice"
- 4) royal prerogative assets, dismiss charges against someone
- 5) give honors (titles)

2013 The Succession of Crowd Act granted the right for women to be in the line of succession and no more obligation to be protestant.

Scandals :

- People criticize Elizabeth's coronation for its huge cost (£1.57M), also Charles' (£55M). In the 1990s, monarchs started to pay taxes and no longer get incomes from public money.
- Princess Diana's death and the lack of reaction of the Queen.
- "Megxit" and Harry and Megan's accusation of racism within the Royal Family.
- 1997, 48% of people thought that monarchy should be abolished. Only old people still support it.

UK Chapter 3 : The Parliament



Parliament was "created" in the middle age, during the Tudor dynasty : the Vikings, Saxons, Scotland had assemblies.

Parliament was created for 3 reasons:

1. The King needed advice
2. People would pay the taxes if they knew why
3. The King needed more people to receive the complains/questions of the kingdom

Magna Carta (1215) : King's powers are limited, creation of parliament and King needs to discuss taxes with parliament.

Simon de Montfort ordered an assembly of nobilities and burgesses around King Harry III to make sure he follows the Magna Carta.

Parliament is made of :

1. **House of Commons** (Low House, elected)
2. **House of Lords** (Upper House, unelected)

3. Monarch (one legislative power)

Roles of Parliament :

- Scrutinize the government
- Amend, pass and appeal laws
- Hold PMQs (Parliament members asks the PM questions every wednesday)
- Vote for taxes
- Debate on major issues

Early election : when the Parliament judges that the government in place isn't good
Vote/Motion of no confidence : vote if the current PM should go (Happened to Boris Johnson but he won.)

By election : when a majority holds the seats in the House of Commons for too long.
Early election motion : when the PM wants to strengthen its majority.

1911 Parliament Act : members of House of Commons receive salaries, but members of the House of Lords are reduced with no salaries.

How to make a law :

1. House of Commons/Lords make a bill
2. House of Commons/Lords vote, change it ...
3. Accepted by both houses, the Monarch agrees (it's just a convention)

In the House of Lords :

1. Lords Temporal (non-religious)
2. Lords Spiritual (religious)

The House of Lords is not democratic, anyone can be nominated peer, but it's not abolished because people say that the House of Commons should have competition.

1959 Life peerages Act : women can become peers

1999 House of Lords Act : removed 666 hereditary peers

In the Parliament :

- **Frontbenchers** are the most important MPs.
- **Backbenchers** are less important.
- **The Speaker of the House of Commons/Lords** leads the discussion, elected by MPs.
- The PM speaks in front of the **Leader of the Opposition** and his **Shadow Cabinet**.

UK Chapter 4 : The PM and the Government



Executive branch : PM, Cabinet & government.

Minority government : when the government is elected by a minor political party
Hung parliament : when there's no majority in the parliament, so there's an alliance.

The Cabinet is made of the PM and ministers.

Main role of Cabinet :

- **Chief Whip** : makes sure that MPs votes according to their political party
- **Leader of the House of Commons** : organizes the agenda (discussions)
- Discusses major issues or departmental issues
- Acts as a unified body, everybody has to agree
- If there's a problem, everyone is held accountable

The office of the PM is at **10 Downing Street**.

First PM was in the 18th century, Sir Robert Walpole acted as a link between the crowd and government.

Current PM is **Rishi Sunak (since 2022)** :

- First South Asian PM
- But very rich, so he's disconnected from British life
- Became popular because he's very against immigration

Roles of PM :

- Organizes the government policies
- Chooses ministers in the Cabinet
- Can dissolve the Parliament with a general election
- Has to attend PMQs

1. Margaret Thatcher 79-90
2. John Major 90-97
3. Tony Blair (remained in power for 10 years) 97-07
4. Gordon Brown 2007-2010
5. David Cameron 10-16
6. Theresa May 16-19
7. Boris Johnson 19-22

UK Chapter 5 : Elections and voting behavior



Before : Only rich protestant men could vote.

Now : Everyone but people in jail, with disability, without citizenship, the King, top royal members and members of the House of Lords.

Enfranchisement : extend the suffrage

Reform Acts (1832, 1867, 1884) : men of the middle class could vote in **1832**. Then, a Chartist movement emerged and asked for the right to vote for all men and for free. In 1844, all men could vote.

1918 Representation of the People Act : vote for women over 30 years old and who owns property (thank to the Suffragettes)

1928 The Equal Franchise Act : all men and women over 20 years old can vote.

In the UK, not many people vote (last general elections only 65% voted) :

- Young people don't vote because they don't like politicians
- Old people only vote for conservative

General elections : elect new members of the Parliament in the House of Commons.

Local election : vote for local government

Regional election : vote in Wales, Northern Ireland, Scotland since devolution.

London Mayor : vote every 4 years (very recent role)

Many referendum in the UK, last one is Brexit in 2016 (answer : yes)

First-Past-the-Post system : whoever gets the majority for the seat they elected wins.
(now it's the conservative party)

- people vote for the party that has a chance to win
- vote for smaller party are useless
- MPs elected with small support
- cheap and fast
- single party government

The EU electoral system revealed that the Conservative party would be 3rd place with a proportional system, and not 1st.

Quiz Chap 1-5 :

- Which Act of Parliament established a parliamentary monarchy in Britain? Bill of Rights 1689.
- What are the 2 main principles of the UK's uncodified constitution? Rule of Law, Sovereignty of Parliament.
- Who and which institutions are part of the executive branch of power? The PM, the government, the Cabinet, the ministers, the Chancellor of the Exchequer.
- Which Kings and Queens belonged to the House of Tudor? King Henry VIII, Queen Mary I, King Henry VII, Queen Elizabeth I.
- When did Queen Elizabeth II become Queen? 1952
- Name some of the British monarchy's symbols : coat of arms, national anthem (... crown, scepter, orb)
- Which powers does the King hold? Head of State, Head of Church, To open the new parliamentary session, Royal assent, Royal prerogative of mercy, To dissolve parliament

- Who is next in the order of succession? Prince Williams.
- When did the first parliament including commoners or burgesses meet? 1265
- Name some of Parliament's roles : scrutinize government, make, appeal laws ...
- Who is the House of Commons' chairperson? Lindsay Hoyle.
- Which Act of Parliament reduced the number of hereditary peers? 1999 The House of Lords Act.
- Which Act of Parliament marked the separation of the legislative and judiciary branches of power? Constitutional Reform Act.
- What is IPSA? The Independent Parliamentary Standards Authority.
- What are the pros and cons of the House of Lords? Pros : Competition to the House of Commons. Cons: Stay for too long. Mostly old white men.
- What are the solutions to avoid a hung parliament? Minority Government.
- Who is the Cabinet's number 2? Chancellor of the Exchequer, Jeremy Hunt.
- What are the 2 conventions that regulate the work of the Cabinet? Cabinet responsibility.
- What are the main roles of the Shadow Cabinet? Expert in debates, questions the Cabinet/government.
- What are the Prime Minister's main powers/duties? Attends PMQs, organizes government policies, elects ministers in the Cabinet, can dissolve the parliament
- Which newspapers are conservative? The Daily Telegraph, The Times, The Sun, The Daily Mail.
- Which Act of Parliament granted the right to vote to women for the first time? Representation of the People Act of 1918.
- What is partisan class voter dealignment? Process whereby individuals become less partisan in terms of their support for a particular political party.
- Who is the current Mayor of London? Sadiq Khan.
- What are the pros and cons of the First-past-the-post system? Cons : people vote for the party that has a chance to win, vote for smaller parties are useless, MPs elected with small support. Pros : cheap and fast, single party government.

UK Chapter 6 : The Conservative Party



The Tory emerged in the 1630s and became the Conservative Party. It started with Edmund Burke, who had an “anti-french revolution” ideology.

The Conservative Party is an umbrella party (many divisions inside) : one-nation conservatives (socialism, equality of opportunities, liberalism), thatcherites (neoliberalists), libertarians, traditionalists, eurosceptics.

Conservative Party main ideas : no “nanny state” (state that involves too much in public spending) and Brexit.

Margaret Thatcher, 1979-1990, first female PM :

- controlling the flow of money
- reducing government’s spending
- closed miners = a lot of unemployment

David Cameron, 2010-2016, formed a coalition between the Conservative Party and the Liberal-Democrats. So he brought the party more to the center :

- same sex marriage
- taking power from the politicians and give it to the people
- re-elected in 2015, but resigned.

Theresa May, 2016-2019, formed a coalition between the Conservative Party and the DUP. So she brought the party more to the center. She replaced David Cameron, she wasn’t elected. Then, she organized general elections to win the majority but she didn’t win :

- more public spending
- restrict immigration
- hard brexit (she failed)

Rishi Sunak, 2022, after Boris Johnson 2019-2022 :

- replaced Boris Johnson in 2022 after Brexit
- people that usually vote for Labour Party voted for Boris Johnson
- Rishi has a strict policy on immigration, that’s why he’s popular

UK Chapter 7 : The Labour Party



Late 17th century, workers wanted better conditions and salary = Trade Unions (but only skilled workers could afford to be in trade unions)

1799 and 1800 Combination Act : Trade Unions became more important with the Industrial Revolution and employers/government feared a revolution, so they limited their actions with law.

But they didn’t stop and formed the **Labour Party in 1900**.

After WWI, The Labour Party had conservative policies : common ownership of the means of production.

Labour Party formed for the 1st time a government with Clement Attlee (1945-51) :

- NHS (National Healthcare Service) free medical care for everyone
- nationalize industries for the common ownership of the means of production

New Labour, Tony Blair (1997-2007), took it closer to the center :

- devolution, Good Friday Agreement 1998 that stopped the war in Northern Ireland
- reduced number of peers with the House of Lords Act 1999

Labour in opposition (2015-2020), Jeremy Corbyn, took it closer to the left but respected Brexit. He appealed to young voters but he resigned after an anti-semetic controversy.

Keir Starmer, a moderate leader, moved to the center and is criticized a lot.

UK Chapter 8 : Other political parties



Communism -> Socialism -> Liberalism -> Conservatism -> Facism

*hard left, center left, center, center right, extreme right
far left, center left, center ground, center right, far right*

Left wing -> center ground -> Right wing

Liberal-Democrats emerged in 1988 from the Liberal Party (1858). Current Leader is Sir Ed Davey with only 15 seats in the House of Commons.

:

- close to Tony Blair because of devolution and House of Lords Act 1999
- popular during the coalition with the conservative party
- liberal economist like right wing but social justice like left wing
- against Brexit
- more proportional voting system

The SNP (Scottish National Party) emerged in the 1930s, is from the left wing and supports devolution.

In 1999, the Scottish Parliament was created and the SNP remained popular, even if a referendum revealed that 55% were against Scotland independence.

It's in power in the Scottish Parliament and the third most powerful in the Parliament (Westminster) since the 2019 general election, with 48 seats.

Smaller parties :

- Nationalists vs Unionists
- Plaid Cymru (Wales) : not popular, supports Wales independence

- **Sinn Féin (Northern Ireland)** : negative image, support Northern Ireland independence. 2022, got more seats with Michelle O'Neill.
- **SDLP & DUP (Northern Ireland)**
- **UKIP (UK)** : nationalist right wing, attached to white England.
- **BNP (British Nationalist Party)** : simplified views on society
- **The Green Party** : not popular

It's difficult for other parties to have an impact in the UK because of the two main parties.

UK Chapter 9 : Devolution



Devolution : transfer of power to a lower level, especially by a government to a local or regional administration.

Mid 10 th century = England became one entity.

In 1707, Queen Anne wanted to apply pressure on the Scottish Parliament.

1707 Act of Union with Scotland : end of Scottish Parliament and Scotland became one entity with England (but they were allowed domestic laws unlike Wales)

Plantation of Ireland : Process of confiscation of fields to give them to aristocrats in the 17th century.

In the 18th century (siècle des lumières), French people helped Ireland gain independence but it failed. So, Ireland was forced to sign the 1801 Act of Union : marked the birth of England.

Civil War in Ireland, 1922 : some regions of Ireland broke free and some stayed in the UK, **forming the Republic of Ireland in 1949.**

Tony Blair referendum = devolution

Conservative Party and Labour Party in Scotland are unionists = against independence

The Troubles (1960-1990s) : Civil War between the catholic nationalists (independence of Ireland with SDLP and Sinn Féin = IRA) vs. protestant unionists (no independence with UUP and DUP = UDA). Political parties worked with military groups.

Bloody Friday 1972 : British troops opened fire on a pacific demonstration of catholic nationalists.

1998 Good Friday agreement : creation of Northern Ireland assembly which put an end to tensions between catholics and protestants and started Ireland devolution.

UK Chapter 10 : British Politics and the European Union

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Quiz Chap 6-10 :

- Which politicians were leaders of the Labour Party ? Tony Blair, Jeremy Corbyn, Keir Starmer, Harold Wilson, Gordon Brown, Clement Attlee
- What are the Conservative Party core values ? Free market economy, strong power of the monarchy, non "nanny" state, less public spending ...
- Which party did David Cameron form a coalition with after the 2010 general election ? The Liberal-Democrats.
- What were the important constitutional reforms or measures adopted under Tony Blair ? Devolution.
- Explain the difference between the "Old" and "New" Labour ? Old : traditional socialist principles, public ownership of industries, close ties with Trade Unions, NHS. New: shifts toward center-left, "Third Way" ideology (combine traditional socialism with free market capitalism)
- Which PM created the Welfare State ? Clement Attlee
- Who is the current leader of the SNP ? Yousaf
- Which political parties are nationalist parties ? SNP, Plaid Cymru, Sinn Féin, SDLP
- Name a far-right political party : UKIP
- What was the percentage of the Scottish population that voted for Remain in the Brexit referendum ? 62%
- When was the Act of Union with Scotland voted ? 1707
- When did Ireland become fully independent ? 1949
- What was the Plantation of Ireland ? Process of confiscation of fields to give them to aristocrats in the 17th century.
- Which institutions were created in 1998, when devolution started ? (several answers) Holyrood
- Which of these areas are still part of Westminster's "reserved powers" ? Foreign affairs, defence, currency, constitution
- Which political party is in power in Wales ? Labour

- What is Home Rule ? The Home Rule movement was a movement that campaigned for self-government (or "home rule") for Ireland within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. It was the dominant political movement of Irish nationalism from 1870 to the end of World War I.
- Which text put an end to the Troubles in Northern Ireland ? Belfast Agreement
- Which political parties have shared power in Northern Ireland since 2007 ? Sinn Féin
- What was the impact of Brexit on Northern Ireland ? Impact on trade, politics, and the peace process (border with Republic of Ireland)
- What are the possible solutions to the English Question ? English votes for English laws
- When did the UK leave the EU ? 31 January 2020
- When did the UK join the EEC ? 1973
- Why did David Cameron organize a referendum on Brexit ? Because of division within his party