

## United Kingdom

- ❖ Primogenitor of modern democracy
- ❖ UK political system is at once strikingly unique and a model for many other liberal democracies
- ❖ World's oldest democracy
  - Transition was gradual beginning with 13th centuries limitation on absolute monarchs and continuing incrementally to the establishment of the rule of law in the 17th century and the extension of suffrage to women in the 20th century
- ❖ Birthplace of the Industrial Revolution
- ❖
- ❖ In 1979, **Margaret Thatcher** of the conservative Party was the first leader of an industrial democracy to experiment with neoliberal economic policies in an attempt to stem economic decline.
- ❖ After Thatcher's resignation in 1990: the conservatives (tories) remained in power until the 1997 election, when they were ousted by the Labour Party.
- ❖ Under the leadership of Tony Blair and his successor, Gordon Brown, the labour party sought to soften the hard edges of Thatcher's neoliberalism while still embracing many of the policies executed by her and her Conservative successors.
- ❖ History of British democracy = a history of shifting sovereignty
  - Devolved from absolute monarchs to parliament
  - Within parliament from the upper house of lords to the lower house of commons
  - Parliamentary supremacy has been weakened in significant ways as the political authority has devolved even further
- ❖ Political leaders have responded to popular demands for a greater voice in government by authorizing referenda
  - Can be seen as both cause and consequence of this process of devolved authority
- ❖ The demand for a vote authorizing Brexit was itself a call for devolved authority away from the EU and the recapturing of British sovereignty.
- ❖
- ❖ Major Geographic and Demographic Features
- ❖ The name United Kingdom came into official use in 1801 with the Acts of Union, which united the kingdoms of Britain and Ireland.
  - Since the Republic of Ireland was granted its independence in 1920s, United Kingdom is officially formed by the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
- ❖ Great Britain itself consists of 3 nations
  - England, Scotland, and Wales + the northeastern part of the island of Ireland
  - Citizens of the UK are referred to as British or Britons even if they live in Northern Ireland
  - Welsh, Scots, and Northern Irish consider themselves British

- Unwise to call them English
  -
- ❖ The UK is roughly the size of Oregon and  $\frac{2}{3}$  the size of Japan.
- ❖ Approximately 65 million residents,  $\frac{1}{2}$  the population of Japan
  - 5 out of every 6 Britons living in England, the country's population is not equally distributed among its constituent members.
- ❖ UK can be considered a multiethnic state because it contains Scottish, Welsh, and English citizens, who have distinct cultures and languages
  - Racially homogenous
    - Nonwhite immigrants population makes up 13% of the total population
    - $\frac{1}{3}$  of those immigrants come from the Indian subcontinent and another  $\frac{1}{4}$  from the Caribbean
- ❖ UK's physical separation from the European mainland ended in 1994 with the inauguration of the Channel Tunnel, which links Britain and France
  - For much of the history, the country's isolation provided some protection from the conflicts and turmoil that afflicted the rest of Europe
  - Minimum fear of invasion may help explain the historically small size and minimal political importance of the UK's standing army. And the relative importance and strength of its navy
  - Also explains the country's late adherence to the European Union
    - Unwillingness to replace the British pound with the euro
  - And the more recent decision to leave the European Union
  - Historical Development of the State
- ❖ British citizens owe their allegiance to the Crown, the enduring symbol of the United Kingdom's state, rather than to a written constitution
  - The crown symbolizes far more than just the monarchy or even her Majesty's government
  - It represents the ceremonial and symbolic trappings of the British state
  - Represents the rules governing British political life, regimes, and the unhindered capacity, sovereignty, to enforce and administer these rules and to secure the country's border
- ❖ The evolutionary changes of the state over the past 8 centuries have been deep and with violence. But overall the development has been gradual, piecemeal, and peaceful
- ❖ Early development
- ❖ The country experienced repeated invasions over a period of about 1,500 years
  - Celts, Romans, Angles, Saxons, Danes, and finally Normans invaded the British Isles
    - Each leaving important legacies
    -

- ❖ The Germanic Angles and Saxons left their languages (except in Wales, Scotland, and others)
  - Local language remained dominant until 18th and 19th century
  - Today we still refer the area on Britain's northern and western perimeter as the UK's Celtic fringe
  -
- ❖ Common law, a system based on local customs and precedent rather than formal legal codes.
  - Forms the basis of the contemporary legal systems of the UK (except Scotland), US. and many former British colonies
  -
- ❖ The Normans, Danish Vikings who occupied northern France, invasion occurred in 1066.
  - In Britain they replaced the Germanic ruling class and imposed central rule
  - Political legacy was the institution of feudalism, which they brought from the European continent.
    - Under feudalism, lords provided vassals with military protection and economic support in exchange for labor and military service
    - Though Feudalism is hardly democratic, it was a process of the devolution of authority and created over time a system of mutual obligation between lord and peasants on one level, and between monarch and lord on another level.
    -
- ❖ Magna Carta became a royal promise to uphold feudal customs and the rights of England's barons
  - Signed by King John in 1215
  - Set an important precedent by limiting the power of English monarchs and subjecting them to the rule of law.
  - As a result, the UK never experienced the type of royal absolutism that was common in other countries
  - Paved the way for eventual public control over government and state
  -
- ❖ UK experienced certain conflicts earlier than other countries -- religious divide
  - During the reign of Henry VIII, disputes between the English monarch and Vatican.
  - When the Catholic church failed to grant Henry a divorce, he used parliament to pass laws that effectively took England out of the Catholic Church and replaced Catholicism with a Protestant Church that could be controlled by the English state instead of by the Rome

- The creation of a state controlled Anglican Church led to a religious institution that was weaker and less autonomous than its counterparts in other European countries.
- Supporters of catholicism fought unsuccessfully to regain power, and religion never plagued the UK as a polarizing force the way it did in so many other countries
- Northern Ireland, where the split between Protestants and Catholics continues to create political division, is an exception.
- ❖ The creation of Anglican Church by Henry VIII strengthened and legitimized Parliament's power
  - Same as the Magna Carter, it helped pave the way for gradual devolution of sovereignty and ultimately democratic control
  - Emergence of the modern British State
- ❖ UK had a more constrained monarchy compared to European neighbors
- ❖ 3 major developments in the 17th and 18th century decisively undermined the power of British sovereigns and are crucial of why UK was the first nations to develop democratic rule
  - ❖ Crowning of James I in 1603 united Scotland and England but created a political criss
    - James I was an absolutist and heard and resisted limits on his power imposed by parliament.
    - His son continued this flaunting of royal power eventually leading to English Civil War - 17th century conflict between Parliament and the monarch that temporarily eliminated and permanently weakened the monarchy
      - Parliament won the bitter struggle and executed Charles I in 1649
    - For 11 years, England had no monarch. Functioned as a republic led by Oliver Cromwell, whose rule soon became a military dictatorship.
    - Parliament restored the monarchy in 1660 with the ascension of Charles II, but its power is forever weakened
  - ❖ When James II, a brother of Charles II, inherited the throne in 1685, monarchy and parliament faced off again.
    - James II was Catholic, parliament feared a return to Catholicism and absolute rule.
    - Removed him and sent him into exile in 1688
    - In 1689, parliament enacted the Bill of Rights, institutionalizing for the first time Parliament's political supremacy and marking a devolution of authority from the monarchs.
      - This so called Glorious Revolution was a turning point in creation of constitutional monarchy

- ❖ Parliament installed the current dynastic family by crowning George I in 1714.
  - The monarch spoke little English and was forced to rely heavily on his cabinet (top advisers) specifically his prime minister(head of government who coordinated the work of other ministers)
  - From 1721 to 1742, Sir Robert Walpole fashioned the position of prime minister to much of what the office is today
  - By the 18th century, largely in reaction to the loss of the colonies in America, prime ministers and their cabinets were no longer selected by monarchs but rather appointed by Parliament.
    - Monarchs would never again have the power to select members of the government.
- The British Empire
- ❖ By WWII, local resistance in many colonies, international sentiment favoring self determination for subject people, and the burden of maintain far-flung colonies helped spell the end of the British Empire
  - Independence was willingly granted to most of the remaining colonial possessions throughout Southeast Asia, Africa, and the Caribbean
- ❖ The UK managed to retain control of a few small colonies, and in 1982 it fought a brief war with Argentina to retain possession of the remote Falkland Islands.
- ❖ One of the last colonial possessions, Hong Kong, was returned to China in 1997.
- ❖ Commonwealth - includes the United Kingdom and 52 of its former colonies and serves to main at least some of the economic and cultural ties established during its long imperial rule
- ❖ Industrial Revolution
- ❖ The 1st industrial economy, it helped support the expansion of its empire.
- ❖ Early industrialization was based on its dominance in textiles, machinery, and iron production.
- ❖ By the mid 19th century, most of the UK's workforce had moved away from the countryside to live in urban areas.
- ❖ Faced little initial competition and amassed tremendous wealth
- ❖ The rise of prosperous and propertied middle class demanding a stronger political voice also facilitated the country's first step toward democracy.
- ❖
- ❖ As a world leader, the UK spent lavishly on its empire and led the Allied forces in WWI and II.
  - This drained the economy in the UK.
- ❖ Economy declined after facing new competition and their outdated technology after WWII.

❖ Gradual Democratization

- ❖ Overtime, the Parliament itself became more democratic as legislative power shifted from the aristocracy to the lower classes
- ❖ Parliament originally represented the interests of the British elite
  - Only the wealthy could vote
- ❖ The UK had an “upper” House of Lords, which represented the aristocracy and a “lower” House of commons, which represented the interests of the lower nobility and the merchant class
- ❖ Two factors gradually democratized Parliament and further weakened monarchical power
  - ❖ Rise of political parties
    - Emerged in the 18th century as a cliques of nobles but eventually reached out to broader sectors of society for support
    - Two largest cliques because the UK’s first parties
      - Conservatives (tories) that supported the monarch
      - Liberals (Whigs) opposed the policies of the monarch
        - Were the first to cultivate support among members of the UK’s burgeoning commercial class, many of whom were still excluded from the political system
  - ❖ Expansion of suffrage
    - Whigs were able to push through a Reform Act that doubled the size of the British electorate, though it still excluded 90% of British adults
    - Over the next century, both parties gradually supported the measure to expand suffrage, the right to vote, hoping in part to gain a political windfall
      - Continued in 1928 when women over the age of 21 were granted the right to vote, reduced to 18 in 1969.
    - The gradual expansion of suffrage forced the political parties to respond to demands for additional services
    - The new voters wanted expansion of such public goods as improved working conditions, health care, education, and housing; they looked to the state to provide them.
    - The labour party, formed in 1900 as an outgrowth of the trade union movement, had become by the end of WWI the main representative of the working class and the primary beneficiary of expanded suffrage.
    - By 1920, labour became the UK’s largest center-left party and pushed for policies that would provide basic social services for all citizens, or what we commonly call the welfare state.
    - Labour was elected to power in 1945.
      - Armed with a parliamentary majority, the Labour government quickly moved to implement a welfare state.

- Accompanied by the nationalization of a number of industry sectors, such as coal, utilities, rail, and health care.

- Postwar politics and Debates on National identity and State Sovereignty

- ❖ Although the Labour Party initiated the welfare state, but the British Conservatives generally supported it during much of the postwar period in what has been called the postwar collectivist consensus -- postwar consensus between the UK's major parties to build and sustain a welfare state
- ❖ By 1970s, a new breed of Tories, named neoliberals, began to blame the United Kingdom's economic decline on the excess of the welfare state
- ❖ When Margaret Thatcher became prime minister in 1979, she broke with traditional Tory support for what she derided as the UK's nanny state and pledged to diminish the government's role in the economy.
  - Lowered taxes
  - Cut state spending on costly social services and replaced some state services with private enterprise
  - Her government marked the end of the postwar collectivist consensus
- ❖ In 1997, when Labour won a landslide victory and returned to office under the banner of "New Labour"
  - Prime minister Tony Blair sought to rebrand the party and distinguish his government's Third Way centrist program from both Thatcher's hard-edged laissez faire policies and Labour's more traditional platform as staunch defenders of an elaborate welfare state.
  - New Labour held government for 13 years, balancing popular progressive social reforms with policies of devolution and continued limits on social expenditures.
- ❖ The large majority victories of both Thatcher's Conservative Party and Blair's New Labour gave way to much smaller margins in subsequent elections.
  - The 2010 election resulted in a hung parliament, in which no party obtained a majority of seats.
  - Prime Minister David Cameron and the Conservatives formed a coalition government with the center left liberal democracy, calling for "fairness" but also "freedom and responsibility"
- ❖ In the 2015 election, voters rewarded the Tories with an outright majority, signaling a conservative shift in the electorate on policies from government spending to immigration.
  - Cameron struggled with controversial issues involving national identity and the devolution of state sovereignty both at home and abroad
  - In 2014, parliament authorized Scotland to hold a referendum on the independence from the UK, with Cameron leading the successful effort to reject independence and retain Scotland as a part of the United Kingdom.

- Two years later, the entire UK held the Brexit referendum on Britain's membership in the EU, with Cameron once again leading the campaign for Britain to remain in the EU.
  - However, those favoring an exit from the EU and greater sovereignty for Britain prevailed, forcing Cameron's resignation and triggering the process of Britain's departure from the EU after more than 4 decades of participation.
- ❖ Cameron was replaced by Theresa May in 2016 as leader of the Conservatives and as Britain's second female prime minister
  - In a failed effort to strengthen her government's Brexit bargaining position, May called an early snap election in 2017, in which her Conservatives ultimately lost seats
  - Returned the UK to a hung parliament and left the Conservatives with a minority government
  - Lacking a majority in Parliament and facing a deeply divided and strongly held position on Brexit both within her own party and across the electorate, May failed on three occasions to persuade Parliament to pass deals she had painstakingly negotiated with other European counterparts to leave the European Union.
- ❖ Following May's third defeat in 2019, May resigned and the Conservatives chose Boris Johnson, the controversial "Brexiteer", who promised to get Brexit done
  - Frustrated by the same deadlock as his predecessor and after losing his first 7 votes as prime minister, Johnson called a general election in late 2019 and regained for the Conservatives a commanding majority.
  - In early 2020, Johnson used his newly acquired majority to push through his negotiated withdrawal agreement, which was subsequently passed by the European Parliament as well, triggering the UK's formal departure from the EU on Jan 31, 2020.
  - The departure from EU meant a launching for a year-long transition process, during which the UK and the EU will engage in extensive and detailed negotiations to iron out a second deal clarifying and codifying their future relationship
    - This second deal covers not just trade arrangements, but also agreements concerning security, transportation, citizenship and residency requirements, and a host of other details.
    - Political Regime
- ❖ The UK's political regime had been notable among the world's democracies because of its highly majoritarian features.
- ❖ Under the longstanding rules of British politics, the majority in parliament has had virtually unchecked power.



- ❖ Even in parliamentary democracies, the majority party in the United Kingdom has been able to enact policies with few checks from other branches of government.
- ❖ The British constitution contains no formal limits on central government, few judicial restraints, and no constitutionally sanctioned local authorities to dilute the power of the government in London.
  - For many years and in many ways it has been the historical traditions of democratic political culture and restrictions imposed by the EU that have checked the possibility of the British government abusing its power
  - However, a number of reforms in recent years have chipped away this parliamentary supremacy and reshaped British democracy.
  - Political Institutions
  - The Constitution
- ❖ Although often described as possessing an unwritten constitution, most of the United Kingdom's constitution is written down, however, the tenets cannot be found in the same place nor do its various components carry the same degree of legal significance
- ❖ Without a single document that defines the rules of politics, the constitution is generally understood to include a number of written documents and unwritten rules that most British citizens view as inviolable
  - In 1215, the Magna Carta set a precedent for limits on monarchical power
  - Bill of rights in 1689
  - 1707 Acts of Union, which united Scotland and England
- ❖ What makes UK's constitution unusual is that it also consists of various acts of Parliament, judicial decisions, customs, and traditions
- ❖ Since the Parliament is viewed as sovereign, the democratically elected lower house of the legislature can modify any aspect of the constitution by a simple majority vote
  - This power extends to the existence of monarchy, the powers of regional or local governments, and the powers of the houses of Parliament.
- ❖ Unlike most other democratic regimes, the United Kingdom has had no constitutional court, because law passed by Parliament is by definition constitutional.
- ❖
- ❖ Essential Political Features
- ❖ **Legislative-executive system:** Parliamentary
- ❖ **Legislature:** Parliament
  - **Lower house:** House of commons
  - **Upper house:** House of Lords
- ❖ **Unitary or federal division of power:** Unitary
- ❖ **Main geographic subunits:** England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland
- ❖ **Electoral system for lower house:** Single-member districts with plurality
- ❖ **Chief Judicial body:** Supreme Court
- ❖

- ❖ The absence of written constitution guarantees has consistently alarmed human rights advocates and has given rise to demands for a more formal constitution or, at the very least, written constitutional protections of basic rights.
- ❖ After United Kingdom joined the EU in 1973, British citizens have increasingly appealed to codified European laws to protect their rights
  - In response to the concerns, in 1998 the British government incorporated into law the European Convention on Human Rights, a document that has served since then as a basic set of constitutional liberties for British citizens.
  - In 2007, signatories to the EU's Lisbon Treaty agreed to make this bill of rights legally binding
- ❖ Britain negotiated the ability to determine which judicial matters would be ceded to the authority of the European union's constitutional court and which would be reserved for the UK judiciary.
  - Conservatives largely favor the current accumulation of conventions and statutes
  - Liberals argued for the value of a written, codified constitution.
- ❖ Some have lauded this unwritten constitution for its unparalleled flexibility and responsiveness to the majority
  - Proven so significant in their effect that they have been compared to the Great Reform Act of 1832
  -
- ❖ Long term consequences of these cumulative reforms have become clearer under the legal and institutional pressures imposed by the 4 year Brexit stalemate.
  - Blair's government created and strengthened regional parliaments, paving the way for Cameron to approve Scotland's demand for an independence referendum in 2014
    - Although failed, the overwhelming disapproval of EU withdrawal has led to renewed demands for a second referendum.
  - Cameron's government also passed the Fixed-term Parliaments Act in 2011
    - A law that prolonged efforts to unwind Britain from the European Union
    - The law changed the established norms allowing votes of no confidence and significantly restricted the power of prime ministers to call elections at any time
      - Permitting defeat after defeat of key Brexit legislation but restricting the parliamentary means of moving beyond the impasse
    - These reforms stretched the constitution in new ways
    - The Crown
- ❖ The Crown, the legislature, the prime minister, the cabinet, and the judiciary as the main branches of government in the United Kingdom
- ❖ British Crown can be viewed as the head of the state

- Embodied by the monarch, is the symbolic representative of the continuity of the British state.
- The monarch acts as a purely ceremonial figure
- The queen can only act at the command of the cabinet
- The British monarch today is essentially paid civil servant
  - Government cover royal family's expenses, and the queen spends much of her time signing papers, dedicating public works, and performing diplomatic functions
- ❖ UK monarchy survived because it has agreed to act constitutionally
  - Ex: although the monarch always selects the head of government, the choice must always be the leader of the largest party in the lower house of Parliament
  - Only in the unlikely event that the legislature found itself dead locked and unable to form a government could a monarch have any real influence on politics, yet the choice is still severely constrained.
  - Although the monarch is officially the commander of the British armed forces, it is the prime minister who has the power to declare wars and sign treaties.
- ❖ The British Monarchy is a hereditary institution that only recently followed the rule of primogeniture -- the oldest son/oldest daughter if there's no son inherited the throne.
  - Gender is recently equalized, the oldest born of each generation is entitled to inherit the throne
  - However, the cardinal constitutional principle of parliamentary supremacy means that the Parliament itself may actually choose the monarch.
- ❖ Polls constantly shows the popularity of the Crown institution
  - In 2018 poll, nearly 70% of Britons were in favor of retaining the monarchy, 21 % wanted elimination
  - Political Institutions
  - The Prime Minister
- ❖ The real power of parliament has been concentrated in the prime minister and the cabinet
- ❖ The prime minister is the head of government and must be an elected member of the legislature.
  - He or she is the head of the largest party in the lower house of Commons
  - Once named prime minister by the monarch (a mere formality), this individual selects the cabinet
- ❖ British prime minister have been considered among the most powerful heads of government of any contemporary democracy
  - Prior to Brexit and other highly controversial issues, prime ministers could expect their parliamentary majority to approve all legislation.
- ❖ However, the prime minister wield less power when
  - their parties hold a slim majority
    - John Major from 1990 to 1997

- Forced to depend on a coalition of parties
  - Conservative-liberal democrat coalition from 2010-2015
- Forced to govern with a single-party minority
  - Conservative governments of May and Johnson
- ❖ As with other members of Parliament(MP), prime ministers in the United kingdom are elected to a maximum term of five years.
  - Before the 2011 Fixed-term Parliaments Act, the prime minister could choose to call elections at any time before that term had expired and would commonly do so to take advantage of favorable political conditions
  - The 2011 act fixed the date of subsequent elections for every 5 years beginning 2015
  - The conservative government's decision to call early elections in 2017 and 2019 required a  $\frac{2}{3}$  parliamentary supermajority in order to override the Fixed-term Parliaments Act.
- ❖ Prime Ministers are still subject to the vote of no confidence, a vote taken by a legislature as to whether its members continue to support the current prime minister; depending on the country, a vote of no confidence can force the resignation of the prime minister and/or lead to new parliamentary elections.
  - Can occur when the chamber rejects a measure deemed of high importance to the government.
  - In such situation, either the entire cabinet must resign and be replaced by a new one
  - Or a new elections must be called, if no government can be formed that can gain the confidence of the House of Commons within two weeks
  - Although such check on government exists, it is rarely used
  -
- ❖ Prime minister can use the threat of no-confidence vote as a way to rally support
  - Tony Blair submitted a motion to the house of Commons to support the use of force against Iraq even though prime minister may take the country to war without parliament approval
  - Blair threatened to resign if he failed to win support
  -
- ❖ Prime ministers play a number of roles
  - Must maintain the support of their fellow MPs, a condition that has increasingly plagued every prime minister since Thatcher
  - They must appear in the legislature weekly for televised question period
    - During which they must defined government policies and answer questions from MPs
  - As head of government, they must direct the activity of the cabinet and smooth over differences among cabinet members

- Expected to guide her party to victory in general elections, and manage to hold together a fractious coalition
- Expected to provide national leadership
- Also diplomats and world leader
- A recent challenge for prime minister is to negotiate Britain's exit from the European Union
- ❖ Prime ministers are always seasoned political veterans, averaged more than two decades of experience in the House of Commons
  - Usually outstanding debaters, effective communicators, and skilled negotiators
  -
- ❖ Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair are the most important and controversial prime minister
  - Margaret Thatcher Conservatives
    - Defying the Conservative Party's traditional ties to the aristocracy, Thatcher was a grocer's daughter who came to political power through sheer force of will
    - Steered the Tories away from the party's traditional social paternalism and toward a more free market economy
    - Undertook a series of dramatic steps to reverse Britain's economic stagnation and to repeal the social-democratic policies that had been created under the collectivist consensus
    - Privatized many-state owned businesses and allowed numerous ailing firms to go bankrupt
    - Confronted and eventually defeated powerful trade unions during widespread strikes by union opposed her policies
  - Tony Blair Labour
    - Reoriented the Labour Party away from its traditional hostility toward the free market and sought to make the party less dependent on its trade union supporters.
    - Devolved power to regional and local governments
    - Creating new legislatures in Scotland and Wales
    - Began to reform the archaic House of lords
    - Established a Supreme Court
    - Made the central bank independent of government
  - Both are credited with reinvigorating political parties that were in crisis after having suffered from long periods of being out of government
  - Both favored an extremely close relationship with US
  - Thatcher and Blair both handed power over to competent that are less charismatic party leaders who proved less controversial and less successful.
  - The Cabinet
- ❖ Evolved out of the group of experts who originally advised Britain's Monarchs

- ❖ Contemporary British Cabinets have about 20 members called ministers
- ❖ All of them are MPs
- ❖ Usually from the lower house but occasionally from the upper house (House of lords)
- ❖ Prime minister generally appoints leading party officials to the top cabinet positions
- ❖ Prime minister and cabinet stand apart from the legislature as separate executive branch and have few checks on their powers
- ❖ As in most democracies, cabinet ministers in the United Kingdom preside over their individual government departments and are responsible for answering to Parliament (during question time) about actions of the bureaucracies they oversee.
  - Foreign Office, which conducts foreign policy),
  - The Home Office, which oversees the judiciary)
  - The Exchequer, whose minister, called the chancellor, oversees financial policy.
- ❖ Collective responsibility - Tradition that requires all members of the cabinet either to support government policy or to resign
- ❖ The Legislature
- ❖ Parliament, British Legislature, is the most powerful legislature on earth
  - Due to the large of constitutional constraints
- ❖ Two chambers of the legislature
  - House of Commons
  - House of Lords
- ❖ House of Common
  - Consists of 650 members representing individual districts in the UK of Great Britain and northern Ireland.
  - Members are elected for a maximum term of 5 years, though new elections may be called before the expiration of the term in the event of a successful vote of no conscience or to override the Fixed term Parliament
  - Members of the government and leaders of the opposition sit in front rows
  - Other MPs, called backbenchers, sit behind their leaders
  - Individual members are less powerful than in the US
  - Largest party elects the prime minister as head of government
    - Political parties, not individual matters
  - MPs are more accessible than US. they offer frequent face to face meetings with individual constituents to hear their concerns
  - Actively debate issues
  - Participate in Legislative committed
  - Vote on legislation proposed by the government
  - Have the power to remove the prime minister through a vote of no confidence
  - Propose measures form time to time
  - Governments usually been able to impose its will on its majority in the House of Commons

- Weaker governments “encourage” backbenchers in their own parties to defy party whips and vote against their governments
- ❖ House of Lords
  - Was considered the upper house because it represented the top aristocracy and considered more powerful
  - Became powerless after democratization
  - Accommodate tradition
  - Composed of over 800 members who have been appointed in different ways
    - Life peers - distinguished citizens appointed for life by the CCrown on the recommendation of the prime minister
      - A dozen top officials of Church and top legal experts
    - Hereditary peers - members of the aristocracy who until recently had been able to bequeath their seats to their offspring
    - In 1999, automatic rights of hereditary peers was abolished and was reduced to only 92 seats
    - No actual veto power over legislation, but can delay some legislation for up to 1 year and occasionally persuades governments to modify legislation
    - The creation of independent Supreme court deprived the lords of most of their judicial influence
    - Rejected the reform of being elected, wanted to be appointed
    - House of commons refuse to react to reforms that would strengthen the legislative power of a second chamber and the expense of its own.
    - The Judiciary
- ❖ No traditional role until recently
- ❖ Formerly the responsibility of law lords in the House of lords
- ❖ All current supreme court justices are also law lords selected from among distinguished jurist by the lord chancellor, minister that heads the judiciary.
  - Their replacement are no longer members of the House of Lords bu appointed by a commission
- ❖ Stronger over the last decades
  - British government sought legal interpretation to support their action
  - Embrace of international laws such as the adoption of European Convention on Human Rights
  - The broader legal system, based on common law and developed in the twelfth century, contrasts starkly with the stricter code law practiced in the rest of Europe, which is less focused on precedent and interpretation.
  - The Electoral System
- ❖ Single member district
- ❖ Each of the 650 constituencies elects 1 MP
  - Constituencies are revised every 5-7 years by a government commission

- ❖ Only needs to win more than any other candidate, not a majority
- ❖ Favors and helps maintain the dominance of 2 main political party
- ❖ Consistently penalizes smaller party
  - The Liberal Democrats, whose support is spread relatively evenly across the country. Rarely muster enough votes to edge out the larger parties
  - United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)
  - Scottish National Party (SNP)
- ❖ Distortions occur when more than two parties contest a seat, so that a majority of votes are wasted—that is, the votes are not counted toward the winning party.
- ❖ Gives virtually unchecked power to the party with the majority of seats in electoral process artificially producing majority could be considered a serious distortion of democratic rule
- ❖ Alternative vote, allow voters to rank candidates by preference
  - Rejected
- ❖ Devolution has permitted greater electoral experimentation in regional legislatures
  - Scotland and Wales have adopted a mixed PR-SMD
  - Northern Ireland use a system called single transferable vote, similar to alternative vote
  - 
  - Local Government
- ❖ Unitary state in which no formal powers are constitutionally reserved for regional or local governments
- ❖ Power has been restored to local governments after Thatcher
  - However, Parliament remains fully sovereign and can enact laws at any time to limit or even eliminate this devolved authority
- ❖ Britain's upper chamber is unelected and therefore not accountable to states or other regional bodies
- ❖ Under the promise of creating a "big Society," Conservative governments have sought to continue this process of devolution, requiring greater transparency in local government and giving local citizens more decision-making power regarding local taxation and public services
- ❖
- ❖ Representation at the regional level has historically been very limited
  - Only Northern Ireland had its own legislature, until political violence there caused the central government to disband it in 1972.
  - Each of the four nations has a cabinet minister in the central government, called a secretary of state who is responsible for setting policies in each region
- ❖ The Labour party promoted devolution, or the decentralization of power, to the United Kingdom's regions.



- In 1997, Scotland and Wales voted in referendum to create their own legislatures to address local issues
  - Scotland's Parliament is more powerful and autonomous than Wales's Assembly
- Good Friday Agreement between Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland allowed for the reestablishment of the Northern Ireland Assembly
- England is the only part of the UK without its own regional government
- ❖ Although devolution is taking place, the central government still has the most power.
- ❖ Political Conflict and Competition
- ❖ The majority government controls government and can generally implement its policy goals
- ❖ Liberal Democratic Party - strong centrist
- ❖ 2 and a half party system, with liberal democrats far behind the two parties
- ❖
- ❖ The Labour Party
- ❖ Formed in 1900 as an outgrowth of the trade union movement
- ❖ Became the major party after WWII, 1945
- ❖ Considered socialism its dominant ideological characteristic
- ❖ British socialists were influenced by Fabianism, a moderate ideology that advocates working within the parliamentary order to bring about social-democratic change
- ❖ Mostly depended on working class votes for most of the history
  - A serious challenge for the party emerged in the 1970s as less people are in blue collar jobs.
- ❖ By mid 1970s, the Labour Party was badly divided between
  - radical socialists - who wanted the party to move to the left to shore up its working-class credentials
  - Moderate - who wanted it to move toward the political center
  - The internal bickering led to the defeat of Labour in every election from 1979 to 1997
- ❖ In 1980s and 1990s, Labour began a process of ideological and organization moderation
  - Rewritten party constitution to weaken severely the ability of trade unions to control party policy
  - Abandoned commitment to socialism and advocates a cross-class appeal
  - Tony Blair consolidated these changes and advocated moderate free-market policies with ambitious constitutional reform. (Third Way)
    - His victory in election began the New Labour
- ❖ Tony Blair → Gordon Brown → Ed Miliband → Jeremy Corbyn, a divisive figure initially well loved by many of the party's ranks and file but highly unpopular among Labour's more moderate leadership. → Keir Starmer

- ❖ The Conservative Party
- ❖ Moderate right
- ❖ Emerged in the 18th century
- ❖ Democratization of the UK and the origins of the British welfare state through the post WWII collectivist consensus
- ❖ Widespread respect and electoral support among a wide range of voters
- ❖ Divided between
  - Traditional conservative pragmatism - supporters of a limited welfare state
  - Champions of radical or neoliberal free-market reforms
- ❖ Thatcher's election made neoliberal dominant
- ❖ Also split between
  - Euroskeptics
  - And supporters of integration with Europe
- ❖ After the defeat in 1997 elections, there's a series of failed attempts to lead the party back to power until David Cameron
- ❖ David Cameron
  - Forged a more coherent and more centrist ideological position
  - "Big Society"
  - Socially liberal policies regarding abortion and gay rights
- ❖ In 2020, the party obtained a solid plurality of seats in the house of commons but not the majority of seats necessary to govern alone
  - Thus entered a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, forming an unlikely alliance that required ideological and political compromises from both party
- ❖ Cameron was forced to step down because of the failure to renegotiate the Britain's EU membership
- ❖ Cameron was succeeded by Theresa May, who also wanted to restore party unity and obtain a strong mandate to negotiate a favorable Brexit deal by calling a snap election in 2017
  - Failed by losing seats
- ❖ Boris Johnson succeeded Theresa May
  - Threatened to allow Britain to "crash out" of the EU with no deal
  - Shut down Parliament for several weeks
  - Ejected Tory MPs from his own party who refused to support his position
  - Turned his back on the support of Northern Ireland's democratic Unionist Party (that May had relied on)
  - Within a few short months, Johnson was able to negotiate a Brexit deal, win a thumping majority in a snap general election, and secure Britain's withdrawal from EU

➤ The Liberal Democrats

- ❖ Formed in 1988 through the merger of the liberal Party and defectors from the Labour Party
- ❖ Ideology is a mixture of classical liberalism's emphasis on both individual freedom and a weak state and social democracy's emphasize on collective quality
- ❖ Current liberal democratic party has been unable to recover the power and influence of the early Whigs
- ❖ Consistent supporters of european integration and were staunch opponents of the war in Iraq
- ❖ Often attacked New labour's policies as too timid and have frequently called for increased taxation and social spending
- ❖ Although often viewed as closer the the Labour than Conservative, it is willing to consider forming a coalition with either party in the event of a hung parliament
- ❖ Nick Clegg was elected leader in 2007, youngest party leader in UK
- ❖ In 2010, Clegg and Liberal democrat obtained the highest ever share of popular vote , 23%, but still lost seats because of the SMD electoral system
- ❖ Constantly called for electoral reform but 2 large parties refused
- ❖ Persuade their Tory coalition partner to agree to a much more modest proposal which failed predictably
  - Also secured a promise from Conservatives that the coalition government would put forward a bill to reform the house of lords. The bill was proposed in 2012 but also failed.
- ❖ Unable to translate vote into more seats in Parliament due to SMD
- ❖ Other Parties
- ❖ Green Party & Liberal Democrats
- ❖ Regional Parties have been most successful in concentrating enough vote in some districts to win seats in the legislature
  - Scottish National Party (SNP)
    - Secured 3 out of 59 seats with less than 5 percent of overall vote in 2015
      - Lost them in 2017 but regained in 2019
  - Welsh Plaid Cymru
  - Northern Irish parties
  - United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP)
    - 1 seat in 2015 and lost it in 2017
    - Garnered significant support for its anti-EU, anti-immigration platform
    - In the 2014 European Parliament Election, it received more seats than any other party, the first time in over a century that a political party other than the Conservatives or Labour had won a national election
    - Nigel Farage - Outspoken leader of the party brought a great deal of publicity and popular support to the party

- Launched the Brexit Party in 2019 (mostly full of populist and Euroskeptic)
  - British Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) are elected using a proportional representation system, which rewarded UKIP as the top vote-getter.
  - Following the success of Brexit, people have no reason to support this party
  - 
  - Political Parties Today
- ❖ In 2015, 12 parties won seats in the House of Commons, up from 10 in 2010
- ❖ 2 years later, the major parties together secured over 90% of the vote again
  - However, no majority of votes or seats in a single party → hung parliament
- ❖ In 2015, all 3 parties have swapped out their leaders
  - Labour: Jeremy Corbyn → Keir Starmer
  - Theresa May → Boris Johnson
  - Liberal Demo Cats - licking their wounds from poor showing of the latest elections
  - Elections
- ❖ British voters select all 650 members of the House of Commons during a general election
- ❖ Campaigns are short, only about a month
- ❖ Candidates may not reside in the district where they run office
  - The notion of a candidate serving local interest first is much less concern of them than in U.S
  - 
  - Civil Society
- ❖ UK houses various groups articulating special interest
  - Interests that benefit specific segments of the population instead of the nation as a whole
- ❖ British interest groups influence public policy and public opinion
  - Interest group lobbying of MPs is far less prevalent than U.S. because British parties are more highly disciplined
- ❖ interest groups must focus their attention on the party leadership and on the government bureaucracies, which often interpret and apply policies
- ❖ The greatest influence of British interest groups comes from their participation in Quangos- quasi autonomous nongovernmental organizations that assist the government in making policy
  - Policy advisory boards or other entities appointed or approved by the government that bring governments officials and affected interest groups together to help develop policy

- First established in the 1960s and 1970s and substantially expanded during periods of Labour government
- Represent a move toward a social-democratic model of public policy making, in which government and interest groups work together to develop policy
- Conservative governments have attacked the quangos
  - Seeing them as costly, empowering special interest, and weakening government
- ❖ Trade Union Congress (TUC) - a confederation of the United Kingdom's largest trade union
  - The most important British interest group
  - Dominated the Labour Party for much of the post war period
  - A variety of factor had weakened their influence
    - Member shrunk dramatically as the number of blue collar workers fall
      - 20 years ago, 1/2 of British workers belonged to trade unions, today only 1/4
    - Conservative government starting with Margaret Thatcher's have sharply reduced the political power of the TUC by passing laws designed to restrict union activity
    - Reforms within the Labour Party since the 1990s severely eroded the TUC's control of that party
  - TUC is still an important source of funding and electoral support, but the TUC labour link has been seriously weakened
- ❖ Confederation of British Industry(CBI) - the most important business organization in the United Kingdom, and the main counterweight to TUC
  - CBI has no direct link to the Tories
  - Main industrial and financial interest in the UK usually favor conservative policy
  - Top business leaders have exercised considerable influence in past Conservative governments.
  - In recent decades, the Labour Party has also been careful to cultivate good relations with the CBI.
  - Society
- ❖ British state is both multinational and multiethnic
- ❖ British society reveals class, religious, and even linguistic divisions
- ❖
- ❖ Class Identity
- ❖ Class identity remains perhaps the most salient of all social divisions in the United Kingdom and the one most noticed by outside observers
- ❖ Social reforms of the 20th century did much to ease the huge income disparities and rigid occupation-based class lines of 19th century England that preoccupied both Karl Marx and Charles Dickens

- ❖ Two tier divide between upper class and a working class
- ❖ Education system
  - Public schools are for elites that train boys for public service. Graduates go to Oxford or Cambridge.
- ❖ Some argue that with neoliberalism, class differences has began to breakdown
- ❖
- ❖ Ethnic and national identity
- ❖ Scots are mainly Catholic or Presbyterian
- ❖ English mostly identify with Church of England
- ❖ Religion remains a source of conflict in Northern Ireland
  - Half protestant half catholic
  - Catholic were discriminated
  - The Troubles - 3 decades of extreme ethnic conflict between Northern Ireland's nationalists or republicans, who are mostly Catholic, and unionists or loyalists, who are mostly Protestants
    - British army and Irish Republican army
- ❖ Negotiation between IRA and Britain lead to good friday agreement, where Catholic population will have greater say in local government
  - Authorize the creation of northern Irish legislature and a voting system ensuring proportional representation
  - Good Friday agreement agreed to a open border between Ireland and Northern Ireland
  - Foreign Relations and the World
- ❖ Since the end of World War II, the United States has counted on the United Kingdom as its most dependable ally.
- ❖ Devolution of power hopes to settle Scotland
- ❖ Although Scotland have settled after given some local power, the tables turned after UK left EU