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Thème

THE TWO PARTY SYSTEM IN THE UK: A MYTH OR  
A REALITY

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## **DEDICATION**

☞ This work is dedicated to the Almighty God.

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.....**ALL MY THANKS TO YOU**.....

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AECR</b>	: Alliance of European Conservative and Reformist
<b>CLP</b>	: Constituency Labour Party
<b>DoH</b>	: Department of Health
<b>DUP</b>	: Democratic Unionist Party
<b>Defra</b>	: Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
<b>EEC</b>	: European Economic Community
<b>EGP</b>	: European Green Party
<b>EL</b>	: party of European Left
<b>EU</b>	: European Union
<b>GDP</b>	: Gross Domestic Product
<b>NATO</b>	: North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
<b>NHS</b>	: National Health Service
<b>OECD</b>	: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
<b>Ofsted</b>	: Office for Standards in Education Children's Service and Skills
<b>PES</b>	: Party of European Socialist
<b>PMs</b>	: Member of Parliament
<b>SDP</b>	: Social Democratic Party
<b>STV</b>	: Single Transferable Vote
<b>UUP</b>	: Ulster Unionist Party
<b>UK</b>	: United Kingdom
<b>WTO:</b>	: World Trade Organisation

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## INTRODUCTION

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, also known as the United Kingdom (UK) or Britain, is a sovereign state located off the northwestern coast of continental Europe. The country includes the Island of Great Britain, the Northeastern part of the Island of Ireland, and many smaller Islands. Northern Ireland is the only part of the UK that shares a land border with another state: the Republic of Ireland. Apart from this land border, the UK is surrounded by the Atlantic Ocean, with the North Sea in the East and the English Channel in the South; the Irish Sea separates Great Britain from Ireland. The UK has an area of 243,610 square kilometres (94,060 sq. mi), making it the 78th-largest sovereign state in the world and the 11th-largest in Europe.

The United Kingdom is the 22nd-most populous country, with an estimated 64.1 million inhabitants. It is a constitutional monarchy and has a parliamentary system of governance. Its capital city is London, an important global city and financial centre with the second-largest urban area in the European Union. The current British Monarch since 6 February 1952 is Queen Elizabeth II. The UK consists of four countries: England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The latter three have devolved administrations, each with varying powers, based in their capitals, Edinburgh, Cardiff, and Belfast, respectively. Guernsey, Jersey, and the Isle of Man are not part of the United Kingdom, being Crown dependencies with the British Government responsible for defence and international representation. The UK has fourteen Overseas Territories, including the disputed Falkland Islands and Gibraltar.

Before the mid-19th century politics in the United Kingdom was dominated by the Whigs and the Tories. These were not political parties in the modern sense but somewhat loose alliances of interests and individuals. The Whigs included many of the leading aristocratic dynasties committed to the Protestant succession, and later drew support from elements of the emerging industrial interests and wealthy merchants, while the Tories were associated with the landed gentry, the Church of England and the Church of Scotland. By the mid-

19th century the Tories had evolved into the Conservative Party, and the Whigs had evolved into the Liberal Party. In the late 19th century the Liberal Party began to pursue more left wing policies, and many of the heirs of the Whig tradition became Liberal Unionists and moved closer to the Conservatives on many of the key issues of the time.

The Liberal and Conservatives dominated the political scene until the 1920s, when the Liberal Party declined in popularity and suffered a long stream of resignations. It was replaced as the main anti-Tory opposition party by the newly emerging Labour Party, who represented an alliance between the Labour movement, organised trades unions and various Socialist societies. Since then the Conservative and Labour Parties have dominated British politics, and have alternated in government ever since. However, the UK is not quite a two-party system since a third party (recently, the Liberal Democrats) can prevent 50% of the votes/seats from going to a single party. Following electoral co-operation as part of the SDP-Liberal Alliance, The Liberal Party merged with the Social Democratic Party in 1988 becoming the Liberal Democrats, which is now the largest third party.

The UK's First Past the Post electoral system leaves small parties disadvantaged on a UK-wide scale. It can, however, allow parties with concentrations of supporters in the constituent countries to flourish. Other than the Green Party of England and Wales, the only other parties winning seats in the House of Commons at the 2010 general election were based in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Since 1997, proportional representation-based voting systems have been adopted for elections to the Scottish Parliament, the National Assembly for Wales, the Northern Ireland Assembly, the London Assembly and the UK's seats in the European Parliament. In these bodies, other parties have had success. Traditionally political parties have been private organisations with no official recognition by the state. The Registration of Political Parties Act 1998 changed that by creating a register of parties. The United Kingdom is a

developed country and has the world's sixth-largest economy by nominal GDP and eighth-largest by purchasing power parity. It was the world's first industrialised country and the world's foremost power during the 19th and early 20th centuries. The UK remains a great power with a considerable economic, cultural, military, scientific, and political influence internationally. It is a recognised nuclear weapons state and its military expenditure ranks from fourth to sixth (depending on the source) in the world. The UK has been a permanent member of the United Nations Security Council since its first session in 1946. It has been a member of the European Union (EU) and its predecessor the European Economic Community (EEC) since 1973; it is also a member of the Commonwealth of Nations, the Council of Europe, the G7, the G8, the G20, NATO, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), and the World Trade Organization (WTO).

My research work entitled “*the two-party systems in the UK: a myth or reality*” aims to study the political system of the UK putting an accent on the two party system.

**PART ONE**  
**GENERAL CONTEXT OF THE STUDY AND**  
**RESEARCH FRAMEWORK**

## **Chapter One: Research Context and Problem Statement**

### **1-1- Problem Statement and Purpose of the Study**

The UK is a unitary democracy governed within the framework of a Constitutional Monarchy, in which the Monarch, the head of the country is also the head of the state and the Prime Minister of the UK is the head of the Government. Despite Executive power is exercise by her Majesty's Government, on behalf on and by the consent of the Monarch; Legislative Power is vested in the two chambers the Parliament of the UK; the House of Common and the House of Lords. The cumulative systems; Monarchy and Democracy can't help the normal evolution of the political system in the United Kingdom with the two largest party have been the Conservative Party and the Labour party. Thus this work intends to describe the UK two party systems in the process of the sustainable development and show if it's a reality or a mythology.

### **1-2- Significance, Limitation and Methodology of the Study**

By choosing the theme *the two-party system in the UK: a myth or a reality*, I aim to study the UK's political parties system and show if it is the two-party system or not. Clearly, is only the two-party system who leads the UK political system?

My research work is divided into four parts: the first is entitled general context of the study and research framework. The second is devoted on general view of the United Kingdom political system. The third is about the United Kingdom government and finally the fourth is concerned to the United Kingdom legislation system.

In terms of methodology I adopted a qualitative approach. It is mainly based on documentations. I have gathered information on the topic, concerning the UK political system. The works cited in this study is from the range of writings that I have browsed. I also used internet through WIKIPEDIA, a free encyclopedia

available on the internet. It allowed me to understand the UK political system. The major problem I faced was related the instability of the network and the energy. However, I have gotten some works to which rather, I have added reports and papers from seminars and symposia that had focused on the question. I finally proceed to the treatment, and a comparison of the data we have gotten in order to achieve the expected goals in this study.

### **1-3- Literature Review**

This part is a broad view of what has been written about two party systems in the UK. Many research works related to my study have been conducted ranging from novel essays and books. Writers discuss the theme of politic in the United Kingdom they give different points of view on the U's two party system. Martin Keegan said that Parliamentary elections in the United Kingdom should be seen as a referendum on the performance of sitting MPs, not merely as a snapshot nationwide opinion poll determining party voting weights for the next Parliament. The Electoral System affects the degree to which voters may hold their representatives to account for their actions in the previous Parliament; changes which would diminish this accountability mechanism should be resisted. The electoral system can restrain this tactic. It works well under First Past The Post, and similar systems. Generally, increasing the number of MPs who represent a single constituency has the effect of making this tactic harder, as the punishment from electors may be spread across several MPs, especially if the electors cannot choose which MPs from a particular party get the benefit of their vote. This is a notorious problem with the European Parliamentary elections in Great Britain: if some MEP is the ringleader for a particularly odious policy, she cannot easily be voted out without voting out the colleagues from her party. Even when a free choice on the preferential ordering of MPs is permitted, it is difficult to stop the disliked MP from riding back to election on the coattails of his more popular colleagues. Other fallacious views on electoral

systems which it is useful to rebut at this juncture include the contention that FPTP entrenches a two-party system (in fact, the number of parties is contingent on the geographical concentration of voters), that AV in the UK in 1997 would have led to a larger Labour majority (only if you didn't tell people and the parties what the electoral system was in advance, otherwise the parties would have behaved differently), and that geographical constituencies are a relic of a bygone age and are being replaced by PR across Europe, or at least the world. FPTP is described by Hilaire Barnett in her militantly Anglosceptic tome on the British constitution as “still” existing in some dusty English-speaking corners of the planet; in fact some countries using PR have been moving towards constituencies: Italy did in the 1990s, and the Dutch are considering a similar move.

**PART TWO**

**GENERAL VIEW OF THE UNITED  
KINGDOM POLITICAL SYSTEM**

## **Chapter Two: History of United Kingdom Political System & the two-party systems**

### **2-1- Definition of the two-party system**

A two-party system is a system where two major political parties dominate politics within a government. One of the two parties typically holds a majority in the legislature and is usually referred to as the majority party while the other is the minority party. The term has different senses. For example, in the United States, Jamaica, and Malta, the sense of two-party system describes an arrangement in which all or nearly all elected officials only belong to one of the two major parties, and third parties rarely win any seats in the legislature. In such arrangements, two-party systems are thought to result from various factors like winner takes all election rules. In such systems, while chances for third party candidates winning election to major national office are remote, it is possible for groups within the larger parties, or in opposition to one or both of them, to exert influence on the two major parties. In contrast, in the United Kingdom and in other parliamentary systems and elsewhere, the term two-party system is sometimes used to indicate an arrangement in which two major parties dominate elections but in which there are viable third parties which do win seats in the legislature, and in which the two major parties exert proportionately greater influence than their percentage of votes would suggest.

### **2-2- History of the United Kingdom Political System**

The two-party system, in the sense of the looser definition, where two parties dominate politics but in which third parties can elect members and gain some representation in the legislature, can be traced to the development of political parties in the United Kingdom. There was a division in English politics at the time of the Civil War and Glorious Revolution in the late 17th century. The Whigs supported Protestant constitutional monarchy against absolute rule and the Tories, originating in the Royalist (Cavalier) faction of the English Civil

War, were conservative royalist supporters of a strong monarchy as a counterbalance to the republican tendencies of Parliament in the following century, the Whig party's support base widened to include emerging industrial interests and wealthy merchants. The basic matters of principle that defined the struggle between the two factions were concerning the nature of Constitutional Monarchy, the desirability of a Catholic king, the extension of religious toleration to nonconformist Protestants, and other issues that had been put on the liberal agenda through the political concepts propounded by John Locke, Algernon Sidney and others.

Vigorous struggle between the two factions characterized the period from the Glorious Revolution to the 1715 Hanoverian succession, over the legacy of the overthrow of the Stuart dynasty and the nature of the new Constitutional State. This proto two-party system fell into relative abeyance after the accession to the throne of George I and the consequent period of Whig supremacy under Robert Walpole, during which the Tories were systematically purged from high positions in government. However, although the Tories were dismissed from office for half a century, they still retained a measure of party cohesion under William Wyndham and acted as a united, though unavailing, opposition to Whig corruption and scandals. At times they cooperated with the "Opposition Whigs", Whigs who were in opposition to the Whig government; however, the ideological gap between the Tories and the Opposition Whigs prevented them from coalescing as a single party.

The old Whig leadership dissolved in the 1760s into a decade of factional chaos with distinct Grenvillite, Bedfordite, Rockinghamite, and Chathamite factions successively in power, and all referring to themselves as Whigs. Out of this chaos, the first distinctive parties emerged. The first such party was the Rockingham Whigs under the leadership of Charles Watson-Wentworth and the intellectual guidance of the political philosopher Edmund Burke. Burke laid out a philosophy that described the basic framework of the political party as "a body

of men united for promoting by their joint endeavours the national interest, upon some particular principle in which they are all agreed. As opposed to the instability of the earlier factions, which were often tied to a particular leader and could disintegrate if removed from power, the two party system was centered around a set of core principles held by both sides and that allowed the party out of power to remain as the Loyal Opposition to the governing party.

A genuine two-party system began to emerge, with the accession to power of William Pitt the Younger in 1783 leading the new Tories, against a reconstituted "Whig" party led by the radical politician Charles James Fox. The two-party systems matured in the early 19th century era of political reform, when the franchise was widened and politics entered into the basic divide between conservatism and liberalism that has fundamentally endured up to the present. The modern Conservative Party was created out of the "Pittite" Tories by Robert Peel, who issued the Tamworth Manifesto in 1834 which set out the basic principles of Conservatism; the necessity in specific cases of reform in order to survive, but an opposition to unnecessary change, that could lead to "a perpetual vortex of agitation". Meanwhile, the Whigs, along with free trade Tory followers of Robert Peel, and independent Radicals, formed the Liberal Party under Lord Palmerston in 1859, and transformed into a party of the growing urban middle-class, under the long leadership of William Ewart Gladstone. The two-party system had come of age at the time of Gladstone and his Conservative rival Benjamin Disraeli after the 1867 Reform Act.

### **2-2-1- Third party**

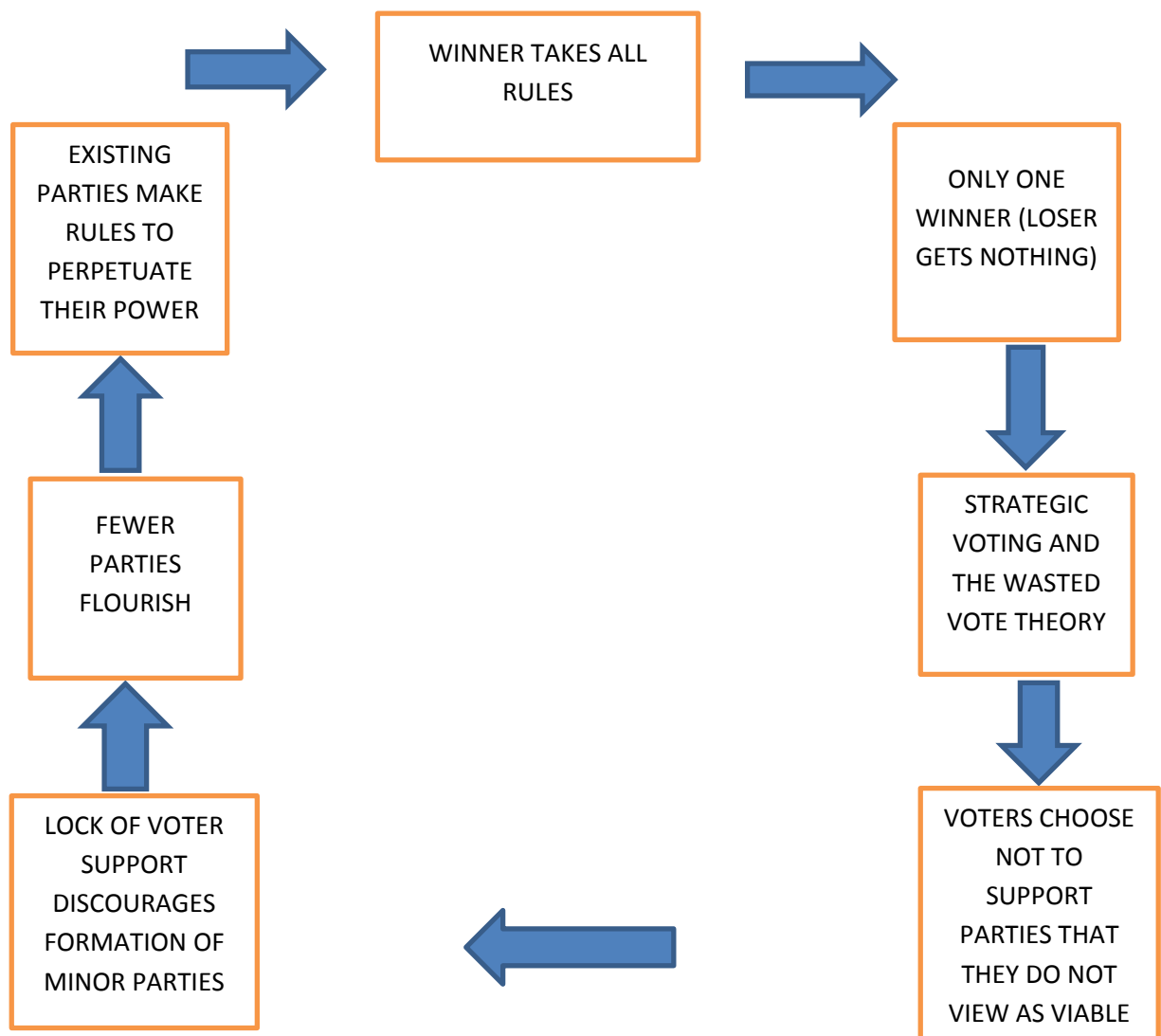
Third party meaning a party other than one of the two dominant parties is possible in two-party system, but they are often unlikely to exert much influence by gaining control of legislatures or by winning elections. While there are occasional opinions in the media expressed about the possibility of third party emerging in the United States, for example, political insiders such as the 1980

presidential candidate John Anderson think the chances of one appearing in the early twenty-first century is remote. A report in The Guardian suggested that American politics has been stuck in a two-way fight between Republicans and Democrats since the Civil War, and that third-party runs had little meaningful success.

Third parties in a two-party system can be:

- ✓ built around a particular ideology or interest group;
- ✓ split off from one of the major parties or;
- ✓ focused on a charismatic individual.

A so-called third party in the United Kingdom is the Liberal Democrats. In the 2010 election, the Liberal Democrats received 23% of the votes but only 9% of the seats in the House of Commons. While electoral results do not necessarily translate into legislative seats, the Liberal Democrats can exert influence if there is a situation such as a hung parliament. In this instance, neither of the two main parties (at present, the Conservative Party and the Labour Party) have sufficient authority to run the government. Accordingly, the Liberal Democrats can in theory exert tremendous influence in such a situation since they can ally with one of the two main parties to form a coalition. This happened in the Coalition government of 2010. Yet in that more than 13% of the seats in the British House of Commons are held in 2011 by representatives of political parties other than the two leading political parties of that nation, contemporary Britain is considered by some to be a multi-party system, and not a two-party systems. The winner-takes-all system discourages voters from choosing third party or independent candidates, and over time the process becomes entrenched so that only two major parties become viable, according to one view.



**Figures 1: How the two-party system perpetuates itself**

Source: “Political Parties”. The Constitution Society.

### 2-2-2- The Crown

#### ✓ Origins

The concept of the Crown took form under the feudal system. Though not used this way in all countries that had this system, in England all rights and privileges were ultimately bestowed by the ruler. Land, for instance, was granted by the Crown to Lords in exchange for feudal services and they, in turn, granted the land to lesser lords. One exception to this was common **socage** owners of land held as **socage** held it subject only to the Crown.

### ✓ **Divisibility of the Crown**

Historically, the Crown was considered to be indivisible. Two judgments, *Ex parte Indian Association of Alberta* and *Ex parte Quark* challenged that view, and today the Crown is considered separate in every country, province, state or territory that acknowledges the Queen as head of state, regardless of its degree of independence, once a government is established. The Lords of Appeal wrote, The Queen is as much the Queen of New South Wales and Mauritius and other territories acknowledging her as head of state as she is of England and Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland or the United Kingdom.

In English jurisprudence, the Crown is the state in all its aspects. In countries that do not have a monarchy, the concept may be expressed as the State or the People, or some political entity, such as the United States, the Commonwealth.

Legally, the Crown is a corporation sole that, in the Commonwealth realms, Crown dependencies and any of its provincial or state sub-divisions, represents the legal embodiment of executive, legislative, or judicial governance. It evolved first in the United Kingdom as a separation of the literal crown and property of the nation state from the person and personal property of the monarch. The concept spread via British colonisation, and is now rooted in the legal lexicon of the other 15 independent realms. In this context it should not be confused with any physical crown, such as those of the British state regalia. The term is also found in expressions such as Crown land, which some countries refer to as public land or state land, as well as in some offices such as Minister of the Crown, Crown attorney and Crown prosecutor (other terms being District attorney, State prosecutor or public prosecutor).

### ✓ **British Overseas Territories**

Following the Lords' decision in *Ex parte Quark*, it is held that the Queen in exercising her authority over British Overseas Territories does not act on the advice on the government of the UK, but in her role as Queen of each territory, with the exception of fulfilling the UK's international responsibilities for its

territories. The reserve powers of the Crown for each territory are no longer considered to be exercisable on the advice of the UK government. In order to comply with the court's decision, the territorial governors now act on the advice of each territory's executive and the UK government can no longer disallow legislation passed by territorial legislatures.

#### ✓ **In the courts**

In criminal proceedings, the state is the prosecuting party and is usually designated on the title or name of a case as "R v" - where R can stand for either Rex (if the current monarch is male) or Regina (if the monarch is female) versus the defendant; for example, a criminal case against Smith might be referred to as R v Smith, and verbally read as "the Crown against Smith". In Scotland, criminal prosecutions are undertaken by the Lord Advocate (or the relevant Procurator Fiscal) in the name of the Crown. Accordingly, the abbreviation HMA is used in the High Court of Justiciary for "His/Her Majesty's Advocate" in place of Rex or Regina, as in HMA v Al Megrahi and Fahima. For example, in Australia, each State uses R in the title of criminal cases and The Queen in criminal appeal cases (i.e., the case name at trial would be R v Smith, if appealed the case name would be Smith v The Queen). Judges usually refer to the prosecuting party as simply "the prosecution" in the text of judgments (only rarely is The Crown used in the text, and never R). In civil cases where the Crown is a party, it is a customary to list the appropriate government Minister as the party instead.

The Crown can also be a plaintiff or defendant in civil actions to which the government of the Commonwealth realm in question is a party. Such Crown proceedings are often subject to specific rules and limitations, such as the enforcement of judgments against the Crown.

In the UK there is multiple crowns used by queens during their different reign. These figures show some crowns used by queens in the UK.



**F1:**



**F2**



**F3**



**F4**

**Source:** Queen and Prime Minister, Official website of the British Monarchy

Figure 1 shows the Queen holds the Orb and Sceptre used at her Coronation, 2 June 1953. The second is about the Queen Victoria who wore the Small Diamond Crown in preference to the Imperial State Crown whenever she could. Studded with about 1,300 diamonds; it was made in 1870. The third shows the Crown of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. She wore it with the arches removed at her daughter's coronation in 1953. And finally the fourth is about St.

Edward's Crown who was refurbished for Charles II's coronation from an old crown. The gold may have come from Edward the Confessor's crown.

**PART THREE**

**THE UNITED KINGDOM GOVERNMENT**

## **Chapter three: The Prime Minister and his Cabinet; Government Department and the Civil Service**

### **3-1- The Prime Minister and his Cabinet**

The Prime Minister of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland is the head of Her Majesty's Government. The Prime Minister and his Cabinet (consisting of all the most senior ministers, who are government department heads) are collectively accountable for their policies and actions to the Monarch, to Parliament, to their political party and ultimately to the electorate. The current Prime Minister, David Cameron, leader of the Conservative Party, was appointed by the Queen on 11 May 2010.

The office is not established by any constitution or law but exists only by long-established convention, which stipulates that the monarch must appoint as prime minister the person most likely to command the confidence of the House of Commons; this individual is typically the leader of the political party or coalition of parties that holds the largest number of seats in that chamber. The position of Prime Minister was not created; it evolved slowly and erratically over three hundred years due to numerous acts of Parliament, political developments, and accidents of history. The office is therefore best understood from a historical perspective. The origins of the position are found in constitutional changes that occurred during the Revolutionary Settlement (1688–1720) and the resulting shift of political power from the Sovereign to Parliament. Although the Sovereign was not stripped of the ancient prerogative powers and legally remained the head of government, politically it gradually became necessary for him or her to govern through a Prime Minister who could command a majority in Parliament.

By the 1830s the Westminster system of government (or cabinet government) had emerged; the Prime Minister had become *primus inter pares* or the first among equals in the Cabinet and the head of government in the United

Kingdom. The political position of Prime Minister was enhanced by the development of modern political parties, the introduction of mass communication (inexpensive newspapers, radio, television and the internet), and photography. By the turn of the 20th century the modern premiership had emerged; the office had become the pre-eminent position in the constitutional hierarchy vis-a-vis the Sovereign, Parliament and Cabinet.

The Prime Minister also acts as the public “face” and “voice” of Her Majesty's Government, both at home and abroad. Solely upon the advice of the Prime Minister, the Sovereign exercises many statutory and prerogative powers, including high judicial, political, official and Church of England ecclesiastical appointments; the conferral of peerages, knighthoods, decorations and other honours. Although he or she may sometimes appear to be heavily under the influence of their aides, in reality the Prime Minister is in control.

The British system of government is based on an uncodified constitution, meaning that it is not set out in any single document. The British constitution consists of many documents and, most important for the evolution of the office of Prime Minister, it is based on customs known as constitutional conventions that became accepted practice. In 1928, Prime Minister H. H. Asquith described this characteristic of the British constitution in his memoirs:

“In this country we live ... under an unwritten Constitution. It is true that we have on the Statute-book great instruments like Magna Carta, the Petition of Right, and the Bill of Rights which define and secure many of our rights and privileges; but the great bulk of our constitutional liberties and . . . our constitutional practices do not derive their validity and sanction from any Bill which has received the formal assent of the King, Lords and Commons. They rest on usage, custom, convention, often of slow growth in their early stages, not always uniform, but which in the course of time received universal observance and respect”.

The relationship between the Prime Minister vis-a-vis the Sovereign, Parliament and Cabinet is defined largely by these unwritten conventions of the constitution. Many of the Prime Minister's executive and legislative powers are actually royal prerogatives which are still formally vested in the Sovereign, who remains the Head of State. Despite its growing dominance in the constitutional hierarchy, the Premiership was given little formal recognition until the 20th century; the legal fiction was maintained that the Sovereign still governed directly. The position was first mentioned in statute only in 1917, in the schedule of the Chequers Estate Act. Increasingly during the 20th century, the office and role of Prime Minister featured in statute law and official documents; however it remains that largely the Prime Minister's powers and relationships with other institutions continue to derive from ancient royal prerogatives and historic modern constitutional conventions. Prime Ministers continue to hold the position of First Lord of the Treasury and, since November 1968, that of Minister for the Civil Service, the latter giving them authority over the civil service.

### **3-2- The Cabinet**

The modern Prime Minister is also the leader of the Cabinet. A convention of the constitution, the modern Cabinet is a group of ministers who formulate policies. As the political heads of government departments Cabinet Ministers ensure that policies are carried out by permanent civil servants. Although the modern Prime Minister selects Ministers, appointment still rests with the Sovereign. With the Prime Minister as its leader, the Cabinet forms the executive branch of government.

The term "Cabinet" first appears after the Revolutionary Settlement to describe those ministers who conferred privately with the Sovereign. The growth of the Cabinet met with widespread complaint and opposition because its meetings were often held in secret and it excluded the ancient Privy Council (of which the

Cabinet is formally a committee) from the Sovereign's circle of advisers, reducing it to an honorary body. The early Cabinet, like that of today, included the Treasurer and other department heads who sat on the Treasury bench. However, it might also include individuals who were not members of Parliament such as household officers (e.g. the Master of the Horse) and members of the royal family. The exclusion of non-members of Parliament from the Cabinet was essential to the development of ministerial accountability and responsibility.

Both William and Anne appointed and dismissed Cabinet members, attended meetings, made decisions, and followed up on actions. Relieving the Sovereign of these responsibilities and gaining control over the Cabinet's composition was an essential part of evolution of the Premiership.

This process began after the Hanoverian Succession. Although George I (1714-1727) attended Cabinet meetings at first, after 1717 he withdrew because he did not speak English and was bored with the discussions. George II (1727-1760) occasionally presided at Cabinet meetings but his grandson, George III (1760-1820), is known to have attended only two during his 60-year reign. Thus, the convention that Sovereigns do not attend Cabinet meetings was established primarily through royal indifference to the everyday tasks of governance. The Prime Minister became responsible for calling meetings, presiding, taking notes, and reporting to the Sovereign. These simple executive tasks naturally gave the Prime Minister ascendancy over his Cabinet colleagues. Although the first three Hanoverians rarely attended Cabinet meetings they insisted on their prerogatives to appoint and dismiss ministers and to direct policy even if from outside the Cabinet. It was not until late in the 18th century that Prime Ministers gained control over Cabinet composition.

### **3-3- Government department and the civil service**

British governments (or Ministries) are generally formed by one party. The Prime Minister and Cabinet are usually all members of the same political party,

almost always the one that has a majority of seats in the House of Commons. Coalition governments (a ministry that consists of representatives from two or more parties) and minority governments (a one-party ministry formed by a party that does not command a majority in the Commons) are relatively rare. One party government, as this system is sometimes called, has been the general rule for almost three hundred years.

Early in his reign, William III (1689-1702) preferred Mixed Ministries (or coalitions) consisting of both Tories and Whigs. William thought this composition would dilute the power of any one party and also give him the benefit of differing points of view. However, this approach did not work well because the members could not agree on a leader or on policies, and often worked at odds with each other.

In 1697, William formed a homogeneous Whig ministry. Known as the Junto, this government is often cited as the first true Cabinet because its members were all Whigs, reflecting the majority composition of the Commons.

Anne (1702-1714) followed this pattern but preferred Tory Cabinets. This approach worked well as long as Parliament was also predominantly Tory. However, in 1708, when the Whigs obtained a majority, Anne did not call on them to form a government, refusing to accept the idea that politicians could force themselves on her merely because their party had a majority. She has never parted with an entire Ministry or accepted an entirely new one regardless of the results of an election. Anne preferred to retain a minority government rather than be dictated to by Parliament. Consequently, her chief ministers Sidney Godolphin, 1st Earl of Godolphin and Robert Harley, who were called Prime Minister by some, had difficulty executing policy in the face of a hostile Parliament. William's and Anne's experiments with the political composition of the Cabinet illustrated the strengths of one party government and the weaknesses of coalition and minority governments. Nevertheless, it was not until the 1830s that the constitutional convention was established that the Sovereign must select

the Prime Minister (and Cabinet) from the party whose views reflect those of the majority in Parliament. Since then, most ministries have reflected this one party rule.

Despite the “one party” convention, Prime Ministers may still be called upon to lead either minority or coalition governments. A minority government may be formed as a result of a “hung parliament” in which no single party commands a majority in the House of Commons after a general election or the death, resignation or defection of existing members. By convention the serving Prime Minister is given first opportunity to reach agreements that will allow them to survive a vote of confidence in the House and continue to govern. The last minority government was led by Labour Prime Minister Harold Wilson for eight months after the February 1974 general election produced a hung parliament. In the October 1974 general election, the Labour Party gained 18 seats, giving Wilson a majority of three.

A hung parliament may also lead to the formation of a coalition government in which two or more parties negotiate a joint programme to command a majority in the Commons. Coalitions have also been formed during times of national crisis such as war. Under this circumstance, the parties agree to temporarily set aside their political differences and unite to face the national crisis. Coalitions are rare; since 1721, there have been fewer than a dozen.

When the general election of 2010 produced a hung parliament, the Conservative and Liberal Democrat parties agreed to form Her Majesty's current coalition government, the first in seventy years. The last Coalition in the UK before 2010 was led by Conservative Prime Minister Winston Churchill during most of the Second World War from May 1940 to May 1945. Clement Attlee, the leader of the Labour Party, served as Deputy Prime Minister.

## **Chapter four: Devolved national administrations**

### **4-1- Governance of England**

There has not been a government of England since 1707 when the Kingdom of England ceased to exist as a sovereign state, as it merged with the Kingdom of Scotland to form the Kingdom of Great Britain. Prior to 1707, the government of England was in fact the government of England and Wales since Wales was joined to England under the Statute of Rhuddlan in 1284 and from the Laws in Wales Acts 1535-1542, England and Wales formed a single legal system.

The Kingdom of Great Britain continued from 1707 until 1801 when it merged with the Kingdom of Ireland to form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, which itself became the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 1922 (in reality; in name in 1927) upon independence for most of the island of Ireland. The UK since then has gone through significant change to its system of government, with devolved parliaments, assemblies and governments in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. England, however, remains under the full jurisdiction, on all matters, of the Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and the UK government as no devolved administration has been created for England within the new structure. This situation has led to the anomaly, known as the West Lothian question, which is the fact that Scottish Members of Parliament (MPs) are able to vote on legislation that affects only England whereas English MPs cannot vote on certain Scottish matters due to devolution. In some cases, the votes of Scottish MPs have been crucial in helping pass legislation for England that the majority of English MPs have opposed. One possible solution to the West Lothian question would be devolution to the English regions but attempts have been unsuccessful so far. However a series of unelected regional assemblies have been established in addition to the creation of Regional Government Offices. One part of England, Greater London, has a degree of devolved power (although

weaker than that of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland) with power vested in an elected Mayor of London, currently Boris Johnson and the London Assembly.

Several Government Departments of the UK Government have responsibilities for matters affecting England alone:

- ✓ The Department for Communities and Local Government.
- ✓ The Department for Education is responsible for issues affecting people in England up to the age of 19.
- ✓ The Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (Defra) is responsible for environmental protection, food production and standards, agriculture, fisheries and rural communities in England.
- ✓ The Department of Health, (DoH) has responsibility for government policy on health, social care and the English National Health Service (NHS).
- ✓ The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) which is a non-ministerial department headed by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools in England.

Other departments deal mainly with matters affecting England though they also have some UK wide responsibilities in certain areas;

- ✓ The Department for Transport
- ✓ The Department for Culture, Media and Sport
- ✓ The Charity Commission for England and Wales, which is a non-ministerial department

#### **4-2- Government of Scotland**

The Scottish Government is responsible in Scotland for all issues that are not explicitly reserved to the United Kingdom Parliament at Westminster by Schedule 5 to the Scotland Act 1998; such devolved matters include NHS Scotland, education, justice and policing, rural affairs, economic development

and transport. The Scottish Government had the responsibility for an annual budget of more than £30 billion in the financial year 2005-2006, rising to more than £30 billion in 2007-2008.

The Government is led by the First Minister. The Scottish Parliament nominates one of its Members to be appointed as First Minister by the Queen. He is assisted by various Cabinet Secretaries (Ministers) with individual portfolios, who are appointed by him with the approval of Parliament. Junior Scottish Ministers are similarly appointed to assist Cabinet Secretaries in their work. The Scottish Law Officers, the Lord Advocate and Solicitor General can be appointed from outside the Parliament's membership, but are subject to its approval. The First Minister, the Cabinet Secretaries and the Scottish Law Officers are the Members of the Scottish Government. They are collectively known as the "Scottish Ministers". The members of the Government have substantial influence over legislation in Scotland, putting forward the majority of Bills that are successful in becoming Acts of the Scottish Parliament. Since 2007, the Scottish Government has been formed by the Scottish National Party, which is the largest party in the Scottish Parliament, although prior to 2011 it did not possess an overall majority. In the 2011 Scottish Parliament election, the Scottish National Party won the first overall majority in the history of the Scottish Parliament. The current First Minister is Alex Salmond.

#### **4-3- Welsh Government**

The Welsh Government (Welsh: Llywodraeth Cymru) is the executive branch of the devolved government in Wales. It is accountable to the National Assembly for Wales, the legislature which represents the interests of the Welsh people and makes laws for Wales. The National Assembly was created by the Government of Wales Act 1998. The Welsh Government and the National Assembly for Wales were established as separate institutions under the Government of Wales Act 2006. The Government is referred to in that Act as the Welsh Assembly

Government, but to prevent confusion about the respective roles and responsibilities of the National Assembly and the Government; the devolved administration became the Welsh Government in May 2011, following the precedent set by the renaming of the Scottish Government in 2007. The Welsh Government consists of the First Minister, usually the leader of the largest party in the National Assembly for Wales; up to twelve ministers and deputy ministers, appointed by the First Minister; and a Counsel General, nominated by the First Minister and approved by the National Assembly. The current First Minister is Carwyn Jones, formally appointed by the Queen on 12 May 2011, who appointed ten ministers and deputy ministers. The Counsel General is Theodore Huckle QC.

#### **4-4- Government of Northern Ireland**

The original Northern Ireland Executive was established on 1 January 1974, following the Sunningdale Agreement, but collapsed on 28 May 1974 due to the Ulster Workers' Council strike. It comprised three parties:

- ✓ Ulster Unionist Party (6 ministers)
- ✓ Social Democratic and Labour Party (4 ministers)
- ✓ Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (1 minister)

The Troubles continued in the absence of a political settlement.

The current Executive was provided for in the Belfast Agreement, signed on 10 April 1998. Designates for First Minister and Deputy First Minister were appointed on 1 July 1998. A full Executive was nominated on 29 November 1999 and took office on 2 December 1999, comprising the following parties, in order of size:

- ✓ Ulster Unionist Party (4 ministers and 1 junior minister)
- ✓ Social Democratic and Labour Party (3 ministers and 1 junior minister)
- ✓ Democratic Unionist Party (2 ministers)
- ✓ Sinn Féin (2 ministers)

Devolution was suspended for four periods, during which the departments came under the responsibility of direct rule ministers from the Northern Ireland Office:

- ✓ Between 12 February 2000 and 30 May 2000;
- ✓ On 11 August 2001;
- ✓ On 22 September 2001;
- ✓ Between 15 October 2002 and 8 May 2007.

The 2002-2007 suspension followed the refusal of the Ulster Unionist Party to share power with Sinn Féin after a high-profile Police Service of Northern Ireland investigation into an alleged Provisional Irish Republican Army spy ring.

Since 8 May 2007, devolution has operated without interruption. The second Executive formed in 2007 initially consisted of the following parties in order:

- ✓ Democratic Unionist Party (5 ministers and 1 junior minister)
- ✓ Sinn Féin (4 ministers and 1 junior minister)
- ✓ Ulster Unionist Party (2 ministers)
- ✓ Social Democratic and Labour Party (1 minister)

However, the Executive did not meet between 19 June 2008 and 20 November 2008 due to a boycott by Sinn Féin. This took place during a dispute between the DUP and Sinn Féin over the devolution of policing and justice powers. Policing and justice powers were devolved on 12 April 2010, with the Alliance Party of Northern Ireland holding the position of Minister of Justice in the Executive from that date.

Following the Northern Ireland Assembly election held on 5 May 2011, a third Executive was formed on 16 May 2011 with the following parties represented:

- ✓ Democratic Unionist Party (5 ministers and 1 junior minister)
- ✓ Sinn Féin (4 ministers and 1 junior minister)
- ✓ Alliance Party of Northern Ireland (2 ministers)
- ✓ Ulster Unionist Party (1 minister)

✓ Social Democratic and Labour Party (1 minister)

Peter Robinson of the DUP and Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin were nominated by their parties and appointed as First Minister and deputy First Minister on 12 May 2011. Traditional Unionist Voice leader Jim Allister opposed the joint appointment. On 16 May 2011, 10 other Executive ministers (with the exception of the Minister of Justice) and two junior ministers were appointed by their political parties. The Minister of Justice was then elected by the Assembly via a cross-community vote.

The current Northern Ireland Executive, formed on 16 May 2011, is constituted as follows: Northern Ireland Executive

**Table 1:** Northern Ireland Executive

Portfolio	Minister	Party
<b>First Minister</b>	Peter Robinson	DUP
<b>Deputy First Minister</b>	Martin McGuinness	Sinn Féin
<b>Agriculture and Rural Development</b>	Michelle O'Neill	Sinn Féin
<b>Culture, Arts &amp; Leisure</b>	Carál Ní Chuilín	Sinn Féin
<b>Education</b>	John O'Dowd	Sinn Féin
<b>Employment and Learning</b>	Stephen Farry	Alliance
<b>Enterprise, Trade and Investment</b>	Arlene Foster	DUP
<b>Environment</b>	Mark H. Durkan	SDLP
<b>Finance &amp; Personnel</b>	Simon Hamilton	DUP
<b>Health, Social Services &amp; Public Safety</b>	Edwin Poots	DUP
<b>Justice</b>	David Ford	Alliance
<b>Regional Development</b>	Danny Kennedy	UUP
<b>Social Development</b>	Nelson McCausland	DUP

**Source:** Government of the UK official site

Two junior ministers in the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister are not members of the Executive but also attend Executive meetings.

**Table 2:** Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Portfolio	Minister	Party
<b>Junior Minister (assisting First Minister)</b>	Jonathan Bell	DUP
<b>Junior Minister (assisting deputy First Minister)</b>	Jennifer McCann	Sinn Féin

**Source:** Government of the UK official site

Ministers are assisted by backbench assembly private secretaries (equivalent to parliamentary private secretaries). The non-political Attorney General for Northern Ireland is the chief legal advisor to the Executive, appointed by the First Minister and deputy First Minister, and may also attend Executive meetings.

**PART FOUR**

**THE UK POLITICAL SYSTEM: THE  
LEGISLATION AND POLITICAL PARTIES**

## **Chapter five: The United Kingdom Parliament and Houses**

### **5-1- The United Kingdom parliament**

The Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, commonly known as the UK Parliament, the British Parliament, and the Westminster Parliament or by the metonym “Westminster”, is the supreme legislative body in the United Kingdom, British Crown dependencies and British overseas territories. It alone possesses legislative supremacy and thereby ultimate power over all other political bodies in the UK and its territories. Its head is the Sovereign of the United Kingdom (currently Queen Elizabeth II) and its seat is the Palace of Westminster in Westminster, London. The parliament is bicameral, consisting of an upper house (the House of Lords) and a lower house (the House of Commons). The Sovereign forms the third component of the legislature (the Queen-in-Parliament).

The legislative authority, the Crown-in-Parliament, has three separate elements: the Monarch, the House of Lords, and the House of Commons. No individual may be a member of both Houses, and members of the House of Lords are legally barred from voting in elections for members of the House of Commons. Royal Assent of the Monarch is required for all Bills to become law, and certain Delegated Legislation must be made by the Monarch by Order in Council. The Crown also has executive powers which do not depend on Parliament, through prerogative powers, which include among others the ability to make treaties, declare war, award honours, and appoint officers and civil servants. In practice these are always exercised by the monarch on the advice of the Prime Minister and the other ministers of HM Government. The Prime Minister and government are directly accountable to Parliament, through its control of public finances, and to the public, through election of Members of Parliament. Laws, in draft form known as bills, may be introduced by any member of either House, but usually a bill is introduced by a Minister of the Crown. A bill introduced by a

Minister is known as a "Government Bill"; one introduced by another member is called a "Private Member's Bill". A different way of categorising bills involves the subject. Most bills, involving the general public, are called "Public Bills". A bill that seeks to grant special rights to an individual or small group of individuals, or a body such as a local authority, is called a "Private Bill". A Public Bill which affects private rights (in the way a Private Bill would) is called a "Hybrid Bill". Private Members' Bills make up the majority of bills, but are far less likely to be passed than government bills. There are three methods for an MP to introduce a Private Member's Bill. The Private Members' Ballot (once per Session) put names into a ballot, and those who win are given time to propose a bill. The Ten Minute Rule is another method, where MPs are granted ten minutes to outline the case for a new piece of legislation. Standing Order 57 is the third method, which allows a bill to be introduced without debate if a day's notice is given to the Table Office. Filibustering is a danger, as an opponent to a bill can waste much of the limited time allotted to it. Private Members' Bills have no chance of success if the current government opposes them, but they are used in moral issues: the bills to decriminalise homosexuality and abortion were Private Members' Bills, for example. Governments can sometimes attempt to use Private Members' Bills to pass things it would rather not be associated with. "Handout bills" are bills which a government hands to MPs who win Private Members' Ballots. Each Bill goes through several stages in each House. The first stage, called the first reading, is a formality. At the second reading, the general principles of the bill are debated, and the House may vote to reject the bill, by not passing the motion "That the Bill be now read a second time". Defeats of Government Bills are extremely rare, the last being in 2005.

Both Houses may decide questions by voice vote; members shout out "Aye" and "No" in the Commons or "Content" and "Not-Content" in the Lords and the presiding officer declares the result. The pronouncement of either Speaker may be challenged, and a recorded vote (known as a division) demanded. (The

Speaker of the House of Commons may choose to overrule a frivolous request for a division, but the Lord Speaker does not have that power). In each House, a division requires members to file into one of the two lobbies alongside the Chamber; their names are recorded by clerks, and their votes are counted as they exit the lobbies to re-enter the Chamber. The Speaker of the House of Commons is expected to be non-partisan, and does not cast a vote except in the case of a tie; the Lord Speaker, however, votes along with the other Lords.

Parliament meets in the Palace of Westminster. Laws can be made by Acts of the United Kingdom Parliament. While Acts can apply to the whole of the United Kingdom including Scotland, due to the continuing separation of Scots law many Acts do not apply to Scotland and are either matched by equivalent Acts that apply to Scotland alone or, since 1999, by legislation set by the Scottish Parliament relating to devolved matters. This has led to a paradox known as the West Lothian question. The existence of a devolved Scottish Parliament means that while Westminster MPs from Scotland may vote directly on matters that affect English constituencies, they may not have much power over their laws affecting their own constituency. While any Act of the Scottish Parliament may be overturned, amended or ignored by Westminster, in practice this has yet to happen. Furthermore, the existence of the Legislative Consent Motion enables English MPs to vote on issues nominally devolved to Scotland, as part of United Kingdom legislation. Since there is no devolved “English Parliament”, the converse is not true.

Following the second reading, the bill is sent to a committee. In the House of Lords, the Committee of the Whole House or the Grand Committee is used. Each consists of all members of the House; the latter operates under special procedures, and is used only for uncontroversial bills. In the House of Commons, the bill is usually committed to a Public Bill Committee, consisting of between 16 and 50 members, but the Committee of the Whole House is used for important legislation. Several other types of committees, including Select

Committees, may be used, but rarely. A committee considers the bill clause by clause, and reports the bill as amended to the House, where further detailed consideration (consideration stage or report stage) occurs. However, a practice which used to be called the kangaroo allows the Speaker to select which amendments are debated. This device is also used under Standing Order 89 by the committee chairman, to restrict debate in committee. Once the House has considered the bill, the third reading follows. In the House of Commons, no further amendments may be made, and the passage of the motion that the Bill be now read a third time is passage of the whole bill. In the House of Lords further amendments to the bill may be moved. After the passage of the third reading motion, the House of Lords must vote on the motion “That the Bill does now pass”. Following its passage in one House, the bill is sent to the other House. If passed in identical form by both Houses, it may be presented for the Sovereign's Assent. If one House passes amendments that the other will not agree to, and the two Houses cannot resolve their disagreements, the bill fails.

## **5-2- The two-House system**

### **➤ House of commons**

The business of Parliament takes place in two Houses: the House of Commons and the House of Lords. Their work is similar: making laws (legislation), checking the work of the government (scrutiny), and debating current issues. The House of Commons is also responsible for granting money to the government through approving Bills that raise taxes. Generally, the decisions made in one House have to be approved by the other. In this way the two-chamber system acts as a check and balance for both Houses.

The Commons is publicly elected. The party with the largest number of members in the Commons forms the government. Members of the Commons (MPs) debate the big political issues of the day and proposals for new laws. It is one of the key places where government ministers, like the Prime Minister and

the Chancellor, and the principal figures of the main political parties, work. The Commons alone is responsible for making decisions on financial Bills, such as proposed new taxes. The Lords can consider these Bills but cannot block or amend them. Since 2010, the House of Commons of the United Kingdom has had 650 elected members.

Although it is common to associate the title of "House of Commons" with the Westminster system in general, in practice, only two states actually use the title.

- The House of Commons of England (most at the Palace of Westminster, London) sat from 1295 to 1706
- The House of Commons of Great Britain (at the Palace of Westminster, London) 1707-1801
- The House of Commons of the United Kingdom (at the Palace of Westminster, London) 1801-present
- House of Commons of Ireland (at various locations in Dublin: Dublin Castle, Bluecoat School, Irish Parliament House) 1297-1801
- House of Commons of Southern Ireland (at Government Buildings, Dublin) 1921-1922
- House of Commons of Northern Ireland (at Parliament Buildings (Northern Ireland), Belfast) 1921-1972

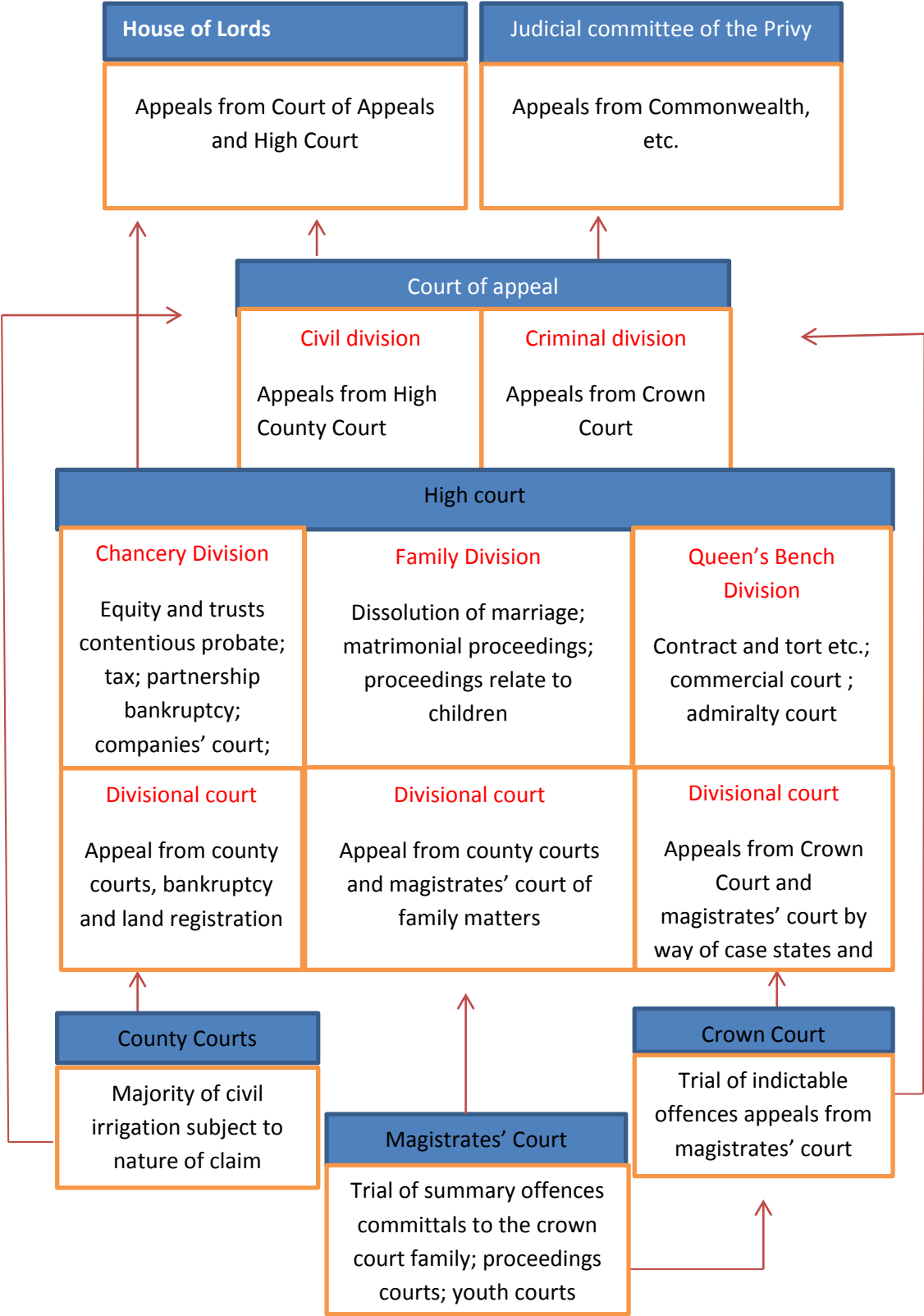
### **5-3- House of Lords**

The House of Lords is the second chamber of the UK Parliament. It is independent from, and complements the work of, the elected House of Commons. The Lords shares the task of making and shaping laws and checking and challenging the work of the government. The House of Lords remained more powerful than the House of Commons, but the Lower House continued to grow in influence, reaching a zenith in relation to the House of Lords during the middle 17th century. Conflicts between the King and the Parliament (for the most part, the House of Commons) ultimately led to the English Civil War

during the 1640s. In 1649, after the defeat and execution of King Charles I, the Commonwealth of England was declared, but the nation was effectively under the overall control of Oliver Cromwell, Lord Protector of England. The House of Lords was reduced to a largely powerless body, with Cromwell and his supporters in the Commons dominating the Government. On 19 March 1649, the House of Lords was abolished by an Act of Parliament, which declared that the Commons of England by too long experience that the House of Lords is useless and dangerous to the people of England. The House of Lords did not assemble again until the Convention Parliament met in 1660 and the monarchy was restored. It returned to its former position as the more powerful chamber of Parliament a position it would occupy until the 19th century.

Since the Parliament Acts 1911 and 1949, the powers of the House of Lords have been very much less than those of the House of Commons. All bills except money bills are debated and voted upon in House of Lords; however by voting against a bill, the House of Lords can only delay it for a maximum of two parliamentary sessions over a year. After this time, the House of Commons can force the Bill through without the Lords' consent under the Parliament Acts. The House of Lords can also hold the government to account through questions to government ministers and the operation of a small number of select committees. After the monarch leaves, each Chamber proceeds to the consideration of an Address in Reply to Her Majesty's Gracious Speech. But first, each House considers a bill pro forma to symbolise their right to deliberate independently of the monarch. In the House of Lords, the bill is called the Select Vestries Bill, while the Commons equivalent is the Outlawries Bill. The Bills are considered for the sake of form only, and do not make any actual progress. Both houses of the British Parliament are presided over by a speaker, the Speaker of the House for the Commons and the Lord Speaker in the House of Lords. The Speaker's place may be taken by three deputies, known as the Chairman, First Deputy Chairman and Second Deputy Chairman of Ways and Means.

**Table 3:** House of Lords subdivisions



**Source:**  
[http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=House\\_of\\_lords&oldid=611855058](http://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=House_of_lords&oldid=611855058)

## **Chapter six: Electoral system**

### **6-1- Electoral commission**

There are six types of elections in the United Kingdom: United Kingdom general elections, elections to devolved parliaments and assemblies, elections to the European Parliament, local elections, mayoral elections and Police and Crime Commissioner Elections. Elections are held on Election Day, which is conventionally a Thursday. General elections did not have fixed dates, with a necessity for them to be called within five years of the opening of parliament following the last election, before the passing of the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011. Other elections are held on fixed dates, though in the case of the devolved assemblies and parliaments early elections can occur in certain situations. Currently, six electoral systems are used: the single member plurality system (First Past the Post), the multi member plurality system, party list PR, the single transferable vote, the Additional Member System and the Supplementary Vote. Elections are administered locally: in each lower-tier local authority, the actual polling procedure is run by the Acting Returning Officer or Returning Officer and the compiling and maintenance of the electoral roll by the Electoral Registration Officer (except in Northern Ireland, where the Electoral Office for Northern Ireland assumes both responsibilities). The Electoral Commission only sets standards for and issues guidelines to Returning Officers and Electoral Registration Officers, but is responsible for nationwide electoral administration (such as the registration of political parties and directing the administration of national referendums).

#### **➤ Electoral registration**

#### **✓ Entitlement to register**

Anyone who will be aged 18 or over on polling day and who is a national of the United Kingdom (all forms of British nationality but excluding British protected persons, the Republic of Ireland, a Commonwealth country (including Fiji,

Zimbabwe and the whole of Cyprus or a European Union member state can apply to the Electoral Registration Officer in the district in the UK where they reside with a 'considerable degree of permanence' to be listed in that area's Electoral Register. A person can still register at his/her ordinary address if he/she will be away temporarily. A person who has two homes such as a university student who has a term-time address and lives at home during holidays may be able to register to vote at both addresses as long as they are not in the same electoral area though an elector can only vote once in any single election or referendum.

In addition, to qualify to appear on the Electoral Register, applicants who are Commonwealth citizens must either possess leave to enter or remain in the UK or not require such leave on the date of their application and no applicant may be a convicted person detained in prison or a mental hospital or unlawfully at large if he/she would otherwise have been detained or a person found guilty of certain corrupt or illegal practices. In Northern Ireland, a further criterion has to be fulfilled to qualify for registration: it is only possible to apply to be listed on the Electoral Register if a person has been resident in Northern Ireland for at least three months prior to the date of application.

Remand prisoners, voluntary patients in mental hospitals and people without a fixed place of residence can register to vote by making a declaration of local connection.

British citizens (but not other categories of British nationals) residing outside the United Kingdom can register as an overseas voter provided that they were on the Electoral Register in the UK within the previous 15 years. The 15 years period begins when they no longer appeared in the electoral register, not the date they moved abroad. For British citizens who moved abroad before they were 18 years old, they can still qualify for registration, with the 15 years period calculated from the date their parent(s)/guardian ceased to appear in the electoral register. Overseas voters can only vote in European Parliamentary and UK Parliamentary

elections in the constituency of their last registered UK address (or for those who moved abroad as a child, the last registered UK address of their parent(s)/guardian). British citizens who are away overseas temporarily do not need to register as overseas electors and can register to vote in the usual way at their UK address.

Crown servants and British Council employees (as well as their spouses who live abroad employed in a post outside the UK) can register by making a Crown Servant declaration, allowing them to vote in all UK elections. An individual can register as an anonymous elector if his/her safety (or that of any other person in the same household) would be at risk were his/her name and address to be disclosed publicly on the Electoral Register, but the application needs to be supported by a relevant court order, injunction or an attestation by a chief police officer or a Director of Social Services.

#### ✓ **Registration procedure**

In Great Britain, most electors are enrolled during the course of the annual canvass, which Electoral Registration Officers are obliged to conduct every year between August and November. Canvass forms are sent to all households, and must be returned, otherwise a fine of £1000 can be imposed. One person in the household must confirm the details of all residents who are existing electors, which includes adding or deleting residents who have moved in or out and are eligible to register to vote.

Between December and early August, the rolling registration procedure applies instead. Applications must be submitted individually (unlike the annual canvass forms where one person is responsible for registering all eligible people in a household) using registration forms available from local Electoral Registration Officers or the Electoral Commission's website. Although no proof of identity or address is necessary when submitting an application, the Electoral Registration Officer can require the applicant to provide further information regarding the applicant's age, nationality, residence and whether or not they are disqualified

and/or evidence to prove the applicant's age and/or nationality. Application forms can be returned to the local Electoral Registration Officer by post, by fax or by e-mail as a scanned attachment.

As of June 2014, as part of the Government's Digital by Default policy, voters in England and Wales registered to the electoral roll online. Special category electors do not register through the annual canvass procedure. Instead, they submit applications at any time during the year and have to renew their electoral application periodically (every one year for overseas electors and voters with a declaration of local connection and every three years for service voters). After applications are received by the Electoral Registration Officer, he/she must add them to a list of applications (unless they are applications to register as an anonymous elector. The list is open for inspection for five working days, during which any other elector may raise an objection to an application. The Electoral Registration Officer can initiate an application hearing if he/she considers that there are reasonable integrity concerns about the application.

#### ✓ **Electoral Register**

Each district council or unitary authority has an Electoral Register which is compiled by the Electoral Registration Officer listing all registered electors. The Electoral Register contains the name, qualifying address and electoral number of every ordinary elector, the name of every special category elector (such as service voters) and the electoral number of every anonymous elector. Any elector who was not aged 18 yet at the time of registration will also have his/her date of birth printed. Each district's Electoral Register is subdivided into separate registers for each polling district. Because the franchise differs between individual voters, various markers may be placed next to voters' names to identify in which elections they are entitled to vote. European Union citizens who are not Commonwealth or Irish citizens have their entry prefixed either with G (meaning they can only vote in local government elections) or K (meaning they can only vote in European Parliamentary and local government

elections). Overseas electors are prefixed with the letter F, meaning they can only vote in European and UK Parliamentary elections. Members of the House of Lords residing in the UK are prefixed with the letter L, meaning they can only vote in European Parliamentary and local government elections, whilst peers who are overseas electors are prefixed with the letter E, indicating that they can only vote in European Parliamentary elections.

The Register is published every year on 1 December after the annual canvass period (unless there has been an election during the annual canvass period between 1 July and 1 December, in which case the publication date is 1 February in the following year. However in 2012, because the Police and Crime Commissioner elections were held on 15 November, the annual canvass in England and Wales (excluding London) was held between July and October and the Electoral Register was published on 16 October. Between January and September, during the 'rolling registration' period, notices of alteration are published on the first working day of each month to add, remove or amend names. Notices of alteration are also published 5 working days before an election at any time of the year and just before the close of poll at any election to correct any clerical errors or to implement any court decisions.

✓ **Electoral Registration Officer.**

There are two versions of the Register: the full Register and the edited Register. The full Register can only be inspected under supervision at the office of the local Electoral Registration Officer, and must be supplied free of charge to the district's Returning Officer, the British Library, the Electoral Commission, the Office for National Statistics (only English and Welsh Registers), the General Register Office for Scotland (only Scottish Registers), the National Library of Wales (only English and Welsh Registers), the National Library of Scotland (only English and Scottish Registers) and the relevant Boundary Commission. The edited Register is available for general sale from Electoral Registration Officers and can be used for any purpose. Electors can choose to opt out from

appearing in the edited Register by informing their local Electoral Registration Officer.

➤ **Party system**

Political parties are the dominant organisations in the political system: they control candidate selection (and de-selection) in constituencies; they control who become their political leaders; and they exert control over individual MPs through party discipline and the whip system.

✓ **Candidate selection**

Political parties control candidate selection (and de-selection) in constituencies. Political party candidates must be authorised to stand for election for their party by their party's "nominating officer".

In the Conservative Party, Constituency Associations dominate the selection of candidates (although some associations have organised open parliamentary primaries). A Constituency Association must choose a candidate using the rules of, rules approved by, and (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) from a list established by, the Committee on Candidates of the Board of the Conservative Party. The candidate selection procedure is almost completely centralised; prospective candidates apply to the Conservative Central Office to be included on the approved list of candidates, and only afterwards may apply to local Conservative Associations. A Conservative MP can only be deselected at a special general meeting of the local Conservative association, which can only be organised if backed by a petition of more than fifty members.

In the Labour Party, the Constituency Labour Parties (CLP) selects the parliamentary general election candidates. The CLP must follow the procedures agreed by the National Executive Committee. Should the CLP select a candidate not on the Labour Party's panel of approved candidates, and in other circumstances, the National Executive Committee can block a CLPs initial choice of candidate.

### ✓ **Polling procedure**

A person may only cast a vote if he or she is on the Electoral Register - even if he or she would otherwise qualify to vote. If, because of a clerical error, someone's name has been left off the Electoral Register, the Electoral Registration Officer can amend the Register up to 9pm on polling day. Because the franchise between electors varies (for example, EU citizens who are not Commonwealth or Irish citizens cannot vote in UK Parliamentary elections) ballot papers are only issued after checking the marker in the Electoral Register before an elector's name to identify in which elections the individual is eligible to vote. Votes can be cast either in person at a polling station, by post or by proxy. British citizens residing abroad and registered as overseas electors cannot vote at British high commissions, embassies or consulates - their votes can only be cast either in person in the constituency where they are enrolled in the United Kingdom, by proxy (who must reside in and be eligible to vote in the UK) or by post (although this option is less popular as postal ballot packs are only dispatched by returning officers at 5 pm, 11 working days before polling day at the earliest and must be received by the returning officer by the close of poll to be counted).

### ✓ **In person**

Polling stations are usually open from 7am to 10pm on polling day. Voters receive a poll card from the returning officer at their local authority with details of their allocated polling place. They are not required to show the poll card (unless they are an anonymous elector or any other form of identification at the polling place in order to vote, except in Northern Ireland, where one piece of photographic ID must be presented at the polling station - a NI Electoral Identity Card, a photographic NI or GB driving licence, a United Kingdom or other EU passport, a Trans link 60+ Smart Pass, a Trans link Senior Smart Pass, a Trans link Blind Person's smart Pass or a Trans link War Disabled Smart Pass.

Having verified and marked off the voter's name and address on the list of electors, the presiding officer or poll clerk issues the ballot paper, calling out the voter's name, elector number and polling district reference, unless the voter is an anonymous elector, in which case only his/her elector number is called out. All ballot papers contain both an official will be invalid and rejected at the count. On a separate list (called the corresponding number list) the presiding officer or poll clerk writes the voter's elector number next to the unique identifying number of the ballot paper issued. However the secrecy of the vote is usually maintained, as at the close of the poll this list linking voters to their ballot paper numbers is sealed inside a packet which may only be opened by the order of a court in the event that the election result is challenged. The ballot paper is folded and then handed to the voter. The voter marks the ballot papers in the privacy of a voting booth. If the ballot paper has been spoilt, the presiding officer/poll clerk can issue a new one after the old ballot paper is cancelled. Before placing the ballot papers in the ballot box, the voter has (in theory) to show the presiding officer or the poll clerk the official mark and the unique identifying number printed on the reverse of the ballot papers.

If a voter requests a ballot paper but someone has already voted in their name, or they are listed as having requested a postal vote, they can only cast a tendered ballot. After marking the tendered ballot in private, the voter must not place it in the ballot box. Instead, it must be returned to the Presiding Officer who will endorse it with the voter's name, elector number and polling district reference, before placing it in a special envelope. The voter's name and elector number is then written down in the 'List of Tendered Votes'. Although tendered ballots are not included at the count, they serve as a formal record that a voter has tried, but has been unable, to cast a vote and is evidence of a voter's concern about the conduct of an election.

### ✓ **By post**

Voters can apply to receive a postal ballot either for specific elections or on a permanent basis until further notice without having to give a reason (except in Northern Ireland, where voters have to give a specific reason explaining why they cannot physically attend their allocated polling station). Applications for postal ballots close at 5pm 11 working days before polling day - this is also the earliest time the returning officer can dispatch postal ballot packs. Postal ballots can be sent anywhere within and outside the United Kingdom, although if they are not sent to a voter's registered address, a reason must be provided to the Electoral Registration Officer as to why the postal ballot is to be sent to an alternative address. Voters return their postal ballots together with postal voting statements filled in with their date of birth and signature either by post or by hand directly to the returning officer, or by hand to the presiding officer on polling day at a polling station situated within the constituency/ward printed on the postal ballot return envelope. However, for the postal ballot to be counted, the returning officer (or the presiding officer if returned at a polling station) must receive the ballot paper by the close of poll (usually 10pm on polling day).

### ✓ **By proxy**

Any person who is eligible to vote (he/she does not necessarily have to be on the Electoral Register already) can be appointed by another voter as his/her proxy, but for the proxy to be able to vote in an election the proxy application must be received by the Electoral Registration Officer at the voter's local authority by 5pm 6 working days before polling day. The proxy can either vote in person, or can apply for a postal proxy vote (though a postal proxy vote application has an even earlier deadline - any such request must be received by the Electoral Registration Officer by 5pm 11 working days before polling day at the latest). A voter who has become ill or disabled after 5pm six working days before polling day can make an emergency application to vote by proxy as long as the application is received by the Electoral Registration Officer by 5pm on polling

day. Unless a close relative, a person can only vote as a proxy on behalf of a maximum of 2 other voters in any single election in each constituency/ward. When applying to vote by proxy for more than one particular election, the application must be accompanied by a relevant attestation and must be justified based on one of the following reasons: blindness; other disability; employment; on an education course; registered as a service, overseas or anonymous elector. If only applying to vote by proxy for one particular election, the elector only needs to explain why he/she cannot vote in person, but does not need an attestation. If it is only possible to get to the polling station from the registered address by air or by sea, the elector can apply for a permanent proxy vote without an attestation. In Northern Ireland, voters can only appoint another person to be their proxy if they can provide a specific reason explaining why they cannot physically attend their allocated polling station.

#### ✓ **Accessibility**

All polling stations are legally required to be wheelchair-accessible and be equipped with a tactile voting device and at least one large print display version of the ballot paper to assist visually impaired voters. Though the large print version cannot be marked, it can be used for reference. Disabled voters can also request the Presiding Officer in the polling station or bring along a family member to mark their ballot papers for them if they wish. If a voter is unable to enter the polling station because of a disability, the Presiding Officer can take the ballot paper to him/her. Although the Electoral Commission provides electoral registration forms in a number of foreign languages, by law all voting materials (e.g. ballot papers) are only printed in English (and also in Welsh in Wales).

#### **6-2- General elections**

United Kingdom general elections are held following a dissolution of Parliament. All the Members of Parliament (MPs) forming the House of Commons of the Parliament of the United Kingdom are elected. Following the

Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011, parliamentary sessions last five years and the only way that an early election can be called is in a vote by a majority of the House. The 2010 election was held on 6 May 2010. Candidates are chosen by their particular party or stand as independents. Candidates aim to win particular geographic constituencies in the United Kingdom. Each constituency elects one MP by the first past the post system of election. At the 2005 general election, there were 646 constituencies, thus 646 MPs were elected to Parliament. Boundary changes in Scotland reduced the number of MPs from 659 at the 2001 election to 646. At the 2010 election the number of MPs was 650.

A party with an outright majority (more seats than all the other parties combined) following an election forms the government. If no party has an outright majority, parties can seek to form coalitions. At the 2010 election, even though the Conservatives won the greatest number of seats, it would have been possible for the Liberal Democrats to form a coalition with Labour (and maybe also other, smaller parties) instead of with the Conservatives. Situations such as these can give smaller parties considerable power, since the eventual outcome of the 2010 election was effectively decided by the Liberal Democrats. The next largest party forms Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition. Almost all successful candidates are members of a political party, with only one independent elected in the 2010 election and only four independent candidates in the entire country gaining more than a hundred votes.

A general election must take place before each parliamentary term begins. Since the maximum term of a parliament is five years, the interval between successive general elections can exceed that period by no more than the combined length of the election campaign and the time for the new parliament to assemble (a total of typically around four weeks). The five years runs from the first meeting of Parliament following the election.

After the 2010 general election, the coalition government enacted the Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 which set fixed term parliaments of five years. As

such, the next general election is scheduled to be held on 7 May 2015, with subsequent elections held every five years on the first Thursday of May.

Polls close at 10 pm and the votes are, in most constituencies, counted immediately. The earliest results are declared by about 11 pm, with most having been declared by 3 or 4 am; some constituencies do not declare their results until the following day.

When all of the results are known, or when one party achieves an absolute majority of the seats in the House of Commons, the first response comes from the current (and possibly outgoing) Prime Minister.

If a majority in the new Parliament has been achieved by their party, they remain in office without the need for reconfirmation or reappointment no new “term” of office is started. If a majority has not been achieved, and it is obvious that another party has the numbers to form a government, the Prime Minister submits a resignation to the Monarch. The Monarch then commissions the leader of the new majority party to form a new government. The Prime Minister has the option of attempting to remain in power even if seats have been lost. The subsequent Queen's Speech (giving an outline of the government's proposed legislative programme) offers a chance for the House of Commons to cast a vote of confidence or no confidence in the government by accepting or rejecting the Queen's Speech. Any vacancies created in the House, due to death, ennoblement, or resignation are filled by by-election. The time-frame for these is not automatic and they can be months after the vacancy was created, or even abandoned if there is a general election due soon.

### **6-3- European Election**

From 22 to 25 May 2014, elections to the European Parliament were held in the European Union. It was the 8th parliamentary election since the first direct elections in 1979, and the first in which the pan-European political parties fielded candidates for president of the Commission. The candidates, sometimes

referred to by the German term Spitzenkandidaten ('top candidates'), were Jean-Claude Juncker for the European People's Party, Martin Schulz for the Party of European Socialists, Guy Verhofstadt for the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe, Ska Keller and José Bové jointly for the European Green Party and Alexis Tsipras for the Party of the European Left. The Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists and the European Alliance for Freedom declined to nominate candidates.

While the European People's Party lost ground to the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats, it remained the largest faction in the new parliament, implying that Juncker may assume the presidency provided that he is elected by a qualified majority of the European Council as well as a simple majority in the new parliament. Additionally, far-left, eurosceptic, and nationalist parties gained ground at the expense of federalist groups. The European Council decided to hold the 2014 elections in late May instead of early June as had been the case with previous EP elections. The elections were brought forward to provide more time for the election of a president of the European Commission, and because they would otherwise have coincided with the Pentecost weekend which falls during school holidays in many member states.

The Economist estimated in January 2014 that "anti-EU populists of the left and right could take between 16% and 25% of the parliament's seats, up from 12% today". Euromoney predicted "anti-EU populists and nationalists" winning around 150 seats in the parliament, almost 20% of the total. A Policy Network article from February 2014 suggested that despite the media focus on anti-EU parties, they "will undoubtedly remain modest compared to" other mainstream parties, but their growth and their intentions to cooperate, signify important changes for the EU and European politics. In several countries, far-right and right-wing populist parties were expected to be in contention to poll the most number of votes in this election, including parties in Austria (Freedom Party), Denmark (People's Party), France (National Front), the Netherlands (Party for

Freedom), and the UK (UKIP). In Greece, the far-left Coalition of the Radical Left (SYRIZA) consistently led the polling in the lead-up to the election. In Italy the populist and anti-establishment Five Star Movement, according to the polls, was expected to be the second most popular party after the Democratic Party, with about 25% of votes. In January 2014, José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission, said, “We are seeing, in fact, a rise of extremism from the extreme right and from the extreme left” and suggested that the election might become “a festival of unfounded reproaches against Europe”.

## **Chapter seven: political parties in the UK and in Benin**

### **7-1- The Conservative Party**

Colloquially referred to as the Tory Party or the Tories, is a centre-right political party in the United Kingdom. It espouses the philosophies of conservatism and British unionism. After merging with the Liberal Unionist Party in 1912, it changed its name to the Conservative and Unionist Party, although that name is rarely used. As of 2013 it is the largest single party in the House of Commons with 305 MPs, governing in coalition with the Liberal Democrats, with David Cameron, the leader of the Conservative Party, as Prime Minister. It is the largest party in local government with 8,296 councillors.

The Conservative Party was founded in 1834, and was one of two dominant parties in the 19th century, along with the Liberal Party. In the 1920s, the Liberal vote greatly diminished and the Labour Party became the Conservatives' main rivals. Conservative prime ministers led governments for 57 years of the 20th century, including Winston Churchill (1940-45, 1951-55) and Margaret Thatcher (1979-90). Thatcher's tenure led to wide-ranging economic liberalisation and saw the Conservatives become the most eurosceptic of the three major parties. The party was returned to government in coalition, having failed to win a majority, in 2010 under the more liberal leadership of David Cameron. As of 2014 the Conservatives are the third largest British party in the European Parliament, with 19 MEPs, who sit with the soft eurosceptic European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) parliamentary group where it co-operates with parties like the Alternative for Germany, Law and Justice of Poland, the Danish People's Party and the Finns Party from Finland. The party itself is a member of the Alliance of European Conservatives and Reformists (AECR) Europarty.

## **7-2- Labour party**

The Labour Party is a centre-left political party in the United Kingdom. It grew out of the trade union movement and socialist political parties of the nineteenth century and has been described as a broad church; the party contains a diversity of ideological trends from strongly socialist, to more moderately social democratic. Founded in 1900, the Labour Party overtook the Liberal Party in general elections during the early 1920s and formed minority governments under Ramsay MacDonald in 1924 and 1929-31. The party was in a wartime coalition from 1940 to 1945, after which it formed a majority government under Clement Attlee. Labour was also in government from 1964 to 1970 under Harold Wilson and from 1974 to 1979, first under Wilson and then James Callaghan. The Labour Party was last in national government between 1997 and 2010 under Tony Blair and Gordon Brown, beginning with a landslide majority of 179, reduced to 167 in 2001 and 66 in 2005. Having won 258 seats in the 2010 general election, the party currently forms the Official Opposition in the Parliament of the United Kingdom. Labour has a minority government in the Welsh Assembly, is the main opposition party in the Scottish Parliament and has 20 MEPs in the European Parliament, sitting in the Socialists and Democrats group. The Labour Party is a full member of the Party of European Socialists and Progressive Alliance, and continues to hold observer status in the Socialist International. The current leader of the party is Ed Miliband.

## **7-3- Liberal Democrats**

The Liberal Democrats, formerly The Social and Liberal Democrats and The Democrats, are a social-liberal political party in the United Kingdom. Its leader Nick Clegg claims the party is of the radical centre, though its membership is on the centre left. It is the third-largest party in the UK in terms of both number of seats in the House of Commons and the number of councillors.

The party was formed in 1988 by a merger of the Liberal Party and the Social Democratic Party (SDP). The two parties had formed the electoral SDP–Liberal Alliance for seven years prior. The Liberals had been in existence for 129 years and in power under leaders such as Gladstone, Asquith and Lloyd George. During these times in government, the Liberals are credited with the Liberal Reforms, which saw the creation of the welfare state. In the 1920s, the Labour Party replaced the Liberals as the largest opponent of the Conservative Party. Nick Clegg was elected leader in 2007. At the 2010 general election, the Liberal Democrats won 57 seats with 23% of the vote, making them the third-largest party in the House of Commons behind the Conservatives with 307 and Labour with 258. No party having an overall majority, the Liberal Democrats joined a coalition government with the Conservatives, with Clegg becoming Deputy Prime Minister and other Liberal Democrats taking up ministerial positions.

The Liberal Democrats Party has difference policies on difference sectors which are: education; economy; health and justice. The party proposed also political reform that we can cite the introduction of the single transferable vote system (STV), cut number of MPs by 150 and introduce fixed-term parliaments.

#### **7-4- Critics view on thatcherism**

The extent to which one can say 'Thatcherism' has a continuing influence on British political and economic life is unclear. In 2002, Peter Mandelson, a Member of Parliament belonging to the British Labour Party closely associated with Tony Blair, famously declared that “we are all Thatcherites now”.

In reference to contemporary British political culture, it could be said that a “post-Thatcherite consensus” exists, especially in regards to economic policy. In the 1980s, the now defunct Social Democratic Party adhered to a “tough and tender” approach in which Thatcherite reforms were coupled with extra welfare provision. Neil Kinnock, leader of the Labour Party from 1983-1992, initiated Labour's rightward shift across the political spectrum by largely concurring with

the economic policies of the Thatcher governments. The New Labour governments of Tony Blair and Gordon Brown were described as “neo-Thatcherite” by some, since many of their economic policies mimicked those of Thatcher.

Most of the major British political parties today accept the anti-trade union legislation, privatisations and general free market approach to government that Thatcher's governments installed. No major political party in the UK, at present, is committed to reversing the Thatcher government's reforms of the economy. Such a convergence of policy is one reason that the British electorate perceive few apparent differences in policy between the major political parties, though with the effects of the Great Recession of 2007-2012 still being felt in the UK, the new Labour Party leader since 2010, Ed Miliband, has been indicating he would support stricter financial regulation and an industrial policy, in a move to a more mixed economy. In 2011, Miliband declared his support for Thatcher's reductions in income tax on top earners, her legislation to change the rules on the closed shop and strikes before ballots, as well as her introduction of Right to Buy, claiming Labour had been wrong to oppose these reforms at the time.

Tony Blair wrote in his 2010 autobiography *A Journey* that "Britain needed the industrial and economic reforms of the Thatcher period". He described Thatcher's efforts as “ideological, sometimes unnecessarily so” while also stating that "much of what she wanted to do in the 1980s was inevitable, a consequence not of ideology but of social and economic change." On the occasion of the 25th anniversary of Thatcher's 1979 election victory, BBC conducted a survey of opinions which opened with the following comments: To her supporters, she was a revolutionary figure who transformed Britain's stagnant economy, tamed the unions and re-established the country as a world power. Together with US presidents Reagan and Bush, she helped bring about the end of the Cold War. But her 11-year premiership was also marked by social unrest, industrial strife and high unemployment. Her critics claim British society

is still feeling the effect of her divisive economic policies and the culture of greed and selfishness they allegedly promoted.

#### **7-5- Political system in Benin**

The country of Benin situated in West Africa has experienced its independence on 1 August 1960 under the name of the Republic of Dahomey with its first president Hubert MAGA. Benin has a very rich and political history marked by numerous coups that by bringing to power the commander KEREKOU in October 26, 1972 who later established the single party, *Partie pour la Revolution Populaire du Benin (PRPB)*.

On 20 December 1990, the adoption by referendum of the draft Constitution established a presidential system, and a multiparty system.

Since 2007 we have 106 political parties in Benin. It is important to note that this count is rising; the main reason for this growth is the elections. In Benin, in the approach of each election, the Interior Ministry still registers new political parties.

The last presidential election in March 2006 resulted in the second round with the victory of Dr. Thomas Boni Yayi with 74.52% of the vote against Mr. Adrien HOUNGBEDJI; the last legislative election was held March 31, 2007 the coalition of movements that support the action of the government grouped *Force Caurie pour un Benin Emergent (FCBE)* won 35 seats out of the 83 available; the first municipal elections in Benin was held in 2004 with preservation of fiefs by party leader.

Benin's National Assembly consists of 83 seats consist of eight parliamentary groups. Within the 6th legislature of the Democratic Renewal era, no party has a majority; there is a coalition of parties that support the work of the head of state. Just as today there is no opposition parties. Some rare times *Partie pour le Renouveau Démocratique (PRD)* leaves his silence to denounce the excesses of government; nevertheless this party has never said to be in the opposition.

## **CONCLUSION**

The United Kingdom has three main parties: the Conservative party, Labour party and Liberal Democrat party. These three parties work in the House of Commons and House of Lords. The main three parties has a range of other political groups also elected by the public. This includes nationalist organisations like Plaid Cymru (Wales) and the Scottish National Party, Northern Ireland's various political parties and minority parties like the Green Party or Respect. Outside of the main parties there are a small number of Members that are not affiliated with a main political party and those belonging to minority groups; There are a limited number of Church of England archbishops and bishops and the Crossbench Peers group. The Crossbench Peers group is currently the second largest group in the Lords (after Labour); and is formed by independent Members who don't take a party whip which means that they are not told how to vote by a political party.

Various electoral systems are now used in the United Kingdom. Historically, First Past the Post had been used in most types of elections, but pressure for change has gradually seen the introduction of different systems, especially towards the end of the 20th century and the beginning of the 21st. This history of using First Past the Post means that the development of political parties in the United Kingdom was and continues to be affected by Duverger's Law, which causes the agglomeration of related political ideologies into a few large parties with many small parties rarely winning representation. Electoral systems now used across the United Kingdom are the First Past the Post system used for UK general elections, and also for some local government elections in England and Wales; the Bloc Vote system is also used for some local government elections in England and Wales; the Additional Member System is used for elections to the Scottish Parliament, Welsh Assembly and London Assembly; the Single Transferable Vote system is used in Northern Ireland to elect the Assembly, local councils, and Members of the European Parliament, and in Scotland to elect local councils. The Party List System is used for European Parliament

elections in England, Scotland and Wales and the Supplementary Vote is used to elect directly elected mayors in England, such as the Mayor of London. Finally the two party system in the UK is not a myth but a reality.

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