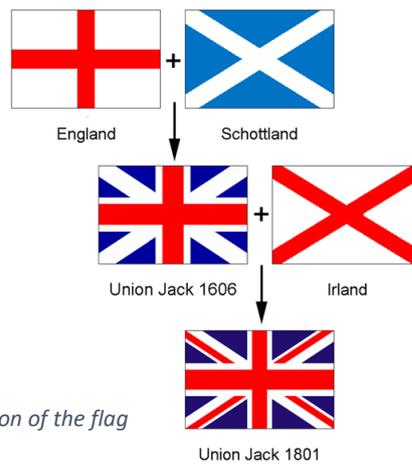


# The **political** system in the **United Kingdom**

**UK:** England, Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland (each country still has its own political system)



*Illustration 1 - composition of the flag*

## **Structure:**

### **Constitution:**

Unlike almost all states, the United Kingdom does not have a codified constitution. Rather, it is based on the basic principles of the rule of law and parliamentary sovereignty - plus common law.



*Illustration 2 - Buckingham Palace with guards*



→ **political system:** The United Kingdom is a unitary state under a **parliamentary democracy** and **constitutional monarchy**

(**Queen Elizabeth II** -> is limited in her power by the basic legal order or by the constitution, has a purely formal, traditional and **representative role**)

### **Duties of the monarch:**

- can veto legislation to be passed
- appoints the Prime Minister and dismisses ministers
- opens the new session in Parliament every year
- supreme command of the armed forces
- must sign all laws passed by Parliament
- can dissolve Parliament on the proposal of the Prime Minister



*Illustration 3 - Queen Elizabeth II.*

- Prime Minister has the most important political role: has largely unlimited decision-making powers
- The prime minister forms the **cabinet** together with other ministers
- The cabinet has the task of deciding on complex issues
- Each minister is responsible for the fulfillment of the duties of his particular ministry
- The cabinet can also dissolve Parliament on the instructions of the Queen

## Parliament House:

- **House of Commons & House of Lords**
- Parliament is above the monarch in all political matters

## House of Commons:

- The House of Commons is made up of members of the Government and their opposition (These members of the government are those who can be elected by the eligible voters)
- is primarily responsible for legislation and government control
- the government control is the majority of the agenda.
- has the majority in all parliamentary committees
- It's members have the right to bring in a bill in the process of legislation



## House of Lords:

- Members of the House of Lords are appointed by the Queen on the proposal of the parties
- consists mainly of nobles, high-ranking people (such as judges) and bishops
- can also only insert a suspensive (max. 12 months) veto
- an advisory function -> often suggests improvements to details



## Supreme Court:

- based in London
- ensures, that everything politically decided by the House of Parliament confirms the law
- responsible for the judiciary
- independent of legislation and government

- **Executive: Prime Minister & Cabinet**
- **Legislative: Houses of Parliament**
- **Judiciary: Supreme Court**

## Elections:

- Every five years
- Every Briton who lives in Great Britain and is over 18 is eligible to vote
- Members of the House of Commons are elected
- In a total of 650 constituencies (=electoral districts,) one seat is allocated according to the **majority system**, which means that the candidate with the most votes gets the seat in the House of Commons
- If a party wins an absolute majority of the seats, that party will form the new government -> Their party leader becomes Prime Minister

## Parties in the UK:

- **The Conservative Party** (Conservative and Unionist Party):  
Founded in 1834, still holds over half the seats in the House of Commons and the majority of seats in the House of Lords
- **The Labour Party:**  
The Labor and Co-operative Party, which emerged in 1900 but allied with its current sister party the Co-operative Party in 1970, holds just under a third of the seats in the House of Commons and the second largest share of seats in the House of Lords, the second largest party in Britain
- **The Liberal Democratic Party:**  
The fourth largest party in Britain is the Liberal Democratic Party (The Lib Dems). It was founded in 1988 as a merger of two parties (Liberal Party & Social Democratic Party). Their values are in stark contrast to those of the ruling Conservative Party. They are also in favor of changing the British electoral system.
- **Scottish National Party:**  
The SNP was founded in 1934 as a merger of two parties (National Party of Scotland & Scottish Party) and is the largest party represented in Scotland. The SNP is the third largest party in the UK as a whole. The party strives for Scottish independence from Great Britain and represents the concept of inclusive nationalism.

## Summary:

- Britain is a constitutional monarchy, however the monarch (the Queen) exercises no actual political power today
- The Prime Minister of Great Britain holds the most powerful position politically
- Parliament consists of the House of Commons and the House of Lords
- The cabinet consists of ministers and the prime minister
- Anyone over the age of 18 who resides in the UK can elect one MP to the House of Commons every five years. There are 650 constituencies, elected by the first-past-the-post system
- The British constitution has not been compiled into a single document, is based on the basic principles of the rule of law and parliamentary sovereignty - plus common law



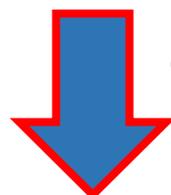
## The political system: USA & UK



	The USA	The UK
<b>The political system</b>	The presidential republic	Constitutional monarchy
<b>The head of state</b>	The president	The Queen
<b>Legislative Branch of power</b>	Congress The House of representatives      The Senate	Parliament The House of Commons      The House of Lords
<b>Executive Branch of power</b>	The Administration (the president, the vice president, the cabinet, the secretaries)	The Government (the Prime Minister, the cabinet)
<b>Judicial Branch of power</b>	The Supreme Court.	House of Lords
<b>The symbols</b>	The Statue of Liberty	Big Ben

### Questions:

1. How does the election work?
2. Who is in supreme command of the British armed forces?
3. Who sits in the House of Commons and who in the House of Lords?
4. How does the political system in the UK work?



(answers below)

### Answers:

1. Anyone residing in the UK and over the age of 18 can elect one MP (Member of Parliament) to the House of commons every five years. There are a total of 650 constituencies and elections are based on the first-past-the-post system. If a party achieves an absolute majority of seats, it forms the new government & the party leader becomes prime minister.
2. The monarch, in this case Queen Elisabeth II
3. Governmant /nobles
4. The people elect MPs to the House of Commons. The Parliament (legislature) consists of that and the House of Lords. If a party wins an absolute majority of the seats, it forms the new government. Your party leader becomes Prime Minister. Politically speaking, the monarch is only responsible for formalities and exercises no power, this falls to the cabinet (Prime Minister & Minister) (executive). The Supreme Court is the judiciary.

### Vocabulary:

<b>english</b>	<b>german</b>
<b>political party</b>	Partei
<b>election</b>	Wahl
<b>to vote</b>	wählen
<b>parliament</b>	Parlament
<b>constitution</b>	Verfassung
<b>constituency</b>	Wahlkreis
<b>executive</b>	Exekutive
<b>judiciary</b>	Judikative
<b>legislature</b>	Legislative
<b>healthcare</b>	Gesundheitswesen
<b>public spending / government spending</b>	Staatsausgaben
<b>social benefits / welfare benefits</b>	Sozialleistungen
<b>social classes</b>	soziale Klasse ODER Gesellschaftsschicht
<b>primeminister</b>	Premierminister
<b>policy</b>	Politik/ Richtlinie