Module : Culture(s)/ Civilization(s)

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Lecture Five: The Government ( Britain)

The United Kingdom is a [**Constitutional Monarchy**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Constitutional_Monarchy) in which the reigning monarch (that is, the king or queen who is the head of state at any given time) does not make any open political decisions. All political decisions are taken by the **government and Parliament**. This constitutional state of affairs is the result of a long history of constraining and reducing the political power of the monarch, beginning with [Magna Carta](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Magna_Carta) in 1215.

The **Government of the United Kingdom**, domestically referred to as **Her Majesty's Government**,[[note 1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_the_United_Kingdom#cite_note-a-1) is the [central government](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Central_government) of the [United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_Kingdom_of_Great_Britain_and_Northern_Ireland).[[1]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_the_United_Kingdom#cite_note-2)[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Government_of_the_United_Kingdom#cite_note-direct1-3) The government **is led by the**[**prime minister**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Prime_Minister_of_the_United_Kingdom) (currently [Boris Johnson](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boris_Johnson), since 24 July 2019) who selects all the other [ministers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/British_Government_frontbench). The country has had a [**Conservative**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Conservative_Party_%28UK%29)**-led government since**[**2010**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/2010_United_Kingdom_general_election), with successive prime ministers being the then [leader of the Conservative Party](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leader_of_the_Conservative_Party_%28UK%29). The prime minister and their most senior ministers belong to the supreme decision-making committee, known as the [**Cabinet**](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cabinet_of_the_United_Kingdom)**.**

The government is [dependent on Parliament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Fusion_of_powers) to make [primary legislation](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_legislation).  [General elections](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Elections_in_the_United_Kingdom#General_elections) are held every five years to elect a new **House of Commons**, unless there is a successful [vote of no confidence](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vote_of_no_confidence) in the government or a [two-thirds vote](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Supermajority#United_Kingdom) for a [snap election](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Snap_election) in the House of Commons, in which case an election may be held sooner. After an election, the [monarch](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monarchy_of_the_United_Kingdom) (currently [Queen Elizabeth II](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queen_Elizabeth_II)) selects as **prime minister the leader of the party most likely to command the confidence of** the House of Commons, usually by possessing a majority of **MPs**. Thus the parliament is composed of two house: **The House of Commons and the House of Lords.**

* **What are the branches of government in the UK and what are their key functions?**

In the majority of modern democracies power is divided among three branches of government: **executive, legislative and judicial.** This is done to provide for the existence of checks and balances so that none of government parts is unlimited and becomes totalitarian and harms democracy.

**British Parliament is the legislative branch of government.** It is made up of two parts - elected House of Commons and partly elected House of Lords - which limit the power of each other and are there to provide for the best expertise of any legislation going through. **Any Bill passed by the Parliament gains legitimate power only when the Queen approves it**, however, nowadays it's more of a formal ceremony rather than a proper check. Judiciary is often considered the most efficient check on the Parliament, because any MP can be called to the court to respond for his actions.

**The executive branch** is made up of the government machine itself, starting with the **prime minister and his office** and **down to the local branches of government such as city majors**. They are the ones responsible for **implementing the Bills produced by the Parliament**. Their actions are mainly limited by the judiciary and publicity.

**Judiciary is the last branch of power in the UK and it is made up of the court system with the Supreme Court on top**. Its members have a great power because they are the ones who decide what the law actually implies in any given case.