



Unit 3

British Government



Arrangement

1. Political System in Western Countries
2. Political System in the United Kingdom
3. British Central Government
 - a. the legislature
 - b. the executive
 - c. the judiciary

Ascription of the Supreme Power

Constitutional monarchy: 君主立宪制

The monarch has the supreme power.

Eg. the U.K.; Canada; Australia; New Zealand; Japan...

Republicanism: 民主共和制

The supreme power is invested in the people.

Eg. the U.S.; Germany; Italy; Greece; Iceland...

The Relation between the Legislature and the Executive

Parliamentary System: 议会制

The executive branch is dependent on the support of the legislative branch.

Presidential System: 总统制

The executive branch is equal to the legislative.

The Relation between the Nation and Its Components

Unitary State: 单一制国家

The local government is subordinate to the central government.

Eg. the U.K.; France; Italy; Japan; Norway...

Federal State: 联邦制国家

Both the powers of the federal government and that of the state government are stipulated by the constitution.

Eg. the U.S.; Germany; Canada; Australia...

Basic Political System in the UK

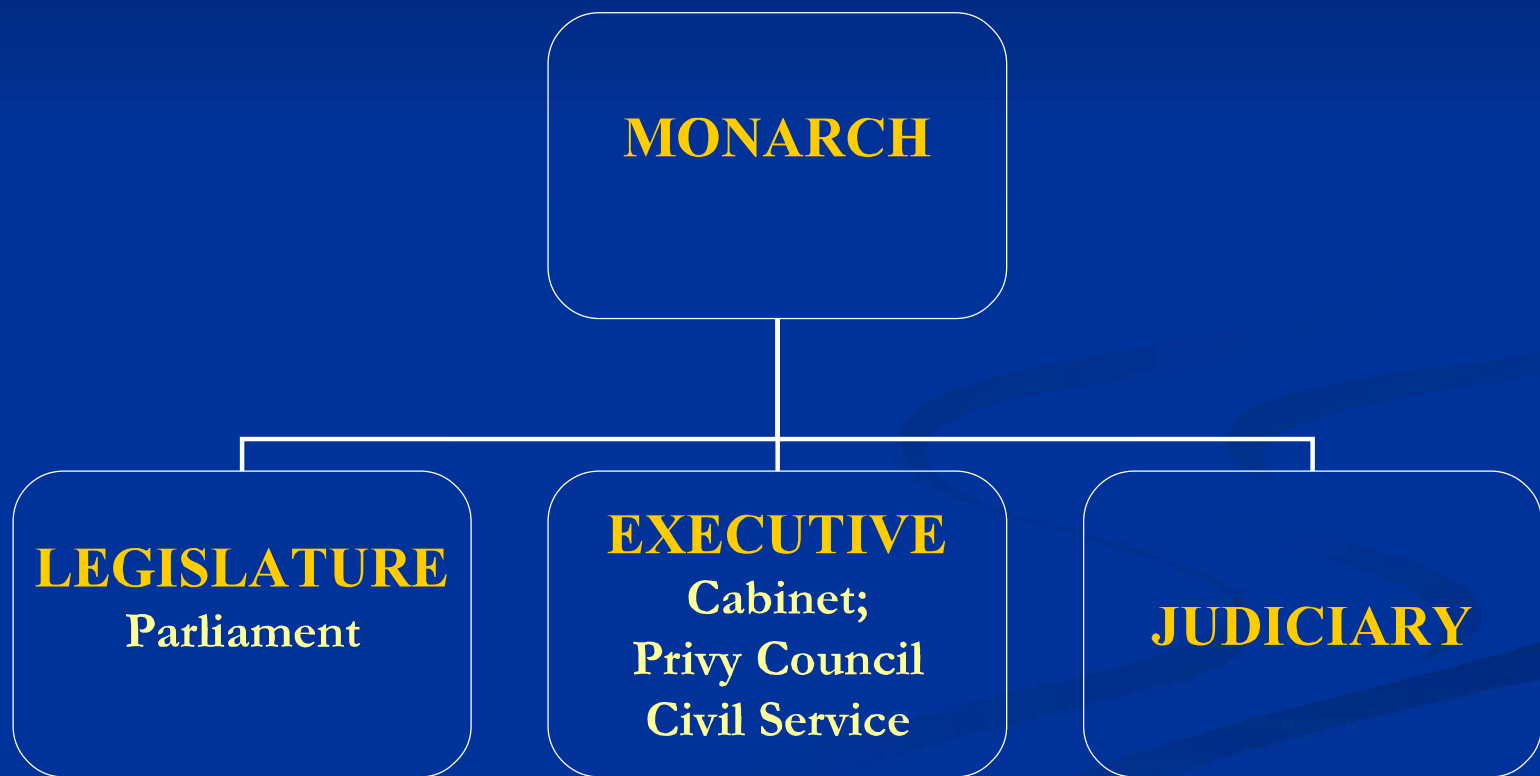
The United Kingdom is a

constitutional monarchy.

parliamentary democracy.

unitary state.

The Structure of Central Government



I. the Monarch

1. the title

The Grace of God of the United
Kingdom of Great Britain and
Northern Ireland and of her Other
Realms and Territories Queen,
Head of the Commonwealth.
Defender of the Faith

2. the role

In law:

- the monarch is head of the executive;
- an integral part of the legislature; head of the judiciary;
- commander-in-chief of all the armed forces;
- temporal head of the church of England.

2. the role

In practice:

- the real power of monarchy has gradually been reduced and today the Queen acts solely on the advice of her ministers.
- A less well known role of the Queen is that of a confidante to the Prime Minister.

The queen reigns, but does not rule.

Theoretically, the queen is the source of all government powers.



In reality, the queen's role is only **ceremonial, unpolitical and symbolic.**

3. Influence of Royal Family



- Her Majesty's government
 - Royal Navy/Air Force/Army
 - Royal Greenwich Observatory
- The queen's official birthday, **the 2nd Saturday in June**, is celebrated as the National Day of the U.K..

Trooping the Color 皇家军队阅兵



- Trooping the Color is a military ceremony performed by regiments of the British Army to celebrate the Queen's official birthday.

Birthday Honor List

➤ It is a means of rewarding individuals' bravery, achievement, or service to the United Kingdom.



On March 2, 2005
Queen Elizabeth II
presented Microsoft
chairman **Bill Gates**
with an honorary noble
title at Buckingham
Palace, London.



Buckingham Palace 白金汉宫



The Monarch's London residence since 1837

II. the Parliament

Westminster Palace 威斯敏斯特宫

Houses of Parliament 国会大厦



Westminster Palace is home to the British Parliament.

Components of Parliament

The British Parliament consists of two houses:

the House of Lords 上议院

(the Upper House)

the House of Commons 下议院

(the Lower House)

House of Lords

➤ All the members in the Upper House are **appointed**.

1. **Lords Spiritual (神职议员)** :

2 archbishops , 24 senior bishops

2. **Lords Temporal (世俗议员)** :

hereditary peers(inherit the seats from their forefather),

life peers (appointed by the sovereign, at the suggestion of the Prime Minister)

Law Lords (chosen in its judicial duties)

➤ The chairman in the Upper House is called **Lord Chancellor (大法官)** .

Power of the Upper House

- The power of Upper House is limited. It only **complements** the work of the Lower House.
- The House of Lords also serves as the **highest court** of the United Kingdom.



The House of Lords

Members in the Upper House

- According to the law, members in the Upper House have no right to vote in elections and they can not be elected to the Lower House.
- Members in the Upper House are not paid and many do not attend Parliament at all.
- Peers in Parliament speak and vote as individuals, not as representatives of the greater interests of the country.

House of Commons

- 646 members **elected** by the people from 646 constituencies. They are called **MPs**.
- The chairman: **the Speaker.**
- MP: a salary of £ 31000 a year

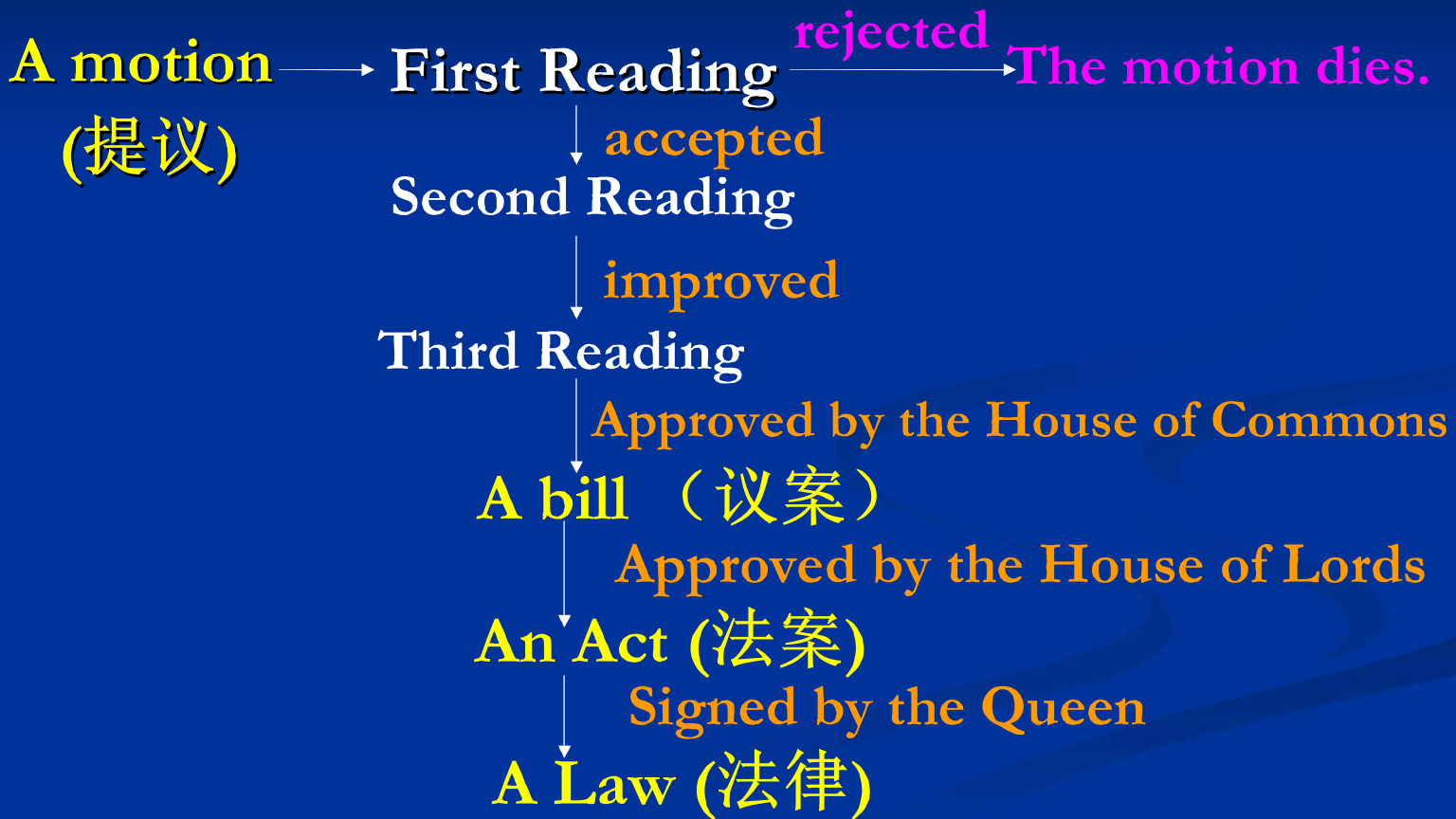


Functions of the Lower House

1. To make laws for the United Kingdom
2. To scrutinize government policy;
3. To influence future government policy



Process of Law-Making



III. The Executive Branch: Cabinet

- The Prime Minister is **the leader of the political party** which wins the most seats in a general election. He is appointed by Queen and Queen always sits in the House of Commons.
- the Prime Minister chooses around **20 MPS** as government ministers in the governing party to form His or her Cabinet.

No. 10 Downing Street



- No. 10 Downing Street is the official residence of the Prime Minister.
- Members of the Cabinet meet once a week there to discuss important issues.

the Prime Minister



Shadow Cabinet 影子内阁

- The party which wins the second largest number of seats becomes the official **Opposition**, with its own leader "**Shadow Cabinet**".
 1. To contribute to the formulation of policy and legislation
 2. To oppose government proposals it considers objectionable
 3. To seek amendments to government bills
 4. To put forward its own policies



➤ The seats in the Lower House are divided into two areas, one for the **Cabinet** and another for the **Shadow Cabinet**.

The cabinet works with two principles.

1. **Collective responsibility.**

The Cabinet members must act unanimously on all matters.

2. **Individual ministerial responsibility**

The ministers are responsible for the work of the departments that they are in charge of.

IV. The Judiciary Branch

There are **two features** for all systems of law in the United Kingdom:

1. There is no single written constitution;
2. There is a distinction between criminal law and civil law.

British Constitution

1. European Community law (欧洲大陆法)
2. Statutes Law (成文法)
3. Common Law (判例法)
4. Conventions (习惯法)

Questions for after-class discussions.

- (1) What are the major features of British Parliament? Illustrate some.
- (2) The Judiciary plays a vital part in British Politics. What do you know about judicial independence; judicial neutrality and judicial supremacy in Britain?
- (3) British method of election called the simple majority system or “first past the post”. Explain it.
- (4) How does the author think the public attitude to politics in Britain? What is your opinion on it?
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➤ Suggested Readings:

- 1. Anthony Wright. 2003. *British Politics: A Very Short Introduction*. London: Oxford University Press.
- 2. Ranald Michie & Philip Williamson. 2002. *The British Government and the City of London..* London: Cambridge University.
- 3 Peter Childs & Mike Storry, eds. 1999. *Encyclopedia of Contemporary British Culture*. London: Routledge.
- 4. Tom O' Meara. 2007. *A Miscellany of Britain*. London: Arcturus Publishing Limited.

➤ Useful Websites:

- 1. <http://www.parliament.uk>
- Here, you can learn the general information of the U.K. parliament.
- 2. <http://www.britannia.com/>
- Here, you can see important events of the U.K.
- 3.. <http://www.statistics.gov>
- Here, you can get the newest statistics of various aspects of the U.K.
- 4. <http://www.number10.gov.uk//>
- Here, you can get information of British government.