

# Glossary

**A treatise on the law, privileges, proceedings and usage of Parliament (1844) by Erskine May (Parliamentary Practice)** – A work of authority of the British Constitution written by Erskine May, a former Clerk of the House of Commons which has been updated and republished 23 times.

**Absolute Monarchy** - A monarchy that retains absolute power, similar to the powers that European Monarchs possessed before the renaissance.

**Acts of Union (1707)** - The Acts of Union merged the Kingdoms of England and Scotland to form the United Kingdom.

**Additional Member System** – A voting system that uses a mixture of First Past the Post and the Party List System.

**Adversarial Politics** – A political system in which is designed so there is deliberately a clear contrast between political parties. This is usually the case particularly in a system that has two dominant parties. The U.K is strongly adversarial.

**Alternative Vote** - A proportional voting system in which a majority of support is needed by a candidate to be elected. Voters also vote by preference, rather than simply choosing one candidate. Introduction of this system for voting in General Elections was rejected in a referendum in 2011.

**Amending Chamber** – A chamber of Parliament that is known to amend legislation for another. The House of Lords is known as an amending chamber.

**Amendments** - An Amendment is change to an individual bill or a Constitution. Amendments are easy to make in the UK constitution because of its flexible nature.

**An Introduction to the Study of the Law of the Constitution by AV Dicey (1885)** – A work of authority on the UK Constitution written by constitutional scholar AV Dicey

**Appellate Committee of the House of Lords** – The ‘Law Lords’ within the House of Lords who were the highest appeal court in the UK, until they were abolished by the Constitutional Reform Act, and replaced by the UK Supreme Court.

**Article 50** – The Article of the Lisbon Treaty that allows a member state to indicate that they will be leaving the European Union. Article 50 was triggered in Britain in March 2017.

**Asymmetrical Devolution** – A situation where the powers of devolved areas vary depending on their agreements with the central government.

**AV Referendum (2011)** - A referendum on whether Britain should adopt the more proportional Alternative Vote system for General Elections. The public chose by 68-32% to stick with First Past the Post.

**Backbenchers** - An MP that is not a member of the government or official opposition. They are called Backbenchers because they usually sit on the back benches in the House of Commons.

**Better Together** – The campaign group during the Scottish Independence Referendum that advocated Scotland remaining as part of the UK.

**Bicameral** - A political system in which there are two chambers of parliament. Britain is a bicameral system.

**Bill** - The term given for a proposed law that has not yet passed through the Houses of Parliament and received Royal Assent. When this has happened, it becomes a law, or an Act of Parliament.

**Bill of Rights** - The part of a codified constitution that defines the rights and freedoms of individuals. A bill of right entrenches citizens’ rights into a Constitution.

**Bill of Rights (1689)** – A building block of the UK constitution which established the rights of Parliament after the Glorious Revolution.

**Bipartisan** – A term for when different political parties work together on a given issue.

**Boundary Commission** – The independent commission that advises on the changes to electoral boundaries in the UK.

**Brexit** - The nickname given for the British exit from the European Union after the EU Referendum of the 23<sup>rd</sup> June 2016.

**Brexiters** – This is nickname given to those who want to leave the European Union.

**British Bill of Rights** - A proposed replacement of the Human Rights Act (1998) by the Conservative Party. It was part of the 2015 Conservative Manifesto, but the idea has been postponed in the wake of Brexit.

**Budget** - The annual statement of expenditure made by the Chancellor of the Exchequer.

**Bureaucracy** - A term for the machinery of government administration. In the UK, government bureaucracy is dominated by a professional Civil Service.

**By-election** - A special election for a UK constituency that is held when an MP has died or resigned.

**Cabinet** - The organ made up of the 23 Highest Ranking Ministers, including the Prime Minister. Traditionally key decisions made about the governance of the country are made collectively within the cabinet.

**Cabinet Committees** - The smaller committees formed out of the larger cabinet. They usually focus on particular areas, such as security or health.

**Cabinet Government** - A Cabinet Style of government is one in which the Government works more collectively and the Prime Minister acts mostly as a facilitator for government.

**Cabinet Members** - One of the 23 politicians, including the Prime Minister, who head departments and attend Cabinet Meetings.

**Cabinet Office** - A Cabinet Style of government is one in which the Government works more collectively and the Prime Minister acts mostly as a facilitator for government.

**Cabinet Reshuffle** - The process by which the Prime Minister changes the individuals in charge of the major government departments. This is often used as a way to freshen up the government and happens about once per year.

**Cabinet Secretary** - The Cabinet Secretary is the Head of the Civil Service. They are responsible for minuting Cabinet Meetings and heading the team of Permanent Secretary's across the different government departments.

**Cameron's Cronies (2016)** - A scandal emerging over the decision of David Cameron to give honours to a number of political allies in his Resignation Honours List.

**Carswell Convention** - A new convention in the UK constitution whereby an MP who is planning to change parties must resign and force a by-election before doing so. It is named after Douglas Carswell, who left the Conservatives to join UKIP and in doing so resigned, thus instigating a by-election.

**Cash for Honours (2007)** - A political scandal around the suggestion that Members of the House of Lords were being appointed due to the donations that they have made to the Labour Party.

**Central government** - The national government of a unitary state. The Central Government of the UK is often referred to colloquially as 'Westminster'.

**Charter 88 (Unlock Democracy)** - A British pressure group that advocated radical reform including a fully codified Constitution. It is now called 'Unlock Democracy'.

**Checks and Balances** - A system of government that allows the different branches of government to stop the others from dominating or gaining too much power. The U.S Constitution has a number of checks and balances, whereas these are less clear in Britain which is often said to have an 'Elective Dictatorship'.

**Chief Whip** - The Chief Whip, who organises the whipping process within their party. The current Government Chief Whip is Julian Smith.

**Civil Liberties** - The basic rights granted to citizens of a country. In a liberal democracy these rights that are considered undeniable, such as freedom of speech.

**Civil Service** - The professional bureaucrats who manage the day to day running of the government. The Civil Service is permanent and does not change if the government changes.

**Clerk of the House of Commons** - A senior position in the House of Commons staff who is responsible for offering constitutional advice to MPs and the Speaker of the House of Commons. The position is currently held by David Natzler.

**Coalition Agreement** - The formal agreement between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats that laid out their plans for government during the 2010-2015 Parliament.

**COBRA** - The code name for the 'Cabinet Office Briefing Room A'. This is the name now given for meetings about issues of National Security, based on where they were traditionally held.

**Codified Constitution** - A constitution which is mostly written down in one single document. This is the most common type of constitution and exists in 158 countries around the world.

**Collective Responsibility** - This is the doctrine that states that decisions taken by the British government are taken collectively, so should be publicly supported by all members of the government.

**Combined Authority** – A term given when local councils are combined to give power to a larger body.

**Committee for Standards in Public Life** – A committee set up to investigate any potential breaches of parliamentary conduct.

**Committee of the Whole House** – When the Committee Stage of legislation is carried out by the whole house. This sometimes happens in the House of Commons, but always happens in the House of Lords.

**Committee Stage** - The third stage of the legislative process. The bill goes to a Public Bill committee which scrutinises the bill and adds amendments before sending it back to the House.

**Common Law** - This law is made by taking into account the previous conclusions of judges. This creates a judicial precedent for judges to use in the future. This is often referred to as judge made law. Importantly, it ‘fills the gaps’ left by Statute Law.

**Commons Liaison Committee** – A Select Committee made up of the chairs of all the other Committees. The Prime Minister appears in front of the Liaison Committee at least once per year.

**Commonwealth** - The organisation made up of the former members of the British Empire. The Queen remains Head of the Commonwealth.

**Confidence and Supply Agreement** – An agreement whereby a party agrees to support another by promising to vote with it on all votes to do with confidence and with the supply of money. Currently, the Conservatives have a Confidence and Supply Agreement with the DUP.

**Constituency** - The electoral areas that the UK is split up into. Constituencies are each represented by one MP. For example, Leo Docherty is the MP for Aldershot.

**Constituency Surgeries** - The open meetings that MPs hold in their constituencies to hear and deal with the grievances of their constituents.

**Constitution** - A Constitution is a set of rules and agreements that defines the way in which a state or a society is run.

**Constitutional Amendments** - A change made to a constitution. In most constitutions, particularly rigid ones, these require a ‘Supermajority’ to pass. The U.S Constitution has only had 27 Amendments since 1787. In Britain, however, because of the flexible constitution amendments can be passed relatively easily.

**Constitutional Law** - A law which has a fundamental impact on the way the constitution operates. An example of a Constitutional Law in the UK is the House of Lords Act (1999).

**Constitutional Monarchy** - A system of government in which a monarch is retained, but their role is largely symbolic with an elected government acting on their behalf. Britain has a constitutional monarchy.

**Constitutional Reform Act (2005)** - An act passed by the Labour Government that reformed the judicial system of the UK, including reducing the power of the Lord Chancellor and creating a Supreme Court. It also set up a Judicial Appointment Committee.

**Constitutional sovereignty** - A political system where a Codified Constitution is where all power flows from. This is the case in the U.S.A.

**Conventions** - Conventions are elements of the UK Constitution that are expected to take place, but are not codified or specified. They form an important part of UK constitutional practice. For example, it is expected that the Queen invite the leader of a majority party in the House of Commons to become Prime Minister.

**Core Executive** - The Core Executive is the term given for the central decision making body of the British political system, including the Prime Minister, Cabinet and Senior Civil Service.

**Crossbenchers** - Members of the House of Lords who do not sit for any political party and therefore sit between the two benches, therefore being known as Crossbenchers.

**Crossing The Floor** – The name for when an MP quits their party and joins a new one. A convention called the Carswell Convention now dictates that they resign and instigate a by-election if they want to do this.

**Crown-in-Parliament** – The official term for the position of the Monarch within the UK Parliament.

**Currency Union** – When two countries share a currency and other economic mechanisms.

**Declarations of Incompatibility** – The declarations that Judges can make if they believe a law does not fit with the Human Rights Act. However, it is up to Parliament to decide if they want to amend it.

**Descriptive Representation** – The term given for how much a chamber of parliament represents the different groups that make up society.

**Devolution** - The process whereby power is delegated to lower levels by a central body. However, this process can technically be reversed. Devolution to Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland and London was introduced by Tony Blair's Labour Government.

**Devolved Assemblies** - The Parliament for a region or province, the power from which is devolved from a central government. The Scottish Parliament at Holyrood is an example of a Devolved Assembly.

**Devolved powers** - Powers that are granted to the devolved assemblies. For example, the Welsh Government has responsibility for the Welsh NHS.

**Devo-Max** - A term given for the greater range of powers offered to Scotland during the 2014 Referendum. This includes the power to raise their own taxes

**Direct Rule** – When an area in a country is ruled directly from the central government.

**Directly Elected** – When an Executive position is elected directly by the people. The Mayor of London, for example, is directly elected. However, the Prime Minister is indirectly elected.

**Dissolution of Parliament** – The closing of a Parliament before a General Election. Previously, the timing of the dissolution of Parliament was down to the Prime Minister. However, since the Fixed-Term Parliament's Act (2011), it happens on a pre-set date.

**Divisions** – The term for votes in the House of Commons and House of Lords. They are called divisions because MPs vote by working into a certain lobby.

**Downing Street Machine** - A term given for the political operation that takes place within Downing Street, in support of the Prime Minister. This machine has developed significantly in recent decades.

**Early Day Motion** – Early Day Motions are motions that call for the Commons to debate an issue. MPs can attach their names to Early Day Motions, to increase pressure of the government to debate the issue.

**e-democracy** – The notion of democracy being enhanced through the use of technology. For example, petitions on the Government website may be debated by MPs if they reach 100,000 signatures.

**Elective Dictatorship** – A term coined by Lord Hailsham to describe how a majority government have near dictatorial powers when they have been elected.

**English Parliament** – The notion of an English Parliament, similar to the devolved Parliament in Scotland.

**English Votes for English Laws** - The notion that special constitutional arrangements should be made to ensure that only English MPs can vote on English-Only issues. This has been somewhat achieved with the introduction of the Grand Committee to the legislative process.

**Entrenched constitution** - An entrenched constitution is one which is very difficult to change. The US Constitution, which has only been amended 27 times, is an example on an entrenched constitution.

**Entrenched provisions** - Parts of a constitution that are deliberately difficult to change. These are normally existent in Codified Constitutions.

**Equality of legislation** – The notion that all laws are equal. This notion is linked to Parliamentary Sovereignty. In an uncodified constitution there is no fundamental law, therefore all laws are equal.

**European Constitution** – A proposed amendment to the European Union which did not pass. In its place, the Lisbon Treaty was agreed.

**European Convention of Human Rights** - An international treaty to protect and enforce fundamental Human Rights in Europe. It was signed in 1950.

**European Union** - The collection of European States that form a collective union in which general political and social standards are accepted, like freedom of movement. It was originally called the European Economic Community, which Britain joined in 1973.

**European Union (Notification of Withdrawal) Act 2017** – The Act of the British Parliament that allowed the Prime Minister to send Britain's Article 50 notice to the European that Britain is leaving the European Union.

**European Union (Withdrawal) Act (2017)** – The Act going through Parliament which will be the mechanism in UK Law by which Britain exits the European Union.

**European Union Referendum (2016)** - A referendum on whether Britain should leave the European Union. The result was that 51.8% of people voted in favour of Brexit.

**Evolutionary Constitutions** - A constitution that has been built up over time, with new layers being built upon an existing structure. Evolutionary constitutions are normally flexible. Britain has an evolutionary constitution.

**Executive** - The branch of government that holds responsibility for the running of a country on a day to day basis. In Britain, Theresa May is head of the Executive Branch.

**Executive Agency** - An agency that is headed by a Civil Servant but is linked to a government department. For example, the DVLA (Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency) is linked to the Department of Transport.

**Executive Branch** - The branch of Government responsible for the day to day running of the nation. The Prime Minister is the Head of the Executive Branch in the UK.

**Factortame** - A legal case between 1989 and 2000 which seemingly confirmed the predominance of European Union law over UK law.

**Federal System** - A system of government in which power is divided between a central (federal) government and a number of state or provincial governments. The U.S.A is the most prominent example of a Federal System.

**Federalism** – The principle of a state where power is split between a central government and different regions.

**Filibusters** – The process whereby an MP, or a group of MPs, keep talking about a bill in order to stop it going to a vote.

**Filling in the Gaps** – A term given for the role of judges in creating Common Law which accounts for the fact that Parliament cannot legislate for every eventuality or circumstance in any given area.

**Financial Privilege** – The right of one house of Parliament to deal with money bills. In Britain, financial privilege belongs to the House of Commons.

**First Lord of the Treasury** - The traditional title of the Prime Minister. It is still the title that is on the front of the door to Number 10 Downing Street.

**First Past the Post** - The voting system used in UK General Election. It is also called the simple plurality system. This system means that the parliamentary candidate who wins the most votes in a constituency will win the seat.

**First Reading** - The first stage of the legislative process. Normally this is in the House of Commons. The bill is introduced and a date is set for the second reading. No debate takes place and no vote takes place.

**First Secretary of State** – The office given to the person who is essentially Number Two to the Prime Minister in Government. The post is currently vacant.

**Fixed-Term Parliaments Act (2011)** - This Act of Parliament guaranteed that an election would be held every five years, unless certain circumstances prevented this. This removed the ability of the Prime Minister to choose the timing of the next election.

**Flexible constitution** - A Flexible Constitution is one that can be changed easily, normally via a simple law passed in Parliament. The UK has a flexible constitution.

**Free Votes** – A vote in the House of Commons whereby party whips do not instruct their MPs how to vote. This is very rare. There have only been four free votes since 2010.

**Freedom of Information Act (2000)** - A law passed by the government of Tony Blair which allows citizens the right to make reasonable requests of public bodies for information that is of the public interest.

**Fundamental Law** – A fundamental law is one that is deeply entrenched and usually deals with constitutional issues. In the UK, there is no fundamental law. This is because under the principle of Parliamentary Sovereignty all Statute Laws are considered equal.

**Fusion of powers** - A system where different branches of government can be intermingled. For example, the Prime Minister is Head of the Executive but, as an MP, is also a member of the legislature. This arguably gives them enormous power.

**General Committees** – Committees in Parliament that deal with a particular issue, for example the Grand Legislative Committee for English Only Laws. Public Bill Committees are also general committees.

**General Election** - Elections that take place at least once every five years in which MPs are elected to the House of Commons. Since the Fixed Term Parliament's Act (2011) election dates are set for certain dates, unless certain other criteria are met.

**Glorious Revolution** – An event in British History that saw William III and Mary II invited to become King and Queen of England, with strict conditions placed on them by Parliament.

**Good Friday Agreement (1998)** - The agreement that ended nearly 30 years of armed conflict in Northern Ireland. It said that Unionists and Nationalists would share political power in Northern Ireland.

**Government** - The group of people with the authority to govern a country or state. In Britain, the Government is normally formed from the largest party in Parliament.

**Government Bill** – A bill put forward in Parliament by the Government. Most bills are Government Bills because the Executive dominates Parliament.

**Government of Wales Act (1998)** - The UK Act of Parliament that allowed for a devolved government in Wales.

**Grand Committee** – A new Committee Stage added to the legislative process in 2015 to discuss issues that were exclusive to England.

**Great Offices of State** – The term given for the four highest offices in the UK: Prime Minister, Foreign Secretary, Home Secretary and Chancellor of the Exchequer.

**Greater London Authority** - The devolved government of London. It is headed by Sadiq Khan as Mayor of London.

**Greater London Authority Act (1999)** - The UK Act of Parliament that allowed for a devolved assembly and government in London.

**Greater London Authority Referendum 1998** – A referendum on greater devolved powers to London in which 72% voted in favour of greater devolution to London, including a directly elected Mayor of London.

**Green Paper** - The process whereby the government publishes a proposed idea for a bill and looks for opinions of groups and individuals.

**Habeas Corpus** – A part of the Magna Carta that guaranteed that no person could be arbitrarily arrested.

**Head of Nation** - The name given for the ceremonial and symbolic role performed by the Monarch.

**Head of State** - The highest ranking constitutional position in a State. In Britain the Queen is Head of State, although most of her powers are delegated to Members of the Government.

**Henry VIII Powers** – The name given for the controversial powers by which the Government plans to convert EU Law into UK Law.

**Her Majesty's Loyal Opposition** - The term given for the Opposition in the UK system. The Opposition is given special status within the House of Parliament, for instance the Leader of the Opposition is paid 'short money' to help them in their role. The current Opposition Party is the Labour Party.

**Hereditary Peers** - A member of the House of Lords who is part of the peerage of the United Kingdom and has inherited their title. There are 92 hereditary peers who have remained in the House of Lords since 1999.

**Holyrood** – The informal name given to the Scottish Parliament, based on where it is based.

**Homogenous population** - A population that is broadly similar in ethnic and cultural make-up. Britain has a homogenous population, as opposed to the USA, that has a diverse population.

**House of Commons** - The Lower Chamber of the UK Parliament. It currently has 650 members who face election at least once every five years.

**House of Lords** – The Upper Chamber of the UK Parliament. It currently has 785 members. Most are Life Peers who are appointed to the chamber, however, there are also 92 hereditary peers and 26 bishops.

**House of Lords Act (1999)** - The Act that removed all but 92 of the hereditary peers from the House of Lords. It was part of the range of constitutional reforms brought in by Tony Blair's government.

**House of Lords Appointments Commission** – The body that recommends non-political appointees to the House of Lords and vets those suggested by political parties.

**Hung Parliament** - A parliament that does not produce a clear majority. The 2010 General Election and 2017 General Election created a Hung Parliament in Britain.

**Hung Parliament Convention** – A new convention that has been established since 2010 that says that in the event of a Hung Parliament the incumbent Prime Minister stays in post until a viable Government is confirmed.

**Hunting Act (2004)** - A bill that was passed by the House of Commons but blocked by the House of Lords. Tony Blair then triggered the Parliament Act to push this bill through in the next parliamentary session.

**Hybrid Bills** - A bill that has both a national and local impact. A good example of a Hybrid Bill is the High Speed Rail Bill.

**Hybrid Lords** – A proposed reform of the House of Lords which sees it being partly appointed and partly elected.

**Independents** - MPs that do not belong to political parties. It is extremely hard to be elected as an Independent. Only one Independent, Sylvia Hermon, sat in Parliament between 2010 and 2015.

**Individual Ministerial Responsibility** - The convention that a government minister is responsible for everything that happens within his department, regardless of whether they knew about it or not.

**IndyRef2** - The informal name given for the likely Second Referendum on Scottish Independence.

**Judicial Appointments** – A term for the appointment of judges.

**Judicial Appointments Commission** - The Committee established as part of the Constitutional Reform Act to recommend appointments to the Senior Judiciary. Before this commission, the power was largely in the hands of the Lord Chancellor.

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**Judicial Branch** – The branch of Government responsible for the Courts and Justice System.

**Judicial Independence** – The notion that judges in the United Kingdom should retain neutrality and not involve themselves in political issues.

**Judicial Neutrality** – The concept that judges should be separate from politics. This is traditionally an important concept in England. However, it is argued that judges have become more actively involved in the political system.

**Judicial Review** - The process whereby the Judiciary considers whether or not the government has acted beyond the law. The process of Judicial Review has grown in importance in recent years. This is largely due to the effects of the Human Rights Act.

**Judiciary** – The term given to describe the Courts and Justice System.

**Justice Secretary** - The Member of the Cabinet who oversees the courts and criminal justice system in the UK. By convention the Justice Secretary now also holds the role of Lord Chancellor. The current Justice Secretary is David Gauke.

**Justices of the Supreme Court** - The 12 judges of the UK Supreme Court.

**Kitchen Cabinet** – A term given for the cliché of close advisors and staff with whom the Prime Minister holds informal meetings through which to develop policy and deal with issues.

**Lascelles Principles** – A constitutional convention that existed between 1950 and 2011 that states there were certain circumstances in which the monarch could refuse to grant a request from the Prime Minister for a Dissolution of Parliament.

**Law Lords** – Twelve members of the House of Lords who sat as the Appellate Committee of the House of Lords. In this role they were the highest court of the UK.

**Law on Any Matter** – A key principle of Parliamentary Sovereignty whereby Parliament can legislate on any issue that it wishes.

**Legal sovereignty** - The legal concept of where power lies in the political system. In Britain, Parliament is legally sovereign.

**Legal Supremacy** – The concept of holding the ultimate legal power. In the UK, legal supremacy belongs to Parliament.

**Legislation** - This means Statute Law.

**Legislative Branch** - The branch of government that discusses and makes new laws. In the UK it is made up of the House of Lords and the House of Commons.

**Legislative Laboratories** – A term given for the idea that Parliaments can learn new ideas for governing from each other. This has become the case in the UK since devolution. For example, a smoking ban was introduced in Scotland before it was introduced in England.

**Legislative Supremacy** – The notion that one part of Parliament holds supremacy over another in law-making. In the UK, the House of Commons has had legislative supremacy over the House of Lords since the Parliament Act (1911)

**Life Peerages** – Peerages that are given for life, in order to enable someone to sit in the House of Lords. These have existed since the Life Peerages Act (1958).

**Life Peerages Act 1958** - The Act of Parliament that provided for individuals to be appointed to the House of Lords for the duration of their life. Prior to this, all peerages had been hereditary.

**Lisbon Treaty** – A European Union Treaty signed in 2007 that changed a number of provisions on the European Union. Article 50, that allows for the leaving of the European Union, is part of the Lisbon Treaty.

**Local Authorities** – A term given for local councils in England.

**London Assembly** - The devolved Parliament for Greater London.

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**Lord Chancellor** - Traditionally the head of the Judiciary, the office of Lord Chancellor had its power reduced by the Constitutional Reform Act and is now, by convention, held by the Secretary of State for Justice. The current Lord Chancellor is David Gauke.

**Lord Chief Justice** - The highest ranking member of the Judiciary in the UK. The current Lord Chief Justice is Lord Thomas.

**Lords Reform Act (2014)** – A reform to the House of Lords that included the right of Lords to retire and to allow for Lords to be removed if they are found guilty of a criminal offence.

**Magna Carta (1215)** - This agreement established the principle that the power of the monarch was limited and that citizens had fundamental rights. Three parts of the Magna Carta are still in law today.

**Mandarins** - A term given for Senior Civil Servants.

**Manifesto** – The formal list of promises made by a political party in a General Election campaign.

**Metro-Mayors** – Mayors of metropolitan (city) areas that have had power devolved to them.

**Miller v Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union** – A significant Supreme Court Case that challenged the right of the Government to instigate Article 50 without the explicit approval of Parliament. This case limited the Royal Prerogative powers of the Executive.

**Miller vs Brexit Secretary** – An important court case which reached the Supreme Court in January 2017 and ruled that Parliament would have to authorise Article 50 and the Government could not do it unilaterally.

**Minister of State** - Ministers of State are the middle rank of Government Ministers. There are normally a number of Ministers of State in any government department.

**Minister of the Crown (Minister)** – A member of the Government.

**Minister without Portfolio** – A member of the government who has a ‘roaming brief’ and is not given a particular job.

**Minister’s Questions** – Questions sessions to Government Minister’s that take place in Parliament every day.

**Ministerial Code** – The document that Ministers have to sign which outlines the expectations placed upon them. Whenever a new Prime Minister takes office the Ministerial Code is updated.

**Ministerial Departments** - A government department which is headed by a Minister, for example the Department of Transport.

**Minor Parties** - Parties that do not have a wide base of support. It is extremely hard for Minority Parties to win seats in Parliament in the UK Political System.

**Minority government** – A government made up of a party that does not have a Majority in the House of Commons. Theresa May’s government.

**Monarchical system** - A system of government that has a Monarch as Head of State. Saudi Arabia is an example of a country with a monarchical system.

**Money Bills** - A money bill is any bill that dictates how Departmental money is spent. By convention, the House of Lords does not vote against Money Bills.

**Motion of no confidence** - A vote in Parliament whereby it is decided if the Prime Minister and Government has the confidence of Parliament. If a vote of no-confidence is lost, the Government must resign or call a new election. The last time a successful Motion of No Confidence was held was in 1979, which James Callaghan’s Government lost by 311-310.

**MPs Expenses Scandal** – A scandal in 2009 in which MPs had been found to be claiming expenses that were either illegally or morally dubious.

**New Labour** - The Labour movement began by Tony Blair in the mid-1990s which placed an emphasis on modernisation and winning the centre-ground in UK Politics. The first New Labour government started with Tony Blair’s landslide victory at the 1997 General Election.

**Nolan Principles** - A set of Principles set up to more clearly define the ethical principles to which public servants and MPs should be held.

**Non-Ministerial Departments** - A government department which is headed by a Civil Servant, for example HM Revenue and Customs.

**Non-Working Peers** – Members of the House of Lords who have been given a peerage as an honour but take very little part in the activities of the house. There are a number of peers with extremely poor attendance and voting records.

**Northern Ireland Act (1998)** - The UK Act of Parliament that allowed for a devolved government in Northern Ireland.

**Northern Ireland Assembly ('Stormont')** - The devolved Parliament of Northern Ireland, in Belfast. Often referred to as 'Stormont'.

**Northern Ireland Executive** - The Executive branch of the devolved government of Northern Ireland since the Northern Ireland Act (1998). The Northern Ireland Executive is made up from a unique power-sharing agreement that was formulated as part of the Good Friday Agreement (1998).

**Northern Irish Good Friday Agreement Referendum 1998** – A referendum on whether to accept the Good Friday Agreement and Northern Irish Devolution. 71% voted in favour of the Good Friday Agreement and Northern Irish Devolution.

**Oath of Allegiance** - The Oath that MPs and Lords must swear at the start of each Parliament. Famously, the Republican Labour MP, Dennis Skinner, whispers his oath. Sinn Fein do not sit in House of Commons because they refuse to swear an oath to the British Monarch.

**Opposition Days** – Days in the parliamentary calendar that are given to the opposition to decide on the business of the House of Commons. There are 20 official opposition days per year.

**Parliament Act (1911)** - The act that limited the ability of the House of Lords to delaying legislation by two years, rather than being able to block legislation completely.

**Parliament Act (1949)** - The act that shortened the amount of time that the House of Lords could delay legislation to one year.

**Parliamentary Democracy** – The form of democracy practiced in the United Kingdom whereby the largest party in Parliament forms the government.

**Parliamentary Majority** – The term when a party has more seats than every other party combined. The First-Past-The-Post normally results in the winning party having a parliamentary majority.

**Parliamentary Ping-Pong** - The process whereby a bill goes back and forth between the House of Commons and House of Lords until they can agree on the bill.

**Parliamentary Privilege** – A doctrine introduced by the Bill of Rights (1689) that ensures that MPs can speak freely in Parliament and cannot be arrested for carrying out their parliamentary duties.

**Parliamentary Privilege** – The protections put in place for MPs to make sure they can adequately do their parliamentary jobs without fear of arrest or persecution.

**Parliamentary sovereignty** - A key principle of the UK constitution. In the UK, Parliament is the supreme legal authority. Parliament can create or reverse any law and this cannot be challenged by any other body.

**Parliamentary System** – A system in which the Executive derives its power from its position in Parliament.

**Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State** - The lowest rank of Government Minister.

**Partisan** - A term given for when someone follows a party line. When someone works with another party they may be considered 'bipartisan'.

**Part-Time Politicians** – Members of the House of Lords that are not attached to any particular party but do take part in votes that are of particular interest to them. Their attendance is usually better than 'non-working' peers but is still irregular.

**Patronage** – The ability of someone to give someone else a position of power. The UK Prime Minister has enormous powers of patronage.

**Permanent Secretary** - The highest ranking Civil Servant within a government department. They work closely with the Ministers that head the department.

**Police and Crime Commissioners** – Elected heads of local police forces. Police and Crime Commissioners were introduced in 2012 by the Coalition Government.

**Political Advisors** – People who are paid to help ministers make their decisions, but are not Civil Servants. The highest level of Political Advisors are called Special Advisors, which is often shortened to 'SPADS'.

**Political Sovereignty** – The reality of where power lies in the political system.

**Popular sovereignty** - The idea that power is vested in the people and that those who govern must do it with their will in mind.

**Posonby Rule** – A convention of the UK Constitution that dictated that any international treaty must be placed before Parliament at least 21 days before ratification.

**Preamble** - The part of a codified constitution that sets out the basic goals and vision of the country.

**Pre-Appointment Hearings** – Hearings that take place before someone is appointed to a role in a Government Department. These are held by Select Committees.

**President of the Supreme Court** - The presiding officer of the UK Supreme Court. The current President of the Supreme Court is Lady Hale.

**Presidential Government** – In a Presidential style of government the leader has massive personal authority and acts as De Facto Head of State. Britain was believed to move towards a Presidential Style of Government when Tony Blair was Prime Minister.

**Presidential system** - A system of government in which there is a clear separation of powers. In this system of government the different branches of government are clearly separate from each other. The U.S and Germany are Presidential Systems.

**Prime Minister** - The common title for the Head of the Executive in the UK. Prime Minister was not traditionally a constitutional title, but developed to become so.

**Prime Ministerial Government** - A Prime Ministerial style is one in which the Prime Minister is dominant over the Cabinet and Parliament.

**Prime Ministers Questions** – The questions asked to the Prime Minister by Parliament at Noon every Wednesday. This is one of the key ways that Parliament can scrutinise the executive.

**Primus Inter Pares** - The Latin term meaning ‘first among equals’. This was traditionally the way that the Prime Minister was viewed in Britain, but it is no longer really applicable.

**Private Members Ballot** - A draw held at the start of each parliamentary law which allows up to 30 MPs to potentially introduce a Private Members Bill. Places in this draw are highly sort after as it is seen to be one of the only ways that a Backbench MP can have a bill seriously considered.

**Private Members Bills** - A type of Parliamentary Bill which is presented by ordinary MPs. These bills are unlikely to pass because the government does not allocate very much parliamentary time to them.

**Privy Council** - A select group of members of the House of Commons and House of Lords who exist to closely advise the Queen on her duties as Monarch. Privy Counsellors can come from all political parties and have the honour of being referred to as ‘Right Honourable Gentleman’ in the House of Commons.

**Proportional Representation** - A voting system in which each vote is equal and the make-up of a Parliament is directly linked to how people voted.

**Public Bill Committee** - Committees that are set up to look at a particular bill that is being considered in Parliament. They are therefore temporary.

**Public Bills** - A proposed law that will have a national impact.

**Punch and Judy politics** – A term that has developed to describe the juvenile behaviour that is sometimes exhibited in Parliament, especially during Prime Minister’s Questions.

**Quasi-federal** - A term coined by Vernon Bogdanor to describe the political make-up of Britain since the Acts of Devolution in the late 1990s.

**Queen’s Speech** - The speech given by the Queen at the State Opening of the year in which the Government outlines its legislative plans for the year.

**Referendum** - A general vote by the population on a single issue. The Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014 is an example of this.

**Remainers** – A term given for someone who wants to remain in the European Union.

**Report Stage** – The stage of the legislative process in which the bill that returns from Committee is debated and voted on.

**Representation of the People Act (1918)** - A change to the UK Constitution that allowed some women over the age of 30 to vote in General Elections.

**Representation of the People Act (1969)** – A change to the UK Constitution that lowered the voting age to 16.

**Representative Democracy** - A type of democracy in which MPs are elected by constituents and represent them in Parliament.

**Republicanism** - Republicanism is the belief that a country should not have a Monarch and that the Head of State should be elected. Labour MP Dennis Skinner is a famous Republican.

**Republicans (Irish)** – Citizens of Northern Ireland who believe that Northern Ireland should be part of a United Ireland and not part of the United Kingdom.

**Republics** - A system of government that does not have a monarch as Head of State. In this system, the Head of State is elected. The U.S.A is a Republic.

**Reserved powers** - Powers that are kept by the Westminster Government, for example Defence.

**Resignation Honours List** – A list of honours given out by the Prime Minister when they leave office. This happened after David Cameron resigned in June 2016.

**Revolutionary Constitution** - A constitution that has started and defined a new period of a country's history, often coming after a time of national strife. The US Constitution agreed in 1787 was a revolutionary constitution.

**Royal Assent** - The final stage of the legislative process in which the Monarch agrees to a law. By convention Royal Assent is now never refused, the last time it was refused was by Queen Anne in 1707.

**Royal Prerogative** - A number of privileges and powers of the monarch, most of which have now been passed to the Prime Minister and members of the government. For example, the Prime Minister appoints the Cabinet on behalf of the monarch.

**Salisbury Convention** - The convention by which the House of Lords will not oppose legislation that was part of a government's election manifesto.

**Scotland Act (1998)** - The UK Act of Parliament that allowed for a devolved government in Scotland and Parliament in Scotland.

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**Scottish Devolution Referendum (1979)** – The first referendum of devolution to Scotland. 51% voted for devolution, however this did not reach a pre-set turnout threshold of 40%.

**Scottish Devolution Referendum (1997)** – The referendum for devolution in Scotland. 74% voted in favour of devolution.

**Scottish Government** - The executive branch of the devolved government of Scotland since the Scotland Act (1998). Until 2007 this was known as the 'Scottish Executive'.

**Scottish Independence Referendum (2014)** - A referendum for the people of Scotland on whether Scotland should leave the United Kingdom and become an independent country. The result was 55% in favour of remaining in the United Kingdom.

**Scottish Independence Referendum Act (2013)** – The Act of the Westminster Parliament that authorised the Scottish Independence Referendum of 2014.

**Scottish National Party** – The party that has had a majority in the Scottish Parliament since 2007. They advocate independence for Scotland.

**Scottish Parliament ('Holyrood')** - The devolved Parliament of Scotland, based in Edinburgh. It is often referred to informally as 'Holyrood'.

**Second Amendment** - The controversial Amendment of the U.S Constitution that still allows all Americans to own and carry a gun.

**Second Reading** - The second stage of the legislative process. At this stage a Minister outlines the principles of the bill and a debate and vote follows.

**Secret Soundings** – The term given for the way that the Lord Chancellor would find new judges by having informal chats with senior judges. This system lacked any fairness or transparency.

**Secretaries of State** - The highest rank of Government Minister. Secretaries of State are members of the Cabinet.

**Select Committees** - Committees in the House of Commons that focus on scrutinising the work of one particular government department or a particular issue of governance.

**Senior Civil Servants** – The upper levels of the Civil Service. This level includes the Cabinet Secretary, Permanent Secretaries and Assistant Secretaries.

**Senior Judiciary** - Judges of the highest courts in the UK, such as the High Court, Court of Appeal and UK Supreme Court.

**Separation of powers** - When the different branches of government: Executive, Legislative and Judicial are clearly defined and do not overlap with each other. The US Constitution allows for a clear separation of powers.

**Sewel Convention** - The convention that says that the Westminster Government will not legislate on issues that are devolved to the devolved areas. These issues are called 'Devolved Powers'.

**Shadow Cabinet** - The leading members of the Opposition who Shadow Government Ministers. Jeremy Corbyn currently has 27 members in his Shadow Cabinet.

**Shared sovereignty** - When power is deliberately split up among different bodies. This is most common in a Federal System.

**Short Money** - Money given to Opposition Parties to support their role. Currently the leader of the Opposition received £775k a year. All parties receive £16k for every seat they have and £33.33 for every 200 votes they received at the last election. Money is also paid for travel expenses. In 2014/2015 the Labour Party received 6.6m in Short Money.

**Simple majority** - A majority that only requires more than half to pass. Parliament requires Simple Majority's for the passage of laws.

**Single Transferable Vote** - A British proportional system in which parliamentary strength is proportionate to electoral support, but MPs retain a constituency link.

**Snap Election** - An election called before it was required. Snap Elections have been harder to call since the passing of the Fixed-Term Parliament Act (2011). However, the June 2017 Snap Election shows that it is still possible.

**Sofa Government** - This is style of government in which meetings are informal in nature and usually involve a variety of unelected advisors. The term Sofa Government first came to prominence when Tony Blair was Prime Minister.

**Sovereignty** - The quality of having supreme power or authority.

**SPADs** - Unelected government advisors who are not tied to the same principles as Civil Servants.

**Speaker of the House of Commons** - The figure responsible for overseeing debates and motions in the House of Commons. The speaker retains an impartial position in the House and sits as an independent. The current Speaker of the House of Commons is Jon Bercow.

**Speaker of the House of Lords** - The Lord in charge of presiding over debates in the House of Lords. It is a position currently held by Baron Fowler.

**Special Interest Groups** - Groups that try to influence the Government on a certain issue. Otherwise known as Pressure Groups.

**Spin Doctors** - A Spin Doctor is a particular form of Special Advisor whose job is to sell the message of the government and keep control of that message across the government.

**State Opening of Parliament** - The yearly event whereby the Queen officially opens Parliament for the year. As part of this event she also gives the 'Queen's Speech', this lays out the government's plans for the coming year.

**Statute Law** - Laws created via Act of Parliament. They are considered the superior form of law.

**Statutory instrument** - Sometimes also called 'secondary legislation'. These are laws that can be passed by the executive having been pre-authorised by another Statute.

**Stormont** - The informal name of the Northern Irish Assembly, based on where it is based.

**Supermajority** - A majority of greater than a half (a simple majority) to enforce a decision. Normally super majorities require two-thirds of a vote.

**Tabling Questions** - The process by which an MP request permission to ask a question in Parliament.

**Tellers** - MPs that count and verify the vote after a division in either chamber.

**Ten Minute Rule Bill** - A process whereby Backbench MPs are given 10 minutes to introduce a bill for consideration. Chances to do this are limited and very few Ten Minute Rule Bills become law. It is largely seen as a chance to publicise an issue that Backbenchers care about.

**The Act of Settlement (1701)** - The Act of Settlement placed clear rules on who could take the throne. It barred Roman Catholics, and those married to Roman Catholics, from becoming monarch.

**The English Constitution by Walter Baghehot** – A work of authority on the UK Constitution written by Victorian scholar Walter Baghehot

**The English Question** – A term given for the conundrum by which England does not have its own parliament and that, because of the West Lothian Question, its laws can be influenced by those that they do not affect.

**The European Communities Act (1973)** - The Act of Parliament that saw the UK join the European Union (then the European Economic Community). By doing this, the UK accepted the supremacy of European Law.

**The Rule of Law** - The concept that states there is equality before the law and that no one can be punished without trial. It is a key principle of the UK constitution.

**The Scotland Act (2016)** – An act that devolved even more powers to Scotland. One additional; power that was devolved was the ability for the Scottish Parliament to vary income tax levels by 3%.

**The Troubles** – A period of violence between nationalist and republican groups in Northern Ireland.

**Three-Line Whip** – The process whereby whips indicate that their MPs must attend and vote as instructed. It is so-called because Whips underline an item on the agenda three times.

**Toe the Party Line** – A term given for the expectation that MPs do what their party whips expect of them.

**Tricameral** - A parliament made up of three chambers. These are very rare.

**Trustee Model** – A model of representative democracy whereby an MP votes according to his beliefs or conscience.

**U.S Bill of Rights** - The first Ten Amendments of the U.S Constitution which solidify civil liberties into the U.S Constitution. These were passed in 1791.

**U.S Congress** - The collective name of the US legislature.

**U.S Constitution (1787)** - The codified Constitution of the United States that has only been amended 27 times.

**U.S Senate** - The Upper Chamber of the U.S Congress in which two Senators represent each of America's fifty states.

**UK Supreme Court** - The highest court in the UK. It was set up as part of the Constitutional Reform Act of 2005. It is the highest court in both civil and legal matters.

**UK Treasury** – The Government Department in the UK responsible for taxation and spending.

**Ultra Vires** – A Latin term that refers to when a government or organisation has acts beyond its legal power. It is a central part of Judicial Review in the U.K.

**Uncodified Constitution** - A constitution which has a number of different sources and is not written down in a single document (therefore often called an 'unwritten' constitution).

**Unconstitutional** - When something is found not to adhere to the constitution. This cannot happen in the UK as the UK has no codified constitution, but is quite common in the U.S.

**Unicameral** - A political system in which there is only one chamber of parliament. The devolved assemblies of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and London are all unicameral.

**Unionists** – People who believe that areas should remain part of the United Kingdom.

**Unitary Systems** - A system of government in which power is held centrally, although it may be devolved by the central body. The UK has traditionally been seen as having a unitary system.

**Unwritten constitutions** - A term often used instead of 'codified constitution'. It is a constitution in which not all articles or parts of it are written down in a single place.

**Upper Chamber** - One of the Chambers of Parliament in a bicameral system. Traditionally, the House of Lords has been seen as the Upper Chamber in the UK Parliament. This does not mean it is the dominant chamber.

**Urgent Question** – Urgent Questions are questions asked by MPs of Government Departments. The Speaker decides whether a question is urgent and can call a Minister to the House of Commons if he thinks that it is.

**Wakeham Commission (2000)** - A commission that took place in 2000 recommended are wholly or partly elected House of Lords.

**War Cabinet** – A War Cabinet is the use of a small number of regular Cabinet members to discuss business related to an ongoing war. It was first used during the First World War and has been used during other wars since then.

**Welsh Assembly** - The devolved Parliament of Wales, based in Cardiff.

**Welsh Devolution Referendum (1979)** – The first referendum of devolution to Wales. Only 21% of voters were in favour of devolution.

**Welsh Devolution Referendum (1997)** – The referendum that saw powers being devolved to Wales. 50.3% of voters voted for devolution.

**Welsh Government** - The Executive branch of the devolved government of Wales, it has existed since the Government of Wales Act (1998).

**West Lothian Question** - The term given for the constitutional problem whereby where Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish MPs can vote on issues that affect England, but English MPs cannot vote on issues that are reserved for the devolved assemblies. It has been suggested that England should have its own Parliament to resolve this problem.

**Westminster Government** - The common term given for the central UK government, based in Westminster, London.

**Westminster Parliament** - The Parliament of the United Kingdom made up of the House of Commons, the House of Lords and The Crown.

**Whip Withdrawn** – The term for when an MP no longer represents a particular party in Parliament. Having the whip withdrawn is one of the ways a party can punish their MPs.

**Whipped Votes** – A vote where the party whips instruct members of their party how to vote. The strictest type of Whipped Vote is a ‘three-lined whip’, where the vote is underlined three times on the parliamentary order paper.

**White Paper** - The process whereby the government sets out the firmer outline of a bill they will introduce to parliament and offer the final chance for views and opinions before turning it into a bill.

**Working Peers** – Members of the House of Lords who consider themselves to be professional politicians. Sometimes they are members of the Government or opposition.

**Works of Authority** - These are collections of work that are so influential they are often considered to be sources of the UK constitution. An example is Walter Bagehot’s ‘The English Constitution’.

**Wright Report** – A report published in 2009 which recommended a number of changes to Parliament to give greater power to backbenchers. These were all brought in by the Conservative and Liberal Democrat government in 2010.

**Written constitutions** - A term often used for codified constitutions.

**Yes Scotland** – The Campaign Group during the Scottish Independence Referendum that advocated for an independent Scotland.

**Zircon Affair** – A political scandal in the 1980s that came to light because an MP used their rights of parliamentary privilege.