

Q10. What are the principals on which British Cabinet is organized and functions? Also mention four occasions of Cabinet change (CSS-2011)

Ans I- INTRODUCTION: PRINCIPALS BEHIND THE ORGANIZATION OF BRITISH CABINET AND THE FOUR OCCASIONS OF CABINET CHANGE

The UK's Cabinet:  
Prime Minister & Cabinet

= Ultimate Decision-Making Body  
within Westminster System

The UK's Cabinet, consisting of the Prime Minister and other ministers, is a body which has legislative, executive, financial and judicial functions. It is formed by the party in power in lower House. Certain principals such as the political homogeneity, governmental unity, ministerial responsibility, fusion of legislature and executive, secrecy of Cabinet proceedings, Cabinet Committees and government by a majority and a

titular head organize the British Cabinet.  
The Cabinet is also subject to change  
in order to refresh the government.

## II. - THE BRITISH CABINET

"The British Cabinet is the most  
curious formation in the political  
world of modern times."

(William Gladstone)

### a) The Cabinet

Cabinet is the executive committee  
of His Majesty's Privy Council. It is composed  
of the Prime Minister and other ministers.  
Cabinet is the ultimate decision-making  
body within the Westminster system.

### b) Powers and Functions

The British Cabinet has the  
policy-determining, executive, legislative, financial,  
judicial and coordinating functions.

### III - PRINCIPLES BEHIND THE ORGANIZATION OF THE BRITISH CABINET

#### a) Political Homogeneity

Members of the cabinet must have the same political party and ideology. This principle was strictly followed before world war I. During 1931 world war I, composite governments were formed. This practice is also followed in the governments of MacDonald, Churchill and others.

#### b) Unity of Government

Cabinet faces Parliament and people as one unit. If any minister disagrees then he/she has to resign.

Example: Sajid Javid resigned as Chancellor of the Exchequer in the cabinet of Boris Johnson in 2020.

#### c) Ministerial Responsibility

##### i) legal

A minister is legally bound

to follow the law and give legal advice to the Crown.

## ii) Political

Ministers are politically responsible to House of Commons and must resign after vote of no confidence is passed. A vote of no confidence against one minister is a vote of no confidence against the whole Cabinet.

Example: It is due to ministerial responsibility that since 1979 no successful vote of no confidence has been passed in UK.

## d) Fusion of legislature and Executive

Cabinet members must be member of either house. Ministers belong to the party having a majority. The Prime Minister (executive) is also a member of legislature.

Example: The PM Rishi Sunak is also a part of legislature.

## e) Secrecy of Cabinet Proceedings

Oath of the Privy Council

binds members to observe secrecy and not reveal divulge secrets before public or Parliament

### f) Cabinet Committees

There is a division of tasks for efficiency and specialization.

Example: There exists Defense Committee, Foreign Affairs Committee etc.

### g) Government by Majority and Titular Head

Monarch is the nominal head of state who summons and appoints majority leader. Monarch does not attend cabinet meetings.

## IV - THE CABINET CHANGE AND ITS FOUR OCCASIONS

### a) Cabinet Reshuffle

A cabinet reshuffle or shuffle occurs when a head of government rotates

or changes the composition of ministers in his/her Cabinet.

## b) Occasions

Reshuffles are needed to:

1. Replace ministers who have resigned, retired or died.

Example: UK's PM Liz Truss resigned in 2022 after failed budget and market turmoil.

2. Deal poor polling numbers
3. Remove poor performers.

Example: In 2023, Nadim Zahawi was fired from Finance Minister post over tax scandal.

4. Reward supporters and punish others.

Example: In 2021, Liz Truss was moved to Foreign Secretary office from International Trade Secretary office due<sup>to</sup> her loyalty to PM Johnson.

## V- CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The Cabinet in UK consists of the Prime Minister and ministers. It has

executive, legislative, financial, judicial and other functions. The Cabinet is so organized that it serves as one unit having a strong unity among its members. It is due to excessive functions and their unity that UK is termed to have "Cabinet Dictatorship". However, in actual sense, the Cabinet is not a dictator as there exists a strong opposition which acts as a ~~watchdog~~ check, a free media as a watchdog and a vigilant public who knows their rights and laws. Further, it is also due to the parliamentary nature of UK that the Prime Minister and his Cabinet have much powers. Thus, "Cabinet Dictator" is not a right term for UK's Cabinet.

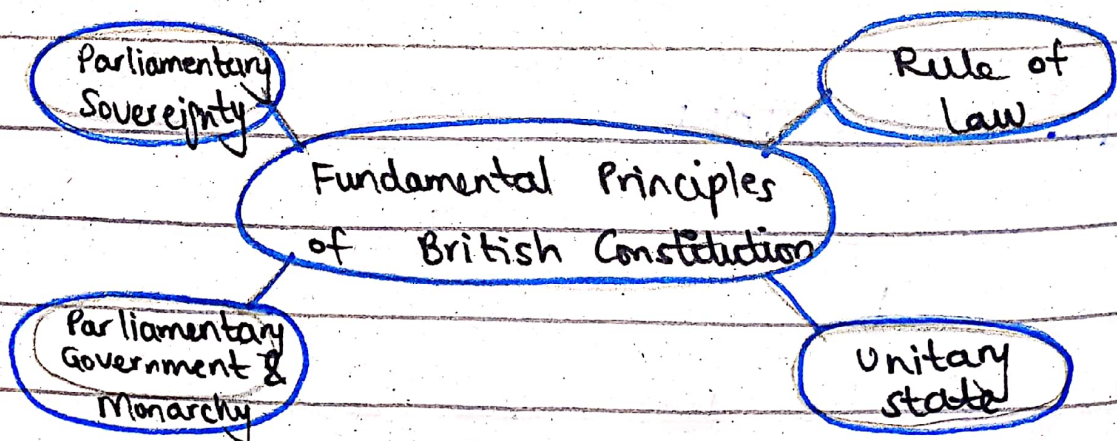
## VI- CONCLUSION

To summarize, the British Cabinet comprising of the Prime Minister and ministers is organized behind the principles

principals of political homogeneity, governmental unity, ministerial responsibility, fusion of legislature and executive, secrecy of Cabinet proceedings, Cabinet committees and government by majority and a titular head. The Cabinet is reshuffled/changed on four occasions: to replace old ministers, deal with poor polling numbers, remove poor performers and reward or punish members.

Q. Examine the fundamental Principles of British Constitution. Also discuss the nature, powers and functions of the British Cabinet.  
(C.S.S - 2005)

## Fundamental Principles of the British Constitution





## a) Parliamentary Sovereignty

The Parliament of England is that supreme and absolute power which gives life and motion to the English government. Parliamentary sovereignty is the principle that makes the Parliament the supreme legal authority in UK which can create or end any law.

## b) Rule of law

Rule of law means:

1. No one can be punished except for breach of law.
2. Equality before law
3. Protection of fundamental rights and liberties

## c) A Unitary State

The United Kingdom (UK) is an asymmetrically decentralised unitary state, comprised of England and three countries with devolved governments: Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

# d) Parliamentary Government Under a Constitutional Monarchy

Short and incomplete answer.

The British Monarchy is known as a Constitutional monarchy. This means that while the sovereign is Head of State (monarch), the ability to make and pass legislation resides with an elected parliament.

4/20

Q11. Do you agree that sovereignty of the parliament is the dominant characteristic of British Political System? Explain in detail the role of British Parliament. (CSS-2008)

Ans I - INTRODUCTION: SOVEREIGNTY OF PARLIAMENT AS THE DOMINANT CHARACTERISTIC OF BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM AND THE ROLE OF BRITISH PARLIAMENT

Sovereignty of UK Parliament i.e. House of Commons & House of Lords	Due to Unwritten Constitution, Absence of Separation of Powers & Judicial Review
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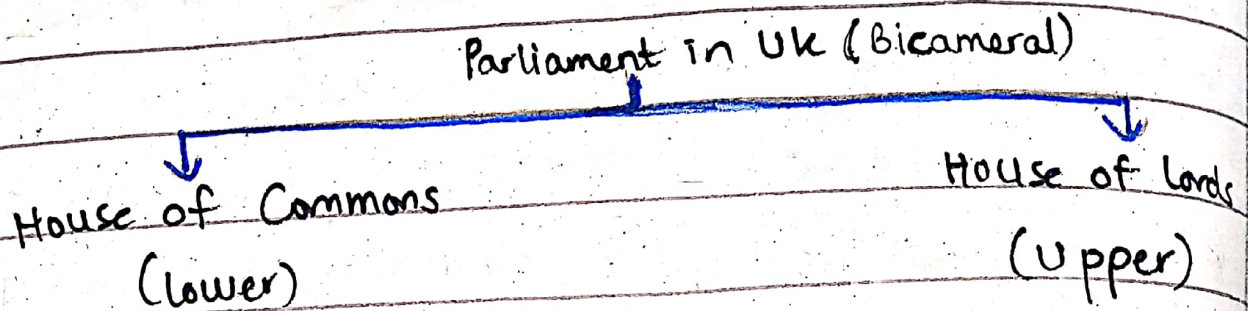
Parliamentary sovereignty in UK means the absolute sovereignty and supremacy of the British Parliament over all other government institutions. The uncodification of the constitution, fusion of executive and legislative and the limited powers of judiciary, all contribute to parliamentary sovereignty in UK. The British Parliament i.e. House of Commons and House of Lords have many powers. The lower house has legislative, financial and control over executive powers while the upper house has legislative executive and judicial powers.

## II - PARLIAMENTARY SOVEREIGNTY IN UK

### a) Parliamentary Sovereignty

Parliamentary sovereignty holds that the legislative body has absolute sovereignty, and is supreme over all other government institutions, including executive and judicial bodies.

## b) In UK and the stance



### STANCE

"The British parliament can do everything but make woman a man and a man a woman."

(De Lolme)

## III - REASONS BEHIND THE DOMINANCE OF PARLIAMENTARY SOVEREIGNTY IN THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM

### a) Uncodified Constitution

UK does not have a codified constitution; it is based on conventions, statutes and precedents. Hence, there are no constitutional limitations on powers of parliament.

## b) Absence of Separation of Powers

Pure parliamentary form of government means there is a fusion of executive and legislature.

Example: The current Prime Minister i.e. Rishi Sunak is the leader of the majority party in parliament.

## c) Absence of Judicial Review

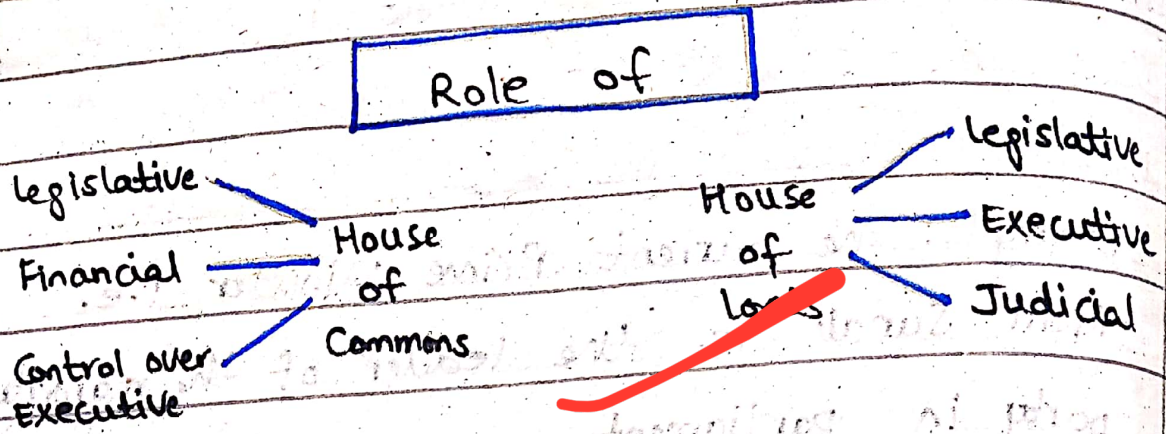
Judiciary does not exercise the power of judicial review in UK.

Example: In *Pickin v. British Railway Board*, the judiciary in unequivocal terms declared that it has no judicial review power.

## d) The Empowerment of Parliament by Monarch

A series of events such as the Magna Carta, the Petition of Rights, the English Civil War, the Glorious Revolution and others have shifted the power of the monarch to the parliament.

# IV - THE BRITISH PARLIAMENT'S ROLE



## a) of House of Commons

### i) legislative

The Parliamentary Act of 1911, as amended in 1949, has granted impressive legislation powers to the House of Commons.

### ii) Financial

The House of Commons wields great authority over the nation's purse.

According to the Act of 1911, all money bills must originate in the House of Commons.

This house also exercises a great control over the finances of the government.

Example: The lower house alone can impose taxes and vote money to, or withhold it from, the various public departments and

services.

### iii) Control Over Executive

England has a Parliamentary form of government and so the executive is responsible to the popular chamber of Parliament. ~~The~~ The House of Commons maintains control in two ways: (i) by sending information about the actions of government and (ii) by criticism.

Example: In 1979, a vote of no confidence was passed against the minority government of James Callaghan.

### b) of House of Lords

#### i) legislative

The House of Lords possess legislative powers over money bills and non-money bills. <sup>However,</sup> ~~the~~ House of Lords is practically inactive ineffective ~~of~~ financial bills as it can be bypassed by the assent of the King.

## ii) Executive

The lords have the power to ask questions from the government and have a full right to debate its policies. It also enjoys a share in the cabinet membership. However, the lords have no power to pass a censure against the ministry.

Example: Annually, over 4,000 written questions are asked from ministers by the House of Lords ([www.parliament.uk](http://www.parliament.uk)).

## iii) Judicial

The House of Lords acted as the final court on points of law for the whole of UK. Its decision <sup>bound</sup> binds all the courts below. However, ~~the~~ from October 1, 2009 the judicial powers of the upper house transferred to the new and separate Supreme Court of the UK.

Example: Cases such as Pinchon's case, Sprat v. Agar, etc., were judged by the House of Lords.



## V- CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The UK's Parliament has absolute sovereignty and supremacy over all other government institutions. It can do every thing except the impossibles. However, the UK's parliament sovereignty has been limited by certain direct limitations as devolution of powers to assemblies of constituent units, UK's commitment to the European Convention of Human Rights, Creation of UK's Supreme Court. Certain practical limitations also limit its sovereignty such as parliament cannot act against people's wishes, prevalence of rule of law, role of press, delegated legislation, vigilant public and commitments to international treaties. Thus, the UK's parliamentary sovereignty is absolute only if it does not violate/breach above-mentioned criterion.

## VI - CONCLUSION

To summarize, in Britain, sovereignty of Parliament is the dominant characteristic of the British political system. The House of Commons and the House of Lords exercise and enjoy many powers such as legislative, executive, financial due to the uncodification of constitution, fusion between executive and legislature and the limited judicial powers.

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Q12. Do you agree that British Political System is known for the cabinet's dictatorship? Give your arguments for or against this idea. (CSS-2002)

Q. Do you agree in cabinet's dictatorship in UK has undermined the supremacy of the parliament? Explain. (CSS-2006)

Q. Explain how the British democracy is overshadowed by the Cabinet dictatorship. (CSS-2010)

Ans. J- INTRODUCTION: THE CABINET DICTATORSHIP IN THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM

The UK's Cabinet: Prime Minister & Ministers	Ultimate Decision-Making Body within Westminster System
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The United Kingdom is a constitutional monarchy with monarch as the Head of the state and the Prime Minister as the Head of the Government. The UK's Cabinet, consisting of the Prime Minister and other ministers, is termed to be a dictator due to its immense functions and other reasons. In UK, the Cabinet has executive, legislative, financial, judicial, policy-determining and coordination functions. Further party-discipline and rigidity, collective responsibility, delegated legislation, power dissolution, administrative justice and national emergencies, also contribute to the Cabinet dictatorship potential.

## II - THE BRITISH POLITICAL SYSTEM, THE CABINET AND ITS DICTATORSHIP

### a) The UK's Political System

The United Kingdom is a unitary state with devolution that is governed within the framework of a parliamentary democracy under a constitutional monarchy in which the monarch is the Head of the State and the Prime Minister is the Head of the Government.

Also, the British Political System is a two party system having the Conservative and the Labour Parties as the dominant parties.

Example: Current Head of State = King Charles III

Current Head of Government = Rishi Sunak

### b) The British Cabinet

Cabinet is the executive committee of His Majesty's Privy Council. It is composed of the Prime Minister and other ministers.

The British Cabinet is the ultimate decision-making body within the Westminster system.

## C) Cabinet Dictatorship

In UK, Cabinet is known as dictator because it possesses and exercises many authorities and powers. The term "dictator" is used <sup>for</sup> by the Cabinet by Ramsay Muir.

Example: 1. Parliament and monarch follow the advice of the Cabinet.

2. Anthony Eden's Cabinet intervened during Suez Canal Crisis without prior assent of the Parliament.

## d) The Stance

The British Political System is known for its Cabinet Dictatorship.

## III. - CAUSES OF THE CABINET DICTATORSHIP IN UK

### a) Powers and Functions of the UK Cabinet

#### i) Policy Determining and Executive Functions

The cabinet gives a single

united policy on national and international issues to the parliament (all members must agree on the policy). The Cabinet is also the real executive and gives formulated policies to ministers who direct the respective departments to implement the policies.

Example: Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and Commonwealth Affairs negotiates treaties with foreign states on behalf of Cabinet.

## ii) Legislative and Financial Functions

Cabinet derives the legislative course of the Parliament. Monarch summons the Parliament on Cabinet's advice. Cabinet members introduce, explain and defend the bills on the House floor when passed by Parliament. The Chancellor of Exchequer, Cabinet member, prepares and introduces budget in the House of Commons.

## iii) Judicial and Coordinating Functions

Crown appoints judges of important courts on the advice of the

Lord Chancellor, a member of Cabinet.  
Crown exercises power of pardon, reprieve,  
and respite on the advice of the Secretary  
of State for Home Affairs. Also, cabinet  
is the hyphen that joins the executive  
and legislative departments together.

Example: Queen's granting of pardon to  
Dr. Alan - a scientist and World War II  
code-breaker.

## b) Other Reasons

### i) Party Discipline and Rigidity

In UK, the party narrative reigns  
supreme over individual conscience. Party members  
are expelled for not following the whip.  
Strict adherence to party and following the  
leader results in political suicide of the  
dissenters.

Example: Sajid Javid resigned as Chancellor  
of the Exchequer in the Cabinet of Boris  
Johnson in 2020.

## ii) Collective Responsibility

The entire Cabinet acts as one unit. The defeat of one member is defeat of the whole cabinet.

## iii) Delegated Legislation

Parliament passes bills in broad outlines due to technicalities of law. Cabinet fills the technical space through Delegated Legislation and Orders-in-Council.

Example: The Constitutional Reform Act 2005 allows the Privy Council to alter the number of judges in the Supreme Court. (Orders-in-Council).

## iv) Power of Dissolution

Prime Minister can request the Monarch to dissolve the Parliament to prevent vote of no confidence. The Crown accedes to the request by Convention. Dissolution means new general elections.



## v) Administrative Justice

Now, Ministers decide cases concerning their departments. The minister or Tribunal is not even bound to give reason for the decision but are bound to follow natural justice.

Example: The Road Traffic Act, 1930 was introduced by the Transport Minister.

## vi) National Emergencies

The British Cabinet has accumulated emergency powers due to Two World wars and the Great Depression.

# Checks/limits on the cabinet??

## IV - CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The British Cabinet consists of the Prime Minister and his cabinet ministers. UK is known for its cabinet dictatorship and the parliament has become merely a registry office since the end of 19<sup>th</sup> century. The immense executive, legislative, judicial, financial functions and the strong unity,

dissolution, administrative and emergency powers make the Cabinet a dictator.

However, the opponents of cabinet dictatorship argues that the presence of strong opposition, free media and vigilant public prevents the dictatorial tendencies of the Cabinet. Further, the fusion of executive, and legislature makes the Prime Minister to compromise on many things, such as his dissolution of the Parliament will remove him too and will incur the costs of re-election. Thus, the dictatorial role of the British Cabinet is an open-debate.

## V- CONCLUSION

To summarize, the British Cabinet i.e. the elected Prime Minister and his Cabinet, acts as a dictator. This is due to the unlimited executive, legislative, judicial, financial, policy determination and coordinating functions of the Cabinet. Further, the party discipline and rigidity, collective responsibility,

delegated legislation, dissolution power, etc.  
give ~~make~~ it a dictatorial gesture. However,  
this "Cabinet Dictatorship" topic is in  
actual an open debate and its perception  
varies from person to person.

Q3. Explain why kingship is not abolished in  
England? (CSS-2013)

Q. Explain the evolution of British Monarchy  
with focus on gradual transfer of powers  
from the Monarch to the Prime Minister. (CSS-2014)

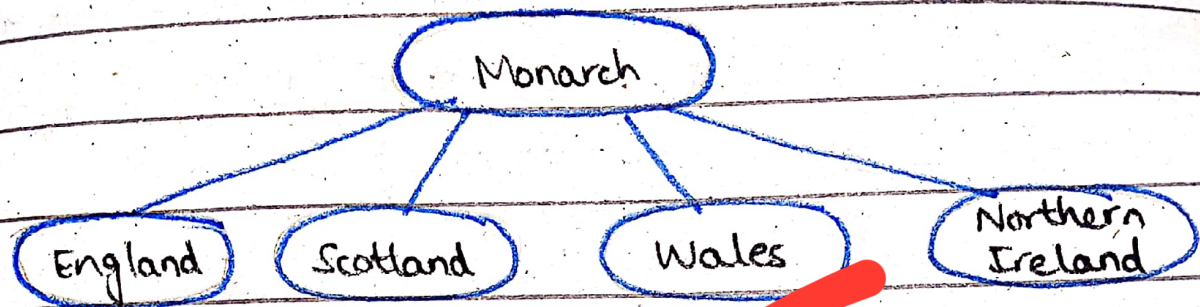
Ans. I-INTRODUCTION: THE EVOLUTION OF  
BRITISH MONARCHY, THE GRADUAL TRANS-  
FER OF POWERS FROM MONARCH TO THE  
PRIME MINISTER AND THE REASONS BEHIND  
THE NON-ABOLISHMENT OF KINGSHIP IN  
ENGLAND

United Kingdom (UK) is a  
Constitutional Monarchy

PM = Head of Government  
Monarch = Head of State

United Kingdom (UK) is a Constitutional monarchy. Absolute monarchy in England was established after the Norman Conquest of 1066. Over time, the idea of the United Kingdom emerged and formally in 18th century the UK became a union of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Later, this monarchy evolved into Parliamentary power due to a series of events such as the Magna Carta (1215), the Petition of Rights, the English Civil War (1642), the Glorious Revolution, the Bill of Rights, etc. However, monarchy in UK is not completely abolished because monarch created Parliamentary government, people were comfortable with it, requirement of a nominal head of state, the significant role of monarch in politics and economy. Thus, UK has both King and Prime Minister.

## II - THE BRITISH MONARCHY AND ITS EVOLUTION



### a) The British Monarchy

The monarchy of the United Kingdom is the constitutional form of government by which a hereditary sovereign reigns as the Head of State of the UK, the Crown Dependencies and the British Overseas Territories. The current monarch is King Charles

III

### b) The Evolution

#### i) Nations of England

The nation of England traces its roots back to the unification of the various Anglo-Saxon tribes, united by King Alfred in the late 9th century in order to fight off Viking invaders.

## ii) The Scotland

The Scotland, located to the north of England, was an independent nation who later united with England by James I in 17<sup>th</sup> century.

## iii) The Wales

The Wales, located the west of England, was conquered and gradually incorporated by England in the 13<sup>th</sup> cent.

## iv) Northern Ireland

The Northern Ireland, made up of the northeastern section of the island of Ireland is mainly dominated by Protestants, who decided to remain part of the United Kingdom when the rest of Ireland formed its own nation.

## c) The Formal Creation of UK

It was during the Stuart dynasty that the idea of a United Kingdom first came into being, but it was not until

the reign of Queen ~~Ma~~ Anne that the union of the crowns of England and Scotland were formerly merged into an entity called "The United Kingdom".

#### d) The Present UK

The current United Kingdom (UK) is a union ~~of~~ of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

### III - THE TRANSFER OF POWER FROM MONARCH TO THE PRIME MINISTER

#### a) Magna Carta (1215)

The Magna Carta (1215) established the principle that everyone is subject to the law, even the king, and guarantees the rights of individuals, the right to justice and the right to a fair trial.

#### b) The Petition of Rights

The Petition of Right was a list of demands of King Charles I of England

issued by Parliament. It was intended to define and curb the monarch's powers and included matters of taxation, the application of martial law, imprisonment without trial, and the billeting of troops on civilian households.

### c) The English Civil War (1642)

The war began as a result of a conflict over the power of the monarchy and the rights of Parliament. King Charles was executed and briefly republic was formed under Oliver Cromwell. Though Charles II was invited to take the throne in 1660, Parliament's victory established the precedent that the monarch could not rule without the consent of Parliament.

### d) The Glorious Revolution

The Glorious Revolution involved the overthrow of the Catholic king James II, who was replaced by his Protestant daughter Mary and her Dutch husband, William of Orange.



### e) The Bill of Rights

The Bill of Rights outlined specific constitutional and civil rights and ultimately gave Parliament power over monarchy.

### f) The Act of Settlement

The Act of Settlement was designed to secure the Protestant succession to the throne, and to strengthen the guarantees for ensuring a parliamentary system of government.

### g) Septennial Act

The Septennial Act increased the maximum length of parliament from 3-7 years.

### h) Acts of Indemnity

The Acts of Indemnity refers to the acts ~~that~~ to free the dissenters from penalties. Similar acts were passed after the two world wars, too.

## 1) Parliament Acts of 1911 and 1949

The Parliament Acts of 1911 removed from the House of Lords the power to veto a Bill, except one to extend the lifetime of a Parliament. Instead the Lords could delay a Bill by up to two years (the duration was ~~also~~ further reduced to one year by the Act of 1949.

## IV - WHY KINGSHIP IS NOT ABOLISHED IN BRITAIN ?

### a) Monarch Created the Parliamentary Government

"The institutions that adapt themselves with the changing needs of time continue to exist."

(Francis Fukuyama)

Monarchy paved way for parliamentary government. King George delegated powers to the Prime Minister by choosing survival over power.

## b) Lack of Republican Sentiment

The people of Britain never demanded abolition of monarchy. They tried republican government only from 1649 to 1660.

Example: People themselves called upon Mary when King James II left.

## c) Source of Patriotism

In UK, Crown has a stabilizing role in the absence of Constitution. Armed forces are more loyal to Monarch than a partisan Prime Minister.

## d) Requirement of a Nominal Head in Parliamentary System

Parliamentary system requires a nominal head. A strong president can subvert parliamentary system and a weak partisan President is a ludicrous idea. Thus, a non-executive presidency in a parliamentary system with a compromising Monarch is worth a stable system.

Example: Monarch follows the advice of the Cabinet (Parliament members)

### e) Monarch is a Mediator in Political Crisis

The Crown reconciles the conflicting planks of different political parties.

Example: King George V played a notable role during Irish Crisis.

### f) Royal House is a Social Inspiration

The Royal house's charisma is the edifice of British gentry and nobility.

Monarch has ethical codes and participate in social welfares. They also contribute to the economy via royal heritage tourism.

### g) Royal House and Monarch are Harmless

The idea to scrap a popular monarchy needs to have a significant demand for a change, which is not there. There needs to be evidence that the institution does significant harm, which is just as hard to find.

## V - CRITICAL ANALYSIS

The United Kingdom is a Constitutional monarchy consisting of England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. In the present era, democracy is regarded as the best form of government over monarchy because the modern societies are heterogeneous and monarchy creates poor leadership, aristocracy, lack of accountability, and incompetent hiers. Further, monarchy is also expensive. However, UK has both democracy and monarchy because there people want monarchs and there is no reason <sup>of</sup> ~~for~~ them to cause any harm. Thus, the people of Britain enjoy ~~both~~ the benefits of both monarchy and democracy.

## VI - CONCLUSION

To summarize, <sup>the</sup> United Kingdom (UK) is a combination of four countries i.e. England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Irelands.

united under a constitutional monarchy.

Initially, UK was governed by a monarch but a series of events transferred the

power of monarch to the parliament. Also,

the people of Britain have allegiance to

the monarch who is only a harmless titular head of the state.