

Good day welcome to my presentation, part one of the evolution of the UK Constitution. In this presentation you will understand the concept of Constitution, classification of the different kinds of Constitutions and the growth and development of UK Constitution at the end of my lecture you will be able to explain the concept of the constitution, differentiate between the different types of Constitutions and describe the landmark developments in the evolution of the UK constitution.

Now let us understand what is a Constitution? Well Constitution is a set of rules and regulations which deal with structure of the government and powers and functions of the government for example is it a presidential government or is it parliamentary is it unitary is it federal? It deals with structure and power then Constitution also defines your rights and duties of the citizens very important it is a supreme law of the land. Why does a state need a constitution? First it secures the rights of the individuals because with the rights, Constitution makes it very clear if your rights are violated what do you do to protect your rights. It sets the limitations on the powers of the government. It protects the country from revolution.

It makes it very clear what is the procedure to change the government, that is through election, to establish the principle of rule of law that is, all are equal in the eyes of law.

Now let us understand the classifications of the Constitution.

Broadly there are three kinds, written and unwritten constitution, flexible and rigid constitution unitary and federal constitution.

A written constitution is the one which is systematically written down and embodied in a single document. It is a product and created by a Constituent Assembly or a Convention for example constitution of India was created by the Constituent Assembly Constitution of USA was set up by the Philadelphia convention. Classic example of written constitutions are India and USA.

Unwritten constitution is evolutionary and uncodified. Evolutionary means which is growing and which is a product of gradual growth. Uncodified means it's not written down in the form of a single document. Unwritten constitution does not have a specific date, it does not have a form of a formal document and a classic example of unwritten constitution is UK.

Rigid and Flexible constitution is based on how the amendments to the constitution takes place.

A rigid constitution requires special procedure for amendment. A constitution is said to be rigid when it is difficult to amend the constitution. USA and Australia are the best examples of rigid constitution for example constitution of USA, till today has only about 26 amendments. While the flexible constitution, the amendment is very easy it requires no special procedure and therefore it's relatively easy to amend, there is no distinction between a constitutional law and ordinary law under a flexible Constitution, and a classic example of the flexible Constitution is UK Constitution.

The next type of Constitution is unitary and federal. Now this distinction is based on how the governmental powers are divided and distributed between the central government and the state government. Under a unitary government all governmental powers are vested in the Union government or central government, while the administrative units or the state governments derive the authority from the central government which means the State governments have powers only which are delegated to them by the central government. The majority of the states in the world follow unitary system government of the 193 U. N member state 165 are unitary. A few examples, Constitution of UK, France, Japan, China, Italy and so on Unitary. Federal constitution divides power between Central government and State Government and both central government and state governments operate independently in their respective jurisdiction and the classic example of federal Constitution is USA, Australia Switzerland and so on.

Well to understand the evolution of the UK constitution it is very necessary and important to understand the different types of constitutions. Now after going through different types of Constitutions, we know that many nations around the world have written constitution and this constitution lays down the fundamental laws of the land and it describes the fundamental rights of the people in one single document

and many countries have adopted written constitution mainly due to a revolution or a war or a change in political regime for example after the French revolution in 1789 or for that reason American revolution after this American war of Independence then they had they wrote down their Constitution. While the UK constitution is unique because it is not set out in a single document. UK escaped the revolutionary zeal of 18th and 19th centuries which means UK followed an evolutionary route rather than a revolutionary route that is why UK constitution has an evolutionary and an unwritten constitution but that does not mean the constitution of UK does not have any written element, it does have written element and the Constitution of UK is based on acts of parliament, historical documents, different court judgments, legal precedence and conventions.

While the earliest date in the history of UK Constitution is 1215 when the Great Charter of the liberties of England called Magna Carta was signed by the king. This Charter is historic in the constitutional history of UK because this Charter limited the powers of the monarch and made him subject to the law of the land that is what is called as rule of law. I quote Munro "the British constitution is a complex amalgam of institutions, principles and practices, It is not one document but hundreds of them. It is a child of wisdom and chance .

These are the references that you can follow further for this topic on evolution of the UK Constitution  
Thank you