

Good day, Welcome to Part 2 of the Presentation on evolution of the UK Constitution.

In this presentation of mine you will trace the evolution of the UK Constitution and learn about various charters, statutes, conventions and judicial precedents through which the UK Constitution has evolved. By end of the presentation, you will understand the evolutionary nature of UK Constitution and able to describe the various acts charters which has contributed to the evolution of the UK Constitution.

Well we know that UK Constitution is unwritten an evolutionary but there is quite a bit of written element to the UK Constitution and as a result we say that UK Constitution has evolved through various statutes. Charters, judicial precedents, and other sources through which one can trace the evolution of the British Constitution.

The first one is Magna Carter, meaning the Great Charter, one of the most famous documents of the world, not only for UK. It was issued by King John of England as a practical solution to the crisis that he faced in 1215 and intended to promote peace between King John and his Barons. Barons are part of the British nobility . Magna Carter, established for the first time that everybody, including the king, was subject to the law, that is rule of law. Today, almost all the clauses have been repealed, but Magna Carter still remains a cornerstone of British constitution, and this charter placed limitations on the authority of the monarch.

The Glorious Revolution of 1688 is also called a bloodless revolution. It took place between 1688 to 1689. In England, it involved the overthrow of Catholic King James II ,was replaced by his protestant daughter Mary and her husband William of Orange. So you see, this revolution is basically a conflict between Catholics and protestants. It was a conflict between the king and the Parliament and as a result of this glorious revolution, Parliament was given more powers over the monarchy, and this sowed seeds of Parliamentary democracy.

Another important document is a Bill of Rights of 1689 or landmark law of England that sets out civil rights and clarifies who would be next to inherit the British Crown. Bill of Rights lays down limits on the powers of Monarch and spells out the rights of Parliament, including free elections and freedom of speech in Parliament. It sets out certain rights of individuals including prohibition of cruel and unusual Punishment.

Act of settlement of 1701. This is a law passed by British Parliament to settle the succession to the crown to protestants meaning no Roman Catholic, nor anyone married Roman Catholic could hold the crown and also it strengthened the Parliamentary system of government. This act proved to be of fundamental importance for the evolution of constitutional monarchy. That is, it restricted the powers and prerogatives which were held by the, Crown Act of Union of 1707. These were a pair of parliamentary acts passed in 1706 and 1707 by Parliament of England and Parliament of Scotland. These acts are referred as twin acts, as Union of parliaments. By these two acts the Kingdom of England and Kingdom of Scotland, which at that time were two separate states with two separate legislatures but had one monarch. What united into one Kingdom by the name of Great Britain.

A referendum you know was lately held on Scottish independence in 2014, where 55% voted against this proposal. As a result, Scotland continues to be a part of UK.

The reforms act of 1832, 1867, 1884 now these acts are important in the constitutional history of UK, as these expanded the electorate. 1867 Reforms Act granted right to vote to men in urban areas, who met property qualification and the act roughly doubled the electorate in England and Wales, which means this act gave right to vote to urban making working class. The Reform Act of 1884 was to target the rural areas, and this extended the right to vote to agricultural workers. This act, tripled the electorate and paved the way for universal male franchise, which means women were still left out or not given the right to vote.

Parliamentary Act 1911, this act is constitutional, important and partly governs the relationship between. House of Commons and House of Lords, the two houses of British Parliament. This act established the formal dominance of the House of Commons over the House of lords, and it also reduced the term of Parliament from 7 years to five years.

The representation of Peoples Act of 1918 and 1928. This parliamentary act expanded suffrage in Britain. The Act of 1918 gave the right to vote to all men over age 21 and all women over 28 and who had property. This meant this act of 1918, was the starting point for the right to vote for women. The 1928 ACT widened suffrage by giving electoral equality with men. It gave the right to vote to all women over 21 years regardless of property ownership. In 1969, the voting age was reduced from 21 to 18, both for men and women.

European Communities Act 1972. This act received Royal assent on 17th October. And UK became an official member of European Economic Community. This meant now the UK was subject to EU laws. The Act is one of the most significant UK constitutional statutes ever to be passed by UK Parliament. This act had important consequences on UK trade by becoming a member of EU, UK became a part of customs of EU where there are no tariffs or duties on goods made between Member States of European Union and this was compulsory for goods imported and exported to a non-European Union state. This act also introduced the right to freedom of movement between Member States.

Finally, we come to Brexit, which is the withdrawal of UK from the European Union. It was a UK wide referendum held in June 2016 where 52% of UK voted to leave EU and 48% voted to remain in European Union. The British Government formally announced UK withdrawal from EU in March 2017, starting the Brexit Process, UK left the European Union on 31st January 2020 and the transition period is set to end on 31st December 2020.

You can do your further reading on the references that I've given you in this slide.
Thank you.