

## The POWERS of the Executive

- a) **PM's ROYAL PREROGATIVE POWERS** (Powers transferred from the monarch)
- i) **Appoint Cabinet & Junior Ministers** (Chairperson of the Cabinet)
- ii) **Head of the Civil Service**
- iii) **Power to dissolve Parliament** (for elections / holidays)
- iv) **Patronage** - advise on "Life Peers" and high level public appointments (e.g. foreign ambassadors - Peter Mandelson US ambassador 2005)
- v) **Commander-in-Chief** (of Armed forces)
- vi) **Foreign Affairs** - treaties, diplomacy, overseas UK territories

- a) **Primary Legislation** - proposal of new laws
- b) **SECONDARY LEGISLATION** - creating laws from existing legislation. Does not require extra Parliamentary scrutiny as it is an extension of previously passed laws.



The EXECUTIVE are the decision makers of the political system. In the UK, it is different to the US as all members of the EXECUTIVE must also be Members of Parliament (Commons or Lords). The PM is based at 10 Downing Street, with their no.2, the Chancellor, next door at 11 Downing street.



## The STRUCTURE of the EXECUTIVE

- a) **PRIME MINISTER**  
"First amongst Equals"  
Generally, the leader of the largest political party (often with a majority) is APPOINTED (invited) by the MONARCH (under ROYAL PREROGATIVE) to form a government and be the PM of that government.
- a) **CABINET MINISTER (e.g. CHANCELLOR of the EXCHEQUER & Secretaries of State)**  
The PM will then appoint MPs to lead the various departments that run the country under their ROYAL PREROGATIVE. The power to "hire and fire" Cabinet Ministers belongs solely to the PM. Cabinet posts can be used as PATRONAGE to secure support within your party.
- a) **MINISTER of STATE / JUNIOR MINISTERS**  
Those selected MPs who support the Cabinet Minister in their department. E.g. Bridget Phillipson (Secretary of State for Education); Georgia Gould (Minister for Schools); Baroness Jacqui Smith (Minister for Universities).
- a) **GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS**  
These are decided by the PM according to the needs they see fit for the running of the country. Led by the Cabinet Minister. Usually there will be the TREASURY (CHANCELLOR of the Exchequer i/c money & taxes); HOME OFFICE (Home Secretary- police & security); FOREIGN OFFICE (Foreign Minister- politics abroad). The Big 3 jobs after the PM. Niche Departments e.g. Dept of "Levelling Up" (2021 - 2024).

## The ROLE of the EXECUTIVE

- a) **Proposing Legislation**  
90%+ of legislation each year is proposed by the Executive. Similarly 90%+ of that legislation is passed (especially if the Governments holds a majority in the Commons).
- a) **Proposing the BUDGET**  
Govt sets up the spending plans for the country. ONE major BUDGET and 2 spending reviews across the year.  
"Emergency" or "mini" budgets can be called at any time, if a crisis or major change occurs.
- a) **Making (executive) policy decisions** within the law & budget.

## The PM & CABINET relationships with Parliament

- 1) **PM direct influence in Commons** : WHIPS, PATRONAGE, party loyalty, physical presence of Executive.
- 2) **WHIPS** - led by **Chief Whip**, they ensure MPs follow party discipline and vote with government. Stops **BACKBENCH REBELLIONS**. Intimidation can go too far. Cons MP for Bury (2020) threatened with withdrawal of local school funding during B. Johnson PM over Labour motion to extend free school meals in holidays. He abstained initially, later switch to Labour.
- 3) **PATRONAGE** or **"Payroll MPs"** - Positive incentives for backbench MPs to support the Executive. E.g. Cabinet jobs, prestigious Bill committees, extra funding to help their area. MPs on "payroll" of the Executive are unlikely to vote against it.
- 4) **PM force Lords to pass legislation** - see Parliament Acts 1911 & 1949, Salisbury Convention 1949.  
**Rishi Sunak 2024 - Rwanda Bill**, Lords tried to delay bill for 12 months knowing Sunak & Cons only had 7 months left. Threat to Lords to make them sit and vote through the night until law was passed. This was after SCUK had declared original bill "unlawful" as Rwanda was not a safe place (under ECHR).



## The EXECUTIVE & Supreme Court

- 1) **SEPARATION of POWERS** between Judiciary and Executive/ Legislative (similar to US)
- 2) SCUK rule on appeal cases in principle and so rulings will **advise Govt about the way it should act lawfully** or if it has acted unlawfully.
- 3) **But who determines what is law? PARLIAMENTARY SOVEREIGNTY** - so in theory, no PM would publicly deny a SCUK ruling (RULE of LAW convention) but they have bypassed the SCUK with a new law.  
E.g. **Ahmed v Treasury 2010 (Terrorist Frozen Asset Act 2010)**, **Boris Johnson v Prorogation of Parliament Sept 2019** - forced to reopen Parliament by **Miller 2 case**. PM "unlawful advice" to Queen. Parliament was unlawfully blocked by PM from discussing Brexit - major constitutional change. BJ called election instead.



The relationship between the PM & Cabinet: How effectively does the UK system allow the Executive to check and scrutinise itself?	
PM strengths (Presidential Style PM)	Cabinet Minister strengths (Cabinet Style Government)
<p>"First amongst equals" - although the PM is an MP like all cabinet ministers he is superior:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>PM Pay</b> £75,500 extra (£174,000 total) vs £67,500 (£166,000) Cabinet (2026)</li> <li>a) <b>Power - PM</b> sole power to select his whole Cabinet. (<b>PATRONAGE</b>)</li> <li>a) <b>PM has a personal MANDATE</b> for his leadership in General Election.</li> <li>a) <b>PM can choose a Cabinet</b> that reflects his supporters and ethos. E.g. Blair &amp; New Labour (1997) or <b>CABINET RESHUFFLE</b> (PM changes his Cabinet) B. Johnson &amp; Brexit Cabinet (2021).</li> <li>a) <b>Use COLLECTIVE MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY (CMR)</b> to control all Cabinet ideas &amp; policies. Collective decision making. E.g. Starmer's Cabinet for welfare policies (&amp; U-turns)</li> <li>a) <b>"SOFA Government"</b> - PM uses a small group of ministers / advisers instead. <b>PRESIDENTIAL PM?</b> E.g. <b>Tony Blair</b>.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) <b>"Big Beasts"</b> V. popular MP's with the support of sizeable MPs/ Party may be asked to participate in Cabinet as they may be more dangerous out of it. E.g. Theresa May vs Boris Johnson &amp; David Davis (Brexit leaders) 2016.</li> <li>a) <b>INDIVIDUAL MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY (IMR)</b> Individual Cabinet Minister Protests can cause embarrassment or division within Cabinet, Party and Parliament. Ministers can resign in protest. E.g. Robin Cook (Leader of Commons) resign over Iraq War - triggered 121 Labour MPs to vote vs Labour Govt in the Iraq War vote. Boris Johnson (Foreign Secretary) resigned 30 minutes before PM May's Brexit deal announcement in Parliament 2018.</li> <li>a) <b>Cabinet REBELLION</b> The Cabinet can withdraw their support for the PM and bring about their downfall. E.g. Thatcher 1990 (over Poll Tax) Johnson 2022 (over 50+ government resignations over culmination of scandals)</li> </ul>



## Pillars of Power: A Timeline of UK Prime Ministers (1945–Present)





# COMPARISONS of UK v US Executives



Similarities of UK PM and US President Powers	
<b>1.. Royal Prerogative Powers (domestic)</b> Commander-in-Chief Head of Civil Service	<b>1.. Executive Powers (domestic)</b> Commander-in-Chief Head of Federal Administration
<b>2.. Royal Prerogative Powers (foreign)</b> Executive for Foreign Policy Similar limitations - Parliament convention for declaring war	<b>2.. Executive Powers (foreign)</b> Executive for Foreign Policy Similar limitations - War Powers Act 1975
<b>3.. Head of the Cabinet</b> In charge of all appointments	<b>3.. Head of the Cabinet</b> In charge of all appointments
<b>4.. Removed by Parliament</b> Vote of No Confidence can trigger General Election and end of their government.	<b>4. Removed by Impeachment</b> Charges passed by 51% HoReps and Trial passed by 66% Senate.

Similarities of UK and US Cabinets	
<b>1.. PM = sole authority for ALL Appointments to Cabinet</b> Can create any posts/ ministries as they see fit. E.g. Communities & Levelling Up = M.Gove (2022-24) & A. Rayner (2024)	<b>1.. President = sole authority for ALL Appointments to Cabinet</b> Can create any posts/ ministries as they see fit.  E.g. Elon Musk & DOGE (after a \$1 BN donation)
<b>2.. Head of the Cabinet:</b> Power to Hire & Fire Cabinet at their will  UK = Cabinet Reshuffle e.g. BJ 2021 Brexit Cabinet.	<b>2.. Head of the Cabinet:</b> Power to Hire & Fire Cabinet at their will  E.g. US = Elon Musk fallout with Trump
<b>3.. Big Beasts in the Cabinet</b> T.May appointed the 2 main Brexit leaders; Boris Johnson and David Davies to be Foreign Sec. and Brexit Sec into her 2019 Cabinet.	<b>3.. Big Beasts in US Cabinet</b> E.g. Trump appointed Robert F Kennedy (presidential rival in 2024) into his Cabinet as Minister for Health. RFK is a well known vaccine sceptic and conspiracy theorist. J. Biden used Paul Buttigieg (presidential rival in 2020) as Sec. of Transport in his Cabinet. Obama used Hillary Clinton (presidential rival in 2008) as Sec. of State in his 2009 Cabinet.

Differences of UK PM and US President Powers	
<b>1.. Direct Influence over Legislation: Fusion of Roles/ Powers</b> The PM is an elected MP of Parliament Use of Whips and Patronage to ensure control over Party & Parliament  Executive & Cabinet MUST be an MP.	<b>1.. Little Influence over Legislation: Separation of Powers</b> Separated from their main party Congress leaders like the Speaker control their party with own system of whips and patronage Executive and Cabinet CANNOT be a member of Congress (Ineligibility Clause Article 1)
<b>2.. First Amongst Equals</b> PM / MP dual role Monarch is the Head of State with Royal Assent	<b>2.. "The Chief": Head of State</b> Power of Assent to new legislation "Hail to the Chief" POTUS Anthem
<b>3.. No influence over Judiciary</b> Independent, separation of powers from politics and judiciary.	<b>3.. Directly Appoints Federal Judiciary</b> Selects Supreme Court Justices- long term influence & judicial review.
<b>4.. Elected as an MP within his Party's Mandate</b> Must fulfill their role to constituency, party and electorate	<b>4.. Directly Elected with their own Mandate</b> Own mandate; separation of powers

Differences of UK and US Cabinets	
<b>1.. Membership of the Cabinet</b>  UK members MUST be MPs (Commons or Lords). E.g. Promotion of Lord Cameron to serve as Foreign Sec. for Sunak 2023. Cabinet & Ministries must be lead by a Parliamentary representative.	<b>1.. Membership of the Cabinet</b> US PROHIBITED from serving in Executive & Legislative = The <b>Ineligibility Clause, Article 2</b> Part of the Separation of Powers between Exec & Legislative. E.g. Matt Gaetz resigned from HoReps in 2024 to be Attorney-General. BUT not ratified by Senate. Presidents can choose experts to lead departments. E.g. Liz Cheney joined Biden's Cabinet 2021. (Cheney was a Republican Representative joining a Democrat Government)- joined Foreign Intelligence Advisory Committee due to experience.
<b>2.. PM has complete authority over his Cabinet appointments-</b> no ratification process PM in charge of any reshuffles.	<b>2.. Senate Ratification of Cabinet Posts.</b> Not always agree = Matt Gaetz rejected 2025 (former Congress Rep- nominated for Attorney General)
<b>3.. Cabinet independence</b> All MPs owe loyalty to constituency; party and themselves. Cabinet Rebellions - BJ over 50 resign after Chris Pincher case 2023. Thatcher 1981	<b>3.. Cabinet dependency</b> President has total control and Cabinet only exist due to their patronage.. Cabinet meetings are dependent on President, sporadic / irregular schedule.