

## The Debate on the British Monarchy in Today's Modern Democratic Britain

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### Abstract

The British Monarchy is the eldest institution in Britain. This institution witnessed many historical developments including civil wars, World Wars, fall of the British Empire, rise of democracy, decolonization, economic crises, but still it exists today even though not as strong as it was. This institution had been at once very powerful with its subjects strongly believing in the Divine Right of kings. Gradually, it was stripped of most of its powers as people no longer believed in the sacrosanctity of their kings. Indeed, people started to rebel against their kings and call for limiting their absolute powers to safeguard their own rights and liberties. Such rebellions marked the end of Absolute Monarchy and gave the birth of Constitutional British Monarchy with only symbolic roles to play which do not justify its existence, leading many to call for its abolition. It is really surprising that the British Monarchy still exists now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, but before rushing into calling for its abolition, one must think deeply and raise questions like: What is the rationality of keeping this institution with its apparent symbolic roles in politics, the arena in which everything is carefully counted for? In this humble work, we try to find possible "hidden roles" played by the British monarch that are so important that they make the possibility of abolishing it out of consideration.

### الملخص

"لا شيء في هذا العالم يستحق الوجود ما لم يوجد سبب لوجوده". هذه المقولة تلخص جيدا حالة النظام الملكي البريطاني بالنظر إلى الدور المتواضع الذي يلعبه. هذا النظام كان في يوم من الأيام ذو نفوذ و سلطة إلى درجة أن الملوك البريطانيين كانوا ينظرون إلى حكمهم على أنه حق رباني أزلي لا حدود لصلاحياته لكن مع مرور الوقت لم يعد الناس يؤمنون بهذا الحق و سلب الملوك من قواهم تدريجيا كما يظهر هذا جليا في عدة ثورات قام بها الشعب ضد حكامهم مثل حرب البارونيين و التي تمخضت عنها الوثيقة العظمى للحد من قوى الملوك المطلقة، الحرب الأهلية الإنجليزية و إعدام الملك شارل الأول، و أخيرا الثورة المجيدة التي أدت إلى فرض وثيقة الحقوق لحماية المواطنين من استبداد الحكام. كل هذه الأحداث التاريخية ساهمت في انتقال النظام الملكي البريطاني من الحكم الملكي المطلق إلى الحكم الملكي الدستوري بصلاحيات جد محدودة مما أدى بالكثيرين إلى المطالبة بإلغائه بحجة أنه لا يواكب العصر و يتناقض مع مبادئ الديمقراطية و الحرية كما انه في الواقع لا يقوم بأي دور محسوس ما دامت كل السلطة بيد البرلمان. لكن قبل المسارعة إلى المطالبة بإلغائه يجب التفكير مليا و طرح أسئلة مثل: هل من الممكن أن يكون الإبقاء على هذا النظام بالرغم من دوره الرمزي مجرد غلطة مع العلم أنه في ميدان السياسة كل شيء يحسب له ألف حساب أم أن الإبقاء عليه هو أمر خطط له لخدمة مصالح البلاد. في هذا العمل المتواضع نحاول معرفة أدوار أخرى قد يلعبها النظام غير المتعارف عليها في الدستور لكن لا تتعارض معه و تفسر سبب التصميم على الإبقاء عليه.

### Introduction

The British Monarchy is not only the oldest in Europe; it is also the eldest European institution of any kind except for the papacy. This institution succeeded the test of time *par excellence*, with its existence remaining unshaken even after many changes had taken place in the United Kingdom. Indeed, the country had passed through civil wars, revolutions and World Wars, after which the monarchy had been weakened but not abolished. Now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the institution still exists, though it plays only symbolic roles, and many are calling for its abolition. Such a contradiction between the unimportance of this institution and the insistence on maintaining it leads any sensible person to ask the following questions: why is the existence of the monarchy insisted on throughout all this period? Why does it exist now if it has only symbolic roles to play? Is it possible that its existence is an innocent mistake? Or is it carefully planned for to serve the country's interest? In short what are these logical but hidden reasons behind maintaining the British Monarchy? To answer these questions we need first to define important notions like monarchy, a historical overview to explain why this institution has become weak; and what are the constitutional roles played by the British Monarchy.

### **What is Monarchy?**

The word Monarchy derives from the Greek word “Monàrcha” which means single or absolute ruler. In recent usage, it refers generally to a traditional system of hereditary rule. Monarchy is a very ancient system of government; indeed, Aristotle in his writings about 350 BC discussed the Monarchy system. He considered it as one of the three basics of a

good government along with democracy and aristocracy. It is ruled by an individual who belongs to the apex in an aristocratic pyramid of honor and authority. (Robertson 2004).

Unlike Aristotle who focuses on the fitness of the ruler and his duty to look after the interests of his citizens, recent definitions of Monarchy focus on its being hereditary. Other definitions of the term merely contrast it with parliamentarism in which the executive power is controlled by assemblies of free citizens elected, as opposed to monarchy in which a person from the dynastic succession rules.

### **Why Were the First English Kings Strong? And What is Divine Rights of Kings?**

The first English kings, including the Anglo-Saxons and the Normans were absolute kings because of the theory of Divine Rights of Kings that English subjects trusted blindly. Figgis (1914), in his source book *Divine Right of Kings*, upon which other historians based on their works like Kern Fritz in *The Monarchical Principle*, and Francis Oakley in *Kingship and the Politics of Enchantment*, formulated the complete theory of Divine Right of Kings, consisting of four elements:

1. *Monarchy is divinely ordained institution.*
2. *Hereditary right is indefeasible.*
3. *Kings are accountable to god alone.*
4. *Non resistance and passive obedience are enjoined by God. (5-6)*

Figgis provided his four elements with supportive detailed explanations which can be summarized as follows: The first element and the most important one asserts that the king derives his right to rule directly from God. The second argues that the hereditary right cannot be denied in any way even after a long act of usurpation. In the third, Figgis affirms that the king is not subject to any earthly authority and any attempt to limit the powers of monarchy is a contradiction to the Divine Right. The last element considers resistance to kings as a sin which ensures damnation; instead, it calls people to passively obey the king.

Thanks to this theory, English kings were extremely powerful, but with the passage of time people rebelled against their kings and started to claim for their rights.

### **How Was the British Monarchy Weakened?**

British monarchy was not weakened overnight. This was a long gradual process which started by the Barons' war that was an unprecedented and courageous step to challenge the king who had always been regarded as the representative of God on earth and to whom people should be passive obedient subjects. Many historians tried to explain this radical change. George C. Kohn in his *Dictionary of Historical Documents* described this event as: "the irate barons

vowing to end John's despotism" (2003, p266). The Barons' war was very significant because it enforced for the first time in history a legal paper to limit kings' royal powers which is the Magna Carta.

If we approach the content of the Magna Carta, we see that its major points include an assertion of men's natural rights through a revolt against the king who enlarged his royal power at the expense of their rights and liberties. This encompasses: no arbitrary imprisonment, no oppressive seizure or banishment, freedom of the church (clause 1), limitations on the king's exaction of relief, scutage and aid (clause 2, 12 and 15), and other clauses granting men's right to justice. If the king refused to observe these rights, the barons gave themselves the right to "distrain upon and assail us [the barons] in every way possible, with the support of the whole community of the land, by seizing castles, lands, possessions, or anything else" (Magna Carta clause 61). The daring of the barons to threaten the king with rebellion in case he failed to observe these rights reveals in fact that they no longer believe in the Divine Rights of Kings and that the Monarchy is weak.

The English Civil War was another step in limiting monarchs' powers. It was described by William Burns as: "the greatest disaster ever to befall the British Monarchy" (2010, p108). This is true regarding its momentous consequences; it led to a deteriorating relation between the crown and parliament without repair and cleared the way for the birth of a Constitutional Monarchy. The English Civil War lasted from 1642 to 1649, It was a series of armed conflicts between Parliamentarians (i.e. supporters of parliament who wanted to restrict royal powers), and Royalists (i.e. supporters of the crown). It ended by:

the trial and execution of King Charles I, the exile of his son Charles II and the replacement of the English Monarchy with a republic under the personal rule of Oliver Cromwell.

The last step to weaken the British monarchy whose effect is felt today is the Glorious Revolution. The problem started when Charles II died in 1685 childless, he was succeeded by his Catholic brother James II who devoted his rule to secure more freedom to Catholics in the name of religious toleration, this enraged most members of leading political circles who, seeing this as a move to make England a centralized Catholic state, forced him out of the throne and invited Mary, his protestant daughter and her husband William III of Orange to be joint monarchs provided that they signed the Bills of Rights which was a fatal blow to the prestige of the monarchy. (Wilkinson 2006)

### **What are the Constitutional Roles of the British Monarchy?**

In fact, Britain has an uncodified constitution. This means that the constitution is not written. It consists of Statute Law (i.e. acts of parliament), Common Law (i.e. judge made law), Conventions (i.e. principles and practices of government which are not legally binding, but have the force of law), some ancient documents like the Magna Carta and the new addition of European Union Law. (Oakland 2002). Under the uncodified constitution of UK, the British monarch has the following roles:

### **The Appointment of the Prime Minister**

Under the uncodified constitution of the United Kingdom, the monarch has the right to appoint an individual who commands the support of the House of Commons. This function is insignificant, as the

monarch automatically chooses the leader of the party or coalition which has a majority in the house. This role becomes significant only in the rare case of “hung parliament” in which no party holds a majority. (Poussard 1968, p77)

## **Royal Prerogatives**

Some of government’s executive authority is vested in the Sovereign; this is known as Royal Prerogative which gives the monarch many powers at home and abroad. This includes the power to grant or refuse Royal Assent to bills to make them valid laws. This means that without Royal Assent no bill can turn into law not only in Britain, but in all the sixteen realms of the commonwealth which recognize the British Monarch as a head of State. The British Monarch has also the prerogative to appoint and dismiss ministers including the prime minister of parliament. Thus, by these powers the monarch can theoretically control the legislative power. The monarch has a hand in the judicial branch too as he can appoint judges and grant Prerogative of Mercy which is an old prestige that pardons convicted offenders to reduce sentences. The British monarch is also Head of State; accordingly, the executive power is vested in his name. In foreign affairs, the monarch can declare wars, make peace, negotiate and ratify treaties, alliances and international agreements, direct the actions of the military and deploy the Armed Forces overseas, receive and credit diplomats from foreign countries, and recognize states. The monarch also holds titles like: “Fount of Justice” which means that the judiciary functions are performed in the sovereign’s name; “Fount of Honour” which implies that he or she is the source of all honours and dignities in

the United Kingdom; “Commander-in-Chief of the British Armed Forces” which enables him to direct the actions of the military. (Oakland 2002).

These Royal Prerogatives make the monarch appear as an absolute ruler, but this is not the case in reality; all that have been said above are only in strict theory. In other word, there is a “gap between constitutional theory and political reality” as argues Tony Wright in *the Political Process in Britain* (2000, p39). For example, the Royal Assent was not refused since 1707, thus we cannot speak of this authority as long as the monarch is not able to veto any bill; the appointment and dismissal of ministers, bishops and archbishops should be struck out of discussion as the monarch acts only within the constraints of the prime minister and the Privy Council; the same thing for the big issues of declaring wars, making peace or drifting international agreements, here, the monarch is a mere figurehead. Even the titles the Queen holds remains meaningless; perhaps the clearest example is being Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces and not interfering at all in the military. (Wright 2000)

Walter Bagehot whose book *The English Constitution* (2001) inspired many prominent historians like M.D Graig, D. Cannadine and Olechnowicz, claims that in reality the British monarch has only three rights: “the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn” (2001, p60). He exemplifies the role of the Sovereign in the following dialogue:



The responsibility of these measures is upon you. Whatever you think best must be done. Whatever you think best must have my full and effective support. But you will observe that for this reason and that reason what you propose to do is bad; for this reason and that reason what you propose is better. I do not oppose, it is my duty not to oppose; but observe that I warn. (Ibid, p60)

The inability to play significant roles led many politicians, organizations and even political parties to doubt the rationality of keeping such an institution, calling for abolishing it as we will see next.

## **What Are the Main Arguments Against the British Monarchy?**

According to republicans, the British Monarchy is not only powerless and insignificant as we have seen previously, but it also suffers from many defects, the strongest ones are:

### **Monarchy Contradicts Democracy**

Republicans believe that the institution of Monarchy deprive people of their fundamental right of electing their Head of State and for every citizen to be eligible to hold that office. It also makes Britain appear backward as it is associated with aristocracy. (Oakland 2002)

### **The Enemy of Merit and Aspiration**

The highest office in the land is not open to free fair competition because the order of succession specifies who will become Head of State. This devaluates intellect and achievement as members of the

Royal Family hold offices without the necessary experience; for example, the Queen has many honorary military titles like being Colonel-in-chief regardless of her military experience.

### **Monarchy is Expensive**

“No aspect of monarchy is so secret as its true cost” (Duncan 1970, p170). Since the distant past, Royal Finances have been shrouded in secrecy, but recently some documents like the Daily Telegraph, leaked the shocking overpriced expenditures of the crown which allegedly amount to £ 202,4 million every year, thus making the British Monarchy the most expensive in Europe. This huge sum was paid for by taxes imposed on each adult British. This caused resentment among republicans, seeing that this money is spent on meaningless self indulgent activities like ceremonies. They called for subjecting the Royal Family to greater scrutiny and accountability.

### **Monarchs are Impartial and Lack Accountability**

In the British Monarchy, an important democratic accountability and transparency is lacking; under the UK law, civil and criminal proceeding cannot be taken against the person of the Monarch whatever he or she does; citizens can sue the government but not the Sovereign.

### **Gender and Ethnic Discrimination**

It is argued that the British Monarchy is discriminatory against women as the institution has used until now male primogeniture, which meant that the crown has been inherited by the eldest son, and has only passed to a daughter if the monarch had no sons. It is also argued that

the Royal Family with their noble dynasty calls for dividing society where one ethnic group can boast about their origins and drive from it a sense of superiority.

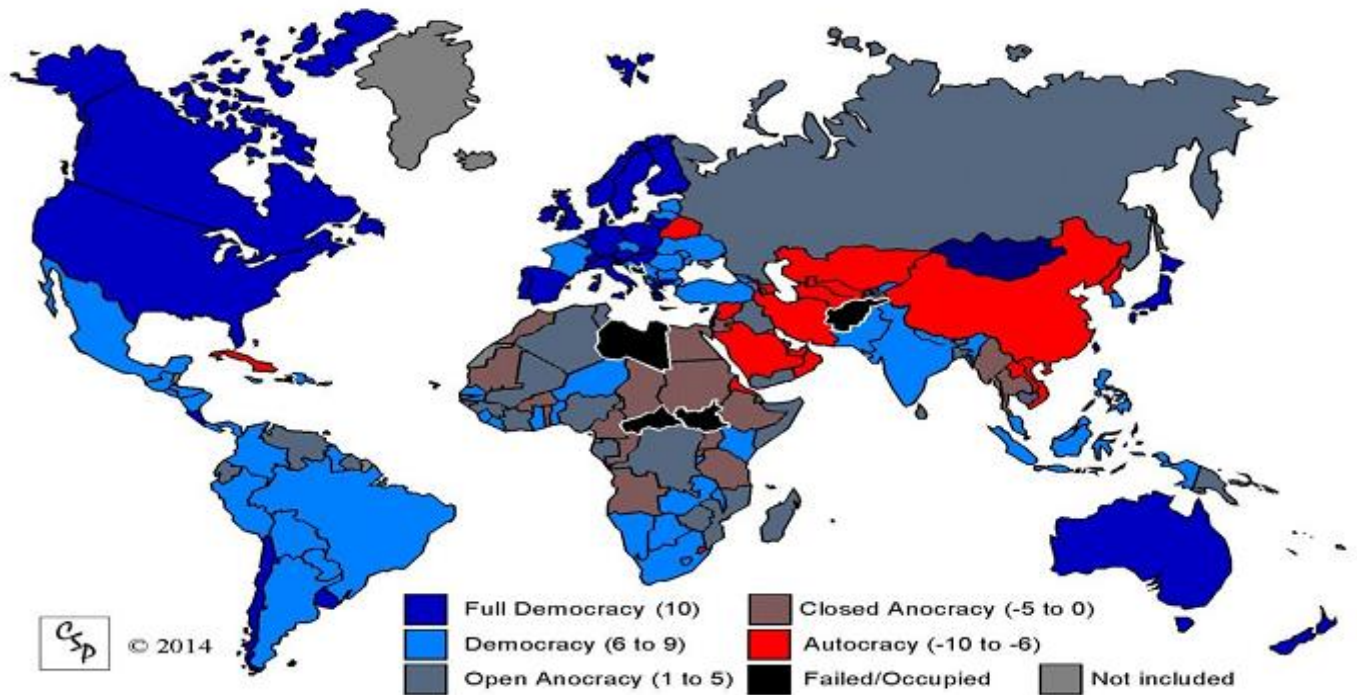
### **It calls for Anarchism and Hinders the State's Development**

Haselor (1993) claims that due to the institution of the monarchy, the British political system is anarchist, he said in his own words in *The End of the House of Windsor* that:

Royal state, with its unwritten constitution and its tightly drawn network of monarchy, Lords and established church is not only a constitutional anarchism, it also represents, reflects and encourages a set of attitudes which hobble the country's development. (1993, p5)

All these arguments can be refuted with the fact that, without a written constitution, the United Kingdom could survive for all these centuries, not endangering the country by dictatorships that the republics had experienced. Since there is a parliament and representatives of people governing, the system is democratic as many international indexes reveal continuously. For example, in the most recent Polity V World Map of Democracy, UK appears in dark blue which corresponds for being full democratic country despite having a monarchy as some

opponents of the institution claim.



**Figure: Polity VI World Map of Democracy 2014. (Marshall & Cole 2014, p27)**

In fact, the British Monarchy causes no harm; by contrast, it plays nowadays an important cultural role especially in maintaining the British national identity that many researches spoke of its deterioration due to many factors. Perhaps the main factor is the rise of local nationalisms in the four countries which make up the kingdom. According to recent surveys conducted by British Social Attitudes surveys (BSA), British identity is challenged by loyalty to countries rather than the kingdom. BSA asks annually the Monero Question to compare two identities, asking respondents to choose the identity which describes them better. For example, the following table presents the questionnaire results in Scotland.

	92	97	99	00	01	03	05	06	07	09	10	11	12
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Scottish not British	19	23	32	37	36	31	32	33	27	27	28	29	23
More Scottish than British	40	38	35	31	30	34	32	32	30	31	30	33	30
Equally Scottish and British	33	27	22	21	24	22	22	21	28	26	26	23	30
More British than Scottish	3	4	3	3	3	4	4	4	5	4	4	5	5
British not Scottish	3	4	4	4	3	4	5	5	6	4	4	5	6
<i>Weighted base</i>	*	882	1482	1663	1605	1508	1549	1594	1508	1482	1495	1196	1229
<i>Unweighted base</i>	957	882	1482	1663	1605	1508	1549	1594	1508	1482	1495	1196	1229

**Table 1: Trends in Monero National Identity, Scotland 2013.**

**(Park et al 2013, p145)**

The 2012 survey results shows that 23% see themselves as “Scottish not British”, 30% consider themselves “more Scottish than British”, 30% as “equally Scottish and British”, 5% see themselves “more British than Scottish”, and 6% as “British not Scottish”. Undoubtedly, the results show that the majority of the sample has more loyalty to their local identity than to their national identity if we consider those who identify themselves as “Scottish not British” and “More Scottish than British” with a percentage of 53% together. Those with dual identity have a considerable percentage as well (30%); whereas those with more loyalty to their national identity do not exceed 11% of the sample. If we compare the 2012 survey results with the previous years, we find that the percentages are close to one another. The Scottish Social Attitudes 2013’s findings reveals that the British national identity is really in a serious problem in Scotland. The same questionnaire was held in England.

	97	99	00	01	03	07	08	09	12
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
English not British	7	17	18	17	17	19	16	17	17
More English than British	17	14	14	13	19	14	14	16	12
Equally English and British	45	37	34	42	31	31	41	33	44
More British than English	14	11	14	9	13	14	9	10	8
British not English	9	14	12	11	10	12	9	13	10
<i>Weighted base</i>	2492+	2722	1956	2786	1929	870	1001	1970	2800
<i>Unweighted base</i>	3150	2718	1928	2761	1917	859	982	1940	2729

**Table 2: Trends in Monero National Identity in England, 1997-2012.**  
**(Park et al 2013, p148)**

The 2012 survey results shows that 17% see themselves as “English not British”, 12% consider themselves “more English than British”, 44% as “equally English and British”, 8% see themselves “more British than English”, and 10% as “British not English”. The highest recorded percentage was is for being “equally English and British”. This confirms the point of Kiely et al that in England people tend to mix between being English and being British. If we take respondents who have more loyalty to their local identity, their percentage does not exceed 29%; and if we take the respondents who have more loyalty to their national identity, their percentage do not exceed 18% with almost the same vote results of the previous years. In Wales, the same survey was conducted. The following table summarises the results.

<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>9</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>1</b>

	7	9	1	3	7	1	1	2
	%	%	%	%	%	(	(	%
						1	2	
						)	)	
							%	
						%		
<b>Welsh not</b>	1	1	2	2	2	1	1	2
<b>British</b>	7	7	4	1	4	9	7	1
<b>More</b>	2	1	2	2	2	1	1	1
<b>Welsh than</b>	6	9	3	7	0	9	9	7
<b>British</b>								
<b>Equally</b>	3	3	2	2	3	3	3	3
<b>Welsh and</b>	4	7	8	9	2	0	0	5
<b>British</b>								
<b>More</b>	1	8	1	8	9	8	8	8
<b>British</b>	0		1					
<b>than Welsh</b>								
<b>British not</b>	1	1	1	9	9	2	2	1
<b>Welsh</b>	2	4	1			0	0	7

**Table 3: Monero National Identity in Wales, 1997-2012.**

**(Curtice 2013, p17)**

The 2012 Survey results show that 21% of people in Wales say they are “Welsh not British”; 17% consider themselves “More Welsh than British”; 35% say they are “Equally Welsh and British”; only 8% regard themselves as “More British than Welsh”, and 17% as “British not

Welsh”. This means that 38% of people in Wales have more loyalty to their local identity as opposed to 25% who identify themselves either as British more than Welsh or British not Welsh. Notice also that people in Wales tend to have dual identities if we consider the large percentage of those who identify themselves as “Equally Welsh and British”. To conclude, the Welsh have more loyalty to their local identity rather than to the British national identity. In Northern Ireland the Monero Questions was asked as well. The following table summarises the results.

	02	03	04	05	06	07	08	09	10	12
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
British	45	41	48	39	39	38	37	35	37	39
Irish	28	27	27	28	28	29	26	32	26	32
Northern Irish	19	23	21	27	26	26	29	27	29	22
Ulster	4	4	3	3	4	3	4	2	3	1
<i>Weighted base</i>	1800	1801	1800	1200	1230	1178	1215	1228	1199	1199
<i>Unweighted base</i>	1800	1800	1800	1200	1230	1179	1214	1228	1201	1197

**Table 4: Identities in Northern Ireland. (Park et al 2013, p171)**

The 2012 survey results show that 39% of the respondents see themselves as British, 32% as Irish, 22% as Northern Irish, and 1% regard themselves as Ulster. As shown in the table, the highest recorded percentage is for being British, followed by being Irish with a close percentage, then by being Northern Irish with a less percentage. What is astonishing in these results is the fact that unlike the Scottish and the English, the Northern Irish tend to have more loyalty to their



British national identity. They even have more loyalty to Ireland rather than to Northern Ireland.

## **The Role of the British Monarchy in Preserving the British National Identity**

By the early 1990's, the British Monarchy was all that was left of Britishness (Olechnowicz 2007). For many British, The monarchy is a symbol of the necessary but deteriorating national identity in the United Kingdom. As long as national identity is fundamental for the survival of any nation, this symbol is highly important, considering symbols in general an essential way to stick ideas into the human mind as claimed by the great Swiss psychologist Carl Jung:

A word or an image is symbolic when it implies something more than its obvious and immediate

meaning. It has a wider unconscious aspect than is never precisely defined or fully explained. No

one can hope to define or explain it. As the minds explore the Symbol, it is led to ideas that lie

beyond the grasp of reason. (1964, p4)

Here, Jung claims that symbols are so powerful that their emotional impact exceeds that of reason. The same idea was emphasized by Baghot in her explanation of the survival of the British Monarchy:

So long as the human heart is strong and the human reason weak, royalty will be strong because it

appeals to diffused feeling, and Republicans weak because they appeal to understanding. (2001, p37).

In precisely this manner, the British Monarchy is a symbol of the continuity of certain values. Many studies have concluded that it plays an important role in preserving the British identity. (Cannadine 1983; Oakland 2002; Taylor 1977).

For example, the hereditary nature of the monarchy and its ability to trace back its family line reminds the British of their historic roots (Palmer 2008); they can see where they came from as individuals and as a nation within an age where peoples suffer from a crisis of identity, not able to answer the questions: who we are? And where we came from? Unlike many, the British know who they are, from where they come, and are very proud of their origins, thanks to the British Monarchy which embodies both their origins and their long history of the Kingdom. (Billig 1992)

The Monarchy represents religion also. As Head of Church in England, all functions in UK protestant churches are carried in her name. In a growing secular society like Britain, as some social studies predict based on church attendance (Ashworth 2007), it is significant that the British Monarch sticks to a religion, which is undoubtedly a basic aspect of the British culture because the British see their monarch as an example to follow and consider him as a source of inspiration. Not only the monarch but the whole royal family should represent the nation at its best, embodying religious teachings in all aspects of their daily life, because in people's mind, they are a model of an ideal family as argues Plimott, exemplifying with the York family:

became a fixed point in the national and imperial psych. When people imagined getting married and

setting up home, they thought of the Yorks. The modest, reserved, quietly proud father, the practical

child-centred mother, the well mannered daughters... (2001, p18)

This may explain the popularity of royal ceremonies which are treated like political events, as the Queen's Silver Jubilee in 1977, the prince wedding to Lady Diana in 1981, the Golden Jubilee in 2002 and others (Olechnowicz 2007). Royal ceremonies were warmly attended by peoples all around the UK despite their differences (i.e. religion, origins, accents). About the significance of these ceremonies and coronations and their impact on the British identity Shils and Young say:

The coronation, much like Christmas, was a time for drawing closer the bonds of the family, for re-

asserting its solidarity and for re-emphasizing the values of the family generosity, loyalty, love

necessary for the well being of the large family. On this occasion, one family was knit together with

another in one great family through identification with the monarchy. A general warmth and

congeniality permeated relations even with strangers. (Shils and Young 1955, p73)

Here, “permeated relations even with strangers” summarises well the long-term goal of maintaining the British Monarchy; it is preserving the British National identity so that those “strangers”, being English, Welsh, Scottish or N. Irish see themselves British and promote relations between them to keep their nation.

### **The Role of the British Monarchy in Keeping the Kingdom United**

Before dealing with this role, it is useful to have knowledge about the rising call for independence in UK to give more significance and urgency to such a role.

### **Attitudes towards Independence within the United Kingdom**

According to Keating (2001), there is a link between sub-state nationalism in Britain and attitudes towards independence; the more people feel Welsh, Irish, English or N. Irish, the more likely that they favour independence from the Kingdom. In the previous section, we have seen that local nationalism is high in two parts of the UK: Wales and Scotland; if the thesis of Keating is true, normally there should be an

attitude towards independence in these two parts, especially with people preferring their sub-state nationalism over Britishness. The following table may help us find this:

Constitutional Preferences	National Identity				
Scotland	Scottish not British	More Scottish than British	Equally Scottish than British	More British than Scottish	British not Scottish
Independence	47%	22%	8%	5%	10%

Devolution	51 %	63 %	62 %	66 %	68 %
No Devolution	5 %	10 %	26 %	23 %	21 %
<b>Wales</b>	<b>Welsh not British</b>	<b>More Welsh than British</b>	<b>Equally Welsh and British</b>	<b>More British than Welsh</b>	<b>British not Welsh</b>
Independence	27 %	11 %	11 %	7 %	6 %
Parliament	40 %	44 %	31 %	38 %	22 %
Assembly	18 %	25 %	28 %	31 %	29 %

No	11	14	28	21	39
Devolution	%	%	%	%	%

**Table 5: Monero Identities and Constitutional Preference in Scotland and Wales**

**Source:** Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2003, Wales Life and Time Survey 2003.

In both nations, there is a significant support for devolution (i.e. self-determination). In Scotland most respondents, whatever is their identity preference, favour devolution. The same thing in Wales in which the largest portion chose either to have their own Welsh parliament or their own assembly. However, the highest percentage of preferring Independence is recorded in Scotland with those who see themselves Scottish not British, followed by those who see themselves Scottish more than British. Again the same thing in Wales; those who identify themselves as Welsh not British, or Welsh more than British, were the largest portion to prefer independence. These statistics highly accord with the thesis of Keating, asserting that in the United Kingdom, attitudes towards independence increase mainly in Wales and Scotland, due to high local nationalisms there.

According to an analysis by Rosie and Bond (2008) to such surveys, attitudes towards independence are influenced by two factors: economic conditions and demographical growth. Considering variables when conducting these surveys, it was found that young people and working class are more likely to favour independence than the old, or the no-

working class people. This gives us a pessimistic image about the future of the United Kingdom, as the old will at once die and the youth grow, especially if the economic conditions will improve.

### **The Role of the British Monarchy in Keeping the Kingdom United**

We have seen how the British Monarchy contribute in maintaining the important but deteriorating British National Identity, then, we have seen how the decline of Britishness sentiment is an attitude towards independence especially in Scotland and Wales. It is now safety to say that, through promoting National Identity, the British Monarchy plays even more important role which is to keep the Kingdom united. The best way to see this role is to imagine the United Kingdom without the British Monarchy; with the rising call for republicanism by local political parties, the kingdom will fall apart as each country becomes separate and possibly a republic. It is so important for the United Kingdom to stay united if it is to act as a strong nation in international affairs.

### **The Role of the British Monarchy in Playing Stronger Role in International Relations**

Before studying this role, it is useful to have an overview about international relations theories first.

#### **Overview about International Relations theories**

There are many theories which try to explain the nature of international relations; perhaps, the most important one that may help us prove that the British Monarchy plays a role in promoting international



relations is the Realist Theory. This theory asserts that states, like human beings, had innate desire to dominate others. Kenneth Waltz (1988), a fervent supporter of the theory, focused on the international system, for him, the system consists of a number of great powers, each seeking to survive. Because it is anarchic (i.e. there is no central authority to protect states from one another), each state has to survive on its own. Waltz claims that this condition would lead weaker states to unite against the more powerful rivals. The same theory stresses the importance of National Identities for states to survive.

### **Britishness and International Relations**

In a much quoted speech on the future of Britishness and UK's foreign policy, Gordon Brown pointed out that in Britain's relation with Europe, USA, and the rest of the world, it is important to "have a clear view of what being British means" (Haugevik 2009, p12). This statement accords with the Realists view that national identities are important in international relations; it is about how states see themselves, and how they would like to be seen by others. In Britain, thanks to its long history of empire that almost every one now knows who are the British. In fact, after the collapse of this empire, the United Kingdom intelligently made use of its history to foster better international relation through the so called "commonwealth" as we will see next. (Haugevik 2009)

### **The Role of the British Monarchy in Promoting International Relations through the Commonwealth of Nations**

The Commonwealth of Nations is an intergovernmental organization of 54 independent member states. All members except Mozambique and Rwanda were part of the British Empire, out of which the Commonwealth developed. This organization aims at: promoting democracy, human rights, good governance, individual liberty, free trade, and world peace through cooperation and consensus between the member states.

These appealing principles, as they may appear, are only a protective cover to hide Britain's real aim behind establishing such an organization. According to Mark Burdman (1997), this organization which incorporates about 30% of the world's population, with a vast control of international minerals, food, grains and energy resources, is the institutional form of the "new less visible British Empire" (32). Through encouraging trade between the UK and its previous colonies - now the Commonwealth countries-, Britain ensures a formidable economic force accounting for 20% of World trade. (Robertson and Singleton 2002)

The very economic force is used as a unique instrument to play stronger roles in international political organizations like the United Nations. According to Thomas Millar (1962), the Commonwealth exists as a cohesive group in the United Nation, acting in one single voice when it comes to voting. This is not surprising; the United Nations has always been described as a huge and imposing theatre of conflicts and interests (Akindele 1999), as affirms a guide issued by the United Nation itself entitled: *Intergovernmental Negotiations and Decision Making at the United Nations*, it is stated that there are unofficial "alliances" (2007,

p12) within the United Nations speaking in one voice, this includes 12 groups like the European Union, the African Union, the Rio Group. Among all these competitors, it is essential for the welfare of the UK that the British voice should be strong and clear, alone, her voice will not be heard, but with cooperation with its ex-colonies within the framework of the Commonwealth of Nations this can be achieved.

We have seen how the UK could strengthen both its economic and political positions, the first through encouraging trade with its previous colonies which are now members of the Commonwealth, and the second, through acting as a cohesive group in the decisive issues of the United Nations. Some analysts turn back the success of the Commonwealth to cooperation among its member states, thanks to the common language, heritage, and constitutional principles which have created an atmosphere of greater trust and understanding among them. But in its essence, the Commonwealth countries are brought together thanks to the British Monarchy which had gathered up its previous colonies and united them with solely British cultural ties. In other words, all the achievements in credit of the Commonwealth are owed to the British Monarchy. (Brysk, et al 2002)

## **Conclusion**

It is true that the uncodified constitution of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland gives the British Monarch large powers, but in reality these powers can never be exercised without reference to parliament. In other words, there is a gap between theory and practice and the institution of the monarchy is left only with

symbolic roles which do not justify its existence. Abolitionists take this point as a strong argument to call for abolishing the institution in addition to being undemocratic, expensive, anarchists, discriminatory, and other points. But recent researches continue to reveal that the British support the existence of the monarchy which in fact plays highly significant roles which might go unnoticed. These roles can be summarised in maintaining the British Monarchy that is deteriorating due to loyalty to local nationalisms rather than Britishness in the four parts that make up the kingdom especially in Scotland and Wales. The institution of the monarchy helps also in keeping the kingdom united, and this role in turns, enables the country to play stronger roles in international organizations like the United Nations through the Commonwealth of Nations to serve UK politically and economically. These roles justify the insistence on keeping the institution throughout all this period.

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