

# The Role of the Monarchy in the United Kingdom

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## **Uloga monarhije u Ujedinjenom Kraljevstvu**

Završni rad

Mentor: doc. dr. sc. Jadranka Zlomislić

Osijek, 2023.

Sveučilište J. J. Strossmayera u Osijeku  
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Bachelor's Thesis

Supervisor: Dr. Jadranka Zlomislić, Assistant Professor

Osijek, 2023

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines the different roles of the Sovereign of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The British Monarchy is one of the most well-known in the world and its influence is significant for the nation, the Commonwealth, and is recognized very favourably globally. The aim of the paper was to prove that along with the representative, religious and the constitutional role, the Sovereign plays a significant part in the Armed Forces, the Commonwealth and as the patron of charities. The paper analyses the historical evolution of the United Kingdom and the monarchy itself, while focusing on the influences that shaped the nation as it is known today, mentioning crucial events and documents such as the Magna Carta, the Bill of Rights and the Glorious Revolution. Additionally, the paper highlights the general role of the monarch as well as each of the monarch's specific roles, beginning with the representative role which is of crucial importance for the sense of pride and unity of the nation. Moreover, the paper discusses the significance of the formal and the ceremonial roles of the monarch, such as dissolution and prorogation of the Parliament, religious duties, the Royal Assent, jubilees, the coronation, and obligations regarding the Commonwealth and the charities. The paper also investigates the relationship between the monarchy, media and the public opinion. In the end, it can be concluded that the British Constitutional Monarchy provides social and political stability that establishes a balance between democracy and tradition and that is the reason that it has lasted for over a thousand years.

**Keywords:** the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, British, monarchy, role, sovereign

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## **Introduction**

The British monarchy represents a central role in the governance and the identity of the United Kingdom. Over the centuries, it has gone through a large number of crucial changes and events which shaped it, such as the Magna Carta and the Glorious Revolution. The monarchy has represented and even today continues to represent the collective identity of the nation. Through many important events, such as royal weddings and jubilees, the monarchy contributes to the British culture and awakens the sense of national pride and unity. Along with the representative role of the Sovereign, the role includes many other functions in regard with religion, the Commonwealth and some other areas. Throughout history, the British monarchs have had an important impact on the country, the Commonwealth as well as on the rest of the world because the British Constitutional Monarchy has always provided social and political stability that establishes a balance between democracy and tradition.

The first chapter provides an explanation of the history of the United Kingdom, emphasizing the different influences and events that shaped the British society and the monarchy. The second chapter analyses the roles of the monarch by firstly explaining the sovereign's role as a constitutional monarch, which is crucial for the UK Parliament's opening, dissolution and prorogation that are among the duties of the monarch. The chapter also analyses the representative role which is significant for the sense of pride and unity in the British society. The sections that follow investigate the religious role of the monarch, explaining the title "Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England." This section is followed by an examination of the monarch's role in the Armed Forces, the Commonwealth and, lastly, as the patron of charities. To sum up, this thesis intends to demonstrate the importance of the monarch in the United Kingdom, who, with the support of the working royals who carry out various official royal engagements on behalf of the monarch, does not play a role in executive or political matters of the country. However, he or she is involved in numerous other aspects, and therefore has an enormous influence on the United Kingdom and holds great respect throughout the world.

## 1. The History of the United Kingdom

The United Kingdom as it is known today was created by numerous social and political influences in its long history, from the Norman dynasty, through the Plantagenets, Tudors, Stuarts and Hanoverians to the Windsors, who continue to rule today. Preceding the formation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, it is crucial to mention the events in the previous centuries that led to the formation of the country as it exists today. The first step began with Henry VIII's Act of Union in 1536, whereby Wales was legally incorporated into England, with English as its only official language ("Act of Union England and Wales"). Thereafter came the joining of Scotland and England in a political union, the idea of which was born in 1689. It was based on the fact that both nations used the same language, shared the same land and both of the nations were Protestant ("Union between Scotland and England?"). This significant year is also known for the Bill of Rights, an Act declaring Rights and Liberties of the Subject, and settling the Succession of the Crown. Its importance is also emphasized today as it outlined constitutional and civil rights and indicated the power of the Parliament over the monarchy as well ("Bill of Rights 1689"). Despite the idea being developed in 1689, the Acts of Union were passed by the English and Scottish Parliaments in 1707, resulting in the creation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain on the first of May of the same year ("Act of Union 1707").

Furthermore, because of the threat of a French invasion, the British Government took joining with Ireland into consideration. Even though the Irish were against it at first, the Dublin and Westminster Parliaments both passed Acts in 1800, resulting in the abolishment of the Irish legislature and the introduction of the Union between Ireland and Great Britain in 1801. As a result, Ireland was given one hundred members of Parliament, four Church of Ireland bishops joined the Lords, and the peerage of Ireland was represented in the House of Lords by twenty-eight of their number ("An Act for the Union of Great Britain and Ireland"). Additionally, a major event happened in 1921 with the Anglo-Irish Treaty. According to Fathartaigh and Weeks, in Ireland, the Treaty was associated with failure to achieve sovereignty and sever the link with the United Kingdom. Therefore, the Treaty was not a democratic outcome of negotiations between the two powers, but it was reached under the threat of war. There were attempts of separating from the British Empire by Dáil Éireann, and even though the British government attempted to deal with it with armed resistance, the Crown forces did not

manage to eliminate the rebels. As a result, the British prime minister, David Lloyd George, issued an open invitation to the self-declared president of the Irish Republic in order to resolve the Irish issue (Fathartaigh and Weeks 2–4). The negotiations began on 11 October 1921 and continued for eight weeks. In the standard published account of the negotiations, Thomas Pakenham, better known as Lord Longford, identified five main areas of conflict between the United Kingdom and the Irish delegates: The Crown, Northern Ireland, trade, finance and defence (qtd. in Torrance, “The Anglo-Irish Treaty” 10–11). According to the UK, Ireland should have gotten Dominion status, which meant that it would become a constitutional monarchy, which the Irish delegates were strongly against (qtd. in Torrance, “The Anglo-Irish Treaty” 11). Furthermore, Lloyd George attempted to pressure the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland into accepting legislative subordination under an all-Ireland parliament, while in response, Sir James demanded Dominion status for Northern Ireland (qtd. in Torrance, “The Anglo-Irish Treaty” 12). Solving the Irish question regarding independence of the Irish, Lloyd George won praise with the Treaty (qtd. in Torrance, “The Anglo-Irish Treaty” 15). After the election, majority of Irish voters supported pro-Treaty candidates, which led to the Irish Civil War, a conflict between supporters and opponents of the Treaty. In 1922, the United Kingdom Parliament considered the Irish Free State Act, which replaced the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland with a Governor of Northern Ireland. However, there was still uncertainty about whether Northern Ireland should remain a part of the United Kingdom or the Irish Free State. In the end, it was decided that Northern Ireland had contracted out of its future inclusion in an all-Ireland parliament (qtd. in Torrance, “The Anglo-Irish Treaty” 32-36). Lastly, it is of crucial importance to mention the final Royal and Parliamentary Titles Act of 1927, which changed the name of the United Kingdom Parliament to “Parliament of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland” (Fathartaigh and Weeks 41).

## **2. The Role of the Monarch**

The United Kingdom monarchy, where a king or queen is the Head of State, remains the oldest form of government. In such a state: “Monarchs often achieve their status through heredity, such that rulership passes from parent to child or to another close relative in a royal family” (Eldridge). Even though the monarch has the power as the head of state, they are not necessarily head of government. With King John’s signing of the Magna Carta in 1215, it was clear that the monarch did not any longer have absolute power. The signing of the document denoted that the crown could not levy taxes without the consent of a council of religious officials and feudal lords, who eventually evolved into Parliament (Wood). The monarchy in the United Kingdom is known as a constitutional monarchy, which indicates that even though the Sovereign is Head of State, the ability to make and pass legislation is in the hands of Parliament (“The Role of the Monarchy”). Along with the constitutional role, the monarch has an enormous role in other aspects as well, such as in religion, armed forces and representation of the nation.

### **2.1. The Constitutional Role**

Since the British Monarchy is a constitutional monarchy, the Sovereign’s ability to make and pass legislation resides with an elected Parliament; however, there are some constitutional roles that the Sovereign is obliged to fulfil, including the opening, dissolution and prorogation (“The Role of the Monarchy”). According to Torrance, in the past the dissolution of the Parliament was exercised at the absolute discretion of the monarch and the dissolutions were officially requested by the Prime Ministers, which could be refused by the monarch. On the other hand, prorogation is a process ending the current parliamentary session, also carried out by the monarch and by Proclamation. Furthermore, the monarch is obliged to conduct several ceremonial and formal roles in the Parliament, such as beginning each new session of Parliament, which is the only time when the three parts of Parliament gather. On this occasion, according to *The Companion to the Standing Orders and Guide to the Proceedings of the House of Lords*, the King is met at the Sovereign’s Entrance by the Lord Great Chamberlain and enters the Palace of Westminster preceded by the Earl Marshal, Lord Great

Chamberlain, Lord Chancellor, Lord Speaker and Lord Privy Seal, then they proceed to the Robing Room where the King robes and puts on the Crown and regalia (Beammish). A procession is formed, and when the King arrives to His throne, His Majesty delivers the speech (Beamish 25-27). It is important to note that the speech delivered by the Monarch is prepared by the government of the day. In addition, when it comes to Acts of Parliament, the Monarch also has an important role. The monarch has the power of giving the Royal Assent, meaning when a Bill has been passed by the House of Commons and the House of Lords, it needs to be formally agreed to by the Crown (Torrance “Royal Assent”). According to Torrance and the UK Parliament information, *The Cabinet Manual* emphasizes the rule which states that Prime Ministers hold office unless and until they resign (Torrance “How is a PM”). If a Prime Minister decides to resign with their administration having an overall majority, the party or the parties in the government are obliged to name the successor, and the Prime Minister officially resigns and recommends a successor to the Monarch once the process is over. In the past, the Monarch had a full right of personally choosing the successor and dismissing a Prime Minister, while today, the political parties are obliged to choose and communicate to the Sovereign who would be the best to command the confidence of the House of Commons. After the resignation of the Prime Minister, the Monarch meets both the departing Prime Minister and their successor, but recently it has become a tradition for a former Prime Minister’s partner and children to meet the Monarch following their resignation. After the former Prime Minister’s departure, the successor is greeted in the Palace courtyard by an equerry and the King’s Private Secretary before entering the Monarch’s private apartments. During the process, only the Monarch and the incoming Prime Minister are present. The Monarch appoints the new Prime Minister with the Royal Prerogative, which is a part of common law, and asks the new Prime Minister to form an administration. Furthermore, after accepting the offer there follows an exchange between the Monarch and the new Prime Minister which is followed by shaking hands and bows. The New Prime Minister then goes to 10 Downing Street and makes a speech, indicating his/her acceptance of the Monarch’s commission to form an administration (Torrance “How is a Prime Minister appointed?”).

## 2.2. The Representative Role

One of the more familiar roles to the public includes the monarch's role as head of the nation, or the representative role. According to *British Heritage: Monarchy, London, British Empire*, with the representative role, the Sovereign symbolizes national identity, unity and pride, but also gives a sense of stability and continuity, officially recognizes success and excellence and supports the ideal of voluntary service (Lobanova et al.). According to Maklyuk et al., for the British people, the Royal family is the embodiment of monarchy and the image of the state, which is why the control of information for the media is a state matter, not only a family matter (196). Certain situations and occurrences in the Royal Family can affect the image of the monarchy, but also the image of the people in the United Kingdom. It can be said that even though it is an honour to have such a role in representing the nation, it is also a big responsibility; therefore, the Royal Family must be careful not to cause incidents, because it could eventually ruin not only the image of the monarchy, but of the whole nation as well. The representative aspect of the monarch's role has been shown through many events, such as annual broadcasts on Christmas Day, the Queen's address to the nation at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as through the visits to the armed forces, schools, hospitals, charities and local organisations. However, not everyone is supportive of the monarchy, as Cannon indicates that even though the royal broadcast at Christmas is watched by millions, some people enjoy in criticizing it later (162). Nevertheless, such occasions and events are essential for bonding the nation and giving the people a sense of belonging and unity. It is also worth mentioning Princess Diana, who gained the image of a humanitarian after visiting countries affected by landmines. During the period, the Princess managed to use the media power and her role in order to draw attention to important humanitarian issues, indicating that her actions were designed to attract the attention of the world community (Maklyuk et al. 199). Assuredly, this is one of the best ways one can use their position, to put emphasis on problems happening in the world while focusing on the difficulties people go through. Undeniably, when people see an important person or their idol volunteering, they might become inspired and start undertaking similar humanitarian actions. Furthermore, the monarch plays a major role in other, public events of great importance in the culture of the United Kingdom, the State Opening of Parliament being one of them. This event officially marks the start of the parliamentary year, and the monarch's speech, written by the government, is what makes it special as it includes proposed policies and legislation, but also the government's agenda for the coming session. Attracting

large crowds, but also the television and online audience, this event remains the main ceremonial event of the parliamentary calendar (“State Opening of Parliament”). One of the most well-known events in the United Kingdom remains the ceremony of Trooping the Colour, or the Sovereign’s Birthday Parade. The ceremony includes over 1400 soldiers, 200 horses and 400 musicians which come together each June to mark the Sovereign’s birthday by displaying precision and horsemanship. During the event, the streets are crowded, and the parade moves from Buckingham Palace down The Mall to Horse Guard’s Parade, with the members of the Royal Family in carriages and on horses. Later, the Sovereign and other members of the Royal Family watch a fly-past by the Royal Air Force on the balcony at Buckingham Palace (“What is Trooping the Colour?”). Moreover, Jubilees are also of significant importance in the representational aspect of the United Kingdom, but also for uniting people of the nation and even for making an impact on people from all over the world. One more example would be the coronation of the new Sovereign. This event is, certainly, not only important for the United Kingdom, but also for the whole world. The influence of the Royal family can be seen globally because millions of people join to celebrate the newly chosen monarch and even watch the coronation which is generally broadcast live on television. Also, Royal Jubilees are of great significance, and they also draw huge British audiences as well as throughout the world. On 6 February 2022, Queen Elizabeth II became the first British monarch to celebrate the 70th jubilee of service to the people of the United Kingdom, celebrating her Platinum Jubilee. The celebration itself lasted for four days, incorporating a large number of public events, community activities, and even national moments of reflection on the Queen’s 70 years of service (“The Queen’s Platinum Jubilee Central Weekend 2022”). Despite all the special occasions with the goal of representation and unifying the whole population, some of the people remain unhappy with the cost of the royal family. A minority emphasizes that the monarchy is a waste of money, however, according to Aljazeera, the Sovereign Grant, or the Civil List, in 2021-2022 was roughly 1.29 pounds per person in the UK. The payment stems from an agreement of King George III and the British government in 1760 (“Taxpayer ripoff or bargain? The cost of the British royal family”). In reality, 1.29 pounds per person is not much because the money is also used to provide for the education and the welfare system, as well as for public projects and different events. Furthermore, media in general plays a major role in the life of an individual today, including the monarchy as well. According to Maklyuk et al., the life of the Windsor Family can be followed via Facebook, Instagram and Twitter, emphasizing that the pages provide neutral information, but still many people leave negative comments on such pages and posts, which

also influence people's opinions of the Royal Family (200). On the other hand, it can be said that such pages exist to connect people of the world with the members of the Windsor Family, but also to shape people's opinions in some way and show some things in a way they want them to be perceived.

### **2.3. The Religious Role**

Throughout history, religion has played an important role in shaping the society of the United Kingdom, along with the religious duties the Sovereign has had. The 16th century can be considered one of the most important periods regarding the religious circumstances in the United Kingdom, since that was the time of the English Reformation. It is of importance to mention that the Church of England, which is the English national church, dates back to the second century, or to be more precise, to the time of the arrival of Christianity in Britain (Petruzzello). According to "The Queen, the Church and other faiths," today, the Sovereign of the United Kingdom has the title "Defender of the Faith and Supreme Governor of the Church of England," which dates back to the reign of King Henry VIII, who initially held the title "Defender of the Faith." The symbolic significance of religion can largely be seen even during the Coronation of the new monarch, when the Sovereign is anointed with holy oil by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and later on takes an oath in which maintaining and preserving the settlement of the Church of England is promised. Furthermore, "General Synod" indicates that on the advice of the Prime Minister, the Sovereign's religious duty includes appointing the Archbishops, Bishops and Deans of the Church of England, who swear an oath of allegiance, as well as the deacons and the parish priests. Moreover, the General Synod, which replaced the Church Assembly, is the national assembly of the Church of England which deals with legislation, that is subject to Parliamentary veto and receives the Royal Assent, but it also deals with formulating new forms of worship and approving the annual budget for the work of the Church. The General Synod is elected every five years and meets twice a year in London or York. On the other hand, according to "The Queen, the Church and other faiths," the Church of Scotland remains a Presbyterian church; therefore, the King does not have the title of the Supreme Governor because only Jesus Christ is a King and Head of the Church from their point of view. The Church of Scotland is self-governing and the Sovereign, when attending Church services, does so as an ordinary member. It is managed by kirk sessions, presbyteries and by the General Assembly which meets each May in Edinburgh. Alongside



Christianity, Queen Elizabeth II accepted other religions and celebrated religious diversity and tolerance. As the Head of State and Head of Commonwealth, the Sovereign's role is to respect other faiths and promote forbearance in Britain, which is today a multi-cultural and a multi-faith society. Because the United Kingdom is a multi-faith society, it cannot be denied that the Sovereign should strive in making everyone feel included and feeling like they belong. The Queen's emphasis on religious significance was visible in Her Majesty's Christmas and Commonwealth Day messages, which generally addressed religious diversity and tolerance. According to "The Queen and the Church," on these important days, each person living in the United Kingdom, no matter their religion or race, should feel included and welcome, and such small doings can mean a lot to the general public. In celebration of Her Majesty's Diamond Jubilee in 2012, the Queen and the Duke of Edinburgh even attended a multi-faith reception at Lambeth Palace, when the Queen put emphasis on faith as a key role in the identity of millions of people, allowing them to develop a sense of belonging and religious identity. This simply shows how important religion is in the United Kingdom, not only Christianity, but other religions as well. In the end, this proves the claim that the Sovereign has a crucial role in the religious aspect, at the same time emphasizing that everyone is equally important and that every religion matters.

## **2.4. Head of the Armed Forces**

The British army, in the United Kingdom, is the military force in charge of national defence and the fulfilment of international mutual defence commitments. The first English standing army was formed by Oliver Cromwell in 1645 during the Civil War, but it was soon disbanded by Charles II (Ray). After the Glorious Revolution in 1688, when the Bill of Rights was written, the Parliament was given the authority over the army as it is known today. In the 18th and 19th centuries, the army grew in size and immensely developed, becoming a great fighting force (Ray). The army, during World War I significantly increased, but major changes occurred after 1945 when the military forces were placed in Europe as a result of British colonies gaining independence (Ray). The same year, Princess Elizabeth, later Queen Elizabeth II, joined the Auxiliary Territorial Service and became the first female member of the Royal family who joined the Armed Services and was later, also the wife, mother and grandmother of people serving in the Forces ("The Queen and the Armed Forces"). This

is extremely important, not only for the representation of women, especially in this period of time, but she also showed that she is a true future leader. That was the beginning of the Queen's relationship with the Armed Forces, where she even learned how to drive and maintain vehicles. Another indicator of the importance of the Armed Forces lies in the public events, such as the monarch's birthday, or Trooping the Colour, which the Queen attended dressed in military clothes and on horseback. During her life, the Queen also spent a lot of time visiting ships and Service Establishments, meeting servicemen and women of all ranks, including their families as well ("The Queen and the Armed Forces"). Her Majesty also introduced the Elizabeth Cross, which is an award launched in 2009 and which was awarded to give special recognition to the families of people who died on military operations as a result of terrorism, including the Korean War, the Malayan Emergency, the Falklands conflict and operations in Northern Ireland as well as recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan ("The Queen and the Armed Forces"). People receiving this honour receive two pinned sterling silver emblems, one full size for formal remembrance events and a miniature version for less formal events. In the reverse of the cross, there would be engraved the name of the person in whose memory it is granted ("About the Elizabeth Cross"). The award itself was inspired by precedents from World War I and World War II, when a scroll and a memorial plaque were presented to the families of the killed. Regarding the role in the Armed Forces, the Sovereign is the only person with the authority of declaring war and peace. This role goes back to the time when the Monarch was in charge of raising, maintaining and equipping the Army and the Navy, while today this power can only be exercised on the advice of Ministers ("Her Majesty's Armed Forces"). It is significant to mention the previous leaders as well. From the beginnings of the British history, there has always been someone who would act as head of the armed forces. According to Carman, one would usually think of a King, but a Queen may also occupy the same position (48). Before Queen Elizabeth II, it is of importance to mention Queen Boadicea and the wife of Henry VI, Margaret of Anjou, who took a part in the Wars of the Roses, and even later, during the reign of Queen Elizabeth, the Queen liked to be present at gatherings of her forces, the most famous being the occasion at Tilbury in 1588 (Carman 48). During her reign, Queen Victoria used to appear in various semi-military dresses and the newspaper accounts, and the pictures of her period give a good idea of the development and increase in sumptuousness (Carman 49). Therefore, it can be emphasized that the Sovereign has a crucial role in the Armed Forces, but also, that representation of the female leaders in the military is of significance as it puts focus on equality and serves as an example to the young women of the United Kingdom.

## 2.5. Head of the Commonwealth

The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of 56 independent nations founded in 1949, most of which were part of the British Empire (“Head of the Commonwealth”). Even though the role of Head of the Commonwealth is not hereditary, Elizabeth II acceded to the throne after her father’s death and assumed the position. In a message broadcast to the Commonwealth on the occasion of her 21st birthday, she stated that her whole life would be devoted to the service in the association, and later on Her Majesty proved to have been a symbol of unity and strength of the Commonwealth (“Head of the Commonwealth”). At the beginning of her reign, the Commonwealth consisted of eight states, while it has 56 countries now. With the Balfour Declaration in 1926, Canada and South Africa, which were British Empire dominions at time, were designated autonomous communities (Tattrie). However, with the London Declaration in 1949, “British” was removed from the Commonwealth’s name and amended its membership from being based on allegiance to the Crown to one where the monarch would be recognised as Head of the Commonwealth (Loft). Furthermore, with the 1971 Declaration of Commonwealth Principles and the 1991 Harare Commonwealth Declaration, it was emphasized that Commonwealth was willing to work on promoting democracy and fighting for human rights. Even though she feared a Commonwealth split due to apartheid-era South Africa, as Head of the Commonwealth, the Queen has generally played a neutral role, staying out of the crises and it is also important to mention that the Queen missed only two of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meetings, which were held each year from 1971 to 2015(Loft). One of the Sovereign’s roles as the Head of the Commonwealth includes visiting the Commonwealth countries. Therefore, between 1952 and 2015, the Queen visited all but two Commonwealth countries, took nearly 200 trips and visited the Commonwealth and the UK territories (Loft). All of these helped in managing to sustain the Commonwealth despite the crises and eventually managed to help in bonding and connecting the member countries of the Commonwealth, as well as helped people all over the world in understanding the concept of the association. Furthermore, there are still fourteen Commonwealth realms where the Monarch retains a ceremonial role (Loft). After Queen Elizabeth II’s death, Charles, Prince of Wales, was appointed the Queen’s successor, even though the role of Head of the Commonwealth is not hereditary, like indicated before. The importance of the Sovereign was also seen in the opening of the

Commonwealth Parliamentary Conference which consisted of the Queen reviewing a guard of honour, the anthem, the flag, a parliamentary procession in uniforms, and even the trumpets (Hall, 252). Such ceremonies and symbols remain, in fact, a big part of one's identity and feeling of belonging. According to Hall, such use of the symbols and ceremonials was welcomed by the delegates, and it, without a doubt, contributed to their feeling of group unity; meaning they communicated with each other and even identified with each other. Hall indicates that it was amazing that with so many people, representatives of parliaments, thrown together and forced to discuss many matters, there were no clashes or ill temper (252). On the other hand, the same author mentions that simply recognising the Queen as Head of the Commonwealth ignores the function of political symbols, meaning that political symbols cannot unify people unless it reflects the already existing unity and continually enlarges that unity. It can be said that Hall is correct, not completely in this concept, but the one where he states that political symbols must circulate in a hundred ways and not only in a physical way, for example on the coins and stamps: "In all the foundation states of the Commonwealth the symbol of the Crown circulates and is in constant daily use by government, parliament, and people. And it plays unceasingly its dual role of reforging the unity of the people of each member state and reforging their feeling of solidarity with their fellow Commonwealth peoples" (255). All of the previously stated proves the claim that the Sovereign, as Head of the Commonwealth, has an enormous influence in the world, but especially in the United Kingdom by creating sense of unity: "The Commonwealth came into being because the sense of belonging to a great community and to the ideological and symbolic structure which both expresses and continuously recreates that sense of unity, has been kept intact" (Hall 253).

## **2.6. Patron of Charities**

As a leader, the Sovereign is mostly included in contributing to a large number of different charities in different areas of life. When talking about patronage and charities in the United Kingdom, it is interesting to mention the historic aspect of it. The first recorded patronage is considered George II's involvement with the Society of Antiquaries, which was an organisation dealing with architectural and art history, but also conservation and heraldry and it is still present today and keeps its Royal patronage through the Duke of Gloucester's contribution ("Charities and patronages"). Today, the

patronages are generally chosen according to the interests of the members of the Royal Family; however, they can sometimes be handed down through generations. An example would be the Mothers' Union, a role of which was first held by Queen Victoria in 1898 but was later on handed down to Queen Elizabeth II ("Charities and patronages"). In addition, the monarch may give patronages to appropriate persons, for example, the Duchess of Cornwall's mother and grandmother died due to a bone disease, which is why she is the President of the National Osteoporosis Society ("Charities and patronages"). Furthermore, the titles of the members of the Royal Family may dictate certain types of patronages. For example, The Duke of Kent is involved with numerous Kent-based institutions, one of which is the Kent County Agricultural Society ("Charities and patronages"). A charity might even be chosen for patronage by a member of the Royal Family while on a visit, or via one of their other charities. The Prince of Wales contributed to the Society to save the Melmerby and Fellside Village Shop by joining them during the visit to the village in 2004 ("Charities and patronages"). Another way of proposing an organisation or charity includes submitting an application to the Private Secretary who passes on the request which they think may be of interest to a member of the Royal Family. If the member of the Royal Family is interested, they usually ask for research and consider a range of factors while deciding, including a reputable request and a good financial track record ("Charities and patronages"). It is important to note Queen Elizabeth II's charitable work left an immense effect on the world. Namely, during her 70-year reign, she visited 100 countries, hosted 180 garden parties and sat for over 200 official portraits as well as supported over 600 charities, including some large national charities such as the NSPCC, the Red Cross, Cancer Research UK, Scouts and Girlguiding, as well as some smaller, local ones (Canady). Through attending engagements and in many other ways, the Queen contributed to many charitable causes, including the Queen's Jubilees which were used for raising money for charities. Research published by CAF in 2012 found the late monarch was among the world's largest supporters of charities, with an estimated £1.4 billion raised just from her work alone (Canady). Serving as an example for her descendants and the whole country in general, her son Charles decided to start his own philanthropic initiatives, while her grandchildren William and Harry decided to focus on campaigns for mental health and the illegal wildlife trade (Canady). Also, the Late Duke of Edinburgh, King Charles III, William the Prince of Wales, and Prince Harry have made challenges to protect the environment a priority. Royal patronages are very important and have a crucial role in raising awareness of problems that need to be addressed or simply representing an organisation and raising the status of numerous charities by using their very

influential platforms. Seeing that the Sovereign or a member of his/her family is included, many people might donate funds or their time to these charity organizations. That, once again, proves the statement that the members of the Royal Family have a significant role in the United Kingdom.

## **Conclusion**

The British monarchy has undergone a significant transformation over the centuries. From absolute rule to a constitutional monarchy, crucial moments like the Magna Carta and the Glorious Revolution have shaped the British society and established principles that live to this day. From its evolution to its symbolic representation, the monarchy remains a dominant part of the British identity.

By investigating the tradition, the ceremonial and formal duties of the monarch and the constitutional aspect of the monarch's role, it can be said that the Sovereign, indeed, does have a crucial role in the United Kingdom. Symbolically, the monarchy plays a major unifying role, representing national identity and preserving the historical legacy of the nation. Public occasions such as royal weddings and jubilees serve as examples of strong expressions of social cohesion, creating connections between the monarchy and the people. Having a representative role, creating a sense of unity and identity and being an example during many humanitarian trips and contributions to charities, the monarchy has a strong impact within the United Kingdom and globally.

In conclusion it is evident that the role of the British monarchy includes a wide variety of functions, encompassing tradition and constitutional elements. By continuing to engage with the British people, the monarchy can continue to evolve and ensure their connection with the Commonwealth countries as well as with other countries throughout the world in the future. This thesis has examined the past and the present role of the British monarchy while further research will shed light on the role of the British monarchy in the future.

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