

# *FOR BETTER OR FOR WORSE.*

## *The Great British Monarchy, in the modern age.*

*By Fionn Keane O'Hagan*



“God save the King”

This is the ancient prayer that is being muttered across the UK’s vast Commonwealth this month, or at least, in theory.

On the 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2022, Queen Elizabeth the 2<sup>nd</sup> of the United Kingdom died, at ninety-six years old, ending a seventy-year-long era of British history. Naturally, the question on every politically inclined person's mind this month is - what happens next?

The rules of the monarchy dictate that the moment the Queen died, her heir ascended to the throne, in this case, King Charles the 3<sup>rd</sup>.

So, at this moment, the world is readying to accept a new King, and usher in a new era of monarchism in Britain. But does Britain still have the appetite for a monarchy?

In many ways all that held the Royal family together was the Queen, she was a likeable and respected figure, with even the most vehement anti monarchists admitting she was an excellent stateswoman, with an incredibly likeable character.

Her son, however, is held in much lower esteem, due to his infamous number of controversies.

Most British adults still remember the heartbreaking death of Princess Diana, and blame Charles, her then husband, for contributing to the princess's death.

Charles's alleged affairs, and various controversial acts throughout his first marriage to Diana, means he ascends to the crown with an incredibly tarnished legacy.

Of course, more recently, his brother, Prince Andrew has been at the centre of various sexual assault allegations, Andrew's disgraceful, stained legacy reflects badly on the new King, and brings the morality of the monarchy into question.

From an Irish perspective, the death of Queen Elizabeth is monumental. Specifically, for the Unionist community, her death could not have come at a worse time.

Queen Elizabeth ascended to the throne in 1952, and reigned throughout the troubles, she therefore became an important British connection for many Unionists. Throughout Northern Ireland's turbulent times, the Queen remained as a stable head of Unionism, she became an elegant and mythical figure, that Unionists learned to look up to. The loyalty of Ulster Unionists lay heavily with the queen.

King Charles will simply not have the same association and importance to the Unionist community. In a time in which the very existence of Northern Ireland is in question, a call for a united Ireland rings louder every day, and as a new, young generation of anti-monarchist, anti-sectarian voters rise, the queen's death may be the final nail in the coffin for the Unionists of Ireland.

Unfortunately for the King, Northern Ireland is not the only British territory experiencing rising anti-monarchist sentiment.

Just minutes after Charles was proclaimed King, the remote, North Atlantic Commonwealth nation, Antigua and Barbuda, announced they would hold an independence referendum. This move was taken as a stab in the back to the new King's rule, and may spell the beginning of a domino effect, that will deeply harm the long reaching power of the British empire.

Across the globe, Britain's "realms" are slipping away from its control, the death of such a beloved and glorified Queen will only speed up this process of "de-colonisation."

Unfortunately for Charles, there is similar, rising, anti-monarchist sentiment closer to home.

Queen Elizabeth died in Balmoral castle, a beautiful, vast estate in the heart of the Scottish Highlands, however, many would argue the castle is yet another symbol of English aggression and colonisation of Scotland.

Since 1842, the castle has been a home for the royal family, and acts as a constant reminder of British rule over Scotland. With the queen's death, Scotland will reconsider, an independent future, one of self-determination.

Even before the Queen's death, consideration of Scottish independence has crept back into the public consciousness, with Scottish first minister Nicola Sturgeon requesting an independence referendum in July. Her motion was shot down by Boris Johnson, but now that the much-loved queen has been succeeded by her controversial son, the calls for that all important referendum are growing louder.

While internationally, the monarchy is yet again under intense scrutiny, at home in England, its support is seemingly strong.

The death of the Queen has only strengthened the English people's love for the royal family. Perhaps it's the pomp and ceremony, seen in the jubilees, royal weddings and "trooping of the colour," that attracts the English people, giving them a chance to celebrate their "patriotism," it's apparent that the royal family brings a niche sense of importance and tradition to the British people.

To many across the world, the monarchy represents imperialism, and a dark history of death and destruction, but to many of the British people, it represents the status quo, a comforting continued tradition, and a sense of stability through the most turbulent of times. In British, particularly English, daily life, there is only two certainties in times of strife, the Presence of a monarch, and religion.

Religious values and traditions are intertwined with the role of the monarch, The King is, after all, the head of the church of England, the monarch is anointed to the role, not appointed, and their great coronations take place in a religious setting, carried out by an archbishop.

So, for many Britons, abolition of the monarchy would be against their culture, traditions, history, and most importantly, their God.

As Queen Elizabeth the 2<sup>nd</sup> is buried, we undoubtedly enter a new era of British history, an era of modernity and progression.

A monarch is an ancient tradition, one that has had to adapt to a rapidly changing world, and deal with the nation's crises head on. Charles will be no different, as he takes his mother's crown, he will be expected to hold together an institution that's popularity fluctuates with the times, he will be expected to stand back from political power and allow democracy to do its work.

The sun may set on the British Empire, but I, for one, am certain, the monarch will remain, for better or for worse, where it has for more than 1,000 years, at the epicenter of British life.

And so, as England's Royalists cry for their late Queen, and mutter through a heavy heart, "God save the King," we look on, in awe, at a fascinating institution of British culture, that, through all its scandals and tumultuous times, thunders on, at the heart of British life.