

The crown

Philip Norton

“The sovereign has, under a constitutional monarchy such as ours, three rights – the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn”

Walter Bagehot, *The English Constitution* (2009: 75)

Learning objectives

- To identify the place of the monarchy in British constitutional history.
- To detail the political significance of ‘the crown’.
- To outline the roles that citizens expect the monarch to fulfil and the extent to which they are carried out.
- To outline criticisms made of the monarchy – and the royal family – in recent years.
- To look at proposals for change.



It is an extraordinary fact, often overlooked, that Britain’s representative democracy evolved over a thousand years out of an all-encompassing monarchy underpinned by the religious notion of the divine right of kings. The monarchical shell remains intact, but the inner workings have been taken over by party political leaders and civil servants. The shell itself has been the subject of critical comment, especially in recent years. This chapter analyses the emergence of the modern monarchy and considers its still important functions together with the arguments of the critics.

The monarchy

The crown is the symbol of all executive authority. It is conferred on the monarch. The monarchy is the oldest secular institution in England and dates back at least to the ninth century. In Anglo-Saxon and Norman times, the formal power that the crown conferred – executive, legislative and judicial – was exercised personally by the monarch. The King had a court to advise him and, as the task of government became more demanding, so the various functions were exercised on the King's behalf by other bodies. Those bodies now exercise powers independent of the control of the monarch, but they remain formally the instruments of the crown. The courts are Her Majesty's courts, and the government is Her Majesty's government. Parliament is summoned and prorogued by royal decree. Civil servants are crown appointees. Many powers – prerogative powers – are still exercised in the name of the crown. The *monarch* exercises few powers personally. However, the concept of *the crown* remains at the heart of the British political system.

The monarchy has been eclipsed as a major political institution not only by the sheer demands of governing a growing kingdom but also by changes in the popular perception of what form of government is legitimate. The policy-making power exercised by a hereditary monarch has given way to the exercise of power by institutions deemed more representative. However, the monarchy has retained a claim to be a representative institution in one particular definition of the term. It is this claim that largely defines the activities of the monarch today.

The concept of representation

The monarchy predates by several centuries the emergence of the concept of representation. The term 'representation' entered the English language through French derivatives of the Latin *repraesentare* and did not assume a political meaning until the sixteenth century. It permits at least four separate usages (see Birch 1964; Pitkin 1967):

- 1 It may denote acting on behalf of some individual or group, seeking to defend and promote the interests of the person or persons 'represented'.
- 2 It may denote persons or assemblies that have been freely elected. Although it is not always the case that persons so elected will act to defend and pursue the interests of electors, they will normally be expected to do so.
- 3 It may be used to signify a person or persons typical of a particular class or group of persons. It is in this sense that

it is used when opinion pollsters identify a representative sample.

- 4 It may be used in a symbolic sense. Thus, individuals or objects may 'stand for' something: for example, a flag symbolising the unity of the nation.

The belief that free election was a prerequisite for someone to claim to act on behalf of others grew in the nineteenth century. Before then, the concept of 'virtual representation' held great sway. This concept was well expressed by Edmund Burke. It was a form of representation, he wrote,

in which there is a communion of interests, and a sympathy in feelings and desires, between those who act in the name of any description of people, and the people in whose name they act, though the trustees are not actually chosen by them.

(Pitkin 1967:173)

It was a concept challenged by the perception that the claim to speak on behalf of a particular body of individuals could not be sustained unless those individuals had signified their agreement, and the way to signify that agreement was through the ballot box. This challenge proved increasingly successful, with the extension of the franchise and, to ensure elections free of coercion, changes in the method of election (the introduction of secret ballots, for example). By the end of the 1880s the majority of working men had the vote. Acts of 1918 and 1928 extended the franchise to women.

The extension of the franchise in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries meant that the House of Commons could claim to be a representative institution under the first and second definitions of the term. The unelected House of Lords could not make such a claim. The result, as we shall see (Chapter 16), was a significant shift in the relationship between the two Houses. However, it was not only the unelected upper house that could not make such a claim. Nor could the unelected monarch. Nor could the monarch make a claim to be representative of the nation under the third definition. The claim of the monarch to be 'representative' derives solely from the fourth definition. The monarch stands as a symbol. The strength of the monarch as symbol has been earned at the expense of exercising political powers. To symbolise the unity of the nation, the monarch has had to stand apart from the partisan fray. The monarch has also had to stand aloof from any public controversy. When controversy has struck – as during the abdication crisis in 1936 and during periods of marital rift between members of the royal family in the 1990s – it has undermined support for the institution of monarchy and called into question its very purpose.

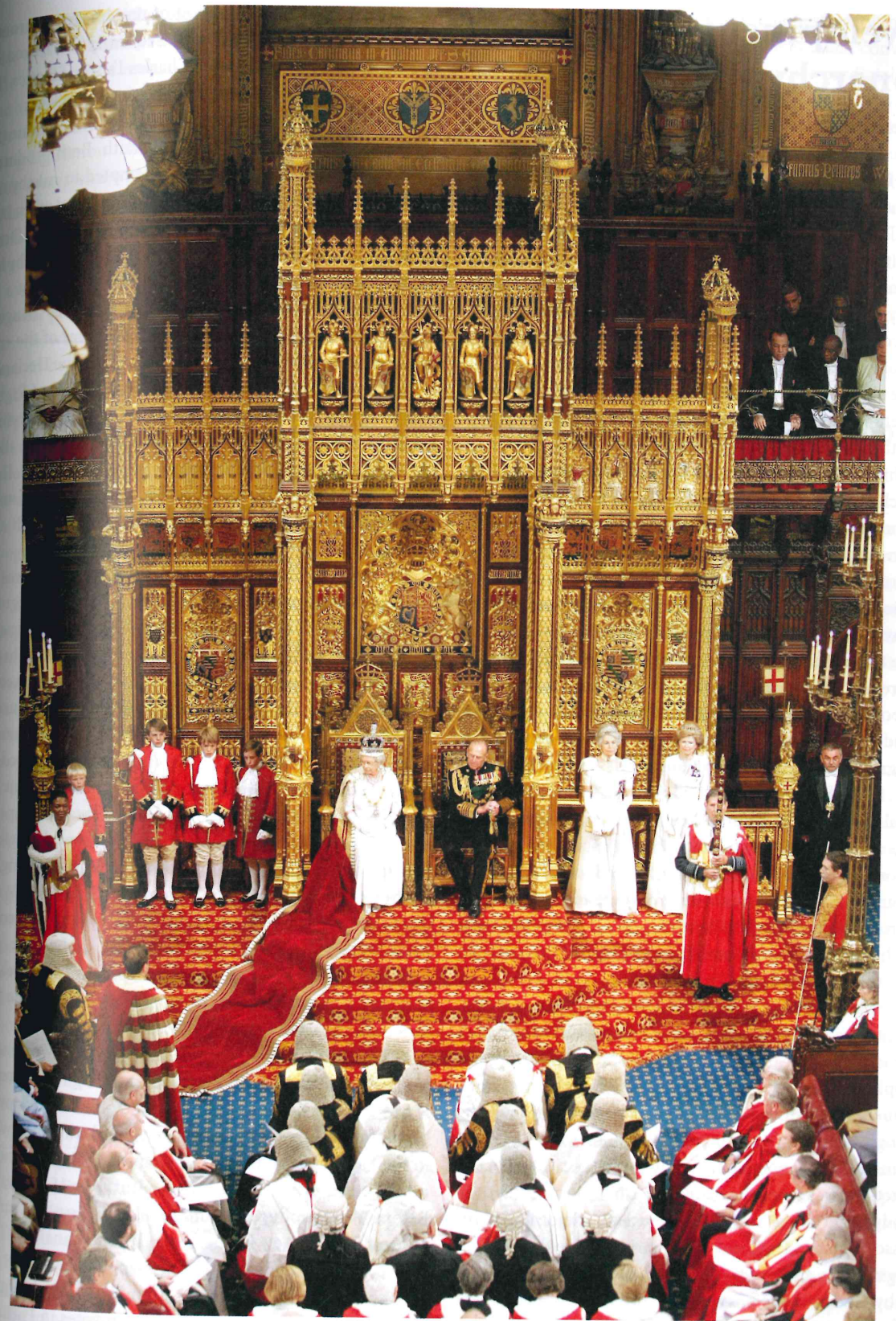


Figure 15.1 Royal ceremonial is symbolic of continuity with the past and of national unity
Source: Copyright © Pool/Tim Graham Picture Library/Corbis

Development of the monarchy

The present monarch, despite some breaks in the direct line of succession, can trace her descent from King Egbert, who united England under his rule in AD 829. Only once has the continuity of the monarchy been broken: from 1642, when Charles I was deposed (and later executed) until the Restoration in 1660, when his son Charles II was put on the throne, restoring the line of succession. The principle of heredity has been preserved since at least the eleventh century. The succession is now governed by statute and common law, the throne descending to the eldest son or, in the absence of a son, the eldest daughter. In 2012 the Government announced that there was agreement with other Commonwealth nations where the monarch is head of state that, in future, the first-born child, regardless of sex, should become monarch. If the monarch is under 18 years of age, a regent is appointed.

Although power was exercised initially by the monarch, it was never an absolute power. In the coronation oath, the King promised to 'forbid all rapine and injustice to men of all conditions'. He was expected to consult with the leading men of his realm, both clerical and lay, in order to discover and declare the law and before the levying of any extraordinary measures of taxation. He was also constrained at times by the more powerful barons, notably in 1215 when King John was induced to affix his seal to a short-lived charter (now known as Magna Carta) – it was variously reissued in modified form – and which is now treated as a document of constitutional significance (Norton 2016). In 1265, a summons to knights and burgesses to attend court was issued by Simon de Montfort, the king's brother-in-law and effectively running the country. From the summoning of these local dignitaries to court there developed Parliament – the term was first used in the thirteenth century – and the emergence of two separate houses, the Lords and the Commons.

The relationship of crown and Parliament was, for several centuries, one of struggle. Although formally the King's Parliament, the King depended on the institution for the grant of supply (money) and increasingly for assent to new laws. Parliament made the grant of supply dependent on the King granting a redress of grievances. Tudor monarchs turned to Parliament for support and usually got it, but the effect of their actions was to acknowledge the growing importance of the body. Stuart kings were less appreciative. James I and his successor, Charles I, upheld the doctrine of the divine right of kings: that is, that the position and powers of the King are given by God, and the position and privileges of Parliament therefore derive from the King's grace. Charles' pursuit of the doctrine led to an attempt to rule without the assent of Parliament and ultimately to civil war and the beheading

of the King in 1649. The period of republican government that followed was a failure and consequently short-lived. The monarchy was restored under Charles I's son, Charles II, in 1660, only to produce another clash a few years later.

Charles II's brother, James II, adhered to the divine right of kings and to the Roman Catholic faith. Both produced a clash with Parliament, and James attempted to rule by royal prerogative alone. A second civil war was averted when James fled the country following the arrival of William of Orange (James' Protestant son-in-law), who had been invited by leading politicians and churchmen. At the invitation of a new Parliament, William and his wife Mary (James' daughter) jointly assumed the throne. However, the offer of the crown had been conditional on their acceptance of the Declaration of Right – embodied in statute as the 1689 Bill of Rights – which declared the suspending of laws and the levying of taxation without the approval of Parliament to be illegal. As the historian G.M. Trevelyan observed, James II had forced the country to choose between royal absolutism and parliamentary government (Trevelyan 1938: 245). It chose parliamentary government.

The dependence of the monarch on Parliament was thus established, and the years since have witnessed the gradual withdrawal of the sovereign from the personal exercise of executive authority. Increasingly, the monarch became dependent on ministers, not only for the exercise of executive duties, but also in order to manage parliamentary business. This dependence was all the greater when Queen Anne died in 1714 without an heir (all her children having died) and yet another monarch was imported from the continent – this time George, Elector of Hanover. George I was not especially interested in politics and in any case did not speak English, so the task of chairing the Cabinet, traditionally the King's job, fell to the First Lord of the Treasury. Under Robert Walpole this role was assiduously developed, and Walpole became the most important of the King's ministers: he became 'prime minister'. Anne's dying without an heir, and George's poor language skills, facilitated the emergence of an office that is now at the heart of British politics.

George's grandson, George III, succeeded in winning back some of the monarchy's power later in the eighteenth century. It was still the King, after all, who appointed ministers, and by skilfully using his patronage, he could influence who sat in the House of Commons. This power, though, was undermined early in the nineteenth century. In 1832 the Great Reform Act introduced a uniform electoral system, and subsequent Reform Acts further extended the franchise. The age of a representative democracy, displacing the concept of virtual representation, had arrived. The effect was to marginalise the monarch as a political actor. To win votes in Parliament, parties quickly organised themselves into coherent and highly structured movements, and the leader of the majority party

following a general election became Prime Minister. The choice of Prime Minister and government remained formally in the hands of the monarch, but in practice, the selection came to be made on a regular basis by the electorate.

Queen Victoria was the last monarch seriously to consider vetoing legislation (the last monarch actually to do so was Queen Anne, who withheld Royal Assent from the Scottish Militia Bill 1707). The year 1834 was the last occasion that a ministry fell because of losing the sovereign's confidence; thereafter, it was the confidence of the House of Commons that counted. Victoria was also the last monarch to exercise a personal preference in the choice of Prime Minister (later monarchs, where a choice existed, acted under advice) and the last to be instrumental in pushing successfully for the enactment of particular legislative measures (Hardie 1970: 67). By the end of her reign it was clear that the monarch, whatever the formal powers vested by the constitution, was constrained politically by a representative assembly elected largely by members drawn from that assembly. Victoria could no longer exercise the choices she had been able to do when she first ascended the throne.

By the beginning of the twentieth century the monarch sat largely on the sidelines of the political system, unable to control Parliament, unable to exercise a real choice in the appointment of ministers, unable to exercise a choice in appointing judges. The extensive power once exercised by the King had now passed largely to the voters and to politicians. The choice of government rested with electors through the ballot box. Between elections it was the Prime Minister who exercised many of the powers formally vested in the monarch. By controlling government appointments, the Prime Minister was able to dominate the executive side of government. And as long as he could command majority support in the House of Commons, he was able to dominate the legislative side of government. Power thus shifted from an unelected monarch to what one writer later dubbed an 'elected monarch' (Benemy 1965) – the occupant not of Buckingham Palace but of 10 Downing Street.

The shift to a position detached from regular partisan involvement, and above the actual exercise of executive power, was confirmed under Victoria's successors. 'Since 1901 the trend towards a real political neutrality, not merely a matter of appearances, has been steady, reign by reign' (Hardie 1970: 188). The transition has been facilitated by no great constitutional Act. Several statutes have impinged on the prerogative power, but many of the legal powers remain. There is nothing in law that prevents the monarch from vetoing a bill or from exercising personal choice in the invitation to form a government. The monarch is instead bound by conventions of the constitution (see Chapter 14). Thus, it is a convention that the monarch gives her assent to bills passed by Parliament and

that she summons the leader of the largest party following a general election to form a government. Such conventions mean that the actions of the monarch are predictable – no personal choice is involved – and they have helped to ease the passage of the monarch from one important constitutional position to another.

These changes reinforce the need to distinguish between *the crown* and *the monarch*. The former denotes the executive authority that formally rests with the monarch but is in practice exercised in the name of the monarch, and the latter is the individual who is head of state and performs particular functions. The separation of the two is significant constitutionally and has major political consequences.

Political significance of the crown

The transfer of power from monarch to a political executive meant that it became possible to distinguish between head of state and head of government. It also ensured that great political power rested with ministers. Prerogative powers, as we have seen, remain important. They are powers that have always resided in the crown and that have not been displaced by statute. Many such powers remain in existence, though just how many is not clear. There is no definitive list, though the government in 2009 published a report seeking to identify the powers (Ministry of Justice 2009). They included the declaration of war and deployment of armed forces. They also encompassed the summoning, prorogation and dissolution of Parliament; the giving of royal assent to bills; the recognition of foreign powers; and the negotiation and ratification of treaties. The power of appointment was also extensive, extending not only to the appointment of ministers and civil servants, but also other occupants of leading public offices, including senior figures in the church (the monarch is supreme governor of the Church of England).

Some of these have since been transferred from the crown to Parliament. The Constitutional Reform and Governance Act 2010 gave Parliament the power to prevent the ratification of treaties. (It also put the civil service on a statutory basis.) The Fixed-term Parliaments Act 2011 removed the power of the crown to determine when, within a five-year maximum, a general election shall be held. As we have seen (Chapter 14), the conditions under which an early election may take place are determined by the provisions of the Act.

Although these changes reduced the number of powers vested in the crown (in effect, reducing the power of ministers), substantial prerogative powers still remain with ministers. Some of the powers are constrained by convention – it is now accepted that the government should seek the

support of the House of Commons before deploying armed forces in action abroad – but the powers remain constitutionally within the prerogative.

The monarch is thus the person in whom the crown vests, but the powers that are inherent in the crown are exercised elsewhere, usually by her ministers. It is common for the powers to be exercised directly by ministers. In other words, the monarch does not even announce the decisions taken by ministers in her name. Announcements of new ministerial appointments are made directly from Downing Street. Decisions as to military action have also been announced from No. 10. In 1939 the announcement that Britain was at war with Germany was made not by the King, George VI, but by the Prime Minister, Neville Chamberlain. The decision to send a task force to repel the Argentine invasion of the Falkland Islands in 1982 was taken by Margaret Thatcher and the Cabinet. The Chief of Naval Staff told her that a force could retake the islands. 'All he needed was my authority to begin to assemble it. I gave it to him. . . . We reserved for Cabinet the decision as to whether and when the task force should sail' (Thatcher 1993: 179). Announcements about the conflict were subsequently made from Downing Street or the Ministry of Defence. In 2003 decisions about joining with the USA in an attack on Iraq were taken by the Prime Minister, Tony Blair. Media attention focused on 10 Downing Street, not Buckingham Palace.

The prerogative is frequently exercised through rules, known as Orders in Council, that by virtue of their nature require no parliamentary authorisation. (Some Orders, though, are also made under statutory authorisation.) Orders in Council allow government to act quickly. Thus, for example, an Order in Council in 1982 allowed the requisitioning of ships for use in the campaign to retake the Falkland Islands. Not only are many prerogative powers exercised without the need for Parliament's approval, they are in many cases also protected from judicial scrutiny. The courts have held that many of the powers exercised under the royal prerogative are not open to judicial review.

Although the monarch will normally be kept informed of decisions made in her name, and she sees copies of state papers, she is not a part of the decision making that is involved. Nonetheless, the fiction is maintained that the decisions are hers. Peter Hennessy records that it was explained to him why the Table Office of the House of Commons would not accept parliamentary questions dealing with honours: 'It's the Palace', he was told (Hennessy 2000: 75). In other words, it was a matter for the Queen.

The maintenance of the royal prerogative thus puts power in the hands of the government. The government has, in effect, acquired tremendous powers, many of which it can exercise unilaterally. Parliament can question ministers about some aspects of the exercise of powers under the royal prerogative

and could ultimately remove a government from office if dissatisfied with its conduct. However, so long as a government enjoys an overall majority in the House of Commons, it is unlikely to be much troubled about its capacity to exercise its powers.

Although the monarch now acts in a symbolic capacity, the country still has a form of medieval monarch – the Prime Minister. The monarch reigns, the Prime Minister rules. The Prime Minister enjoys the powers that she does because of the confluence of two things: a majority in the House of Commons and the royal prerogative.

The contemporary role of the monarchy

Given that the powers of the crown have almost wholly passed to the government, what then is the role of the monarch? Most people still believe that the monarchy has an important role to play in the future of Britain. In a MORI poll in 1998, 66 per cent of those questioned said that the monarchy had an important role to play in Britain's future. In 2016, the figure had increased to 75 per cent. What, then, is the monarch's contemporary role? Two primary tasks can be identified. One is essentially a representative task: that is, symbolising the unity and traditional standards of the nation. The second is to fulfil certain political functions. The weakness of the monarch in being able to exercise independent decisions in the latter task underpins the strength of the monarchy in fulfilling the former. If the monarch were to engage in partisan activity, it would undermine her claim to symbolise the unity of the nation.

Symbolic role

The functions fulfilled by the monarch under the first heading are several. A majority of respondents in a poll in the late 1980s considered six functions to be 'very' or 'quite' important. As we shall see, the extent to which these functions are actually fulfilled by members of the royal family has become a matter of considerable debate. Two functions – preserving the class system and distracting people from problems affecting the country – were considered by most respondents as 'not very' or 'not at all' important.

Representing the UK at home and abroad

As a symbolic function, representing the country at home and abroad is a task normally ascribed to any head of state. Because no partisan connotations attach to her activities, the

sovereign is able to engage the public commitment of citizens in a way that politicians cannot. When the President of the United States travels within the USA or goes abroad, he does so both as head of state and as head of government; as head of government, he is a practising politician. When the Queen attends the Commonwealth Prime Ministers' conference, she does so as symbolic head of the Commonwealth. The British Prime Minister attends as a head of government – a political figure – and is able to engage in friendly, or not so friendly, discussions with other heads of government. The Queen stays above the fray. Similarly, at home, when opening a new building or visiting the injured in hospital (as in 2017 following the terrorist bombing of a concert in Manchester), the Queen is able to stand as a symbol of the nation.

At least two practical benefits are believed to derive from this non-partisan role, one political, the other economic. Like many of her predecessors, the Queen has amassed considerable experience by virtue of her monarchical longevity. According to one of her Prime Ministers, Tony Blair: 'she has an absolutely unparalleled amount of experience of what it's like to be at the top of a government' (Hardman 2007: 168). In 2012 she celebrated her Diamond Jubilee as Queen. In 2015 she became Britain's longest reigning monarch. During her six decades on the throne, she has been served by a total of 13 Prime Ministers. As one MP noted, she had met nearly a quarter of all the Presidents of the United States throughout its history and had known a fifth of all British Prime Ministers (Simon Hughes, House of Commons: Official Report, 7 March 2012, col. 859). Three of her four most recent Prime Ministers (Tony Blair, David Cameron and Theresa May) had not been born when she ascended the throne. Her experience, coupled with her neutrality, has meant that she has been able to offer Prime Ministers detached and informed observations. (The Prime Minister has an audience with the Queen each week.) As an informed figure who offers no challenge to their position, she also offers an informed ear to an embattled premier: 'the Queen harbours a greater store of political knowledge and wisdom than any prime minister whose length of career is at the mercy of fickle voters' (Hamilton 2002: 17). The value of the Queen's role to premiers has been variously attested by successive occupants of Downing Street (see Shawcross 2002). These have included Labour Prime Ministers Harold Wilson, James Callaghan and Tony Blair, who were especially warm in their praise. Blair said at the time of the Queen's golden wedding anniversary that he enjoyed his weekly audience with the Queen, not simply because of her experience but because she was an 'extraordinarily shrewd and perceptive observer of the world. Her advice is worth having' (*The Times*, 21 November 1997). Her questions, declared Gordon Brown 'are designed to get the best out of you' (Hardman 2011: 186). Her contact is not confined to the Prime Minister. The Chancellor of the Exchequer also sees her the night before a Budget speech. As

Gordon Brown recalled when he was Chancellor: 'She knows over the years what works and what doesn't. Sometimes you go back and change a bit of your speech' (Hardman 2007: 170).

The political benefit has also been seen in the international arena. By virtue of her experience and neutral position, the Queen enjoys the respect of international leaders, not least those gathered in the Commonwealth, a body comprising more than 50 countries with over 2 billion inhabitants. During the 1980s, when relations between the British government, led by Margaret Thatcher, and a number of Commonwealth governments were sometimes acrimonious (as on the issue of sanctions against South Africa), she reputedly used her influence with Commonwealth leaders 'to ensure that they took account of Britain's difficulties' (Ziegler 1996). There were fears that, without her emollient influence, the Commonwealth would have broken up or that Britain would have been expelled from it. Her state visit to Dublin in 2011 – the first by a monarch since 1912 – was seen as a critical success in cementing the relationship of the United Kingdom and the Irish Republic. It was, declared one Labour MP, 'a very powerful symbol of reconciliation, which I believe will have a profound effect on healing the wounds that have disfigured life in the island of Ireland for generations' (Paul Flynn, House of Commons: Official Report, 7 March 2012, col. 870).

In terms of economic benefit, some observers claim – although, as we shall see, a number of critics dispute it – that the Queen and leading members of the royal family (such as the Prince of Wales) are good for British trade. At home, royal palaces are major tourist attractions, though critics point out that Versailles – the royal palace in republican France – gets more visitors than Buckingham Palace.

The symbolism, the history and the pageantry that surround the monarchy serve to make the Queen and her immediate family a potent source of media and public interest abroad. Royal (although not formal state) visits are often geared to export promotions, although critics claim that the visits do not have the impact claimed or are not followed up adequately by the exporters themselves. Such visits, though, normally draw crowds that would not be attracted by a visiting politician or industrialist.

Setting standards of citizenship and family life

For most of the present Queen's reign, this has been seen as an important task. The Queen has been expected to lead by example in maintaining standards of citizenship and family life. As head of state and secular head of the established Church, she is expected to be above criticism. She applies

herself assiduously to her duties; even her most ardent critics concede that she is diligent (Wilson 1989: 190). In April 1947, at the age of 21, while still Princess Elizabeth, she said in a broadcast to the Commonwealth: 'I declare before you that my whole life, be it long or short, shall be devoted to your service.' She reiterated her vow when she addressed both Houses of Parliament in 2002 and again in 2012. She and members of the royal family undertake about 4,000 public engagements each year (Hardman 2007: 15); she has made more than 250 overseas visits. She is the patron of more than 620 charities and voluntary organisations. Other members of her family involve themselves in charitable activities. The Prince of Wales founded 18 out of 20 charities that form the 'Prince's Charities', a group of not-for-profit organisations. The Prince's Youth Business Trust has been responsible for funding the launch of 30,000 small businesses. The work of the Princess Royal (Princess Anne) as president of the Save the Children Fund helped to raise its international profile. Indeed, the name of a member of the royal family adorns the headed notepaper of about 3,000 organisations.

Up to and including the 1980s the Queen was held to epitomise not only standards of good citizenship, applying herself selflessly to her public duties, but also family life in a way that others could both empathise with and hope to emulate. (Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother – widow of George VI – was popularly portrayed as 'the nation's grandmother'.) Significantly, during the national miners' strike in 1984, the wives of striking miners petitioned the Queen for help. However, the extent to which the Queen fulfils this role has been the subject of much publicised debate since the late 1980s. The problem lay not so much with the Queen personally but with members of her family. By 1992, the Queen was head of a family that had not sustained one successful lasting marriage. The Prince of Wales, as well as the Princess, admitted adultery. The Duchess of York was pictured cavorting topless with her 'financial adviser' while her daughters were present. By the end of the decade the divorced heir to the throne was attending public engagements with his companion, Camilla Parker-Bowles. In a MORI poll in January 2002, respondents were divided as to whether or not members of the royal family had 'high moral standards': 48 per cent thought that they did, and 44 per cent thought that they did not.

The claim to maintain high standards was also eroded by the collapse of a trial in 2002 involving the butler to Diana, Princess of Wales. The butler, Paul Burrell, was charged with stealing many items belonging to his late employer. The trial collapsed after it emerged that the Queen recalled a conversation with Burrell in which he said that he was storing items for safe-keeping. Following the collapse of the Burrell trial, a YouGov poll (17 November 2002) found that 17 per cent of respondents thought that 'recent revelations' had damaged the royal family 'a great deal' and 41 per cent 'a fair amount'.

The negative perceptions of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries gave way to more positive views when Prince Charles' eldest son, Prince William – second in line to the throne, after his father – married Kate Middleton and they had two children, George and Catherine. The portrayal of family life – pictures of the children, taken by their mother, were variously published – contributed to popular support. A 2015 poll found Prince William and his brother, Prince Harry, and Kate Middleton to be the most popular members of the royal family, especially among young people. In terms of perceptions of public role, an ICM poll in 2016 found that Prince William was second only to the Queen in perceptions of doing a good job. Of those questioned, 72 per cent thought the Queen was doing a good job (only 7 per cent thought she was doing a bad job) and 71 per cent thought Prince William was doing a good job. Only 6 per cent thought he was doing a bad job.

Uniting people despite differences

The Queen is head of state. Various public functions are carried out in the name of the crown, notably public prosecutions, and as the person in whom the crown vests the monarch's name attaches to the various organs of the state: the government, courts and armed services. The crown, in effect, substitutes for the concept of the state (a concept not well understood or utilised in Britain), and the monarch serves as the personification of the crown. Nowhere is the extent of this personification better demonstrated than on British postage stamps. These are unique: British stamps alone carry the monarch's head with no mention of the name of the nation. The monarch, it is argued, provides a clear, living focal point for the expression of national unity, national pride and, if necessary, national grief.

This unifying role is made possible by the monarch transcending political activity. Citizens' loyalties can flow to the crown without being hindered by political considerations. The Queen's role as head of the Commonwealth may also have helped to create a 'colour-blind' monarchy, in which the welfare of everyone, regardless of race, is taken seriously. At different points this century, members of the royal family have also shown concern for the economically underprivileged and those who have lost their livelihoods. This has found expression over the years, from the 'something must be done' remark in the 1930s of the then Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII) about unemployment while visiting Wales through to the work of the present Prince of Wales to help disadvantaged youths.

This unifying role has also acquired a new significance as a consequence of devolution. The crown remains the one unifying feature of the United Kingdom. The UK traditionally

comprises one constitutional people under one crown and Parliament. The position of the UK Parliament is circumscribed by virtue of devolving powers to elected assemblies in different parts of the UK. The royal family anticipated the consequences of devolution by seeking funding for an enhancement of the royal offices and residence in Scotland. The Queen opened the Scottish Parliament as well as the National Assembly for Wales. In the event of conflict between a devolved government and the UK government, the Queen constitutes the one person to whom members of both governments owe an allegiance. According to *The Economist* magazine:

The fact that a monarchy is not intellectually justifiable does not mean that it does not have a stabilising role. This may be particularly true in Britain, a composite nation. . . . For Britons who do not particularly identify with one of the Kingdom's constitutional parts, the crown may seem a more binding element.

(*The Economist*, 8 September 2015)

The extent to which this unifying feature remains significant was exemplified by the funeral of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother, who died in 2002 at the age of 101. The number of people queuing up to pay their respects as the Queen Mother's coffin lay in Westminster Hall, as well as those lining the route for the funeral, far exceeded expectations (see Box 15.1). When questioned as to why they were queuing for hours to pay their respects, some people responded by saying that it was because it enabled them to express their sense of identity as being British. The Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilee celebrations, in 2002 and 2012, acted as a focal point for the expression of national identity, of bringing people together in a way that no other single national figure or institution could do.

However, the extent to which this role is fulfilled effectively does not go unquestioned. Critics, as we shall see, claim that the royal family occupies a socially privileged position that symbolises not so much unity as the social divisions of the nation. Although the royal household is known for having gays in its employ, and is an equal opportunities employer, critics have drawn attention to the dearth of employees in the royal household drawn from ethnic minorities. The 12,000 employees in the royal household are not especially well paid. In May 2017, for example, Buckingham Palace was advertising for a housekeeping assistant at a salary of £16,500 a year and a service desk analyst for £20,000–£22,000 a year. There have been attempts to widen recruitment, but pay and conditions are not among the most competitive.

Allegiance of the armed forces

The armed services are in the service of the crown. Loyalty is owed to the monarch, not least by virtue of the oath taken by all members of the armed forces. It is also encouraged by the close and longstanding links maintained by the royal family with the various services (see Beckett 2016). Members of the royal family have variously served in (usually) the Royal Navy or the Army. Most hold ceremonial ranks, such as colonel-in-chief of a particular regiment. Prince Andrew was a serving naval officer and a helicopter pilot during the 1982 Falklands War. Prince Harry, as a serving army officer, saw action in Afghanistan in 2008 and 2012–3. (He also founded in 2014 the Invictus Games, a Paralympic-style sports competition for disabled service personnel.) Prince William has also been a serving officer. The Queen takes a particular interest in military matters, including awards for service. In 2009 she instituted the Elizabeth Cross for widows of soldiers killed on active service or as a result of terrorist acts.

Such a relationship helps to emphasise the apolitical role of the military and, according to supporters of the monarchy, provides a barrier should the military, or more probably sections of it, seek to overthrow or threaten the elected government. (In the mid- to late 1970s, the press and some television programmes reported rumours that a number of retired officers favoured a coup in order to topple the Labour Government.) The Queen is seen as being in a position to exercise the same role as that of King Juan Carlos of Spain in 1981, when he forestalled a right-wing military takeover by making a public appeal to the loyalty of his army commanders.

According to the anti-monarchy organisation Republic, there is nothing to support the claim that the Queen would be able to fulfil such a role. *The Economist* has argued to the contrary, claiming that the Queen can command loyalty in a way that a Prime Minister cannot (*The Economist*, 8 September 2015). Insofar as there is a precedent that underpins the unique capacity of the monarch to command loyalty, it is to be found in the so-called Curragh incident in 1914, when army officers threatened to resign if called upon to take action against those in Ulster who were prepared to fight in order not to become part of a united Ireland. 'It was an unauthorised use of the King's name in orders from the War Office that did much to induce obedience, since it was suggested that he had personally approved what were perceived to be highly distasteful orders' (Beckett 2016: 123). It is unlikely that using the prime minister's name would have had the same effect.

Maintaining continuity of British traditions

The monarch symbolises continuity in affairs of state. Many of the duties traditionally performed by her have symbolic relevance: for example, the state opening of Parliament and – important in the context of the previous point – the annual ceremony of Trooping the Colour. Other traditions serve a psychological function, helping to maintain a sense of belonging to the nation, and a social function. The awarding of honours and royal garden parties are viewed by critics as socially elitist but by supporters as helping to break down social barriers, rewarding those – regardless of class – who have contributed significantly to the community. Hierarchy of awards, on this argument, is deemed less important than the effect on the recipients. The award of an MBE (Member of the Order of the British Empire) to a local charity worker may mean far more to the recipient than the award of a knighthood to a senior civil servant, who may regard such an award as a natural reward for services rendered. Investiture is often as important as the actual award.

To some it is a rather tiresome ordeal but to most a moving and memorable occasion. A fire brigade officer, who was presented with the British Empire Medal, spoke for many when he said: 'I thought it

would be just another ceremony. But now that I've been, it's something I'll remember for the rest of my days'.

(Hibbert 1979: 205)

During her reign, the Queen has conferred more than 400,000 honours and awards, and more than 2 million people have attended royal garden parties or parties on behalf of charities, either at Buckingham Palace or Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh. Few decline the invitation.

Again, this function does not go unchallenged. The award of honours, for example, is seen as preserving the existing social order, the type of honour still being determined by rank and position. Critics dislike the use of 'Empire' in the principal awards below a knighthood. It is also seen as a patronage tool in the hands of the Prime Minister, given that only a few honours (Knight of the Garter, the Order of Merit and medals of the Royal Victorian Order) are decided personally by the Queen. However, both Buckingham Palace and Downing Street have sought to make some changes while preserving continuity. Successive Prime Ministers have tried to make the honours system more inclusive – in recent years, for example, knighthoods have been conferred on head teachers – and the monarchy has sought to be more open. Since 1993 any member of the public has been able to nominate someone for an honour: nomination forms are available online.

BOX 15.1

Diamond Jubilee year, 2012

In 2002 the Queen's mother – Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother – died at the age of 101. It was estimated that 70,000 people would file past her coffin as she lay in state in Westminster Hall. In the event, 200,000 filed past. When the coffin was taken to Windsor for burial, it is estimated that more than 1 million people lined the route. An estimated 300 million people worldwide watched the funeral on television. The extent of popular interest took the media by surprise. The level of interest was demonstrated the same year as the Queen celebrated her Golden Jubilee. The celebrations culminated in a weekend of events, including a pop concert in the grounds of Buckingham Palace, a firework display and a service of thanksgiving. An estimated 1 million people lined the Mall in London for the celebrations on the Saturday, and a similar number were estimated to have lined the route for the Queen's visit to St Paul's Cathedral for the service of thanksgiving. Over a 6-month period, there were 28 million hits on the Golden Jubilee website.

The celebrations appeared to tap popular support for the Queen as well as an opportunity to come together. Such sentiments appeared even more to the fore when the Queen celebrated her Diamond Jubilee in 2012. She became only the second British monarch to celebrate 60 years on the throne. Among the celebratory events were a pageant on the River Thames, with more than 1,000 boats taking part, and watched by an estimated 1.2 million people in central London. There was a Jubilee concert at Buckingham Palace – performers included Robbie Williams, JLS, Annie Lennox, Kylie Minogue, Sir Elton John and Sir Paul McCartney – and the official Diamond Jubilee song, 'Sing', reached number one in the single and album charts. The concert, broadcast on BBC1, attracted a peak audience in the UK of 17 million. The Jubilee website attracted over 2 million unique visitors and 7.6 million page views. The Monarchy Facebook page had over 1.8 million unique views.

The Diamond Jubilee appeared to tap popular support for the monarchy or may have been a factor in enhancing

support for it. Held at a time of austerity, the celebrations – allied with the 2012 Olympic Games held in London – appeared to contribute to a feeling of goodwill at a time of political and economic uncertainty. The satisfaction with the Queen reached a record level, with 90 per cent saying that they were satisfied with the way she was doing her job; only 7 per cent said they were dissatisfied. As the Ipsos MORI report on the findings recorded, 'The Queen's rating is much higher than the ratings of David Cameron (40 per cent) and Ed Miliband (40 per cent) put together; no Prime Minister or party leader has ever scored more than 75 per cent satisfaction in Ipsos MORI's polls'. The polls in that year found that support for the monarchy was higher than at any point in the previous 20 years. Public confidence in the monarch's long-term future was also at a 20-year high. The Director of Research at Ipsos MORI, Professor Roger Mortimore, noted that

This has been a triumphant Jubilee year. After a rocky period in the 1990s, public support for the Monarchy and the Queen now looks as strong as it has been for many years. Most of the public now expect the Monarchy to survive well into the future, and that is probably the best guarantee that it will do so'

The support was, as Professor Mortimore recorded, for 'the Monarchy and the Queen'. There is a difficulty in separating support for the institution from the person fulfilling the role of monarch. The performance of the Queen as



The Duke and Duchess of Cambridge

Source: Danny Martindale/WireImage

monarch has generally won widespread admiration, demonstrated in the remarkably high levels of satisfaction. Underpinning support for the institution in the future is public support for the heir to the Prince of Wales – the Queen's elder grandson – Prince William. The marriage of Prince William and Kate Middleton in 2011 attracted widespread public interest. Polls have tapped the popularity of the couple. In 2015 a ComRes poll found that the most popular royals were the Queen, Prince William (Duke of Cambridge) Prince Harry and Kate Middleton (Duchess of Cambridge). Significantly for the future of the monarchy, older respondents tended to name the Queen, while younger ones tended to name younger members of the family.

Preserving a Christian morality

The Queen is supreme governor of the Church of England, and the links between the monarch and the church are close and visible. The monarch is required by the Act of Settlement of 1701 to 'joyn in communion with the Church of England as by law established'. After the monarch, the most significant participant in a coronation ceremony is the Archbishop of Canterbury, who both crowns and anoints the new sovereign. As we have seen, bishops are formally crown appointments. National celebrations led by the Queen will usually entail a religious service, more often than not held in Westminster Abbey or St Paul's Cathedral. The Queen is known to take seriously her religious duties and is looked to, largely by way of example, as a symbol of a basically Christian morality.

Preserving what are deemed to be high standards of Christian morality has been important since the nineteenth century, although not necessarily much before that: earlier monarchs were keener to protect the Church of England

than they were to practise its morality. The attempts to preserve that morality in the twentieth century resulted in some notable sacrifices. Edward VIII was forced to abdicate in 1936 because of his insistence on marrying a twice-married and twice-divorced woman. In 1955 the Queen's sister, Princess Margaret, decided not to marry Group Captain Peter Townsend because he was divorced. She announced that 'mindful of the Church's teaching that Christian marriage is indissoluble, and conscious of my duty to the Commonwealth, I have resolved to put these considerations before others'. However, two decades later, with attitudes having changed, the Princess herself was divorced. Her divorce was followed by that of Princess Anne and Captain Mark Phillips and later by that of the Duke and Duchess of York and the Prince and Princess of Wales. Following the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, the Prince of Wales began to be seen in public with his companion, Camilla Parker-Bowles. Although attitudes towards divorce have changed, divorces and separations in the royal family – and the heir to the throne admitting to

adultery – have nonetheless raised questions about the royal family's capacity to maintain a Christian morality. The capacity to do so has also been challenged explicitly by the heir to the throne, Prince Charles, who is reported to have said that he would wish to be 'a Defender of Faiths, not the Faith'.

The stance of the Prince of Wales also reflects criticism by those who do not think that the royal family *should* preserve a morality that is explicitly or wholly Christian. Critics see such a link as unacceptable in a society that has a several non-Christian religions and indeed a large and growing secular element. The connection between the crown and the Christian religion may act against the crown being a unifying feature of the United Kingdom.

Those who think the royal family should preserve a strict Christian morality appear to be declining in number. This was reflected at the start of the twenty-first century in popular attitudes towards the relationship of Prince Charles and Camilla Parker-Bowles. Mrs Parker-Bowles was divorced, and her former husband was still living. She and Prince Charles engaged in an affair while both were still married. In a YouGov poll in August 2002, when asked what they believed should happen at the end of the Queen's reign, a majority of respondents – 52 per cent – said that Prince Charles should become King and be allowed to marry Mrs Parker-Bowles. No less than 60 per cent would approve of the Archbishop of Canterbury allowing them to have a Church of England wedding (*Evening Standard*, 15 August 2002). In the event, they married in a civil ceremony in April 2005.

Exercise of formal powers

Underpinning the monarch's capacity to fulfil a unifying role, and indeed underpinning the other functions deemed important, is the fact that she stands above and beyond the arena of partisan debate. This also affects significantly the monarch's other primary task: that of fulfilling her formal duties as head of state. Major powers still remain formally with the monarch. In practice, as we have seen, prerogative powers are exercised by ministers and done so in the name of the crown. A number of other powers, which cannot be exercised by ministers, are as far as possible governed by convention. By convention, as we have seen, the monarch assents to all legislation passed by the two Houses of Parliament; by convention, she calls the leader of the party with an overall majority in the House of Commons to form a government. Where there is no clear convention governing what to do, the Queen acts in accordance with precedent (where one exists) and, where a choice is involved, acts on advice. By thus avoiding any personal choice – and being seen not to exercise any personal choice – the monarch is able to remain above politics. Hence the characterisation of the monarch as enjoying strength through

weakness. The denial of personal discretion in the exercise of inherently political powers strengthens the capacity of the monarch to fulfil a representative – that is, symbolic – role.

However, could it not be argued that the exercise of such powers is, by virtue of the absence of personal choice, a waste of time and something of which the monarch should be shorn? Why not, for example, as suggested by Blackburn (1999), codify existing practice in a way that requires no involvement by the monarch? There are two principal reasons why the powers remain vested in the sovereign.

First, the combination of the symbolic role and the powers vested in the crown enables the monarch to stand as a potential constitutional safeguard. As head of state and as commander-in-chief of the armed forces, the monarch could deny both legitimacy and support to anyone who sought to usurp the democratic institutions of the state. Thus, ironically, the unelected monarch – successor to earlier monarchs who tried to dispense with Parliament – serves as an ultimate protector of the political institutions that have displaced the monarchy as the governing authority (see Bogdanor 1995). The role of the Queen as a protector of democracy was emphasised in her Diamond Jubilee year by Labour MP Sir Gerald Kaufman: 'What she has done in making this United Kingdom a permanent democracy, a democracy that is impregnable, is perhaps the greatest of her many achievements' (House of Commons Official Report, 7 March 2012, col. 862). In the same debate, another MP recalled the occasion when Margaret Thatcher's premiership was coming to an end, and there were fears that she may try to call a general election to save herself, an act that her party, the Commons or the Cabinet would not have been able to prevent:

The only person who could have stopped her was the Head of State and I believe all of us agree that the Queen's strength of character and the fact that she had served many other Prime Ministers would give us full confidence that she was the best person in that situation or any situation when a Prime Minister decided to act in his or her interests rather than the interests of the country.

(House of Commons: Official Report, 7 March 2012, col. 870)

Second, retention of the prerogative powers serves as a reminder to ministers and other servants of the crown that they owe a responsibility to a higher authority than a transient politician. Ministers are Her Majesty's ministers; the Prime Minister is invited by the sovereign to form an administration. The responsibility may, on the face of it, appear purely formal. However, although the monarch is precluded from calling the Prime Minister (or any minister) to account publicly, she is able to require a private explanation. In *The English Constitution*, Walter Bagehot offered his classic definition of

the monarch's power as being 'the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, the right to warn'. The Queen is known to be an assiduous reader of her official papers and is known often to question the Prime Minister closely and, on other occasions, the relevant departmental ministers. Harold Wilson recorded that in his early days as Prime Minister he was caught on the hop as a result of the Queen having read Cabinet papers that he had not yet got round to reading. 'Very interesting, this idea of a new town in the Bletchley area', commented the Queen. It was the first Wilson knew of the idea. More significantly, there are occasions when the Queen is believed to have made her displeasure known. In 1986, for example, it was reported – although not confirmed – that the Queen was distressed at the strain that the Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, was placing on the Commonwealth as a result of her refusal to endorse sanctions against South Africa (see Pimlott 1996; Ziegler 1996). She was also reported to have expressed her displeasure in 1983 following the US invasion of Grenada, a Commonwealth country (Cannon and Griffiths 1988: 620). Indeed, relations between the Queen and her first female Prime Minister were claimed to be strained (see Hamilton 2002), although Mrs Thatcher said that her relationship with the Queen was correct. The Queen is also believed to have signalled her displeasure when Prime Minister Tony Blair failed to include her in the itinerary of a visit to the UK by US President Bill Clinton (Pierce 1999). Nonetheless, former Prime Ministers have variously attested to the fact that the Queen is a considerable help rather than a hindrance, offering a private and experienced audience. She also serves as a reminder of their responsibility to some other authority than political party. She also stands as the ultimate deterrent. Although her actions are governed predominantly by convention, she still has the legal right to exercise them.

Criticisms of the monarchy

Various functions are thus fulfilled, or believed fulfilled, by the monarch and by other members of the royal family. There has tended to be a high level of support for the monarchy and popular satisfaction with the way those functions are carried out. However, a high level of support for the institution of monarchy has not been a constant in British political history. It dropped during the reign of Queen Victoria when she withdrew from public activity following the death of Prince Albert. It dropped again in the 1930s as a result of the abdication crisis, which divided the nation. It increased significantly during the Second World War because of the conduct of the royal family and remained high in postwar decades. It dipped again in the 1990s. The Queen described

1992 as her *annus horribilis* (horrible year). The monarchy was no longer the revered institution of preceding decades, and its future became an issue of topical debate. Even at times of high popular support, it has never been free of criticism. In recent years the criticisms have been directed particularly at the activities of various members of the royal family.

Four principal criticisms can be identified: that an unelected monarch has the power to exercise certain political powers; that, by virtue of being neither elected nor socially typical, the monarchy is unrepresentative; that maintaining the royal family costs too much; and that the institution of monarchy is now unnecessary.

Potential for political involvement

The actions of the sovereign as head of state are governed predominantly by convention. However, not all actions she may be called on to take are covered by convention. This is most notably the case in respect of the power to appoint a Prime Minister. Usually, there is no problem. As long as one party is returned with an overall majority, the leader of that party will be summoned to Buckingham Palace or, if already Prime Minister, will remain in office. But what if there is a 'hung' parliament, with no one party enjoying an overall majority? In the General Election of 2010, no party emerged with an overall majority. The Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, remained in Downing Street and opened negotiations with the third largest party, the Liberal Democrats. Conservative leader, David Cameron, whose party had the largest single number of seats, did likewise. A Conservative–Liberal Democrat coalition was agreed, and David Cameron was summoned to Buckingham Palace. But what would have happened if no agreement had been reached?

Such situations can pose a threat to the value that currently derives from the sovereign being, and being seen to be, above politics. She is dependent on circumstances and the goodwill of politicians in order to avoid such situations arising. The Queen was drawn into partisan controversy in 1957 and 1963 in the choice of a Conservative Prime Minister: the Conservatives at the time had no formal mechanism for selecting a new leader and no obvious leader had 'emerged'. The embarrassment to the monarchy spurred the party to change its method of selecting its leader. In 2010 there was clear pressure on the parties to reach an agreement, not least to keep the Queen out of political controversy (Norton 2011: 244). There nonetheless remains the danger that circumstances may conspire again to make involvement in real – as opposed to formal – decision making unavoidable.

Given this potential, some critics contend that the powers vested in the monarch should be transferred elsewhere. Various left-of-centre bodies have advocated that some or all

of the powers be transferred to the Speaker of the House of Commons. The proposal was advanced in 1996, in a Fabian Society pamphlet, by Labour parliamentary candidate Paul Richards, and again in 1998 by the authors of a pamphlet published by the left-wing think tank Demos (Hames and Leonard 1998). Defenders of the existing arrangements contend that the retention of prerogative powers by the crown has created no major problems to date. One constitutional historian, Peter Hennessy, in a 1994 lecture, recorded only five 'real or near real contingencies' since 1949 when the monarch's reserve powers were relevant (Marr 1995: 234; see also Bogdanor 1995). Furthermore, it serves as a valuable constitutional long-stop. Giving certain powers to the Speaker of the Commons would be to give them to a member of an institution that may need to be constrained and would probably make the election of the Speaker a much more politicised activity. Furthermore, the Speaker presently operates solely within the context of the House of Commons and has no remit that extends beyond it.

Unrepresentative

The monarchy cannot make a claim to be representative in the second meaning of the term (freely elected). Critics also point out that it cannot make a claim to be representative in the third meaning (socially typical). The monarchy is a hereditary institution and by its nature is of necessity socially atypical. Critics contend that social hierarchy is reinforced by virtue of the monarch's personal wealth. The Queen is believed to be among the world's richest women. Many of the functions patronised by the Queen and members of the royal family, from formal functions to sporting events, are also criticised for being socially elitist. Those who surround the royal family in official positions (the Lord Chamberlain, ladies-in-waiting and other senior members of the royal household), and those with whom members of the royal family choose to surround themselves in positions of friendship, are also notably if not exclusively drawn from a social elite. In the 1950s Lord Altrincham criticised the Queen's entourage for constituting 'a tight little enclave of British "ladies and gentlemen"' (Altrincham et al. 1958: 115). Various changes were made in the wake of such criticism – the royal family became more publicly visible, the presentation of *débutantes* to the monarch at society balls was abolished – but royalty remains largely detached from the rest of society. The closed nature of the royal entourage was attacked in the 1990s by Diana, Princess of Wales, who had difficulty adapting to what she saw as the insular and stuffy nature of the royal court. Even at Buckingham Palace garden parties, members of the royal family, having mixed with those attending, then take tea in a tent reserved for them and leading dignitaries. Focus

groups, commissioned by Buckingham Palace in 1997, concluded that the royal family was out of touch because of their traditions and upbringing as well as remote because of the many physical and invisible barriers thought to have been constructed around them' (quoted in Jones 1998). In a MORI poll in 2002, 68 per cent of those questioned thought that the royal family was 'out of touch with ordinary people'; only 28 per cent thought that it was not.

Pressures continue for the institution to be more open in terms of the social background of the Queen's entourage and, indeed, in terms of the activities and background of members of the royal family itself. Two events influenced the royal family in seeking to be more open and accessible. One was the public reaction to the death, in a car crash in 1997, of Diana, Princess of Wales, popular not least because of her public empathy with the frail and the suffering. The other was the findings from the focus groups, commissioned in the wake of the Princess' death. Defenders of the royal family argue that it is, by definition, impossible for members of the family to be socially typical – since they would cease to be the royal family – and that to be too close to everyday activity would rob the institution of monarchy of its aura and charm. There has to be some element of distance. When Prince William and Prince Harry spoke openly in 2017 about their mental state in the wake of their mother's death – and emphasised the importance of mental health – the Queen was reported to be concerned at the extent of such revelations. It constituted what one newspaper has characterised as a modern 'royal paradox': we 'want our monarchs to be just like us but also completely different from us' (quoted in Glencross, Rowbotham and Kandiah 2016: 263).

Overly expensive

The cost of the monarchy has been the subject of criticism for several years. This criticism became pronounced in the 1990s. Until 2012 much but not all of the costs of the monarchy were met from the civil list. This constituted a sum paid regularly by the state to the monarch to cover the cost of staff, upkeep of royal residences, holding official functions, and public duties undertaken by other members of the royal family. (The Prince of Wales was not included: as Duke of Cornwall his income derives from revenue-generating estates owned by the Duke of Cornwall.) Other costs of monarchy – such as travel and the upkeep of royal castles – were met by government departments through grants-in-aid from Parliament. In 1990, to avoid an annual public row over the figure, agreement was reached between the government and the Queen that the civil list should be set at £7.9 million a year for ten years. When the other costs of the monarchy – maintaining castles and the like – are added to this figure, the annual public

expenditure on the monarchy was estimated in 1991 to exceed £57 million.

In the 1970s and 1980s accusations were variously heard that the expenditure was not justified. In part, this was because some members of the royal family did very little to justify the sums given to them and in part because the Queen was independently wealthy, having a private fortune on which she paid no tax. (When income tax was introduced in the nineteenth century, Queen Victoria voluntarily paid tax. In the twentieth century, the voluntary commitment was whittled down and had disappeared by the time the Queen ascended the throne in 1952.) These criticisms found various manifestations. In 1988, 40 per cent of respondents to a Gallup poll expressed the view that the monarchy 'cost too much'. In a MORI poll in 1990 three out of every four people questioned believed that the Queen should pay income tax; half of those questioned thought the royal family was receiving too much money from the taxpayer. Certain members of the royal family became targets of particular criticism.

These criticisms became much louder in 1991 and 1992. They were fuelled by a number of unrelated developments. The most notable were the separation of the Duke and Duchess of York and – in December 1992 – of the Prince and Princess of Wales, following newspaper stories about their private lives. The result was that members of the royal family became central figures of controversy and gossip. In November 1992 fire destroyed St George's Hall at Windsor Castle, and the government announced that it would meet the cost of repairs, estimated at more than £50 million. Public reaction to the announcement was strongly negative. At a time of recession, public money was to be spent restoring a royal castle, while the Queen continued to pay no income tax and some members of the royal family pursued other than restrained lifestyles at public expense. A Harris poll found three out of every four respondents believing that ways should be found to cut the cost of the royal family.

Six days after the fire at Windsor Castle, the Prime Minister told MPs that the Queen had initiated discussions 'some months ago' on changing her tax-free status and on removing all members of the royal family from the civil list, other than herself, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Queen Mother. The Queen herself would meet the expenditure of other members of the royal family. The following year, the Queen announced that Buckingham Palace was to be opened to the public, with money raised from entrance fees being used to pay the cost of repairs to Windsor Castle. These announcements served to meet much of the criticism, but the controversy undermined the prestige of the royal family. Critics continued to point out that most of the costs of the monarchy remained unchanged, funded by public money. They drew attention to the fact that the Queen was using novel devices of taking money from the public (entrance fees to the Palace) in order to fund Windsor

Castle repairs rather than drawing on her own private wealth.

A further major change took place when Parliament enacted the Sovereign Grant Act 2011 to aggregate the different sources of support – the civil list and grants-in-aid. Under the Act the monarch and her successors are now funded by a Sovereign Grant which is linked to the net income surplus of the Crown Estate. The Crown Estate comprises the income from crown lands that was surrendered to the Exchequer in the eighteenth century in return for government support. The Grant, which came into being in April 2012, was set equal to 15 per cent of the profit from the Crown Estate for two years previously.

By 2008–9 Head of State Expenditure was £41.5 million, a notable reduction in the costs compared with 10 years and, indeed, 20 years previously. In 2010–1 it was down further to £32.1 million. Buckingham Palace recorded that costs had been reduced as a result of increased income generation, deferral of property maintenance and a pay freeze. Although the Palace continued to make economies, the Sovereign Grant for 2016–7 was £42.8 million. In 2017, Parliament agreed an order to increase the percentage of money received from the Crown Estate from 15 per cent to 25 per cent. This was to cover the cost of a ten-year overhaul of the ageing Buckingham Palace. This meant that the Sovereign Grant for 2017–8, utilising the 25 per cent figure, was £76.1 million. The Government announced that legislation would be introduced to allow for a reduction in the grant once the renovation was complete.

Defenders contend that the country obtains good value for money from the royal family. They argue that much if not most of the money spent on maintaining castles and other parts of the national heritage would still have to be spent (rather like Versailles in France) even if there was no royal family. When such money is taken out of the equation, the public activities of the Queen and leading royals such as the Princess Royal are deemed to represent good value for public money. However, despite the various savings made, there is a dispute as to the cost to the nation of the monarchy and whether it offers value for money. In 2015 brand valuation agency Brand Finance estimated the monarchy's value at £57 billion and its net contribution (once all costs of the monarchy were taken into account) at £1.55 billion. However, the organisation Republic argued that when hidden costs, such as security and visits, were included (and income from the Crown Estate excluded) there was a net loss, with the monarchy costing annually £334 million.

In November 2012, despite record levels of satisfaction with the Queen, 52 per cent of those questioned thought that the royal family should not receive as much money as it did, against 47 per cent who disagreed. That, though, represented a notable decline from the percentage of those believing that

Table 15.1 Attitudes to cost of the royal family

Q: Do you agree or disagree with the following statements? 'The Royal Family should not receive as much money as it does?'

Date	Agree	Disagree	Don't know	Net agree
		%	%	%
June 1972*	48	48	4	0
Jan. 1990	50	44	6	+6
Feb. 1991	64	28	8	+36
May 1992	76	18	6	+58
June 2000	64	29	7	+35
Nov. 2012	52	47	6	+5

Note: *Source for 1972 data: NOP

Source: Ipsos MORI

royals cost too much in 1992 (Table 15.1). Then, 76 per cent agreed, against only 18 per cent who disagreed.

A 2015 poll found that a majority of those questioned believed that minor royals should not receive any public subsidy. There was also some dissatisfaction with the fact that the cost of refurbishing Buckingham Palace should be met from public funds. By early 2017, a petition calling for the costs to be met by the royal family exceeded 145,000 signatures. However, the public debate was far more muted than over the cost of repairing St George's Hall and the change to the Sovereign Grant to cover the cost was supported by the Labour Opposition as well as the Government. Also, when asked about providing a good return on taxpayer investment, a 2016 ICM poll found that more respondents than not thought that the Queen, Prince Philip, Prince Charles, Prince William and Prince Harry provided a good return.

Unnecessary

Those who criticise the monarchy on grounds of its unrepresentative nature and its cost are not necessarily opposed to the institution itself. A more open and less costly monarchy – based on the Scandinavian model, with the monarch mixing more freely with citizens and without excessive trappings – would be acceptable to many. However, some take the opposite view. They see the monarchy as an unnecessary institution; the cost and social elitism of the monarchy are seen as merely illustrative of the nature of the institution. Advocates of this view have included the organisation Republic and the *New Statesman* magazine. This approach is also taken by a number of writers. They include Tom Nairn in *The Enchanted Glass: Britain and Its Monarchy*, Edgar Wilson in *The Myth of the British Monarchy*, Jonathan Freedland in *Bring Home the Revolution*, the contributors to Cyril Meadows' *Ending*

the Royal Farce, Alastair Gray and Adam Tomkins in *How We Should Rule Ourselves* and Stephen Haseler in *The Grand Delusion*.

Both Wilson and Haseler contend that the various arguments advanced in favour of the monarchy – its popularity, impartiality, productivity, capacity to unite, capacity to protect democratic institutions of state and ability to generate trade – are all myths, generated in order to justify the existing order. To them and similar critics the monarchy forms part of a conservative establishment that has little rationale in a democratic society. For Haseler, maintaining the monarchy is at the heart of the UK still seeing itself as a world power and an attempt by political leaders at 'imperial overreach' (Haseler 2012: xiv). Such critics would prefer to see the monarchy abolished. 'The constitutional case for abolishing the Monarchy is based mainly on the facts that it is arbitrary, unrepresentative, unaccountable, partial, socially divisive, and exercises a pernicious influence and privileged prerogative powers' (Wilson 1989: 178). The monarchy, declared the *New Statesman*, 'sits like the spider at the centre of a web of wealth and privilege. . . Its continued existence gives legitimacy to the deeply unequal way in which British society is structured' (*New Statesman*, 13 July 2009). Removing the monarchy, it said, would have huge symbolic value, 'confirming the people of Britain as citizens, not subjects'. Necessary functions of state carried out by the monarch could be equally well fulfilled, so critics contend, by an elected president. Most countries in the world have a head of state not chosen on the basis of heredity. So why not Britain?

Supporters of the institution of monarchy argue that, despite recent criticisms, the Queen continues to do a good job – a view that, according to opinion polls, enjoys majority support – and that the monarchy is distinctive by virtue of the functions it is able to fulfil. In a MORI poll in November 2012 satisfaction with the way the Queen was doing her job was at an all-time high (see Box 15.1). It is considered doubtful that an appointed or elected head of state would be able to carry out to the same extent the symbolic role, representing the unity of the nation. For a head of state not involved in the partisan operation of government, it is this role (representative in the fourth sense of the term) that is more important than that of being an elected leader. The monarch has a duty to represent all subjects; an elected head of state may have a bias, subconscious or otherwise, in favour of those who vote for him or her, or in favour of those – presumably politicians – who were responsible for arranging the nomination. 'An elected and therefore political head of state is sure to upset at least one large section of the electorate a lot more than an uncontroversial one who is above politics' (*The Economist*, 8 September 2015). The monarch enjoys a stature not likely to be matched by an elected figurehead in engaging the loyalty of the armed forces and, by virtue of her longevity and

experience, can assist successive Prime Ministers in a way not possible by a person appointed or elected for a fixed term. Hence, by virtue of these assets particular to the Queen, the monarch is deemed unique and not capable of emulation by an elected president. Although these assets may have been partially tarnished in recent years, it is argued that they remain of value to the nation.

Proposals for change

The monarchy has never been wholly free of critics. In the 1970s and 1980s those critics were relatively few in number. In the early 1990s they became far more numerous and more vocal. There were various calls for changes to be made in the institution of the monarchy and in the conduct of members of the royal family. Those most responsible for this situation arising were members of the royal family themselves. The marital splits, the antics of various royals, the public perception of some members of the royal family as 'hangers-on' (enjoying the trappings of privilege but fulfilling few public duties) and the failure of the Queen to fund the restoration of Windsor Castle herself contributed to a popular mood less supportive of the monarchy than before. This critical mood was tempered at the start of the new century.

Although the public standing of the monarchy improved, not least at the time of the Queen's Golden and Diamond Jubilees, calls for change continue to be made. Various options have been advanced. These can be grouped under four heads: abolition, reform, leave alone and strengthen.

Abolition

The troubles encountered by the royal family in the late 1980s and early 1990s appeared to influence attitudes toward the monarchy itself. As we have seen, the Queen described 1992 as her *annus horribilis* – her horrible year. That was reflected in popular attitudes towards the monarchy. Until the middle of 1992 fewer than 15 per cent of people questioned in various polls wanted to see the monarchy abolished. A Gallup poll in May 1992 found 13 per cent of respondents giving such a response. By the end of the year, the figure had increased to 24 per cent. In 1994, those favouring abolition gained the support of a leading magazine, *The Economist*.

Not only was there an increase in the percentage of the population expressing support for the abolition of the monarchy; there was also an increasing agnosticism among a wider public. In 1987, 73 per cent of respondents in a MORI poll thought that Britain would be worse off if the monarchy were abolished. In December 1992 the figure was 37 per cent; 42 per cent thought it would make no difference. The same poll

found, for the first time, more people saying that they did not think that the monarchy would still exist in 50 years' time than saying it would: 42 per cent thought it would not, against 36 per cent saying it would.

However, those who argue the case for the retention of the monarchy appear still to have a considerable edge over those demanding abolition. The early 1990s represented the high point in terms of popular disaffection with royalty. *The Economist* appears since to have rowed back from its earlier embrace of abolition. Support for abolition of the monarchy has varied but usually no more than one in five express support for a republic. Those who do favour abolition are more likely to be found among the left-leaning members of the professional classes than the lower middle or working class: 'abolition of the monarchy is much more a demand of liberal intellectuals . . . than of the traditional working class left' (Mortimore 2002: 3). Although the proportion dipped in April 2005 (around the time of the marriage of Prince Charles), usually about seven out of ten people questioned favour retaining the monarchy (Table 15.2). An Ipsos MORI poll in 2016 found that by 76 per cent to 17 per cent, respondents supported a monarchy over a republic. When the question was posed as continuing to have a king or queen, or having an elected president, 84 per cent opted for retaining a monarch and only 12 per cent wanted an elected president. There is also a difference between those who express support for abolition of the monarchy and those campaigning for it. Republic, founded in 1983, claims a relatively small support base: 5,000 members and about 30,000 supporters.

Reform

Recent years have seen a growing body of support for some change in the nature of the monarchy and especially in the royal family. Some proposals for reform are radical. The authors of the Demos pamphlet, *Modernising the Monarchy*, argue the case not only for transferring the monarch's prerogative powers to the Speaker of the House of Commons but also for holding a referendum to confirm a monarch shortly after succeeding to the throne (Hames and Leonard 1998). There are some data to suggest that more people support the first of these proposals than oppose it. In a MORI poll in August 1998, 49 per cent thought that the powers should be removed, against 45 per cent who thought they should be retained.

There is also a desire for more general change in the openness and engagement of the monarch, and other members of the royal family. This desire has been tapped by opinion polls as well as by the focus groups commissioned by Buckingham Palace. The public preference is for a more open and less ostentatious monarchy, with the Queen spending more time

Table 15.2 Attitudes towards the monarchy

Q. If there was a referendum on the issue, would you favour Britain becoming a republic or remaining a monarchy?

	Dec 1994	Aug 1998	Feb 2002	Apr 2005	Apr 2006	Apr 2011	Nov ¹ 2012	Feb ¹ 2016
Republic	20	16	19	22	18	18	16	17
Monarchy	71	75	71	65	72	75	79	76
Don't know/other	9	9	10	13	10	7	5	7

Note: ¹ Question in 2012 and 2016: 'Would you favour Britain becoming a republic or remaining a monarchy?'

Source: Ipsos MORI

meeting members of the public, and with other members of the royal family, especially the 'minor royals', taking up paid employment (as some have) and blending into the community. A Granada TV deliberative poll in 1996, which involved interviewing people before and after discussing the subject with experts, found that the biggest percentage of affirmative responses was for the statement that 'members of the royal family should mix more with ordinary people'. The percentage agreeing was initially 66 per cent and, after discussion, it increased to 75 per cent. In a MORI poll in January 2002, 54 per cent of those questioned agreed with the statement that 'the monarchy should be modernised to reflect changes in public life'. Only 28 per cent felt that 'the monarch's role should remain broadly unchanged'.

There is also some support for a change in the order of succession. A small number of people favour the Queen abdicating in favour of Prince Charles, but the number is declining: it peaked in 1981 (48 per cent) and 1990 (47 per cent); since then, the proportion believing that she should remain Queen has exceeded 60 per cent. In an Ipsos MORI poll in 2016, it was 70 per cent; only 21 per cent supported abdication. Some people also favour 'skipping a generation' and allowing Prince William, Prince Charles' elder son, to succeed to the throne in place of his father. In a MORI poll in September 1997, in the wake of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales, 54 per cent supported such a move: by November 1998, the percentage giving the same response was 34 per cent. The proportion increased markedly in March 2003 following the publication of the critical report on the way Prince Charles' household was run. By 2005 there was a more even split of opinion. A MORI poll in April 2005 found that 43 per cent favoured such a move against 40 per cent opposed. Ten years later, the figures had not changed much. A ComRes poll in 2015 found that 40 per cent favoured him giving way to his son, against 43 per cent who were against doing so.

The question itself is hypothetical. It is not in the gift of the Prince of Wales to give up 'his right' to be the next monarch. The succession to the throne is a matter of law. A decision by the Queen, or by Prince Charles upon or at the time of

his succession to the throne, to abdicate is not one that can be taken unilaterally. Under the Act of Succession, Prince Charles will become King automatically on the death of his mother. There is no formal power to abdicate. That would require – as it did in 1936 – an Act of Parliament.

Another change that has variously been discussed, but which has less immediate relevance, is that of allowing the eldest child to succeed, regardless of gender. Though the Queen's eldest child is male and his eldest child is male, the marriage of Prince William in 2011 led to speculation as to what would happen if his first child was a girl. The Government announced its intention to legislate for the first born to succeed to the monarchy regardless of sex and in 2012, as we have noted, it announced it had achieved the agreement to such a change of the Commonwealth nations where the Queen was also head of state.

In 1996 it emerged that the senior members of the royal family, apparently prompted by Prince Charles, had formed a small group (the 'Way Ahead Group' composed of senior royals and Buckingham Palace officials) to meet to consider various changes to existing arrangements.

The measures taken by the Queen in recent years – notably the decision to pay income tax, to limit expenditure and to spend more time meeting ordinary members of the public – appear to enjoy popular support. The deliberations of the Way Ahead Group were designed also to bring the institution up to date and enhance such support. A Co-ordination and Research Unit, composed of officials, was also formed to act essentially as a royal think tank, since superseded by a body known as the Secretariat (Hardman 2011: 247). 'Charles Anson, the Queen's Press Secretary of the period, says that the reformers were pushing at an open door' (Hardman 2011: 25). The financial accounts (once highly secret) are now published, the Jubilee celebrations in both 2002 and 2012 were carefully planned, and junior royals have a somewhat lower public profile than before as well as receiving no support from public funds. In 2002 the Queen became the first member of the royal family to receive a gold disc from the recording industry: 100,000 copies of the CD of the *Part*

at the Palace, produced by EMI, were sold within a week of release. More than half-a-million people 'like' her Facebook page. The Secretariat engages in thought as to how the royal family 'should be interacting with the rest of us' (Hardman 2011: 247).

Leave alone

The monarchy as it stands has some ardent admirers. Conservative MPs have generally moved quickly to defend the monarchy from criticism. When a Fabian Society pamphlet, *Long to Reign Over Us?*, was published in August 1996 (Richards 1996) advocating a referendum on the monarchy, a Conservative Cabinet minister, Michael Portillo, immediately portrayed it as an attack on the institution of monarchy. 'New Labour should be warned that they meddle with the monarchy at the nation's peril', he declared. After 1997 some of the attempts by Prime Minister Tony Blair to encourage change also encountered criticism. In 1999 the leading historian, Lord Blake, declared: 'Reform has gone far enough. ... The monarchy is one of the fixed points of the British constitutional firmament. It cannot be subjected to constant change' (Pierce 1999).

Although this stance attracts support, it tends to be outweighed by those favouring some reform (a fact acknowledged in effect by the royal family in the creation of the Way Ahead Group). As we have seen, most people questioned in the MORI poll in January 2002 favoured some change; only 28 per cent wanted to leave the monarchy broadly unchanged. Those favouring modest reform appear to be in a majority among voters. It was also the stance favoured by the Labour Government under Tony Blair. 'Palace officials have been told clearly by Downing Street that there is strong political pressure for a much leaner monarchy' (Pierce 1999). Although some of the proposals emanating from Downing Street, such as reducing the ceremony of the state opening of Parliament, were resisted by Buckingham Palace (see Pierce 1999), the need for reform has generally been accepted by the royal family. This, according to Glencross, Rowbotham and Kandiah largely accounts for the success of the Windsor monarchy since 1910: 'its ability to adapt itself to what the people want its monarchy to be at various points in time' (Glencross, Rowbotham and Kandiah 2016: 265).

Strengthen

The final option is that of strengthening the role and powers of the monarchy. A Gallup poll in 1996 for *The Sunday Telegraph* tapped a body of support for giving the Queen a greater role. This was especially marked among working-class

respondents and among the 16- to 34-year-old age groups. Fifty-seven per cent of working-class respondents thought that the Queen should be given 'a more substantial role in government'. Fifty-four per cent of respondents aged 16 to 34 also thought that she should have a more substantial role (Elliott and McCartney 1996). The nature of the role was not specified. As we have seen, the potential for the Queen to be drawn into decision making exists. The exercise of some of these powers may not prove unpopular to a section of the population. It was notable in the 1996 poll that many respondents regarded the Queen as having superior skills to those of the then Prime Minister, John Major. Forty-six per cent thought that the Queen would make a 'better Prime Minister than John Major'. Thirty-nine per cent thought that she would make a better Prime Minister than Tony Blair, and 47 per cent of working-class respondents thought that she would run the country 'more wisely than politicians'.

There is thus some body of support for the Queen exercising more power in the political affairs of the nation. However, that view is not widely held among politicians, nor – as far as one can surmise – among members of the royal family. As we have seen, the strength of the monarchy rests largely on the fact that it is detached from the partisan fray and is not involved in having to exercise independent judgement. Having to make independent decisions would be popular with some but, and this is the crucial point in this context, not with all people. Those adversely affected by a decision would be unlikely to keep their feelings to themselves. The monarchy would be drawn into the maelstrom of political controversy, thus ridding it of its capacity to fulfil the principal functions ascribed to it.

Conclusion

The monarch fulfils a number of functions as head of state. Some of those functions are not peculiar to the monarch as head of state: they are functions that are typically carried out by a head of state. Supporters of the monarchy argue that a number of functions are particularly suited to the monarch and, in combination, could not be fulfilled by an elected or appointed head of state. The monarchy was under strain in the early 1990s as a result of various disconnected events, and its public standing declined markedly. The nature of the monarchy was further called into question following the death of the popular Diana, Princess of Wales, in August 1997. The Queen and other members of the royal family have responded to criticism by implementing changes in structures and activities designed to create a more open and responsive monarchy. The actions of the Queen and her family appeared to bear fruit, notably in the celebration of the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002 and especially her Diamond Jubilee in 2012.

BOX 15.2

BRITAIN IN CONTEXT

Presidents and monarchs

The United Kingdom is not unusual in having a monarchy. There are basically two types of head of state: presidents and hereditary rulers. Presidents are typically elected, though their role in government may vary. Some combine executive powers as head of government with formal ceremonial power as head of state; the President of the USA combines both. Some are predominantly ceremonial: that is, serving as head of state but not head of government; the President of Ireland is an example of this type. The same distinction can be drawn in terms of hereditary rulers. Some are both head of government and head of state. The number is now small, concentrated especially in the Middle and Far East, as powerful rulers over time have been overthrown, removed by popular vote or reduced to playing a largely ceremonial role. More than two-thirds of hereditary rulers have a predominantly or wholly ceremonial role, exercising few or no independent political powers. This is especially the case with monarchs in Europe. Those in the Middle East tend to exercise more

power as well as being much richer than Western heads of state. Most hereditary rulers take the title of king or queen, but some have the title of emir, grand duke, prince, sheik, or sultan; they are generally subsumed under the generic title of monarchs.

Monarchies account for less than one-quarter of the nations that now exist. There is a notable concentration of ceremonial monarchies in western Europe – Belgium, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, Spain, Sweden and the United Kingdom are monarchies; Luxembourg is a Grand Duchy and Monaco a principality. The number of countries with a monarch exceeds the number of monarchs, as some monarchs reign over more than one country: the Queen of Denmark, for example, is also Queen of Greenland. None, though, can match the British monarch, who is Queen of 16 countries and of a number of non-sovereign territories such as Bermuda, Gibraltar, the British Virgin Islands and the Falkland Islands.

‘The reality’, observed *The Economist*, ‘is that the monarchy does not do much harm and does not do much good; but it is accepted and liked by most Britons. Getting rid of it simply isn’t worth the fuss’ (*The Economist*, 8 September 2015). There is, though, some scepticism about its future. However, the percentage of people thinking the monarchy will not exist in 100 years was, in April 2011, the lowest (42 per cent) since 1992. The proportion thinking it will still exist (37 per cent) was the highest since 1992. In November 2012 the percentage thinking it would exist in 100 years was even higher, exceeding the percentage believing it would not by 42

per cent to 38 per cent. The monarchy has proved remarkably adaptable, weathering some notable storms, and engaging popular support. The proportion of people thinking the monarchy is important to Britain’s future has increased in recent years, standing – as we have seen – at 75 per cent in 2016, up from 66 per cent in 1998. It remains the most popular of the nation’s political institutions. An Ipsos MORI poll in 2012, commissioned by Channel 4, found that, when asked what made them most proud to be British, more people opted for the royal family (28 per cent) than ‘our system of democracy’ (22 per cent).

Chapter summary

The monarchy remains an important institution in British political life. The monarch’s transition from directing the affairs of state to a neutral non-executive role – with executive powers now exercised by ministers in the name of the monarch – has been a gradual and not always smooth one, but a move necessary to justify the monarch’s continuing existence.

Transcending partisan activity is a necessary condition for fulfilling the monarch’s symbolic (‘standing for’) role and hence a necessary condition for the strength and continuity of the monarchy. The dedication of the present monarch – the longest-serving monarch in British history – has served to sustain popular support for the institution. That support dropped in the

1990s, criticism of the activities of members of the royal family rubbing off on the institution of monarchy itself. Popular support for the institution remains and received a particular boost with the Queen’s Golden Jubilee in 2002, the marriage of Prince William in 2011, and the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee in 2012. However, most people when questioned want to see some change, favouring the monarchy and royal family being more open and approachable.

Discussion points

- What is the point in having a monarchy?
- Does the royal family represent value for money?
- What are the most important roles fulfilled by the Queen in contemporary society?
- What public role, if any, should be played by members of the royal family, other than the Queen?
- Should the monarchy be left alone, reformed or abolished?

Further reading

There are few substantial analyses of the role of the crown in political activity. The most recent scholarly analysis – that by Bogdanor (1995) – seeks to transcend recent controversy. The book provides a good historical perspective on the role of the monarchy as well as offering a defence of the institution. Glencross, Rowbotham and Kandiah (2016) provide a useful study of how the monarchy changed in the twentieth century; Hardie (1970) and Hibbert (1979) also offers a useful overview. Lacey (1977, Golden Jubilee edition 2002) and Pimlott (1996, Golden Jubilee edition 2002) have produced useful and readable biographies of the Queen.

Several works appeared just prior to and during the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee year, including Hardman (2011), Marr (2011), Bradford (2011) and Bedell Smith (2012). More recent works include Ewart (2016) and a Penguin edition of Bedell Smith (2017a). Bond (2012) offers a largely pictorial history. Shawcross (2009) has written a substantial official biography of Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother. Prince Charles is covered by Bedell Smith (2017b). Recent books about the monarchy include Douglas-Home (2000) and Shawcross (2002). Strober and Strober (2002) offer quotations from people who have been close to the Queen during her reign. Hardman (2007) provides a guide to the royal family at work.

In terms of the debate about the future of the monarchy, the most recent reform tracts are those by Barnett (1994), Richards (1996) and Hames and Leonard (1998). The principal works arguing for abolition are Nairn (1988), Wilson (1989), Freedland (1999), Meadows (2003), Gray and Tomkins (2005), and Haseler (2012). The issue of the *New*

Statesman, 13 July 2009, advocating abolition, also provides a substantial critique. On the case for monarchy, see Gattey (2002).

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Useful websites

Official royal websites

Royal family: www.royal.gov.uk
 Online magazine: www.royalinsight.net/forum/index.php
 Prince of Wales: www.princeofwales.gov.uk
 Crown Estate: www.crownestate.co.uk

Nominations for public honours

Nomination process: www.gov.uk/honours

Organisations favouring reform

Republic: www.republic.org.uk
 Centre for Citizenship: www.centreforcitizenship.org

Organisation supporting the monarchy

Constitutional Monarchy Association: www.monarchy.net

Survey data on attitudes towards the Royal Family

Ipsos MORI: www.ipsos.com/ipsos-mori/en-uk/royal-familymonarchy-trends-index-page
 ComRes: www.comresglobal.com/?s=monarchy
 YouGov: <https://yougov.co.uk/opi/search/?q=monarchy>
 ICM: www.icmunlimited.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/OIOM-Royal-3.pdf
 Gallup: www.gallup.com