

## **Lecture II**

### **The Sovereign: Role, Significance, and Appeals for Reform**

This lecture explores the role and historical importance of the British monarch. It examines the criticisms that have been raised against the monarchy as an institution

#### **I. Role of the British Monarch:**

##### **A. Constitutional Framework:**

The British monarchy operates within a constitutional framework, defined by the unwritten constitution, statutes, and conventions. The monarch's role is largely ceremonial, non-partisan, and symbolic, representing national unity and continuity.

##### **B. Ceremonial Duties:**

The monarch conducts state visits, hosts receptions, and represents the nation at various official events. The monarch also performs traditional rituals, such as the opening of Parliament and the awarding of honors and decorations.

##### **C. Constitutional Duties:**

The monarch exercises constitutional functions, including granting royal assent to legislation, appointing the Prime Minister, and issuing proclamations.

The monarch's powers in governance are limited, with executive authority predominantly residing with elected officials.

#### **II. Historical Significance of the British Monarchy:**

##### **A. Stability and Continuity:**

The monarchy has played a crucial role in providing stability and continuity throughout British history. Through times of political upheaval, the monarch has symbolized the nation's unity and resilience.

### **B. Soft Power and Diplomacy:**

The British monarchy has long served as a symbol of national identity and represented the nation on the international stage. The monarch's international visits and diplomatic interactions contribute to the UK's soft power and cultural influence.

### **C. Evolving Constitutional Role:**

The monarchy has adapted to changing circumstances, evolving from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional form of government.

Historical landmarks, such as the Magna Carta and the Glorious Revolution, shaped the monarchy's gradual transition to its present form.

## **III. Proponents Vs. Opponents of the Monarch (y):**

In fact, many voices in Britain call for reforming the monarchy, some others, more radical, stand as advocates for the removal of monarchy and replacing it with a republic. Proponents of the monarchy argue for:

- Historical Continuity:** Supporters of the monarchy highlight its historical and cultural significance, serving as a unifying symbol of national identity and heritage.

- **Constitutional Stability:** The monarchy is seen by some as a stabilizing force, providing a non-partisan and ceremonial head of state that is separate from the political realm.

- **Tourism and Soft Power:** they argue that the monarchy contributes to the tourism industry and enhances the country's international reputation and soft power.

Opponents of the monarchy suggest:

- **Democratic Legitimacy:** One prominent criticism pertains to the monarchy's lack of direct democratic legitimacy, as the position is hereditary and not subject to popular vote. Critics argue that hereditary succession is incompatible with the principles of modern democracy with some advocating for an elected head of state.

- **Lack of Accountability:** Critics argue that the monarchy should be subject to greater democratic scrutiny and accountability. They question the accountability of the monarchy, arguing that the monarch is exempt from many aspects of ordinary legal and political scrutiny. Concerns are raised over potential abuses of power or interference in politics by the monarchy.

- **Cost and Financial Burden:** Some criticize the monarchy for being an expensive institution, funded by taxpayers through the Sovereign Grant. Critics argue that public funds could be better allocated in areas such as healthcare, education, or infrastructure. They argue that public funds allocated to the royal family (£86.3 million in 2021-2022) could be better utilized elsewhere, especially during times of economic challenges.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the British monarchy, operating within a constitutional framework, plays a significant role in symbolizing national unity, stability, and continuity. Throughout history, it has adapted to changing circumstances, while still retaining its ceremonial and constitutional duties. However, critics argue that the institution lacks democratic legitimacy, represents a financial burden, and raises questions about accountability. Understanding and analyzing both the historical significance and the criticisms of the monarchy are key to engaging in the ongoing debate about its future in British society.