GRESHAM COLLEGE

16 MAY 2017

QUEEN ELIZABETH II

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Today's lecture is on the Queen. I gave a lecture on the Queen last year to commemorate her 90th birthday, and of course, I want to avoid repeating anything I said in that lecture, which is naturally available on the Gresham College website, so what I want to discuss today is the constitutional role of the Queen and, more generally, the role of constitutional monarchy in the 21st Century, but I shall also discuss the constitutional role of the Prince of Wales, which is I think widely misunderstood. But above all, I shall discuss the changes, which I think are very considerable in the monarchy since 1952 when the Queen came to the throne.

But let me begin with a confession: this has been the most difficult lecture of the series to prepare, and the reason is that, inevitably, we know far less about the Queen than about her predecessors. There are official biographies of all the past monarchs whom I have discussed in this series, except for Queen Victoria, and that was because Edward VII, for some reason, would not allow an official biography. We also have historical works about past monarchs, based on material in the Royal Archives and in the National Archives. What we have learnt about past monarchs does, in many cases, alter the view that people had of them at the time, especially perhaps in the case of Queen Victoria. Bagehot, writing in the 1860s, thought her a perfect constitutional monarch, but later research has shown that she was very far from that.

But there is, and can be, no official biography of the Queen while she is alive, and in accordance with constitutional convention and Freedom of Information legislation, there is limited access to the Royal and National Archives for material bearing on her reign, and in consequence, no one knows her views on public matters, and it is hardly possible to form an accurate view of her influence. Like her predecessors, the Queen never gives interviews. Her mother, Queen Elizabeth, did once give an interview to a glossy magazine when she married the Duke of York, later George VI, in 1923.
She was rebuked for this by George V, and she never gave another. Now, there are, it is true, a number of biographies of the Queen, but frankly, I am sceptical of their value because no biographer can write definitively about the Queen during her lifetime. The people who know her well, her close friends, will never talk about her, except in the most general of terms. A popular writer of the 1920s, Lytton Strachey, once said: "A few faults are indispensable to a really popular monarch. What we need is Queen Victoria by an acquaintance who dislikes her." But of course, that kind of book will never be written, and anyone who spoke about the Queen in specific terms would not, I suspect, remain a friend or even an acquaintance for very long. But most of those who talk about the Queen's supposed views do not know here, and so they have nothing of real importance to say.

It is of course essential to the success of constitutional monarchy that the political views of the sovereign are not known to the public because, if they are known, it would also be known that she approved or disapproved of the views of a particular government, and that would reflect on her impartiality. There are occasionally suggestions that the Queen does in fact hold particular views. In particular, people who claim to be close to her have attempted to report to the public what she really thought about the Suez campaign of 1956 and, more recently, what she really thinks about Brexit, and these reports seem to me almost certainly false.

In 1977, the year of the Silver Jubilee, a book appeared by Robert Lacey alleging that the Queen had disapproved of Suez. He claimed to have acquired this information from the Duke of Edinburgh and from Lord

Mountbatten, but the Duke of Edinburgh had been in the Antarctic at the time he was alleged to have provided this information, while Lord Mountbatten said his views had been misinterpreted. Now, when the Cabinet Secretary at the time of Suez, Sir Norman Brooke, took his leave of the Queen on his retirement in 1963, the conversation turned to Suez. Sir Norman told Anthony Eden what had been said, and Eden recorded it in his papers. She had remarked to him, in reference to the events of 1956, that the country had been very evenly divided. There was, she said, a very strong body of support for Sir Anthony – "My milkman", she added, "was one of them." You may make of that what you will. In my view, the Queen, whatever her private views on Suez, and I have not the faintest idea what they were, would have felt it her duty to support and sustain her Prime Minister, as in fact she did.

On Brexit, reports appeared in the press before the referendum that the Queen was in favour of it and had made that clear at a lunch party at which various politicians, including Michael Gove and Nick Clegg, were present. I am very sceptical. It is hardly likely that, after 64 years as a constitutional monarch, the Queen would suddenly tell politicians that she disagreed with a central plank of government policy, which was of course that Britain should remain in the European Union. It appears that, even in her private discussions with Prime Ministers and other ministers, she is very rarely forthright. She does not indicate that she approves or disapproves of a particular line of policy or particular legislation.

Edward Heath once said that she would never say that she was opposed to a particular line of government policy, but would probe the Prime Minister about its merits, without indicating her own views. Her method, I suspect, though I am, I confess, guessing, is to probe through questions, often difficult ones to answer, and that technique was shown in public when she asked Economics Professors at the LSE why none of them had predicted the credit crunch of 2008. She might well – and this again is speculation – she might have asked politicians, "Can you give me some good reasons why we should remain in the EU?" and that might lead some to believe that she thought Britain should leave, but she would be just as capable of asking politicians what advantage they thought Britain could gain if she did in fact leave.

As I said, my own view is that the Queen sees her primary constitutional role as that of supporting and sustaining the Prime Minister of the day. Perhaps, unlike professional politicians, or commentators on politics, she does not ask herself whether a policy is left-wing or right-wing, or enquire of herself whether or not she agrees with the government. In a democracy, it is ministers who are chosen by the people to govern. It may be the Queen's outlook is more administrative or managerial than political, namely, that the Queen's government must be carried on, and that, in a democracy, it is carried on by ministers chosen by the people. Her role, in consequence, is to assist them in that task. That certainly seems the view held by George VI, as I tried to show in my last lecture.

Perhaps the Queen also has a different attitude from the rest of us towards elections and towards politicians. In the 1960s, Richard Crossman, a Labour Cabinet Minister, kept a copious diary of events, which he later published in three volumes. The Diaries end in 1970, when the Labour Government was unexpectedly defeated, and Crossman had to return his seals of office to the Queen. The very last entry in the Diaries refer to this: "The Queen," he said, "thanked me a little bit and it was perfectly decent and formal. I asked her whether she minded elections. She said, "Yes, it means knowing a lot of new people." Crossman concludes by continuing: "I suppose that is it. She does not make all that difference between Labour and Conservative, and for her, all this simply means that, just when she has begun to know us, she has to meet another terrible lot of politicians."

We do, however, have some idea of the Queen's views on some topics, for, on rare instances, she has allowed her views to become public.

In 1977, at the time of her Silver Jubilee, in a reply to addresses from both Houses of Parliament, she spoke of separatist pressures in the United Kingdom. She said this: "I number Kings and Queens of England and of Scotland and Princes of Wales among my ancestors, and so I can readily understand these aspirations, but I cannot forget that I was crowned Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. Perhaps this Jubilee is a time to remind ourselves of the benefits which Union has conferred, at home and in our international dealings, on the inhabitants of all parts of the United Kingdom." This was interpreted as a rebuke to the nationalist parties in Scotland and Wales.

In 2014, shortly before the referendum on Scottish independence, she told a member of the public outside a church in Scotland that she hoped voters would think very carefully about the referendum. Now, this comment was, in itself, absolutely neutral - it was carefully crafted. It does not, of itself, suggest that voters should vote for or against Scottish independence, but of course it was interpreted, rightly I am sure, as a clear indication that the Queen hoped that Scottish independence would be rejected. It is indeed understandable that, as she was crowned Queen of the United Kingdom, she would not wish to see her kingdom broken up and end her reign as Queen of a disunited kingdom. I discussed in my lecture how upset George VI was when Ireland left the Commonwealth in 1949 and how he anxiously asked the Irish Minister in London whether he had been to blame. He was only partially mollified when the Irish Minister said that even the Angel Gabriel could not have prevented it. The Queen, one may suspect, would have been at least as upset had Scotland decided to leave, even though an independent Scotland, as the SNP makes clear, would, unlike Ireland, have remained a monarchy and would have remained in the Commonwealth.

It is also reasonable to assume that the Queen holds strong views on the value of racial and religious tolerance. That, after all, is the basis on which the Commonwealth has existed, at least since the Declaration of London in 1949, legitimising the entry of the first non-white member of the Commonwealth, India, as a republic. The Queen's famous pledge in 1947, on her 21st birthday, mentioned allegiance not to Britain but to what she called "our great imperial family", which is now the Commonwealth. Of course, it is a very different organisation now from what it was then. There were then just seven self-governing dominions, all, except for South Africa, comprising a majority of white people and all ruled by white people. There were also 39 British colonies and protectorates, mainly in Africa and Asia, ruled from Whitehall, their government being the responsibility of the Colonial Office. The first African colony, the Gold Coast, did not achieve independence as Ghana until 1957. The changing status of the independent countries of the Commonwealth was acknowledged at the Queen's accession in 1952. She was the first sovereign to be crowned not just as Queen of Britain but as Queen also of other Commonwealth monarchies, equally with being Queen of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, for the British monarchy, uniquely amongst the world's monarchies, is not contained by geographical boundaries since the Queen is Queen not only of Britain but of 15 other countries, including Canada, Australia, New Zealand and Jamaica. She is also Head of the Commonwealth, which contains 52 countries, around one-third of the countries in the world.

It is difficult but important to distinguish the role of Head of the Commonwealth from that of Queen of Britain or Canada or Australia or any of the other Commonwealth monarchies. Were the Commonwealth to be seen simply as an extension of British power or influence, it would fail. It is a delicate task to distinguish the various roles, and problems certainly arose during the long premiership of Margaret Thatcher, from 1979 to 1990, when Britain seemed out of line with much of the Commonwealth on the issues of how to deal with the rebel white regime in Rhodesia and with the Apartheid regime in South Africa. Before the opening of the 1979 Commonwealth Conference, held at Lusaka, the Queen had spoken to a number of African leaders and had come to the view that the Commonwealth was in danger of breaking up unless there were agreement on majority rule in Rhodesia. She used her influence to help prepare the discussions which led to the independence of what is now Zimbabwe. The then Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, Chief Anyaoku, said that he was convinced that the intervention spurred the organisation, which was on the point of possibly splitting up, to compromise. The Prime Minister of Zambia, Kenneth Kaunda, said that, "Without her, many of us would have left." The Prime Minister of Singapore, Lee Kuan Yew, contrasted the Queen's sympathetic attitude with that of her Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, saying that Margaret Thatcher was not forthcoming about independence for Rhodesia, but there was this mother figure who represented the wider British public and the Commonwealth, who showed a softer side, a more humane side, and one that sympathised with those aspirations. So, the Queen achieved the feat of retaining the loyalty and sentimental attachment of the leaders of member states, even when they were opposed to the policies of the British Government. The Queen has, I think, in particular, gained the affection of African leaders and many of their peoples, even though there are no African monarchies in the Commonwealth. Sir Shridath Ramphal, a former Secretary-General of the Commonwealth, has said that the Queen brought to the Commonwealth "a new quality of caring, a sense that it was an important dimension of her reign, and not just tacked on to being Queen of England." Her success in Commonwealth countries has derived from an awareness that she cared. They mattered in a sense beyond the British Government.

The Commonwealth is, to some extent, the Queen's personal creation and might not have continued to exist without her. She has often emphasised the importance of the transformation of Empire into Commonwealth, the transformation of a relationship based on domination to one that is voluntary and based upon equality and consent. It is perhaps remarkable that almost every country once ruled from Westminster has chosen to join and remain in it. Burma and Ireland are the only countries which refused to remain in the Commonwealth after independence.

The Commonwealth is multiracial. So also is Britain today, although, when the Queen came to the throne in 1952, Britain was a predominantly white society. Now, the ideas of the Commonwealth and of multiracial tolerance are interconnected for, clearly, discrimination based on race and religion are incompatible with the idea of Commonwealth. It was because Apartheid South Africa could not accept this that she left the Commonwealth in 1961. So, there is a link between the Queen's support of the Commonwealth ideal and her support for a multiracial and multidenominational society in Britain. This was symbolised very recently, in 2012, the year of the Diamond Jubilee, when one of the Queen's first visits was to Leicester, a town that has become a symbol of successful ethnic integration. There were also numerous visits to mosques and temples.

The development of a multiracial society is of course only one of the many radical changes that have occurred since 1952, the year the Queen came to the throne. The novelist, L.P. Hartley, famously remarked: "The past is a foreign country – they do things differently there." Britain, in 1952, certainly seems like another country, one barely recognisable today. The early-Fifties were a time of great optimism, as Britain seemed to be emerging from post-War austerity and rationing. Some saw the new reign as inaugurating a new Elizabethan age. The Queen, however, was eager to distance herself from such aspirations, and in her 1953 Christmas Broadcast, she confessed that she did not feel at all "like my great Tudor forebear, who ruled as a despot and was never able to leave her native shores".

The Queen had come to the throne unexpectedly early, at the age of 25, owing to the premature death of her father in 1952 at the age of 56. Had George VI lived to his natural span, she would not have become Queen until she had reached middle age. The Queen shared with her father, who had himself come unexpectedly to the throne after the Abdication, a strong and stoical sense of duty. Her father certainly never wanted the job. Perhaps, in an ideal world, she would not have chosen it either, for it does involve some degree of personal sacrifice. In Shakespeare's Henry V, the King, brooding before Agincourt, declares: "What infinite heart's ease must kings neglect that private men enjoy." But the Queen had one advantage that her father lacked: George VI had come to the throne without any training at all, but he had carefully instructed his daughter in the duties of monarchy, and it is said that, throughout her reign, she has sought to be worthy of the example of her father, who had indeed been an exemplary constitutional monarch. The Queen, like her father, has accepted the duties of monarchy with a certain stoicism, and the experience of the War perhaps reinforced her stoicism, for members of the Wartime generation were accustomed to the idea of social obligation, to accepting the duties they were called upon to perform, without complaint. The Queen, it seems to me, is essentially a product of that Wartime generation of the 1940s.

She perhaps first came to wide public notice when, in 1947, as Princess Elizabeth, she made a famous declaration in a radio broadcast on her 21st birthday, from Cape Town, where George VI had gone on a state visit. She said: "There is a motto which has been borne by many of my ancestors, a noble motto – I serve. I cannot quite do as they did, but through the inventions of science, I can do what was not possible for any of them: I can make my solemn act of dedication with a whole Empire listening. I should like to make this dedication now. It is very simple. I declare before you all that my whole life, whether it be long or short, shall be devoted to your service and the service of our great imperial family to which we all belong." She has always taken that declaration extremely seriously. In her 1953 Christmas Broadcast, delivered in New Zealand, she said she would give her heart and soul "every day of my life" to what she called "this equal partnership of nations and races". In 1977, she referred to it in her Silver Jubilee Speech to the Lord Mayor of London, saying: "Although that vow was made in my salad days when I was green in judgement, I do not regret nor retract one word of it."

A clear implication of this declaration is that the Queen will not abdicate, that she perceives the role of monarch as a job for life, with no possibility of retirement. Moreover, the Coronation is in part a religious ceremony. If the sovereign is anointed by God, it follows that she must serve for life. And there is an addition of course, the trauma of the abdication of Edward VIII, which one suspects is very much remembered in royal circles. When, in 2003, the Archbishop of Canterbury, George Carey, came to the Palace to announce his retirement, the Queen told him: "Oh, that is something I cannot do. I am going to carry on to the end", but she did tell her late-cousin Margaret Rhodes: "Unless I get Alzheimer's or have a stroke", and in that case, provision is made for a regency in the Acts of 1937 and 1943, and the regent would be the Prince of Wales, who would act in the Queen's place.

Just as there have been changes in the role of the Commonwealth, and social changes at home, so also there have been changes in the Queen's constitutional position. Her discretionary powers, the so-called personal prerogatives, have been so reduced during her reign that they now hardly exist. At the beginning of her reign, the Queen had two such personal prerogatives. The first was discretion over appointing a Prime Minister, and that was used in 1957 when she appointed Harold Macmillan rather than R.A. Butler, who many expected would be chosen, and then again in 1963, when she appointed Lord Home rather than R. A. Butler, again an unsuccessful candidate, Lord Hailsham or Reginald Maudling. On both occasions, there were those who criticised the Queen's use of her discretion. Some suggested these choices were based on the Queen's personal views, as they had been in Queen Victoria's time. That was not the case. They were based on her judgement as to which candidate was most likely to prove acceptable to the ruling Conservative Party. But then, the obvious repost was that Conservative MPs, rather than the Queen, were in a far better position to decide who was most acceptable as leader of their party. Would it not be better if they themselves decided upon their favourite candidate rather than putting the Queen in the position of using her discretion and so making a decision that would prove controversial? The Conservative Party drew this sensible conclusion when, in 1965, it decided, in future, the Conservative Prime Minister would be elected by Conservative MPs, not appointed by the Queen. Today, it is the party members who decide, once MPs have chosen the top two candidates. One suspects the Palace was relieved at the substitution of an electoral process for royal discretion, but, in consequence, the Queen no longer has any discretion in the choice of Prime Minister.

There were many, including, I have to confess, myself, who believed that the Queen might have to exercise her discretion on who to appoint when there was a hung parliament, but that has not been the case. There have been two hung parliaments in the Queen's reign: the first after the February 1974 Election; the second after the Election of 2010. After the February 1974 Election, the Prime Minister, Edward Heath, resigned after vainly trying to secure a coalition, and the Queen then appointed the leader of the opposition, the Labour Party, Harold Wilson, who formed a minority government. In 2010, the Prime Minister, Gordon Brown, resigned after vainly trying to secure a coalition, and the Queen then appointed the leader of the opposition, the Conservative Party, who formed a coalition with the Liberal Democrats. On both occasions, the outcome was decided by the politicians and the Queen played no role in the negotiations. In 2010, indeed, she made clear her distance from the negotiations by remaining at Windsor for the five days while the negotiations occurred, so that no one could say she had played any part in the outcome. That was a great contrast to 1931, when George V played an important role, in my view a fundamental one, in the discussions leading to the formation of the National Government. But in 1974 and 2010, by contrast, the Palace in effect told the politicians: you decide, and the Queen will then endorse what you decide. Of course, if MPs do not like the outcome, they can vote against the Queen's Speech, the first legislative test of the new government, but that did not occur either in 1974 or 2010. So, it is clear the Queen does not enjoy any discretion in the case of the hung parliament.

Secondly, it was thought the Queen had the discretion to refuse a prime ministerial request for a dissolution of Parliament, even though this power has not in fact been exercised in modern times. But the Fixed Term Parliaments Act of 2011 lays down definite statutory rules governing the dissolution of Parliament. A Prime Minister seeking a dissolution must show that she has complied with them to lawfully secure it, and the rules in the Fixed Term Parliament Act were of course applied in the House of Commons last month when two-thirds of the MPs voted for an early election. So, the Queen no longer has the discretion to refuse a request for a dissolution.

This constitutional transformation is important, for the following reason. The Queen has two roles: the first is that of constitutional head of state; the second is that of head of the nation. The position of head of the nation requires the Queen to represent the whole nation, not just one particular section of it. But if the Queen has genuine discretion, there is always the possibility that its use will cause controversy and that it will offend one or other section of political opinion. Therefore, the removal of the so-called personal royal prerogatives is an essential step in emphasising the role of head of the nation. The role of head of the nation cannot be combined with responsibility for the policy of the nation, nor with choosing the government that represents the nation, and there has been a shift during the Queen's reign from her constitutional role as head of state in favour of her role as head of the nation. Now, in the past, the monarch, as head of state, had power, and before the 19th Century, considerable power. That has now gone. But this does not mean that the Queen is a mere symbol or figurehead. Instead, influence has been substituted for power. As Disraeli said in the 19th Century: "The principles of the English constitution do not contemplate the absence of personal influence on the part of the sovereign, and if they did, the principles of human nature would prevent the fulfilment of such a theory." Lord Esher, a close friend of Edward VII, said: "It is irrational to contend that because under our constitutional rules and practice the sovereign has now and then to act automatically that he is therefore an automaton without influence or power."

In the 19th Century, Walter Bagehot declared the sovereign had three constitutional rights: the right to be consulted, the right to encourage, and the right to warn, and the exercise of these rights requires the sovereign to be thoroughly familiar with the policies of her government. This means the Queen must master state papers. Every day, except for Christmas and Easter, she receives red boxes full of papers for her perusal and signature. These apparently take around three hours to read. All of the Queen's Prime Ministers agree that she works through them assiduously, with a considerable grasp of detail. Now, Bagehot, after describing the sovereign's three constitutional rights, says this: "And a king of great sense and sagacity would want no others. He would find that his having no others would enable to use these with singular effect. He would say to his minister: "The responsibility of these measures is upon you. Whatever you think best must be done. Whatever you think best shall have my full and effectual support. It is my duty not to oppose, but observe that I warn." Supposing the king to be right and to have what kings often have, the gift of effectual expression, he could not help moving his minister. He might not always turn his course, but he would always trouble his mind." The Queen has the great advantage that she has been trained from an early age for her vocation, and unlike politicians, she has no public political history and is free from party ties. While perhaps no one can be wholly objective in their political views, she is perhaps in a better position than many to try to achieve that elusive goal.

The influence of the sovereign increases the longer the reign. Again, to quote Bagehot: "In the course of a long reign, a sagacious king would acquire an experience with which few ministers could contend. The king could say: "Have you referred to the transactions which happened during such-and-such administration, I think about 14 years ago? They afford an instructive example of the bad results which are sure to attend the policy which you propose. You did not at that time take so prominent a part in public life as you now do, and it is possible you do not fully remember all the events. I should recommend you to recur to them and to discuss them with your older colleagues who took part in them. It is unwise to re-commence a policy which so lately worked so ill."" The Queen has now been served by 13 Prime Ministers, three more than Queen Victoria, and has longer political experience than anyone now active in political life. My guess, and it can only be a guess, is that the influence of the Queen is rather underrated and not overrated, but of course, we shall not know whether I am right for many years to come.

James Callaghan, who was Prime Minister from 1976 to 1979 told one of the Queen's biographers that mostly the Queen "weighs things up but does not offer advice – she listens". Once, when he asked her what he might do about a certain problem, she apparently replied: "That is for you to decide. That is what you are paid for."

The Queen was once asked what she could do if she disapproved of an appointment. She replied: "Nothing constitutionally, but I could always say that I should like more information." That is an indication that the Prime Minister will not miss. If, however, the Prime Minister insisted, then of course she would have to give way, make the appointment, and hope for the best.

Earlier, I spoke of the Queen as head of the nation, but perhaps it would have been more accurate to say head of a multinational country, which Britain has become since devolution to the non-English parts of the United Kingdom, because one consequence of devolution has been to emphasise the multinational nature of the United Kingdom. Political issues now involve not just left and right, but issues concerning the various nationalities comprising the United Kingdom – the English, the Scots, the Welsh, and two communities in Northern Ireland. The nationalists who favoured devolution did so because they hoped it would prove a step towards separation, but of course the Labour Government which implemented devolution hoped the opposite, that by allowing national feeling to be expressed within the framework of the United Kingdom, it would blunt the force of separatism, and of course the jury is still out on who was right.

But if devolution is to prove compatible with the maintenance of the United Kingdom, then, in addition to institutions allowing the different nations to express their nationality, there must also be institutions capable of holding the country together. The monarchy is one such institution. An elected president would be unlikely to be able to perform this function. He or she would belong to one of the nations comprising the United Kingdom, most probably the English since the English are by far the largest nation in the country. But the Queen, however, is neither English, Scottish, Welsh or Northern Irish; in a sense she is both all and none of these, and she is therefore in a strong position to represent the whole country. It is said, in Belgium, that the only Belgian is the King, that everyone else is either a Fleming or a Walloon. So, the Queen continues to be a real presence in all of the nations of the United Kingdom, providing a unifying force above politics and perhaps helping to hold the country together, and that may be one advantage of monarchy.

Another advantage is that having no political or party history, she is in a better position than an elected president to represent the whole nation. A president would have been chosen by a majority and so would find it more difficult to represent the whole nation. Moreover, if the president were to be directly elected, he or she would be in competition with the prime minister, since he or she could claim equal democratic legitimacy. If a president were to be elected by Parliament, the politicians would be sure to choose someone who could not possibly compete with them. They would probably choose a retired politician whom they wished to put out to grass. Which of us can name the Presidents of Germany or Italy?

In Third Republic France after the First World War, the great Clemenceau advised parliamentarians: "Votez pour le plus stupid". The parliamentarians took him at his word: they rejected Clemenceau for the presidency in favour of Deschanel, President of the Chamber, who had to retire on grounds of insanity a few months after being elected.

As head of the nation, the Queen performs the crucial function of representing the nation to itself. This is most obviously seen at national commemorations, such as Armistice Day in November, or the anniversaries of D-Day or VE- Day. It is also seen in the recognition of achievement, for example, at investitures, and through visits and the awarding of prizes and medals. In 1992, when she was asked which was the most important of her many functions, she replied the investitures. She has presided over more than 600. She has certainly not followed the example of Queen Victoria in living in seclusion at Windsor and avoiding public engagements. In April 2013, the Sunday Telegraph noted that, since 1984, she has carried out nearly 15,000 official engagements. There had also been nearly 300 official overseas visits, including state visits to 116 countries, 22 tours of Canada, 16 of Australia, 10 of New Zealand, and six of Jamaica. Sir Peter Tapsell, a former Father of the House, once asked a courtier how she did it, and the answer was: "By not eating salads, shellfish and watermelon while travelling."

In the 1970s, she began the practice of making informal walkabouts so that she could speak to and be seen by those who would not meet her at official functions, and of these visits and walkabouts, a former private secretary has said: "All these engagements are enjoyable and there are many who would welcome the opportunity of attending them, but for the Queen, who can never enjoy them with the freedom of a holidaymaker, the pleasure of attending them is bound to be tempered by the strain imposed on her as a public figure and by the knowledge that somebody is looking at her all the time, and that she is being continuously photographed, filmed, and televised as well. The strain of a long day in a provincial town, taking a lively interest in everything, saying a kind word there, and asking a question there, always smiling and acknowledging cheers when driving in her car, sometimes for hours, has to be experienced to be properly appreciated." Nor has there

been much slackening in recent years. Indeed, during her Diamond Jubilee year of 2012, the Queen carried out 425 engagements.

There have been marked changes in attitude towards the monarchy during the 65 years of the Queen's reign. In 1952, Britain was a highly deferential society, respectful of all forms of authority and traditional institutions, and with a somewhat mystical attitude towards the monarchy. The phrase "the magic of monarchy" was often heard. In 1956, four years after the Queen's accession, an opinion poll found that 35% of the population believed that she had been chosen by God. The strength of the monarchy seemed to lie in its remoteness. The mystique of monarchy could only be preserved, so it was thought, if it remained on a pedestal, unapproachable and untouchable. The spirit of the age has now rendered that conception of the monarchy untenable because the social attitudes which have sustained the magical monarchy, or the mystical monarchy, have largely passed away. It is no longer enough for an institution to be justified simply on the grounds that it has existed for a long time. Tradition is no longer a source of legitimacy. Instead, people asked: what good does the institution do? Institutions have to justify themselves, in practical or utilitarian terms. We have moved from the magical monarchy to the public service monarchy. In the days of Queen Victoria, it was enough for the monarchy to be seen. Now, the monarchy is expected to justify itself in practical terms if it is to retain the consent of the people, without which it cannot continue to exist.

In 1997, celebrating the 50th anniversary of her marriage, the Queen, with her Prime Minister Tony Blair present, referred to the huge constitutional difference between a hereditary monarchy and an elected government. Both, she said, depended on the consent of the people. "That consent, or lack of it, is expressed for you, Prime Minister, through the ballot box. It is a tough, even brutal, system, but at least the message is a clear one for all to read. For the Royal Family, however, the message is often harder to read, but read it we must." The monarchy, therefore, has had to adapt, but because the adaptation has been gradual, it has not been noticed.

One royal advisor has put forward what he called the Marmite Theory of Monarchy. The labelling on a jar of Marmite is the same as it was 65 years ago, but what is inside is quite different. So it is with the monarchy, which has evolved, but in so gradual a manner as to be almost imperceptible.

The most fundamental change is this development towards the public service monarchy, and this is given explicit recognition on the Queen's website, which declares: "An important part of the work of the Queen and the Royal Family is to support and encourage public and voluntary service." One of the ways in which they do this is through involvement with charities and other organisations. These range from well-known charities, such as the British Red Cross, to new smaller charities like the Reedham Children's Trust, to regiments in the armed forces. During the Diamond Jubilee Year, a new Queen Elizabeth Diamond Jubilee Trust was established to raise money for legacy projects to improve lives both in Britain and in the rest of the Commonwealth. Today, around 600 organisations list the Queen as patron or president. The value of this work is increased for members of the public by the fact that it is not tainted by thoughts of political or electoral advantage.

I now want to talk briefly about the constitutional role of the Prince of Wales. He, unlike the Queen, has no clearly defined role. You may say the role of the Queen has been defined fairly closely and accurately by Bagehot and by later writers. The Prince of Wales is not constrained, as the Queen is, to speak or act on advice, but that of course does not mean that he can do or say whatever he likes, and I think one has to distinguish between his public utterances and his private communications with ministers. Now, with his public utterances, the crucial principle is that he must never say or do anything that would embarrass the Queen, and that clearly means not doing or saying anything which involves party politics. It does not necessarily mean, in my view, that he cannot say or do anything which bears upon public policy, otherwise much of his work would be impossible. For example, the Prince's Trusts which he has sponsored train the long-term unemployed and the disabled, and give financial support and practical advice to young people starting out in business. Some discouraged him, since it might have the implication that the government was not doing enough on youth unemployment, but 40 years later, nearly a million young people have been beneficiaries.

Then there is help to ethnic minorities, and after 9/11, the Prince of Wales frequently spoke to make sure that hatred of terrorism did not become an excuse for Islamophobia or attacks on Muslims. In fact, he had also given speeches before 9/11 to show that he was interested in Muslim faith and culture. These activities have

benefited not only the individuals concerned but community as a whole. "In my travels round the country," he has said, "it has become more and more apparent to me that when people feel excluded from their community and unable to make a contribution, the whole fabric of those communities is at serious risk. When that fabric starts to disintegrate, then we all suffer." Those fears were perhaps justified by the London riots of 2011, many of which occurred in Tottenham. The MP for Tottenham, David Lammy, said that, after the riots, the politicians came once but did not come back. The Prince of Wales, he said, came back five times and brought his charities and businesses to Tottenham, and this led to practical results in terms of employment.

In November 2005, Chris Mullin, the left-wing Labour MP and former Editor of Tribune, was invited to Clarence House, where he heard the Prince of Wales speak, "…without notes, with passion and self-deprecating humour, holding our attention for a full 20 minutes. Always, he comes back to the same point: how to widen the horizons of the young, especially the disaffected, the unlucky and even the malign. I confess I am impressed. This is a man who, if he chose, could fritter away his life on idleness and self-indulgence, as others who have borne the title Prince of Wales have done, and yet he has chosen to take an interest, a detailed interest, in the human condition. What influence he has, he uses, sometimes to great effect, even at the risk of treading on official toes. It is not just talk. His mentality is "can-do" and he has a track record of achievement, clearly visible for anyone who cares to look. Let he who has done more cast the first stone."

The Prince of Wales therefore has developed, in my opinion, the public service monarchy, and what he's done is, first, identify issues previously ignored in the democratic process – youth unemployment, the inner cities, the environment, the need to connect with moderate Muslims – and then try to do something about them, and then to drop the issue when the politicians take it up.

Of course, none of these activities are non-controversial, in the sense there may be people who disagree with his approach, and of course his actions and speeches are as open to debate and disagreement as those of anyone else. But I personally see no reason why his speeches and actions should be restricted to matters on which opinion is unanimous, if there are any such matters. Constitutionally, the Queen and the two Speakers of the Houses of Parliament do not enjoy the right of free speech, but in a land of free speech, the heir to the throne has that right, provided he says nothing to embarrass the Queen or compromise the political neutrality that he must display, both as heir to the throne and eventually as King. He accepts this constraint and apparently sends texts of his speeches to ministers on whose departments his speeches may impinge – he sends them for comments, though, in my view, he is under no constitutional obligation to take notice of these comments. There is this difference from the Queen: that her speeches are not her own, and therefore criticism of them should be directed at ministers; but the Prince of Wales' speeches are his own speeches, as open to challenge as anyone else in public life.

In terms of private communications with ministers, Bagehot said, you will remember, the Queen had the right to be consulted, to encourage, and to warn. Now, as heir to the throne, the Prince of Wales does not have the right to be consulted, but perhaps he does have the right to encourage and to warn, so it is not, it seems to me, an abuse of his role to make suggestions to ministers based on his experience on the issues on which he's familiar, and it is of course for ministers to decide for themselves whether to accept these suggestions or not, because it is they who have to make the decisions and they who are accountable to Parliament and the electorate for these decisions.

These constitutional functions can only be fulfilled if communications with ministers remain confidential, otherwise, if his views become know, this could compromise his position as heir to the throne and then, later, as sovereign. Now, of course, any of us can write or contact ministers, either directly or through our MPs, and contrary to what's often said, I think some interest and pressure groups have more leverage than the Prince of Wales because they have electoral leverage. He does have electoral leverage and of course he has no veto on what ministers do.

Some people have justified this in terms of the apprenticeship role for the throne, that they help prepare him for monarchy, but I think too much weight is put on this because the implication is that he has no real role or function until he becomes King. Now, if the Queen lives to be 100, the Prince of Wales will be 78 when he comes to the throne. We are all living longer. This alters the role of the heir to the throne. It is not simply

preparation or apprenticeship, but the role of heir to the throne has become a role in itself, become, as it were, a part of the constitution, in a way that it has not been before, and as with the Queen, that role is public service and taking part in the growth of the welfare or public service monarchy. The Prince of Wales, I think, has set a precedent for future heirs to the throne, and he has become, like the Queen, a representative of the nation. Now, of course, his role will alter when he becomes sovereign. Then, he is bound by the conventions relating to advice. His speeches and acts are then those of his ministers. It is, I think, absurd to think he is unaware of this. He is known from his earliest years that one day he would be King, and there is nothing unique about someone altering their role in mid-life. A barrister, when he becomes a judge, must learn to keep controversial opinions to himself. As a barrister, one can make political or controversial utterances; as a judge, you cannot. An MP who becomes a minister has a different relationship to Parliament, being bound by collective responsibility. An orchestral performer who becomes a conductor then has a different relationship with his orchestral colleagues. Therefore, I do believe that the Prince of Wales will become a constitutional King, as he has been a constitutional Prince of Wales, and I suspect his work for charities will continue, and there will certainly continue to be the encouragement and recognition of public service and voluntary work, which seems to me the main modern contribution of the monarchy, that it represents, and continues to represent, certain values.

I conclude with a paradox: that the Queen, like George V and George VI, was not born to be sovereign, yet it is these three sovereigns who have given the monarchy its modern and stable character as a repository of popular affection, as heads of the nation as well as heads of state, and the Queen, perhaps even more than her predecessors, has, in a manner that is very difficult to define, understood the soul of the British people, and that, I believe, accounts for the widespread popular affection for her, an affection as strong, or even stronger, today as it was 65 years ago when she first came to the throne.

Thank you.

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