



Kissing the royal hand  
after the death of  
Queen Elizabeth II,  
September 2022





# The King and us

Komplexe Zeiten für eine Krönung: König Charles tritt offiziell die Nachfolge von Queen Elizabeth an. Welche Schwerpunkte wird der Monarch setzen? Von LORRAINE MALLINDER

## ADVANCED

When King Charles is crowned on 6 May 2023, the nation will officially enter a new era. This may not be immediately apparent to those watching as the jewelled St Edward's Crown is placed between those familiar ears. But, with this symbolic act, the spell cast by his iconic mother will finally be broken.

God help the King. The 74-year-old has a complicated relationship with his "subjects". Who can forget that careless remark he made while he and his sons were being photographed on the piste at Klosters, Switzerland, in 2005? "I hate doing this," he said, unaware of the nearby microphones. His sense of entitlement has led him in the past to try to influence senior government ministers on issues he cares about. Some people have accused him of being a "meddling prince".

With his personal crises an endless source of interest to the taxpaying masses, the new King lacks mystery. First came Diana – now almost considered a saint for living in a loveless marriage, and then watching her husband carry on his relationship with Camilla. More recently, Harry and Meghan left "the firm" in a destructive blaze of publicity. The Queen was not long dead when Harry published his tell-all memoir, *Spare*, announcing that his father had "trouble being intimate face to face". Neglected as a child, unhappy at boarding school, is it any wonder?

As the public's show of love after Queen Elizabeth's death revealed, the monarchy still enjoys widespread support. Charles is far from being the most popular member of the royal family, but most people are willing to give him a chance to prove himself in the job for which he was destined. Certainly, he's had time to come into his own, and

### blaze

- hier: Ausbruch

### boarding school

- Internat

### cast

- hier: wirken

### come: ~ into one's own

- seine Berufung finden

### destined: be ~ for sth.

- für etw. bestimmt sein

### meddle

- sich einmischen

### neglect sb.

- jmdn. vernachlässigen

### saint

- Heilige(r)

### sense of entitlement

- Anspruchsdanken

### spell

- Zauber

### subject

- Untertan(in)

### the firm UK

- Spitzname für das britische Königshaus



What is he thinking?  
A skiing holiday near Klosters, Switzerland, in 2005 where Charles was heard saying what he thought of photo ops

his interest in subjects like the environment and architecture are now very much on trend. While the job demands political neutrality, surely, it will do no harm to have a king who cares so deeply about the state of the planet. Maybe, just maybe, Charles will surprise us all in his new role...

So, what can Brits expect from his reign?

### Downsizing “the firm”

First things first: the royal family is not about to disappear any time soon. Opposition to the monarchy has rarely risen above 20 per cent, even in its worst moments of crisis – but compromises will be needed if it is to maintain its ratings.

To match the current mood of austerity, the coronation at Westminster Abbey (its code name is Operation Golden Orb) will not be as extravagant as his mother’s coronation in 1952. Once the celebrations are over, the King wants to remove less important members of the royal family from the payroll, reducing the institution to a small number of high-profile royals – including William and Kate, and his siblings Edward and Anne – who are engaged in full-time duties. Following the public outcry over a £369 million (€420 million) refurbishment plan for Buckingham Palace, he will be under increasing pressure to justify the running costs of this already immensely wealthy family.

King Charles will be reigning over a nation in decline. While it seems unlikely that he will match the iconic status of his mother, decades of being first in line to the throne have enabled him to

develop crucial trade and diplomatic relationships around the world, making him a valuable ambassador for the United Kingdom. It will be his job to support the country’s position in a shifting global order.

### Playing politics

Under the unwritten rules of Britain’s constitutional monarchy, King Charles may be head of state, but his role is a purely decorative one that carries no real power. At least this is the theory – in practice, the boundaries of power are rather less clear.

The current King is political by nature. The first member of the royal family to receive a university degree, he is intellectually driven, with an activist streak. These qualities have no doubt kept him honest and moral – in contrast to his playboy brother, Andrew – but they have also fuelled his attempts to influence government policy on certain topics, such as Iraq and badger culling. When he was asked in a BBC interview in 2018 whether he would continue his campaigning, Charles replied: “I’m not that stupid.” Now that he is King, he will have to bring these political impulses under control.

### The climate monarch

As the patron of more than 400 charities, Charles likes to do good. Although he will have to stop his backdoor lobbying, it seems likely that the King will use his voice to advance the issues he cares most about.

**austerity** [ɔːˈsterəti]

• Sparkurs

**badger** [ˈbædʒə]

• Dachs

**coronation**

• Krönung(szeremonie)

**cull**

• erlegen, keulen

**downsize sth.**

• etw. verschlanken

**fuel sth.** [ˈfjuːəl]

• etw. antreiben

**payroll**

• Gehaltsliste

**refurbishment**

• Renovierung

**reign** [reɪn]

• Regierungszeit

**siblings**

• Geschwister

**streak**

• Ader



In 2021, at the COP26 summit in Glasgow, the future King called on world leaders to adopt a “warlike footing” in the battle against climate change. Charles was already speaking out against the destruction of the planet in the late 1960s, before Greta Thunberg’s mum was born. These days, his knowledge of the issue is probably his strongest quality, earning him the respect of even his strongest critics.

For further clues on the King’s vision of the country, look no further than Poundbury, his very own model village. It was designed to showcase his very firm ideas on traditional architecture and sustainability, but has been called a “feudal Disneyland”. However, the idea has become more appealing over time, as citizens in crowded cities pay sky-high rents for poor accommodation.

### Queen Camilla

“There were three of us in this marriage,” Diana once said. Now, that third person will be crowned Queen alongside Charles.

For better or worse, Camilla will have considerable influence on the King. Endlessly criticized since the death of her love rival, the new Queen seems not to care about being liked, an appealing trait that has slowly won her the respect of many. Over the years, her sense of humour has become more open. Remember that cheeky wink to her courtiers during a state visit by former US President Donald Trump?

But Camilla’s elevation to a throne of her own sits uneasily with some, particularly since Harry’s account in *Spare* of how his stepmother “sacrificed” him on her “personal PR altar”. Later, in an interview with Anderson Cooper, he accused her of trading information with the British press in a bid to rehabilitate her image. A clever operator, Queen Camilla, it seems, will provide plenty of material for future episodes of the Netflix series *The Crown*.



Planting a lime tree near the Tea House in the Buckingham Palace garden after hosting a reception for key figures ahead of the COP27 summit, November 2022

### A new place in the world

Shortly before Queen Elizabeth died, William and Kate toured the Caribbean. In Jamaica – where there are calls for reparations for Britain’s role in the slave trade – they drove around in an open-topped Land Rover. With William wearing a military uniform and Kate dressed all in white, this was a throw-back to the days of British colonial rule. The country’s prime minister patiently informed them that Jamaica would be “moving on” to become a republic.

In truth, the whole world has moved on. And yet, in the latter stages of Elizabeth’s reign, there was a sort of cognitive dissonance: despite growing awareness of the horrors of British colonialism, this elite family, which had grown fabulously rich on its proceeds, somehow maintained its star power. When Queen Elizabeth died, VIPs came from the four corners of the globe to pay their respects.

With her death, the Commonwealth of Nations, a political association of 56 countries, mostly former British colonies, seems like a relic of a bygone age. King Charles is now head of state of 14 of those nations. Barbados declared itself a republic in 2021. Jamaica will likely be next. Others will follow. But if he plays his cards right, Canada might stay.

### Monarchy in transition

Charles faces the difficult task of reinventing Britain’s monarchy. Making this mysterious institution relevant



William and Kate touring Jamaica, March 2022



The future Queen Camilla at a dinner hosted by President Donald Trump in London, June 2019

**cheeky** UK  
• frech, verschmitzt

**considerable**  
[kən'sɪdərəbəl]  
• beträchtlich

**courtier** ['kɔːtiə]  
• Hofbeamter, -beamtin

**elevation**  
• Erhebung

**footing** ['fʊtɪŋ]  
• Stand

**for better or worse**  
• wie dem auch sei

**given that**  
• wenn man bedenkt, dass

**glued to sth.**  
• an etw. kleben;  
hier: auf etw. unverwandt starren

**relic**  
• Überrest

**reparation**  
[,repə'reɪʃən]  
• Entschädigung, Wiedergutmachung

**sacrifice sb./sth.**  
• jmdn./etw. opfern

**stepmother**  
• Stiefmutter

**sustainability**  
[sə'steɪnə'bɪləti]  
• Nachhaltigkeit

**trait**  
• Eigenschaft, Charakterzug

**transition**  
• Wandel

**wink** [wɪŋk]  
• Augenzwinkern

to today’s world will involve a careful balancing act: maintaining the sense of spectacle that keeps audiences around the world glued to their TV sets, while letting go of some powers and privileges that are more difficult to justify in today’s world.

Given that he is already 74, the big question is how long Charles will remain on the throne. The fact that both of his parents lived well into their 90s suggests that a long life is in his genes. The reign of King Charles III could well be more than a mere stepping stone to King William V. A lot can be achieved in a couple of decades, and there’s no time to waste.