

Boston College High School

Model UN Conference

XXXII



British House of Commons: Monarchy or Republic



Chair: Charlie Donovan

Co-Chair: Max Kelly

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Letter from the Chair

Dear Delegates,

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the committee on the British House of Commons for BCHigh MUN XXII. I am very excited to dive into this complex topic and am interested to see how you approach it. Since this topic is present-day, there is new information coming out daily about the effects of Brexit. To avoid confusion, everything discussed in committee should have happened as of March 1st, 2024. Also, keep in mind that this background guide was written in January, so there may be events missing because they have not happened at the time of writing.

I started Model UN in 7th grade and have enjoyed attending conferences all around the country since then, notably NAIMUN, BruinMUN, and Stanford MUN. It has been a great experience for me because it pushes me out of my comfort zone and helps with public speaking. One of my favorite MUN experiences was this past November at Stanford MUN, where we discussed Irish Troubles, engaged in spirited debate, split up Europe and reunited Northern Ireland with the Mainland, and made many friends in the process! This is my third time chairing a committee. Some of my other high school activities include rowing, aviation club, and French culture club.

See you all in March!

Charlie Donovan '24 Deputy Secretary General

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Letter from the Co-Chair

Dear Delegates,

Welcome to BCH XXXII! My name is Max Kelly and I am a senior here at BC High. This is my first year in the Secretariat, but I have chaired prior conferences. I have been a member of Model UN for a couple of years now. I am super excited to be a co-chair in this Committee, alongside Charlie. This is an extremely complex and nuanced topic that requires participation and group collaboration. By no means do we expect you all to solve every aspect of this topic and all of its issues, but we hope you will be able to take steps toward a solution. I know this committee will be a ton of fun, and I look forward to reading your position papers and hearing meaningful discussions on the British House of Commons.

Outside of school, I love to ski and run with our family's dog on the Cape in the summer. BC High has provided me with so many opportunities and I am excited to be enrolling at Boston College's business school in the Fall. That is a little bit about me, but more importantly, I can't wait to hear from all of you in March!

See you soon!

Max Kelly '24 Liaison Officer

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Introduction

According to The Cabinet Office policy paper “Global Britain in a Competitive Age: the Integrated Review of Security, Defence, Development and Foreign Policy,” a United Kingdom separate from the EU “would seek to leverage its ties and ‘special relationship’” with the United States to reassert its position on the world stage, and make itself an indispensable link in the global community. Through this relationship, the United Kingdom would theoretically advance itself not only on the military and political, but global stage. Whether the United Kingdom can achieve this ambition after several changes in government and an uncertain future remains to be seen.

Throughout the years, there has been much local and national upset about the legitimacy and authority of the British Crown as it relates to the official passage of laws. The King, although having no actual effect on the creation of the parliament’s bills, must allocate consent for the just and lawful passage of these very bills. This very topic has created tensions with the British people and parliament alike.

While the King’s power may seem limited, he still has the underlying power to “appoint and dismiss ministers; to grant royal assent to bills passed by parliament; and to summon, dissolve and prorogue parliament.” However, according to the royal family’s website, their succession to the throne can be regulated by Parliament, which can remove monarchs for “misgovernment.” These competing powers can combine to create difficult situations where the citizens of the United Kingdom find themselves having to decide over their heritage and loyalty to the British Royal family, or their personal rights as citizens, which, in of itself, only creates more tensions between the government and its people.



Background

Looking back to the Crown's long-seated history in England, many claim that the First Reform Act of 1832 represented the actual shift from the monarchy to a republic. Others argue the execution of Charles I in 1649 marked the historical shift, as Parliament officially abolished the monarchy. The disparity on this topic is only the beginning of the conflicts that have arisen from the Monarchy's presence alongside Parliament and the Prime minister, especially in times of war and trouble.

It might be more helpful to contextualize this time period in light of the English Civil Wars in the mid-1600s. The conflicts, which split the nation at all social levels, were fought between those who supported King Charles I and those who supported Parliament. Fundamental issues of power and religion lay at the core of the struggle. In this battle, Parliamentarians, led by Oliver Cromwell, challenged the absolute authority of the monarchy, resulting in the execution of King Charles I in 1649. The subsequent establishment of the Commonwealth of England marked a period of republican rule, signaling a meaningful shift away from traditional monarchical governance.

Despite the restoration of the monarchy in 1660 with the return of Charles II, tensions between the Crown and Parliament persisted. The Glorious Revolution of 1688, which saw William of Orange and Mary ascend to the throne, further solidified the constitutional limitations on the monarchy's power. The Bill of Rights and the Act of Settlement established parliamentary supremacy, placing constraints on the monarchy and ensuring a constitutional monarchy. Over the centuries, these tensions have evolved, with debates and negotiations continuing to shape the balance between the Crown and Parliament in the United Kingdom.

The constitutional struggles between monarchs and Parliament, as well as the enduring symbolism of the monarchy, have fueled ongoing debates about the relevance and cost-effectiveness of the hereditary system. In contemporary times, discussions surrounding the role of the monarchy, especially in the context of a constitutional democracy, continue to stir public discourse and reflections on the nation's identity and governance structure.

Present Day Conflict

Today, while it may seem these conflicts have already been fought over before with violence between Northern Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom over sovereignty and disdain for the current constitutional monarchy, there is much more nuance to this topic than ever before.

While the monarchy is largely symbolic, and the monarch's powers are largely ceremonial, the relationship between the monarchy and Parliament remains a dynamic aspect of British constitutional history.

Many citizens of the United Kingdom find themselves further and further detached from their once integral identity of the crown. According to CNN, “More than half (55%) of UK adults younger than 25 say that they don't consider the royal family a good source of leadership and guidance, a view shared by just 36% of those aged 55 or older.”

With the decreasing national identity, it is becoming increasingly difficult for older generations to continue to respect and appreciate the former positives of the so-called figureheads that “run” the UK today.



Questions to Consider

1. Are there ongoing debates or proposed reforms regarding the role of the monarchy in the UK? How might potential changes impact the relationship between the monarchy and Parliament, and what implications could they have for the broader political landscape?
2. What are the advantages and disadvantages of the British system in terms of political stability, representation, and governance?
3. How do public perceptions of the monarchy influence the political climate in the UK? To what extent does the monarchy contribute to national identity, and are there growing sentiments for or against maintaining a constitutional monarchy? If so, how should they be managed?
4. What specific constitutional documents or laws define the roles and powers of the British monarchy and Parliament? How have these legal foundations evolved over time, and what implications do they have for the functioning of the government?

Committee Positions

1. Nickie Aiken
2. Fleur Anderson
3. Mr. Richard Bacon
4. Scott Benton
5. Hilary Benn
6. Ben Bradshaw
7. Mickey Brady
8. Kevin Brennan
9. Sir Conor Burns
10. Dawn Butler
11. Alun Cairns
12. Gregory Campbell
13. Wendy Chamberlain
14. Sarah Champion
15. James Cleverly
16. Daisy Cooper
17. Neil Coyle
18. Ed Davey
19. Dave Doogan
20. Colum Eastwood
21. Sir Michael Ellis
22. Marion Fellows
23. Vicky Foxcroft
24. Richard Fuller
25. Mary Glendon
26. Peter Grant
27. Louise Haigh
28. Stephen Hammond
29. Emma Hardy

30. John Healey
31. Gordon Henderson
32. Rachel Hopkins
33. Dan Jarvis
34. Gerald Jones
35. Ben Lake
36. Chris Law
37. Rachel Maclean
38. Jason McCartney
39. Lisa Nandy
40. Sir Mike Penning
41. Rob Roberts
42. Naz Shah
43. Mel Stride
44. Rishi Sunak
45. Sir Jeremy Wright

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