

What's the future of the Commonwealth under King Charles III?

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Welcome to the inquiry on the BBC World Service. I'm Charmaine Cozier. Each week, one question, four expert witnesses and an answer.

September 2022 Queen Elizabeth II's death is announced to the world. Less than 24 hours later, King Charles III makes his first televised speech. He remembers his late mother "in 1947, on her 21st birthday she pledged – in a broadcast from Cape Town to the Commonwealth – to devote her life, whether it be short or long, to the service of her peoples." Now, her son is the new Head of the Commonwealth. It's a symbolic role and the king starts as some of the 56 countries in it consider cutting their domestic ties with the UK royalty the group also faces wider questions about what it means to younger generations when one on three people between the ages of 15 and 29 live in member countries. So this week we're asking: What's the future of the Commonwealth under king Charles III?

Part 1 – Lynchpin 01:12 – 07:06

Anna Whitlock, Professor of the History of modern monarchy at City University of London

Part 2 – Moving on 07:09 – 13:35

Opal Palmer Adisa, Professor, Jamaican cultural activist and writer

Part 3 – Common Ground 13:37 – 18:56

Balasubramaniam Chandramohan, Senior research fellow at the Institute of Commonwealth Studies at the University of London

Part 4 – The King 18:57 – 21:52

Cindy McCreery, Senior Lecturer in History at the University of Sydney in Australia

So, what's the future of the Commonwealth under King Charles III? It clearly has much value for the member countries, the ones with no historical ties to the British Empire have chosen to join it. The royal connection hasn't put republics like Barbados off remaining in the group either. There's no signs it's about to disappear. As for what the new king can bring, perhaps the row focus will shift away from the presidents and politicians charmed by his mother and more towards highlighting the work of the Commonwealth doing on issues relevant to the future of millions of children, teenagers and young adults across the world.