

1 TIMOTHY GARTON ASH

2 **Should a democracy have a King Wills and Queen Kate?**

3 original at

4 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/apr/28/democracy-wills-kate-president-blair>

5 As I look across Europe, I don't think countries like Sweden, Holland,
6 Denmark and Spain, all of which have monarchs, are worse off than those
7 that have party politicians directly or indirectly elected to be president. If
8 William and Kate behave themselves, unlike some of the gamier members
9 of Britain's royal family, and contribute to the development of a
10 modernised, slimmed-down constitutional monarchy, this can actually be
11 better than the likely alternatives. Or would you rather have Buckingham
12 Palace occupied by a President Blair?

13 In England there have been kings and queens for more than a thousand
14 years. That is an amazing thing. It is the stuff of poetry. Before you
15 abandon a thousand years of poetry, you should be very certain that you
16 will fare better in prose.

17 As we see again with the world media invasion of London for the royal
18 wedding, this history, legend and mystique is also a significant
19 contribution to Britain's soft power (the power to attract) and its earnings
20 from tourism. I don't think anyone goes to Berlin to watch them changing
21 the guard at Bellevue Palace, or to catch a glimpse of President and Frau
22 Wulff, and the little Wulffs. "President who?" is what most of the world
23 would ask, if reference were made to the current head of state of Europe's
24 most powerful country.

25 That's OK, if you make lots of BMWs, Mercedes and machine tools to
26 export to China. Britain doesn't. Instead, it has the Queen, William and
27 Kate.

Questions

- 1) What do the countries mentioned in paragraph 1 have in common?
- 2) Explain the meaning of 'behave themselves' (line 8).
- 3) What are, according to the text, the benefits of having a royal family?
- 4) Explain what the author wishes to underline by saying "'President who?' is what most of the world would ask' in lines 22 to 23.
- 5) Which country is referred to as 'Europe's most powerful country' in lines 23 and 24?
- 6) What is the key economic difference between that country and the UK?
- 7) Does the author of the text think that UK should abandon its monarchy model? What arguments does he use to back his opinion?
- 8) Could you imagine the Czech Republic becoming a (constitutional) monarchy? What would, in your opinion, be the advantages and disadvantages?

Vocabulary

be worse/better off (line 6) – to be in a better/worse situation/condition, etc.

slim down (line 10) – make smaller, leaner more slender

fare (well/better/worse, etc.) (line 16) – to experience good or bad fortune, treatment and the like

catch a glimpse (line 21) – to see someone or something for a moment

You can find additional explanation and more examples to help you understand and use English words and phrases at <http://dictionary.reference.com>, <http://dictionary.cambridge.org/>, <http://www.merriam-webster.com/> or <http://www.ldoceonline.com/>

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Tým jazykové skupiny Spěváček:

