

Andrew's arrest, the British monarchy, and the international oligarchy

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The arrest and ongoing investigation of the former prince, Andrew Mountbatten-Windsor, has set in motion the gravest crisis Britain's constitutional monarchy has ever faced.

Whatever attempts are made to portray this as a problem exclusively of the disgraced ex-Duke of York, the entire Royal Family and successive British governments face the possibility of devastating revelations about their knowledge of Andrew's sordid dealings with the billionaire child-sex trafficker Jeffrey Epstein.

And not only their knowledge of his crimes, but revelations about their own relations. As is made clear by the ongoing scandal over Labour Party grandee Peter Mandelson—appointed US ambassador by Keir Starmer—any follow-up investigations of the Epstein material released in the US could bring to light far broader dealings with Britain's monarchy and ruling elite.

Thursday's events were extraordinary. Andrew was arrested at his Wood Farm residence on the Sandringham royal estate just as his birthday breakfast was being cleared away. He was held at a police station for 12 hours and questioned on suspicion of misconduct in public office, before being released under investigation. A picture of him cowering in the backseat of his car epitomises the fear that will also be gripping King Charles III and the rest of the royals.

The allegations made against Andrew are devastating. Descriptions of his participation in sex parties, visits to Epstein's private Caribbean island, and grace-and-favour stops at his New York apartments have been fleshed out with reports of visits by Epstein's call girls to Buckingham Palace—the main royal residence—and pictures of Andrew straddling a young woman.

According to Richard Scorer, head of abuse law at

Slater and Gordon, questions about sexual abuse could form part of the misconduct in public office investigation. "If prosecutors build a case which convinces a jury that Andrew misused his position to have sex with young women, in my opinion he could be pursued on that basis," he told the *Guardian*.

To this is added the fact that Andrew—in his position as UK trade envoy between 2001 and 2011—sent Epstein confidential details of upcoming official trips to Singapore, Vietnam, Shenzhen in China and Hong Kong, where he was accompanied by the sex trafficker's business associates. Reports of the results of those meetings were forwarded to Epstein, as were investment opportunities in gold and uranium in Afghanistan.

During this time, Andrew was receiving significant taxpayer-funded expenses—worth £4 million over nine years. He also used his position and royal status to hobnob with Kazakhstan's dictator, Nursultan Nazarbayev, who bought Andrew's Sunninghill Park mansion for £15 million, £3 million more than the asking price. Other associates included the billionaire son of Tunisian dictator Ben Ali.

Little wonder that King Charles' first response to the arrest was to issue a statement throwing Andrew to the wolves, declaring "the law must take its course" and promising his "full and wholehearted support and co-operation" with the investigation. Similar statements were issued by Labour Prime Minister Starmer and Justice Secretary David Lammy.

But efforts to take distance from Andrew will not withstand scrutiny. The then prince was protected at every turn by the palace, in an operation led by the former queen, Elizabeth II. No visit to the palace by Epstein or his victims could happen without the knowledge of the queen and her staff. When rumours

first began to emerge publicly, she responded by elevating him to Knight Grand Cross of the Royal Victorian Order—the highest honour she could bestow.

It was only after all attempts by Andrew to deny his relations with Epstein, and specifically the late Virginia Giuffre, had collapsed—following his car crash BBC interview and last year’s Epstein document releases—that he was told to relinquish his titles and remove himself from his Royal Lodge mansion on the Windsor Castle estate in Berkshire and then to a small farm house on the Sandringham estate in Norfolk.

His continuing to be sheltered on private land owned by King Charles reflects not so much familial warmth, but because Andrew likely has as much on his family as the press now have on him.

The unprecedented scale of the crisis is reflected in the near universal references to the last senior royal to be arrested, Charles I, by Oliver Cromwell during the English Civil War. He was subsequently tried and executed for high treason in 1649.

No one faces a similar fate today, but the long period of constitutional monarchy that began in the aftermath of Cromwell’s Protectorate, with the restoration of Charles II and then the installation of William of Orange in the “Glorious Revolution”, is finally unravelling.

This has major implications for British imperialism. The monarchy is not merely a symbol. It plays a major role in the system of class rule in Britain. Its recent and prolonged crisis has been intimately connected with the cancerous growth of the global financial oligarchy epitomised by Epstein.

Increasingly close relations with that oligarchy, the intermingling of the old and new aristocracies, have accelerated the public fall of the royal family from its appointed position of aloof propriety into the sewer of bourgeois politics and corruption.

The bitterness of the then Prince Charles’s breakup with Diana and the damage done was fuelled in large measure by her ability to win the support of members of the global super rich when the palace moved against her—above all in the US, and then later with Mohamed Al-Fayed. It saw support for the monarchy fall to an historic low of 26 percent.

In many respects, Andrew followed in the grooves dug by Diana. Similarly, when relations broke down with Diana’s son Prince Harry surrounding his

marriage to Meghan Markle, he turned to the American super-rich as a new power base and source of continued income and privilege.

Attempts to keep the royal flagship afloat through these crises have been dashed on the rocks of Epstein’s island.

If a prosecution proceeds, amid the insistence of everyone from King Charles to Starmer and the Director of Public Prosecutions that “no one is above the law”, then the question follows: who else will be interviewed under caution—other members of the royal household, senior government officials? An arrest, investigation and prosecution of Mandelson would immediately shine a spotlight on the dark heart of Starmer’s and Tony Blair’s Labour governments.

There is a concerted attempt to deny the feasibility of any prosecution of Andrew for misconduct in public office—a common law, not a statutory offence, of which only four people in senior positions were convicted between 2014 and 2024. However, no one is really so sanguine about the dangers posed, neither in Britain nor internationally.

Even the possibility of a prosecution of Andrew has immediately stimulated questions about why the US Department of Justice has ruled out the possibility of any prosecutions in America. Skye Roberts, Giuffre’s brother, has commented, “The reality is the UK is doing far more... While here in the United States, our president has yet to even do even remotely the same. And survivors and the people are very disappointed in that.”

As if to rub salt in an open wound, Trump responded to journalists’ questions about Andrew’s arrest by calling it “very sad”, adding, “I’m the expert in a way because I’ve been totally exonerated.”

The last comparable corruption scandal in the UK was the Profumo Affair (1961-63), which ended in the fall of the Macmillan government. The Epstein scandal, international in scope, is already reverberating far beyond Britain’s shores, and its impact will only intensify in the coming period.



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