

Andrew V. Kudin

**IN SEARCH OF THE
PERFECT STATE:
FOUNDATIONS OF
POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY**



KUDIN & SONS

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PREFACE

Every human being strives for well-being and happiness. This desire is woven into life itself; it lies at the core of our existence. From our first breath to our last, we long to feel the joy of living, to see the world in its brightness, and to feel the warmth of love and the nearness of those dear to us. We come from an ideal world into the earthly one not to suffer and endure pain, but to experience pleasure and joy. In our dreams, fragments of a lost paradise return to us. Upon waking, we strive to recreate that paradise here, in this world, and to be happy once again—as we once were long ago, before birth.

Through us, God knows Himself. We are His sense organs.

The pursuit of happiness is inseparable from the experience of freedom, for a person deprived of freedom cannot fully taste life or enjoy happiness. Without freedom, happiness becomes a phantom—appearing real, yet disappearing the moment one tries to hold it. An unfree person is like a bird in a cage that has never flown: it may have food, shelter, and safety, yet lacks the one essential thing—space and sky. Such a bird has never known the joy of flight—and may never know it.

Seeing others fly and flying yourself are profoundly different experiences. There is always a gulf between another's life and your own. It is one thing to watch birds soar, to admire their freedom and grace, and quite another to spread your own wings and rise into the air, feeling the exhilaration and lightness of flight.

The same world looks and feels completely different when viewed through the grimy window of a crowded bus or from the window of a private Rolls-Royce. And the difference is not merely about where one happens to be at a given moment. Too often, one person's freedom becomes another's enslavement. History is filled with examples in which the well-being of a small elite was built upon the suffering, deprivation, and oppression of vast numbers of people.

Human beings are social creatures. We realize our potential only through interaction with others. But how should such interaction be organized so that it respects the interests of every living being it touches? How can we build an ideal, harmonious, balanced society in which one person's freedom is not an obstacle to another's, but rather a foundation for shared prosperity and mutual harmony?

Throughout history, humanity has sought to create the perfect model of society.

If you wish to change the world, you must study the experience of past thinkers and understand what models have existed before and what models exist today. This knowledge can help you develop an effective strategy for building and governing a state.

If you are an ordinary citizen, it is essential to understand the nature of the society you live in, how it is structured, and the laws that govern its development.

If you are forced to leave your homeland and seek a new place to live and build a future for your family, it is crucial to know in advance what realities and difficulties you will encounter.

Unfortunately, the media and propaganda too often distort reality, presenting falsehood as truth. We are deceived again and again. Those at the top of power need people to give up their savings and pay taxes to sustain a regime or to finance war. We are told this is for noble causes—for the defense of freedom and democracy. But time passes, power changes hands, and the message on television shifts entirely. We discover that there was no struggle for freedom and democracy after all, and that our money served entirely different, far less noble ends.

Caligula and Hitler—like many other dictators—sincerely believed that under their leadership the state was the most democratic and free. But the only ones who truly felt free in such countries were they themselves and, perhaps, their closest circle—not the ordinary people. No dictator will ever admit to establishing a brutal tyranny or to grossly violating the rights and freedoms of citizens. The media, controlled by the dictator and by foreign allies pursuing their own geopolitical aims, will echo these lies, amplifying them until they dominate public discourse.

This is why it is so vital to recognize the key characteristics and indicators of a state's political structure. With such knowledge, you can analyze the situation in a country independently and reach sound conclusions without relying on external interpretations. You will be far less vulnerable to confusion or deception. This is especially true today, when everyone is under intense informational pressure from competing political forces seeking to manipulate public opinion for their own ends.

Such is the value of this book.



HOW IS THIS BOOK STRUCTURED

The book opens with a universal classification of models of government, past and present. This classification serves as a guide, helping the reader understand the variety of political systems and the links between them. The analysis is divided into nine main parts, each focusing on a particular dimension of state organization — from the form of government and political regime to the economic system, cultural and historical patterns, and the degree of protection of human rights and freedoms.

This structure allows for a systematic study of the subject: by moving from one dimension to another, the reader gains a multi-layered perspective that shows both the theoretical foundations and the practical workings of different models. Historical examples illustrate how these models arise, develop, and interact, while the comparative approach highlights their strengths and weaknesses.

The framework is not limited to the study of the past; it can also be applied to the analysis of current events worldwide. By identifying the features of a particular state within this classification, one can better interpret political developments, assess reforms, and anticipate possible shifts in governance.

To determine which model a given state corresponds to, the reader is invited to answer YES or NO to the questions in the final chapter — Questionnaire for Determining the State Model — and then, at the end of the book, use the key to apply the formula. This method turns abstract concepts into a practical tool for political analysis.





UNIVERSAL CLASSIFICATION

I. By Form of Government

1. **Monarchy** – a form of government in which supreme authority is vested in a single ruler, usually for life and often hereditary.
 - **Absolute Monarchy** – the monarch holds unrestricted political power, unconstrained by laws or constitutions.
 - **Constitutional Monarchy** – the monarch's powers are defined and limited by a constitution.
 - **Parliamentary Monarchy** – the monarch acts within a parliamentary system, with executive authority derived from the legislature.
 - **Elective Monarchy** – the monarch is chosen through an election process rather than hereditary succession.
2. **Republic** – a form of government in which the head of state is elected, directly or indirectly, for a fixed term.
 - **Presidential Republic** – executive power is vested in an elected president, separate from the legislature.
 - **Parliamentary Republic** – executive authority is vested in a cabinet that is accountable to the legislature.
 - **Mixed (Semi-Presidential) Republic** – executive power is shared between an elected president and a prime minister.

II. By Political Regime

1. **Democratic Regime** – a system in which political authority derives from the people, with institutions ensuring participation and accountability.
 - **Direct Democracy** – citizens directly participate in decision-making without intermediaries.
 - **Representative Democracy (Parliamentarism)** – citizens elect representatives who make decisions on their behalf within a parliamentary framework.
 - **Liberal Democracy** – a representative democracy that guarantees individual rights, the rule of law, and separation of powers.
 - **Limited (Electoral) Democracy** – a system with regular elections but significant restrictions on political rights or competition.
2. **Authoritarian Regime** – political power is concentrated in the hands of a leader or small elite, with limited political freedoms.
 - **Military Authoritarianism** – the armed forces control the state's political power.
 - **Personalist Authoritarianism** – authority is centered on an individual leader whose power is not effectively constrained.
 - **Bureaucratic Authoritarianism** – political control is exercised by state bureaucratic structures.
 - **Electoral (Hybrid) Authoritarianism** – elections are held but are neither free nor fair, serving to legitimize the regime.

3. **Totalitarian Regime** – an extreme form of authoritarianism with pervasive state control over all aspects of life.
 - **Ideological Totalitarianism** – governance based on an all-encompassing official ideology.
 - **Fascist Totalitarianism** – authoritarian nationalism promoting unity through strict control and suppression of dissent.
 - **Nazi (National Socialist) Totalitarianism** – authoritarian rule grounded in racial ideology and nationalist expansionism.
 - **Religious Totalitarianism** – political authority justified and enforced through religious doctrine.

III. By Administrative and Territorial Structure

- **Unitary State** – a state governed as a single entity with centralized authority.
 - **Centralized** – decision-making power is concentrated in the central government.
 - **Decentralized** – local authorities have delegated powers within a unified framework.
- **Federal State** – sovereignty is constitutionally divided between a central authority and constituent political units.
 - **Symmetrical Federation** – all constituent units have equal powers and status.
 - **Asymmetrical Federation** – constituent units have different powers or status.
- **Confederation** – a union of sovereign states that retain primary authority and delegate limited powers to a central body.
 - **Union of Sovereign States** – the central authority exists only by agreement of the member states and has limited powers.

IV. By Economic System

- **Market Economy** – resources are allocated through supply and demand with minimal state intervention.
 - **Liberal Capitalism** – economic activity is predominantly private and market-driven.
 - **State Capitalism** – the state plays a significant role as owner or controller of key industries.
- **Planned Economy** – economic decisions are made centrally by the state.
 - **Socialist Planned Economy** – planning is based on socialist principles, emphasizing collective ownership.
 - **Non-Socialist Model of Planned Economy** – centralized planning without a socialist ideological framework.
- **Mixed Economy** – a combination of market mechanisms and government regulation.
 - **Combination of Market and State Regulation** – the private sector operates alongside state-directed economic activities.

V. By Degree of Religious Influence

- **Secular State** – religion and government are institutionally separate.
 - **Strictly Secular (Laïcité)** – religion is fully excluded from public and political life.
 - **Moderately Secular** – religion may play a limited role in cultural or ceremonial contexts.
- **Religious State** – governance is based wholly or partly on religious principles.
 - **Islamic State** – governance based on Islamic law (Sharia) and traditions.
 - **Christian State** – political authority influenced by Christian doctrine and values.
 - **Jewish State** – governance influenced by Jewish law (Halakha) and traditions.
 - **Buddhist State** – governance influenced by Buddhist doctrine and ethics.
 - **Hindu State** – political authority influenced by Hindu traditions and philosophy.
 - **State with an Official Religion** – a specific religion is recognized and integrated into public life but does not control all aspects of governance.

VI. Special Historical and Cultural Models

- **Military Oligarchy** – political authority concentrated among a small group of military leaders.
- **Aristocratic Republic** – governance dominated by a hereditary elite or nobility.
- **Absolute Theocratic Monarchy** – the monarch holds supreme political and religious authority.
- **Caste-Based State** – political and social organization determined by hereditary caste divisions.

VII. Philosophical and Hypothetical Models

- **Ideal (Utopian) State** – a theoretical model of perfect governance.
- **Minimal State (“Night-Watchman”)** – government limited to essential protective functions such as security and enforcement of contracts.
- **Technocratic State** – governance by technical and scientific experts.
- **Ecological State (Ecocracy)** – governance prioritizing environmental sustainability.
- **Digital State (Virtual Democracy)** – governance conducted primarily through digital technologies and platforms.
- **Transhumanist State** – governance adapted to the integration of advanced human enhancement technologies.
- **Cosmopolitan State (World Government)** – governance extending beyond national boundaries to a global authority.

VIII. Anti-State (Anarchist) Models

- **Anarcho-Syndicalism** – self-management of production and governance by workers' collectives.
- **Anarcho-Communism** – stateless society based on communal ownership and egalitarian principles.
- **Individualist Anarchism** – emphasis on individual autonomy and voluntary association without state authority.

IX. By the Level of Protection of Human Rights and Freedoms

- **Liberal State** – maximum legal and practical protection of rights and freedoms.
- **Non-Liberal State** – restrictions on rights and freedoms.
- **Intermediate or Hybrid Forms** – partial protection of rights and freedoms.
- **Declarative Model** – formal recognition of rights without effective enforcement.



PART I

CLASSIFICATION BY

FORM OF GOVERNMENT



SECTION 1. MONARCHY

Introduction

Monarchy is a form of government in which a single individual—the monarch—serves as head of state, typically for life or until abdication, most often through hereditary succession, with powers that may range from absolute to largely ceremonial.

Monarchy, by its nature, entails the concentration of power in the hands of a king, emperor, sultan, or other sole ruler. The term “monarchy” derives from the Greek μοναρχία (monarchía), from μόνος (mónos, “alone”) and ἄρχειν (árchein, “to rule”), literally “sole rule.”

Monarchy is one of the oldest and most widespread forms of governance. Its origins cannot be confined to any single culture or corner of the world. Across continents and through the centuries, peoples have arrived at this system independently, seeing in it a way to organize political and social life. From the ancient realms of the East and Africa to the kingdoms of Medieval Europe and the civilizations of pre-colonial America, monarchies appeared in diverse forms almost everywhere. Their persistence suggests that monarchy rests not only on historical necessity but also on deeper patterns of human nature and the psychology of communities.

From a psychological perspective, monarchy appears both understandable and natural. Human beings instinctively seek order, clarity, and stability in political life. A single ruler—embodying the center of power and responsibility—offers a simple and recognizable image of governance in the public mind. People often find it easier to relate to an individual than to an abstract institution, and the figure of the monarch makes authority tangible and visible.

The presence of a ruler at the head of the state also satisfies a deep emotional need for continuity. Monarchs are not only political leaders but also symbols of tradition, linking past, present, and future. Their role provides a sense of permanence in a world of constant change. In this respect, monarchy mirrors family structures, where authority and protection are entrusted to a single parental figure.

Succession strengthens this continuity. Power passes from one generation to the next within the same dynasty, preserving accumulated experience and cultural traditions. In this way, monarchy becomes a thread between past and future, offering stability and a sense of unbroken heritage. For many, the monarch is more than a political figure: they embody national identity.

Even in countries where monarchy is largely ceremonial, the monarch remains central in public life. It is not only a political institution but also a social and cultural force. It embodies unity and gives citizens a sense of belonging to a shared history. That is why, after thousands of years, monarchy has not disappeared but continues to adapt to new eras and social realities, existing alongside other forms of government.

Chapter 1

Absolute Monarchy: Centralized Authority Without Constitutional limits

Absolute monarchy is a form of government in which all state power—legislative, executive, and judicial—is concentrated in the hands of a single monarch, unconstrained by a constitution, laws, or representative bodies. In such a system, the ruler's decisions are not subject to challenge and carry the highest legal authority.

Characteristics

Absolute monarchy is a form of state in which all power—legislative, executive, and judicial—is held by a single ruler. The monarch exercises the full range of authority: issuing laws and decrees, forming the government, appointing and dismissing officials, directing the courts, commanding the armed forces and security services, and controlling the nation's finances. His will is not restrained by law, constitution, or parliament, and his decisions carry absolute force.

A defining feature of absolute monarchy is its highly centralized character. All authority flows from the ruler and rests on personal loyalty. State institutions exist only at the monarch's will and function according to his directives. This structure allows for swift decision-making, since approval from independent bodies or parliaments is unnecessary; such institutions either do not exist or are purely ceremonial.

In this system, court circles and the ruler's closest advisers play a pivotal role. Senior officials, ministers, and counselors are appointed directly by the monarch and act under his supervision. Their status, influence, and careers depend entirely on his favor, making the personal element decisive for the fate of the state and its people.

The ideological foundation of absolute monarchy is closely linked to the doctrine of the Divine Right of Kings—the belief that royal authority comes directly from God and cannot be challenged. This doctrine flourished in Europe between the sixteenth and eighteenth centuries, when rulers emphasized their divine status, presenting their power as both political reality and sacred truth. One of the most famous examples was the French king Louis XIV, the “Sun King,” whose declaration *L'État, c'est moi* (“I am the state”) became a symbol of absolute power, where ruler and state were inseparable.

In many ancient civilizations and traditional societies, monarchs went further, claiming descent from the gods and presenting themselves as divine or semi-divine beings. Such claims were thought to justify their right to rule and to make their authority sacred in the eyes of their subjects.

Historically, absolute monarchy was not only a political system but also an ideology of power, rooted in sacred justifications of the monarch's role. Around the ruler grew a carefully cultivated aura of mystique, reinforced by rituals and ceremonies that highlighted his exceptional place in the life of the state and society.

Strengths of Absolute Monarchy

1. Stability and Unity of Leadership

One of the main advantages of absolute monarchy is its capacity to ensure stability and unified governance. When authority is concentrated in the hands of a single ruler, the state avoids political infighting, partisan conflict, and rivalry among factions. The monarch serves as a national arbiter, able to reconcile divisions and restore order quickly in times of crisis or instability.

2. High Speed of Decision-Making

Another important strength of absolute monarchy is the speed of decision-making. The monarch does not need to coordinate with parliament or other representative bodies; ultimate authority rests with one person. Here, as the American saying goes, the buck stops with the monarch, who carries full responsibility for the final decision. This enables the state to respond quickly to threats, resolve emerging problems, and introduce reforms without delay.

3. Clear Hierarchy and Transparency in Governance

Absolute monarchy is defined by a clear hierarchy. Citizens know who makes decisions and who is responsible for them, which reduces bureaucratic confusion and removes uncertainty in governance. Officials at all levels know to whom they report and whose orders they follow, making the execution of decisions consistent and effective.

4. Continuity of Power and Long-Term Planning

Absolute monarchy secures continuity of power by passing the throne from one generation to the next within a single dynasty. This allows the state to plan long-term policies without the risk of sudden shifts in direction caused by frequent changes of leadership. As a result, the country can look decades ahead and carry out its goals steadily over time.

5. Symbolic Unity and the Monarch's High Authority

In an absolute monarchy, the ruler is not just a head of state but embodies the nation itself—its history, traditions, and culture. His authority, grounded in both political and symbolic power, allows decisions to be carried out effectively and internal conflicts to be resolved quickly.

6. Efficient Use of State Resources

The absolute monarch holds sole control over the state's resources and directs them where they are most needed. This removes bureaucratic delays and formal approvals, allowing resources—financial, human, and military—to be allocated quickly and effectively to priority tasks.

7. Centralization of Responsibility

In an absolute monarchy, responsibility for decisions rests with one person. The monarch is directly accountable for the outcome of every state initiative and cannot shift blame to other institutions. This concentration of responsibility forces the ruler to govern with caution, aware that the results of his actions shape both his authority and the legacy he leaves behind.

Weaknesses of Absolute Monarchy

1. Risk of Despotism and Arbitrary Rule

The most serious risk of absolute monarchy is that unchecked power can foster despotism and authoritarian rule. Without effective oversight, the monarch and his inner circle may suppress opposition, silence dissent, and stifle criticism. Power without limits also carries the temptation to use it for personal gain or to serve the interests of a narrow elite. Under such conditions, violations of rights, political persecution, and abuses by state agencies become likely.

2. Absence of Political Freedoms and Citizen Representation

Another serious problem of absolute monarchy is the absence of political freedoms and real ways for citizens to influence policy. People cannot freely express opinions, choose representatives, or take part in decision-making. This produces passivity and apathy, weakens civic involvement, and narrows participation in social life. A state cut off from feedback loses the capacity to respond to society's needs, which in turn fuels social tension.

3. Problems of Succession and Crises of Inheritance

In an absolute monarchy, succession is a critical issue, since the monarch usually rules for life. The death or abdication of a ruler without a clear heir often triggers a crisis of succession. Rivalries among heirs, struggles between claimants, and court intrigues can escalate into civil war and armed conflict, undermining stability and plunging the state into political turmoil.

4. Risk of Incompetence and Unfitness of the Monarch

Another drawback is that absolute power is inherited, which does not guarantee the competence of the next ruler. If the throne passes to an inexperienced or weak monarch, the state may face grave challenges. With no mechanism to remove an unfit ruler or limit his authority, the risks to the country and its people increase sharply.

5. Limited Adaptability and Flexibility of the Political System

Absolute monarchies are often slow to adapt to new conditions and social change. Because decisions are made unilaterally, without input from a wider circle of experts, they may be detached from reality and overlook shifts in public needs. The rigidity of the system hinders reform and weakens the state's capacity to respond to changing political and economic circumstances, which over time can lead to crisis and decline.

6. High Dependence of the State on the Monarch's Personal Qualities

Because all power in an absolute monarchy is concentrated in the hands of a single person, the ruler's personal qualities become the decisive factor in the country's rise or decline. The monarch's morality, intellect, education, and psychological state directly influence his decisions and, consequently, the fate of the entire state. This makes the political system extremely vulnerable to chance, where the nation's future depends entirely on the character and abilities of one individual.

Absolute monarchy is a spark in a dry forest — it carries with it risks that are neither few nor small. Hidden contradictions lie under the surface, waiting for the right spark to turn them into political, economic, or social earthquakes. And yet, for all its dangers, there is a quiet truth: in every leader — be it a monarch who wore a crown centuries ago, a modern president in a tailored suit, or the unassuming head of a small-town board — their lives the same dream. To hold all the cards. To be the single, unchallenged center of gravity where every decision begins and ends. The sole source of law. The final word.

This hunger for dominion is stitched into the very fabric of human nature. It runs through history like a scarlet thread, winding through the rise and fall of empires, whispered in palaces and shouted in the streets. Sometimes it wears a humble face. In some, the thirst for power is the quiet will to master their own fears, to keep the reins tight on their impulses, to wrestle their weaknesses to the ground. They see in this inner victory the real crown jewel of the spirit. For them, self-mastery is the only road to freedom worth walking.

Others carry the same thirst, but it burns in another way — hotter, louder, and outward. It's the unshakable urge to bend others to their will, to pull the strings of another's choices, thoughts, and even dreams. This instinct goads leaders and rulers alike, prodding them to push the edge of their authority further, and further still, until there's no horizon left. In absolute power, they see not just a prize, but the very point of existence. And for even one step closer to it, they'll pay any price, walk through fire, or burn bridges without a second thought.

Here lies the two-faced truth of power. Some turn inward, finding their kingdom within, building their freedom brick by brick through self-control. Others look outward, chasing the high of total command over people and events. And so long as this ancient hunger keeps beating in the human heart, absolute monarchy will be more than a system of rule. It will be a siren song — calling every ruler, in every age, to imagine themselves on the throne, no matter how far away it stands.



Historical Examples of Absolute Monarchy

France During the Reign of Louis XIV (1643–1715)

France under Louis XIV, the Sun King, is one of the most studied examples of absolute monarchy in European history. He ascended the throne in 1643 as a child after the death of his father, Louis XIII, and at first reigned under the regency of his mother, Queen Anne of Austria, with Cardinal Mazarin as chief adviser. The turning point came in 1661, after Mazarin's death, when Louis declared that he would govern personally. From that moment, power was concentrated in his hands to an unprecedented degree.

Louis XIV pursued a clear strategy of centralization. Local parliaments, once able to challenge royal edicts, were reduced to ceremonial bodies. The king himself appointed and dismissed ministers and generals, issued laws without parliamentary consent, oversaw judicial affairs, and controlled fiscal policy. This eliminated institutional checks and affirmed that sovereignty lay wholly with the monarch.

His famous declaration, *L'État, c'est moi* ("I am the state"), captured the essence of his rule. In the culture he created, the monarch's will and the state's authority were inseparable. Opposition to royal policy was treated not as debate but as disloyalty to the nation, making dissent both dangerous and unacceptable.

The Palace of Versailles became the most effective tool of control. More than a royal residence, it was designed as the symbolic and practical center of power. By requiring nobles to live at court and binding them to elaborate rituals, Louis ensured their dependence on royal favor. Versailles functioned as a theater of power where etiquette and spectacle reinforced his supremacy and prevented nobles from building independent influence in the provinces.

Foreign policy was another foundation of Louis XIV's rule. His reign was marked by major wars—the War of Devolution (1667–1668), the Dutch War (1672–1678), the War of the Palatinate (1688–1697), and the War of the Spanish Succession (1701–1714). These conflicts aimed not only at territorial expansion but also at projecting France as Europe's leading power, enhancing the monarchy's prestige at home and abroad. They also placed France at the center of European politics, making the kingdom both admired and feared by its rivals.

Yet the very methods that strengthened his rule also carried the roots of later instability. Unchecked military spending and the extravagance of Versailles strained the treasury. The burden of taxation fell heavily on the lower classes, while representative bodies were unable to voice grievances. Social discontent grew quietly but persistently.

By the end of his reign, France's standing in Europe was secure, but the monarchy's domestic foundations were fragile. Concentrating authority in one person brought unity but removed flexibility. The economic pressures and social tensions left unresolved under Louis XIV would, in the next century, help lead to the French Revolution of 1789.

The Russian Empire During the Reigns of Peter I and Catherine II

Another major example of absolute monarchy is the Russian Empire under Peter I (1682–1725) and Catherine II (1762–1796). Under their reigns, Russian autocracy took on the most complete form of European absolutism.

Peter the Great's rule was a time of radical change and the consolidation of central power. He came to the throne at the age of ten, at first ruling with his half-brother Ivan V under the regency of Tsarevna Sophia, and later as sole ruler after her removal. From the start of his independent reign, Peter held near-unlimited authority. His determination and ambition were directed at transforming what he saw as a backward and isolated state.

Centralization was the hallmark of his rule. He dismantled the old boyar institutions and created collegia—new administrative bodies answerable directly to the monarch. In 1711 he founded the Senate as the highest governing institution, but it functioned entirely under his command. Peter appointed officials, enforced decrees, and punished even minor breaches of discipline. A centralized bureaucracy took shape, extending through every level of government.

His reforms sought to modernize Russia. He built a standing army and navy, which secured victory in the Great Northern War (1700–1721) against Sweden, gave Russia access to the Baltic, and led to the proclamation of the Russian Empire in 1721. He introduced Western customs, reformed taxation and currency, promoted industry, founded factories, and created new cities, most notably the new capital, St. Petersburg.

After Peter's death, decades of instability followed until Catherine II seized power in 1762 after deposing her husband, Peter III. Born a German princess, she was well educated, influenced by Enlightenment thought, and corresponded with Voltaire, Rousseau, and Diderot.

Catherine II ruled as an absolute monarch. She decided policy herself, appointed and dismissed ministers and governors, and held direct control over finance, the military, and foreign affairs. Her reforms streamlined the legal system, created a unified provincial administration, and strengthened bureaucracy and policing.

Her foreign policy brought major gains. She fought two successful wars against the Ottoman Empire (1768–1774, 1787–1791), annexed Crimea in 1783, and expanded Russian territory through the three partitions of Poland (1772, 1793, 1795). By the end of her reign, Russia had become the leading power in Europe.

But the same concentration of power that brought achievements also created lasting problems. Political dissent was crushed, freedoms were absent, and corruption thrived in the bureaucracy. Social unrest erupted in the massive Pugachev Rebellion (1773–1775), suppressed with brutal force. Succession remained unresolved: after Catherine's death, the lack of a stable system of transfer of power once again led to political uncertainty.

The reigns of Peter I and Catherine II show the defining features of Russian absolutism. Both rulers transformed Russia into a major European power, but their rule also exposed the weaknesses of absolute monarchy—authoritarian governance, the lack of political freedoms, and the constant risk of succession crises.

Saudi Arabia: A Modern Absolute Monarchy

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is a modern state that has preserved the core traits of absolutism into the 21st century. All governing authority belongs to the Al Saud dynasty, which has ruled since the country's unification in 1932 by its founder, King Abdulaziz ibn Saud.

A defining feature of the Saudi model is the fusion of political and religious authority. The king is at once head of state and government, commander of the armed forces, and the highest religious authority. He approves laws and decrees, appoints ministers and governors, directs domestic and foreign policy, and carries full responsibility for state decisions.

Formally, Saudi Arabia has an advisory body, the Shura Council, whose members are appointed by the king. It has no legislative power and serves only in a consultative role. Recommendations may be issued, but final authority rests with the monarch. This highlights the absolute nature of royal power and its independence from other political institutions.

The ideological basis of Saudi absolutism differs from the European doctrine of the divine right of kings. In Saudi Arabia, legitimacy derives from Islam, where authority is seen as rooted in the will of Allah rather than in popular sovereignty. The Al Saud dynasty is regarded as guardian of Islamic tradition and custodian of Mecca and Medina. This religious legitimacy grants the ruling family near-unquestioned authority, making criticism of the king not just political dissent but a grave religious offense.

In practice, this system offers advantages of decisiveness and speed. Concentrated power enables rapid responses to challenges, large-scale infrastructure development, and economic modernization. Saudi Arabia's advances in oil, urban growth, transport, and technology are often credited to centralized rule.

Another advantage is internal stability. Acting as arbiter, the monarch mediates among tribal, religious, and social groups, maintaining cohesion and preventing open conflict.

Yet the weaknesses are familiar. Political freedoms and civil rights are largely absent: opposition is banned, public debate restricted, and the media censored. The judiciary applies conservative interpretations of Islamic law, often criticized by international human rights organizations.

Succession is another source of uncertainty. With hundreds of princes and an opaque process for choosing the next monarch, rivalries and intrigue within the royal family are inevitable. Though traditions and guidelines exist, the question of succession has often stirred competition.

Saudi Arabia remains a striking example of how absolute monarchy, grounded in religion and dynasty, can persist into the modern era—combining the strengths of centralized authority with the vulnerabilities of unchecked power.

Chapter 2

Constitutional Monarchy:

Monarch's Powers Defined and Restricted by a Constitution

Constitutional monarchy is a form of government in which the powers of the monarch are clearly limited by law and the constitution, while actual political authority rests with elected bodies and is regulated by democratic institutions.

Characteristics

Unlike absolute monarchy, where the ruler holds nearly unlimited power, this form of government places the crown within a system where authority is defined and limited by law. At its core stands the principle of the rule of law: no individual, not even the monarch, may act outside established legal norms. In such a system, everyone is subject to the same legal standards, regardless of status or birth.

Another cornerstone is the separation of powers. Legislative authority belongs to parliament, formed through free elections. Executive power is carried out by the government and cabinet of ministers, who are accountable to parliament and, through it, to the citizens. Judicial authority rests with independent courts, ensuring justice without political interference.

Within this framework, the monarch has no direct political power and fulfills mostly ceremonial, representative, and symbolic roles. The crown embodies unity and continuity, carries historical traditions, and serves as a reminder of national identity. While the monarch may formally open parliament, sign laws, or appoint officials, these acts are performed strictly according to constitutional provisions and parliamentary will.

A defining aspect of this system is the recognition and protection of rights and freedoms enshrined in law. The state is responsible for safeguarding freedom of speech and conscience, freedom of the press and assembly, political participation and fair elections, as well as the right to a fair trial.

The monarchy also plays a symbolic role in moments of national crisis or celebration. Its presence at ceremonies, anniversaries, or times of mourning provides citizens with a sense of continuity that rises above party politics. It reassures society that beyond competition for power there exists a figure representing the state as a whole.

At the same time, this form of monarchy serves as a bridge between tradition and modern governance. It preserves rituals and historical symbols while fully integrating democratic institutions. This dual nature enhances political legitimacy: governments change through elections, but the crown endures as a constant point of reference.

In this way, constitutional monarchy combines the stability of dynastic tradition with democratic governance and the protection of citizens' rights. It demonstrates how an ancient institution can remain relevant in modern society, retaining its symbolic role while leaving political authority to elected representatives.

Strengths of Constitutional Monarchy

1. Harmonious Combination of Tradition and Democracy

Constitutional monarchy combines national traditions with modern democratic institutions. The monarch stands as a symbol of unity and continuity, while parliament and independent courts give citizens real means to take part in political life and protect their rights.

2. Limitation of Arbitrary Power

The monarch's powers are clearly limited by the constitution and laws, which prevents overreach and guards against authoritarian rule. A system of checks and balances ensures that no branch of government can fully dominate the others.

3. Political Stability and Continuity of Governance

The monarch, remaining outside party politics and daily conflicts, stands as a symbol of stability and continuity. This allows the country to handle changes of government and parliament calmly.

4. Neutral Arbiter in Times of Crisis

During political crises or deadlocks, the monarch can serve as a neutral figure standing above party struggles. This stabilizing role helps restore dialogue, mediate tensions, and prevent escalation.

5. Strengthening of National Identity

The monarch serves as a living symbol of the nation's history and culture, strengthening feelings of unity and belonging. Through both the person and the institution, the crown helps hold society together and creates a lasting bond between state and citizens.

6. Transparency and Predictability of Governance

Constitutional monarchy presupposes well-defined powers for all branches of government, including the monarch. This ensures clarity in governance and allows citizens to see who is responsible for specific decisions.

7. Encouragement of Long-Term Vision

Because the monarch is not subject to election cycles, the institution provides continuity that fosters long-term national projects. Governments may change, but the crown sustains a sense of strategic direction across generations.

8. Promotion of Charity and Social Causes

Royal patronage of cultural, educational, and charitable initiatives brings public attention and resources to important causes, strengthening civil society and supporting social cohesion.

9. High International Standing

By carrying out representative and ceremonial duties, the monarch strengthens the country's standing in international relations. Presence at global events highlights goodwill and stability, helping to shape a favorable image abroad.

Weaknesses of Constitutional Monarchy

1. Potential Conflicts Between the Monarch and Other Branches of Government

Even with clear constitutional rules, disputes may arise over the monarch's role. While parliaments and governments usually view it as ceremonial, a monarch may sometimes attempt to intervene in politics.

Crises expose these tensions most sharply. A refusal to approve a parliamentary bill, for example, can spark a clash in which parliament and government must balance respect for the crown with defense of their democratic mandate.

Ambiguities in the constitution add further risk. A coalition deadlock may force the monarch to appoint a prime minister, a decision that is inevitably political. Even brief episodes of this kind can undermine trust in both monarchy and parliament.

2. Limited Real Influence of the Monarch

In a constitutional monarchy, the monarch is head of state in name but holds mainly ceremonial powers. This prevents authoritarian rule but leaves little room to shape policy. Even with a personal vision, constitutional limits exclude the monarch from major decisions.

These limits are most evident in times of crisis, when swift action is needed. Bound by protocol and dependent on elected officials, the monarch often remains a passive figure—high in symbolic authority yet unable to act in practice.

3. Complexity of Crisis Management

The separation of powers, while providing stability in normal times, can slow decision-making in emergencies. Consultations between parliament, government, and the monarch prevent rash choices in calm periods, but during crises they may delay urgent measures.

In moments of economic shock, natural disaster, or sudden political conflict, swift action is essential. Yet checks and balances restrict unilateral steps: even necessary measures require debate and approval, consuming valuable time and weakening the state's response. This can lead to paralysis, as branches avoid responsibility for unpopular decisions. The monarch, though formally above politics, has no mandate to intervene, and any attempt to do so risks breaching constitutional limits.

4. High Cost of Maintaining the Monarchy

The monarchy can place a heavy financial burden on the state, even without real political power. Costs include the upkeep of the royal household, security, residences, and ceremonial events.

Such spending may be tolerated in prosperous times but often provokes discontent during economic downturns. Lavish allocations for royal functions can seem unjustified when public services are underfunded, fueling criticism and calls for greater financial transparency.

5. Legitimacy of Hereditary Succession in Modern Society

In modern democracies that value equality, freedom of choice, and merit, hereditary succession often appears outdated and at odds with contemporary principles. Democratic systems choose leaders based on competence and public trust, while monarchies pass power by birth. This can place unqualified individuals on the throne, raising doubts about fairness and legitimacy. Such concerns regularly fuel debate over the compatibility of monarchy with democratic values, especially in societies with strong civic traditions.

6. Risk of Obsolescence and Loss of Relevance

Traditions and rituals that once unified the nation may seem detached from modern life. Though culturally significant, they can appear excessive or irrelevant to citizens focused on practical governance and equality.

In societies that value openness and accessibility, the hierarchical customs of monarchy often clash with prevailing norms. Among younger generations, it is increasingly viewed as ceremonial and politically marginal, which over time can weaken public support.

7. Inflexibility of the Succession Process

Hereditary succession ties leadership change to birth and family tradition rather than merit or public need. This can place unsuitable individuals on the throne and prevents the timely removal of ineffective monarchs.

Regencies required for underage heirs add to instability, while personal scandals or unpopular royals can damage the monarchy's reputation and weaken public trust in the state.

8. Limited Accountability of the Monarch

The monarch holds symbolic authority but little direct responsibility. In democracies, senior officials are accountable to the public and subject to criticism, whereas in constitutional monarchies such scrutiny is often muted by tradition.

This lack of openness creates uncertainty about the monarch's powers and can weaken public trust. Without open discussion, the monarchy risks drifting away from the society it represents.

9. Potential for Abuse by the Monarch's Inner Circle

Advisers and relatives with privileged access to the monarch may wield influence without accountability, shaping decisions that serve private rather than public interests.

Such influence is hard to detect or restrain, since the monarch's inner circle lies beyond the oversight applied to official institutions. Even if the monarch is uninvolved, scandals around close associates can damage the institution's reputation.

10. Tensions Between Democratic and Monarchical Values

Democracy rests on equality before the law, while monarchy reserves the highest office for a single family by birth. This contradiction becomes sharper in times of social change, when citizens demand broader equality and participation.

Historical Examples of Constitutional Monarchy

Great Britain (from the 17th Century to the Present)

Great Britain offers one of the most enduring examples of constitutional monarchy. The British model developed gradually over centuries, shaped by conflict, compromise, and the adaptation of tradition to changing circumstances.

The first major attempt to limit royal power came in 1215 with the Magna Carta. Although not a constitution in the modern sense, it marked an early step in restraining monarchy and securing rights for subjects. Over time, additional charters and parliamentary acts further reduced the scope of royal prerogatives.

A decisive turning point came in the 17th century during the English Revolution (1642–1651), when King Charles I was executed and England briefly became a republic under Oliver Cromwell. The experiment failed to deliver stability, and the monarchy was restored in 1660.

The foundations of constitutional monarchy were firmly laid in 1688 with the Glorious Revolution. Parliament invited William III of Orange and Mary II to take the throne on condition of parliamentary supremacy. The Bill of Rights (1689) formalized this settlement, establishing that royal authority was subordinate to Parliament. Later, the Act of Settlement (1701) secured Protestant succession and gave Parliament control over the line of inheritance, further restricting monarchical independence.

The 18th and 19th centuries brought steady change. The Hanoverian kings relied heavily on ministers, and the office of prime minister emerged as the true head of government. By the time of Queen Victoria (1837–1901), the monarchy was widely recognized as a symbolic institution, while Parliament and Cabinet exercised effective power. The Reform Acts of the 19th century expanded suffrage, anchoring the system ever more firmly in democratic principles.

In the modern United Kingdom, the sovereign serves as head of state but fulfills mainly ceremonial and representational duties. The monarch formally opens Parliament, grants royal assent to legislation, receives foreign dignitaries, and undertakes state visits abroad. All political authority rests with the elected Parliament and the government led by the prime minister. In practice, royal assent is ceremonial: while the monarch must sign every law, refusal is not considered possible. As is sometimes said in Britain, the monarch “can say ‘yes’ or... say ‘yes.’”

The monarchy today plays a cultural and unifying role. National ceremonies such as coronations, jubilees, and royal weddings attract worldwide attention and foster a shared sense of identity. The monarch also serves as a focus of continuity during times of crisis, embodying stability when governments change frequently.

The British model blends deep respect for historical tradition with strong democratic institutions. Its resilience lies in its ability to adapt to political, economic, and social change, surviving wars, revolutions, and crises while preserving constitutional stability.

Japan After World War II (Since 1947)

Japan's political system underwent a profound transformation after its defeat in World War II. In 1947, under Allied occupation led by the United States, the new Constitution of Japan (日本国憲法 — Nihon-koku Kenpō) came into effect, redefining the emperor's role in both society and the state.

Before the war, the emperor held a unique and sacrosanct position—regarded not only as sovereign ruler but also as a divine being, a descendant of the sun goddess Amaterasu. To the Japanese people, he embodied spiritual authority and national identity. Although policy was largely shaped by military and political elites, the emperor's symbolic power was immense, and in theory his authority was absolute.

Japan's surrender in 1945 and the Allied-led reforms ended this system. The new Constitution stripped the emperor of governing authority and recast him as “the symbol of the State and of the unity of the People.” Sovereignty now resided with the people, and all acts of state performed by the emperor required cabinet approval.

Since 1947, the emperor has held no political power. His duties are purely ceremonial, carried out on the advice of Japan's elected government. These include opening sessions of the National Diet, attesting to the appointment of the prime minister and Supreme Court justices, awarding state honors, receiving foreign dignitaries, and presiding over national ceremonies.

The Japanese model represents a synthesis of ancient imperial tradition and modern democracy. The imperial institution preserves historical and cultural continuity, while the constitutional framework ensures its complete separation from political power. This arrangement prevents authoritarian concentration of authority and safeguards democratic governance.

Japan's post-war success illustrates the strength of this model. In the decades since 1947, the country has risen from wartime devastation to become one of the world's leading economies, combining prosperity with political stability. The emperor's symbolic role, alongside democratic institutions, has been a stabilizing force throughout this period of rapid modernization.

In recent years, the monarchy has shown its continued ability to adapt. Emperor Akihito's historic abdication in 2019—the first in over two centuries—was widely regarded as a gesture of responsibility, reflecting his concern over age and health. His son, Emperor Naruhito, ascended the throne that year, beginning the Reiwa era. The smooth transition reinforced the monarchy's symbolic role as a unifying presence, linking Japan's ancient imperial tradition with the realities of modern constitutional democracy.

Although debates occasionally arise over the relevance of the imperial institution, public opinion remains strongly supportive of its current non-political role. For most citizens, the emperor endures as a respected symbol of historical continuity, national pride, and cultural unity.

Sweden and Denmark (Modern Constitutional Monarchies)

Both Sweden and Denmark have centuries of monarchical tradition, but over the past two hundred years their political systems have changed profoundly. Royal authority has been steadily reduced, and democratic governance has been consolidated. This gradual evolution shows how long-standing institutions can adapt to modern democracy while the monarchy retains symbolic importance within a framework of full parliamentary sovereignty.

Sweden

The Swedish model was firmly defined by the 1974 Instrument of Government (Regeringsformen), which reduced the monarch's role to that of a symbolic head of state. King Carl XVI Gustaf, who ascended the throne in 1973, has presided over this modernized form of monarchy throughout his reign. His duties include opening the annual session of the Riksdag, presenting the Nobel Prizes, receiving foreign dignitaries, and representing Sweden on state visits abroad.

Political authority rests entirely with the elected parliament and government, keeping the crown outside party politics. The monarchy remains, however, an important cultural institution. The royal family is closely associated with national traditions, public celebrations, and charitable activities. Sweden has also maintained broad public support for the monarchy, with opinion polls regularly showing a majority in favor of retaining it, though debates about reform or abolition occasionally surface in political discourse.

A distinctive feature of the Swedish monarchy is its emphasis on simplicity and accessibility. Members of the royal family are expected to live in close contact with the public, participate in civic events across the country, and uphold a modest image in keeping with Sweden's egalitarian culture. This combination of formality and approachability has helped the monarchy maintain legitimacy.

Denmark

The Danish monarchy is based on the 1849 Constitution (Danmarks Riges Grundlov), substantially revised in 1953. The revision introduced important democratic reforms, including the transition to a unicameral parliament (the Folketing) and changes to succession law, which eventually allowed for absolute primogeniture in 2009, granting daughters and sons equal rights to inherit the throne.

Queen Margrethe II, who reigned from 1972 until her abdication in 2024, became Denmark's longest-serving monarch and a deeply respected cultural figure. Her official duties included promulgating laws, signing treaties, and representing Denmark internationally, always on the advice of the prime minister and cabinet. Beyond her constitutional role, she was known for her personal contributions to the arts, including painting, design, and translation, which helped strengthen her public popularity.

The monarchy in Denmark continues to enjoy widespread support, with the royal family often described as a unifying institution in a small country with strong democratic traditions. The succession of King Frederik X in 2024 further demonstrated the monarchy's adaptability and the stability of Denmark's constitutional framework.

Comparative Analysis: Modern Constitutional Monarchies

Modern constitutional monarchies—such as those in the United Kingdom, Japan, Sweden, and Denmark—show that monarchy can coexist with, and even reinforce, democratic governance. While each reflects its own history and culture, several shared principles define their role today.

1. Separation of Symbolic and Political Functions

In all four systems, the monarch is head of state but excluded from political authority. Executive power belongs to the elected government, and legislative authority rests with parliament. This separation prevents the monarchy from being used for political control while preserving its role as a neutral symbol above party politics.

2. Constitutional and Customary Restraints

The form of limitation differs. In Japan and Sweden, constitutions (the 1947 Constitution and the 1974 Regeringsformen) explicitly remove the monarch from political life. In the United Kingdom and Denmark, restrictions rest mainly on constitutional conventions, supplemented in Denmark by the Grundlov. In every case, monarchs act only on the advice of the government.

3. Ceremonial and Representational Duties

The monarch's work is almost entirely ceremonial: opening parliament, granting formal assent to laws, welcoming foreign leaders, representing the nation abroad, and presiding at state events. These duties keep the monarchy visible as a symbol of continuity and identity.

4. Historical Legitimacy and National Identity

Even without power, monarchs retain deep cultural weight. In Britain, the crown reflects centuries of constitutional development; in Japan, the imperial house links the present to ancient origins; in Sweden and Denmark, monarchy ties medieval traditions to modern democracy.

5. Stability Through Institutional Balance

These monarchies enjoy notable stability thanks to the balance between democratic institutions and a politically neutral head of state. The monarchy acts as a steady presence, giving continuity without interfering in governance.

6. Public Support

Although debates about their relevance recur, public opinion remains broadly favorable. Polls suggest that a non-political monarchy can strengthen trust in institutions and foster a shared sense of belonging.

Modern constitutional monarchies show that monarchy, once the hallmark of absolute rule, can be reshaped into an institution that strengthens democracy rather than threatens it. By preserving historical symbols while transferring real authority to elected bodies, they provide societies with both continuity and adaptability. This balance explains why, in an age defined by rapid change, the institution of monarchy endures—not as a relic of the past, but as a stabilizing force that connects tradition with modern democratic life.

The Use of Technocratic Methods in Modern Governance

Modern governance often integrates technocratic features into its decision-making structures. Governments rely on expert commissions, advisory councils, and independent panels to address complex economic and social challenges that exceed the capacity of ordinary partisan politics.

In times of crisis, entire technocratic governments have sometimes been appointed. A well-known example is Italy in 2011, when economist Mario Monti was named prime minister to restore market confidence and introduce fiscal reforms at the height of the Eurozone crisis. His appointment reflected the belief that expert-led administrations could provide stability and credibility when traditional political leadership seemed paralyzed.

Beyond such exceptional cases, many policy domains are routinely shaped by technical expertise. Central banking, for instance, has long been entrusted to independent authorities whose legitimacy rests on economic competence rather than electoral support. Infrastructure development and climate policy likewise depend heavily on scientific analysis, engineering expertise, and long-term planning. In these areas, technocratic methods supplement the political process by grounding decisions in specialized knowledge and empirical data.

Lessons from 20th-Century Technocratic Experiments

The technocratic experiments of the twentieth century yielded important insights into both the promise and the limitations of governance grounded solely in technical and scientific principles.

On the positive side, they demonstrated that expertise and systematic analysis can improve the precision of decision-making. By emphasizing data, measurement, and professional competence, technocratic approaches highlighted the indispensable role of specialized knowledge in addressing complex social and economic problems.

Yet these same experiments also exposed inherent weaknesses. Technical calculation alone could not account for the full complexity of human societies. Effective governance requires sensitivity to psychology, culture, and social relations—dimensions often overlooked by technocratic systems. When these factors were neglected, policies lost effectiveness and citizens' confidence in institutions diminished. In addition, many technocratic projects suffered from excessive centralization. Over time, this concentration of authority fostered bureaucratic rigidity and limited the capacity of institutions to adapt to unexpected challenges.

The Core Legacy of 20th-Century Technocracy

The history of technocracy in the twentieth century underscores a lasting lesson: expertise and scientific methods must be integrated with democratic institutions and responsiveness to social needs. Stability and adaptability in modern governance depend on achieving this balance between technical rationality and democratic legitimacy.

The experience of the century showed that technical expertise, while indispensable, cannot by itself resolve the complexities of social life. Economic models, forecasts,

and engineering schemes may optimize production or resource flows, but without public participation and legitimacy such measures often fail to gain acceptance or to endure. Projects that treated society as a system to be managed from above frequently met resistance, as citizens rejected policies detached from their everyday concerns.

At the same time, democratic systems themselves proved insufficient without expert guidance. Electoral politics and popular will are essential for legitimacy, yet they cannot alone address problems that are technical in nature—financial crises, environmental threats, or the regulation of new technologies. Where expert knowledge was combined with democratic oversight, however, institutions became more resilient, policies more effective, and public trust more secure.

The enduring legacy of technocracy lies not in the attempt to replace politics with science, but in demonstrating that governance requires both. Expertise brings precision, innovation, and foresight; democracy provides accountability, fairness, and consent. Together they form a model of governance better equipped to meet the demands of modern societies—complex, dynamic, and interdependent.



