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Countries with monarchy government

A constitutional monarchy is a form of government in which a monarch acts as head of state within the parameters of a written (i.e., codified), unwritten (i.e., uncodified) or blended constitution. It differs from absolute monarchy in that an absolute monarch serves as the sole source of political power in the state and is not legally bound by any constitution. Most constitutional monarchies employ a parliamentary system in which the Monarch may have strictly Ceremonial duties or may have Reserve Powers, depending on the constitution. They have a directly or indirectly elected prime minister who is the head of government, and exercises effective political power. As in most republics, a constitutional monarchy's executive authority is vested in the head of state. Today constitutional monarchy is almost always combined with representative democracy, and represents (as a theory of civics) a compromise between total trust in the political class, and in well-bred and well-trained monarchs raised for the role from birth. Though the king or queen may be regarded as the government's symbolic head, it is the Prime Minister who actually governs the country. More frequently however, monarchical institutions have played crucial roles in thwarting coups d'état efforts, and the overthrow of democratic institutions by fascist or communist movements. Examples include the attempted 23-F coup in Spain in 1981, the 1991 and 1985 coup attempts in Thailand, and the attempted communist takeover in Grenada in 1983. In the Spanish and Thai cases action taken by the king proved decisive; in the case of Grenada the call for outside assistance was made by the Governor-General (Sir Paul Scoon). Contemporary constitutional monarchies include Australia, The Bahamas, Bahrain, Barbados, Belgium, Belize, Bhutan, Cambodia, Canada, Denmark, Granada, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Liechtenstein, Lesotho, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Monaco, Morocco, New Zealand, the Netherlands, Norway, Papua New Guinea, Saint Vincent and the Grenadines, Solomon Islands, Spain, Sweden, Thailand, Tuvalu, and the United Kingdom. As in most republics, a constitutional monarchy's executive authority is vested in the head of state. Today constitutional monarchy is almost always combined with representative democracy, and represents (as a theory of civics) a compromise between total trust in the electorate, and in well-bred and well-trained monarchs raised for the role from birth. Though the king or queen may be regarded as the government's symbolic head, it is the Prime Minister who actually governs the country, thus in Britain the Queen reigns, whereas the Prime minister rules. In Britain, the Glorious Revolution of 1688 led to a constitutional monarchy restricted by laws such as the Bill of Rights 1689 and the Act of Settlement 1701, although limits on the power of the monarch ('A Limited Monarchy') are much older than that, as seen in our Magna Carta. Today the monarchy in Britain is politically neutral and by convention the role is largely ceremonial. No person may accept significant public office without swearing an oath of allegiance to the Queen. Constitutional monarchy most notably occurred in continental Europe after the French Revolution. Napoleon Bonaparte is considered to be "the first monarch" proclaiming himself as embodiment of the nation, rather than as a divinely-appointed ruler in contrast the Divine Right of French Kings before him; this interpretation of monarchy is basic to continental constitutional monarchies. G.W.F. Hegel, in *Philosophy of Right* (1820) justified it philosophically, according it well with evolving contemporary political theory, and with the Protestant Christian view of Natural Law. Hegel forecast a constitutional monarch of limited powers, whose function is embodying the national character and constitutional continuity in emergencies, per the development of constitutional monarchy in Europe and Japan. Moreover, the ceremonial office of president (e.g. European and Israeli parliamentary democracies), is a contemporary type of Hegel's constitutional monarch (whether elected or appointed), yet, his forecast of the form of government suitable to the modern world might be perceived as prophetic. The Russian and French presidents, with their stronger powers, might be Hegelian, wielding power suited to the national will embodied. As originally conceived, a constitutional monarch was quite a powerful figure, head of the executive branch even though his or her power was limited by the constitution and the elected parliament. Some of the framers of the US Constitution may have conceived of the president as being an elected constitutional monarch, as the term was understood in their time, following Montesquieu's account of the separation of powers. The present concept of constitutional monarchy developed in the United Kingdom, where it was the democratically elected parliaments, and their leader, the prime minister, who had become those who exercised power, with the monarchs voluntarily ceding it and contenting themselves with the titular position. In many cases even the monarchs themselves, while still at the very top of the political and social hierarchy, were given the status of "servants of the people" to reflect the new, egalitarian view. In the course of France's July Monarchy, Louis-Philippe I was styled "King of the French" rather than "King of France". Following the Unification of Germany, Otto von Bismarck rejected the British model. In the kind of constitutional monarchy established under the Constitution of the German Empire which Bismarck inspired, the Kaiser retained considerable actual executive power, and the Prime Minister needed no parliamentary vote of confidence and ruled solely by the imperial mandate. However, this model of constitutional monarchy was discredited and abolished following Germany's defeat in the First World War. Later on, Fascist Italy could also be considered as a "constitutional monarchy" of a kind, in the sense that there was a king as the titular head of state while actual power was held by Benito Mussolini under a constitution. This eventually discredited the Italian monarchy and led to its abolition in 1946. After the Second World War, surviving European monarchies almost invariably adopted some variant of the constitutional monarchy model originally developed in Britain. In present terms, the difference between a parliamentary democracy that is a constitutional monarchy and one that is a republic, is considered more a difference of detail than of substance. In both cases, the titular head of state - monarch or president - serves the traditional role of embodying and representing the nation, while the actual governing is carried out by an elected Prime Minister. This is contradictory to the Republican cause and desire to abolish the role of the Monarch, to replace it with another individual to assume the same duties. Today constitutional monarchies are mostly associated with Western European countries such as the United Kingdom, Netherlands, Belgium, Norway, Denmark, Spain, Luxembourg, Monaco, Liechtenstein, and Sweden. However, the two most populous constitutional monarchies in the world are in Asia: Japan and Thailand. In such cases it is the prime minister who holds the day-to-day powers of governance, while the King or Queen (or other monarch, such as a Grand Duke, in the case of Luxembourg, or Prince in the case of Monaco and Liechtenstein) retains only residual (but not always minor) powers. Different nations grant different powers to their monarchs. In the Netherlands, Denmark and in Belgium, for example, the Monarch formally appoints a representative to preside over the creation of a coalition government following a parliamentary election, while in Norway the King chairs special meetings of the cabinet. In nearly all cases, the monarch is still the nominal chief executive, but is bound by constitutional convention to act on the advice of the Cabinet. Only a few monarchies (most notably Japan and Sweden) have amended their constitutions so that the monarch is no longer even the nominal chief executive. The most significant family of constitutional monarchies in the world today are the sixteen Commonwealth realms under our Queen, Elizabeth II. Unlike some of their continental European counterparts, the Monarch and her Governors-General in the Commonwealth realms hold significant "reserve" or "prerogative" powers, to be wielded in times of extreme emergency or constitutional crises usually to uphold parliamentary government. An instance of a Governor General exercising his power was during the 1975 Australian constitutional crisis, when the Australian Prime Minister of the time, Gough Whitlam, was dismissed by the Governor-General. The Australian senate had threatened to block the Government's budget by refusing to pass the associated appropriation bills. On 11 November 1975, Whitlam intended to call a half-Senate election in an attempt to break the deadlock. When he went to seek the Governor-General's approval of the election, the Governor- General instead dismissed him as Prime Minister, and shortly thereafter installed leader of the opposition Malcolm Fraser in his place. Acting quickly before all parliamentarians became aware of the change of government, Fraser and his allies were able to secure passage of the appropriation bills, and the Governor-General dissolved Parliament for a double dissolution election. Fraser and his government were returned with a massive majority. This led to much speculation among Whitlam's supporters as to whether this use of the Governor-General's reserve powers was appropriate, and whether Australia should become a republic. Among supporters of constitutional monarchy however, the experience confirmed the value of the monarchy as a source of checks and balances against elected politicians who might seek powers in excess of those conferred by their respective constitutions, and ultimately as a safeguard against dictatorship. In Thailand's constitutional monarchy, the monarch is recognized as the Head of State, Head of the Armed Forces, Upholder of the Buddhist Religion, and Defender of the Faith. The current King, Bhumibol Adulyadej, is the longest reigning current monarch in the world and in all of Thailand's history. Bhumibol has reigned through several political changes in the Thai government. He has played an influential role in each incident, oftentimes acting as mediator between disputing political opponents. (See Bhumibol's role in Thai Politics.) While the monarch retains some powers from the constitution, most particular is Lèse majesté which protects the image and ability of the monarch to play a role in politics and carries modest criminal penalties for violators. Generally, the Thai people are reverent of Bhumibol. Much of his social influence comes from that and the fact that the royal family is often involved in socio-economic improvement efforts. In both the United Kingdom and elsewhere, a common debate centres around when it is appropriate for a monarch to use his or her political powers. When a monarch does act, political controversy can often ensue, partially because the neutrality of the crown is seen to be compromised in favour of a partisan goal. While political scientists may champion the idea of an "interventionist monarch" as a check against possible illegal action by politicians, the monarchs themselves are often driven by a more pragmatic sense of self-preservation, in which avoiding political controversy can be seen as an important way to retain public legitimacy and popularity. There also exist today several federal constitutional monarchies. In these countries, each subdivision has a distinct government and head of government, but all subdivisions share a monarch who is head of state of the federation as a united whole. The latest country that was completely transformed from an absolute monarchy to a constitutional democratic monarchy is Bhutan. While monarchy is unelected, unlike an elected presidency, Constitutional monarchy allows for certain powers of the monarch to be limited and balanced by an elected body in the form of a Parliament of elected ministers, and is therefore a democratic process drawn upon an enlightened basis for government. Monarchists argue that Constitutional Monarchy possesses two central features that rarely are to be found in presidents; while presidents may see themselves in terms of a limited term of office, with them often being "retired" from other posts into the presidency, constitutional monarchy tends to involve a professional life-long commitment. The other often cited advantage is that monarchs do not represent specific political views, and that they provide stability or act as a symbol of the state or nation. The very fact that a monarch has a lifelong professional (job) does mean that an experienced monarch has a wealth of knowledge that governments find invaluable, although of course most monarchs do not last that long. Figures like Elizabeth II or the late King Olav V are seen as possessing an almost encyclopaedic knowledge of their state's recent history, knowing lessons learned through error by past governments that can be passed on to future governments. Elizabeth II and Her Governments: In the United Kingdom many important governmental actions are done 'on behalf of' the Queen Elizabeth II or she exercises her powers at the direction of the Prime Minister. These are generally things which remain within the Royal Prerogative. These powers are diverse: for example they include (a) appointment of Bishops in the Church of England (b) the power to appoint a Government (c) call and dismiss Parliament (d) declare war (e) appoint members of the House of Lords (f) carry out all criminal prosecutions (g) give medals (h) control all the armed forces (i) control police forces (j) pass (or refuse to pass) Acts of Parliament (k) appoint judges and (l) to pardon (which was material under the Tudors, and is the basis of the mechanism for directing the appointment of Bishops). However, such activities are not (generally) done by her directly and were the Queen to carry out these functions independent of Parliament she would precipitate a constitutional crisis. In addition, historically it has been held that the Queen cannot be prosecuted for any criminal offence or be required to give testimony in court. Queen Elizabeth II, Queen of the United Kingdom, Australia, Canada, New Zealand and other states, nevertheless, the monarch still has important and useful functions. The nineteenth century British constitutional writer, Walter Bagehot, described the monarch having 'the right to be consulted, the right to advise and the right to warn '. Queen Elizabeth II meets her prime minister every Tuesday evening for a confidential audience, at which she and her prime minister discuss matters of state. The longer a reign, the greater the degree of experience a monarch has, particularly as she receives copies of all state documentation, all cabinet memoranda, reports from British ambassadors worldwide, security service intelligence, etc. A Parliamentary Committee was told in the early 1970s that Queen Elizabeth spends three hours daily 'doing the boxes' (ie, reading state papers sent to her from all departments of state). Sir John Peck, on being appointed British ambassador to Senegal, said that when Kissing Hands (the formal name of the appointment procedure) he received a more perceptive analysis of African and Senegalese politics from Queen Elizabeth than from any government official, based on her personal experiences on state visits, briefing documents and knowledge of African leaders, experiences that desk-bound officials, no matter how theoretically knowledgeable, had never had. In the mid 1970s, for example, Queen Elizabeth's belief that contacts between a British official, Lord Grenville, and the Government of Rhodesia were worth pursuing, shaped the policy of then Labour cabinet. Grenville's report mentioned some signs of movement. The Labour cabinet saw the scale of the movement as too insignificant to warrant further exploration. However Queen Elizabeth, who had ten years continuous experience of the Rhodesian issue (unlike the ministers who had only a relatively small degree of experience, having only come to power in the early 1970s), observed how any sign of movement was a change from the lack of movement present previously. The Labour ministers paid heed to her privately expressed observation (that followed a conversation she had had with James Callaghan at a state banquet for the Italian president) and maintained the initial contacts. These contacts over a number of years finally led to the Lancaster House conference that established Zimbabwe. James Prior, a minister in the subsequent Conservative Party government, wrote of how the 'intoxicating mix' of the Queen and the Foreign Secretary, Lord Carrington kept Margaret Thatcher from abandoning the earlier contacts between the previous Labour government of James Callaghan and the Rhodesian government. In early 2003, as the Labour government of Tony Blair pondered whether to enter into a war with Saddam Hussein, Queen Elizabeth was the only senior governmental figure still in office who had had experience of the Suez Crisis in the late 1950s, and who as a result could mention to Blair observations on the nature of the Suez debacle and lessons to be learned from it, in deciding on whether to go to war with Saddam. It is not known what comments Queen Elizabeth made to the Prime Minister, but few doubted but that she would give the benefit of her observations (having been monarch at the time, she had had access to all the then government documentation and memoranda, as well as having been a confidante of the then Prime Minister Anthony Eden and his cabinet) and that the Prime Minister would take her observations very seriously. Elizabeth II came to the throne in 1952, meaning that she could give to Tony Blair observations and advice based on observations and advice given to her by every prime minister back to Sir Winston Churchill and including Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas- Home, Harold Wilson, Edward Heath, James Callaghan, Margaret Thatcher and John Major, as well as the comments of hundreds of ministers since 1952.

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