
CHANGING DYNAMICS OF MONARCHY IN CONTEMPORARY TIMES: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES AHEAD

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ABSTRACT

Monarchy is one of the oldest systems of governance. Ranging from absolute to constitutional and hybrid monarchy, it has undergone significant changes in contemporary times. Earlier seen as epitome of political power and autocracy, monarchy is now mostly restricted to constitutional and symbolic power due to growing democratic norms of the civil society. The paper explores various dimensions of monarchy and its changing dynamics in contemporary times. It analyses the factors that led to the decline of the monarchy and presents the challenges and opportunities that remain relevant for the monarchies existing today. The paper uses a comparative approach to study the changing dynamics of various monarchies and establishes that constitutional monarchies or monarchies that adopt transparency, modernization and inclusivity are relevant in modern times.

Keywords: Monarchy, Democracy, Constitutional monarchy, Absolute monarchy, Dualist monarchy, Republic, Ceremonial head.

1.1 Introduction

Monarchy is the earliest form of government in which a single person is the head of the state for his entire life. It came into existence in around 3100 BC in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Existing in 43 countries out of 195 countries in the world, it is still the crucial identity of many countries. Contemporary times have witnessed the evolution of the institution of monarchy. Several transnational events have transformed most of the old autocratic or absolute monarchy into modern day symbolic or constitutional. From Europe to Asia and the Middle East, many monarchies have been abolished altogether or have transformed into a constitutional framework. The research paper explores how these institutions have evolved, provides a comparative analysis of different monarchies, challenges faced by them and opportunities are offered by modernization to make the existing monarchies relevant in this age of democracy and constitutionalism.

1.2 Research Objectives

The research aims at exploring the changing dynamics of monarchies in the contemporary time of 20th and 21st century particularly the shift from absolute to constitutional through comparative study of different monarchies. The research analyses the factors responsible for the same and provides opportunities for the existing monarchies to remain relevant for their long-term survival.

2. Defining Monarchy

To understand the changing dynamics of the monarchy, it is important to provide a robust classification of the institution of monarchy. The paper utilizes the below three classifications.

2.1 Absolute Monarchy: An absolute monarchy is a form of governance in which the monarch who is the head of the state enjoys unlimited and unrestricted power. The monarch wields complete control over the legislative, executive and judicial affairs of the state. Examples of absolute monarchy include Oman, the United Arab Estate, Saudi Arabia, Sultanate of Brunei.

2.2 Dualistic Monarchy: In dualistic monarchy the legislative authority is vested in the parliament however monarch enjoys the executive and the judicial power. The term dualistic monarchy originated from the Latin word *dualis* which means duality. It symbolizes the

division of power between the monarch and the parliament. Examples of dualistic monarchy are Morocco, Kuwait, Lesotho, Eswatini.

2.3 Constitutional Monarchy: In constitutional monarchy the powers of monarch are restricted by the constitutional and legal framework. The monarch is non-executive head of the state with limited or no authority. The legislative and executive power is exercised by the elected government. The monarch acts as merely the ceremonial head of the state. The examples of constitutional monarchy are Belgium, United Kingdom, Bhutan, Denmark, Jordan, Spain, Sweden, Netherlands, Norway, Thailand, Cambodia, Canada, Barbados, Australia, New Zealand.

3. Changing dynamics of monarchy: transition from absolute to constitutional monarchy

The monarchial system which initially came into existence in 3100 BC spread from Egypt to the Mediterranean through central and western Asia. During the early stages monarchies were absolutely under the control of a supreme ruler monarch who headed the state in all political affairs. However after the imperial expansion, monarchies have witnessed great turbulence. As a result there has been gradual shift in the monarchies from absolute to constitutional and abolition of monarchies. Where almost in the initial stages two-third of world's population resided in monarchies, there are only 43 countries having the monarchy as form of governance today, out of which 29 countries are constitutional monarchies, 5 are absolute monarchies and remaining are dualistic. This gradual shift is driven by the long historical power transfers, civil wars, signing of Magna Carta in England, Glorious revolution, French Revolution, laws like Bill of Rights 1689. These events limited the power of the monarch subjecting it to a constitutional and legal framework.

The 20th century is considered an age of change for monarchy. The empires were defeated in World War I and their thrones were overthrown. Most of the monarchies in the Europe were dismantled and overthrown of the Russian Tsar Nicholas II marked the downfall of last absolute monarch in the Europe in 1917. In the first half of the century many monarchies were turned into republics as blue blood monarchy was considered a sign of war, discrimination, poverty and despotism. After the World War II many civil revolutions were seen in the Europe, Italy and Germany. As a result many weak monarchies saw downfall due to a growing sense of liberty and freedom from suppression among masses.

In the second half of the century, the monarchial system in the Northern and Western Europe and Japan leaned towards the stabilization due to which parliamentary constitutional monarchies were established at these places. Constitutional monarchy was established in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Netherlands, United Kingdom, Belgium, Thailand where the monarch was given very few powers and the monarch mostly acted as a ceremonial head for the state. This change of trend was due to transnational events like universal adult suffrage, civil rights and growing democratization.

4. Factors driving the shift in monarchial dynamics

The transformation of monarchies in contemporary times has not occurred in isolation. Many social, political, economic factors and globalization have impacted this gradual shift of monarchies. From having roots in hereditary privilege, divine rights, autocratic control to constitutionalism and democratization, monarchies have changed a lot. Globalization, technological advancements, civil rights movements and modernization have reshaped the perception of royal authority from rulers to symbolic unifiers. The factors driving this change are mentioned below:

4.1 Changing social norms

One of the most significant factor in changing the dynamics of monarchies is transforming social norms in the contemporary world. There has been growing demand for equality, inclusivity and progress in the modern civil societies. The societal shift reflects the demand for gender equality, public service, ethical conduct, adaptability, and social expectation of transparency. Historically, the monarchies followed the patriarchal or male preference in which son inherited the throne even if the elder daughter was there. This practice of male preference primogeniture came to an end in several monarchies like Sweden, when in 1980 Sweden introduced absolute primogeniture allowing the eldest child regardless the gender to inherit the throne. Similarly in 2013 United Kingdom followed the Succession of the Crown Act and ended the male preference inheritance system. Other monarchies including Belgium, Netherlands, Norway also reflected the similar gender norms. These social factors all together with the public expectations regarding the conduct and transparency of the monarchy has led to the transition of monarchy from absolute power to the legitimacy where monarchies are now subject to the constitutional framework. Today the monarch is mostly a Ceremonial head and has minimum political power. The monarchial institutions are now more participatory and

service-oriented whereas they were just a symbol of wealth and privilege in the past. In the current times only constitutional monarchies or those monarchies that embrace inclusivity, equality, social engagement and support the idea of civil rights are surviving.

4.2 Economic considerations

Economic realities have played a prominent role in shaping the evolution of monarchies in modern times. Historically, monarchies controlled the wealth derived from land ownership, taxation and colonial resources. However, today most of the monarchial institutions are funded publicly and subject to scrutiny by taxpayers, parliament and the media. Public funding has emerged as a contentious issue which creates an economic pressure on the monarchy to justify the royal expenditure and operate with greater economic responsibility. The citizens question the allocation of public funds to the royal monarchial institutions. Glimpse of this can be seen in the United Kingdom where heated debates happen regarding the Sovereign fund which is granted to the royals for official royal duties and palace maintenance. In Spain, Sweden and Japan there are parliamentary committees which review the royal budget and checks the royal expenditures. Ultimately, economic pressures have transformed monarchy from an unquestioned privilege into a performance-based institution. Thus it has become essential for a monarchy to justify its cost and demonstrate tangible value to maintain its survival and legitimacy.

4.3 Political changes

The dawn of 21st century fostered democratization and public accountability across traditional monarchies. The traditional idea of monarchy having absolute power has now eroded as people have rising sentiments of democratic values emphasizing equality, transparency, accountability and inclusivity. It is now believed that legitimacy cannot be inherited and can only be earned through service, integrity and accountability. The idea of democratization and public accountability has forced the monarchies to work within a set legal constitutional framework. This constitutional settlement was first adopted in Britain and later across Europe and parts of Asia. The duty of monarch has evolved from governing as ruler to being a symbolic head of the state. This can be seen in the modern-day British monarchy where the monarch performs ceremonial duties like taking part in annual ceremony of parliament opening, meeting the foreign delegates. Similarly, in countries like Japan, Spain, and the Netherlands, monarchs serve as means of reconciliation and stability during political crises.

4.4 Globalization

Globalization refers to the process by which countries, societies, and people around the world become increasingly connected and interdependent through the exchange of ideas, goods, services, technology, and culture. Globalization has altered the very nature of national sovereignty with the development of international norms of human rights, liberty, freedom and idea of democracy. Technological advancements and growing digital communication

have exposed monarchies to global observance which has heightened the accountability for the monarchy. The 24-hour news channels, online journalism and social media platforms have created an environment of continuous visibility. This creates a sense of responsibility on monarchies to be transparent, open and accountable in the times where perception shapes power. This can be seen in Scandinavian monarchies which are often held up as models of fiscal transparency and modesty promoting public debate whereas royal privileges are referred as extravagant.

5. Comparative study of different monarchies

5.1 The British Monarchy

The British monarchy emerged in 11th century with the advent of Anglo-Saxon Kingdom of Wessex. It was marked as a powerful institution with the monarch having unlimited power. In the 13th century king John encountered several conflicts which resulted in losing British territories in France. This loss of territories accompanied by other political affairs like the introduction of Magna Carta in 1215 imposed legal limits on the King's power. Later the English civil war broke in 1642 to 1651 in which there was conflict between King Charles I and parliament over royal and parliamentary powers. The war resulted in the execution of king and temporary abolition of monarchy. This is considered the first step of the establishment of constitutional monarchy in England. However the monarchy was restored in 1660 under King Charles II but the power dynamics between the king and parliament remained unaltered with the parliament holding more power. Afterwards the Bill of Rights of 1689 limited the sovereign's powers, ensuring that the King or Queen could not rule without the consent of Parliament. This deprived the monarch of rights such as suspending laws and levying taxes. It also subjected a ceremonial role on the king or queen. The king or queen acts as symbolic head of the country and performs duties like receiving foreign delegates, making official visits to

maintain peace, taking part in parliament opening. The monarch is bound by the legal framework and cannot exercise the royal prerogative. However in certain emergencies this prerogative can be exercised when the precedent does not answer the situation in question. For example the monarch is head of Royal military forces and has power to declare war, make peace and sign treaties but this can be done in consonance with the Parliament.

The changes in succession system which lately allowed the women to head the state and other changes like transition of monarchy from low tech royalty to all access institution and centuries long process of rise of civil rights and societies cemented England as constitutional monarchy.

5.2 The Japanese Monarchy

The Japanese monarchy known as the Chrysanthemum Throne is the oldest continuous hereditary monarchy in the world. Traditionally, the Emperor of Japan was believed to be the divine descendant of the Shinto sun goddess Amaterasu Ōmikami. Due to this belief the emperor was given spiritual and political authority. However during the feudal era from 12th to the 19th century there was shift in the power from the emperor to the military ruler shogun. The Tokugawa shogunate (1603–1868) formulated a policy of isolation and kept the emperor away from the political affairs of the country. But later in 1868 the power was restored back to the emperor Meiji marking the Meiji Restoration. The Meiji government adopted the Meiji Constitution of 1889 which established Japan as a constitutional monarchy modeled partly on European systems. The emperor served as a figure of national unity and modernization. Later in the beginning of 20th century the divine status of the emperor was set aside by the establishment of imperialism and militarism. After the defeat of Japan in the World War II, the constitution of Japan in 1947 redefined the emperor's role as the symbolic head of the state and made people of the state sovereign. This embarked Japan as constitutional monarchy.

5.3 The Sweden Monarchy

The Sweden monarchy is one of the most prominent monarchy in Europe. The Sweden was governed by the absolute monarch King Charles XI and King Charles XII in the seventeenth and eighteenth century. This period of absolutism began in 1680 making the king absolute head of the political and military functions. There was no political opposition and public participation. However this absolute power of the king began to weaken after the defeat of military power in the 1700s Northern war. The war depleted the resources and the elite

Swedish people began to revolt against the king to limit his authority. This was time age of liberty (1719-1772) during which the power dynamics shifted from king towards the legislative body named Riksdag. The final blow of shifting this power happened in the 19th when the Instrument of Government was adopted in 1809 which curtailed king's authority and established separation of powers. This document laid the foundation of Sweden's constitutional monarchy where the king acted as ceremonial head. Over the time with further democratic reforms the king's authority reduced as a result Swedish monarchy today is purely ceremonial and constitutional.

6. Challenges faced by the monarchies in the modern time

The successfully existing monarchies of 21st century is undermined by a convergence of severe challenges. These challenges help in predicting the future trajectory of the monarchy. Some of these challenges are:

6.1 Legitimacy crisis

The citizens today express the sentiment of Republicanism. The monarchy is viewed as expensive celebrity system forcing it to justify its existence. The hereditary privilege in monarchy lacks the sense of democratization. Citizens increasingly demand the monarchs to justify their privileges. However most of these demands go unmet which leads to legitimacy crisis.

6.2 Gender and Succession Inequality

Most of the monarchies existing in the world today have patriarchal system and male inheritance primogeniture. In countries such as Saudi Arabia, Morocco, and Jordan succession continues to follow strict agnatic primogeniture where only male descendants can inherit the throne. These countries emphasize on the traditional and spiritual role of men in the society. This creates tension between tradition and modernity in the times when the survival and respect of monarchy depends on its ability to balance tradition with transformation.

6.3 Political instability

Most monarchies face the challenge of political instability. The main cause of political instability is blurred boundaries between political and ceremonial authority. institutional crisis.

For instance, in Thailand monarchy has been center of political conflicts. The invocation of royal authority during political conflicts has led to repeated constitutional disruptions. Similarly in Spain there has been political instability due to tensions over Catalonian independence movement and abdication of King Juan Carlos I because of corruption scandals which shook public confidence in the monarchy.

6.4 The media scrutiny

Monarchies being a symbol of privilege are always a center of attraction and strict scrutiny by the people and media houses. They are mostly under the spotlight of media coverage. Every move of the royals is closely scrutinized. This intrudes their personal and private life as it is subject to public opinion. This can be a challenge for the monarchies as it is difficult to keep the internal affairs private and openness to the public can sometimes affect internal affairs.

7. Opportunities that make monarchies relevant

It is a widespread belief that monarchies are relics of the bygone era as most of the monarchies have either abolished or developed a constitutional setup. But the existence of substantial monarchies is a sign that there is scope and opportunity for the survival or revival of monarchy if they embrace reform, social engagement, transparency, global diplomacy etc. Monarchs can adapt the following opportunities to remain relevant:

7.1 Reimagining Monarchy as a Symbol of Unity and Continuity

The Monarchies can be relevant in modern times if the monarchy act as a symbol of national unity and continuity as it creates an opportunity for their long-term survival. Example of Queen Elizabeth II's reign in United Kingdom can be considered which represents a period of stability across decades of political and social transformation. The public reposed its confidence in the constitutional order because of her impartial and consistent presence. Also in countries like Norway, Sweden, and Denmark monarchs have cultivated unity by representing shared national values. This provides monarchies with lasting relevance.

7.2 Modernization and public engagement

The monarchies can utilize technology and growing media to increase public engagement. This creates a sense of inclusivity among the masses and reposes their confidence in the

monarchy. Crown Princess Victoria of Sweden have used the digital channels of communication to engage with the young population. They have successfully reframed monarchy as an institution reflecting modern societal values by highlighting the social causes like environmental sustainability and gender inequality. This is an instance that accessibility and adaptability can sustain royal relevance in modern time.

7.3 Institutional reforms

Monarchies can bring institutional reforms like introducing new gender-neutral succession laws, ensuring financial transparency and defining constitutional limits as it creates a sense of legitimacy of monarchy among the citizens. It should act as an institution of social progress rather than a static remnant of privilege.

7.4 Promoting public interest

Monarchies can sustain their ground by understanding the needs of public and promoting public interest as it creates a sense of inclusivity and trust on monarch. Inspiration can be drawn from Japan where the Imperial Household Agency supports cultural exhibitions and educational documentaries that highlight the emperor's transformation from divine ruler to symbolic head of state under the post-war constitution.

8. Conclusion

The transformation of monarchy from absolute to constitutional depicts profound political evolutions in history. This has not been a sudden shift but a gradual process driven by the social, political, economic changes accompanied with globalization. The enlightenment and civil wars happened in 17th and 18th century shattered the ideology of absolutism. The global events like French revolution, American Revolution, Glorious Revolution, Bill of Rights 1689 marked the emergence of constitutionalism. However this transition does not signify the end of monarchy but rather a reinvention and change that shows no institute can remain static in the phase of social progress. The prevailing constitutional monarchies are a sign that royal privilege can co-exist with the political authority. The transformation is sign of evolution of monarchy from dominion to serving the public. This can be concluded that in the contemporary times the public is the king in the modern world built on the foundations of equality, liberty and constitutional order. And only that institution can survive which caters to the needs and demands of the public.

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