

Committee: Special Political and Decolonization

Topic: Monarchies in the Modern Age



Theme of AUSMUN 2024

The theme for this year's AUSMUN is "Forging Tomorrow with Yesterday's Lessons". Dating back to 500 BC, great minds such as Confucius have spread this ideal: "Study the past, if you would divine the future". During a typical Model United Nations conference, delegates are expected to learn from their country's past and, in many cases, actively rewrite it. Historical knowledge when used effectively can lead to informed decisions; by reflecting on what has and has not worked in the past, collectively we are able to gain perspective on current and future policy. We encourage delegates to keep this ideal in mind while wrestling with the nuances and complications inherent in the ideas of modern day problems.

AUSMUN is committed to actively serving its community and combating pressing issues. As we continue to expand in numbers, we further seek to expand our positive impact on the world around us. We are proud to announce that we have partnered with Dress for Success, a non-profit organization that enables women to become economically independent by offering professional clothing, a network of support, and the resources necessary for both personal and professional growth. By participating in AUSMUN 2024, in addition to debating "model" policy, you are actively bettering society and changing the world.

The 2024 AUSMUN board is honored to host all delegates for our largest conference yet. We cannot wait to see what delegates bring forward to each committee in their efforts to embody values of collaboration and this year's theme. Looking twenty twenty-forward to seeing you!

Rationale

The United Nations and the world are characterized by the continued pursuit of equity. As the modern world constantly moves towards democracy and equality, many believe that it has outgrown its ancient power structures, one of these being monarchical rule. In questioning the morality of lineaged base rule, delegates are forced to encounter issues of race, colonialism, and democracy. Monarchies have persisted for thousands of years and shifted to democratized rule through hybridization, but many do not consider this enough. Others, such as the French Monarchy, have been overthrown by the people who then established a new government. This is sound in theory, but many countries living with monarchs do not have enough power to overthrow their leaders. In other instances, they might overthrow the monarch and leave a power vacuum that will do more harm to the country than good. As the world grows more connected and more interested in international equity as a whole, the idea of hereditary rule becomes one that is hotly debated based on its tendency to contradict democratic ideals. In this discussion, delegates must consider the nature of the social contract and whether a ruler can effectively represent a people which did not elect them in another manner than by failing to properly revolt.

Background of the Issue

With only 43 monarchies left, the question remains of the importance they have to the movement of our modern world, if any at all. Throughout history, monarchies have been contributing to the foundations of our modern-day governments and civilizations around the world. The first monarchies began to arise in Egypt and Sumer 5000 years ago, leading to the

systems we know of today (TICAN). In this system, the role of a monarch is to control the citizens. While the power of monarchs has fallen to that of simple decisions and symbolic leadership, at one point most rulers had large control of their whole kingdoms, which led to some ethical concerns regarding their authority. Despite this, the influences of monarchies has led to the growth of civilizations. The idolization of those rulers of the old world led to impressive achievements such as the Great Wall of China and the Egyptian pyramids. This devotion and commitment that many under their rule felt led to some of the greatest feats of old and modern history. More recently, people have lost such allegiances to their leaders in favor of the need for representation and elections as opposed to hereditary rule.

One of the major historical conflicts is the idea of “divine right;” that rulers should be hereditary since they were appointed by the equivalent of their god. This presents the idea that you can only rule if you were to be born into it, causing the openness of kingdoms to new ideas and ruling styles to be less than that of democracies. Because of this stagnancy and general lack of representation for those not born to royal blood, efforts to overthrow lineages or monarchies were common in the past. The efforts that evolved into revolutions would prove to be turning points in history. For example, the French Revolution in 1799 marked the fall of the French Monarchy and the rise of democratic sympathies in Europe ([History.com](https://www.history.com)). While some monarchies ended through revolution, others ended through abdication or being merged into other monarchies, such as the Crown of Aragon and the Crown of Castile becoming the Kingdom of Spain.

As history moves forward, the ending of major monarchies becomes more contested. Major examples of this are the French Revolution abolishing the absolute monarchy in France, the collapse of royal families in Russia, Germany, and Austria-Hungary from World War I, and

the ending of China's final dynasty. Overall, the trend of the last few centuries is the ending of monarchies and the increased practice of constitutional monarchies, ones where the monarch does not influence the politics of its state. The big question remains: should monarchies remain in the modern world, and, if so, should they have more or less power over their citizens?

Contemporary Evidence

Despite the undeniable reduction of monarchies, they continue to be present and relevant in the modern age. Over 40 sovereign states are ruled by a variation of the ancient governmental form, from Canada to New Zealand (Deen 2022). The most well-known example, Britain's royal family, came under attack amid the late Queen Elizabeth II's funeral on September 19th, 2022. In declaring the solemn event one of international mourning, a number of the country's supermarkets and food banks were closed, in addition to "non-essential" medical appointments such as cataract surgery, hip and knee replacements, and cancer treatments being postponed (Weaver 2022). This prompted outrage from the public, raising the question of whether a government can exist as a monarchy and effectively care for its citizens and their rights at the same time. Many citizens living underneath these systems say no. One such man was Ali al-Nimr in Saudi Arabia, a 17-year-old arrested in 2012 for protesting against the discrimination of Shia Muslims by the government. He was sentenced to death in 2014 for "breaking allegiances with the ruler" and "going out to a number of marches, demonstrations, and gatherings against the state and repeating some chants against the state" (USCIRF). Although he was released from prison in October of 2021, Ali al-Nimir's case is one of many to highlight the

monumental power allotted to an unchecked ruler. In Thailand, for instance, there is a severe abuse of lèse-majesté laws. These are designed to suppress criticism of the monarchy and have led to the breach of freedom of expression and are being enforced in such a way that infringes upon democracy in the country ([US DOS](#)). Thai citizens face more frequent and harsher sentences for criticism than in years past, with the monarchy recently coming under fire for sentencing a woman to 43 years in prison after audio clips of her insulting the government were posted to her personal Facebook page (OHCHR 2021).

This is not to say that some countries are not moving forward with solutions to such egregious displays of despotism. The majority of modern monarchies rule underneath a constitutional monarchical system in which the power of the individual is checked by the power of the country's ruling document in addition to an often elected governmental body. One such example is found in the Netherlands' King Willem-Alexander, who can make no executive decisions by himself but has the power to deny the passage of laws in bills by withholding his signature from government documents (Escritt 2013.) The question still remains if this is an undue privilege given to those simply lucky enough to be born into it.

Directive

The conversations held in this debate aim to openly discuss the role of monarchical governments in the 21st century and how that role may be changed or abolished as the world progresses into this modern age. Conversations regarding the effects of colonization and the continued subjugation of countries by royal rulers have been debated since the rush of independence movements that followed the end of World War II; the questions surrounding the

ethics of monarchy and how its history as a system has affected citizens spanning the centuries remain relevant, and it is now the duty of these delegates to consider them, coming to a unified understanding and decision that best preserves prosperity internationally. These questions include the following:

1. Can a ruler who is not elected by the people effectively govern them?
2. What are the implications of monarchical colonialism on the modern development of nations?
3. How has the glorification and commodification of monarchs in recent years affected the societal perception of the monarchical system?
4. Does the possession of a monarch as a leader provide any stability to a nation?
5. What place, if any, do monarchies have in modern society?

Resources for Delegates

[How Modern Monarchies are Evolving](#)

[Which Countries Still Have a Monarchy?](#)

[Different Forms of Government](#)

[Monarchy and Modern Politics in Southeast Asia](#)

[Communicating Royalty: A Study of Modern Monarchs' Online Branding](#)

[The Functions of Constitutional Monarchy: How Kings and Queens Survive in a World of Republics](#)

Delegations

1. **Australia** - Australia is currently a constitutional monarchy, part of the British commonwealth under the rule of King Charles III since its settlement as a penal colony in 1788. However, despite its independence from the United Kingdom as a marker of its sovereignty in the modern age, calls for the making of a republic and complete severance from British rule have been made; in fact, a referendum with the intention of changing the head of state to the Australian parliament by way of a constitutional amendment was considered in 1999, failing but displaying statewide contention by way of a 45%-55% vote. Recently, the conversation has resurfaced following the late Queen Elizabeth II's passing, with some citizens hoping to mark it as the beginning of a new era for Australia.

[From Constitutional Convention to Republic Referendum: A Guide to the Processes, the Issues and the Participants](#)

[The British Invasion of Australia](#)

2. **Bhutan** - As one of the remaining 43 monarchies, Bhutan is a Buddhist kingdom with a constitutional monarchy. The country was a complete monarchy established in 1907 and rule was passed down five generations before King Jigme Khesar established an elected legislature in 2008. Now, Bhutan has a prime minister, a monarch, and three main branches of government.

[Bhutan: Freedom in the World 2020 Country Report](#)

[Bhutan - Monarchy, Buddhism, Himalayas | Britannica](#)

3. **Brazil** - Brazil was a colony under the Portuguese empire, formerly used as a trading post since its discovery in 1500 by Pedro Alvares Cabral until independence was achieved in 1822 when the Empire of Brazil was established. The empire didn't last long, being overthrown in the Republican Revolution of 1889, an echo of the state's contentious relationship with monarchy as a system. Its colonization led to the impediment of fiscal development and the institutionalization of racial wealth disparity.

[The Making of Colonial Brazil](#)

[The Church and the Overthrow of the Brazilian Monarchy](#)

[The Political Development of the Modern Brazilian State](#)

4. **Canada** - Canada has been subject to foreign rule since the first implementation of the Canadian Crown by France in the 16th century, though currently its constitutional monarchical position is held by British ruler King Charles III. Surveys and polls taken from the Canadian populace following the coronation of Britain's new king represent a growing dissent to the system and a distrust of the power allotted to the position of the governor-general, the monarch's handpicked representative. However, relations between the two powers remain friendly as the conversations of discontent have not yet been addressed by governmental heads.

[FALQS: Canada and the Monarchy](#)

[Canada](#)

5. **Chile** - Chile declared independence from the monarchy of Spain in February of 1818, creating an authoritarian republic in the 1830s. In the 1990s, Chile began the transition to democracy after the dictatorship approved a constitution establishing an itinerary for the transition. Since then, the country has established a stable democratic republic that is still seeing reform by the people today.

[Chile: Freedom in the World 2022 Country Report](#)

[Chile country profile - BBC News](#)

6. **China** - China's long history of monarchical government was terminated by the Xinhai Revolution of 1911, in which the last imperial dynasty, the Qing Dynasty, was overthrown by the Revolutionary Alliance, or Tongmenghui. The Communist People's Republic of China was formed shortly after and refocused on the ideals of modernization and innovation, efforts that would propel it to become the superpower it embodies in the modern day. Despite its own history with the system, China appears to have no qualms engaging with states under monarchical rule, being close trading partners with Saudi Arabia and the United Kingdom.

[The Chinese Revolution of 1911](#)

[China's Embracing Innovation Leads to the Future](#)

7. **Egypt** - Egypt is a democratic republic; the current government system was born from the '23 July Revolution in which the Kingdom of Egypt and its ruler Farouk I were overthrown by a group of Egyptian military officers in a coup. Following this was the establishment of a presidential system, though its function and utility in the country have

been rocky at best. No president since the revolution has voluntarily departed office without the pressure of mass protest, and both citizens and outside powers argue that it's truly the Egyptian military that holds the power of the state, raising calls from some for the return of the monarchy in the face of such corruption.

[Egypt - The Revolution and the Early Years of the New Government](#)

[Nostalgia for the Monarchy in Egypt](#)

8. **Eswatini** - Eswatini is home to the continent of Africa's last remaining absolute monarch, King Mswati III, crowned on April 25th, 1986. His rule has encompassed over 36 years of the state's history. However, this longevity does not come without protest from the citizenry. Human rights abuses perpetrated by the government- including but not limited to democide, arbitrary detainment, and child labor- sparked protest and unrest in the summer of 2021 that was violently suppressed by the crown, though their sentiments continue in the strained relationship between the king and citizens.

[Eswatini: Government](#)

[2021 Country Report on Country Reports on Human Rights Practices](#)

9. **Ethiopia** - The Ethiopian Empire, otherwise known as Abyssinia, was one of the longest-running empires in history until its decline in 1974 due to the Wollo famine and general civil unrest, ending centuries of monarchical rule. However, civil organizations such as the Crown Council are attempting to keep the memory and legacy of the royal lineage alive, seemingly with the hope of their return to power.

[A Short History of the Ethiopian Empire](#)

[Ethiopia: A Country Study](#)

[Ethiopia \(1942-present\)](#)

10. **France** - France is currently a unitary state ruled by a semi-presidential system in which the executive branch consists of a president conducting affairs alongside a prime minister and cabinet. The country has had a long and infamous history of its relationship to monarchy, beginning with the revolution in 1789 and the subsequent republic that was formed; such social sentiments have largely survived to the modern day within the citizenry and are undoubtedly present in the political actions of the heads of state.

[The Storming of the Bastille Led to Democracy but Not for Long](#)

[The Legacy of the French Revolution: Rousseau's General Will and the Reign of Terror](#)

[Legacies of the Revolution](#)

[Champion of Freedom in the Modern World: France](#)

11. **Germany** - In 1918, (at the end of World War I) Germany, which was once an empire, was formed into a republic. Since then, no form of monarchy has taken place there. Nowadays, most Germans hold high affection for the monarchy next door: the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. With that being said, a study taken place in 2010 reports that 67% of Germans are opposed to a monarchy returning to the country.

[Brits can keep Kate](#)

[Germany Legal Research Guide: Government and Political Structure](#)

12. **Ghana** - Once a colony of the United Kingdom, Ghana has a history of monarchy.

Nowadays, Ghana is a constitutional democracy, but before that, before colonization, Ghana had its own chiefs who were equivalent to kings. Nowadays, they still have these chiefs in their society, yet the chiefs hold no direct political power.

[Royalty in Africa](#)

[Ghana's Monarchies](#)

[Ghana: Government](#)

13. **Iceland** - Considered the oldest assembly democracy in the world, Iceland's government consists of a prime minister, a president, and the legislative and judicial branches. While the democracy dates back more than a thousand years, the constitution of Iceland was established in 1944 and created the parliamentary democracy.

[Iceland - Parliamentary Democracy, Geography, Economy | Britannica](#)

[Iceland: Freedom in the World 2021 Country Report](#)

14. **India** - India nowadays is a democratic republic, yet in the past, it has been a monarchy and under a monarchy's rule. The region previously had been under the rule of many different empires, each with different ideals, making India a very diverse region. In 1757, the East India Company took control of India, but it wasn't till 1857 that the country became a dominion to the Crown's rule. While there were many princes still vaguely in control throughout some of the regions, the conditions of British rule were harsh; many died of starvation due to being forced to farm non-edible goods. This, and other reasons due to the world wars, caused India to become independent in 1947. Nowadays, India's

government faces corruption, for many positions do not feel secure in their rule and thus gobble up as much money as they can.

[India is a Republic, But Could it Have Been a Monarchy](#)

[India from Queen Victoria's Time to Independence](#)

[India](#)

15. **Iran** - The current Islamic republic, has strong feelings of disapproval of monarchies, saying that they are “evil.” This is because the authoritarians that ruled Iran ended a monarchy rule of nearly 2500 years in 1979, forming the country's ongoing republic. Though many of the citizens want a reformed government from the current authoritarian Islamist one, some want a constitutional monarchy and others want a new republic. Both want reform because of the lack of human rights and the corruption of the region. The government has killed many of its own people who protested the abolishment of the current government.

[Exclusive: Iran's Exiled Prince Says Future Monarch Should be Elected](#)

[Iran on Queen Elizabeth and Monarchy](#)

[Iran History](#)

16. **Ireland** - Long ago, many individual kingdoms in the territory of modern-day Ireland came together to form the kingdom of Ireland, which then united under one rule with Britain and Scotland in 1169. Yet throughout history, Ireland has had very rigid tension with the crown. The main cause of the strain of the relationship was due to Ireland being Catholic and most of Britain being protestant. Britain greatly caused suffering for

Catholics, causing Ireland to view the kingdom as an enemy. Through many suppressed rebellions and war, southern Ireland finally gained independence in 1921, and nowadays the country is a republic, yet it still holds vague resentment towards the crown.

[Queen Elizabeth's Complicated Relationship with Ireland, Britain's First Colony](#)

[The British-Irish Relationship and the Centrality of the British-Irish Intergovernmental Conference](#)

17. **Japan** - The Imperial House of Japan has ruled Japan for over 2600 years, making it the oldest hereditary monarchy in the world. In 1868, a new constitution was established; it gave emperors the ability to create laws, enforce laws, and have supreme command of the army and navy. This way of ruling lasted until 1947 when the emperor signed a surrender agreement with the allied forces at the end of World War II. This agreement formed a new constitution in Japan that had terms that barred the emperor from involvement in any politics, making it a constitutional monarchy. Nowadays, the emperor is only symbolic, yet many of the citizens still cherish emperors and don't want the monarchy to change.

[All You Need to Know About the Japanese Monarchy](#)

[The Imperial Family](#)

18. **Monaco** - The second smallest country in the world, known as the Principality of Monaco, is a constitutional monarchy. It has been ruled by the same house, the House of Grimaldi, since 1419, yet it only became a constitutional monarchy in 1911. Before the Monégasque Revolution, Monaco was an absolute monarchy, meaning the ruler had all the power in the country. The sovereign country is amongst the few countries in Europe whose monarchy still plays an active role in routine politics, this continuation greatly

influenced by its fame and economic stance. This gives the country a desire to uphold its monarchy while sustaining good relations with its very wealthy inhabitants.

[Monaco IMUNA](#)

[Monaco: Freedom in the World 2020 Country Report](#)

[Royalty in Monaco - The Princely Family of Monaco](#)

19. **The Netherlands** - The Netherlands, previously a vassal state, has been a constitutional monarchy since its freedom from the French in 1814. The Monarchs of the kingdom have very little political influence and do not have much say when it comes to legislation and laws. Rather, they are decided by the ministers and parliament of the country. Currently, a rough 58% of Dutch inhabitants believe the Netherlands should remain a monarchy. With that being said, the Dutch have great pride in their country and often wear orange, especially on Kings Day, to represent the House of Orange that has ruled the Netherlands since its independence a mere 200 years ago.

[Constitutional Monarchy](#)

[The Dutch and their Monarchy: A Two-Sided Coin](#)

[Netherlands](#)

[Netherlands history](#)

20. **Russia** - The Russian Empire Persisted Under Monarchical rule for hundreds of years before coming to a violent end in 1917. Since then, Russia has faced decades of instability within its power structures, including civil war and the rise and fall of communism. The 1997 film “Anastasia”, a fictional story loosely based on the life of one

of the last true Russian Princesses, accrued massive box-office and critical success. This drastically altered the perception of the Russian Monarchy, and Monarchies as a whole, in popular culture.

[Soviet Russia I Britannica](#)

[The Romanov Family](#)

21. **Saudi Arabia** - The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has been an Absolute Monarchy since its establishment in 1932. Saudi Arabia is also a theocracy, lacking any separation of church and state. The King has enacted absolute diplomatic and military power under the guidance of Islamic Shari'ah law.

[Government of Saudi Arabia](#)

[History of The Monarchy](#)

22. **South Korea** - South Korea, first established in 1948, has seen many periods of transition for the the government and its main systems. Now, however, the country is under the Sixth Republic, founded in 1987. While now a democratic nation, the Koreas were once united in the Korean Empire which was ruled by one monarch.

[Political System - Seoul](#)

[South Korea: Freedom in the World 2024 Country Report](#)

23. **Spain** - Over the past century, Spain has shifted through multiple systems of power. The state abolished its monarchy in 1931, followed by the Spanish Civil War and several republic rules, before eventually becoming a constitutional monarchy in 1977. Under the

current system of government, the Monarch's power is checked by the democratic system of government.

[Institutions of Spain](#)

[Governments of Spain](#)

24. **Thailand** - Thailand was an absolute monarchy for hundreds of years before becoming a constitutional monarchy in 1932. The government has been the topic of recent controversy in the United Nations for its criminalization of the critique of the monarchy but has stood by its legislation.

[The Monarchy of Thailand](#)

[Thailand defends its strict royal insults law at U.N. rights review](#)

25. **Trinidad and Tobago** - Trinidad and Tobago is a former British colony and member of the British Commonwealth. Trinidad and Tobago gained independence from Britain in 1962, before becoming a Republic within the British Commonwealth in 1976.

[Trinidad and Tobago I The Commonwealth](#)

[Trinidad and Tobago History](#)

26. **United Arab Emirates** - The UAE was formed in 1971 when it gained its independence from Britain, and its government is described as a presidential-elected monarchy because the president is elected from the monarchs of the emirates. The government works hard to protect the national identity with strong Islamic influences and roots. The country has one of the highest GDPs per capita, mostly from the large oil and natural gas reserves.

[History | UAE Embassy in Washington, DC.](#)

[United Arab Emirates - Gulf, Sheikhdoms, Federation | Britannica](#)

[The Political System of the UAE](#)

27. **United Kingdom** - In addition to being head of the Commonwealth, the Monarch functions as the head of state for the United Kingdom and the 14 'realms'. The Commonwealth takes its root in the British colonial empire. The British Empire colonized a large portion of the world in order to gain economic and political power, leaving behind devastating and lasting global impacts. The British Royal family is now highly commodified in pop culture, feeding the British economy.

[Role of the Monarchy](#)

[The Impact of the Past: How British Colonialism Affects the Modern World.](#)

28. **United States** - The United States was founded through a colonial revolt against the British King in the eighteenth century. Today, Britain is one of the United States' closest allies. The Walt Disney Corporation, based in the United States, has made billions of dollars globally from Princess-themed merchandise. The depiction of princesses, as soft, weak, pink, feminine, ideal women is thought by many to have a negative impact on the role of women in the country.

[Why Americans are obsessed with the British royal family](#)

[The Princess Effect](#)

29. **Vatican City** - Vatican City is an extremely small ecclesiastical monarchy. The nation takes up less than one square mile and has a population of fewer than 1000 people. The primary function of Vatican city is to serve as the office of the Pope, King of the state and head of the Catholic Church. The Pope is elected by the cardinals of the Catholic Church and is required to be a man. Vatican city does not prioritize international relations, economic productivity, or armed conflict.

[Vatican City: the world's smallest state and monarchy](#)

[Conclave: How cardinals elect a Pope](#)

30. **Zimbabwe** - Zimbabwe is a former British colony that gained independence in 1980, remaining a member of the Commonwealth. Zimbabwe was suspended from the British Commonwealth in 2002 due to domestic conflict and left the Commonwealth in 2003 after the suspension was extended indefinitely.

[Queen's death revives memories both fond and bitter in Zimbabwe](#)

[Zimbabwe History](#)

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