

**The Grand Political Experiment:  
Formal Constitutional Limitations on the Power of the Ruler**

I. King-in-Council: Prevailing Form of Government in Early Modern Europe

A. Absolutism Model: Insufficient to Explain Available Evidence

1. Monarch in conflict with nobility
2. Monarch forms alliance with bourgeoisie, bureaucracy, and/or military
3. Absolutism—a transitional form between feudal decentralization and centralized democratic nation-state

B. Ruling Class Model: Characteristics

1. Absence of Constitutional Limitations on Monarch
2. Ruling Class Grants Power to Monarch in Exchange for Monarch's Authority
3. Patronage Networks

II. Development of Monarchies with Strong Constitutional Limitations

A. England: Catholic Monarch vs. Protestant Parliament

1. War of the Roses (1455–1485)
2. Henry VIII (1509–1547)
3. Elizabeth I (1558–1603)
  - a. Elizabethan Compromise
  - b. Mary Stuart
  - c. Edward De Vere (Earl of Oxford) and the authorship of Shakespeare
4. James I (1603–1625)
  - a. Claim of Divine-Right Monarchy
  - b. “even by God himself they are called gods.”
5. Civil War (1642–1645)
  - a. Charles I (1625–1649)
  - b. Oliver Cromwell (1649–1658)—Lord Protector
6. “Glorious Revolution” (1688)
  - a. James II (1685–1688)
  - b. William and Mary

B. Poland: Experiment in Limited Monarchy

1. *szlachta*: landed gentry (aristocracy)
2. *pacta coventa*: elected monarch bound by constitution
3. *sejm*: national assembly
4. *liberum veto*: principle of unanimity in *sejm*
5. *rokosz*: legal armed rebellion
6. Warsaw Confederation (1572)—tolerance for Jews, Protestants, Orthodox, and Muslims

C. Sweden: Military and Administrative Innovation

1. Gustavus Adolphus (1611–1632) – *Accession Charter of 31 December 1611*
2. Axel Oxenstierna, Chancellor
2. Christina (1632–1654)

D. Republics (no king or queen)

1. Netherlands—United Provinces
2. Switzerland
3. Italian city-states
4. United States

III. Monarchies without Strong Constitutional Limitations

A. France: Catholic Persecution of Huguenots

1. Henry IV of Navarre (1589–1610): “Paris is worth a Mass.”
2. Edict of Nantes (1598)
3. *Fronde* (1648–1652)
4. Louis XIV (1643–1715)
  - a. Louis, Duc de Saint-Simon, *Versailles, the Court, and Louis XIV*
  - b. Voltaire, *The Age of Louis XIV*
  - c. Pierre Goulbert, *Louis XIV and Twenty Million Frenchmen*
5. Revocation of the Edict of Nantes (October 18, 1685)

B. Prussia: An Army in Search of a State

1. Frederick William the Great Elector (1640–1680)
2. Frederick II the Great (1740–1786)

C. Holy Roman Empire, Austria, and the Habsburg Family

1. Charles V (1519–1556)
2. Peace of Augsburg (1555)—*cuius regio, eius religio*
3. Council of Trent (1545–1563)
4. Defenestration of Prague (1618) and the Thirty Years War (1618–1648)
5. Defeat of Ottoman Turks at Vienna (1683)
6. Joseph II (1765–1790)

V. Theories of State Organization

A. Absolutists

1. Thomas Hobbes (1588–1679)
2. Jacques Bossuet (1627–1704)
3. Feofan Prokopovich (1681–1736)

B. Non-Absolutists

1. John Locke (1632–1704)
2. Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–1778)