

## A Sole Ruler With Absolute Power

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#### When Absolute Power Made Sense

the concept of a sole ruler with absolute power isn't exactly trending on TikTok these days. But here's the thing: centralized authority worked surprisingly well for centuries. Ancient China's Legalist philosophers argued that "a state needs commands like a body needs blood," while Louis XIV's famous "L'Etat, c'est moi" became the ultimate power flex.

Wait, no - that's oversimplifying. Actually, successful absolute rulers typically combined iron-fisted control with practical benefits. Take Emperor Qin Shi Huang standardizing weights and measures while burning books. Harsh? Sure. Effective infrastructure development? You bet.

#### The 21st Century Paradox

Fast forward to 2024: 58 nations still grant their leaders some form of absolute authority according to the Democracy Index. Why does this model persist when democracy's supposed to have won?

Well, Singapore's Lee Kuan Yew showed how authoritarian efficiency could transform a fishing village into a global hub. But what happens when that power remains unchecked? The 2023 Myanmar crisis demonstrated how quickly military rule can unravel social contracts.

#### Saudi Arabia's Balancing Act

Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman's NEOM megacity project reveals modern absolutism's tightrope walk. With \$500 billion committed, he's betting that centralized decision-making can outpace bureaucratic democracies. Yet the Line city's worker protests in March 2024 highlight recurring human rights tensions.

It's sort of like trying to build IKEA furniture while wearing boxing gloves - theoretically possible, but messy in practice.

#### The People Equation

Let's get real: no discussion of absolute power works without addressing its impact on Joe and Jane Citizen. A

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2022 Oxford study found citizens in authoritarian states report 23% higher short-term life satisfaction but 41% lower institutional trust.

your local council needs 18 months to approve a playground renovation. An absolute ruler could greenlight it in days. But who ensures that power isn't later used to disappear political rivals? That's the rub - efficiency versus accountability.

### Hybrid Governance Emerges

Here's where it gets interesting: Rwanda's blended model combines strong presidential authority with grassroots umuganda community councils. President Kagame's administration boasts 67% approval ratings despite international criticism. Is this the new template for controlled absolutism?

Maybe. But as tech billionaires experiment with private city-states from Honduras to Malaysia, we're seeing corporate-flavored authoritarianism emerge. These ventures promise "governance as service" - but who holds the CEO-king accountable?

### Q&A

Q: Can absolute rulers handle climate change better?

A: China's rapid renewable energy rollout suggests maybe, but centralized systems often ignore local ecological impacts.

Q: Do citizens ever regain power peacefully?

A: Spain's transition from Franco's dictatorship shows it's possible, but requires careful institutional rebuilding.

Q: Are there term limits in modern autocracies?

A: Typically no - Russia's 2020 constitutional amendments allow Putin to stay until 2036.

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