

Day-to-Day Political Functions of the Monarchy

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4.1. INTRODUCTION

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THE DAY-TO-DAY POLITICAL functions of the monarch are less visible than the constitutional functions. They involve working closely with the Prime Minister, with other ministers, and with senior officers of state. This is done in an endless round of meetings, public engagements, reading official papers and signing documents of all kinds, from international treaties to royal pardons. For most monarchs it also involves chairing the Council of State.

There is a summary of the main political functions of each monarch in Table 4.1. It shows for each country whether there is a weekly meeting with the prime minister, regular meetings of the Council of State, a ministerial countersignature required on royal decrees, a speech from the throne to open parliament, and whether the monarch appoints senior officials and judges, receives incoming and outgoing ambassadors, and is Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces.

The chapter opens with a fascinating account of the political functions of the Dutch monarchy. In Chapter 3.5, Paul Bovend'Eert analysed the constitutional provisions about the King's role in the business of government; in this chapter Rudy Andeweg describes what happens in practice, including examples of royal interference and influence. Helle Krunke, Robert Hazell and Eivind Smith report that the Danish, British and Norwegian monarchs appear to have less influence, so far as we know; but the difficulty facing scholars in all countries is that no records are kept of the weekly meetings between monarch and prime minister, politicians are very reluctant to talk about them, and it may suit both sides to play down the extent of any royal influence.

Running through all the contributions are two sets of questions. The first is descriptive and analytical: How much autonomy does the monarch have? How much influence and soft power? The second is normative: How much influence should the monarch have? Should other monarchies follow the example of Sweden, and reduce the monarch to a purely ceremonial role? And if the monarch remains a political actor, should that remain a closely guarded secret, in the interests of the monarchy and of the politicians?

Table 4.1 Main political functions of the monarch

Country	Weekly meeting with prime minister	Council of State	Countersignature of decrees and ministerial decisions	Throne speech at annual opening of Parliament	Appointment of senior officials and judges	Foreign policy: Treaties, Ambassadors	Commander-in-chief of armed forces
Belgium	Yes, on Mondays	Yes	Yes: Article 106		Article 107		
Denmark	Yes. The queen also meets with the Minister of Foreign Affairs.	Yes, ten times a year. Article 17	Yes: Article 14		Article 27	Article 19: with consent of the Folketing	
Luxembourg	Yes, Article 77		Yes, Article 45	Yes, revived by Grand Duke Henri. Art 72.3	Yes, Article 35	Treaties Article 37	

(continued)

Table 4.1 (Continued)

Country	Weekly meeting with prime minister	Council of State	Countersignature of decrees and ministerial decisions	Throne speech at annual opening of Parliament	Appointment of senior officials and judges	Foreign policy: Treaties, Ambassadors	Commander-in-chief of armed forces
Netherlands	Yes, weekly on Mondays; The king also meets other ministers separately	Article 74. King presides only at ceremonial occasions.	Yes, Article 47, 87 and 89 for all legislation and royal decrees, but not for ministerial decisions	Yes, Article 65	Article 46 State Secretaries, Art 74 Council of State, judges. Some top civil servants and military officers	Articles 90 and 100 require government (of which the king is a member) to promote an international legal order and inform parliament of military deployment abroad. Legislation based on Article 91 requires the signature of the king for consent to treaties (treaties are approved by parliament by legislation)	Article 97 (the government has supreme authority over the military; the king is a member of the government; the present king has high military ranks but is not commander-in-chief of the armed forces)
Norway	Sometimes before the Council meeting on Fridays	Yes, every week on Friday (except during the holiday seasons)	Yes, on decisions adopted by the King in Council (not on ministerial decisions by delegation from the King in Council). Article 31	Yes Article 74	Yes, by the King in Council. Article 21 (cf. Articles 3 and 27 ff)	Foreign policy/ treaties: the King in Council (or by delegation). Receiving foreign Ambassadors: the monarch. Article 26	Yes (but orders adopted by the King in Council or by delegation to the minister and to military commanders). Article 25
Spain		King presides at request of President of Government	Yes, section 64		Section 62.f	Section 63	Section 62.h
Sweden	No	Yes, around three times a year. 1974 Instr of Govt, Ch 5, Art 3	No	Yes. Riksdag Act 2014, Ch 3, Art 6	No	King chairs Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs	No, but has high military titles
UK	Yes, on Wednesday	Privy Council meets once a month	No	Yes, once a year	Yes	Yes: receives incoming and outgoing Ambassadors	Colonel-in-Chief of 15 regiments

4.2A. THE KING AND THE GOVERNMENT IN THE NETHERLANDS

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The King has a unique and special place in the Dutch system of government. In a constitutional sense, the King fulfils two main state functions. In the first place, he is the head of state (Bovend'Eert and Kortmann 2018: 73). In addition, his position is predominantly determined by the fact that he constitutes, together with the Cabinet ministers, the governmental office; such is stated in the official explanatory note to the Constitution of 1983 (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 1979/80: 2). As head of state, he represents the Dutch State both within the Netherlands and abroad. Nowhere in the Constitution is it explicitly stated that the King is the head of state. In the constitutional revision of 1983, this royal function was considered to speak for itself, so that no constitutional provision was considered necessary.

The fact that the King is part of the government is not that obvious. For that reason, the Constitution expresses this function explicitly since 1983 in article 42, paragraph 1 of the Constitution: 'The Government shall comprise the King and the Ministers'.

The two functions of the King must be clearly distinguished. The King does not exercise his governmental function as head of state but as part of the government, as expressed in the explanatory note to article 42 of the Constitution (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, Handelingen II 1980/1981: 2618). A characteristic feature of the exercise of the governmental function is that the King always makes decisions jointly with one or more Cabinet ministers. Article 47 of the Constitution ('All Acts of Parliament and Royal Decrees shall be signed by the King and by one or more Ministers') establishes in this context that the decrees promulgated by the government, referred to in the Constitution in a rather misleading way as 'Royal Decrees', shall be co-signed by the King and one or more Cabinet ministers. Remarkable in this respect is that the King is no longer referred to in the constitutional revision of 1983 as 'the head of the government'. He is a constituent part of the government. The requirement of article 47 of the Constitution does not apply to his actions as head of state. In that specific capacity, he can act autonomously, although the ministers always remain responsible for the conduct of the King.

Under articles 42 and 47, the King is involved in the decision-making process for all important state affairs. His signature is required for all governmental decrees, including decrees regarding the submission of legislative propositions (article 82 of the Constitution) and the ratification of laws (article 87 of the Constitution). For the adoption of governmental decrees and laws, there is an equality and mutual dependence between King and Cabinet. The King cannot act without the Cabinet ministers. However, the Cabinet ministers always need the cooperation of the King.

Article 47 of the Constitution should not be interpreted to imply that the King is required in principle to sign every decree that is submitted to him by the ministers. It cannot be deduced from the Constitution, nor from the explanatory notes or constitutional history, nor from constitutional practice, that the involvement of the King in the government and his signature are merely a formality.

In the constitutional revision of 1983, the government presented the following viewpoint. Under article 42, paragraph 2, the King is inviolable and the ministers are responsible. By countersigning a governmental decree, a minister accepts responsibility

for that decree. The King shall confine himself to the exercise of ‘the rights to be consulted, to encourage, to warn’, as formulated by Bagehot for the British monarch (Tweede Kamer den Staten-Generaal, Kamerstukken II 1980/1981, 16035, 8: 2). As formulated by Prime Minister Kok in 1996, ‘the King takes part in the government and has in that function a personal role, which consists of ... inquiring, advising and urging other members of the government’ (Eerste Kamer der Staten-Generaal: 128). This advisory function of the King is also emphasised in more recent government memoranda (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal 1999/2000).

The King has a restricted task (inquiring, advising, urging), and the Cabinet takes up a dominant position. The government speaks in this regard of ‘the normal practice’. In this practice, a Cabinet minister will take the initiative for a governmental decree. The King will not present proposals for government decrees to the ministers, but he can urge a minister to take an initiative.

In normal practice, the King has a limited advisory function in the government, it is more than just a strictly ceremonial role. In practice the King speaks with the Prime Minister every Monday afternoon and in addition, although less frequently, with the individual ministers.

The ensuing question is whether the King’s limited advisory function is acceptable in a modern parliamentary democracy. The King lacks democratic legitimacy. He does not require the confidence of Parliament but has acquired his function through hereditary succession. The hereditary and non-responsible position of the King is difficult to reconcile with an assignment of effective governmental powers to the King.

The next question is whether it is still acceptable that the King does not limit himself in special circumstances to an advisory function. In constitutional theory, it has been argued in the past that the King may not ultimately withhold his signature from government decrees or laws. The Constitution and the related explanatory note do not establish whether it is the King or the ministers who must yield. Queen Juliana once defined her position towards Prime Minister Drees as follows: ‘You may bear political responsibility, but when I sign a decree, then in a moral sense I also bear responsibility for the consequences of that decree’ (Drees 1980: 150). This responsibility led Queen Juliana on occasion to refuse to sign. In 1951–52 she refused to sign royal decrees rejecting a pardon of four Nazi war criminals, who were responsible for the deportation of more than 100,000 Dutch Jews. The Queen had moral objections against the death penalty. In the end these Nazi war criminals were not executed but given lifetime sentences (Bovend’Eert 1985: 443). Queen Juliana on one occasion also objected to the appointment of a mayor in one of the larger cities in the Netherlands on moral grounds. Nevertheless, these interventions of Queen Juliana were, as far as we know, incidental and exceptional.

Viewed from the underlying constitutional principle of parliamentary democracy, the stance taken by Queen Juliana is hard to defend. It might be better in such a case, where the King harbours conscientious objections in special circumstances, that he renounces the throne (article 27 of the Constitution) – as King Baudouin temporarily did in Belgium in 1990, described in Chapter 3.6.

In recent years the proposition has also been defended in the literature that the King, based on the oath that he has taken, in which he swears allegiance to the Constitution, has a certain personal responsibility to see that the constitutional rules are adhered to (Hoeneveld 2018). It cannot be concluded from this oath of allegiance that the King has

a special constitutional function to subject decisions of the government to some form of constitutional scrutiny. At the most, it may be imagined that the King would voice objections to Cabinet ministers in constitutional emergencies. In such a situation, not the oath of allegiance to the Constitution, but his power by virtue of articles 42 and 47 would be the basis for the refusal to cooperate with government decrees.

In the Netherlands, the King's role in the government is hardly disputed at this time. The populist Freedom Party (PVV) of Geert Wilders did introduce a proposal some years ago to revise the Constitution, with the intent of removing the King from any governmental role, but this proposal has not been debated in Parliament. The current King, Willem-Alexander, who has been on the throne since 2013, appears to manifest himself mainly as head of state, with a strong emphasis on his ceremonial function.

4.2B. POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE DUTCH MONARCHY

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Monarch and Ministers

When, in the 1970s, Prime Minister Den Uyl referred to his Cabinet as the 'Den Uyl government', he was reportedly corrected by Queen Juliana, who argued that it was the 'Juliana government'. In practice, the monarch does not preside over, or even attend, the weekly Friday meetings of the Council of Ministers, and there is no Privy Council or other formal meeting in which monarch and ministers jointly take decisions. Instead, the Prime Minister meets the monarch informally each Monday. During the first half of the reign of Queen Juliana (1948–1980), this was a time consuming task for the Prime Minister, as the Queen lived in Soestdijk palace, at least an hour's drive from the centre of government in the Hague. Prime Minister De Jong (1967–1971) persuaded Queen Juliana that it was more practical for her to come to the Hague:

The Queen lived at Soestdijk and it was always quite a journey to get there. In addition, I felt that she should be better informed about what went on in Cabinet. The contacts were not frequent enough. First I tried to telephone her on Saturday to tell her what had been decided in Cabinet. Then I suggested that she should come to the Hague on Monday. That way I could inform her on Monday morning, and she could invite ministers and junior ministers in the afternoon. She thought this an excellent idea. (interview by the author).

These weekly meetings are intensive and time consuming, and they are complemented by frequent telephone contacts. Prime Ministers vary considerably in their appreciation of their meetings with the monarch: 'The contacts with Queen Juliana were not very useful, a waste of time, because the Queen seemed rather muddle-headed. The conversation was all over the place' (interview with a Prime Minister by the author). Prime Minister Lubbers (1982–1994), on the other hand, has publicly said that he always looked forward to his Monday meetings with Queen Beatrix, who reigned from 1980 to 2013 (Breedveld 1992, 21). In comparison with her mother, the meetings with Queen Beatrix were more business-like and well organised.

Other ministers are invited by the monarch less frequently (two to four times a year). After the intervention by Prime Minister De Jong, such meetings with Queen Juliana would also take place at Huis ten Bosch palace near The Hague, but ministers who lived not far from Soestdijk would be invited there, usually on Saturday: 'I was on the Saturday shift because I lived near Soestdijk' (interview by the author); 'Boersma and I had to come to Soestdijk on a Saturday because we lived in the area – it was like a visit to Mother'. Queen Beatrix took up residence in The Hague, so all meetings with her took place there. Ministers interviewed estimated that the meetings with Queen Juliana lasted from one-and-a-half to over two hours, and with Queen Beatrix about an hour. Again, not all ministers enjoyed their visits; they have been described as 'an examination by the Queen' and 'a nuisance, time consuming'. 'When the director of the Queen's office telephoned, my secretary already knew that I would be abroad, or something'. 'I tried to minimise those meetings. You would be there for hours and she was a difficult conversation partner' (interviews by the author). But for most ministers the monarch still held an attractive mystique (as TeVelde 2006: 201, shows for the nineteenth century) and they readily made time to go to the Palace. Some ministers will also see the monarch on other occasions:

As Foreign Secretary I would introduce new ambassadors when they came to offer their letters of credence to the Queen. After the ambassador had left she would ask me to stay behind for a cup of coffee or a glass of sherry (interview by the author).

Other than the wide ranging meetings with the Prime Minister, the meetings with the ministers tend to focus on the minister's own portfolio, with a few exceptions – 'it was mainly about my portfolio, but also about the position of women' (female minister, interview by the author) – or about issues in the news. Especially with Queen Juliana, the nature of the meeting would depend on the degree to which the Queen was interested in the policy area. Ministers of finance, for example, did little more than update the Queen on new developments: 'it lasted for at least two hours, but it was purely about providing information', 'it was more like giving her a lecture on macro-economics' (interviews by the author). But things were different when the Queen took an active interest: 'The Queen was very interested in my policy area (social work). The contacts were not just informative. The Queen had very articulate views and you had a hard time persuading her if you disagreed with her' (interview by the author). If the Queen took an active interest, she also kept herself informed through other channels, as another Minister of Social Work experienced: 'She was well informed about my policy area, because she was friendly with Labour Senator Martina Tjeenk Willink, who was a prominent figure in the field of social work, and who did not always agree with me' (interview by the author). With Queen Wilhelmina (who reigned from 1890 to 1948) or Queen Beatrix (1980 to 2013), there were fewer ministers who reported such differences across policy areas.

Occasionally, the monarch would use these meetings to press her own agenda, sometimes regardless of the minister's portfolio:

I was in close contact with Queen Wilhelmina, probably because I had entered the government from the (wartime) resistance movement. She would often ask my opinion, although she did not always find my opinion agreeable. Afterwards I would always report to the Prime Minister that the Queen had received such and such information and had asked my opinion (interview by the author).

During one of my meetings when I was Minister of Economic Affairs, Queen Juliana suggested that I should organise a search for oil with divining rods. I politely ignored this, but at subsequent meetings she asked if the divining rods had already been used (interview by the author).

The Queen telephoned once to invite me for lunch on Saturday. When I arrived we were joined by a few professors who worked on concentration camp syndrome. The Queen presented a plan to create a centre for the treatment of that syndrome. I replied that this was a matter for the Minister of Public Health, not for the Minister of Defence, but she thought that I could initiate it in the Cabinet, and defend it in Cabinet meetings. I then contacted the Prime Minister and suggested to pass the matter on to ... the junior Minister of Public Health. [The junior minister] demanded to know why the Queen had contacted the Minister of Defence, but the Prime Minister replied that that was a question for the Queen. If she wanted to talk to the Minister of Defence, that was her choice. But [the junior minister] remained offended and I think this delayed the creation of that centre. When it was finally opened, I was no longer a minister; I was sitting on the second row at the opening ceremony. [The junior minister] was in the front row. When the Queen entered the room she saw me, shook my hand over [the junior minister's] head and said: 'we succeeded in the end' (interview by the author).

In 1996, Foreign Secretary Van Mierlo revealed that it was at Queen Beatrix's insistence that the Dutch government was opening an embassy in Amman. The friendship between the royal families of Jordan and the Netherlands was, reputedly, the cause of the Queen's intervention.

The monarch is reported to be particularly interested in government appointments: the vice-president of the Council of State, the King's Commissioner in the provinces, mayors in cities and towns that are relevant to the monarch, and, in the case of Queen Beatrix, ambassadors.

I would discuss appointments of Queen's Commissioner in the provinces with the Queen before tabling them in Cabinet. In those days the Queen would stay at the Commissioner's residence when visiting a province (interview by the author).

When I decided to deviate from the Queen's Commissioner's recommendation in making mayoral appointments, I would call the Commissioner to ask him to accept my choice. I could then include that in my nomination to the Queen. Otherwise you would definitely be summoned to the Palace. (interview by the author).

In 1996, the ambassador to South Africa was transferred to another posting at the request of Queen Beatrix (Van Wijnen 2000: 17–24).

Although more examples of royal interference could be provided, most of the ministers I interviewed insist that open attempts by the monarch to influence government policy are the exception rather than the rule, and that the monarch usually acts as a well-informed sparring partner rather than as a lobbyist.¹

The Public Impartiality of the Monarch

Our knowledge of the political role of the monarch is based on anecdotal and indirect information. Publicly, the monarch is impartial and has no preferences. To avoid drawing

¹ There is no reason to assume that this has changed since King Willem-Alexander took the throne in 2013, but I have not interviewed any ministers from that period.

the monarchy into political conflict, those who are in contact with her are not supposed to make public what was discussed, and in particular, what the monarch said. This 'secret of the palace' even led some ministers not to discuss their meetings with the monarch amongst each other. The aforementioned incident of the Foreign Secretary revealing to journalists that the Queen influenced his decision to open a Dutch embassy in Jordan is exceptional; if the secret of the palace is violated by ministers, it is long after they have left office. However, in 1999 a member of Parliament resigned after being criticised for having breached the confidentiality of a conversation he had with the Queen.

Public impartiality is most difficult to maintain when the monarch makes public speeches. Here, a distinction is often made between speeches given as head of state on the one hand, for instance during state visits, or as a member of the government, in particular the speech from the throne at the annual opening of Parliament; and on the other hand more personal speeches such as the televised Christmas speech. All public speeches fall under ministerial responsibility, but in the case of speeches as head of state or government, the ministers, and in particular the Prime Minister or the Foreign Secretary, dominate the preparation of the texts. Prime Minister Lubbers' suggestion that he spent 'many a tenfold hour' discussing the text of a speech from the throne with Queen Beatrix (Van Baalen and Brouwer 2005: 17) may be an exaggeration. Drafts are discussed with the monarch and changes are made, but his or her influence is largely stylistic. That influence is slightly more substantive for speeches abroad. In her speech to the Knesset in 1995, for example, Queen Beatrix explicitly nuanced the image of the Netherlands as a country of courageous resistance fighters during the Nazi occupation, in line with other speeches she made in that period. This shocked many Dutchmen, but the speech was carefully prepared with civil servants and ministers (Kooistra and Koole 2000: 108). This was not the case in 1952, when Queen Juliana visited the United States and gave several speeches, including one to Congress. The Queen's pacifist leanings at the time (see below) caused great concern within the Cabinet, and the drafts of her speeches caused a major conflict between the ministers and the monarch (Daalder 2006: 40–51).

It is generally assumed that drafts of the more personal Christmas speeches are also discussed with the Prime Minister, but here the contents reflect the monarch's personal concerns. On one rare occasion, the coordination between Palace and Prime Minister appears to have failed. In 1988, the speech from the throne mentioned improvements in environmental protection, particularly in the quality of air and water. This was not only strongly challenged in Parliament, but in the Christmas speech just a few months later, Queen Beatrix painted a bleak picture of environmental pollution (Van Baalen and Brouwer 2005: 49), and this was widely interpreted as royal criticism of the ministers. However, the Christmas speeches became really controversial when they dealt with issues of multiculturalism and tolerance of minority beliefs. To some extent such messages of peace and goodwill are in the spirit of Christmas and for a long time they did not draw much attention. This changed when immigration and the integration of minorities became politically controversial in the early 1990s. Warnings against intolerance were now interpreted first as criticism of conservative-liberal leader Frits Bolkestein, and later of the populist leader Geert Wilders. This new political sensitivity also took the then Crown Princess Máxima by surprise in 2007 when, as a relatively recent arrival to the Netherlands, she publicly questioned the existence of an unequivocal Dutch identity: warm hospitality, but also offering a cup of tea with just one biscuit. So far, the Christmas speeches of King Willem-Alexander have avoided controversial topics.

(Prime) Ministers and Royal Crises

The previous sections dealt primarily with the (potential) influence of the monarch over the decisions of ministers, but occasionally the tables are turned. This is, for example, the case when the Prime Minister or the Cabinet as a whole are confronted with a crisis caused by the monarch or other members of the royal family. Two such crises have been particularly threatening to the monarchy: the Hofmans affair (1948–56), and the Lockheed affair (1960–76). In the first case, Queen Juliana, desperate to find a cure for the eye defects of her youngest daughter, came under the influence of a self-professed faith healer, Greet Hofmans. When the Queen surrounded herself with other followers of Hofmans, and when the latter's influence became not just religious and mystical, but also political and pacifist, this raised concerns within the Cabinet, for example about the Queen's public speeches during the state visit to the United States mentioned above. It also led to a crisis in the royal marriage, already affected by the prince consort's extramarital affairs. When Prince Bernhard confided in foreign journalists, the story eventually broke in the German weekly *Der Spiegel* portraying Prince Bernhard as being caught 'between Queen and Rasputin'. A committee of wise men was appointed to find a solution, and their report – which was only recently made public – criticised both the Queen for allowing Greet Hofmans to influence her in her role as monarch, and the Prince for talking to the media. It took yet another committee of wise men to persuade the Queen to follow the recommendation of the first committee and distance herself from Miss Hofmans and her followers. The Prime Minister at the time, Labour leader Willem Drees, is widely credited with handling the crisis prudently, publicly reassuring the people that there would be neither a divorce nor an abdication, but actually he seems to have been most reluctant to intervene in the personal domain (religion, marriage) of the monarch (Daalder 2006; Fasseur 2008). Both committees of wise men were not appointed by the government, for example, and Drees' reticence was strongly criticised in Cabinet.

This was very different in the second crisis. In 1976, the US Senate conducted an investigation into allegations of corruption by the Lockheed aircraft company. During the Senate hearings one of the examples given involved bribes totalling over a million dollars allegedly made to the Prince Consort since the 1960s, supposedly to help influence the government to buy Lockheed planes for the air force; Prince Bernhard was, among other military roles, inspector-general of the Dutch armed forces at the time. Within three days, Labour Prime Minister Den Uyl had set up an independent committee to investigate the allegations, and formed a Cabinet committee of five ministers (including the Foreign Secretary, the Home Secretary, the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Justice – the latter also being the Deputy Prime Minister, representing the Christian Democratic Parties in the governing coalition), to deal with the situation. In practice, the Cabinet committee was kept informed by the Prime Minister, but played no role in setting up the independent committee or forging a solution after the committee had found information implicating the Prince. There was one meeting of the Cabinet committee with the Queen, but some of the committee members objected to further meetings between five (male) ministers and the Queen:

When we got home from that meeting I telephoned Den Uyl and told him that we should not continue like this. It was embarrassing. Even if she had been a man it would be embarrassing.

I advised him to do it [the discussions with the Queen] together with Van Agt [the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Justice] (interview by the author).

When the other ministers supported this suggestion, the Prime Minister reluctantly agreed and the Cabinet committee effectively ceased to function. The crucial issue was whether criminal proceedings should be initiated against the Prince. Apart from the question whether there was sufficient evidence to secure a conviction, it could well have endangered the monarchy: not only was it likely that Queen Juliana would then abdicate, but the Cabinet had also received information that Crown Princess Beatrix was reluctant to succeed her mother in these circumstances. Eventually the Cabinet accepted the proposal of the Prime Minister not to prosecute the Prince, but to make the report of the investigation public, to dismiss the Prince from all his military functions and to force him to end his membership of the supervisory boards of several companies, including KLM. In addition, the Cabinet made clear that the Prince should no longer wear a military uniform. Prime Minister Den Uyl was widely praised for his proactive but even handed approach to the crisis, although later it was suggested that he decided to keep secret last minute information that the Prince had also accepted bribes from another aircraft company, Northrop (Bleich 2008: 342–346; but see Van Merriënboer et al 2008: 178–79).

Royal weddings also necessitate involvement by ministers as marriages by the King and those in line of succession require permission by an Act of Parliament. Without such consent, the King is considered to have abdicated, and those in line of succession, and their children, forfeit that right. When the Cabinet is unwilling to initiate legislation approving a marriage, a public conflict between the royals and the Cabinet is avoided by the engaged couple announcing that they will not request permission. This happened, for example, when Princess Irene, younger sister of Crown Princess Beatrix, converted to Catholicism and, in 1964, announced her engagement to a Catholic Prince, Carlos Hugo de Bourbon-Parma, who at the time was a pretender to the Spanish throne. In an evening session at the palace, Prime Minister Marijnen, himself a Catholic, and three ministers representing the other Parties in the governing coalition, asked Carlos Hugo whether he was willing to give up his claims to the Spanish throne. He refused, and that same day Princess Irene announced that she would not seek consent for her marriage. On the advice of the government, no members of the royal family attended the wedding in Rome later that year. By focusing on the claims to the Spanish throne – the Netherlands had gained independence in an eighty-year war against Hapsburg Spain – the government avoided addressing the question whether a Catholic could ascend to the Dutch throne. Another sister, Princess Christina, also did not seek parliamentary approval when she became engaged to a Catholic in 1975.

Religion no longer played much of a role when Crown Prince Willem-Alexander married Máxima Zorreguieta, a Catholic woman from Argentina in 2001, although she had to agree that any children from the marriage would be raised in the Protestant faith. What did play a role, however, was that Máxima's father had been a junior minister in the Videla regime, raising questions about possible involvement in the 'disappearances' of opponents of the Argentinian junta. Labour Prime Minister Kok did not want to judge the daughter by her father's past, but also wanted to avoid undermining popular support for the monarchy. In close consultations with the Queen he secretly engaged a professor of Latin-American studies to investigate the role of Jorge Zorreguieta.

The report concluded that *Máxima's* father must have been aware of the 'disappearances' but that it was practically excluded that he had been involved in human rights violations himself. On that basis, the Cabinet decided that there were no objections to giving consent to the marriage, but that the presence of the father of the bride at the wedding or other state occasions would undermine popular support for the monarchy. Again, after consulting the Queen, the Prime Minister asked former Foreign Secretary Van der Stoel to travel to Argentina and persuade Jorge Zorreguieta to stay away voluntarily (Chorus 2013: 166–68).

It is ironic that in each of these episodes it fell to a Prime Minister of the Labour Party, the least monarchical of the mainstream political parties, to stave off a crisis in the monarchy. Rather than acting from personal royalist sympathies, they and most other Dutch politicians realise that any controversy about the monarchy is likely to overshadow any other political issues and sidetrack their own political agenda. As Prime Minister Den Uyl reportedly put it: 'The House of Orange is well loved by the population, and social democrats have other priorities than making an issue out of the monarchy' (Bleich 2008: 334).

4.3. DAY-TO-DAY POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE MONARCH IN DENMARK

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Introduction

The day-to-day political functions of the Danish monarch are closely related to his constitutional functions, especially with regard to the monarch's role in the Council of State and his royal assent to laws, which also constitute part of his day-to-day political life. Because of this overlap, what follows must be read in connection with Chapter 3.3 on constitutional functions.

The Non-Political Principle

Article 13 of the Danish Constitution states that the King is not answerable for his actions and that the ministers are responsible for the conduct of government. Article 13 is said to have the following effect: if the King wishes to make a political statement, which is not a legal act – a legal act must be countersigned by a minister (article 14, part 3) – but must be seen as part of the governing of the state, he must beforehand have the consent of a minister (see Andersen 1954: 172; Sørensen 1973: 65; Germer 1995: 39, and Zahle (ed) 2006: 153). It has also been expressed in the following way: if the King's statements might have political effect, consent from a minister is required (Germer 1995: 39). This includes actions and not just verbal statements. For his private actions the King needs no consent (see Andersen 1954: 192–93; Sørensen 1973: 65; Germer 1995: 39, and Zahle (ed) 2006: 153). However, one might suggest that in reality, if the monarch expresses political views

related to his private actions, people might doubt the neutrality of his actions as part of governing the state.²

Article 13 is normally said to have as an indirect effect that the King's competence is only formal (see Sørensen 1973: 63–64). In parts of the constitutional literature, this is presented as an obligation for the King to act according to the wishes of the ministers (see Andersen 1954: 97). It is thus a common view in contemporary constitutional theory that the King has no real *influence* in Danish politics any more, and that the few duties and competences left for the King are only of a symbolic nature.

In practice, the monarch and the royal family have in some cases expressed political views. However, the present Queen is normally very careful about not expressing political statements in public. On the home page of the royal court, it is said that 'HM The Queen takes no part in politics and does not express any political opinions'.

The Danish version proclaims that the Queen takes no part in 'party politics'. At first glance, one might think there is a slight difference between party politics and politics, but it does not seem to be a tenable distinction. Ultimately, all political subjects are also party political subjects. In her new year's speech in 1984, the Queen urged the Danes to be more tolerant towards asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants. This created a stir. In the book *Margrethe*, the Queen explains that she was surprised by this reaction. Today, she probably would not express such a view, though, because integration is clearly regarded as a political issue. Still, integration was already a political issue in 1984. At that time, integration was one of the most important questions for Fremskridtspartiet, a right-wing Party in Parliament. Nevertheless, the Queen touches upon a very important point: it is extremely difficult to determine which subjects are 'politics' and which are not, time and norms change and the transition is often vague.

Many questions concerning humanitarian issues that were once considered to be non-political issues are today considered political questions. This makes it difficult for the royal family because by tradition, they support and visit exposed and vulnerable groups both in Denmark and abroad and frequently are engaged in charitable activities.³ Furthermore, involvement in art and culture in general can have political repercussions. The Danish Queen is very interested in cultural matters.⁴ Cultural matters might not at first glance seem like a politically controversial subject. Yet, politics in this field has been a very important political subject area for the former Danish Prime Minister, Anders Fogh Rasmussen and his government. In an interview from 2008, he mentioned immigration politics and policy in the field of culture as, in his opinion, important political fields (Kastrup 2008). According to Anders Fogh Rasmussen, his government has, for

²Furthermore, as we shall see in Chapter 9, the present legitimisation of the monarchy among other things builds on its neutrality, which makes it extremely important for the Monarch to appear non-political.

³The present Queen's father King Frederik IX often underlined that it was part of being Danish to make sure that the weaker groups in Danish society shared in technical and material developments, see Buttenschøn and Ries (2003: 61). The present Danish Crown Prince and the Crown Princess have visited ghettos with many residents with different ethnic backgrounds many times, see also Bjørn (2001: 260–61). Moreover, it is not just the royal family but also the Danish national church which operates in a difficult field. Some vicars in their Christmas sermons have expressed concern with the conditions of asylum seekers in Denmark. This caused a political reaction from several prominent politicians.

⁴The Queen is a painter herself and her interests include literature (she has translated and illustrated several books), ballet (she has designed costumes and scenography for several ballets) and textiles (she has designed robes for the church).

instance, eliminated cultural relativism by introducing canons in almost every cultural field (literature, music, and art, for instance). The Crown Prince's involvement in the Olympic Committee is also interesting. Sports are considered part of cultural policy and with the Olympic Games taking place in China in 2008, foreign policy was also involved because of the question of China's policy in the field of human rights. A good example of the Danish royal family participating in an uncontroversial area is the Crown Princess's involvement in the attempt to eliminate bullying in Danish schools.

Thus, the potential arena for the royal house to participate in is being reduced. Areas like humanitarian issues, arts, and sports – which were formerly considered quite neutral subjects – are now controversial political subjects. This does not leave much room for the royal family to become involved, and show that they are useful to the community. As a result, it seems to have become increasingly difficult for the royal family to interact with Danish society. The political vs non-political distinction is without doubt a very difficult matter to handle for the royal house, and the distinction is getting increasingly burdensome to determine. That the royal family is in an almost impossible situation is illustrated by the logical argument that when the royal family chooses which subject areas are political and which are not, this in itself is a political statement.

This analysis of the principle of non-political behaviour in the Danish monarchy reveals the difficulties of handling the principle in practice. Thus, even though the non-political behaviour principle might at first glance seem like the perfect bridge builder between monarchy as a state form and a modern democracy, the content and application of the principle are in fact filled with grey areas. As a general rule, the Queen tries to be non-political both in her formal actions, as part of government, and in her private actions. Regardless, room for informal influence in practice still seems to exist.

Some years ago, an interesting statement could be found on the home page of the Danish Crown Prince: 'The Danish Crown Prince has been thoroughly educated in political science and military disciplines because the royal house still wants the monarch to be able to see and assess the political challenges of his country'. The statement, which has now been removed from the home page, seems to show that the royal house takes its constitutional duties seriously and that their members do not want to be mere puppets. Why is it significant that the Crown Prince is able to see and assess political challenges for Denmark if the royal house sees its constitutional role as entirely formal? One answer could be that the monarch is still a player on the constitutional scene. This provides the monarch with an opportunity to advise the government and influence political actions in Denmark. In a state of emergency, it is of great importance to be an actor on the political scene. The highly respected constitutional theorist Max Sørensen (1954: 64) declared that if a government tried to launch a coup d'état, the King might actually play a role as the guardian of the Constitution. This happened in Spain in 1981 (see Chapter 3.9). In the new version of the home page of the Crown Prince it is briefly mentioned that he has a Master's degree in Political Science. However, the main emphasis is put on his military education.

The Council of State

The body of ministers form the Council of State (article 17). The Council of State is presided over by the monarch (article 17, part 1). The Secretariat of the Royal Cabinet and

the Ministry of State arrange the meetings, and the Secretariat of the Royal Cabinet calls the meetings. According to article 17, part 2, all bills and important government measures shall be discussed in the Council of State. The Constitution does not define what is meant by 'important government measures'. There exists no clear principle on which government decisions should be discussed in the Council. Bills adopted by Parliament (which need royal assent) and parliamentary decisions are put before the Council.⁵ Under normal circumstances, only very few decisions apart from legislation come before the Council (see Zahle (ed) 2006: 173). Normally, no negotiation takes place. A minister introduces a bill, and the King signs it (Zahle (ed) 2006: 173).⁶ According to a constitutional convention, the King can sign bills outside the Council given subsequent confirmation in the Council. A bill may be valid, even if it is not put before the Council.⁷

The fact is that the Council of State is no longer an important political forum (Zahle 2001: 211, and Germer 1995: 25, 74, note 32). Thus, the process in the Council of State is purely formal and has no real constitutional significance (Zahle (ed) 2006: 172). The average number of meetings in the Council is 10 each year (Zahle (ed) 2006: 173). Even so, the Queen drew much attention to her role in the Council of State during her recent 40 years anniversary as monarch. A few more meetings than normal were held in the Council in order for the Queen to be able to celebrate the number of her Council of State meetings reaching 500 in combination with her anniversary. Political discussion on whether the Council of State should be abolished arose. Some political parties found it unnecessary to have the meetings in the Council. Today, the important political decisions are discussed in the so-called minister-meetings.⁸ However, the former Prime Minister Helle Thorning-Schmidt from Socialdemokratiet made the following statement:

The Council of State is here to stay. It is an institution which connects the current modern democracy with past times, and in this way I think it is a good institution in the relationship between Parliament and the Royal House (Politiken 2012).

This is an interesting statement since the government, of which she was the Prime Minister, had expressed interest in a revision of the Constitution and since another political Party in that government, SocialistiskFolkeparti, is critical of the monarchy.

On the other hand, Queen Margrethe is much more active in her role as head of state than her father, King Frederik IX. Former Prime Minister Anker Jørgensen has said that the Queen takes a much more active part in the Council of State and in working with the government than her father (Jørgensen 1989: 196).⁹ Apparently, she is very interested and

⁵ According to Article 22 of the Constitution, a bill passed by Parliament shall become law if it receives the royal assent not later than thirty days after it was finally passed. Royal assent is given by the King's signature on the bill accompanied by the signature of a minister, article 14. See also Chapter 3.3. On article 22 in the Danish Constitution, see Blume (1989).

⁶ There exists an instruction in the Ministry of State on meetings in the Council of State (*Vejledning om ekspedition af statsråds sager*, 14 January 2002), and the instruction on quality in legislation has a few paragraphs on the Council of State (*Vejledning om lov kvalitet*, 3 June 2005, paragraph 5.9 and 5.10).

⁷ In 2004–05, approximately 40 per cent of the governmental bills were introduced in Parliament without prior consideration in the Council of State; see Zahle (ed.) (2006:173).

⁸ Despite the great importance of these meetings they are not regulated in the Constitution.

⁹ See also Krag (1973: 115): 'The King is a nice man, well-liked and well-meaning, without political thoughts and without desire to spend more of his and our time than necessary. We have meetings in the Council of State, which last less than 20 minutes ... A new Queen could be more difficult to cooperate with. Furthermore, she has political knowledge which is not necessarily an advantage'.

often asks the Prime Minister to elaborate on subjects, she comments on matters, and has her own opinions (Bjørn 2001: 258–59).

Informal Meetings with the Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs

The Prime Minister and the Minister of Foreign Affairs keep the King updated on the political situation (see Larsen et al 2010: 187).¹⁰ Since there are no minutes of these meetings, it seems possible for the monarch to comment on the political situation (Bjørn 2001: 93–94). Even though the monarch does not have much formal competence left there is still some room for influence (Sørensen 1973: 64). The former Danish Prime Minister Poul Schlüter stated that he valued the meetings with the Queen and that she had often given him good advice – she did not tell him what to do, but rather what she would do (Andersen 2011: 232). The weekly meetings probably form the most important direct informal competence for the monarch. They have no direct legal basis in the Constitution, but must probably be seen as part of the monarch’s role as head of state.

Other Forms of Influence and Soft Power

The Queen visits foreign countries and she hosts foreign heads of state and heads of government. The Queen does not formally exercise foreign policy in these situations. Denmark benefits from the Queen representing Denmark, but these visits also strengthen the Queen’s position as a player on the international scene. This gives her informal influence both internationally and internally in Denmark.

Greenland is part of the Danish realm, but it has gradually gained more and more self-determination. The Queen and her family regularly visit Greenland, where she is quite popular. Her close relationship with Greenland has probably had an impact on the relationship between Denmark and Greenland, influencing the speed of the process of self-determination. Though the Queen’s interest in Greenland’s culture and nature seems to be real, she has definitely played an important role for the political relations between Denmark and Greenland (Andersen 2011: 413–26). This strengthens the Queen’s political importance in Denmark.

The Queen can bestow royal orders, medals, and titles. When a ministry recommends a person for an order, the Queen always follows this recommendation,¹¹ but she makes the final decision in every case (Larsen et al 2010: 177). This competence might not seem very important, but it has quite a strong symbolic importance and provides the Queen with informal power since it is still attractive for high ranking civil servants, judges, and others to receive orders. When the Queen has decorated foreign heads of state with orders, it has occasionally given rise to difficult situations. An example of this was when

¹⁰ These meetings have no legal basis in the Constitution or in normal legislation.

¹¹ See statement from the Head of the Secretariat of the Royal Cabinet, in Fogt and Karker (2009).

the Danish Queen visited Bahrain in February 2011. She decorated King Khalifa with one of Denmark's most prestigious orders, and shortly after her visit a demonstration for democratic reforms in Bahrain was brutally handled by the police. This caused a public discussion on whether the Queen's award of medals was part of Denmark's foreign policy or whether it was part of the Queen's private actions. The conclusion was that the latter is the case.¹² However, when it comes to foreign policy, it seems quite difficult in practice to uphold such a distinction. The Queen is head of state and when she gives an order to another head of state or a Prime Minister, it seems unlikely that the receiver is always aware of the distinction and that they see it as a cultural exchange with the Queen rather than an action of the Danish state.

Another soft power with a strong symbolic effect is the fact that the Queen's picture is on Danish coins. This became clear when the Danes voted 'no' to European monetary union among other things because they feared that the Queen's picture would no longer be on the coins.

Finally, it is a tradition in Denmark that the King speaks to the Danish nation on New Year's Eve. Christian X's and Frederik IX's speeches concerned the events of the past year, the upcoming events of the new year and offered thanks to everybody who made a special effort in Danish society (Buttenschøn and Ries 2003: 69; Bjørn 2001: 259 ff).¹³ Queen Margrethe II attaches a great deal of importance to her New Year speeches and they are a good example of the Queen's informal power, since they carry a lot of weight among the Danish people.¹⁴ The content of the speeches are the Prime Minister's responsibility (article 13). Therefore, the Queen's speeches must be approved by the Prime Minister. A first draft – which the Queen then works on – is written by government officials. The Queen is known to make many alterations and give the speeches a very personal touch.

Conclusion

In an interview with the Queen in a Danish newspaper in 2010, the Queen stated: 'Even though one is not a co-player in political life – and one is not – I still believe that [the monarchy] plays a role, that one is an active participant in the country's constitutional life' (Bistrup 2010).

When reading this (and other statements) it is quite clear that the Queen takes her constitutional duties and competences very seriously and that she attaches substance and importance to the constitutional rules/conventions in which she plays a part. When the Queen insists on keeping her formal competences one must remember that if she loses those, then she may also lose important informal means of influence.

¹² See Letter from the Ombudsman to journalist David Tarp, 11 January 2012 and letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to David Tarp, 1 March 2012.

¹³ Since 1958 the new year's speeches have been televised live (and transmitted on the radio) from the King's/Queen's study at the Castle Amalienborg.

¹⁴ The New Year speeches have no legal basis.

4.4. DAY-TO-DAY POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE MONARCHY IN THE UK

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This contribution describes the day-to-day political functions of the monarchy in Britain: working with the Prime Minister, other ministers, and senior officers of state; holding meetings of the Privy Council; giving audiences to incoming and outgoing ambassadors; and appointing senior officials.

Weekly Meetings with the Prime Minister

The Queen is kept informed of the business of government through daily boxes of papers to read, and to sign. She receives all the Cabinet papers and minutes, diplomatic telegrams and other government papers, especially about appointments. In addition, she hosts frequent lunches and dinners for politicians, and people from every corner of public life, which gives her a good understanding of current thinking, and the personalities involved. The ‘golden triangle’ of the Cabinet Secretary and the Private Secretaries in the Palace and No 10 are also in regular contact to ensure there is no grinding of gears between the monarch and the government. They seek to anticipate potential difficulties and deal with them before they get out of hand or cause reputational damage. These can range from major items like the planning of state visits or royal Jubilees to minor issues like trouble in one of the royal households.

When Parliament is sitting, the Queen has a weekly audience with the Prime Minister, held on Wednesday evenings, the day after the weekly meeting of Cabinet on Tuesday. The Private Secretaries in 10 Downing Street and the Palace liaise beforehand about the matters to be discussed, and the Number 10 Private Secretary accompanies the Prime Minister and talks to the Queen’s Private Secretary during the audience. These are the occasions when the monarch can exercise Bagehot’s famous trio of rights: the right to be consulted, to encourage and to warn (Bagehot 1867). No notes are taken and no record is published, so it is impossible to judge what influence the monarch has on government policy. Prime Ministers have always been discreet, saying only that they value the opportunity to talk things through with someone of such long experience. The nearest we can get to guessing what takes place is through drama, in Peter Morgan’s play *The Audience* (2013), and his subsequent television series *The Crown* (2016).

The Queen also has audiences with senior officials from the military, the diplomatic and security services; and the judiciary, with the top 150 judges all being appointed personally by the Queen. She also has audiences with officials from other countries, in particular the 15 Commonwealth countries where she is also head of state (the Realms). And she receives in an audience newly appointed ambassadors and High Commissioners, and their families: with over 170 foreign missions in London, this is a frequent part of her weekly routine.

To give a sense of the Queen’s official business, here is an analysis of her engagements for the month of November 2018, extracted from the Court Circular. The Queen had official engagements on 20 days that month. She met the President of Germany (who came for the Remembrance Day ceremony at the Cenotaph), and the King of Norway. She had three audiences with the Prime Minister. There were two meetings of the Privy

Council, at which five new members were sworn in, and two new Secretaries of State were appointed and received their seals of office. The Queen received 10 new ambassadors from foreign countries, and four British ambassadors before they went overseas; as well as the UK's new Permanent Representative to the EU, and to the UN. She also received the Governor-General of Australia, and of the Solomon Islands, and the Lieutenant-Governor of Newfoundland. There were five Investitures: two held by the Queen, one by the Prince of Wales, two by the Duke of Cambridge. And the Queen received a lot of military personnel: the new Chief of the General Staff, the new Chief of the Defence Staff, and 12 officers from different regiments of which she is Colonel-in-Chief.

In the same month the Prince of Wales went on a state visit to The Gambia, Ghana and Nigeria. This included visits to the British High Commission in each country, the British Council, Commonwealth war graves, and UK Border Force offices at Accra airport. When back in London, Prince Charles also met the President of Germany, and received visits from the Governor-General of Antigua, the President of Cuba and former President of Kosovo. He ended the month with a visit to a local police station, at King's Lynn.

State Opening of Parliament

Another regular fixture in the Queen's calendar is the State Opening of Parliament, when she delivers the Queen's speech setting out the government's legislative programme for the next annual session. The suggestion has been made that the Prime Minister should deliver the speech every year, since it is the government's legislative programme, and that the Queen should be involved only at the beginning of a new Parliament (Fabian Society 2003: 59). But the Queen continues to deliver the annual speech in the House of Lords, with peers arrayed in their full robes, and the Commons assembled at the bar of the House. In October 2019 there was criticism that the Queen's speech was a sham, since it was clear that the Prime Minister wanted an early election, not a new session of Parliament, and the Queen was being used to deliver a Conservative party broadcast (Hazell, 2019).

Meetings of the Privy Council

The Privy Council is the equivalent of the Council of State in other countries. It normally meets once a month, in Buckingham Palace. Its main business is to approve Orders in Council, a form of delegated legislation. The business is purely formal; the Orders will have been agreed beforehand by ministers, in consultation with any outside bodies as necessary. The Lord President of the Council (a government minister) reads out the title of each Order in Council, and the Queen says 'Approved'. Usually only three or four ministers attend; the meetings are brief; the Queen and the members remain standing. The dissolution, summoning and prorogation of parliament have been effected by royal proclamations in Council; as are the declaration of war, and its termination. Dissolution is now regulated by the Fixed Term Parliaments Act 2011. Prorogation has not normally caused controversy, but the five week prorogation advised by Prime Minister Boris Johnson in August 2019 was declared unlawful in *R (Miller) v the Prime Minister* [2019] UKSC 41, and the prorogation order to be null and void.

Informal Influence

It is hard to judge how much influence the Queen has on the business of government. Officials report that she is assiduous in reading all her government papers, and does not hesitate to query declining standards of record keeping, or submissions which are inadequate. So for the parts of Whitehall which have dealings with the Palace, from the planning of state visits, to recommendations for senior public or church appointments, to awards for gallantry or the grant of royal pardons, she helps to keep government up to the mark. As for politicians, successive Prime Ministers have commented on the value of their weekly audiences, and her unrivalled experience thanks to her very long reign. Being Prime Minister can be lonely as well as demanding, with Cabinet colleagues constantly jostling for position; it must be a relief to be able to confide in someone who is not a political rival. Typical are these reflections in their memoirs from Ted Heath, and Jim Callaghan:

I looked forward to these for a variety of reasons. It was always a relief to be able to discuss everything with someone, knowing full well that there was not the slightest danger of any information leaking. I could confide in Her Majesty absolutely, not only about political matters, but also about the personal affairs of those involved, both at home and abroad (Heath 1998: 317).

[There was] no doubt of the keenness with which she followed Commonwealth affairs and of her genuine concern for its well-being. Her very perceptive understanding comes not only from her many years spent reading Foreign Office documents, but also from numerous meetings with successive Commonwealth leaders and her regular overseas tours. These have given her a knowledge of Commonwealth politicians and politics unequalled by any member of the Diplomatic Service or any British politician (Callaghan 2006: 380).

But the Queen has been a model of political neutrality, and if she has had political influence, her ministers are too discreet to admit it. The main issue which we know has occasionally put her at odds with her ministers has been her devotion to the Commonwealth. This caused frequent tensions with Margaret Thatcher (Pimlott 1996: 466 ff, 503 ff), and before that with Ted Heath. After a bruising experience at his first Commonwealth Heads of Government (CHOGM) meeting in Singapore in 1971, Heath vowed not to attend again; but he was thwarted by nimble footwork by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Palace, who persuaded the Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau to host the next CHOGM, and to invite the Queen to make a state visit. The invitation was accepted without reference to Downing Street: 'the Prime Minister was perturbed by the Queen's decision to accept, as The Queen of Canada' (Foreign Office memo quoted in Murphy 2013: 131). It is inevitable that occasionally the Queen's role as head of the Commonwealth, and head of state of 15 countries in the Commonwealth, will conflict with her duties as Queen of the United Kingdom: especially since her passionate interest in the Commonwealth has rarely been shared by her British ministers.

4.5. POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE MONARCHY IN NORWAY

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Chapter 3.7 presents the constitutional functions of the Norwegian monarchy in some detail. In order to facilitate the proper understanding of the system, that chapter pays

particular attention to certain institutional aspects, namely the fact that it is for the King-in-Council, not for the King acting alone, to take any decision issued by ‘the King’ as head of state and of the executive (Smith 2017). Since a constitutional amendment adopted in 1911, the countersignature of the Prime Minister is not only required as a means for ensuring orderly decision making, but a condition for ‘royal resolutions’ to obtain legal effect. By consequence, the monarch alone never conducts formal decision making on behalf of the state. In other words, the several articles of the Constitution that vest both the executive power in general and a number of more specified powers in the King must be read in conjunction with articles 27 to 31 on the Council as the decisive state body. Within that supreme organ of the executive, the monarch’s assent is required for any decision to be achieved, but insufficient if the countersignature is not provided.

During the 90 years’ personal union between Sweden and Norway (November 1814 to June 1905), a number of conflicts between the Norwegian political institutions and the King of Norway unfolded. As King from 1818 to 1844, Karl III Johan (in Sweden: Karl XIV Johan), the former Marshal of France, eagerly vetoed legislation adopted by the Norwegian Parliament; in fact, this happened in 19 per cent of the bills adopted by Parliament between 1815 and 1837 (Jansen 1921). The last King of the Bernadotte dynasty (Oscar II, King of Norway 1872–1905) adopted a more modest attitude (for instance, he vetoed only 2 per cent of the bills between 1884 and 1905), and experienced a number of political defeats by the Parliament (*Stortinget*). His final legislative veto (1905) on a bill establishing separate consular services for Norway, replacing the existing services common to the two kingdoms, triggered the unilateral declaration that his reign had come to an end.

Since the arrival of King Oscar’s successor in November 1905, none of the three kings have utilised their personal veto on legislation adopted by Parliament. This has not been accidental; we should understand the new equilibrium as the result of deliberate political efforts arising from three principal considerations. Firstly, although the monarchy has enjoyed strong popular support, leading politicians have regarded the choice to maintain a monarchical form of government as the result of political calculation in a rather unfriendly international environment dominated by monarchies rather than as one of conviction (similar to the origins of the Belgian monarchy: see Chapter 3.6). Admittedly, of course, many of the close to 80 per cent of the electorate who voted in favour of the new King in the referendum organised in November 1905 probably thought otherwise (Bjørklund 2005). Secondly, the initial collaboration between the government and the new King included instruction on how to behave as head of the modern Kingdom of Norway (Bomann-Larsen 2006). Third, the unhappy experiences during the last years of King Oscar’s reign, a monarch that some would say behaved like a member of the Conservative Party (and – regarding Norway – as King of Sweden rather than of Norway), gave rise to desires to avoid similar experiences in the future.

Behind all three considerations, however, we can easily discern the growth of modern ideas about the proper role of an unelected monarch within the framework of an increasingly democratic system of government. In any case, King Haakon ended up by systematically demonstrating a strong commitment to the Constitution that he had sworn to maintain.

Since the constitutional amendment of 1911, imposing the monarch’s personal veto on legislation adopted by Parliament without the Prime Minister’s countersignature has,

in fact, been formally impossible. The same goes for any other decision taken by the King-in-Council. Moreover, the three successive monarchs have gradually become less and less involved in the Council's deliberations. It is thus safe to affirm that, in reality, it is the Council's political element – the 'King's advisers' that we normally call 'the government' – that determines the substance of the decisions to be taken.

Outside this institutional framework, the monarch conducts a number of activities with obvious political connotations. As they meet at least once a week (except during holiday seasons) at the Council meetings, the number and frequency of formal meetings between the monarch and the Prime Minister, and between him and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, seems to be considerably lower than in some other countries. By contrast, the secretary general of the foreign ministry and the top military commanders appear in the Palace at regular intervals. The King also receives, for example, high-ranking foreign visitors and heads of state, to whom he offers his 'high protection'; prize-winning laureates; and those who have been bestowed with royal decorations.

Sometimes, both the list of visitors and the choice of places to visit reflect personal choices. A Palace reception followed by a seminar with religious leaders of all major faiths offers just one example of the first kind; while the royal couple's several visits to parts of Oslo with high numbers of immigrants during the Breivik trial (2011) illustrate the second. Moreover, personal influence of a more remote political kind flows, for example, from the royal family's speeches, presence at different kinds of public ceremonies, scenes of disaster and public mourning and the systematic travelling across the country of its members. The family's active involvement in the aftermath of the tragic killing of 77 people in July 2011, including landmark speeches by the King and the Crown Prince, is one powerful example. These activities are clearly not – and indeed could not be – devoid of any political connotations (on speeches, see also Chapter 7).

A number of examples where both King Olav and King Harald have been the first to pay public tribute to groups that, according to today's prevailing opinion, have been underestimated or even completely disregarded by the political authorities, deserve a particular mention. One telling example is a speech given by the latter during his very first years as King (1992) in North-Eastern Norway (Kiberg), which recognised the anti-Nazi actions and devotion of the Norwegian 'partisans' during the German occupation, actions which had been conducted in collaboration with Soviet authorities and therefore regarded with high suspicion during the cold war (Det Norske Kongehus Website: HM The King's Speech at the Partisan Building in Kiberg, August 3, 1992).

On the other hand, the choice of where to pay formal state visits or which heads of state to receive in Norway primarily belongs to the government or are, at least, subject to its informal consent. The royal couple's state visit to China in the autumn of 2018, symbolising the end of the Chinese diplomatic boycott of Norway in the aftermath of the 2010 Nobel Peace Prize to a Chinese dissident, provides a most eloquent recent example.

The formation of new governments are crucial moments in the life of any polity. As noted in Chapter 3.7, the King-in-Council appoints and dismisses both individual ministers and the entire government. Since the constitutional amendment of 1911, this has meant that no dismissal or appointment may take place without the consent of the politically responsible element in the Council; the government expresses itself by way of the Prime Minister's countersignature. Under ordinary circumstances, this effectively

eliminates any kind of personal involvement by the monarch once the political processes have identified the identity, party affiliation and departmental responsibilities of new ministers. This implies, *inter alia*, that the outgoing government is responsible for appointing the next one, and for the dismissal of itself with effect from the moment the first meeting between the King and his new Council is scheduled.

The monarch's role during the search for the next Prime Minister and the formation of the new government is not clear-cut. The Constitution gives no explicit answer to this question. Since 1905, however, the practice is that the monarch consults, first, with the outgoing Prime Minister, next, with the political leader suggested to him by the outgoing Prime Minister and, if needed, with all the leaders of the political parties. Should the political situation still be unclear, it has even happened that the King has called upon the Speaker of the Parliament and asked him or her to conduct more thorough discussions.

Ordinarily in Norwegian politics, the identity of the new Prime Minister is obvious enough that the King can charge him or her with the appointment of the new government. On occasion, however, the King has been more intrusive. This happened most famously in 1928, when the still 'revolutionary' Labour Party came out of the general election as the biggest of the parties represented in Parliament, but with no majority to govern. At the same time, the centre-right 'bourgeois' political parties commanding the majority were unable to provide a more credible basis for forming the new government. In that situation, King Haakon – who, on one occasion, had declared himself as King even of the communists – insisted on appointing a Labour government.

Within a couple of weeks, Parliament passed a vote of no confidence and the Prime Minister applied for the Labour government's dismissal. In this sense, the experiment earned little immediate success. However, this example of direct royal involvement in the political life of the nation has since been generally regarded as an important contribution to the promotion of the Labour movement within Parliament, and thereby reducing any possible temptation to establish a 'proletarian dictatorship' that may have existed in the years following the establishment of the Soviet Union.

By far the most important example of the present dynasty's direct involvement in the strictly political sphere is provided by King Haakon's role during the German invasion in April-June 1940 and throughout the entire duration of World War II. There is no need, here, to tell the full story of the role of King Haakon and the royal family in Norway, London and the USA, but it is worthwhile recalling that it contributed substantially to strengthening the institution's legitimacy in post-war Norway (Bomann-Larsen 2011).

The single most important occurrence ought also to be recounted: on 9 April 1940, the royal family, the government and members of Parliament managed to flee northwards from Oslo before the arrival of the German troops. The next day, the German ambassador, received on the ambassador's demand by the King in a small town North-East of Oslo, urged him to surrender and to appoint Vidkun Quisling, the leader of a Nazi-oriented micro-party, as the new Prime Minister. The King refused. At the same time, he declared that he – as a constitutional king – would not stand in the way should the government nevertheless accept the German ultimatum in order to avoid the destruction likely to follow. In that case, however, he would have no other option than to abdicate. This defiant attitude contributed substantially to the evaporation of any reservations on behalf of the government, now acting on behalf of the Parliament that had been abrogated – in principle temporarily – due to the ongoing invasion.

It would be perfectly legitimate to regard this historically decisive episode as an example of the monarch's use of a kind of deep reserve power in cases of crisis. In fact, discussions about whether to maintain a monarchical form of government regularly call upon this example as an argument in favour of monarchy: these discussions frequently refer to 'the King's No'. It seems less likely that a similar deep reserve power could credibly be exercised by a monarch who has lost all active constitutional functions (as in Sweden, discussed below).

4.6. POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE MONARCHY IN SWEDEN

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The King and the Riksdag

The overarching principle of the 1974 Instrument of Government is that the King shall have no formal power. But he is not completely written out of the script. The King opens the Riksdag's yearly session on the request of the Speaker (chapter 3 article 6 of the 2014 *Riksdagsordning*, the Riksdag Act). The ceremony takes place in the Chamber of the Riksdagbuilding, and not – as under the old Constitution – in the Royal Palace (art 40 of the 1866 Riksdag Act). As Åse (2009: 11) has noted, the choice of venue symbolically indicates the changed constitutional roles.

The King is also the chairman of *Utrikesnämnden* (The Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs), a permanent constitutional body for discussions on foreign policy between the government and the opposition in the Riksdag (Nergelius 2015: 41). The Advisory Council does not make any formal decisions. The King may, however, decide on a duty of unconditional confidentiality for the Council's deliberations (chapter 10 article 11 and 12 of the 1974 Instrument of Government). Holmberg et al (2012: 510 ff) refer to this chairmanship as probably the most important political task of the King.

The King and the Government

Under the 1974 Instrument of Government, the King and the government constitute two separate constitutional bodies. The fundamental law requires that the Prime Minister keep the King informed of the affairs of the realm. The King, in turn, shall consult the Prime Minister before travelling abroad. The reason is that the King needs to be informed of current domestic and international developments in order to carry out his duties, especially when representing Sweden internationally. This is linked to the possibility of the government convening in *konselj* (Council of State) under the chairmanship of the King (chapter 5 article 3 of the 1974 Instrument of Government). This remnant of the old Council of State is a complement to the regular weekly government meetings (regulated in chapter 7 article 3), where the King does not take part. Such Council of State meetings generally take place around three times a year (Holmberg et al 2012: 277 ff).

Information can also be conveyed in other ways between the Prime Minister or the government offices and the King (Bull and Sterzel 2015: 144).

The King's public statements and other activities must not be in conflict with the government's policy. This could imply a certain legal scope for the Prime Minister to give instructions to the King (SOU 1972:15, 139). As Sterzel (2009: 157) notes, such directives would, however, not be legally binding. It is for the King to decide on what course to take.

Controversies have occasionally arisen concerning the King's international role. In 2004, the King made positive remarks on the political system of the Sultanate of Brunei after a state visit there. The parliamentary Committee on the Constitution examined the responsibility of the Prime Minister to advise the King before state visits. It concluded that the practices in the government offices for preparing state visits needed to be improved (Bet. 2004/05:KU20, 88 ff).

Under the current Constitution, the King does not have any formal decision making power over the military, which is organised under the government. Still, the King is considered the foremost representative of the Swedish defence forces. He is therefore bestowed with the highest military titles (Prop. 1973:90, 174; Strömberg 2001–02: 723).

Conclusions

The intention of the 1974 Instrument of Government was to remove all political functions of the monarch, and to leave the King with a purely symbolic and ceremonial role. But in practice the King has retained a limited political role. He still chairs meetings of the Council of State, around three times a year; and his role as the chairman of the Advisory Council on Foreign Affairs, including decisions on confidentiality, may be seen as the most far reaching example of 'hard' powers of the King. Still, this is only an advisory board, without formal decision making competence.

Equally important are the more 'soft' constitutional powers of the King, which flow from his continuing role as head of state, representing Sweden on state visits abroad, and receiving incoming heads of state and their ambassadors. This means that the King needs to be kept abreast of current domestic as well as international developments, and the fundamental law requires the Prime Minister to keep the King informed. The recurrent contacts with the Prime Minister may establish a certain scope for informal influence in domestic as well as international matters, which may not be much less than his counterparts with more formal powers.

4.7. POLITICAL FUNCTIONS OF THE MONARCHY IN BELGIUM

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Introduction

'The King reigns, but does not rule'. Within a constitutional monarchy and a parliamentary regime like Belgium, the room for politics in the King's hands is small.

The political powers of the Belgian monarch are naturally limited. This can be explained by the conjunction of article 88 paragraph 1 of the Constitution, which provides that ‘the person of the King is inviolable’, and article 106 which provides for a ministerial counter-signature for all acts of the King. The King is, therefore, politically irresponsible for his actions and attitudes. There is no legal way to blame the King for the implications of a decision he has taken; he is not accountable to anyone. The place of the Belgian sovereign is therefore naturally in retreat and his government is in charge of the *res publica*.

However, this has not always been the case, as the first constitutional monarchs did not hesitate to take a more active part in the country’s political life. Thus, Leopold I intervened considerably in the Kingdom’s foreign policy (see Chapter 3.6), Leopold II was the main architect of the Belgian colonial era, and Baudouin clearly played a role in the Congo’s independence in the 1960s. All these examples show the influential role that the King of the Belgians was (and still is) able to play. This role is sometimes implicit by the silence of the Constitution, as in the process of forming governments. Sometimes it takes a historian’s work to discover the real influence of the sovereign in political relations, since all of this is clearly unofficial. In any case, the King retains, as Bagehot wrote, ‘the right to be consulted, to encourage, to warn’.

Government formation Process

Article 96 of the Constitution entrusts the King with the task of appointing and dismissing his ministers. However, this constitutional provision does not say anything about how the negotiations and the formation of the government itself are conducted. It is therefore the custom of the Palace that has shaped this highly political exercise. The King’s most important political power lies in the timeframe between the national election day and the installation of the new government. This power is that much greater in long periods of political crisis, as Belgium has regularly experienced (Belmessieri 2008: 810).

The formation of a government in Belgium has undergone three major stages in history. The first is that of unionism (political parties did not exist yet) and then the succession of homogeneous liberal and Catholic majorities. The King had wide room for manoeuvre to appoint his *chef de cabinet* (the word ‘Prime Minister’ would only appear after the First World War) and to veto certain personalities (Stengers 2008: 43–44). The second stage follows the creation of the Belgian Workers Party (predecessor of the Socialist Party) and paved the way for coalition governments, when Parliament became the main forum for discussion on the formation of governments, which reduced the King’s power (Velaers 2019: 443–46). Finally, since the end of the Second World War, in Belgium, as in many other liberal democracies, the apparatus of political parties has become increasingly important, making the sovereign *a priori* almost useless since discussions are essentially led at the level of party leaders. However, as has been said, political crises can occasionally restore the influence of the sovereign’s role.

In practice, the formation of a Belgian government takes place in several phases. The first is that of preliminary consultation by the King of leading politicians. These meetings take place at the discretion of the sovereign and are not public. Deciding which politicians to consult is inevitably political. Belgium has had moments of resurgence of extremist parties through its history. The King, who enjoys a wide margin of appreciation during

these preliminary consultations, has therefore sometimes been faced with the dilemma of whether or not to receive a party of the extreme right (or left). Since 1936, when Leopold III received Léon Degrelle, head of the Nazi-related Rex Party, the Crown has usually refused to meet with extreme right-wing leaders. This rule was broken in the spring of 2019, after the elections of 26 May, which saw the Flemish nationalist party VlaamsBelang increase from three to 18 seats in the House of Representatives. King Philippe eventually agreed to receive the party's President in June 2019. The party in question remains, for the moment, unacceptable in the eyes of most other parties, and the King's undoubtedly political gesture was widely commented on in the press.

In the second phase, the King usually appoints an '*informateur*' (or two, since Philippe's reign) whose task will be to prepare the ground for the actual formation of the government. Most of the time, the *informateur* is not a member of the political party that is being considered for the post of Prime Minister. The *informateur* negotiates the important points of the future coalition agreement and secures the presence of a sufficient number of parties to represent a majority in the House. After hearing his report, the King then appoints a '*formateur*', who will have the task of definitively setting up the government agreement and the list of ministers to be appointed. Even in the time of the first kings, a *formateur* was always used. It is, in a sense, an indirect way to avoid calling into question the neutrality of the monarch (Stengers 2008: 43).

When election results are more difficult to interpret and in the event of institutional crises, the King's role, which usually lasts only a few weeks, can be extended. The King may then have to use creativity to appoint personalities to resolve political tensions and reach a compromise, for example royal negotiators or groups of wise men. The longest political crisis the country has experienced, in 2010–11, lasted for 541 days. Many authors have taken an interest in this episode and revealed the political intentions that marked Albert II's choices at the time (Samyn & Peeters 2011). Among these, it is said that the King, under the advice of his Chief of Staff, refused the Flemish nationalist leader a mediation mission, and that he held the President of the Flemish Liberal Party responsible for the institutional crisis.

Daily Relations with the Government

The King is kept informed by the federal government. To that end, the Prime Minister traditionally meets the King every week at the Palace, usually on Mondays. The King also receives in audience, but only once in a Parliament, the heads of the governments of the federated entities (the 'minister-presidents'), who take an oath before him after having taken it before their Parliament. All discussions between the King and members of the government are secret.

Indeed, the King's personal share in decisions taken under the guise of the ministers' countersignature cannot be known. As a result, the *colloquium singular* between the head of state and his ministers must remain secret. This is an old practice (Molitor 1994: 100), which has also been recalled by the Soenens Committee (see Chapter 3.6). However, it should be emphasised that compliance with this obligation is not always perfect and even tends, over time, to erode. If King Baudouin still had the luxury of having politicians who held the principle in high esteem, his successors did not have the same chance. Jan Velaers

reports in particular a number of indiscretions reported on the political positions of King Albert II (Velaers 2019: 450).

The *colloquium singular* is a double-edged sword. On the one hand, it certainly protects the neutrality of the sovereign who, in any case, is inviolable. The prohibition of reporting the King's words is, in this sense, a prescriptive rule to confirm that 'the King can do no wrong'. On the other hand, it creates a certain screen behind which the King may be able to play politics.

The King consults on both sides of the political (and of course linguistic) spectrum, and is not obliged to speak only to members of the coalition parties of his current government (Molitor 1994: 50). However, the political power of the King should not be overestimated. Indeed, today the monarch is most often informed via the media of government decisions requiring his signature (Belmessieri 2008: 808).

Power of Influence

The King also has an undeniable representative function, which contains a political aspect. On the one hand, in carrying out representative functions within the country the King is the embodiment of national unity; this may run against separatist currents or help with the appeasement of institutional crises. This can be seen in the King's only two official speeches in a calendar year: 20 July (the day before Belgium's national day) and 24 December. Thus, King Albert II's speeches from 2006 onwards, although consensual (they had to be approved by the government, which takes responsibility for them), were an echo of the troubled times of the country's longest political crisis (Vuye & Wouters 2016a: 280–300).

On the other hand, at the international level, the numerous state visits and other royal economic missions often make the King the showcase of Belgium's economic policy: the King's presence increases the prestige of the delegation and the chances of attracting investment and contracts. The Palace's (and especially the chief of staff's) opaque role in this matter is crucial, since it negotiates the sovereign's agenda with the government (Vuye & Wouters 2016a: 135–47).

Finally, it should be noted that the King of the Belgians enters the *Palais de la Nation*, where the Parliament is located, in principle only once, during his swearing-in ceremony. There are no 'state of the Union' speeches or other official speeches to members of Parliament. His ministers are responsible for representing the executive branch in the Parliament, which can call on them to explain themselves, as well as ask for a vote of no confidence.

4.8. CONCLUSIONS

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We have tried in this chapter to explain the day to-day political functions of the monarch. This is not easy, because on the whole they are less visible than the constitutional functions. The monarch is kept informed about the business of government through regular

meetings with the Prime Minister, with other ministers, and with senior officers of state, and through receiving a regular flow of Cabinet and state papers. The monarch's consent or countersignature is given at meetings of the Council of State, but is also handled through exchanges of correspondence, reading official papers and signing documents of all kinds. It is hard grind, with a lot of paperwork: monarchs have to sign hundreds of documents every week. In the UK The Queen receives a box of official papers every working day, with a larger box at weekends, and for routine business turns round papers within a working day.

Formally the monarch has little or no discretion: little choice but to sign or approve every action or decision of the government. But through Bagehot's trio of rights, the right to be consulted, to encourage and to warn, monarchs can develop influence, even if they do not have a power of veto. The Dutch contributions show that a strong minded monarch can occasionally have influence: Queen Juliana in preventing the execution of war criminals, and withholding assent to legislation limiting the size of the royal family; Queen Beatrix in her close interest in the appointment of Queen's Commissioners, mayors or ambassadors. How much influence a monarch can have will vary from country to country: it is hard to conceive of a Danish monarch being as interventionist as these two Dutch Queens. It will also vary from monarch to monarch within the same country: Queen Margrethe of Denmark takes a much closer interest in politics than her father Frederik IX; and King Willem-Alexander appears to be less interventionist than his mother Queen Beatrix. And finally, how much influence a monarch can have will depend on the issue in question, the relationship between monarch and prime minister, and the willingness of each to give way.

We can never know the full extent of a monarch's influence, because our knowledge of their political role is based on anecdotal, indirect and incomplete information. But it is likely that interventions by the monarch are incidental, exceptional and at the margins. No one could claim that Queen Beatrix changed Dutch foreign policy through opening an embassy in Jordan, or having the ambassador to South Africa transferred. Nor has Queen Elizabeth changed British foreign policy through her own powerful attachment to the Commonwealth: her enthusiasm has not been shared by any of her governments, until Brexit led the present government to rediscover the Commonwealth, in search of trade deals.

A different kind of influence might be psychological rather than political: the potential for the monarch to provide encouragement and support to the prime minister through their weekly meetings. Being a modern prime minister is intensely demanding, emotionally and physically, and since their senior colleagues are potential political rivals there is often no one in whom they can easily confide. Many senior business and public sector leaders now have regular sessions with a mentor or coach, an independent figure with whom they can discuss their problems in complete confidence. It may not always be the case, but is it too fanciful to suggest that sometimes, when the chemistry is right, similar benefits can accrue to a prime minister from their weekly sessions with the monarch? How many European prime ministers might echo the words of Ted Heath, when he said 'I could confide in Her Majesty absolutely, not only about political matters, but also about the personal affairs of those involved'?

Monarchs who are too interventionist will encounter resistance and lose their reputation for neutrality. As Helle Krunke shows, the scope for the monarch to be a neutral

actor is shrinking, as traditional areas for royal activity like humanitarian relief, sport or the arts have become increasingly politicised. This can make it harder for the royal family to demonstrate its utility while remaining politically neutral. In Denmark and in the Netherlands the monarch's Christmas speech has incurred criticism when advocating greater tolerance for refugees, immigrants and minority communities. But when it comes to organising the programme of visits within their own country monarchs still have considerable discretion, in terms of the causes they are seen to support, such as the visits made by the royal couple in Norway during the Breivik trial. And there is greater scope for the Crown Prince or Princess to support causes which might be deemed controversial or political, on the understanding that when they become monarch, their behaviour will need to become more restrained and strictly neutral. For examples of the different causes they support, see Chapter 8.5.

Finally, it is worth asking, not simply how much influence does the monarch have, but how much should they have? So far, no other country has followed the example of Sweden, and reduced the monarch to a purely ceremonial role. Luxembourg contemplated doing so: as Luc Heuschling explains (in Chapter 3.8), after the 2008 crisis the politicians initially planned a radical revision of the constitution, stripping the Grand Duke of all political functions, but have since opted for more modest reforms. The Netherlands have also taken a step towards the Swedish model, in removing the monarch's role in government formation since 2012.

The Swedish model seems a logical solution: it is hard to defend the retention of political power by a hereditary monarch in a modern parliamentary democracy. So why have the other countries resisted the Swedish example? There are three possible explanations. One is simply inertia, and a reluctance by politicians to challenge the powers of an institution which commands strong popular support (see Chapter 9). A second may be resistance by monarchs themselves, and a concern that if they lose their formal political role, they will also lose the means of informal influence. It must be unrewarding drudgery, signing hundreds of documents as a mere cypher, and it would be only human for monarchs to expect something in return. But a final explanation, developed more fully in Chapter 10, may be the value in a political system of a *pouvoir neutre*: someone above the political fray, with a legitimising role, whose legitimacy derives precisely from their complete neutrality.