

ANNALES  
UNIVERSITATIS MARIAE CURIE-SKŁODOWSKA  
LUBLIN – POLONIA

VOL. XXXII, 2

SECTIO K

2025

BARBARA JOANNA BIENIEK

University of Silesia. Faculty of Social Sciences

ORCID ID: 0000-0003-2048-3700

*We Want a Republic! A Comparative Analysis of Criticism  
of Monarchy in Denmark, Norway and Sweden*

---

Cheemy republiki! Analiza porównawcza krytyki monarchii w Danii, Norwegii i Szwecji

ABSTRACT

Denmark, Norway and Sweden are Scandinavian monarchies. Although monarchs in Scandinavia and royal families are generally respected, they do draw criticism. This article examines the anti-monarchy arguments used by Scandinavian republicans – first, monarchy as an anti-democratic; second, as a despotic; third, as an antiquated mode of rule; and, finally, as an imposing a financial burden on the state. In the research two questions were posed: Do Danish, Norwegian and Swedish republicans share anti-monarchy arguments?; Do republicans, on the contrary, represent contrasting systems of values regarding monarchy? The hypothesis stipulates that Scandinavian republicans present very similar arguments, and that their rhetoric revolves around “discussing” rather than “taking action” to replace the monarch with a president. Study applies critical and comparative analysis and critical literature analysis to the sources, which include literature on the monarchy as well as anti-monarchs’ online sources and legal documents.

**Keywords:** Scandinavian monarchies, republic, monarchy, republicans, democracy

INTRODUCTION

During the last centuries, European monarchs, especially Scandinavian ones, lost most of the power once vested in their hands. They became constitutional monarchs, working within increasingly democratic states. Modern constitutional monarchies can also be called parliamentary monarchies. In a parliamentary monarchy, the parliament dominates over the monarch, for it is the legislature that elects government

ministers. In short, the parliament leads a country, the government governs, while the monarch can only reign [Rusak 2003: 37–38]. The king or queen is just a symbol, without any of the powers delegated to the government and parliament. There is, however, one condition: the monarch must be informed of recent decisions regarding the state and is, at times, allowed to give public expressions to her or his concerns and opinions [Encyklopedia... 2008: 158].

Today, the power held by Europe's constitutional monarchs varies, from the greater power of Liechtenstein's monarchies to the almost completely nominal power of Scandinavian monarchs. In Scandinavia, this means that the monarch performs only ceremonial duties, such as participating in national holidays, delivering speeches to the nation, and promoting national culture and heritage at home and abroad. Nonetheless, many Scandinavian citizens feel that monarchies should be replaced with republics. Monarchies may seem outdated, unsuitable for the modern world, which should be ruled by democratic republics. But why is there a need to replace monarchies with republics?

The topic of this article was chosen due to the limited amount of national and international research in this matter. No study in the shape of research articles or monographs has been so far published analyzing the aforesaid issue of Scandinavian republicans' arguments regarding having a crowned head of state. The only available source are news and websites of political parties or pro-republican formations. This research paper is oriented to shed a light on yet another topic regarding the sense of having a monarch in Europe in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The main purpose of this article is to present the arguments used by the republicans in Denmark, Norway and Sweden. In this paper two following questions were posed: Do Danish, Norwegian and Swedish republicans share anti-monarchy arguments?; Do republicans in Scandinavian countries represent contrasting systems of values regarding the Crown? The hypothesis states that the republicans use similar arguments, and that their discourse is based mostly on having a discussion rather than proceeding to abolishing monarchy. The results were achieved through methods such as critical and comparative analysis and critical literature analysis.<sup>1</sup>

#### ANTI-MONARCHY ARGUMENTS

For the purpose of this paper, republicans' arguments from Denmark, Norway, and Sweden will be divided into four themes: antidemocratic nature of monarchy; monarchy as a despotic regime; outmoded character of monarchy; monarchy as a financial burden for the state.

---

<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank Madeleine Hurd and Norbert Götz who were in charge of Writing in Academic English: A Hands-On ReNEW Workshop (September 13–16, 2023) organised by the ReNEW (Reimagining Norden in an Evolving World) funded by NordForsk through Nordic University Hubs initiative.

Monarchies are not democratic. Monarchs are not elected; they are born into the “right” family. As Thomas Paine pointed out, in 1791, monarchy – “a silly and contemptible thing” – might well put a madman on the throne [Hitchens 2008: 25]. But monarchies also depend on unequal rights. Even today, members of a royal family may enjoy special privileges, such as exemptions from the obligation to pay taxes or take responsibility for their actions. The Norwegian Constitution establishes the person of the monarch as something sacrosanct; the monarch cannot be legally prosecuted. All accountability for the monarch’s actions rests with the members of his or her Council (Article 5) [The Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway adopted May 17, 1814]. But monarchs may also have fewer rights than other citizens. European royal families do not seem to complain much about this, but the fact remains. Those wishing to inherit the throne must, often, adhere to a certain confession; they must sometimes ask permission to marry. Nor may they give public expression to their feelings and opinions, at least on political matters. All of this is in contradiction to the UN Declaration of Human Rights (1948).

To attack “monarchy as a despotic mode of rule” is to bring up images of an absolute monarch, comparing a constitutional monarch to Ivan the Impaler, Louis XIV, or Henry VIII. There are still concerns about undue political influence, even in today’s strictly circumscribed Scandinavian monarchies. Swedish critics point, for instance, to the one-to-one meetings between the monarch and the prime minister (Article 3). It is impossible to tell if the meetings consist of the prime minister merely imparting information, or whether the monarch significantly influences government policy. The reports on these regularly conducted conversations are not made available to the public [Sweden: *The Instrument of Government* 1974: 152].

The third argument describes monarchies as a relic of the past. Critics of monarchy point to exhibitions of royal splendor, the festive celebrations of royal birthdays, weddings, coronations and funerals, as outmoded. The recent British coronation ceremony of Charles III on May 6, 2023 is only the most striking example of a lavish ceremony, complete with regalia, costumes, and gestures. As one Scandinavian critic put it:

Driving through the streets in a golden carriage, waving to the cheering crowds, then putting on a jewelled crown and the gaze of thousands of spectators from all over the world, and ending the celebrations with a big pop concert – that sounds like the dream of every Barbie Princess. [Felgendreff, 2023]

The final major objection raised by republicans is that the monarchy imposes a heavy financial burden on the state. There is, in addition, the issue of unclear, irregular and unpublished accounts of how this money is spent. Royal families are seen as dead weight on the state budget, which has to provide the ruling dynasty with its apanages as well as running expenses for security, residences and travel. The money, republicans argue, might be much better spent on things like fighting

poverty. The critique sharpens when royal financial scandals are exposed. In 2011, for instance, King Juan Carlos entered into 7 billion euro contract with Saudi Arabia to build a high-speed rail – a tender which led to the monarch's forced abdication [*The Role of Monarchy...* 2020].

Scandinavian monarchies are not noted for neither scandals nor lavish ceremonies. Rather, Danish, Norwegian and Swedish monarchs have adopted a new approach in their relationship to the public. Their “golden mean” for preserving the Scandinavian monarchy is to move closer to the people. They present themselves as part of society rather than a higher, privileged group in the social hierarchy. Surveys show that this approach has been successful. In a poll conducted in 2018, 76.7% of Danes approved of monarchy [*What do Europeans...* 2023]. A 2017 study confirmed that 81% of Norwegian supported the Norwegian Crown; while 54% of Swedes voted in favor of keeping the Swedish king in 2022 [*ibid.*]. This shows the extent of popular respect for the monarchy; there seems no need to replace it. But opposition does exist: republicans argue that abolishing the monarchy would lead to greater economic development, stability, security and prosperity.

## DENMARK

In Scandinavian countries, some political parties are forming an anti-monarchy front. In Denmark, the political party *Republik nu*, founded on June 21, 2009, intends to replace the monarchy with a republic. The general idea is to introduce equality, freedom and fair play neglected in a state with a monarch [Smitt 2022]. According to the party, the monarchy is indifferent and harmful, does not provide stability and cannot be responsible for tradition and history. As mentioned earlier, *Republik nu* stresses that stability depends solely on people and culture [*Republik nu...*]. Republican Party member, Viggo Smitt, stresses that in a democratic state, no one is privileged to inherit power and carry the titles of Royal Highness. Queen Margaret II of Denmark (1972–2024), called by Smitt a “relatively mediocre and somewhat artificial upper-class woman” [*Republik nu...*], would not satisfy the Danes, even if the queen made every effort to avoid mistakes [*Republik nu...*]. This means that Danish republicans remained dissatisfied despite what Margaret II was doing. This argument that the abolition of the monarchy should be replaced by a republic without providing concrete evidence is the main reason for the low public support for the introduction of a republic.

On the other hand, representatives of the *Republik nu* criticize the monarchists for their actions. Mads Rundstrøm, the chair of *Republik nu*, put an emphasis on the lack of knowledge from the pro-monarchists' side, who simply are not aware of the provisions stated in the constitution [Bryant 2024]. Their ignorance leads to questioning the value of democracy by supporting the monarchy and campaigning against the republicans. Referring to the actions of monarchists is quite an original argument. Republicans have found a “scapegoat” not in the form of the monarchy, but in the form of supporters of the

Crown. The *Republik nu* suggests adopting the strategy of the monarchists, i.e. attacking the opposition. Attacking the monarchists is a deliberate action, because reducing the number of Crown advocates is a key step towards overthrowing the monarchy. This is essential for a constitutional monarchy who has neither an army nor a sophisticated bureaucratic system to preserve his or her position. Monarchs are therefore the only “sword” and “shield” a crowned head of state can wield. However, the establishment of a republic is not the answer to all questions and the way to solve all problems, as Republicans realize. On the other hand, opponents of the Crown emphasize the most crucial advantage of a republic – the separation of powers. In a monarchy, there is an individual who holds power for life. Such exercise of power opposes the rotation of offices based on a short-term mandate obtained by a competent and qualified person. As a result, paraphrasing Thomas Paine, monarchy carries the risk that a madman will sit on the throne [*Republik nu...*].

*Republik nu* highlights another original view of the monarch’s formal power. Monarchs claim that today’s monarchy pursues only ceremonial goals, and that monarchs cannot perform any political functions. The truth, however, is different. A crowned head of state is a means for those who want to be closer to the royal court. This is made possible by “fulfilling the wishes of the monarch”. These “wishes” are, according to republicans, mostly illegal, non-transparent and evidence of abuse of the monarch’s power [*Republik nu...*]. As an example, consider the Queen’s use of the Council of State, through which Margaret can contact influential politicians without hindrance [*Republik nu...*]. The aforementioned republican argument is close to Walter Bagehot’s view. According to him, monarchy is a significant theatrical performance, a kind of smokescreen behind which power operates more effectively when it is shrouded in secrecy [Grever 2006: 167]. Thus, the royal power, having the power of “shrouding”, can indirectly influence the political decisions and actions of politicians.

It is also worth mentioning the importance of Danish history, which plays a key role in the rhetoric of the *Republik nu*. However, according to the Republicans, Danes should not be tied to the past. The Republicans’ historical argument refers to the old-fashioned nature of the monarchy. Second, praising infamous events is irrational. *Republik nu* places the power of the crowned head of state in the same group as the cruel punishments, social hierarchy and gender inequality once practiced in Denmark. The institution of the monarch thus impedes progress and denies all that the state has achieved so far [*Republik nu...*].

*Republik nu* criticizes another argument used by the monarchists. Republicans cite the monarch’s contribution to promoting Danish exports. The anti-monarchs compare this case to “prostitution” and a kind of “selling” of the ruler’s skills to promote state interests. Republicans further postulate that the high level of international trade is not because of having a crowned head of state, but because of the quality of products [*Republik nu...*]. The same is with tourism. Many foreigners visiting Denmark do not even realize that the country is a monarchy. Royal monuments and mansions are often not on the main itinerary compared to other well-known desti-

nations such as Tivoli or Legoland. Nevertheless, all monuments reflecting the royal era can undoubtedly be seen in the Republic of Denmark [*Republik nu...*].

The anti-monarchist front, in addition to *Republik nu*, is formed by the Unity List (*Enhedslisten, Ø*). The Unity List views the privileged position of the royal family and its high place in the social hierarchy as undemocratic [Kristensen 2017]. Party members have expressed their dislike of the monarchy, among others by refusing to attend Mary Donaldson's wedding to Prince Frederick on May 14, 2004 [*Republicans threaten...* 2004]. The Socialist People's Party (*Socialistisk Folkeparti, SF*)<sup>2</sup> also questions the value of monarchy. The party's criticism centers around the undemocratic succession of power [Kristensen 2017].

There is little likelihood that the Danish Republicans' strategy to establish a republic in Denmark will succeed. The unreliability and lack of logic in the arguments presented make it difficult to convince Danes to change the regime. For the Danish public, members of the royal family are decent and loyal. The current dynasty is a symbol of national history, an integral part of Danish culture and identity. Danes are aware that political reforms can threaten stability and order. And even if Danes are willing to change the system of government, they prefer to replace the monarchy with a republic as a result of natural causes, such as the death of the monarch or abdication [*Republicans threaten...* 2004]. The event which provided an opportunity to bring up the question of abolishing monarchy was Margaret's abdication in May 2024. Mads Rundstrøm believes that this is the time to renew a debate about the future of the monarchy, since there has been an noticeable interest in becoming a member of *Republik nu*. Simultaneously, changing the crowned head of states brings closer an idea of having a referendum in Denmark [Bryant 2024].

However, according to the Republicans, the Danish public, does not want the abolition of the monarchy because of the legal chaos, but because they are intimidated. Culture spokesman Rasmus Nordqvist of The Alternative commented on the attitude of the Danes as follows: "We are completely afraid to talk about the royal family, which is funny because whether you are a republican or not, you should at least be able to talk about it" [Kristensen 2017]. Nordqvist compared criticizing the royal family to portraying the Prophet Muhammad in the Islamic religion. Politicians do not dare to speak openly about the royal family in the media, but even so, when the cameras and microphones are off, political leaders do not hesitate to condemn the dynasty [*ibid.*]. Zenia Stampe, co-founder of the Republican Institution Movement, says opponents of the Crown are treated as public enemies who harm the national interest [*ibid.*]. The monarchy deprived people of their freedom of speech to obey the Crown, which corresponds to Étienne de la Boétie's beliefs. Boétie argued that only a despotic regime contributes to the loss of the ability to say "no". Opposition is a natural right of both humans and animals. Animals always fight to the end to regain their freedom, while

---

<sup>2</sup> Presently, it is the Green Left (*Socialistisk Folkeparti, SF*).

humans effortlessly submit to the oppressor [Pieters, Roose 2006: 86]. For republicans, monarchy is a kind of tyranny. If you defy the Crown, you will be punished.

On the other hand, Republicans seem to sympathize with the monarch. This is because they point out the vulnerability of the royal family in defending the institution of the Crown. Members of the dynasty cannot (or should not) criticize any political action or address the nation without consultation. Secondly, the defenseless royal family is unable to defend itself against attacks by anti-monarchical politicians [Kristensen 2017]. Supporters of the republic are against the monarchy's restrictions on freedom. Restricting the right to or directing speech to the immediate public negatively affects the national interest. Monarchs, in the performance of their duties, could contribute to the image of the state if their freedom of speech was treated on an equal footing with other freedoms and human rights. From February 28 to March 1, 2016, then the Crown Prince of Denmark participated in the promotion of the Danish export campaign in Saudi Arabia. However, he did not condemn the state of human rights and women's rights in the Arabian Gulf [*ibid.*]. The foreign event could have been a chance to show the true power of the crowned head of state.

Danish anti-monarchy movement uses classical arguments (other than economic ones) [*What do the Danes...* 2023]<sup>3</sup> against the monarchy. Republicans emphasize the anti-democratic, despotic and outdated nature of the privileged crowned head of state. Secondly, Danish anti-monarchs allude to the uselessness of the monarchy. The novelty of republican rhetoric is to invoke the strategy of monarchists. Supporters of the monarchy attack republicans and defend the monarchy against all accusations. This attitude is recommended for adoption by anti-monarchs. Lastly, opponents of the Danish Crown emphasize the problem of portraying republicans – as an enemy of the state, which makes it difficult to form attitudes against the Crown. In conclusion, the monarchy, according to Danish republicans, is not a democratic and liberal mode of government in which freedom and human rights are protected.

## NORWAY

Norway stands out from other Scandinavian monarchies in terms of republican efforts to abolish the monarchy. It is an annual tradition to ask the parliament (Storting) to approve the transition from monarchy to republic [Grønli, Wernersen

<sup>3</sup> The costs of maintaining the Danish royal family reach around DKK 343 million, including state contribution to the dynasty's members of DKK 82 million a year. This money is intended to cover living costs, including staff, clothes, transport, heating and electricity in their castles. Nevertheless, the expenses include the bill of the Royal Guard, the Royal Castles, and the Danish Secret Service, as well as state visits, royal properties, etc. However, the question is that no official communication on the financial conditions and royal expenses has not been published since 2009 when Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen informed about the sum of DKK 343 million spent on royal needs and duties. But annually, the Royal Household informs the public about its accounts and how the royal family spends state money.

2013]. Making proposals to abolish the Crown has been ingrained in Norwegian constitutionalism since 1972. The tradition was started by the Socialist Left Party (*Sosialistisk Venstreparti*, SV) [Aanmoen 2019]. Republicans are using royal scandals to persuade members of parliament to support an anti-royal proposal. One of the most shocking situation is the engagement from June 2022 of Princess Märtha Louise to self-proclaimed shaman Durek Verrett, which caused the king's daughter to relinquish her royal duties [Milne 2023].

Scandals in the royal court did not contribute significantly to gaining more parliamentary support. In January 2019, voting results showed that 36 of 169 parliamentary representatives voted in favor of the republic [Aanmoen 2019]. Three years later, in June 2022, Culture Minister Anette Trettebergstuen authored a motion against the monarchy. 134 PMS voted in favor of the monarchy, compared to 25 votes for a republic [Aanmoen 2022]. It is puzzling that Anette Trettebergstuen, as a minister, had had to take an oath before the king, and yet she voted against the Crown. She explained her pro-Republican stance in the following words: "I love the Norwegian royal family and think it is great to meet the King and the Crown Prince every Friday. Nevertheless, I am in principle a republican, and believe power should not be inherited" [*ibid.*]. I dare say that Norwegian politicians have an ambiguous approach to their duties. On the one hand, ministers must be loyal to the Crown, which is a *sine qua non* for holding a particular office. On the other hand, the opinions of political leaders can contradict the official statement.

The main supporters of establishing a republic in Norway are the Red (*Rødt*), the Socialist Left Party (SV) and Norway as a republic (*Norge som republikk*). *Rødt* criticizes the privileges and power inherited by the royal family. Secondly, *Rødt* points out that the monarchy is undemocratic. People should have the right to choose decision-makers and participate in the decision-making process in their own country. Thirdly, *Rødt* emphasizes the economic burden of paying for the appanages of the dynasty. Therefore, spending on the monarchy should be reduced [*Rødt*]. Monarchy, in Red's program, has to be abolished through referendum [*Foreslår nytt Rødt-partiprogram: ... 2024*]. SV joins the pro-republican discourse and takes the initiative to change the system of government in Norway. In 2012, SV members (Hallgeir H. Langeland, Snorre Serigstad Valen) together with some representatives of the Labor Party (Eirin Sund, Truls Wickholm, Marianne Marthinsen and Jette F. Christensen) presented a proposal [*Dokument 12:10 (2011–2012)*] for a monarchy. The authors of the document describe succession of posts as an undemocratic practice and a historical anachronism. Therefore, SV and the Labor Party have proposed a new bill for a Norwegian Republic [*ibid.*].

*Norge som republikk* is an association presenting a complete program for a future Norwegian Republic. They point to the cost of having a court as one of the arguments for abolishing the monarchy. According to a 2016 *Dagbladet* study, taxpayers paid about NOK 460 million a year to maintain the royal court [*Norge som republikk* 2023]. Victoria Åsne Kinsella, a member of the board of *Norge som republikk*, highlights the main flaws of the monarchy. On the one hand, royals are deprived of basic human rights,

including freedom of religion, freedom of speech or marrying whomever they want. On the other hand, placing the royal family above the law is itself contrary to democracy. Kinsella also raised an intriguing point. She highlights the requirements that must be met by the heir to the throne [Kinsella 2023: “All heirs to the throne have been white, Christian, heterosexually married people with biological children” *ibid.*]. Thus, for Norway’s multicultural society, the royal family is not a symbol of all Norwegians, but only of those citizens who resemble members of the dynasty.

Skeptics of the royal power *sensu largo* are predicting the demise of the monarchy. But the republicans and the annual Storting vote pose no serious threat to either the royal family or the monarchy in Norway. According to Norstat, in 2014, 82% of Norwegians expressed their support for the royal family [Kalajdzic 2023]: “It’s definitely the highest number I’ve heard in 20 years”, said political scientist and royal house expert Carl-Erik Grimstad [*ibid.*]. Kjetil Alstadheim explains the reasons why the monarchy achieved such a result. First of all, the question of a republic seems unclear to Norwegians, who do not see a republic as a credible option. Furthermore, discussion of the possible legitimacy of a republican government is all but absent from public discourse [*ibid.*]. Wibecke Lie adds that Norwegian citizens respect the monarch’s commitment to social issues. Finally, as Lie notes, royal personalities unite the nation [*ibid.*]. Like Lie, Kjell Arne Totland argues that the royal family’s participation in society significantly affects the perception of the monarchy by younger generations, who are more interested in matters related to the Crown. The royal family is the epitome of the Norwegian nation – a symbol common to all Norwegians [*ibid.*].

Norwegian republicans emphasize the main flaws of the monarchy: its anti-democratic nature, the inheritance of power, privileges and the deprivation of the royal family of key human rights. Unlike in Denmark, anti-monarchists include economic rationale in their argument. In addition, supporters of a republic from Norway present a new discriminatory argument regarding informal racial, religious and sexual requirements for couples with offspring. In conclusion, the possibility of regime change in the near future does not exist. As for the annual vote, it is merely part of Norwegian parliamentary tradition, not a sign of the overthrow of the monarchy. The main obstacle to the establishment of a republic is the attitude of Norwegians. Norwegian society accepts the monarch and appreciates the royal family’s initiatives. At the same time, the Kingdom’s citizens have no intention of destabilizing the political situation caused by a change in the political system.

## SWEDEN

Unlike Norway and Denmark, Swedish favorability for the Crown is declining. Lennart Nilsson notes that support for the monarchy has gradually decreased. But Swedes do not intend to implement the political change. As Nilsson underlines, the Swedish public is concerned about other issues, such as healthcare or education [Ta-

gliabue 2010]. The declining number of monarchy supporters is due to the Swedish monarchists' emotional attachment to the Crown. From the rational perspective, Crown supporters are more likely to agree with republicans' arguments [*ibid.*]. This is an opportune time for anti-monarchists to launch a successful campaign on pro-republican issues.

One of the most important republican organizations in Sweden is the Swedish Republican Association (*Republikanska föreningen*, RepF), founded on November 6, 1999. RepF has been growing steadily, gaining new members, including among parliamentarians (Birgitta Ohlsson and Hillevi Larsson), mainly because of the royal scandals [Mattsson 2021; Savic 2004].<sup>4</sup> RepF's anti-monarchist program contains three main arguments in favor of a republic in Sweden. Firstly, inheriting power in the same family is not democratic. It is more prudent to elect people who are competent and knowledgeable [Blidh 2009: 18]: "Better crowd than genetic material!" [*Republikanska föreningen*]. Hillevi Larsson, former chair of the RepF, emphasizes the undemocratic nature of the monarchy. The monarch cannot be deposed or elected, and formally the queen or king stands above the *talman*, prime minister and parliament (Riksdag) [Larsson 2006: 41]. Niclas Malmberg, the chair of the RepF, highlighted that even that the royal family is deprived of crucial state competences, still possess both formal and informal political power [Malmberg 2024a]. Those who support monarchy opt for anti-modern state [Malmberg 2024b]. Secondly, the Crown opposes democratic values such as rights and equality, and leads to a cult of the individual. The third argument cited is that members of the royal family are deprived of the right to determine their own lives [Blidh 2009: 18, 20; Larsson 2006: 43].<sup>5</sup> In short, the abolition of the monarchy would be a relief to the dynasty and would abolish "royal slavery."

According to republicans, the undemocratic nature of the monarchy is that it violates the principle of equality. Due to the immunity from prosecution (*åtalsimmunitet*), the monarch cannot be prosecuted for any crime he or she has committed. Olle Palmlöf points out that in this case Sweden is violating Article 7 of the UN Declaration of Human Rights. However, immunity from prosecution is in accordance with the Swedish Constitution [*Kungörelse (1974:152) om beslutad ny regeringsform (RF)*], which states: "The King does not take any responsibility for his deed" [*Republik nu...*]. In 2003, the Swedish tabloid "Aftonbladet" commented on this legal

<sup>4</sup> One of them was the king's trip to Brunei, during which Carl XVI Gustaf praised royal dictatorship describing him as a "leader who is close to his people and who is not a dictator" [*en ledare som står nära sitt folk och inte som någon dictator*]. Another controversy was related to Crown Princess Victoria's speech, which said that electing Magdalena Andersson as a first Swedish Prime Minister on 30 November 2021 "is an important symbol" [*Det är en viktig symbol*]. Ellen Myrgård Lindén, the journalist of "Svensk Dam", commented on Victoria's words as a phenomenon of stepping out of line regarding limitations of expressing opinion.

<sup>5</sup> For instance, Crown Princess Victoria must always ask her father whether or not she can travel abroad.

principle in a news article titled “Avsätt kungen för demokratins skull”: “The king can therefore kill without being prosecuted, but cannot be an atheist without getting fired” [Avsätt kungen för... 2003].

Among the opponents of the Crown are political parties: the Green Party (*Miljöpartiet*, MP) and the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*, V) [Nilsson 2017]. The MP program is not as developed as the V program. However, the Green Party stresses that monarchy is no longer fashionable in Sweden [Time to Abolish the... 2016]. The Left Party, on the other hand, is trying to become more actively involved in abolishing the monarchy in Sweden. In 2005, *Vänsterpartiet* submitted “Avskaffande av monarkin och utarbetande av en republikansk författning i Sverige Motion 2005/06:K347”. The document explains the arguments against the monarchy and presents a Swedish republican constitution. The draft describes monarchs as “old wizards” and the monarchy as a “source of demoralization”. The authors point out the undemocratic regulations still present in the Swedish constitution. For example, the definition of the king as head of state, who is not elected. Secondly, the monarch has specific political roles. The Queen or King of Sweden is chairman of the Special Information Council and the Foreign Affairs Council (*utrikesnämnden*). In addition, the crowned head of state is responsible for opening the annual session of the Riksdag. This means that the monarch has been given power by the parliament, not the people. In the 2018 edition of “Avskaffa monarkin. Motion 2017/18:2120”, the Left Party authors again signaled the political functions performed by the monarch and the necessity of electing a head of state as a *sine qua non* of a modern democratic state [Avskaffa monarkin. Motion till riksdagen 2017/18: 2120: 1].

Swedish republicans emphasize anti-democratic arguments about the monarchy, which also harms members of the ruling family. In addition, anti-monarchists highlights the old-fashioned nature of having a crowned head of state. Republicans, however, repeatedly emphasize the monarch’s unlimited role in influencing national politics. This is the main reason for abolishing the monarchy, as it denies the importance of constitutional monarchy.

## CONCLUSION

The arguments of the Danish, Norwegian and Swedish republicans fall into themes of anti-monarchy standpoints. However, the frequency of their occurrence differs. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, anti-monarchist rhetoric is mainly concerned with the undemocratic nature of the monarchy, including the inheritance of power, privileges and the deprivation of the royal family of basic human rights. Only in Norway did republicans mention the economic burden of supporting the crowned head of state and the royal family. Monarchy as a despotic and old-fashioned way of governing a state is a constant argument among opponents of the Danish and Swedish Crowns, with the exception of Norway.

In addition, Scandinavian republicans have their own unique arguments. In Denmark, the comparison of the monarchy to “prostitution” is noteworthy. On the other hand, republicans regret that the dynasty cannot be less restricted in its rights, including expression. A monarchy that ensures freedoms could be more constructive and beneficial to the national interest. Accordingly, Danish anti-monarchs refrain from ruthlessly attacking the royal family, which lacks the means to defend itself. In addition, Danish republicans recommend adopting the tactics of supporters of the Crown, i.e. attacking the opposition. Norwegian republicans have shed light on the requirements for becoming heir to the Crown: a certain skin color, gender and religious faith. However, in Sweden, the political nature of the Swedish monarch is often emphasized, and regardless of the constitution, he or she can still strongly influence national politics. In summary, supporters of the republic mainly use arguments based on the anti-democratic and outdated nature of the monarchy. The cost of maintaining the head of state and the royal family, combined with its despotic nature, appeared sporadically in the discourse of the groups analyzed. However, this does not mean that these accusations are not present in the general mainstream against the Crown. Despite the fact that republicans use the same arguments, they supplement their discourse with a set of ideas specific to a particular anti-monarchist grouping.

To some extent, the Republicans are right to abolish the monarchy, for at first glance it reminds the remains of the Ancient Regime that defiles democracy, particularly since there is still a group of people who enjoy privileges. However, republicans’ arguments feature the most common anti-monarchy aspects without diving into the deeper meaning of the monarchy. The undemocratic nature of having the Crown is emphasized by the fact that being born into a royal family makes them a special and privileged group. If we take a closer look at this matter, we can notice that a heir is prepared from the beginning to fulfil the role of a monarch and to represent the country with dignity, unlike a prime minister or president who take over the position as a result of the vote. The fact that a monarch stands above politicians derives from an old tradition, when a king was at the top of the political pyramid, supported by a group of advisors, later known as the government, the parliament as a body that formed the opposition, and an independent court.

Special privileges, such as the lack of accountability for actions, originate from being represented by ministers who approve state documents. Furthermore, as a constitutional monarch, it seems illogical to bear responsibility for actions over which the crowned head of state has no control. However, the exemption from tax and criminal liability seems rather unfair, but it can be justified. Being privileged is supposed to keep the royal family above society, giving the impression of their uniqueness; otherwise, what is the point of having people who are devoid of any power, yet not obligated to follow universal rules? Dynasty representatives create the illusion of mystery and an inaccessible realm, which even if we manage to get close to, we still will not be able to fathom its essence. On the other hand, the general rule of freedom

in criticising monarchy has also prevailed, contrary to what republicans say, and is visible in a free journalism, published anti-monarchy books and motions send to the parliament to reduce the power or abolish completely the monarchy.

Not having the same rights as others is also questioned by monarchists. Members of royal family when they no longer intend to perform royal duties can always step down. Undoubtedly, this may cause some controversy, especially if the successor decides to do so, but legally they have every right to do it. Moreover, equality has been introduced by replacing agnatic succession with the cognate one which enabled women to inherit the throne. Moreover, there is now a tendency to exclude children who are not directly related to the succession to the throne to release them from this dynasty burden. This has already happened in Denmark, where Queen Margrethe stripped four of her grandchildren of their royal titles in 2022, and in 2019, Swedish King Carl XVI Gustav did the same to five of his grandchildren. It is worth mentioning that being locked in a “golden cage” should be a wake-up call that even if members of the royal family can live in luxury, certain restrictions have prevailed.

As hard power in the form of being politically active has disappeared, soft power has begun to play a significant role in maintaining a constitutionally limited position in the state. Members of the royal family intend to integrate into society, to be closer to the citizens, actively engaging in social problems. Monarchs want to be closer to society because they are the only bastion that can help it survive. The fact that a royal family are described as indifferent and harmful is a far-fetched fact. Repeatedly, the monarch appeared as an integrating force while politicians failed to deal with the situation. When the tsunami hit the Southeast Asian coast on December 26, 2004, among the victims were 543 Swedes who died and 1,500 who were injured. The Swedish government was accused of gross negligence in the tragedy. Meanwhile, the monarch addressed the nation with an emotional speech full of support and understanding, which in effect eased tensions in Sweden and created an impression of understanding among a shocked nation. In the case of Denmark, Queen Margrethe and the current King Frederick improved Denmark’s image among Greenlanders, who viewed the Danes as colonizers and exploiters. The argument that they do not represent the history or tradition is also incorrect. They embody history, guard the national heritage and connect the past to the present. They are continuity. For people born and raised in a republic it stands for a chance to see how the tradition cooperates with the contemporary vision of the democratic state.

For all the political impotency, European monarchs are still classified as a part of the political system, just with a certain amount of power limited by the constitution. As for Benjamin Constant (1767–1830), a monarchy keeps the balance between the government in charge of the executive branch and the parliament associated with the legislature. Without a balancing force, these two figures would compete with each to take over the power, badly affecting stability of the state. The role of still being a political figure is reflected in regularly organised meetings between a monarch and a prime minister during which perhaps a crowned head of state gives advice in

accordance with Walter Bagehot's doctrine that the monarch should advise, encourage and warn the government.

Both the arguments for and against the monarchy represent the constant struggle between keeping the old order and introducing the new one. However, "if our age is so egalitarian that the most beautiful monarchical traditions and aristocratic past cannot survive in it, then there is no longer any reason for the existence of a monarchy" [Wiszowaty 2018].

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Aanmoen, O. 2022. *Norway's parliament votes over the abolishment of the monarchy*, 8 June, <https://royalcentral.co.uk/europe/norway/norways-parliament-votes-over-the-abolishment-of-the-monarchy-177808/> (access: 10.07.2023).

Aanmoen, O. 2019. *Some Norwegian MPs favor abolishing monarchy in annual debates on constitutional reform*, 31 January, <https://constitutionnet.org/news/some-norwegian-mps-favor-abolishing-monarchy-annual-debates-constitutional-reform> (access: 10.07.2023).

*Avsätt kungen för demokratins skull*, 15 July 2003, <https://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/a/G1Mx09/avsatt-kungen-for-demokratins-skull> (access: 10.07.2023).

*Avskaffa monarkin Motion till riksdagen 2017/18:2120*.

Blidh, D. 2009. *Monarkidebatten – en analys av de båda sidornas argument*, Examensarbete i statsvetenskap.

Bryant, M. 2024. *Danes are cheering their new king Frederik X, but republicanism is stirring*, 14 January, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/14/danes-are-cheering-their-new-king-frederik-x-but-republicanism-is-stirring> (access: 20.02.2024).

*Dokument 12:10 (2011–2012). Grunnlovsforslag fra Hallgeir H. Langeland, Snorre Serigstad Valen, Eirin Sund, Truls Wickholm, Marianne Marthinsen og Jette F. Christensen*.

*Encyklopedia Gazety Wyborczej*, vol. 11, PWN, Kraków 2008.

Felgendreff, L. 2023. *Too big, too expensive and simply inappropriate*, 4 May, <https://www.ips-journal.eu/topics/democracy-and-society/too-big-too-expensive-and-simply-inappropriate-6681/> (access: 1.07.2023).

*Foreslår nytt Rødt-partiprogram: Vil ha folkeavstemning om monarkiet innen 2029*, 27 September 2024, <https://www.bt.no/politikk/i/wgKrrA/foreslaar-nytt-roedt-partiprogram-vil-ha-folkeavstemning-om-monarkiet> (access: 30.10.2024).

Grever, M. 2006. *Staging Modern Monarchs. Royalty at the World Exhibitions of 1851 and 1867*, [in:] *Mystifying the Monarch Studies on Discourse, Power, and History*, J. Deploige, G. Deneckere (eds.), Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.

Grønli, H., Wernersen, C. 2013. *Ap-politikere foreslår avskaffelse av kongedømmet*, 19 March, <https://www.nrk.no/norge/ap-ber-stortinget-vedta-republikk-1.10954369> (access: 10.07.2023).

Hitchens, Ch. 2008. *Thomas Paine. Prawa Człowieka. Biografia*, Muza, Warszawa.

Kalajdzic, P. 2024. *Åtte av tistøtter kongefamilien: – Kan ikke huske å ha sett slik oppslutning*, 16 May, <https://www.nrk.no/norge/enorm-stotte-til-kongefamilien-1.11720904> (access: 10.07.2024).

Kinsella, V.Å. 2023. *Time for an honest and grown-up debate about the monarchy*, 25 April, <https://www.dagsavisen.no/debatt/2023/04/25/pa-tide-med-en-aerlig-og-voksen-debatt-om-monarkiet/> (access: 13.08.2023).

Kristensen, K. 2017. *Kongehuset er det sidste tabu i Folketinget*, 17 February, <https://www.information.dk/indland/2017/02/kongehuset-sidste-tabu-folketinget> (access: 8.07.2023).

*Kungörelse (1974:152) om beslutad ny regeringsform (RF)*.

Larsson, H. 2006. *Kungen för Sverige – ur tiden!*, [in:] *För Sverige – Nu förtiden. En antologi om Carl XVI Gustaf*, M. Ögren (ed.), Bokförlaget DN.

Malmberg, N. 2024a. *Debatt: Fullborda demokratin – avskaffa monarkin*, 6 March, <https://www.etc.se/debatt/fullborda-demokratin-avskaffa-monarkin> (access: 10.04.2024).

Malmberg, N. 2024b. *Debatt Republikanska föreningen: Att införa republik kommer att utveckla svensk demokrati*, 22 March, <https://www.alinget.se/artikel/republikanska-foreningen-att-infora-republik-kommer-att-utveckla-svensk-demokrati> (access: 28.04.2024).

Mattsson, S. 2021. *Victorias oväntade ord om nya statsministern Magdalena Andersson*, 7 December, <https://www.svenskdam.se/kungligt/kronprinsessan-victorias-ovantade-utspel-om-magdalena-andersson-det-kanns-fel/8084558> (access: 10.12.2021).

Milne, R. 2023. *Scandinavian monarchies struggle with their own royal ‘spares’*, 13 January, <https://www.ft.com/content/56c77833-dc97-4650-a280-5df3f572ad85> (access: 10.07.2023).

Nilsson, L. 2017. *Monarkins legitimitet i Sverige och Danmark*, 27 April, <https://www.dixikon.se/monarkins-legitimitet-i-sverige-och-danmark/> (access: 23.06.2022).

Norge som republikk, <https://republikk.no> (access: 13.08.2023).

Pieters, J., Roose, A. 2006. *The Art of Saying ‘No’. Premonitions of Foucault’s ‘Governmentality’ in Étienne de La Boétie’s Discours de la servitude volontaire*, [in:] *Mystifying the Monarch Studies on Discourse, Power, and History*, J. Deploige, G. Deneckere (eds.), Amsterdam University Press, Amsterdam.

*Republicans threaten Mary’s reign*, 12 May 2004, <https://www.smh.com.au/world/republicans-threaten-marys-reign-20040512-gdiwuo.html> (access: 8.07.2023).

*Republikanska föreningen*, <http://www.repf.se/?display=argument> (access: 20.06.2023).

*Republik nu*, <http://www.republik.nu/> (access: 20.06.2023).

Rusak, J. 2003. *Forma monarchiczna państwa według Georga Jellinka*, “*Studenckie Zeszyty Naukowe*”, vol. 6(10), pp. 32–39.

*Rødt*, <https://roedt.no/monarki> (access: 13.08.2023).

Savic, V. 2004. *Kungen får skarp kritik för uttalanden om Brunei*, 9 February, <https://sverigesradio.se/artikel/365873> (access: 11.09.2022).

Smitt, V. 2022. *Republic for 50 years...!*, 16 January, <https://www.republiknu.dk/republik-i-50-aar/> (access: 8.07.2023).

*Sweden: The Instrument of Government (1974:152)*, <https://www.riksdagen.se/globalassets/05.-sa-fungerar-riksdagen/demokrati/the-instrument-of-government-2023-eng.pdf> (access: 12.12.2022).

Tagliabue, J. 2010. *Some Doubt if Any King Is Still Fit for Sweden*, 24 August, <https://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/25/world/europe/25sweden.html> (access: 12.07.2023).

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Norway adopted May 17, 1814.

*The Role of Monarchy in Modern Democracy*, 6 October 2020, <https://talkinghumanities.blogs.sas.ac.uk/2020/10/06/the-role-of-monarchy-in-modern-democracy/> (access: 11.10.2020).

*Time to abolish the monarchy*, 2 October 2016, <https://www.mp.se/just-nu/dags-att-avskaffa-monarkin/> (access: 13.08.2023).

Waterton, B. 2023. *Sweden sees lowest support for republic in 20 years*, 17 May, <https://www.thelocal.se/20230517/sweden-sees-lowest-support-for-republic-in-20-years> (access: 6.08.2023).

*What do Europeans think about their monarchies?*, 7 May 2023, <https://www.brusselstimes.com/492442/what-do-europeans-think-about-their-monarchies> (access: 10.07.2023).

*What do the Danes think of their Royal Family and what role does the Danish Monarchy have?*, 18 April 2023, <https://www.yourdanishlife.dk/the-danish-monarchy/> (access: 8.07.2023).

Wiszowaty, M. 2018. *Czy symbole, przepych i bogactwo mają znaczenie w życiu człowieka?*, 8 April, <http://armaria.info/?p=16> (access: 16.07.2022).

CHCEMY REPUBLIKI! ANALIZA PORÓWNAWCZA KRYTYKI MONARCHII W DANII,  
NORWEGII I SZWECJI

**Streszczenie:** Dania, Norwegia i Szwecja są monarchiami skandynawskimi. Pomimo, że monarchowie ze Skandynawii i rodziny królewskie cieszą się powszechnym szacunkiem, są oni przedmiotem krytyki. Celem tego artykułu jest analiza argumentów wykorzystywanych przez skandynawskich republikanów. Pierwszy argument dotyczy pojmowania monarchii jako antydemokratycznego ustroju; drugi jako despotycznej formy władzy; trzeci jako przestarzałego sposobu sprawowania władzy; ostatni odnosi się do monarchii jako brzemienia finansowego nałożonego na państwo. W badaniu postawiono dwa pytania badawcze – czy duńscy, norwescy i szwedzcy republikanie wykorzystują podobne anty-monarchiczne argumenty? Czy też raczej republikanie reprezentują zupełnie inny system wartości odnoszący się do Korony. Hipoteza badania brzmi następująco: Skandynawscy republikanie wykorzystują podobne argumenty, a ich retoryka skupia się bardziej na „dyskutowaniu” problemu posiadania koronowanej głowy państwa niż na „podjęciu działania” w celu zastąpienia monarchii prezydentem. W badaniu zastosowane metodę porównawczą, analizy krytycznej i krytyki piśmiennictwa, która odwołuje się do prac poświęconych monarchii, jak i źródeł internetowych odnoszących się do krytyki monarchii oraz dokumentów prawnych.

**Slowa kluczowe:** monarchie skandynawskie, republika, monarchia, republikanie, demokracja

#### BIOGRAPHY

**Barbara Bieniek**, PhD in social sciences in the field of political and administrative studies. Her doctoral dissertation on the Swedish monarchy was defended at the University of Silesia in Katowice. Her research focuses on the politics of Scandinavian-Nordic countries. E-mail: [basiabieniek11@gmail.com](mailto:basiabieniek11@gmail.com)