

Chapter 15: Constitutional Reform in the Netherlands: from Republic, to Kingdom, to Parliamentary Democracy

In contrast to the kingdoms of the United Kingdom and Sweden, the constitutional monarchy of the Netherlands is a relatively recent innovation. The Netherlands has not always been a kingdom, nor part of some other kingdom, as might be said of Norway and Belgium. From the late sixteenth century until the late eighteenth century, the *Republiek der Verenigde Nederlanden* (United Provinces of the Netherlands) was a relatively liberal federation of seven sovereign provinces. Its territories consisted of the northern lowlands of the Rhine, and its national policies were jointly selected by a committee of provincial representatives and a *stadhouder*. The stadhouders' autonomy was greater than that of contemporary prime ministers and presidents, but his authority was less than that which kings normally had during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.

That the kingdom the Netherlands is relatively new makes the lowland kingdom a very useful addition to the present study, because it demonstrates that relatively peaceful transitions to democracy within parliamentary systems do not require a long history of negotiations between kings and their parliaments, nor a deeply rooted, long-standing political culture. The first half of chapter 15 provides a short history of the Dutch republic and the origin of the kingdom of the Netherlands. The second half of the chapter focuses on its nineteenth-century transition to parliamentary democracy.

Its republican is of interest because its success helped stimulate and support the work of enlightenment scholars and played important roles in the constitutional developments of the United Kingdom and United States. Its scholars included such influential men as Grotius, Spinoza, La Court, and Mandeville. Many well known scholars from other less tolerant countries spent time in the Netherlands in the seventeenth century and many others published their books and pamphlets at Dutch printing houses. William III, King of England, was *stadhouder* Willem III for much of the Netherlands for many years before obtaining the British crown. As noted in chapter 12, the republic sponsored the Dutch invasion that made Great Britain's "Glorious Revolution" possible. The Dutch republic's confederal government was also used as a model during constitutional deliberations in the United States (Riker 1957, Congleton 2008).

The Kingdom of the Netherlands (*Koninkrijk der Nederlanden*) was established in 1815 as part of the reorganization of Europe worked out by the great powers in Vienna following their victory over Napoleon and his French army. In spite of its relatively short experience as a kingdom, the evolution

of Dutch parliamentary practices in the nineteenth century parallels those of the long-standing British and Swedish monarchies. As in the other kingdoms, increases in commerce and industrialization helped to energize politically active liberal, commercial, and labor groups. Constitutional bargaining and a series of agreements gradually shifted policy making authority from the king to the parliament. A series of electoral reforms adopted during the same period caused members of parliament to be elected on the basis of increasingly broad suffrage.

The Dutch case demonstrates that the European path to parliamentary democracy was not rooted in a deep evolutionary pressures within constitutional monarchies, but rather was a consequence of increased support for liberal reforms that emerged in the nineteenth century. It also demonstrates the durability and flexibility of the king and template for governance.²³⁷

A. Setting the Stage: The Emergence of the Dutch Republic

Recorded history in the low countries begins when the Roman Empire reached the place where the great central European river (the Rhine) enters the North Sea. Julius Caesar brought all the remaining territory south of the main channel of the Rhine within the Roman Empire in 57 B.C.. Those territories remained Roman for more than 400 years, until the empire began to disintegrate along its frontiers in the early fifth century. The Romans did go north of the Rhine, but their primary fortress cities and commercial centers were along its southern shores. Consequently, Latin and French influences are far stronger south of the Rhine (contemporary Belgium and the southern Netherlands) than in the North, where Germanic and Frieslandic influences dominate. In this respect and many others, the Rhine played an important role for the peoples of the low countries, from our first knowledge of them.

The Rhine did not only divide the future Netherlands from the future Belgium, the geography and geology of the Rhine created commercial and cultural ties with Germanic Europe. The Rhine is central Europe's most important gateway to the North Sea and the Atlantic Ocean. Its large delta includes many channels through which the Rhine reaches the sea, which provided many potential harbors for transshipping goods from central Europe to other parts of the world, including England and Scandinavia. Fishing and commerce were important economic activities for the Rhinish lowlands from very early times.

²³⁷ Belgium seceded from the Netherlands in 1830, established its own constitutional monarchy, and followed a similar peaceful transition to parliamentary democracy during the next 80 years, thereby demonstrating that peaceful transitions in non-Protestant countries were also possible. The state religion of Belgium is Catholicism.

The marshy nature of the delta and its relatively long coastline with the North Sea, however, created problems as well as commercial opportunities. Floods were commonplace, and dry land was scarce. The marshlands isolated the coast somewhat from the mainland and reduced its agricultural productivity at the same time that commerce and fishing encouraged independent political and economic communities to develop. Towns often built hills and dikes to protect themselves from floods and storm tides. Villages and towns often joined forces to build protective larger dikes to protect settlements and existing farms and to drain marshland to create new farmland, promoting the formation of loose regional associations.

These collective efforts to cope with the Rhine delta, in turn, produced specialized knowledge of flood control, drainage, and maritime enterprises. The soft and flat delta lands made expansion of the natural waterways relatively easy and the same efforts could simultaneously produce more arable (dry) land for agriculture. An intricate maze of canals gradually developed, which were the most efficient method of transporting goods and people to market in the centuries before invention of the steam engine. By the time the lowlands found themselves (largely) in the hands of the Duke of Burgundy in the early fifteenth century, the northern and southern Netherlands were among the most urbanized areas of Europe. Their fishing and commercial fleets were among the largest in the world, and their cities among the most prosperous (Israel 1998: 113–16; Barker 1906: 23–25).

Governance at that time was largely in the hands of local town councils and noblemen, as was true of much of continental Europe in that period. There was no national or regional government, although continental institutions existed: the Catholic church and Holy Roman Empire. Most of the separate provinces had their own parliaments (provincial estates), and most towns had their own mayors and town councils. The 17 provinces of the low countries did not form a single autonomous polity or administrative area, although many belonged to the Burgundy family, whose territories more or less followed a southern branch of the Rhine (the Meuse) from present day France to its delta.

A loose regional government for the lowlands was established by duke Philip the Good of the House of Burgundy when he called for a meeting of the States General in 1464. Representatives from all of the provincial and town governments assembled, mostly for the purpose of being advised by Philip, who was attempting to centralize control over his far-flung properties. The states general met when called by Philip and only for as long as the meeting advanced Philip's purposes. In this respect, the Burgundian States General was similar to other parliaments during this time period. It was a consultative body with very little policymaking authority (Israel 1998: 21–22).

In addition to the States General, the Burgundy family created the office of *stadhouder* (provincial governor). The Burgundian *stadhouders* for the Rhine's lowlands were initially chosen from the southern (Belgian) nobility who had the wealth, connections, prestige, and education to be effective representatives of Burgundian interests in the lowlands (Israel 1998: 23). The *stadhouders* normally had power of appointment (or at least agenda control) for major regional offices and served as arbitrators of major disputes within their territories. In this manner, a somewhat unusual form of the "king and council" template, with an assembly of local governments and governor, became the regional government of the Rhine's lowlands.

The authority and influence of the Burgundian *stadhouders* varied through time as the centralizing efforts of the Burgundian administration ebbed and flowed. During times when local provinces obtained greater autonomy, as in 1477, *stadhouders* were constrained by their respective provincial parliaments, which had veto power over new taxes and significant power over the creation and implementation of new laws. During such times, the provincial parliaments of the Burgundian period were routinely consulted about laws and appointments, and occasionally vetoed Burgundy appointments of *stadhouders* and bishops. During periods of increased centralization, the formal authority of *stadhouders* increased, and the regional governors could use their power of arbitration and appointment to advance Burgundian interests in the provincial governments and town councils (Israel 1998: 25–26).

The Great Privilege

It was marriage and inheritance law that produced the great family-ruled domains of Europe during the late Middle Ages, although this process of amalgamation was not without problems and was often reinforced by territorial armies.

Philip's properties were inherited by his son, Charles the Bold, in 1476 and, subsequently, by his daughter Mary in 1477, following the death of Charles in January 1477 in a battle with the Swiss, who opposed Burgundian efforts to further centralize political authority (Israel 1998: 27). Shortly after coming to power, Mary found herself under attack by the French king, who disputed her claim to the Burgundian territories. Women could not always inherit noble titles and lands. In desperation, Mary negotiated the Great Privilege with her provincial governments in exchange for their help in the conflict with the French king.

The Great Privilege granted Burgundian towns and provinces veto power over new taxation and war and also gave the cities the right to refuse payment of taxes for which they had not voted.

The privilege also granted provincial courts priority on legal matters and allowed the States General in the Netherlands and their provincial counterparts to meet on their own accord (Barker 1906: 39–40). This authority was very rare among the medieval compacts of the day. Most other national assemblies met only when called by the local sovereign (normally a baron or count in the English terminology). The self-calling provisions of the Great Privilege gave the provinces, cities, and regional parliaments considerable autonomy, which of course, increased their ability to resist usurpation of their powers of governance.²³⁸ From that point on, the States General exercised significant authority over the regional public policies of Belgium and the Netherlands.

Many of the veto powers and procedures and even the location of governance (Den Haag), specified in the privilege continued in place for several hundred years. Indeed, it could be said that the representative States General established by Philip the Good in the mid-fifteenth century continues to this day in both the Netherlands and Belgium, albeit in much modified form.

The Habsburgs and the “Spanish Netherlands”

Support for Mary against the king of France increased after issuing the Great Privilege, but not enough to turn back the French army. Fortunately, Mary was betrothed to an important member of the Habsburg family, a man who would become the emperor of the Holy Roman Empire. Maximilian sent his father’s German troops to Mary’s defense. The Habsburg armies prevented the Burgundian properties outside of France from coming under the control of the French king.

In this manner, through marriage, the territories that would become the Netherlands became part of the powerful Habsburg family’s territories. A subsequent series of marriages brought the German and Spanish crowns to a single head.

Mary’s son, Philip the Handsome, married Joanna of Castile, and their son Charles subsequently inherited the Spanish throne (from Isabella and Ferdinand) in 1516. It is for this reason that the

²³⁸ The Great Privilege applied to most of the other principalities of the Burgundy domain, which at the time included parts of northern Italy and Switzerland, as well as a large area of modern-day France. The Burgundian holdings were greatly diminished in number and importance when the French king, Louis XI, took over the main Burgundian holdings later in 1477. Many other holdings of Burgundy (outside of France) were rescued by Mary’s marriage to Duke Maximilian of the powerful Habsburg dynasty (who later became the Holy Roman Emperor Maximilian I). In one intervention, Maximilian sent his army into Belgium., winning an important victory over the French at Guinigate in 1479, which preserved the Netherlands as an autonomous region.

pre-revolutionary Netherlands are often referred to as the Spanish Netherlands.²³⁹ The same young man, Charles, subsequently became emperor of the Holy Roman Empire through his grandfather Maximilian in 1519. Thus, through little of his own doing, but as a consequence of a very good genealogical tree, Charles V became the ruler of one of the largest empires ever assembled, an empire that included much of Europe and most of South America.

For much of this period before 1800, politics in Europe was a family affair, rather than a national one. As national states emerged and the Holy Roman Empire declined, the Austrian branch of the Habsburg family provided the hereditary kings of Austria and subsequently the emperors of Austria. As such, they remained among the most influential families in Europe until the twentieth century.²⁴⁰

The Protestant Wars, Centralization, and the Dutch Revolt

Prior to the Great Privilege, it is clear that resistance to the centralizing efforts of the House of Burgundy took place throughout the Burgundian territories. For example, as noted above, Charles the Bold was killed in 1477 during an attempt to retake Lorraine after it had resisted Burgundian efforts to centralize policymaking and tax authority. After Mary's Great Privilege was adopted, local governments in the lowlands continued to defend their new formal tax and legislative veto authority, which made it very difficult for the Habsburgs to finance and govern their lowland territories. The Habsburgs, naturally, attempted to renegotiate and weaken the Great Privilege. The local governments naturally resisted those efforts. In some cases, negotiation failures led to pitched battles, as for example, the Hoeksen party of Holland launched military campaigns against Burgundian-Habsburgian authorities in the early 1480s.

These long-standing political centralization conflicts were reinforced by religious ones in the sixteenth century. Luther's famous "95 Theses" were "nailed" to the Wittenberg church door at

²³⁹ The Habsburg family held numerous duchies throughout Europe, but their main holdings were centered around present-day Austria. After the Dutch revolt the part of the lowlands that remained under Habsburg control (present-day Belgium) came to be called the Austrian Netherlands.

²⁴⁰ Charles V was born in Ghent in 1500 and became the king of Spain at the age of 16. Charles V ruled until 1556, when he abdicated and retired to a monastery in Yuste, Spain, turning the Habsburg territories over to his son Philip II. Charles V was born in the low countries, spoke Dutch (Flemish), and continued visiting the Netherlands even after assuming his position in Spain and subsequently the Holy Roman Empire. (Charles V is known as Carlos I (and Carlos V) in Spain, Karel V in the Netherlands, and Karl V in Germany. The English name is used in this case to reduce confusion as the historical analysis shifts across national boundaries. Charles V was of international importance, rather than a national leader.)

approximately same time that Charles obtained the Spanish and German crowns. Luther's critique of church practices and reinterpretations of biblical texts, together with other protests against Catholic practices and corruption, greatly intensified the long-standing decentralization conflicts throughout much of Europe.²⁴¹ The eventual Dutch revolt was largely a consequence of conflict between local elites and the Habsburgs regarding the extent of local control over taxes, appointments, and religious practices.

The Habsburg territories had been Catholic for centuries, but the new Protestant doctrines stressing independence from the centralized religious authority of Rome were very appealing for those already favoring decentralization, as well as for those Christians who questioned various aspects of Catholic religious practices. Such views were common in the Holy Roman Empire and northern Habsburg domains. Lutheran and Calvinist doctrines, consequently, found many supporters in the lowland territories, especially in the provinces north of the Rhine's main channel. Religious and centralization conflicts intensified and were often bloody in Northern Europe.

In an attempt to end the war, Protestantism was legitimized within the Holy Roman Empire by the "Religious Peace of Augsburg" in 1555. The Augsburg treaty allowed 300 local rulers (dukes and barons) to choose between Lutheranism and Catholicism for themselves (and implicitly for all of their subjects). The treaty did not end religious tensions in Europe, but did allow Protestant princes and barons to openly support Protestant beliefs within their domains, to suppress Catholic ones, and to gain control over Church properties. Traditional local political autonomy was augmented with significant religious autonomy throughout the Holy Roman Empire.

The treaty of Augsburg advanced Protestantism in the north more than south of the Rhine, because the leading families of the north were more closely linked to German noble families (or held German titles themselves), who largely declared themselves Lutheran. This was, for example, true of the Nassau family, which ruled the Barony of Breda, a province in the center of the Rhine's lowlands.²⁴²

²⁴¹ This is the mythic version of events. There are no eyewitness accounts of this famous event. Most scholars now believe that it never actually happened. Rather, Luther evidently mailed or presented a letter to the archbishop of Mainz and Magdeburg in October of 1517 that objected to various church practices (particularly the recent increase in sales of indulgences) and also presented his 95 theses, which reinterpreted biblical texts. This letter and other works came to the attention of church authorities in Rome, who insisted that he recant, but Luther refused. He was declared an outlaw in 1521 and was hunted by troops of Charles V for many years.

²⁴² The Orange territory with its associated rank of prince was inherited by the Dutch Nassau's

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Charles V's son and successor, Philip II attempted to reverse both areas of local autonomy after he assumed the Spanish crown in 1556 by aggressively suppressing local tax resistance and Protestantism.²⁴³ Partly in response to these policies, in 1566 Protestants throughout the Netherlands stormed Catholic churches destroying images of Catholic saints. Philip II sent an army to restore order and to increase his control of appointments and policymaking in the Rhine's lowlands. As a consequence, Protestant doctrines and their supporting organizations were largely suppressed south of the Rhine by local authorities, although the cosmopolitan city of Antwerp remained an important center of Calvinist thought.²⁴⁴

By bringing the Spanish inquisition to the Netherlands, Philip II increased resistance to Habsburgian rule among Protestants throughout the lowlands. His execution of 80 "rebellious" nobles in the south in 1568 further alienated the aristocracy, and made it clear that Philip II was not interested in compromise. By forcing a 10 percent sales tax through the States General in 1569, the last in a long series of Habsburg tax increases to finance the suppression of Protestants, Philip II also alienated pragmatic businessmen and farmers who would otherwise not have been interested in politics or civil war. It was clear that Philip II would not defer to local aristocratic families or respect long-standing rights and privileges.

The Constitutional Foundations of the United Provinces of the Netherlands

In 1579 the seven northern provinces met in Utrecht and formally created a mutual defense alliance against Spain. Open warfare with the Habsburgs had occurred for at least a decade. For example, the important Spanish siege of Leiden had occurred in 1573–74. The treaty thus could be said to have formalized military relationships among the provinces that had already successfully resisted the Spanish for a decade; however, it also provided the basis for future policy decisions.

Willem I from a somewhat distant French branch of the family in 1544. Willem was appointed *stadhouder* of several of the major lowland provinces (Holland, Zeeland, and Utrecht) by Philip II in 1559 at the age of 26.

²⁴³ Charles V abdicated in 1556, and the Habsburg properties were divided between Charles V's brother and his son. Austria and other properties in the Holy Roman Empire went to Charles' brother Ferdinand I. Spain, Naples, Burgundy, and the Netherlands to his son Felipe (Philip II). The Spanish branch of the Habsburg family died out in 1700, and produced the war of Spanish succession (1701–14).

²⁴⁴ Calvin (1509–1564) himself was the son of a French attorney, educated in Paris, and lived in the French part of Geneva, Switzerland for much of his life. The French speaking elites of the southern lowlands would have found his writings much more accessible and congenial than Luther's German.

Article 1 united the seven provinces as if a single province, and also assured the provinces and cities their historic privileges. Article 2 permanently bound the provinces together in a mutual defense alliance. Article 9 affirmed the core procedures of the Great Privilege, which had been much contested by the Habsburgs. It specified that new general taxes and declarations of war and peace required the unanimous consent of the provinces. Other national policies would be determined by a majority of provincial votes. Article 13 provided for religious tolerance in accordance with the pacification of Ghent (recently negotiated in 1576). The provinces were free to regulate religious matters, provided that everyone remained free to exercise their religion. Articles 9, 16, and 21 specified that the *stadhouders* were to arbitrate differences among the provinces on matters of general interest and on matters of constitutional law (Barker 1906: 99–100; Rietbergen 2002: 84).

Negotiations with the Spanish continued to be fruitless, and thus on July 26, 1581, the States General adopted the Dutch declaration of independence (the Act of Abjuration). The line of reasoning developed in this pre-Enlightenment document is surprisingly similar to that developed by Locke a century later and also that crafted by the committee of Jefferson, Adams, and Franklin in Philadelphia two centuries later (Congleton 2008).

The Dutch declaration espouses a theory of limited government, includes a list of grievances, and mentions the natural and ancient rights of man. The Act of Abjuration uses the “necessity” of escaping from tyranny as its justification for secession:

As it is apparent to all that **a prince is constituted by God to be ruler of a people, to defend them from oppression and violence as the shepherd his sheep;** and whereas God did not create the people slaves to their prince, to obey his commands, whether right or wrong, but rather the prince for the sake of the subjects (without which he could be no prince), to govern them according to equity, to love and support them as a father his children or a shepherd his flock, and even at the hazard of life to defend and preserve them. And **when he does not behave thus, but, on the contrary, oppresses them, seeking opportunities to infringe their ancient customs and privileges, exacting from them slavish compliance, then he is no longer a prince, but a tyrant,** and the subjects are to consider him in no other view...

All these considerations **give us more than sufficient reason to renounce the king of Spain,** and seek some other powerful and more gracious prince to take us under his protection; and, more especially, as these countries have been for these twenty years abandoned to disturbance and oppression by their king, during which time the inhabitants were not treated as subjects, but enemies, enslaved forcibly by their own governors...

So, having no hope of reconciliation, and finding no other remedy, we have, agreeable to the law of nature in our own defense, and for maintaining the

rights, privileges, and liberties of our countrymen, wives, and children, and latest posterity from being enslaved by the Spaniards, been constrained to renounce allegiance to the king of Spain, and pursue such methods as appear to us most likely to secure our ancient liberties and privileges.²⁴⁵

The first and third excerpts provide an early theory of natural rights and of limited governance a century before Locke's *Two Treatises on Government* was published in 1689.

The second of the three excerpts demonstrates that the Dutch were initially reluctant to form a completely republican government without a prince or king at the helm. However, no king or queen accepted the proffered throne—most likely because of the military and economic costs associated with doing so. At the time of the Dutch revolt, the Habsburgs were the most powerful family in Europe, and Dutch success was by no means assured.²⁴⁶ Instead, existing Burgundian institutions were modified to serve as a national government.

The military force raised by the northern principalities and led by Willem the Silent (of the Orange-Nassau family) succeeded in pushing the Spanish Army out of the north, and temporarily from much of the southern lowlands.²⁴⁷ The southern half of the Rhine's lowlands (Belgium) was subsequently subdued by the Spanish and remained in Habsburgian hands for another two centuries, but a new independent republic was established in the northern half of the Rhine's delta.

²⁴⁵ The translation of the Act of Abjuration is taken from Thatcher (1907: 189-97) as modified by Jerome S. Arkenberg, <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/mod/1581dutch.html>.

²⁴⁶ Nonetheless, England and France often supported the Dutch revolt, along with a number of Lutheran princes from Germany. This was more likely done to reduce the power of the Habsburgs than for religious reasons. France was ruled by Catholics in this period.

²⁴⁷ Willem I was himself a complex and interesting figure. He was a favorite of Charles V, who had appointed Willem to the office of stadhouder to represent Habsburg interests in the Netherlands. However, Willem defended the autonomy of the Dutch provinces against Charles V's son (Philip II), who attempted to centralize authority and crush Protestantism in the low countries. At first he did this peacefully through his office as stadhouder and, after his lands were confiscated by Charles V, through open warfare.

Willem was a member of a Lutheran family, although he was himself an avowed Catholic—until he joined the Dutch revolt. In 1573, he converted to Calvinism. The conversion to Protestantism allowed him to lead and energize most of the religious and secular groups that opposed Spanish rule of the Netherlands. (The political convenience of his conversion suggests that Willem's religious beliefs were a bit flexible at the margin and served practical, perhaps more than spiritual ends.)

William's leadership of the Dutch resistance naturally attracted the attention of Philip II, who posted a 25,000-crown reward for William's assassination in 1580. When Willem was assassinated in 1584, however, Philip refused to pay the assassin's family (Barker 1906: 107-109). William's highest noble title, "the Prince of Orange" was derived from his family's control of a principality in Catholic France. Willem the Silent is often referred to as Willem I, the first stadhouder of the United Provinces of the Netherlands.

B. The Government of the Dutch Republic 1581–1795

The successful and somewhat fortunate Dutch war of secession allowed the procedures specified by the Union of Utrecht and its Act of Abjuration to become the constitutional core of national governance in the United Provinces of the Netherlands for the next 200 years.

In combination with the Great Privilege, the Utrecht treaty favored those represented in the provincial governments, which were often controlled by representatives of the major urban centers.²⁴⁸ The requirement of unanimity for new taxes helped keep the central government small and the broad consent required for other policies made nationwide laws and projects difficult to adopt and implement. In practice, seven provincial assemblies were sovereign. The provincial assemblies and city governments had essentially complete control over local government finance, public services, and regulation.²⁴⁹

The provincial assemblies were composed of representatives from city governments and from the countryside. The cities were normally represented by persons appointed by their town councils (*vroedschap*, “wise men”). In many cases, city councilors served for life and their replacements were selected by the remaining city council members. The countryside was normally represented by the local nobility. The specifics varied somewhat by province, but in many cases the urban representatives dominated deliberations at the provincial level. For example, in Holland the cities appointed eight of the nine members of the provincial states general (Barker 1906). Together, the provincial systems of representation and need for broad consensus at the states general, allowed the cities, especially Amsterdam, to have considerable influence over the policies of the national government.

After the Dutch independence, *stadhouders* were appointed by the provincial governments, rather than by the States General. Given the autonomy of the provinces, one might have expected each province to appoint a unique *stadhouder*. However, rather than seven *stadhouders*, as might have been expected, only one or two persons held the office of *stadhouder* at a time. The same person(s) was

²⁴⁸ Seven provinces could vote in the States General: Holland, Zeeland, Utrecht, Friesland, Groningen, Overijssel, and Gelderland. Holland was the most populous, wealthiest and most influential of the seven. The states of Brabant, Vlaanderen, and Linburg were governed by the States-General as spoils of war for many years. Drenthe could not vote in the States General, but exercised a degree of provincial sovereignty (Rietbergen 2002: 84).

²⁴⁹ In addition to the States General, a National Assembly was created by the 1581 declaration of independence. Its decisionmaking procedures and representation were very similar to that of the States General. However, it met very infrequently and is therefore neglected in the present overview (and by most historians).

(were) normally appointed captain general(s) of the Dutch army throughout the Netherlands. (The Dutch navy was normally controlled by the other person[s].)

Although not formally a hereditary office, *stadhouders* were always chosen from the Orange-Nassau family. The northern provinces chose their stadhouders from one branch of the family and the southern provinces from another, until that branch ended. This occurred in part because of tradition. Orange-Nassau family members had often been appointed *stadhouders* in Burgundian and Habsburg times. Support for Orange-Nassau family members also reflected the important roles that that the family had played in the Dutch war of secession and in subsequent wars with France. It also bears noting that the family's wealth and past influence over appointments provided it with a base of support within the provincial assemblies. As a consequence, the Orange-Nassau family was the most influential family in the Netherlands, although it had far less control over public policy than truly royal families had at this time.²⁵⁰

As in any divided government, there were often disagreements between *stadhouders* and the States General on matters of national policy. These reflected to a significant degree institutionally induced differences in their interests. As national leaders, *stadhouders* had a more encompassing interest in national unity, centralization, and development. As leaders of the army, *stadhouders* were especially interested in military expenditures, although less interested in spending money on the navy. The provincial members of the States General represented local political and commercial interests. As agents of local elites, provincial governments were less interested in national policies, generally opposed to national taxation, and more inclined to support profitable naval and capital projects than army salaries (which might well be used to increase centralization). The States General, thus, tended to support decentralized authority, naval power, and peace treaties.

With respect to the latter, they did so because they believed that war was costly and bad for commerce, and because war increased the power and prestige of the *stadhouder(s)*. As a result, peace treaties were often accepted over the objection of the *stadhouder* and military budgets were normally smaller than the *stadhouders* desired. For example, the 12-year truce of 1609 was adopted by the States General over the objection of *stadhouder* Prince Maurice (Rietbergen 2002: 80). Nonetheless, during national emergencies, the States General was willing to finance both the navy and army, often by selling bonds that were backed by new earmarked taxes (Stasavage 2003). About 90 percent of the

²⁵⁰ Toward the end of the republican era, the position of *stadhouder* was formally made a hereditary position. Willem IV became the first hereditary *stadhouder* of all the provinces in 1747. He was shortly thereafter succeeded by his son, Willem V, who served as the last *stadhouder* of the republic from 1751–95 (Rietbergen 2002: 160).

Dutch republic's national budget went for national defense during this period of the 80-year war of secession with Spain (Ferguson 2002: 41). National defense was often a matter of life and death for the republic. At such times, the *stadhouder* was a very important man, even if he was neither sovereign, nor the main locus of policymaking within the Netherlands.²⁵¹

After the death of Willem II in 1650, the office of stadhouder was left empty for 22 years in the south.²⁵² A new stadhouder was finally appointed in 1672 during a time of grave military threat. The French were repelled, but the risk from France and its English ally was not eliminated. Subsequent, Dutch geopolitical strategy played a pivotal role in English history, as noted above in chapters 12 and 13. After securing permission to invade England from the States General, Willem III led a successful invasion of that country, which induced James II to flee to France. Negotiations with the Parliament in 1689, Willem III became the king of England (as William III) and held the offices of stadhouder and King of England until his death in 1702.²⁵³

Even as king of England, the long-standing *stadhouder* preference for the Dutch army over the Dutch navy continued to influence Willem/William III's military policies. In the ensuing war against France, Willem III used the Dutch army on land and the British navy on the sea. The latter made the British navy the unchallenged leader on the world's oceans, which in the long run undermined Dutch commercial international interests and promoted British ones—a sensible strategy for a *stadhouder*.

Economic and Political Effects of Decentralization

The control of public policies by local urban commercial elites together with a mobile and well-trained work force contributed to Dutch prosperity. Contemporary mercantilist theories and practices were less binding in the Netherlands than in other European countries, because of its long-standing orientation toward international trade and because its decentralized governance

²⁵¹ The title “Prince of Orange” is taken from an ancient French territory and title (prince) acquired through inheritance in 1515. The title was more prestigious than other Nassau titles (which included baron and count) and became part of the Nassau family legacy, even after the province was taken over by the French king in 1672. The Nassau family already had substantial holdings in the Rhine's lowlands and had served as provincial *stadhouders* in the fifteenth century.

²⁵² Willem II's son, Willem III, was born the week after his death. Willem III was only 22 when he was appointed stadhouder for the other provinces in 1672. Two of the seven provinces had appointed stadhouders during this period, Groningen and Friesland, but from a northern branch of the Nassau family..

²⁵³ More details are provided in chapters 12 and 13. Willem III had been invited to intervene in English politics by several prominent members of parliament.

generated competition among localities for the large inflows of new capital and labor, which favored those with relatively open internal and external trade networks. Together these produced rapid economic growth, which encouraged further immigration by increasing economic opportunities for immigrants relative to those available elsewhere in Europe.

Economics was not the only reason for the influx of persons and capital into the Netherlands. If not a liberal state in the modern sense, the United Provinces was a relatively safe haven for nonconformist religious and political ideas. Although the Union of Utrecht called for religious tolerance, as did many of the republic's early political leaders, tolerance was not always supported by provincial and urban governments. Local autonomy, however, implied that a place could nearly always be found in the Netherlands where nonconforming intellectual perspectives and religious practices would not be contested by local authorities. As a consequence, thousands of Protestants and other nonconformists from the southern provinces (Belgium) moved to the Netherlands in the late sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. A similar immigration from throughout Europe followed, including thousands of Huguenots from France and several hundred English Puritans. European liberals of this period also found the Netherlands useful places to work and to have their work published.

The population of the United Provinces grew rapidly and commerce expanded as innovators, capitalists, craftsmen, and scholars converged on the Netherlands. Amsterdam became a metropolis, and many other towns became cities. New universities, newsletters, journals, and printing companies were founded.

Unfortunately for the Republic, the rapid growth of wealth generated by its internal tax competition, relatively free trade policies, and tolerance of political and religious nonconformists attracted the interest of the Dutch neighbors. Moreover, its borders and coastline were normally poorly defended during times of peace, because provincial autonomy allowed the provinces to free ride on the provision of national public goods, including national defense. This tended to exacerbate the military crises of the next two centuries (Barker 1906: 181–82, 364–65, and 379–83). A low-level war with Spain dragged on for 80 years, with periodic major engagements, and the Spanish war was subsequently replaced with British and French conflicts.

C. Constitutional Significance of the Dutch Republic

National governance in the Dutch republic was based on an intermediate version of the king and council template in which the balance of authority shifted as military threats increased and

diminished. Two centuries later, such divided governments would be fairly common, but in the seventeenth century, this form of government was extremely unusual. In the Netherlands, national assemblies often had dominant authority over public policy, especially during times of peace. This was also true at provincial and local levels of governance, where provincial and town councils, rather than kings (dukes or barons), had extensive control over public policy decisions. Votes were counted in the various regional and national assemblies, although those who held office were not broadly elected in the modern sense. There were no popular elections.

Nonetheless, the republic provided useful evidence about parliamentary governance, the effects that voting rules can have on parliamentary decisions, and of how decentralized systems of governance based on such divided governments operate. The supermajority and unanimity rules of the national government's reduced its ability to "impose" taxes and regulations on the provinces. As a consequence, most fiscal and regulatory decisions were made at the provincial and city government level. The supermajority provisions of its national policymaking system, however, while preserving considerable decentralization, also made the republic a fairly rigid system of governance in which its component parts were difficult to reform. Toward the end of the republican period, there were true revolutionary pressures, as the pro-reform "patriots" pressed for liberal constitutional changes that would change the basis of representation within the local and national assemblies, while the anti-reform "Orangists" successfully defeated their proposed reforms in the assemblies (and once or twice on the battlefield).

Decentralization, itself, tended to produce relatively liberal economic policies and a relatively open society. Inflows of capital and labor tended to increase prosperity, and competition for capital and labor tended to favor provinces with relatively few trade barriers and restrictions on immigration. Although, the republic was not dominated by liberals, there were many economic liberals, such as La Court, who played significant roles in the more successful provincial governments. Competition for labor and capital also tended to favor provinces with relatively liberal policies with respect to censorship and religion.

Dutch interest in the enlightenment and its associated political and economic reform agenda were relatively broad by the standards of the seventeenth century. Several famous Dutch scholars are mentioned at the beginning of this chapter and several are quoted in chapter 9, but there are many other examples. For example, consider this passage in praise of rationality taken from a piece written by the Jacob Hendrix in 1582:

“A **free mind**, in which an unrestricted intellect governs, **can see and observe ... what is honest, profitable, righteous, lawful**, proper, possible, feasible, and necessary ... the mind inflamed by the fire of passion **cannot** judge rightly in private nor in common matters” (Van Gelderen 1993: 169).

Dutch readers and publishers were interested in liberal ideas and willing to print books and pamphlets that discussed radical reforms of king-dominated systems of governance. Many influential books about political theory and constitutional design were published at Dutch presses, often in Latin during the seventeenth century, but also in many other languages. Elsewhere such books were more likely to bring death penalties and long jail sentences to their publishers than profits.

Proponents of enlightenment and liberal ideas were also somewhat more free to write and publish their theories in the Republic than elsewhere in Europe. Descartes spent two decades working in the Dutch republic. John Locke spent five years in the Netherlands as a political refuge, where he completed his influential work on governance and religious tolerance. The safety of such persons, however, was largely a consequence of its decentralized political institutions, rather than widespread liberalism or tolerance per se in the Dutch republic.²⁵⁴

In the eighteenth century, scholars from other countries often used the experience of the Dutch republic to motivate or illustrate general theories, as in Montesquieu’s (1748) chapter on decentralization and Adam Smith’s (1776) discussion of the benefits of trade liberalization. Dutch references and illustrations were used during the constitutional conventions that led to the founding of the United States of America (Congleton 2008).

D. Revolutionary Times, 1795–1814: the Batavian Republic, First Kingdom, and the French Empire

The polar cases of the king and council template were briefly visited by the Dutch during 1795–1814 as the two-century-old republic was replaced by a new more centralized system of governance as a consequence of two decades of exogenous political shocks.

Most historical accounts suggest that centralization within the Republic tended to increase during the second half of the second century, because a single stadhouder, Willem IV, was appointed for all of the Netherlands in 1747 during another war with France, and the office was made formally hereditary. Partly for this reason, ideological competition and interest in constitutional reform intensified between Dutch liberals and conservatives at the national level.

²⁵⁴ See Israel (2002) and Van Bunge (2003) for careful surveys of Dutch contributions to the European enlightenment.

A large, loosely organized, more or less liberal political reform movement called the “patriot movement” emerged in the second half of the eighteenth century. The patriot movement began as a series of loosely affiliated reading societies that debated and pressed for Dutch constitutional reform. As true of other liberal movements of the eighteenth century, the members of the patriot movement often quoted and referred to such English political theorists as Locke, Price, and Priestley in their pamphlets and arguments for reform in addition to their Dutch predecessors. In the second half of the eighteenth century, a few patriot groups acquired arms and trained in military operations, for example, the *Free Corp* (Israel 1998: 1136). Thomas Jefferson occasionally met with leaders of the patriot movement during his tour of office in Paris.

However, both peaceful and revolutionary efforts were largely unsuccessful, until the French army provided additional support, shortly after the French Revolution. In 1795, with help of the French army, the patriots induced Willem V to leave for England on January 18, and a mild Dutch counterpart to the French Revolution took place. Although much less bloodshed was involved, the patriot revolution also demonstrated the difficulty of radically reforming political institutions.

After Willem V’s departure, the patriots organized a constitutional convention to write a new national constitution and found a new government, the Batavian Republic. The States General called for elections to a constitutional assembly in January 1796. Elections to the constitutional assembly were based on essentially universal male suffrage. All men older than 20, in favor of popular sovereignty, and not on poor relief could vote for representatives to the constitutional assembly. This was very broad suffrage for its day.

Constructing an acceptable new constitution at the special assembly required much negotiation and bargaining, but finally a federal constitution with sufficient support emerged from the assembly. As required for those espousing popular sovereignty, the proposed design was placed before the public in a direct referendum. Unfortunately, the constitution was rejected in the referendum of August 1797. The constitutional assembly resumed meetings and negotiations, and several more months of fruitless constitutional renegotiation followed.

Finally, in January 1798, the French ambassador assumed the leadership of the constitutional assembly and dictated a unitary constitution with separation of church and state, broad male suffrage, and abolition of guilds, feudal duties, and the slave trade. This French proposal for a unitary state was accepted in a referendum in April 1798. Although the Batavian Republic was somewhat more stable and more humane than its French counterpart of that period, its constitution was also revised several times in a manner that tended to concentrate policymaking authority. For

example, in 1801 the Batavian constitution was reformed to concentrate executive power in a small committee. Two years later, it was reformed again to centralize executive power in a single person in 1805.

Later in 1805, the Batavian Republic was replaced by the first Kingdom of the Netherlands, as Napoleon appointed his brother Louis to be king. This, too, proved to be unstable. In 1810 the Netherlands became part of the French empire with the annexation of the Netherlands by Napoleon.

E. The Kingdom of the Netherlands: 1815–48

The Congress of Vienna and the Kingdom of the Netherlands

After the great powers had defeated Napoleon in 1813, the son of Willem V, prince Willem, arrived in the Netherlands from England with English support. A new constitution was quickly drafted by supporters of the House of Orange. It called for a new States General, a unicameral parliament to be appointed by regional governments. The old office of stadhouder, however, was replaced with that of king, with much enhanced authority. As a consequence, prince Willem was crowned king Willem I, rather than *stadhouder* Willem IV, by the new States General on March 15, 1814.

At roughly the same time that Willem was taking power in the Netherlands, the great powers held a Congress in Vienna to redraw the map of European governance with an eye to major power interests and to the future security and political stability of Europe. The great powers (England, Prussia, Russia, and France) agreed to merge many small polities into larger ones, ending the independence of many long-standing polities and creating new ones. The Holy Roman Empire was replaced by the German Confederation. Bavaria was elevated to a kingdom. Switzerland was reestablished. Venice lost its six-century-long independence and became part of the Habsburg domains. The Vienna Congress also placed Norway and Sweden under a common crown, transferring Norway from Denmark to Sweden; formally placed “Swedish Finland” and part of Poland under the Russian sovereign.²⁵⁵

²⁵⁵ The Vienna conference also encouraged the great powers to continue their alliance, which indirectly created a pan-European diplomatic forum, the Concert of Europe. Both the alliance and concert helped to reduce European tensions during the remainder of the nineteenth century.

.It was by no means clear at the time that the kingdom of the Netherlands would include the former Habsburg territories to the south, what became Belgium in 1830. Many evidently believed that those lands would revert to Austria. Willem I, however, lobbied for their merger with the North and was successful. On July 31, 1814, Willem I and his government took over the administration of the South. (The Vienna Congress shifted parts of Spain and Italy to the Austrian Sovereign to compensate the Habsburgs for the loss of their Belgian territories.)

According to the terms worked out between the House of Orange and the great powers in Vienna, the North, and South were to be equal parts in a new unitary state, the details of which were to be worked out by the new Netherlands' States General and King (Kossman 1978: 109–11). A constitutional commission with 12 members from the north and 12 from the south undertook the task of refining the new constitution. Negotiations between northern and southern representatives show that a variety of interests, including liberal ones, were represented in the constitutional convention. It established a new bicameral States General with the first chamber based on nobility and royal appointments for life, and the second indirectly selected by provincial governments. The north, unlike the south, with its republican history lacked a proper nobility, although it had many influential and wealthy families, several of which had noble titles in the Netherlands or elsewhere. Willem I predictably “solved” the problem of northern peers by elevating his most prominent supporters to the new noble chamber.

The second chamber was a federal chamber composed of 55 members from the North and 55 members from the South, each elected by their respective provincial governments (Rietbergen 2002: 124). The provincial governments were modeled after the French system and were organized on the basis of the three medieval estates, the nobility, the towns, and the rural class. Representatives for the town and country were indirectly elected by urban administrators and county electoral colleges. One third of the members of the second chamber stood for election every year (Van Raalte 1959: 2). Suffrage rules for the urban administrators and for the county electoral colleges were based on tax payments and were substantially more restrictive than under the short-lived Batavian Republic. Only about 80,000 Dutchmen and 60,000 Belgians were entitled to vote out of populations of about 2.4 million and 3.4 million respectively (Kossman 1978: 113; Maddison 2003: table A-3A).

The bicameral parliament had formal power to veto proposed budgets and did intervene on budgetary matters. However, until 1840, budgets were normally proposed only *once every 10 years*, which left day-to-day governance almost completely in the hands of the king and his ministers. The constitution called for all routine peacetime expenditures to be part of a decennial budget. Of

course, the king and parliament occasionally disagreed about what was routine. Extraordinary budgets were approved one year at a time (Van Raalte 1959: 2).

Amendments to the constitution had to be approved by majorities in the first and second chambers, and formally accepted at a meeting of the provincial states and by the king. The former prevented the king from simply adopting new constitutional provisions by fiat, and the latter protected the king from usurpation by the parliament. (No formal provision for constitutional review was provided.)

The new constitution was clearly a king-dominated form of the king and council template. It included many provisions that were similar to those of other constitutional monarchies based on late medieval negotiations, although never before present in the Netherlands. The king's appointment of the members of the first chamber, together with his control of ongoing government policies, gave King Willem I considerable control over public policy. To a considerable degree, he and his ministers ruled by royal decree for most of his reign (Rietbergen 2002: 124, Van Raalte 1959: 2).

Belgian Secession of 1830

Equal representation in the second chamber was consistent with the Vienna mandate for equal participation in the new unified national government; however, the south naturally felt shortchanged by this compromise. Those living south of the Rhine (Walloons and Flemish) outnumbered those from the north (Dutch) by more than 30 percent.

A variety of policies implemented by Willem I during his first 15 years further alienated the south. Dutch was gradually introduced as the official language of the Southern courts and government (1819). The language of civil service and governance became predominantly Dutch; which excluded many educated Belgians from government service. Although Dutch (Flemish) was widely spoken in the south, most educated Belgians were from French-speaking households and trained at French schools. A new system of public primary schools was established in the South, which competed with the long-standing Catholic system, which now had to be certified by governmental authorities. In 1825 all Latin schools founded without government permission were closed (Kossman 1978: 127). These policies increased literacy in the south, but also increased Catholic reservations about the new union with the north.

By actively trying to "bring the south into the north," Willem raised suspicions among lay Catholics and French-speaking aristocrats that their lifestyles and wealth were threatened by the new regime. Many intellectuals and businessmen in the south believed that they were being held back by

“northern” policies. A liberal Belgian petition movement gained momentum in the late 1820s, which advocated freedom of education, a free press, and personal liberty. Petitions were distributed by politically active groups, signed by hundreds of thousands, and presented to the States General. The king and his ministers essentially ignored the petitions, because by constitutional law, such documents were irrelevant, and taking formal account of them would have implicitly changed the constitution. A right to petition would have provided direct participation for citizens and politically active groups, rather than the indirect one allowed by the constitution.

In 1830 an economic downturn produced large numbers of bankruptcies, falling wage rates, and unemployment in the South, which further increased discontent. By the end of 1831, a series of working-class demonstrations, resistance by liberal and Catholic interest groups, and mistakes by Willem I and his ministers led to southern secession. Willem objected to the secession both militarily and diplomatically, but the secession was sanctioned by the French and British. In 1831 a new Belgian constitutional monarchy was formed under Leopold I, a Bavarian duke who had fought against Napoleon.²⁵⁶

Many of the same considerations that led to the Belgian secession and to a new relatively liberal Belgian constitution were soon to induce major reforms of the Dutch constitution.

Reforms of 1840: Ministerial Responsibility and the Rule of Law

In 1839 Willem I formally acknowledged the secession of Belgium, which required revising the 1815 constitution, because the southern provinces no longer required representation. The constitution of 1815 prevented the king from modifying the constitution by decree, which gave the parliament a chance to renegotiate some of the procedures of governance. The second chamber had also recently vetoed the king’s proposed 10-year budget. The Belgian secession had shifted the full burden of the Netherlands’ debt back on the northern provinces and reduced tax receipts. The fiscal problems faced by the king increased the parliament’s bargaining power with respect to constitutional reforms, as predicted by the models of part I, and as it often had in other systems in which parliament held the power of the purse (Kossman 1978: 162–64, 182).

Several liberal proposals for reform of the constitution had already been made and rejected. The second chamber refused to accept the current budget proposal unless some recognition of ministerial responsibility was incorporated into the constitution (Van Raalte 1959: 4).

²⁵⁶ During the Burgundian period, all residents of the territories of the Netherlands had been referred to as *Belge* in French or as *Belga* in Latin. However, by 1830 the term *Belge* indicated residents of the southern Netherlands alone (Kossman 1978: 118).

Both the king and the first chamber were initially opposed to constitutional reforms beyond those necessary to take account of the Belgian secession. However, there were new constitutional gains to trade, because of changes in the composition of the first and second chamber and the fiscal conditions. After additional negotiation and bargaining, several liberal amendments were adopted by supermajorities in both chambers in September 1840.²⁵⁷

The 1840 reforms eliminated the 10-year budgetary cycle and required that all departments submit two-year budgets. In addition, every future decree by the king had to be countersigned by a minister, and royal ministers could be prosecuted if they were suspected of violating ordinary or constitutional law. The requirement that decrees be countersigned by ministers by itself would not have affected the king's freedom of action very much, insofar as he retained complete control over appointments. The fiscal and immunity reforms, however, increased the king's need for ongoing support within parliament.

Previously, both the king and his "servants" were above the law, and there was no penalty that the States General or the courts could impose if the king or his ministers ignored constitutional law or ordinary legislation. After the reforms, the responsible minister could be fined, jailed or executed, which made ministers more responsive to parliament (and the constitution) than before, and indirectly reduced the king's power of decree. Equally important, the king would also require routine support in both chambers of the Dutch parliament to keep tax revenue flowing to "his" treasury. These reforms ended the era of royal governance in the Netherlands by shifting Dutch governance to an intermediate form of the king and council template.

Willem I abdicated shortly after the reforms were adopted to pursue an unpopular marriage. His son, Willem II, took office in October 7, 1840 (Kossman 1978: 180; Van Raalte 1959: 4).²⁵⁸

F. Thorbecke's Constitutional Reforms of 1848

In 1839 a professor of history at Leiden University, wrote *Comment upon the Constitution*, a book criticizing the 1815 Dutch constitution. In his book, Professor Johan Thorbecke argued in favor of broader suffrage, the parliamentary appointment of ministers, and other liberal reforms. A second edition was published in 1843 that took account of the 1840 amendments, but advanced similar

²⁵⁷ The amendments included approval by a meeting of the second chamber augmented by representatives of the provincial states.

²⁵⁸ Willem II had had a rather non-Dutch childhood. During the French period, he lived in Berlin, where he received a Prussian military education, and in England, where he attended Oxford University. He served in the British army in 1811 at the age of 19 as aide de camp of the Duke of Wellington. He married Anna in 1816, the sister of the Czar of Russia.

arguments. Thorbecke's work was typical of liberal books, pamphlets, and newspaper articles that addressed constitutional issues at that time. Thorbecke, however, was not simply an academic theorist, but also a respected member of the second chamber of the parliament. In 1844, Thorbecke proposed a series of constitutional reforms. His proposals were rejected, as many other proposals for liberal reforms had been rejected over the years.

A few years later, King Willem II also became interested in constitutional reform. On March 16 1848, in an often quoted conversation, Willem II reported to a group of diplomats from the major powers that "from being very conservative, he had in the course of 24 hours become very liberal." This statement was used to introduce his new strategy of constitutional reform as a method of maintaining the position of the House of Orange, which he described in some detail at the same meeting (Van Raalte 1959: 16). The king's new interest in liberal constitutional reform is often attributed to the demonstrations that swept across much of Europe in 1848, especially in Paris and Bonn.²⁵⁹ These events surely influenced his constitutional strategy somewhat, although it was not the first time that he had proposed constitutional reforms, and it bears noting that demonstrations in the Netherlands were not especially widespread.²⁶⁰

The king's hand was not forced, but it seems clear that Willem II now believed that some liberal reforms were unavoidable and sought to control their course. In early 1848 the king's ministers proposed 27 amendments to the Dutch constitution. Liberals and moderates in the second chamber favored more liberal economic and administrative reforms than proposed by the king's ministers, while Catholics wanted more religious freedom than proposed (Kossman 1978: 183–88). A majority

²⁵⁹ In 1848 a series of large, but mostly peaceful, demonstrations favoring constitutional reform took place in many parts of Europe. For the most part, the demonstrations were illegal, and in this sense revolutionary, a term often used by historians to describe the events of 1848, although there was little bloodshed. There was, however, little evidence of revolution in the Netherlands. The Kingdom of the Netherlands, like much of Europe, was in economic distress, but there were no large-scale riots or takeovers of government buildings in the Netherlands. Some 16 percent of the Dutch population were on poor relief, which suggests that a welfare state was already present in the Netherlands and may have reduced the urgency of those suffering from economic distress. Peaceful demonstrations, nonetheless, made it clear that support for liberal reforms was rising in the Netherlands, as in other European countries, particularly among the middle class.

²⁶⁰ Eighteen years earlier, Willem II had proposed to his father that Belgium be granted a "separate administration" as a possible method of reducing Belgian opposition to the Orange sovereign, after negotiating with Belgian liberals. An emergency session of the States General was called by Willem I, which voted in favor of such reforms, but they were too little and too late to overcome pressures for Belgian secession (Kossman 1978: 153). This experience without doubt also influenced Willem II's thoughts and decisions in 1848.

in the second chamber thus rejected the proposed reforms, and the royal ministers resigned (Van Raalte 1959: 5).

In pursuit of more viable proposals, Willem II appointed a constitutional commission headed by Professor Thorbecke on March 17 and solicited a new cabinet under the leadership of Count Schimmelpenninck. Count Schimmelpenninck agreed to lead the reform cabinet under three conditions: (i) that he could select the other members of the cabinet, (ii) that the new cabinet would review the proposed reforms of the Thorbecke commission, and (iii) that the king would accept significant constitutional reforms. By accepting Schimmelpenninck's conditions, the king accepted what many regard to be the first ministerial government in Dutch history (Van Raalte 1959: 17).

Given Thorbecke's published work and his proposals while in the second chamber, the constitutional commission's recommendations were predictable. They would be more substantial than those adopted in 1840 and proposed by the king's ministers, but not as radical as many outside parliament favored. Thorbecke did not believe in radical reform, but rather in evolutionary reform. Moreover, his reforms had to be adopted constitutionally, which required majority support in the two chambers of parliament, among the provinces, and support of the king. Thus, predictably, his proposed 1848 reforms were modest, relative to the French or Dutch constitutional experiments of the late eighteenth century.

Thorbecke submitted three carefully crafted reforms for approval on April 11. First, he proposed a major reform of the bicameral States General to place it on electoral foundations. In effect, the old first chamber of nobles would be eliminated. The confederal second chamber would become the new first chamber. A new, directly elected chamber would become the "second" chamber. The federal chamber of the States General would have 39 members and be indirectly elected by the provincial governments. The new second chamber would have 50 members and be directly elected from single-member districts under restricted suffrage (Van Raalte 1959: 57). Members of the second chamber would serve four-year terms, and elections for half the members would be held every two years. Members of the first chamber would serve for nine years. A third of its members would stand for election every three years. Budgets were to be annual, rather than biannual. Sessions of both chambers were to be open to the public (Van Raalte 1959: 5–6).

Although the elections would determine essentially all of the members of parliament, the proposed electorate for the new second chamber was slightly *reduced* relative to that of second chamber that it replaced. The new more uniform tax requirement reduced the franchise from perhaps 90,000 to 75,000 out of a population of three million (Kossman 1978: 194). Qualifications

for suffrage at provincial and national elections were to be determined by the same law. Moreover, eligibility for seats in the two chambers was still restricted to Dutch elites. For example, to be eligible for membership in the first chamber, an individual had to belong to the highest category of taxpayer, which made about a 1,000 taxpayers eligible for seats in the first chamber (Van Raalte 1959: 5). Such rules helped to secure support from the first chamber, many of whom would expect to be elected to a seat in the new first chamber. It seems clear that these reforms were designed to make electoral foundations more acceptable to members of the noble chamber and urban elites. The eligibility rules for the new first chamber implied that a majority of the current peers would be “re-elected.”

Second, the principle of ministerial responsibility was taken a step farther than in the 1840 reforms. Thorbecke proposed that parliament be able to dismiss cabinet ministers as well as punish them for illegal or unconstitutional actions. The king’s other prerogatives were left unchanged, except that the Dutch colonies would no longer be treated as the king’s royal property (reducing his non-parliament based income and colonial authority). The king remained free to appoint his ministers, veto legislation, dismiss parliament, declare war, elevate persons to the nobility, and call for new elections for each chamber. To compensate for this reduction in authority, royal income was increased and guaranteed (by section 2).

Third, freedom of assembly, worship, and the press were guaranteed by the new constitution, as was funding for public education. The former assured Catholic support for the new constitution in the second chamber, because it meant that the Catholic Church would be free to organize bishoprics for the first time since the sixteenth century. Increased support for public education reduced opposition from Protestants and increased support among moderates, because tax revenues would support education in church-run schools as well as secular ones (Kossman 1978: 291).

Overall, Thorbecke’s proposed constitutional reforms shifted additional policymaking authority from the king to the parliament, slightly changed the membership of the Parliament, and moderately expanded civil liberties. It provided electoral foundations for the Dutch parliament in a manner that made the reforms acceptable to majorities in the first and second chamber.

The ability of parliament to dismiss ministers meant that the ministers were no long entirely agents of the sovereign. Indeed, ministers became increasingly responsible to parliament during the next two decades, as new bargaining equilibria emerged. The elimination of the old chamber of appointed lifetime peers also diminished the king’s influence within parliament, because the Dutch peers had been chosen in large part because of their loyalty to Orange interests. Nonetheless, the king retained far more control of public policy under the 1848 constitution than his *stadhouder*

forebears had possessed in the days of the Dutch republic. Netherlands remained a kingdom; the king could veto laws, appoint governments, and dismiss the parliament.²⁶¹

Willem II found this moderate shift of authority to be an acceptable compromise with politically active liberals. The king pressed the first chamber peers into accepting elections. Liberals, moderates, and Catholics, with the king's support, provided majorities for the Thorbecke proposals in the second chamber, which in turn were accepted by the king. In this manner, negotiation and bargaining, rather than revolution or pressing revolutionary threats, produced a major reform of the constitution of the kingdom of the Netherlands. After 1848 the kingdom of the Netherlands had an elected parliament with significant authority over public policy for the first time.²⁶²

Willem II himself never experienced the effects of the 1848 reforms. Shortly after swearing in the new Thorbecke cabinet in 1849 elected under the new rules, Willem II died unexpectedly, and his son, who was far less favorably predisposed to reform, became King Willem III.

The Gradual Emergence of Cabinet Governance, 1848–68

The 1848 reforms were not a liberal “revolution” or coup, but rather a bargain worked out among all politically active groups. As might be predicted, the reforms had relatively small, short-term effects on the authority of the Dutch political elites, although it did affect the distribution of policymaking authority among those groups and between the parliament and the king. Between 1848 and 1877, more than a third of the 410 men who became members of parliament were from families with noble titles. Of the 100 different cabinet ministers, 81 came from noble or patrician

²⁶¹ Other liberal provisions are scattered throughout the 1848 constitution, including rights of due process (articles 151 and 156), the requirement of warrants to enter private property or read personal mail (articles 158 and 159), freedom of association (article 9), freedom of the press (article 7), and freedom of religion and religious association (articles 167, 168, and 169). The new constitution also included central government responsibility for poor relief (article 193) and reformed local and provincial governance. For example, town governments would consist of a locally elected council, whose president would be selected from among those proposed by the king (Article 143).

²⁶² The constitutional and national assemblies of the Batavian Republic (1796–1805) were also elected (and on the basis of broader suffrage rules, although Orangists and federalists were initially excluded). Thus, it could be said that for the second time in Dutch history, the Netherlands had an elected parliament.

However, the Batavian Republic was not fully independent in that it was subject to French monitoring and intervention (Kossman 1978: 91–97; Rietbergen 2002: 118–19). It also bears noting that the authority of the new parliament, although larger than it had ever been within the kingdom of the Netherlands, remained below that of the States General of the Dutch Republic for several more decades (Van Raalte 1959: 6).

families. Most of the other members and ministers were from the successful business and professional strata of Dutch life. (The latter had played a role in the old Dutch republic and in the provincial governments, but had been less influential in the kingdom.) The overwhelming majority of the men elected to the new parliaments had law degrees or training in the law. It was clearly a government of relatively wealthy, well-connected men (Kossman 1978: 273–74).

Although parliament could dismiss individual ministers for nonperformance, it was not clear how far their authority over the cabinet extended. For the first 20 years after the 1848 reforms, cabinet ministers continued to serve at the pleasure of the king, including the two Thorbecke cabinets of 1849 and 1862. For example, in 1853 Thorbecke dutifully resigned when the king (and much of the country) openly disapproved of his liberal policy with respect to Catholics, although his ministry continued to have majority support in the second chamber (Van Raalte 1959: 18). This suggests that Thorbecke believed that the king's power of appointment and dismissal was not significantly reduced by the constitutional reforms.

On the other hand, there were practical limits to the king's power of appointment under the new budgetary arrangements. The power of the purse granted to the second chamber in the constitutions of 1840 and extended in 1848 allowed parliament to exercise veto power over the policies of ministers and their ministries—as long as a particular parliament could maintain electoral majorities. The importance of parliamentary support for ministers became very evident in 1868, when parliament vetoed the proposed budget of the Foreign Affairs Ministry over a policy dispute on Luxembourg. The cabinet offered to resign, but the king refused their resignations, arguing that parliament had unconstitutionally interfered in the government's execution of foreign policy.

The king called for new parliamentary elections and campaigned for a new pro-sovereign parliament. However, the electorate selected a parliament that supported parliament's right to criticize and sanction ministers and their policies. The newly elected parliament again vetoed the proposed budget of the recalcitrant ministry of foreign affairs. The king reluctantly accepted the resignation of his cabinet and appointed a new cabinet that was more respectful of parliamentary advice (Van Raalte 1959: 20). After 1868 the sovereign routinely chose ministers from the major parties in the parliament.

The governments elected under the 1848 constitution alternated between liberals and conservatives; with liberals holding power a bit more often than conservatives. Suffrage was far from universal, although it gradually expanded as the economy grew in the decades before the next series of constitutional amendments.

G. Dutch Liberalism and Political Competition in the Nineteenth Century

Nineteenth-century Dutch liberals were not Cartesian system builders, but rather were generally skeptical of such all-encompassing theories. They were evolutionists, while being skeptical of evolutionary theorists (Kossman 1978: 259–64, Stuurman 1989). The groups referred to as “liberals” in the Netherlands did not always agree about the end that reforms should achieve or cooperate their persuasive campaigns. What might be called “right of center” liberals sought reductions in trade barriers, suffrage of “competent” persons, and very little more. Centrist liberals pressed for educational reform, the abolishment of slavery, and a somewhat greater extension of suffrage, largely because of a more generous notion of competence. “Left of center” liberals (radicals) supported very broad suffrage, major educational reform, child labor laws, and a shift of tax instruments from excise to income taxation. In the late nineteenth century, such “radical liberals” were increasingly influential within liberal groups in the Netherlands, as elsewhere, and liberal thought drifted to the left, in this sense, as the nineteenth century progressed.

In mid-century, Thorbecke was by far the most important Dutch liberal, because he was simultaneously an important liberal theorist and three times the prime minister, in addition to being the author of the 1848 constitutional reforms. Economic and ideological trends, however, favored the more “radical” liberal ideas, as each generation’s “radicals” became the next generation’s conservatives. As in other parts of Europe, the center of gravity in Dutch liberalism shifted toward increasingly open politics and markets. The liberal magazine *De Gids* (the guide) was founded in 1837 and played an important role as a forum for ideas, criticism, and advocates for reform(s). The *Gids* was challenged in 1874 by the new more radical *Vragen des Tijds* (Issues of the Day).

Their opponents for most of the century were conservatives whose loyalties were not to an ancient kingdom and church, but rather to religious and cultural norms from the past. Conservative groups also included former liberals who thought that reforms had gone far enough, members of economic interest groups opposed to free trade, and pragmatists who generally benefited from the status quo. Conservatives remained skeptical of the usefulness of further political liberalization at each point in the series of reforms that gradually produced liberal parliamentary democracy in the Netherlands (Von der Dunk 1978, Kossman 1978: 275–77).

Political Parties

Political parties during most of the nineteenth century were loose affiliations of persons and small groups who could agree on the merits of particular reforms and/or politicians. Suffrage was very narrow, and it was not until it expanded toward the end of the century that disciplined political parties emerged. In 1878 the Calvinist anti-revolutionary (conservative) party was founded. The Liberal Union was founded in 1885, and the Social Democratic Labor party was founded in 1894. The new parties were formally organized, but their members remained open to new alignments and organizations.

For example, the most conservative members of the anti-revolutionary party broke away in the 1890s to found the Christian Historical Union party. A few years later, the Liberal Union split into centrist liberals and the right-of-center Union of Free Liberals (which subsequently rejoined the Liberal Union in 1921). The left of center radicals left the Liberal Union in 1891 to form the Liberal Democratic Union (VDB). The left-of-center liberals in the VDB worked with the Social Democrats for universal suffrage. (The VDB subsequently joined the Social Democrats in 1946.) A similar split occurred among Social Democrats and Marxists in the first part of the twentieth century (Van Raalte 1959: 10; Kossman 1978: 338–47, 515; Skillen and Carlson-Thies 1982; Sap 2000: 35–37; and Rietbergen 2002: 134.)

Most voters, of course, were not driven entirely by liberal ideological considerations, but rather influenced by them at the margin, as suggested by the models developed above. That is to say, most Dutch voters and politicians were pragmatists with dispositions for or against liberal reform.

Liberal Policy Reforms

Significant liberal policy reforms were adopted during Thorbecke's first and second periods of office. Policymaking power was decentralized somewhat in the municipality laws of 1850 and 1851, and local excise taxes were replaced with direct taxes. Policies protecting Dutch shipping were eliminated. Internal and external protectionism was dismantled as tariffs were reduced in 1854 and export duties eliminated in 1862. New higher burgher schools, which focused on science and modern languages, were introduced by Thorbecke in 1863 (Kossman 1978: 414).²⁶³ Slavery was abolished in 1863 (Rietbergen 2002: 134).

²⁶³ By all accounts the educational reforms and those that followed in the 1870s were very successful, as most graduates of the higher burgher schools went on to university training. Indeed, four won Nobel prizes in the early 1900s (Willink 1991).

In 1860 the rail network begun under Willem I was extended. New canals and dikes were built. International trade expanded rapidly, partly because of the free trade regimes adopted in the Netherlands and elsewhere, and also because of the increased income associated with new production technologies and more open markets. Foreign trade increased by 179 percent during the 1850–73 period. The increased exports were initially largely agricultural, but cloth and clothing followed as the factory approach was more broadly applied. Textile and agricultural production expanded. The Dutch population grew rapidly in the second half of the twentieth century (Kossman 1978: 264–65).

The most difficult and controversial of the mid-century reforms was expanding the freedom of association to include the religious organizations of Catholics and Jews.²⁶⁴ This was guaranteed by the constitution of 1848, but not fully implemented until 1853, when the Catholic Church established bishoprics in Utrecht, Haarlem, Breda, Roermond, and Hertogengosch. A subset of the Protestant community responded with petitions and sermons predicting a new inquisition, censorship, tyranny, and so forth—in short a return to the days before the Dutch revolt nearly three centuries earlier. Although not all Protestants were outraged, the king’s response was to ask Thorbecke to resign as prime minister, which he did, as noted above (Kossman 1978: 282). The liberal majority of the second chamber, however, pressed on with liberal reforms under new leadership. (Thorbecke did not regain the prime minister’s office until 1862.)

Suffrage Movements

From the perspective of the twenty-first century, Thorbecke’s failure to extend suffrage, rather than reduce it, further seems odd, indeed outrageous, but it should be kept in mind that universal suffrage had never been used to select a national government, except very briefly during the period of the French Revolution, where the results were not widely admired. Under Thorbecke’s law, suffrage expanded as personal income increased and their tax payments satisfied the qualification thresholds. Suffrage also expanded somewhat as taxes were raised. These factors by themselves gradually increased the electorate to 122,000 persons in 1887, about 14 percent of adult males (Kossman 1978: 351).

²⁶⁴ Jews and Catholics had long been worshipping in the Netherlands, but privately in “secret” churches, rather than openly, as had the Protestants before the success of the Dutch war of secession. Catholics were elected to the second chamber and provided important support for Thorbecke’s constitutional reforms in exchange for his support for extended rights to organize churches (Kossman 1978: 193, 278–79).

Early and mid nineteenth-century liberals favored allowing all appropriately qualified (independent and thoughtful) men to vote. Thorbecke's 1850 election law used direct tax payments to determine whether one was qualified or not, with thresholds for the countryside that were somewhat lower than for urban areas. This law was similar to many others in Europe at the time and was adopted by a relatively liberal government. It enfranchised about 10 percent of the adult males (Kossman 1978: 194).

Most politically active liberal groups focused their energy on suffrage expansion and educational reform during most of the nineteenth century, rather than universal suffrage. Educational reforms increased literacy and rising income associated with economic development increased economic independence. Consequently, many liberals began to think that universal suffrage would emerge gradually as education and economic opportunity expanded and more and more people qualified as independent, thoughtful voters. Suffrage expansion, if not universal suffrage, was an issue upon which a variety of liberal groups could agree.

After the parliamentary reforms of 1848, support for reforms of suffrage law gradually increased, and several political organizations devoted to suffrage reform were created. In 1876 an association called the *Algemeen Stemrecht* (universal franchise) was created by the Dutch left. In 1879 the *Comite voor Algemeen Stemrecht* was founded by left-of-center liberals. Other groups by socialists, labor unions, and liberals were founded in 1880, 1881, and 1882. These groups launched persuasive campaigns aimed at a broad cross-section of the existing and potential electorate. A woman's suffrage league was founded in 1894. Intellectuals wrote books that predicted near utopian results from universal franchise. Many of the political parties founded in the late nineteenth century also pressed for suffrage expansion. By the century's end, Social Democrats, radical liberals, liberals, and a good many conservatives supported universal male suffrage.

If sociological political theorists are to be believed, the existence of such mass movements should induce rapid changes in suffrage law. However, universal suffrage was not obtained for nearly two generations.

Suffrage Reform in 1887 and 1894

A new round of fruitful constitutional negotiations was launched when a conservative government commission proposed a series of 12 constitutional amendments in 1883. These could not generate the required level of support, and the proposals were withdrawn, revised, and resubmitted in 1885. Again there was too little support, and after a year of negotiations, new

elections were called in June 1886. The result was a small liberal majority in the second chamber and a new round of constitutional bargaining. Finally, in 1887, a package of 11 provisions were passed, including suffrage reform, a slight change in the size of the two chambers, and a provision for subsidizing Catholic Church schools (Blok 1912: 504-06). New elections were called, as required by the amendment procedures adopted in 1848, and the required support obtained in the (largely) reelected parliament.

The new suffrage laws eliminated the tax payment threshold. Suffrage was granted to all male heads of household aged 23 or older, who showed “signs of fitness and social well-being,” with “fitness” to be defined by parliament through new election laws. The standard of fitness chosen, approximately doubled the electorate from 14 to 28 percent of the electorate (Kossman 1978: 350, Ogg 1918: 226, Blok 1912: 505). Conservatives expected to benefit (and did) from an increased turnout of middle-class religious voters.

Catholic and Protestant political parties after 1888 were often partners in government, as old religious controversies on doctrine were put aside to advance shared policy objectives, especially subsidies for religious schools. Together they passed an educational reform bill in 1889, long opposed by liberals, that allowed free schools (religious schools) to pass on one-third of their costs to the national government (Kossman 1978: 354).

Debate over election law continued and various proposals were made to further extend suffrage by left liberals. In 1893 Tak van Poortvliet proposed allowing all persons who could read and write and who were self-supporting to be eligible to vote. That proposal, however, was too large of an expansion for moderate liberals and conservatives at that time, and was withdrawn. A few years later, suffrage reform was taken up again, but this time more successfully by a coalition of moderate liberals and conservatives. Von Houton’s 1896 reforms of Dutch election law redefined “fitness” in terms of modest tax payments (1 guilder), savings, rental payments, income, residency, and other measures of a man’s ability to vote rationally and independently. Suffrage doubled again to about 47 percent of the male population.

Consistent with the models developed in part I, these reforms reflected changes in the beliefs of pivotal voters and pivotal members of parliament—as well as a bit of political pragmatism on the part of parties who expected to benefit from reform. Although left liberals had long supported universal suffrage, moderate liberals did not believe that poor and relatively uneducated citizens were capable of exercising the franchise with sufficient competence to be given the vote.

Moderate and right-of-center liberals controlled the largest block of seats in the late nineteenth century parliaments, and so it was they (and their religious party opponents) who actually determined whether new suffrage laws would be adopted, rather than left liberals, the suffrage movement, or unenfranchised voters. Suffrage continued to increase gradually, reaching 60 percent by 1910 as education and wealth expanded and as election laws were reinterpreted (Kossman 1978: 361, Ogg 1918: 527–30, Blok 1912: 509).

The consequence of electoral reform was not “capture” by one of the main political coalitions, as might be predicted by an entirely opportunistic model of suffrage law. Government continued to shift among conservative, liberal, and left-liberal coalitions.

H. Electoral Reforms of 1917–22: PR and Universal Suffrage

Two decades of suffrage reform gradually allowed the Social Democratic party (SDAP) to become a significant party in parliament. The elections of 1913 returned 18 Social Democrats, 37 Liberals, and 45 Conservatives to the second chamber. The left-liberal coalition had adopted platforms that favored universal male suffrage and a new social security system. The Social Democrats, however, refused to participate in government with the liberals, and as a compromise a “non-partisan” cabinet was accepted under the leadership of van der Linden.

In 1915 prime minister van der Linden initiated a new round of constitutional bargaining with the three major parties-coalitions, as World War I was taking place. Three major reforms were negotiated and adopted through normal legislative and constitutional procedures in 1917. Male suffrage was made essentially universal. The first-past-the-post election process was replaced with a PR system. The school-funding provisions of the 1848 constitution were modified to allow full funding of “free” (religious) schools by the federal government.

All three parts of the package of reforms were necessary to generate the support necessary to amend the constitution. Without PR, the smaller parties feared being eliminated from parliament when universal suffrage was adopted. Liberals insisted on PR as a method for saving seats for the three liberal parties that held seats during World War I. Without constitutional provisions for educational funding guarantees, the conservative religious parties feared that expanding suffrage would end taxpayer support for religious schools. The secular left had routinely opposed financial support for the religious schools. The Social Democrats accepted such funding, however, because they were unlikely to have significant control over public policy unless suffrage was expanded.

Together the guaranteed funding for religious schools and PR produced sufficient liberals and conservatives support for package of reforms to be adopted (Kossman 1978: 555, van Raalte 1959: 20–23, Lijphart 1968: 98–104). The logic of universal suffrage was extended to include women in 1922, as essentially universal women’s suffrage was added to that of men. (If men were all competent to vote, surely women were as well.)

In the Dutch case, the new electoral rules benefited the religious parties and conservatives, rather than social democrats or liberals. As expected, the parties of the left became relatively more important after universal suffrage was adopted; however, they did not become the dominant coalitions, as in Sweden. Most of the new male and female blue-collar voters split between the Christian Democratic and Social Democratic parties, and the religious parties initially attracted more votes from the newly enfranchised. As a consequence, center-right coalitions of the religious parties formed the government in 1918, 1922, and 1925. Similar center-right coalitions continued to gain the favor of moderate Dutch voters for several decades.

Social Democrats were not routinely invited to majority coalitions formed by other parties until after World War II. They became the largest party in 1960. Liberal political parties as expected, lost seats after the 1917 expansion of suffrage. The 1918 elections supported 17 political parties in the second chamber, but the number of liberal members fell from 40 to 15. Indeed, Dutch liberal parties lost ground with nearly every increase in suffrage, which suggest that liberal interests in suffrage reform tended to be ideological, rather than partisan, although pragmatic interests clearly affected their constitutional bargaining positions and votes on how suffrage expansion would be implemented (Kossman 1978: 556-57).

In contemporary Netherlands, Social Democrats alternate with Christian Democrats as the “first” parties in left- and right-of-center coalition governments. In 2002 the Christian Democrats had their best finish since the 1950s.

I. Conclusions: Interests, Economic Development, and Reform 1815–1920

The Dutch transition to parliamentary democracy reflected opportunities for constitutional exchange that emerged during the course of the nineteenth century. As in Sweden, there were three major periods of reform. The first in 1813–16 established a new Kingdom of the Netherlands, with a relatively powerful king and relatively weak and narrow parliament. The second from 1840–1848 created an electoral basis for governance by replacing the noble chamber with a directly elected chamber. The third from 1917–1922 adopted universal suffrage and proportional representation.

Although the Netherlands remained a constitutional monarchy, control over public policy gradually shifted from kings and queens to the parliament during the nineteenth century.

As in England, the transition to parliamentary rule was faster than the transition to universal suffrage. Thorbecke's 1848 constitutional reforms formally shifted power from the king to parliament by giving it a stronger power of the purse and indirect control over ministers, but the same reforms reduced, rather than expanded, suffrage. Most of the shifts of authority from kings and queens to parliament were products of the new bargaining equilibria produced by Thorbecke's reforms. The sovereigns in the second half of the century retained formal authority to dismiss ministers, but support from majorities in elected parliaments was difficult to obtain without deferring to leaders of majority coalitions. Consequently, cabinets were increasingly populated by leaders of major political parties in the directly elected chamber of parliament, and kings increasingly accepted the recommendations of "their" cabinets.

Suffrage reform began several decades later (in 1887) and reflected ideological shifts and partisan interests within parliament. The qualifications for suffrage and for elected office were often revised as parts of carefully negotiated packages of constitutional reforms. For example, the reforms that produced universal male suffrage in 1917 also included a shift to proportional representation and reforms of educational funding. As predicted by the theory of constitutional reform developed in part I, the reform packages reflected the institutionally induced interest of the negotiators and addressed several issues at a time. The reforms were nonetheless incremental rather than revolutionary.

Perhaps surprisingly, the relatively liberal republican past of the Netherlands played almost no role in the constitutional developments of the Netherlands during the nineteenth century. Earlier liberal successes during the republic meant that the Netherlands began the nineteenth century with relatively more open trade, relatively greater religious and intellectual tolerance, and perhaps broader support for liberal ideas than elsewhere, but they did not produce a legacy of political institutions or politically active interest groups. The Netherlands did not return to its confederal structure with strong cities and provinces, and a weak central government. The office of *stadhouder* was not recreated or reinvented.

The pattern of nineteenth century reform was very similar to that of other constitutional monarchies affected by liberal tides and technological innovation. The royal office did not disappear, as might be predicted by other theories of constitutional change. Indeed, contemporary Dutch kings and queens retain much of their past formal authority. The Dutch constitution of 1983 states that

each of the chambers of parliament may be dissolved by royal decree (article 64) and that the Prime Minister and other ministers shall be appointed and dismissed by royal decree (article 43). Article 74 states that the King shall be the president of the Council of State and that the heir apparent is entitled to a seat on that council. The council is to be consulted on legislation and may draft general administrative orders.

Nonetheless, the bargaining equilibria that emerged as parliaments became more decisive and as the power of the purse became more importance were remarkably stable. As a consequence, Kings and Queens continue to remain in the background on most policy debates. In that and many other respects, the formal and informal constitutional bargains struck by the liberal movement of the nineteenth century arguably created both the mainstream Dutch politics of the twentieth century and the core procedures of governance through which it determines contemporary public policy.

Table 15: Major Constitutional Developments in the History of the Netherlands

Year	Constitutional or Political Event
58 BC	Roman empire reaches southern edge of the Rhine. In what came to be called the Netherlands, a series of fortress cities and trading posts were established, many of which remain today.
1450	States General created for most of the Netherlands by the Burgundy provinces.
1477	Mary's letter of preference grants the States General the right to veto taxes and meet as they wish, i.e., without being called by a king or queen. The Union of Utrecht formalizes the alliance of Protestant provincial governments and provides constitutional foundations for collective decisions by the Seven United Provinces. Provinces have the right to appoint their own stadhouders, and a different stadhouder is appointed in the north than in the south, although both are from the House of Orange.
1579	
1581	
1650–72	First stadhouder-less period in Holland and several other southern provinces.
1672–02	Office of stadhouder reestablished, Willem III takes office and drives the French out.
1702–47	Second stadhouder-less period: after Willem III's death in 1702, no stadhouder is appointed in the south.
1747	Office of stadhouder reestablished. Willem IV is from the Friesland line of the House of Orange and becomes the first stadhouder for all of the Netherlands. Willem IV drives the French out.
1793	The French declare war on stadhouder Willem V, who flees to England in 1795
1798	Batavian constitution adopted with a unicameral parliament elected under broad suffrage. The constitution provides for freedom of press and association, freedom of religion, independence of judges, and separation of church and state. It also formally eliminates guild privileges and feudal duties.
–1801	
1801-06	Napoleon replaces the Batavian constitution with a more authoritarian system, with R. J. Schimmelpenninck at its head.
1806-10	Kingdom of the Netherlands created with Louis Bonaparte as king (Napoleon's brother).
1810	Netherlands temporarily becomes part of France.
1813-16	Kingdom of the Netherlands established, a new constitution is drafted with a bicameral parliament with a more or less noble chamber and a federal chamber. Its territories include present-day Belgium,
1830	Belgium secedes and secures independence in 1831. Its new constitution is finalized in 1839 and causes constitutional issues to be revisited in the Netherlands.
1840	Constitution reforms increase parliament's power of the purse by shortening the budget cycle from 10 to 2 years and introduces ministerial responsibility.
1844	Thorbecke (a law professor at the University of Leiden) proposes nine constitutional reforms shortly after coronation of Willem II, but they fail to receive a majority in the lower house. King Willem II proposes constitutional reforms, but these fail, and his cabinet resigns.
1848	A new constitutional commission is created on March 17 (headed by Johan Rudolph Thorbecke). Peaceful demonstrations take place in Amsterdam for constitutional reforms.
1848	Thorbecke proposes major reforms of the Dutch constitution: a compromise between liberals and House of Orange supporters is reached, with support of King Willem II. Parliament is placed on an electoral basis. The new first chamber becomes a federal chamber (essentially the existing second chamber) The new second chamber is to be directly elected by about 10 percent of male adults; it controls the budget.

Perfecting Parliament

- Members of the first chamber are elected for nine years (one-third of members elected every three years). The second chamber is elected for four years (and increasingly dominated by liberals).
- 1848 Freedom of press, association, and right of petition established through legislation.
- 1849 King Willem II dies, Willem III becomes king, and Thorbecke becomes prime minister. He has poor relations with the new king who threatens Thorbecke with the gallows.
- Thorbecke resigns at Willem III's request after Protestants protest the return of Catholic bishops to the Netherlands for the first time in 200 years (under the new freedom of association rules).
- 1853 Religious parties gain seats in the next election.
- 1868 Parliamentary power becomes more extensive as a consequence of bargaining over the budget; ministers now clearly require significant parliamentary support as well as support by the king
- 1870 A Liberal Party is founded.
- 1869 Anti-Revolutionary Party (conservative coalition) is founded by Kuyper
- 1880 New "socialist" parties started in the 1880s, although they did not have significant representation in parliament. They are firmly linked to the labor and social democratic movements.
- 1887-94 Parliamentary reforms: expansion of male suffrage to 27 percent of adult men. First chamber now includes 50 members and second chamber 100 members. Reforms in 1894 extend suffrage to about 50 percent of male voters.
- 1891 Special meeting of Anti-Revolutionary Party (conservatives) to address labor issues.
- Catholic parties are encouraged to pay more attention to labor by Pope encyclical 1891.
- 1900 First national unions are organized and a major strike occurs in 1903. In response, the government tries to reduce the power of unions, but fails. There are Christian and secular unions closely related to the Christian Democratic and Social Democratic parties
- 1917-22 Major constitutional reforms adopted in a constitutional exchange.
- Universal male suffrage, PR for second chamber, first chamber remains indirectly elected by provincial councils, but with no minimum wealth threshold for chamber seats. First chamber to have six-year terms, with half elected every three years (in 1980 went to four-year terms).
- Educational funding for religious schools is adopted in exchange for support of other parliamentary reforms.
- 1922 Women's suffrage is adopted. Support for religion-based parties increases.
- 1938-72 Minor constitutional reforms.
- 1940-46 German occupation, government flees, no election until 1946
- Major constitutional reforms: royal authority is formally reduced and the bill of rights is extended.
- 1983 However, ministers are still formally appointed by royal decree and chambers may still be dissolved by royal decree. The first chamber has 75 members and the second 150 members.