

## **Chapter 14: The Swedish Transition to Democracy**

### **A. Sweden's Written Constitutional History**

Swedish constitutional history is in many ways similar to that of England, although its international entanglements and its evolutionary path differ somewhat from the English case. Sweden originated as a relatively small kingdom in the early fourteenth century, at about the same time that its first constitutional documents were drafted (Helle et al. 2003: 401–402, Weibull 1993: 18–22). At its peak in the seventeenth century, its territory included lands in northern Germany, Poland, Russia, the Baltic States, and Finland. Norway was ruled by the Swedish king during most of the nineteenth century. Although not a small country today, Sweden is much smaller now than it was in past centuries. Nonetheless, the constitutional laws and architecture of Sweden were quite stable and therefore may be argued to be among the oldest in the world.

As in the English case, the Swedish constitution consisted of several written laws and customary procedures with special status, rather than a single foundational document. It bears noting that usage of the term “constitution” in this book differs somewhat from that used by most Swedish legal scholars. Constitution is normally translated into Swedish as *grundlag* (foundational or grounding law). Under that definition, there have been just two Swedish constitutions since 1809. The 1809 constitution remained in place until 1975. Swedish legal scholars might argue that during the period of greatest interest for this book, Swedish governance was based on a single constitution. However, by the usage adopted here, the Swedish state may be said to have operated under at least four different constitutional systems from 1809 to 1975, because the fundamental procedures for choosing public policies underwent four major reforms.<sup>241</sup>

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included three periods of major reforms and many other periods in which minor reforms were adopted. For example, the “new” constitution of 1809 was a relatively liberal document with clear medieval antecedents. It reaffirmed parliament’s veto power over taxation and specified formal procedures for constitutional amendment. The

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<sup>241</sup> That collection of constitutional rules essentially specified that Sweden was governed jointly by a king and Riksdag and also characterized royal succession. Under that collection of rules, Sweden went from a substantially unelected parliament with four chambers to a two-chamber parliament elected with wealth-weighted voting in 1866, universal male and female suffrage under proportional representation in 1909–20, and a unicameral parliament in 1970. In addition, the position of the king evolved from the dominant figure in Swedish politics to a largely symbolic figure in the early twentieth century.

amendment of the Riksdag Act in 1866 changed the architecture of parliament from a four-chamber assembly organized on the basis of class to a bicameral one grounded in elections. Major electoral reforms were adopted in 1907 and 1920 that produced universal male and women's suffrage. Another significant reform was adopted in 1970 when the two chambers of the Riksdag were merged into a single chamber, although that much later reform is beyond the scope of the present chapter.<sup>242</sup> Other unwritten reforms also occurred, for example, as the balance of public policymaking authority shifted from the king to the parliament in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

The evolution of Swedish governance, however, is generally clearer than that of England, because new procedures were normally formally codified in written constitutional laws, although it must be acknowledged that Swedish governance was not always faithful to its constitutional law. However, for the most part, Sweden's rules for creating laws and amending its constitution have been followed for seven centuries.

### *Origins of Swedish Constitutional Law*

The early kings of Scandinavia were normally elected at formal meetings called variously *tings*, *lagtings*, and *althings*, which can be considered precursors to modern parliaments.<sup>243</sup> Medieval *tings* combined aspects of modern judicial and legislative branches of government. They were deliberative assemblies that met at regular intervals to settle disputes, pass sentences on law breakers, and select kings.<sup>244</sup> There were local, regional, and national *tings*. In the early Middle Ages there were many small rival kingdoms and duchies, which were gradually unified into three kingdoms—Sweden, Norway, and Denmark—through wars of conquests and arranged marriages.

Modern Sweden's constitutional law may be said to have begun at a national *ting*. In 1319 after a 20-year period of considerable turmoil and mayhem, Magnus Eriksson, the son of Duke Erik, was elected at a national assembly at which, according to the *Rhymed Chronicle*, "both the commons and privileged estates had assembled to elect a king." Magnus Eriksson was only age 3 and was evidently selected as part of a compromise to restore order and reduce conflict over the top posts in government. It was agreed that governmental decisions would be made by a council representing major noble families (who initially served as regents and would later form the royal council after Magnus came of age). The regents (royal council) promised to govern by rule of law, to follow

<sup>242</sup> See Congleton (2003) for an analysis of Sweden's twentieth-century reforms.

<sup>243</sup> Indeed, the contemporary Danish parliament is called the Folketing or Folketinget: the people's *ting*.

<sup>244</sup> Petersson (1994: 6) briefly describes these early collective decisionmaking bodies.

certain procedures for adopting public policies, and committed the new king to the same procedures. The regents also committed the king to impose new taxes only after consultation with the royal council (Helle et al. 2003: 401–9, Weibull 1993: 22).<sup>245</sup>

Thirty years later, King Magnus Eriksson promulgated a new unified legal code for the entire kingdom (the Land Law). The new legal code was a synthesis of the best practices in Scandinavia and served as the foundation of Swedish law until the nineteenth century. Eriksson's Land Law created a uniform criminal and civil law for the kingdom as a whole, specified judicial procedures, and included constitutional provisions.<sup>246</sup> It also included and extended the promises made on his behalf in the 1319 charter.<sup>247</sup> Eriksson's Land Law stated that the king "shall be true and faithful to all his subjects and he shall not harm anyone poor or rich, except according to law and after legal process." It called for a royal council to be selected (by the king) that would consist of 12 Swedish nobles and 7 native-born church officials, who would serve on the council for life (Upton 1998: 1–2, Helle et al. 2003: 700–01). It also states that "in the future no laws should be given to the common people without their aye and good will" (Wigmore 1912: 21). It further states that new taxes would be negotiated with delegations of the provinces and that subsequent kings would be elected by similar assemblies (Helle et al. 2003: 701).

The main provisions of the Land Law were repeated many times, as for example in Kristoffer's code ratified in 1442 (Weibull 1993: 22) and when a new official text was printed and distributed in 1608 (Upton 1998: 2). In this manner, Swedish governance became grounded in written documents that remained in force for several centuries.<sup>248</sup>

The Letter of Privilege of 1319 was less an agreement between a king and council than an effort by the Swedish elite to constrain their still very young (thirteen-year-old) sovereign. However, the

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<sup>245</sup> Helle et al. (2003:702) refer to the agreement that formalized Eriksson's election as the Swedish Charter of Liberty. Weibull (1993: 22) refers to the agreement variously as the Letter of Privilege and as the Swedish Magna Carta.

<sup>246</sup> Similar civil codes and more or less representative constitutional structures had been adopted by Denmark (Jydske Law) and Norway (Laws of Gula-thing, and Jonsbok) in the century before (Wigmore 1912: 17–20).

<sup>247</sup> The dates and details mentioned for this period (and many others) vary a bit among historians. Here and in several other places in the historical narratives, I apply what might be called the law of the blind men and the elephant. When historians describe the same events in different ways and/or similar events at different dates, I assume that they are all essentially correct. The precise details of Eriksson's accession are less important than his subsequent creation and use of the Land law, which was promulgated and widely in use by 1352.

<sup>248</sup> Magnus Eriksson also made Stockholm the official port city of Sweden, through which all foreign trade was to pass. This made Stockholm the main commercial and political city of Sweden (Helle et al. 2003: 333–34).

“privilege” became accepted as the law of the land and can be regarded as the first Swedish constitution (Wiebull 1993). The king’s authority was also constrained by local governments and by international alliances rooted in trade, such as the Hanseatic League and Kalmar Union, and by complex family relationships within northern Europe.

Standing royal tax revenues from land taxes, many of which were paid in the form of produce, had been fixed in the previous century. There were also excise taxes on copper and obligations of nobles to provide military service to the kingdom when called upon (partly in exchange for tax exemptions). Royal income, however, was relatively small and a good deal of day-to-day financing took the form of loans against future income. Loans were evidently easier to negotiate than new taxes. The loans were partly from the Catholic Church and partly from noble families in northern Europe (Helle et al. 2003: 407–408).

## **B. Medieval Sweden**

In the medieval period, the king of Sweden was formally a nonhereditary post, chosen by gatherings called for that purpose (national *tings*). *Tings* had been common in Sweden, Norway, Germany, and Denmark for many centuries before the establishment of written instruments of governance and played a role in settling local and regional disputes as well as electing kings. Most *tings* were local or regional gatherings, although national gatherings were not uncommon (Pettersson 1994). Once elected, a king normally retained power until his death, although kings were occasionally replaced for extreme malfeasance of their duties.

Eriksson’s Land Law implicitly codified the practice of calling for assemblies of regional governments, although it did not create a formal architecture for such assemblies. As a consequence, a series of Swedish national assemblies were called during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to address tax issues and to elect sovereigns (Bellquist 1935: 857, Helle et al. 2003: 701–02, Sawyer and Sawyer 1993: 95–99). These assemblies were initially similar to *tings* in that they were arranged at times of religious and commercial festivals to increase participation. This suggests that national assemblies during this time were not considered to be very important, possibly because central governments were not considered to be very important. Governance was quite decentralized during the late Middle Ages.

The most important of the early meetings of the Swedish assemblies occurred in 1388, when it met and elected Margrethe of Denmark to be the next Swedish sovereign, a few years after Eriksson's death.<sup>249</sup> In 1389 Margrethe arranged to have the crowns of Denmark, Norway, and Sweden placed on a single head (that of her grand nephew, Erik), which began the period of the Kalmar Union (1389–1521).

The Kalmar Union was a period of joint sovereignty, rather than a merger of the three countries (at least according to Swedish and Norwegian accounts). The national laws and councils of Sweden, Denmark, and Norway remained distinct, as was normally the case during periods of joint sovereignty in Europe. Consequently, Swedish's Land Law remained in place, as did most national, regional, and local governmental institutions, including its royal council, which was largely populated by Swedes. Swedish national assemblies were routinely involved in electing Danish and Swedish kings in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, as in 1396, 1441, 1448, 1520, and 1521 (Sawyer and Sawyer 1993: 71–79). Accession charters normally required the Danish kings to consult with the three councils of state and to call their parliaments as required. And, assemblies of regional governments continued to be called in Sweden to deliberate on new taxes and royal succession.

### *Emergence of the Four-Chamber Swedish Parliament*

The specific institutional form that emerged for meetings of the Swedish national assembly evidently reflected Danish practices. The Danes had long distinguished among their “estates” (groups that had their own legal rights), and Danish governance had long included a national parliament of the estates, which had been called a Riksdag since 1241 (Helle 2003: 680, Wigmore 1912: 547–48).

Disputes between the Danish sovereign and the Swedish and Norwegian councils did occur, and occasionally rose to the point of armed revolts (usually over taxes). In 1435 the usual centralization disputes of this period led to a rebellion in Sweden. The leader of that rebellion, Engelbrekt, called a meeting of nobles, clergy, burghers, and peasants in Arboga. The groups met separately and had equal rights. They agreed to carry through the decision of a majority of the chambers, and agreed to support Engelbrekt in his negotiations with the Danish crown. They also

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<sup>249</sup> Queen Margrethe was related to the Swedish royal family through marriage to Magnus Eriksson's son, Håkon. Magnus Eriksson had been sovereign of Norway as well as Sweden during most of his lifetime. The transition from Eriksson to Håkon to Margrethe was not a simple or uncontested one, although it was consistent with the rules of inheritance in Scandinavia at the time, and was ratified by a Swedish national assembly as required under Eriksson's Land Law (Sawyer and Sawyer 1992: 69-75).

elected Engelbrekt and Knutsson protectors of Sweden. Subsequent negotiations (and a bit of military resistance) produced increased Swedish autonomy in 1438 and subsequently a Swedish king in 1448 (Toyne 1948: 86–89, Sawyer and Sawyer 1993: 76).

During the first decades of the sixteenth century, the centralization contest between Sweden and Denmark was finally resolved in Sweden's favor as the Danish army lost a series of battles and Hansaetic support for Sweden was enlisted against the Danes. In 1523, the leader of the Swedish war of succession was elected king of Sweden by the Riksdag (at Strängnäs). Gustav Vasa, although bound by the procedures of the Land Law, acted rapidly to buttress his authority.<sup>250</sup>

As the Swedish territories expanded, the countrywide tings were replaced by formal gatherings of the four estates: the nobles, burghers (town leaders), clerics, and peasants (non-noble landowners). Given the territorial expansion that occurred during this period, as territories were taken from Denmark and added to Sweden, it could be said that the Swedish Riksdag (as a four-chamber national parliament) and the kingdom of Sweden emerged more or less simultaneously. The four-estate architecture of the Swedish parliament continued until 1866.

In addition, the king continued to appoint and consult with his council of state, whose members continued to be chosen from among the most powerful families in Sweden, as noted above. The council of state (Riksråd) remained the main "representative" body during most of this period. It met far more often and exercised greater influence over day-to-day policies. For several centuries, Swedish governance was literally based on the king and council template.

### *The Shifting Balance of Authority*

The balance of policymaking authority among the king, council of state, and Riksdag fluctuated somewhat during the next two centuries, although the king remained the dominant figure in national politics during most of this period. The king had veto power over the recommendations of the Riksdag and could normally engineer support in the Riksdag for policies of interest to him. During periods in which kings were away (or were minors), the council of state would rule Sweden in the king's name. During other periods, kings would delegate more or less authority to their councils according to their personal interests on matters of state and policy agendas. Parliament (the Riksdag) was called principally to deal with tax issues and successions. Most of the kings accepted accession charters at the time they came to office, which normally committed them to rule lawfully and constitutionally, while obliging their subjects to abide by the law.

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<sup>250</sup> Norway had Danish sovereigns until the end of the Napoleonic period, when the king of Sweden also became king of Norway.

In 1527 King Gustav Vasa with the support of the Riksdag ended Catholicism in Sweden, making Lutheranism the official state religion, with himself as head of the Swedish Lutheran Church. The Protestant Reformation produced large transfers of real estate from the Catholic Church to the sovereign, which as elsewhere in northern Europe, reduced the need for royal subsidies from the Riksdag, increased the king's ability to reward personal loyalty, which naturally increased support for the reformation within the parliament and royal autonomy (Toyne 1948: 130–34).

In 1544 sovereignty became (formally) hereditary for the house of Vasa, which temporarily eliminated the Riksdag's control of succession. This reduced the Riksdag and council's ability to draft accession charters, which somewhat reduced their influence within the government for the next fifty years. In 1594 there was no direct Vasa heir, and the council and Riksdag intervened to determine who would rule.<sup>251</sup> The parliament elected a new sovereign and required the new king (Sigismund) to accept an oath of accession, which among other conditions specified acceptance of Lutheranism. Sigismund accepted and the next several kings also accepted accession charters and took oaths of office (*konungaforsäkrän*) at the time of their accession.

An especially restrictive oath of office was negotiated in 1611, under which the 17-year-old king Gustav Adolphus pledged not to “make laws, declare war or peace, or form alliances without the estates' and council's consent not to impose any new taxes without first consulting with the council” (Wiebull 1993: 40). It was in his reign that the first formal Riksdag Act was adopted (in 1617), which affirmed the legal requirement that the king consult the four estates before declaring war or forming alliances. In 1650 the Riksdag secured veto authority over all new laws (Toyne 1948: 156–60, Roberts 1986: 4). In 1660 a protocol calling for the routine meetings of the Riksdag was adopted, which gave the Riksdag more independent standing.<sup>252</sup>

As in other places, accepting a parliamentary veto reduced, but did not eliminate, the sovereign's control of public policy. A medieval king did not have to resort to violence to affect parliamentary decisions; patronage, customs of royal deference, elevation, and land grants could be

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<sup>251</sup> An early Swedish contract theory of the hereditary monarchy was developed by Erik Sparre in 1590 (Roberts 1986: 64).

<sup>252</sup> A series of other reforms were adopted at more or less at the same time. Positions in the council of state (Riksråd) were henceforth limited to nobles. Five major departments of government were also organized, including ones for the chancellor, treasury, admiralty, the marshal and high steward. Schools were also established for noble children, and a pathway for talented commoners into the low nobility was established. A meeting place for nobles was established in Stockholm (Riddarhuset). The courts were reorganized and the law more uniformly applied. (Toyne 1948: 156-60).

used to align the interests of members of the council of state and parliament with those of the royal household. The army could also be employed to threaten and punish those who opposed royal policy, although this was not done very often. As a consequence, shifts of policymaking authority from the Riksdag to the executive branch normally reflected the skill of a particular king and his advisers, rather than new laws and so were not always codified in formal documents.

A very public example occurred when Karl XI took office in 1675, after a 15-year regency with considerable evidence of mismanagement by his five regents and the council of state. Karl asked the lower chambers of the Riksdag (the burghers and farmers) to investigate the regents and council of state (who were largely from major noble families). The lower chambers found against the regents and directed that essentially all countships, baronies, manors, and other estates owned by the guilty parties revert to the sovereign (*reduktion*). The penalty eliminated the fortunes of many of the most influential families in Sweden. Karl XI used the proceeds of land sales and grants to reduce debts, increase his support, and finance his relatively efficient government.

Karl XI also created a new, more efficient Swedish bureaucracy, which could regulate and interpret laws, but not in principle, adopt new laws without Riksdag approval. Riksdag approval, however, was somewhat easier to obtain under the new balance of power within the noble chamber (the Riddarhuset). Karl XI elevated many loyal senior bureaucrats and army officers to the nobility, after the *reduktion* had reduced the number of the old aristocratic families in that chamber. Many of the new nobles had little personal wealth and so depended entirely on their positions in the military and bureaucracy for their incomes, which provided the king with additional influence in the noble chamber (Roberts 1986: 4–6). Moreover, the new nobles were relatively more likely to attend and vote in the noble chamber of the Riksdag, because most lived and worked in Stockholm. Consequently, they tended to dominate proceedings in the Riddarhuset.<sup>253</sup>

During times of war, the Riksdag and council often gave kings temporary authority to impose new taxes for a few years at a time during a period of war. In 1693 the Riksdag mistakenly extended the royal taxing power again, but this time for “the period of crisis.” The absence of an explicit time limit essentially freed Karl XI (and subsequently Karl XII) from parliamentary fiscal constraints, because wars and other “crises” were commonplace at this time. This essentially eliminated the bargaining power of the Riksdag for the next 25 years.

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<sup>253</sup> Elevation also evidently allowed Karl XI to save money on bureaucratic and military salaries (Roberts 1986: 73–75). (Karl is sometimes translated as Charles by English historians.)



The result was a nearly absolutist period of Swedish governance. National debts rapidly increased, as Swedish resources were consumed in a variety of unsuccessful military campaigns, in spite of the king's new freedom to raise taxes during times of crisis. Indeed, Karl XII, perhaps inspired by British precedents, never called the Riksdag into session.

### **C. The Age of Liberty, 1720–71**

The unexpected death of Karl XII in 1719 reversed the tide of events favoring royal authority, because Karl XII died without children.

The absence of a clear heir (together with the army's support for the Riksdag) provided the Riksdag with the opportunity to choose the next king.<sup>254</sup> They had two very reasonable alternatives, and negotiations with both potential sovereigns were undertaken with restoring the medieval constitution and enhancing the Riksdag's authority in mind (Roberts 1986: 6–7, 30, and 60). As a consequence of those negotiations, Ulrika Eleonora accepted an oath of office (accession charter) that included the promises of no taxation without Riksdag consent, freedom of election for the three representative chambers (those representing farmers, townsmen, and church officials), and the right of free speech in the Riksdag (Roberts 1986: 60, note 9). These privileges had been granted the Riksdag in previous times—although they had been largely ignored during the reign of Karl XI and Karl XII.

Additional opportunities for constitutional bargaining arose, when the new queen attempted to have her husband Frederick (landgrave [duke] of Hesse) elevated to the throne.

The result was a new constitutional regime characterized by three documents negotiated by the Riksdag and accepted by the queen and her husband: (i) a new instrument of government (*Grundlag* 1720), (ii) Frederick's Accession Charter (1720), and (iii) a new Riksdag Act of (1723). The new constitutional documents reestablished and strengthened the Riksdag's control of legislation and taxation. In 1734 a new civil code was adopted to update existing civil law, although it and the new instrument of government remained grounded in Eriksson's Land Law of 1350.

Under the new constitutional regime, the Riksdag would meet three months every three years, and all new laws required majority approval in three of the four chambers. New taxes required support in all four estates. A "secret committee" composed of 50 nobles, 25 clerics, and 25 burghers served as the agenda maker for legislation in the parliament. A similar committee had formerly dealt

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<sup>254</sup> The army had declared that it would not take an oath to a king not elected by parliament. The two candidates were Karl Frederick of Holstein, the grandson of Karl XI, and Ulrika Eleonora, the sister of Karl XII.

with sensitive foreign policy issues (secrets), but was now given responsibility for developing policy proposals and monitoring the cabinet (council) and the courts. (The farmer's estate was excluded from the committee.) The combination of agenda control and veto authority gave parliament far greater authority over legislation than it had possessed in previous centuries.

All nobles had the right to participate in their chamber, with the consequence that it was the largest of the four chambers, although normally nobles from distant provinces without business in Stockholm skipped meetings and votes.<sup>255</sup> Members of the lower three chambers were generally selected via elections of various kinds, often through wealth-weighted voting, and indirect elections (Roberts 1986: 70). The burgher representatives were often appointed by town councils, and in many periods, the majority of the town representatives were burgermeisters (mayors). The farmer representatives were often appointed by local county governments, which were often dominated by large landowners, in part because of weighted voting. The clerics were elected by their fellow clerics, with fairly broad participation during much of their history. Weighted voting, indirect elections, and variation in local eligibility for suffrage continued until the early twentieth century.<sup>256</sup>

The reformed council of state (Rådet) was quite important during the age of liberty, because it issued rules when the Riksdag was not in session, which it was not 33 months of every three-year cycle. Members of the council were selected by the king from a short list of candidates (normally three) recommended by the Riksdag. Council members could not sit in the Riksdag. The king served as the council's president and had two votes (of 18). He also had the ability to settle ties. The nomination lists, however, allowed the Riksdag significant control over the selection of ministers and other advisers of state for the first time. The Riksdag could also impeach individual ministers (Roberts 1986: 82–89, Weibull 1993: 53). The council's major rulings were to be affirmed at the next meeting of the Riksdag, although this was evidently a more difficult task than one would expect, because the council and the Riksdag often disagreed about how "major" a given ruling was (Roberts 1986: 82).<sup>257</sup>

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<sup>255</sup> Nobles could also appoint representatives to sit in their seats and occasionally sold this privilege (Verney 1957: 25).

<sup>256</sup> Suffrage in the towns was possible for all resident burghers who paid taxes, but votes were weighted in proportion to their financial contributions. Suffrage for the peasants was similarly constrained by land ownership and independence, and votes were often weighted by land holdings. (Roberts 1986: 70). There were no national suffrage laws at this point. Instead, the towns made up their own rules, which varied somewhat throughout Sweden.

<sup>257</sup> Parliament and the secret committee instructed the council on a variety of matters including foreign policy, monetary, and fiscal policies. The council was the fiduciary agent of the estates, but they had little control over the council while they were not in session (Roberts 1986: 82–86).

Although suffrage was limited by significant wealth qualifications, elections were often competitive.<sup>258</sup> This, together with the benefits of coordinated voting in a parliament with decisive policymaking authority caused political parties to emerge fairly rapidly in this period (the “hats” and the “caps”), first, as coalitions of representatives with shared interests and then for purposes of national political campaigns.<sup>259</sup> These politically active organizations affected government policies and the membership of the council of state that governed Sweden during the 33-month periods in which the Riksdag was not in session.

Royal power did not completely disappear, as is sometimes claimed, but was greatly diminished in importance from 1720 to 1772. Sweden did not become a republic. Formal control of the executive remained with the king, and a broad cross-section of members in the Riksdag held appointed positions in the bureaucracy of one kind or another, which gave the king some leverage over the Riksdag. The king’s ability to use patronage, however, was far from complete, because many of the administrative positions were lifetime appointments reserved for nobles alone. Leadership positions in the army were also limited to nobles. Frederick I’s ability to intervene in governmental affairs was further reduced by his inability to speak Swedish, and by his lack of standing relationships with influential Swedish families.<sup>260</sup>

The Riksdag was able to bring the budget into balance and to pay down the war debts of Karl XI and XII during its first 20 years. However, it was not able to keep the budget in balance, in part because of a separation between budget and tax decisions, but for the most part because of participation in two expensive wars. Deficits increased during most of the second half of the age of liberty (and continued to expand after it had ended). Toward the end of the period of liberty, fiscal crises were commonplace, inflation was high, a severe recession was under way, and even army salaries were not always paid on time or at all.

The Riksdag met in 1771 to consider institutional reforms to address its fiscal problems, but it could not find a compromise that would satisfy the four chambers of the Riksdag, which was needed for constitutional amendments. In earlier periods, when some of the four chambers had disagreed

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<sup>258</sup> Fregert (2009: 5) reports that only a few percent of the population belonged to the noble, clergy, and burgher estates, and that suffrage for the peasant estate included between 20 and 30 percent of the adult male population. Elections were made more direct and qualifications for suffrage more uniform in the parliamentary reforms of 1866.

<sup>259</sup> The “Hats” are sometimes regarded to be the Swedish equivalent of the English Tories (who often had French support), and the “Caps” as Sweden’s Liberals (who often had Russian and occasionally English support).

<sup>260</sup> After 1723, the Frederick I was reported to devote most of his energy to hunting and romance rather than governance (Nordstrom 2000: 108). Frederick I ruled from 1720–51.

with a royal proposal, the king would simply accept the advice of the chambers that supported his proposal. Under the 1766 rules for amendment, however, majorities in each of the four chambers were necessary.

Partly because of the Riksdag failure to deal with Sweden's economic problems, parliamentary dominance of public policy came to an end shortly after the accession of Gustav III in 1771.<sup>261</sup> In 1772, with the poorly and irregularly paid army at his side, Gustav III suggested a new constitution that increased royal authority over public policy. The Riksdag "accepted" the new constitution by acclamation with armed troops assembled outside (Roberts 1986: 206). It bears noting that many of the members of parliament had favored a stronger monarchy in any case, but clearly the king's implicit threat shifted many votes.

Gustav's constitutional reforms reversed the tide of political liberalization. Initially, they simply restored the medieval constitution. Under the new constitution, the king regained his former authority to appoint members of the council of state, and the Riksdag lost its right to meet routinely. It was no longer self-calling. It would assemble only when called. The Riksdag retained its veto over new taxation and legislation. No new taxes, laws, or wars could take effect without the consent of a majority of the four estates. Indeed, trade was liberalized and freedom of the press was supported through a new act in 1774. The Riksdag's power of the purse guaranteed its independence and relatively frequent meetings, at which royal proposals were often vetoed.<sup>262</sup>

In response to Gustav's intervention in 1772, Stockholm was filled with a "tumult of rejoicing" (Roberts 1986: 204).

### *Significance of the Age of Liberty*

Overall, the age of liberty is an important period for the purposes of this book, because it demonstrates several properties of interest. First, the more liberal constitution of 1720 was not invented whole cloth, but rather reformed preexisting Swedish political institutions. The king and council template remained in place as authority shifted from one nearly polar case to the other. Nonetheless, the shift in policymaking authority from king to parliament resulted from queen- and king-specific agreements in the form of accession oaths and constitutional reforms negotiated with

<sup>261</sup> A careful description of the budgetary process and economic conditions during this period is provided by Fregert (2009). His figure 3 plots nominal and real Swedish government debt for 1719–76. It implies that much of the new debt between 1745 and 1776 was monetized, leading to inflation. Attempts to reverse the inflation and bring the budget back into balance, in turn, induced a recession and another fiscal crisis.

<sup>262</sup> Indeed, the Riksdag's power of the purse was initially enhanced somewhat by its new control of the Swedish national bank, the Riksbank (Fregert (2009)).

the sovereign. That is to say, the initial reassignment of policymaking authority was the result of bargaining, rather than revolution. The negotiations demonstrated that even fairly substantial shifts in constitutional authority can occur peacefully and that parliamentary supremacy can emerge quickly from shifts in the bargaining power of the Riksdag relative to the king.

Second, as in seventeenth- and early eighteenth-century Britain, the Swedish age of liberty demonstrates that parliamentary supremacy is not necessarily associated with significant suffrage reform. A Swedish suffrage movement began to gather momentum only in 1769, but the estates, if anything, were inclined to increase the requirements for membership in the Riksdag, rather than reduce them (Roberts 1986: 208–10). Electoral reform is not always in parliament's interest.

Third, the English and Swedish cases also demonstrate that liberalization in Europe did not require the inspiration of the French or American Revolutions. The Riksdag's interests in a more liberal state clearly combined economic, partisan, and ideological interests. Their constitutional debates included an appreciation for a free press, due process, and separation of powers by the 1760s. Although pragmatic interests were arguably more important than liberalism, the torrent of political pamphlets published during the age of liberty (partly a consequence of reduced censorship) demonstrates that ideas as well as interests affected policy debates and constitutional developments.<sup>263</sup> Liberal ideas affected the political theories of Swedish intellectuals, voters, and politicians (Roberts 1986: 61, 106–08).<sup>264</sup>

Fourth, the relatively poor fiscal policies of the Riksdag in the second half of this period suggest that parliaments, like kings, may have problems controlling their tendencies to spend more than is raised through taxes. National debt fell somewhat during the first decade or two of parliamentary rule, but rose substantially during its later period, particularly during the "hat" government. The national debt increased substantially between 1757 and 1765, largely because of participation in the

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<sup>263</sup> Sweden's freedom of the press acts were adopted in 1766, which eliminated pre-publication censorship, except for religious materials. Freedom of the press was thereby increased, but it was not absolute. It was, for example, still a crime to publish material attacking the king, the estates, and the Lutheran church (Roberts 1986: 106).

<sup>264</sup> It is a slight exaggeration to say that all of Sweden's constitutional reforms and public policies resulted from domestic pressures during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Sweden had long received subsidies from France and England in exchange for participation in continental wars. Partly for that reason, war and international alliances had absorbed much of Sweden's governmental time and treasure since the Protestant Reformation. Adolf Fredrik's accession to the throne in 1743 as successor to Fredrick I (who died without heirs shortly after his queen) was clearly influenced by international considerations as well as domestic ones (Roberts 1986: 31).

Pomeranian war, but also because of peacetime extravagance (Roberts 1986: 19–20). Indeed, the fiscal problems were so severe that the government lacked the means to pay interest on the national debt and salaries for the army and bureaucracy, which created the support necessary for Gustav III to end parliamentary rule. Parliamentary rule by itself does not assure fiscal responsibility.

Fifth, the Swedish and English experience suggest that the political influence of kings who do not speak the national language tends to be smaller than that of sovereigns who are able to undertake their own direct negotiations with parliament, the bureaucracy, and the army. The English and Swedish parliament's authority rose under two German-speaking kings and declined when a native speaker rose to the throne (George III and Gustav III). This suggests that personality and bargaining skills as well as institutions affect the balance of authority between kings and parliament.

The 1772 instrument of government imposed by Gustav III essentially restored the medieval constitution. It did not initially attempt to return to the nearly polar case of Karl XII. Parliaments were routinely called and passed legislation and tax bills. The tax base was expanded to include noble estates, which had previously been largely untaxed. European entanglements continued to influence Swedish foreign and domestic policies. Royal successions also continued to be far from routine, as infertility and unexpected deaths remained commonplace for the royal family, as well as commoners. Gustav III's new medieval constitution, nonetheless, remained fairly stable for nearly 40 years.<sup>265</sup> Governance during the second half of the age of liberty with its high debt, inflation, and even famine had undermined support for parliamentary rule.

### *Economic and Other Political Developments in the Eighteenth Century*

The Swedish economy began gradually industrializing and internationalizing in the eighteenth century, as in much of Europe. A Swedish East India Company was established in 1731, which helped produce a new silk industry. Water-powered equipment for metal working was invented by Polhem and the Celsius thermometer by Anders Celsius in the mid-eighteenth century. Botany was

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<sup>265</sup> Gustav III's Act of Union and Security of 1789 attempted to secure somewhat greater authority for the king by reducing the independence of the nobility. It abolished noble privileges with respect to taxation and high office. It also established a new supreme court and reduced parliament's control over legislation and the declaration of war, although it preserved parliament's veto over new taxes. The act was accepted by the clergy, burgher, and farmer chambers, but rejected by the noble chamber. Gustav proclaimed the act to have come to force, nonetheless.

His unconstitutional overruling of the nobles chamber on this and subsequent tax decisions is said to have led to his assassination in 1792 (Weibull 1993: 73–75, Ward et al. 1909: 780–82, Grimberg 1935: 314).

placed on a rational, scientific foundation by Linnaeus.<sup>266</sup> New Royal Academies of Science and Literature were founded. Copper and iron industries had prospered since the sixteenth century.

A Swedish enclosure movement began the mid-eighteenth century (Roberts 1986: 138, 144). Steam engines were introduced by Triewal in the late eighteenth century. However, land reforms and the first railroads were not completed until the mid-nineteenth century (Roberts 1986: 139; Verney 1957: 22). Consequently, economic life in 1800 for the most part reflected its medieval foundations. Mercantilist policies continued to affect internal and external trade. Rural trading was constrained to favor specific market towns, many guilds retained monopoly privileges, and exports of silver and gold were controlled (Roberts 1986: 137, 165, and 208).

#### **D. The 1809 Instrument of Governance**

Another dispute over succession to the throne in 1809 provided the Riksdag with another opportunity for constitutional renegotiation.<sup>267</sup> The Riksdag was again in the position of selecting a king (or two in this case). Accepting a new constitution was made a condition for occupying the Swedish throne, and the Riksdag proposed constitutional reforms that formalized and somewhat increased the authority of the Riksdag without returning to the age of liberty. In 1809 a new instrument of government (IG) was adopted by the Riksdag and accepted by the new king, Karl XIII, as a condition of his accession.<sup>268</sup> The instrument of government specified the traditional architecture for Swedish governance: a constitutional monarchy with a king, a council of state (cabinet), and a parliament. It also described the distribution of authority between the executive and

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<sup>266</sup> Linnaeus also revised the Celsius thermometer by making 100 the boiling temperature of water and 0 its freezing point, reversing Celsius' initial mapping of temperatures into numbers.

<sup>267</sup> Gustav IV Adolf was deposed by a broad coalition of army officers and civil service (many of whom were members of the Riksdag). His heirs were declared disqualified for the throne in March 1809. The overthrow of Gustav was quickly ratified by the Riksdag, and the constitution of 1809 was drafted while negotiating with successors (Weibull 1993: 76). This parliamentary coup d'état occurred partly because of Gustav's failures in warfare (through which Finland was lost), partly out of concerns for his mental competence and partly by his neglect of constitutional governance.

<sup>268</sup> Karl XIII was the brother of Gustav III, who was relatively old, and childless. At essentially the same time that Karl was chosen to be Gustav IV's successor, his successor was also chosen, but surprisingly, from well outside Swedish royal and noble circles.

Karl XIII's successor was to be Jean-Baptiste Bernadotte, a commoner, who had risen to high military office in France during its revolutionary period (Marshall). He took the name Karl XIV, when he became king of Sweden and Norway in 1818. Bernadotte renounced Catholicism and converted to Lutheranism to qualify for the throne. However, he never learned to speak Swedish. (The Swedish sovereign had obtained the Norwegian crown from Denmark in compensation for losing Finland to Russia during the Vienna Congress.)

the legislature, a distribution that was still very much in the executive's favor, but less so than under Gustav III's constitution.

For example article 4 stated that "the king alone should govern the kingdom in accordance with the provisions of the constitution." The king was forbidden to deprive "anyone of life, honor, personal liberty, or well being unless he has been legally tried and condemned" (article 16). The king was also bound to consult with his cabinet on most matters, including the declaration of war. He is bound to consult with parliament on matters of taxation and budgeting:

The **ancient right of the Swedish people to tax themselves** shall be exercised by the **Riksdag alone** (article 58) ... **No general tax**, of whatever name or character, **may be increased** without the consent of the Riksdag, the duties on imported and exported grain alone excepted<sup>7</sup> nor shall the king lease the revenues of the state, or establish any monopoly for the benefit of himself and the crown or of individuals and corporations (article 60). ... **All taxes voted** by the Riksdag, under the headings mentioned in the preceding article, shall be collected **until the end of the year** within which the new taxes are to be voted by the Riksdag (article 61).

It devolves upon the Riksdag, after examining the needs of the treasury, to vote supplies to meet such needs and also to prescribe the special purposes for which separate items of appropriation may be used... (article 62).

The 1809 instrument of government also guaranteed routine annual meetings of the Riksdag of three months in duration (articles 49 and 109) and assured this through a one-year limit on royal tax authority (article 61).<sup>269</sup> The Riksdag also had the power to censure individual members of the king's cabinet, although not to remove them from office. Members were granted freedom of expression during meetings of parliament, and interference with a member's efforts to attend sessions of the Riksdag was punished severely (article 110).<sup>270</sup>

Three other fundamental laws completed the constitutional core of Swedish governance: a new Riksdag act, a revised law of succession, and a revised press act were given explicit constitutional status (Article 85). Fundamental laws were to be interpreted literally (article 84). Procedures for amending the fundamental laws required the consent of two successive sessions of the Riksdag and the king (Article 82).<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup> Verny notes that a four-month term was adopted on 1866 (Verney 1957: 51).

<sup>270</sup> Anyone, including ministers or other high officials, who forcibly interfered with a member of parliament's efforts to dispatch his duties was deemed guilty of treason. The mandated punishment for treason required that a guilty person's right hand be cut off, his bones broken on the wheel, and finally executed. In addition, the treasonous party's properties were forfeited to the sovereign (Verney 1957: 23).

<sup>271</sup> The translation is from Dodd (1909: 219–59), as are the article numbers referred to.



The 1809 constitution formalized a more or less medieval distribution of authority between the king and parliament, but gave parliament and the council somewhat greater authority than they had during most of Sweden's medieval period. The king appointed the council of state, so the king and his cabinet retained substantial discretion to implement public policy as they saw fit. They were clearly not, however, above the law. The Riksdag had greater control over taxes and the budget than in any previous period except the age of liberty, and all royal acts had to be countersigned by the council of state. There was also relatively broad freedom of the press.

### *Gradual Liberalization Follows*

The architecture specified in the new *grundlag* remained in place for more than a century and a half. It was within this architecture that Sweden made its transition from monarchy to parliamentary rule and democracy during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The major reforms of the next century affected the organization of the Riksdag, election law, and civil liberties, rather than the fundamental architecture of Sweden's constitutional monarchy. Major reforms were adopted using formal constitutional procedures for amendment. Minor reforms were adopted as ordinary legislation.

Sweden's gradual transition to parliamentary democracy required neither palace coups nor popular revolts, although many peaceful demonstrations took place. Rather, changes in underlying political and economic circumstances led to a series of changes in the organization of the Riksdag which made it a more effective advocate of its institutional and partisan interests. This, together with the rise of liberal ideology, industrialization, and emergence of more disciplined political parties, gradually transformed Swedish governance into a modern parliamentary democracy.<sup>272</sup>

In many respects, the constitutional history of Sweden after 1809 parallels that of England. Policy reforms were commonplace, and there was a clear liberal trend in the pattern of reforms. Public demonstrations were also commonplace, although there was little if any real threat of revolution. Sweden differed from England in that it had a formal constitutional amendment process, which was more demanding than required for ordinary legislation.

### **E. Constitutional Bargaining Produces a New Bicameral Riksdag in 1866**

Liberal pressures for reform were evident throughout the period following the adoption of the 1809 Instrument of Government. The estates themselves were modified, as representation in three

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<sup>272</sup> By coincidence, the first Swedish factory using steam was founded in Stockholm by an English mechanic (Samuel Owen) in 1809 (Grimberg 1935: 339).

of the four estates was extended to include new groups. In the 1820s the clergy estate invited new members from the major universities and from the Swedish Academy of Science; in 1830 the burgher estate added industrialists to its long-standing guild-based membership; in 1845 suffrage for the farmers' estate was expanded to include (non-noble) owners of tax-exempt land and further expanded in 1863 to include middle-class property owners.<sup>273</sup>

Other significant procedural and public policy reforms were also adopted. In 1830 parliamentary debates were made public. In 1842 compulsory education was introduced. In 1846 King Oscar I abolished the guild system (by decree).<sup>274</sup> In 1860 a law of religious toleration was passed. Jews with sufficient property acquired the franchise in 1865. Numerous proposals for the reform of the Riksdag were also introduced, including demands for unicameral (1830) and bicameral parliaments (1840 and 1851), with memberships based on elections, rather than occupation, but none secured the necessary approval of all four estates.

A consensus for reform of the Riksdag was present in the farmers' and burghers' estates, and support had been increasing somewhat in the noble chamber and council of state, as economic and political liberal ideas and industrialization gained ground during the first half of the nineteenth century. The accession of Karl XV in 1859 changed the non-institutional interests of the king and his cabinet. New men were appointed to the royal cabinet, including Baron Louis de Geer, who was appointed minister of justice and chancellor. De Geer was a long-serving senior bureaucrat, a member of a successful industrial family, a noble, and also a moderate liberal interested in parliamentary reform.

In 1863 chancellor De Geer proposed a new, more liberal organization of the Riksdag. Much of what he proposed had been proposed before, but De Geer's reforms were more carefully crafted to

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<sup>273</sup> Representatives for the farmers' estate were indirectly elected at the county (*härad*) level by electors selected at churches; only Lutherans were allowed to vote until 1860. Only tax-paying farmers could participate in these elections, and no representative could be from other estates or in the employment of the sovereign, which eliminated nobles, burghers, clerics, and bureaucrats from the farmer estate (Verney 1957: 29–30). Such restrictions did not apply to the other estates, who often served in the army or bureaucracy.

<sup>274</sup> Oscar I was the son of Karl XIII. He came to office in 1844 with the death of his father, who had lived well into his 80s. Oscar was a well-educated, relatively liberal man in the years before he assumed the throne. He initially chose his advisors from the liberal party, although shifted toward the conservative party toward the end of his rule (Grimberg 1935: 330–31).

acquire the support needed for constitutional amendment, and there was greater support for political liberalization in the 1860s than in previous periods.<sup>275</sup>

De Geer proposed that the old four-estate system be replaced with a new Riksdag composed of two chambers. Members of the first chamber would have 125 members with relatively long terms of office (nine years), would be relatively old (older than 35 years) and relatively wealthy, and would not receive a salary, but live on their own means. The second chamber would have 190 members with relatively short terms of office (three years). Membership in the second chamber was to be less restricted and more directly elected than in the first chamber. To be adopted, majorities in all four existing chambers and acceptance by the king were required.

Chancellor De Geer managed to achieve the required level of consensus in the farmer, burgher, and noble chambers by proposing an indirect wealth-weighted voting system for the first chamber, largely based on existing procedures for selecting representatives in the farmer and burgher chambers, and a more direct franchise for the second chamber. The interests of the clergy were also taken into account. A new church assembly was to be formed in which national church matters would be decided by the clergy without being subject to veto by the other estates (Verney 1957: 64).

The new 125-seat first chamber was designed to protect the interests of the wealthier members of the three secular chambers. Its seats were reserved for men with substantial property. Indeed, only 6,000 persons were eligible for seats in the first chamber, and most of those lived in Stockholm. There were no residency requirements, so that those residing in Stockholm could run for office in whatever province in which they might expect sufficient electoral support. Members of the first chamber were to be elected indirectly by the provincial councils in a manner roughly analogous to that of the U. S. Senate at that time.

The influence of wealthy Swedes in those elections was reinforced by a striking feature of mid-century election laws for the provincial councils. All taxpaying citizens could vote, which included independent women; however, votes for provincial councils were weighted according to a schedule of tax payments. A person in the highest tax category might cast as many as 5,000 votes. A similar system was used in towns, where persons in the highest tax categories could cast up to 100 votes (Verney 1957: 52, 91). The weighted voting system often allowed local elections to be determined by a handful of wealthy men or women. In 10 percent of the districts, the weighted

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<sup>275</sup> The institutional details in the rest of this chapter are for the most part from Verney's (1957) careful political history of the Riksdag in the nineteenth century. Grimberg (1935), Metcalf (1987), and Grofman and Lijphart (2002) also provide useful institutional details. See Congleton (2003) for an assessment of Sweden's twentieth-century reforms.

votes of just three or four voters could be decisive (Verney 1957: 91, Särilvik 2002: 333). Election by provincial councils, nonetheless, implied that local interests could not be entirely ignored by their representatives. And, although many nobles would secure offices in the first chamber, eligibility was now defined by wealth or tax payments, rather than family heritage *per se*.

The interests of upper middle-class farmers, burghers, and liberals were advanced by De Geer's proposed second chamber. Majorities in the farmers' and burghers' chambers had long favored a more somewhat broader suffrage and a reduced role for the nobility in the Riksdag and in government. Members of the second chamber were for the most part directly elected for three-year terms. 135 seats were allocated to rural districts and 55 to town districts. Voter eligibility was somewhat more restricted in the new direct elections for members of the second chamber. Voters for the second chamber were males (initially Lutherans) who were eligible to vote in local elections and who satisfied taxable real estate or income restrictions. Eligibility, thus, varied significantly among districts as local rules, assessments, and taxation varied.<sup>276</sup>

Membership in the second chamber was much less restricted than for the first chamber. Representatives simply had to be older than age 25 and eligible to vote in the local elections. The latter implied that representatives to the second chamber also had to meet minimum tax payment constraints (article 19), although eligibility for seats in the first chamber was much broader than that for the first, although this varied somewhat according to local assessments and tax laws.<sup>277</sup>

Elections were to take place every three years (article 15) and meetings of parliaments were to be annual. Terms in the first chamber were to be nine years, a third of which would stand for election every three years, and terms in the second chamber would be three years. Salaries were paid to members of the second chamber, but not the first. Disagreements among the chambers regarding fiscal matters would be determined by a joint vote, which the second chamber was likely to dominate, because it had more 50 percent more members.

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<sup>276</sup> Särilvik (2002: 332–33) notes that local voting districts were initially allowed to use either direct or indirect elections. A majority of districts used indirect election in the early years, but these were gradually phased out. Multiple member districts for major cities also existed during this period. All these details were, of course, matters worked out among the interests already represented in the chambers. About 20 percent of adult males had the right to vote for members of the second chamber.

<sup>277</sup> Weighted voting by the members of parliament themselves were also previously been possible. For example, Anders Danielsson of West Gothland had once been chosen to represent 27 districts and so had 27 votes in the farmer's chamber, one-fifth of the total votes in that chamber (Grimberg 1935: 327–28).

Ownership of real estate was given preference in the new suffrage rules for parliament, because De Geer, as true of many nineteenth-century liberals, believed that ownership of real estate gave a man a greater stake in the country (Verney 1957: 52–53). To vote, it was sufficient to pay taxes on 1,000 riksdaler of real estate, which was *one-eightieth* of that required for membership in the first chamber. Satisfying the voter income requirement required payment of taxes on 800 riksdaler of income, which was one-fifth of that required for membership in the upper house (articles 6 and 14). The second chamber's electorate consisted for the most part of successful farmers, bureaucrats, small businessmen, doctors, and lawyers. Given the Swedish economy at the time and its associated distribution of wealth and income, the electorate for the second chamber was less than half that of the first chamber.

The king's acceptance of the proposal was made more likely by the fact that the reorganization of the Riksdag did not directly affect his power. The king retained powers of veto and initiative, and laws continued to be published and issued in his name (articles 79–82, see Verney 1957: 52–58). The king was also promised a somewhat increased budget (Verney 1957: 156) and the authority to appoint the cabinet (ministry) and the speakers of the two chambers. He could also call for new elections during the “fixed” terms of the two chambers. The first chamber would also be reliably conservative, although royal influence over it was likely to diminish as nobles without property were not likely to be returned to office.

Together, wealth requirements and the weighted voting system of the provincial council made it likely that many of those already sitting in the noble and burgher estates would continue to be elected to the Riksdag (Verney 1957: 50–52, 89). These features also increased support by the new industrialists (iron mongers and miners) who favored economic liberalization (Verney 1957: 32, 77–82).<sup>278</sup> Only the poorest of the nobles and burghers were unlikely to be returned to the first chamber, although lesser nobles could run for office in the second. In late 1865, after four years of public and private debate, votes were taken in each of the chambers. The proposal passed easily in the farmer and burgher chambers, where similar proposals had long had success.

The final outcome would not be known until after the noble chamber voted, where previous proposals had failed. The noble chamber accepted the proposal 361 to 294. The clergy quickly followed. After the parliament had completed the work of its last session as a four-chamber body in

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<sup>278</sup> De Geer was such a person. Baron Gerard Louis De Geer (1818–96) was the son of a wealthy landowner, who had risen to the ministry through a distinguished legal career and, of course, family connections.

June 1866, the king signed the new Riksdag Act, and the major reforms drafted by De Geer became law.

The king's approval ended the last session of the medieval four-chamber Riksdag on June 20. In his remarks, he declared

We end today not only a memorable session, but a whole era in the history of the Swedish people, an era that is measured in centuries.”

As a consequence, as Verney notes, “Some of the pomp and ceremony left Swedish life. The heralds and trumpeters appeared for the last time and Ministers ceased to ride in their colorful robes to the State opening of Riksdag. (Verney 1957: 78).

Membership in the chambers of the new Riksdag rested on elections for the first time, rather than a noble family heritage, appointment by the king, or membership in particular economic and religious organization. The reforms were products of intra-parliamentary negotiations and compromise, not royal fiat, or mass politics.

These reforms were significant reforms of Sweden's long-standing medieval system of representation, although suffrage was still very restrictive and only men of wealth could sit in the first chamber. The changes indirectly made future reforms more likely, because fewer chambers had to be consulted and their interests were somewhat more aligned than before. Moreover, adjusting existing procedures tends to be easier than adopting new ones. Election law and eligibility rules are easier to reform than are the number of chambers and basis of representation.

## **F. 1866–1906 Political Support Grows for Expanded Suffrage**

Support for further liberalization of Swedish governance existed within the Riksdag and also within a number of politically active interest groups around the country. However, the remaining constitutional reform issues were somewhat less clear cut than those in many other countries, and support for further reform was not initially very great among the new officeholders. Suffrage eligibility for the elections to the provincial councils was very broad by the standards of the nineteenth century, although the effect of breadth was reduced by weighted voting. The voting districts for the second chamber somewhat favored the towns. Rural districts required 40,000 residents to send a representative, whereas town districts required only 10,000 residents (Verney 1957: 52). Although this was not equal representation, it was relatively equal by mid-nineteenth century standards. The main liberal constitutional reform issues were, consequently, not obvious ones, such as suffrage expansion or unfair districts, but rather opposition to weighted voting in the first chamber and support of suffrage expansion in the second after the 1866 reforms.

Besides blunting liberal criticism, the 1866 reforms also weakened the link between economic and political liberals. Sweden's new industrialists no longer had to press for expanded suffrage or reapportionment in order to influence internal and external trade policies, as in England. As wealthy men, they were eligible to sit in the first chamber and could disproportionately determine its membership by casting votes for the provincial councils. Because apportionment was more or less fair, political liberals also faced institutional interests that worked against suffrage reform in the second chamber. Proposals for reform of the second chamber were likely to be popular among middle-class liberals, who could not vote, but less so among upper-middle-class and wealthy liberals who determined the members of the second chamber.

The representatives of the upper-middle-class and well-to-do were chosen under the existing suffrage rules and tended to be quite happy with them, as were their voters. Reform of the first chamber's rules would be supported by many members of the second chamber, but few in the first. Turnout remained very low in provincial council elections, although some 20 percent of adult males (and some women) were eligible to vote in 1870. Moderate liberals and conservatives were satisfied with the reforms, as were the most active economic interest groups of that time. As a consequence, the new suffrage rules proved to be quite stable for the next 40 years, although there were minor reforms. Economic growth, higher taxation, and changes in municipal voting rules gradually increased the municipal electorate from 20 to 34 percent of adult males between 1870 to 1902 (Dodd 1909: 233).<sup>279</sup>

### *Economic Development*

The period after the 1866 reform of the Riksdag was one of rapid economic growth and industrialization, punctuated by recessions. Major new firms were founded. The mining, timber, and banking industries were reorganized. A railroad system was constructed to connect the major cities. Water-driven saw mills were replaced with steam-driven mills. A paper industry emerged. Farmland expanded with the completion of the Swedish enclosures, which increased food production and freed labor for other purposes. New industries in explosives, matches, chemicals, and telephones were founded. Exports of manufactured goods and raw materials expanded. Population and average

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<sup>279</sup> The size of both chambers, for example, tended to increase through time. In addition, the number of members in the second chamber varied somewhat, as communities could merge for the purposes of elections to meet population requirements; consequently, the number of representatives in the second chamber varied with population growth and community interests in merging to form electoral districts. In 1894 it was agreed to limit the number of seats in the first chamber to 230 and those in the second to 150 (Verney 1957: 109).

income expanded (Magnusson 2000: chs 5–6; Heckscher 1954). Economic growth accelerated during 1896–1912 as new industries expanded.

Industrialization and changes in transportation had direct effects on the employment, location, lifestyles, and welfare of most Swedes. At the beginning of the nineteenth century, about three-quarters of the population resided in agricultural districts. By 1910 the agricultural sector accounted for less than half of the Swedish population. In 1850 only about 10 percent of Swedes lived in cities; by 1950 more than half did (Heckscher 1954: 214–15). Swedish life spans and population levels increased, as per capita income nearly tripled during the late nineteenth century.

By these measures at least, governance by the wealthy was better for industry and for most Swedes, than governance by nobles had been.<sup>280</sup>

### *Politically Active Interest Groups*

The policy goals and size of Swedish interest groups in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were affected by the same technological changes that induced changes in economic scale and organization in industry. Greater income and wealth provided more resources for all individual pursuits, including politics. The concentration of workers and firms within cities reduced the cost of organizing labor unions and producer cartels. Technological innovations, such as the train, telegraph, and telephone, reduced the cost of coordinating activities within cities and across the nation as a whole in those industries that remained diffuse, such as iron works and timber. The new industries and the new organization of work often created new, or at least more obvious, common economic interests. In economic terms, industrialization in Sweden caused the benefits of many kinds of collective action to rise and their costs to fall.

Liberal movements and other movements on the left grew faster than their conservative counterparts. This was partly because the liberal and labor movements advanced middle-class and working-class interests, two sub-populations that were rapidly expanding as a consequence of industrialization and increased commerce. The latter was partly a consequence of previous reforms, insofar as liberal economic reforms in Sweden (and elsewhere) had produced rapid economic

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<sup>280</sup> It bears noting, however, that this was also a period in which Swedish emigration, especially to the United States, was very large. Heckscher notes on the one hand that real per capita national income increased nearly threefold in 1861–1914 (1954: 260). Heckscher notes that beginning around 1880 the money wages of farm laborers fell dramatically (p. 258) in part because of imported agricultural products. This would have increased real wages in other sectors, which is consistent with the increase in the population of Sweden and average longevity. However, it also evidently induced many tenant farmers and farm laborers to seek their own personal farms in the United States.



growth. Reducing economic privileges from the medieval period allowed new technologies to be adopted more rapidly and specialization to increase, which increased average income, as predicted by most economic theories.

Similarly, relatively more open political systems had not produced disasters, as many conservatives had predicted. Budgets, if anything, tended to be better controlled by representative parliaments than kings at the same time that many government services became more widely available.

Evidence of past success, together with increased numbers of middle- and upper-middle-class families, lent support to liberal ideas about economic and political systems, at the same time that industrialization and urbanization undermined traditional defenses of age-old medieval institutions. In this, Sweden was not very different from many other industrializing nations with parliamentary systems and relatively free speech.

In areas in which industrialization produced new problems, parliaments and interest groups generally attempted to solve those problems with new policies and organizations, rather than with a return to the medieval order. A variety of politically active groups inside and outside of government pressed for market and educational reforms, reduced alcohol consumption, and for suffrage expansion and trade liberalization.<sup>281</sup>

Some problems and solutions were more common in Scandinavia than elsewhere. For example, increasing the scale of the efficient production of goods and services, together with somewhat greater trade protection in the late nineteenth century, tended to produce relatively more monopolies in Sweden's relatively small economy. The favorable prices engineered by monopolists and cartels were, in turn, often countered by the creation of new organizations, such as cooperatives, that could provide services at lower cost to their members (Strode 1949: ch. 12).

### *Late Nineteenth-Century Swedish Liberals*

Liberalism has a long history in Sweden, but interest in liberal ideas broadened during the nineteenth century. Heckscher attributes much of the rise of liberalism in the middle of the nineteenth century to writings by Bastiat and Swedish liberals such as Hans Forssell and J. W. Arnberg. He also notes that the creation of the *Nationalekonomiska Föreningen* (National

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<sup>281</sup> As in many other countries of Europe, the high tide for free trade occurred in the middle of the century when most Swedish tariffs were repealed. Toward the end the century (as in 1888), however, protectionist tariffs had been reintroduced for many commodities and free-trade movements re-emerged, although they were less successful in the late nineteenth century than they had been mid-century.

Economic Society) in 1877 provided a useful forum for liberal businessmen and senior civil servants (1954: 263). Verney (1957: 137) notes that J. S. Mill's *On Liberty* and writings by Hedin were influential among the leadership in the new liberal political organizations in the period after the 1866 Riksdag Act. He also suggests that the founding of the Verdandi, a student organization, increased the dissemination of liberal ideas.

The economic and political reform agendas of nineteenth-century liberals were supported by a variety of interest groups, scholars, and politicians. A common ideology and expectation that the public interest could be advanced through industrialization and political reform clearly reduced organizational costs for many liberal reform groups and trade associations. Their universalist utilitarian and natural rights–based arguments generated support for their reform agendas within all income groups and occupations, although groups varied in their support for specific proposals. The liberal view of economics implied that innovation, increased production, and perhaps free trade were ends in their own right and socially important engines of progress (Heckscher 1954: 214). The liberal view of politics implied that the purpose of government was to advance shared interests such as equality before the law and economic progress. Public education should be universal, and all those who were capable of casting independent, well-informed votes should be able to do so.

It bears noting, however, that the liberal reform agenda was a moving target. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the center of gravity of Swedish liberalism became more “radical,” as was true in much of the rest of Europe. Self-described liberals increasingly favored nearly universal suffrage, industrial regulations to increase market competition, and modest social insurance.<sup>282</sup>

### *Late Nineteenth-Century Swedish Economic Conservatives*

Institutional and social conservatism are common perspectives among persons who are content with the existing order. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, this perspective led persons to support the medieval order. In the late nineteenth centuries, conservatives defended the 1866 reforms, the end of serfdom, and the liberalization of trade. Conservatives also tend to focus on past glories, but few late nineteenth-century conservatives wanted to reverse the reforms of 1866 or return to a feudal society. Indeed, many conservatives thought that the economic reforms of the

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<sup>282</sup> An example of the policy consequences of a limited franchise can be found in Wicksell's analysis (1896) of the effects of government policies on the working class, who were at that time ineligible to vote in Sweden. His analysis suggests that the taxes paid by the working class, whose interests were not directly represented in the legislature, generally exceeded the value of services they received from government (see Wagner 1988: 159).

1850s and the 1866 political reforms had worked quite well, although perhaps trade liberalism and reduced censorship had gone a bit too far in some cases.

That is to say, the late nineteenth-century conservatives had gradually adopted policy positions that were not so different from those of the previous generation of liberals. Conservatism in this sense is not a class-based ideology, nor an entirely static world view, although it does tend to favor the status quo.

As in the case of liberals, there were pragmatic as well as ideological reasons to take a conservative stance with respect to public policy and constitutional issues. Those favoring cultural and political conservatism because of risk aversion, respect for cultural evolution, or religious reasons, were normally joined by those who profited from existing arrangements.

Major land owners and guild members in towns profited from their medieval privileges, and initially opposed reforms for pragmatic reasons. Anti-liberal arguments were later taken up by many industrialists, who had previously favored the liberal reform agenda. Firms producing similar products, for example, have common economic interests in lowering production costs and increasing market prices and profits. Consequently, firm owners and senior managers often organized to share information, promote sales, and reduce competition. These economic ends can be advanced by coordinating purchasing and pricing decisions within trusts and cartels and also through public policies, as with support of import tariffs or opposition to labor law reforms. For example, Swedish cartels in sugar, milling, and oleomargarine were able to obtain significant and profitable protective tariffs in the early twentieth century (Heckscher 1954: 263).

In some cases, changes in economic and political interests caused persons and political parties to shift from supporting liberal reforms to opposing them. For example, the farmers' estate had helped pass the De Geer reforms and had long pressed for more equitable taxation, representation, and suffrage laws. However, in the late nineteenth century, the Farmers' Party shifted to relatively conservative positions on many policy issues. For example, it opposed suffrage reform in the 1880s, because it realized that the newly enfranchised would include fewer landholders from rural districts than earlier in the century. The new middle-class owned houses, rather than farms (Verney 1957: 110). The party also shared protectionist interests with many large landholders and industrialists, because imports from Russia and North America had reduced prices for Swedish farm products.

Not all late nineteenth-century conservatives were wealthy or industrialists. Many were simply risk-averse and relatively content persons and groups who favored preserving the status quo to

reduce uncertainty and because they were satisfied with the political and economic reforms of previous decades.

### *Social Democrats in Late Nineteenth-Century Sweden*

Another important political group emerged in the late nineteenth century to the left of mainstream liberals. Many were simply the radical liberals of their day, a new generation of left liberals with relatively intense interests in civic equality. Such persons demanded universal suffrage, greater support for public education, and changes in the civil code to increase the symmetry of bargaining between firms and labor. They tended to oppose cartels and other barriers to trade. In addition to the radical liberals, there were also new ideological movements that believed private property was less an engine of prosperity than a device through which privileged persons secured unfair advantages in political and economic life. An important subset of the latter were influenced by Marx's ideas about social evolution, conflict, and economic justice.<sup>283</sup>

As true of the liberal and conservative interest clusters, idealists were often supported by economic pragmatists whose income or wealth could be enhanced by the left's reform agenda. For example, the labor movement routinely used ideological arguments from both left liberals and Marxists, emphasizing the solidarity of the working class, the unfairness of the wage-bargains reached with many industrial firms, and the lack of working class political rights. To the extent that these perspectives were accepted, organizational costs fell, and shared economic interests could be more effectively advanced through persuasive campaigns and strikes. It is, however, unlikely that ideology was the main motivation of most workers who joined unions or cooperatives. Workers who joined unions expected to receive wage and benefit packages that were superior to those of nonunion members. Similarly, persons joined cooperatives to pay lower prices for their goods and services or receive higher quality for the same price. These were voluntary organizations that had to provide services for their members, which largely consisted of higher salaries, better working condition, and lower prices. This is not to say that ideology played no role in labor organizations or was without interest to members. As in conservative and liberal organizations, it seems clear that

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<sup>283</sup> A good overview of the ideas and norms that shaped the outlook of moderate "socialists" is provided in Castles (1978), who analyzes the social democratic movements that swept through Europe in the early twentieth century.

ideological interests motivated many of the most politically active persons and doubtless played a role at the margin for a broad cross-section of the labor movement.<sup>284</sup>

It was widely recognized that advancing labor union interests would be easier if middle- and working-class interests were directly represented in the Riksdag. Labor unions, thus, often pressed for suffrage reform at the same time that they lobbied for labor law reform and social insurance. Unions of different trades in different industries often favored limited work weeks, social insurance, safety regulations, and universal male suffrage. Their shared policy interests led to the formation of nationwide organizations in the late nineteenth century, including a new Social Democratic Party.

Although most strikes were conducted to advance negotiations with specific firms or industries over wages, work weeks, and working conditions, the Swedish labor movement occasionally organized large public demonstrations in support of specific public policy reforms, including two very broad strikes in 1902 and 1909 that supported suffrage and labor law reform. Together, ideology and the conditionality of member benefits helped solve collective-action problems and allowed unions to succeed in their private sector negotiations and in public lobbying activities, despite the fact that most union members could not vote in Sweden's national elections.

### *Suffrage Movements, Parties, and Reform*

Suffrage expanded slowly during the nineteenth century as economic development and government growth took place. Income and taxes rose, without substantial changes in electoral law. Representation of the unenfranchised in the Riksdag was largely through the "radicals" of the Swedish liberals, who were elected to the second chamber by upper-middle-class voters, and the odd industrialist with sympathies for left liberals. Those lacking the franchise for the second chamber, however, were better organized at the century's end and thus potentially more influential than they had been before, which provided additional political and economic support for constitutional reform. In 1890 a Universal Suffrage Association was founded with support among liberals and social democrats.

The gradual increase in the importance of the Riksdag and in the number of voters required to win seats created new benefits for partisan organizations, and new political parties were gradually organized after 1866. The first to organize were the farmers, who dominated the second chamber

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<sup>284</sup> Many of the most radical leaders of the Social Democratic Party promoted public ownership of the means of production, although its mainstream leaders, such as Branting and Lindahl, could be regarded as "left liberals," rather than revolutionaries, who favored the reform of capitalism and extension of suffrage, rather than radical reforms. This became obvious when the Social Democrats became the dominant party after World War I.

for the first 20 or 30 years after the 1866 reforms. A Social Democratic Party emerged out of the suffrage and labor movements in 1889. A new Liberal Party was organized in 1899, as a coalition of more or less like-minded members of the Riksdag, organized over dinner at Tattersall's restaurant, many of whom were also involved in the suffrage movement.<sup>285</sup> Nationwide economic organizations such as labor's Landsorganisationen (LO) were organized partly with the support of the Social Democrats in 1898. Industry's employer association, Svenska Arbetsgivarföreningen (SAF), was organized with the encouragement of the Conservative and Liberal Parties in 1902. (Heckscher 1954: 136, 235). A new conservative party was formed in 1904 (the National Election League). Both labor and industrial economic interest groups hoped to profit from reforms that increased their party's control of public policy.

A petition in support of suffrage reform with 364,000 signatures was presented to the Riksdag by liberals in 1898. Pressure for economic and suffrage reform was further increased by a short peaceful general strike organized by the Social Democrats in 1902 (Strode 1949: 172).<sup>286</sup>

A series of proposals for reform were made by members of the second chamber, especially after 1900. For example, in 1902 prime minister Boström proposed extending the vote for members of the second chamber to all taxpayers at the same time that a Swedish income tax was enacted (Steinmo 1993: 64). This was followed by proposals by his government and others in the second chamber for various forms of proportional representation and for extended suffrage in 1903 and 1904, but all were blocked by the first chamber.<sup>287</sup> Norway's secession in 1905 further increased dissatisfaction with the incumbent parties, officeholders, and current institutions.

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<sup>285</sup> Verney (1957: 98–99) discusses an earlier and less formal liberal party, the New Liberal Association, organized in 1868 just after the parliamentary reforms were adopted. It was, however, unsuccessful in its legislative aims and disintegrated in the next two years. The Farmer's Party was evidently much more successful in its early forms (1867), partly because it was based on membership in the old farmer estate.

<sup>286</sup> The *New York Times* (June 22, 1902) and some other references report that the strikers had been promised universal suffrage for the 1904 elections, but universal suffrage was not adopted until several years later.

<sup>287</sup> Although the ideological foundations of many activists in the Social Democratic Party and the labor movement differed from those of most liberals, there was significant agreement among liberals and social democrats on constitutional reform issues.

This was evidently because many of the most influential Swedish Social Democrats were “left liberals,” rather than radical Marxist reformers. Here, one may note that Hjalmar Branting, the son of a prominent university professor who became the leader of the Social Democrats and helped organize the 1902 strike, opposed bloodshed and favored an evolutionary approach to reform. “It will take longer by evolution, but not so long as it would take to undo the destruction of property and spirit a revolution would bring” (quoted in Strode 1949: 171).

The liberal coalition continued to gain members in the second chamber during this period, and its leader, Staaff, was invited to become the prime minister in 1906. He accepted and brought four fellow liberals to the ministry (the other six ministers were nonpartisan administrators). This led to a torrent of legislative proposals and major proposals for constitutional reform. The proposed constitutional reforms were again defeated in the first chamber (where they lost 102 to 18), in part because the king refused to call new elections or to support the bill in the first chamber.

Reform would require a more sophisticated constitutional bargain than the one proposed by Staaff. The first chamber generally opposed further liberalization of Swedish politics, because most reforms would reduce the influence of those represented in the first chamber or the first chamber itself.

### **G. 1907–20, A Series of Compromises: Proportional Representation and the Expanded Franchise**

After the failure of his reform bill, Staaf resigned as prime minister and conservatives were invited to head the government (without an intervening election). Prime Minister Lindman proposed several additional and important modifications of the voting procedures by which members of the Riksdag were selected for the two chambers. Lindman's reforms were partly motivated by the broad support for expanding suffrage in the second chamber and partly by the concern of conservatives that expanded suffrage would end their participation in government. First, he proposed that the franchise be expanded by reducing the property requirements in a manner that would double the franchise for the second chamber (from 500,000 to 1,000,000). This modification would allow nearly universal male suffrage. Second, he proposed that the weighted voting system used for selecting members of the first chamber be moderated (maximum votes were reduced from 5,000 to 40). Third, he proposed that proportional representation (PR) be introduced for elections to the first and second chamber. The method proposed for the first chamber would be a "double proportional representation," in which the provincial councils would be elected using PR and their votes would select the members of the first chamber using PR. Under the proposed D'Hondt rule, which favored the largest party, double PR would help preserve the conservative dominance of the first chamber, even with the reduced weighted voting system.<sup>288</sup> Fourth, he proposed that PR also be adopted by

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<sup>288</sup> Under the D'Hondt system, seats are allocated as follows: (i) the party with the most votes gets a seat, (ii) that party's vote is divided by two and the party with the largest vote (given that division) gets a seat, (iii) that party's vote is divided by three and the party with the most

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the committees within the Riksdag. The term of office for the first chamber were also to be reduced from nine to six years, and wealth requirements for seats in the first chamber were reduced from 80,000 to 50,000 krona.

As in 1866, the proposals were carefully crafted to secure majority support in each of the chambers of the Riksdag and the approval of the king. Proportional representation was seen as a method for minority parties (such as the conservatives in the first chamber) to retain some power in the Riksdag after reductions in weighted voting and expansion of the franchise. The broadened suffrage appealed to Liberals and Farmers in the second chamber, who were divided on PR. (Most Liberals favored the continuation of plurality voting in single-member districts.) There was only a single Social Democrat holding office at that time, and he favored an end to weighted voting.

Lindman's compromise satisfied demands for universal male suffrage, but protected the interests of conservatives in both chambers with PR and weighted voting. The king's interest in reform was increased somewhat by a proposed 25 percent increase in the budget for the civil list and the fact that his powers would not be (explicitly) altered. After several rounds of intraparlimentary negotiations and compromise, Lindman's final proposal was passed 93 to 52 in the first chamber and 128 to 98 in the second in April of 1907. It was ratified in 1909 after an intervening election, as required under the 1909 amendment procedures (Verney 1957: 154, 167–69, Weibull 1993: 113).

These reforms set the stage for the emergence of more disciplined political parties in the years to come. Proportional representation gave party leaders direct power over their members in the legislature by allowing the leadership to control who would be on party lists and thereby who could potentially be in the Riksdag. The expanded franchise also created a new electoral base by which the Social Democrats would shortly come to dominate Swedish politics, although in the short run, both Liberals and Social Democrats gained from the reforms. The Liberals won the 1911 election.

### *Party Governance Emerges*

Sweden was neutral during World War I, although its military budgets for national defense were increased. In 1914 the king made a speech that supported conservative proposals for further expanding the military budget, which the present Liberal-Social Democratic coalition opposed. This speech violated the custom that had emerged in the late nineteenth century. The proper method through which the king's interests would be presented to the parliament was through "his" cabinet,

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remaining votes gets a seat, and so forth until all the seats are filled. After the 1920 reforms, this electoral system worked to the benefit of the Social Democrats, as they became the party with the greatest electoral support. See Särilvik (2002: 342–45) for a careful analysis of this effect.



rather than by the king himself. The king was supposed to remain in the background of parliamentary debates, above the fray.

The Liberal ministry resigned in protest of the king's more direct intervention. Elections in 1914, however, returned a Conservative plurality to the second chamber. In spite of the conservative victory, the king's speech and the ministry's reaction is often regarded as the last time that a Swedish king publicly participated in parliamentary debate (Verney 1957: 190).

The shift to parliamentary dominance of policy was essentially complete, but not to party government. The king continued to exercise some discretion in his appointments to the cabinet, although these were increasingly determined by the electoral outcomes. For example, the king selected a moderate conservative civil servant, Hjalmar Hammarskjöd, to be prime minister in 1914, rather than a leading member of the majority party in parliament.

In 1917 conservatives lost the election, and the king accepted the recommendations of the majority Liberal-Social Democratic coalition of the second chamber, with a Liberal prime minister (Edén) and Social Democrat as finance minister (Branting), both from the second chamber.<sup>289</sup> This coalition is said to mark the beginning of party government in Sweden, although Swedish kings had long paid attention to electoral results. This routine deference to the majority parties in the second chamber, however, was not formally incorporated into constitutional documents until 1975.

### *Universal Suffrage*

The Liberal-Social-Democratic coalition government pressed for additional constitutional reforms as World War I ended, and those reforms completed the transition to parliamentary democracy.

Between 1918 and 1920 the franchise was further expanded as property restrictions for voting were eliminated and women were granted the franchise. Voters still had to be taxpayers of sufficient age, but most other restrictions were eliminated. Persons who were on relief or bankrupt, however,

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<sup>289</sup> The Social Democrats held more seats in the directly elected second chamber than the liberals since the 1914 elections. After the 1917 elections, their lead was 86 to 62 in the second chamber. Liberals, however, held more seats in the indirectly elected first chamber. It was in the 1917 election that the radical left broke from the Social Democratic Party and formed their own coalition, which was about a sixth as large as the mainstream party. The Swedish Communist Party would be formed by the left socialists early in the next decade.

The center of the Social Democratic Party could be regarded as "left liberal," in that it continued to favor democracy and open markets, even as it attempted to reform the latter. The party's economic advisers in the late 1920s included Erik Lindahl, Gunnar Myrdal, and Bertil Ohlin (Steinmo 1993: 83–86, Verney 1957: ch. 10).

were not eligible to vote until the suffrage reforms of 1945 (Verney 1957: 215). The weighted-voting system modified 10 years earlier was eliminated, although differences in the electoral method and wealth qualifications for the first chamber remained. Members of the first chamber continued to be restricted to the very wealthy until 1933 (Verney 1957: 215).<sup>290</sup>

The resulting more disciplined and more broadly representative bicameral Riksdag became the chief architect of public policy in Sweden for the next 50 years.

## **H. The Evolutionary Nature of the Swedish Constitution**

Most of Swedish constitutional history from late medieval times until 1918 can be regarded as a bargaining contest between the Riksdag and the king in which their bargaining positions and strengths shifted back and forth over the centuries. Peaks in parliamentary powers are often marked by formal revisions to the instruments of governance, as in 1617, 1634, 1660, 1720, and 1809. Kings occasionally regained power through constitutional reform, as in 1680 and 1772, and also by playing the estates off one another. At times of maximum royal authority, the powers of the Riksdag were rather limited, although the king and council template remained in place. The flexibility of the king and council template, together with the lack of an effective constitutional court, meant that day-to-day governance reflected the particular personalities, talents, and circumstances confronted by those in government, as often stressed by political historians.

After 1809 the flexibility of the king and council template remained evident, although constitutional compromises exhibited a clear liberal trend for the next century. Parliament was reformed a number of times in a manner that changed the bargaining equilibria between the king and parliament and the selection process for members of the king's executive council (ministry).

The trend can be explained as a joint consequence of the rise of liberalism and industrialization. Economic reforms preceded political reforms in Sweden, insofar as education reform, free trade, land reform, and the extension of religious tolerance were well underway before the reform of the Riksdag in 1866. Many of the proposed reforms of parliament demonstrate that political liberalism had penetrated the aristocracy and king's inner circle as well as the towns and rural districts during the early nineteenth century.

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<sup>290</sup> The first chamber remained indirectly elected by provincial councils. The terms of office also differed, although these were modified by the 1918–20 reforms. Members in the first chamber retained office for eight years and those in the second chamber for four years (Verney 1957: 248).

Pressures for reform diminished after 1866, in part because so much success had been achieved in 1866 and in part because of the conservative institutional interests produced by the procedures of the new Riksdag. Further industrialization, however, continued to empower liberal and labor-based interest groups, who were finally able to persuade the Riksdag to undertake additional reforms of suffrage in the early twentieth century. Together formal and informal reforms of Sweden's procedures of governance produced parliamentary democracy shortly after World War I.

This path of reform in nineteenth-century Sweden is very consistent with the analytical history developed in part I of the book. The king initially remained the dominant figure in public policy formation, but could not neglect parliament, because he needed an overall majority in the joint vote to assure that budgets would pass. Leaders of significant coalitions within the second chamber were often invited to be consulting ministers (Verney 1957: 134). The Riksdag gradually accumulated authority after the 1866 reforms through its control of taxation and public budgets, gaining complete control early in the twentieth century. Fine-grained negotiations and compromise (i.e., constitutional exchange) among the king, the parliament, and the executive council are evident throughout Sweden's transition to parliamentary democracy.

The peaceful and lawful nature of Sweden's transition to parliamentary democracy remains evident in the medieval roots of its contemporary architecture. After 1925 the king and Riksdag continued to have roles in policymaking, but the balance of policymaking authority had essentially reversed itself over the course of a century of constitutional bargaining. The king's authority had become largely advisory and ceremonial, as might have been said of the relatively weak parliaments during most of Sweden's medieval period. Sweden remains formally a constitutional monarchy, a kingdom, rather than a republic, although it could be said that the prime minister has replaced the king as the chief executive in Sweden's contemporary form of the king and council template.

The new balance of authority over public policy, however, emerged as informal shifts in bargaining equilibria associated with changes in the Swedish parliament and the balance of interests represented there, rather than through an explicit constitutional reform. It was not until 1975 that the bargaining equilibrium that emerged between the Riksdag and king in the first decades of the twentieth century was finally written down in new constitutional documents.<sup>291</sup>

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<sup>291</sup> The 1975 instrument continues to assign minor authority to the king (who, for example, presides over special sessions of the Riksdag [*Instrument of Governance*: Ch. 5, Article 1]) and continues to characterize the rules of royal succession.

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**Table 14: Major Constitutional Developments in Swedish Constitutional History**

Date	Event	Description
1319	Letter of Privilege	Binds the sovereign to govern by rule of law, promised due process, and allowed new taxes to be imposed only after consultation with the Royal Council.
14th century	Magnus Eriksson's Land Law	Provides for the election of a king, describes his duties, and the election and functions of the members of the Council of State.
1389	Kalmar Union	Common kingdom of Sweden, Norway, and Denmark established, each with their own parliament and council.
1442	Kristofer's Law	New Royal Charter, a revision of Eriksson's law
1523	End of Kalmar Union	Gustav Vasa elected king by the Riksdag, after successful war of secession from Danish sovereign.
1527	Protestant Reformation	Protestant Reformation initiated by Gustav, king becomes head of the new Swedish (Lutheran) Church, Catholic church properties are confiscated.
1544	Succession Pact	King made a hereditary office for the House of Vasa.
1594	Accession Charters reestablished	Kings sign an accession charter before taking office, in which they promise to govern constitutionally (all future kings and queens sign one, except Charles XII).
1617	First Riksdag Act	Formally establishes the four-chamber system of parliament with veto power over new laws and taxes.
1634	First Instrument of Government	Clarifies and extends the Royal Charter and form of government.
1660	Swedish Triennial Act	The Riksdag is to meet every three years (i.e., parliament becomes self-calling).
1680	Instrument of Government Revised	Parliament exempts Charles XI from many provisions of the Instrument of Government, although Riksdag retains its veto power on new taxes.
1719	Succession Pact Revoked	Following the death of Charles XII without heir, the Riksdag revokes the hereditary foundation of the monarchy, and Queen Christina accepts the new procedure.
1720	Second Instrument of Government	Re-establishes constitutional monarchy, with greater authority placed in the Riksdag, laws to be approved by the Council of State, its members are selected by the king or queen from lists prepared by Riksdag.
1723	Second Riksdag Act	Formalizes internal procedures of parliament and establishes a procedure for removing council ministers ("ministerial responsibility" established).
1766	Ordinance for the Liberty of Printing	Eliminates pre-publication censorship (except for religious books) and includes rules regarding access to government documents, amending the act requires agreement by two successive parliaments (i.e., the act has constitutional status).

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The 1975 constitution begins with a statement of popular sovereignty and social contract: "All public power in Sweden proceeds from the people. Swedish democracy is founded on the free formation of opinion and on universal and equal suffrage. It shall be realized through a representative and parliamentary polity and through local self-government. Public power is exercised under the law" (Holmberg and Stjernquist 1996: 65).

*Perfecting Parliament*

1766	Ordinance for the Better Execution of Laws	The justice chancellor henceforth to be appointed by parliament, rather than the king, a formal amendment process for constitutional law is adopted, constitutional amendments require approval by all four chambers of two successive parliaments and the king, many reforms of the bureaucracy are adopted.
1772	Reform of the Second Instrument of Government	Gustav III negotiates a shift of authority from the Riksdag and council to the king. Legislative authority is to be shared between king and the Riksdag. The Riksdag ceases to be self-calling, but retains veto power on taxes and new legislation. The king has veto power on legislation and can impose new taxes if the country is attacked.
1789	Act of Union and Security	Gustav III obtains further authority over the council of state and Riksdag, a new court of appeals is established, of which the king is a member and casts two votes.
1809	Third Instrument of Government	Re-establishes the Riksdag's authority on legislation and taxation and provides the Riksdag with new budgetary authority.
1810	New Succession Act	Sovereign is again made hereditary for the new Bernadotte line.
1840	Cabinet Act	Government administration organized into departments, and heads of departments become ministers in the government's cabinet.
1860	Religious Tolerance Act	
1866	Third Riksdag Act	Four-chamber medieval parliament is transformed into a two-chamber elected parliament (the first chamber elected via wealth-weighted voting); the first chamber is indirectly elected by regional governments, and the second is directly elected by voters; national election law replaces district level laws.
1907-09	Lindman's Suffrage Reforms	Reduces weighted voting for the first chamber, lowers wealth restrictions for elective office, adopts PR for electoral colleges of both first and second chambers
1920	Edén-Branting Suffrage Reforms	Essentially universal and equal suffrage for men and women becomes the rule for both the first and second chambers, a system of direct PR is adopted for the second chamber.
1969	Fourth Riksdag Act	The two-chamber parliament is merged into a single, directly elected chamber based on proportional representation.
1975	Fourth Instrument of Government	A unified constitution is adopted that combines elements of previously separate constitutional laws into a single document; the sovereign's diminished policymaking authority is explicitly described.

Sources: Holmberg and Stjernquist (1995), Verney (1957), Roberts (2002).