

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, Kouri, and Jansson 2003: 401–402, Weibull 1993: 18–22). At its territorial peak in the seventeenth century, its domain 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. 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. Its constitutional laws, perhaps surprisingly, have been more stable than the territory governed and may be argued to be among the oldest in the world.

It bears noting that usage of the term constitution in this book differs somewhat from that used by many 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 during the period of greatest interest for this book. Sweden’s 1809 grounding law remained in place from 1809 until 1975. 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 its core procedures for choosing public policies underwent four major reforms.¹⁹⁷

The nineteenth and early twentieth centuries included three periods of major reforms and many other periods in which minor reforms were adopted. The “new” constitution of 1809 was a relatively liberal document with clear medieval antecedents. That constitution reaffirmed parliament’s veto power over taxation and specified formal procedures for constitutional amendment. It included a four-chamber parliament based on the estate system. The Riksdag Act of 1866 changed the

¹⁹⁷ 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.

architecture of parliament from a four-chamber assembly 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 reform is beyond the scope of the present chapter.¹⁹⁸ Other unwritten reforms also occurred, as the balance of public policymaking authority shifted from the king to the parliament in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Although Swedish governance was not always bound by its constitution, 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 evolution of Swedish governance is generally clearer than that of England, because more of its constitutional reforms are formally codified in written constitutional laws.

In the early Middle Ages there were many rival kingdoms, which were gradually unified into three kingdoms: Sweden, Norway, and Denmark through wars of conquests and arranged marriages. 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. Indeed, the contemporary Danish parliament is called the Folketing or Folketinget: the people's ting. 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.¹⁹⁹ There were local, regional, and national tings. Once elected, a king normally retained office until his death, although kings were occasionally replaced for extreme malfeasance of their duties.

Contemporary 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, observe due

¹⁹⁸ See Congleton (2003c) for an analysis of Sweden's twentieth-century reforms.

¹⁹⁹ Petersson (1994: 6) briefly describes these early collective decisionmaking bodies.

process, 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).

Helle, Kouri, and Jansson(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. 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 several 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 for the purposes of this book than his subsequent creation and use of a national legal code.

Approximately 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, which included and extended the promises made on his behalf in the 1319 charter.

The constitutional provisions of Eriksson’s Land Law stated, for example, 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). The royal council would have veto power, “in the future no laws should be given to the common people without their [the council’s] 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 such assemblies (Helle et al. 2003: 701).²⁰⁰

The main provisions of Eriksson’s land law were repeated many times, as for example in Kristoffer’s code ratified in 1442 (Weibull 1993: 22). A new official text was printed and distributed

²⁰⁰ 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). An early fifteenth century (illustrated) version of Eriksson’s national law code can be found at the library of Uppsala University (on parchment).

in 1608 (Upton 1998: 2). In this manner, Swedish governance became grounded in written documents that remained in force for centuries at a time.

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

Standing tax revenues from land, 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 for nobles to provide military service to the kingdom when called upon (partly in exchange for tax exemptions). Magnus Eriksson made Stockholm the official port city of Sweden, through which all foreign trade was to pass. This made tariffs and similar payments easier to collect and also made Stockholm the main commercial and political city of Sweden (Helle et al. 2003: 333–34).

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 obtain than new taxes from the council. The loans were partly from the Catholic Church and partly from noble families in northern Europe (Helle et al. 2003: 407–408).

B. Emergence of the Swedish Parliament

Eriksson’s land law codified the practice of calling for assemblies of nobles, church officials and regional governments, but it did not create a formal architecture for such assemblies. This emerged gradually over the course of the next two centuries.

A series of Swedish national assemblies were called during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries to address tax issues and to elect sovereigns (Bellquist 1935, 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. The latter suggests that national assemblies during this time were not considered to 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 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. 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 (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.²⁰¹

Sweden'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. Accession charters normally required the Danish kings to consult with the three councils of state and to call their parliaments as required. Assemblies of regional governments continued to be called in Sweden to deliberate on new taxes and royal succession. Such meetings occurred, for example, in 1396, 1441, 1448, 1520, 1521 (Sawyer and Sawyer 1993: 71–79).

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

Secession from the Kalmar Union

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

²⁰¹ 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).

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 secession 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.²⁰² Sweden's territory expanded, as lands were taken from Denmark and added to Sweden. 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).

In this sense, 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. 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. Day-to-day governance, however, was literally based on the king and council template. The council of state (Riksråd) met far more often and exercised greater influence over day-to-day policies than Sweden's parliament.

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 the Swedish parliament and could normally engineer support in the parliament for policies of interest to him.

The Shifting Balance of Authority

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.

In 1527 King Gustav Vasa with the support of the parliament 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

²⁰² Norway remained under the Danish Sovereign until the end of the Napoleonic period when the king of Sweden also became king of Norway.

Church to the sovereign, which as elsewhere in northern Europe, reduced the need for royal subsidies from the parliament, 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 was made formally hereditary for the house of Vasa, which temporarily eliminated the parliament's control over succession. This reduced the parliament and council's ability to draft accession charters, which reduced parliament's influence within the government for the next fifty years. In 1594 there was no direct Vasa heir, and the council and parliament intervened to determine who would rule.²⁰³

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 (*konungaförsäkran*) at the time of their accession. (The religious condition for accession was introduced in Sweden approximately a century before it was introduced in Great Britain.)

An especially restrictive oath of office was negotiated in 1611, under which the seventeen year old 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” (Weibull 1993: 40). It was in Gustav Adolphus' reign that the first formal Riksdag Act was adopted (in 1617). It affirmed the legal requirement that the king consult the four estates before declaring war or forming alliances. In 1650 the parliament 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 parliament was adopted, which gave the Riksdag a more independent standing.²⁰⁴

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 used to align the interests of members of the council of state and parliament with those of the royal household.

²⁰³ An early Swedish contract theory of the hereditary monarchy was developed by Erik Sparre in 1590 (Roberts 1986: 64).

²⁰⁴ 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).

The king's army could also be occasionally employed to threaten and punish those who opposed royal policy, although not arbitrarily. As a consequence, shifts of policymaking authority from the parliament to the executive branch normally reflected the skill of a particular king and his advisors, 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 parliament (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 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). The new nobles were relatively more likely to attend and vote in the noble chamber of the parliament, because most lived and worked in Stockholm. Consequently, they tended to dominate proceedings in the noble chamber.²⁰⁵

Karl XI also created a new, more efficient Swedish bureaucracy, which could regulate and interpret laws but not, in principle, adopt new laws without parliament approval. Riksdag approval, however, was somewhat easier to obtain, with the support from the new members of the noble chamber (the Riddarhuset) and other members of parliament employed in the bureaucracy.

During times of war, the parliament 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 parliament 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 mistake essentially eliminated the bargaining power of the parliament for the next 25 years.

²⁰⁵ 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. Indeed, Karl XII, perhaps inspired by British precedents, never called the parliament into session. 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.

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

C. The Age of Liberty, 1720–71

The absence of a clear heir (together with the army's support for the parliament) provided the parliament with the opportunity to choose the next king. Army leaders had declared that they would not take an oath to a king not elected by parliament. There were two natural alternatives, Karl Frederick of Holstein, the grandson of Karl XI, and Ulrika Eleonora, the sister of Karl XII.

Negotiations with the two potential sovereigns were undertaken with restoring the medieval constitution and enhancing the parliament'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 parliament consent, freedom of election for the three representative chambers (those representing farmers, townsmen, and church officials), and the right of free speech in the parliament (Roberts 1986: 60, note 9). These privileges had been granted to Swedish parliaments 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 parliament 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 parliament'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.

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

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.

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.²⁰⁶ Members of the lower three chambers were generally selected via elections of various kinds, often through wealth-weighted voting and/or 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.²⁰⁷

The combination of agenda control and veto authority gave the Swedish parliament far greater authority over legislation than it had possessed in previous centuries. However, the reformed council of state (Rådet) remained important during the age of liberty. It issued rules when the parliament 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 parliament. Council members could not sit in the parliament. 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 parliament significant control over the selection of ministers and other advisors of state for the first time. The parliament could also impeach individual ministers (Roberts 1986: 82–89, Weibull 1993: 53). The council's major rulings had to be affirmed at the next meeting of the parliament, although this proved to be more difficult task than one would expect,

²⁰⁶ Nobles could also appoint representatives to sit in their seats and occasionally sold this privilege (Verney 1957: 25).

²⁰⁷ 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.

because the council and the parliament often disagreed about how “major” a given ruling was (Roberts 1986: 82).²⁰⁸

Although suffrage was limited by significant wealth qualifications, elections were often competitive.²⁰⁹ This, together with the benefits of coordinated voting in a parliament with decisive policymaking authority caused political parties to emerge (the “hats” and the “caps”), first, as coalitions of representatives with shared interests and then for purposes of national political campaigns.²¹⁰ The early political parties affected parliamentary decisions, including its suggestions for membership on the council of state, which allowed party leaders to indirectly control a broad range of governmental decisions.

Royal power did not completely disappear, as is sometimes claimed, but was greatly diminished in importance from 1720–72. Sweden did not become a republic. Formal control of the executive remained with the king, and a broad cross-section of members in the parliament held appointed positions in the bureaucracy of one kind or another, which gave the king some leverage over the parliament. The king’s ability to use patronage, however, was far from complete, because many 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.²¹¹

Frederick I died in 1751 without (legitimate) children. He was followed by Adolf Frederick, who ruled from 1751-1771, and who took office under a similarly restrictive accession charter and constitutional rules. Constitutional negotiations continued under Adolf Frederick with revised amendment procedures adopted in 1766 and a reduction in state censorship. The freedom of the

²⁰⁸ 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).

²⁰⁹ 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.

²¹⁰ 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). There were a number of politically important English, French, and Russian international intrigues at this time, which are neglected to focus on constitutional developments. See Svanstrom (2008:210–50) for a somewhat dramatic presentation of them.

²¹¹ After 1723, the Frederick I was reported to devote most of his energy to hunting and romance rather than governance (Nordstrom 2000: 108).

press acts of 1766 eliminated pre-publication censorship, except for religious materials. It remained a crime, however, to publish material attacking the king, the estates, or the Lutheran church (Roberts 1986: 106). A Swedish enclosure movement began the mid-eighteenth century, followed by organizations that lobbied for suffrage reform (Roberts 1986: 138, 144, 208).

Economic Problems and the End of the Age of Liberty

The parliament was able to bring the budget into balance and to pay down the war debts of Karl XI and XII during the first 20 years of the age of liberty. However, it was not able to keep the budget in balance in the long run. This occurred partly because of the separation between budget and tax decisions, but mainly 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 army salaries were not always paid on time or at all.²¹²

Adolf Frederick was succeeded by his eldest son Gustav, in 1771, who became Gustav III upon his accession at the age of 26. The Riksdag met the same to consider institutional reforms to address its fiscal problems, but it could not find a compromise that would satisfy the four chambers of the parliament, as required for constitutional reforms. In earlier periods, when some of the four chambers had disagreed with a royal proposal, the king might have simply accepted the advice of the chambers that supported his proposal. Under the 1766 amendment procedures all four chambers had to support constitutional reforms.

Partly because of Riksdag's failure to deal with Sweden's economic problems, parliamentary dominance of public policy came to an end shortly afterwards. In 1772, with the poorly and irregularly paid army at his side, Gustav III "suggested" constitutional reforms that increased royal authority over public policy. The parliament "accepted" Gustav's reforms by acclamation with armed troops assembled outside (Roberts 1986: 206, Svanstrom 2008: 253-5). Although many of the members of parliament favored a stronger monarchy, it is clear that the king's implicit threat changed many votes. Gustav's 1772 instrument of government reversed the tide of political liberalization, although at first it could be said to have simply restored the medieval constitution.

²¹² 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.

Under the revised constitution, the king regained his former authority to appoint members of the council of state, and to call and dismiss parliament. The Riksdag ceased to be self-calling, but it 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, the Riksdag's power of the purse was initially enhanced somewhat by its new control of the Swedish national bank, the Riksbank (Fregert 2009). Trade and freedom of the press were somewhat liberalized through reforms adopted in 1774.

Gustav's intervention in 1772 was evidently quite popular, given the economic circumstances of that time. Stockholm was said to be filled with a "tumult of rejoicing" after the new instrument of government was adopted (Roberts 1986: 204).

Significance of the Age of Liberty

Sweden's the Age of Liberty is important for the purposes of this book, because it affirms several predictions of part I. 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 the balance of authority shifted from one nearly polar case to the other. The new division of policymaking authority was the result of bargaining, rather than revolution. 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 (potential) sovereigns. Even fairly substantial shifts in constitutional authority can occur peacefully when the bargaining power of the parliament increases relative to the king (and vice versa).

Second, as in Britain, the Swedish age of liberty demonstrates that parliamentary domination of policy formation is not necessarily accompanied by major expansions of suffrage. A Swedish suffrage movement began to gather momentum in 1769, but the estates, if anything, were inclined to increase the requirements for membership in the parliament, 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, although policies clearly reflected ideological (liberal) goals as well as economic and partisan ones. 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) demonstrated that liberal ideas had already affected the political theories and debates of Swedish intellectuals, voters, and politicians.

Constitutional debates included arguments favoring a free press, due process, and separation of powers in the 1760s (Roberts 1986: 61, 106–08).²¹³

Fourth, the relatively poor fiscal policies of the parliament 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 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. As a consequence more authority is delegated to ministers and, indirectly, to parliament. 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.

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 placed on a rational, scientific foundation by Linnaeus, who also revised the Celsius thermometer by

²¹³ It is an 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).

making 100 the boiling temperature of water and 0 its freezing point, reversing Celsius' initial mapping of temperatures into numbers. New Royal Academies of Science and Literature were founded. Copper and iron industries, which had prospered since the sixteenth century, grew more rapidly as new uses for metals were developed.

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

The 1772 instrument of government had essentially restored the medieval constitution. It did not 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. Royal successions, however, continued to be far from routine, as infertility and unexpected deaths remained commonplace for the royal family, as well as commoners. European entanglements continued to influence Swedish foreign and domestic policies. Swedish governance, nonetheless, remained fairly stable for nearly 40 years, although trends in those years favored royal authority.²¹⁴ Governance during the second half of the age of liberty with its high debt, inflation, and even famine had undermined support for parliamentary rule, but not parliament's interest in greater authority.

²¹⁴ 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).

Another dispute over succession to the throne in 1809 provided the Swedish parliament with another opportunity for constitutional renegotiation.²¹⁵ 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. A revised grundlag (instrument of government, IG) was quickly adopted by the Riksdag and accepted by the new king, Karl XIII, as a condition of his accession.²¹⁶

The 1809 instrument of government was, of course, not entirely new.²¹⁷ It specified the traditional architecture for Swedish governance: a constitutional monarchy with a king, a council of state (cabinet), and a parliament. It also described a distribution of authority between the executive and the parliament that was still very much in the executive's favor, although less so than under Gustav III's 1772 instrument of government. For example article 4 stated that: the **king alone** should govern the kingdom in accordance with the provisions of the constitution (IG). Many of its provisions simply restored the medieval balance, which had shifted in the king's favor during the past few decades. 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 was 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' 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

²¹⁵ Gustav Adolf IV was deposed by a broad coalition of army officers and government officials (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. (A few years later, the Vienna Congress granted the Swedish sovereign the Norwegian crown [from Denmark] in compensation for losing Finland to Russia.)

²¹⁶ Karl XIII was the brother of Gustav III, who was relatively old, and childless. At essentially the same time that Karl XIII 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.

²¹⁷ A translation of the 1809 Instrument of Government can be found in Dodd 1909: 219-59. The article numbers referred to below are from that translation.

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).

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).²¹⁸ The king retained the authority to appoint the council of state, and retained substantial executive discretion to implement public policy as he and his council saw fit.

Beyond these more or less traditional medieval authorities and privileges, the Riksdag gained the authority to censure individual members of the king's cabinet, although not to remove them from office. The council was no longer protected by royal immunity. The 1809 instrument of government also guaranteed routine meetings of the Riksdag of three months in duration (articles 49 and 109) and assured annual meetings through a one-year limit on royal tax authority (article 61). The Riksdag thus gained greater control over taxes and the budget than in any previous period except during the Age of Liberty. All royal acts had to be countersigned by the council of state.

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).

It was under the 1809 instrument of government 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.

²¹⁸ 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 then executed. In addition, the treasonous party's properties were forfeited to the sovereign (Verney 1957: 23).

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 constitutional bargains that made the Riksdag 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.²¹⁹

E. Constitutional Bargaining Produces a New Bicameral Riksdag in 1866

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.

Liberal pressures for reform were immediately evident in the period following the adoption of the 1809 Instrument of Government. The estates themselves were modified, as representation in three 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.²²⁰

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).²²¹ 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

²¹⁹ By coincidence, the first Swedish factory using steam was founded in Stockholm by an English mechanic (Samuel Owen) in 1809 (Grimberg 1935: 339).

²²⁰ Representatives for the farmers' estate were indirectly elected at the county (*bärad*) 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.

²²¹ 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 towards the end of his rule (Grimberg 1935: 330-31).

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 placing parliament on an electoral basis was present in the farmers' and burghers' estates, and support for other reforms of parliament 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. However, no proposals for parliamentary reform gained broad enough support to be adopted. To be adopted, majorities in all four existing chambers and acceptance by the king were required.

In 1859 the accession of Karl XV changed the non-institutional interests of the king and his cabinet, which provided new opportunities for constitutional negotiations. New men were appointed to the royal cabinet, including Baron Louis de Geer, who became 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.²²² In 1863 chancellor De Geer proposed a new, more liberal organization of the Riksdag.

Much of what De Geer proposed had been suggested before, but his reform package was more carefully crafted to acquire the support needed for constitutional reform, and there was greater support for political liberalization in the 1860s than in previous periods. De Geer proposed that the old four chamber Riksdag be reorganized into two chambers: a first and second chamber. All members of the reorganized Riksdag were to be elected for fixed terms of office, although new elections could be called during the terms by the king. 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 that in the first chamber.

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, based on existing appointment 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

²²² 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.

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. 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 living 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 24 provincial councils in a manner roughly analogous to that of the U. S. Senate at that time.

The influence of wealthy Swedes in elections for the first chamber was reinforced by a striking feature of mid-century election laws for the provincial councils. All taxpaying citizens could vote in elections for provincial councils, including 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: 50, 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 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*.²²³

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 somewhat broader suffrage and a reduced role for the nobility in the Riksdag and 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, however, was more

²²³ Weighted voting by the members of parliament themselves had previously been possible. For example, Anders Danielsson of West Gothland had once been chosen to represent twenty 7 districts and so had 27 votes in the farmer's chamber, one fifth of the votes in that chamber. (Grimberg 1935: 327-28).

restricted for the direct elections of members of the second chamber than for the indirect elections for the first chamber.²²⁴

Voters for second chamber elections had to be males (Lutherans), eligible to vote in local elections, and had to satisfy national eligibility requirements in addition to local ones. There were three national eligibility qualifications for suffrage: paying taxes on 1,000 riksdaler of real estate, renting 6,000 riksdaler of real estate (for a period of more than five years), or paying taxes on more than 800 riksdaler of income a year. 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 second chamber's electorate consisted for the most part of successful farmers, bureaucrats, small businessmen, doctors, and lawyers.

In contrast, eligibility for seats in the second chamber was 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), but the lack of national standards implied that eligibility for seats in the second chamber was much broader than that for the first and that it varied somewhat according to local assessments and tax laws.

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 fifty percent more members.

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 in elections for the second chamber, it was sufficient to pay taxes on 1,000 riksdaler of real estate, which was only one-eightieth of that required for eligibility for membership in the first chamber. Satisfying the voter income

²²⁴ 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% of adult males had the right to vote for members of the second chamber.

requirement required payment of taxes on 800 riksdaler of income, which was one-fifth of that required for seats in the upper house (articles 6 and 14).

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 ministry and the speakers of the two chambers. The first chamber would also be reliably conservative, although royal influence over it was likely to diminish, because noble government officials (senior bureaucrats and military officers) without property were not likely to be returned to office.

Noble support for the proposal was increased by the wealth requirements for seats in the first chamber and the weighted-voting system of the provincial councils. These made it likely that many of those already sitting in the noble and burgher estates would obtain seats in the reformed Riksdag (Verney 1957: 50–52, 89). It also increased support by industrialists (iron mongers and miners) who favored economic liberalization, by reducing the influence of the petty nobility and allowing them to obtain seats in the upper chamber (Verney 1957: 32, 77–82).²²⁵ Majorities in the burgher and farmer chambers had long favored reforms along the lines proposed by Verney.

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 last four-chamber parliament had completed its work in June 1866, the king signed the Riksdag Act, and the parliamentary reforms negotiated by De Geer became law. After ratifying the reforms, the king 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).

²²⁵ 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.

The parliamentary reforms were significant reforms of Sweden's long-standing medieval system of governance. Although suffrage was still very restrictive and only men of wealth could sit in the first chamber, 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 changes indirectly made future reforms more likely, because it increased parliament's ability to negotiate with the king. The Riksdag has somewhat greater tax and legislative authority than in the past (except during the age of liberty), fewer chambers had to be consulted, and the interests of members in the two chambers were somewhat more aligned than before.

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 for liberals 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 relatively broad suffrage was reduced by weighted voting, which in turn produced relatively low turnouts. 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 simple 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.

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 to influence internal and external trade policies (as in England). As wealthy men, they were eligible to sit in the first chamber and could also disproportionately determine its membership by casting weighted 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. Reform of the first chamber's rules would be supported by many members of the second chamber, but few in the first.

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).²²⁶

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 income expanded (Magnusson 2000: chs 5–6; Heckscher 1954).

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.

²²⁶ 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 first to 150 (Verney 1957: 109).

By these measures at least, governance by the wealthy was better for industry and for most Swedes, than governance by nobles had been. Economic growth accelerated during 1896–1912 as new industries expanded. It bears noting, however, that this was also a period in which Swedish emigration, especially to the United States, was very large.²²⁷

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 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. There was also additional evidence that more open political systems do not necessarily produced policy 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.

²²⁷ Heckscher estimates that real per capita national income increased nearly threefold in 1861–1914 (1954: 260). Heckscher notes, however, 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 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.

Economic developments, 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.

A variety of politically active groups inside and outside of government pressed for market and educational reforms, reduced alcohol consumption, and also for suffrage expansion and trade liberalization.²²⁸ 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. Some problems and solutions were more extreme in Scandinavia than in more populous countries. For example, increases in the scale of the efficient production of goods and services naturally generated more monopolies in Sweden's relatively small economy than in larger or more open economies. The favorable prices engineered by monopolists and cartels were, in turn, often countered by the creation of new Swedish 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 at the same time that liberal support for openness and civic equality increased. 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 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 sense that the public interest could be advanced through industry and political reform clearly reduced organizational costs for many liberal reform groups and trade associations. Their universalist utilitarian and natural

²²⁸ As in many other counties 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 reemerged, although they were less successful in the late nineteenth century than they had been mid-century.

rights-based arguments generated support for their reform agendas within all income groups and occupations, although groups varied in their support for specific proposals than others.

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.²²⁹

Late Nineteenth-Century Swedish Economic Conservatives

Institutional and social conservatism are common perspective among persons who are content with the existing order. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, this perspective led many persons to support the medieval order. In the late nineteenth century, such conservatives defended the 1866 reforms, the end of serfdom, and the liberalization of trade. Conservative political theorists and politicians often recounted 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 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. The late nineteenth-century conservatives had gradually adopted policy positions that were not so different from those of early and mid-nineteenth century liberals. Conservatism in the late nineteenth century was not an explicitly class-based ideology, nor an entirely static world view, although it did 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 respect for cultural evolution, national religious beliefs, and

²²⁹ 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).

history were normally joined by those who profited from existing arrangements and those who were risk averse about constitutional experimentation. Anti-liberal arguments were taken up by many industrialists, who had previously favored the liberal reform agenda, but profited from protectionist measures in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. 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 the late nineteenth century, the Farmers' Party shifted from relatively liberal to relatively conservative positions on many policy issues. For example, the Farmer's Party opposed suffrage reform in the 1880s, because they 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.

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 strong interests in civic equality. Such persons pressed for 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 Sweden's "radical" liberals, there was also new ideological movement that thought private property was less an engine of growth than a device through which privileged persons secured unfair advantages in political and economic life. A significant subset of the latter were influenced by Marx's ideas about social evolution, conflict, and economic justice.²³⁰

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, along with 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.

²³⁰ A good overview of the ideas and norms that shaped the outlook of moderate "socialists" is provided in Castels (1978), who analyzes the social democratic movements that swept through Europe in the early twentieth century.

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, as became obvious when the Social Democrats became the dominant party after World War I.

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 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.²³¹ 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

²³¹ 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.

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 various union strikes. Although most strikes were conducted to advance negotiations with specific firms or industries over wages, workweeks, 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 (Strode 1949: 172).²³²

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; all of which were blocked by the first chamber.²³³

Norway's secession in 1905 further increased dissatisfaction with the incumbent parties, officeholders, and current institutions. 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 several proposals for constitutional reform. The proposed constitutional reforms were again defeated in the first chamber (one lost 102 to 18) in part because the king refused support the bill in the first chamber. Reform clearly required a more sophisticated constitutional bargain than the one(s) proposed by Staaff.

²³² 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.

²³³ Although the ideological foundations of many activists in the Social Democratic Party and the labor movement differed from that 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 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: Another Round of Grand Constitutional Bargaining

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 reforms of the voting procedures by which members were selected for the two chambers of the Riksdag. Lindman's reforms were partly motivated by the broad support for expanding suffrage in the second chamber (as evidenced by the general strike of 1902 and liberal reform proposals) and partly by the concern of conservatives that expanded suffrage would end their influence over governmental decisions.

First, Lindman 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 used for the first chamber would be "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.²³⁴ Fourth, he proposed that PR also be adopted by 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 influence in the

²³⁴ Under the D'Hont 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 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.

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 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 1866 amendment procedures (Verney 1957: 154, 167–69, Weibull 1993: 113, Svanstrom 2008:417–18).

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. The King's speech, however, violated the custom that had emerged in the late nineteenth century. The "proper" method through which a king's interests should be presented to the parliament was indirect, through "his" cabinet, rather than through speeches 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 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 Hammarskjöld, 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.²³⁵ 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 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, 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).²³⁶

The resulting more disciplined and more broadly representative bicameral Riksdag became the chief architect of public policy in Sweden for the next 50 years. The social democrats emerged as the dominant political party in Sweden, although it could be regarded as “left liberal,” in that it

²³⁵ The Social Democrats had 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 during 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.

²³⁶ 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).

continued to favor democracy and open markets, even as it attempted to reform the latter. The party's economic advisors in the late 1920s included Erik Lindahl, Gunnar Myrdal, and Bertil Ohlin (Steinmo 1993: 83–86, Verney 1957: ch. 10). The more radical members of the labor movement departed in the 1920s to form their own party.

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. 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. The balance of authority over public policy in 1925 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 Swedish parliament and king in the first decades of the twentieth century was finally written down in new constitutional documents. It bears noting that the 1975 instrument of government 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. It also bears noting that the 1975 constitution, in contrast to the 1809 instrument that it replaced, begins with what might be regarded as a liberal statement concerning popular sovereignty, civic equality, and the constitutional basis of Swedish governance:

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).

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 Ericsson'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 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	Reestablishes constitutional monarchy, with greater authority placed in the Riksdag, laws to be approved by the Council of State, its members 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).
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.

Perfecting Parliament

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	Reestablishes the Riksdag's authority on legislation and taxation, and provides the Riksdag with new budgetary authority.
1810	New Succession Act	Sovereign is again made a hereditary office, with 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 Electoral 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, and for parliamentary committees
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 PR
1975	Fourth Instrument of Government	Unified constitution 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).