The map of the European North was redrawn in more lasting fashion than any other part of Europe during the Age of Revolution and the Napoleonic wars. The Russian Empire became an unquestioned great power at the same time as the two conglom erate states, Denmark and Sweden, were dismantled. In 1809, Sweden lost its eastern part, Finland, to the Russian Empire, which incorporated the country as a grand duchy. In 1814, Norway became independent of Denmark following the Treaty of Kiel, but was forced into a personal union with Sweden later that year as a compensation for Sweden.

An integral part of the Swedish kingdom for more than six hundred years, Finland became as a consequence of war and occupation a part of an autocratically ruled vast empire. While the loss of Finland was difficult to overcome in Sweden, many historians have pointed out the endurance of Swedish culture in Finland not only in terms of the Swedish language, which remained the language of administration, education and political discussion until the latter half of the nineteenth century, but also in terms of political institutions, laws and cultural traditions. The separation has been described as a «long goodbye» of two «Swedish states». Accordingly, it has been held that Finland stands as an example of the endurance of Scandinavian political cultures.
Yet, if there were two «Swedish states», they were drifting apart under quite different circumstances. The Swedish political life after 1809 was characterised by public political debates and parliamentary politics, whereas Finland lacked proper forums of political publicity, as the Diet was not summoned between 1809 and 1863 and because of considerable censorship of the press. While the freedom of the press was re-introduced in Sweden in 1810, censorship in Finland continued to be based on restrictions enacted under the semi-absolutist rule of the Swedish kings Gustav III (1771–1792) and Gustav IV Adolph (1792–1809). Although the freedom of the press was again restricted in Sweden in 1812, the Swedish system was still an open one in European comparison.\(^6\)

Swedish politics during the first half of the nineteenth century has been viewed as the age of an emerging «public opinion» and political mobilisation in associations; an era of the articulation of national romantic, liberal and conservative ideas.\(^7\) The same period in Finland has been characterised in a two-fold manner. First, the imperial rule in Finland has been regarded as cementing social hierarchies and the political position of a small number of aristocratic men, who often had a background in the service of the Swedish kings. And second, the first half of the nineteenth century has also been seen as a formative period in laying the foundations for the Finnish national awakening caused by the patriotic sentiments of the Finnish political and bureaucratic leadership, who defended the political status of the grand duchy.\(^8\) The image of both stagnation and a nascent national awakening was captured in the metaphor «state night» (valtioyö in Finnish) coined by the historian and leading Finnish-language nationalist Yrjö Koskinen, when he in 1863 described the time between 1809 and 1863 as a political night. During this night, he said, «national work» had not been able to reach its full potential, because it had lacked its most important forum, the Diet.\(^9\)

This article will shed light on the onset of that Finnish «state night» by analysing how the issue of political representation was made public in Finland during the first decade of Russian rule. In a wider European perspective, the period can be character-
ised as a post-revolutionary moment of constitutions, which also included the founding or renewal of a number of representative assemblies. Although many of these political institutions of «das Zeitalter der Constitutionen» were built on the idea of consolidating monarchical sovereignty and hampering any signs of disorder between and within states rather than on the principle of popular sovereignty or the separation of powers, they nevertheless formed a platform for popular representation and political debate. This was missing in Finland.

The article explores how the topic of political representation was made present in Finland in the context of imperial dependency and a lack of established forums for public debate. The analysis is based on the ways in which the official newspaper Åbo Allmänna Tidning described the new political situation of Finland and reported on political circumstances and parliamentary life in other countries. As the only newspaper in Finland at the time – with a very modest number of subscribers – and being under the supervision of governmental censorship, its role as the only public forum in the country is indicative of the circumstances. These highlight rather than question the paper’s importance as the source for an analysis of the reception of political concepts and the transfer of ideas. However, as will be argued in the concluding part of this article, such an analysis demands a modified view of what counts as conceptual transfer: the notion of descriptive reception.

Drawing on the idea of «the two Swedish states», this study discusses the Finnish case in relation to political circumstances in Sweden. Not only were there many cultural and personal ties, a shared historical legacy and a vernacular for political matters between the grand duchy and Sweden, but there was also a possibility for a point of comparison for the political elite and educated readership in both countries.

This kind of comparative angle draws attention to complex features of the formation of a new polity and the reformation of an old. It also helps us to capture aspects of uncertainty and contemporaneity of the changing circumstances that were to a high degree conditioned by wars and great power politics.


13 Swedish remained the language of political and intellectual discussion in Finland until the second half of the nineteenth century. The role of the Lutheran Church was crucial in communicating political matters in Finnish.

1. The Constitutional and Parliamentary Year of 1809

When Yrjö Koskinen identified the year of 1809 as the onset of the «state night», he was not indicating that the history of Finland had only just begun. Quite the contrary, he was perhaps the most influential historian to establish the view that the history of Finland went back much further.\(^{15}\) When he referred to the year 1809, he had in mind the Finnish Diet that was held in 1809 in Borgå (Porvoo) on the orders of the Russian emperor Alexander I.\(^{16}\)

In the opening ceremony of the Diet in March 1809, Alexander I addressed the Finnish Estates (Nobles, Clergy, Burghers and Peasants) by promising to confirm «the religion of the country, foundational laws, privileges and rights in accordance with the constitution».\(^{17}\) Importantly, the Russian emperor also held, while closing the Diet a couple of months later, that Finland was «from now on raised to the rank of nations».\(^{18}\) To fathom what these words meant has been one of the most intriguing tasks in Finnish historiography. Today, it is commonly noted that, in the context of 1809, «constitution» referred to the existing privileges within society as well as to the mode of administration, and therefore it should not be interpreted as denoting the idea of a modern written constitution or having anything to do with a contract between the ruler and the representative assembly. The ceremony had the character of an acclamation in which the new ruler received the declaration of faithfulness from his subjects. It was not a meeting between in any sense equal parties. The meeting of the Diet in 1809 was only retrospectively established as a foundational act for the Finnish autonomous state with a constitution of its own. In this interpretative process, which took off in a more elaborate manner in the 1830s, the Swedish foundational laws of 1772 and 1789, which with their emphasis on the powers of the monarch befitted the new circumstances, were taken as the basis of the Finnish constitution.\(^{19}\)

It has sometimes been maintained that Alexander I was inspired by the French revolutionary ideas of nation when he told the Finnish Estates that Finland had been raised to the rank of nations. The argument is that, because Finland was already recognised as a nation in terms of its culture and language, it would not make sense to raise it to a nation if nothing more was meant.\(^{20}\) More commonly, however, it is sug-

\(^{15}\) Y. Koskinen, Oppikirja Suomen kansan historiasta, Helsinki 1869.

\(^{16}\) Following the standard procedure on nineteenth-century place names in Finland, the Swedish names are used for places where Swedish was clearly the language of the majority. The Finnish name is given in parentheses.

\(^{17}\) Protokoll förda hos höglofliga ridderskapet och adeln vid landtdagen i Borgå år 1809, Helsingfors 1905, 15–16.

\(^{18}\) The original reads: «Placé désormais au rang des nations». E. Lagerblad, Presteständets protokoll vid Borgå landdag år 1809 jämte handlingar rörande landtdagen, Helsingfors 1899, 54.


\(^{20}\) A. Kemiläinen, Nationalism. Problems concerning the Word, the Concept and Classification, Jyväskylä 1964, 212–214; Tommila, Suomen autonomian synty, 52–
gested that the Russian Emperor wanted to show that the occupied province had a particular place within the empire. It was a showcase for Alexander to signal to Sweden that the Finnish people had broken away from their old political connection and voluntarily approved their new political status. It can also be seen as a ceremony directed to the other European powers, not least France, in order to demonstrate that a new nation had joined the Russian Empire. These different emphases should not be taken as contradictory but rather as proof of the rhetorical potential that the concept of nation had in the post-revolutionary political language. It may well be that both Alexander and the Finnish representatives at the Diet were aware of the interpretative room that the statement created. It is also possible to view this double aspect as an expression of Alexander’s acquaintance with both the constitutional ideas of the Enlightenment – Montesquieu, De Lolme, Blackstone, Jefferson and Bentham, to name but a few – and absolutist constitutional theorists, such as de Maistre, who was the Savoy ambassador to Russia in St Petersburg in 1803–1817.

The 1809 Diet was composed of the Finnish members of the Swedish Estates and it was held before the peace treaty had been signed between Sweden and the Russian empire – «it was a gigantic improvisation» (Max Engman). A couple of weeks after the opening of the Finnish Diet, the Swedish Diet convened in Stockholm in order to adopt a new constitution following the deposition of King Gustav IV Adolph. The situation was certainly unclear for the members of the Estates convened in Borgå. Also, the number of Finnish Nobles attending the Swedish Diet was greater than the number of those who were present in Borgå at the beginning of the Diet. Many families of the Finnish nobility sent representatives to both Diets. In such circumstances many representatives of the Estates wanted to see the new situation in the light of continuity rather than as a radical change. The Speaker of the Noble Estate, for instance, drew the legitimacy of the Diet from the existing Swedish constitutional tradition, but instead of referring to earlier meetings of the Swedish Diet he pointed out the continuity between the present Diet and the local meetings that were held in the Finnish part of the Swedish kingdom in the sixteenth and the seventeenth centuries. The nature of the 1809 Diet was also displayed in the name

53; M. Klinge, Finlands historia 3, Esbo 1993, 17, 24–30; Klinge, Napoleonin varjo, 188.
22 See also J. Marjanen, Den ekonomiska patriotsismens uppgång och fall. Finska hushållningsallskapet i europeisk, svensk och finsk kontext 1720–1840, Helsinki 2013, 218.
26 Protokoll förda hos höglofliga ridderskapet och adeln, 1.
When announcements concerning the Diet were published in the newspaper Åbo Tidning, both the word landdag and riksdag were used, but the former name of the meeting became established both in official documents and in the press. In official documents the Finnish name of the meeting of the Estates was herrain päivät (herredagar, Days of the Lords), which was the name of aristocratic consultative meetings of noblemen and bishops under the leadership of the monarch during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, or maa-päivät (landdag). The Russian used the French word diète or in Russian seim, but also the Swedish word landdag. See Hali-la, «Porvoor valtiopäivät ja autonomian alkuaika», 497–498; Jussila, Maakunnasta valtioksi, 185.

Despite the wartime nature of the Diet, there were some crucial administrative reforms that spoke for the beginning of a new era. The Government Council was founded in 1809, and in 1811 the Committee of Finnish Affairs, which was tasked with preparing and introducing Finnish affairs to the Emperor, was founded in St Petersburg. Moreover, the Finnish part of the Swedish kingdom that had been incorporated into the Russian empire in 1721, the so-called Old Finland, was administratively and politically united with the grand duchy in 1812. Also, the customs frontier between Finland and Russia was reintroduced, at the same time as Finland’s trade with Sweden was allowed to continue on its former basis. According to the 1809 Peace Treaty of Fredrikshamn (Hamina), the inhabitants of Finland and Sweden could freely choose their country within the next three years’ time.

If the summoning of the Diet took place in exceptional circumstances in Finland, so did the proceedings of the Swedish Riksdag. Although the Riksdag was convened in accordance with the existing constitutional forms, the situation in May 1809 was in many ways revolutionary. Sweden was at war not only with Russia but also with France and Denmark. Poor success in the war against Russia led a number of officers to turn against the king and arrest Gustav IV Adolph. The plan of the coup executioners was to appoint the uncle of the overthrown king as his successor. However, there was an influential faction that saw the order of things differently, insisting that a new constitution precede the nomination of the king. Within a few months the Riksdag decided upon the new constitution, which relied on the separation of powers between the monarch, whose domain included the Council of the State, and the Diet, which maintained control over the state budget. It marked the end of the semi-absolutist era of Gustav III and Gustav IV Adolph.

While the constitutional moment in Finland was retroactively attached to the 1809 Diet, there was a lively political debate in Sweden concerning the drafting of the constitution at the Riksdag as well as in the newspapers and in numerous pamphlets...

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27 When announcements concerning the Diet were published in the newspaper Åbo Tidning, both the word landdag and riksdag were used, but the former name of the meeting became established both in official documents and in the press. In official documents the Finnish name of the meeting of the Estates was herrain päivät (herredagar, Days of the Lords), which was the name of aristocratic consultative meetings of noblemen and bishops under the leadership of the monarch during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, or maa-päivät (landdag). The Russian used the French word diète or in Russian seim, but also the Swedish word landdag. See Hali-la, «Porvoor valtiopäivät ja autonomian alkuaika», 497–498; Jussila, Maakunnasta valtioksi, 185.

28 See, e.g., Paasivirta, Finland and Europe, 21–24.

discussing the relationship between the monarch, the council and the representative body. Almost 150 political pamphlets were published in 1809/1810. While the Estates in Finland gave their oath to the new emperor and received promises about the Estate privileges, the Swedish Estates and numerous writers were discussing the limits of royal power and the acceptability of the Estate system in general. There was significant opposition to political representation being based on the Estates in Sweden after the coup. Some radical accounts made it known that the principle of «one man, one vote» should be introduced. As a recent study has shown, the Gustavian language of «subjects» (undersåte) continued to characterise the Finnish Diet, whereas the 1809 Riksdag was marked by the language of the civic liberties and rights of «the citizen». Direct references to «popular sovereignty» were few in the debates of the Swedish Diet, but «the nation» was given connotations that indicated its active political force. This differs from the way in which the Finnish Diet received the concept of the nation from the emperor, although «the Finnish nation» was used in Borgå to describe the body engaged in the political process.

The memorandum of the Constitutional Committee of the Swedish Diet maintained in 1810 that the Estates should be replaced by a bicameral representation in which the right to vote would be personal and guaranteed to all «active citizens». The exemplary model was Sieyès’s directorial system of 1795. However, the Instrument of Government of 1809 did not touch upon representation by Estates, nor did the 1810 Riksdag Procedure change the old system. By confirming the system of the Estates, the Instrument of Government of 1809 actually paved the way for the continued representation of the Estates. In this sense there was no radical difference between Sweden and Finland.

2. The Congress of Vienna as a Threshold

The consequences of any reform or period of transformation are unknown to the people participating in their making. The constitutional and parliamentary year of 1809 is a case in point, for the changes discussed above took place when belligerent circumstances prevailed between Russia and Sweden, and the Napoleonic wars were far from over in Europe. It is therefore possible to maintain that the settlement reached in the negotiations that we know as the Congress of Vienna was more impor-
tant for the confirmation of the political status of both Finland and Sweden than is commonly thought. The most important factor was that both Finland and Sweden were by the end of the Napoleonic wars on the same side as the Russian empire. The question of Finland was not officially dealt with at the congress, because Russia saw that the issue had been settled already in 1809. Sweden belonged to the grand coalition against Napoleon and participated in the congress, albeit without the presence of the monarch. It has been held that it was a conscious Swedish strategy not to have a prominent role in the Congress of Vienna, as it was in the interest of the Swedish government that the congress did not raise the question of Norway.

Two geopolitical processes that took place in 1812 were crucial for the position of Finland and Sweden during the Congress of Vienna. The failure of the Napoleonic forces to conquer Russia became evident by the end of the year, which obviously had a major impact on the development of the European power relations. Moreover, the improved prospects of the war largely stemmed from the non-aggression agreement between Russia and Sweden, which was first forged in secret in St Petersburg in April 1812 and made public in August in the meeting between Alexander I and the Swedish crown prince Jean Baptiste Bernadotte in Åbo (Turku). One of the realignments during the Napoleonic wars, the rapprochement meant that Sweden would participate in the alliance against the Napoleonic coalition and restrain from any intentions on Finland. In turn, Alexander promised to support Bernadotte’s ambition to compensate for the loss of Finland by incorporating Norway into the Swedish kingdom.

The rapprochement between Russia and Sweden was critical not only for the forging of the grand coalition against France, but it also included a plan to place Bernadotte on the French throne after Napoleon’s fall. It has been argued that Madame de Staël, who spent time both in Russia and in Sweden, was the mastermind behind the coalition and the vision of the future king of France. When the French Marshall Bernadotte had been elected heir to the throne in 1810, it was thought that this would help Sweden to gain French support for bringing Finland back to the Swedish kingdom, but it turned out that the crown prince abandoned any intention to bind his own, and thus Sweden’s, position to Napoleon. The rapprochement policy between Sweden and Russia has been taken as a watershed in Swedish history, marking the beginning of Swedish neutrality.

34 Paasivirta, *Finland and Europe*, 34.
37 For the Norwegian question, see R. Hemstad, *Propagandakrig. Kampen om Norge i Norden og Europa 1812–1814*, 38–40, 73–79, and passim. See also R. Berg, «Denmark, Norway and Sweden in 1814».
38 G. Sluga, «Madame de Staël and the Transformation of European Politics, 1812–17», in: *The International History Review*, 37 (2015) 1, 142–166. However, it has also been maintained that G. M. Armfelt, a former Gustavian General of Finnish origin positioned in St Petersburg, was the most important advisor of both Alexander I and Bernadotte. See Klin-
40 See, e.g., T. Suominen (ed.), *Sverige i fred.*
The Swedish press debate shows that the question of Finland was a delicate matter. The 1810 Freedom of the Press Act was followed by a press debate in which even foreign powers were criticised. This did not go unnoticed by the French and Russian governments, which made the Swedish government concerned about its foreign relations. Consequently, the 1812 Riksdag decided upon the right of the government to stop the publishing of papers that were seen as harming the country’s relations with foreign powers. Moreover, Bernadotte, or Charles John as his name was in Sweden, attempted to direct the public opinion by supporting certain newspapers financially, one of them bearing the name Scandinavia, which indicated the orientation toward Norway instead of Finland. It has been noted that, as a consequence of the new Swedish foreign policy, Finland was more or less absent in the Swedish press while Norway was being written into Swedish history by national romantic authors.

In Finland, the meeting of the Russian and Swedish monarchs was made public in a short news item a week after it had taken place in Åbo. There was no mention of any formal agreement in the news, but a clear sign of the change of the relations could already be seen on the day when Charles John arrived in Finland. A special issue of the official paper Åbo Allmänna Tidning was dedicated to imperial patriotic propaganda in order to support the Russian war effort against Napoleon’s army. In this rhetoric, Sweden gained a prominent place. Importantly, the Finnish readers were appealed to not only as the subjects of the Russian empire, but also in the name of their former fatherland, Sweden. For example, Governor-General F. G. von Steinheil, the highest representative of the imperial government in Finland, stated that the enemy aimed at establishing «tyranny over the three Nordic realms, Russia, Sweden and Denmark». Moreover, he held that Sweden, although having a closer entitlement to the goodwill of the French ruler, had nevertheless been treated as Napoleon’s enemy. Steinheil also praised the «elevated way of thinking» of the Crown Prince of Sweden and greeted his independence from the French «world-despot». The Finnish inhabitants were therefore asked to participate in the liberation of their own country, as well as Russia, Sweden and the whole of Europe in breaking free from the yoke of Napoleon.

The role of the official paper in imperial foreign policy and Sweden’s place in that policy was also emphasised in an article addressed to «the inhabitants of Finland» and signed by «a Finnish citizen», the pseudonym of J. A. Ehrenström, one of «the
Gustavians» who had returned from Sweden after 1809 and an ardent opponent of Napoleon. The article was written on governmental commission and first published in the Russian foreign policy organ Journal du Nord.\(^{44}\) The article made the point that Russia and Sweden were the only states able to stop the spreading of Napoleon’s power to include the whole of continental Europe. The Swedish crown prince was praised for his independence and for defending the interests of his «new fatherland». In dramatic words, the author maintained that, as vassals of France, the Finns would have to choose «between the vicious alternatives of fighting a war against Russia or against their former fatherland».\(^{45}\)

The link between the Finns’ commitment to the emperor and the respect they had shown to their former Swedish regents was pointed out in an article a couple of weeks later. Swedish kings and Alexander I were presented as being of the same mould, proud of the patriotic support they had received from their Finnish subjects. The Swedish Prince was described as the personification of the patriotic spirit, which inspired the author to claim that the Finnish common people should be «as patriotically spirited as the Swedish people». If this did not happen and Napoleon won the war, «the long revolution» would reach all the way to «the North» (Norden).\(^{46}\)

Napoleon was demonised as much as Alexander was praised. The Russian emperor appeared to be both on the side of «the humankind» and on the side of «small nations».\(^{47}\) He was portrayed as defending these nations from becoming «provinces conquered by occupation». His rule was based not on «glorious life of the court», neither did he demand any «forced thanksgiving addresses».\(^{48}\) It is quite obvious that not all of this rhetoric was unproblematic for the Finnish readers of the paper, although they were soon told that the Russian emperor was one of the most powerful architects of post-Napoleonic Europe. The attempt to establish a Finnish army to support the Russian defence in the war against Napoleon was met with passivity rather than enthusiasm, but the victory against Napoleon was welcomed with festivities in Finland.\(^{49}\) In Sweden, the war against Napoleon did not become an important building block of national identity, even if Sweden participated in the war and even if a number of anti-Napoleonic pamphlets were published during the war.\(^{50}\)

The political situation in Europe, the advance of the Russian armies, the peace treaties and the Congress of Vienna all gained much attention in the Finnish official paper. Readers of the paper learned that a major change was taking place in Europe, that the Russian empire was the strongest power of the continent and that Sweden had been on the same side.\(^{51}\) However, it took two more years before the Finnish paper attempted an explanation of the consequences of the Vienna arrangement. It
was held that the decisions made in the Congress of Vienna formed the basis on which the new political system of Europe was built. A completely new political era had begun, for the congress had brought peace to Europe, settled internal relations within states and created an order between the nations by binding the governments together through mutual contracts. Especially important in this respect was the Holy Alliance, which was described as the key creation in «the annals of diplomacy».

It should be noted, however, that the emphasis on the new European order was not to just show the power of the Russian empire, but also to serve as a warning and a reminder of the dangers of any kind of political radicalism. The anonymous author of the article therefore pointed out that there were those who were influenced by «untimely fear» or «secret hopes» and who caused disorder by trying to gain more than had been achieved.

3. Attempts to Establish Political Representation in Finland

In addition to Alexander’s words at the meeting of the diet in 1809, there were some public statements that could be taken as promises of a more developed political life in Finland. The official newspaper published an address by Alexander I in 1810, in which he emphasised the freedom of the nation and its constitution and rights. He also included the notion of «legislative and executive powers», which was rhetorically associated with the Finnish Diet and the Government Council. It was seen that these institutions «witnessed of the guarantees given to the Finnish nation of its political existence». Given this kind of rhetoric, it is hardly any surprise that the Diet was expected to be convened also in the foreseeable future.

It is evident that among the Finnish political elite the existence of the institution of political representation was regarded as a fact. For them, regular meetings of the Diet would confirm the political status of Finland. The question of a new meeting of the Diet was raised among the members of the Committee of Finnish Affairs in 1811, but it turned out that Alexander I was not willing to convene the Diet, explaining privately that he did not want to risk the Diet’s not accepting his proposals. To be sure, these early hopes did not seek to make the Diet the centre of the political system, but rather pertained to some practical issues which, according to the old Swedish foundational laws, should be processed through the Estates. This kind of practical attitude was spelled out by the Chair of the Committee of Finnish Affairs G. M. Armfelt, who in 1814 maintained that «everything must be carefully planned for a discussion before these uneducated men and self-learned characters are to convene». The degrading tone with regard to the members of the Estates was no accident, for paternalism was the main feature of the Finnish political elite. With regard

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52 Åbo Allmänna Tidning, 15.4. 1817.
53 Ibid.
54 Åbo Allmänna Tidning, 21.4.1810.
55 K. Korhonen, Suomen asiain komitea. Suomen kor-}
56 Korhonen, Suomen asiain komitea, 297–299, 305.
57 Ibid. 300.
to the lower classes, the attitude was sometimes even fearful and dressed in the language of «crowds» and «revolution».

The expectations of the Finnish political elite peaked in 1819, when Alexander I was about to pay a visit to the grand duchy and only a year after he had opened the meeting of the Diet in Poland. It was thought that he had shown willingness to summon the Estates. Alexander made an extensive tour in Finland in August/September 1819, but he did not give any order to summon the Diet, although it was held later that he had been close to signing the call. The expectations regarding the emperor’s visit in Finland had triggered among the members of the Committee of Finnish Affairs a private exchange of ideas, which gives us a rather complex picture of how the political elite in Finland viewed political representation. On the one hand, they recognised the importance of the institution of political representation, describing it as historical and based on Finnish social conditions. County Governor C. J. Walleen even doubted if the system in Finland was representative at all, because the Estates were not allowed to meet. According to him, regular meetings of the Estates would foster popular patriotism. Any party division that such parliamentary meetings might provoke was not to be feared, because the government was wise and strong. In his vision, the representatives would be allowed to express their opinions and requests concerning the matters that the Emperor wanted to be discussed.

On the other hand, it is quite obvious that the representation by the Estates was not idealised as such, despite the alleged historical and social anchorage of the Finnish system. In his letter to Walleen, J. A. Ehrenström bluntly stated that «one had to be blind not to see that the representation was really improper». In a situation where not even the Estates were able to meet, he held that there should be a bicameral system of representation instead. However, it should be noted that in contemporary European discourses a bicameral organisation of political representation was often thought of as being a more secure and steady barrier against political reforms than the system of Estates, as it was not uncommon to think that the Nobility and the Clergy had lost much of their political weight. In other words, it was thought possible to secure the interests of social estates through a bicameral organisation of the representative body. Nevertheless, this was not what R. H. Rehbinder, another member of the committee, thought when he maintained that a country like Finland, a part of an empire, could not imitate countries like England and France.

These differences in the ways in which a preferable political representation ought to be organised were to a large extent a result of their being expressed in private let-

58 See Apunen, Hallituksen sanansuattaja, 14–15; Jussila, Suomen perustuslait, 100–101.
59 Korhonen, Suomen asiain komitea, 321.
61 Ibid., 81–82.
62 Ibid., 122–123.
63 See, e.g., Biefang / Schulz, «From Monarchical Constitutionalism to a Parliamentary Republic», 63.
64 L. Castren, Adolf Ivar Arwidsson isänmaallisena herättäjänä, Helsinki 1951, 71.
ters among the most privileged political and administrative elite. What they all agreed upon was that political representation was a means of consolidating – not questioning – estate privileges. The Finnish elite thought along the same lines as the powerful elites behind the rearrangement of European affairs in the Congress of Vienna. For instance, the 1815 German Federal Act stipulated that the political representation was to be based on the old privileged Estates.  

However, private letters do not help to explain how the topic of political representation was made public in Finland, even if the public forum available was closely tied with the very same men whose opinions have been discussed here. As will be shown in the next section of this article, the Finnish official newspaper quite expectedly reflected the spirit of the Vienna arrangement and the Russian imperial view, in particular. Somewhat unexpectedly, though, the analysis of the ways in which the topic of political representation and parliamentary politics in other countries was made public in Finland reveals a great deal of how the notion of «liberal» was understood. Importantly, moreover, the Finnish paper can be seen as a forum in which the topic of Finnish Diet was kept alive through news items on representative assemblies elsewhere.

4. News from Abroad as a Means of Keeping the Finnish Diet Alive

Notwithstanding the censorship, the publication of international news was an important way of maintaining the actuality of the Diet in Finland. The topic of a written constitution was more present in Finnish public life than we have been accustomed to think, thanks to the recurrent short news items that described constitutions or pointed out the mere existence of a constitution in other countries. Accordingly, a person who was reading the sole newspaper in Finland was able to learn that the Diet was convened, for example, in Saxony, in Hungary, in Hannover and in Switzerland. Many more examples could be given, but the point is rather to note that basic practices and institutions of political representation were described in these short news items. It was also possible to see that these representative assemblies were often convened in countries or provinces that were directly influenced by the Napoleonic wars and the arrangements of the Congress of Vienna. It is tempting to argue that, because the Russian empire was a key operator in these arrangements, the publication of these reports and notices was also to some extent meant to serve the interests of the imperial regime in Finland.


Åbo Allmänna Tidning, 14.2.1810; 12.11.1811; 11.11.1812; 6.12.1814; 25.5.1815.
In this respect the most obvious case was the meeting of the Polish Diet in 1818. It gained considerable coverage in the Finnish official paper, and there is no doubt that the purpose was to manifest the powers and benevolence of Alexander I and his empire. Regardless of whether or not the extensive coverage of the Polish Diet in the Finnish paper was also intended to serve the purpose of having the Finnish Diet convened, it is quite obvious that such extraordinary publicity expressed the expectations in Finland. The reports from the Polish representative assembly made many of the key political concepts and conditions of representative politics in the post-Napoleonic age known to the Finnish public.

When he opened the Polish Diet\(^{68}\) in his role as the Polish king, Alexander I spoke to the representatives of a country whose status and geographical position had been one of the most difficult issues in the Vienna arrangement. He spoke as an emperor who had liberated the country from Napoleonic rule, but also as a ruler who had left many Polish hopes unfulfilled. The representatives of the so-called Congress Poland were therefore addressed with a large international audience in mind. In fact, Alexander I told the Polish representatives: «Europe is watching you». In his opening speech at the Diet, published \textit{in extenso} in \textit{Åbo Allmänna Tidning}, the Russian emperor acknowledged the rebirth of the Polish state while also recognising the legacy of the previous Polish state, which had made it possible for him to implement «the liberal principles». This, he maintained, had always been his objective. Alexander I also mentioned that he hoped to be able to put the liberal principles into practice even in other countries that were under his rule.\(^{69}\) Obviously, this would include Finland and it is quite clear that such a statement triggered expectations among the Finnish political and intellectual elite.

What these liberal principles meant in practice, the emperor explained, was that the government would let the parliament deal with its law proposals. He also mentioned the freedom of opinion. But he kept quiet about the right to legislate independently from the government proposals. Alexander I also wanted to clarify that the «liberal constitutions» bore no resemblance to ideas that aimed at overthrowing the society and would lead to a catastrophe. The core message in his opening speech at the Diet was that the existing order in the society had to prevail and that the fate of Poland was forever tied to Russia. As he put it, this was «decided upon in festive tractates and sanctioned in the constitution».\(^{70}\) In the following weeks, the official Finnish paper quoted at length different speeches which more or less repeated the words used by the emperor. The nature of the constitution was praised for its «elevated liberality»,\(^{71}\) and the system was described as «representative government» because it was the responsibility of individual ministers to countersign the monarch’s decisions. In addition, the liberality of the constitution was held to signify

\(^{68}\) The Finnish paper referred to the Diet as \textit{riksdag}.  
\(^{69}\) \textit{Åbo Allmänna Tidning}, 30.4.1818.  
\(^{70}\) Ibid.  
\(^{71}\) Ibid., 9.5.1818.
that it was in accordance with «the ideas of the times».72 It was a proper «national constitution».73

So-called *idées libérales* had become a universal concept for continental authors by 1815. Originally a part of Napoleon's programme for saving the legacy of the revolution without political and social disorder, this language of liberal ideas was adopted after Napoleon's fall by the victorious Alexander I in particular. Drawing on the notion of progress and individual rights, such use of Napoleonic terminology meant that the liberal ideas were no longer associated with the revolution and the republic, but with a constitutional order that was compatible with hereditary monarchy.74 It is in this light that we need to understand the language Alexander I used at the Polish Diet. Moreover, «liberal» was used to combine its old virtuous meanings, which often referred to generosity and a good education, with political liberties and rights. A «liberal government» could therefore denote a well-meaning or open-minded government as well as a government that was bound by a constitution that guaranteed political liberties and was perhaps even politically tied to a representative assembly. It is noteworthy that most of these meanings of «liberal» had already been presented in the Finnish paper by the time that the reports from the Polish Diet were published. It is likewise remarkable that «liberal» had an overwhelmingly positive connotation.

5. Concluding Remarks on the Reception of Political Concepts

The point of the above analysis of the foreign news in the Finnish newspaper is not to claim that the Finnish public discourse was characterised by liberal language or that any of these notions referred to Finland in the 1810s. Although the Diet in Poland and the 1809 Diet in Borgå did bear some resemblance in terms of the emperor speaking to his subjects in the role of a guarantor of the rights and liberties, it is nevertheless obvious that a Finnish reader was able to see the difference between the status of Poland and that of Finland. What can be argued, however, is that the case of «liberal» is a good example of how an analysis of the news and reports that referred to other countries’ circumstances can help us to create a picture of the political and conceptual landscape that is considerably different from that which is available when the focus is merely on top-level negotiations, institutional reforms and individual actors, even if the public forum would be more or less under the control of a regime. Such an analysis can be taken as one way of developing a transnational view of history in general, and political language in particular.

This kind of analysis can be related to the analytical scheme of the transfer of concepts across different linguistic, cultural and political contexts. In order to opera-
tionalise a study of the reception of concepts, Jörn Leonhard has suggested that we should pay attention to three different stages of translation: imitating translation, adapting translation and discursive integration. An imitating translation is in question when a foreign use of a concept is imported to a local context without any differentiating commentaries regarding the ways of how it should or could be understood in this new environment. In an adapting translation, a transferred concept is adapted to the experiences and political purposes of its new context, which causes it to lose some of its foreign connotations. In discursive integration the transferred concept has become a part of the discourses of the receiving society, and references to its foreign origins are no longer present.\textsuperscript{75}

The Finnish case can be understood as being close to the analytical category of imitating translation. However, a «descriptive translation» should perhaps be added as a new category below an imitating translation in order to capture the characteristics of the Finnish practice in the 1810s. Imitation may have sometimes been too advanced a mode of political transfer, because sometimes there was no possibility or willingness to reflect on the impact of foreign circumstances even in their original context. What was possible to some extent, however, was to describe foreign events and political conditions in a seemingly innocent and often purely descriptive way.

The emphasis on the descriptive nature of the reception of political concepts and ideas comes with some qualifications, though. First, it should be taken into account that a description is a selection, which renders it an active political aspect. Second, description and imitation do not exclude later attempts to adapt and, eventually, integrate political language, ideas and institutional models. What is first describable may later be imaginable and, finally, doable.\textsuperscript{76} Third, these different stages of the reception of ideas do not necessarily form any linear and evolutionary process, but are always more or less mixed and parallel. Sometimes the development may be regressive. Fourth, a mere descriptive reception in public forums never excludes completely a more advanced and active participation in debates and the exchange of ideas in private forums. Moreover, despite censorship and a controlled access to foreign literature, hardly any autocracy is able to close all borders, physical and intellectual.

Finland in the post-Napoleonic age is a case in point. The Finnish political and intellectual elite did participate in intellectual and political exchange of ideas and debates in different more or less exclusive forums, some of which took place in St Petersburg, others in Germany or France, and certainly many in Stockholm. Nevertheless, conditions for public political debate were quite different in the «two Swedish states». Despite access to Swedish debates through the Swedish papers and literature that circulated in Finland, there was no forum in Finland for the public to take part in these debates. The articulation of private or non-authorised political opinions

\textsuperscript{75} Leonhard, «Language, Experience and Translation: Towards a Comparative Dimension», 256–257.
\textsuperscript{76} Cf. W. Steinmetz, Das Sagbare und das Machbare.

\textsuperscript{Zum Wandel politischer Handlungsspielräume. England 1780–1867, Stuttgart 1993.}
did not take place in public, but in learned societies and within the administrative structures that were emerging in the 1810s. Foreign political circumstances were presented to the Finnish public, but without any explicit reference of their relevance for Finnish conditions. In Sweden, the end of the Gustavian era sparked lively debates that primarily dealt with the Swedish political issues. For example, while «liberal ideas» gained access to Finland through Alexander’s imperial rhetoric, there was in Sweden a group of radical men, debating over the Swedish constitution, who called themselves «liberals». Moreover, while «public opinion» was one of the most important political concepts signifying the new political life in Sweden, its rare appearance in the Finnish newspaper placed its existence in foreign contexts, the most important of which with regard to the Finnish circumstances was Alexander’s use of the expression in his speech to the Polish Diet. Perhaps the most telling contrast between Finland and Sweden concerning parliamentary life is that at the same time as the Finnish public was able to learn about the Russian emperor’s liberality at the Polish Diet in 1818, first attempts were made at the Swedish Noble Estate to make the parliamentary debates free for the public to attend. The argument was that it would make better political debates and «clarify the elevated and liberal principles».

78 Åbo Allmänna Tidning, 7.4.1818; idem., 2.6.1818. For the use of «public opinion» in Sweden, see, e.g., Edgren, Publicitet för medborgsmannavett, 62–63; Hirschfeldt, «Den återerövrade tryckfriheten 1809 – något att bry sig om i dag?», 395.
79 Rosengren, Tidevarvets bättre genius, 132–137, 137.
Political Representation, Imperial Dependency and Political Transfer: Finland and Sweden 1809–1819

The article examines the post-revolutionary rearrangement in Europe by focusing on the separation of Finland from Sweden. In 1809, the eastern part of the Swedish kingdom became a grand duchy within the autocratically ruled Russian empire. Both Finland and Sweden experienced the constitutional moment which characterised the post-revolutionary and post-Napoleonic Europe, but in very different ways. The Swedish Diet enacted a new written constitution while the Finnish Diet gave its oath to the new emperor, who promised to maintain the laws, privileges and rights of the country. Alexander I might have used the word «constitution» in his speech to the Finnish Estates, but the political status of the grand duchy remained unclear, and it was only in 1863 that the Finnish Diet was called to convene again. In the context of imperial dependency and a lack of established forums for public debate, the article analyses how the issue of political representation was made public in Finland during the first decade of Russian rule. The analysis is based on the ways in which the official newspaper described the new political situation of Finland and reported on political circumstances and parliamentary life in other countries. It is argued that the publication of news from abroad can be seen as an important way of keeping the issue of political representation alive in Finland. It was also a channel for the reception of political concepts. The study discusses the Finnish case in relation to political circumstances in Sweden. The comparative angle draws attention to complex features of the formation of a new polity and a reformation of an old.

Jussi Kurunmäki
Helsingin yliopisto
Maailman kulttuurien laitos
PL 59 (Unioninkatu 38 A)
FIN–00014 Helsingin yliopisto
jussi.kurunmaki@helsinki.fi