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The Formation of the Finnish Polity within the Russian Empire: Language, Representation, and the Construction of Popular Political Platforms, 1863–1906

JUSSI KURUNMÄKI AND ILKKA LIIKANEN

A PECULIAR FEATURE OF THE FORMATION OF FINLAND as a political unit within the Russian Empire is that throughout most of the nineteenth century, political discussions of language issues were not about the Russian language and culture but rather the relation between the Finnish and Swedish languages. This was, however, not a reflection of fundamental differences between members of the Finnish political elite about their primary goal. From the beginning of imperial rule in 1809, the Finnish elites were exceptionally unanimous in their ambition to strengthen the Grand Duchy of Finland's autonomous status vis-à-vis the empire. It was rather a question of different strategies of constructing a Finnish nation and state that took the form of language strife between the advocates of the Finnish language, the vernacular of approximately 80 percent of the population, and those of the politically, administratively, and educationally dominant Swedish language. In public political debates during the latter part of the nineteenth century, this strife colored essentially every political issue in Finland. Only after the closing years of the century, during the so-called period of Russification, did linguistic arguments gradually lose their overriding weight when Finnish political frontlines were reshaped by the Constitutional Battle in defense of the Grand Duchy's status against pressures of legal codification and imperial administrative-political reforms.

Conventional notions of a linguistically defined nationality rising against imperial supremacy fit the Finnish case rather poorly also in the sense that the primary language of the Finnish nation-building elite had long been Swedish. Even the notion of a Finnish constitution, which was used by both language "parties" to ultimately justify the existence of a separate political entity, referred by and large to the idea of retaining Swedish eighteenth-century foundational laws. In this situation, settling the language issue as such was obviously not a primary political goal that inspired the national mobilization. It was rather an outcome of colliding assessments about how to strengthen Finnish autonomy and what the foundations for building a separate Finnish polity should be.

In this paper, we will deal with the formation of the Grand Duchy of Finland as a polity in the Russian imperial context. We will focus on the period between the early nineteenth century and the 1906 parliamentary reform, which created modern political institutions of representation, granted universal and equal suffrage to both sexes, and led to the foundation of modern political parties. We will pay particular attention to the ways in which linguistically bounded conceptions of nationality were linked to strategies for establishing and strengthening Finnish political platforms, both in the sense of the institutional settings of representation and the formation of arenas for popular mobilization.

THE LUCKY YEAR 1863: THE END OF A "STATE NIGHT"

In many contemporary accounts, as well as in later analyses, the year 1863 has been described as a turning point in Finnish political history. Unlike in Poland, which experienced an abortive revolution, 1863 was regarded as a lucky year, inaugurating a new perspective for strengthening the Finnish nation. It was the year when the four-estate Diet was convened and the Finnish language was elevated to the status of an official administrative language.¹ The historian Yrjö Koskinen, a prominent Finnish-language nationalist leader of late nineteenth-century Finland,² expressed his enthusiasm by writing that "[our] state night, over a half-century long, had come to its end."³ Koskinen's ardor was widely shared among the country's political class. The newspaper *Helsingfors Dagblad*, a bastion of Swedish-language liberals, held, for example, that "political concepts have begun to take shape among us as well."⁴

Koskinen's metaphor of the "state night" was a rhetorical device to highlight the new opportunities for political representation and civic engagement, rather than an exact account of past political life in Finland. It can also be taken as a signal intended to stress the significance of the emerging nationalist faction that Koskinen himself was organizing under the label "Young Fennomans." The attribute "young" was adopted to point out that the group was no longer satisfied with the more or less compromising strategy that characterized the older generation of Fennomans. The intention was to project an image of future generations not interested merely in advancing the cause of Finnishness through an engagement with folk culture and the promotion of a Finnish-language literature but keen also to organize themselves as a political party and to demand political reforms.

This rhetorical move undermined efforts made by Finland's political and administrative elite since 1809 to more or less actively promote the idea of an autonomous status for the Grand Duchy within the Russian Empire, conceived more in terms of building a special relationship with the emperor than of reforming the political system. This older strategy had its origins in the meeting of the Finnish estates summoned to Borgå (Finnish Porvoo) in 1809 to pledge

allegiance to the new emperor. While the war between Russia and Sweden was still going on, Alexander I promised to respect Finland's religious status quo, to confirm the privileges and rights of the estates, and to maintain, as he phrased it, the constitution of the country. During the closing ceremony of the meeting, he proclaimed that Finland was "from now on raised to the rank of nations."⁵ From then on, these statements of the ruler rather than revolutionary ideas of national or popular sovereignty were used to legitimize the existence of a separate administrative unit.

Retrospectively, the 1809 meeting was established as the foundational act of a Finnish autonomous state with a constitution of its own. This interpretation first gained momentum in the 1850s and 1860s, particularly in connection with the 1863 session of the Diet. During the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the question would become a highly contentious issue between the Finnish and Russian authorities, as well as specialists in both countries, and ultimately a contest in which both sides sought international recognition.⁶

At the time of the creation of the Grand Duchy, the Finnish elite's strategies rested mainly on two foundations. The first was the establishment of administrative practices and principles that would cement the political system and the social hierarchy while simultaneously limiting opportunities for the Russian authorities to interfere. This strategy was initially developed in conversations held among the highest-ranking Finnish civil servants. It rested above all on the position of the emperor as the Grand Duke of Finland and thus, it was argued, the plenipotentiary head of an administration separate from that of Russia proper. There were no public discussions about Finland's constitutional status, as the matter was considered too dangerous to be talked about openly, and at first this initiative had nothing to do with building a modern nation in the sense of a political community. The second foundation invoked was sought in the cultural traditions of the population. The idea of the Finnish language and culture as a basis for the new state structure was formulated only gradually and simultaneously alongside attempts to establish civic associations and a regular press as platforms for broader public debates. The issue of the role of the Finnish language in public life was hardly raised; its use was considered vital primarily as a means of communication among the estates, as it was thought to be the language of the peasants.

THE NEW CULTURAL ELITE AND THE "NATIONAL SPIRIT"

First signs of somewhat more radical nation-building discourses can be found in the writings of a group of young academics and publicists around 1820. Influenced by romantic ideas of such thinkers as Schelling, Fichte, and the Swedish historian Erik Geijer, these men wanted to give the common people a role more active than simply reducing them to an object of folkloristic idealization.

Although these ideas were almost exclusively written and published in Swedish, the Finnish language was now given a more prominent role. The leading figure of this small group was the journalist and historian Adolf Arwidsson, who is commonly considered the founder of Finland's modern political press. He was not satisfied with the reassurance that Finland had a constitution of its own, but wanted to discuss its content as well. Arwidsson refused to see the relationship between the state and the Finnish-speaking peasantry merely in terms of cultural enthusiasm. He conceived language and popular culture as essential parts of the national spirit, which for him was fundamental for developing the nation towards statehood. However, the bureaucracy put an end to such writings. To continue his public life Arwidsson had to leave the Grand Duchy and moved to Sweden in 1823.⁷

Arwidsson's fate marked the limits of political debate in Finland. Finland as a nation was not to be understood in terms of a political community, but as a separate administrative unit. The Finnish-language press in particular was carefully screened to prevent it from writing on questions concerning the political system or its legal foundations and ideal future. In 1829, Finland was subjected to full-scale censorship, which was abolished only in 1865. Moreover, in 1850, a decree banned all publications in Finnish, except works on religious or economic subjects. Even the Swedish-language papers in Finland had to submit to strict control and were only allowed to reproduce what was being published in the official journal. In 1850, censorship in Finland was stricter than in Russia proper.⁸

Since public political discussion of the forms of government was in principle impossible, the justification of the polity and the political positions therein took the form of an administrative-judicial or a nationalistic-cultural discourse. The promotion of Finnish-language culture was to a certain extent accepted by the emperor because it was thought to loosen the old ties to Sweden. The notion of a culturally specific Finnish nation was gradually linked to political aims by a younger academic generation active in the Finnish Literary Society, established in 1831. This group raised new ideas about the relationship among the people, the nation, and the state. According to an organic-historical view, the people was understood as a historical subject with a past and a future of its own. Although views on the history of the Finnish people varied, it was maintained that in order to help the nation develop towards statehood, the educated elite had to foster the personality, language, and culture of the people.⁹

Revolutionary ideas of a nation articulating its will free from estate privileges through a body of political representation, as famously presented by Sieyès and associated with the National Assembly of the French Revolution, gained force throughout Europe in connection with the revolutionary events of 1830 and 1848. In Finland too they gave rise to the idea of an ethnic-cultural community that would achieve maturity as a nation. Nonetheless, neither the

notion of popular will nor that of participation in political decision-making was part of this discourse. In 1848 the Finnish press hardly dared to refer to such demands, but the news from Paris, Frankfurt, and Vienna made these modes of thinking familiar.¹⁰

At this point, the concept of national spirit became particularly important in a new political sense. It was used to describe the growth of the nation to self-awareness and self-realization and, ultimately, to statehood. Yet, it refrained from openly linking the national question to political rights of the people.¹¹ This mode of thinking found its most sophisticated expression in the writings of Johan Vilhelm Snellman, a philosopher who was regarded already in his lifetime as the chief intellectual authority behind the Finnish national movement. Drawing especially on Hegel and, in terms of the role of a common language as the criterion for a nation, on Herder, he developed a theory of the state in which the existence of a state did not rely primarily on any form of government but on the degree to which it was in accordance with "the demands of the national spirit."¹² For Snellman, the national spirit and national consciousness found their expression in the active participation of citizens in the law-making process. This did not mean more people should be involved in the political process, but rather that those already engaged should act in a "patriotic" manner. Even though writing in Swedish himself, Snellman saw that the most decisive step towards patriotic action was to advance the cause of the Finnish language.¹³

LANGUAGE PARTIES AND THE FIGHT FOR HEGEMONY IN THE EMERGING PUBLIC SPHERE

The summoning of the Diet in 1863 raised political life in Finland to a new level. Although censorship was not abolished officially until 1865, it was loosened during the early 1860s. Political manifestations in the name of the constitution and "public opinion" became increasingly common, to the extent that the 1860s have often been described as the period when nationalism and liberalism made their breakthrough in Finland.¹⁴ After the emergence of new forms of civic organization and the mass press, the political field was characterized for the first time by a division into two parties competing for popular support by describing themselves as forces in opposition to each other. The rhetorical strategies deployed to define the nature of this division were, however, quite distinct. Yrjö Koskinen, the self-appointed leader of the "Young Fennomans," opened the contest for the souls of a growing public by claiming the division to be one between "the Fennomans," who represented the Finnish people, and "the Swedish party," who stood for the elite groups of the estate society. Koskinen's obvious intention was to discredit the Fennomans' main rivals in

the emerging public political arena, namely the "Liberals." The latter, in turn, perceived the distinction as one between "Liberals" and "Conservatives." They saw themselves as the sole political reform movement, by describing the Fennomans as a conservative group interested only in apolitical language reform. It is noteworthy that, despite pejorative mention of the "governmental party" in the rhetoric of both groups in the 1860s, the political battle line in public discussions was seldom drawn vis-à-vis the government, but instead between the two language-based groups.¹⁵

Both the Fennomans and the Liberals viewed a functioning institution of political representation as a requisite for a political nation. Although both were critical of an estate-based representation when they commented on the ongoing reform debate in Sweden, for instance, they nevertheless refrained from openly criticizing such a system when discussing the Finnish situation. It was generally thought more important to ensure that the Diet would still be convened in the future than to criticize this archaic political institution.¹⁶ The Diet Act of 1869 thus escaped critique in the press, although it was based on the four estates and the Constitutional Committee itself had earlier maintained that estate privileges had lost their foundation.¹⁷

The Liberals readily referred to the advanced political systems of other countries, in particular the British parliamentary system, as an example to be followed. They also expressed sympathy for national liberation and unification in other countries and presented themselves as supporters of the principle of freedom and sovereignty of the people. But they experienced difficulties when applying these national liberal principles to the Finnish debate, because they were quite successfully being labelled by Fennomans as advocates of the Swedish language in Finland, a consequence of their positions being promoted in the Swedish-language press. Because of the country's linguistic situation, the Liberals were not able to respond successfully to this rhetoric, even though they claimed to be in favor of the advancement of the Finnish language.¹⁸

Under the leadership of Yrjö Koskinen the Fennomans launched a campaign in the late 1860s that in many ways transformed the political discourse. The abstract notion of a national spirit was replaced by that of "the people" as the ultimate historical actor, which the Fennomans claimed to represent. The people was, however, not defined merely by their common language and common ethnic traditions, but by their participation in a long-term political process.

The Finnish People, though a latecomer on the historical scene, had gradually caught up with the rest of the world on the path to civilization and social progress, and simultaneously its self-awareness had awakened, and this matured national spirit began to call for a particular position of statehood. This is how the separation from the Swedish empire was prepared as a natural progression in the history of the Finnish people.¹⁹

The quotation is from Koskinen's pioneering work of Finnish-language historical writing, *Oppikirja Suomen kansan historiassa* (Lectures on the History of the Finnish People), published in several volumes during the late 1860s and early 1870s. In many ways, Koskinen laid the foundation here both for the tradition of Finnish historiography and the ideology of the emerging national movement. Central to both was the notion of Finnish history as the history of the people. For him, the history of the people was first of all that of a maturation to statehood. In this sense Koskinen's basic conception was similar to the philosophy of Snellman, but with the important exception that instead of the "national spirit" the main historical subject was the people.²⁰

In the Fennoman rhetoric, the idea that the state's existence was grounded in the history of the people was combined with the notion of the people as the ultimate source of sovereign power. The key concepts of European revolutionary thinking were now explicitly associated with the Finnish-speaking common people: "Now the question is who is to rule in the country, a tiny minority whose position is based on old social evils or the majority of the people?"²¹

Shifts in political rhetoric signaled a broader redefinition of the political arena. Starting in the 1860s, the sphere of political action broadened from tightly controlled public discussions and voluntary associations of the upper classes to mass organizations and a popular press. The struggle over hegemony in this new field of political action changed the meaning of the language issue as part of a broader redefinition of political doctrines and concepts. Appeals to the will of the people were linked to the new forms of civic action embodied by mass movements and mass meetings that challenged the legitimation of existing political institutions and marked a radical broadening of the political space.²²

NEW POPULAR PLATFORMS AND POLITICAL CHALLENGE IN THE NAME OF THE "PEOPLE"

In the 1870s, the Fennoman elite supported the mobilization of popular organizations and even the student activists who were organizing public demonstrations among academic circles and the Finnish-speaking common people. Their initial emphasis was not on local-level activism, however, but on national, centralized organizations. The nucleus of the latter was the Society for Popular Education (Kansanvalistusseura), established in 1874. The Society brought together members of the Helsinki intelligentsia and the wealthy peasantry, and to some extent even included poorer commoners. For a decade it was the largest civic organization in the country and the foremost organizer of nationalistic gatherings and manifestations. In Fennoman rhetoric the Society was depicted as a symbol of the unity of the Fennoman movement and the

Finnish people. It was the grand tool that allowed Fennoman intellectuals to speak in the name of the people and to claim strong legitimacy for their political demands by referring to the will of the people.²³

The actual educational work of the Society tended to have other, less grandiose aims. In its documents and publications the people was discussed more often in terms of the lower classes, or common people, than in those of a self-organizing political subject.²⁴ The foremost examples of this line of thought can be found in the writings of Agathon Meurman, who together with Koskinen was the leading figure in formulating Fennoman politics in the 1870s and 1880s. For Meurman the task of the national movement was to civilize the common people. Apart from fostering a socially structured view of “civilized” and “non-civilized” people, Meurman emphasized moral and ethical values as the normative characteristics of the Finnish people. Religion in particular was used as the ultimate source of moral norms through which the intellectuals could define the true nature of the Finnish people. Meurman only recognized those expressions of popular opinion that satisfied the moral norms set from above by people like himself. Only “virtuous and religious” people belonged to true Finnish nation and were entitled to express its political and social aspirations.

In the 1880s, the Fennoman leaders (now known as “the Old Fennomans”) gave a new meaning to the concept of people that seriously narrowed legitimate popular political platforms and disconnected the language issue from radical political mobilization. The nomination of Koskinen to the Senate in 1882 ended the direct link between politics in the existing political institutions and the fight for hegemony in the public sphere. The Fennoman leadership still employed new forms of civic organization when seeking to establish closer ties to the people. The concept of people no longer referred to the entire population, however, but only to its civilized part, the “religious and virtuous” people. In practice this definition was attached to the wealthy peasantry, the estate for which Meurman was the acknowledged spokesman. Popular protests that might violate public order were now rejected as “un-Finnish.”²⁵ Meurman’s pedagogically and socially colored concept of the people was reminiscent of Snellman’s concept of the national spirit, since it similarly limited the right to define the will of the people to the educated elite.²⁶ In this respect, it stood in stark contrast to the politicized concept promoted by Koskinen during his earlier radical period and to its reformed version advocated by the publicist and professor of philosophy Johan Perander in the 1880s.

As early as 1869, Perander had published a Swedish-language pamphlet in which he strongly refuted the belief that language and ethnic origins as such were the main values of Fennomania. In his view, it was crucial to define nationality politically and set it above ethnic homogeneity. At the same time, it was important to promote the status of the Finnish language because its present state blocked the political energy of the nation and weakened the power of the

people and their ability to associate politically.²⁷ Perander's political strategy did not link the future of the nation primarily with cultural uniformity, but with the organization of civil society and the formation of a political community. Ultimately, it was this goal that made it imperative that the Finnish-speaking population, too, participate in the political discussion and action. For Perander, voluntary associations had a key role to play in this development beyond that of promoting education and culture in Finnish. In the 1880s, at the time of the mobilization of the first mass movements, Perander maintained that associations and societies active in various spheres of public life were a crucial part of the customs of a free people. According to him, they should be regarded as natural supplements to the parliamentary participation of the people. Even in Finland, he held, "people have started to realize the importance of these vehicles of evolution."²⁸

The line of argument presented in the writings of Perander had obvious links with contemporary European political discourses that have rarely been related to Fennomania and the formation of Finnish political culture. Perander referred to the ideas of Tocqueville and Marx, and he was the main propagator of John Stuart Mill in Finnish. He employed a concept of nation and nationality that significantly departed from the way Koskinen and Meurman defined the essence of Finnishness as a language-based unitary political-cultural or moral-religious concept. Referring to Mill, Perander rejected the existence of a national spirit separate from class, party, different patterns of life, customs, and opinions.²⁹

COMPETING LIBERAL VIEWS OF LANGUAGE, NATIONALITY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

It should be noted that, although a radical among the Fennomans, Perander was not the only Finnish author to advance an inclusive concept of the people and a liberal view of the concept of political nation. The ideas of Tocqueville and Mill had been similarly appraised in the liberal Swedish-language papers of the early 1860s.³⁰ By the 1880s, however, many of the "national liberals" of the 1860s had moved to better positions in the administration of the Grand Duchy and lost some of their sting when writing about existing political conditions. True, the Liberals were still running influential newspapers in which they presented liberal ideas and continued to compare political life in Finland with that in more "advanced countries," but their appeal was constantly being jeopardized by the language issue.

The Liberals, who did not see language as the decisive criterion of forming a national political community, were unable to refute the rhetoric of their Fennoman opponents that questioned their commitment to the national cause. At the same time, their political position became narrower after the

emergence of the so-called Vikings, a nationalist faction that advocated a language-based Swedish nationality in Finland and whose idea of the nation was actually rather similar to the one cultivated by the Old Fennomans. The Vikings pointed out that Swedish was not exclusively the language of education and of the cultural, political, and economic elites, but was also used by many peasants and workers living in Finland's southern and western coastal areas. In addition, they referred to racial differences between the Swedish and Finnish population in Finland.³¹ Although the group was never very numerous, the radical position of the Vikings led some Liberals to take a more pronounced stand in favor of the Swedish language than previously by claiming that the Swedish language was a precondition for higher culture and the realization of the country's constitutional rights. It is symptomatic that when the language rescript of 1863 was to be updated in 1883, Robert Montgomery, the Liberal law officer (procurator) of the Senate, maintained that Finnish could not be proclaimed an official language, since the Swedish Code of 1743 forbade its use in courts of law.³² This kind of attitude led to situations that in the view of many Fennomans could not possibly be understood as anything other than another arrogant defense of privileges.

As a matter of fact, an attempt to found a liberal party in 1880 was successfully foiled by the Fennomans, who had launched a campaign against "cosmopolitan" liberalism, which, in their opinion, was completely insensitive to the advancement of the country's majority language.³³ It is hardly surprising that the conservative Meurman and Snellman played a central role in this denunciation of liberalism, but it is noteworthy that even the rising younger liberal-minded intellectuals, who were influenced by modern currents in literature and science and aimed at social and political reforms beyond the language division, started to use Finnish in their political activities and tended in their rhetoric to regard the program of the liberal party as being based on a foreign ideology.³⁴

The question as to whether these younger intellectuals, who organized themselves under the banner of the "Young Finns" in 1894, were also liberals has been difficult to answer.³⁵ Nonetheless, there was an easy rapprochement between the Young Finns and the Swedish-language Liberals toward the end of the nineteenth century during the time of the imperial Russification policies. This time, however, it was the concept of constitutionalism that brought them together and became more important than the question in which language liberal values should be promoted.³⁶ In 1890, the Finnish postal system was incorporated into the Russian one, and in the February Manifesto of 1899 the emperor seized the right to determine himself legislation for Finland in matters of "general imperial concern." The Finnish Diet and the Senate retained only the authority to issue statements on proposed legislation. With the 1900 Language Manifesto, Russian became the official administrative language in Finland and, in 1901, the Russian system of military conscription was extended to Finland.

It should be noted, however, that soon after Russian had become the official language of the Senate, the 1902 language rescript issued by Nicholas II made Finnish an official language in the Grand Duchy, together with Swedish. The imperial "period of oppression" ended abruptly with the 1905 Revolution in Russia. It opened an unanticipated "window of opportunity" for Finland, a situation in which goals and strategies were no longer under the control of the political elite alone but voiced through new popular political platforms.

MASS MOBILIZATION, CONSTITUTIONALISM, AND THE DEMOCRATIZATION OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION

In 1906, Finland became the first country in Europe where universal voting rights were granted to both men and women. Moreover, the parliament was turned into a unicameral legislative body. Explanations of the reform, which transformed this most backward system of political representation into a democratic one, emphasize the exceptional political circumstances. Revolutionary unrest in Russia is said to have forced the imperial government to reduce its pressure on Finnish autonomy, thus creating an opportunity for a thorough reform. When the Russian strike movement in October 1905 was followed by a general strike in Finland, the Finns profited from this state of affairs—so the explanation goes—and within a couple of days an agenda for the reform was set and immediately accepted by the Russian emperor as part of the efforts to stabilize the situation. On 4 November 1905 Nicholas II signed the November Manifesto, which announced the preparation of a parliamentary reform based on universal and equal suffrage. An extraordinary session of the Diet was called to implement the reform, and less than a year later Nicholas II signed the new Parliamentary Act of Finland.³⁷

Be that as it may, the changed circumstances and the ability to take advantage of the weakened imperial power do not answer the question of why the reform was so radical. The Russian emperor would certainly have accepted a less radical version if the Finns had wanted it. Why did the manifesto, actually penned by Leo Mechelin, the leading Finnish liberal and theorist of constitutional law, dictate that the bill was to be based on democratic representation? In the following, we will outline several overlapping lines of explanation.

The language division and imperial dependence had blocked gradual reforms of political representation.

The combination of the two had made it virtually impossible to reform Finland's political institutions in the nineteenth century. As noted, there had been some willingness to abandon the estate-based representation in the 1860s, but such a step was considered unfeasible in a situation in which raising the question of political representation could threaten the whole plan of strengthening Finnish

political institutions. Some more or less carefully formulated ideas of abolishing the estates had been advanced during the following decades. In 1876, Mechelin maintained that the estates tended to further corporate interests rather than those of the entire nation.³⁸ In the 1880s, several liberal or broad-minded (as they preferred to call themselves) intellectuals who had joined the Fennoman camp suggested a bicameral Diet.³⁹ But neither the Liberal Party program of 1880 nor that of the Young Finns in 1894 rejected the political estates.

The most important debates on political representation had focused on attempts to reform the burgher estate. As it was, the peasants and the clergy had a Finnish-language majority, whereas the majority language in the nobility and the burgher estates was Swedish. Despite several initiatives and debates after the 1870s, it proved impossible to expand income-based voting rights substantially. The major hurdle was that a thorough reform would have changed the existing language balance in the Diet by creating a "Finnish-speaking" burgher estate. Unlike many European countries, Finland saw the corporate interests of the burghers not serving as a springboard for democratic reform, but constituting a major obstacle to it.

In the long run, the language issue, which prevented a reform of the estates, resulted in a greater willingness to let the "people" vote and popularized the idea of a per capita vote. Several Old Finns in particular hoped that an electoral reform would put an end to the overly strong influence of the Swedish-speaking minority.⁴⁰ Along the same lines, it could be argued that the unicameral structure of the legislative body resulted from an attempt to prevent any "upper house" Swedish influence in the parliament. It has also been suggested that some Russian authorities welcomed a substantial electoral reform because of its alleged negative effect on the influence of the Constitutionalists in Finnish politics.⁴¹

Mass mobilization had created a considerable trust in the common people among the political elite.

In Finland, popular movements had a cross-class character. The idea of self-education, in combination with a paternalist attitude of the elite, created an atmosphere of trust in the common people. One consequence of this trust was that associative rights never became a matter of conflict in Finland.⁴² Mass organization gained momentum in the 1880s and 1890s with the support of the political party groupings. While liberal intellectuals had played a major role in organizing voluntary fire brigades in Finnish towns and rural industrial communities, the Old Fennoman elite was closely involved in the founding of the temperance movement in 1883, and the Young Finns were active in the youth society movement, which remained the largest social movements until 1905, when they were surpassed by the Social Democratic labor movement.

Importantly, the emerging labor movement was closely linked to the tem-

perance movement, and workers' associations in their early phase were often led by people who had been involved in earlier forms of social mobilization. Moreover, women played a key role in the temperance movement, and the struggle for women's suffrage should therefore be seen as part of a larger mobilization in which it is difficult to draw a clear line of demarcation between socialists and non-socialists. It is in this context of the mid-1890s that claims for equal and universal suffrage first made their appearance. Consequently, the right to vote was considered a means of engaging everyone in the defense of the nation.⁴³

The period of Russification triggered a wave of national reaction.

At the turn of the century, the Finnish political elite, divided between "the Constitutionalists" (the Young Finns, Liberals and the Swedish Party) and "the Compliance Party" (the Old Finns and the conservative administrative elite). Although these groupings adopted different strategies to cope with the government in St. Petersburg, their members virtually agreed on the necessity to appeal to popular support in defense of the Finnish cause. Even the emerging Social Democratic Party considered reforms to be possible only if Tsarist acts of oppression in Finland were defeated. In this sense, their primary standpoint was nationalist rather than internationalist.⁴⁴ Moreover, when Finland's autonomy came under pressure from the Russian government, the symbolic status of the Diet became even more a national cause and created an atmosphere of defense and resistance not only in the Finnish political elite but also in the emerging civil society. Mass petitions and mass demonstrations against violations of "Finnish autonomy" triggered a wave of national reaction that made the political elite more willing than before to invite the non-enfranchised people into the political system.

It is also worth noting that no significant attempt was ever made to mobilize an opposition against a major reform of parliament in order to secure the position of the Swedish language in Finland. No doubt there were disappointments, and defeatist voices could be heard to worry about the future of the country's culture and civilization, but the language division lost its importance to the "constitutionalist" cause, and those who disapproved of the reform resorted to arguments that were critical of democracy in general. Finally, the language divide among the political elite was not directly based on alleged ethnic differences or even language skills. At the turn of the century, most members of Finland's political elite were still bilingual, and politically prominent families were often split, with some members marching behind the Finnish-language banner and others behind its Swedish-language counterpart.

The revolutionary situation and the labor movement played a crucial role.

The Finnish parliamentary reform took place in the shadow of revolutionary

events in Russia, and there were echoes of this revolutionary mood in Finland. There was a time during the weeklong general strike when both the political and coercive apparatus were on the verge of a breakdown.⁴⁵ Popular meetings and gatherings in public places exerted considerable pressure, and the rhetoric of the people as the ultimate source of power played a major role during and shortly after the days of the 1905 strike. Nevertheless, when compared to the Baltic provinces and other parts of the Russian Empire, events in Finland took a relatively well-organized course.⁴⁶

Although the Social Democrats occasionally employed revolutionary rhetoric and made demands for a National Assembly, it can be safely assumed that their aim in 1905 was not an immediate revolution. A majority in the party took sides with the constitutional campaign and viewed universal suffrage as the primary political question. In addition, those who considered themselves revolutionaries held a doctrinaire view that ruled out the possibility for a revolution in an underdeveloped periphery like Finland. In accordance with the Kautskyan doctrine, it was stated in *Sosialistinen Aikakauslehti* (*Socialist Journal*) that a revolution would take place when the time was right.⁴⁷ This did not prevent the revolutionary threat from being seriously discussed for the first time in domestic politics and from becoming an argument in favor of the reform; it certainly contributed to the acceptance of the principle of universal suffrage.

There can be no doubt that universal suffrage was the main topic of and a starting point for mass demonstrations and party meetings, as well as negotiations between different delegations during the strike and the debates over the Reform Bill in 1906. It had become clear for everyone during the strike that what was at stake was not only the recovery of the country's constitutional rights, but also democratic reform. In fact, all political parties wanted to deserve credit for having successfully included universal suffrage in the November Manifesto.⁴⁸ It is important to note that the 1906 Parliament Act did not touch upon the powers of the Senate or the imperial government, and it is quite obvious that the Russian government never considered granting any additional powers to the Finnish parliament. Parliamentary government never occupied a central place in the debates over the reform either. After 1905, there existed, however, nationally defined political platforms that made Finland a polity both in terms of representative institutions and popular mobilization from below.

CONCLUDING REMARKS: THE FINNISH POLITY AND IMPERIAL POWER

The formation of the Finnish polity began in the early nineteenth century in a context of strong but diffuse Russian imperial power. Despite the restrictions imposed on political publicity and although the Diet was never convened, the

period from 1809 to 1863, the so-called state night, proved to be a time that not only led to the formation of the political-administrative unit of Finland but also saw members of Swedish-speaking elite groups establish many of the ideological foundations of the Finnish nation-state. The major reforms of Finland's political institutions occurred at times when the imperial power had become weaker. The process was slower and more enduring in the 1860s, after Russia's defeat in the Crimean War and during the imperial troubles in Poland, than around 1905, when the internal weakness of the imperial government allowed for a reform that was more radical than many of its advocates had imagined.

In an important sense, the 1860s and 1870s can be considered as the period of the breakthrough of modern politics in Finland, a starting point for a fundamental redefinition of both the political arena and the political language. Finland was no longer understood simply as a state structure and an administrative unit, but more as a political arena and a field of a new kind of political action. This process was notably initiated by the Liberals, who fought for self-administration and the control of the administrative apparatus by an "enlightened" civic opinion. The Fennomans intellectuals, who embarked on a new type of struggle for hegemony among the emerging Finnish-speaking social groups, added a new dimension to Finnish political culture by introducing the idea of popular sovereignty as the foundation of politics. This in turn was connected to a structural redefinition of political space and a crucial reassessment of the language question. Voluntary organizations, often initiated by liberal intellectuals, were drawn into a hegemonic battle of representing the people, and the political arena was radically enlarged towards civil society, with the Finnish language appearing as the means of making claims in the name of the people.

The political mobilization and the 1906 parliamentary reform rested much on this heritage. Although the Fennomans and the Liberals had for decades used the language issue to doubt each other's role as the true avant-garde of the emerging nation and civil society, they both contributed in their own way to create the preconditions for 1905 and the formation of a Finnish polity. The Liberals' strategy was built on constitutionalism, Finnish civic and political institutions and their legitimacy, whereas the Fennomans' strategy was based on the promotion of popular mobilization and the ideas of national solidarity and popular sovereignty. When Russian imperial power experienced a moment of weakness, these strategies, which were both supported and challenged by labor mobilization, became more radical and focused on constituting the Finnish polity both in institutional sense and as a political community of active citizens. With the constitution of these new political platforms the language issue lost much of its role as the core of the competing nation-building strategies that set the early political parties against one another in the emerging public arenas. After 1906, political discourses turned increasingly towards class-based rhetoric and a direct challenge to Russian imperial rule.

NOTES

1. The 1863 language rescript granted that public documents and public administration should be accessible not only in Swedish but also in Finnish. The reform was to be implemented over a period of twenty years, but both languages became official languages only in 1902.
2. Born Georg Forsman, Koskinen later adopted a finnicized version of his name as his pen name.
3. Yrjö Koskinen, *Kansallisia ja yhteiskunnallisia kirjoituksia: Toinen osa 1863–1871* (Helsinki: SKS, 1906), 13. For an analysis of the debate on parliamentary life in Finland in the early 1860s, see Jussi Kurunmäki, “The Reception of Political Concepts in the Wake of Finnish Parliamentary Life in the 1860s,” in *Zeit, Geschichte und Politik: Time, History and Politics. Zum achtzigsten Geburtstag von Reinhart Koselleck*, ed. Jussi Kurunmäki and Kari Palonen (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2003), 291–310.
4. *Helsingfors Dagblad*, 28 October 1862; see Kurunmäki, “Reception of Political Concepts,” 291.
5. *Prästeståndets protokoll vid Bårgå landtdag år 1899 jämte handlingar rörande landtdagen* (Helsingfors: E. Lagerblad, 1899), 514. See also Osmo Jussila, “Finland as a Grand Duchy 1809–1917,” in *From Grand Duchy to a Modern State: A Political History of Finland since 1809*, ed. Osmo Jussila, Seppo Hentilä, and Jukka Nevakivi (London: Hurst & Company, 1999), 14–16.
6. Osmo Jussila, *Maakunnasta valtioksi: Suomen valtion synty* (Porvoo: WSOY, 1987), 103–69. On the formation of Finland in terms of political space before 1809, see Ilkka Liikanen, “Territoriality, State, and Nationality in the Making of Borders of Finland,” *Russian Sociological Review* 13, no. 4 (2014): 105–15.
7. Liisa Castrén, *Adolf Ivar Arwidsson: Nuori Arwidsson ja hänen ympäristönsä* (Helsinki: Otava, 1944). For a recent account, see also Jani Marjanen, *Den ekonomiska patriotismens uppgång och fall: Finska hushållningssällskapet i europeisk, svensk och finsk kontext 1720–1840* (Helsingfors: Helsingfors universitet, 2013), 203–12.
8. Päiviö Tommila, “Yhdestä lehdestä sanomalehdistöksi 1809–1859,” in *Suomen lehdistön historia 1: Sanomalehdistön vaiheet vuoteen 1905*, ed. Päiviö Tommila (Kuopio: Kustannuskiila, 1988), 104–5, 162.
9. Ilkka Liikanen, “Kansa,” in *Käsitteet liikkeessä: Suomen poliittisen kulttuurin käsittehistoria*, ed. Matti Hyvärinen, Jussi Kurunmäki, Kari Palonen, Tuija Pulkkinen, and Henrik Stenius (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2003), 272–3.
10. Ilkka Liikanen, “Suomalainen nationalismi: Kansallinen yhtenäisyys vai kansanvalta,” in *Nationalismit*, ed. Jussi Pakkasvirta and Pasi Saukkonen (Helsinki: WSOY, 2005), 226–32.
11. Liikanen, “Kansa,” 274–76.
12. J. V. Snellman, *J. V. Snellman: Samlade arbeten III 1842–1843* (Helsingfors: Statsrådets Kansli, 1993), 301–4.
13. J. V. Snellman, *J. V. Snellman: Samlade arbeten IX 1859–1860* (Helsingfors: Statsrå-

- dets kansli, 1997), 111; see also Jussi Kurunmäki, "Kan en nation byggas på politisk vilja? Debatten mellan J.V. Snellman och August Schauman 1859–1860," *Historisk Tidskrift för Finland* 92, no. 1 (2007): 63–89.
14. See Lolo Krusius-Ahrenberg, *Der Durchbruch des Nationalismus und Liberalismus im politischen Leben Finnlands, 1856–1863* (Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia, 1934); Henrik Stenius and Ilkka Turunen, "Finnish Liberalism," in *Liberalism: Seminars on Historical and Political Keywords in Northern Europe*, ed. Ilkka K. Lakaniemi, Anna Rotkirch, and Henrik Stenius (Helsinki: Renvall Institute, 1995), 49–62.
 15. See Kurunmäki, "Reception of Political Concepts," 294–97.
 16. *Ibid.*
 17. Ismo Pohjantammi, "Edustus," in Hyvärinen et al., *Käsitteet liikkeessä*, 376–77.
 18. Jussi Kurunmäki, "On the Difficulty of Being a National Liberal in Nineteenth-Century Finland," *Contributions to the History of Concepts* 8, no. 2 (Winter 2013): 83–95.
 19. Yrjö Koskinen, *Oppikirja Suomen kansan historiasta* (Helsinki: SKS, 1869), 510.
 20. Ilkka Liikanen, *Fennomania ja kansa: Joukkojärjestäytymisen läpimurto ja Suomalaisen puolueen synty* (Helsinki: SHS, 1995), 124–26.
 21. Yrjö Koskinen, "Kysymys Normaali-koulun suomenkielisestä osastosta," *Kirjallinen Kuukausilehti* 4, no. 6 (1869): 141–42.
 22. Henrik Stenius, *Frivilligt, jämlikt, samfällt: Föreningsväsendets utveckling i Finland fram till 1900-talets början med speciell hänsyn till massorganisationsprincipens genombrott* (Helsingfors: SLS, 1987), 284–93.
 23. Ilkka Liikanen, "The Ironies of People's Power," in *People, Citizen, Nation*, ed. Lars-Folke Landgrén and Pirkko Hautamäki (Helsinki: Renvall Institute, 2005), 78–87.
 24. Liikanen, *Fennomania ja kansa*, 171–72.
 25. *Ibid.*, 304–9.
 26. Agathon Meurman, "Esipuhe," in *J. V. Snellmanin kirjoituksia aikakauskirjallisuuden alalla I* (Helsinki: SKS, 1879), 8.
 27. J. J. F. Perander, "Med anledning af Helsingfors Dagblads 'slutliiquid,'" in *Ettan: Uppsatser i dagens frågor* (Helsingfors: J. Simelii arvingar, 1869), 49–62.
 28. J. J. F. Perander, "Laulu ja soitto kansanvalistuksen palveluksessa," *Kansanvalistus-seuran Kalenteri 1885* (Helsinki: Kansanvalistusseura, 1884), 43–51.
 29. J. J. F. Perander, "Suomen Kansanvalistusseurasta ja sen toimesta," *Kirjallinen kuukauslehti* 10, no. 6 (1876): 133–37.
 30. Kurunmäki, "On the Difficulty of Being a National Liberal," 87; Onni Pekonen, *Debating "the ABCs of Parliamentary Life": The Learning of Parliamentary Rules and Practices in the Late Nineteenth-Century Finnish Diet and the Early Eduskunta* (Jyväskylä: University of Jyväskylä, 2014), 65–70.
 31. See Arvid Mörne, *Axel Olof Freudenthal och den finlandssvenska nationalitetstanken* (Helsingfors: Svenska Folkpartiets Centralstyrelse, 1927).
 32. David Kirby, *A Concise History of Finland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University

- Press, 2006), 121. In 1883, Finnish was granted equal status with Swedish in all but the higher courts.
33. Stenius and Turunen, "Finnish Liberalism," 50; Kurunmäki, "On the Difficulty of Being a National Liberal," 94–95.
 34. Kurunmäki, "On the Difficulty of Being a National Liberal," 92–93.
 35. For a discussion, see Vesa Vares, *Varpuset ja pääskyyset: Nuorsuomalaisuus ja Nuorsuomalainen puolue 1870-luvulta vuoteen 1918* (Helsinki: SKS, 2000), 9–21.
 36. Stenius and Turunen, "Finnish Liberalism," 58.
 37. For the most detailed account of the making of the 1906 Parliament Act, see Juhani Mylly, *Edustuksellisen kansanvallan läpimurto: Suomen Eduskunta 100 vuotta 1* (Helsinki: Edita, 2006); for a rhetorical analysis of the debate, see Jussi Kurunmäki, "A Parliament for the Unity of the People: On the Rhetoric of Legitimization in the Debate over Finnish Parliamentary Reform in 1906," in Landgrén and Hautamäki, *People, Citizen, Nation*, 116–31.
 38. Leo Mechelin, "De fyra stånden," *Finsk tidskrift för vitterhet, vetenskap, konst och politik* 1 (1876): 152–71.
 39. Ismo Pohjantammi, "Edustus," 381–85.
 40. Olavi Seitkari, "Eduskuntalaitoksen uudistus 1906," in *Suomen kansanedustuslaitoksen historia V* (Helsinki: Eduskunnan historiakomitea, 1958), 26–28.
 41. Uno Tuominen, "Säätyedustuslaitos 1880-luvun alusta vuoteen 1906," in *Suomen kansanedustuslaitoksen historia III* (Helsinki: Eduskunnan historiakomitea, 1964), 138, 143–44.
 42. Risto Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 101.
 43. Jussi Kurunmäki, "The Breakthrough of Universal Suffrage in Finland, 1905–1906," in *The Ashgate Research Companion to the Politics of Democratization in Europe: Concepts and Histories*, ed. Kari Palonen, Tuija Pulkkinen, and José María Rosales (Farnham: Ashgate, 2008), 355–70.
 44. Alapuro, *State and Revolution*, 112–14; Antti Kujala, *Venäjän hallitus ja Suomen työväenliike 1899–1905* (Helsinki: SHS, 1995), 129ff.
 45. Alapuro, *State and Revolution*, 114–15; Osmo Jussila, *Nationalismi ja vallankumous venäläis-suomalaisissa suhteissa 1899–1914* (Helsinki: SHS, 1979), 65–86.
 46. T. U. Raun, "The Revolution of 1905 in the Baltic Provinces and Finland," *Slavic Review* 43 (1984): 453–67.
 47. *Sosialistinen Aikakauslehti* 1 (1906), 2.
 48. See Kurunmäki, "Breakthrough of Universal Suffrage in Finland," 358.