8 Rejecting the upper chamber

National unity, democratisation and imperial rule in the Grand Duchy of Finland, 1860–1906

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Introduction

Finland underwent radical and abrupt parliamentary reform in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution of 1905. Europe's last four-estate system of representation was transformed directly into a unicameral parliament elected by universal and equal male and female suffrage in 1906. The decision to adopt a unicameral parliament was a dramatic departure from Finland's bicameral model parliaments, such as the Swedish *Riksdag*, which had dominated Finnish reform plans in the nineteenth century.

This chapter examines how and why Finnish reformers abandoned the bicameral model prevalent in European and North American discussions. Was the unicameral parliament merely a hasty improvisation resulting from the unexpected crisis of the Russian Revolution or a carefully prepared compromise? In order to understand the reform and its background, I examine how bicameral parliaments and their upper chambers were viewed in Finland based on the experiences and inspiration of other countries. What role did national and transnational political traditions, contexts and ideologies play? How did the Finnish reformers understand Finland's position as part of wider Nordic, European and North Atlantic parliamentary developments?

The chapter highlights, perhaps paradoxically, the central role of foreign examples, models and discussions in the efforts to create a national parliamentary tradition. Whilst Finland was part of transnational parliamentary publicity (Pekonen 2017b) and eager to learn from other countries, political reformers emphasised the need to apply foreign lessons to domestic circumstances. Finnish reform plans, prepared and debated for decades, were eventually realised and partly revised as a result of shifts in international politics.

Finland's constitutional status and national representation as part of the Russian Empire

Finland was annexed to the Russian Empire as a result of the Napoleonic Wars in 1809. Until then, Finland had been part of Sweden for over 500 years and constituted a sparsely populated area that made up approximately one-third of

the Kingdom. After the annexation, Finland became a relatively small north-western grand duchy of the Russian Empire, with the tsar as grand duke and its own national representative assembly. Tsar Alexander I summoned the Finnish estates (the nobility, the clergy, the burghers and the peasants) to the Diet of Porvoo in 1809, where he promised to uphold the constitutional laws, rights and privileges in Finland. From this event on, 'the Finnish constitution' became a question of varying dispute, especially between Finnish and Russian political and administrative elites. During the nineteenth century, Finnish political actors began to highlight the events at Porvoo as a state treaty, the founding moment of Finnish autonomy within the Russian Empire. Finnish politicians and scholars viewed the Swedish Instrument of Government of 1772 and the Union and Security Act of 1789 as Finnish constitutions, despite the fact that the emperor never officially validated them.

Until Finland's independence in 1917, the Finnish constitution was *de facto*: it seemed to exist and remain in force as long as it was respected and not challenged by the Finns and the Russians. One reason for this was the leeway it offered for both Finnish and Russian actors. On one hand, the Gustavian constitutions gave the monarch (the emperor) sufficiently vast powers. The task of the Diet of Finland was formally limited to examining and approving or rejecting proposals of the emperor. The proposals were prepared by Finland's domestic (*kotimainen*) government, which answered only to the emperor – not to the Diet. The domestic government was called 'the Senate', but it did not function as an upper chamber. On the other hand, the Finnish estates were able to expand their rights. Emperor Alexander II reconvened the estates in 1863 after a more than fifty-year hiatus, and after this the Diet met regularly, mostly in intervals of first five and then three years, until the Parliamentary Reform of 1906. Although the emperor had the right to reject any decision of the Diet, he mostly respected the Diet's decisions and took many of its petitions into account by transforming them into government proposals and reintroducing them to the estates. The emperor authorised the Diet Act of 1869, the first Finnish constitutional law, which, among other things, manifested the principle of the representation of the Finnish people. The Diet was the centre of Finnish public and political life from the 1860s onwards. Each decision the Diet made according to the (*de facto*) constitutions was an irreversible move towards strengthening Finland's special status within the Empire. Thus, the Diet was invaluable in strengthening the Finnish polity and protecting its interests (Engman 2017; Krusius-Ahrenberg 1981).

Alexander II introduced a reform program for Finland after Russia's defeat in the Crimean War. The final decision to convene the Diet was a result of the bloody January Uprising in Poland in 1863. As part of a series of concessions aimed at calming the situation within the Empire, Alexander II rewarded Finland with a Diet, which convened on 15 September 1863. Despite the enthusiasm for the reconvened Diet, Finnish political actors acknowledged the four-estate system as outdated and expressed hopes for a bicameral parliament. As in several other countries in the North Atlantic, suggestions were made for either reform or the establishment of a bicameral system. Encouraged by discussions in the press,

estate members petitioned to introduce a bicameral parliament with ministerial responsibility as early as 1863–1864. Finnish political actors argued that estate representation was ‘unfitting and in contradiction to the demands of the time’ and ‘outdated in comparison to civilised and constitutional European countries’. The Diet, with its division of four mainly separate estates, was considered time-consuming, inefficient and undemocratic (cf. Pekonen 2017a).

Bicameralism – but of what kind?

Finland’s position as part of the Russian Empire set the limits for parliamentary reform. Despite this, political groups discussed and debated the direction of Finnish parliamentary life with reference to a variety of foreign examples and developments. The discussions were considered preparations for the inevitable yet distant reforms. Finnish actors across the political spectrum argued that Finland, as a late-comer, could benefit from the experiences of other countries and, when possible, should update its existing system according to the demands of the time. This transition from the old forms and practices of estate representation towards modern Western parliaments was an active process of imitation and application, explained in Finland, for instance, through reference to ‘the ABCs of parliamentary life’ and ‘rudiments of parliamentary work’. Despite Finland’s remote location on the north-eastern edge of Europe, it was in no sense excluded from European and North American discussions. The press was an important means for the Finnish political protagonists, public servants and scholars to study foreign examples and plan future reforms (Pekonen 2014; Pekonen 2017b). Finnish arguments for bicameralism reflected and repeated ideas from foreign discussions.

The main principled arguments for bicameralism, which were repeated in the following decades, were expressed in Finnish public debate in the 1860s. The press highlighted that all prominent European parliaments were bicameral, and very few had changed their bicameral systems to something else. There was, in contrast, little experience with regard to unicameral assemblies. The liberal and nationalist political elite had a complex attitude towards the people. On the one hand, they were concerned about the political and social backwardness of the country and its people’s low level of education. On the other hand, they argued that the highest principle of representative government was that state affairs should be based, in theory, at least, on ‘the public opinion’ or ‘the will of the people’s majority’. Consequently, the elite were convinced that Finland needed a bicameral parliament whose democratically elected lower chamber would be combined with an experienced, educated and intellectual upper chamber which could restrain immature expressions of the public opinion. The true public opinion and will of the people required time, discussion and exchange of arguments to shape, develop and mature (e.g. *Helsingfors Dagblad* 1863a). The question, then, remained how those who sat in the two chambers should be selected and how their relationship should be organised.

In search of foreign inspiration, Finnish political protagonists and scholars recognised two main forms of upper chamber. The first was based on the existence

of a strong aristocratic element which served as a 'natural' foundation for division between the chambers (e.g. *Helsingfors Dagblad* 1863b). Britain was highlighted as a prominent example of this form of bicameralism. In the second form, the upper chamber was created by electoral arrangements or by regional assemblies choosing the members, as was the case in countries such as Sweden, Denmark and the United States. It was the second form of bicameralism that raised most interest in Finland, as the country arguably lacked a strong aristocracy.

In the late nineteenth century, most members of the political elite saw the bicameral model as the best option for reform, but there was no consensus on how the system should be organised. Bicameral parliaments abroad were typically results of a long historical development or created as a compromise solution to a crisis. In nineteenth-century Finland, there was no opportunity for a thorough reform and thus no urgent need to agree and compromise. Thus, political groups settled for presenting proposals, criticising those of their opponents and discussing international examples.

In the 1860s, future Finnish reform prospects were discussed indirectly through and in connection with foreign debates. Because of its shared constitutional tradition and close political, cultural and economic links, Sweden was the closest and most frequently discussed example. The Swedish parliamentary reform of 1866 (cf. Nilsson, this volume; Nergelius, this volume) coincided with the formulation of the Finnish Diet Act of 1869 and a failed attempt to create and codify a constitution act for Finland, which would have decreased the prerogatives of the emperor. The Swedish Riksdag Act of 1810 and its later revisions were used as the main model for the Diet Act.

Louis de Geer had been the father of the Swedish reform, and his ideas and arguments inspired the Swedish-speaking liberals in Finland, who were loosely organised around the newspaper *Helsingfors Dagblad*. They argued that when the time was right, the Finnish reform could be based on Swedish bicameralism and correct its mistakes. The Finnish liberals had doubts whether the Swedish upper chamber could offer a sufficient hindrance to an immature public opinion. Leading Finnish liberals were strongly indebted to the British culture and practices of parliamentary debate and liberal authors such as John Stuart Mill. So it should refer to British culture (of parliamentary debate) and practices of parliamentary debate. These liberals argued that, regardless of the nature of the parliamentary system, a well-designed deliberative procedure was a necessity for securing a thorough examination of matters and making high-quality, legitimate decisions. According to the liberals, a representative assembly could only speak and decide in the name of the people after a thorough *debate*. Parliamentary rules should be used to force different opinions and arguments to clash and test each other's strengths and weaknesses in an open debate in multiple plenary readings. In no other way could a question be sufficiently examined from different sides. The priority of debate was an overriding principle in the political thought of the Finnish liberals. They argued, for example, that the upper chamber in a bicameral parliament should not be given a definite veto in decision-making. Instead, procedures should be in place in the lower chamber

to guarantee a thorough debate and careful examination (Pekonen 2014, 2017a). Such approaches to parliaments and parliamentary debate were typical among liberals across Europe (Ihalainen, Ilie & Palonen 2016).

In the early 1870s, the pro-Finnish language Fennoman nationalists, in contrast, argued that the Swedish reform had led to plotting, dispute and conflicts. Their main organ, the newspaper *Uusi Suometar* (1872), stated that many Swedes, in fact, complained that their reform had been implemented too early. The analysis of the Swedish case reflects a Fennoman nationalist aversion to the liberals' idea of debate as the essential characteristic of representative politics. Mainstream Fennoman nationalists were opposed to all factions and political parties that had the potential to divide the people and disturb the Fennoman idea of 'one language, one people'. The Fennomans found their opponents in the Swedish-speaking ascendant bourgeoisie and aristocracy, who, according to the Fennomans, held on to their privileges and obstructed reforms that were crucial to the development of the people's Finnish-speaking majority. The dispute between the Finnish and the Swedish languages dominated Finland's political life until the end of the nineteenth century. The Fennoman views on the Swedish reform and conflict reflected a tradition that would eventually play a central role in the rejection of bicameralism in Finland.

The question of bicameralism reappeared in Finnish public debate during a short wave of reform optimism in the 1880s. This sense of optimism was triggered by European reform debates and the emperor's decisions to grant the estates the right of motion and to convene the Diet every three years. The situation in Norway, for instance, motivated the Finns to try to introduce characteristics of parliamentary government and democratise the estate elections. All major political groups presented their reform plans. The nationalist Fennoman movement had started to split into factions, and the so-called *Valvoja* group, a liberal and internationally oriented faction of the Fennomans, was the most vocal advocate of bicameralism. Their model was based on Sweden, which 'shared a common past and somewhat similar social conditions' with Finland (Danielson 1881, p. 463). According to the *Valvoja* group, time was not ripe for thorough reform, but bicameralism could be introduced gradually by preserving the best aspects of the existing system.

The *Valvoja* group argued that the Swedish reformers had expected too much from the people and that the reform of 1866 had resulted in the one-sided rule of the peasantry and its *Lantmanna Party*. According to *Valvoja*, Swedish constitutions were not a sufficiently powerful bulwark against the dominance of a particular class. The 'purse of the state' was open only to the peasantry, and 'estate spirit' and 'estate envy' were still alive and kicking. Two prominent *Valvoja* members, professor of history J. R. Danielson and professor of philosophy Th. Rein, argued that, in order to avoid such mistakes in Finland, the two chambers should be given distinctly different characters. The lower chamber should represent the prevailing opinions of the moment, while the upper chamber was to represent more serious, intergenerational opinions and stable interests. The representatives of the upper chamber should thus have longer mandates than those of the lower chamber; the members of the upper chamber should be replaced gradually, while those of the

lower chamber were to be replaced all at once. According to Danielson and Rein, the two lower estates of the peasants and the burghers should be united into a democratic lower chamber, while the two higher estates of the nobility and the clergy would form an aristocratic upper chamber. Towns should be given relatively stronger representation in the lower chamber than the countryside, as cities were more civilised and politically active. Provincial assemblies would elect one-third of the upper chamber, and the nobility and the clergy would each elect one-third. After these revisions, both chambers could be given equal decision-making powers, and a joint vote of both chambers could be held in case of disagreement (Danielson 1881; Rein 1885).

Bicameralism was challenged in the 1880s mainly because of the situation in Denmark, where the opposition between two chambers had resulted in a total standstill of decision-making on budget and tax issues (cf. Skjæveland, this volume). As a result, the government dictated budgets. The Finnish liberals described the Danish situation as a crisis which had pushed the country to the verge of a *coup d'état* or a revolution. The *Valvoja* group found the Danish situation worrying and described it as 'contempt of the constitution' (Rein 1885, p. 431).

The main question with regard to the Danish case was how to overcome the deadlock between two chambers. Finnish discussants took the side of the lower chamber. The *Valvoja* group presented two options: either the lower chamber should have authority concerning budget and tax issues or it should be represented by more members in the joint votes of the two chambers. According to the group, the upper chamber should be given the right to 'give the people the chance to reflect and deliberate' but 'not to block its seriously considered will for good' (Rein 1885, p. 431).

The Finnish liberals argued that the Danish form of bicameralism was 'a severe mistake' and 'contrary to the principles of constitutionalism' as it did not give the lower chamber a lawful possibility to break the stubborn opposition of the upper chamber. As a solution, they argued, it would be wise to follow the example of Britain, where the rights of the House of Lords had been limited in matters of budget and taxation. In Britain, the House of Commons could influence the majority of the Lords by forcing the government to introduce new members. Thus, instead of a definite veto, the upper chamber had only moderating power and a suspensive veto (*Helsingfors Dagblad* 1885a, 1885b).

The rise of the unicameral model

The bicameral model was discussed in the Diet, local election and press debates and social movements and associations, for example in the meetings of the temperance movement (cf. *Waasan Lehti* 1887). The inevitability of a bicameral parliament was taken into account even when planning a new house for the Finnish estates in the 1880s. It was argued that the building should be equipped with facilities for the meetings of a future bicameral assembly (*Helsingfors Dagblad* 1882, 1883). Nonetheless, the consensus on the bicameral model became increasingly challenged towards the end of the nineteenth century.

A ‘crisis of parliamentary politics’ or ‘crisis of parliamentarism’ spread across Europe in the final decades of the nineteenth century. Increased pressure to open up parliaments to new groups and public scrutiny resulted in the (gradual) democratisation of suffrage and candidacy. Democratisation brought new groups to parliaments. The newcomers criticised parliaments as debating clubs of the elite and argued that parliament’s slow and multiphase proceedings were intended to obstruct democratic progress and reforms necessary for the people. Parliaments were considered unable to keep up with the pace of progress (Vieira 2015). They became arenas for new controversy and heated disputes. National assemblies were challenged by scarcity of time resulting from growing agendas and longer speeches. Obstruction campaigns by nationalist and socialist minorities spread across Europe, inspired by the Irish obstruction in the British House of Commons in the late 1870s and early 1880s (Te Velde 2013). ‘The whole future of parliamentarism’ was at stake (Jellinek 1904). The crisis of parliaments was partly viewed as a crisis of bicameralism.

The challenges faced by bicameralism resulted in arguments stating that it was, in fact, safer either to keep the Finnish four-estate system or to upgrade it rather than adopting a bicameral parliament. For example, the Swedish-language newspaper *Nya Pressen*, suspicious of democratic reforms aimed against the aristocracy, argued that the ‘reform fanatics’ were unable to offer a good alternative for the old system, which had stood the test of time (*Nya Pressen* 1885). Actors with gradual reform plans argued that ‘it is better to fix a poorly built hut than to move to an unknown, foreign palace’ and that ‘a reasonable man would rather renovate an old, sturdy house than tear it down to construct a new palace for mere amusement’ (Numminen 1950; *Uusi Suometar* 1899).

Moreover, precautionary tales from abroad led to increased support of the unicameral model, which had, up to the 1880s, been considered the risky, revolutionary counterpart of bicameralism. The problems in Denmark resonated especially strongly with the Finns, whose Diet decision-making was often paralysed by a deadlock between two estates against two. The Diet decisions required a majority of three estates on regular matters. Two estates, the peasants and the clergy, had pro-Finnish Fennoman nationalist majorities, while the Nobility and the Burghers were in the hands of pro-Swedish members. The Fennomans argued that Finland was small, developing and still weak, and therefore could not afford to halt national progress by having two chambers fighting against each other. Finland needed more unity and harmony, while bicameral parliaments produced conflicts and politics.

The Fennoman nationalists started to move towards more radical democratic ideals from the early 1880s on. While the old generation of the Fennomans spoke in favour of the abstract ‘public opinion’ and ‘will of the people’, these rhetorical figures did not materialise in serious demands for extended suffrage until the 1880s. The Fennomans aimed their political rhetoric at the people’s peasant majority. Their main organ, *Uusi Suometar* criticised *Valvoja*’s reform proposals for favouring urban areas at the cost of the countryside. The Fennomans attacked the old privileges of the Swedish-speaking nobility. According to the Fennomans,

the nobility's representational rights were based neither on trust, ingenuity, education nor earned social status, but on an inherited 'fancy family name and a jingling coat of arms'. The Fennomans argued that the Nobility should give away its privileges and the three other estates should form a unicameral assembly. While earlier proposals were based on the use of electors among the lower echelons of society, and the number of tax units as criteria for suffrage rights, the Fennomans now claimed that direct elections, the principle of 'one man, one vote' and unicameralism were standards of the day. If implemented, they would increase the people's interest in striving for common national goals (*Uusi Suometar* 1881a, 1881b, 1884a).

In the 1880s, a new radical young Fennoman generation drew on empirical naturalism, individualism and moral relativism and stressed the need for a wide application of European democratic influences. The young students put faith in the idea of progress that emanated from the doctrine of evolution and the developments and explanations of natural sciences. Often combining nationalist Fennoman ideology with socialism, they spoke openly in support of radical democratic reform and argued that the spirit of the time had abandoned bicameralism. The power of landowners, aristocracy and capital had been replaced by humanism, civilisation and equality; representation based on class was replaced by representation of the people (*Aamulehti* 1882b, 1882c).

Unicameralism was now supported with the argument that it gave the most direct and undistorted expression of the will of the people's majority. It promoted national awareness and spirit, and strengthened Finland's autonomy and representation of the people. Unicameralism saved time and made decision-making more efficient (*Uusi Suometar* 1884a, 1884b). Upper chambers such as the British House of Lords and the Danish *Landsting* represented 'reaction' and 'conservatism' and 'obstructed progress', while democratic lower chambers were assemblies of freedom, democracy and the people. Upper chambers were becoming useless and obsolete (*Savo* 1887; *Päivälehti* 1896).

The revolutionary context of the Parliamentary Reform of 1906

The breakthrough of the unicameral model took place in the context of the Russian Revolution of 1905. In the 1890s, Russian constraints and the so-called February Manifesto published by Russian Emperor Nicholas II in 1899 shifted the political focus from the Finnish-Swedish language question to Finnish-Russian relations. The manifesto ruled that Russian authorities could bypass the Finnish Diet when revising Finnish constitutional laws. Other aims of the manifesto included, for example, the merging of the Finnish and Russian militaries. The so-called Constitutionalists, consisting of the more liberal faction of the Fennomans (Young Finns) and the Swedish Party, argued that passive resistance was the best way to end Russian 'oppression'. The Constitutionalists drew on legalism and argued that while the Emperor was an autocrat in Russia, he was a grand duke of Finland, which meant he was obliged to respect the Finnish constitution. The Constitutionalists argued that the 'illegal' decrees imposed by the Emperor should

not be obeyed but passively resisted. The conservative faction of the Fennomans (Old Finns), in contrast, supported appeasement in relation to the Empire and argued that Finnish interests would be best secured in the long run by submitting to most Russian demands.

Another political division became pivotal in the Parliamentary Reform of 1906. The Finnish labour movement, whose members lacked representation in the Diets, challenged the old political elite by actively invoking 'the will of the majority of the people', consisting of the workers and the poor. The Social Democratic Party of Finland was established in 1903 when the Finnish Labour Party (est. 1899) changed its name and proclaimed to be part of the international social democratic movement. The party's programme of 1903 was an almost direct translation of the *Hainfelder Programm* of Austria's Social Democratic Party (1888–1889) written by Victor Adler and approved by Karl Kautsky. While the rise of the labour movement and socialism were traditionally linked to industrial workers in urban areas, in Finland they spread swiftly to the countryside and among the poor landless peasantry. The rise of the Social Democratic Party challenged the position of the Fennomans as the sole and rightful representatives of the (common) Finnish people. The rise of socialism turned many of the Fennomans back to being supporters of more moderate reform and a calm and considerate upper chamber.

The Parliamentary Reform of 1906, as were all momentous reforms in early Finnish parliamentary life, was a result of shifts in Russian and international politics. During the Russian Revolution of 1905, demands for democratic reform were presented in the Empire, including the Baltic states and Poland. At the end of October 1905, the revolutionary spirit spread to Finland, where it manifested itself as a general strike. Collective action culminated in two main demands: the reversal of Russian attempts to integrate Finland into the Empire and the reform of Finland's outdated political system. All political groups shared these objectives. The Social Democratic Party (SDP), which had been a relatively modest force until the revolution, took the lead in the Finnish mobilisation and became a major political movement. The number of paying members of the SDP rose from 16,000 in early 1905 to 107,000 in October 1906 (Alapuro 2006). The party advocated its main concrete objective, the introduction of a unicameral assembly based on universal and equal suffrage for both men and women, with unprecedented force.

As a response to the revolutionary situation in Russia and pressure from the large-scale protests, Emperor Nicholas II signed a new manifesto on 4 November 1905, in which he reversed the February Manifesto of 1899 and gave Finland's domestic government the task of preparing a proposal for parliamentary reform. The manifesto laid down that the reform should be based on the 'demands of the time' and apply the principles of universal and equal suffrage. The manifesto did not say anything about the number of chambers. The publication of the manifesto was followed by intense public debate, in which political groups presented their proposals in reference to foreign examples and experiences. Newspapers published extensive presentations on foreign parliaments and constitutions. Public lectures were held and books were printed on the topic in order to influence and frame the Finnish reform.

Finland's domestic government appointed a reform committee to prepare proposals for a new parliament act and a new electoral act. The Committee consisted of 14 members representing the main political groups of the Swedish Party, the Social Democratic Party, and the Fennomans, divided into the conservative Old Finns and the more liberal Constitutionalist Young Finns. The committee had thorough knowledge of foreign parliaments and constitutions and experience in Diet work, ten of its members having been members of the estates. The committee members included, for example, the former *Valvoja* group members Th. Rein and J.R. Danielson, who had been active in the debates on bicameralism. The committee was in session for less than three months, from 8 December 1905 to 28 February 1906. The Emperor ratified the parliament act and the electoral act after hearing the Diet as well as Russian and Finnish authorities.

The parliamentary reform committee of 1905–1906 started its discussions on general principles and agreed that universal and equal suffrage, which had already been mentioned in the November Manifesto, would be implemented. Despite the fact that suffrage reform had been discussed for decades in Finland (Alapuro 2006), the democratisation of voting rights was dramatic and left its mark on the organisation of Parliament and its procedures.

The rejection of bicameralism

Unifying the people

The number of chambers was a heated topic in the parliamentary reform committee, and the Finnish reformers ultimately had several reasons for abandoning the bicameral. Firstly, it can be argued that the timing and political context of the reform played a crucial role in how Parliament would be organised. Non-socialist groups, who had earlier been satisfied with more moderate changes, such as a bicameral assembly and equal but not universal suffrage, eventually consented to the Social Democrats' demands for radical reform. In the unstable and revolutionary political situation, the non-socialist parties felt that only a unicameral parliament could efficiently calm civic unrest and unify the Finnish people in a critical, historical moment. There was a general consensus that the unique window of opportunity created by the revolutionary situation should be used effectively. The political elite feared that the long-awaited reform might not be passed at all if the nation seemed too divided or too much time was spent on disputations.

While the fear of political conflict and division had first been focused on the paralysis of intra-parliamentary decision-making, democratisation shed light on a wider extra-parliamentary context. The Fennoman leaders highlighted the importance of compromise during the general strike of 1905. Their rhetoric focused on restraining disagreement and conflict and stressing the need for national unity. Young Finn leader K. J. Ståhlberg argued that Finland's most important task at hand was to 'deepen and strengthen the internal harmony of the people'. Only through harmony could the Finnish people seize the moment. Ståhlberg argued

that all elements of the population should be included in striving for common national goals (Ståhlberg 1905, pp. 706–708).

In the reform committee, Old Finn leader J. R. Danielson argued that the exclusion of the intelligentsia from the chamber would only separate it from the people and create conflicts. Old Finn Juho Torppa argued that the problem of reaching consensus in the Diets was often the result of an inability to understand each other rather than irreconcilable views on common goals. Thus, ‘common understanding’ and ‘full integration of different opinions’ could be reached only in a unicameral parliament. Old Finn J. K. Paasikivi argued that a unicameral parliament was ‘the best way to unify the people’ (*Eduskunnan uudistamiskomitean pöytäkirjat* 1906). The participation of the people in a single chamber would strengthen patriotism and encourage Finns to strive for common goals.

These views stood, of course, in strong contrast to the typical criticism of unicameralism. The advocates of bicameralism had linked unicameralism to heated disputes, revolutions and chaos. In November 1905, for example, the anti-socialist Fennoman newspaper *Suomen Kansa* argued that the adoption of a unicameral system had resulted in a tyrannical government during the French Revolution. When a bicameral parliament was finally adopted, ‘the people was already torn’ and had ‘gone wild’, which resulted in the new despotism of Napoleon (*Suomen Kansa* 1905).

Defenders of unicameralism rejected such criticism by referring to the ‘calm’, ‘stable’ and ‘considerate’ Finnish national character, which helped the Finns avoid radicalism and resist the temptations of demagogues. Finnish actors mainly linked this character to people who lived in the countryside, which was the case for the majority of the Finnish population (*Aamulehti* 1882a, 1882b; *Koitar* 1905; *Turun Sanomat* 1905).

Strengthening national representation: Parliament as ‘the people in miniature’

Unicameralism corresponded with the ideal of national representation for Finnish nationalists. According to the Fennomans, parliament should be ‘the people in miniature’ and offer ‘a picture of the Finnish people as a whole’. It was argued that this could be made possible through proportional representation of different areas of the country and different classes of the population in one chamber.

The ideal surfaced in the Fennoman thought in the early Diets. In 1871, for instance, nationalist leader Yrjö Koskinen cited Mirabeau’s speech in the French National Constituent Assembly in 1789: ‘Like a map portrays mountains, dales, lakes and rivers, forests and plains, towns and villages, the representative assembly should present a miniature picture of all parts of the people as a unified whole’ (*Uusi Suometar* 1871). The idea of representation of all parts of the people supported the Fennoman aim of speaking in the name of the people and gaining a majority in the representative assembly.

This conception of representation became a central argument for justifying the combination of universal suffrage, unicameral parliament and proportional

representation in the reform of 1906. The Fennomans believed that an internally harmonious assembly of all parts of the people would ensure the legitimacy of the Parliament and strengthen national representation both within Finland and in relation to Russia. Such a parliament would best be able to speak and decide in the name of the Finnish people.

The surrogates for an upper chamber and the powerless Parliament

Against the backdrop of democratisation and the rise of socialism, a central question for the non-socialist parties was how to secure 'thorough, considerate and calm discussion and reflection' against 'immature', 'inconsistent' and 'hasty decisions' made by 'the uneducated masses' and 'occasional majorities'. The aristocratic elite studied procedural and electoral ways to avoid 'the tyranny of the majority'.

The Social Democrats were unconditional in their demands for a unicameral parliament. Inspired by revolutionary spirit, the party demanded that, instead of leaving the reform in the hands of the 'oligarchic class representation' in the Diet, which would opt for a bicameral parliament, the question should be decided by a democratically elected, unicameral 'national (constituent) assembly' (*Työmies* 1905a). Both the Russian authorities and the non-socialist parties rejected such an approach. The non-socialists underlined that the reform should be implemented constitutionally – a legislative national assembly would be a revolutionary option. The socialist press used fierce rhetoric and implied its readiness to use violence if 'the traitors' were to introduce a bicameral parliament in which the elite sat unequally in a different chamber (*Työmies* 1905b).

The Old Finns were the first to consent to the demand for a unicameral parliament. They had lost support because of their appeasement policy and were looking to siphon some support from the SDP supporters, especially in the countryside. The socialists were frustrated with the Young Finns' indecision. Some prominent Young Finns, who had been allies of the socialists in the passive resistance, supported a bicameral assembly. In mid-November 1905, for instance, Young Finn Eero Erkko, who had recently returned from exile in the United States, suggested that Finland should model its parliament after the US Congress. Erkko argued that the Finnish workers opposed European upper chambers as hosts of capital and class interests, but in his eyes, both chambers of the US Congress were democratically elected and represented the people. According to Erkko, there were differences of neither class nor ideology between the House of Representatives and the Senate. Instead, they were based on differently sized electoral districts, different age requirements and mandates of a different length. Instead of general elections, US Senate members were 'elected indirectly' by the state legislators. Erkko tried to sell the idea of a bicameral assembly to the supporters of universal and equal suffrage (*Helsingin Sanomat* 1905).

Finally, the Young Finns also faltered in the face of public pressure and assented to unicameralism. It is notable that the non-socialist parties, the Young

Finns, the Old Finns and the Swedish Party, abandoned bicameralism, as they understood that there were other means to restrain the potentially negative side-effects of democratisation. The Young Finns argued that as much as democratic aspects could be incorporated into a bicameral assembly like the US Congress, a unicameral parliament could also be equipped with precautions against haste and disregard. The party argued that procedure should be used to protect the rights of the minority and to make sure that 'sudden winds in the public opinion could not harm the steady work of the State'. Norway became the main model for such plans (Louhi 1905a, 1905b, 1905c; *Turun Sanomat* 1905).

In contrast to bicameral assemblies, the models for a unicameral assembly were few and far between. Germany, Greece, Bulgaria and Norway were the main unicameral examples discussed. Norway (cf. Smith, E., this volume) was considered the most suitable model for Finland because of its somewhat similar social and political conditions. The qualified unicameralism of the Norwegian *Storting*, which had already been presented in the Finnish discussions in the 1880s, became a central model in the parliamentary reform committee after bicameralism was rejected. At first, non-socialist committee members sought to replace the separate upper chamber by electing part of the single chamber in a different manner. As the proposals were turned down as a form of bicameralism, the next effort was to divide the chamber into so-called 'sections' inspired by the Norwegian *Storting*. Young Finn E. N. Setälä proposed that the smaller section would comprise one-third and the larger two-thirds of the members. The two sections would deliberate separately, and in case of disagreement the sections would negotiate in a committee. If this were unsuccessful, a final decision would require a qualified majority of two-thirds in a joint vote of the two chambers. In contrast to Norway, where the *Storting* elected one-fourth of its members to the *Lagting*, Setälä's proposal aimed to give the upper section (one-third of the MPs) more power in legislation.

Some Finns criticised the *Lagting* for being 'a mere committee' or 'a mere echo' of the majority of the *Odelsting* (cf. Rein 1885). Further proposals on the sections were made. It was, for example, argued that the smaller section should consist of older and more experienced members so that it would be 'calmer', 'more serious' and protective of the role of the educated intellectuals. The larger section would be younger, 'more lively' and 'progressive'. According to one proposal, electoral success should be the leading criterion for one-third of the smaller section, as this would encourage parties to choose good, merited and experienced candidates (*Eduskunnan uudistamiskomitean pöytäkirjat* 1906; Mylly 2006).

Social Democrats and Old Finns eventually abandoned the sections, which were replaced with the so-called Grand Committee. Based on the proposal by Swedish Party representative Felix Heikel, the unicameral Parliament was given a sixty-member Grand Committee, which discussed every bill after a referral discussion, standing committee examination and the first plenary reading. The Grand Committee would draw up a report for the second plenary reading. If the report was not passed as such in the second plenary, it was sent back to the Grand Committee with amendments. At this point, the Grand Committee re-examined the

question and even had the right to send the bill back to the standing committee. In addition to blocking hasty decisions, the Grand Committee was designed to increase the influence of intelligent, experienced members. The members of the Grand Committee (as well as those of other committees) were elected proportionally and indirectly by the MPs (Mylly 2006). Committees have played a central role in the Finnish parliamentary work since the Diets. It is notable that the Finnish word for parliamentary committees, *valiokunta*, signifies a group of the best and most capable individuals.

Finnish advocates of bicameralism and qualified unicameralism included strict minority provisions in their proposals on joint votes of the chambers and sections. These were eventually replaced with the procedure of 'adjournment to the next elected parliament' – an internationally unique product of the Finnish reform. According to this procedure, a minority of at least one-third of MPs (sixty-seven out of two hundred members) could, during the third reading of a bill, require that it be left in abeyance until after the next parliamentary elections. Electoral terms were set to three years. Constitutional revision required a qualified majority of two-thirds of two consecutive parliaments or, if declared urgent, a qualified majority of five-sixths of one parliament (*Suomen Suuriruhtinaanmaan Valtioapäiväjärjestys* 1906, §§57–60).

The possible negative side effects of democratisation were also taken into account when planning the electoral laws. The reform committee designed a system of proportional representation based on party lists which gave parties the power to ensure that their intelligent and experienced candidates would be elected. Large electoral districts were introduced in order to guarantee that enough capable candidates stood for election.

The procedures of the non-socialists were aimed to increase the influence of the educated and experienced MPs, to slow down the deliberative process and to force the majority into compromise. They were designed as surrogates for bicameralism. The Social Democrats condemned the complex and multiphase procedure and primarily criticised the Grand Committee and the minority provisions for leaving too many possibilities for efficient obstruction of reform. They argued that the bourgeoisie had made the unicameral parliament 'a system of one-and-a-half chambers' and 'a bicameral parliament in disguise' (Kuusinen 1906a, pp. 99–103; 1906b, p. 246; e.g. *Sosialisti* 1907a, 1907b; *Sosialidemokraatti* 1908).

An essential reason for the final acceptance of the unicameral model was the representative assembly's lack of final decision-making power. New legislation required promulgation of the emperor, there was no parliamentary government and the emperor had the right to dissolve the unicameral Parliament (which he often did). Finnish reformers of 1906 argued that the Russian ruler and the strong government acted as a conservative bulwark against hasty and inconsiderate decision-making typical of unicameral parliaments. Constitutional reformers retained the unicameral Parliament after independence in 1917, but its powers were counterbalanced now with a strong presidency in a republic, adopted as a compromise after the plans for a monarchy failed (Ihalainen 2017). The (semi-)

presidential system gave the president veto powers in legislation and positioned him or her independent of Parliament.

Concluding remarks

Crisis made its presence known in the Finnish parliamentary reform in three ways. Firstly, the reform was made possible by the window of opportunity created by the crisis of the Russian Revolution. Secondly, the crisis created an exceptional opportunity for the supporters of radical democratic reform, which, thirdly, resulted in the crisis of the bicameral model. Despite the dramatic nature of the reform, there was continuity: discussions on bi- and unicameralism were based on arguments that had already been made in Finland as early as the 1880s.

The delayed reform resulted in a radical democratisation. Had an opportunity for reform appeared earlier, Finland would have probably adopted a bicameral parliament with more moderate suffrage reform. This tendency of democratic and parliamentary reform was acknowledged in the Finnish discussions based on foreign experiences (Danielson 1881; *Mikkeli* 1905).

The role of foreign models was essential in Finland, a small and rather peripheral country which was still in the process of creating its own national tradition and practices. Finland, as a latecomer to parliamentary reform, was able to benefit from the experiences of other countries and apply their lessons. Finnish actors used foreign examples selectively to frame, contextualise and interpret domestic political questions and to influence the development of Finnish parliamentary life. Models for parliamentary practice were sought from a variety of foreign cases, but there was a strong desire to connect and identify with the Scandinavian countries and, in this way, contribute to a Nordic approach to politics.

The Finnish case illustrates that there are alternative ways to include characteristics of upper chambers in unicameral parliaments. By the reform of 1906, Finnish reformers had gained expertise in procedure as a parliamentary tool. The Finns had used procedure to fight the deficiencies of the obsolete estate system in the Diets, when thorough reforms were impossible because of Russian opposition. Procedures designed to overcome the estate division played a central role in introducing forms of parliamentary deliberation and inter-estate committee negotiation while at the same time preserving the forms of estate representation (Pekonen 2017a). These lessons of procedurally blurring the chamber division were further applied in the parliamentary reform of 1906.

The presidential powers, the strict minority provisions and the Grand Committee's old role were dissolved gradually from the 1980s onwards, especially in the constitutional reform of 2000. Today, the adjournment to the next elected Parliament applies only in questions of the constitution, and the Grand Committee specialises in matters related to the European Union. The main work of the Finnish Parliament is considered to take place in committees behind closed doors, where disagreement can be solved more pragmatically and calmly than in plenary debates (Pekonen 2011).

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