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<CN>Chapter 7

<CT>The First World War, the Russian Revolution and Varieties of Democracy in Northwest European Debates

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<FL>The First World War constituted a catalytic transnational experience that inspired new discourses referring to democracy. The impact of the war on individuals and societies, revolutions in Russia and Germany, suffrage reforms and constitutional changes seemed to make it essential for any modern polity to embody political democracy – in the sense of the will of the people being considered through universal suffrage and parliamentary representation[1] or through alternative direct forms of participation. 'Democracy' was moving to the centre of the political debate, becoming a procedural as well as a normative and increasingly future-oriented ideological term with which to identify. The concept became subject to constant disputes over its meanings, applications and implications. Debates on democracy were also at times exceptionally transnational in the period 1917−19, even though they mostly concerned nation states.

By 1917, leaders on both sides understood that the war was leading to an entirely new kind of society. The German Chancellor, Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, conceded that the war had fostered the emergence of 'a new era with a regenerated people' and that this might imply reconsidering the right way to ascertain the will of that people, particularly vis-à-vis the unequal Prussian suffrage system.[2] The British War Cabinet led by David Lloyd George concluded that it had become impossible to exclude from suffrage men *and women* who had participated in the war and thereby 'made the new Britain possible'.[3] Unlike in previous

revolutionary eras, the term ‘democracy’ was used by most ideological groups.[4] Optimism about democracy became prevalent on the left and mostly in the centre, but to a lesser extent on the right.

This chapter analyses the ways in which the war, as a challenge to the legitimacy of the states and previous conceptions about politics and international relations, internationalized and transnationalized debates on democracy.[5] It explores similarities and differences in debates on democracy in two great powers, Britain and Germany, and two smaller states, Sweden and Finland. These mostly remained nation state-centred, ideologically motivated and related to the party-political calculations of the day, but also had interconnections. The analysis is based on the uses of ‘democracy’ in parliamentary and press debates on constitutional reform during the cycle of discourse that followed the Russian February Revolution and the entry of the United States into the war. In parliaments, political elites debated future democracy in comparable institutional circumstances, making comparisons with other countries and thereby opening up possibilities for discursive transfers. The wartime press, too, was highly dependent on parliaments as forums for national discussion. Crossnational scholarly debates were also linked to parliaments through contributions by representatives who were academics.

How and why did conservatives oppose, doubt or redescribe parliamentary democracy in a period of total war, and how were some able to adapt to universal suffrage? Why were liberals, despite their reformism, cautious and divided? How did revisionist social democrats view parliamentary democracy while the far left called for direct action? To what extent were these debates affected by the state of international affairs or transnationally linked through the press and the activities of individual politicians? Examples from plenary debates, related press coverage and pamphlets from four European countries representing different paths to

democratization allow for a degree of European-level generalization on these questions.[6] ‘Democratization’ is used here in the contemporary Weberian sense of a process of transformation during which the masses enter politics; this process embodies at least the introduction of universal suffrage.[7]

Britain had an established parliamentary government, but lacked universal suffrage and had experienced a wartime decrease in parliamentary vis-à-vis executive power. Germany had a constitutional monarchy and universal male suffrage for the Reichstag, but its political system, dominated by Prussian political culture, was far from the kind of parliamentary democracy that the domestic opposition or the Entente was calling for. Sweden remained a monarchical polity within which pro-German and pro-Entente factions competed and that extended suffrage only after Germany lost the war. Finland, an autonomous grand duchy within the Russian Empire, had introduced democratic suffrage, but had a nearly powerless parliament and a constitutional question to solve after the fall of Tsarist power, a crisis of parliamentary government, disputes on the proper nature of democracy, a declaration of independence and a civil war. Whereas Britain tended to be increasingly viewed as a model for rarely defined ‘Western’ democracy, the German polity was presented in Allied war propaganda as constituting its counter-concept. Sweden and Finland were moving from German ideals of constitutional monarchy towards parliamentary democracy of the Western type – one in relative calm and the other in circumstances where ideological interpretations of democracy clashed in a civil war.

<HDA>The Great War that Turned into a Battle over Democracy

<FL>German war propaganda had been mobilizing the nation to fight against ‘the West’ and its ‘democracy’ since 1914. By 1917, both sides in the war were abusing these concepts in

simplifying descriptions of the confrontation.[8] The term 'Western democracy' was used in British discourse partly to persuade the Americans to the war, partly as a result of the impact of the American rhetoric of democracy; in Germany, it was cited as a reaction to claims about 'Prussianism'; and in Sweden and Finland, it was employed when their political elites needed to choose between national, Anglo-American, German or Russian democracy – or no democracy at all. The concept divided Europe by including some political cultures and excluding others, the dividing line running between the Entente and the Central Powers. On both sides, some oppositional forces were also questioning the democracy of their own country as opposed to that of the enemy.[9]

In German discourse on the so-called 'democracy' of the West, much criticism had been based on the classical notion of democratic systems tending to be subverted by demagogy and public opinion. Many Germans concluded that Western propaganda merely defended pseudo-democratic systems since not even all Western commentators believed in democracy.[10] This dispute entered a new phase when the Entente began to emphasize opposition to Prussianism as their war goal: in propaganda, and gradually also in the broader political debate, the war turned into a global battle over democracy as a universal form of government. 'Western democracy' united the Allied powers despite different understandings of this ambiguous concept and turned into a normative concept, affecting the self-understandings of the political elites, though still defined in a variety of ways to serve particular political goals. David Lloyd George, the British Prime Minister, started to define democracy in the domestic political context only once he had secured an election victory after the war.[11] Despite contrary claims in war propaganda, he was hostile to the emerging German democracy.[12] This had the transnational effect of discrediting democracy in Germany.

The fall of the Romanovs on 15 March 1917 provoked international interest in the democratic future of Russia, with socialist leaders such as Arthur Henderson of Britain, Hjalmar Branting of Sweden and many of the leaders of the Finnish Social Democratic Party finding their way to Petrograd to observe the course of events. Two weeks later, the British War Cabinet introduced its previously prepared electoral reform proposal, which suggested that suffrage in the oldest of parliamentary governments would be democratized. Once the United States entered the war and declared on 2 April that '[t]he world must be made safe for democracy', the German and Continental European debates were forced to take a stand on the Western understanding of democracy.[13] From a German rightist perspective, such propagation of 'democracy' was an attempt to alienate the German government and people from each other. The critics of this authoritarian state, on the other hand, saw democracy as challenging Prussian notions of the state.[14] However, the kind of democracy they proposed was not uncritically Western; they spoke for a more organic German democracy.

Democracy was extensively debated at the Reichstag in the spring and summer of 1917 and again in October 1918, when the Prussian system was falling. In Britain, discourse on democracy emerged in the late spring of 1917, but remained modest until the left began in 1918 to call for the advancement of domestic democracy through reforms. The question of democracy was no less acute for the Swedish and Finnish politicians, whose ways of thinking were moulded by the evolving war. As long as the German war effort seemed to be successful, the right preferred the German monarchical model to 'Western' democracy, or then they referred to traditional native democratic traditions.[15] They would be forced to rethink their relationship to democracy more as a result of the victory of the Entente than as a response to demands for reform at home.

After the war, there was enthusiasm for the construction of a specifically German version of a popular state among the left and some liberals, but a revolution in November 1918 left all sides dissatisfied. Accusations that the war had been lost because of a betrayal by the Social Democrats, the abuses of the leftist councils, the state of latent civil war, the limited economic benefits of the transition to parliamentary democracy[16] and especially the feeling that the Western democracies had not honoured their promises to the new democratic Germany in the peace negotiations all made democracy appear a suspect party-political (essentially Social Democratic) and unpatriotic concept.

In Sweden, the suffrage reform was obstructed by the right, frightened by the Finnish Civil War and still believing in a German victory. By contrast, the Social Democratic leader Hjalmar Branting profiled himself internationally as a pro-Entente spokesman for parliamentary democracy.[17] In Finland, the Social Democrats and the non-socialist coalition fundamentally disagreed on the proper ways to realize democracy. When German academic traditions suspicious of unlimited democracy met radically Marxist notions of democracy as the rule of the proletariat, supported by transnational links with Bolshevist revolutionaries and isolation from alternative socialist discussion, the debates on democracy became exceptionally confrontational. Only after the crushing of the Reds in the Civil War, the German defeat and a general realization that Finland needed the recognition of its independence by the Anglo-American great powers was the monarchist right ready for a compromise on a parliamentary democracy limited by presidential power.

<HDA>Anti-democratic Conservatism

<FL>A compromise on democracy was sought in all four polities. In Britain, the Conservative opposition to extended suffrage did not explicitly question democracy, but used rhetorical redescriptions and proposed postponements and amendments in order to mould it to their liking.[18] The majority of the Conservatives recognized the inevitability of the transition to universal suffrage and accepted it partly out of party-political calculations, expecting the patriotic atmosphere of wartime to give them an election victory.[19]

In Germany, Sweden and Finland, democracy was gaining ground in mainstream discourse, but right-wing opposition to democracy consisting of high-ranking civil servants, officers and leading academics spoke out on behalf of the old elites, who feared the loss of their privileged status.[20] Kuno von Westarp and Albrect von Graefe, representatives of the Prussian bureaucratic elite, rejected the democratization of the German Constitution[21] once the left suggested that Russia had joined the 'democratically governed, liberally administrated countries'[22] and that Germany was surrounded by democracies.[23] In the Weimar National Assembly, the right protested against the proposed democratic constitution, and the rightist press continued to hope for the restoration of an autocratic system.[24]

The determination of the German right to defend the established 'constitutional monarchy' encouraged their counterparts in Sweden and Finland to stick to similar views. Ultra-conservatives in Britain, Sweden and Finland engaged in debates on the nature of democracy, which perhaps made it easier for them to reconcile the new political order with conservatism. However, the sceptics of the Swedish right continued to protest even when the reform was about to be confirmed. Hugo Hammarskjöld, a former minister for ecclesiastical affairs, rejected 'the rule by the masses' and questioned the ability of democracy to make people any happier.[25] Indeed, a considerable degree of principled opposition to democracy continued to exist until the

early 1930s.[26] In Finland, though there were proposals to qualify it, no actual attacks on democracy were heard from the right in 1917 – the conservative but emancipatory Finnish Party being in principle on the side of ‘the people’. The Civil War, however, demonstrated to many conservatives the pernicious consequences of universal suffrage. R.A. Wrede, a former professor of law and MP for the Swedish People’s Party, maintained that the Finnish case, in which the unicameral parliament elected by universal suffrage had jeopardized the entire society, demonstrated the global decline of democracy.[27] A strong anti-democratic reaction followed in autumn 1918. Even after Finland had gained independence, some of the academic and economic elite questioned the ability of the nation to form a democracy, using arguments based on classical political theory and the adverse experience of Social Democratic dominance in the unicameral parliament.

<HDA>Academic Scepticism of Democracy

A slightly more moderate version of conservative scepticism was presented by other transnationally linked professors. James Bryce, 1st Viscount Bryce and a leading Liberal who had made a distinguished career both as an academic in law and history (he had written a well-known book on U.S. institutions and was currently President of the British Academy) and as a high-level civil servant (including the post of Ambassador to the United States), saw it as a mistake to adopt suffrage reform in wartime.[28] Bryce reflected on international developments in a functionalist comparative analysis entitled *Modern Democracies* (1921) as well.[29]

In Sweden, Carl Hallendorff, a historian and the Rector of Stockholm School of Economics, warned about plutocracy taking over in the name of democracy,[30] just as it had done in America. In the spring of 1918, the Swedish right still had good reasons to doubt claims about

any pan-European breakthrough of democracy after both the Russian and German attempts of 1917 had failed and the Finnish Civil War had demonstrated what universal suffrage implied.[31] Even after its introduction seemed unavoidable in late 1918, Karl Hildebrand found evidence of the double-edged nature of democracy in the United States, France and Germany.[32] It was not 'the mature will of the people based on understanding but the primitive and immature one that makes an unjustified use of the name of the will of the people' that was being mobilized.[33] Harald Hjärne, a professor of history, insisted that appeals to the will of the people were as unreal as appeals to divine providence under autocracy, since that will was a result of manipulation in elections.[34] The leading ideologists of the Swedish right clearly had not revised their political theory by the time of the transition to democratic suffrage. Such hardliners also included Hugo Suolahti, the Chairman of the Finnish National Coalition Party and Vice-Rector of the University of Helsinki, who viewed 'the class hatred which the Social Democratic Party has used as its weapon in a fight against the so-called bourgeoisie' as a manifestation of democracy at its worst.[35] Most Finnish conservatives would adapt themselves to parliamentary democracy only by the early 1930s.[36]

<HDA>Conservative Rhetorical Redescriptions of Democracy

<FL>A unifying feature of the right was the use of rhetorical redescription to defend the continuity or the slow evolutionary change of the prevailing constitution. It was the favourite argument of the British Unionist minority – similar to their anti-Parliament Act arguments of the early 1910s[37] – to claim that Britain already possessed 'democracy' and that they themselves championed it against innovations introduced with 'Prussian' methods. William Burdett-Coutts, an American by background, suggested that the proposed extension of suffrage struck 'at the

foundations of a democratic Government based on the representative principle'.[38] It could be argued that Britain was already progressing towards democracy within its gradually evolving political system and thus that no reform was needed. Besides, France, another 'democracy', was not implementing such a reform either.[39] After all, as it was held, the Western powers were democratic in principle.

In the Weimar Assembly, Konrad Beyerle, a professor of law representing the Catholic Centre, saw the revolution in autumn 1918 as having already led to a sufficient extension of 'a democratic-parliamentary form of government' and opposed any 'socialist' additions in the name of democracy.[40] The rightist leader Clemens von Delbrück talked about a sufficiently 'democratic monarchy' being created already with the reforms of October 1918.[41]

The Swedish right was equally keen on using such rhetorical ploys to obstruct reform. According to Carl Hallendorf, 'the democracy which we have' should be allowed to develop towards 'as extensive a capability of judgment and true maturity as possible' without sudden reforms.[42] In the view of Karl Hildebrand, the Swedish Constitution and societal spirit were 'far more democratic than in most other countries'.[43] Both were experiencing a 'democratizing development'; the Constitution could be changed once the evolutionary transformation had gone far enough.[44]

Among Finnish conservatives, the existing political order and the government's proposals for a constitution were viewed in 1917 as 'democratic' thanks to 'one of the most democratic assemblies of representatives in the world'.[45] After the Civil War, the monarchists insisted that their constitutional proposal was more 'democratic' than any of the republican proposals.[46] It seemed necessary to call any future political order – even a Germanic monarchy – a 'democracy': 'Demands for a king represent the most mature expression of democratic notions at

the present moment. The people know and acknowledge that they need a royal head of their democratic constitution. Therefore they want to establish a royal democracy.'[47] Prime Minister J.K. Paasikivi considered all criticism of the monarchical proposal to be unfounded unless 'democracy' was 'understood to stand for an ultra-socialist people's commissariat',[48] which is illustrative of the will to take over 'democracy' from the socialists. While the need to counter Bolshevism caused conservatives to talk about democracy, it also persuaded some of them to make concessions to appease the left and accept a less pernicious system. In Finland, the right successfully used similar redescriptions to force through a presidential republic after being defeated in an attempt to establish a monarchy.

<HDA>Conservative Adaptations to Democracy

<FL>The adaptation of the majority of the right to parliamentary democracy would be decisive for a successful transition to it. This adaptation was happening most clearly in Britain and would start among the Swedish and Finnish right, but no signs of it can be found in the speeches of the German right. After a decision by the Conservative Party to support reform, Lord Henry Cavendish-Bentinck advised his party to 'cultivate friendly relations with the great forces of democracy'. Once conservatism allied with democracy and set out to promote the welfare of the people, it would win 'a great and glorious future'.[49] The party was, quite rightly, counting on electoral support from the patriotic women and soldiers, and even most of the reform opponents refrained from delaying it.

In the Swedish First Chamber, Rudolf Kjellén, a professor of political science, expressed some understanding of the inevitability of democratization in June 1917,[50] at a time when reform was expected in Germany. However, even in late 1918, Carl Swartz, a former prime minister and

university chancellor, was the only major rightist leader to openly concede that ‘the time for the change of our constitution in a purely democratic direction has come’ as ‘the Swedish people are just as capable as many other peoples of taking care of their affairs on the basis of a democratic constitution’.[51] Nevertheless, the Swedish right continued to play a double hand and reserved the chance to appeal to their argumentative opposition should the reform fail.

In Finland, many members of the Finnish Party, the conservative party of the Finnish-speakers, sympathetic to social reform were not fundamentally anti-democratic. In December 1917, the liberal minister Onni Talas, who later became a conservative, argued that the constitution should be based on ‘the most democratic principles’ as ‘the Finnish people are democratic’ in their entire essence[52] – the obvious comparison being with Russian autocracy. The particular connotation of the Finnish vernacular translation of democracy (*kansanvalta*) as ‘the rule by the people’ also in an ethnic sense, suggesting the engagement of the educated Finnish-speaking people in running the state as opposed to the Swedish-speaking elite,[53] opened up a way for Finnish-speaking conservatives to accept democracy provided that a clear division of power and hence limits on majority power were maintained.

<HDA>Liberal, Progressivist and Agrarian Views on Democracy

<FL>Liberal parties had played major roles in the advocacy of constitutional reforms, but their contributions to defining ‘democracy’ in debates were rather modest, emphasizing the parliamentarization of the government and hiding concern for the party-political consequences of mass suffrage. Liberals in Britain and Sweden were generally pro-democracy, while their German and Finnish brethren tended to distance themselves from ‘pure’ democracy.

Cautiousness is characteristic of the British Liberal rhetoric of democracy. In the Commons, Willoughby Dickinson was the only MP 'flying the flag of democracy' in March 1917.[54] In May, Herbert Samuel, a former cabinet minister, characterized the major institutions of Britain as 'democratic'.[55] The British Liberals feared a takeover by the Labour Party and were cautious about calling for any democratic reforms until Lloyd George ensured the continuity of his mandate. The Liberal press nevertheless distinguished itself from the Conservative press in its openness to the idea of democratizing the British Empire in the sense of giving Indians a say in their government,[56] an example of the rising global dimension of democracy.

The German National Liberals were far from enthusiastic about adopting political models from the West in 1917, though their spokesman Gustav Stresemann recognized the dynamism of democracy.[57] The party would continue to hold a critical attitude towards democratization, rejecting the Weimar Constitution as being based on 'the spirit of an extreme democracy'.[58] The left-liberal Progressivists spoke more openly for 'the development of the state in a democratic direction' during the war[59] and characterized themselves as democrats and the new Germany as a 'democracy' after it, but even they did this with more hesitation than liberals elsewhere;[60] this reluctance reflects the prevailing reservations about the concept in German political discourse. Hugo Preuß, who planned the Weimar Constitution, did not use democracy as a programmatic concept and preferred to talk about a 'state of the people' (*Volksstaat*) instead.[61]

Swedish Liberals allied with the Social Democrats much more clearly than their German counterparts in challenging the right. They viewed democracy as a procedural concept for opposing rightist policies rather than spelling out any concrete objects of democratic reforms. The Minister of Justice, Eliel Löfgren, aimed at 'ensuring the undisturbed development of society by giving the right to, and share of, responsibility to the many, not only to the few'.[62] For

Axel Schotte, the Minister of Public Administration, democratization was not so much a goal as a medium for further transformation, 'which has everywhere and in all times been essential for a society that wishes to live'.[63] Liberal democracy remained regulated, focusing on procedures and explicitly rejecting 'the pure line' of democratization of the far left in favour of 'bourgeois democracy'.[64] This stood for favouring representative over direct democracy.

Finnish liberals were divided over the desirable degree of parliamentarization and democratization. Among the Progressivists, Bruno Sarlin presented bourgeois democracy as the very force with which the Civil War had been won and Bolshevism crushed.[65] The Civil War had been fought by various social groups 'for democracy, for democratic equal rights in the state and society and the liberty of the people/nation'.[66] Here, the notions of political democracy within a polity, ethnicity and national self-determination merged in a way typical of Finnish discourse.[67] Sarlin described how very different notions of democracy had clashed in the Finnish Civil War more dramatically than elsewhere. Sarlin's liberal definition contributed to an understanding of the confrontation that brought the victorious bourgeois groups together, persuading the conservatives, too, to accept bourgeois democracy while continuing to exclude any far-left versions.

A feature particular to Finland was derived from the exceptional early modern Swedish-Finnish tradition of the representation of the Peasant Estate in the Diet. This discourse resembled contemporary Danish and Norwegian discourses on peasant democracy (see also the chapters by Beurle, and Kurunmäki and Herrmann in this volume). The nonsocialist and anti-capitalist Agrarian League built its radical programme of democracy (or rather 'the rule by the people') on this tradition and played a key role in constitutional disputes, opposing both Bolshevist and reactionary bourgeois definitions of democracy.[68] Speaking against the monarchical majority of

the Rump Parliament of 1918, the leader of the party, Santeri Alkio, insisted that it was ‘a natural law’ that ‘the development of all humankind proceeds towards democracy’.[69] The Finns, too, should trust in ‘the development of the people, the inner power of the people, the education of the people and a constitution that enables the realization of the rule by the people’.[70] Alkio asserted that democracy would, despite all its acknowledged shortcomings, inevitably prevail and that the old elites had simply better recognize that in time.[71] Alkio’s unreservedly optimistic and future-oriented, nonsocialist and anti-elitist description of democracy was exceptional in the post-Civil-War context. The availability of this variety of Nordic peasant democracy, as a middle way between conservative and radical socialist conceptions, provides one explanation as to why the majority of Finns opted for parliamentary democracy as opposed to the Russian or German alternatives.

<HDA>Moderate Social Democratic Definitions of Parliamentary Democracy

Various branches of socialist thought advocated different concepts of democracy, ranging from the process-like concept of the revisionist majority Social Democrats to radical leftist understandings of democracy as the rule of the working class and the Bolshevist replacement of parliamentary democracy with a dictatorship of the proletariat.

In the case of the British Labour Party, the reformist implications of democracy were raised more distinctly only during the election campaign of 1918. In the reform debates of 1917, few Labour MPs used democracy as a programmatic concept, which differed from the contemporary Social Democratic discourses in Germany, Sweden and Finland. The Labour Party was careful not to associate itself with ‘Russian democracy’, the future direction of which was not yet known. Democracy was used rhetorically either to oppose or to defend proportional

representation.[72] In the opinion of the British far left, Britain lacked democracy, even in comparison with Germany, and preparations for direct action were thus considered necessary.[73] As the Labour Party set out to demand democratic reforms at home and support for democracy in Europe in 1918,[74] Lloyd George responded with insinuations of Bolshevism.[75] Despite a poor election result, the Labour Party continued to prioritize representative democracy over direct action,[76] distancing itself from council democracy – though its leading theorist, James Ramsay MacDonald, continued to emphasize weaknesses in parliamentary democracy and called for a British combination of democracy and socialism.[77]

The German Social Democrats openly challenged the Prussian order from late 1916 onwards with calls for political democracy in the sense of extended suffrage and the parliamentarization of the government. From the autumn of 1918 onwards, they competed with the far left by making cautious promises of economic and social democracy in addition to political democracy. A German version of democracy was their goal both during the war and after it: the Western democracies had their institutional deficiencies, whereas Germany had progressed in most areas of life and needed a revision of the political system to strengthen the state.[78] While the German Social Democrats and their centrist allies failed to force through a reform in Germany in 1917 and became associated by the right with plotting on behalf of the enemy, their calls for democratization, which were reported in the press, encouraged the Swedish and Finnish left (and even the British far left) to call for related reforms at home.

The political situation in Germany had changed completely by the time of the Weimar National Assembly in the spring of 1919. The polity had been preliminarily parliamentarized in October 1918, with some calling for the democratization of the constitution and others supporting changes mainly to please the Entente in the hope of more favourable peace terms. The

monarchy had fallen, and leftist experiments with direct council democracy had provided an alternative to parliamentary democracy, albeit one that the majority Social Democrats rejected as Bolshevism. In Weimar, the discourse on democracy was dominated by Social Democratic leaders who tried to find a middle way, playing down rightist accusations of betraying the nation by importing Western notions of democracy, on the one hand, and countering far-left criticism that they were not advancing the interests of the workers to a sufficient extent, on the other. One solution was to vernacularize democracy every now and then to underscore its national character as 'the rule by the people' (*Volksherrschaft*),[79] which was not so far away from the organic concept of a 'people's community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*) favoured by practically all political groups.[80] Eduard David, the minister responsible for the preparation of the new constitution, presented the proposal as 'the most democratic constitution in the world'[81] and the future Germany as a 'democratic republic, a republic in which the supreme state power rests in the people, in which the representation of the people is the source of political power'.[82] Social Democrats spoke about 'the democratic construction of our country' in 'the spirit of democracy',[83] but failed to win support for this discourse from the other parties. In Germany, democratic discourse remained distinctly party-political; it was overwhelmingly Social Democratic. Furthermore, disappointment with the Western powers resulting from the Treaty of Versailles gave democracy a questionable reputation.

The rhetoric of democracy and calls for suffrage reform (and other reforms that would follow in due course) were particularly strong among the Swedish Social Democrats. Their discourse was also the most internationalist, in that it viewed Swedish democratization as part of an irresistible pan-European, if not a global, process.[84] In the aftermath of the Russian February Revolution, the Social Democrats emphasized the breakthrough of 'democratism' (a term that

the right loathed) in every neighbouring country, a development that forced Sweden into introducing a reform.[85] Democratization would create opportunities for the talents of the people to develop and would lead to an increase in rational thinking among the masses; it would not lead to any upheavals.[86] The Swedish right was presented as allying itself with the 'anti-democratic ideals' of the past and with contemporary Germany by opposing the will of the Swedish people.[87]

The Liberal–Social Democratic coalition managed to force through the reform only after the fall of the German monarchy. The Social Democrats emphasized external pressures – the victory of Western democracy in the war and the German Revolution – in addition to the demands of the Swedish people, as forcing Sweden to change. To persuade the right, Hjalmar Branting described the future democracy as 'mature' and 'informed', and promised that it would proceed with caution when changing society:[88] an essentially 'Swedish democracy' would solve future problems in accordance with the will of the people,[89] a choice of words that reflects the general tendency to nationalize democracy after the war, which added to earlier national historiographies of democracy. On the other hand, in order to please the left, Branting promised that the democratization would take place in the spirit of 'our socialistic and democratic ideals' and bring the rule of the privileged to an end.[90] Swedish Social Democrats were positively optimistic about their future victory once majority parliamentarism was strengthened through universal suffrage, and they did not hesitate to identify the goals of democracy with their own ideology.

In Finland, the Social Democrats followed Kautskyist teachings about the priority of parliamentary activity in the expectation of a peaceful revolution in principle, but in practice their discourse on democracy had been more radical and was further radicalized under the

influence of the Russian Bolsheviks. The lack of a split among the socialists, unlike what happened in Sweden and Germany, meant that the moderates moved closer to the radicals. In July 1917, the possibility of a Bolshevik takeover in Petrograd (and expected constitutional changes in Berlin) encouraged the Social Democratic parliamentary majority to aim at full parliamentary sovereignty on the basis of a Marxist concept of democracy as the rule of the working classes. After the Russian October Revolution, the party adopted an openly revolutionary concept of democracy, one that the bourgeois parties associated with Bolshevism. Also after the Civil War, most Social Democratic speakers maintained their opposition to 'bourgeois' democracy, although some members aimed at building a bridge between the party and the centre by giving up the class-based exclusion of nonsocialist groups from the democratic forces. The aim of the revisionist moderates was to create 'such a constitution that the democratic majority of the people can act within it and advance social development'. They recognized the potential of the republican constitution as a compromise,[91] and in the interwar years they joined the bourgeois republicans in constructing a democratic Finland based on majority parliamentarism.

<HDA>Radical Leftist Definitions of Democracy

In Britain, the far left remained on the fringes of political discourse, propagating their views mainly through the press. The German and Swedish Social Democratic Parties, unlike the Finnish Social Democratic Party, were divided into revisionist majorities and radical Marxist minorities during the spring of 1917. Among the minorities, examples from Russia supported more radical conceptions of democracy: criticisms of parliamentary representation as a realization of democracy were heard and 'direct democracy' idealized. The Swiss political

system, in which there was no division between legislative and executive power, was presented as an alternative to Western parliamentarism, which was 'the opposite of democracy'.[92]

In Germany, many radical leftists were active in the council revolution, aiming at direct democracy. In Weimar, they wished to extend the concept of democracy: Oskar Cohn called for the democratization of all aspects of national life and the abolition of distinctions between the governing and the governed.[93] Despite trying to avoid associations with Bolshevism, the Independent Social Democrats rejected 'bourgeois' compromises on democracy and parliamentarism. For Alfred Henke, the proposed system constituted no more than a 'democracy of a minority' that legitimated the continuation of capitalist rule.[94] Though marginalized, the leftists forced the Majority Social Democrats to recognize that, in addition to political democracy, economic democracy and social justice should also be advanced.[95]

The Swedish leftists initially defined democracy in more inclusive terms than German or Finnish radicals, speaking for a democratic bloc that excluded only the 'anti-democratism' of the right.[96] They called for social and economic as well as political democracy, echoing the German far left and forcing the Majority Social Democrats to make promises on related reforms. They demanded *both* democracy and parliamentarism,[97] although appeals to the masses remained in their arsenal. Many leftists also sympathized with the uprising of the Finnish Reds, with whom they shared the notion of an ancient Swedish democratic tradition that needed to be restored.[98]

<HDA>Bolshevik Democracy?

On the far left, a rejection of parliamentary democracy in favour of the dictatorship of the proletariat was arising. This concept tended to supplant alternative understandings of democracy in Russian discourse and was actively imported to other countries, the first of which was Finland.

In Britain, Germany and Sweden, the sympathizers of the Bolsheviks never managed to take over.

The disappointment of the Finnish Social Democrats with parliamentary means of reform after 1907 was exacerbated in 1917 by a gradually radicalizing revolutionary discourse that contributed to their armed rising against parliamentary government in January 1918. In July 1917, Yrjö Mäkelin, Chairman of the Constitutional Committee, accused the bourgeoisie of 'a fear of the people's power', i.e. the rule of the working classes.[99] Under transnational influence from Russia, with Finnish MPs attending revolutionary assemblies in Petrograd, revolutionary Russian soldiers present and Bolshevik leaders visiting Helsinki, Kautskyist notions of parliamentarism and democracy were supplanted by Russian revolutionary discourse, in which contrasts between the educated classes and the workers as constituting the 'people' proper were emphasized (see the chapter by Beuerle in this volume). The bourgeois parties were excluded from cooperation in the construction of democracy; only the socialist majority represented true democrats. After the October Revolution, Social Democratic definitions of democracy were radicalized further, and the bourgeois parties, which now held a majority in parliament, were accused of being 'hungry for violence and illegality in the fear of democracy'.[100] The bourgeoisie lacked 'a democratic conscience' and were ready to make use of Russian counter-revolutionary forces 'against the democratic parliament of Finland, against Finnish democracy', referring to the dissolved former parliament with its Social Democratic majority.[101] The Bolshevik power in Russia, by contrast, represented 'true democracy'.[102]

In the eyes of the Finnish bourgeois parties, this uncompromising discourse became associated with the Bolshevik rejection of parliamentarism and democracy in favour of terror.[103] They responded with a republican constitutional proposal based on the principles of democracy

as they understood it.[104] A violent confrontation on the proper form of democracy was approaching as Otto Wille Kuusinen challenged this proposal as mere 'bourgeois democracy', the parliamentary model of which did not represent true democracy at all.[105] He claimed that Joseph Stalin, the commissar responsible for national questions, had instead recently shown in Helsinki the way to 'the democratic self-determination of Finland'.[106] Internationally, the Finnish Civil War constituted an example of a Bolshevik threat to representative democracy that made even conservative circles more ready to try regulated forms of democracy. The communist parties founded in this period, for their part, customarily denounced democracy and parliamentarism in their 'bourgeois' forms.

<HDA>Conclusion

<FL>The collective experiences and propagandistic discourses of the First World War and the Russian Revolution brought democracy to the centre of political debate around Europe and among all ideological groups. Democracy was becoming an increasingly normative and future-oriented programmatic and procedural concept concerning the organization and functioning of political systems. It was becoming a concept of identification for most political groups as well as an object of dispute about its proper meanings, applications and implications. The political rhetoric of democracy – if not always democracy as a functioning system of government enjoying legitimacy in the eyes of the majority of the people – was making progress.

The discourse on democracy was greatly influenced by the international situation, especially after U.S. President Woodrow Wilson had given the concept normative and goal-oriented content. The prospective result of the war also affected understandings of democracy in smaller countries, the Swedish and Finnish right providing the most obvious examples of

wartime opportunism and the far left being equally inspired by the Russian Revolution. In Britain, the democratization of Germany, though demanded in war propaganda, was viewed with suspicion for domestic party-political reasons, which, in turn, decreased German respect for democracy. Debates on democracy were affected by international comparisons and transnational transfers carried out in particular by internationalist socialists and conservative academics.

Even if catalysed by the transnational moment of early 1917, the debates on democracy remained overwhelmingly nation state-centred and were nationalized everywhere again in 1918 and 1919, giving the impression that transitions to democratic suffrage had been national processes. Whereas in Britain democracy was becoming a concept used by most political groups to characterize the established or future political order, and in Germany and Sweden it was mainly only the right who remained doubtful of democracy as a Western import or outdated idea, in Finland a violent confrontation on the understandings of democracy between socialists and nonsocialists emerged, which was reflective of the challenge of the Bolshevik ideal of the dictatorship of the proletariat to regulated 'bourgeois' parliamentary democracy.

Typical of the debates was an emphasis on equal voting rights and the parliamentary representation of the people as constitutive of democracy as a process leading to reforms; this definition also became increasingly accepted by Social Democrats, while the far left spoke for revolutionary council models and the immediate implementation of social and economic democracy. The German and Finnish left and some centrists associated democracy with the republican form of government, whereas the right continued to prefer monarchical and organic conceptions of the political system and mere revisions of the mixed constitution.

After revisionist Social Democrats prioritized parliamentary democracy in nation states, the readiness of the right to adapt to extended participation by the people would be decisive. A

common strategy of obstruction among conservatives had been to rhetorically redescribe the established order as 'democratic'. Now the even less palatable scenario of a takeover by Bolshevism contributed to their adaptation to democracy. The British Conservatives reconsidered their stance under exceptional wartime circumstances. In Sweden and Finland, the right deferred reluctantly to a constitutional compromise after the fall of the Prussian model. In Germany, the right shunned such compromises and maintained their anti-democratic attitudes.

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Notes

1. For further background, see P. Ihalainen, C. Ilie and K. Palonen (eds), *Parliament and Parliamentarism: A Comparative History of a European Concept* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2016).

2. *Verhandlungen des Reichstags* (VdR). *Stenographische Berichte* (Berlin, 1917–19), http://www.reichstagsprotokolle.de/index.html, 27 February 1917, 2374–75.

3. Hansard Online, m http://hansard.millbanksystems.com, 28 March 1917, c. 489.

4. Search Google Books Ngram Viewer for 'democracy' between 1700 and 2014 to see a distinct peak in British and American English references and a considerable rise in German ones in 1917–19. A rise in Russian references started in 1914, but peaked only in 1922.

5. J. Leonhard, *Die Büchse der Pandora. Geschichte des Ersten Weltkriegs* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 2014), 11, 14; R. Bessel, 'Revolution', in J. Winter (ed.), *The Cambridge History of the First World War, Vol. 2: The State* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 126–27, 144.

6. See P. Ihalainen, *The Springs of Democracy: National and Transnational Debates on Constitutional Reform in the British, German, Swedish and Finnish Parliaments 1917–1919* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2017), https://doi.org/10.21435/sfh.24, for extended national contexts. The intention here is to focus on how various ideological groups discursively constructed democracy.

7. M. Weber, *Gesammelte politische Schriften*, Johannes Winckelmann (ed.) (Tübingen, 1988 [1918]), 405. The term 'democratization' was in use in the other studied languages, but only to a

very limited extent in English, in which it mainly referred to what should or was claimed to be happening in Germany. Its later social scientific meanings are not discussed here.

8. R. Bavaj and M. Steber, 'Germany and "the West": The Vagaries of a Modern Relationship', in R. Bavaj and M. Steber (eds), *Germany and 'the West': The History of a Modern Concept* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2015), 17–18; M. Llanque, 'The First World War and the Invention of "Western Democracy"', in Bavaj and Steber, *Germany and 'the West'*, 70–71.

9. Gustav Noske, VdR, 29 March 1917, 2841; *The Herald*, 'The Prussian Reform Bill', 15 December 1917; 'Appeal to the Congress', 29 December 1917.

10. M. Llanque, *Demokratisches Denken im Krieg. Die deutsche Debatte im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Academie Verlag, 2000), 102; Llanque, 'The First World War', 74–75.

11. *Manchester Guardian*, 'Trade Unionism and Democracy', 2 September 1918; *The Times*, 'Towards a Programme', 14 November 1918, 'The Voter's Choice', 12 December 1918; *Manchester Guardian*, 'Premier & Government Promises', 2 January 1919.

12. D. Newton, *British Policy and the Weimar Republic, 1918–1919* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 1, 10–11, 415, 417, 424–25.

13. Llanque, *Demokratisches Denken*, 102–4, 106, 111–12.

14. Llanque, *Demokratisches Denken*, 12–13, 214, 307.

15. P. Ihalainen, 'The 18th-Century Traditions of Representation in a New Age of Revolution: History Politics in the Swedish and Finnish Parliaments, 1917–1919', *Scandinavian Journal of History* 40(1) (2015), 70–96.

16. C. Gusy, 'Einleitung: Demokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik – Entstehungsbedingungen und Vorfragen', in C. Gusy (ed.), *Demokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Republik* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2000), 11–36, 27.

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17. *The Times*, 'M. Branting's Tribute to British Army', 22 July 1918; *Manchester Guardian*, 'M. Branting's Visit', 28 July 1918, 'Socialist Appeal to Mr. Henderson', 17 November 1918.

18. N.R. McCrillis, *The British Conservative Party in the Age of Universal Suffrage: Popular Conservatism, 1918–1929* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1998), 16.

19. J. Garrard, *Democratization in Britain: Elites, Civil Society and Reform since 1800* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001), 4.

20. For Germany, see T. Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur in Weimarer Republik. Politische Kommunikation, symbolische Politik und Öffentlichkeit im Reichstag* (Düsseldorf: Droste, 2007), 38–39.

21. VdR, 27 February 1917, 2404.

22. VdR, 29 March 1917, 2859.

23. Von Graefe, VdR, 30 March 1917, 2919.

24. *Neue Preußische Zeitung*, 1 August 1919; Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*, 38–39.

25. *Riksdagens protokoll vid … riksmötet år … Första kammaren* (FK) (Stockholm: Riksdagen, 1867–1948), 17 December 1918, 10:68–69.

26. T. Nilsson, *Mellan arv och utopi. Moderata vägval under hundra år, 1904–2004* (Stockholm: Santérus, 2004), 81, 145.

27. *Valtiopäiväasiakirjat* (VP), *Pöytäkirjat* (Helsinki: Eduskunta, 1907–75), 12 June 1918, 1253, 1651.

28. Viscount Bryce, House of Lords Hansard, House of Commons Parliamentary Papers Database, 17 December 1917, c. 176.

29. J. Bryce, *Modern Democracies*, 2 vols (New York: Macmillan, 1921).

30. *Riksdagens protokoll vid … riksmötet … Andra kammaren* (AK) (Stockholm: Riksdagen, 1867–1948), 5 June 1917, 72:65.

31. Arvid Lindman, AK, 27 April 1918, 44:42–43.

32. AK, 26 November 1918, 9:2632.

33. AK, 17 December 1918, 18:44.

34. FK, 17 December 1918, 11:9–10.

35. VP, 21 June 1919, 1021.

36. J. Kurunmäki and J. Strang (eds), *Rhetorics of Nordic Democracy* (Helsinki: Finnish Literature Society, 2010).

37. R. Saunders, 'Democracy', in D. Craig and J. Thompson (eds), *Languages of Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 142–67.

38. Hansard, 22 May 1917, c. 2173–76.

39. Henry Craik, Hansard, 22 May 1917, c. 2237.

40. Beyerle, VdR, 28 February 1919, 464–65.

41. VdR, 28 February 1919, 383.

42. AK, 21 March 1917, 33:60.

43. AK, 14 April 1917, 41:38.

44. AK, 14 April 1917, 41:69.

45. Eirik Hornborg, VP, 8 November 1917, 28.

46. R.A. Wrede, VP, 12 July 1918, 1652.

47. Paavo Virkkunen, VP, 7 August 1918, 1824.

48. VP, 8 October 1918, 53.

49. Hansard, 23 May 1917, c. 2409.

50. FK, 9 June 1917, 56:45–46.

51. FK, 26 November 1918, 5:30.

52. VP, 6 December 1917, 368.

53. M. Hyvärinen, ‘Valta’, in M. Hyvärinen et al., *Käsitteet liikkeessä. Suomen poliittisen kulttuurin käsitehistoria* (Tampere: Vastapaino, 2003), 83.

54. Hansard, 23 March 1917, 2395.

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57. VdR, 29 March 1917, 2854.

58. Rudolf Heinze, VdR, 30 July 1919, 2093.

59. Otto Wiemer, VdR, 27 February 1917, 2400.

60. Friedrich von Payer, VdR, 10 February 1919, 20; *Berliner Tageblatt*, 11 February 1919.

61. VdR, 8 February 1919, 13.

62. AK, 27 April 1918, 44:21–22; FK, 27 April 1918, 27:32.

63. AK, 17 December 1918, 17:8.

64. Carl Gustaf Ekman, FK, 17 December 1918, 11:13.

65. VP, 14 June 1919, 884.

66. VP, 14 June 1919, 884.

67. In the Finnish language, there is no such clear distinction between the political people (*kansa*), the ethnic nation (*kansakunta*) or even a person with the rights of a citizen (*kansalainen*).

68. Santeri Alkio, VP, 12 June 1917, 511.

69. VP, 12 June 1918, 1254.

70. VP, 12 July 1918, 1659–60.

71. VP, 24 May 1919, 513.

72. Ramsay MacDonald, Hansard, 22 May 1917, c. 2227; Charles Cripps, House of Lords Hansard, 17 December 1917, c. 193.

73. *The Herald*, 'The New Germany', 12 October 1918, and 'The Dud Parliament', 21 December 1918.

74. *Manchester Guardian*, 'The Labour Appeal', 28 November 1918, 'Mr. Arthur Henderson', 2 December 1918.

75. C. Wrigley, *Lloyd George and the Challenge of Labour: The Post-War Coalition 1918–1922* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990), 1–2.

76. *Manchester Guardian*, 'Labour in the New Parliament', 1 January 1919.

77. J.R. MacDonald, *Parliament and Revolution* (S.l., s.n. [1919]), 64–65, 103–4.

78. Gustav Noske, VdR, 29 March 1917, 2839; Eduard David, VdR, 30 March 1917, 2902; Friedrich Ebert in July 1917 as cited in Llanque, *Demokratisches Denken*, 200.

79. VdR, 4 March 1919, 500.

80. See Llanque, *Demokratisches Denken*, 322; Mergel, *Parlamentarische Kultur*, 54.

81. VdR, 7 February 1919, 8.

82. VdR, 4 March 1919, 498.

83. See for instance Paul Löbe, VdR, 10 February 1919, 20.

84. AK, 27 April 1917, 50:22; AK, 5 June 1917, 72:5.

85. AK, 14 April 1917, 41:27.

86. Gunnar Löwegren, AK, 14 April 1917, 41:26–27.

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87. Harald Hallén, AK, 27 April 1918, 44:37.

88. AK, 26 November 1918, 9:22; AK, 17 December 1918,17:22.

89. AK, 26 November 1918, 9:24.

90. AK, 17 December 1918, 17:24; AK, 17 December 1918,17:32.

91. Hannes Ryömä, VP, 24 May 1919, 510; 14 June 1919, 927.

92. Carl Lindhagen, AK, 21 March 1917, 33: 37, 64.

93. T. Pohl, *Demokratisches Denken in der Weimarer Nationalversammlung* (Hamburg: Kovac, 2002), 125.

94. Pohl, *Demokratisches Denken*, 137.

95. Pohl, *Demokratisches Denken*, 140; Eduard David, VdR, 7 February 1919, 9; 4 March 1919, 500–1.

96. Ivar Vennerström, AK, 27 April 1917, 50:24.

97. Ivar Vennerström, AK, 5 June 1917, 72:11–12, 67; Ivar Vennerström, AK, 26 November 1918, 9:15; Fredrik Ström, FK, 26 November 1918, 5:35, 17 December 1918, 10:42, 45; Ivar Vennerström, AK, 17 December 1918, 17:61, 71; AK, 17 December 1918, 18: 36; 24 May 1919, 54:16; A. Friberg, *Demokrati bortom politiken: en begreppshistorisk analys av demokratibegreppet inom Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti 1919–1939* (Stockholm: Atlantis, 2013).

98. AK, 5 June 1917, 72:50; Ihalainen, ‘The 18th-Century Traditions of Representation’.

99. VP, 2 July 1917, 687, 689.

100. Jaakko Mäki, VP, 8 November 1917, 15.

101. Edvard Hänninen-Walpas, VP, 10 November 1917, 62–63.

102. Yrjö Sirola, VP, 8 November 1917, 25–26; 26 November 1917, 221–23; 7 December 1917, 411.

103. Paavo Virkkunen, VP, 26 November 1917, 206, 244.

104. VP, 24 November 1917, 182.

105. Otto Wille Kuusinen, VP, 5 December 1917, 350.

106. Yrjö Sirola, VP, 7 December 1917, 412, 416.