Shifting Regimes: State Formation and Political Reform in Early Modern Sweden

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Abstract
How, and in what ways, could early modern state formation have promoted the development of modern democratic institutions? The research project Shifting Regimes: Representation, Administrative Reform and Institutional Change in Early Modern Sweden propose to answer this question by studying the interaction between the political and the administrative spheres during regime shifts in Sweden, c. 1527–1810. The wider purpose is to analyze the agency behind institutional change by comparing the actions of political leaders with those of major administrative bodies. To study how key decision-makers acted to influence the organization of the state the project will focus on several “critical junctures”, or periods when the Swedish state experienced substantial change in a relatively short time. This paper presents preliminary findings from one of the case studies in the larger project: the political regime shift and its consequences in 1765–1766. The case study applies the concept of “state capacity” to give a theoretical explanation for the regime changes in Sweden in the mid 1760s.

Keywords: Sweden, Age of Liberty, Bureaucracy, Civil Servants, Parliament, Political Conflict, Enforcement of Laws, Regime Shift, State Capacity

1. Introduction

In September 1766, the Swedish Riksdag (the diet/parliament) approved an ordinance called “[O]n the promotion of the competent enforcement of the laws […]”. At the Riksdag, a new political regime was instated, the so-called “caps” (mössorna), and the ordinance marked an important step in the new regime’s showdown with the previous government of the so-called “hats” (hattarna). One of the most significant regulations in the ordinance was extensive

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2 The two ruling political parties in Sweden during the eighteenth century is traditionally known by their nicknames “hats” and “caps”. To some extent these political fractions corresponded to group and class interests in the Riksdag. The hats represented a protectionist economic position and an aggressive foreign policy, especially against Russia, while the caps predominantly advocated a restrained foreign policy and a liberal economic agenda. See further in Metcalf 1981, pp. 35–49.
restrictions on the appointment policy of the civil servants; the new regime purged the bureaucrats, ending a period where the state administration had held the upper hand, compared to the politicians.

The Riksdag 1765–1766 was one of the most turbulent in eighteenth century Swedish history, or what in Swedish historiography has been called the Age of Liberty (Frihetstiden) 1721–1772. In this period, the Riksdag became a political key-actor; consisting as it did of four estates: the nobility, the clergy, the burghers and the peasants. The Riksdag seized power from the state council (Riksrådet) and the king, and a sort of proto-parliamentary rule marked Swedish political life.\(^3\) After continually holding power since 1738, the majority of the hats were overturned in the elections before the Riksdag 1765–1766. To speak with famous Swedish political scientist, Fredrik Lagerroth, the result was “one of the great landslides in Swedish parliamentary history”.\(^4\)

The context of the Riksdag was foremost a financial crisis, due to the two failed wars against Russia in 1741 and 1757. Furthermore, the situation was worsened by the general economic crisis in Europe, and an accelerated inflation. Hence, the table was set for a regime shift, and the caps immediately attacked the previous policies of the hats. The critique had an anti-bureaucratic edge, and according to the caps, it was the bureaucracy that had held the real power in the previous decades, and it was the bureaucrats in the administration who were to blame for the miserable state of the realm.\(^5\) The economic policy pursued by the hats was criticized for not yielding the predicted results, and even worse, the policy had contributed to a situation where self-interest was considered to have gained priority over the common good.\(^6\)

\(^3\) The preceding period is mostly referred to as Sweden’s Age of Greatness (Stormaktstiden) 1611–1718, including the era of Carolinian absolutism (1680–1718). This period ended with the death of King Charles XII in Norway in 1718. See in English about the Age of Liberty in: Roberts 1986 and Metcalf 1987.

\(^4\) Lagerroth 1915, p. 569.

\(^5\) Lagerroth 1915, p. 585; Linnarsson 2017, pp. 91–92.

The aim of this paper is to empirically chart the introduction of the ordinance “[O]n the promotion of the competent enforcement of the laws [...]”, and by doing so present a theoretical analysis of its consequences and the regime shift of 1765–1766. I will use the concept of “state capacity”, derived from Lindvall and Teorell, to tentatively explain the political changes.\(^7\) The paper is part of a case study, comprising the period 1765–1772, starting with the Riksdag in 1765 and ending with the autocoup of king Gustaf III in 1772. The paper presents preliminary results from the first part of this case study. Furthermore, the study is a part of the research project *Shifting Regimes: Representation, Administrative Reform and Institutional Change in Early Modern Sweden*.\(^8\) The project covers the period 1527 to 1810 and I will start by shortly describing the overall project and the basics for our methodology. Thereafter, I will discuss some general theoretical approaches and the concept of state capacity, before analyzing the case of 1765–1766. The paper concludes with results and some implications for further research.

2. The research project “Shifting Regimes”

The problem of how to build stable democratic regimes in hostile surroundings lies at the heart of the project. Since the start of the de-colonization process after World War II, and further triggered by the upheavals after the fall of the Berlin wall 1989, leaders of the western nations have made great efforts to establish democratic rule in contested areas of the globe such as the Middle East, Central Africa or South-East Asia. The results of trying to implement a “Western” or “European” model for parliamentary democracy in places like Somalia, Afghanistan, Congo Kinshasa or East Timor has generally been frustrating; democratic institutions don’t seem to travel very well. As a result, the relation between state building and democratic reform have

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\(^7\) Lindvall & Teorell 2016.  
\(^8\) Financed by the Swedish Research Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*), 2018–2021.
come under new scrutiny from experts in political science, international relations as well as political history.\(^9\)

Some scholars have claimed that crucial legal and administrative institutions must be established before parliamentary democracy can be successfully introduced.\(^10\) Others argue to the contrary, that democratic government is a necessary tool for establishing well-functioning administrative bodies.\(^11\) The timing of the process is thus a crucial matter: should we consider democracy a pre-condition for effective government or is it the other way around? This question begs for a historical investigation, since many states who are considered as stable democracies today, have a long and troubled history.\(^12\)

There are several reasons for making Sweden a case for studying changes in the state-democracy nexus over time. \textit{First}, Modern Sweden has often been referred to as a model democracy with strong parliamentary tradition and a high degree of popular trust in the state bureaucracy.\(^13\) \textit{Second}, Sweden has a long history as an independent nation, stretching back to medieval times. Some scholars have even argued that the Swedish tradition of bargaining in local forums was an important precondition for modern democracy.\(^14\) \textit{Third}, in the early modern period Sweden became a pioneer organizer of the fiscal-military state, with a highly developed capacity to extract resources and allocate revenue for military purposes.\(^15\) \textit{Fourth}, Sweden is often presented as an anomaly when discussing state building in the early modern period. In terms of regime type, Swedish politics shifted wildly: from representative regime to royal absolutism and then back again.\(^16\) The project seeks to explain how and why Sweden managed

\(^11\) Moore 1966; Ertman 1997; Sung 2004; Chowdhury 2004.
\(^12\) Capoccia & Ziblatt 2010.
\(^13\) Östlund 2007; Teorell & Rothstein 2012.
\(^14\) e.g. Österberg 1993 & 1998.
to develop effective administrative institutions and a resilient parliamentary regime, in spite of these oscillations.

The research project will study the relation between democratization and state building by focusing on regime shifts in early modern Sweden. Sweden provides the case to discuss a general problem: We want to compare the oscillations between monarchic rule and constitutional government, and analyze their impact on administrative and representative functions respectively.\(^\text{17}\) We seek to determine what agents played the decisive role in major shifts of power: the rulers, the officeholders or the representatives of the realm—or the interaction between them. Our premise is that institutional changes involved agents operating in both spheres of government, and hence, produced a strong administrative legacy, which served to minimize the disruptive elements of autocratic government.

The early modern Swedish state of course never succeeded in establishing a democratic government in the modern sense of the word. However, there were strong representative institutions who remained in place throughout the period, thus surviving the oscillations between absolutist rule and constitutional government. The Riksdag was the main arena for national politics from the reformation right up to the modern period, and at the local level the district courts defended their traditional rights of self-rule.\(^\text{18}\) The Swedish tradition of self-government by peasant elites resembles the participatory model identified by Thomas Ertman as one of the important foundations for Early modern state building.\(^\text{19}\) It is therefore interesting to study the influence and impact—or lack of impact—of the recurrent regime shifts on these representative institutions.

Methodologically, we will empirically investigate six different regime shifts in Swedish history between 1527 and 1810. These are all important events in political history where the

\(^{17}\) Lemke & Reed 1996; Elgie 1998; Wahman et al 2013.
\(^{19}\) Ertman 1997.
political regime was radically changed. We will analyze key agents as well as the long-term effects of their efforts on the development of political institutions.\textsuperscript{20} First, we will focus on the setting: the key agents active in both spheres of government during the regime shift in question. Second, we will then map out the case by studying their agency and tracing its effect on governance and administration. Third, we will analyze the outcome, whether the shift in government led to lasting improvements in governance or political representation.

3. Theoretical approaches

The project draws on the theory of historical institutionalism.\textsuperscript{21} This perspective emphasizes the role of political institutions as central to societal change. The political system—the state in its broadest sense, both as an organization and as a system of laws—is the focus of our analysis.\textsuperscript{22} Our research covers empirical aspects, where the state apparatus lends itself to a study over longer time periods, as well as theoretical ones, because it is within this system that the rules of human relationships are regulated over time.\textsuperscript{23}

While there are often strong tendencies of path dependency in the development of political institutions, periods of stability are sometimes disrupted by moments of substantial institutional change, so-called “critical junctions”.\textsuperscript{24} These junctions consist of short periods of time when (dramatic) changes can occur, both in the political arena, as well as in the administration. Accordingly, the research project will investigate such periods when there was great potential to influence and change the political and administrative institutions.

In this paper, the concept of state capacity will be used to theoretically explain state building and political development. This strand of theorizing about the state has recently gained

\textsuperscript{20} Capoccia & Ziblatt 2010; Beach & Brun Pedersen 2013.
\textsuperscript{22} cf. Premfors 1999.
\textsuperscript{23} North 1990.
\textsuperscript{24} David 2007; Capoccia & Kelemen 2007.
a growing interest amongst scholars in the social sciences, as well as among some historians. Political scientists Johannes Lindvall and Jan Teorell has presented a conceptual framework for the use of state capacity in—what I interpret as—a long-term historical analysis of the development of the (modern) state.\textsuperscript{25} They conceptualize state capacity as political power and develop an argument about the resources needed to project such power.\textsuperscript{26} They do so by differentiating between resources, policy instruments and policy outcomes. Resources are the means of the state to increase its capacity: i.e. money, human capital and information. Policy instruments are the tools the state can use to implement its policies: i.e. coercion, economic incentives and propaganda. Policy outcomes, lastly, is the intended effect of the implementation of the chosen policy. Following Lindvall and Teorell, I therefore define state capacity as the casual relationship between policy instruments and policy outcomes.\textsuperscript{27} To analyze increase or decrease of state capacity, I measure the policy instruments implemented by the state to increase the effect of the same policies.

The advantage of this framework is its holistic approach to state building. It encompasses several parts of “what is going on” when the state is implementing policies. It is also sympathetically trans-historical, and it is possible to apply it to various eras of history. However, its somewhat all-embracing framework is also a challenge for an historical analysis, grounded in empirical work. Consequently, I will in this paper focus on only one part of the model: the policy instruments. The subject matter for the following analysis is the control of the civil servants and their perceived quality, i.e. the human capital of the eighteenth-century Swedish state. In this analysis, I concentrate on the policy instruments implemented to obtain what Lindvall and Teorell have called “a well-trained and reliable government workforce”.\textsuperscript{28}

The political conflicts on how to recruit and to manage this supposedly well-trained state

\textsuperscript{25} Lindvall & Teorell 2016.
\textsuperscript{26} Lindvall & Teorell 2016, p. 1.
\textsuperscript{27} Lindvall & Teorell 2016, p. 18.
\textsuperscript{28} Lindvall & Teorell 2016, p. 15.
administration is to be found in the archive, and the strive for the deployment of this resource is therefore possible to chart and analyze. After doing so, I will return to the theoretical discussion about state capacity. The operationalization here is elaborative and an attempt to tentatively apply the framework to a specific empirical case.

4. The revolt against the civil servants: 1765–1766

When the *Riksdag* of 1765–1766 began in Stockholm, the ground was prepared for the new leaders from the caps. The elections before the *Riksdag* had secured a majority in all important committees and deputations. Consequently, the new majority went about to criticize the state of the society at whole, chiefly focusing on three areas; the strained financial situation, the influence of foreign powers on Swedish politics, and the corrupt and dysfunctional state administration and its civil servants.²⁹ Each of these areas rendered extensive debates in the estates and also in printed pamphlets and various written submissions to both the administration and to the *Riksdag*. Hence, it would be possible to devote an entire investigation to the new economic policy that were implemented, or to analyze the critique against the influence of foreign powers, e.g. the Swedish dependence on subsidies.³⁰

However, the common denominator in all of the three areas was a critique against the unrestricted powers of the civil servants, the so-called “reign of the civil servants” (*ämbetsmannaväldet*). According to the caps, the civil servants favored themselves and their colleagues when it came to promotion and rewards, instead of working for the public good. Central to this critique was the argument that the laws and regulations of the kingdom were not enforced and upheld, and that the civil servants enriched themselves at the expense of the public.

²⁹ See Malmström 1900, p. 408.
³⁰ The changes of the economic policy in 1765–1766 are discussed in Linnarsson 2017 & 2018. Foreign subsides to Sweden has recently been analysed in Norrhem 2018.
When other policy areas were discussed, for example the economic policy, the quality and impact of the officials was seen as an important cause and explanation. Because of this, the question of how to recruit civil servants had been in the center of the political debate in Sweden during most of the eighteenth century. Therefore, the political debates in conjunction with the enactment of the above-mentioned ordinance “[O]n the promotion of the competent enforcement of the laws […]” makes a good case for an analysis of the regime change in Sweden in 1765–1766.

One of the loudest critics of the state of the society in the 1760s was the economist and radical political writer Anders Nordencrantz. At the previous Riksdag, in 1760, he attracted a lot of attention with a statement that criticized the civil servants.31 In 1765 he continued his critique, and sent in a memorial to a subcommittee of the “Great deputation” (Stora deputationen).32 This was a parliamentary committee during the 1760s who mainly prepared constitutional issues, wherein questions about the appointment policy was included.33 Nordencrantz named the bureaucracy the enemy and the cause of the failures of the country. Most important, according to Nordencrantz, was the civil servants’ bad enforcement of the laws, which was a consequence of the self-interest of the bureaucracy. In the memorial, Nordencrantz criticized the practice of handing out office for life and the automatic advancement to higher offices, based solely on seniority.34

32 “Ursprugete Orsaker, hvarföre Rikets goda Lagar haft så elak wärkställighet”, no date, printed in Anders Nordencrantz, Undersökning om de rätta orsakerne til den blandning som skedt af lagstiftande och lagskipande, redofordrande och redoskyldige magternes gjöromål ... (Stockholm: Carl Stolpe, 1770).
33 The Swedish Riksdag in the Age of Liberty consisted of a plethora of various deputations, committees and subcommittees. Some of them was permanent, regulated in the Riksdag act, some of them temporary, similar to a “select committee”. The decision-making powers of the various bodies varied, and they usually only prepared the questions, while the estate as such made the final decision. For the sake of simplicity, I only refer to the “Great deputation” in this text, even if some of its subcommittees was involved.
The latter practice was introduced in 1756 when the so-called “Report of state offices” (Tjänstebetänkandet) was approved.\(^{35}\) The report marks the pinnacle of the powers of the bureaucracy and established the principle of seniority (anciennitetsprincipen).\(^{36}\) It outlines the relationship between the concepts of skill, experience and merit, and concludes that all of these should be measured by seniority. Due to the “Report of state offices” the power over appointments to offices in the state administration was concentrated within the bureaucracy itself. The kings’ control over the nomination policy was circumscribed, and the politicians in the Riksdag had little possibilities to intervene in individual cases.

The “Report of state offices” had been the target of critique and complaints since its enactment in 1756. Ten years later, the political majority had changed and the situation was favorable for those working for regime change, amongst them Anders Nordencrantz who fiercely criticized the principle of seniority in his memorial. According to him, the principle had led the civil servants to violate the king’s rights and the freedom of the nation.\(^{37}\) The causes for this was the “right [of the civil servants themselves], to appoint extra-ordinary without proposal, using seniority, exchanges and trade of positions”.\(^{38}\) The misuse of the appointment policy were the reason for the bad enforcement of the laws and rules, and Nordencrantz blamed the civil servants. He accused them for being corrupt and abusing their powers, and he called for a reform of the overall appointment policy if, according to Nordencrantz, “the good laws henceforth will win better enforcement than hitherto”.\(^{39}\)

The conclusion of Anders Nordencrantz memorial was, therefore, that the miserable state of the society in Sweden in 1765 to a large extent was to blame on the “reign of the civil servants”,

\(^{35}\) Kongl. Maj:ts Nädige Förordning. Angående Hvad som bör i akt tagas vid Förslagers upprättande til lediga tienster och Beställningar samt theras besättande ... (Stockholm: Kongl. tryckeriet, 1756).

\(^{36}\) Lagerroth 1915, p. 490.


\(^{39}\) Nordencrantz, “Urspruigelige Orsaker …”, p. 231, “om de goda Lagarne hådanefter skola vinna bättre wärkstållighet än hit intils”.

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which deprived both king and the Riksdag from its legitimate rights and obligations. Nordencrantz contended that the Riksdag should investigate the conditions within the state administration and give suggestions on how to improve the future enforcement of the laws—i.e. the appointment policy.

Anders Nordencrantz was joined in his critique by the baron Carl Magnus Adlermarck, who also sent in a memorial to the “Great deputation”.40 Adlermarck painted a stark negative picture of the Swedish state in 1766. According to him, the Riksdag and the state administration had deteriorated severely since the 1720s. For this, the bureaucracy was to blame, and most importantly, individual prestige and self-interest amongst the civil servants had gotten in the way of the task of promoting the common good. Like Nordencrantz, Adlermack sought the reason for this in the bad enforcement of laws and regulations.

Adlermarck was even more negative than Nordencrantz to the “Report of state offices” and blamed it for the degenerating effect it had on the civil servants of the state. According to him, the main reason for the dysfunctional state administration was to be found in the distorted appointment policy, and one of the main issues was the way in which new civil servants was recruited. The principle of seniority deprived the administration of the “best” servants, according to Adlermack, and furthermore, the servants within the administration was able to “choose their successors themselves, which was contrary to the principle of services belonging to the kingdom”.41

This course of action led to administrative inbreeding and Adlermarck was much worried about the future of the kingdom. This was not the kind of people he wished to run the

40 Carl Magnus Adlermarck, “Lagmannen och hofrätts-Rådet herr Baron Adlermarks Votum”, February 20, 1766, printed in Handlingar som utwisa, huru ledamöter af riksens högloflige ständer tillförene tänkt i de ämnen, som ifrån högl. secrete- utskottets sammanträde med secrete- och justitiae-deputationerne nu senast äro upgifne, om wåra lagars wärkställighet ... (Stockholm: Grefingske tryckeriet, 1769).

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bureaucracy: “in the way the civil servants are now appointed, all incentives disappear; it does not need any work, all encouragement is killed, no prerogative for the more skilled, but only benefits for the slow and less hard-working, with one word, all the officials cast in one form”.42 Adlermarck connected an efficient and corruption-free bureaucracy to the welfare of the realm, and according to him, the situation in 1766 pointed in the wrong direction. Like Nordencrantz, he advocated a reform of the recruitment of civil servants, the appointment policy at large and a more forceful enforcement of laws and rules.

The critique against the appointment policy, here exemplified by Anders Nordencrantz and Carl Magnus Adlermarck, struck the core of the criticism that the new regime directed towards its predecessors. It made the reformation of the appointment policy one of the most important questions at the Riksdag 1765–1766. Both memorials were sent to subcommittees of the “Great deputation”, which was the committee responsible for the investigation of the question. The Deputation was given instructions to work out a report and present recommendations for new regulations regarding the appointment policy. In the summer of 1765 it started to discuss the memorial from Nordencrantz, at that point still an anonymous text. Since the caps had majority in the committee, the representatives were more or less in agreement of the situation described by Nordencrantz.

The interpretation of what was a good enforcement of the laws, in response to the perceived bad enforcement, took its cue from the form of government from 1720.43 This document formed the basis for the common good and on which foundation the Swedish kingdom rested. In the discussions in the deputation, the critique was initially towards the “explications, and

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42 Adlermarck, “Adlermarks Votum”, pp 14–15, “På det sättet tjensterna nu äro inrättade, försvinner all åhåga; det behöfves ej något öfwerlopps arbete, all uppmuntran dödad, intet prærogativ för de mera skickelige, utan enahanda med den tröge och mindre idoge, med ett ord, alla Embetsmän stöpte uti en form”.
43 The form of government stated that the higher positions in the state administration was to be appointed by the king in council. Usually the discussions referred to § 40 in the form of government from 1720, see Cavallin 2003, pp. 76–77.
exceptions, which were later added” to the form of government.\textsuperscript{44} This illustrates the perception that the form of government was in some cases seen as infallible. The chair of the deputation, lord marshal Thure Rudbeck, described the task of the deputation to once again make “the form of government […] as good and clean to all its content, as it was when it first appeared”.\textsuperscript{45} If this was accomplished, the enforcement of the laws would be better, according to the lord marshal.

The discussion revolved around the so-called three “powers”: the king, the council and the Riksdag, considered to be the basic elements of the political system, and by extension of society as such.\textsuperscript{46} Many of the committee members was self-critical, and argued that in some respect the Riksdag itself had went too far in its exercise of power during the preceding decades, and it was important to restore the balance between the three power spheres.\textsuperscript{47} One example is the state councilor and secretary of state, Carl Hermelin, that in a note to the committee blamed both the Riksdag and the State Council, and more specifically the persons who had held these various offices: “some powerful [persons] have sought to lead the Nation to their [own] intentions”.\textsuperscript{48} Hermelin blamed his predecessors for enriching an promoting themselves before the common good, thus, he joined the widespread critique against the alleged influence of self-interest. However, some of the perceived faults was blamed on the practical execution of the political decisions, hence a criticism of the civil servants. The representative from the peasant estate, Jon Bengtsson, gave an example of the bad enforcement: “it has happened that a

\textsuperscript{44} “Transumpt af Riksens högl. Ständers Stora Deputations Större Utskotts Protocoll”, August 2, 1765, printed in Handlingar som utwisa, huru ledamöter af riksens högloflige ständer tilförene tänkt i de ämnen, […], om våra lagars wärktällighet ... (Stockholm: Grefingske tryckeriet, 1769), p. 8, “explicationer, och exceptioner, hwilka sedermera tillkommit”.

\textsuperscript{45} “Transumpt af Riksens högl. Ständers Stora Deputations Större Utskotts Protocoll”, August 2, 1765, p. 8, “Regeringsformen måtte til alt sit innehåll blifwa lika så god och ren, som den war då den först utkom”.

\textsuperscript{46} See Malmström 1900, p. 409.

\textsuperscript{47} This was discussed on August 2, when Nordencrantz memorial was treated, see “Transumpt af Riksens högl. Ständers Stora Deputations Större Utskotts Protocoll”, August 2, 1765, e.g. p. 13.


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completely different decision has been sent out from the State Council to the King’s Commanders in the country, then what the estates [Riksdagen] had decided”.49

The “Great deputation” concluded its deliberations in the spring of 1766. Thereafter their report, “On the causes of the bad enforcement of our good laws […]”, was written.50 The report formed the basis for the later published ordinance “[O]n the promotion of the competent enforcement of the laws […]”. The report, and the ordinance, has been described as a summary of the critique from the caps against the former regime of the hats, and the alleged “reign of the civil servants”. When the report from the deputation was finished, it sparked debates in the four estates, mostly in the nobility that discussed the report at some length.51

The report blames the miserable state of the Swedish kingdom on the civil servants and on the policy of the hat-leaders. Like Nordencrantz and Adlermark, the civil servants yearning for titles and positions is singled out as causes for the bad enforcement of the laws and rules—i.e. the bad state of the society as a whole. The deputation accused the civil servants to be greedy and to only strive for promotion. The reason of this was evident, according to the report: “the positions have to be more and more fulfilled by less capable people, the country for incurable damage, in all branches of the constitution”.52 The quality of the civil servants was thus directly connected to the enforcement of the laws and to the wellbeing of the kingdom. The report explicitly stated that “one reason for the bad enforcement of the laws lies in the system of

50 Rikens ständers stora deputations betänkande, om orsakerne til wåra goda lagars elaka verkställighet, och botemedel theremot för framtiden (Stockholm: Kongl. Tryckeriet, 1766).
51 This debate is not part of this paper, see RASP Vol. 26:3, p. 136.
52 Rikens ständers stora deputations betänkande, p. 4, §2, “ämbetsmännen måste mer och mer uppfyllas av mindre dugliga personer, Landet til obotlig skada, i alla grenar af lagskipningen”.

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promotion, which always has an irrefutable effect on the skills of the state servants, and which affects the constitution in general”.

Consequently, the most important regulation in the ordinance “[O]n the promotion of the competent enforcement of the laws […]” was the annulment of the “Report of state offices” from 1756. The principle of seniority was abolished, from now on the most skilled and deserved candidates would receive the appointment. The ordinance established clearer bureaucratic principles, such as appointment based on merit and a greater transparency in the administration, making it possible for “new men” to gain promotion more easy than previously. The principle of seniority was greatly reduced in importance with one exception; if someone had been proposed for a position three times, but surpassed by others: the fourth time he should be automatically promoted. The new rules, or more correctly the re-implementation of previous rules, continued to apply also after the autocoup of Gustaf III in 1772. Accordingly, it seems as the strengthening of bureaucratic principles continued after the regime change in 1772. However, the king increased his ability to appoint or promote civil servants himself without the consent of the council.

5. Conclusions

The appointment policy was discussed at length at the Riksdag 1765–1766. As shown above, the quality of the civil servants, their promotions, and their enforcement of laws and regulations, were described as an absolutely central issue for all policy areas within the state. By referring to the lazy and incapable civil servants and their bad enforcement of the law, the financial

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53 Riksens ständers stora deputations betänkande, p. 4, §3, “en orsak till Lagarnes elaka werkställighet ligga i siefwa befördringssättet, hwilket altid har en owedersägelig werkan på Ämbetsmanna- egenskaperne i allmänhetm som thesse på siefwa Lagskipningen”.
55 Cf. Cavallin 2003, p. 82. Cavallin argues that the principle of seniority still played a key role.
strains, dependence on foreign powers, and many other political problems could be explained, and blamed on others, by the new majority of the caps.

Hence, the introduction of the ordinance “[O]n the promotion of the competent enforcement of the laws […]” is an example of a policy instrument the leadership of the state used to increase state capacity (i.e. incentives for a better administration and a change of the administrative culture). The perception within the newly elected majority of the caps, was that the quality of the civil servants had been deteriorating. The state administration, drawing on Lindvall and Teorell, was seen as the human capital in the administrative institutions, and as such a vital resource for the capacity of the state.56 In other words: the new political regime sought to gain control of the administration, arguing for, and implementing, a reform of the appointment policy; here interpreted as a policy instrument to strengthen state capacity and the future possibilities to enforce polices by the new leadership.

In effect, this was also a strengthening of political control over the administration, but it also pawed the way for a reform of the bureaucracy. At first sight, the reforms of 1766 were introduced in favor of the political sphere, but in reality, they were based on calls for clearer bureaucratic principles, appointment based on merit and greater transparency. Hence, the institutional result of the regime shift in 1766 was a more “modern” state, and hypothetically a state with more administrative capacity then previously.

However, a definite judgement of the increase or decrease of state capacity, must be grounded in an analysis of the ordinance and the politics regarding it. If the prescribed practices later became institutionalized, state capacity was strengthened. Likewise, based on the examination above, it is difficult to say if the administration became more rational and less arbitrary, as a result of the new policy. Consequently, further research must decide if the ordinance was successful in the years following its implementation.

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56 Lindvall & Teorell 2016, pp. 15–16.
As Fredrik Lagerroth has described, the introduction of the “Report of state offices” in 1756 was the height of the “bureaucratism” (byråkratismen) in Sweden. Based on above, it can be concluded that the events of 1765–1766 ended this period and closed the “reign of the civil servants”. The political struggles in 1765–1766 is a typical example of a conflict between politics and bureaucracy and drawing on the discussion above, it is evident that the political sphere moved the chains in 1766. The bureaucrats were pushed back, and had to adopt to new rules.

The following years was furthermore marked by an increased political conflict between the caps and the hats. The 1760s saw a change in the character of the political debate and the tension between the commoners and the nobility escalated. A part of this were calls for a leveling of privileges and also an expanded press freedom. In a wider context, both the introduction of the act of freedom of the press in 1766, and the intensified debate on privileges are connected to the arguments wielded in favor of the ordinance “[O]n the promotion of the competent enforcement of the laws […]”. Specifically, the debate on the privileges of the nobility, were the caps and the commoners were the main proponents, regarded issues on office appointments based on ancestry—a practice criticized by the caps. This critique was similar to the opposition to the principle of seniority, articulated in the ordinance.

At the next Riksdag in 1769, the power shifted again, and the hats was once more in majority. Tough, their power base was smaller than before and in the coming years the king, and the royal family, emerged as yet another important political power. In 1772, the Age of Liberty came to an end when king Gustaf III carried through an autocoup, decreasing the powers of the Riksdag. During the 1770s and the 1780s Gustaf III undertook several reforms to modernize the state

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57 Lagerroth 1915, p. 492.
administration, many of them as a response to the increased critique from the public against the
civil servants.\textsuperscript{58}

The \textit{Riksdag} of 1765–1766 represents a regime shift in Swedish history. However, compared
to other regime shifts, it does not include a new king, a \textit{coup d'état} or any other overthrown
leaders. It was a regime shift within the framework of the constitution. An interpretation of this
is that the Swedish form of government from 1720, and the political culture of the Age of
Liberty, had gained such strength in 1766, that the obvious arena for political battles was the
\textit{Riksdag}. This is confirmed by the relative lack of subversive plans to overthrow the political
system.\textsuperscript{59} In one way, this is a validation of the high state capacity of the Swedish state in the
late 1760s. On the other hand, it is also the last breath of a proto-parliamentary system. The
\textit{Riksdag} controlled the policy resources, such as the financial means of the state, the state
administration and the monopoly of information. More importantly, they also controlled the
policy instruments, such as the propaganda machinery and the coercive means of the state.

In a first step, the changes in 1766 strengthened the powers of the \textit{Riksdag}, increasing the
political control of the state administration. Together with the introduction of the freedom of
press in 1766, and increasing tensions in the society, a more volatile political landscape was
introduced. This made possible the coup in 1772 which instantly thwarted the ambitions of the
\textit{Riksdag} and led to a transfer of political initiative and recourses in the direction of the king.

When faith in the prevailing system waned, the king became the last available resort. As
some of the resources, particularly the bureaucracy, became open to the king, he could muster
policy instruments on an equal level to the political system of the \textit{Riksdag}. Hence, the state
capacity, firmly rooted in the proto-parliamentary system, were dismantled and turned to the
king’s advantage. This process will be analyzed in the next part of this case study. At this point,

\textsuperscript{58} About the reforms of Gustaf III in Cavallin 2003, ch. 6.
\textsuperscript{59} The most notable exception to this is the failed \textit{coup d'état} in 1756, orchestrated by the royal family
it can be tentatively argued that the introduction of the ordinance “[O]n the promotion of the competent enforcement of the laws […]” established a (more) rational, bureaucratic state administration, and that these administrative resources later could be utilized by the king, as well as they previously were by the parliamentary regime. An interpretation would then be, that the state’s capacity in the reign of Gustav III increased, but in this case, it did not promote any long-term democratic development, since the representative institutions decreased in importance.
6. References


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