Articles

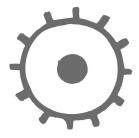# Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies

About JASS

The Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies (JASS) is a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal published by the Åland Islands Peace Institute (AIPI), Mariehamn, Åland, Finland. The journal addresses its overarching theme of peace and security from the perspectives of autonomy, demilitarisation, and minority protection.

Each issue of JASS will include scholarly articles that in some way deal with the subjects mentioned above. Before being accepted, all articles have been subject to a double-blind peer-review process. JASS issues may also include other types of contributions such as research notes, book reviews, and information on pending conferences. JASS is published twice a year – in the late spring and fall.

The editorial board invites articles and other contributions to JASS via the email address submissions@jass.ax and looks forward to proposals on articles, thematic issues, and other suggestions to make JASS a relevant and accessible scholarly journal in its field. It is appreciated if manuscripts sent to us have undergone language editing.

Foreword

It is a common view, held by scholars as well as many others in the public debate globally, that there is in many networks and regions globally a tendency towards polarization and sweeping generalizations in the exchange of views. This may very well be a true observation, and many argue that the debate as social interaction is losing ground.

From a scholarly perspective, cleaning up a debate is nothing new: it is a classic and critical task to keep an eye on the use of vague or generalizing concepts in the trade. This is so both for the risk of imprecise findings and the risk of debates where the parties talk past one another. Nevertheless, academic work, including theories, are full of vague concepts, sometimes inspiring in their openness, but normally in need of draconic operationalizations to be useful for a more precise conversation and analysis. Examples are probably not needed.

This journal deals with autonomy and security studies. Both the autonomy and security concepts are in themselves challenging a static and uniform concept of, for instance, the state. But exceptions from the idea that states are uniform constitutional constructs are rather the rule than something strange. For anyone believing otherwise, a good reminder is A.P. Blaustein's inventory of Constitutions of Dependencies and Special Sovereignties.

This issue of JASS covers areas of security and autonomy among groups and individuals with very different but constitutionally regulated relations to their respective societies. It is a palette of issues that demand to be addressed, that come to the reader from within very different material situations, but with clearly comparable theoretical and practical implications.

Through the articles in this issue of JASS the editors hope that spaces for insightful debate and open discussion – without conversations at cross-purposes – can be held at a time of a trend towards another direction in the wider public sphere.

Kjell-Åke Nordquist
Editor-in-Chief

Table of Contents

Journal of Autonomy and Security Studies

Volume 3 Issue 1

Autonomy, Indigenous Peoples,
and Afro-Descendants in Colombia

Mauricio Romero Vidal and Juan David Niño

Abstract

The article analyzes how indigenous and Afro-descendant communities achieved participation in the National Constitutional Assembly in 1991 in Colombia and how this process influenced the definition of new territorial institutions in which territorial autonomy and self-rule were successfully granted – against all odds. How did this happen? What circumstances facilitated the agency of these marginalized groups to such an extent that it shaped the new constitution to their benefit? The argument in this article highlights a historical juncture between a global discourse in favor of human rights, and ethnic and cultural diversity – supported by the United Nations – and a regional trend towards democratization and constitutional change. This juncture occurred during the times of a domestic peace negotiation process between the Colombian government and the country's guerrilla groups, a process that was joined by an unusual social mobilization of underprivileged groups. Taken together, these international and national circumstances created conditions that paved the way for a successful outcome of the constitutional process, for the indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

Despite this constitutional achievement, reality has however not been easy. The territory of the two groups is rich in natural resources, something that creates opportunities for large scale agribusiness investments, and they are also well located for coca cultivation and cocaine trafficking. Such activities are not beneficial for marginalized groups. Instead, different kinds of violent fortune seekers, legal or illegal, have been attracted to the indigenous and Afro-descendant territories, which have faced threats and violence without any, or very limited, state protection.

Keywords

Indigenous rights, Afro-descendants, Territorial Autonomy, Colombia

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The Colombian Garden is being devastated by a series of plagues;
the insecurity of life; lack of work, land and knowledge;
the rule of law which in practice protects only the powerful
and punishes the humbly dressed (...)
To attack these plagues, I propose the following remedies:
Ensure the existence of life; secure the freedom of people; and decrease
inequality relative to the powerful.[1]

1. Introduction

The call for a National Constituent Assembly (NCA) in 1991, a unique event in Colombian history, created a space for political debate where social and political actors, who having had no previous political leverage, sat face-to-face with representatives of the country's powerful traditional parties and engaged in the opportunity to negotiate the definition of the country's constitutional framework.[2] This scenario provided representatives of indigenous peoples and Afro-descendants, claiming their right to territorial autonomy, based on defense of their culture and ethnicity, with an opportunity to bring issues, invisible to the mestizo and white elites of the main urban areas, to the fore.

The Constitution of 1991, outcome of the Assembly, weakened resistance to democratization of the structures of power which had monopolized access to the State since the 19th century. For more than a hundred years, the Constitution of 1886, drafted by an elite of intellectuals chosen by the then president Rafael Núñez, favored the interests and opinions of an elite promoting the idea of a "white and mestizo nation", and denying the existence of indigenous and Afro-descendant communities.

How was this recognition achieved? What circumstances facilitated the agency of these marginalized groups, their access to the Assembly, and the shaping of the new constitution to their benefit?

This article analyzes how indigenous and Afro-descendant representatives were able to achieve participation in the Constituent Assembly, as well as recognition of these groups as the subjects of rights, including their territorial autonomy. It likewise analyzes their principle demands, the reactions they provoked, and the ensuing debates related to their claims on territorial rights, territorial autonomy and the institutional mechanisms proposed to ensure that self-rule became a reality.

Concepts of a democratic society, based in the precept of pluralism, grounded the new constitution. It established a specialized court in defense of the new constitutional

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1 Muelas 1991, p. 12. Lorenzo Muelas was one of two representatives of the indigenous movement in the National Constituent Assembly of 1991.

2 Uprimny 2001, p. 97.

order and recognized the existence of historically excluded social groups, insisting on their mandatory inclusion as the subjects of rights in the future. A political context of discredited traditional parties, exacerbation of violence associated with the armed conflict and the drug cartels, and the critical juncture of the international system were factors that contributed to the convocation of a Constituent Assembly.

The Assembly provided for the participation of ethnic groups, Afro-descendants and other social forces previously excluded by the political project and values of the mestizo and white nation. Actors such as the demobilized M-19 guerrilla movement, descendants of African slaves and native populations, aspiring to become new political and social forces that would faithfully portray the heterogeneity of Colombian society, came to have a voice in this political space.

The opening of the Colombian State to pluri-ethnicity and multiculturalism, as evidenced by the new constitution, is incomprehensible without a broader understanding of changes in the international system prompted by the end of the Cold War, as well as the crisis of the national political system. Waves of widespread social mobilization and protest, in addition to the dynamics of the armed conflict and attempts to reach peace throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, unlocked opportunities for change.[3] These circumstances enhanced the struggles of social, ethnic and identity-based movements for the vindication of their interests, denied in the old "mestizo and white statute" established by the 1886 Constitution.

To understand how Afro-descendants and indigenous people became involved in the NCA, external as well as internal factors which facilitated the participation of these groups and their organizations in the discussion of constitutional provisions concerning territorial autonomy and the rights of ethnic groups and black communities, need to be acknowledged. On three occasions, during the governments of Alfonso López (1974–1978), Julio Cesar Turbay (1978–1982) and Virgilio Barco (1986–1990), attempts to reform the constitution had been blocked.[4] The reluctance of the two traditional political parties to effect constitutional reform finally receded in 1990 after an electoral campaign in which four presidential candidates from the left and center of the political spectrum were murdered by drug traffickers and violent extreme right-wing groups.[5]

The main source of data for this research is the archive of the National Constituent Assembly located in the Luis Angel Arango library in Bogotá, as well as documents of the NCA kept in the General National Archive. Presentations by representative members of indigenous and Afro-descendent communities were particularly significant, as were the reactions evoked in traditional political party leaders. Additionally, academic works

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3   Castillo 2007, p. 260.
4   Ibid.
5   Romero 2006, pp. 364–365.

regarding the Assembly and its significance at the time of the negotiations, and literature related to international treaties supporting the recognition of indigenous peoples' rights, were reviewed.

2. End of the Cold War, Human Rights and Ethnic Diversity

The fall of the Berlin Wall in the early 1990s and the end of the international bipolar order of the Cold War era engendered diverse spillover effects within national polities worldwide. In Colombia, one of the most important effects was the opening up of traditional frameworks of participation to include new political and social actors. Negotiations with the M-19 guerrilla movement, its transition to a political party – *Alianza Democrática* M-19- and its participation in the NCA and the drafting of the new constitution is one example. Indeed, participation by the demobilized M-19 in spaces of democratic debate and in the Constituent Assembly was a fact of enormous political significance. The end of the Cold War had created an environment supportive of multiparty systems with broad participation of parties from the left of the political spectrum, thereby enhancing competition and allowing new political forces access to power.

At the regional level, Latin America was going through a period of important constitutional and democratic change.[6] States governed by authoritarian and military regimes during the second half of the 20th century, such as those in Chile, Peru, Brazil and the Central American countries, concluded in political transitions, which included the creation of constituent assemblies and new constitutions. Peru did so in 1979, Chile in 1980, Brazil in 1989 and El Salvador and Guatemala in 1993.[7] In order to expand electoral participation and replace old authoritarian regimes, the new constituent assemblies were considered the most appropriate mechanism in the region. Although Colombia's political history differs from other authoritarian systems of the region, the new Constituent Assembly was in concordance with the political and institutional changes occurring in Latin America.

Another external factor contributing positively to the participation and influence of indigenous and Afro-Colombian people in the NCA was the development of a global discourse in favor of human rights and cultural and ethnic diversity. The United Nations began to work on the drafting of the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 1983, and after two decades, the highest organ of the organization, the General Assembly, adopted the Declaration on the right to cultural diversity on September 13, 2007.[8] This initiative for recognition, promoted by several indigenous organizations worldwide, met

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6   Lee Van Cott 2000, p. 9.
7   Castillo 2007, p. 237.
8   A/RES/61/295, hereinafter "the Declaration".

considerable resistance, as is reflected by the amount of time required to obtain approval and a majority vote in the General Assembly. 143 states voted in favor; the US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand voted against, and there were 14 abstentions.[9]

Colombia was the only country in the region that abstained from voting in favor. The then president, Álvaro Uribe Vélez (2002–2010), opposed limitations affecting the sovereignty of the central government in its relation to indigenous territories. Within the Declaration, one of the most controversial points was Article 3, which recognizes indigenous peoples' right to self-determination. This concept, embodying recognition, was the most highly disputed within the bloc opposing the Declaration, given that, by virtue of this right, indigenous peoples could freely determine their political status and development priorities, and would be granted the right to autonomy and self-government in internal affairs. In Colombia, recognition of the Declaration was one of the most debated discussions within the NCA between the bloc that supported ethnic and Afro groups and the most conservative sectors who rejected the idea of recognition of ethnic groups' jurisdiction in specific territories, and who, in addition, considered the declaration a threat to the preservation of a unitary state.

The Declaration and the International Labor Organization [ILO] Convention Nº169 of 1989 were the international legal instruments allowing indigenous and minority communities worldwide to address their demands. Most agreements and treaties on human rights reflect an individualist concept of rights, a concept that is alien to the worldview of indigenous communities, given that individual identity is encapsulated within their concept of collective identity.

Prior to the Declaration, ILO Convention No. 169 was the only international instrument of indigenous rights in force. Having been officially adopted in 1989, it was a legally binding treaty, unlike the Declaration. The importance of the Convention is that Article 13 recognizes the special nature of the relationship between indigenous peoples and their territories, particularly the collective dimension of their conceptualization of rights.[10]

The Colombian government officially adopted the Convention through Law 21 of 1991. Its adoption and ratification, within the existing institutional framework, demonstrated the capacity of new social and political forces to lobby in the political arena for indigenous communities' rights. Ratification of the Convention fostered debate concerning the recognition of self-determination and the political and territorial autonomy of the communities and, in addition, recognition of the cultural and ethnic diversity of the population, a concept not included the 1886 Constitution, was embraced.

Moreover, the concept of ethnic group, presented in the NCA, was based on the definition contained in the Convention, which considers as indigenous

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9   Olsen 2008, p. 9.

10   Id. p. 11.

those populations whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations.[11]

The inclusion of the Convention in Colombia's institutional framework ensured concurrence with global discourse favoring respect for human rights and cultural and ethnic diversity.

3. Crisis of the Political System, Alliances and The Broadening of Representation

The crisis of the two traditional parties plus peace negotiations with different guerrilla groups were the main internal factors creating a context favourable to constitutional and institutional change. This context, which had weakened the most hardened opponents, contributed to the participation of ethnic groups within the Assembly. The election of the liberal candidate, César Gaviria, (1990–1994) to the presidency facilitated State reform; espousing a technocratic perspective, his government facilitated expansion of political representation while at the same time introducing reforms to privatize activities under the State's responsibility.

In the end, the government and an elite sector conceived the NCA as the most suitable solution to the crisis of institutional legitimacy and violence experienced by the political system during the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s. Inclusion of newly demobilized insurgent organizations and different ethnic groups in the Constituent Assembly reflected the will of an important sector of the elite to embrace national coexistence.[12]

Considerable distress had resulted from the violence generated by the confrontation between the State and guerrilla groups; the emergence of new illegal armed actors such as the paramilitaries; and violence generated by drug trafficking. Various social and political groups, promoting a proposal to build a new framework for participation, demonstrated in the main cities. The mobilization of university students in favor of a popular consultation to convene a constituent assembly were key to the success of the call.

Despite the persistent demand of different movements and social sectors for constitutional reform, the project met with resistance from the more conservative sectors of the two traditional political parties, the Liberal and the Conservative. In the Conservative party, the main opponent was former President Misael Pastrana, and in the Liberal, former President Alfonso López. The two political leaders argued that the Constitution of 1886

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11   ILO Convention No. 169 concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries 1989, article 1, para 1a.
12   Castillo 2007, p. 238.

was an inspirational source of Colombian history that had ruled the country for more than a hundred years, and to destroy it would also involve destroying that legacy. The two former presidents supported a reform of the 1886 Constitution but did not support the idea of a new constitution.

The initiative favoring a new constitutional framework, therefore, lacked homogeneous support within the two historical parties, a reflection of the resistance to modification of the existing traditional system of the alternation of power. The two leaders – Pastrana and López – participated in the campaign to oppose the Constituent Assembly; however, President Gaviria (1990–1994) managed to marshal sufficient support to have it convened. Moreover, the project garnered new support among the public when the guerrillas negotiating their demobilization announced that they would hand over their weapons even if the convocation of the assembly was not yet approved.

In the end, reality prevailed. The opposition bloc was forced to participate in the election of delegates to the Assembly in order not to be excluded from this space of deliberation that would define a new constitution. The turnout to elect members of the Assembly on December 9, 1990 had a historical abstention rate of 73% of potential voters. The ex-presidents' opposition to the assembly and the two traditional parties' lack of support had influenced voters, but what was unexpected was the massive mobilization of the supporters of constitutional change, who elected more than one third of the delegates to the Assembly.

The determination of the liberal sector supportive of President César Gaviria's call for the NCA was partly an attempt to weaken on-going clientelist practices of the two historical parties, understanding that a series of pacts to counteract traditional political powers was necessary. The Democratic Alliance M-19, a party organized by the demobilized guerrilla group M-19, played a leading role in shaping the reformist bloc in opposition to the more conservative factions of the traditional parties.

The axis of the alliance that paved the way for the establishment of the NCA was the pact between the presidential candidate Carlos Pizarro, of the Democratic Alliance M-19; Álvaro Gómez, candidate of the National Salvation Movement, a faction of the Conservative party; Rodrigo Lloreda, leader of the Conservative party; and the government of President César Gaviria. The agreement was signed on August 2, 1990, despite objections from traditional political sectors, mainly from within the Liberal party. These four political sectors agreed on the agenda, the number of representatives, the day of the election, and the period and mode of operation of the Assembly. It should be noted that ethnic minorities did not participate in any agreement before the NCA; however, their spokespersons were elected as members of the Constituent Assembly.

4. Indigenous, Afros, and their Organizations

The presence of delegates from indigenous organizations and people of African descent in the NCA was an unusual occurrence in the national political arena, an elitist space reserved for people with political or economic power. Among indigenous people and within their organizations, but less so among Afro-descendants, deep distrust of the traditional schemes of political participation existed, given their historical exclusion by what was termed the mestizo and white nation. Ensuing discussions concerning this exclusion generated ideological and political differences within these organizations.

The pioneer indigenous organization was the CRIC, *Consejo Regional Indígena del Cauca*, officially created on February 24, 1971, in Toribío, department of Cauca, in the southwest of the country, as the result of the union of seven councils.[13] The national context was one of intense agrarian mobilization against the biased anti-peasant policies of the national government, such that the organization emerged as a defensive reaction against the occupation of their territories by landowners as well as by other private and state actors. The reclaiming of their land emerged as the driving force behind indigenous mobilization.[14]

Although indigenous organization and mobilization were part of the overall peasant struggle for land, their principle demands directed to the government were broader than the peasants' demand for lands and resources. Indigenous people defined themselves as agricultural producers and supported agrarian reform; however, this component did not encompass all their claims. A group within the indigenous movement claimed that the demand for land also must include the social relations of exploitation associated with land monopolization. They denounced factors such as the colonialism to which they had been subjected by the white and mestizo nation that had exploited them and denied affirmation of their ethnic identity, affirming that these concerns could not be side-lined. Their claims demonstrated that indigenous groups and the descendants of African slaves were defending interests beyond those of the peasant population.

In the midst of this debate, two new indigenous organizations flourished within the CRIC: Indigenous Authorities of Colombia, AICO, and the National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, ONIC. Both were part of the NCA. Since the CRIC's creation, a faction emphasizing the cultural dimensions of the movement and proposals for its politicization through the construction of a political party, had existed[15]. A political party would gather together ethnic-cultural demands for a true "Indianist" policy, one which would highlight

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13   The indigenous cabildos or councils are political-administrative units that rule an indigenous community settled in a traditional *resguardo,* which is a communally owned land with specific legal rights. This is an institution of native governance that has endured from the colonial era.

14   Castillo 2007, p. 118.

15   Id. p. 144.

the need for liberation of the Indian from the interests of the white and mestizo nation, and which would emphasize recovery of their territories as the main foundation of their identity. With these purposes in mind, AICO was born as a political party and organization in 1990 and participated in the NCA.

AICO's main criticism of CRIC was its narrow materialistic approach, instead of a broader cultural proposal. While the CRIC did distinguish between peasant and indigenous claims, cultural struggle was not its priority. AICO contended that land was not only the main means of production and family reproduction, as in the case of peasants, and therefore the main objective of their struggle, but also represented something more. Indeed, their core project stated that Indians should direct all their efforts towards the recovery of their territory and the defense of their councils, instead of the exploitation of territory. Their main purpose should be to defend tradition and their historical heritage.

Having emerged with political ambitions and not merely material aspirations, the AICO had a golden opportunity in the NCA where it could situate the demands of the indigenous community at the centre of national debate. The representative elected to the NCA was Taita Lorenzo Muelas Hurtado,[16] a former landless peasant and member of the indigenous Cabildo of Guambía, in the southwest of the country. From a young age, he had been involved in the defence of indigenous territories, which were continually threatened by landowner occupation and of being unrecognized by local authorities as territories of indigenous jurisdiction.

The ONIC, National Indigenous Organization of Colombia, also emerged from within the CRIC, but with a national mandate, and as a consequence, the first national-level indigenous organization was created in 1982.[17] Following the CRIC model, other indigenous organizations were also set up in different regions. Since its first congress, ONIC agreed that its main principles would be unity in the struggle for territory, culture and the search for recognition of territorial autonomy.
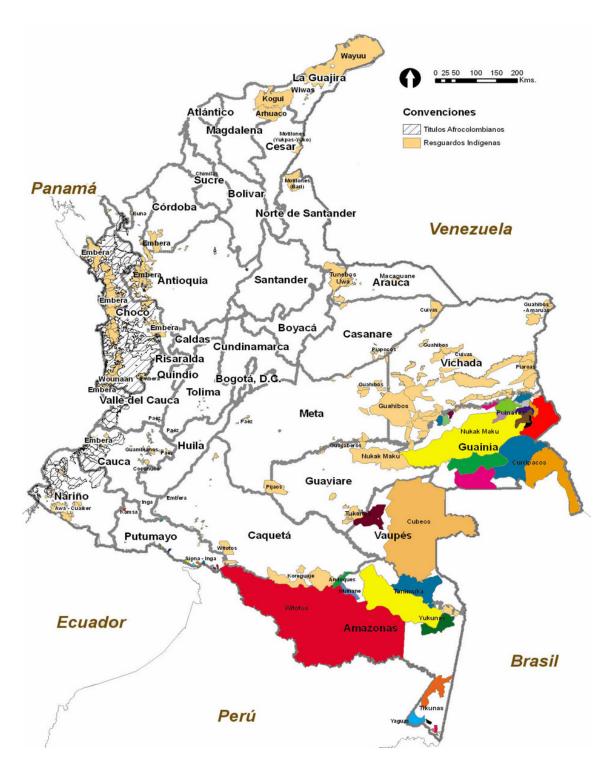
The ONIC chose the indigenous leader of the Emberá group, Francisco Rojas Birry, as its candidate for the NCA. On December 9, 1990, both Muelas Hurtado and Rojas Birry were elected members of the ANC on behalf of indigenous and Afro-descendant groups, an unprecedented event in Colombian history.

Rojas Birry had a double role in the NCA. In addition to indigenous representation, he also acted on behalf of black communities in the country's western region, a population with which indigenous groups share territories in the Pacific Ocean basin (See Map No. 1). The groups were constituted as minorities entitled to a voice and vote in the new democratization project represented by the NCA.

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16   Taita was the name given to the leaders of the Guambiano community.
17   ONIC, see http://www.onic.org.co, last visited 23rd of April 2019.

Map No. 1

Indigenous Territories and Afro-Colombians Collective Titles

Source: http://www.onic.org.co

Despite being between ten to fifteen times more numerous than the indigenous population, the Afro-descendant population's organizational process has been more recent and included several vicissitudes, which had resulted in an organizational profile that was not comparable to that of the CRIC or AICO. On the contrary, it had been fragmented by electoral interests, which impeded the development of a more homogeneous identity or a political perspective based on race.[18] However, similar to indigenous peoples, they shared the marginality to which they had been subjected during the colonial and republican periods, but their weak organizational capacity and identity formation precluded their having direct representation in the NCA.

The most organized and militant groups of African descent formed alliances with indigenous candidates in order to guarantee recognition of ethnic diversity and territorial rights for organized black communities by way of precepts of collective land ownership in the new constitution. Even though, in the end, this right was not included in the new constitution, it emerged as a possibility that became reality when Law 70 was passed in 1993.

Collective land ownership was recognized for black communities' public lands in the riparian rural areas of the rivers of the Pacific Ocean basin (See Map No. 1). New legislation, emerging in subsequent years, stipulated how collective ownership would be regulated and recognized community councils as self-governing bodies in internal affairs and as legal mechanisms in interactions with the state.[19]

5. The NCA, Minorities and Territorial Autonomy

The election to choose the 70 constituents of the NCA took place on December 9, 1990. The turnout was low with 3,710,557 votes, representing 27.1% of the electoral potential. However, this low turnout favoured minorities such as the left and the ethnic and racial groups, which were highly mobilized to elect their representatives.

The 70 constituents were distributed as follows: The Liberal party won 25 seats; the Democratic Aliance (AD) M-19 obtained 19; the National Salvation Movement (NSM, Conservative) 11 seats; the Social Conservative Party, 9, and finally the Indians, Christians and the Patriotic Union[20] each obtained two seats. A rotating presidency was approved to cover three periods: Álvaro Gómez Hurtado for the National Salvation Movement; Horacio Serpa for the Liberal party; and Antonio Navarro Wolf for the AD M-19. The NCA

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18 Lee Van Cott 2000, p. 68.
19 Romero 2010, pp. 252–253.
20 *Unión Patriótica* was a party organized out of the peace negotiation between the president Belisario Betancur (1982–1986) and the FARC guerrilla movement 1985. The party suffered an extermination campaign until its disappearance in the mid 1990´s.

worked in five commissions, each dealing with a specific topic; the second commission was assigned issues related to territorial ordering and distribution.

Coalitions within the ANC were unusual. The AD M-19, the National Salvation Movement of conservative origin, indigenous delegates, the UP and sometimes Christians, with a total of 36 constituents, formed a bloc against the Liberal and Conservative parties, which in total had 34 constituent votes. The most important ally for the territorial claims of the indigenous and Afro-descendant populations, and against the resistance of the bloc opposing recognition, was the AD-M19. What united the AD-M19 and the NSM was their need to maintain a counterweight to the Liberal party, the majority sector. In the commissions, however, the NSM delegates did not support the territorial aspirations of the indigenous and black communities.

The NCA constituted a unique opportunity for the territorial aspirations of ethnic minorities. Between 1978 and 1989, 220 indigenous territories had been created throughout Colombia, but the State only recognized 24 of them. The materialization of territorial claims was not an easy task, so for Lorenzo Muelas and Rojas Birry, being part of the NCA ensured a space for promoting constitutional recognition and delimitation of territories occupied by ethnic communities.

In Rojas Birry's and Muelas Hurtado´s presentations in the NCA's second commission, recognition of territorial autonomy was the main topic of discussion. The two representatives emphasized the traditional and historical nature of territories inhabited by ethnic groups and the need to accept the cultural characteristics of the *resguardos*, including a language other than Spanish, structures of self-government, and communal methods of land exploitation.

The indigenous delegate Rojas Birry, with the support of the constituent member, Orlando Fals Borda,[21] part of the AD M-19 list of elected delegates, presented reform project No. 104 on March 7, 1991. Its main objective was the formation and recognition of indigenous territorial entities, and their documentation highlighted the country's heterogeneous ethnic composition, and the importance of including areas inhabited by ethnic groups within the new territorial order in order to preserve their culture and historical legacy.

Similarly, Lorenzo Muelas Hurtado presented project No.103 to encourage recognition of "the right to territories", which would include jurisdictions formed by municipalities, *resguardos*, and communities or *capitanías*, to be protected by the State and with territorial divisions distinct from those defined by the central government. Also included was the right of indigenous peoples to self-rule by their own authorities within special jurisdictions embracing community norms and judicial procedures. Additionally, they would have the right to define, through their own systems of governance, projects, development plans and

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21 Sociologist of international prestige, who advocated for a participatory action-research approach to field work in order to overcome the unjust social reality of the poorest groups.

exploitation of natural resources and of the subsoil within their *resguardos* and territories, in consultation with local and national authorities. The proposal indicated that in any cases of risk endangering the cultural identity or the well-being of indigenous communities or ethnic minorities, the right to oppose, based on cultural objection, would be honoured.[22]

Autonomous, regional administration of each indigenous entity formed the core of the proposals submitted by the indigenous constituents for discussion. Each indigenous territory would have its own jurisdiction and administration, represented by a major council composed of leaders from different *resguardos*. Thus, each indigenous territory, constituted by *resguardos* or municipalities from different departments, could include a considerable extension of land.

The indigenous proposal for a new type of territorial administration challenged the prevailing State-centred model. The creation of ethnic and autonomous territorial entities whose collective property was indivisible, imprescriptible and inalienable resulted in a territorial and administrative management that had not been previously recognized by the Colombian state and which raised objections among the national and regional elites.

6. Oppositon to Autonomy, Backwardness and "Independent Republics"

Traditional sectors of the population considered the territorial ordering proposed by the minorities as a threat to the unitary state. Inclusion of autonomous administrative entities within the national territorial division implied the cession of power and jurisdiction from the central government to the regions, and implicitly, from privileged groups to traditionally excluded social sectors. This was, in short, to give control of an appreciable amount of territory to unreliable allies of the traditional elites, a disturbing concept for the centralist and elitist rule of the country.

Rojas Birry defended the indigenous territorial entities, ETIs, as:

> The way to accomplish our right to autonomy, which must be manifested in the possibility of having our own government, of being able to decide our plans for development, of making use of and managing resources to satisfy our needs and especially to be able to maintain our cultural identity and our organizational forms.[23]

The indigenous delegates defined three types of ETIs. First, were small areas with few inhabitants, under the jurisdiction of a municipality, such as a county, but with autonomy to manage their development processes. The second category included a larger population,

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22   Rojas Birry 1991, pp. 5–7. Free translation.
23   Id. p. 3.

at the municipal level, with administrative autonomy and self-government. Finally, the third type of ETIs corresponded to large territorial areas, such as a department, with its own divisions, such as the Colombian Amazon.

The plan was a bold proposal for benefiting indigenous groups. An ETI was not like a *resguardo*, a territorial entity existing since colonial times, although it could include this type of territorial division. Neither was it an area inhabited by a single ethnicity given there could be different communities and ethnic groups within an ETI. The conformation of the ETIs would correlate with the political-administrative division of the State, since much of the delimitation of indigenous territories had been defined since the Spanish colonial period.

The territorial demands of the black community were similar to those of the indigenous people. However, this group did not have direct representation in the NCA and knowledge of their situation in the territory was precarious at the time. Despite this limitation, twelve NCA constituents formed a coalition that sought recognition of the Pacific and Caribbean coasts as territorial entities with administrative autonomy to manage the interests of Afro communities in these areas.

Among the 12 constituents, the names of Orlando Fals Borda, Eduardo Serrano de la Rosa, Gustavo Zafra and Carlos Holmes Trujillo stood out, the latter three being professional politicians from traditional parties who were seeking advantages for their regions of origin.

The territorial aspirations of the minority groups faced solid resistance, both in the commissions and in the plenaries, their proposal for autonomous ethnic territorial entities generating disagreement among the most conservative constituents.[24] The constituent Cornelio Reyes, of the National Salvation Movement, former minister of agriculture, communications and government, and one of the most influential traditional political leaders, led the bloc opposing the demands for territorial autonomy. In the commission, Reyes argued against the proposal presented by Muelas Hurtado and Rojas Birry.

According to Reyes, the Colombian Institute of Agrarian Reform, INCORA, had granted a considerable amount of land to indigenous communities in previous years. Reyes insisted that the *resguardos'* extension of approximately 25 million 821 thousand hectares was more than enough. He stated that in the Amazon there were *resguardos* with up to 8 million hectares, and in the department of Guanía, with up to 5 million hectares. During the discussions, Reyes insisted that the government had already handed over sufficient territory to indigenous groups, and that it was unexploited and had, for the most part, not been used for the country's production and economic growth.[25]

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24   Gómez Martínez 1991, pp. 1–3.
25   Reyes 1991, p. 5.

Reyes criticized the model of indigenous production and its relation to territory, claiming that their production system was rudimentary and did not make proper use of the land. He insisted that their form of production was associated with the technological backwardness of the communities, which, in turn, explained the economic and social backwardness of indigenous people.

Thus, according to Reyes, recognition of political autonomy of ethnic territorial entities implied acceptance of the economic models they were implementing in the region, models that would put national economic growth at risk. The group opposing autonomy argued that indigenous people had completely unexploited territories in eastern Colombia.

Reyes, a politician representing sugar plantation elites in western Colombia, had historically disputed land access for indigenous groups. In his view, guaranteeing the right to autonomous forms of organization in accordance with their traditions, institutions and administrative hierarchy meant that such "autonomy" could only be preserved at the risk of supporting "independent republics".

In Reyes' view, "the territory had been torn apart by the commission´s work", adding that "granting new territory to indigenous groups implied maintaining a limited economic model and atomizing government resources for the protection of these territories".[26] In reference to the recognition of indigenous territoriality in border areas with other countries, Reyes also indicated that Colombian citizenship had been arbitrarily granted to indigenous people born in countries such as Peru, Panama, Ecuador, Brazil or Venezuela.

7. The Issue of Autonomy in the NCA Plenary Sessions and in Congress

After the proposals for territorial autonomy, defended by Lorenzo Muelas and Rojas Birry, had been debated in commission, discussion followed in NCA plenary sessions. Criticisms of indigenous autonomy came to the NCA presidency, and Álvaro Gómez, the most prestigious conservative leader and co-president of the NCA, presented a paper on territorial organization that ignored the indigenous constituents' proposals presented in the commissions. The conservative leader insisted that the only form of internal territorial division would be one of departments in order to avoid the division of the Colombian unitary state.

On June 16, 1991, the Assembly approved the article related to recognition of the heterogeneous cultural character of the population and of the autonomy of territories inhabited by ethnic communities. The decision enabled such jurisdictions to associate with each other or with other territorial entities, or directly with the nation. The recognition

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26   Ibid.

made it clear that these new units could not be divided to form other territorial entities and that their property would be collective and inalienable.[27]

This first victory for indigenous peoples' demands generated confusion within the most centralist sectors. The proposal had to be reviewed, along with other proposals, by a codifying commission, where it would be re-drafted according to constitutional language. Carlos Lleras de la Fuente, Cornelio Reyes and Álvaro Gómez, all constituents of the two traditional parties, were the members of this commission, which had the power to propose modifications for a second debate.

The commission rejected the proposal related to recognition of the ETIs, and instead, an alternative, suggested by the interior minister at the time, Humberto de la Calle, would permit indigenous territories, when they complied with the law of territorial ordering. The redraft of the articles ignored the right to territorial autonomy and delimitation would remain in the hands of congress, a historically inaccessible body for indigenous people.

The codifying commission's proposal caused concern in the bloc supporting the claims of indigenous and Afro-Colombian people. Representatives of ethnic groups threatened to leave the NCA, and as a solution, a meeting with the government was set up. Finally, an agreement emerged which recognized *resguardos* as entities like municipalities or departments, as was initially drafted in article 286 of the new constitution.[28] However, there was no agreement on the definition of the ETIs and their conformation, and the matter was left in the hands of congress to decide.

Congress finally approved the organic law of territorial ordering in 2011, 20 years later. The context in which approval was achieved indicated that a first step had been taken at the national governmental level to address territorial administration in a more rational way and in accordance with the 1991 constitution. Unfortunately, the law did not develop territorial issues such as the ETIs, nor did it clarify competences between national and territorial entities. Rather, the law created a set of territorial associative instruments of minor relevance.[29]

This situation has been labelled one of "institutional negligence", with no administrative consequences.[30] The issue of territory, its administration and the definition of competences between self-rule entities and the national government continue to be a key concern for the indigenous population and Afro-Colombians, although it appears not to be a priority for national government coalitions.

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27 Comisión de Ordenamiento Territorial 1991, pp. 1–3.
28 ANC 1991, p. 5.
29 Duque 2012, p. 176.
30 Baena, 2015, p. 129.

8. Conclusion

The article analysed the circumstances in which excluded groups – indigenous communities and Afro-descendants – were able to gain a voice in the constitutional assembly of 1991 in Colombia and how they influenced the definition of new territorial institutions, according to their needs and traditions. This was a unique moment in Colombian history that requires highlighting. Both indigenous people and Afro-descendants managed to take advantage of the juncture of change and to gather enough support to become "visible" to the national elites in the capital and main urban areas.

A historical juncture of national and international political dynamics facilitated the agency of organized groups of indigenous and Afro-descendants. The development of a global discourse in favor of human rights and cultural and ethnic diversity in the 1980's coincided with a period of constitutional and democratic change in the region. At the national level, the peace negotiations between the government and the guerrillas – mainly the M-19 movement – provided an opportunity for participation in the Constituent Assembly and to find allies, supportive of their claim for territorial autonomy.

The claim for territorial rights and self-rule challenged the centralist and elitist view of territorial governance espoused by traditional elites and created great discomfort among both national and regional elites. In fact, this elite distress became clear a decade later with the global boom for natural resources. National and international investors realized that minerals and other exploitable resources were located in territories that were not empty, but inhabited by indigenous, afro-descendants and peasants, whose voices would now have to be taken into consideration. This fact, although positive in principle, has had devastating effects on local communities in a country like Colombia with an armed conflict and coca and marihuana cultivation.

The Pacific Ocean basin, where indigenous people, Afro-descendants and peasants share territory, has been subjected to guerrilla armies, paramilitary forces, drug traffickers' cocaine exportation routes, central government military interventions, and greedy fortune seekers looking for opportunities. Although these communities have more rights on paper since 1991, the possibility to enjoy them has been limited. Their priority has been not to be killed in such a dangerous context.

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Can a True Finn Speak Swedish?
The Swedish Language in the Finns Party Discourse

Hasan Akintug ´

Abstract

This paper aims to analyse the rhetorical utilisation of Swedish language in the discourse of the Finns Party. This contribution will provide an overview of the history of Swedish language in Finland and will attempt to analyse the relationship between the two language groups. This contribution will analyse the rhetorical uses of Swedish language within the discourse of the Finns Party with the intention to highlight the consistently negative portrayals of Swedish language and its status. It will be argued that the historical experience of the inequality of status between the Swedish and Finnish languages have been politicised by the Finns Party as a part of its ethno-nationalist and populist conceptualisation of the Finnish identity.

Keywords

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1. Introduction

The Swedish language has been one of the eternal issues of Finnish politics. Its position as a *de jure* equal language to Finnish language has been subject to varying degrees of criticism by various political actors in Finland. Arguably, one of the harshest criticisms comes from the (True) Finns Party, who when the chance is provided challenges the status of the language in the context of Finland. In this short article, the Swedish language and its status will be analysed both in its historical context in Finland and in the contemporary Finns Party rhetoric to argue for a continued politicization of the historical position of Swedish language in Finland through a populist framework. Furthermore, it will be argued that the old connotations of the Swedish speaking "elite" and the old (and quite unequal) power dynamics between Swedish language and Finnish still find their way in to the contemporary Finnish political discourse. In the first section, an attempt will be made to briefly summarize the linguistic situation in Finland in three periods: Finland under Swedish rule, Finland as a Grand Duchy under Russia, and independent Finland. In this section, the focus will revolve around the *Fennoman-Svecoman* divide in the late 19th century to highlight that although the divide itself is no longer a primary issue, the memory of it is still very much operationalized, particularly by opponents of the status and usage of Swedish language in Finland. In the second section, cases of this operationalization of the historical status of Swedish found implicitly and explicitly in the rhetoric and discourse of the Finns Party will be highlighted. Through analysis of the populist attitudes of the Finns Party organization and its representatives two main arguments will be put forward: firstly, the idea that Swedish represents the "upper classes" and secondly, that Swedish is an alien element which, still persists as a "spectre" of the historically unequal relationship between the two languages in Finland.

2. Swedish Language in Finland during three Periods

2.1 The Swedish Period

For a period lasting over six centuries, Finland remained an integrated part of the Swedish Kingdom. It would not be much of an exaggeration to claim that this historical experience has left its mark on Finnish society up until the present day. The beginning of this period has been attributed by some to the 12th century excursion of the Swedish King Erix IX and the Bishop of Uppsala in 1155.[1] It must also be noted that some argue against this particular narrative of the introduction of Swedish language in Finland, and cite evidence

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1   Singleton 1998, p. 18.

of earlier Swedish settlements in the 8th and 9th centuries.[2] The Swedish influence in Finland transitioned from missionary excursions to a locally administered medieval society, to a centrally governed kingdom, to an integrated part of the "Northern Power", and eventually the fall of Sweden as a "Northern Power", concluded with the transfer of power to the Russians in 1809. McRae notes that the two main social aspects that remained constant during the Swedish rule were the influence of the Western legal system and the importance of Christian religious organizations.[3] The incorporation of the area that was later to be called Finland to the Swedish realm also brought about significant change in terms of the linguistic composition of the area. After this incorporation, a number of Swedish speakers migrated to the south-west coastal areas of Finland, which roughly corresponds to the borders of "*Svenskfinland*", which is a term still in use today. This situation had created a language boundary between the Swedish and Finnish speakers that remained relatively stable until the late 19th century.[4] Although no reliable statistics exist from the earlier stages of the Swedish rule, some speculate that roughly 78 percent of the region spoke Finnish, 20 percent spoke Swedish and 2 percent spoke German.[5]

At this point in history, as the Finnish language remained uncodified and its use was limited to speech, all official documents and communications were conducted in Swedish language. This situation changed in the 16th century through the efforts of Mikael Agricola[6], when the Finnish language was finally systematically organized and "elevated" to the level of a written language.[7] However, this did not translate into any form of real equality between the Swedish and Finnish languages. Especially during the 17th and 18th centuries the central administration of the Swedish Kingdom attempted to homogenize the realm in order to establish a uniform society with a majority of its total population as Swedish speakers. In this epoch of Finnish history, one could find the majority of the civilian population speaking Finnish both on the street and in church but the state administration, the judicial branch and the university (Kungliga Akademien in Turku; later the University of Helsinki) were all operating in Swedish. In this context, learning Swedish was not just a matter of language acquirement but also a matter of upwards social mobility.[8] In other words, one could claim that despite the majority status of Finnish in terms of demographics, Swedish language held a much more central position politically under the Swedish realm.

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2   McRae 1999, p. 12.
3   Ibid.
4   Engman 1995, p. 179 and Allardt 1997, pp. 7–8.
5   Lavery 2006, p. 36.
6   A Finnish clergyman of the 16th century. As a student of Martin Luther he translated the Bible into Finnish language in 1554 and is widely celebrated as the "Father of Finnish Language" in Finland. The date 9 April is an official flag day in contemporary Finland which is dedicated to him. See Heininen 2017.
7   Singleton 1998, pp. 32–33.
8   Allardt 1977, p. 8.

2.2 The Russian Period

In 1809 with the Swedish loss of Finland to Russia, as declared in the Diet of Borgå, Finland had been granted its "elevation to the national status".[9] This was achieved through the special status of Finland as a Grand Duchy with a considerable amount of autonomy. The new situation in Finland allowed the continuation of the previous legal and social structures, meaning that the position of Swedish as the main language of the political unit continued under the rule of the Tsar. The establishment of the Grand Duchy of Finland also created a discrepancy between the Finnish speaking majority and the centrality of Swedish language to the administration. Previously, under the Swedish realm, the majority of the inhabitants (of the Kingdom as a whole) were Swedish speakers and Finnish speakers only constituted 22 percent of the total population. In this new political order, the balance shifted drastically in favour of Finnish speakers, who now made up 87 percent of the population.[10]

Indicative of the power structure between the two linguistic groups was the fact that despite a clear Finnish speaking majority, the estates of the clergy and the peasants had requested the continuation of Swedish language as the administrative language of the Grand Duchy.[11] In the early stages of the Grand Duchy, that is the first half of the 19th century, the Romantic interpretations of national identity which had taken a grip on other continental European nations had found their way to Finland as well. This form of nationalism found its intellectual basis in the thinking of German philosopher Herder who claimed language was the ultimate representative of the "spirit of the people" (*Volkgeist*).[12] In the Finnish context, this perception of nationalism had an issue to deal with: the Swedish language.

One of the earlier representatives of Finnish nationalism Adolf Ivar Ardwidson is frequently quoted (albeit with disputes regarding its authenticity) to claim that: "Swedes we are no longer, Russians we cannot be, therefore let us be Finns".[13] This statement, whether or not it was actually made, may be interpreted not only as a political positioning between Sweden and Russia through the unit of the Grand Duchy but perhaps also as description of the "in-between" nature of Finnish identity between the West (represented by Sweden) and the East (represented by Russia).

Following the ideological leanings of Ardwidson and by extension Herder, Finnish politician and philosopher Johan Vilhelm Snellman conceptualized the idea of a Finnish nation which held the idea of the centrality of language to the "true" character of a nation.

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9   Klinge 1999, p. 64.
10   Engman 1995, p. 182.
11   Ibid.
12   Johan Gottfried Herder was a German philosopher of the 18th century. His emphasis on the distinctiveness of national cultures through ethnic markers, most notably language, sets this form of ethnic nationalism from what is called civic nationalism which focus on common political units. See Forster 2018 and Özkirimli 2010.
13   Quoted in Kirby 2009, p. 91.

Hence for the Finnish nationalists (the Fennomans) the unequal status of Finnish and Swedish was an obstacle against achieving an "authentic" national identity, despite the fact that most of these intellectuals were Swedish speakers themselves. Of course, this idealization also had a practical element to it, there was an essential need for the loyalty of the Finnish speaking majority against possible pressure on behalf of the Russian empire. In other words, it was politically unrealistic to construct a national identity based on the minority Swedish speaking population, despite the historical importance of the language.[14]

For the Russian side the calculations to support (or at least tolerate) the development of a Finnish national identity was based on deep suspicion of links between the Swedish language and its speakers in Finland and Russia's historical competitor, Sweden. By supporting the development of the Finnish national identity, the Russians intended to break the cultural link between Sweden and Finland to assure that the Finns would not act in Swedish interests in case of a military conflict in the region. As a result of this relatively positive attitude towards the development of Finnish language, the Finnish literature society was founded in 1831 and from the 1840's the use of Finnish was accepted in certain areas of the public sector.[15]

Snellman partially achieved his aims when he obtained the position of Finance Minister in the Imperial Senate of the Grand Duchy. After the Diet reconvened in 1863, he pushed for a language reform in the country, which established the use of Finnish in lower courts and public administration in 1883. This reform then led to the recognition of full legal equality between the two languages in 1902.[16]

With the increased pressure on the Swedish language in Finland, a counterpart nationalist movement developed among the Swedish speaking intellectuals who did not share the same enthusiasm towards the majority language or culture. This movement had been called the Svecomans. The Svecomans emphasized the importance of the cultural links to Sweden and Scandinavia as a whole, through the Swedish language and claimed that the Swedish speaking population constituted its own nationality.[17] The Svecoman counterpart of Snellman may be found in the character of Alex Olof Freudenthal. His ideas of a Swedish nation in Finland, combined with the "scientific" racism of the 19th century, has led to interpretations of the "racial" supremacy of the Swedish speakers.[18]

After the introduction of universal suffrage in 1906, the original Swedish Party of the Svecomans had joined forces with the Liberals to establish the Swedish People's Party, which is still active today and has been speculated by some to garner around 70 percent of

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14   Engman 1995, pp. 185–188.
15   McRae 1999, pp. 35–36.
16   Ekberg 1997, pp. 23–24.
17   Lavery 2006, p. 59.
18   MacRae 1999 p. 38.

the Swedish speaking vote.[19] This party has played a crucial role in uniting the rural and urban divide within the Swedish speaking population by placing the "language question" as its primary issue above all others.[20]

2.3 Independent Finland

Finland gained independence in 1917 after a period of Russification attempts in the late 19th and early 20th century. The civil war that followed Finnish independence also had consequences in terms of inter-group relations between Finnish and Swedish speakers. Hämäläinen highlights the support of the Swedish speakers against the Russification of Finland and their overrepresentation in the winning "White" side of the civil war as the two main factors that produced favourable conditions for Swedish language and its ability to remain as a *de jure* equal language (through the 1919 Constitution and 1922 Language Act) to Finnish despite the demographic disadvantage of the group.[21]

Despite the difficulties experienced in the 1920's and 1930's within the context of the illiberal trend in Europe, the tensions between the two camps were largely set aside in the aftermath of the Winter War when the Swedish speakers showed no hesitation to "prove" their loyalty to Finland, contrary to the suspicions of many Finnish nationalists.[22]

It is hard to claim that the Swedish language in Finland was the most pressing issue in the mainstream political discourse of the country in the post-Second World War era. In this period, the Swedish People's Party (*Svenska Folkpartiet*) took upon itself to remain in government and promote the interests of Swedish speakers and maintain a voice for the status of Swedish in Finland. This includes including advocating mandatory Swedish language education for Finnish speakers in upper comprehensive school. The Swedish People's Party was almost continuously in government in the post-war era until the 2015 elections. This election brought not only the end of a period of the Swedish People's Party in government, but also the inclusion into government of a right-wing populist party with deep hostility towards the status of Swedish language in Finland, the (True) Finns Party (*Perussuomalaiset*).

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19   For a recent study see Magma 2019.
20   Allardt 1977, pp. 9–10 and Broo 1995, p. 59
21   Hämäläinen 1979, pp. 73–87.
22   Engman 1995, pp. 205–207.

3. Swedish Language in Finland and the Populism of the (True) Finns

Populism has been somewhat of a buzzword in recent political science research. It has produced a wide range of literature on the concept of populism through theoretical and practical lenses[23]. It has been argued that the concept of populism may be approached from three distinct perspectives: the ideational approach[24], the political strategical approach[25] and the socio-cultural approach[26]. This article will adopt the ideational approach to highlight the importance of ideas in the party's construction of an opposition towards the status of Swedish language in Finland as opposed to strategy and leader-based analyses of the two other approaches. It will be argued that the opposition to the existence of two equal national languages in Finland by the Finns Party derives from a politicisation of the historical experience outlined in the previous section, primarily through a populist ideational framework as mentioned by Mudde.

Finland has a relatively new place in the studies of right-wing populist parties when compared to other examples such as the Front National in France or the Danish People's Party in Denmark which had already established their positions on the national scale in the 1970's. The Finns Party has only risen to prominence in the late 2000's[27]. This said, Finland was no stranger to rural populism and the origins of the Finns Party lie with the historical experience of the Finnish Rural Party (*Suomen Maaseudun Puolue- SMP*). During its existence from 1959 to 1995, the party had primarily focused on its staunchly populistic opposition to the "urban elite" (i.e. Helsinki) and claimed that it spoke on behalf of the "forgotten" people in the country side[28]. The successor party (the Finns Party) was founded in 1995 and included many of the SMP members such as Timo Soini who became leader in 1997. The Finns Party remained on the fringes until the significant results of the 2011 Parliamentary Elections where the party became the second largest in parliament with 19.1 percent of the vote. Ylä-Antilla argues that the primary reason for this election success can be found in Timo Soini's intention to broaden the rural populist voter base by appealing to the anti-immigrant urban voter[29]. Jungar and Jupskås had previously noted

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23   For more on contemporary populism research see Kaltwasser et al. 2017 and de la Torre 2018.

24   According to the ideational approach: "populism is essentially a set of ideas, connected to an essential struggle between 'the good people' and 'the corrupt elite'." Quoted in Mudde 2017, p. 41.

25   According to the political strategy approach: "Populism is best defined as a political strategy through which a personalistic leader seeks or exercises government power based on direct, unmediated, uninstitutionalized support from large numbers of mostly unorganized followers." Quoted in Weyland 2017, p. 50.

26   According to the socio-cultural approach: populism is defined as the antagonistic, mobilizational flaunting in politics of the culturally popular and native, and of personalism as a mode of decision-making Quoted in Ostiguy 2017, p. 84.

27   Bergman 2016, p. 82.

28   Arter 2010, p. 486.

29   Ylä-antilla 2017, pp. 26–27.

the ideational convergence of the Finns Party with other right-wing populist parties in the Nordic region, despite their differences in origin[30].

The application of the "set of ideas" that constitute populism to the Finnish lanuage version name of the party name will give an indication of how the party constructs the dialectical antagonism between the "people" and the "elite". Taking apart the two components of the name *Perussuomalaiset* we find the prefix *perus* which roughly translates to "basic" or "ordinary" attached to *suomalaiset* which in its totality translates to "basic Finns" or "ordinary Finns"[31]. On face value, this does not appear to constitute an exclusionary idea of Finnish identity. However, the implicit normativity in the term "ordinary" within a populist and ethno-nationalist framework may transform to an outright majoritarian opposition to the status of minorities, which in this case also constitutes the image of "the elite". This transformation will be analysed below.

As mentioned above, the Finns Party began to take a larger position in Finnish political discourse after their "breakthrough" into the mainstream in the 2011 elections. For example, in an interview for a Nordic Council publication about Nordic Languages Finns Party MP Maria Tolppanen immediately felt the need to emphasize that the Swedish speaking minority "had too much power and too much [sic!] privileges compared to their proportion".[32] The argument here is seemingly based on democratic principles, however this also decontextualizes Swedish language as an absolute "foreign" language in Finland existing outside the historical experience summarized in the first section.

Another issue pushed by the Finns Party in this era was the "scandal" revolving around the "Freudenthal Medal" usually awarded to prominent Swedish speaking Finns by the Swedish People's Party. The Finns Party representatives, among them then-Minister of Defence Jussi Niinistö, claimed that it was an outrage that in today's Finland, a political party was handing out medals in the name of a "known racist".[33] This is particularly interesting coming from a party who had Jussi Halla-aho (who had been convicted for inciting ethnic hate the year before) and other members of the well know radical right-wing organization Suomen Sisu among its ranks. Once again, one may observe implications of the old connection between Swedish language as a marker of social status and the memory of the Svecoman movement being utilized to agitate certain feelings of suppression and inferiority put forward by 19th century racial theories.

Moving on to the 2015 elections, with the "language policy" document, which is not available in Swedish, on the Finns Party website we see yet another set of images regarding the foreign nature of Swedish in Finland and several complaints regarding the costs of

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30   Jungar and Jupsksås 2014, pp. 215–217.
31   Raunio 2013, p. 133
32   Quoted in Arvidsson 2012, p. 97.
33   See Siren 2013.

sustaining "artificial bilingualism" while at the same time proposing expenditure on "Finno-Ugric" languages even outside of Finnish borders.[34] The harshest criticism towards Swedish perhaps comes from the following excerpt:

> The Finns Party does not accept outsiders setting up standards for how people judge themselves. We feel that Finnish-speaking Finns can be constructive members of Finnish society without any knowledge or concern for the Swedish language or culture. There must be respect for what language skills a person thinks they need. [35]

This short passage gives a quite clear picture of what the Finns Party views as "ordinary Finns". Firstly, they begin by framing a situation in which the Finnish language and identity are under attack in Finland not only by immigrants but Swedish speakers as well. Secondly, by emphasizing the link between language and culture they are utilizing the Hederian idea of language as the "spirit" of the nation and hence Swedish by definition cannot belong to Finland or the Finns. It is doubtful that their idea of "citizen's own feelings of identity" refers to the lack of Swedish language services in formally bilingual municipalities.

The mandatory Swedish language education in Finnish upper compulsory schools is another matter the Finns Party has taken issue with. Even after joining the government coalition in 2015, the party's chairman of the youth branch, Sebastian Tynkkynen had made a short clip in 2016 in which he was being "whipped" while the slogan "Nothing is mandatory except dying and studying Swedish" was accompanying the scene.[36] The imagery here is once again victimhood of the poor and ordinary Finnish speaker against the elite, the Swedish speaking dominators from the outside.

Even more recently, during the party congress in June 2017 which led to the fragmentation of the party, the newly elected leader of the party, Jussi Halla-aho claimed that "Bilingualism had served its time" and that he "would speak Finnish in his homeland".[37] Similarly, during the 2018 presidential election debates Laura Huhtasaari, the Finns Party candidate simply refused to speak Swedish despite participating in the Swedish language debate on Yle.[38] One can only speculate about the potential reaction a Swedish speaking Finnish politician would receive from the Finns Party should they chose to speak Swedish in a Finnish language debate.

During the process which led to the 2019 Parliamentary Elections the condition of the ongoing status of Swedish as a requirement for employment within the City of Helsinki was polled among the candidates of the political parties in Helsinki. Only two of the parties maintained a majority of candidates willing to support this requirement. Unsurprisingly, 81 percent of the candidates from the Swedish People's Party were opposed to removing

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34   Finns Party, *Language Policy,* pp. 5–6.
35   Id. p. 3.
36   See Langh 2016.
37   See Karlsson 2017.
38   See Johansson 2018.

this requirement in favour of easing the employment of immigrants in Helsinki. What was surprising was that 59 percent of Finns Party candidates also opposed this requirement based on the premise that "language requirements should be the same for all" and that "language requirements should not be eased in order to make it easier for immigrants to gain employment"[39]. This is an interesting coalescence between a minority-oriented party which is for protecting the status of the language and a party which prioritises protecting "the ordinary people" through populist ethno-nationalism. This brings into question the relationship between the Swedish People's Party and their limits regarding immigrant integration. However, the Finns Party remains internally consistent within populist logics which promote a majoritarian solution rather than a group-based rights and statuses.

As Finnäs notes, the memory of the requirement for Finns to acquire Swedish language to achieve upward mobility in society does not disappear as quickly as the memory of the significant socio-economic development of the Finnish speaking majority in the long term.[40] This has been a crucial element of the Finns Party discourse on the status Swedish language, the "good people" or "silent majority" must be defended against the "corrupt elites".

4. Conclusion

Despite the easing of tensions between the Finnish and Swedish speaking groups in Finland after the Winter War, the historical experience of Swedish language as marker of higher social status is still very much utilized by Finnish populists in contemporary times. The same memory of supremacy overrides the actual situation of the Swedish speaking Finns as a minority with declining proportion in relation to the overall population and the Finnish penetration into the traditionally Swedish speaking areas. It has been argued that opposition to the status of Swedish language in Finland has been viewed through a populist ideational framework. This opposition is primarily constructed around a combination of a belief in a struggle between "the good people" (i.e. the Finnish speaking majority) and "the corrupt elite" (i.e. the Swedish speaking minority) and an exclusionary conceptualisation of Finnishness based in Hederian ethno-nationalism. This constitutes an ideational construction beyond the confines of understanding populism as a political strategy or as a socio-cultural phenomenon. The point of departure for the Finns Party's opposition to the status of Swedish appears to be the normativity given to majoritarianism and the emotional politicisation of historical experiences between language groups.

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39   See Mannila 2019.
40   Finnäs 1995, p. 73.

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