Peasant Political Thought
Politics, Discourse, and Identity in the Age of Liberty

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Abstract

The thesis deals with the development of the Swedish Peasant Estate's political identity in the Age of Liberty. Previous research into the Peasant Estate has mostly emphasized practices, and relies upon brief periods of investigation. Research into conceptual history has centred on the Nobility and the emergence of popular radicalism in the public sphere. This thesis contributes to a broader understanding in both fields by undertaking an investigation into the long-term developments of the Peasant Estate's political language, whereby it is elucidated how an estate that is not the Nobility constructed its political identity by use of political concepts in making political claims. This is accomplished by investigating how the members of the Peasant Estate formulated their political identity through linguistic constructions of the political system and the social order. The source materials used to this end are the Peasant Estate's internal protocols and the protocols of a subcommittee of the Secret Committee in the form of the Greater Secret Deputation.

The results of the investigation point to two shifts in the political identity of the Peasant Estate. In the 1730s there was a shift from the self-conceptualization of the estate as a subject to that of a peasant politician. This is illustrated by a desire to participate more broadly in politics, and manifested itself through the use of a language with references to the law and specific discourses that emphasized their status as constitutional equals with the other estates, and their right to participate as equals in political proceedings. A further shift occurred in the 1760s, whereby the peasant politician was replaced by the citizen politician. This manifested itself through the abandonment of discourses traditionally associated with the Peasant Estate, and the appropriation of discourses that emphasized the interests of the public and the importance of the law instead of estate-interests. The results have led to a new understanding of how the Peasant Estate conceptualized its role in politics in the eighteenth century, and point to the importance of investigating the formation of political identities as part of an interactive process between estates.

Keywords: Sweden, Age of Liberty, Peasant Estate, Riksdag, Greater Secret Deputation, Secret Committee, Council of the Realm, eighteenth century, political identity, political language, political culture, discourse, interaction, estate society, peasant politician, politics, public sphere, citizen politician, peasantry.
# Table of Contents

1 Popular Politics in Early Modern Europe 5

2 Language, Politics, and Identity 9

   2.1 Discourse 10
   2.2 Political Culture 12
   2.3 Identity, Interaction, and Political Thought 13

3 Politics in the Age of Liberty 16

   3.1 The Peasant Estate 17
   3.2 Conceptual History 21

4 Aim and Research Questions 24

5 Operationalization 24

6 The Political Language of the Peasant Estate 30

   6.1 Defining the Peasant Estate 30
   6.2 The Riksdag 1726/27 33
       6.21 Internal Debates 34
       6.22 External Debates 38
       6.23 Summary 43
   6.3 The Riksdag 1738/39 44
       6.31 Internal Debates 46
       6.32 External Debates 49
       6.33 Summary 56
   6.4 The Riksdag 1746/47 57
       6.41 Internal Debates 59
           6.411 The Secret Committee 59
           6.412 The Council of the Realm 64
       6.42 External Debates 67
       6.43 Summary 68
1 Popular Politics in Early Modern Europe

One of the most significant developments within the field of political history in the past half-century, it has been said, is the ability to take ordinary people seriously as political actors.¹ Most frequently in the field of popular political history, historians have emphasized revolts, the public sphere, and the submission of supplications as the main ways in which commoners could act politically. Rarely, however, has this translated into forays into the political mind of the common man. Two exceptions to this trend in recent times have been E. P. Thompson’s concept of the moral economy and Peter Blickle’s communalism. Thompson finds that revolts occur not simply due to economic and social crises, but have a strong foundation in how ordinary people perceived politics and the mutual obligations between rulers and ruled, oftentimes conceptualized in other contexts as a social contract.² Similarly, Blickle finds that commoners were not simply deferential subjects, but formed strong communal identities predicated upon egalitarian principles, which ran counter to the elite’s hierarchical principles.³ Both theories suggest that commoners had a greater understanding of political ideas and conceptions that they are often credited with. Consequently, it asks for further inquiries into how commoners conceptualized politics. As will be demonstrated, the case of eighteenth-century Sweden presents some unique opportunities in this regard. Notably, each country in Europe possessed its own particular experiences and sets of political institutions, which allowed for the development of different political repertoires for commoners to draw upon in their political behaviour. Before delving into the Swedish case, a glance will be cast to parts of the Protestant world to see what opportunities existed for commoners to act politically and how this contrasts with the Swedish case.

The Dutch Republic was to defy the expectations of many European political theorists of the time as it styled itself as the “first Republic of Europe” and accomplished feats that were deemed improbable for such a form of government.⁴ Originally, the republic was formed as an alliance of convenience against the common enemy, Spain. As the war was won, much of the raison d’être of the Dutch state that had provided its ideological drive and sense of direction disappeared.⁵ Accordingly, the political system was to become even more oligarchic in the eighteenth century, with commoners having limited means of exercising political influence and to have their interests

¹ te Brake 1998 p. 2.
² See Thompson 1971.
³ See Blickle 1986.
looked out for. However, a public sphere began to emerge already in the latter half of the sixteenth century, which reached its full potential by the mid seventeenth, with even the peasantry as part of the reading public. The public sphere was to prove an effective means of spreading political news around the country and politicize the people, as the sovereign seven provinces lacked jurisdiction to prosecute libellous pamphleteers who simply closed up shop in one town and moved to the next. Furthermore, the concept of the people (het Volk) was to add further significance to the politicization of the polity, as certain provinces could point to a mythical past in which the people had exercised sovereign power through sworn councils (gezwoen gemeente). Supposedly, the political potential of the concept of het Volk was impressive, yet there existed a fear that it would devolve into its opposite, the unbridled violence of the faceless grey mass (het Grauw). This reference to the sovereignty of the popular will was to exercise itself in the three revolutions of the eighteenth century in 1747, 1787, and 1795 respectively. Especially, the Patriot Revolution of 1787 placed particular emphasis upon popular political participation as a political principle. Thus, the Dutch popular political repertoire mainly revolved around a tradition of resistance and the spread of political news via printed media.

Great Britain presents another oligarchic parliamentary state of Europe. Unlike its Dutch counterpart, however, the unreformed electoral system offered significant political opportunities to the electorate. In the “moral economy of electioneering”, most boroughs operated under relations of paternalism and deference, meaning that those seeking political office would have to act as patrons and earn the votes of the electorate. Within this system, a unique form of electoral political culture was to emerge, whereby the enfranchised became aware of the significance of their vote and how to use it effectively. Moreover, the political culture of electoral independence became available as an alternative political language when the oligarchy threatened the local electoral rights of the electorate. Over time, however, the local interests would turn into an increasing interest in national politics as well. The public sphere also emerged early on in England and was in full effect from the mid seventeenth century onwards. In the eighteenth century, “the people” would also emerge as a powerful political concept in Britain, primarily as a tool used by the political opposition as a criticism of the oligarchic practices of Robert Walpole’s

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7 Harline 1987 pp. 57-71.
8 Harline 1987 p. 20.
ministry. This forced the government of Walpole in the early eighteenth century to engage with this form of language in printed media in a battle that he could not win. In the 1760s it would spawn the radical political movement involving such famous characters as John Wilkes who based their political careers on championing the rights of the people. Characters such as Wilkes frequently got voted into office specifically for the use of such a language. The British case, with its electoral opportunities, and public sphere, produced its own set of tools that commoners could draw upon as part of their political repertoire.

Absolutist Denmark-Norway presents a stark contrast with the two oligarchic republics mentioned in the above. It is commonly said within Danish historiography that Denmark was the country in Europe with the most fully implemented form of autocracy as of 1660 with all legislative and executive power in the hands of the king. Yet it is even more revealing of the strength of Denmark's landed nobility, as it is also said that the reach of the autocracy stopped just outside the country house gates. The Danish country houses have been described as miniature states within the state. As such, the Danish peasantry was, to a significant extent, at the mercy of their lords. Within the political culture of absolutism, the supplication presented itself as the only tool in the peasant’s political repertoire to have his grievances addressed, and was perceived by both the peasantry and the central government as an indispensable tool of governance and a fundamental right of the people. Moreover, the king also encouraged the people to submit ideas to the authorities in certain political initiatives. During the second half of the eighteenth century, the state started to look more favourably upon peasant grievances. Prior to that, any peasant who complained about his master having wronged him would simply have his supplication sent back to him as having no cause for complaint. Due to the strong feudal nature of the Danish state, the Danish peasant was quite limited in his options until the second half of the eighteenth century. At this time the state set out on a land reform project that would eventually break the power of the landed aristocracy and see the emergence of freeholder peasants. However, the civic process would not come to fruition until the nineteenth century.

In the other half of the kingdom one is presented with a completely different scenario. Norway lacked a strong Nobility, as they were mostly wiped out by the Black Death. Consequently, the Norwegian peasantry consisted mostly of freeholders. The localities were to a

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17 Colley 2012 pp. 105-118.
18 Bregnsbo 1997 pp. 21-22.
significant extent granted local autonomy in an effort by the authorities to reduce unrest. This was further strengthened towards the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Much popular dissent was allowed to be expressed at local assemblies known as thing (ting).\textsuperscript{23} If they, for any reason, needed to contact the Danish king, they would either send supplications, like the Danish peasantry, or travel to Copenhagen themselves in order to meet with the king in person, which was an age old practice that the Norwegian peasantry would use surprisingly often.\textsuperscript{24} The Norwegian popular political repertoire thus involved some similarities to the Danish case, but marked more so by their position as freeholders and their relative local autonomy.

Sweden presents a different case in the general European scene of developments. There were comparatively few revolts throughout the early modern period, with most of them concentrated in the sixteenth century and only one major revolt in the eighteenth.\textsuperscript{25} Furthermore, Sweden presented a homogenous religious community, which removed the perhaps most explosive seed of political conflict in the early modern period from the Swedish polity, which had left substantial marks on both the Dutch Republic and Great Britain.\textsuperscript{26} Moreover, censorship hindered any attempts at the free printing of opinions. In Sweden it was instead the pulpit that was the main channel of communication, and it served as the mouthpiece of the state.\textsuperscript{27} A stark contrast to the remainder of Europe, however, was that the Swedish peasantry was offered a position as an estate in the central political arena of the Riksdag. This experience forced the peasants to learn how to become political actors by virtue of having to act as ones. However, it does not imply that the Peasant Estate was an equal partner in politics that was comparable to the Nobility, Clergy, or Burgher Estates. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, for instance, they were not allowed to take part in any committee deliberations and were mostly relegated to a role of stating their opinion on prepared topics.\textsuperscript{28}

The Peasant Estate did enjoy a fairly privileged position, however, during Sweden’s absolutist period of 1680-1718. When Charles XII died outside Fredrikshald in Norway in 1718, he left behind a political vacuum, in which the estates quickly acted to enhance their political positions in the creation of a new political system. Particularly, the Nobility was attempting to strengthen its privileges in ways that would make its position stronger than it had ever been before. The commoner estates attempted to form a united front against the Nobility, but in the end, their efforts crumbled, as the Clergy was hesitant, fearing later attacks on their own privileges.\textsuperscript{29} The

\textsuperscript{23} Dørum 2011 pp. 279-289.  
\textsuperscript{24} Bregnsbo 1997 pp. 52-53.  
\textsuperscript{25} Katajala 2004 pp. 258-269.  
\textsuperscript{27} See Reuterswärd 2001.  
\textsuperscript{28} Olsson 1926 p. 1.  
\textsuperscript{29} Hallberg 2003 p. 153.
Peasant Estate came out as the loser of this process, after having struggled in the initial parliamentary sessions to try and keep the privileges that they had gained during the war. The monarchy was weakened to a point where the peasants feared that the monarch would not be able to uphold law and order, or fulfil its most important function, namely to protect the peasantry. As a result, the peasants feared that the Nobility would be free to exercise arbitrary rule over them. In this regard, the Swedish dominions in the Baltic served as a horror story, where Swedish noblemen used serf labour on their manors.\textsuperscript{30} The exclusion of the peasants from all committees during the process of crafting a new constitution seemed to confirm this fear.\textsuperscript{31}

This period of political confusion marks the beginning of the Age of Liberty and this thesis. Towards the end of the period, the political playing field was vastly different. A public sphere emerged in the late Age of Liberty, and created a situation in which the commoner estates used printing technologies to forward political claims that were highly critical of the privileges that the Nobility enjoyed. Voices were heard that sought to grant all estates equal privileges, or simply to even the social playing field. In this situation, the commoner estates tended to join forces in the increasingly fierce debates surrounding privileges. The period was to end with the coup of Gustav III in 1772, where he was able to argue that he had saved the Nobility from doom. If that had not occurred, it seems likely that the commoners would have emerged as the victors in the struggle over privileges.\textsuperscript{32} Over the course of the Age of Liberty, the Peasant Estate went from an insecure position to one of confidence and relative strength. It represents a significant development in Sweden’s political history that is of interest to understand further. This thesis is an attempt to contribute to just that, by investigating the development of the Peasant Estate’s political identity in the Age of Liberty.

2 Language, Politics, and Identity

The following subsections are intended to illustrate the relationship between language, politics, identity, and the Peasant Estate.

\textsuperscript{30} Roberts 1979 p. 117.
\textsuperscript{32} See Hallberg 2003.
2.1 Discourse

This section will elaborate upon the theory and methodology involved in studying the written word. In regards to this thesis’ ambition of studying a popular political identity by virtue of the language employed in its construction, there is a need to elaborate on the vast scholarship and philosophical debates regarding what one can reasonably gain from studying concepts and words.

One of the most significant contributions to this field is Reinhart Koselleck’s Begriffsgeschichte. Koselleck regards historical time as generated by the tension between experience and expectation. Experience is past present, meaning the lessons drawn from past events and memories. Expectation is future present, meaning words and actions directed towards prescribing a future in order to help bring it about. By appropriating such a conceptualization of historical time, it becomes possible to study historical change as pre-conditioned by linguistic developments and what Koselleck terms horizons of expectation. The eighteenth century makes for a particularly illustrative example. It saw the breakdown of the elite’s monopoly on political language, as the public sphere enabled everyone with access to printing technologies to manipulate concepts that previously had belonged exclusively to the elite. Thus, linguistic control lessened along with power over the direction of consciousness and behaviour. As such, new horizons of expectations, with new meanings attached to old words and neologisms, altered the linguistic arsenal of the entire political and social space of experience, resulting in a struggle over the correct interpretation of concepts. This, in turn, alters experience and affects future expectations, in a way that Koselleck considers as an increase in the rate of change of historical time. In such a way, it becomes possible to conceptualize the development of the political language of the Peasant Estate as founded on the tension arising from the experiences of the institution and its constituents, as well as the expectations that was placed upon the future. The result is that the linguistic developments of the estate will precede historical developments as they emerge and it will become possible to fully trace the origins of those developments.

The question then, is how one would go about studying something like this. There is a larger debate on how much information one can actually garner from reading an author’s text without being able to ask the author what their intention was with the text. Indeed, what Quentin Skinner calls the “New Criticism”, in order to bundle together those more critical authors, such as W. K. Wimsatt and Monroe C. Beardsley, Roland Barthes and Michel Foucault who pronounced the “death of the author”, and perhaps most notably, Jacques Derrida, would argue that what this

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33 Koselleck 2004 pp. 258-259.
thesis intends to accomplish cannot be done. They would all seem to argue that the intention of an author is completely lost to any reader. As it is the intention of this thesis to interpret the statements of the members of the Peasant Estate in order to grasp at some underlying idea of what intention they had in making their arguments, in regards to how they conceptualized the role of the Peasant Estate and their function in the political system, this would seem a powerful critique. Especially given that as members of the Riksdag, wielding political powers, it would have been in their interest to obscure their motives as much as possible in order to not show all the cards on their hands. In fact, subterfuge was conceivably a significant part of being a member of the Riksdag, particularly at a time when corruption was widespread and factional politics threatened to undermine the political stability of the realm.

However, one might respond to such a criticism by turning to the speech act theory of J L Austin. The main contention of his argument is that to say something is also to do something. In Skinner’s description of Austin’s work, to gain what Austin calls “uptake” of an author’s intentions is “equivalent to understanding the nature and range of illocutionary acts that the writer may have been performing in writing in a particular way”. This implies that one needs to be in a position to characterise what the author wanted to achieve, for instance if he or she wanted to defend or attack a certain line of argument. If one is able to characterise an author’s work in terms of its illocutionary force, Skinner argues, it is the equivalent of understanding the meaning behind the author’s work. Moreover, Skinner argues that an author should be considered as part of a genre, and his work has to be related to the general conventions and assumptions of this genre if it is to be understood. These insights can be fruitfully appropriated in the study of the Peasant Estate’s political identity in the way that the speech acts of the estate become legible by placing them within the broader context of the political culture of the time.

There is also a recurring perception that one cannot easily understand the intentions of early modern actors as their conceptualization of the world and human social organization differed significantly from our own. If one cannot understand the intention of a text, it becomes even more problematic to seek to understand the intentions of speech acts that are centuries old. This line of argument is based on the idea that everything that is foreign to an observer is somehow locked away in a mental strongbox that she cannot access. Skinner argues, however, that this is only true when one ignores the extent to which intentions embodied in any successful act of communication must be publicly legible. As such, the peasants’ use of concepts in formulating

37 Skinner 2002 p. 100.
political claims as part of their speech acts in the estate’s session room should constitute a suitable contextualization of social conventions and cultural patterns for understanding the ways in which they acted. For this reason, as has been stated by Clifford Geertz, “ideas are “envehicled meanings”; they “are not, and have not been for some time, unobservable mental stuff”.

Thus, in order to perform such an analysis one would have to familiarise oneself with what Cornelius Castoriadis has termed the “social imaginary” of the time, i.e. the complete range of the inherited symbols and representations that constitute the subjectivity of an age. Once this broader understanding is in place, the statements and actions of the members of the Riksdag should become open to analysis.

At this point, the argument has practically come full circle. In order to understand political practices, the next section will turn to the concept of political culture. Arguably, the social imaginary of the political peasants lay in the political culture governing their behaviour during their stay in the halls of power and how they imagined not just their conduct but their role and function in the political system. The debates that followed surrounding recurring vital matters of politics at the Riksdag throughout the Age of Liberty saw the peasants engaged in a rhetoric aimed at influencing discourses in certain directions, which impacted upon their perceptions of what their role in the political system ought to be. This can be investigated further by appropriating the view of historical time as constructed by the tension between experience and expectation, whereby linguistic changes will precede historical developments.

2.2 Political Culture

Political culture is a concept that has seen much use in recent historical research. Originally, the term was used by the political scientists Gabriel Almond and Sidney Verba in *The Civic Culture* as something that might explain the persistence of political life and a resistance to political change. In historical research, the term has become popular as a means of making sense of political behaviour by anchoring it to a cultural system of norms, values, and symbols, along with those political practices that together define political interaction between groups in a society. Legitimacy is a central concept in political culture as it defines the contents of the political repertoire available to an actor at any given time by defining which actions are legitimate and illegitimate. Moreover, if an actor wishes to gain support for a proposed course of action, her political behaviour has to be widely held as legitimate, lest she be classified as a pariah and

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41 Quoted in Skinner 2002 p. 97.
42 Quoted in Skinner 2002 p. 102.
43 See Almond & Verba 1963.
shunned for her views and actions. As argued by David Beetham, rules of power are socially reproduced in a way that reinforces their legitimacy. In Sweden with its particular brand of Lutheran ideology, this can be viewed as a system of hierarchy based upon a ritualized interaction between estates that is re-enacted and, in the process, reproduced. This, in turn, reinforces the system of hierarchy and endows it with legitimacy by virtue of popular participation.

Political culture has been noted to consist of two dimensions. The first being political practices such as the institutional arrangements that govern the forms for how political groups interact. Practices are typically characterized by their inertia to change. The second being discourse, or the power of ideas, in shaping the contents of politics. Discourse, on the other hand, is characterized by its fluidity. This thesis will largely emphasize discourse, as it is considered to both define the contents as well as the rules of the conversation. It is through language that human communities determine themselves and mediate experiences. It is also through language that political arenas are endowed with meaning and significance. The concept is of particular interest to this thesis for this very reason. It provides a helpful means of anchoring the speech acts of members of the Peasant Estate within a system of meaning that demonstrates whether or not a speech act is legitimate, and, moreover, how the discursive contents of speech acts change over time and how the Peasant Estate’s perceptions of legitimate political behaviour changes over time.

2.3 Identity, Interaction, and Political Thought

This section is intended to illustrate how political ideologies function, their role in estate relations, how political identities are subject to discursive conflict, and how political identities are subject to alteration. Political ideologies actively seek to define how people should live their lives, and, in the process, redefine existing identities by way of discourse. In this sense, identities can be thought of as discursive constructions that are open for interpretation and manipulation by those engaged in relevant discourses. Identity itself consists of two separate and opposing dimensions. On the one hand, it is the identity of the individual as she defines herself in relation to others. On the other hand, it is the identity of the group as she defines herself as part of a collective. Due to the early modern period’s strong corporate nature, however, emphasis is placed on the latter form of identity. Moreover, individuals are capable of containing and compartmentalizing an

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46 Welch 2013 pp. 189-190, 208-209.
48 Wahrman 2004 p. xii.
array of simultaneous identities that operate under different discourses which inform the individual of how to act in any given circumstance that can either corroborate or conflict with one another.\(^49\)

A primary way in which identities and their discourses can be manipulated is through interaction. Human interaction can be conceptualized as a game of wits. According to Erving Goffman, it is in human nature that whenever individuals interact they will attempt to pick up tells from one another and make adjustments to their personality in order to achieve their goals.\(^30\) Regarded in such a way, there is no definitive personal identity, rather, one’s identity is a constantly shifting entity, whose alterations depend upon the context that the individual finds herself in. As such, individuals are who they need to be at any given time. Fundamentally, performances are about gaining the acceptance of those who witness it. To that extent, it is important that a performance is considered genuine. Conversely, if it is not considered genuine, the performer comes across as insincere.\(^51\) A central aspect to the establishment of a performance that can be considered legitimate is that it must be anchored within political culture and draw upon accepted conventions and practices. If a performer does not, she will be unable to accomplish her objectives. Thus, at the very core of human interaction lies the seed for a potential change of identities and previously held assumptions about the world. In terms of the political interactions of the estate in the Age of Liberty, this can be considered as the potential for a re-evaluation of an estate identity with ramifications for how the political system operates.

In the early modern period identities were determined by Christian doctrine. The version of Luther’s catechism that was used in Sweden described and prescribed a social order based upon the existence of four estates. Society was conceptualized as a human body, in which the estates, as limbs of a body, had their own separate sets of responsibilities; the Nobility fought, the Clergy prayed, the Burghers traded, and the Peasants laboured. Importantly, all four functions were deemed equally significant for the survival of the realm and were illustrated by four statues standing side-by-side.\(^52\) In this sense, the state was conceptualized as a joint project that could not be undertaken without these four elements working in unison.

However, this egalitarian aspect was offset by the feudal conceptualization of a social division based on a hierarchical social organization. This conceptualization instead took the form of a pyramid-shaped house with four floors and a crown on top.\(^53\) The conception was realized by giving all but the Peasant Estate privileges, and by taking measures designed to distinguish the

\(^{49}\) Sundin 2006 pp. 42-43.  
four groups from one another. This was mainly accomplished through the discursive creation of fictions of what a member of each group was supposed to be like, which could be further enhanced by legislation governing manners and appearance.\textsuperscript{54} In the pyramid-shaped house, this was illustrated by attaching items to each floor, with the bottom floor having an axe and a plough, while the top floor has a sword and a lance.\textsuperscript{55} This system was mainly to be held together with reference to the importance of concord, while discord inevitably resulted in doom.\textsuperscript{56} A natural consequence of this counter-conceptualization was the emergence of derogatory views of how the other group was perceived. The Nobility, for instance, fashioned games to ridicule the simple nature of the peasant, who knew nothing of proper decor or etiquette.\textsuperscript{57} Similarly, the peasant would often go along with this construction and refer to his simple nature and ask for the noblemen to enlighten him with their greater understanding, as part of this ritualized interaction.\textsuperscript{58} For this relationship to function, deference was a requirement, “that the non-elite regard the elite without too much resentment as being of a superior status and culture to their own, and consider elite leadership in political matters to be something normal and natural”.\textsuperscript{59}

However, this appears to be a generally simplified picture. The peasantry had every reason to wish to oppose feudal ideology. Peter Blickle suggests a conflict between two political principles of social organization inherent in the time period from 1300 to 1800. According to the principle of communalism, the peasantry possessed an ideology founded on the egalitarian organization of village life, striving towards unity and the common good. This is placed in a stark contrast to feudalism, which is based upon the institutionalization of inequality whereby an elite feeds off the labours of the poor. For this reason, the peasantry is more likely to favour the egalitarian version of Lutheranism, founded on the four indispensable statues and not the pyramid-shaped house.\textsuperscript{60}

These theoretical considerations were also accompanied by practices. A commonly used concept to describe peasant behaviour in recent times has been that of James C. Scott and his idea of the “weapons of the weak”. These weapons consist of actions of everyday resistance that are revolts-in-miniature against the established system, as an effort to “mitigate or deny claims made by superordinate classes or to advance claims vis-à-vis those superordinate classes.”\textsuperscript{61} Typically, these took the form of shoddy workmanship or similar minor acts of resistance. In Sweden examples such as not going to Sunday service or running away from military musters and

\textsuperscript{54} Hallberg 2006 pp. 295-298; Katajala 2006 pp. 791-800.
\textsuperscript{57} Englund 1989 p. 195.
\textsuperscript{58} Englund 1989 pp. 197-198.
\textsuperscript{59} Pocock 1976 p. 516.
\textsuperscript{60} Blickle 1986; Swedish examples using this theory include Österberg 1989 and Aronsson 1992.
\textsuperscript{61} Scott 1985 pp. 32-33.
so on are commonplace amongst other examples. Other types of resistance include resisting the claims of the elite whenever the local assemblies gathered. Thus, there are reasons to dispute peasant acceptance of deference as a political principle. Although such acts never amounted to political change, it is all the more illustrative of the subjugated peasantry testing the boundaries of what is possible to get away with within the framework of the feudal hierarchical ideology. This type of grudging resistance could potentially manifest itself as attempts at renegotiating estate relations and the political identity of the Peasant Estate.

These ideas made up much of the ideological content in the political culture of the Age of Liberty. It illustrates an ideological conflict that can be investigated as a discursive tug-of-war between various political principles governing the content that was vested in the construction of who the peasant was supposed to be. The boundaries of this construction would have been constantly under negotiation as the estates interacted with one another at the Riksdag. Identity is thus conceptualized in this thesis as an act of performance based on discourse intended to produce a shift within these political ideologies. This instrumental conception is then reproduced and solidified into something more concrete.

3 Politics in the Age of Liberty

After the fall of the political system in 1772, the Age of Liberty was described as a period of corruption and political chaos. This image was to be reproduced throughout the Gustavian autocracy and by subsequent historians in the nineteenth century. It was not until 1915 that this image would start to change, as Fredrik Lagerroth re-evaluated the period as a forerunner of modern democracy. This sparked renewed interest in the time period amongst scholars.

Historians to this day have come to echo the ghost of Carl Gustaf Malmström, who wrote six influential volumes in the nineteenth century covering the entirety of the period. According to Malmström, the only relevant analytical category for understanding the Age of Liberty is that of party. This was a phenomenon that originated in the House of Nobility. Consequently, the analysis is entirely centred on the Nobility, and the other estates are rarely mentioned, except to say that the influence of these parties of the Nobility extended into them and influenced them to act in various ways. In the process, the other three estates are effectively stripped of any political

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62 Linde 2000 pp. 75-80, 128-147.
63 Aronsson 1992 pp. 163, 172-238.
64 Linde 2000 p. 128.
66 Lagerroth 1915 pp. 732-735.
67 See Malmström 1893-1901.
agency. Historians since then have wholly accepted the premise of Malmström’s argument and have been interested in refining his argument. They have reasoned teleologically in a Lagerrothian fashion that the parties of the Age of Liberty bore more similarities than dissimilarities to modern democracies. Gunnar Olsson and Ingemar Carlsson have been two pioneers of this tradition in refining the analytical categories of Hats and Caps. The two categories are mapped out in theory to an extent where applying the categories Hat or Cap to a politician immediately reveals what this politician’s stance will be in any given political question. However, as these parties did not have any party programs, or leave any records of party activity behind, these characterizations mostly rely upon the inferential method of Olsson. Olsson tried to infer party programs by studying the speech acts of those politicians known to be prominent members of each party.68 Following the work of Olsson, Carlsson set out to fashion a categorization scheme that would allow for the classification of any given politician as either a Hat or a Cap.69 This has not turned out to be a successful method for predicting political behaviour, however, as politicians rarely acted in accordance with the theoretical constructions of Hat and Cap party behaviour.70 Carlsson has attempted to bypass this difficulty by applying adjectives such as “radical” or “moderate” to the politicians. Yet the difficulties remain. Party research has generated criticism in recent times, though it still remains the most frequently used explanation for developments in the political history of the Age of Liberty.71

Consequently, historians have regarded the Hats and the Caps as the primary political actors of the Age of Liberty. Following their arguments, parties influenced politics rather than the estates themselves. The estates were instead overshadowed by subsets of interests located within the Nobility. This seems an odd interpretation, seeing as the estates represented different social groups with separate interests. As such, it becomes unclear how one should understand political struggles covering a wide range of topics where the estates have vested interests in certain policy outcomes that more frequently than not differed from one another.

3.1 The Peasant Estate

The Peasant Estate has in general not received much attention by historians of the Age of Liberty. To a large extent this is due to Malmström’s influential party interpretation. In what follows will be a presentation of those works most pertinent to the ambitions of this thesis.

70 See for example Winton 2006 pp. 228-229.
71 For recent criticisms of party research see Winton 2006 and Sennefelt 2011.
Ragnar Olsson is the historian of the tradition of constitutional history that took the greatest interest in the Peasant Estate of the Age of Liberty. Like most writing in that tradition, Olsson’s work is entirely based upon institutional practices. He studies a wide range of local communities in order to establish how elections were intended to function in practice and the relationship between representatives and represented. Moreover, he investigates how the estate was supposed to function when it convened at the Riksdag, in terms of the conduct of the estate and how the roles of Speaker and Secretary were intended to work. Thus, his two works form a virtual encyclopaedia of every relevant practice surrounding the Peasant Estate’s operations. Even though his ambition is descriptive, the description of the estate’s practices is very suggestive of the development of the estate’s political identity following its emancipation in the constitution of 1719. If there is any drawback to Olsson’s work, it is that he does not consider the estate’s political language. Those few times when he does point to linguistic artefacts, it is mostly to illustrate their role in upholding any given practice. Thus, it is not clear how the Peasant Estate itself conceptualized politics and its own role within the political system without further investigating the development of their political language.

Erland Alexandersson was the historian to follow in the wake of Olsson. His focus is the practices of the Peasant Estate in the time period 1760-1772, during what he calls the “onslaught of the commoners”. He specifically looks at eligibility for membership in the estate, the conduct of the estate both inside and outside the Riksdag, voting procedures, cooperation with the Clergy and Burgher Estates, and the relationship with the monarchy. Alexandersson was the first to ask whether the concepts of party and “naive monarchism”, i.e. that the peasants unconditionally wished to see a strong monarchy, were fruitful analytical tools for understanding the Peasant Estate’s political behaviour. The conclusion that he comes to is an emphatic no. He finds that the Peasant Estate became increasingly difficult for external influences to control. Moreover, following the political gains made by the commoners towards the end of the period; the Peasant Estate had the least of all to gain from the restoration of absolutism. However, Alexandersson only considers a brief and tumultuous time period. It remains unclear how valid those findings are for the previous forty or so years of the Age of Liberty. Furthermore, by only considering practices and the relationship between the estate, the other estates and the monarchy, like Olsson, it remains unclear how the Peasant Estate conceptualized itself and its role within the political system. For this reason, Alexandersson’s argument presents a one-sided picture of the political

72 See Olsson 1926; Olsson 1948.
74 Alexandersson 1975 pp. 211-213.
culture of the Age of Liberty that is missing a central linguistic component if one is to fully understand the development of the Peasant Estate’s political identity.

Kalle Bäck was to approach the Peasant Estate with a different set of questions in mind. He specifically investigates decision-making processes from the 1730s to the 1770s in order to find out whether or not it was possible for the estate to wield political influence at the Riksdag in order to obtain political outcomes that were favourable to them.\(^{75}\) As the politically weakest estate, he chooses to characterize the estate as an interest group. To that end, he relies upon theories drawn from 20\(^{th}\) century social sciences of how interest groups function in terms of the resources that they can mobilize. As an interest group, Bäck argues, they would have to focus their limited resources on the questions that mattered the most to them.\(^{76}\) For this reason, he chooses to investigate three policies of significant economic interest to the Peasant Estate in the form of forest policy, policies governing the distillation of aquavit, and an agricultural reform (storskifte).\(^{77}\) Unsurprisingly, he finds that the estate devoted significant resources to these questions. Perhaps more surprisingly, he does find that they were more successful in certain cases and less so in others. The implications of his study, however, are misleading at best. A direct consequence of his focus upon the estate’s economic interests is that he simply reaffirms the view of the Peasant Estate as a self-serving interest group with no interest in anything beyond those economic questions that affected it. Furthermore, Bäck does not consider the political language of the estate as a tool that it might use to further its political goals or to present its thoughts on a topic. Thus, this study offers little in the way of how the Peasant Estate conceptualized the political process and their role in it. Therefore, there are several reasons to seek to nuance this overly simplified view of the political ambitions of the Peasant Estate.

Karin Sennefelt is the first cultural historian to study the Peasant Estate through an investigation of the revolt that took place in the province of the Dales in 1743. Specifically, she investigates how the rebellious peasants argued amongst themselves for a conceptualization of reality in which the realm found itself in a state of emergency that required them to act. By studying their language, she is able to demonstrate how they turned the illegitimate action of a revolt into something legitimate with support in the political culture of the Age of Liberty.\(^{78}\) The arguments of the peasants were mainly threefold. Firstly, the state had failed to uphold their obligation of protecting the commoners, which left them fending for themselves. Secondly, they opposed the perceived oligarchic rule of the council in Stockholm. Thirdly, they felt that the Peasant Estate did not represent their interests and forced them to accept decisions that they had

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\(^{76}\) Bäck 1984 pp. 20-22.

\(^{77}\) Bäck 1984 pp. 27-29.

\(^{78}\) Sennefelt 2001 pp. 29-34.
not had part in shaping.\textsuperscript{79} Thus, Sennefelt is able to demonstrate a peasantry capable of formulating elaborate political claims and, most significantly, as having an interest in matters of state that go beyond economic considerations. However, a drawback for the general validity of her results is that her study is focused on an anomaly in the form of the one revolt at a time of heightened political activity that only lasted for a couple of months. Thus, it is unclear what her results imply in the general development of the estate’s political language. This calls for a longer time period in which such results can be contextualized.

Anders Claréus is the final entrant of interest in the history of the Peasant Estate. He bases his study on the political language present in grievances from local communities during the period 1755-1771. Significantly, he argues that there was such a thing as a peasant ideology. According to Claréus, it was based on the concepts of justice, tradition, and liberty. These were joined together in what he refers to as a system of norms, or a moral order, that consisted of several peasant expectations of the other groups of society. Supposedly, a defining characteristic of peasant politics and its ideology is moralism and its connection with a “just life”, founded on the peasantry’s agrarian economy, rights, obligations and reciprocity. In regards to national politics, it is supposed to imply that tax payers should be allowed influence and oversight of politics.\textsuperscript{80} Moreover, Claréus finds that the localities did not present any “traces of newly developed political arguments”. For this reason, he claims that the Peasant Estate was a form of “peasant avant-garde”.\textsuperscript{81} Grievances as a source material, however, pose a significant problem for the questions Claréus poses. The problems that mainly featured in the grievances were of an economic nature. It can come as no surprise that they would seek to safeguard their economic interests. Thus, by emphasizing their economic interests as a source of ideology in an agrarian society, one will find a strong image of continuity. By relying on such a moral economy-esque conception, the Peasant Estate comes across as completely static and isolated from any political developments in society. The late Age of Liberty was a tumultuous period with many politico-linguistic novelties that Claréus’ argument would have one believe was of no significance for the development of the estate’s political language. This presents a skewed image of the Peasant Estate’s political identity that needs to be nuanced.

There is also another closely related field of research relating to peasants and politics. These scholars tend to rely upon Peter Blickle’s concept of communalism to say that the peasantry possessed a local identity founded on an egalitarian principle that stood in conflict with the

\textsuperscript{79} Sennefelt 2001 pp. 54-67.  
\textsuperscript{80} Claréus 2003 pp. 102-103.  
\textsuperscript{81} Claréus 2003 p. 103.
hierarchical principle of feudalism that governed the social order. Historians such as Peter Aronsson and Eva Österberg have argued that political developments on the national level originate in developments on the local level. Thus, they seek to highlight the importance of local assemblies as a formative experience for the peasantry as they interacted with members of the other estates and the state. They were then able to take these lessons with them to the Riksdag.

The image of the Peasant Estate is thus fairly fragmented. There are no major conflicts within the field of research, as the historians working on the history of the estate have mostly emphasized different aspects from one another. Mostly, the emphasis has been upon practices and with a focus on the latter Age of Liberty with limited periods of investigation. As such, there is a significant gap in regards to the estate’s political language and its long-term development.

3.2 Conceptual History

Those scholars who have emphasized language, on the other hand, are the ones operating within the field of conceptual history. To a significant extent their interest is with the emergence of the public sphere and the debates of learned scholars and nobles, and not with peasants.

Peter Hallberg is one such scholar whose primary interest is the public sphere. Specifically, he studies the production of history books in the period 1740-1790. He places his study within the context of the emerging public sphere in Sweden, and for that reason most of his emphasis winds up on the use of history as source of argumentation in the period that he calls the “Strife of the Estates” in 1769-1772. Of interest for this thesis are the debates that emerged in the public sphere. Hallberg finds that differing conceptualizations of society emerged in response to the growing crisis over privileges. In these debates, the traditional four estate system would be contested with alternative visions of society structured on the competing interests of commoners and nobles. Particular for this two-estate-model was the discursive creation of a commoner estate (odalståndet). Thus, the end of the Age of Liberty is attributed to the emergence of the public sphere and the conflict between the Nobility and the other three estates. However, it is highly unclear what the Peasant Estate’s role is in all of this. Oftentimes, they are assumed to simply be part of the conflict. Yet those who took part in the public sphere were mostly members of the disenfranchised “middling sorts”, such as teachers and lawyers and others who did not fit into the traditional model of the estate society, along with members of the three upper estates. While

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82 See Blickle 1986.
83 Österberg 1989 pp. 76-87; Aronsson 1992 pp. 311-312.
84 Hallberg 2003 pp. 5, 37.
one can find examples of peasant signatures on pamphlets, their contribution to the political conceptualizations that was to redefine estate relations remains shrouded in mystery. Equally so, the impact of the public sphere upon the estate's political conceptualizations have not been elaborated upon. For this reason, much of peasant political thought remains unclear within this tangled web of ill-defined “commoner interests”.

Charlotte Wolff is the conceptual historian who has taken the greatest interest in conceptualizations of the political system of the Age of Liberty. She studies the political identity of the Nobility as illustrated by their language in the period 1740-1790. Specifically, she investigates how they conceptualized the political system in terms of the three classical forms of government known as aristocracy, democracy, and monarchy, and the particular blend of these three that was known as monarchia mixta. Traditionally, it was thought amongst philosophers that too heavy a focus on either aspect would lead to corruption and turn the three into oligarchy, anarchy, and absolutism respectively. Closely linked to this are the two opposing concepts of liberty on the one hand and arbitrariness on the other. These two concepts were closely related to commonplace notions of the importance of virtue, as a lack of virtue would lead the rulers of a state to cause its ruin by abuse of power. Much of Wolff’s interest derives from the same arguments as raised by party research, namely that the Nobility was the most powerful social group with the most to lose from a change in political system. Wolff finds that, with continuous references to the republic of Rome and its Senate, the Nobility conceptualized society as an aristocratic republic where they had a clear role in the leadership of the state much like their Roman predecessors. A drawback to Wolff’s study is that she only considers sources such as private correspondence, where they could privately formulate their conceptions, and not sources in which situations present themselves whereby they have to formulate such conceptions as they engage with the other estates. As the ritualized forms of interaction between the estates mostly occurred within a Lutheran political framework, the relationship with the other estates becomes even less clear by her emphasis on classical political concepts.

Pasi Ihalainen shares many similarities with Wolff. He investigates meanings attached to the concepts of democracy and popular sovereignty during the final Riksdag of the Age of Liberty in the interest of seeing if and when those concepts adopted the same generally positive connotations as they have in the modern period. Much like Wolff, he draws heavily upon party

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86 Cf Hallberg 2003 p. 168.
87 Wolff 2008 pp. 28.
90 Wolff 2008 pp. 43-46.
research and places significant focus upon the Nobility. Of particular interest to this thesis, however, are those rare moments when he considers the statements of members of the Peasant Estate. He is highly cynical of their abilities as politicians. According to Ihalainen, while the Nobility used concepts such as “the people” and “the nation” to describe the core of the political community, the Peasant Estate did not. Instead, they referred to themselves as the representatives of the “common folk”. Ihalainen regards this as “a term that emphasized estate identification and political passivity rather than activity. Lacking a generally applicable and politically active concept of the people, the Peasants continued to view themselves as political objects rather than subjects.”

When the Peasant Estate does use a new concept, Ihalainen regards it as something that is merely passed along to the more informed peasants when their patrons in the Nobility choose to let them in on the discussions held in the higher estates.

Furthermore, Ihalainen finds that “[u]nsurprisingly, [peasant speech acts were] ignored by the higher estates. Despite all the rhetoric about equally empowered estates, the Peasants were not yet considered full members of the Swedish political community.” To Ihalainen, the Peasant Estate is nothing more than a passive self-serving interest group that, at best, mimics the words of their superiors with no capacity for political thought. Moreover, Ihalainen’s claim that the peasants were ignored seems highly unlikely, as the peasants were one out of four votes in the Riksdag and could not simply be ignored or considered unimportant. The image thus fashioned fits poorly with the research that has been done on the Peasant Estate. It seems as though the strong emphasis on the Nobility, as the only voice of concern in politics, has led to the assumption that the derogatory views of the Nobility regarding the peasantry is indeed an objective truth regarding the capabilities of the peasants as political actors.

This field of research is informative of how the elite has conceptualized politics and society. However, as the Peasant Estate rarely figures in the analyses, one is mostly left with the elite’s view of the peasants. Oftentimes, this is quite a derogatory and unsympathetic view of the peasants’ capabilities. It presents a missed opportunity to find out how the estate conceptualized politics and the implications of their involvement in parliamentary work. Moreover, Lutheran conceptualizations of politics are given surprisingly little room in the interpretations of political concepts and their use in debates. Mostly, this is due to a fascination with the new concepts of the time. This implies that conflicts over the primary political conception of society are missing from much of the analysis of political concepts.

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92 Ihalainen 2010 p. 184.
94 Ihalainen 2010 p. 230.
4 Aim and Research Questions

The ambition of this thesis is to investigate how the members of the Peasant Estate formulated their political identity through linguistic constructions of the political system and the social order. As was illustrated in the previous chapter, there are several shortcomings inherent in the fields of research regarding the Peasant Estate on the one hand and conceptual history on the other. A central contribution to the former field of research is pursuing a long-term investigation into the development of the Peasant Estate’s political language. In regards to the latter, a central contribution will be to broaden the discussion to include other estates than merely the Nobility. This will be done by relying upon two theoretical considerations, theories of political language drawn from Reinhart Koselleck and Quentin Skinner, as well as Goffman’s theory of interaction. Vital to producing an answer to the formulated research aim are a number of questions:

- How did the Peasant Estate’s political language develop over time?
- What concepts did the estate draw upon as it constructed its vision of the body politic?
- Was there a specific peasant political language, and if so, what values and concepts did it rely upon?
- How did the Peasant Estate negotiate its identity when interacting with others?

5 Operationalization

In order to investigate the development of the Peasant Estate’s political identity, this thesis will mainly be relying on three tools. Two of these are drawn from a recent dissertation by Anders Sundin on the discursive struggles surrounding the creation of the constitution of 1809. Sundin relies upon the theoretical considerations of Quentin Skinner in his work, and his methodology offers a means of operationalizing those considerations. As such, his work is relevant with regards to the theories employed in this thesis. The final tool is drawn from classic Aristotelian rhetoric and offers a means of elaborating upon the interaction theory of Goffman.

The first tool is what Anders Sundin calls “key words”. These are strong carriers of meaning and are as a general rule open for conflicting interpretations that allow them to be used by various political actors in constructing overarching frameworks of political thought. An example of this would be the word citizen and its role within a civic discourse. Discourse in turn forms aspects of political thought that can be combined into overarching interpretive frameworks, as Sundin calls them. These frameworks are schemes of interpretation that simplify and condense
reality by selectively pointing out things, situations, experiences, and actions in the past or present. These frameworks gain political significance by being anchored in a political culture with which a society formulates political claims.\footnote{Sundin 2006 pp. 37-44.}

The second tool is what Sundin refers to as “subjective positioning”. By virtue of containing multiple identities at once, for instance peasant, citizen, father, etc., individuals are under the effect of multiple discourses at any given time that offer directions for how to act in any given situation. Individuals can mostly slide between these discourses without conflict. However, when an individual is affected by multiple discourses that are in disagreement as to the appropriate course of action, a conflict will arise as to how to act. For a political idea to gain credence, the proponent of it would have to get potential supporters to identify with a subjective position that is not in disagreement with the proposed course of action, and phase out those positions which would place the same purposes in a less favourable light.\footnote{Sundin 2006 p. 42.} Of significance is that as key words are contested and the appropriate use of a discourse in question, it becomes possible to manipulate discourses in such a way that would propose a course of action as either legitimate or illegitimate.

The final tool is what is commonly referred to as ethos. With Goffman’s theory of interaction in mind, it is not only of importance to study a speech act in terms of what is said, but also how it is said. Ethos refers to the character of a speaker. For an actor to come across a credible, his statements need to be considered legitimate, or within the bounds of the political culture. Consequently, if one only considers discourses and their key terms, one would miss out on the opportunity to describe a political actor’s mode of speaking or the characteristic ways that he would express himself. For instance, a subordinate would have to show a superior deference as part of a legitimate interaction within the social order, which would not necessarily lend itself to characterizations with a set of words as much as a general performative behaviour in line with Goffman’s conceptualization of interaction.

In what follows is a short description of potential discourses that can be found in the speech acts of the Peasant Estate based upon observations drawn from previous research.

An overall framework of interpretation is that of Lutheran political theory. A central component of this framework is the discourse of concord.\footnote{Ihalainen 2003 pp. 87-89; Ihalainen 2005 pp. 585-586.} A key word of concord is the concept of unity. As was noted in section 2.3, there were different conceptualizations of Lutheran political theory as either founded upon the harmonious cooperation of four equally important estates, or the hierarchical society which implied that some estates were more important than others. Considering Blickle’s concept of communalism, it is possible that there will be conflicting...
visions of the appropriate conceptualization of the societal body. To that end, there exists another set of recurring key words that has been noted by previous research in the form of “equally empowered estates”. While this concept has not been further elaborated upon, it suggests the potential of a discursive struggle over the appropriate conceptualization of Lutheran society. This will be considered indicative of a discourse of constitutional equality.

A central discourse to peasant political thought is that of principality. The exact workings of this concept will be further demonstrated in section 6.1. For now, however, it will suffice to say that the peasantry had a well-developed conception of the mutual obligations of electorate and elected representative. This conception was often realized during deliberations by references to the “brothers back at home”.

Another central discourse is that of justice. The archaic Swedish word used in the sources for this concept is “billigheten”. According to Pär Frohnert, this was a central concept used by the peasantry in interactions between state and locality in regards to their mutual obligations towards one another as stipulated by the social contract. Similarly, Anders Claréus regards this as a central discourse for a peasant ideology of what constitutes a good society, founded on the peasantry’s agrarian rights and the mutual obligations between state and locality. Thus, it is to be considered a discourse of significance in upholding the moral economy. The authorities cannot bleed the localities dry in terms of resources, while the localities are obliged to obey their betters and pay their taxes. Moreover, Ihalainen finds that, evidently, this discourse became even more important towards the end of the Age of Liberty. Based on previous research, the only key word attached to this conceptualization of justice appears to be the word itself.

The investigation will be split into five samples. Specifically, the years under investigation are the Riksdag sessions of 1726/27, 1738/39, 1746/47, 1755/56, and 1765/66. This means that the first three Riksdag sessions and the final two have been left out. The early Age of Liberty up to and including 1726/27 has been characterized by many as a Sattelzeit for the new political system, where actors had not entirely figured out how the system worked. Furthermore, the material produced during those Riksdag sessions is fairly sparse. For these reasons, 1726/27 is a more rewarding starting point. The late Age of Liberty, on the other hand, has been much investigated by those interested in the emergence of a public sphere and the rise of bitter struggles surrounding privileges. As was noted in chapter 3, most historians have emphasized

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98 Ihalainen 2010 p. 230.
100 Frohnert 1993 p. 282.
101 Claréus 2003 pp. 102-103.
103 Hammarlund 1985 p. 7.
certain time periods in their investigations. Therefore, it is deemed to be of the greatest interest to investigate long-term developments. This will allow for the possibility to detect the shifts in the estate’s political language over time in a way that will either corroborate or refute the findings of those historians who have emphasized particular time periods. In terms of expected results, Ragnar Olsson, Kalle Bäck, and Karin Sennefelt all point to the late 1730s and early 1740s as a period where the Peasant Estate was to become more politically active. Similarly, a vast number of authors have pointed to the 1760s as a period of increasing radicalism and the emergence of the public sphere as developments that brought about a significant shift in general political behaviour. Therefore, one can expect two shifts in political behaviour to occur throughout the Age of Liberty, one in the late 1730s and one in the 1760s.

Furthermore, as another means of operationalizing Goffman’s theory of interaction, two sets of source materials will be investigated in order to elucidate how the Peasant Estate formulated political claims when faced with different audiences. To that end, the first source material is the Peasant Estate’s protocols. These detail the deliberations that took place inside the estate and are of interest as they illustrate how the peasants spoke in an arena composed of social equals with similar political objectives. The scope of the deliberations necessitates narrowing the investigation to a limited set of political questions. These questions have been chosen on the basis of the fact that they need to be recurring questions at every Riksdag. Preferably, they should be static, meaning that the problem should remain roughly the same in every sample. That way one can rule out that linguistic changes are due to variations in the questions investigated. Moreover, both Bäck and Cléral have amply demonstrated the problems of focusing on questions of economic policy in terms of peasant political ambitions. It would be of far greater interest to select a set of questions where the peasants were forced to be abstract and where they could not hide behind the subject matter. For these reasons, the questions selected are two-fold.

The first question pertains to the Peasant Estate’s exclusion from the Secret Committee. The committee was tasked with dealing with matters of foreign policy, government regulations, the military, the banking system, coin and credit policy, and other issues referred to them by the estates. As such, it was the true centre of power for the most part of the Age of Liberty. The Peasant Estate was to continuously seek admittance to the committee throughout the period. Consequently, it forms a constant political conflict between the estates, which would be initiated repeatedly by the Peasant Estate as it formulated its claims as to why it should be allowed to have its deputies in the committee.

105 See Alexandersson 1975; Hallberg 2003; Nordin 2003; Winton 2006; Sennefelt 2011.
106 Alexandersson 1975 p. 57.
The second question pertains to the dismissal of members of the Council of the Realm from office. This became a recurring feature of the political life of the Age of Liberty and a staple of party politics. Technically, the councillors were appointed for life and could only be dismissed if they had committed some form of criminal offense. If a crime could be proven, then it became possible to remove them through the procedure of “licentiering” (fr. licencier). The term has no English equivalent, as impeachment amounts to a vote of no confidence, and licentiering was ultimately a judicial proceeding. The term used throughout this thesis will simply be “dismissal”, yet the reader is advised to bear in mind that the procedure was not quite so simple. As the Peasant Estate had no part in the political game surrounding the councillors’ dismissal from office, they often sought to understand what had forced such serious accusations to be levelled against some of the most important men of the realm. Oftentimes this question was linked to the issue of a lack of insight into the deliberations of the Secret Committee. Thus, this question presents another area of conflict between the Peasant Estate and the other estates, which forced the peasants to vocalize thoughts about the political system.

The second source material is the protocols of the Greater Secret Deputation. This was a subcommittee of the Secret Committee, composed of twice the amount of members as the Secret Committee and complemented by 25 peasants. For reasons similar to the investigated questions in the above, the interest has primarily been to investigate a committee that would convene continuously throughout the period and to study peasant speech acts in an area where they have been thought to have nothing to contribute with. However, there does not appear to have been any clear definition of what policy considerations were to fall under the purview of this committee, and one is faced with a wide range of issues from defence questions to tax questions, or even a single individual’s grievances. For these reasons, it is scarcely possible to find recurring questions of interest throughout the period. Furthermore, the peasants were not always active participants in the debates. They were not necessarily expected to participate either, which offered the peasants certain opportunities in terms of when to speak and when to remain silent. Mostly, however, it is due to the asymmetrical relations at play in the nature of Riksdag work in terms of the resources that each estate could marshal. The peasants did not possess the same level of education as the other estates or the same ability to gather information during a Riksdag. Furthermore, the Nobility possessed twice as many deputies as the other estates in any given committee, which naturally increased the frequency of noblemen’s speech acts. As such, one is forced to a much greater extent to simply work with what one can find in terms of peasant

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107 See Linnarsson 1943.
speech acts. Moreover, as the composition of the audience changed, one can expect that the peasant deputies altered their speech acts as a response to no longer being amongst social equals. Furthermore, there does not appear to have been a clear idea as to what to do with the protocols. In the first half of the Age of Liberty, the protocols were simply bundled together with the Secret Committee’s protocols. However, in the 1720s the question of what was to fall under this particular subcommittee’s purview appears even less clear, as peasant delegations turn up frequently with topics similar to grievances that they wish to have dealt with. In the latter half of the period, it did get its own volume. Regrettably, the volume for the Riksdag 1755/56 seems to have gone missing, which presents certain complications for that particular sample year.

Parliamentary protocols have been surprisingly under-utilized in the political history of the Age of Liberty. The reason for this, according to Gunnar Olsson, is that, “while the protocols, in their first draft, are contemporaneous with the debates of a session, they are fashioned from the subjective observation of the secretary and cannot be freed from it.” As such, Olsson argues that one has to regard parliamentary protocols as little more than recounted stories of what occurred during a session. Lennart Thanner, similarly, found in his comparison of concepts with finalized protocols in the Council of the Realm’s records that there were noticeable differences in tone and sometimes content. Consequently, he found that “referring to these sources without reservation is methodologically unsatisfactory if one wishes to obtain a realistic impression of what occurred.” Historians approaching the material from perspectives of party conflict and high politics, however, have not had an interest in studying the political language employed by various actors as a tool for studying their political identity. As such, it is not in the interest of this thesis to study the exact content of a debate, as it is to study what was said. In this context, it is equally possible that what they wanted left on record is of even more interest than what was said during a debate. Consequently, any alterations to the text are not considered a significant concern for the ambitions of this thesis.

The most significant difficulty involved in studying parliamentary records, from this thesis’ point of view, is the lack of secretarial guidelines for how a protocol was to be kept. As such, the quality of each individual protocol varies quite significantly. Some contain the complete record of a debate, while some can summarize an entire day’s worth of deliberations in just a few sentences. Others are halfway in-between debates and summaries and, instead of capturing what an individual was saying, only seek to relay what the “spirit” of any given speech act is. The Peasant Estate’s protocols improve throughout the period, while the committee protocols are far more random in their quality.

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110 Olsson 1963 pp. 46-47.
111 Thanner 1953 p. 9.
6 The Political Language of the Peasant Estate

The first subsection is dedicated to offering the reader a definition of how the Peasant Estate was intended to operate. The following subsections are dedicated to one Riksdag session each, with an introduction based on how previous research has conceptualized the major conflicts during each session, followed by a summary at the end of each subsection.

6.1 Defining the Peasant Estate

Historians have tended to emphasize the origins of the Peasant Estate as a tool of statecraft. During the Medieval era matters of taxation and legislation had been conducted on the local level in assemblies called thing (ting). There the monarchy would have to bargain with the localities for support. Gustav Vasa attempted to change this by summoning legally empowered deputies to the Riksdag. This was a measure designed to centralize political decision-making on the national level and to remove the localities as a hindrance to the monarch’s state-building ambitions.\footnote{Holm 2002 pp. 199-202.} In addition to being called to the Riksdag to take part in the deliberations, the peasants were allowed, even encouraged, to bring their grievances to the Riksdag so that they may be addressed. This has been interpreted as a form of safety valve designed to relieve tensions in the land by guaranteeing the peasantry that their problems would be heard and dealt with.\footnote{Nilsson 1990 pp. 88-99; Holm 2007 p. 93.} The estate also proved useful to the monarchy, as it pitted the estates against one another and presented itself as the guarantor of uniting and protecting the disparate interests of the realm.\footnote{Holm 2007 pp. 200-205.}

The Age of Liberty was to present a new beginning for the Peasant Estate. One of the clauses in the constitution of 1719 decided that the peasantry was to be allowed to choose their own representatives free of any outside influence. Prior to the Age of Liberty it had mostly fallen upon the governors of the hundreds to handpick representatives that they deemed appropriate for the task.\footnote{Olsson 1926 pp. 22-24.} The peasantry being given free reign over its estate was a vital component for the new political system to function, as the rule of the estates demanded that each estate be in control of its own affairs. Thus, Ragnar Olsson has argued that “if the government previously had sought, through its bailiffs and governors of the hundreds and counties, to influence the elections in order to create a Peasant Estate, which was amenable to the state’s goals, the representative was
now primarily the spokesman of those who had elected him".\textsuperscript{116} Thus, as soon as the estates convened again after the period of absolutist rule, the Peasant Estate had undergone its perhaps most significant constitutional development since its inception, which would allow it to truly work towards its own interests without external influences looming over it.

The Peasant Estate was, however, not a political franchise encompassing the entirety of the Swedish peasantry. The Swedish equivalent of the word peasant (bonde) is not an exact translation. A peasant in Sweden referred to a landed peasant who possessed a fiscally defined land unit in the form of the homestead. Landless and semi-landless groups in the rural area who made their living by agriculture, such as crofters, lodgers, and day labourers were not included in the Swedish definition.\textsuperscript{117} In Sweden, there were three main categories of peasants during the early modern era: tax peasant (skattebonde), crown peasant (kronobonde) and tenant peasant (frälsebonde).\textsuperscript{118} The first category consisted of yeomen, who were peasants who owned their own land. The second category consisted of peasants working state land. The third and final category consisted of peasants working the land of noblemen. Only peasants of the first two of the three categories were allowed to be a part of the Peasant Estate.\textsuperscript{119} There were two more requirements for membership in the estate. First, he had to be a resident of the hundred that he would represent. Second, he had to be the owner of a form of homestead that fit into the categories of either a tax or crown peasant. In order to enforce these regulations, the estate would inquire into the nature of the homestead that the prospective members of the estate possessed and whether he lived in the hundred that he was to represent at the start of each Riksdag.\textsuperscript{120}

There was also significant stratification within the Peasant Estate. It has been demonstrated that roughly 50 % of the Peasant Estate throughout the Age of Liberty was made up of members of the hundred courts, both judges and so called lay assessors.\textsuperscript{121} Generally, it has been argued that the members of the Peasant Estate were elevated above their electors in regards to social rank, wealth as well as education.\textsuperscript{122} Their knowledge of the judicial system, however informal their training might have been, must have been considered a useful skill when it came to defending peasant interests at the Riksdag. The peasants that made up the ranks of the lay assessors were typically drawn from the more respectable homesteads in the hundreds. Oftentimes, they would be drawn from the group of peasants that possessed a specific type of

\textsuperscript{116} Olsson 1926 p. 25.  
\textsuperscript{117} Lindström 2008 p. 22.  
\textsuperscript{118} Lindström 2008 pp. 33-34.  
\textsuperscript{119} Olsson 1926 pp. 26-27.  
\textsuperscript{120} Olsson 1926 pp. 46-55, 57-58.  
\textsuperscript{121} Olsson 1926 p. 53; Olsson 1948 p. 108; Alexandersson 1975 p. 28; for the function of the hundred court see Simonson 1999 pp. 15-16.  
\textsuperscript{122} Alexandersson 1975 pp. 26-29.
homestead, a so called rusthåll. The possessors of this type of homestead were exempt from most forms of taxation in exchange for providing the state with a cavalry soldier. Owners of these homesteads seem to have generally been of the wealthier sort amongst the landed peasantry. Jonas Lindström has argued that local economic stratification was transformed into social relations of power, by virtue of the idea that possessing greater economic resources entailed a social responsibility to the local community. This took the shape of taking time away from one’s homestead to perform the duties of local offices, e.g. as a lay assessor, or travelling to the Riksdag, or by acting as a patron and benefactor in lending money to those in need in the local community.

The Peasant Estate was, however, not composed of a self-serving peasant elite. By virtue of the discourse of principality, the estate’s interests and the reasons for their stay in Stockholm were aligned with the interests of their brothers back at home. As direct political influence by the localities was eliminated with the increasing importance of the Riksdag, it was inevitable that representatives would be required. Originally, the mandate that was signed was intended to empower the representative of the localities in such a way so that he was freed from the imperative mandate that bound him to the will of his constituents and made capable of making legally binding decisions for his electorate. However, the effect was to be the opposite, as the peasant representatives occasionally referred to their “brothers back at home” as a reason for why they could not accept a proposed tax or law. The relationship between the representative and his electorate functioned in the way that the electorate paid for their representative’s upkeep at the Riksdag, while he was to work towards their common interests. While this relationship of accountability had no basis in the law, failing to live up to this agreement would not infrequently result in beatings for the representative if he came back home with more taxes for his brethren to pay. According to Ragnar Olsson, principality, or the representative’s accountability to his principals through the imperative mandate, has a history that goes back to the inception of the Peasant Estate. This discourse was a particular feature of the estate’s political language, and it served as a central cornerstone of the peasant politician’s political identity as it formulated his mission, loyalties, and raison d’être at the Riksdag.

123 Olsson 1926 p. 54; Lindström 2008 p. 43.
126 Olsson 1926 pp. 56-60.
127 Olsson 1926 pp. 149-150.
128 Olsson 1926 pp. 148-158.
6.2 The Riksdag 1726/27

The main conflict during this Riksdag revolved around considerations of foreign policy. In Europe, a system of alliances had taken shape with the Hanoverian alliance, consisting of England, France and the Dutch Republic, on the one hand, and the Viennese alliance, consisting of Austria and Russia on the other, with separate treaties between Russia and Prussia. At this time, Sweden was considered a state that might tip the scales one way or the other, and some importance was placed on getting Sweden to pick sides. However, these were not merely the dynamic flows of international treaties. There were certain minor considerations that came to carry much greater significance for some of the powers involved. The defence treaty between Sweden and Russia from 1724 contained a clause which compelled both states to work towards the restitution of the Gottorpian areas of Schleswig to the Prince of Holstein. Russia’s growing ties to Holstein were further solidified with the marriage of Peter the Great’s daughter Anna to Prince Carl Fredrik of Holstein.\(^{129}\)

Sweden was divided in the issue. Chancery-President and Marshal Horn and his allies were in favour of joining the Hanoverian alliance, while their opponents, often referred to as the “Holsteiners” for their support of the Prince of Holstein in the succession after the death of Karl XII, were in favour of joining the Viennese alliance.\(^{130}\) The council was divided into two equally powerful camps and it would take some manoeuvring for either side to win.\(^{131}\) Horn’s camp was to seize the initiative and try to oust Count Mauritz Vellingk from the council, following some not strictly legal financial advice he had given to the king, who found himself in financial difficulties. Vellingk had advised the king to put up all of his domains, estates, and incomes that he possessed as the Prince of the Hessen-Cassel as collateral in exchange for a loan of 200,000 riksdaler that would be repaid by his future heirs.\(^{132}\) The king, however, did not have the right to bargain with state income in such a way, which opened up for the legal action against Vellingk. Vellingk, subsequently, risked being charged with embezzlement and treason. However, the political motives were clear to the political observers of the time, who labelled it as a political witch hunt.\(^{133}\) During the investigation, Vellingk’s private correspondence was seized from his residence in Stockholm, which implicated several of his allies as they had not always spoken in the kindest of words about their political opponents. This, in turn, opened up the opportunity to have Count Josias Cederhielm dismissed from office, as well as applying considerable pressure to

\(^{129}\) Hammarlund 1985 pp. 40-42.
\(^{130}\) Hammarlund 1985 pp. 40-42; Thanner 1954 p. 18.
\(^{131}\) Malmström 1895 p. 1.
\(^{132}\) Malmström 1895 p. 8; Hammarlund 1985 pp. 94-96.
\(^{133}\) Hammarlund 1985 p. 96.
the remaining “Holsteiners”. The legal action against both councillors was handled by a commission consisting of the members of the Secret Committee and was kept secret. When the dust had settled, Horn was able to secure a victory for his foreign policy objective of joining the Hanoverian alliance in 1727 by the slimmest of margins, only managing to win due to the king’s two votes in the council.

The Peasant Estate was not privy to any of these deliberations. They were reduced to a role of onlooker as this “witch hunt” proceeded. A role with which, they were not comfortable.

6.21 Internal Debates

In the two or so months after the opening of the Riksdag in August 1726, the political behaviour of the estate can mainly be characterized as a remnant of the political culture of absolutism. They do not actively seek political questions and confrontations. Rather, they dealt with internal matters, such as the submission of grievances and supplications, and various other minor topics such as having the estate’s chest, in which they stored their protocols, sent for, and which two members of the estate were to carry the keys to it. The Peasant Estate was therefore to operate within the boundaries of their estate interests and embrace passivity in regards to all other political considerations. They would only engage in political discussions when they were presented with a matter by the other estates or single individuals, who either turned up in person or submitted memos for the estate’s consideration. For these reasons, the political practices of the estate in the early months of the Riksdag generally fit the image of the estate as passive in previous research.

However, their political activity was to change gears once the accusations against Count Vellingk were made known in October 1726. Initially, they were sent an extract from the Secret Committee, which stated that the commission would consist of the members of the Secret Committee. The protocol, unfortunately, does not let on more than that the Peasant Estate “spoke of this for a while”. Their conclusion, however, was that “the estate could not think other than that the case should be transparent and settled by all of the estates and their deputies”. Thus, their initial response was to hint at the vital importance that all estates be given the opportunity to voice their opinion on this matter. It was a form of argument founded upon the notion of constitutional equality, whereby the rule of the estates relied upon all four estates being

134 Malmström 1895 p. 29; Hammarlund 1985 pp. 151-166.
136 BdP 1726/27 pp. 331-400.
137 Cf Ihalainen 2010 p. 184.
138 BdP 1726/27 pp. 400-402.
allowed the opportunity to voice their opinion. Transparency was therefore a vital concept for ensuring the proper functioning of the constitution.

The estate would continue to deliberate upon the matter during their next session. However, the Secretary reminded the estate that the constitution stipulated that secret matters did not concern them. The estate still argued that by virtue of the fact that “they had been summoned to this Riksdag same as everyone else, and had to have their stay paid for by their brothers back at home, then they, no less than any other estate, should attend the deliberations.”\(^{139}\) It was their opinion that the commission should consist of an equal amount of members from each estate without excluding anyone. Key words that underpinned this line of argumentation were the Riksdag summons and the brothers back at home. Their responsibility to those back at home, as well as being called to perform political duties demanded that they take part in the deliberations.

Of central importance to the thoughts of the Peasant Estate were thus two ideas. The first is the strong role of principality, enshrined in the key words “brothers back at home”, as the members of the estate were there by virtue of a mandate from back home signed and agreed to by all present parties, as well as the exchange of money to provide for the representative’s stay in Stockholm. This acted as an imperative mandate which forced him to act as their representative and to work towards furthering their common interests. The second idea is the notion of constitutional equality. In the above example it is illustrated by reference to the practice of being summoned to the Riksdag, “same as everyone else”. Furthermore, the notion of constitutional equality was enshrined in the constitution as it stipulated the rule of the realm by the four estates. As such, all four estates were recognized as vital to the functioning of the realm. This was to hearken back to ideas of society as based upon four independent and equal estates, as opposed to one of hierarchy where the peasantry was excluded. By appropriating the constitution in their argumentation, the Peasant Estate were therefore able to present the idea of the state as a joint project that relied upon the combined efforts of all four estates. For such a reason, it would not have seemed unreasonable to request parity of representation in a matter of state of such vital importance as the dismissal of a councillor. Thus, the estate assumed a subjective positioning, whereby their conceptualization of the body politic was in conflict with the hierarchical conceptualization.

Conflicts would resume as the matter dragged on. According to the Secretary, the estate knew full well that, according to the Riksdag Ordinance 1723, they were not allowed to take part in the deliberations of the Secret Committee. The Peasant Estate argued that “they could not recall having agreed to such a law, and wished to have their protocols examined for such an

\(^{139}\) BdP 1726/27 p. 402.
In regards to Vellingk’s case, the estate argued that “if there were things that needed to be kept quiet, then the Peasant Estate could, as well as anyone, keep those things quiet”. They further thought that surely there would be others among the estates that thought that the peasants should be part of the commission. After further words of caution from the Secretary, the Peasant Estate decided that the worst thing that could happen was that they got no for an answer. However, in case there were any repercussions, they would stand together, “one for all and all for one.”

This is an illuminating example in several ways. It illustrates a discursive battle over the control of the estate with the Secretary. A Secretary had been assigned to the estate ever since the reign of Gustaf II Adolf, as a means of establishing order and control over the estate, and to enable them to act politically by having their protocols kept and their thoughts written down into extracts that could be carried off to the other estates. However, when the interests of the estate differed from the strict letter of the fundamental law, as it tended to do during the Age of Liberty, this discursive power struggle emerged. For the Peasant Estate, it turned into a matter of whether or not they were the masters of their own estate. It further illustrates the importance of concord, as internal discord was perceived as detrimental to their chances of reaching political outcomes that favoured them. As long as they stood united, then the consequences of potentially being considered subversive did not seem as grave. Finally, it illustrates the ways in which the estates used the discourse of constitutional equality, as they would not recognize having agreed to a law that would hamstring their political capabilities. Thus, they feigned ignorance to avoid having their will subverted by the Secretary’s remarks. Moreover, they figured that they were “just as able as anyone else to keep quiet what needed to be kept quiet”. It was not a particularly compelling argument, however, and did not stop the other estates from arguing that whenever the Peasant Estate was involved things invariably were not kept quiet.

When the other estates delivered their response to the Peasant Estate’s request to be allowed to join the commission, the answer was, as expected, a no. They referred to the Riksdag Ordinance 1723, which said that such matters fell under the purview of the Secret Committee. As the commission’s verdict would be announced to all four estates, the delegation stated that it could be of no detriment to the Peasant Estate, and as always they pledged their full confidence with the estate. Thus, they minimized the importance of the Peasant Estate’s participation in the commission by suggesting that they, like the other estates, would be privy to the announcement of the verdict. After the delegation had left, the protocol states that “the estate spoke of this and

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140 BdP 1726/27 p. 403.
141 BdP 1726/27 pp. 403-404.
142 BdP 1726/27 pp. 403-404.
143 Olsson 1926 pp. 70-74.
came to the conclusion that the other estates do not consider the Peasant Estate worthy to take part in the commission regarding Count Vellingk, despite the constitution stating that the Councillors of the Realm are accountable to the estates, a formulation in which no estate is excluded.\footnote{BdP 1726/27 pp. 412-413.} For that reason the Peasant Estate decided to send a delegation to the king on the upcoming Monday, to see if it was his will, as well, that they be excluded. If he said yes or did not care, the Peasant Estate would ask permission to return home, since they clearly had no more business at the Riksdag after having delivered their grievances.\footnote{BdP 1726/27 pp. 412-413.}

This episode is significant for several reasons. Again, the centrality of principality shines through in the way that the Peasant Estate approached the problem at hand. If the estate cannot affect politics in any significant way apart from submitting grievances, then there is no reason for them to stay as they cannot live up to the mandate that they have been entrusted with by their brothers back at home. The feeling then, that they are unworthy, is a strong indicator of the dissonance between their own perception of politics and current political practices. As a response, they return to their old royalist behaviour and seek the support of the monarch. It turned out, however, that he could do nothing to help them, while constrained by the current constitution. The threat of going home was not a new one. Johan Holm has noted that it occurred during the seventeenth century as well, as a means of pressuring the other political groups into appeasing the estate.\footnote{Holm 2007 p. 214.} Certainly, this was the case here as well. If the threat was carried through, it meant effectively disabling the state, as political decision-making would no longer be possible without the legitimating presence of the four estates. It was a discursive response to having their subjective positioning refuted by the other estates, and took a form not unlike the strategies of resistance often employed in the localities to display disobedience when they were forced to perform labour tasks or the like against their will.\footnote{Cf Linde 2000 pp. 75-80, 128-147.}

After the events that transpired in those autumn weeks, the Peasant Estate ceased to be as aggressive in their claims. Instead they appropriated an apologetic language, as they responded to rumours of conspiracies and political witch hunts, to say that they “found that they knew nothing that was not good about the Secret Committee’s members and that the members of the committee were also under a sacred oath.”\footnote{BdP 1726/27 pp. 459-460.} Moreover, the estate claimed that “they had never heard or knew anything other than that the members of the Secret Committee were right honourable patriots and that they had the full support of the Peasant Estate.”\footnote{BdP 1726/27 p. 470.} On 27 April the
commission’s verdict over Vellingk was announced in which he was sentenced to loss of life, honour and estate. The Secretary concludes by writing that “[t]he Peasant Estate did not say anything one way or the other”\textsuperscript{150}. It seems as though the estate simply gave up on their claims. Most likely, it would seem related to the rejections that the estate faced in the Vellingk case. However, there are no clear indications in the records or by findings in previous research as to why the Peasant Estate abandoned their interest in the question.

The interpretation is further corroborated when the case against Count Josias Cederhielm is brought up. At this point the Peasant Estate seemingly accepts that they are to have no part in the commission and that they have to rely upon the “more mature considerations” of the other estates\textsuperscript{151}. As such, they assumed the language of a social inferior and abandoned any opportunity to a say in the matter.

This foray into the internal debates of the estate has resulted in findings that both corroborate and differ from those made by previous research. The image of passivity that the estate has often been ascribed by previous research seems an appropriate characterization of the estate’s practices. However, it should not be understood as a political disinterest. Rather, it should be regarded as a political strategy employed by the estate founded in the remnant political culture of absolutism, whereby the peasants were subjects and not active political actors looking for political confrontations. This presents a more nuanced version of the otherwise simplified understanding of early peasant political behaviour\textsuperscript{152}.

6.22 External Debates

The discussion in this section is structured according to the events that were seemingly the most important in terms of the frequency with which one can find peasant speech acts. For that reason, the topics discussed in this section will be the deliberations surrounding the mandates given to the members of the peasant estate back at home, the contribution, the dearth that occurred in 1727, as well as two taxes.

Early in the autumn, the Peasant Estate’s delegation brought up the topic of the faulty mandates that a significant number of the estate’s members had shown up to the Riksdag with. Technically, the forms needed to be filled out in accordance with the guidelines set down in the Riksdag Ordinance. This, however, had not been done in some of the hundreds and, accordingly,

\textsuperscript{150} BdP 1726/27 p. 561.
\textsuperscript{151} BdP 1726/27 pp. 708-709.
\textsuperscript{152} Cf Bäck 1984; Clérèus 2003; Ihalainen 2010; the Danish case can serve as a suitable point of comparison, see Bregnsbo 1997 and Bregnsbo 2011.
the representatives from those hundreds could not lawfully be considered as members of the Peasant Estate. The Peasant Estate wished to allow these members to join the estate anyway, as “it would cause the brothers back at home to suffer [...] should they be excluded from the estate.”¹⁵³ As the error lay with the governors of those hundreds and not with the peasantry, the peasants argued that the governors’ mistakes should not be allowed to have an adverse impact on the Peasant Estate.

This minor incident serves as a practical illustration of not just the role of principality once more, enshrined in the key word(s) “brothers back at home”, but also of the importance of proper legal guidelines. As was illustrated in section 6.1, much effort went into defining the Peasant Estate in the early Age of Liberty as something genuinely peasant. Having the appropriate documentation was pivotal in order to make sure that the decisions made by the bearers of those documents were legally binding for their local communities.

As the indirect tax known as the contribution was under discussion in the spring, the estate was to pursue an alternative angle. They were instead interested in limiting the amount that they would have to pay and pleaded for the use of available funds in the state coffers for alleviating poverty. The Vice Speaker gave thanks for the tender care that the Secret Committee had shown for the country. However, the Peasant Estate did not possess the means to pay for the tax, since the country had been struck by a severe dearth. For this reason, they would much rather see the state step in and provide the affected provinces with cereal for bread and sowing. The Vice Speaker felt that the state possessed “an impressive income that could be used for the common weal.”¹⁵⁴ As such, they were relying upon a subjective positioning that was predicated upon a Lutheran conceptualization of the peasantry as the labouring group that provided for the other estates. This was combined with a moral economy argument, to say that in exchange for their contributions, their superior and benefactor should alleviate the problems of the peasantry and not force them to pay additional taxes as they were starving. It serves as an illustration of how the Peasant Estate appropriated the language of a social inferior that was part of the overall ritualized interaction of the estates to make political claims from the position of the subject.

Two delegations from the Peasant Estate were sent in regards to the severe dearth in the counties of Elfsborg and Skaraborg. The delegation spoke of the great and unfortunate dearth, which was “greater than anyone could imagine”. The countrymen there were forced to “live off of an unusual diet” of tree buds and bark, and, the delegation from Elfsborg said, with tears in their eyes, in order to “quench their hunger and to sustain their lives” they were forced to “consume cattle dung”. For such reasons both delegations felt strongly compelled to beg the

¹⁵³ SU 1726/27 Vol. 1 p. 22.
members of the Secret Committee that they would take pity on the poor countryman and relieve him of his misery by sending much needed cereal to the province so that they might make bread and have seeds for the upcoming harvest. The delegation urged haste, unless the people completely starve to death and are forced to more desperate acts than those that had already been committed. It was noted that six churches had already been defiled in the people’s desperate search for sustenance.\textsuperscript{155} Thus, the Peasant Estate relied upon an evocative language founded upon emotional appeals to the Secret Committee, to try and spur them, as the benefactors of the poor, into action.

These episodes are interesting mainly in the sense of the ethos presented. The estates were supposed to be equal partners in politics. If they had been equals in practice, one would imagine that they would ask or perhaps demand that something be done. Yet the peasant delegations find themselves begging for relief and hoping that they can appeal to their betters to do something about the situation. It is indicative of the peasant as someone who acts within the model of Lutheran political theory as he seeks to present an image of himself in line with his superiors’ expectations of a peasant subject, in an effort to move the members of the Secret Committee with their plight, so that they might get them to act in an expedient manner to resolve the dearth crises. Thus, unlike the resolve that the estate showed in its internal debates in regards to standing up for their equal right to a part in the commission overseeing Count Vellingk’s case, these examples illustrate how the estate took up the position of a subject and adopted the language of a social inferior by emphasizing pathos, or appeals to emotion, rather than reason, in their speech acts, as a means of playing on the contractual obligations of the authority figure. This is reminiscent of the political culture of absolutism and appears to function in the same way. The subject who is in need of assistance from his king comes to beg for aid, and the king, by virtue of his station and in the interest of maintaining that station, has to offer help in order to present the image of himself as a benefactor of the people.

The final example regards the implementation of the so-called “wage and payment fee” (lön-och betalningsavgiften). This particular tax was introduced to service the immense debt that had been amassed during the Great Northern War. The revenue from this tax was earmarked specifically for the Debt Office (Riksens Ständers Kontor) that was created in 1719 for that purpose.\textsuperscript{156} The Vice Speaker argued that, after having read the Secret Committee’s extract, the Peasant Estate had reacted with “apprehension and distress”, as the peasantry was “emaciated and destitute”. For that reason they felt compelled to ask for dispensation from the fee.\textsuperscript{157} In a

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{155} SU 1726/27 Vol. 1 pp. 2571-2572.
\item \textsuperscript{156} Åmark 1961 pp. 675-712.
\item \textsuperscript{157} SU 1726/27 Vol. 2 pp. 3712-3713.
\end{itemize}
later session, the Vice Speaker argued that “the common folks’ meagreness and poverty is greater than anyone can imagine, and many have had to sell everything they own, as well as the clothes on their back in the midst of this dearth.” Thus, they could not possibly pay this new tax. “Only the Lord knows where the poor common folk will find the means with which to pay this tax.” The consequence, according to the Vice Speaker, would be that the Crown would be cheated out of tax revenue. “While the peasantry wishes to help in any way it can”, he argued, “if they cut too deep they will pull up the roots and leave the land barren”.158 As a response to not being granted the requested relief, the estate once more relied on evocative terms such as “apprehension and distress” in an effort to emphasize their shock and outrage that their benefactors are acting in a way that does not seem conducive to their well-being. Similar responses would be issued, as they received a denial to their request, where the Vice Speaker expressed the estate’s apprehension and distress that this just request would be denied.159 This was the first time that the justice discourse would crop up in these deliberations. Overall, it appears to have been sparingly used, despite being considered a commonly occurring concept by other researchers.160

The Peasant Estate was not to give up so easily, however. They reminded the Secret Committee of their request to have the matter reconsidered, and they were “hoping for a just response.”161 The request was denied once more, however, and, once more, the Vice Speaker returned to state that it is with much apprehension and distress that they hear that their most reasonable request has been denied. “Reasonable” (skälig) was to become another key word associated with this discourse of justice, emphasizing that it was more based on some form of common sense notion of what was fair and what was not, as opposed to being founded on an ancient principle.162 The Vice Speaker was to further argue that “if it pleases the other estates to place such a burden on the Peasant Estate, then the emaciated peasantry shall pull this load until they fall over, and the other estates will have to assume responsibility.”163 This was a pointed argument aimed at how unevenly a new tax such as this would hit upon the general population. The Peasant Estate rightly perceived itself to be hit the hardest by the introduction of any new tax, and the perceived lack of sympathy for the peasantry’s plight displayed by the other estates did little to alleviate peasant concerns.

This perception of the state of things was to reach a low point towards the end of the Riksdag. The peasant estate was to humbly beg to be spared half of the fee until the next Riksdag.

159 SU 1726/27 Vol. 2 p. 3986.
160 Cf Claréus 2003 p. 103.
161 SU 1726/27 Vol. 2 p. 4498.
162 Cf Ihalainen 2010 pp. 229-230.
163 SU 1726/27 Vol. 2 p. 4273.
session, as they feared that they would be “poorly treated” by their brothers back at home when
they got back, especially since the provision of their stay in Stockholm had proven costly for the
local communities. The Peasant Estate tried to make a deal in which they would not have to pay
anything this year, but half the next year and the other half the year after, as that was all that the
Peasant Estate claimed it could manage without its complete doom. If they could get away with
this, they would, as faithful and honourable subjects, henceforth do anything in their power to aid
the realm. This final example of the fear that the peasant representatives felt when they thought
of returning home was a very tangible fear. It was the consequence of failure. Failure, as the
representatives had not lived up to their part of the agreement that they had entered into back
home when they signed their mandates and agreed to represent the interests of the localities. As
such, this turns into something of a last-ditch manoeuvre to plead with the Secret Committee to
be spared of the situation that they feared inevitably awaited them back home. It, furthermore,
points to the reality of the discourse of principality, as was illustrated in section 6.1.

Their desire to avoid having to pay taxes was often met with a counter-conceptualization of
the body politic. While the Peasant Estate emphasized how they were hit the hardest by any new
tax and how they could not afford to pay, the other estates would often respond with an
argument of stating that everyone had to contribute. They would often overlook the fact that the
peasantry, which made up over 95% of the population, possessed the least means of all to pay
the taxes, which meant that they would be proportionately struck harder by the introduction of
any new tax. Thus, the Peasant Estate would emphasize the economic differences between the
various limbs of society and how the loss of one limb would put the overall state project in
danger, while the other estates emphasized a form of equality-in-taxation. This points to the way
in which alternative conceptualizations of the body politic lent itself to different subjective
positions that could be used in order to make one’s case in forwarding political claims. In
comparison with the case of admittance to the Secret Committee, the roles were now reversed in
how this conceptualization was used.

The Peasant Estate was, as has been illustrated, to act quite differently when they entered into
a committee. Most of the examples that have been presented have pointed to similar findings.
The peasants were to emphasize the language of the subject. They often relied upon an evocative
language, used to plead with their superiors, as they presented grievances; much like a subject
would to a king, when they came before the committee members. This language has not been
explored much in the politics of the Age of Liberty, however, it does reproduce many of the
findings that have been associated with the moral economy, namely the mutual obligations

SU 1726/27 Vol. 2 p. 4305.
between subjects and authorities, which the peasants attempted to use in their favour. It confirms the characterization of the Peasant Estate as mainly concerned with its estate-interests. However, even though they presented the more passive ethos of the subject, they used this position as a strategy of how to accomplish political objectives within the ancien régime, where they used the expectations placed upon them to their favour.

6.23 Summary

The Peasant Estate in the 1720s can mainly be characterized as consistent with the political culture of absolutism. Their political language in the 1720s appears to have centred on a couple of key discourses. The first is that of principality, illustrated by the oft-repeated set of key words “brothers back at home”. This discourse presented the peasants with an effective way of anchoring their own sense of political mission and raison d’être. Their attempts, however, to use it in arguments with the other estates were less compelling. Another central discourse was that of constitutional equality, which most commonly took the form of references to the constitution and the fundamental laws, and occasionally various simplistic remarks such as being able to keep things quiet as well as anyone else. This discourse was common in their internal deliberations, but did not turn out to be an argument that they felt comfortable using amongst the other estates. Concord, which is widely regarded as one of the cornerstones of Sweden’s early modern political culture, did not surface much, except for a bid to stand together “one for all and all for one”. The most significant finding in the material from this Riksdag, however, is the Janus-faced contrast between how they presented themselves in their internal deliberations and in the deliberations of the committee. Amongst themselves, they were assertive in their demands to be allowed to take part in the commission set to examine the case against Count Vellingk. This runs contrary to the expectations of the estate as passive, as it signalled a desire to participate politically, when most of the elements of their political identity suggested that they embraced passivity as a political strategy. When they were amongst members of the other estates, they slipped back into a language of the social inferior. They used this language as they pleaded for assistance from the other estates, much in the same way that a subject would come before a king and beg for his merciful aid. This was part of a political behaviour founded upon the ritualized conceptualization of how the estates were supposed to interact with one another, as well as how the peasant subject was supposed to approach his superiors in asking for their aid. For these reasons, the Peasant Estate’s behaviour during this Riksdag is a curious mix of the passive ethos of the subject and a

desire to participate in an important political question that seemed uncharacteristic for this particular ethos.

6.3 The Riksdag 1738/39

The Riksdag 1738/39 was to herald the downfall of Arvid Horn. There had been growing disillusionment with his regime ever since 1726/27. Furthermore, the remnants of the Holstein faction had not stopped working towards undermining the regime. Carl Gyllenborg, who was to emerge as their leader, completely restyled his faction from a friend of Russia to a staunch opponent of Russia and a fierce ally of France. He found much support amongst those who felt that they had been wronged by Horn’s regime. Traditionally, these groups have been regarded as military men who had either been passed by in terms of promotions, or a younger generation of the Nobility who wished to see Sweden return to glory. Following the demobilization process after the Great Northern War, there were far more officers available than there were positions, and the pay was particularly meagre, meaning that it became increasingly difficult to make a living off the profession, and it only worsened as the Age of Liberty progressed. Horn had also made enemies amongst civil servants, who felt that his regime stood in the way of their own ambitions. Most significantly, however, Gyllenborg was willing to approach members of the other estates to form allegiances, something which had been unthinkable and that earned him accusations of vanity.

Once more, the conflict would mainly revolve around considerations of foreign policy. In 1731, the Hanoverian alliance was dissolved. Following the death of August II of Poland in 1733, and the ensuing War of the Polish Succession, both England and France were in treaty deliberations with Sweden. France offered the more interesting treaty, however, one of the articles of the treaty stated that Sweden was not to enter into any treaty with any power that was or could become an enemy of France. Consequently, when Horn’s regime renewed the treaty with Russia in 1735, France was antagonized and relations soured considerably. This offered a propaganda edge to Gyllenborg’s faction that they had lacked until now, as they made themselves out to be true patriots and accused Horn of being too weak in his foreign policy, which caused Sweden to become dependent on Russia and hindered from reclaiming her lost glory.

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166 Roberts 1986 p. 112.
167 Linnarsson 1943 p. 72; Thisner 2007 pp. 100-117.
168 Carlsson 1984 pp. 81-84; Roberts 1986 p. 112.
169 Sennefelt 2011 p. 90.
The fateful blow to Horn’s regime would come from a seemingly minor issue as that of the appointment of a new vice admiral. The Council of the Realm handled many of the promotions to vacant offices in both the military and civilian government, and as such the matter of promotions had serious constitutional and political implications. One of the few privileges that the king still possessed was the right to pick one candidate out of three that were up for a promotion and nominated by the council. The king, however, wished to forego the candidate who possessed seniority, which was the trait that the king was supposed to go by. In his frustration, however, the king only agreed to the council’s demands if the other two also could obtain the rank of vice admiral, but not the position in question. The council, however, could not agree to such a procedure, as it was contrary to the fundamental law. Councillors Bark, Bielke, Creutz, Hård, and Taube felt that they could not agree with the king’s demands, but at the same time they felt as though they could not oppose him. Councillors Cronstedt, Ekeblad, Gyllenborg, Horn, and Lagerberg voted against the promotion of the younger officers, as it would be giving away titles to individuals who could not make claims to them without the position to go with it. Therefore, they wished that the king would obey the letter of the law and heed their counsel.

This would turn into a similar witch hunt as the one that had occurred a little more than ten years previously. Gyllenborg’s faction did not hesitate to use the same methods that Horn had used back then to get rid of his opponents. Subsequently, the councillors who had not wished to oppose the king were accused of not upholding the fundamental laws. The proceedings would take up most of the winter and spring, and took place in the Great Secret Deputation, where the estates were divided in the matter. The Secret Committee, controlled by Gyllenborg’s faction, along with the Nobility and the Burghers, wished to see them removed from office. The Clergy, on the other hand, wanted to let the councillors off with a stern warning and a lecture on proper conduct. The Peasant Estate lacked insight into what the matter was truly about and thought it most prudent to side with the Clergy in this matter. This created a two versus two situation amongst the estates, which was highly problematic, as it meant that no decision could be made until the situation was resolved. It became an issue that was not soon forgotten, as the Clergy and Peasant Estates were overruled by reference to the matter as a foreign policy concern, which meant that the reasons for the Secret Committee’s decision were secret and not up for debate. The matter was concluded with the dismissal of Bark, Bielke, Creutz, Hård, and later also Bonde, while Taube, and also Horn, handed in their letters of resignation.

172 Linnarsson 1943 pp. 31-41.
173 Malmström 1897 pp. 288-290; Linnarsson 1943 pp. 81-82.
174 Carlsson 1981 pp. 81-84.
Thus, the “Gyllenborgers”, as some called them, came to redefine the political culture of the Age of Liberty. Not only had they institutionalized the licencier procedure and formed alliances across estates, but in their brash assault on Horn’s allies in the House of Nobility, they wore distinct clothing laden with political symbols to identify themselves as members of the same political faction. Their tell-tale symbol was the so called storm hat that they wore with a ribbon. This was against military regulations and an open assault on their opponents. Reuterholm would laud their actions as “our Hat heroes”. Horn and his allies were derisively described as “inert” and “somnolent”, leading to the epithet of the “Night Caps”. Thus, the rivalry that has dominated Swedish political historiography of the Age of Liberty between the Hats and the Caps was created, even though their divisive potential was frowned upon by every political commentator of the time.

These developments mostly left the Peasant Estate untouched, however. This Riksdag affected the estate in a different way, as it would herald the appointment of the individual who is widely recognized as the most able peasant politician of the Age of Liberty as its Speaker, namely Olof Håkansson, a position that he would maintain until 1765 and later regain in 1769 for a brief moment until his death that same year.

6.31 Internal Debates

During this Riksdag, a significant legal aspect was to be introduced to the Peasant Estate’s language. This was most forcefully illustrated in a statement by Otto Olofsson from Saxhyttan. He was to invoke the legal argument of “unius positio non est alterius exclusion”, or, “the position of one thing does not exclude the other”. This set of key words, or various forms of it, formed a recurring argument for the admittance of the Peasant Estate to the Secret Committee. Olofsson was referring to the expressed mention in the Riksdag Ordinance that the Secret Committee consists of the Nobility, Clergy, and Burgher Estates. It was, however, not expressly stated that the Peasant Estate was excluded. In a court of law this would become a question of presumed legislative intent, as it could not be inferred from that passage in the Riksdag Ordinance that the Peasant Estate was to be excluded the committee. If legislative intent cannot be proven, then it is possible for a court to draw a different conclusion. As such, Otto Olofsson argued that the peasants are not forbidden from seeking to have their deputies in the Secret

176 Nilzén pp. 219-220.
177 Roberts 1986 p. 114.
179 See Strom 1967 for a partial biography.
Committee. Thus, the fundamental laws and the ambitions of the Peasant Estate were based on subjective positionings whose discourses were in conflict with one another. This immediately stands in a stark contrast with the more simplistic references to the constitution that the estate had relied upon in the 1720s when formulating their political claims.

The estate was to stay conspicuously quiet on the matter of the councils until the spring. Per Persson from Halland argued that “if the Secret Committee thinks it has the right to decide matters, then the estates, as empowered and the right principals of the Secret Committee, have the right to supersede their decision and be merciful.” Persson felt that they could follow the fundamental law and pardon the councillors if they deemed that to be best. Anders Christensson from Bohuslän stated that he was a member of the Justice Deputation and the Great Secret Deputation, and he “did not know anything other than that the Lords Councillors had always acted as loyal and well-intentioned men.” Afterwards, it was settled that the estate would side with the Clergy in this matter, who felt that the councillors should not be dismissed, and instead be given a stern warning and a lecture regarding proper conduct.\textsuperscript{181}

The speech acts quoted in the above point to several aspects of how the Peasant Estate viewed the conflict in the light of their own interests. Persson appropriates the discourse of principality to state that the estates are the principals of the Secret Committee, meaning that the committee is accountable to the estates. Furthermore, he uses the discourse of constitutional equality, illustrated particularly by the key word “empowered”, to argue that the decision in such a matter should rest with the estates and not the committee. Moreover, the estates did possess the right to pardon, jus ad gratiandi, and if whatever game the noblemen in the committee were playing was to the detriment of the realm, then it could be counteracted by a pardon of the estates. The lack of insight certainly offered the Peasant Estate no incentive to go along with the intentions of the Secret Committee, whose intentions they had no way of knowing. Christenssen’s speech act only served to cast additional doubt upon the whole affair.

Talk in the estate of how they could not accept the current state of affairs was to continue for some time. Otto Olofsson argued that “on the one hand, the Secret Committee says that they have found such errors in the conduct of the councillors so that they must resign, yet on the other hand, they also say that the councillors should receive pension and keep their dignity as councillors.” As such, he could not see why the estate could not do them a favour and pardon them as well as let them keep their positions.\textsuperscript{182} Many members of the Peasant Estate approved of this and stated that they could not abandon their position. Jan Swensson from Skaraborg argued that “the estate would think it best to act in accordance with the Riksdag Ordinance, by

\textsuperscript{181} BdP 1738/39 pp. 392-393.
\textsuperscript{182} BdP 1738/39 pp. 397-398.
neither agreeing nor disagreeing with the dismissals, since the estate still had not had any part in the Secret Committee’s proceedings.”

Olof Håkansson admitted that “it was vital to remain by the fundamental law, [as] it was of utmost importance that no reason be given for indirectly abandoning our right to seat and voice in the Secret Committee, the liberty of the estate and our jus ad gratiandi.”

Jan Persson from Tuna would later remark that “the Riksdag Ordinance 13 § was clear that such matters should be investigated and decided by the Secret Committee, but the right to extend leniency or the imposition of additional severity should fall to the estates as empowered.” He felt that they should not abandon their position before the other estates allow them to have deputies in the Secret Committee so that they can become more informed.

The speech acts quoted above offer further illustration of how connected the matter of the councillors’ impending dismissal and admittance into the Secret Committee were for the Peasant Estate. According to Håkansson, it was their “right”, and the “liberty” of the estate depended upon it. It would have been difficult to truly be one out of four ruling estates if one was denied an equal opportunity to gather information in vital matters of state and to have a say in them. A free estate could not at the same time be dependent on the good will of the other estates, whose interests were estate-specific. Similarly, Persson also forward a claim based upon constitutional equality by using the key words of the estates as “equally empowered”. It falls to the estates to decide matters, not a committee that does not consist of all four estates.

The language employed by the estate is remarkably different from the 1720s. Not only do they forcefully emphasize what they perceive to be political rights of the estate, but they also seek support for their claims in the constitution with the use of a judicial language. It is plausible that many of the members of the estate were able to draw upon their backgrounds as prominent members of local courts in their argumentation. However, perhaps even more plausible is that the estate had undergone a learning process, whereby they picked up on how the other estates operated politically and phrased claims. Particularly, cases where the other estates used legal arguments against the Peasant Estate likely served to drive the point home that arguments with legal foundations served as powerful political tools.

Thus, they now looked to the constitution as a source of authority as they phrased their political claims, as a form of adaptation to the requirements of the time. Moreover, they no longer simply presented the ethos of the subject, their political activities were not characterized by the subject’s passivity, and they do not turn to the king whenever they are faced with difficulties. During this Riksdag, they were actively seeking political confrontations regarding political matters that went far beyond the economic self-

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185 BdP 1738/39 pp. 401-402.
186 Cf Pocock 1985 p. 12.
interests of an estate. For this reason, the image that one is presented with in the estate’s internal protocols points to the validity of the idea of a shift in the estate’s political activity at this particular junction.\textsuperscript{187}

6.32 External Debates

During this Riksdag, the records of the Great Secret Deputation were divided in two. One part became its own volume, with discussions pertaining to the purchase of lumber for the navy and various other matters.\textsuperscript{188} The other part pertained to the Secret Committee and the council members, and was bundled together with the Secret Committee’s protocols. This second part will form the centre of attention in this section. Some of the main concerns of the Peasant Estate when they took part in this subcommittee were to obtain as much insight as possible into the Secret Committee’s proceedings, how the state’s funds were being used, and towards the end of the autumn, the pressing matter of the conclusion of the Riksdag session.

In comparison with the 1720s, where it seemed more arbitrary who would speak on behalf of the peasant deputies, Olof Håkansson would in the late 1730s literally perform the role of Speaker of the Peasant Estate, as he was almost exclusively the only peasant that spoke in the deliberations of this particular committee. Occasionally some other peasant would speak, but only in order to pose a question pertaining to some minor detail. If there were uncertainties regarding a matter, then the deputies would leave the room and have a private deliberation before coming back in to have their Speaker carry on speaking for them.\textsuperscript{189} Sometimes, the Speaker would turn to his fellow comrades and ask rhetorically if they were in agreement with him, to which they would vocalize their agreement in unison. This functioned as a brief presentation of a united front and an illustration of the support behind his words, as the Speaker rallied his comrades to take part in his performance.\textsuperscript{190} It would not have been ideal for the overall presentation of the estate if they questioned the performance of their main authority figure in front of members of the other estates.

One of the main difficulties facing the Peasant Estate was that, because they were not part of the Secret Committee, they lacked insight into how state funds were being used. Thus, the issue of the wage and payment fee was to surface once more by request of the Peasant Estate. According to Håkansson “the Peasant Estate was no less saddened than the other estates in

\textsuperscript{188} See SSDU 1738/39.
\textsuperscript{189} See for example SU 1738/39 Vol. 1 p. 1596.
\textsuperscript{190} See for example SU 1738/39 Vol. 2 p. 3726.
regards to how pressing it is that the servants of the realm who had risked life and welfare in the
service of the fatherland be helped with their wage claims.” Furthermore, “the common folk [...] with disregard for their own need and destitution [have] paid [...] in the hopes that the servants would [...] cede some of their claims for 1719 onwards.” It was the hope of the Peasant Estate, that, while they had no wish to “withdraw from contributing to this fee alongside the other estates”, it merited a reduction of the tax for the autumn for the children and servants of the peasantry, due to their great poverty.

Asking for a reduction in this tax would prove problematic. The expressed purpose of it was to service the debt of the realm and had to be paid by all estates as a common contribution to that end. For that reason the Marshal informed Håkansson that the state’s credit would suffer from the prolongation of the servicing of the debt, and he questioned the fairness of the estate’s proposal, as it would result in forcing the other estates to pay the full fee every single year as the peasants got away with less. Håkansson’s response was to state that “the estate was saddened by [the state of] the credit and wished that the sooner the debt was paid the better.” They thought that this request would be granted, however, as it was “fairly reasonable.” This was particularly due to the many “aggravations” that the Peasant Estate had endured during the war in the form of additional fares, lodgings, and tributes on top of their regular taxes, for which they had been promised remuneration from the state. It was believed that the claims of the common folk would more than double those of the Crown. Thus, Håkansson asked that the “just in this request of the common folk be considered [...] as the common folk can produce evidence of a considerable amount of claims that they have ceded in the hopes that others would too. But as this cannot be done, if the other estates find that they cannot give the common folk leniency, then they suppose that the same kind of justice will be shown to them when they submit their claims and that they be paid as soon as possible.” However, he feared that “the sum would then become so vast that it could not be paid for many years. But if the common folk can have the favour of a reduction in the fee, then they should fall upon the thought to cede it all for the benefit of the Crown.”

Thus, the language employed by Håkansson relies on several strategies. Firstly, he utilizes pathos as a means of playing on the expectations of what a peasant ought to be like, founded upon the ethos of the subject. To a point, this presents continuity with the 1720s, except this time it is not used to plead for the assistance of a superior. This is further illustrated by the use of the discourse of justice and its moral economy-based argument in forwarding the estate’s political

192 SU 1738/39 Vol. 1 pp. 1066-1067.
claims. However, it was not a simple matter to dispute the entitlement of the servants of the state to recompense for their services. For this reason he relied upon emphasizing the service of those men which earned them that entitlement. Thus, he appeals to their sensibilities by phrasing the wishes of his estate as a “hope” for a reduction. Although, this would soon turn into a veiled threat as the peasantry had suffered as much, if not more than any other group, from the hardships both during the war and now after the war as well. As such, the use of pathos and the emphasis on the merits of the servants of the state served as an elaborate frame for arguing the case of what is just and what is not, illustrated by repeated references to this discourse of justice by the words of just and reasonable.

The Peasant Estate would later on formulate their ambitions in regards to this matter. According to Håkansson, the deputies had been charged with obtaining a reduction of half the fee, however, they could now agree to a fourth’s reduction. Furthermore, as they wished to contribute in accordance with their abilities in servicing the debt, they asked for “a deputy of the Peasant Estate on the board of the Debt Office that can inform them of the state of the office and anything that is not secret and thus falls under the purview of the Secret Committee.” Håkansson added that “he did not think that the public would suffer from the Peasant Estate having a deputy there that can inform them of the office’s condition, and as such they hope that their request will be found just, especially as they only wished information of the things that could be made known.”

By far the largest category of debts being serviced in 1738/39 was the many wages that had not been paid during the war. The recipients of these claims were mainly civil servants and officers. Thus, there was an estate dimension to this issue in the form of the peasants having to pay the wage claims of nobles, despite the peasantry having suffered far more during the war than the other estates; a fact which struck the Peasant Estate as deeply unfair. Furthermore, it is similar to the argument that the principal tax payers have a right to know how their funds are being spent. If such a reasonable request cannot be granted, then the raison d’être of such a tax is nullified if the government cannot point to any tangible benefits to the people from paying such a tax. Moreover, this raises the issue of confidence between the estates, as the Peasant Estate is forced to rely on the other estates for information regarding how the tax revenue is being spent. As the estates were supposed to be independent and free of outside influences, any relation of dependence would present constitutional difficulties.

197 Åmark 1961 pp. 677-691.
The language present in this example presents some curious novelties. While operating within the discourse of hierarchy, where the subject presents a grievance to his superiors, Håkansson does not simply plead with them for a reduction in the tax as was more common in the 1720s. A novelty use of the discourse of justice allows him to act as though the Peasant Estate can dictate terms and negotiate with the estates on even terms. Frequently, he refers to only having the best intentions in mind for the welfare of the realm as a form of strategy to prove that they too are ready and willing to partake in the administration of the realm. By arguing for their good intentions and ability, no one could reasonably doubt the just of their requests for further insight into political matters and that the estate possessed the right mindset to undertake greater responsibilities and become an equal partner in politics in practice as well as in theory. The language used by Håkansson places a much greater emphasis on logos than pathos, with pathos mainly being used to frame the argument within something familiar to the other estates, often combined with the discourse of justice. This suggests that a significant change had occurred in the way that the Peasant Estate phrased its political claims. It is, however, conceivable that much of the political skill that Håkansson has been attributed with lay in this ability to navigate the hierarchical discourses and still present arguments as though he was a representative of an equal estate, and that the results are more Håkansson-specific than generally true for the estate.

The matter of bringing the Riksdag to a close was to become a point of contention, as it had been decided that the Riksdag was only supposed to last for two months according to a decision from 1734, and now it had dragged on for almost eight.198 For the Peasant Estate it was quickly becoming an issue, as the local communities that paid for their stay in Stockholm were being increasingly strained by the effort and displeased that the Riksdag was not concluded yet. According to the Marshal, if the current treaty with France did not get ratified, then the realm would be placed in jeopardy if the estates departed too soon from the Riksdag. In such an event, they would have to formulate some alternative alliance, which could not be done if the estates went back home. Consequently, the prolongation of the Riksdag was a vital measure to ensure that the realm was not left exposed to foreign threats.199

At this point the Peasant Estate chose to force the issue of its exclusion from the Secret Committee. Håkansson stated that “the Peasant Estate was not familiar with any such thing, as they had no deputies in the Secret Committee.”200 As such, their overriding concern was that of principality, and not being able to defend their stay in Stockholm any longer. The remark itself would prove quite controversial, as it was coming close to questioning the fundamental laws and

the relationship between the four estates. The Marshal responded that: “The Secret Committee hoped that [it was held in such high regard that it would be believed that] it had worked diligently and without negligence. [...] And under what judgement do we submit, if we leave here without having taken [every precaution] during these conjunctures, when war has left the realm exposed on all sides?”201 The key word “confidence” was of paramount importance to a society whose guiding principle was concord. Consequently, the Marshal’s response highlighted the subversive nature of Håkansson’s speech act, which seemed to question whether or not confidence between the peasants and the other three estates could be possible while the Peasant Estate was barred from the Secret Committee. Håkansson, however, did not relent, while professing the good qualities of the committee members: “no one doubts the diligence of the Secret Committee, and that is precisely the reason why it is felt that the vital errands of the realm may come to an end. Otherwise, everyone is convinced that the Marshal is a well-intentioned man who would not be making these statements without reason: however, I and the deputies cannot depart from the position of the estate.”202 With the estate as their principals, it would prove impossible for the deputies to defend a departure from the estate’s opinion in this matter, yet it also proved problematic to put into question the character of the members of the Secret Committee, which undoubtedly obliged Håkansson to laud the Marshal’s many good qualities.

As the deliberations dragged on, this would turn into a stalemate where the presented ethos would eventually tip the scales. Håkansson stated that “it grieves my Comrades terribly to hear that the realm is in such peril, as they thought that they had trustworthy friends and neighbours who had promised to maintain peace and tranquillity.”203 The Marshal, however, reassured the Peasant Estate that the realm was not currently in danger, though it certainly risked being in peril in the future if their work was abandoned too soon.204 Håkansson stood by his initial position. He stated that he “believes all of the Peasant Estate to have the kind of love for their fatherland, that if they could contribute to its welfare by staying here [then they certainly would]. However, as they had no members in the Secret Committee, they could not obtain further information regarding the circumstances that would require [the prolongation of the Riksdag]. As such, they could do naught but stand by their decision.”205 This argument points to another potential discursive strategy that actors had at their disposal in the form of a rhetoric of the weal of the fatherland that was a prominent feature in Swedish Lutheranism.206 Moreover, with the state as a

206 Cf Ihalainen 2003 pp. 86-87.
common project, it was vital that they all do their individual parts for the good of the whole. However, that hinged upon all four estates working together as equal parts, a prospect which was severely hindered by the Peasant Estate’s continued lack of insight.

In an attempt to reason with the peasants on their own terms, the Marshal used one of their own key words against them, that of “brothers”. He argued that “the Secret Committee supposed that the Honourable Peasant Estate would have confidence in them as their brothers, and that they, less now than during previous Riksdag sessions, can comfort themselves with what the Secret Committee tells them. If they knew of some other suggestion as to the Riksdag’s shortening, the Peasant Estate was at liberty to present it.”\textsuperscript{207} The Marshal asked for a few more weeks before concluding the Riksdag. This challenged the singular subjective positioning that coordinated the peasants as a group. As a corporate body, peasants were their brothers. But at the same time, on the national level, the other estates were also their brothers, and, subsequently, worthy of their trust. This presented the peasants with a dilemma, which seemed to have an effect on some of them. According to the protocol, “one or the other of the peasants thought that they ought to and should have confidence in what the Marshal had told them about the matters of the realm”. Håkansson, however, iterated on his previous statement and said that “the estate does not distrust [the Secret Committee]. However, as it does not have the information required to make a decision about the Riksdag’s continuation, [Håkansson] solicited if the estate could be given insight into the cases, so that they might, after their best understanding, take them under consideration.”\textsuperscript{208}

Håkansson’s resolute stand proved problematic for the Marshal. He did turn down their request with reference to the oath of silence that the members of the Secret Committee had taken, that the treaty with France might not happen, and in such an event, they would have to find a new solution. It was a further hope of his that “the Honourable Peasant Estate would have confidence in the Secret Committee, as the aforementioned estate is so reasonable and well-minded, that if others outside the estates would insinuate that [the Secret Committee] is trying to procrastinate, [...] then they should not believe it, as they who avoid saying such things between four eyes are not to be trusted.”\textsuperscript{209} It would seem as though the Marshal could not fathom this ethos presented by Håkansson, and he refuted it as the influence of some external actor, manifesting itself through this unusual behaviour that seemed insincere to him and genuinely unpeasant-like. This seemed a far more likely interpretation to the Marshal as the members of the

\textsuperscript{207} SU 1738/39 Vol. 1 p. 1981.
Peasant Estate were perceived to be particularly susceptible to bribery and manipulation by external forces.\textsuperscript{210}

In order to respond to such an accusation, Håkansson chose to emphasize the independence of his estate and that the ideas were those of his estate. He offered assurances that “no one had spoken with him or had tried to persuade him that the Riksdag was prolonged for any reason. He thought the same to be true of his brothers, and reassured [the Greater Secret Deputation] that they [...] treated the matters entrusted to them with tender caution care, even though they were but simple men” (enfaldiga män). The peasantry, lacking any real education and mostly being simple folk, were often thought of as children that required the custodianship of the other estates. Similar cases have been noted by Johan Holm, who sees “simplicity” as an escape mechanism to avoid political responsibility that was used in the seventeenth century.\textsuperscript{211} It certainly seems a plausible interpretation within the political culture of absolutism. However, in this situation it becomes more of a tool that Håkansson can use to his advantage, to step back into the ethos of the subject as soon as his ethos of a peasant politician is faced with strong criticism. Consequently, this debate comes off as a curious example of the Peasant Estate pushing the boundaries of what they can get away with within the prevailing interpretive framework of Lutheran political theory and the hierarchy that it implies, by virtue of having the option of returning to an ethos based on an accepted version of what a peasant was supposed to be like.\textsuperscript{212}

To that end, Håkansson ended with an affirmation of the Marshal’s previous point regarding confidence, with a twist of his own. He said that “it is recognized that the Peasant Estate should have confidence in the other estates, when something is referred to them that they have complete information in. The other estates have their deputies in the Secret Committee, and if also the Peasant Estate could have theirs in there, then they would surely have confidence in [the other estates].”\textsuperscript{213} They cannot make decisions without information to base their decisions on. This raised the question of the amount of confidence that one could possibly have in an institution that had amassed so much power that it was beyond scrutiny. Simply accepting whatever came out of the Secret Committee would be tantamount to giving up one’s independence. One could certainly not claim to maintain a position as an equally empowered estate by being forced to rely upon the good will of the other estates.

During the spring, the proceedings regarding the dismissal of the councillors began and became the topic of most of the deliberations.\textsuperscript{214} The Peasant Estate contributed little to the

\textsuperscript{210} Cf Olsson 1926 p. 108; Sennefelt 2001 p. 167; Sennefelt 2011 pp. 208-212.
\textsuperscript{211} Holm 2007 p. 46.
\textsuperscript{212} Cf Englund 1989 pp. 90-102, 194-204.
\textsuperscript{214} See SU 1738/39 Vol. 2.
debates, apart from voicing their agreement with the Clergy’s position. It would seem most likely that their disinterest in participating in the deliberations stemmed from their lack of information regarding the subject matter and that this was primarily a matter of political intrigue between various groups of noblemen, as illustrated in the introduction above to this Riksdag session. However, as has been demonstrated by the examples mentioned above, by only considering the case against the councillors, based on an interest in discovering the origins of the Hats and the Caps, previous research has overlooked several examples of how the Peasant Estate conducted politics on a much more even footing when the scales were not as heavily tipped in favour of the other three.215 Thus, by refining their political language and altering its ethos, the Peasant Estate was able to put the subject behind and embrace more fully the role of a peasant politician. Moreover, this interpretation of the ethos of the Peasant Estate in the committee also seems to lend credence to the idea of a shift in the estate’s political activity.216 Furthermore, by overlooking language as a possible political resource, as Bäck has, historians have missed out on the opportunity to study estate relations as they came to expression through the discursive struggles in various committees.217 Moreover, by simply assuming that the peasant language is uninteresting, a highly misleading image of the discursive struggles between the estates has been perpetuated that is not accurate.218

6.33 Summary

This Riksdag session was to prove significantly different from the 1720s. The most prominent trait that the political language of the estate had accrued was a judicial aspect, most likely drawn from the background of the majority of the members as lay assessors in their hundreds. Within the discourse of constitutional equality, they referred to the absence of a strict mention of their exclusion from the Secret Committee. They also referred to the estates as “equally empowered”, which replaced the more simplistic references to the constitution in the 1720s and being as capable as anyone else. This illustrates that this discourse had evolved past the simplistic arguments previously used and was now based upon a judicial language instead. Other words that were closely connected to this discourse were the “right” to be on the committee and the “liberty” of the estate being threatened. This would stand as a stark contrast to the Marshal’s claims that they ought to have confidence in the committee. The discourse of principality

215 Cf Carlsson 1981.
enhanced this by emphasizing the estates as the principals of the Secret Committee, meaning that
they were accountable to the estates. References to the brothers back at home do not seem to
have been as prevalent. Instead, justice became by far the most important discourse as part of the
peasant ethos in the subcommittee. Particularly, in the way that Håkansson was able to utilize
pathos to preface his argument with a frame of familiarity by using an evocative language before
presenting an argument, as opposed to a plea. Through such measures, the Peasant Estate re-
fashioned their old language into something new, with which they could navigate the discourses
of hierarchy and formulate political claims. The findings of this section seem to offer significant
credence to the suspicions of Ragnar Olsson, Kalle Bäck and Karin Sennefelt that the late 1730s
and early 1740s present a different kind of peasant.219

6.4 The Riksdag 1746/47

Much had transpired since the conclusion of the Riksdag 1738/39. Sweden was engaged in the
Russian War 1741-1743. The war effort was catastrophic, with Sweden unable to make any
progress. Furthermore, Queen Ulrika Eleonora died in November 1741, which created a crisis of
succession in the midst of the war. By 1743, a revolt broke out in the province of the Dales,
where the rebellious were intent on marching down to Stockholm to make their choice of the
Danish prince as their successor known, and to determine whether they were ruled by one king
or sixteen, as they thought the current regime was run by corrupt noblemen.220 Their desire to
march down to Stockholm was informed by a desire to participate in foreign policy
considerations, as the succession was to be determined in the peace talks between Sweden and
Russia. They did not think that any treaty resulting from the peace talks applied to them, as they
had not been there in person to agree to the terms. This was, as Sennefelt demonstrates,
principality drawn to its conclusion.221 The revolt was to end, however, with a bloodbath on
Norrmalm’s square in Stockholm.222 After the revolt was rushed, the official declaration by the
state proclaimed that the peasantry had broken the contract between them and the state and that
they had acted like savages. Thus, any political gains made by the peasantry were nullified over
the course of a couple of months.223 However, as Sennefelt notes, the national political arena was

221 Sennefelt 2001 p. 187.
no longer the preserve of the Nobility, and broad layers of the peasantry became increasingly politicized and interested in more than just estate-interests.\footnote{Sennefelt 2001 p. 314.}

Throughout this period in the early 1740s, the Peasant Estate had been admitted into the Secret Committee in regards to questions that pertained to the estate and the defence of the realm. It was hoped that it would result in the cooperation of the peasantry in the management of the crisis. However, they were not allowed to take part in the deliberations surrounding foreign policy or the reading of letters from foreign courts. Thus, they had to enter and leave the committee’s chamber multiple times, and they began to suspect that the succession was discussed as soon as they were out of the room, which further fuelled their suspicions and unrest.\footnote{Sennefelt 2001 pp. 98-99.}

Following the revolt and the conclusion of the Riksdag 1742/43, however, they were no longer admitted into the Secret Committee. According to Malmström, their exclusion was “without doubt a consequence of the aforementioned’s unruliness during the last Riksdag.”\footnote{Malmström 1897 pp. 289-294, quote on pp. 289-290.}

What turned into a major issue during this particular Riksdag, however, was what became known as “the battle of principality”. It originated in the Burgher Estate in the Riksdag of 1742/43 due to the damaged inflicted upon the Riksdag’s reputation after the disastrous war effort and the misery that followed in its wake as a matter of the accountability of the politicians to the wider population.\footnote{Sallnäs 1947 p. 176.} The merchant Christopher Springer wished to see the merchant Thomas Plömgren, a prominent burgher who happened to be part of Carl Gyllenborg’s faction and part of the Burgher Estate’s delegation in the Secret Committee, removed from the estate, as he did not live up to his responsibilities to his principals. While the majority agreed with Springer, they did not wish to exclude Plömgren from the estate. After the 1742/43 Riksdag was concluded, Springer appealed to the Chancery College to be allowed to print the texts regarding this matter that had cropped up during the Riksdag. The college turned to the council to have Springer criminally charged for his dangerous claims.\footnote{Malmström 1897 pp. 376-377.} Strangely, the college’s solicitation turned into a difference of opinion on whether or not the council should take a stand in the matter of principality. However, it was made to look as though the “doctrine of principalship” (principalatsläran) was an assault upon the succession of Adolf Fredrik and as a twisted interpretation of the fundamental laws.\footnote{Malmström 1897 p. 403; Roberts 1986 p. 118.} This turned into a political controversy as the estates decided to reject principality as contrary to the fundamental laws, while there were those on the council who had voiced their support for it, namely Counts Cronstedt, Posse, Wrangel, and,
particularly, Count Samuel Åkerhielm. The matter, however, was considered to fall under the purview of the Secret Committee, and the reasons for their dismissal were not communicated to the other estates.

Åkerhielm was considered a significant opponent, as well as a turncoat after he had left Gyllenborg’s faction after the Riksdag 1738/39, supposedly because he was uncomfortable with the methods used by his faction to remove councillors from office. Now he was about to face that same fate. His old friends and now opponents were to use this controversy fully against him, and as the Riksdag drew to a close, Åkerhielm was forced to hand in his resignation.

This issue was, however, not discussed much by the Peasant Estate. Instead, they were still mostly caught up in the events that had transpired in the 1730s, when the realm had gone from the dismissal of seven councillors to the declaration of a disastrous war with severe economic repercussions.

6.41 Internal Debates

6.411 The Secret Committee

The conflict surrounding the Secret Committee would not wait and started up almost immediately. On 2 October some of the estate’s members said that they had heard that today would be the day when the electors of the other estates would announce their choice of members for the Secret Committee. As they were speaking, the committee’s instruction was being sent around the other three estates. The Peasant Estate voiced unanimously that they “could not be satisfied nor stand accountable before their brothers back at home, in regards to the condition of the realm, if they could not have their deputies in the Secret Committee.” After some debate, Olof Håkansson summarized the estate’s two options as follows: either they could wait for a better opportunity once the document with the oath and the instruction had been shared with the estate, or they could immediately choose their members for the Secret Committee. During this Riksdag the discourse of principality and the pressure exacted upon the representatives of the peasantry resulted in that they could not forego what they considered an affirmed political right of theirs to be on the committee. According to Malmström, “bitter words were spoken [in the Secret Committee] regarding the Peasant Estate, “which time after time sought to subvert the

231 Malmström 1897 pp. 372-373.
232 Sallnäs 1947 p. 231.
233 Malmström 1897 pp. 373-376; Sallnäs 1947 p. 283.
234 BdP 1746/47 p. 42.
Subsequently, this would turn into a struggle over political power relations between the estates; one that did not favour the Peasant Estate.

Principality would emerge as the overriding concern during this Riksdag and was to be most forcefully expressed by Johan Carlsson Öhrman from Västmanland. He thought that any waiting with the appointment of members for the Secret Committee was precarious. The entire estate had explained itself to not be able to satisfied, with anything less than having their deputies in the Secret Committee. Öhrman found that “he, after considering the present destitution of the realm as well as the perilous position that the public finds itself in, does not dare, from fear of accountability to his brothers back at home, to enter into any committee or take part in any matter of the Riksdag, unless the estate gets its deputies in the Secret Committee.” The fear that had existed during previous Riksdag sessions of returning home only to get beaten up on account of their failures to further the interests of the peasantry had now found a concept for itself in the form of “accountability”. Accountability serves as a synonym for the imperative mandate and obliges the representatives to further the interests of their principals. It forcefully expresses their mission in an uncompromising fashion that would set the Peasant Estate on a collision course with the other estates over the matter of the estate’s exclusion from the committee. Moreover, Öhrman suggested that the ones back at home considered it as a political right that they had gained during the previous Riksdag; one that they would not willingly relinquish.

This is further illustrated by a speech act of Johan Pehrsson. He argued that, “as the Secret Committee was the foundation of everything that revolves around the welfare of the realm, the Peasant Estate, being an equally empowered estate, as well as consisting of the largest portion of the population of the realm, and having the strongest experience of anything that regards the public, is justified in seeking a free and unmitigated participation in the deliberations pertaining to such matters.” Furthermore, he thought that “as far as the necessity of silence goes, anything that can be made known should be made known to their brothers back at home in the interest of promoting unity and confidence in the land.” Pehrsson found that in the unlikely event that they are not allowed to have their deputies in the Secret Committee, then, before anyone enters into any deputation, they should first send letters back home, asking their brothers how they should proceed. Thus, Pehrsson combines the two discourses of principality and constitutional equality, which is expressed through the recurring set of key words “equally empowered”. This was done to propose a similar subjective positioning as during the 1730s, to say that the estate

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236 BdP 1746/47 p. 43.
237 BdP 1746/47 pp. 43-44.
represents the largest portion of the population and are the most affected by the topics that are considered secret and for that reason fall under the purview of this committee. It presents a similar argument to those of Håkansson in the 1730s, where he would emphasize the concept of justice to say that it cannot be considered just that those who are the most affected, or those who pay the most taxes, do not have any insight, nor can they obtain any information, pertaining to the decisions from which they must bear the consequences.

In response to the arguments forwarded thus far, the estate decided to make a stand. The entire estate proclaimed its concord with the previous speech acts by shouting as one that they were in unison and that they would not enter into any committee unless they were given seat and voice in the Secret Committee. If this would not be granted to them, they felt that they might as well head back home. In other words, they decided to play the strongest card in their deck once more, the threat of going home, which was spoken of back in the 1720s regarding the councillors. Again, it was to be the discursive strategy of making a stand and resisting the perceived injustices of current political practices.

As no response was forthcoming from the other estates, the Peasant Estate felt they could wait no longer with electing members for the committee and they proceeded to elect 25 members. The estate then began to deliberate upon what would be the appropriate way to go about joining the committee. Two alternatives presented themselves. One was to quietly send the deputies to the chamber of the committee. The other was to send a list of their deputies to the other estates to notify them that the estate had elected deputies, in order to force a reaction out of the other estates. It was deemed that the former alternative was “too perilous”, as the estate would suffer too heavy a blow to its honour in case their deputies were turned away upon their arrival. Thus, the second alternative was approved, but it was emphasized that “it had to be done in a way that avoided raising the question of whether they were entitled to have members in the Secret Committee”. The protocol is unclear as to what this meant exactly. However, it does illustrate the continuity with the assertive claims made in the 1730s that admittance to the Secret Committee was something that the estate was entitled to as an equally empowered estate. Thus, the estate proceeded to send delegations to the other estates with the lists of deputies and the message that the Peasant Estate was awaiting the instruction and the oath for the Secret Committee to be sent to them, presumably so that their deputies could be sworn in.

On the next day, some members announced that the Secret Committee was in session. The discussion started immediately as to the estate’s course of action. Olof Jönsson stated that

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238 BdP 1746/47 p. 44; Malmström 1897 p. 294.
239 BdP 1746/47 p. 45.
240 BdP 1746/47 p. 46.
“according to his instruction, he was to not let the Peasant Estate be stolen of its right to participation or seat and voice in the Secret Committee. For this reason, if the estate was pushed aside, he intended to not participate in any other matter of the Riksdag, and would in such an event find himself forced to either immediately leave [the Riksdag], or at the very least gather the thoughts of his brothers back at home by letters.”

Many had similar instructions as Jönsson and felt that “in the unlikely case that this request was denied, they could do naught in order to avoid great peril but to leave and seek the counsel of their brothers back at home.”

This serves to further highlight how the discourse of principality had become the overriding concern of the estate, as it now effectively hamstrung the members of the Peasant Estate to the point where they felt that they could not do anything that deviated even in the slightest from the letter of their instructions.

In the midst of this crisis, the discursive struggle with the Secretary was to resurface again. The Secretary found himself forced to remind the estate that going home would be “fairly perilous, and would be regarded as contrary to the fundamental law”. Furthermore, it would have severe consequences for the Peasant Estate as the other estates might simply take it upon themselves to decide every single matter on their own and punish the Peasant Estate in the process.

The Secretary presented a tangible problem that the estate had not considered. According to the protocol “the estate argued under much distress that their request to enter the Secret Committee could not be regarded as unjust, as the estate had already been part of the committee once before, during the reign of Gustaf Adolph”. While justice was not a major discourse during this Riksdag, it would crop up every now and then in a fairly novel way. Justice had shifted from a mere moral economy argument of the mutual obligations between subjects and authorities to say that it would be just for them to be on the committee. This was predicated on the notion that they were entitled as an equally empowered estate to be on the committee. Thus, the concept of justice had shifted from one that offered a way of navigating the discourses of hierarchy from the position of a subject to a conceptualization of society as consisting of four equally empowered estates. Regarded in this light, the peasant conceptualization of the body politic as illustrated by this concept had undergone a significant change. Moreover, such a use of the concept has not been noticed in previous research, where it has exclusively been seen in the light of the moral economy.

As the days dragged on, however, the estate did not receive any response to their request, and their position began to grow precarious. Some members of the estate informed the Speaker and

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241 BdP 1746/47 p. 48.
242 BdP 1746/47 p. 48.
243 BdP 1746/47 p. 68.
the Secretary that they should already have elected members for the other committees, as some
of them had already begun their work. This presented a significant difficulty, as “the estate
otherwise could not avoid the accusation of having been the cause of the Riksdag’s
prolongation”, which would have meant that they were responsible for making their principals
pay for their stay in Stockholm longer than necessary. It was further argued that the other estates
might report the Peasant Estate’s lack of contribution in the decision-making process to the
government on account of them refusing to let go of the issue with the Secret Committee. This
was a particularly problematic interpretation of events, as those same members said that the other
estates had only been informed of the matter the previous day. As such, it would be more
prudent to await the decision from the deliberations of the other estates; a decision which was
placed in peril by virtue of their ultimatum. Thus, it would have been in the best interests of the
estate to cease this strategy and go about its affairs as usual, until the other estates had a chance
to review the Peasant Estate’s request.245

When they finally received their answer, it was not the answer that they were hoping for. It
was a resounding no, with reference to the constitution and the Riksdag Ordinance, and that
anyone possessing a Riksdag mandate had a duty to accept that. Håkansson thanked the
delegation on behalf of the estate, and argued that the estate had not imagined anything but an
affirmation of their request, as it had thought, considering the current state of the realm, to be
just. He also told the delegation that he “did not know how the estate’s members were supposed
to explain themselves to their brothers back at home, who knew nothing but that the estate took
as much part in the matters pertaining to the welfare of the estates as the others.”246

After the delegation had left an intense discussion broke out in the estate. Many felt that they
should honour their words and return home. The Secretary and the Speaker warned of the
perilous consequences that this might lead to. Many wished to continue arguing their case by
sending around more extracts of their protocols and raise the arguments anew. The protocol
states that “[a]s the estate was under much distress and proclaimed under loud shouting that they
were in unison with everything that their members had argued and that all of it had to be argued
for in the most forceful way possible.”247 This strategy was continued for a short while, but never
amounted to anything significant.

This episode has mainly been interpreted as a party matter. Malmström writes that the Hat-
dominated Secret Committee did not require the Peasant Estate’s approval to convene.
Supposedly, the Caps in the estate realized the futility of this course of action and urged the

245 BdP 1746/47 p. 76.
246 BdP 1746/47 p. 96.
247 BdP 1746/47 p. 96.
estate to abandon it.\textsuperscript{248} This interpretation seems unlikely, however, considering the strong adherence to the discourse of principality that has been illustrated. Malmström regards this as a simple by-product that resonated throughout all estates following the Riksdag sessions 1742/43 and 1746/47.\textsuperscript{249} However, the long roots of the concept within the Peasant Estate refute any notion that the estate was simply influenced by the events of the past five years.

Furthermore, this episode stands as a strong contrast to the claims of Anders Claréus that the localities did not contain “traces of newly developed political arguments”.\textsuperscript{250} He bases this claim upon having studied the grievances that the representatives of the peasantry brought to Stockholm. However, the many references throughout this episode to the instructions from back home and how it bound the Peasant Estate to the will of the localities point to a very different reality of the relationship between representative and represented than that presented by Claréus.

6.4.12 The Council of the Realm

The struggle surrounding power relations between the Peasant Estate and the others was to become even clearer in the matter of the Council of the Realm. Due to vacancies on the Council of the Realm, the Peasant Estate made a case for the reinstatement of Counts Bonde and Bielke, as a means of calming the unrest that had arisen in the localities following the events since 1738/39.\textsuperscript{251}

One of the ways in which they argued for the reinstatement of the councillors was to focus upon the lack of legal procedures and to emphasize the importance of concord. Olof Jönsson stated that “during the two previous Riksdag sessions, the estate has with zealous care had the ability to contribute to the restoration of the desirable unity and confidence in the land, which has served the state well. Several extracts from the protocol would attest to that those still alive of the Lords Councillors who were dismissed from office during the Riksdag 1738 must either be immediately returned to office, or in accordance with the request they voiced then, to have the privilege of proving their innocence before a court of law.”\textsuperscript{252} Jönsson’s emphasis on the importance of legal procedures suggests the gradual emergence of a discourse of the rule of law. A basic civic right was to have one’s case heard in a court of law. This, the councillors had been denied, and for that same reason, the overarching value of unity was severely disrupted. It is

\textsuperscript{248} Malmström 1897 pp. 292-294.
\textsuperscript{249} Malmström 1897 p. 402.
\textsuperscript{250} Claréus 2003 p. 103.
\textsuperscript{251} Malmström 1897 pp. 290-291.
\textsuperscript{252} BdP 1746/47 p. 52.
suggestive of the rule of law as a tool for emphasizing concord, rather than a discourse that could be invoked on its own as a political argument.

Erich Jöransson forwarded a similar argument. He found the reinstatement of the councillors to be “so much more necessary and just as this request of the Peasant Estate was founded on love and justice”. He could come to no other conclusion than that “the aforementioned Lords Councillors intentions and deliberations had been honest and well-intentioned, and that the realm would be in better health, if their counsel had been listened to.” In other words, justice and the rule of law were two values that were damaged by the lack of confidence in the councillors, who, as far as the estate was aware, had done nothing wrong. As such, it points to unity as the overarching value to which other discourses contributed. Moreover, it suggests the continued relevance of an overarching Lutheran conceptualization of the body politic for the construction of new concepts and new meanings for old ones for the subjective positioning of the estate.

The entire estate proclaimed that they stood united by Jöransson’s thoughts. They found that the weal of the public and the realm had taken a regrettable turn for the worse after the Lords Councillors dismissal from office. That they had received no explanation as to the reason for this measure apart from that the Councillors had lost the confidence of the estates had caused a severe dissatisfaction among the common folk. The only way in which this dissatisfaction could be removed was to reinstate these Lords and reassure them that they did indeed possess the much sought after confidence of the estates. By proclaiming their approval in unison, the estate voiced its acceptance of this interpretation and arrangement of discourses. The overarching value to be embraced was concord and its synonym, confidence, by reference to the importance of erasing the mistakes of the past that rested on questionable legal grounds.

Johan Carlsson Öhrman submitted a memo to the estate, in which he argued for the importance of the rule of law and concord. Öhrman wrote that: “it had not been shown or proven to the Realm’s Honourable Estates that Their Excellencies had, through intended faults, dangerous counsel or suspicious deeds, made themselves unworthy of the trust that had been placed in them by the King and the Estates of the Realm. [...] It was important to have an unquestioning confidence in the Lords Councillors, and on the other hand it was just to not, without complete and clear reasons, undermine that same honest confidence. Thus, it is in accordance with all law and justice that each and every one may possess the right to prove their innocence before he can be considered guilty.” The solution to all of the calamities that had befallen the realm after the councillors’ dismissal, according to Öhrman, was the immediate

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253 BdP 1746/47 p. 52.
254 BdP 1746/47 p. 53.
255 BdP 1746/47 pp. 53-55.
256 BdP 1746/47 pp. 53-54.
reinstatement of the councillors. This would also have the added benefit of not having to pay their pensions in addition to the salaries of the councillors that would replace them. The estate proclaimed their complete agreement with Öhrman.257

Öhrman’s argument draws heavily upon Lutheran political theory and the importance of the law. The councillors’ errors were never brought to light and the lack of insight as well as the unwillingness to divulge the actual reasons for such a severe measure only seemed to suggest that the real reasons for their dismissal were shady at best. This is illustrated by the argument that one should have very strong and transparent reasons for seeking to undermine the confidence that should be had in the Councillors. It was contrary to the fundamental concept of concord, to suggest that the most prominent members of the political community had intentionally committed grievous errors that would force their dismissal, without being willing to demonstrate proof to that effect, and only served to promote discord, which, in turn, would place the realm in peril. This fear would seem to be confirmed by the way that events had played out after the Riksdag 1738/39.

The Peasant Estate and the Clergy were to act as one in this matter. Following their tacit agreement in the matter during the Riksdag 1738/39 the estate had sought the support of the Clergy based on the unity and confidence between them.258 The Nobility sent a delegation in response to this matter that had been raised once more by the Clergy and Peasant Estates. They announced to the Peasant Estate that the Nobility found that the estate should forbid its deputies in the Expedition Committee from hindering the committee in regards to this matter, as the Secret Committee had already settled it. Furthermore, they found that “the peasants had simply claimed that the aforementioned councillors should be reinstated. This claim could not be regarded as either an application or memo [for discussion] but as the estate’s thoughts and decision, from which no alteration [of the decision of the Secret Committee] was to be expected, and subsequently any communication from the other estates and the already made decision by the Secret Committee was unnecessary.”259

The estate took the thoughts of the delegation under consideration. They found that they could not forbid their deputies from hindering the committee in regards to the resurfaced matter of the councillors. Furthermore, they found the request from the Nobility to be “no less unexpected than fairly serious”. Yet they found it impossible to determine whether their deputies had acted inappropriately. For this reason, the estate found the message of the delegation “extraordinary and of serious consequence”, as it seemed to them to be the equivalent of

257 BdP 1746/47 p. 56.
258 BdP 1746/47 p. 61.
ordering the estate what to do. Consequently, they decided that they could not order their deputies to cease and desist with their actions in the Expedition Deputation. 260

A final incident in this matter was to occur as the autumn session had already drawn to a close. As per usual, it was decided that the estates would part ways over the holidays. The peasant estate left Stockholm on the 17th of December. When they returned in January it turned out that the Nobility and Burghers had not parted ways after all, they had in fact stayed a couple of days more to manage the appointment of new councillors without them. The estate reasoned that they had always had the opportunity in the past to make their thoughts heard. This they thought constituted a right of theirs, as an equally empowered estate, which they had never renounced, even though they had no constitutional right to a vote in the appointment of new councillors. 261 Moreover, they had hoped to be allowed to enjoy this right unperturbed, as the estate had always striven to consolidate unity and confidence. 262 In regards to the other points raised, the core foundation of the estate’s argument once more seems to be based around the central Lutheran politico-theoretical concept of concord, based on the key words unity and confidence. By combining concord with the recurring concept of the estates being equally empowered, they conceptualize the governance of the realm as a joint project that they have an equal part in, and continue to formulate their subjective positioning around it. For that reason, it becomes all the more unfathomable from their position that their opinion was not sought after in such an important matter.

6.42 External Debates

Regrettably, the Great Secret Deputation’s records for this Riksdag are sparse. Only a dossier was produced, consisting of a limited amount of, mostly illegible, content, which was diminutive by comparison with the deliberations in 1738/39. The size of the dossier is fairly suggestive, however, when regarded in the light of the strained relationship between the estates during this Riksdag. It suggests that far fewer matters were relegated to its care, and those that were seem to have been minor topics of lesser political relevance, thereby lessening the amount of topics that was exposed to the Peasant Estate. After a supplementary investigation of the Secret Committee’s protocols, one can note that the peasants did not figure in it once. 263 Likewise, in the Secret Deputation’s protocols, one is hard-pressed to find any peasant speech acts and the topics

261 Malmström 1897 p. 291.
263 See SU 1746/47 Vol. 1; SU 1746/47 Vol. 2.
are mostly trivial matters.\textsuperscript{264} Those that one can find are only in regards to trivial matters. As this material has rarely been used in previous studies, it is difficult to find corroborating evidence as to why the Greater Secret Deputation suddenly decreased in importance.\textsuperscript{265} The most likely explanation seems to be related to Malmström’s conclusion that their exclusion from the Secret Committee was due to their unruliness in 1743.\textsuperscript{266} This was another way to limit peasant influence and to re-establish hierarchy.

6.43 Summary

The political language used in the two separate questions of admittance onto the Secret Committee and appointments to the Council of the Realm point to two different sets of languages used. In regards to the former, the overriding concern was principality. This was not only illustrated by the usual set of key words referring to those back at home, but also accountability as a concept which clearly defined their purpose and reason for being at the Riksdag. This concept was to have such a strong impact upon the Peasant Estate that the members of the estate felt that they could not deviate in the slightest from the instructions that they had obtained from their local communities. Another frequently used discourse was that of constitutional equality, which worked well in combination with principality. It was most strongly illustrated by the recurring key words equally empowered. Moreover, new meanings attached to the old moral economy-esque discourse of justice had transformed it into something that corroborated their claims for equality. The most important discourse in regards to the councillors was that of concord, based on the key words unity and confidence, and the use of a discourse of the rule of law as a means of framing the argument. As these arguments were presented to the other estates through various memos and extracts of their protocol, it becomes clear that framing their arguments within the pathos of the old political culture of absolutism was no longer part of their self-conceptualization. Rather, they place their emphasis on legal arguments and the requirements placed upon them as representatives of those back at home. The estate now fully presented the ethos of a peasant politician.

\textsuperscript{264} See for example SD 1746/47 p. 158.
\textsuperscript{265} See SSD 1746/47.
\textsuperscript{266} Malmström 1897 pp. 289-290.
6.5 The Riksdag 1755/56

Ever since his coronation in 1751, Adolf Fredrik had been disappointed in his lack of royal powers as king of Sweden. He and Queen Lovisa Ulrika had conspired with any supporters they could gather, as they sought to establish their own faction as a prelude to a monarchical resurgence. This was met with varying successes. However, by 1755 they had not managed to gather much support. The dreams of the royal couple were to be short-lived, as their attempted coup in 1756 was thwarted and their co-conspirators executed. As far as the Peasant Estate is concerned, they had supposedly recruited the royalist peasant Johan Persson from the Dales, who had been present at several sessions of the Riksdag by now, with his name spelled somewhat differently every time. Early on, he encountered difficulties gaining admittance into the estate. Later on, there would be outright fighting in the estate as the royalist faction within the Peasant Estate enacted their own version of Bastille Day and assaulted the authority figures of the estate in the form of both the Speaker and the Secretary.

Another development that began during this Riksdag was the increasing publication of political texts. In particular, the parliamentary newspaper started to be printed during this Riksdag as a means to provide the public with an official account of what goes on at the Riksdag, in order to quell the rumours and talk that went around the country of what went on at the Riksdag. In this sense this Riksdag formed the starting point of the public sphere that would later emerge more fully, as public opinion was recognized as being important, and by introducing the public to the work of the Riksdag, it was acknowledged that central political questions were open for discussion by the public. Another text in particular that was to gain a certain amount of infamy was *En Ärlig Swensk*, which defamed the political system in print and was widely discussed during the Riksdag. This was to further illustrate the political potential inherent in print more fully, compared to prior sporadic printing of texts.

6.51 Internal Debates

The Peasant Estate’s ambitions of gaining admittance into the Secret Committee appear to have lessened during this Riksdag, as the deliberations were quite brief compared to previous sessions.

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267 Malmström 1899 pp. 89-139.
269 Olsson 1963 p. 196.
270 BdP 1755/56 pp. 523-530.
271 Winton 2006 pp. 221-224.
272 Malmström 1899 pp. 144-145.
Jakob Larsson had prepared a text to that end, where he stated that it was his unassailable thought that the “ones back at home” had entrusted them with working in the interest of the common folk. However, as the estate lacked information regarding how the realm’s funds were being used or why the commoners were troubled by additional taxes, it was vital that they be admitted into the committee. He further supposed that the other estates would agree to this, if they wished that the estate should agree to any new tax for the sake of helping the realm.\footnote{BdP 1755/56 pp. 501-502.}

The formulations used by Larsson echo many of the thoughts presented in previous sessions of the Riksdag. He points to the importance of principality in guiding their mission in Stockholm; to work for the maintenance of the noble peace in the interests of those they are the “representatives” of, namely the “ones back at home”. Furthermore, as their representatives they required insight into how their principals’ tax money was being used by the state. Pointedly, he states that the estate will not sign off on any new taxes if it is not granted this insight. Thus, much like the Riksdag 1746/47, principality continues to be the overriding concern for the Peasant Estate in formulating what their political objectives are, as well as the implicit consequences of failing to live up them, despite the fact that principality was clearly rejected during that previous session of the Riksdag.

The remark about the tax payer’s money struck a chord with a number of other members of the estate. “Jonas Olson, Lars Larson and others, said that they could not accept any additional tax before the estate got to see the state’s budget.”\footnote{BdP 1755/56 p. 502.} The matter ends with the words: “but this was left now, and would be deliberated upon another time.”\footnote{BdP 1755/56 p. 508.} Four days later an extract from the Peasant Estate’s protocols was sent to the other estates in regards to the estate’s admittance to the Secret Committee.\footnote{BdP 1755/56 pp. 508, 861-862.} However, there does not appear to have been any continuation of the matter. It comes across as quite curious that a matter that had forced the estate to issue an ultimatum during the Riksdag 1746/47, had seemingly turned into a form of apathy, whereby the estate acted more out of habit than political interest in gaining admittance to the committee. A potential explanation for this is that political power began to be shifted from the Secret Committee to the estates during this Riksdag, as the Riksdag Act confirmed the estates as the sole legislative body.\footnote{Nordin 2003 p. 61.} For this reason, it would not have been as pressing to be part of the deliberations to be able to act as an independent estate.

In regards to the political language used by the estate, it is not possible to glean any linguistic developments in the brief deliberations regarding the matter. However, in his study of the Clergy
during this time period, Winton finds that there were no novelties amongst them either.\textsuperscript{278} For that reason, it seems fairly plausible that the same is true of the Peasant Estate.

6.52 External Debates

Unfortunately, there is not much to be said about this during this Riksdag session. For some reason, the volume pertaining to the deliberations of the Great Secret Deputation is nowhere to be found. Likewise, the only times that the Peasant Estate appeared in the Secret Committee was when the Speaker of the Peasant Estate was tasked with delivering a report on the incident on the 29\textsuperscript{th} of November, and an unrelated matter regarding a Captain Scheckta.\textsuperscript{279} Likewise, the records of the Secret Deputation are equally slim, and do not offer any significant opportunities to examine the conduct and language of the Peasant Estate during this particular Riksdag.\textsuperscript{280}

6.53 Summary

There does not appear to have been any novelties in the Peasant Estate’s political language during the 1750s. It is, however, entirely possible that to some extent this is due to the lack of material available for this session pertaining to the formulated objectives and method of this thesis. Apart from any such shortcomings in the findings of this investigation, the language does suggest much continuity between this session and those of the preceding two decades. The main overriding discourse in formulating their view of themselves and their role in politics was based upon principality once more, centred on the key words of the “ones back at home” and “representative” and the lack of information as a politicized concept. As such, one is mainly faced with an image of continuity between the 1740s and 1750s.

6.6 The Riksdag 1765/66

Much had transpired between this Riksdag and the 1750s. In 1757, Sweden joined the Seven Years War on the French side as the council, without consulting the estates, declared war on Prussia. The war was to last until 1762 for Sweden’s part before a separate peace treaty was concluded with Prussia, during which time Sweden had made no significant gains. This created severe inflation that spread across the land, where prices on many staple goods more than

\textsuperscript{278} Winton 2006 pp. 191-192.
\textsuperscript{279} SU 1755/56 Vol. 1 pp. 55-66, 100-101.
\textsuperscript{280} See SD 1755/56.
In turn, this caused a significant outrage at the Riksdag 1760/62 and several councillors were dismissed. The matter resurfaced again during the Riksdag 1765/66, as not all of the responsible councillors had been removed, and many felt that the estates had been far too lenient during the previous Riksdag.282

Furthermore, in the wake of Sweden’s separate peace with Prussia, another foreign policy disaster was to befall Sweden. France had decided to stop paying subsidies to Sweden, partly out of spite, but also because of an inability to keep up with the payments. The council had come to an arrangement after the war whereby France would pay a reduced sum of the debt, 12 million riksdaler, over a period of eight years, 1765-1772, as well as binding the two states together for an added period of time. The councillors were, subsequently, attacked for tying Sweden’s fate to a state whose allegiances, it was felt, one could not be certain of in the future. Moreover, such an important matter of finance should not have been decided upon before the convening of the estates. As such, it was felt that the council had acted to the detriment of the state.283

For this reason, it would not be long before the calls for their dismissal were made. The senior members Fleming, Hamilton, von Seth and von Rosen were in particularly dire straits. Some thought that the three younger councillors Hjärne, Liewen and Rudenschöld, while equally as guilty as their seniors, could be allowed some leniency. The Nobility voted for the restoration of confidence in all seven council members, while the Burghers and the Clergy wished to see the four senior members dismissed and the other three turned over to the judgement of the Secret Committee. The Peasant Estate, on the other hand, wished to see all seven dismissed. The matter was concluded with the dismissal of the four senior members of the council, along with the dismissal of Rudenschöld later in May 1766. Councillors Ekeblad and Scheffer also took the opportunity to hand in their letters of resignation.284

The influence that the council members had previously wielded had vanished. The same can be said for the situation in the Burgher Estate and the Clergy, where the leading merchants from Stockholm along with the bishops had been displaced as the centres of authority within their respective estates, in favour of small-scale merchants, chaplains and vicars, who often acted with a more unbridled outspokenness than had previously been the case in the political life of the Age of Liberty.285 Subsequently, the eyes of the public turned to the merchants in charge of the Exchange Office. The office was charged with controlling the value of the Swedish currency in regards to other European currencies. However, doing so had become increasingly difficult with

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282 Linnarsson 1943 pp. 222-231.
284 Linnarsson 1943 pp. 249-250, 265-266.
the outbreak of the Seven Years War. Due to these difficulties, the state did not renew its contract with the merchants in 1760/62, and attempted to buy them out. The settlement reached amounted to 6,4 million daler kopparmynt. This deal was to become heavily criticized during the Riksdag 1765/66, as many felt that the men in charge of the office had failed to live up to their end of the contract and should therefore reimburse the state, not the other way around. The merchants were subsequently accused of unjustly having made a profit at the expense of the public. Without the protection of their allies on the council, it did not take long before calls for their arrest were made. Gustaf Kierman, who had been an ally of Carl Gyllenborg’s faction ever since he had been approached in the early 1730s, and his associates now found themselves under investigation by the Great Deputation that had been formed for the expressed purpose of their prosecution. Notably, this task did not fall under the Secret Committee’s purview. Before long, the associates were sentenced to reimburse 453,000 daler silvermynt to the state, and Kierman was to find himself thrown into Marine’s fortress, where he would spend the last remaining months of his life.

Another significant development during this Riksdag was the introduction of the Ordinance of the Liberty of the Press. The developments that had been started in the 1750s of introducing a parliamentary newspaper and other journals and political prints in order to communicate political topics to the public had now started to turn the concept of public opinion into an intangible authority figure in and of itself. Moreover, the emergence of the public sphere was in no small part due to the Seven Years War, which highlighted the impact that disastrous political decisions could have on everyday life. For such reasons, some considered the necessity of proposing a new constitution as the laws were seemingly abused by those in office, which seemed to call into question liberty itself. In light of the crises that had befallen Sweden, unlike previous sessions of the Riksdag, appeals were now increasingly made to public opinion, with political content spread via pamphlets that started to have a major impact upon the way in which political debates were conducted. Moreover, the Secret Committee no longer operated under complete secrecy, as a consequence of the Riksdag Act that was passed in the 1750s, and many of its thoughts and reports were published and made available to the public.

Finally, the 1760s would see the rise of disputes between the estates regarding privileges. The Nobility had closed its doors to further ennoblement until the number of noble families had been

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288 Malmström 1900 pp. 319-320, 329; Winton 2006 p. 263.
290 See Hallberg 2003 for the emergence of the public sphere in the late Age of Liberty.
291 Nordin 2003 pp. 61-63.
reduced to below 800. With all higher positions in the civil service and military being the preserve of the Nobility, it was to create a conflict with the other estates, as it meant an effective stop to all social mobility. This period has generally been characterized as one of increasing radicalism, whereby the three lesser estates gradually realized that they could turn the political system in their favour by cooperating. It was also during this period that discursive struggles over the correct conceptualization of society would reach new heights through use of neologisms or giving new meanings to old concepts, or formulating discursive constructions such as that of the commoner estate, which all served to challenge the privileged position of the Nobility.

6.61 Internal Debates

In the autumn of 1765 the main question was the dismissal of seven members of the council. Membership in the Secret Committee does not appear to have been a major focal point of as it had been in 1746/47. Rather, the conspicuous absence of that topic presents continuity with the seeming disinterest found in the protocols of the session of 1755/56. In the debate regarding the councillors, there were two camps in the debate in the form of those who wished to table the matter and those who wished to decide it immediately.

Jonas Bengtson was one of those in favour of settling the argument immediately. He found it “fairly strange, that it was often requested that the matter be tabled in the Peasant Estate, as it is likewise obvious that no Councillor has ever been in favour of tabling those matters that for the longest period of time pressed [...] the Peasant Estate. When the children of the Peasant Estate are sent against the enemy on trumped up charges; when all specie and coin is to be shipped out; when 90 barrels of gold are borrowed under the pretence of purchasing cereal, and not done; and finally when the common man’s purchase of crown land (skatteköp), conscription contracts etc. are nullified, things progress quite smoothly in the Council Chamber and none of it is tabled.”

Subsequently, Bengtson found that if law and justice were to carry any weight, then he who acts contrary to the law needs to be held accountable. This bears strong similarities with the way in which Sennefelt has demonstrated that the rebels in 1743 came to view the council as their enemy. Except this time, it was the opinion of the general public, as the council’s responsibility for the war and its consequences were irrefutable. This was to form the bulk of the argument against the councillors with the complete emergence of a discourse of the rule of law. Judicial

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292 Hallberg 2006 p. 311.
295 Sennefelt 2001 pp. 60-63.
arguments had been voiced in previous sessions of the Riksdag, but then the law had more so been a means rather than an end in and of itself in the estate’s argumentation. In particular, the key word of accountability, previously associated with principality, though not mutually exclusive to one or the other, was now used more as a term relating to the law.

Members of the opposite camp also referred extensively to the importance of keeping with legal proceedings. Jonas Björnson argued that “any lengthy discussion on the matter is unnecessary. The Secret Committee has announced that the aforementioned Lords Councillors’ confidence is spent.” However, he “finds [himself] unable to say anything, in a matter which he has not the slightest insight into as to the errors committed.” For this reason, Björnson argued that “the Secret Committee should divulge the reasons why the Lords Councillors should be dealt with in such a manner.” Similarly, Lars Thorbjörnsson found that “as the Peasant Estate has no deputies in the Secret Committee, it is just and natural to wait with settling the matter.” Thus, the problem that had faced the estate since the very beginning of the Age of Liberty, the lack of insight, was still experienced as a hindrance to proper proceedings. It once more raised the question of the lawful nature of the attacks upon the councillors. If the reasons were related to misconduct pertaining to the war and the ensuing inflation, there should not be any difficulty in presenting such evidence to the estates. Such a procedure could only serve to further a sense of concord under the circumstances.

However, the fact that the Secret Committee’s action against the council served the interests of the Peasant Estate went a long way to suspend any distrust. Hansson responded by stating that “the Riksdag Ordinance was clear on the matter of which questions the Secret Committee could not divulge and subsequently had the right to decide on. However, he argued, everyone ought to know in general quite well what the reasons are that have lead the Secret Committee to reach such a decision.” This statement points to the increased transparency with which the Secret Committee now operated. It seemingly tempered the political ambitions of the estate vis-à-vis the committee, as it effectively eliminated the concern of a lack of insight. Lars Erson would illustrate this point fairly well, as he argued that “shedding further light on this matter should not be necessary as experience had already divulged enough. Poverty and misery presses the majority of the realm’s inhabitants; and from where do they originate if not from the dealings of the Lords Councillors? The Secret Committee has clearly divulged as much as their oath and the fundamental laws permit. As far as their deliberations are concerned, there is nothing to remark

296 BdP 1765/66 pp. 185-186.
298 BdP 1765/66 p. 186.
upon, except approving it completely.” 299 Where the estate had previously criticized the Secret Committee and the fundamental laws for excluding them from the most vital political deliberations, several members of the estate now defended the committee instead. This was a complete shift from previous Riksdag sessions, where the estate had taken up a subjective positioning in which they perceived it as a political right of theirs to gain admittance to the committee.

The consequences would prove dire for those who did not keep with this new position of the estate. Lars Thorbjörnsson stated that he “preserved the right to speak in regards to what he perceived the case was really about. He claimed that the Lords Councillors ought to be kept in the confidence of the Estates, until the Secret Committee divulged what their crimes were. It was incontrovertible that they were the Councillors of the Estates and not the Secret Committee, and, as such, they ought to be judged by the Estates and not solely by the Secret Committee. However, before this could occur the Estates needed to be informed of the Councillors situation. Each and every one, even the beggar, possesses the right to have his conduct examined and to be heard before he is sentenced.” A statement to which, Olof Håkansson, Jonas Björnsson and Valentin Straeng voiced their support. 300 Lars Thorbjörnsson was the only one who would invoke the old discourses of principality and constitutional equality in his argumentation. He would refer to the estates as the principals to whom the Secret Committee were accountable. This, in effect, demanded that the estates be given full insight into the matter. He would also refer to the importance of the rule of law in stating that everyone has a right to have their case brought before a court under the principle of “innocent until proven guilty”. A similar argument had been used in the 1740s regarding the councillors who were dismissed in the 1730s. Thorbjörnsson thus echoed the full spectrum of arguments that the estate had previously relied upon.

This, however, was to turn into a highly controversial matter. Bryngel Håkansson responded by saying that the Secret Committee had divulged more than had been known prior to this Riksdag. Therefore, it would not be reasonable to suspect that they wished to withhold anything from the public that could be made known. “In regards to this”, Bryngel argued, “it would be both unjust and illegal to make demands upon the Secret Committee that they divulge information, which the fundamental law and their oath prohibit.” 301 This presented a unique defence of the lack of insight into the Secret Committee that had no counterpart throughout any of the previous Riksdag sessions. Bryngel defended the lack of insight by arguing that it would be

299 BdP 1765/66 p. 186.
300 BdP 1765/66 pp. 188-189.
301 BdP 1765/66 p. 189.
unjust to think that the committee would withhold something from them.\textsuperscript{302} This complete confidence in the law and the committee members stands in as a stark contrast to the way in which the discourse of justice had been used in the 1740s. Then it had been used to say that the estates are equally empowered and that they should be allowed on the committee. Now the discourse was being used in a way that seemed eerily similar to the way that it would have been used by the peasant acting under the logic of the subject, whereby one would place one’s confidence in one’s superiors. However, the circumstances were very different. This time the reason for having confidence in the committee was based upon the fundamental law as opposed to the moral economy. Moreover, the Secret Committee was no longer out of the estate’s reach, as it was only an advisory body and not a legislative body.\textsuperscript{303} Thus, the Peasant Estate was in a more advantageous political position compared to the 1720s.

The matter of Thorbjörnsson and his compatriots, however, still remained. Joseph Hansson, who served as Speaker for this Riksdag, stated that he “considers the fundamental laws to be so sacred that nothing might be voiced against them under any circumstance.” Therefore, he wished to “warn anyone in the strongest words possibly from speaking out against the laws.”\textsuperscript{304} However, he did propose that Thorbjörnsson be pardoned in the interest of maintaining unity within the estate. Many wished to see Thorbjörnsson and his compatriots stripped of their seats and voices in the estate. Jan Janson considered Thorbjörnsson’s statement about the fundamental laws to be “unforgivable”. Thus, they were not moved by the appeal to unity, as a greater value was placed on the sanctity of the law. The matter was resolved by a vote of exclusion against Lars Thorbjörnsson and those who had supported him, namely Olof Håkansson, Jonas Björnsson and Valentin Straeng. The vote ended with a tally of 64 in favour to 42 against. Thus, Håkansson, who had been the Speaker of the Peasant Estate for nearly two decades, was excluded from the estate for supporting a seemingly outdated opinion on the Peasant Estate’s fundamental right to insight into the Secret Committee and parity with the other estates.\textsuperscript{305}

Most significantly, all of the above speech acts point to the same finding, namely the complete absence of several political arguments that had carried significant weight during previous Riksdag sessions. No member of the Peasant Estate referred to the brothers back at home as an argument or idea that held political significance throughout the debate. Similarly, no one referred to the estates as equally empowered. This complete lack of reference to these two sets of key words, coupled with the exclusion of Thorbjörnsson for using them, suggests the almost complete

\textsuperscript{302} BdP 1765/66 pp. 189-190.
\textsuperscript{303} Cf Nordin 2003 pp. 61-63.
\textsuperscript{304} BdP 1765/66 p. 193.
\textsuperscript{305} BdP 1765/66 p. 197.
abandonment of the discourses of principality and constitutional equality, and, subsequently, the two most important components of the identity of the peasant politician prior to the 1760s.

This presents a significant shift in the Peasant Estate’s political identity. A potential explanation for this is that the discourses had simply outlived their usefulness at this point. The discourse of constitutional equality was mainly used to emphasize one of the two potential images inherent in Lutheran political theory of the four estates being equally important as they worked together in unison for the greater good. This image was further enshrined in the constitution by stipulating that the realm be ruled by the four estates. As the Peasant Estate became a more accepted member of the political community, there would no longer have been any need to resort to such a discourse. The conclusion is further corroborated by the work of historians interested in the public sphere, who have demonstrated how estate interests were increasingly replaced by wider commoner interests that stood in contrast to the privileged interests of the Nobility. As the “onslaught of the commoners” was increasing in force, the three commoner estates would more likely than not have found common ground in their mutual interests. This conclusion stands in contrast to Ihalainen’s claims that the Peasant Estate still was not considered a member of the political community in 1772. Such an observation is further corroborated by the limited value placed in the discourse of concord. The speech acts illustrate that there was now a multitude of different opinions that clashed against one another in the Peasant Estate's plenary chamber. As such, the estate had now moved beyond exclamations of being in unison, and internal differences that would previously have been condemned as the perils of discord were now the norm, despite attempts to uphold concord by some. This interpretation finds much support in Alexandersson’s study of the estate’s practices during this Riksdag. However, the most significant shift is the lack of reference to principality. It suggests that they no longer considered themselves to be bound by the interests of the localities, and as such, they were no longer obliged to represent estate-interests. Consequently, their raison d’être for being in Stockholm was no longer tied to the imperative mandate which made them accountable to their constituents. It is therefore apt to characterize the members of the estate as individual politicians rather than as members of a collective, and they now represented national discourses and sentiments as opposed to estate-interests.

The conclusion that is drawn here stands as a strong contrast to the peasant moral economy ideology formulated by Anders Claréus. There is very little in the results to suggest that such discourses remained important as political arguments beyond the 1720s, as the discourses

associated with the subject were left behind. Moreover, the emphasis placed upon the discourse of justice by both Claréus and Ihalainen find no support here. As such, the concept of a peasant ideology as founded upon the moral economy and estate-interests proves highly problematic as it cannot explain the re-alignment of the estate’s political interests that led to the emergence of a peasant politician in the 1730s and the emergence of a citizen politician in the 1760s.  

6.62 External Debates

The focal point of this section is the deliberations in the Great Deputation pertaining to the Exchange Office and its board of directors.

If the observation of the estate’s members as individuals seemed striking in their internal debates, it was to become even more so in their work on the committee. The Speaker, who had previously spoken on behalf of the collective, now no longer held a monopoly on the spoken word, as the deputies spoke their minds more freely.

Hansson was the one to frame the position of the estate in regards to the Exchange Office. He stated that “the Peasant Estate did not possess more knowledge in the case than could be gathered from the public records, which attest to the great harm that had been inflicted upon the Realm and the Bank. At the same time a general poverty spreads across the land on account of the exchange rate that had been tampered with by the Exchange Office.” Apart from mentioning a general poverty, as a means of illustrating how the actions of the merchants supposedly had affected the land, there is no suggestion of an estate-interest. Compared to the ways in which the estate had previously expressed itself regarding its financial difficulties, it immediately comes across as a stark contrast.

Jon Bengtsson was to be the most active participant of the estate in these deliberations. He found that, in regards to the concerns regarding security and the setting of bail, “there needs to be a clear principle in place as in all other things. The committee and deputation have discerned what the associates are guilty to pay restitution for. Thus, it follows that they pay the sum, or be dealt with in accordance with the law. However, they should not be released until a judge has declared how much they owe.” Bengtsson thus phrases his argument entirely within a legal framework, with no mention of how this affects the peasantry in general.

Bengtsson was to interject during another session to frame his understanding of the matter of the restitution as resting on two questions. Firstly, “the crown and the bank may not endanger

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310 SD 1765/66 pp. 80.
311 SD 1765/66 pp. 97-98.
what is owed them by considering any reduction of the sums or by selling the properties of the associates’ at a reduced value”. Secondly, “whether the crown or bank on the one hand, and the private creditors on the other, should in regards to justice stand to lose or simply concede that the sums they receive might be less than what they are asking for”. In regards to the former, Jon Bengtsson reasoned, that selling their properties in moderate or smaller chunks would be the safest measure against bad prices, in the case that many hands find it well to pay as the proverb goes. In regards to the latter, the letter of the law is clear, after which a judge, in this dispute about the claimants’ rights and priority to a credit-bound home, separate different parties. And when all is said and done, this presents the shortest route to being done with it all with the least headache.\textsuperscript{312} Once more, Bengtsson relies entirely on a legal framework, with only a mention to fairness as a hint of continuity with the estate of the past. Furthermore, what is interesting about his speech act is that he presents his own solution to the financial problem at hand in a way that, compared to previous Riksdags, seems uncharacteristic for a member of the Peasant Estate.

Bengtsson would also phrase his opinions on the nature of people dealing in credit. He stated that “he has never found anything other than that each and every single debtor always seek every possible escape [from restitution], and the associates were no different. They had not been in communication with the authorities before the crown and bank decided to fine them.” Consequently, Bengtsson thought it absurd to consider entering into an accord with the associates, as he thought that they had not acted with sincerity in the payment of their debts, and since they had not lived up to their contracts, it was therefore necessary for the crown to seize their obligations in the royal office, and proceed to sell both their fixed and movable assets, through which a real support of the public needs could be affected.\textsuperscript{313} It is of further interest to note his reference to the public and its needs. As an interest group, the Peasant Estate has, even towards the end of the Age of Liberty, been assumed to only care for its own interests.\textsuperscript{314} Yet, Bengtsson refers to the needs of the public, with no reference to the state of the countryside or the woes of the common folk as had previously been commonplace amongst peasant speech acts. It would seem to signal the emergence of a civic discourse as estate-interests were starting to be replaced by concerns for the common weal and the public, which would form key words within this new discourse.

The primacy of state interests would be further emphasized by Paul Jönsson. He stated that “while the associates’ private creditors could have ensured their safety”, he found that, “it would be strange if the Crown did not possess an equal or greater right to reimbursement than anyone

\textsuperscript{312} SD 1765/66 pp. 132-133.  
\textsuperscript{313} SD 1765/66 pp. 152.  
\textsuperscript{314} Cf Ihalainen 2010 p. 184.
else. Her right would thereby be worsened, in case each and every one of the creditors were to get their full claims”. “No!”, Paul Jönsson exclaimed, “that is not how things are done back home. Not even the fabric of the bed is spared, when old parents and infirm people have to pay the Crown.” Jönsson stated with pain in his eyes that he had witnessed similar things several times in his duties as lay assessor. For this reason, he found it impossible to accept what he called the “different care” for the right of the Crown, as he had seen in this case, and he found that “one had to proceed in accordance with what is just.” According to Jönsson, the interest of the public was thus far more important than the profiteering of a number of creditors. This conclusion he would further emphasize by reference to the discourse of justice. As such, this presents another novel use of the justice discourse. Where Bryngel Andersson had used it in the internal debates to state that one should have confidence in the Secret Committee on account of the law, Paul Jönsson used it to state that the interests of the crown, and, subsequently, the public, was what was to be considered just. Thus, the discourse was to be used in two different ways to further establish a civic discourse and a discourse of the rule of law.

The Great Deputation 1765/66 was also to provide a very different image of the peasant politician. Like the internal debates, one is hard-pressed to find any references to previously dominant peasant discourses throughout the deliberations. Instead, the discourse that now dominates entirely appears to be that of the rule of law. The discourse had started to emerge in the 1740s as a framework within which one could establish authority for one’s argument. This time, however, it has become a central value in and of itself at the expense of other discourses. Moreover, the many references to the public and the common weal suggest a shift from an estate-interest to the interest of the public. One might characterize this as an emerging civic discourse. This would also prove to be the first time when the political language employed internally would also be employed in a committee. Previously the estate had always been more assertive of its ambitions internally. This would suggest that the Peasant Estate no longer considered itself a subordinate, and could freely vocalize its political ambitions without fear of the kind of criticism that Håkansson had faced in the 1730s when he challenged the Marshal. As such, the interpretive framework of Lutheran political theory and its hierarchical vision had lost much of its raison d’être and was in the process of discursive developments being replaced by something more civic. In this process, the political identity of the Peasant Estate would shift from that of a peasant politician to that of a citizen politician. This finding is in line with what public sphere research finds is generally true of the late Age of Liberty, yet stands as a stark

315 SD 1765/66 p. 173.
contrast to much of the characterizations of the Peasant Estate.\textsuperscript{316} Moreover, as the estate’s political language has rarely been investigated, especially not so comprehensively, this particular shift in the estate’s language has gone unnoticed and without a long term context in which to place it.

6.63 Summary

The Peasant Estate of the 1760s offers a case completely different from the preceding decades. All of the major discourses that had previously formed central components of the peasant conceptualization of self and the body politic had disappeared. Internal differences were now the norm, as opposed to the vital importance ascribed to concord at previous Riksdag sessions. The two discourses that were to characterize the Peasant Estate’s political language were a civic discourse and a discourse of the rule of law. These were emphasized by continued references to the interest of the public and the importance of the law. The strongest illustration of the extent to which these discourses had replaced the previous ones was when Lars Thorbjörnsson and four other members of the estate were excluded for criticizing the fundamental laws and the lack of insight into the committee, as the estate had previously done throughout the Age of Liberty. In other words, the old arguments and their associated discourses were wholly rejected. Instead, the estate presented the ethos of a citizen politician by emphasizing these new discourses.

7 Peasant Political Thought in the Age of Liberty

The ambition of this thesis has been to investigate how the members of the Peasant Estate formulated their political identity through linguistic constructions of the political system and the social order. This has been done by using the theoretical frameworks of Reinhart Koselleck’s Begriffsgeschichte, the history of ideas by Quentin Skinner, and the theory of interaction presented by Erving Goffman, in an investigation of the protocols of the Peasant Estate, as well as those of the Great Secret Deputation, a subcommittee which dealt with a wide variety of issues and that met continuously during most of the Age of Liberty.

In the 1720s the political activity of the Peasant Estate can mostly be characterized as a remnant of the political culture of absolutism. The estate did not actively seek political confrontations, and mostly dealt with the submission of grievances. Their political behaviour can therefore be generally characterized as passive and estate-specific. To this end, they relied upon a

\textsuperscript{316} Cf Bäck 1984; Clarèus 2003; Hallberg 2003; Nordin 2003; Winton 2006; Ihalainen 2010; Sennefelt 2011.
discourse of principality to formulate their reason for being at the Riksdag as bound by the imperative mandate and their obligations to their brothers back at home. This should be viewed in the light of the political culture of absolutism, whereby the peasant mantled the role of a subject, and was subjected to a conceptualization of the body politic where each estate was designed to fill an estate-specific role. In particular, this behaviour would manifest itself when the Peasant Estate acted in the committee, where they mostly pleaded for the assistance of the Secret Committee. The position of the subject was used as a political argument to imply the mutual obligations between ruler and ruled. In using this strategy, the estate would not so much utilize any particular concepts as it would a general use of an evocative language in order to move their superiors by the severity of their plight. However, when the accusations against Councillor Vellingk were made known, the estate was to express an uncharacteristic desire to participate politically. They wished to be part of the deliberations, and relied upon a discourse of constitutional equality to say that this was a matter that required the insight of all four estates.

In the 1730s a shift was to occur in the political identity of the Peasant Estate. The estate had undergone a learning process over the previous decade and would significantly draw upon the law as a source of authority as they shaped their arguments. During this Riksdag, they were far more assertive and expressed a right to participate in the deliberations of the Secret Committee. They relied upon the discourse of constitutional equality and the new key words “equally empowered” to argue for a Lutheran conceptualization of the body politic where the estates were equally important to the function of the state. It was further emphasized by reference to the discourse of principality, to say that the estates were the principals of the Secret Committee, implying a relationship of accountability. This stood in contrast to existing practices, whereby the liberty of the estate was considered to be threatened, as it made the estate dependent on the other estates. This represented a shift from the limited political interests of the subject to the broader political interests of the peasant politician. In the committee, the moral economy discourse of justice was the most important. However, unlike the 1720s, the estate no longer pleaded with the other estates for their aid. Instead, they began to bargain with the other estates on a more even footing, while using the evocative language of the subject to their advantage as they presented their political claims. When these claims were met with criticisms, the estate had the option of retreating back into the ethos of the subject by emphasizing their “simple nature”. Through these measures, the estate was able to re-fashion its political language into something new with which they could navigate the discourses of hierarchy and present political claims. In using this language, they illustrate a shift in the conceptualization of their political identity from that of the subject to that of the peasant politician.
In the 1740s the estate would tailor its political language to suit the circumstances. In regards to the Secret Committee, their primary concern was principality. They now considered themselves strictly bound by the instructions that they had received from the localities. Their claims would be combined with the discourse of constitutional equality once more, by reference to the estates as equally empowered, thus echoing the same conceptualization as in the 1730s. Moreover, new meanings attached to the old moral economy-esque discourse of justice had transformed it into something that corroborated their claims for equality. The most important discourse in regards to the councillors was that of concord, based on the key words unity and confidence, and the use of a judicial language as a means of framing the argument. They now ceased to use appeals to emotion as a discursive strategy and more fully embraced reasoning with the other estates. Thus, the estate more fully presented the ethos of a peasant politician.

In the 1750s the question of being part of the Secret Committee was reduced in importance. The one time that it was mentioned in the estate it was mainly to echo the same arguments as before. A potential explanation for this is that the Riksdag Act, which was approved during this meeting of the Riksdag, saw a shift of power from the committee to the estates.

In the 1760s the Peasant Estate was to present a second shift in its political identity. All of the major discourses that had previously been relied upon as central components of their conceptualization of self and the body politic had disappeared. Internal differences had become the norm, and concord had disappeared as a central political value. The interpretive framework of Lutheran political theory was to become increasingly replaced by the emergence of a civic framework. It was mainly characterized by references to a civic discourse, with key words such as the public, and a discourse of the rule of law, whereby the concept of the law became a fundamental value in and of itself, as opposed to merely a tool towards an end, which had been more in line with prior conceptions of it. The strongest illustration of the extent to which these discourses had replaced the previous ones would be when Lars Thorbjörnsson and four other members of the estate were excluded for criticizing the fundamental laws and the lack of insight into the committee, as the estate had done throughout the Age of Liberty. In other words, the old arguments and their associated discourses were wholly rejected. Instead, the estate presented the ethos of a citizen politician as they emphasized the new discourses.

One of the research questions posed was whether or not the Peasant Estate possessed a language that was distinctly their own, or if they simply borrowed concepts from the other estates. The results indicate that the two discourses of principality and constitutional equality filled specific functions in the estate’s political language. The former was to establish the relationship between represented and representative. According to Ragnar Olsson, this discourse
dates back to the inception of the estate.\textsuperscript{317} Therefore, it seems apt to characterize it as distinctly peasant, even though previous researchers have mostly treated the discourse as something that emerged during the 1740s as a political idea that was spawned by the conflict in the Burgher Estate between Christopher Springer and Thomas Plomgren.\textsuperscript{318} The latter discourse was to rely upon a specific conceptualization of the estates as equally empowered. This is the reason why it comes across as specifically peasant, as the peasants were the subordinated estate that lacked insight into the Secret Committee. Thus, the discourse had a clear function in the estate’s political language. It is unclear if it could have the same function in the claims of the other political estates. However, that remains a question for further research and is not one that can be established within the bounds of this thesis.

The question remains as to how one should understand the two shifts in the estate’s political identity during the Age of Liberty. By appropriating Koselleck’s view of the relationship between language and historical time, whereby historical change is pre-conditioned by linguistic developments, one can turn to the concept of horizons of expectation. Political claims are simultaneously based upon experiences of the past and expectations of the future. Thus, when actors formulate political claims in the present, with an eye to the future, they seek to bring those changes about.\textsuperscript{319} By further appropriating Goffman’s theory of interaction, the ethos presented by the actor needs to be perceived as credible and sincere.\textsuperscript{320} Both the performance and the political language employed need to be rooted in the political culture in order to gain legitimacy and acceptance from the other estates.\textsuperscript{321}

The first shift to be explained occurred in the 1730s. The constitution of 1719 was the product of a discursive change, as the estates wished to replace absolutism with a new political system. A key part of this discursive change was the emancipation of the Peasant Estate and the introduction of the rule of the four estates. Consequently, the political vocabulary was altered. The shift in the 1730s can be considered as the product of the horizon of expectations vocalized in the internal debates of the estate in preceding Riksdag sessions. In the 1720s, they assertively claimed amongst themselves that they wished to be a part of the commission, as they were constitutional equals. This linguistic novelty would be realized a decade later as they made alterations to the language of the subject and formulated new political claims. However, it raises the question of why their attempts were rejected in the 1730s, while they were met with success in the 1760s. A significant difference between the two cases is the role played by interaction.

\textsuperscript{317} Olsson 1926 pp. 148-158.
\textsuperscript{318} Malmström 1897 pp. 376-377.
\textsuperscript{319} Koselleck 2004 pp. 79, 252-259.
\textsuperscript{320} Goffman 1990 pp. 13-69.
\textsuperscript{321} Skinner 2002 pp. 96-102.
Significantly, the performance of the estate was not in line with the other estates’ expectations, founded on the norms and values of the political culture of the time, of who a peasant should be, a definition founded upon the ethos of the subject more so than an active political force. As the displayed ethos of the peasant politician was refuted, it made the peasant performance seem insincere, and brought on the assumption that the ethos was the product of a foreign agent acting through the peasant.

The second shift occurred in the 1760s. By far the most important innovation of the late Age of Liberty was the spread of printing technologies. This technological shift was a development that stands outside the two dimensions of political culture in the form of practice and discourse, and it was to transform both of them, thereby effectively changing the political culture itself. The main reason for why both practices and discourses were to change because of this innovation was that the elite lost the linguistic control with which it had propagated a political ideology that formulated visions of how society was to be structured. Consequently, the political vocabulary was to change remarkably as there was no longer an overarching vision for the correct conceptualization of the body politic that could be enforced by the elite, thus causing a re-evaluation of the norms and values that were central to the political culture. Subsequently, the rate of change of historical change increased, due in no small part to the experiential shift produced by the consequences of the Seven Years War, as an arena was created in which old concepts were given new meanings and neologisms were created, with which the political order was actively challenged.\(^{322}\) The increasing cooperation between the three lower estates produced an interaction in which the Peasant Estate’s expectations of being regarded as a political equal could find sympathy from the other estates. This would be expressed as the estates were to increasingly use a similar political language in formulating claims with regards to the political issues of the day, echoing more so a national sentiment than estate interests. In this interactive process, the Lutheran conceptualization of the body politic had outlived its usefulness and was now perceived as a hindrance to the political ambitions of the commoners. For this reason, many of the old discourses that the estate had relied upon disappeared and were replaced with concepts more in tune with the civic political culture, as the estate went through this second process of re-fashioning its political identity.

These results have several important implications for our understanding of the Peasant Estate and how it developed over time. This investigation’s discursive emphasis has been able to add a further understanding of the development of the estate’s practices and is in line with the findings of Olsson and Alexandersson. It has been illustrated how the findings of Bäck and Claréus are of

\(^{322}\) Cf Koselleck 2004 pp. 244, 252-254.
limited value, as the estate used a political language to forward claims about political questions with implications that went far beyond simple economic considerations. Moreover, the strong role played by the discourse of principality refutes Claréus interpretation of the estate as a “peasant avant-garde”, as the localities for the longest period of time defined the reason for the peasants being in Stockholm. The findings of this investigation further point to the peasant politician as a conceptualization that arose in the late 1730s. As such, it shows that the findings of Sennefelt have broader significance both before and after 1743. While one can trace a greater degree of cooperation and linguistic similarities between the estates in the 1760s, there is little to suggest that discursive constructions such as the middle estate (odalståndet) or other “radical” conceptions of society that have been noted by Hallberg had gained any significance in the political language of the Peasant Estate in the mid-1760s. Furthermore, the results point to the importance of interaction between the estates and the use of Lutheran political theory for the formation of political identities, which problematizes Wolff’s Nobility-centred conceptualization of the formation of an estate identity. The investigation also illustrates that contrary to the findings of Ihalainen, the Peasant Estate was more than capable of fashioning a political language of their own, which they could use to forward political claims in a way that made them anything but passive as they abandoned the ethos of the subject.

A question that remains to be answered is what these findings imply for the political history of Sweden during the eighteenth century. As an answer to that, some historians have chosen to consider the Age of Liberty as part of a longer time span. For instance, Karin Sennefelt sees the Age of Liberty as the conclusion of a learning curve for the peasantry that was started somewhere in the sixteenth century.323 However, she does not consider which practices and discourses set the Age of Liberty apart from preceding epochs. A significant part of that was the promise for change that was inherent in the constitution and Lutheran political theory to start with, as both held within them the promise of an egalitarian government based on the rule of four equally important estates, combined with the emancipation of the Peasant Estate in 1719.324 Thus, the new political system set in motion a political process that would, in a fairly brief time, as the rate of change of historical time increased, come to change the Peasant Estate’s self-conceptualization. As such, it took two decades for the Peasant Estate to abandon the political identity of the subject, which it had possessed for centuries, and its accompanying ethos in favour of that of the peasant politician. Three decades later, mostly due to the gradual emergence of a public sphere, which would completely transform the political culture of the time, the estate’s political identity would shift once more to that of a citizen politician. As a result of this process,

323 Sennefelt 2001 p. 312.
the differences between the estates were becoming smaller, as the estates became more as equals. It would no longer prove possible to turn back the clock, as the other three estates had attempted in the 1740s. As such, the Age of Liberty presents a time period in Swedish political history that is very different from anything that preceded and followed it. During the Gustavian autocracy, it would not prove possible to exclude the estate from several important political institutions. In the nineteenth century, the estate would become arguably the most powerful political actor of them all.

The final consideration to be made is in regards to the relationship between these findings and its European context. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, many European countries moved towards a civic discourse. As such, the specific findings in the Swedish context do not reveal anything necessarily new content-wise. However, it has been able to illustrate what the process looked like within the Swedish Peasant Estate. In the case of Denmark-Norway, the civic project was mostly an undertaking from above. The land reforms that broke the oligarchic authority in the Danish countryside, along with other measures to produce a public sphere, were efforts driven by the central authorities. Great Britain is the case that displays the most similarities with Sweden, with processes driven both from above and below by constellations of interests across social groups. The political opposition used popular references, while the populace helped bring men such as John Wilkes into power who championed their cause. However, ultimately, ordinary people still required members of the gentry to represent them politically. As such, they remained a force outside the halls of power. The Dutch Republic was perhaps the greatest contrast to Sweden, as the oligarchic system was mainly challenged by an increasing political pluralism relying upon a tradition of resistance and the public sphere. Sweden stands as a contrast to these cases by virtue of the interactive process between representatives of the peasantry and the other estates in a national political arena. Within this interactive process, they were to learn how to construct and utilize a political language founded upon specific conceptualizations of the body politic and the law that aided them as they formulated political claims in a way that was unparalleled in the European context.

325 Alexandersson 1975 p. 212.  
326 Aronsson 1992 pp. 312-337.
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