



Topic:

Power and powers in the history of Europe: oligarchies, political participation and democracy.

Description:

This syllabus is concerned with different aspects of power in Europe and the societal structures associated with that power. The syllabus consists of five sections, which all deal with the main theme but approach it through different perspectives and historical contexts. The syllabus is not constructed chronologically as all the five sections have their own chronological structure. Thus, each of the five sections can be taught as an entity or as independent study units.

Societal structures and social classes have had a significant role in European history throughout centuries. Position, wealth and property have had and continue to have a close relationship with political power creating different kinds of influential groups such as aristocracy, nobility and oligarchs. However, often these and other terms are used interchangeably and without their historical contexts. In this study unit the vocabulary related to different social classes is described and defined. In addition, the changing position and influence of the European ruling classes is explored briefly before focusing on the British and Swedish cases.

Although most educational materials addressing political systems and democracy take Antiquity and especially ancient Greece as their starting point, the present syllabus does not have a strong focus on these points for two reasons. First, because the Antiquity is well represented in other materials, the aim of this syllabus is to address less explored aspects. Secondly, the nation states, which are essential for the later development of democracy, did not exist in Antiquity. Therefore the context for democracy was significantly different from that of later development. Thus, although the significance of, for example, ancient Greece in the history of political participation is uncontested, it is not the main focus of the present syllabus.

Establishing and maintaining democracies has been the central value in European and Western countries for more than hundred years. However, what may often be overlooked is the multifaceted nature of democracy, its varying definitions and numerous attempts to execute it. In formulating the second study unit the aim has been to look at democracy from the viewpoint of how inclusive past and present democracies are or are able to be. It is worth noting that our common perceptions of democracy often fail to take into account both the constraints and possibilities that democracy holds. Looking into the history of democracy may offer insights to those challenges faced by present democracies all over the world. Because the form and shape that democracy takes is greatly affected by structural conditions, any analysis





of democracy has to consider factors such as education of the masses and technological changes, such as the influence of social media in our own times. If the aim is to maintain and further develop democracy, it is vital to understand different conceptions and development phases of democracy. The second-order concepts of progress and decline offer useful points of reflection for the development of democracy.

Although visual arts are often evaluated and analysed through their aesthetic merits, they always carry meanings, even political ones. Art has been used as a way to manifest power and as it has also been a powerful tool for propaganda. On the other hand, art has also been a way to criticize those in power. The third study unit looks at power from the viewpoint of art and aims to discuss the ways power is represented in art. The agency of artists has also changed over the centuries from anonymous authors to renowned artists with a strong influence on society. On the

The fourth study unit focuses on the turmoil within the societal structures and on attempts to redistribute power. The causes behind revolutions are often both long-term and short-term. In other words, some of the causes develop and build up slowly and may even remain hidden while there are other short-term causes which accelerate the change towards revolutions. This study unit looks at revolutions in the context of nation states and elaborates on the relationship between the nation states are structured and the way revolutionary movements come about. The historical context is the the Finnish Civil War, which is closely connected to the Russian Revolution.

The last study unit looks at the formation of different types of nation states in Europe and aims to examine the varying preconditions for the formation of nation states. For this, some theoretical reflections are used. In addition, the role of nations and different ways of perceiving nationalism both in past and present Europe are explored.

Concepts

The following concepts are central for all the five sub-topics:

- power
- representation of power
- participation
- change and continuity





- progress and decline
- historical empathy
- agency of historical actors

Chronological Axis

Each of the five sub-topics have their own temporal structure

Sub-topic 1: From Antiquity to the 20th century

Sub-topic 1: Enlightenment, 19th and 20th centuries as well as the present day

Sub-topic 3: Middle ages in Europe 400–1500, French Revolution 1700–1800

Sub-topic 4: Russian revolution and the Finnish Civil War, turn of the 20th century

Sub-topic 5: The 19th and 20th centuries

Aristocracy, nobility and political power: changes and permanences in their position of power in Europe.

This study unit looks at aristocracy, nobility, and their political power in Europe. The aim is to explore how their position has changed in Europe.

Description of terms aristocracy and nobility

The term aristocracy derives from the Greek *aristokratīā*, meaning 'rule of the best'. The term was first used by such ancient Greeks as Aristotle and Plato, who used it to describe a system where only the best of the citizens, chosen through a careful process of selection, would become rulers, and hereditary rule would actually have been forbidden, unless in certain circumstances.

Hereditary rule in this understanding is more related to oligarchy, a corrupted form of aristocracy where there is rule by a few, but not by the best. Plato, Socrates and Aristotle considered aristocracy (the ideal form of rule by the few) to be inherently better than the ideal form of rule by the many (democracy), but they also considered the corrupted form of Aristocracy (oligarchy) to be worse than the corrupted form of Democracy (mob Rule). This belief was rooted in the assumption that the masses could only produce average policy, while the best of men could produce the best policy, if they were indeed the best of men. Later Polybius in his analysis of the Roman





Constitution used the concept of aristocracy to describe his conception of a republic as a mixed form of government, along with democracy and monarchy in their conception from then, as a system of checks and balances, where each element checks the excesses of the other. In practice, aristocracy often leads to hereditary government, after which the hereditary monarch appoints officers as they see fit. From the perspective of changes and permanencies during the times aristocracy was usually seen as rule by a privileged group and has since been contrasted with democracy.

The difference between the aristocrat and noble can be described in that way that aristocrat is someone in the highest social class in a society; one of the most influential and powerful people, while noble is a member of a class which was given special privileges and titles because they or their family were rewarded by a king or queen for their loyalty. Nobility is a social class normally ranked immediately below royalty and found in some societies that have a formal aristocracy.

Nobility has often been an estate of the realm that possessed more acknowledged privilege and higher social status than most other classes in society. The privileges associated with nobility may constitute substantial advantages over or relative to non-nobles or may be largely honorary (e.g., precedence), and vary by country and era. Membership in the nobility, including rights and responsibilities, is typically hereditary.

The term derives from Latin *nobilitas*. In ancient Roman society, *nobiles* originated as an informal designation for the political governing class who had allied interests, including both patricians and plebeian families (*gentes*) with an ancestor who had risen to the consulship through his own merit.

In modern usage, nobility is applied to the highest social class in pre-modern societies. In the feudal system in Europe, the nobility were generally those who held a fief, often land or office, under vassalage, in exchange for allegiance and various, mainly military, services to a suzerain, who might be a higher-ranking nobleman or a monarch. It rapidly came to be seen as a hereditary caste, sometimes associated with a right to bear a hereditary title and, for example in pre-revolutionary France, enjoying fiscal and other privileges. While noble status formerly conferred significant privileges in most jurisdictions, by the 21st century it had become a largely honorary dignity in most societies, although a few, residual privileges may still be preserved legally for instance in Europe in Netherlands, Spain and in UK.

Changes and permanencies in aristocrats' and nobles' position of power

During the medieval feudal system, the power of monarchs was limited by the nobility and the Church. The feudal arrangement between medieval kings and their nobility was as follows. The king bestowed land (called a "fief") and tax-exempt status on noble families. Most nobles' wealth was derived from one or more estates, that might include fields, pasture, orchards, timberland, hunting grounds, streams, etc. It also included infrastructure such as castle, well and mill to which local peasants were allowed some access, although often at a price. Nobles were expected to live nobly,



that is, from the proceeds of these possessions. Work involving manual labor or subordination of those of lower rank was either forbidden or frowned upon socially. On the other hand, membership in the nobility was usually a prerequisite for holding offices of trust in the realm and for career promotion, especially in the military, at court and often the higher functions in the government, judiciary, and church. In return, that noble family pledged its loyalty to the king and his successors and promised to provide military assistance in time of war. Feudalism was a symbiotic arrangement (i.e., it was mutually beneficial). However, with limited ability to tax and no standing army, medieval kings were rather politically weak. They constantly worried about powerful nobles throwing their support behind rival claimants to the throne. If a noble rebellion did break out, it was a serious problem.

At different times in Europe, the status and position of power of the nobles has varied: The Black Death which hit Europe repeatedly from the mid-14th century onwards seriously weakened the Church and nobility. The Church's inability to explain the plague or to protect the population undermined its influence. The Black Death also ruined the finances of many noble families as millions of rent-paying peasants died. In the ensuing labor shortage, nobles had to compete to rent out land to surviving peasants who were able to sign long-term leases on favourable terms. Nobles who couldn't rent out land had few ways of earning money, and many went bankrupt.

The Hundred Years' War and the arrival of new weapons weakened the military power of the nobility. During the war, the age of the mounted noble knight came to an end. New weapon, gunpowder, was used during the Reconquista on the Iberian Peninsula, and its value was seen by the English and French during their century-long struggle. Monarchs were quick to monopolize this new technology. Royal gunpowder workshops became the sole source. This was deliberately done to keep the manufacture of gunpowder out of the hands of the nobility. This gave a distinct advantage to monarchs.

The Partnership between monarchs and towns also weakened the nobility. Townspeople, especially the merchants and professionals, had long resented local noble interference in their affairs. During the crises of the 14th century, cash-strapped nobles frequently attempted to get their hands on the wealth in towns by taxing townspeople or by simply plundering property. In response, town councils reached out to monarchs for protection. In return for paying taxes to the monarchy, towns received royal charters stating that they could form their own councils and select their own mayors without interference from the local nobility. Nobles who attempted to plunder towns would be brought to justice in the royal courts. In addition to receiving much needed taxes, monarchs could also use educated middle class lawyers to staff their bureaucracies, thus diluting the influence of the nobility.

Prior to the French Revolution, European nobles typically commanded tribute in the form of entitlement to cash rents or usage taxes, labour, or a portion of the annual crop yield from commoners or nobles of lower rank who lived or worked on the noble's manor or within his seigneurial domain. In some countries, the local lord could



impose restrictions on such a commoner's movements, religion, or legal undertakings. In France, nobles were exempt from paying the *taille*, the major direct tax. Peasants were not only bound to the nobility by dues and services, but the exercise of their rights was often also subject to the jurisdiction of courts and police from whose authority the actions of nobles were entirely or partially exempt. In some parts of Europe, the right of private war long remained the privilege of every noble.

The changing power of aristocrats – the case of Britain

The British aristocracy has a long history, and its strong toughness and continuity are remarkable. It began in the Anglo-Saxon period, established in the Norman period, experienced the rise and fall of the vicissitudes, and ushered in the prosperous period after the Glorious Revolution, as the historians called the “aristocratic era”, and fell into irreparable decline in the early twentieth Century. In the millennium, its toughness and continuity were amazing. After several ups and downs, it could always adapt to the development of society and regain its vitality through its own adjustment and variation. However, why did the British aristocracy fail to survive in the twentieth Century? The Industrial Revolution opened the course of British modernization and profoundly changed all aspects of British society. Generally speaking, “modernization refers to the profound changes in human society since the 18th century Industrial Revolution. It includes the historical process and change from traditional economy to modern economy, traditional politics to modern politics, traditional society to modern society, traditional civilization to modern civilization”. In fact, whenever confronted with challenges, the British aristocracy adjusted to survive for a thousand year. However, in the face of modernization, the modernity required by modernization, such as economic industrialization, political democratization, social urbanization, and welfare, made every initiative or passive change of the British aristocracy in the direction of collapse. Eventually the British aristocracy fell into irretrievable decline. This profound social change, in Britain, was a quiet revolution and reflected a kind of lag, which was in line with conservatism and gradualism in the modern British development model.

The democratization of modern politics swallowed the legitimacy of the British aristocratic hereditary privilege. The welfare and equity of modern society made the British aristocracy's economic and political advantages unsustainable, and the decline of the British aristocratic system was inevitable. The welfare and fairness of modern society made the British aristocratic economy's political advantage unsustainable, and the decline of the British aristocracy was inevitable. However, such a profound social change: the collapse of an economic system-large land ownership, and the decline of a privileged class-the British aristocracy was accomplished through peaceful evolution and legislation. This embodied the British tradition of compromise between the thatopposing classes and the gradual conservative development pattern of Britain. This model provided a path for the world in transition to deal with the conflict between tradition and modernity.



The changing power of nobles in Europe - the Case of Sweden

The role of the European nobility and their ability to retain their political and economic power are part of the debate on the modernization of Europe's economy. In Eric Hobsbawm's analysis, the French, and the Industrial revolutions, in the second half of the eighteenth century led step by step to a triumph of the new bourgeois society. In this triumph, the industrial bourgeoisie in Sweden took over the role of society's pre-eminent group, which the nobility had played in all European societies throughout the early modern period. Nobles were increasingly side-lined by commoners in the accumulation of wealth, as well as in politics and the control of the state.

Hobsbawm's view of a decisive bourgeoisie take-over has been contested. Arno Mayer argues that up to the First World War, Western European societies were still typical of the *ancient regime*, dominated by the aristocracy in terms of politics as well as wealth and cultural prestige. Ever since, the debate on the 'persistence of the old regime' and the alleged dominance of the aristocracy into the early 20th century has been lively. One important aspect is the wealth of the nobility that had a very strong economic position in eighteenth-century European societies, holding a very large share of the total wealth. The question then is how political changes reduced the economic position of the nobility, and how far the nobles succeeded in managing their wealth and putting it into productive use in the era of industrialization.

In Sweden, the nobility's position was confirmed in the Alsnö Ordinance (*Alsnö stadga*) of 1280, which stipulated that those who supplied the Crown with heavily armed horsemen would be exempt from tax. Noble status meant tax-exemption, and was at this point not hereditary, but it became so during the late Middle Ages. In 1626 the nobility was formalized when the House of Nobility (*Riddarhuset*) was created.

The nobility has always been a small fraction of Swedish society, never above one per cent of the population. This was a good deal less than that in Poland and Spain, where the aristocracy occupied 6–8 percent and 12–13 percent, respectively, or even Britain and France where 1–1.5 percent of the population were nobles. In 1600 Sweden had only around 50 noble families, but extensive ennobling, often related to military service, took place in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The practice slowed down after the 1790s and ended in 1907. In 1750 the nobility consisted of 9000 persons, which translates into a little less than 0.5 of the then population of 2 million (excluding Finland).

In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries nobles had several privileges: one related to the ownership of land, together with the local power associated with landholding, and the other attracting more general political privileges. In 1550, nobles held about 20 percent of all arable land, which by 1658 had increased to 65 per cent, after which land reforms from 1680 to 1700 reduced the share to between 33 and 40 per cent. The Noble Rights Act of 1723 confirmed that the state should never interfere with



what noblemen did with their land or their tenants; just as in England, the landowners enjoyed wide-ranging freedoms. The Act also confirmed the customary right of certain high nobles to appoint the minister of their parish, and to use the church and crown tithes in many parishes in the south. While seigneurial or private justice held less sway in Sweden than in other European countries, the Act did include the right of landlords to flog their subordinates. Until 1789, with few exceptions, only nobles could control such land. The highest occupations in public service were exclusive to nobles. During the period of the Four Estates Parliament, from 1668 to 1865, the House of Nobility was one of the four estates, along with the clergy, the burghers, and the peasants. The nobility was by far the most powerful of them all, with many more representatives than the other estates, and the distribution of power in the governing of Sweden from the early sixteenth century to the mid-nineteenth century can be described as dyadic, the initiative swinging between the Crown and the nobility. Even after representation reform in 1865–66, which abolished the Estates parliament and installed a two-chamber parliament, the nobility was very much overrepresented in the political elite. Swedish nobles were a privileged group both in the sense of a wealthy landed upper class, and a political entity.

The loss of power of aristocrats and nobles at the end of 19th and early 20th centuries

Only at the very end of the nineteenth century did nobles lose their central place in European life, and then the sources of the crisis were mainly political rather than economic or social. An anti-aristocratic government came to power in England, and its taxes on inheritance undermined what had been the aristocracies' greatest strength, their ability to accumulate wealth generation after generation. World War I destroyed the monarchies and courts of central Europe and discredited aristocratic political influence. For many families the war was an economic disaster as well, destroying savings and rendering many investments worthless. It has been plausibly argued that 1918 rather than 1789 marked the end of aristocratic society in Europe. And there were still political manoeuvres: many German aristocrats used support for conservative politicians to win favourable tariff policies for their agricultural goods in the 1920s and into the Nazi era. Even at the beginning of the twenty-first century, numerous aristocratic families survived, the 1980s and 1990s having brought them significant economic advantages. Their lands and houses, even their bric-a-brac, had increased enormously in value. Despite generations of republican criticism, they remain culturally self-confident, and the society around them has become more respectful of their values. Aristocratic society has disappeared from Europe, in the sense that aristocracies no longer place their imprint on other social groups or determine the values of society. The aristocracies themselves remain, demonstrating yet again their own capacity for survival and the tenacious power of social inequality itself.



Access to power in democracy

This study unit looks at power by examining nations, democracy and oligarchies in modern societies. The aim is to explore how these concepts relate to each other in different historical contexts. The assignment has two central questions. First, who have had the possibility to use power in society in the form of participating in democratic processes such as voting? Second, to what extent has a democratic system represented the will of all those it claims to represent? The aim is to identify those threats that face democracy both within and from the outside. The assignment utilizes mainly three temporal levels: the Age of Enlightenment, the beginning of the 20th century as well as the present day.

The first part of the assignment deals with the concept of suffrage and more precisely the struggle towards universal suffrage which means that all adult citizens have the right to vote. Suffrage has historically been restricted by factors such as sex, age, race, religion and property. While many steps forward have been taken, universal suffrage is still a contested topic as segments of population (e.g. prisoners, immigrants without citizenship) may be excluded from voting. Thus, many argue that suffrage still remains non-universal in most established democracies. The present assignment focuses on the development of universal suffrage in the United Kingdom and more specifically in England because the long parliamentary tradition of England is often perceived as a democratic one. The aim is to investigate to what extent people were able to vote and look at the reasons given for not including segments of the population in democratic processes.

Regarding the second part of the assignment, the theoretical basis lies in the work of a German sociologist Robert Michels, who in his work *Political Parties: A Sociological Study of the Oligarchical Tendencies of Modern Democracy* (1911) introduced an “iron law of oligarchy”. His thesis, in simple terms, is that democracies are theoretical impossibilities and result in oligarchies. In this introduction of the assignment, Michels’ central arguments are elaborated.

The origins of modern democracy

The concept of democracy has its roots in Antiquity and since then it has been defined and executed in countless ways. The present assignment is concerned with its modern interpretations, starting from the Enlightenment when several philosophers and thinkers worked on the relationship between individuals and governments. The rights to life, liberty and property and the freedom of men in general were addressed from a new perspective, which emphasized reason and progress. In many European countries and regions Enlightenment was preceded by the rule of absolute monarchies whose power extended even to religious matters. Although philosophers





like Locke (1632-1704) and Rousseau (1712-1778) introduced ideas which gave more weight to the rights of individuals, as thinkers of the 17th and 18th centuries, their views on equality were significantly different from those of today.

For John Locke a social contract was made among people but also between the people and the sovereign. If the sovereign broke this contract, the people had the right and almost an obligation to revolt. As a result, a new government would be established. According to Locke, the legitimacy of any government needs the consent of the individual. Locke was in favor of a representative democracy, as the English Parliament, where power was divided between the hereditary (House of Lords) and elected (House of Commons) representatives. Rousseau concluded that “democracy can either embrace all of the people or be restricted to half of them; aristocracy, on the other hand can embrace half of the people or an indeterminately smaller number”. For Rousseau, democracy would ideally be small-scale and direct as was in his native Geneva. He had reservations about whether representative democracy could in fact represent the people.

The first country in Europe to establish universal male suffrage was France, where in 1792, in the aftermath of the Revolution, all men above the age of 21 were given the right to vote for the Convention assembly. However, during the following decades in France suffrage went through several changes concerning for example matters of taxation and the age of those eligible to vote. Most European countries established universal male suffrage during the 19th century and universal suffrage (including women) after the First World War. In some of the Nordic countries (Finland 1906, Norway 1913) the right to vote was given to women before the war.

Parliamentary franchise in England

Although sex, religion and ethnicity have been central criteria for restricting universal suffrage, property in different forms seems to have defined electoral matters to a large extent. England has a long parliamentary history, as the word ‘parliament’ was mentioned for the first time already in 1236 when it referred to the King’s council, comprising members of aristocracy. During the following centuries voting was reserved for land and property owners in counties and boroughs as well as representatives from the universities of Oxford and Cambridge. Many landowners increased their power by dividing their lands into smaller units (worth minimum of 40 shillings) which each was allowed a vote in the elections. Landowners then used the votes of the smaller estates according to their will. Although some exceptions are known, women did not usually vote, although this was more defined by custom than law.

There were initiatives already in the late 18th century to extend the franchise to a larger population but these efforts remained unsuccessful. Five franchise reforms in the 19th and 20th centuries are considered the most essential for the universal



suffrage in England. The first reform in 1832 increased the electorate of about 500 000 to more than 800 000 through having less strict property qualifications and extending the right also to tenants renting a place worth at least 50£. For the first time, women were explicitly denied the right to vote. Although the number of people included in the franchise increased as a result of the 1832 reform, only 3 percent of the population could cast a vote.

The second reform of 1867 increased the franchise in the city-areas (boroughs) and thus included more working class men. However, voting was a public event (by raising hands) which meant that bribery and intimidation were common. Only in 1872 secret ballots were introduced. The third reform (1884) again increased by 70 percent the number of those who could register to vote but managed to cover only about one quarter of the entire adult population (21 year-olds).

After the reform of 1832 which had specifically denied women the right to vote, accomplishing female suffrage was a continuing struggle throughout the 19th century. During the latter half of the century debates in the parliament over female suffrage were recurring annually between 1869-1884. Nevertheless, any amendments to bills that would change 'men' to 'persons' were defeated by a great majority in Parliament. As the attempts to include women in the franchise failed, frustration and militancy increased, which in turn was used as an argument not to establish female suffrage. After the First World War, the reform of 1918 was a significant one as a nearly universal male suffrage was created and women over 30 were given the right to vote under some conditions. Were universal female suffrage created, it would have enfranchised 14 000 000 women thus outnumbering male voters. The 1918 reform also gave franchise to those receiving poor relief or alms. Thus, after the reform 74 percent of those over 21 could register to vote.

From 1918 onwards, different organizations campaigned actively for a universal female suffrage and equal franchise bills were presented in the parliament almost annually since 1919. The Conservative Party (including Winston Churchill) did not support these bills and some advocated for a bill enfranchising only women over 25 years of age. Finally in 1928 a reform was passed which created universal suffrage and abolished all previous legislation which enabled anyone to use more than one vote.

The central question is when is democracy inclusive enough to represent the will of the people. As evident, for several centuries in English history, the House of Commons in the Parliament was elected by minorities of different sizes. Even in the 19th century it was considered a dangerous experiment to extend power to the less wealthy and less educated. While the female suffrage is often discussed as a separate entity, it should be looked at within the wider social and economic context. For example, to what extent were matters of property and ownership a reason for women's disenfranchise and to what extent did attitudes towards the female sex play a part in excluding women.



Democracy as a form of utopia

The theory of German sociologist Robert Michels's (1876-1936) does not give much weight to universal suffrage because for him democracy, even if every human being were given the right to participate, it would not be able to express the will of the masses. Michels was born into the German Empire (from 1871 to 1918) led by the "iron chancellor" Otto von Bismarck. The empire inherited a universal male suffrage from the North German Confederation, where it was established in 1867. It is widely agreed upon that Bismarck promoted a universal male suffrage because he needed the support of the rural population in the election, not because of the injustice suffered by those not allowed to vote. Michels viewed his own ideas about democracy as pessimistic. Michels wrote his work in 1911 when the male suffrage as well as universal suffrage had already made progress in many countries. However, by then, universal suffrage had been established only in two countries (New Zealand 1893, Finland 1906).

For Michels, the threats and challenges facing democracy were both internal and external and, in his work *Political Parties* he expressed skepticism about the possibility of overcoming these challenges. On the one hand the problem is embedded in the very existence of organizations: "It is organization of the elected over the electors, of mandataries over the mandate, of the delegates over the delegators. Who says organization says oligarchy". Thus, an intrinsic part of any large-scale organization is the control by those few who have made their way to the top. On the other hand, Michels pointed out that things such as the level of education of the masses and economic development play a part in the nature of democracy. However, despite his pessimism about creating a truly democratic society, at the end of his book Michels states that democracy is something to aspire towards. The key is to identify and become aware and thus reduce those factors that tend to shift democracy towards oligarchy: "Democracy is a treasure which no one will ever discover by deliberate search. But in continuing our search, in laboring indefatigably to discover the undiscoverable, we shall perform a work which will have fertile results in the democratic sense" (368).

Although oligarchy, the dominance of few over the masses, is not synonymous with aristocracy, they do have an undeniable historical connection, as it most often has been the aristocracy using the power of the minority. Rousseau concluded that "democracy can either embrace all of the people or be restricted to half of them; aristocracy, on the other hand can embrace half of the people or an indeterminately smaller number". For Michels, oligarchical tendencies of democracy have to do with the idea that although in democracies the power might change from one group to another, the power still remains with a minority.

In his theory Michels questions the generally held conception that in democracies, the masses have the power. In his later work (1936) he wrote: "the rapid turnover of



leaders deceives the inexperienced regarding the true character of authority in democratic countries. It is not the masses that overthrow leaders but rather new leaders who take advantage of the masses who bring this about”. The aristocracy turns to the masses only when forced, in other words, in the elections. For Michels, organizations such as states or political parties are concerned with self-preservation, in other words, with the interests of the organization itself. Principles and ideologies are modified in order to protect the organization. When writing the preface to the 1915 translation of his work Michels, who was part of the socialist movement before the 1st World War, argued that even the German Social democratic party aiming for peace and internationalism, abandoned its values and supported the war.

As the direct democracy found in Antiquity did not exist in large organizations such as national states in the early 20th century, Michels focused on the mechanism of representative democracy. He gave various reasons for the impossibility of representative democracy. First, the masses, who are preoccupied with the responsibilities of work, family and personal life, have limited, even non-existing possibilities to concern themselves with the matters of significance to organizations. Representative democracy would require actively attending meetings and discussing matters of importance. Second, Michels stated that representatives of parliaments, parties or unions “whilst belonging by social position to the class of the ruled, have in fact come to form part of the ruling oligarchy”. Leaders of the masses, irrespective of their original background, create a power elite which is not able to make decisions reflecting the will or interest of the masses even if they wanted to. Whoever gets to be elected by democratic means will look at things from the perspective of the new elite they are part of.

As an example of the accuracy of his theory Michels used the French Revolution and the following Third Republic which were not able to suppress the old order. Instead, Michels points out, the aristocracy was disproportionately represented in the French government still in 1911 when he wrote his book. In his view, the French Revolution and the following decades had not fundamentally changed the power relations in French society.

USA: An example of today’s democracy

The political system of the United States as well as current political events offer a platform for reflecting on some aspects of Michels’s theory. USA itself as well as other countries have considered USA a leading democracy in the world during the 20th century. However, concerns have been raised in several reports about its more recent developments regarding, for example, polarization of society, practical barriers preventing people of color to vote and the influence of private money of special-interest groups in the form of lobbyists and campaign fundraising in the democratic process.



The democratic system in the USA is dominated by two political parties, the Democrats and the Republicans. The bicameral Congress consists of 435 members for the House of Representatives and 100 senators for the Senate. In addition, presidential elections are held every four years. Michels claimed that in democracies change from the point of view of the masses is rare as one elite is replaced by another in elections. This claim of elites can be approached by asking to what extent do individuals from the “masses” in the USA have realistic possibilities to run as candidates and to be elected?

The cost of elections in the USA has increased steadily from the turn of the Millennium, both in congressional and presidential elections. The financial stakes in elections are significantly higher than in other Western democracies. For example, in the 2018 elections the costs for candidates who were elected averaged \$ 15.7 million in the Senate and just over \$ 2 million in the House of Representatives. Although self-financing has been marginal (on average less than 1 % in the 2020 elections for House representatives), and in theory it is possible for anyone to raise funding for the elections, the actual possibilities for raising money are not equal for everyone. The other aspect of elites in US politics concerns the intertwined relationship between public and private sectors. Special interest groups use billions of dollars to influence the political decision-making process. In addition, there is a constant movement from the public sector to the private one and vice versa as large corporations hire or give board seats to former politicians.

In the context of early 20th century Michels concluded that the ones in power also have an advantage over those who seek to change policies for three reasons. First, those in power have superior knowledge in general and specifically on matters which will help to keep them in power. Although access to knowledge through education in the 21st century has improved tremendously, there are significant differences in the level of education between people. Second, access to, and in some cases, control over means of communication such as the press favor the ones in power. Third, people who have experience in the art of politics are more equipped to make convincing speeches and to organize events. Since Michels’s time, the world of press and media have changed considerably. On the one hand, social media has provided the means to participate and be heard in a way that was not conceivable a hundred years ago. Democracy in the context of the United States offers interesting points of reflection on the possibilities of the masses to influence democracy.

Changes and permanence in the images of power – Art and power

The following introduction addresses the power from three different aspects: religious power through the Church, power of those conquering other cultures and revolutionary power. The historical contexts are medieval life in Europe, expeditions



to the American continent and the rise to power of Napoleon Bonaparte, and power is examined through its manifestation in art.

The medieval worldview and its reflection in art

Religion played a central role in the medieval worldview. The teachings of the Church formed the basis of the worldview, although superstition was common among people. Especially in remote areas, pagan beliefs coexisted with Christianity. Death was strongly present in everyday medieval life, because life was uncertain in many ways. There was no effective medical treatment for common diseases. Epidemics like different types of pests and typhus further increased mortality. Uncertain earthly life was seen as an intermediate stage before the afterlife. The Church behaved as a mediator between earthly life and hereafter, as its doctrines were promised to open the gates of heaven.

The church justified its power by claiming that the power was given by God, represented on earth by the Pope and the church he led. The power of the Church was increased by the fact that medieval states were weak. On the other hand, the power of the church was not absolute. Local rulers, whose status was based on a feudal system, also had a significant amount of power. Medieval society was marked by a hierarchical division of estates, in which the lower in class had to submit to the will of the superior. It was in the interests of the higher estates to emphasize the permanence and immutability of the system. Therefore also the earthly establishment described the medieval system of power as God's will. Each social class had its own role to play in this system and therefore each class should be content with its role in society.

Medieval art was strongly dominated by religious themes. Typical topics dealt with Biblical stories and various saints. Art represented the divine order of the world. On the other hand it also had an important pedagogical role. Art conveyed to the illiterate people information about the message of the holy Bible. While the artist was not important in the middle ages, the religious message portrayed in art was. In most cases the artists of medieval times have remained unknown to future generations. There are, however, exceptions to the rule. For example, the famous illustrated prayer book commissioned by French Duke of Berry, falls into this category. The book called *Très Riches Heures* is illustrated by three brothers, Pol, Jean and Hermant Limbourg. The images in the book are an impressive work of art but they can also be seen as extremely interesting historical sources as they depict the lives of medieval time ordinary people. However, religion is strongly present in the book, as the illustrations are related to prayers suitable for different seasons.

Expeditions & the Conquest of America

The era of so called great expeditions began in the late 15th century. These expeditions are seen as one of the milestones between the Middle Ages and the New



Age. As a result, the worldview of Europeans changed radically as new, earlier unknown continents were found. On the other hand, expeditions often had a devastating effect on the lives of the residents of their target areas. The main motives for expeditions are related to economics, politics and religion. European states wanted to increase their economic and political power by conquering new territories. On the other hand, expeditions were also justified by the need to Christianize so called pagans.

The voyage of Christopher Columbus in 1492 to the present-day Caribbean began the conquest of Europeans in the continent of America. As is well known, Columbus' goal had been to find a sea route to India. Instead, he discovered an entirely new continent unknown to Europeans.

After his first voyage, Columbus made three more expeditions to the Caribbean archipelago and Central America. He was followed by, among others, the Italian explorer Amerigo Vespucci. He made several expeditions to Central and South America from 1497 onwards. The American continent is named after Amerigo Vespucci even though Columbus visited the territory of present-day Venezuela before him. However, until his death, Columbus assumed that he had found a sea route to India and did not realize he had found a whole new continent.

Europeans encountered highly developed cultures on the American continent. However, this did not prevent Europeans from treating Native Americans, in many cases, unscrupulously and sometimes brutally. Local Indian cultures were highly developed in many ways. The Inca Empire, for example, had a very extensive road network and a nationwide postal system. They were skilled engineers and architects. The Incas also had an advanced calendar system. The Mayans, who lived in Central America, in turn, were skilled astronomers and mathematicians who used the number zero hundreds of years before Europeans.

The arrival of Europeans had a devastating effect on Native American cultures in Central and South America. At the time of the arrival of Europeans, the population of the American continent was estimated at 40-50 million. In about a hundred years, by the early 17th century, the population had dropped to less than 15 million. The Spaniards managed to quickly defeat the Incas, Mayans, Aztecs and other local Indian cultures. Here, in addition to advanced weapons technology, they were helped by Eurasian diseases to which the natives had little resistance. The surviving natives of Central and South America were commonly forced to work as slaves in plantations and silver mines.

Napoleon Bonaparte

Napoleon Bonaparte became the ruler of France in 1799 after the turbulent revolutionary period. He sealed his power by crowning himself emperor of France in 1804. Napoleon was born on the island of Corsica in 1769, the same year that France





conquered Corsica and annexed it to its territories. Although Napoleon's parents belonged to the local Corsican noble family, the family did not belong to the French ruling elite. Napoleon's father pushed his son into the Brienne Military School in northern France when Napoleon was nine years old. His fellow students from the French nobility despised Napoleon and his broken French. However Napoleon proved to be a very talented student. He entered the French Military Academy in 1785. After this he advanced very rapidly in his military career.

The great French Revolution that erupted in 1789 was a stroke of luck for Napoleon. At that time, numerous officers belonging to the old noble families of France lost their positions and the road was open to young and talented officers from outside the power elite, such as Napoleon. Napoleon sided with the revolutionaries and took part in the battles against opponents of the revolution. In 1795, he rose to the rank of division general at the age of only 26. For several years, he led French troops against foreign powers that opposed the revolution. The victorious war against Austria in particular increased Napoleon's popularity. However, the revolutionary war collapsed the French economy and the country's government lost the support of the people. However, the popularity of Napoleon, who successfully led the French forces, continued to grow. He saw the situation as an opportunity to rise to power. He led a coup in which the old regime was overthrown. Napoleon sealed his power by crowning himself emperor in 1804. A hereditary monarchy re-emerged in France, although Napoleon himself had supported the rebels who opposed the king and demanded the republic in 1789.

The official painting of the coronation was not completed until a few years later in 1808. Napoleon closely followed the completion of the painting and also intervened in its content. Among other things, he ordered that his relatives be depicted in it, even though many of them were not present at the coronation. The painting can be seen as a propaganda image of its own era. Because Napoleon had risen to power through a coup, he had to justify his new status as emperor of France. Since he could not rely on his royal descent, the arguments had to be found elsewhere.

Revolutions and Collective Protest Movements

In this study unit the focus is on the instabilities which take place in nation states. The underpinning theme behind protest movements as well as revolutions is the demand for change, which is thus a central concept in this study unit. The demand for change can be stated in any form, anything from demonstrations to revolutions.

Theoretical reflections

At the forefront of the revolution, an integrated social class usually places demands on the ruling class. It needs mass movement to make its voice heard. The mass movement can either use existing forms of expression and communication, or create



entirely new forms. For example, today, different forms of social media platforms are new ways of influencing. One option is also to ally with the political rulers which has happened in many small and new states in the early 20th century. This allows existing administrations and their institutional power to be used to achieve their own ambition and consolidate power. In this case, achieving this goal does not require forms of violence, but is pursued within existing power structures. The use of outside forces is also common.

In simple terms, a dispute is about one party demanding something from the other (be it an individual, a group, or an institution). At the individual level, this could be illustrated by the case where an individual asks a friend to return the money he or she has borrowed. The manner in which a loan is levied can vary from request and order to an attack that affects the well-being of another.

On the other hand, if three or more parties are involved in the dispute, the situation is further aggravated. A friend would demand money back from another friend who had given it to a third party. In a complicated situation, it is no longer clear who should return the borrowed money.

Conceptually, there are three dimensions to a dispute: author, object, and argument. Most demands are resolved more or less peacefully, even when groups or institutions are involved. When violent action is added to the group's demand, it leads to revolution within the state and war between states. The revolution demands a collective mass movement with demands on the other side. In addition, the situation must be so tense that it leads to violent action by at least one other party.

The intensifying situation in the Grand Duchy of Finland

In the beginning of the 20th-century Finland was a part of the Russian Empire. The pattern of class relations, state structures, and political organisation in Finland differed from that in the other regions between Russia and the rest of Europe. The existence of an autonomous polity within a multinational empire at the outbreak of World War I was unique. The Finns were the only nationality in the Russian Empire to have a largely Scandinavian type of social structure and political system. The presence of a strong landowning peasants, together with the attachment of the Swedish speaking upper class to the state bureaucracy, had led to the easy adoption of the Finnish language and Finnish culture by the latter group and to a rather frictionless national consolidation by the beginning of the twentieth century.

At the beginning of the century, the demands made by the united and deliberately created Finnish national ruling class towards the Russian Empire increased. Parliamentary reform increased the sense of an active citizenship and reduced the power of traditional estates. On the other hand, Russia's nationalist efforts to unite



partially divisive peripheral areas with central government—both administratively and ideologically—posed local challenges.

At the same time, the food situation also began to deteriorate threateningly as a result of the World War I and unrest in Russia, from where the majority of bread grain was imported. It also raised internal demands, in particular for a more equitable distribution of bread grain. Workers also began to be more active and required, among other things, a maximum of eight working. Thus, external factors such as World War I and change of power in Russia, as well as the internal ones such as the question of supreme power and social inequality, strained the situation to the extreme by the end of the year. The largest party in the Finnish Parliament, the Social Democrats, resigned in November. In December, both a minority parliament and the government issued a declaration of independence.

At the turn of the year, Finland was in a situation where it had declared independence, without the monopoly of coercion typical of the state, i.e. the army. Instead, there were Russian soldiers in the country in wartime strength without actual leadership. In addition, both workers and bourgeois had armed their own unofficial troops during previous unrest. The newly formed state of Finland declared the white forces of the bourgeoisie the Finnish army.

The Revolution

A civil war broke out in Finland in January 1918. At that time the Red Guards began hostilities against government forces, called the Whites. At the beginning of the war, the Red Guards ruled the large centers of population in southern Finland. Central and Northern Finland was held by the Whites. Tens of thousands of soldiers were armed on both sides at the beginning of the war.

An important background to the war was the rapid change of the Finnish society in the second half of the 19th century. At that time, Finland, which was still a part of Russia, began to industrialize. At the same time the population grew rapidly. This led to the gradual crumbling of the old class society based on estates. The position of landowners improved as they benefited from the rise of the forest industry. The bourgeoisie also benefited from industrialization. However, the land was concentrated in the hands of a few. The majority of the rural population did not own land. The position of tenant farmers and agricultural workers was weak. Factory workers were also dissatisfied with their position. The idea of socialism, which promised hope for better, inspired many poor people. However, the pace of social reform was slow. The outbreak of World War I in 1914 further complicated the situation of the poor. The Finns did not find themselves on the front lines, but the food shortage of civilians was getting worse all the time as mainland Russia was at war. Unemployment of factory workers also rose rapidly.



Russia's internal unrest was also reflected in Finland. When the Russian tsar was ousted in 1917, the country plunged into internal chaos. There were no more Russian gendarmes in Finland to maintain order. Both the bourgeoisie and the working population began to arm their own order guards at an accelerating pace. The working population staged demonstrations around the country. The bourgeoisie feared that they would seek to seize power as acts of violence erupted during the protests. The Senate, led by the bourgeoisie, declared Finland independent in December 1917. The Reds began hostilities a few weeks after the country's independence. They had lost their faith that societal change could be brought about peacefully. On the other hand, the coup d'état of the Russian Communists in the fall of 1917 inspired many.

Although the war was fought mainly among Finns, foreign powers also became involved in the war. Communist-dominated Soviet Russia armed the Reds. Germany took part in the war by sending troops to help the Whites army. The war ended in a few months with the defeat of the Reds in the spring of 1918. More than 35,000 people died during the war and its aftermath.

The number is large, considering that Finland's population was only about three million in the early 20th century. Most of the casualties of the war died as victims of terror. Both sides carried out illegal executions. Thousands of Reds died of starvation and disease in prison camps set up by whites after the war. Recovery from the wounds of the bitter Civil War took a long time. The recovery was facilitated by the fact that most of those who fought on the white and red sides began to support a policy of reconciliation during the 1920s and 1930s.

States and Nationalism

The following texts is related to nationalism in Europe, state formation in Europe, and small states in Europe.

Nationalism in Europe

Nationalism has played a great role in Europe, forming states and riots, cohesion and confrontation. Nationalism does not have a single definition, but the concept can refer to a number of different ways of thinking. Ernest Gellner, a philosopher and a sociologist who studied nationalism, for example, said there are about 8,000 languages in the world, but 800 nations and 200 states. Ethnic nationalism refers to the idea that a nation is made up of people belonging to a particular ethnic group. The opposite of ethnic nationalism is civic nationalism. The term refers tonational thinking, where anyone who shares the values and freedoms of a particular country can belong to a nation. Belonging to a nation is thus a choice, not just a constant determined by descent. Built into the concept is the idea that a nation is not exclusive.

Nation-states in general are a fairly new concept in human history. The idea of nationality began to be emphasized in the states at the end of the 18th century, when





Europe was shaken by, among other things, the French Revolution. Benedict Anderson, a political scientist who defined nationalism, called states imaginary communities because not all of their members actually meet each other. The idea of nationality was emphasized in Europe in recent centuries, and new states emerged after the world wars and the break-up of the Soviet Union. The youngest states on the continent have been a result of the break-up of Yugoslavia.

Although Europe can be considered the peace of nation states, there are still many peoples living within the continent who do not actually have their own state. Not all of these peoples are actively seeking their own state, but Scotland, for example sought independence from the British, virtually English, regime in 2014. The disadvantages of nationalism are obvious. The history of 20th-century Europe can be seen as an example of where nationalism shows its worst: world wars and genocide. But nationalism in itself is no more good than evil, but that is what makes it so. Some kind of community spirit, which can be called nationalism, is needed to build a functioning society.

Quite often when examining the formation of a nation state and its moving into the modern age, the focus remains on big and powerful countries, such as France, Great Britain or Russia. Because of this perspective, events within small states are easily seen only as the result of the actions of large states. Most countries are small and are economically and politically dependent on distant centers of powers.

State-making patterns

The nation-state is often associated with modern times. Nation-states have emerged in Europe as a result of administrative and cultural change. The first nation-states were the so-called great nation-states. This included commercial and military competition, followed by economic intrusion into the rest of Europe and non-European parts. The first stage in the development of the global state system involved the formation of a few early nation-states and empires with ethnically separate centers. The second phase consisted of the division of most of Europe into separate nation-states through wars, alliances and a wide range of other movements. The states of the first stage of state formation set strict limits to these states of the next stage. The Treaty of Westphalia, the Congress of Vienna (1815) and the Treaty of Versailles (1919) are dramatic evidence of this. The formation of the third stage of the state can be considered to have begun with the end of the Cold War, when the disintegration of control in the Eastern bloc in particular allowed the formation of new nation-states, as well as the re-formation of old states.

Finland is a good example of such a new state: its two great landmarks towards statehood were the Napoleonic Wars and the First World War. At that point, the most important factor was the disintegration of the three great multinational empires, Russia, Austria-Hungary, and the Ottoman Empire. Finland is one of these small,



distant states. It can also be called as a 'successor state' between the world wars, since it gained independence during the first world war and its society developed significantly between the wars. Characteristically these states were before the wars dependent on major European power, but were situated closer to the metropolis than so called third countries which existed under colonial rule. Finland was located in the buffer zone on the European hinterland (such as the Baltics, Bohemia, Poland and Hungary), where regional centers and the city network were poorly developed. The surplus needed for growth was squeezed directly from agriculture, not the monetary economy as in Western Europe. Cultural integration, which is one of the preconditions for the formation of a nation-state, was quite easy to implement (as in the other Nordic countries), because the territory of Finland was fairly united linguistically and in terms of religion.

National integration

The states formed at different stages led to different relations between the largest social class and the central government of the state. The connection between state structures and class relations differs from that of the early states. In the former large (European) states, the link between the ruling class and the state structure was strong. In small and dependent political units, however, class relations were not so deeply rooted in state structures. In the context of political structures, one of the main factors in class relations is the dismantling of feudal ties and the reshaping of the agrarian class. In the small Eastern countries, most liberated peasants did not distribute land at all, except in the Balkans, where smallholder farming became predominant. Class boundaries were still set according to ethnic boundaries: local peasants faced non-native landowners.

Differences in relations then shape the nature of local political and collective action, which was reflected in both national integration - that is, the homogenization of culture and nation-building - and class integration - that is, class-based collective action. In the late states, the non-native ruling class contributed to the formation of local nationalism before independence, whereas in earlier states, nationality and ethnic consciousness typically formed after state formation.

Central and Periphery, Small State International Politics

small and peripheral states often receive less attention than large and central states. The concept of a small state is already more difficult and always relatively defined. It can be defined, for example, according to the size of the land, the population or the product of the gross population, or its political importance (power). Other states, for example, play a "bigger" role in international organizations or local conflicts. Small states have been particularly important in the history of 20th century Europe. It must be borne in mind, however, that there is often a strong power asymmetry between



small and large states, which determines the sphere of activity of small states both economically and politically, ie a small state has less power over a large one.

There are three small state models in the European context. Old small and neutral states that have been active as developers of the ideology of peace and cooperation and dialogue, mediators, peace-builders, promoters of disarmament, supporters of international organizations, international law. They tend to have an internationally restrained profile of action that emphasizes peace and stability. Switzerland and Belgium, for example, are in this group. New small states have democratic constitutions, but they are often determined by internal and economic fragility. In addition, there is the so-called category of “quiet” states including, for example, Hungary and Poland. They are determined by distrust in the survival of the new own (small) state. The self-understanding of these states is determined by “shame peace” and internal instability, as well as economic problems.

In the early 19th-century stability, balance and security were sought among the great powers through congressional diplomacy. Small states were not called upon to decide on war and peace, but they had a growing instrumental value as buffers and balancers. Examples include the “buffering” of France by small states in the Vienna Congress or the guarantee of multilingual and impartial Swiss territorial integrity by mutual agreement between the great powers. The perspective of peripheral, small and marginal actors has recently been highlighted. Peripheral state is a state which is located far from central and metropolis, but are economically and politically dependent centrals. Their role, especially in major international conflicts, has received less attention. Small operators can prolong (prolonging); spread; decide; bloc, mediation, expansion, or intensification of conflicts. Examples of these can be seen, for example, from the Cold War.

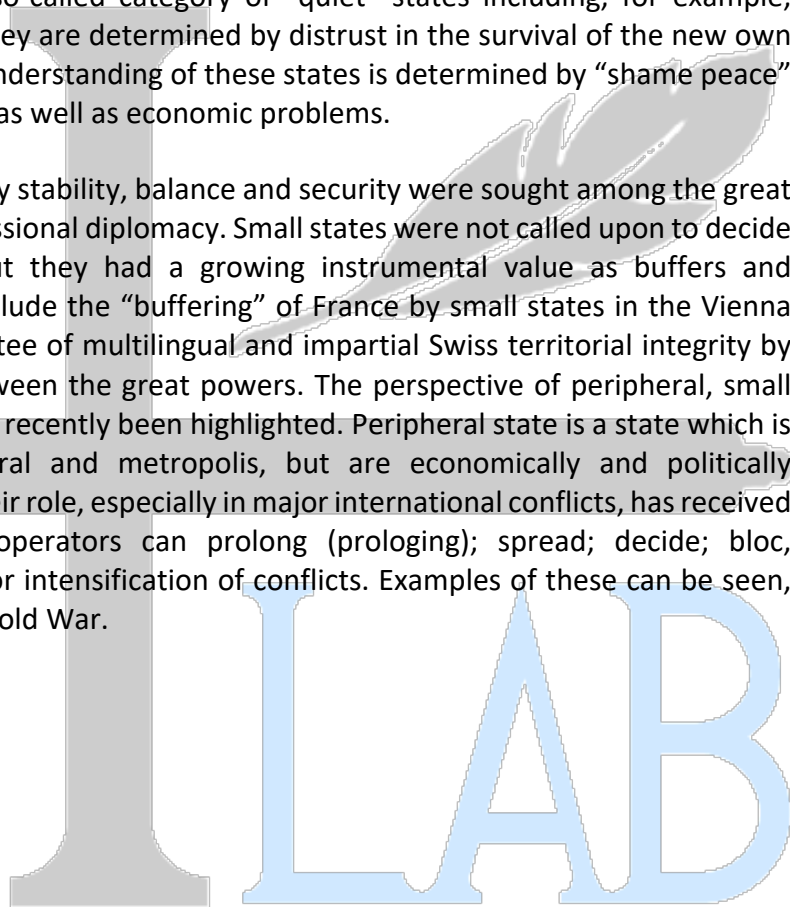
Glossary of concepts

Sub-theme 1

- Aristocracy
- Nobles / nobility
- Oligarchy
- Hereditary caste
- Feudalism
- Ancient Regime

Sub-theme 2:

- Democracy
- Oligarchy
- Organization
- Participation
- Suffrage, universal suffrage
- Property laws





Freedom
Voting
Elections

Sub-theme 3:

Christianity
Church
Feudal system
Great expeditions/Voyages of Discovery/
Kolumbus
Incas
Mayans
Aztecs
French Revolution
Napoleon

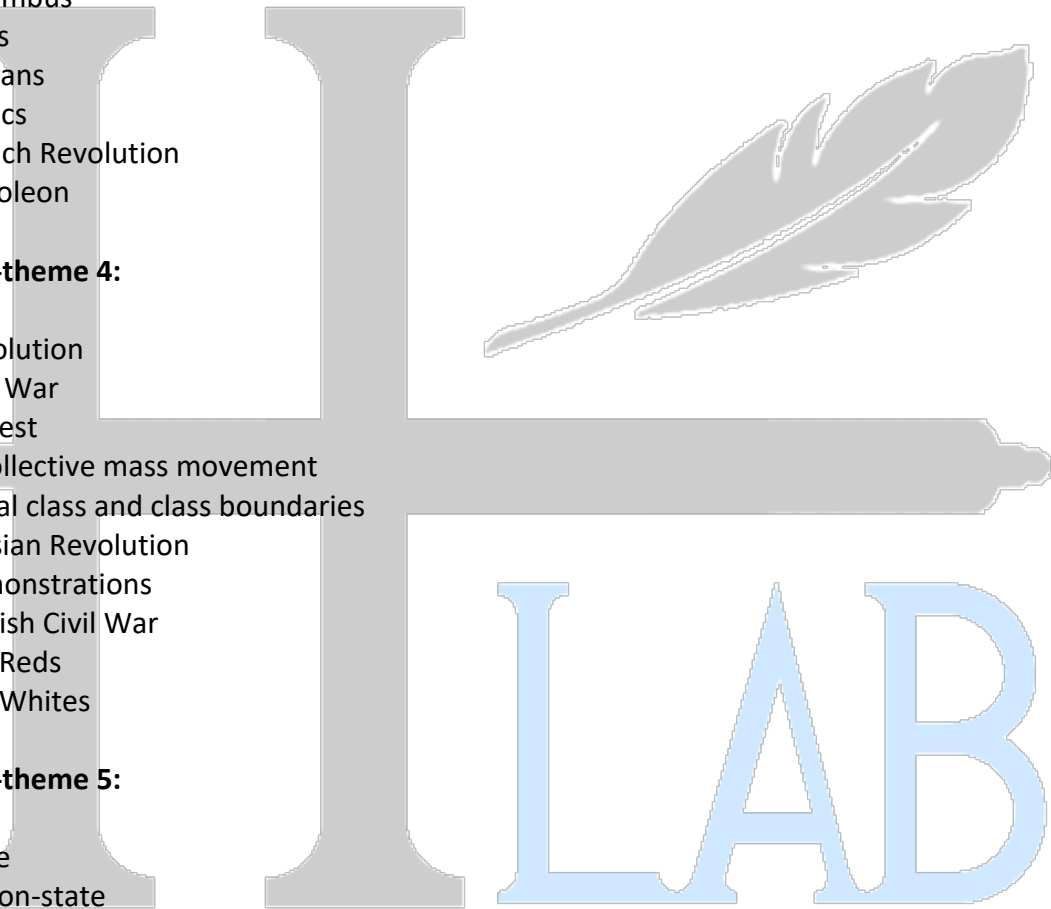
Sub-theme 4:

Revolution
Civil War
Protest
A Collective mass movement
Social class and class boundaries
Russian Revolution
Demonstrations
Finnish Civil War
The Reds
The Whites

Sub-theme 5:

State
Nation-state
state-making
nationalism
Ethnic nationalism
Civic nationalism
national integration/national disintegration
Web resources

Sub-theme 1:





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