

FOREWORD

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The Norwegian Constitution of 1814 is the only written European constitution that survived the Napoleonic era. It has been central for the development of modern Norway on at least three levels: as a manifestation of the country's independence; as basis for its political structure; and as a symbol of Norway, which is celebrated every year on 17 May, the date of the formal adoption of the Constitution in 1814. Expressing revolutionary ideas such as the sovereignty of the people, individual freedom and equality, the Constitution established a constitutional monarchy with a parliament stronger than that established by any other nineteenth-century constitution. This made it possible to develop a system of parliamentary rule in Norway after 1884.

The opportunity for a Norwegian constitution arose during the last phase of the Napoleonic Wars. Under the leadership of Prince Frederik, Norway declared full independence on 19 February 1814 and convened an assembly to adopt a constitution. In the Treaty of Kiel, dated 14 January 1814, the Danish King, as an ally of France, had been forced to cede the Kingdom of Norway to the King of Sweden. Norwegians resisted and the Swedish army could not claim its reward for having taken part in the alliance against Napoleon while still fighting. This led to Norway's brief full independence, the Constitution and the election of Christian Frederik as King of Norway from 19 May. This full freedom lasted a summer. On 10 October, King Christian Frederik formally abdicated after having lost a war with Sweden, supported by Great Britain, and accepted to surrender and abdicate in the Convention of Moss of 14 August 1814. Norway formally entered into a loose union with Sweden on 4 November, after necessary changes to the

Constitution were made to accommodate the union between the two kingdoms. Norway retained its own parliament, government, budget, army and navy, but the King of Sweden also claimed the Norwegian crown. Foreign policy, including defence, became joined in the union, which lasted until its dissolution in 1905. In that year, most of the revised provisions of the Constitution were deleted and the original ones from 17 May 1814 reinstated.

This themed issue of *Scandinavica* is dedicated to studies that explore some of the most important issues related to the establishment of the Norwegian Constitution. At the core are the Constitution's international aspects relating in particular to Norway's relationship with Sweden and Denmark, but, above all, to the importance of Great Britain and the more general European situation leading up to 1814. In the first article, Iver B. Neumann and Morten Skumsrud Andersen study the Danish State as an empire, emphasising the role that Norway, formally as a separate kingdom, played within this empire. They also discuss how this role may have prepared the ground for Norwegian independence and how the later national interpretation of Norway as a former Danish colony may have framed interpretations of Norwegian identities.

Bård Frydenlund's study focuses on the three most important British actors in Norway in 1814 – two diplomats and one spy – and reveals what information they managed to gather and which actions they undertook to implement British policy. Frydenlund's article clearly demonstrates the difficulties of international action in times of severely constrained communications. Ola Mestad goes on to analyse the implications of the Norwegian question in Great Britain by examining the extent to which the Law of Nations may have had an impact on the British Prime Minister Lord Liverpool. In his article, he therefore tries to answer the question of why the Norwegian issue may have become for Lord Liverpool 'the most awkward and embarrassing' one. Dag Michalsen expands on the relevance of the Law of Nations in his contribution. Here he studies the Norwegian Constitution as an international instrument of law and demonstrates how a constitution, which is typically considered as a national document, can be intertwined with international relations and instruments, also after 1814.

David Redvaldsen brings one of the most egalitarian features of the Norwegian Constitution into the spotlight. In his article, he examines the ban on new nobility and the ensuing abolition of the existing one. This process, which happened under threat of war and violent action by the King, resulted in the full abolition of nobility without compensation.

Ruth Hemstad's article, on the other hand, shows how one of the most politically engaged ladies of Europe at the time, Madame de Staël, played a key role in forming international, and above all, British, opinion in favour of the Swedish cause, championed by the former French general Bernadotte. This article also relates to Hemstad's seminal book about the war over public opinion, which is also reviewed by Thomas Munck in this journal. Finally, Elettra Carbone studies an English novel about Norway published in 1814. Despite being set a hundred years earlier, the novel clearly manages to play a part in forming British opinion of Norway and Norwegians at a time when British policy towards Norway was of decisive importance.

The book reviews by Thomas Munck, Morten Nordhagen Ottosen and Michael Rowe also form an important part of this issue of *Scandinavica*. All the volumes under examination represent new research into international aspects of 1814, one of the most formative years in the development of modern Scandinavia.

The international dimension of the events requires international dialogue in this field and the Research Committee for the Bicentenary of the Norwegian Constitution 1814-2014, instituted by the Research Council of Norway, is proud to contribute to the presentation of this research in the English language.