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European Parliament Elections in the
Post-Brexit-Referendum EU

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The Case of Sweden

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Abstract

The 2019 European Parliament election in Sweden was full of surprises and paradoxes. For the first time since Sweden joined the European Union (EU), there were no major parties contesting the election which advocated the Swedish exit from the EU. This U-turn by two staunch EU opponents — Sweden Democrats and the Left Party — was even more unexpected given the backdrop, namely the impending British withdrawal from the EU, which was thought to amplify the eurosceptic attitudes. Despite the predictions, these two remaining eurosceptic parties shifted their positions the opposite way. At the same time, the election results seemingly showed that Sweden was going against the common European Green-Liberal trend, with its so-called right-wing wave. This thesis will attempt, by analyzing the national and European political background Post-Brexit-Referendum, as well as through employing several theories, to explain, categorize and put into context the 2019 Election. Other perspectives will also be considered that can be helpful in better interpreting and understanding the election outcome than the first glance allows.

Keywords: Euroscepticism, Brexit, European Parliament, election, Sweden, politics

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1 Introduction

After the 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum results became known, it seemed that we were witnessing the heyday of the eurosceptics of the EU. To some observers, a chain effect had been triggered, which would mean other exits, such as Swexit. However, no other country has followed suit. On the contrary, the EU has become increasingly popular and appealing to EU citizens across the continent, confirmed by numerous opinion polls.

In some countries, the political landscape has shifted more markedly than others. Sweden is one of them. The 2019 European Parliament (EP) Election in Sweden was the first since 1995 in which no parties opposing membership contested.

What had changed? What was forecasted or feared by some observers as a domino effect did not materialize. We have seen no anti-EU populist and nationalist wave strong enough to take over or even paralyze the EU. The theories of EU collapse turned out to be exaggerated, if not outright false. This view was further amplified by the results of 2019 EP Elections. The radical right parties seemingly had wind under their sails, but in the 2019 EP elections they fared less well than expected. Instead, their moderate successes were overshadowed by continued resilience of mainstream parties, coupled with the success of pro-EU liberal and green parties.

I will attempt to explore the case of Sweden, focusing on how the eurosceptic parties adapted to the changing political reality and why in that particular way.

Notwithstanding the U-turn of the two remaining eurosceptic parties, was Sweden isolated from the pan-European voting trends as the election results suggested?

To what extent was the election a strictly national affair, a so-called second order election?

In short, this thesis sets out to do the following:

- Exploring different political arenas potentially shaping the 2019 EP Election in Sweden, both the national and the European, in order to make judgements about the decisiveness of either.
- Generally mapping the parties' ideological leanings and pro or anti-EU stances, relying on theories about euroscepticism.
- Explaining parties' political positions and changes to them in the context of the Brexit Referendum and its consequences, with particular focus on the Sweden Democrats, and by extension, the Left Party.
- Testing the applicability of the GAL-TAN classification to the European dimension of the Swedish political reality and its explanatory value, in order to understand parties, as well as the overall election result.
- Testing the Second Order Election theory with the election results at hand.

While the 2019 EP Election in Sweden is the core focus of the thesis, it is in the context of theory testing and ideological breakdown of contesting parties, as well as exploring external or internal political influences that may have shaped the election. There will be no detailed analysis of voter swings, voting patterns by age, ethnicity, income or other possible metrics in order to explain the outcome. In other words: I intend to interpret the outcome, not explain the reasons for it, save the European trends and their impact. However, the general attitudes of the voters are important in identifying the election as First Order Election (FOE) or Second Order Election (SOE), thereby relevant polls will be incorporated.

Lastly, the primary aim is to classify and interpret the election's level of euroscepticism and SOE nature in the context of theory testing, while the secondary aim is to make some judgments for such a result.

1.1 Research Questions

1. How did the Brexit-Referendum outcome affect the 2019 EP Election in Sweden and the parties contesting it?
2. To what extent was it a Second Order Election?

1.2 Pre-research Hypotheses

1. The British withdrawal caused the popularity of the EU to increase significantly, which made maintaining pro-exit stances electorally unrewarding. Additionally, increased prospects of gaining influence within the EU (or thwarting the plans of opposing political forces) made it more attractive to try to change the EU from within.
2. Despite the election outcome at the first glance pointing at the SOE nature of the 2019 Swedish EP Election, this election had some characteristics of a FOE. I associate European influences with the FOE, while national ones with the SOE.

1.3 Variables

The thesis can be structured along the following three variables:

- Independent variable: The victory for the "Leave" option in the British EU membership referendum.

- Intermediate variable: Expectations, predictions and perceptions generated by Brexit process.
- Dependent variable: Party positions and the outcome of the European Parliament election in Sweden.

The independent variable will not be analysed, since the thesis is solely focused on its impact. However, the intermediate variable will be explored through literature analysis, namely scholarly books and articles dealing with the consequences of the Brexit Referendum and in the context of the opinion polls and relevant surveys.

The dependent variable will be analyzed through tracking party positions and looking at the election results, with the help of the above-mentioned theories that will be applied and tested.

Some events and circumstances detailed in the thesis fall outside of the scope of these variables, such as the national background as well as political developments during the 2019 EP Election campaign.

2 Methodology and the Theoretical Framework

The study is qualitative in nature. The chosen method represents textual analysis, more specifically qualitative content analysis. However, the thesis draws on both publicly available qualitative and quantitative material, such as quantitative studies of citizens' attitudes and opinions, as well as pre or post-election polling. No field studies, such as in-depth interviews with party representatives or voters at large have been conducted for the purposes of writing this thesis. The decision regarding the former was determined by inaccessibility of party leadership, officials and operatives for interviews as well as substantial concerns about their trustworthiness, while the latter was simply too time and resource consuming and too large of a research to undertake for a master's thesis such as this one.

Therefore, it is completely dependent on primary and secondary sources. Regarding qualitative data, I make use of relevant scholarly articles in the field, as well as some books around the subject that have been published so far. The literature directly examining the subject is scarce, due to its recency, but older literature is also employed to provide theoretical basis for the thesis, among other purposes.

The study period covers 2016-2019 (4 years), with the starting point defined as the 2016 United Kingdom European Union membership referendum and the ending point the 2019 EP Elections. The study unit is defined as the nation state of Sweden, while the study subject is the 2019 EP election, which I seek to both understand and explain.

Since the timeframe this thesis was intended to study imposed a certain set of limitations, I had to rely heavily on news reports from pre-selected quality newspaper sources, namely the established news media of Sweden, most of them broadsheet papers such as Dagens Nyheter, Göteborgs-Posten, Svenska Dagbladet, and Sydsvenska Dagbladet, with the exception of two tabloids right and left of center — Aftonbladet and Expressen. Swedish Public Service, such as Sveriges Television (SVT) and Sveriges Radio (SR) have also been important sources, along with some other minor news sources. My solid understanding of Swedish gives me the benefit of not being limited to English language sources.

In political science research, content analysis is suitable for engaging in systematic analysis of textual materials such as electoral manifestos and newspaper articles, that are essential to this study. (Halperin and Heath, 2012, p. 318) In contrast to interviewing, this method of data collection is unobtrusive, guaranteeing that the researcher will not affect subjects s/he intends to study. It also represents a

workaround to deal with the problem of not being able to get the information directly from public figures, who shy away from personal contact. (Halperin and Heath, 2012, pp. 318-319)

The thesis also draws heavily on the Eurobarometer surveys, conducted on behalf of the European Commission between May 2014 and June 2019 — Standard Eurobarometers 81-91. The 81st and 91st Eurobarometers are assumed to more or less accurately reflect the public opinion around the 2014 and 2019 EP elections, respectively.

This thesis represents a single case study, which is the recommended method when the goal is to provide in-depth understanding of the study subject, instead of focusing on generalizability. Single case study is also good at gaining insight into the causes of effects of a distinct case. (Vromen, 2010, pp. 255-256) Single case study is well suited for testing existing theories. (Gustafsson, 2017)

Choosing case study is advised when several criteria are met: when the researcher has no control over the social or political events they intend to study; when the subject case is a social or political event that is recent or contemporary and not historical; and when the research attempts to explain why something that has happened in a particular way has occurred as well as how it occurred. (Campbell and Yin, 2018, pp. 30-35)

The thesis is a mixture of two different kinds of single case studies, explanatory, as it seeks to explain the election outcome, and descriptive case studies, as it describes the party landscape and their electoral platforms in order to make judgements about their pro or anti-EU character.

Therefore, I will test the SOE theory of Reif and Schmitt, with the purpose of understanding to what extent the election was a national affair. Measuring the Swedish election against the SOE benchmarks is not an end in itself, but rather a crucial tool to understand the EU-wide political developments and their impact on Sweden, if any. Second theory to be tested is the GAL-TAN political dimension and its relevance to the Swedish politics by analysing party positions through surveys and electoral manifestos. In order to assign the label of eurosceptic to a party or parties, the theories of euroscepticism will be explored, but only for explanatory, not theory-testing purposes.

Concentrating on Sweden does not necessarily mean that the Swedish case is studied in isolation from the larger European political context. On the contrary, the starting point are the events outside of Swedish borders, setting a chain of events in motion that would shape and impact the 2019 EP Elections. This only applies to the Europe-wide trends that help explain the Swedish political developments.

No researcher has a claim to complete objectivity. I am 27 years old, an admirer of the European project and concerned with the unfolding political events since 2016. I am a social liberal, supporter of human rights and minority rights, open borders

and nearly everything the EU represents. Values that the eurosceptic parties often take a stand against. For that reason, I have taken steps to deal with it for my background or beliefs not to obfuscate the bigger picture and hinder me from considering all the facts at hand. In order for the thesis not to be defined by eagerness to see a resurgence of pro-European forces in a direct response to the Brexit process, I will be:

- Observing to what extent did the domestic political reality determine the election outcome instead of solely concentrating on common European trends reflected in Swedish politics. It will be done jointly with measuring the elections against the SOE benchmarks.
- Critically examining the concept of euroscepticism by considering its different forms and applying it carefully as a label.
- Avoiding solely relying on dichotomies, for instance dividing parties in strictly eurosceptic and pro-EU camps. There are pro-EU parties with eurosceptic tendencies and parties highly critical to the EU with some pro-EU tendencies. The reality is rarely neatly delineated black and white.
- Taking into consideration an alternative perspective to the traditional left-right political spectrum, a GAL-TAN scale, which has lately redefined how the Swedish politics is analysed.

This will help minimize the partiality the way the research is conducted and make better informed conclusions.

The choice seems to be feasible and not overly ambitious. While the case might not be generalizable enough to help explain future electoral trends in other EU states, it adds to the field a better understanding of interstate effects of national referenda/elections, EU-wide trends in European Elections and party adaptation to changing political climate.

3 Powers of the European Parliament

Explaining the importance of the EP elections requires highlighting the importance of the institution itself. The European Parliament is governed by two consolidated treaties of the EU, Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union (TFEU) and Treaty on European Union (TEU).

The EP is a key EU institution and the only one directly elected by European citizens in EU-wide elections, thereby it has a degree of legitimacy that sets it apart from other EU institutions.

The EP lends its legitimacy to the European Commission, as it has the ultimate authority to confirm (Article 17(7) TEU) the President of the European Commission and the individual commissioners-designate at the start of each parliamentary term; or dismiss the entire college of commissioners by two-thirds majority (Articles 234 TFEU and 17(8) TEU), if there are sufficient grounds. (Wallace and Reh, 2015, pp 88-89; Fairhurst, 2016, p. 126) Without confirmation by the EP, the EU executive branch would be leaderless.

Since the Treaty of Lisbon, the European Council, representing the heads of state and government, are obliged to appoint the Commission President with the preceding EP Election results in mind. (Wallace and Reh, 2015, p. 88, p. 90)

The overwhelming majority of laws in the EU are passed by the Ordinary Legislative Procedure, that requires adoption of Commission proposals by the EP, which is empowered to amend it as it deems appropriate (Article 294 TFEU). (Wallace and Reh, 2015, p. 89; Fairhurst, 2016, p. 127) No EU budget can be passed without the EP involvement, which can scrutinize and make amendments without any reservation, according to the Article 314(4) of TFEU. (Wallace and Reh, 2015, p. 89; Fairhurst, 2016, pp. 125-126) Consent of the EP is also required for ratifying international agreements or treaties and admitting new members to the EU by Article 352 TFEU. (Wallace and Reh, 2015, p. 89)

Being equipped with those powers, the EP would be able to paralyze the entire EU, if anti-EU parties held the majority of mandates. That makes EP elections of crucial importance, worthy of further study.

4 Literature Review

The literature review below is intended to inform the thesis on the interrelated topics which are essential for understanding the context, as well as answering the research questions. The relevant literature includes related, but still distinct fields of study. These are: 1. The impact of Brexit; 2. Euroscepticism and the anti-EU sentiment; 3. The nature of EP Elections and additional supporting literature.

The literature overview shows some disparity in different areas of interest. Some subjects, such as euroscepticism are thoroughly researched. Others, such as possible effects of withdrawal of a polity from the EU are understudied. Other multidisciplinary areas, such as international electoral effects of voting outcomes in a single country on other countries are also very under-researched. These gaps present notable challenges for the thesis.

4.1 Definitions

Radical right parties are identified by their ethnonationalism and strive to keep or make the nation more ethnically homogenous, seek to protect their national identity and culture, which makes them opposed to immigration. (Rydgren, 2018, p. 1)

Radical right parties are often populist and accuse the mainstream parties of prioritizing international interests over the national ones. They often latch onto political issues such as law and order, which neatly ties into their preoccupation with islamist terrorism and representation of immigrants in general as threatening. They also share an opposition to international institutions, such as the EU (Rydgren, 2018, pp. 1-3) It is also noted how international agencies, such as the EU, embody all of those radical right party fears, with an addition of weakening national sovereignty. (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, pp. 976-977) Considering these criteria, we can count Sweden Democrats among typical radical right parties and this term will be used throughout the thesis.

Most literature around euroscepticism focuses on the radical right, but ignores far-left parties. Braun, Popa and Schmitt distinguish far-left parties' motivations for being eurosceptic. While the main reason for the radical right opposition to the EU is national sovereignty and ethnocultural issues, far-left parties are mostly unhappy with the economic policies of the EU. (Braun, Popa and Schmitt, 2019, p. 800) Far-left parties are critical of the EU's capitalist and neoliberal character, represented by its monetary and economic union, and believe that it poses a threat to the welfare state and economic equality. (Braun, Popa and Schmitt, 2019, p. 800) This

perception of the EU as a capitalist construction has some merit to it, since the EU's institutional set-up favors deepened market cooperation, rather than taming capitalism. (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, p. 974)

4.2 The European Background

The unexpected results of the Brexit-referendum immediately prompted soul-searching, not only by politicians on the both sides of the channel, but also academics and journalists alike. How would it affect the EU and its member states?

Sweden and the United Kingdom share some common characteristics. They both are highly urbanized, developed economies, with significant immigration. In other words, they are roughly comparable countries that are likely struggling with similar political challenges.

Like the United Kingdom before withdrawal, Sweden does not have an “all in” approach to the integration process. For example, Sweden has shown itself sceptical to adopting the Euro currency by rejecting it in the 2003 referendum. Sweden barely voted yes to joining the EU in the 1995 referendum in the first place. For that reason, Sweden is often placed in the same category as the United Kingdom with regards to European integration. Chopin and Lequesne even speak of Anglo-Scandinavian Model of resisting centralization. According to that view, Sweden and the UK joined the EU for purely economic objectives, but as the EU outgrew its original purpose, the countries grew more wary of further integration. For that very reason Sweden and the UK turned to differentiated integration, by securing opt-outs from the EU. (Chopin and Lequesne, 2016, p. 537-538) This underscores the similarities between Sweden and the UK that could have caused Swedish parties to double-down on their euroscepticism, except that it turned out differently.

Swedish politicians saw the British departure not only detrimental for the EU as a whole, but a loss of an important ally, further underlining the similarities in the countries' approaches. (Mellin, 2016)

Rosamond points out that there is no theoretical framework relating to EU disintegration as the fascination with the European integration processes made researchers blind to the potential of a reverse process. Rosamond does not dismiss the possibility of an eurosceptic contagion which would prompt other EU member states to try to reenact Brexit-like scenarios on the national stage. (Rosamond, 2016, pp. 865-866) This illustrates that there is no pre-made theory about the ripple effects of a polity leaving the EU, or rather the impact on the political behavior of voters and political parties in other member states it could have triggered in response.

In one of the rare articles concerning electoral spillovers, Delis, Matakos and Xefteris claim that Brexit had an effect on the 2016 Spanish general election, which took place days after the Referendum. They argue that the uncertainty and a sense of instability in the wake of the “Leave” camp victory in the United Kingdom, some

of the voters rallied behind the sitting government, resulting in a 14-seat gain for the People's Party (Partido Popular) and stagnation of left-wing challengers. (Delis, Matakos and Xefteris, 2018, pp. 1-2) That means that theoretically other countries could have been affected by the results of the British EU membership referendum. Their findings are partially corroborated by Glencross.

Glencross observes shifts in public opinion during the withdrawal talks. Glencross' analysis is a good illustration of fears around the outcome of the withdrawal process, namely the fear of EU disintegration post-Brexit-Referendum through the so-called domino effect. Glencross points at the tortured negotiation process and the possibility of the economically harmful departure without an agreement. (Glencross, 2019, pp. 189-190) Referencing the benchmarking theory of De Vries, he focuses on the countries, citizens of which are most likely to regard life outside the Union as a realistic option, identifying Sweden as such. (Glencross, 2019, p. 190) The negotiation process exposed the difficulties of leaving the EU and acted as a mythbuster of what life outside of the EU could look like and what trade-offs were required for a withdrawal, which had an impact on even economically strong states. Additionally, the prospect of economically damaging no-deal Brexit also played a role. Glencross connects that to above average public opinion swings in favor of the EU in rich member states, such as Sweden. Glencross believes that the resulting public reaction is an example of risk aversion and explains the lack of domino effect. (Glencross, 2019, pp. 190-191)

Böhmelt, Ezrow, Lehrer, and Ward found some confirmation of the foreign incumbent hypothesis, insofar that parties take examples from incumbent parties of the same party family constituting the government. (Böhmelt, Ezrow, Lehrer, Ward 2016, pp. 397-399) This is somewhat helpful in informing the thesis about transnational effects of changes in one party's ideology or political campaigns. If not setting off a chain reaction, it is likely that they at least inspire some parties to follow its example. Emulating parties that assumed governing positions is not surprising, since parties' *raison d'être* is to gain more political influence or govern. It would be more relevant to the radical right parties, if we extended this theory to include those parties that are simply electorally successful, without necessarily assuming governing positions. In a way, this logic can be applied to the EP elections in which radical right populist parties were inspired by national successes of similar parties, such as UKIP and would try to imitate it. However, in Sweden no such phenomenon could be observed, which creates questions around Brexit's influence on the Swedish radical right.

Chopin and Lequesne believe that differentiated integration within Europe is a major problem. While this kind of integration has allowed many member states to tolerate being in the EU in the first place, it is a long term recipe for disaster. Pointing out growing economic disparities between the Eurozone and the rest of the EU and the concepts such as multi-speed Europe gaining ground, they see future seeds of intra-EU conflict and disunion. According to them, two potential scenarios post-Brexit are the reforms to the EU or its Economic and Monetary Union or eventual disintegration, one country at a time. (Chopin and Lequesne, 2016, pp.

541-545) While the reforms put forward as a response to Brexit have not yet materialized, the ambitious reform agenda proposed by French President Emmanuel Macron and its financially demanding nature had an impact on the Swedish EP election, as parties took stances on raising contributions to the EU budget. (Macron, 2019; Deutsche Welle, 2019)

It has been clearly demonstrated that Brexit was fueled by the concerns about increased immigration. One study has shown that the more drastic ethnic change a particular area underwent, the more support the Brexit cause attracted there. (Goodwin and Milazzo, 2017, p. 13) This potentially serves as a cautionary tale for Sweden, with high rates of immigration as well as taking in a disproportionately large number of refugees during the refugee crisis. Assuming that we do not know anything about the EP election outcome in Sweden, if rapid ethnic change causes electoral backlash, then an anti-immigration party like Sweden Democrats would be favored to make dramatic gains.

In his analysis of Brexit, Outhwaite offers a similar opinion. Among other reasons, Outhwaite pinpoints the perceived migration crisis as a major culprit in the referendum outcome. The idea of “taking control of our borders” indeed resonated with many voters. (Outhwaite, 2019, pp 93) He also takes notice of disinformation campaigns from the Leave Campaign, such as the wholly unrealistic prospect of Turkey joining the EU, which would then open the floodgates to uncontrolled migration by millions of Turks. Thus, the EU and the free movement it guaranteed were seen as a threat. (Outhwaite, 2019, p. 94) Another strength of Outhwaite's reasoning is the focus on perceptions. A crisis is something abstract, its impacts on the society may be quite modest, however, it is the public perception that has a final say and not the actual burden or risks it brings.

Reviewing existing research in the field, Arzheimer explains electoral support for the radical right parties. Aside from the lack of party identification or charismatic leaders, he identifies a major reason factor for electoral success of radical right parties, supported by a number of studies — the anti-immigrant sentiment. (Arzheimer, 2020, pp. 146-150)

While pondering about a post-Brexit world in order to speculate and theorize about possible scenarios, as seen by Europeans themselves, there are some good analyzes at hand. Adler-Nissen, Galpin and Rosamond observe that some of the more pessimistic discourses about Brexit consider it an existential threat to the current world order, as well as question if the future security of Europe can be taken for granted. (2017, pp. 579-580) On the other hand, Brexit strengthened the remaining 27 countries' resolve to remain united and committed to building a better future together in order to counteract the domino effect that the Brexit referendum may have unleashed, that potentially threatened the entirety of Europe. Immediate reactions to Brexit by Populist leaders expressed hope that it was not an isolated event, but a start of a chain of events yet to unfold. It could potentially give rise to

a new world order, a new Europe of nations and nationalists, brought about by Brexit. (Adler-Nissen, Galpin, and Rosamond, 2017, pp. 579-580)

Can we assume that the voters understand the impact of Brexit on the rest of the EU in general, and Sweden in particular?

In other words, we should ask: How much are they aware about these issues when they decide to vote?

While a separate research is needed to answer that question with any satisfaction, there are some hints that voters' awareness increases during EP campaigns.

Beach, Hansen and Larsen studied the 2014 EP Election in Denmark and found confirmation of their hypotheses, namely that: 1. voters' interest in EU politics rises as a result of the campaign; 2. voters become more self-conscious about their European political attitudes; 3. voters get to know more about party positions; 4. Additional information gained during the campaign leads citizens to vote more with the EU issues in mind, rather than the national ones. (Beach, M. Hansen and V. Larsen, 2018, p. 794, pp. 805-806)

I write the thesis with these findings in mind, that the campaign indeed increased the voter awareness about the EU issues, and the potential Brexit impact is not only felt by the "academic bubble", but also has an effect on the general population.

While reviewing academic literature gives us insight into the array of potential consequences and challenges British withdrawal poses for the EU, it still cannot answer the question that we need an answer to. These questions will remain unanswered, but it is important to point them out. We can regard these questions as known unknowns.

Firstly, how well-versed in international affairs is an average Swedish voter?

Secondly, how many Swedish voters know the importance of the European Parliament as an institution?

Thirdly, even if we assume that a significant chunk of the population is well-informed about both of these issues, how many of them acted on it, as opposed to purely domestic political considerations?

These are questions answers to which are hard to know without a comprehensive nation-wide survey. Nonetheless, it is not irrational to assume that some of this speculation about the future of the European reached some of the voters and then, some of them voted accordingly.

Some of the EU issues, however, made the headlines and were nearly ubiquitous in the Swedish media, with a negligible chance of newspaper-readers to miss them entirely.

- Brexit withdrawal process and its possible consequences, questions about the future of the EU and its potential break-up. (Höglund, 2019; Ohlin, 2019; Lucas, 2018; Lundin, 2017; Bolling, 2019; Selimovic, 2018)

- The question of Swedish contributions to the EU budget, due to the funding gap through the British departure. (Ström Melin, 2018; Holm, 2019; Küchler, 2019)
- French President Emmanuel Macron's ambitious plans to reform and strengthen the EU, creating the need by the politicians, media and public alike to take positions on these issues. (Gripenberg, 2017; TT 2019; Frid, 2019; Gripenberg, 2019; Macron, 2019)
- Predicted surge of the radical right populists in the upcoming EP Elections and the alliance-building efforts between them. (Dahl, 2019; Svensson, 2019; TT, 2019; Hansson, 2019)

4.3 Euroscepticism

Szczerbiak and Taggart were first to distinguish between different degrees of euroscepticism — soft and hard. According to them, hard euroscepticism is a fundamental, principled opposition to European integration, political as well as economic. It translates to the desire to leave the union, or not to join it in the first place. Soft euroscepticism, on the other hand, describes the qualified opposition to certain EU policies, due to either ideological concerns, or a belief that a certain policy runs contrary to so-called national interests. (Szerebiak, Taggart 2010, p 7-8)

Vasilopoulou expands existing theories about eurosceptic attitudes of the radical right parties. She thereby outlines 3 patterns in which right-wing party euroscepticism manifests itself: rejecting (extremely eurosceptic), conditional (moderately eurosceptic), and compromising (somewhat eurosceptic). (Vasilopoulou, 2011, p. 224) For the purposes of conceptualizing these three patterns, Vasilopoulou identifies 4 aspects of integration with regards to radical right parties: 1. Cultural definition: awareness of cultural, historical, and religious interconnectedness of Europeans and their commonalities, which can manifest itself as emotional attachment, the “us” feeling. (Vasilopoulou, 2011, pp. 229-230) 2. Principle of integration: acceptance of or desire to cooperate on the EU level. (Vasilopoulou, 2011, p. 230) 3. Policy practice: the current institutional make-up and policy practices of the EU. (Vasilopoulou, 2011, pp. 230-231) 4. The future EU polity: the gradual formation of an European polity in the principle of an “ever closer union”, as outlined in EU treaties. (Vasilopoulou, 2011, pp. 231)

Through this 4-aspect toolkit, the aforementioned 3 patterns are broken down in identifiable components. 2 of those 3 patterns are directly applicable as descriptions in the Swedish context: *Rejecting euroscepticism*, which only accepts shared history and culture (1), but rejects cooperation on multilateral level (2), is unhappy with the status quo regarding EU policies and institutions (3), and opposes any attempts to bind EU nations closer together (4); and *Conditional euroscepticism*, on the other hand, accepts the first two aspects, but rejects the last two. (Vasilopoulou, 2011, pp. 232-233) One of the strengths of Vasilopoulou’s reasoning is offering an alternative

for the hard and soft euroscepticism of Szczerbiak and Taggart, as distinguishing between them can be difficult.

De Vries assumes that perceptions of good economic and political conditions on the national level imbue the citizens of the given nation with a feeling that there is an alternative to EU membership, because their country is doing well anyway. Therefore, at the time of national self-confidence, the exit option comes into play. According to De Vries, this theory also applies vice versa. Periods of national weakness result in more support to the EU. (De Vries, 2018, pp. 5-7) De Vries uses that to explain rising eurosceptic sentiment in economically highly developed, wealthy states such as the United Kingdom. De Vries argues that due to a popular misconception, citizens give credit to the national government for economic successes, but not the EU. (De Vries, 2018, pp. 5-7) In 2019, Swedish economy found itself in an economic boom, albeit a slowing one. (www.konj.se, 2019) That means that during the period leading up to the 2019 EP election Sweden experienced good economic conditions. Nonetheless, in apparent defiance of the De Vries' theory, the public opinion did not take an eurosceptic turn.

Van Kessel et al. take a closer look at the radical right parties responses to the Brexit vote and explore the infamous domino effect as predicted by some observers. The authors research Populist Radical Right (PPR) parties' reactions to Brexit in several EU member states and develop a framework for studying them. Four assumptions guide their research: 1. Post-Brexit-Referendum opinion polls have an impact on PRR parties, 2. The Importance level of the EU issue as a vote-winner for PRR parties 3. EU issue as a tool of claiming the eurosceptic niche ownership and causing internal division among competitor parties 4. Intra-party considerations and party unity. (Van Kessel et al., 2020, pp. 68-69) These four assumptions will be utilized for explaining the Sweden Democrats U-turn before the 2019 EP elections.

5 The Swedish Party System

Since the 2010 parliamentary elections, the Swedish party landscape has been dominated by 8 parties. (Aylott, 2015, p. 161) If we divide it by the left-right political spectrum, it consists of the the Social Democrats (Socialdemokraterna — S), the Environmental Party the Greens (Miljöpartiet de gröna — MP) and the Left party (Vänsterpartiet — V) on the left; and the Moderates (Moderaterna — M), the People's Party/Liberals (Folkpartiet/Liberalerna — L), the Center Party (Centerpartiet — C), the Christian Democrats (Kristdemokraterna — KD), and the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna — SD) on the right. This is the same set of parties that would eventually contest and win all the seats in the upcoming European Parliament election. For brevity, the Swedish abbreviations of party names will be used occasionally throughout the thesis.

Observers note that the Swedish party system is very fragmented, both in relation to its previous iteration and when compared to party systems across Europe, which has led to increased difficulty in forming a government. (Lindvall et al., 2019, pp. 486-487)

The Swedish party system, despite going through some cross-block cooperation phases over the course of the 20th century, developed into a clearly delineated system of left and right wing political blocks, with every party having their political home in either. Arrival of SD in the Swedish parliament, Riksdag, changed the picture. The party is often described as populist right, far-right or radical right and is greatly burdened by their highly controversial history. (Rydgren and van der Meiden, 2018, pp. 449-450) For that reason, no block wanted to cooperate with or even acknowledge the existence of SD. This cordon sanitaire against the party seen as radical right complicated the prospects of building parliamentary majorities to the point of impossibility. (Lindvall et al., 2019, pp. 486-490; Aylott, 2015, pp. 162-165) Technically, the Swedish party system now consisted of three blocks, the third of which could not be wished away or discounted from the parliamentary arithmetic, no matter the ideological considerations.

The left–right political spectrum has been challenged as no longer accurately representing the Swedish party landscape as the party division lines in various issues sometimes transcend that spectrum. Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, seeking to structure party attitudes toward European integration, reasoned that a new dimension of politics, that is sometimes termed postmaterialist or new politics, preoccupied with issues such as ecology, immigration, cultural diversity and nationalism is indeed emerging. (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, p. 966, p. 976) They proposed a new dimension of classifying and distinguishing parties into two

groups: the green/alternative/libertarian (GAL) parties and the traditional/authoritarian/nationalist (TAN) parties. (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, p. 966) The radical right parties, placed at the TAN pole of the dimension, fear European Integration due to perceived threats to sovereignty they associate with it. That makes parties near the TAN pole fundamentally eurosceptic. (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, pp. 976-977) On the other hand, parties near the GAL pole object to the EU to some extent, mostly because of its free market capitalist nature. However, green parties see the EU as means to an end — enacting environmental regulations. The authors posit that the Green parties' pro-EU or anti-EU attitudes are structured around fundamentalist and realist camps, with the latter wishing to channel the EU institutions for environmental goals. (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, p. 977) It is noted that some GAL parties grew more supportive of the EU and further integration prospects in the face of increasing racism and xenophobia. (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, pp. 983-984) This pattern is also seen in Sweden.

Libertarian parties, on the other hand, are socially liberal and support expanding freedoms and rights, aim to safeguard the freedom of expression and wish to combat discrimination and intolerance, as well as involve more citizens in democratic decision-making processes. This stands in contrast with the order-based and traditionalist nature of the TAN parties, which support stronger state structures over personal freedom. (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, p. 967) Conservative parties, who lean in the TAN direction, have some eurosceptic tendencies. This applies especially to the socially conservative parties, who wish to preserve national sovereignty and community, and oppose immigration and influence of international actors, such as the EU. (Hooghe, Marks and Wilson, 2002, p. 976)

As I will demonstrate later, the majority of the authors' assumptions have come true in the Swedish case, and that GAL-TAN dimension is a helpful tool for understanding and explaining it.

If we look at the GAL-TAN dimension among the Swedish parties by 2017, we can observe that V, MP, S, C, and L are in the GAL category, while only M, KD and SD belong to the TAN category. (Lindvall et al., 2019, p. 485) I assume that no major shifts have happened since then and that this classification still fully applies.

6 Explaining the U-Turns

Before the 2019 EP election, two remaining eurosceptic parties, the Left Party and the Sweden Democrats, modified their campaign platforms to make it less eurosceptic, which ruled out campaigning for the Swedish withdrawal from the EU.

Sweden Democrats have been trendsetters and taboo-breakers in Swedish politics. They catapulted the immigration issue onto the national stage and increased its salience to voters. SD has made this issue part of the daily political agenda, in which it was aided by the centrist politics of both the Moderates and the Social Democrats. (Rydgren and van der Meiden, 2018, pp. 440-441) By extension, it also forced the established political parties like the Moderates and the Social Democrats to back down on their worldviews and unwillingly take more hardline stances on immigration to stop the loss of voters to Sweden Democrats.

However, when it comes to the EU, the Sweden Democrats themselves were forced to rethink their approaches to get themselves more electable. Is this merely window dressing, in order to get more mainstream and make themselves suitable as coalition partners in future potential government cooperation? The answer to that is likely a yes.

It fits the pattern of the Sweden Democrats trying to distance themselves from their right wing extremist past and increase their legitimacy among Swedish voters. (Rydgren and van der Meiden, 2018, pp. 449-450)

Shifting party positions on the EU-question is not an entirely new phenomenon in Swedish politics, and has also been employed on the opposite side of the political spectrum as we will see later.

In January 2019, Sweden Democrats' leader Jimmie Åkesson published a debate article in Aftonbladet, explaining why the SD changed their policy regarding the EU withdrawal. Åkesson emphasized that the EU had its advantages and disadvantages. He promised that he would always oppose the EU in its current supranational configuration, but underlined how unrealistic it was for Sweden to ever leave. He communicated his vision of Europe based on free trade between independent cooperating nations. Åkesson stated that even though the EU was a bureaucratic monster, only through pragmatism could it be tamed. That required reforming the EU from the inside, with help from the like-minded parties. Åkesson admitted the importance of the European Single Market for Sweden, because of its status as an export-oriented economy. (Åkesson, 2019) However, he remained deeply critical of core tenets of the EU, like the free movement, which he believed

caused a host of issues in Sweden, such as increased numbers of beggars, robber groups, illegal immigrants, terrorists and criminals. (Åkesson, 2019)

When explaining Sweden Democrats U-turn, I will be using the 4 assumptions as formulated by Van Kessel et al., as observations by Böhmelt et al. about party policy diffusion do not seem to be supported by evidence in this case and are therefore inapplicable.

1. Opinion polls post-Brexit-Referendum turned sharply to the favor of the European Union. The last Eurobarometer conducted before the EP elections showed up to 82% of Swedes feeling as an EU citizen, 59% having trust in EU institutions, and 53% thought that the EU had a positive image. Sweden Democrats must have paid some attention to it and changed their platform accordingly. This roughly corresponds to the variables formulated early on in the thesis. Brexit process ---> public opinion ---> parties/election. 2. As noted by multiple authors such as Arzheimer, Outhwaite, Goodwin and Milazzo, the main voter-winner issue for the radical right parties is immigration, ethnic change and the anti-immigrant sentiment. For SD, opposition to the EU integration was only a component, not the formula of their electoral success. They continuously prioritized immigration and law and order above all other issues, interlinkedness of which they continuously emphasized — the more immigration, the more crime and disorder. Involving the EU in that campaign rhetoric might have muddled that message.

3. Sweden Democrats may have been the most eurosceptic party in Sweden, but their use of euroscepticism to cause reputational damage to other parties or cause internal divisions was very limited. Sweden hesitantly joined the EU and parties such as Social Democrats and The Greens have some EU-critical stances which are shared by the party leadership as much as their membership, as evidenced by their electoral manifestos. That makes them less susceptible to blame games. The Left Party shared the same niche with the SD, albeit on the opposite side of the political spectrum, so it could not be wielded against them. When it comes to decidedly pro-EU parties, like the Moderates or the Liberals, they are unified in their support in most EU policies and there are no internal divisions to exploit.

4. Sweden Democrats' leader Jimmy Åkesson is the longest current serving party leader. His resilience, if nothing else, is tantamount of having the entire party firmly behind him.

Additional arguments can be made to account for motivations of the SD to give up Swexit. In an interview with SvD, Sweden Democrats' top candidate and MEP Lundgren himself admitted that growing nationalism was the reason SD now wished to stay, because perhaps it was now possible to reform the EU from the inside. He also stated that Sweden Democrats were very encouraged by the opinion polls that bode well for the nationalist parties and hoped that together they could influence the agenda in the EU. Lundgren did not hide his dissatisfaction with the Brexit process, which he called “a circus”. (Eriksson, 2019) This reminds of the risk-averseness theory due to Brexit realities as formulated by Glencross. Furthermore, the political turmoil in the post-Brexit-Referendum United Kingdom

has experienced, including the inability to pass the withdrawal deal through the House of Commons has likely affected the judgement of Sweden Democrats.

When the center-left coalition of Red-Greens (De rödgröna) was launched before the 2010 Riksdag election, the Greens and the Left Party temporarily set aside their demand of EU-exit and promised not to campaign for it. This change of heart was due to the Social Democrats' insistence that they moderate their positions if they wished to become fully-fledged coalition partners in a future government. (Magnusson, 2007). After some back and forth, the Greens finally settled on accepting the EU by the 2009 EP elections (DN, 2008) with the Left Party doing the same by the 2019 EP elections, despite leaving the door open for "Swexit" as late as 2018. (Aftonbladet, 2018)

The Left Party leader, Jonas Sjöstedt, said in an interview that the party lost votes, because people believed they were not actively pursuing issues such as climate change or employee rights in the EU, simply because they are against the Union. Sjöstedt also underlined that since 1995 the Left Party has not actively campaigned for a Swedish withdrawal. (DN, 2019) Providing another hint for the U-turn, reports showed already in 2016 that both Sjöstedt and their European deputy Malin Björk were dismayed by the open racism and reactionary attitudes of the Leave Camp in the Brexit campaign. (Ramberg, 2016) It justifies the observations of Hooghe, Marks and Wilson about the GAL parties.

As rightly noted in the Swedish media, the Left Party's turn was circumstantial, not ideological. The Left Party's hand was forced by SD's announcement of their U-turn. That would make the Left Party the only Swedish party campaigning for an exit. On the other hand, knowing that weakening or dissolving of the EU was the principal goal of the eurosceptic radical right parties, the Left Party likely decided it was no longer a goal worth pursuing. We can assume that the opinion polls predicting a far-right surge was helpful in nudging them in that direction.

7 The Nature of the European Parliament Elections

Are the elections to the European Parliament subject to and dependent on the national political climate?

Reif and Schmitt were first to argue that this is the case. They claimed that the European Parliament elections were somehow subordinate to national politics, a phenomenon they called a second-order election (SOE). (Reif and Schmitt, 1980, p. 3, pp. 8-9) According to the SOE theory, European issues and policies were of secondary importance. The EP elections were mostly determined by the domestic political reality and the situation on the ground, such as the parties in power. (Reif and Schmitt, 1980, pp. 8-9)

Reif and Schmitt detailed several criteria of identifying a SEO, developing a framework which will serve as one of the benchmarks for measuring and interpreting the 2019 EP Election in Sweden.

According to Reif and Schmitt, the following rules apply for Second Order Elections: 1. Less is at stake because the impact of a SOE is not immediately felt on the national level and it does not lead to a change of government. 2. The turnout is lower than the national elections because it is not important enough, thereby it is a low salience election 3. Small, radical, niche parties are more successful in the European parliament elections than on the national stage, which means that large parties lose vote share to them. It is connected to the first rule, as the voters do not face direct consequences such as electing a national government. Therefore, instead of voting tactically, they can vote sincerely for parties to which they are ideologically close. (Reif and Schmitt, 1980, pp. 9-10)

4. There is a higher percentage of spoilt votes 5. The governing parties usually lose seats, especially if the EP elections coincide with mid-term, enabling the voters to send a signal of dissatisfaction, reducing the EP elections to a feedback mechanism. (Reif and Schmitt, 1980, pp. 9-10)

Hix and Marsh critically analyzed the SEO theory to test whether it still fit the reality much distinct from 1980. The authors observed that pan-European voter swings could be identified in some elections, which either favored or disfavored a particular party family. (Hix and Marsh, 2011, pp. 4-5) The authors note the relative success of the center right parties in the 2009 EP Elections, coupled with the decline of the socialist parties independent of their status as governing or opposition party, across the EU. (Hix and Marsh, 2011, pp. 4-5) That EU-wide trend is not considered random and unexplainable, but is potentially attributed to the Great Recession, which gave renewed credibility to the center right parties, who voters trust more in handling economic issues. Hix and Marsh however refrain from giving an explanation to their poor performance. (Hix and Marsh, 2011, p. 12) However,

when considering socialist losses, Hix and Marsh controlled for the government status and their vote share in the previous national parliamentary election, finding that in that case the losses were very much in accordance with the patterns outlined by the SOE theory. (Hix and Marsh, 2011, p. 11) Despite that, they still find some support for pan-European swings that are expressed in party family results, on the example of the success of green parties in 1989. Their most important contribution is suggesting that truly European elections may perhaps not be expressed not by voting in accordance to the European issues or the voters' judgement of the EU, but rather reacting to the existing policy challenges in the same way. (Hix and Marsh, 2011, pp. 12-13)

Hobolt and Wittrock did an experimental study on a group of British voters for testing the SOE theory and theorized an individual-level model, instead of analyzing the election results as a whole. For calculating deviation of voters' preferences from party positions, participants were placed on two scales, with identical measures, assigning left-right and anti-EU/pro-EU positions. The scales already reflected party stances. The results demonstrated that the EP vote was predominantly determined by proximity of voters' ideological placement relative to party position on left-right scale rather than the eurosceptic/europhile position. (Hobolt and Wittrock, 2010, pp. 35-36) Having the benefit of organizing some participants into a control group, they noted that providing negative information about government accomplishments also negatively impacts the governing party's chances, even if that information is not EU-related. However, according to the study, the role of information is a double edged sword — the more information about the EU issues the voters get, the more role the EU attitudes play in their choices. (Hobolt and Wittrock, 2010, pp. 37-39) I assume that the 2019 EP Election in Sweden, because of the supposed Brexit effect, drove political socialization of voters, which moved them towards voting with their European instincts, instead of the national ones.

8 The National Background

In order to understand the full picture, it is impossible to ignore the events preceding the 2019 European Parliament Election in Sweden. The government formation after the 2018 Election to the Swedish Parliament (Riksdag) gives us important clues about potential voter dissatisfaction with certain parties, important trends in party support overall as well as make sense of the new party landscape that emerged from this process that set the stage for the upcoming EP election.

The mainstream right-wing grouping of parties called the Alliance (Alliansen) jointly governed Sweden as a coalition government in 2006-2014. They had hopes to continue in the same capacity after the 2018 election. The Alliance, despite its best efforts to project unity, suffered from some newly emerged internal disputes that threatened to undermine their efforts to replace the then current government. The latter consisted of the Social Democrats and the Greens, with the parliamentary support of the Left Party. Even with the confidence and supply agreement with the latter, the S-MP cabinet lacked a majority in Riksdag. Therefore, they could only stay in power thanks to the tacit support of the 4 parties comprising the Alliance. Shortly before the 2018 campaign season, the fault lines began to emerge between these parties, with the two championing liberal values (C and L), while the remaining two (M and KD) also being liberal, but slowly evolving towards a more conservative trajectory.

The Alliance, quite unsurprisingly, jointly went to the polls as a government alternative, but came out of the election fractured. The post-election arithmetic was not on their side. The seat distribution was 144-143, to the favor of the left-wing block. Sweden Democrats, with their 62 mandates, stood in the way. (Aylott and Bolin, 2019, pp. 1511-1513)

After months long government formation process, during which the role of formateur changed hands multiple times, the Social Democrats won a major strategic victory on two fronts. They split the opposition and kept the government position, by gaining the parliamentary support of the Liberals and the Center Party. These parties have political platforms which are vastly different from the Social Democrats on economic policies, among other issues. However, the fear of Sweden Democrats gaining influence over the direction of Swedish politics through the M-KD minority government was enough to cement the new cross-block cooperation and abandon their own prime ministerial candidate. (Aylott and Bolin, 2019, pp. 1512-1514) It also started a debate about the political values amongst parties that cut across left-right scale, making the GAL-TAN dimension increasingly prominent in Swedish politics.

However, this Social Democratic victory would seemingly come at a heavy cost. Dagens Nyheter, based on the analysis of the emerging coalition's electoral manifestos, estimated the percentages of each party's campaign promises weighed against the 73-point agreement. The breakdown was the following: 26% for the Liberals, 25% for the Center party, 22% for the Green Party and only 21% for the Social democrats, a party with a larger representation in the parliament than the other three combined. (Ewald, 2019)

The content of what was dubbed the January Agreement was even more painful to accept. It included many reforms that the Social Democrats had rallied against during the entire parliamentary election campaign. The nightmare scenarios that would become reality if the opposition won were now theirs to carry out.

The agreement proposed partial privatisation of the Swedish Public Employment Service (Arbetsförmedlingen), repealing defence tax (värns katt, repurposed historical tax without name change) which taxed citizens with highest income, cutting taxes for the employers, tripling the ceiling for tax deductions on household-related expenses (RUT-avdrag), weakening of Law for Employment Protection (Lag om anställningsskydd), allowing market prices on newly built housing facilities and other liberal policies. (Utkast till sakpolitisk överenskommelse mellan S, C, L och MP, 2019)

While the Center Party took the decision to support the so-called old-new government in near unison, it was not the case with their sister party. The Liberals were split on the issue to an extent that they arranged a meeting with both Prime Ministerial candidates. In what can only be described as a job interview, the Moderate leader Ulf Kristersson and the Social Democrat Stefan Löfven both got to make their case before the Liberal party leadership. (Olsson and Rosén, 2019) At the same time, 8 out of 20 Liberal MPs authored a debate article in Expressen in which they argued for Kristersson and pointed out the dangers of the Liberals cooperating with the Social Democrats. (Persson, et al., 2019) The Liberals ended up supporting the party leadership proposal with the votes 62-30. Because the party congress and the subsequent debates were broadcast live, the internal division was clearly visible for any observer.

Therefore, compared to the Center Party, the Liberals headed into the European Parliament election on a much weaker footing, which would later impact their electoral performance.

It can be said that the 2018 Riksdag elections and the controversial government formation created more problems than it solved for most of the parties involved, which soon faced negative voter reception of the four-party agreement. Among the issues that the January Agreement did not solve was the parliamentary arithmetic. $S + MP + C + L$ only had a relative majority of 167 mandates to the newly dubbed right-wing opposition's 154 ($M + KD + SD$) and required toleration from the Left Party.

This two-front victory of splitting the opposition and staying in power, ironically, threatened to drain the Social Democratic electorate both to the left and to the right. Sweden Democrats could now attack the party not only from the right, as in being too soft on immigration and law and order issues, but also from the left — failing ordinary Swedish citizens who need government assistance most and rewarding those who need it least.

It was seen as betrayal on both right and left of the political spectrum.

On the right, the old friends seemingly became enemies. Sara Skyttedal, the future top candidate of the Christian Democrats to the EP, even used the word “quislings” to describe her old Center Party friends. (Aftonbladet, 2019)

On the Social Democratic side, some expressed shock and disbelief at the extent of compromises, while others were outright angry. The chairman of Swedish Trade Union Confederation (LO) did not hold back in his criticism. When the negotiations were ongoing, Karl-Petter Thorwaldsson stated that he would rather see an extra election than changes to the employment protections or state regulated rental prices. (DN, 2018) After these fears became accomplished facts, LO expressed concern and commented that it would deepen the social inequalities in Sweden, and it went against the interests of LO members. (Olsson, 2019; Carp, 2019) At the Social Democratic Party Congress held in Örebro, Thorwaldsson deplored that Social Democracy has sold out too much of their core values. (Karlsson, 2019) The LO represented the organizational backbone for Social Democrats, and the overwhelming majority of the trade union members were traditionally their fervent supporters. At one point, 70% of trade union members were members of the Social Democrats. (Ó. Erlingsson, Kölln and Öhberg, 2015, p. 172)

With that in mind, the attacks by the LO chairman on the party leadership was unprecedented.

The public at large seemed to share the dissatisfaction with the government’s policies and the point of view of its fiercest critics. A SVT/Novus poll conducted just days after the January Agreement was announced, showed that 47% of Swedes surveyed thought the agreement was bad, while only 39% thought it was good for Sweden and the rest were unsure. (Thomsen, 2019)

Nobody could envy the situation the Social Democrats found themselves after the government formation with unhappy core voters and a possibility to lose voters both to the left (V) and to the right (SD). Furthermore, according to SOE theory this election could be used as a tool to punish the existing government without incurring direct damage or living with its immediate consequences. Propensity of large parties to lose their vote share in the EP elections is also posited by SOE. With that in mind, the Social Democrats could expect a potentially catastrophic European Parliament election. However, these fears did not materialize.

The controversial and record-breaking government formation ended with the collapse of old alliances and emergence of the new, significant voter disillusionment, some intra-party struggles and a new party landscape.

9 Party Positions

This chapter will explore the party positions as revealed to the public through surveys and interviews as well as electoral platforms of each party. Dominating themes and party rhetoric will also be briefly discussed. In some instances, particular attention is paid to the Left Party and Sweden Democrats, because their platforms underwent the most noticeable changes since the 2018 Riksdag election. It has to be emphasized that not all the issues are in the focus, but rather only those that have implications for the EU or its future development, as well the parties' attitudes towards the common European project.

The Swedish Television (SVT), surveyed the party candidates before the 2019 EP Election. They were given 4 options, ranking from the highest approval to strongest disapproval of a given suggestion: very good, rather good (both considered a positive response ✓), rather bad, very bad (both considered a negative response X).

“Sweden should leave the EU” (my translation)

| SD ✓ X*/ KD X/ M X/ L X/ C X/ S X/ MP X/ V X ✓* | (valkompassen.svt.se, 2019)

“All national exceptions hindering free exchange of goods and services should be abolished” (my translation)

| SD ✓/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/ C ✓/ S X/ MP X/ V X | (valkompassen.svt.se, 2019)

“The EU should economically punish members violating freedom of the press/media” (my translation)

| SD X/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/ C ✓/ S ✓/ MP ✓/ V ✓ | (valkompassen.svt.se, 2019)

“The EU should economically punish members if they break the budget deficit rules” (my translation)

| SD X/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/ C ✓/ S ✓/ MP ✓/ V X | (valkompassen.svt.se, 2019)

“Financial support to the poor regions in the EU must decrease” (my translation)

| SD ✓/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/ C X/ S ✓/ MP X/ V X | (valkompassen.svt.se, 2019)

“EU members who refuse to accept asylum seekers should lose economic assistance” (my translation)

| SD X/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/ C ✓/ S ✓/ MP ✓/ V ✓ | (valkompassen.svt.se, 2019)

“Asylum seekers should be distributed evenly among members, proportionally to their size” (my translation)

| SD X/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/C ✓/S ✓/MP ✓/V ✓| (*valkompassen.svt.se, 2019*)

“The right of economic help to other member state citizens should be limited” (my translation)

| SD ✓/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/C X/S ✓/MPX /V X| (*valkompassen.svt.se, 2019*)

“The EU should institute a common border police for its external borders” (my translation)

| SD ✓/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/C ✓/S ✓/MP X/V X| (*valkompassen.svt.se, 2019*)

“The EU should be more actively involved in the armed conflicts abroad” (my translation)

| SD X/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/C ✓/S X/MP X/V X| (*valkompassen.svt.se, 2019*)

“The EU should drastically reduce the contributions to agriculture” (my translation)

| SD ✓/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/C X/S ✓/MP ✓/V ✓| (*valkompassen.svt.se, 2019*)

“The EU should forbid single-use plastics” (my translation)

| SD X/ KD ✓/ M ✓/ L ✓/C ✓/S ✓/MP ✓/V ✓| (*valkompassen.svt.se, 2019*)

* SD and V answered this question in a very confusing manner. Sweden Democrats answered with “rather good”, but the full answer showed that they would rather stay and try to reform the EU from the inside. In case of failure, exit should be the option. The Left Party’s answer was “rather bad”, but the answer showed that they were a “EU-critical party” and in the long run they wished to leave the EU, however, it was not on the current agenda. By referencing their electoral manifesto as discussed below, in both cases I assume a negative answer. (*valkompassen.svt.se, 2019*)

Positive answer is regarded as pro-EU on questions: 2, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 12

Negative answer is regarded as pro-EU on questions: 1, 5, 8, 11

SVT survey **scoreboard** of pro-EU stances:

SD (3/12), V (6/12) , S (7/12), MP (8/12), KD (10/12), M (10/12), L (10/12), C (12/12)

These questions were not randomly chosen out of the entire, more comprehensive selection. Each question illustrates a given party's stances towards crucial issues for the present and future of the EU. The questions concern acceptance of EU membership as a whole, dealing with the integrity of the Union. (1); enabling unrestrained free trade, on which the European Single Market rests and is the backbone of the EU (2); the Union's authority to intervene and course-correct undemocratic developments in member states (3); the authority of the EU to impose common budgetary rules to prevent financial crises (4); the ability of the EU to reduce inequalities that can give rise to populism, if not dealt with (5); having a common immigration and asylum policy that fairly redistributes responsibilities, so that it can be sustainable for border member states and manageable for all other members; having the policy tools and institutional structure to enforce it (6, 7); reciprocal treatment of EU citizens in other EU member states as if they are citizens and not — second class citizens. However, reducing or denying economic aid can be in the parochial national interest of rich member states, such as Sweden, but this indicates euroscepticism (8); common management of the Union's borders, in order to manage the inflow of refugees is in its interests. Taking Goodwin and Milazzo's arguments into consideration, without measured immigration, radical right attitudes will likely be strengthened to the detriment of the EU (9); involvement in armed conflicts abroad as a peacekeeper or peacemaker serves EU's interests, as it creates a more stable and safe neighborhood and can prevent escalation or spillover of conflicts, that can yet again trigger refugee flows that test the resilience of the EU (10); drastic cuts to Common Agricultural Policy will further widen the urban-rural divide and will create opportunities for radical right parties to seize upon. Reducing it can be in the parochial national interest of rich member states, such as Sweden (11); reliance on the EU to solve problems that cannot be fully managed at the national level, such as environmental degradation and climate change is indicative of a pro-EU approach (12).

Svenska Dagbladet also surveyed parties for the purpose of informing citizens before the election day. The parties were asked 18 questions to which they should have placed their position on a scale with assumedly the following options (as there are 5 different placement options on the scale given): Strongly agree, Somewhat agree, Neither agree nor disagree/Neutral, Somewhat disagree, Strongly disagree. (Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019) The major difference from the SVT survey is that parties can give a neutral answer.

In order to code their answers, the neutral answer will be given the value of 0, strongly agree +2 and strongly disagree -2. As there are up to 8 potential placement slots for party positions between strongly agree and disagree in the SvD visualization, these numbers are at best approximations. SvD itself offers no exact scores. The scores will be combined as a cumulative score that perhaps more accurately reflects individual parties' political beliefs. Just as for the SVT survey, question selection includes only those having a direct connection to the future of the EU, division between national and European interests and other relevant party stances.

“EU cooperation should be more extensive in the future” (my translation)
(Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / L
0 / M, C, S, MP
-1 / V, KD
-2 / SD

“The EU should allow more countries to become members” (my translation)
(Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / L, S
1 / M, C, MP, V
0 / KD
-1 / SD

“The EU should have a common asylum policy” (my translation) (Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / L, S, KD, C
1 / M, MP
-2 / V, SD

“EU member states should distribute all asylum seekers among themselves” (my translation) (Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / M, C, L, KD, S, MP
1 / V
-2 / SD

“The EU should develop a common defence and security policy” (my translation)
(Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / L
1 / M, C, KD, S
-1 / MP
-2 / SD, V

“The EU should have an European FBI, which solves cross-border crimes” (my translation) (Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / L
1 / M
0 / KD, C
-1 / MP, SD
-2 / V, S

“The EU should combat racism, xenophobia, religious intolerance and violent extremism” (my translation) (Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / L, C, S, MP
1 / V, KD, M
-1 / SD

“The EU should punish member states who are violating democratic principles” (my translation) (Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / M, KD, C, L, S, MP
1 / V
-1 / SD

“The free movement of people and goods should be the main responsibility of the EU” (my translation) (Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / SD, M, L, C, KD, S
0 / MP
-1 / V

“Everyone [from other EU countries] who works in Sweden should have Swedish wages and [working] conditions” (my translation) (Küchler, Eklund and Lönegård, 2019)

2 / SD, S, MP, V
1 / L, M, C, KD

As the issues provided above are nearly identical to those used in the SVT survey, a separate explanation of motives behind the choices will not be provided.

The highest potential score is 20, and the lowest -20. The higher the score, the more pro-EU a given party is. 0 would mean mostly neutral or undecided on EU issues.

SvD Survey Scoreboard: SD: -8; V: -2, MP: 8; KD: 10; M: 12; C: 13; S: 13; L: 19.

9.1 The Electoral Platforms

In order to be able to apply the eurosceptic labels to parties with certainty, an overview and subsequent analysis of their electoral manifestos is needed. These

proposals will be referenced to when drawing conclusions about the elections as a whole.

Not all parties have as detailed manifestos as others and in most cases the skewed description length can be attributed to that. The electoral programs will be treated in the same way as the survey questions. Only the substantial questions regarding the authority and competences of the EU, the future of the European project and the issues structuring party positions on the GAL-TAN scale will be taken into consideration.

9.1.1 Sweden Democrats

Sweden Democrats electoral program for 2018 Riksdag elections included promises of: 1. A referendum on the EU membership 2. A radical reduction of the EU budget through deep cuts to the structural and cohesion funds and the Common Agricultural Policy 3. Lowering the Swedish contributions to the EU budget 4. An opt-out from the Eurozone and the Banking Union 5. Working towards the goal of returning more influence to the member states in various policy areas from energy policy to immigration policy 6. Opposing “militarization” of the EU. (SD valmanifest, 2018)

Making no mention of a referendum, Sweden Democrats’ electoral platform for the 2019 European Parliament Election is far removed from their 2014 EP Election manifesto in which they proclaimed “We demand a referendum about going back to national self-determination!”. (my translation) (SD Valmanifest, 2014)

It seems that this mainstreamization of SD was longer in the making. In summer of 2018, just before the national parliamentary elections, Sweden Democrats changed their political group in the European Parliament from hard eurosceptic Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD) to more moderate eurosceptic grouping of European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) which was founded in 2009 by the British Conservative Party. (TT, 2018)

In the 2019 manifesto, Sweden Democrats proposed to reform the existing EU treaties in order to increase possibilities of exceptions and opt-outs for member states, in addition to strengthened veto rights. SD strived to curtail competences of the EU, so that areas such as defence, taxation, criminal law become exclusively national matters. Sweden Democrats demanded more respect for national self-determination and planned to limit the power of the European Commission as well as reduce the number of European Union agencies. The party believed that the subsidiarity principle needed to be strictly applied and decisions taken as close to the people as possible. SD wished to tackle corruption and supported a stronger European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF). (Valplattform EP-valet, 2019) The goal to reduce the Swedish contributions remained unchanged from their 2018 manifesto. SD supported combating terror on the European level, but it is unclear whether it would happen through an empowered EU, although they explicitly supported a more powerful Frontex (European Border and Coast Guard Agency). SD was firmly

against an European army and wished a restrained enlargement policy. Lastly, Sweden Democrats proposed to abolish European External Action Service (EEAS) and replace it with national foreign ministries of large states. Same applied to the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy. SD reasoned that this position should be replaced by the foreign minister of the country holding the rotating Presidency of the Council of the European Union (Council of Ministers). (Valplattform EP-valet, 2019)

Assessment: The party is still predominantly eurosceptic, supports some deeper integration, but wants to weaken, defund or abolish much more of the EU than it wishes to strengthen. Their opposition to immigration and willingness to even resort to the EU for controlling the influx of immigrants firmly identifies it as a radical right party and as a result, places it near the TAN-pole. After their U-turn the Sweden Democrats have not automatically become a pro-EU party as both their platform and the surveys prove. Per Vasilopoulou's theory of euroscepticism, SD can now be categorized as a conditional eurosceptic party, whereas they were previously a firmly rejecting eurosceptic party.

9.1.2 Christian Democrats

During the campaign, the Christian Democrats raised eyebrows with their Swenglish slogan — MAKE EU LAGOM AGAIN. It was obviously inspired by Donald Trump's "Make America Great Again".

Lagom is likely the most known Swedish word internationally. It is hard to translate with one word, but means not too much, not too little, exactly the right amount, the golden middle. It is illustrative of Swedish attitudes in general and is reflected by what is known as the middle way in the English-speaking world, something between the unbridled capitalism and planned economy. However, not even the inclusion of "lagom" made things better. The critics, such as the former Moderate Prime Minister Carl Bildt, thought that the whole slogan was eurosceptic, and that "a lagom EU" would not be able to effectively deal with the challenges of tomorrow. The Liberal Party leader Jan Björklund nodded in agreement and accused the Christian Democrats of sounding like "anti-EU populists". (Eriksson and Nantell, 2019; Clason, 2019)

In an interview, the party's top candidate Sara Skyttedal was given a choice between the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán, an authoritarian strongman championing "illiberal democracy", or Emmanuel Macron, a newly elected President of France who presented controversially ambitious plans to radically reform the EU. Skyttedal chose the "lagom" option and replied that they were both "equally destructive" for Europe and that she preferred neither, but rather would like to stop them both. (Bendjelloul and Eriksson, 2019) The equal treatment of Orbán and Macron did not sit well with the other parties. Shortly after the interview, the Center Party's top candidate Fredrick Federley published a debate article in Aftonbladet, attacking Skyttedal and the Christian Democrats. He accused them of having "dictatorial tendencies" (my translation) and questioned their political

values, while emphasizing the right-wing populist threat the EU faced in the upcoming election. (Federley, 2019)

In their electoral manifesto, the Christian Democrats strongly opposed supranationalism and the creation of so-called “United States of Europe” or any political project leading to a more federalized EU in general. According to their reasoning, centralization of power in Brussels would increase the conflict between the European citizenry and the decision makers of the EU. Therefore, the Christian Democrats concluded that federalist ambitions of creating an European superstate were the real threat to the Union, which they aimed to preserve by keeping it “lagom”. (Valmanifest, 2019)

While their values as a party have been continuously questioned, their manifesto included some important proposals that closely reflect the majority of the parties’ positions on the matter. Having already reviewed the party stances, this concerns the following questions: question 3 from SVT survey and question 8 from the SvD survey about sanctioning/punishing EU member states who violated freedom of the media, and democratic principles, respectively. The Christian Democrats consistently answered such questions affirmatively. Their election manifesto reflects that. Specifically pointing to countries like Hungary and Romania, the manifesto stated that the EU should be given the ability to stop the payments to countries which systematically violate human rights or the rule of law. Therefore the economic assistance these countries get should be conditional upon them aligning to democratic principles. The Christian Democrats also promoted strengthening of the EU as a foreign policy actor. They deplored that it was difficult for the EU member states to come to a common understanding about thorny foreign affairs issues. To solve that, they proposed curtailing individual countries’ veto power. As an example of a subject matter about which vetoes could be bypassed by moving to qualified majority voting they named human rights issues. (Valmanifest, 2019)

On the EU enlargement, the Christian Democrats stressed the importance of the Copenhagen Criteria as the basis of admitting new member states to the Union. They emphasized that the demanding criteria should be taken seriously and all candidate states should meet the requirements, otherwise the credibility of the EU would be damaged. The Christian Democrats wished to see a common asylum policy and thought it was the duty of the European Union to help people in need. Furthermore, they stated that more cooperation was needed to deal with cross-border criminality, such as organized crime, as well as terrorism. Towards that purpose Europol (EU Agency for Law Enforcement Cooperation) and Eurojust (EU agency ensuring judicial cooperation in criminal matters) mandate needed to be strengthened, and criminal database exchange deepened between member states. They also advocated for Sweden joining the cooperation around the European Public Prosecutor’s Office (EPPO) in order to deal more effectively with the common European problem of terrorism. Lastly, the Christian Democrats underlined the importance of the EU in depriving terrorist groups of financing. (Valmanifest, 2019)

Taking note of the impending British withdrawal from the EU and the subsequent gap in the EU budget, the Christian Democrats maintained that the EU should review its priorities and re-prioritize the expenses. According to them, the EU budget should decrease, instead of contributing more to compensate for the absence of the UK. (Valmanifest, 2019)

Assessment: Mostly pro-EU party with some eurosceptic stances (or possibly simply a pre-election rhetoric) on federalism and the EU budget. No other significant differences from other center-right parties. They take a humanist approach to immigration, but are hardliners regarding law and order issues, which still places them in the TAN category.

9.1.3 Moderate Party

The Moderate Party's manifesto for the 2019 EP elections had several key points: law and order, protection of freedoms and rights of EU citizens, deepened cooperation in the areas of foreign relations and common security policy, and managing the external borders of the EU. (Valmanifest Europavalet, 2019)

The Moderates expressed their unease at the events unfolding in and around Europe, such as the refugee crisis, terrorism and the British withdrawal, as well as rise of right and left wing populism, conveying a sense of instability. For that reason, their manifesto promised the voters safety and security. (Valmanifest Europavalet, 2019)

The Moderates also promised to make combating international crime a priority. They emphasized that while they would protect the free movement within the EU, criminals should be denied the same free movement benefits. In order to achieve that goal, they proposed doubling Europol's resources and widening its competences. Additionally, founding a new police force which could operate across the entire EU for cracking down on illegal trade of weapons and drugs was suggested. The Moderates regarded combating terrorism as one of the key responsibilities of the EU. As with combating crime, they proposed strengthening anti-terrorism capacities of Europol and introduction of common EU-rules to cut financing to terrorist and joint list for extremists who would be denied entry to all the EU countries. The Moderates advocated for joining EPPO, in which Sweden did not participate as one of the few countries of the EU. (Valmanifest Europavalet, 2019) In order to defend freedoms and rights of European citizens, the Moderates recommended more active EU involvement in combating hate crime, as well as radicalization on the European soil. The party wished to safeguard human, ethnic and sexual minority rights and work towards gender equality. (Valmanifest Europavalet, 2019) The Moderates were convinced that the EU needed more proactive foreign and security policies, that would mean making EU foreign policy decision making more effective. In an unstable world, they saw a distinct need for closer European cooperation. The Moderates underscored the importance of relations with the departing UK and trying to keep this partnership intact, despite the circumstances. The Moderates were open to the idea of strengthening European Union defence and cyber defence capabilities, but stopped short of calling for the

creation of an EU army. The Moderates believed that EU enlargement should happen only if the candidate state meets the strict criteria, so that every admitted polity fits the fundamental values that the EU rests upon, instead of putting them at risk. (Valmanifest Europavalet, 2019)

The Moderates stated that the EU member states actively undermining democratic principles and the rule of law must be punished appropriately. To that end, they proposed cutting EU funding to such countries, or initiating legal proceedings against them, including suspension of their voting rights at the European Council, as foreseen by the Article 7 TEU. (Valmanifest Europavalet, 2019)

Control over the external borders of the EU was also an issue of key importance for the Moderates. Strengthening Frontex so as to achieve control over maritime borders together with land borders. Their priorities lay with more controlled immigration, which was dependent on full control over outer borders. They also advocated for a quota-based system of distributing asylum-seekers, for avoiding that some countries would be disproportionately burdened because other countries would not fulfill their responsibilities. The Moderates wished to protect the right to asylum, but at the same time proposed a crackdown on human smugglers. They suggested constructing reception centers for asylees at the border, where their applications would be processed quickly and effectively. The Moderates reasoned that common rules regarding asylum needed to apply across the entire EU if the failing migration system was to be saved. Finally, they stressed that failed immigration and integration system would create problems in the long run from poverty to criminality to terrorism. For that reason, controlled immigration as well as effective deportation of those with no right to stay were required.

Assessment: The Moderates are decidedly pro-EU. However, in addition to being tough on crime and terrorism, they also favor a very restrictive immigration policy, much more than the Christian Democrats. Lastly, they want to solve the problems they identify through the EU's existing structures or by expanding their authority, which is tantamount to being europhile, but statist. Their social liberalism gives them some features of a GAL party, but they lean towards TAN nonetheless.

9.1.4 Liberal Party

The Liberal Party ran a campaign with a slogan — Yes to Europe!

As the slogan hints, their positions on the EU were by far the most pro-EU, with countless reform proposals to strengthen the EU and its institutions and expand their competences, along with more involvement in or a membership of common European projects. As the only Swedish party, the Liberals advocated joining the Eurozone, with hopes of having a say in economic-political decisions taken in Eurogroup. They supported joining the banking union, creating the position of a common minister of finance and a common Eurozone budget, reflecting some of Emmanuel Macron's priorities.

As other center-right parties, the Liberals supported common asylum policy and shared responsibility, more humanitarian assistance in conflict-ridden areas and

more legal ways of entering Europe. They also promoted strengthening of European Asylum Support Office (EASO). (Liberalernas program, 2019)

They advocated more proactive foreign policy and more resources to EEAS, which promotes democratic principles and human rights in dealings with undemocratic states and support those trying to build it. The Liberals aimed to limit the veto right in foreign policy. The Liberals also called for defence of human rights, reproductive and minority rights through EU's international aid. They shared the Moderates' and Christian Democrats' view on enlargement issues. Liberals wanted to safeguard human rights, minority rights, rule of law, freedom of the press and democratic principles protected within the EU. To that end, they advocated punishing deviant member states by article 7 of the TEU and by withholding funds. (Liberalernas program, 2019) The Liberals supported the creation of European FBI, joining EPPO, creation of a common criminal intelligence agency in addition to Europol, European witness protection program, measures against radicalization in the EU, crackdown on human smugglers. The Liberals proposed strengthening of external borders with a common border police. Within security policy, Liberals emphasize stronger defence and cyber defense capabilities and participation in Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), a defence initiative. (Liberalernas program, 2019) The Liberals also sought reforming the EU, including giving the European Parliament the ability to initiate legislation, among other changes to the EU institutions such as making the Council of Ministers' negotiations more transparent. (Liberalernas program, 2019)

Assessment: The Liberals are easily the most pro-EU party and they can be placed on the libertarian side of the GAL spectrum. However, despite being staunch defenders of personal rights and freedoms, they are also supportive of securing EU borders and having a controlled migration policy.

9.1.5 Center Party

The Center party almost verbatim matches the proposals of Liberals and Moderates, when it comes to protection of democracy, human rights and the rule of law within the EU, as well as standing up to authoritarian countries. The Center Party also wished for deeper defence and cyber-defence cooperation, but emphasized that this should be of international and not supranational character, so that every participant country would have full control over their own military forces. Deepened cooperation around transnational crime and better policing of outer borders was also welcomed by the Center Party. Lastly, the Party aimed to combat human smugglers and protect the right to asylum to preserve a more humane EU.

Assessment: The Center Party shares most of its ideology with the Liberals, except taking a stand against federalism and favoring a more international approach, coupled with the advocacy for improved border defences and putting some focus on law and order issues. However, they can be categorized as a GAL party overall.

9.1.6 Social Democrats

The Social Democrats also believed that encroaching on democracy should lead to article 7 TEU procedure and frozen funds. In addition, they wanted the EU to investigate the state of the rule of law in all member countries and produce systematic analysis. The Social Democrats proposed combating terrorist content on the internet. They also suggested developing better readiness against cyberattacks, combat interstate crime and terrorism, as well as better patrolling of EU's external borders. They proposed strengthening of foreign and security policy and prioritized civil crisis management, as well as post-conflict assistance and stabilization in the European neighborhood. The party also wanted to work toward a sustainable asylum policy. (Valmanifest för EU-valet, 2019)

Assessment: Relatively brief, the Social Democrats manifesto is a combination of different policies, which, taken together, neatly fit in neither the left/right spectrum nor the GAL/TAN dimension. The party profile overall hints at the GAL-orientation, but the electoral platform contains a sizable chunk of typical TAN-issues. Without having the possibility of looking at their voting record at the end of the 2019-2024 parliamentary session, it is difficult to distinguish campaign rhetoric from the actual policies they would support.

9.1.7 The Greens

The Greens expressed their worry that political polarization, proliferation of hate groups and right wing extremism is threatening European democracies. Therefore, they pledged to protect democracy and its tenets, such as fundamental rights. This also applied to countries outside of the EU. For that purpose, the Greens wanted to increase funding to the civil society in the EU and abroad. (EU-valmanifest, 2019) The Greens stressed the importance of the principle of subsidiarity and therefore believe that political decisions should be made as close to the citizens as possible. The Greens believed that the EU citizens should have more insight in as well as influence over the Union, for instance being more involved in the legislative process. The Greens emphasized that radical right governments are wreaking havoc in Europe through different means from threatening freedom of the media to shutting down universities or imposing control over the judiciary. They identified social cleavages as one of the reasons for the success of populism. (EU-valmanifest, 2019) In the same spirit as the majority of parties, the Greens proposed sanctioning countries where democracy is backsliding due to government actions or minorities are oppressed, strengthening the EU's cyber security and terrorism and radicalization-combating abilities. Moreover, they proposed greater transparency in political advertising and donations, presumably for combating illicit financing of radical right parties. The Greens demanded more resources and increased authority for the Fundamental Rights Agency (FRA) and EU-wide legislation and directives to protect all minorities from discrimination and hate crimes.(EU-valmanifest, 2019) The Greens advocated a common EU asylum system with a shared responsibility

for all countries, protecting the right to asylum and for creating safe and legal ways for asylees to enter the EU. (EU-valmanifest, 2019) The Greens took a stand against raising Swedish contributions to the EU budget, which they believe is one of the highest. They seemed somewhat supportive of the EU's regional policy in helping underdeveloped regions, but they placed strong focus on conversion to a green economy and climate-smart technologies. (EU-valmanifest, 2019)

Assessment: The Greens neatly fit the description of Hooghe, Marks and Wilson of what a GAL party with a green profile should be, by their focus on climate, citizen involvement, democracy, human rights and more humane asylum policy, among other issues.

9.1.8 The Left Party

In 2018, the Party deplored that along with increases of EU power, privatisation, tax cuts and destruction of nature have become the normal and unelected firm representatives set the agenda. They saw the EU as contributing or causing the misery of refugees by weapons export and castigated its increased border protection efforts that, in their opinion, led to human smuggling and put refugee lives in danger. (Valplattform, 2018) In their 2019 platform, the Left Party committed itself to protecting the right to seek asylum in Europe and proposed forming a coalition of the willing countries for a more humane immigration policy. They were adamantly opposed to armed border guards and what they call increased militarization in order to stop the inflow of migrants and refugees. (Valplattform EU-valet, 2019) They supported creating safe and legal pathways of travelling in order to seek asylum and increasing international and development aid to countries in need. They also proposed investing in lifeboats to save refugees crossing the mediterranean from drowning. The Left Party was opposed to the building and development of military capabilities for the EU and wants to spend the resources on climate goals instead. They advocated independent economic policy for Sweden and believed that it should be possible for countries to leave the Eurozone.(Valplattform EU-valet, 2019) The Left Party wished that elected representatives would govern the economic policy, instead of bureaucrats in the EU. The Party proposed stripping power of EU's bureaucrats, judges and commissioners and instead re-empower national parliaments.(Valplattform EU-valet, 2019)

While in their platform the undemocratic character of the EU seemed to concern the Left Party most, in interviews the party leader Sjöstedt even suggested throwing the authoritarian countries out of the EU, a clear sign that they are worried about undemocratic developments in countries such as Hungary and Poland. (Lönegård, 2019) The Left Party wanted to reduce the EU budget and renationalize the EU agricultural policy which they claimed to be both ineffective and unfair. The party also took a stance against what they believed were undemocratic free-trade agreements which they claimed to pose danger to the environment and put the power in the hands of transnational corporations.

On a concluding note, the Left Party championed itself as the strongest opponent to the radical right populism and racists. (Valplattform EU-valet, 2019)

Assessment: The Left Party's main conflict with the EU is about economic and asylum issues and also occasionally employs a populist rhetoric that advocates radical weakening of the EU and its institutions. It is near the pole of the GAL dimension and its stances are consistent to what is expected from such a party. Because of their opposition to the core features that makes the EU what it is, much like the SD, they can be classified as a conditional eurosceptic party.

Analysis of party positions shows that the GAL/TAN perspective is not only helpful in explaining the 2018-2019 government building process in Sweden. It is also helpful to a lesser extent in explaining the Pro-EU or Anti-EU attitudes of Swedish political parties. The notable divergences are the Moderates and the Christian Democrats are not as eurosceptic as would be expected from TAN parties, and the Greens and Social Democrats not as europhile as their placement in GAL dimension suggests. All pro-EU parties share concerns about the state of democracy in the EU and propose measures against its decline. Slightly surprisingly, all parties, except Liberals and the Center Party, oppose increasing Swedish contributions to the EU. Lastly, Sweden Democrats and The Left Party nearly perfectly embody the roles foreseen for them by the GAL-TAN dimension.

9.2 Campaign Scandals

The electoral campaign was interrupted by several scandals, which have moved the focus away from the substance questions and towards the yellow press territory. Estimating exactly how many voters each party has lost because of these scandals, as opposed to some other reasons is elusive and at the same time, not the aim of the thesis. Nonetheless, *ceteris paribus*, without these revelations their losses would have likely been less severe, and their gains more prominent, depending on whether a particular party found itself in upswing or a downward spiral. This chapter will only be concerned with the politically damaging reports during the campaign period that are directly tied to the current of former candidates to the European Parliament and not the party officeholders at large. The parties affected by these so-called scandals were the Liberals, the Left Party, the Christian Democrats and the Sweden Democrats. They were evenly divided by the GAL-TAN dimension, but considering the left right scale, it mostly affected the right wing parties.

In March 2019, SVT published an investigative report about the two-term member of the European Parliament for the Liberals, Cecilia Wikström. After publishing, it was made known that besides being a full-time MEP, she also sat on the board of two Swedish companies, Beijer Alma and Elektta. It immediately raised concerns

about conflict of interest of an MEP who through her parliamentary work or votes cast could affect the companies in question, or potentially even lobby on their behalf. (Zachrisson and Winberg, 2019)

Wikström claimed that there was no conflict of interest and she could effectively handle the challenges of being a taxpayer-funded MEP while earning almost as much on a monthly basis through her “side jobs”. The Liberals, already weakened by the government formation, could not afford negative media coverage. As a result, Wikström was given a choice — to either remain the top candidate on the party list, or choose being a board member, but not both. She declined to abandon her side jobs and was promptly removed by the party, but the damage was already done. (Jakobson, 2019) Shortly after, the Liberals had their worst showing ever in a SvD/Sifo poll since it started in 1967, namely 3,3%. (Delling, 2019)

After that, the party also had more practical issues to take care of, such as quickly finding a replacement candidate so late in the campaign who could stop the bleeding of voters and attract enough positive coverage to mobilize enough supporters to salvage their bid. The Liberals hovered around the electoral threshold for the remainder of the election through the election night.

Malin Björk, the MEP of the Left Party, also made headlines. The Left Party was hoping to gain a second mandate in Brussels. Another SVT investigation revealed that Björk took tax-free per diem allowance during time spent in her hometown Brussels, despite living there on a permanent basis. The Swedish Tax Agency (Skatteverket) revealed that it was not possible to take such tax-free allowance if one were registered as permanently residing at that very place. (Grill Pettersson; Bengtsson and Resare, 2019) Another eyebrow raising detail also came to light, that Björk bought “quite a lot of 3-D clitorises” for the office with her tax-free allowance. She did not shy away from that fact, and openly declared that it was an expense for feminist causes. However, the reactions from the columnists of both-left and right-wing tabloids were swift in their condemnation for her carefree spending of taxpayer money. (Mellin, 2019; Krakowski, 2019) The Left Party would later blame the SVT for their inability to gain the second mandate, after the results became known. (Olsson, 2019)

When it comes to Sweden Democrats, the accusation was arguably of a more serious character. In connection to the removal of MEP Kristina Winberg from the candidate list to the European Parliament, an instance of sexual harassment was revealed. According to her own story, Winberg was removed for informing the party leadership about the improper sexual advances. She claimed that the number 1 on the party list, MEP Peter Lundgren, had sexually harassed a female party colleague at one of the party events. Sweden Democrats reaffirmed their support for Peter Lundgren and kept him on the list. Winberg, in turn, was denounced by the party leadership, and accused of being disloyal and scheming. Winberg was removed from the candidate list and also expelled from the party. (Tano and Sundberg, 2019) This episode unfolded on the heels of the Me Too Movement, which gave female voices more credibility than ever before. That created the potential of being more damaging to Sweden Democrats than before. We cannot

know their exact motivations, but Sweden Democrats possibly felt the urgency and turned to crisis management. A never-done-before in Swedish politics, the party released a video on YouTube in which Lundgren had a dialogue with the woman he sexually harassed, whose face was not visible, to which he apologized profusely. (Arvidsson, 2019; Thomsen, Sartori and Carlehed, 2019)

In May 2019, Dagens Nyheter revealed the voting pattern of the former MEP for the Christian Democrats. Having served as MEP 2014-2018, Lars Adaktusson voted against European Parliament resolutions concerning right to abortion 22 times out of total 28. Adaktusson maintained that he only cast those votes in protest to abortion issue being decided in Brussels, which he thought was a national matter. (Melchior, 2019) DN countered his reasoning by pointing out that in order to protest the EU involvement in social issues, Sweden Democrats abstained from voting, rather than voting no. Especially thorny issue was his vote against condemning Paraguay's extremely restrictive abortion laws, when it concerned the right to abortion as a principle, not the authority of the European Union. These laws resulted in refusal to provide abortion and thus forced a 10 year old girl, who was raped by her stepfather, to give birth. (Melchior, 2019)

Lars Adaktusson was already on thin ice when these reports started circulating. In early April, the left-leaning magazine ETC drew the readers' attention to Adaktusson's participation in an ultraconservative and christian right international conference. The report also detailed that among the co-organizers, sponsors or participants were members of hate groups, anti-LGBTQ+ propagandists, conspiracy theorists and apologists of fascism. (Söderin, 2019) Adaktusson claimed that he was only there to give a speech about freedom of religion and freedom of conscience. He expressed regret that he would be associated with participants whose ideas he does not share. (Söderin, 2019) These reports managed to deal some lasting damage to the Christian Democrats and caused their skyrocketing numbers to gradually sink.

As expected, other parties seized on these issues and for the remainder of the campaign. Alice Bah Kuhnke, the top candidate of the Greens, accused them of directed efforts against women's right to decide over their own bodies. (Sartori, 2019) Adaktusson's apparent social conservatism caused both the Center Party and the Moderates to flash their social liberal credentials in standing up for the right to abortion. Immediate post-election analysis hinted that they were the main beneficiaries of voters defecting from the Christian Democrats. (Eriksson, 2019; Jakobsson, 2019) This was the most illustrative example throughout the campaign of the GAL-TAN conflict in Swedish politics.

10 The Public Opinion

10.1 Eurobarometer Polls

We can observe the Standard Eurobarometers 81-91 for Sweden, between the 2014 EP Elections and the 2019 EP elections. The 86th Eurobarometer is the first one conducted after the Brexit Referendum. After the referendum, with some minor exceptions, we see continuous improvement in trust in the EU institutions, feeling as an EU citizen and the image of the EU. Trust in the EU institutions is the biggest beneficiary of the post-Referendum trends, with a 15 point improvement, with 14 point improvement for the EU image, compared to their pre-Referendum lows (Standard EB 85). Overview of the earlier Eurobarometers demonstrate that even lower numbers have been measured in Sweden. This means that Sweden went to the 2019 European Parliament Election as a significantly more pro-EU country than in 2014.

Table A: Public opinion trends in Sweden: 2014-2019

Standard Eurobarometer / Sweden	Trust in EU institutions / Sweden	Feel as EU Citizen / Sweden	EU Image / Sweden
81 (June/July 2014)	37%	77%	Positive: 42%
82 (Nov. 2014)	48% (+11)	76% (-1)	Positive: 40% (-2)
83 (May 2015)	48% (=)	78% (+2)	Positive: 42% (+2)
84 (Nov. 2015)	46% (-2)	72% (-6)	Positive: 39% (-3)
85 (May 2016)	41% (-5)	74% (+2)	Positive: 36% (-3)
*86 (Nov. 2016)	43% (+2)	75% (+1)	Positive: 35% (-1)
87 (May 2017)	48% (+5)	76% (+1)	Positive: 43% (+8)
88 (Nov. 2017)	52% (+4)	77% (+1)	Positive: 41% (-2)
89 (March 2018)	51% (-1)	76% (-1)	Positive: 42% (+1)
90 (Nov. 2018)	59% (+8)	82% (+6)	Positive: 53% (+11)

91 (June 2019)	56% (-3)	83% (+1)	Positive: 50% (-3)
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The Eurobarometers closest to the date of the 2019 EP election were Standard EB 90 (November 2018) and Standard EB 91 (June 2019).

Those polled were asked: “What are the two biggest issues facing Sweden at the moment?”

The answers that are relevant to the EU cooperation, the future of the EU as a whole, identifying a Second Order Election, as well as the key issues for radical right parties are highlighted. Issues that are strictly or mostly national in character that do not fit the above-mentioned criteria are not highlighted.

Standard Eurobarometer 90: 1. Health and Social Security (47%); **2. Environment, Climate and Energy (39%)**; 3. Education (26%); **4. Crime (21%)**; **5. Immigration (20%)**.

Standard Eurobarometer 91: 1. **Environment, Climate and Energy (44%)**; 2. Health and Social Security (42%); **3. Crime (24%)**; **4. Immigration (22%)**; and Education (22%)

10.2 National Polls

During the EP election campaign, the DN/Ipsos released polls (conducted 9–22 April, 2019) of 1007 randomly selected Swedish voters. (Rosén, 2019)

Those surveyed could answer more than one question. Swedish citizens were asked the following: “Which issues are most important when you make a decision to vote in the European Parliament Election?” (Rosén, 2019) (My translation)

1. I do not know, I cannot or do not want to answer 32%; **2. Environment/Climate (23%)**; **3. Immigration/Integration/Asylum/Refugee Issues (21%)**; **4. Curb the influence of the EU/Reduce EU contributions/Leave EU (7%)**; **5. Crime/Law and Order/Combating Terrorism (4%)**; 6. The Economy (4%); 7. Social Issues, Welfare, Healthcare/School (3%); 8. Gender Equality (3%); **9. Cooperation between EU-countries; (2%)**; **10. Peace, Security and Defense Issues (2%)** (Rosén, 2019)

Using a slightly different set of issues, SVT Valu’s polling shows different voting priorities. In this polling the share of voters agreeing that it is an important issue is measured, therefore the voters had the possibility of identifying more than one important issue for them. (SVT Nyheter, 2019) For showing trends since the 2014 EP Election, changes in percentage are also shown. **1. Peace in Europe 58% (-1)**; **2. Democracy 54% (+3)**; **3. Environment 51 (=)**; 4. Gender Equality 49% (+4); **5. Combating Crime 48% (+8)**; 6. Social Welfare 44% (-5); 7.

Refugees/Immigration 41% (absent) 8. Energy/Nuclear Power 38% (absent);
9. Economy 37% (-8); **10. National Independence 37% (-2)** (SVT Nyheter, 2019)

All polls demonstrate that environment/climate is one of the top issues for Swedish voters, among the top 3 issues across all the polls. As in Sweden no single party can claim total ownership of this issue, demonstrated by the party manifestos, the effects were likely diffused among different parties. The climate issue in the EU context largely means a pro-EU approach if a party advocates mitigating the climate change through the EU.

As the standard Eurobarometer asks “issues” as in “problems”, it is less comparable to the national polls, but there are some similarities, as those surveyed are likely to name problems, rather than important themes.

Standard EB, DN/Ipsos and SVT Valu rank immigration and refugee issues, as well as crime as mid to high tier of issues for voters, with some indications that they are rising in importance. These are largely national issues, but are important as they explain the successes for right-wing parties, who all saw sizable gains in the election.

SVT Valu stands out in showing the importance of EU-wide issues, not just the national priorities or problems. Issues such as “Peace in Europe”, “Democracy” and “Environment” are holding stable or have increased importance, while “National Independence” has decreased. This could be a Brexit effect, as more voters are concerned about the radical right electoral success and are wary of what that means for democracy or peace.

In conclusion, it must be pointed out that poll results are shaped by citizen opinions in equal measure as the selection of questions/issues the poll presents to them. Therefore, predominance of domestic issues may be attributed to the pollsters, instead of the citizens.

11 Election Outcome Analysis

For making judgements about the nature of the 2019 EP Election in Sweden, we have to measure the facts at hand against the SOE benchmarks.

The First rule is that the governing parties lose seats. At the first glance, the -3,89% decline of the Greens is not surprising, as it is seemingly a typical SOE effect. The Greens were a governing party, burdened by their role. Their first full term in office was characterized by a series of failures, broken promises, and scandals. (Bolin and Aylott, 2019, pp. 569-570) They were likely saved from becoming an extra-parliamentary party in the 2018 Riksdag Election by raging forest fires during the summer, which accentuated climate change issues. (Bolin and Aylott, 2019, pp. 570-571) On the contrary, it is surprising that they fared so well. Coming back from that low point to claim 3 out of 4 mandates previously held was a success. Their previous showing of 15,41% was a very difficult result to replicate, given the circumstances. The Social Democrats, the leading coalition partner, also had an array of problems that were discussed at length above. Therefore, the -0,71% decline is likely something of an achievement. In terms of mandate distribution, it was not a huge shift, just one net loss for the government parties overall. Nevertheless, a rejection of the SOE claim that governing parties lose seats is not possible with these results. Although, there is a reason to believe that the losses should have been more severe, considering the national dynamics and the tendency of voters to punish the governing parties. It perhaps played a role that these were back-to-back elections (September 2018 — May 2019), with less than a full year separating them, instead of being in-between national parliamentary elections. This criterion is likely met, even though questions can be raised to what extent.

The second rule is that less is at stake. Is this indeed the case? Looking back at the repercussions of Brexit, it seems that more was at stake than in previous EP elections. The Standard Eurobarometer polls show the support and appreciation of the EU on continuous rise after the Brexit Referendum, which corresponds to the trends seen in other EU countries. We can connect this to the risk-averseness among voters that the Brexit process has assumedly triggered, despite the good economic indicators for Sweden at that time, that could have instead boosted the national self-confidence, making life outside the EU a credible alternative. This criterion is likely not met.

The third rule of SEO is a lower turnout, compared to the national elections.

Sweden has one of the highest turnout rates in the world and the country has been pointed out for accessibility of early voting. (Öhrvall, 2015, 231) The 2018 Riksdag Election had a turnout 87,18%. With that in mind, 55,27% turnout for the EP Election seems modest, but the increase of 4,20% hints that it increased in importance. The gap between turnouts is simply too large to ignore, amounting to

31.91%, in other words nearly one third (33.3%) of all eligible voters. Thereby, this criterion is likely satisfied, despite the rising turnout.

The fourth rule that small and radical parties are more successful than in the national elections can be easily dismissed. Sweden has had an experience of small, extra-parliamentary parties taking seats: Junilistan (2004), the Pirate Party (2009), the Feminist Initiative (2014). Nonetheless, in 2019, all the parties winning seats in EP were also represented in Riksdag. Therefore, this criterion is not met.

The fifth rule stipulates that there is a higher percentage of invalid votes. In the 2019 EP Election, that amounted to 0,86% of votes, the same statistic for the 2018 Riksdag Election was 0,89%. Since these numbers are nearly identical, with the EP election showing even marginally less percentage of spoiled ballots, this criterion is not met.

For completion of the SOE theory, we can look back at the pan-European voter swings theory of Hix and Marsh. In addition, I assume that assigning a First Order Election status to the 2019 EP Election in Sweden is intertwined and nearly synonymous with confirming Brexit effects and the EU-wide trends in the election.

In the 2019 EP Elections, three EU-wide trends in electoral support can be identified:

Losses by the mainstream center right and center left parties. (Erlanger, 2019; Henley, 2019; Küchler, 2019; DW, 2019)

Gains by the Liberal and Green parties. (Pearson and Rüdiger, 2020; Henley, 2019; Alestig, 2019; Küchler, 2019; DW, 2019)

Gains by the radical right and eurosceptic parties, though to a lesser degree than expected. (Erlanger, 2019; Henley, 2019; Küchler, 2019; DW, 2019)

The two main political forces in the EU have historically been the European People's Party, and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats. The former consists of Christian Democrats and mainstream, pro-EU Conservative parties, while the latter is composed of mainstream, pro-EU Socialist and Progressive parties. Their respective groups in the EP are the EPP Group and the S&D Group. These two groups have continuously held majorities in the European Parliament since the first direct elections in 1979. In the 2019 EP Elections, the vote share of the two main blocks was diluted to the extent that they no longer had a majority.

The Swedish parties seemingly defied this trend. The Moderates and the Christian Democrats who belong to the EPP Group gained 2 seats, while the Social Democrats of the S&D Group kept all 5 seats. There are two perspectives of looking at the results: a) Swedish electorate, fearful of consequences of Brexit and the rise of populism, rallied around the large, established parties — the Social Democrats and the Moderates b) both parties benefited from the scandals other parties were engulfed in, while the Moderates benefited from their status as an opposition party. The alternative “a” hints at the First Order Election nature, dominated by worries about European dynamics, while the alternative “b” implies a national, Second Order Election character of the Election.

The second trend was the surge of support for the Liberal and the Green parties. More research is needed to pinpoint the exact reasons for their electoral success, but it is not unreasonable to assume that the Liberals profited from positioning themselves as staunch defenders of the EU, and it also applies to the Greens to some extent. Some observers pointed out the importance of climate strikes inspired by Greta Thunberg's "Fridays for Future" school strikes, which allegedly gave rise or helped to the green wave. (Pearson and Rüdig, 2020; Alestig, 2019) If that is the case, the Green parties' success has less to do with Brexit and more with the increased awareness about the climate issues. Additionally, while the "Greta Effect" might be a foreign influence in other EP elections, it is a national phenomenon from a Swedish perspective.

At the onset of the 2019 EP Election in Sweden, the Liberal (2 seats for the Liberals, 1 seat for the Center Party) and Green (4) parties held 7 seats out of 20, which is a disproportionately high share (35%). After the 2019 Election, it was reduced to 6/21, a 28.5%.

To compare, even after the historical electoral success for the German Greens (Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) and moderate gains by the Liberals (Freie Demokratische Partei, FDP) in 2019, they could account for only 26.6% of total German seats.

That indicates that Swedish Liberal and Green parties had reached their cumulative historic highs already in 2014. For that reason, the likelihood of losing, instead of gaining seats in 2019 was high. As discussed above, the Liberals were likely damaged by the Wikström affair and the government formation, so they lost a disproportionately large number of votes. However, the Center Party's success compensated it in terms of mandates. The Green Party's misfortunes as a governing party has already been briefly pointed out. Overall, the continued success of the Liberal and Green parties in Sweden, while underwhelming by European standards, does not clearly defy the common EU trends and may even be an enigmatic example of it. As polls showed, voter interest in climate issues were high. Although, since 7 of 8 Swedish parties actively engage in climate issues, the Greens could not monopolize climate voters, as their sister parties have done in other countries.

The gains by the radical right parties across the EU was noticeable, but less than expected. Sweden Democrats were encouraged and energized by the British withdrawal and regardless of their post-Referendum positioning, expected dramatic vote gains. The 5,67% vote share gain by the SD was indeed the largest gain in the 2019 Election, even though it only resulted in 1 extra mandate. That means that the third trend was clearly visible in the Swedish Election.

It is difficult to refer to these three trends for arguing either clear FOE or SOE nature of the Swedish EP elections. However, unexpected resilience of some parties can indicate vary, risk-averse voters flocking to them. Ultimately, We have to ask a rhetorical question: are we perhaps setting a too high threshold for the EP elections to prove their own authenticity and independence from the domestic political arena?

In discussing which context shaped the outcome of the 2019 Swedish EP election more decisively than the other, the European or the national context, we have to

look back at the reconfiguration of the party landscape on the national level along the GAL-TAN lines after 2018-2019 government formation. There is some evidence for claiming that it also affected the 2019 EP Election. Namely, parties neither sitting in, tolerating or actively supporting in government (M, KD, SD) all saw their vote share swell. On the other hand, it was a mixed bag for the government and supply and consent side, which represented an overall loss, but was perhaps moderated by common European concerns in voters. If we divided parties across the left-right spectrum, the results would have been less clear-cut, with losses and gains on both sides, but the right-wing parties being clearly predominant.

Theory of pan-European voter swings is both a reassurance and a cautionary tale at the same time.

Firstly, by leaving the door open to the idea that the current policy concerns (i.e Brexit and the rise of radical right) motivate citizens throughout the Union to vote similarly, we can at least speculate that there were such swings in the 2019 EP Election and it possibly had some effect on the election outcome. The clearest indicator is the rise of a radical right party, while an additional potential indicator is keeping the most of the gains by Liberal and Green parties, despite their role in supporting or participating in the incumbent government.

Further research and more data around the subject is needed for drawing conclusions. Unless we can control for all the parties in all 28 member states (by 2019) with regards to criteria set out by the SOE, we cannot make authoritative judgements around the presence of the EU-wide swings in the 2019 EP Election in Sweden.

Table B: Trends in electoral support: 2018-2019

2018 Riksdag Elections			2019 EP Elections			TAN = Right-Wing opposition.
Vote share	Seats	Swing	Vote Share	Seat change	Swing	GAL = Government + support.
						GAL parties
8,00%	28 (+7)	+2,28%	6,80%	1 (0)	+0,50%	V
4,41%	16 (-9)	-2,48%	11,52%	3 (-1)*	-3,89%	MP
28,26%	100 (-13)	-2,75%	23,48%	5 (0)	-0,71%	S
8,61%	31 (+9)	+2,50%	10,78%	2 (+1)	+4,29%	C
5,49%	20 (+1)	+0,07%	4,13%	1 (-1)	-5,78%	L
54,77%	195/349	-0,38%	56,71%	12/21	-5,65	Totals

						TAN parties
19,84%	70 (-14)	-3,49%	16,83%	4 (+1)	+3,18%	M
17,53%	62 (+13)	+4,67%	15,34%	3 (+1)	+5,67%	SD
6,32%	22 (+6)	+1,75%	8,62%	2 (+1)	+ 2,69%	KD
43,69%	154/349	+2,93%	40,79	9/21	+11,54%	Totals
6 535 271 / 7 495 936 87,18% (+1,38%)			4 187 848 / 7 576 917 55,27% (+4,20%)			Elig. voters/ Turnout

Source: Valmyndigheten

Comment: *The Greens originally lost 2 seats, but regained one, the so-called Brexit mandate, after the UK withdrawal was completed, as Sweden was awarded 1 extra seat as a result of parliament reapportionment.

12 Conclusions

The thesis satisfactorily answers some research questions, and leaves some unanswered that future studies can examine in-depth.

Firstly, the effect of Brexit on Swedish parties is readily observable and can be explained on the basis of empirical evidence. However, measuring and interpreting its impact on voters is elusive.

Secondly, the thesis has found some evidence to believe that the 2019 EP Election in Sweden was not purely a national phenomenon, and there were some elements of First Order Election, despite the first impression of election results pointing at the exact opposite. National context shaped the election to an extent, but its effects were perhaps moderated by the European context in which the elections took place. Lastly, party positions have shown that the GAL-TAN dimension has explanatory value not only for the national arena, but also for the European one. Additionally, using GAL-TAN as an analytical tool boosts credibility for the SOE alternative as TAN parties win, while GAL parties remain stagnant or decline.

Nonetheless, the inability to beyond reasonable doubt classify the given election as FOE or SOE heavily implies that more research, especially fieldwork needs to be done if we are to get these answers.

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