

What Type of EU?

Conceptions of the EU in the Riksdag in the Aftermath of the EU's COVID-19 Crisis

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Abstract

This case-study examines how political parties in Sweden view and understand the EU in terms of political system and whether this changed following the COVID-19 crisis. The research questions of this thesis are as follows: What types of conceptions of the EU do political parties in Sweden have? And did their conceptions of the EU change following the COVID-19 crisis?

This study is a qualitative document analysis in which the parties' views on the EU and its response to the COVID-19 crisis are assessed in terms of an intergovernmental and a neofunctional polity conception of the EU. To find out what types of conceptions of the EU parties in Sweden had before the COVID-19 crisis, the parties' manifestos from the Riksdag and EP elections in 2018 and 2019 were assessed. To determine whether the parties' conceptions of the EU changed following the COVID-19 crisis, the parties' views on the EU's response to the COVID-19 were assessed.

The study finds that before the COVID-19 crisis the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats, the Centre Party, the Left Party, and the Sweden Democrats all had an intergovernmental conception of the EU (IGC). The Liberal Party was found to have a neofunctional conception of the EU (NFC). The study also finds that while there were differences in how the parties viewed and acted in relation to the EU's crisis response, none of the parties examined changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

However, while none changed their conceptions of the EU, the study also finds that the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party did not act in accordance with their conception of the EU. These parties did not oppose the EU's crisis response and therefore accepted that NGEU would strengthen the EU's supranational institutions and increase the EU's fiscal capacity, albeit temporarily. The theoretical implication of this is that while these parties subscribe to an intergovernmental model of the EU, their actions during the crisis can be viewed in terms of a neofunctional logic of integration.

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List of Abbreviations

ALDE	Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe Party
CEUA	The Riksdag's Committee on European Affairs
EC	European Council
ECR	European Conservatives and Reformists
EIB	European Investment Bank
EMU	The Economic and Monetary Union
EP	European Parliament
EPP	European People's Party
ESM	European Stability Mechanism
EU	European Union
IGC	Intergovernmental conception of the EU
NFC	Neofunctional conception of the EU
NGEU	Next Generation EU
NNRP	National Recovery and Resilience Plans
ORD	Own Resources Decision
SGP	Stability and Growth Pact

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 Background

The European Union (EU) is a political system with supranational and intergovernmental decision-making forms. It is, therefore, a political system that is sui generis. Throughout its history, the EU has been devoid of a clear consensus about what type of political system it should be and thus on the character and scope of integration. As a result, the EU is a political project in development that comprises member states with very different conceptions of the EU (Fabbrini 2015). European integration has often been viewed as a linear and unidirectional process. However, recent EU crises such as the Eurozone crisis and, more recently, Brexit have challenged this notion. They have demonstrated that also disintegration can occur as part of the integration process (Gänzle, Leruth, and Trondal 2019). Jean Monnet, one of the founding fathers of the EU, famously stated that “Europe will be forged in crisis, and will be the sum of the solutions adopted for those crises.” (quoted in Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales 2016, 249). As was foreseen by Monnet, the EU has historically tended to respond to crises by pursuing deeper integration. As such, EU crises and how it responds to these often raise new questions about what type of political system the EU is and where the integration process is headed.

1.2 The EU’s Response to the COVID-19 crisis

In March of 2020, the COVID-19 virus quickly spread across Europe. The decision by several member states to introduce border controls and export bans on medical equipment suggested that countries had turned inwards in response to the pandemic and highlighted a lack of solidarity between member states. As the economic consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic became clear, many feared that this lack of solidarity and the reluctance of stronger and predominately northern European member states to assist those countries most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic would threaten the survival of the EU. The German Chancellor, Angela Merkel, called the COVID-19 pandemic the biggest test the EU had ever faced (Reuters 2020). Many therefore believed that the COVID-19 pandemic was an existential crisis for the EU.

The EU's initial response to the COVID-19 pandemic was uncoordinated and had raised fears about the Union's future. However, the decision by the EU's Heads of State at the European Council Summit (EC Summit) in July 2020 to establish Next Generation EU (NGEU), a temporary €750 billion recovery fund in response to the crisis, is viewed as a significant step towards deeper fiscal integration. It has even been described as a "Hamiltonian" moment for the EU (Giugliano 2020). The description of the EU's recovery fund as a Hamiltonian moment references Alexander Hamilton, one of the founding fathers of the United States, who is credited with having played a crucial role in the United States' development into a federal Union. As part of NGEU, the European Commission would borrow large sums of money from financial markets and issue EU debt. These funds are primarily to be used to provide non-repayable grants as well as loans to member states particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic but also to prepare Europe for the digital and green transition (European Commission 2022a). For member states to receive funds from NGEU they are required to submit national recovery and resilience plans (NRRP) in which they must detail how funds are to be used. The Commission has been given a central role in the EU's crisis response as it assesses the NRRP's and approves the disbursement of funds from NGEU (European Commission 2022b). Furthermore, as part of the agreement made at the EC Summit and the ratification of the Own Resource Decision in the national parliaments, the EU has also acquired a new revenue source in the way of the plastics own resource (European Commission 2022c). The plastics own resource is meant to help finance parts of the EU budget and NGEU and is a revenue source that is a member state contribution based on the amount of non-recycled plastic waste (European Commission 2022c). The plastics own resource is therefore akin to many of the EU's existing revenue sources, as it is a revenue source that is channeled through and provided by the member states. However, the roadmap on additional own resources agreed on at the EC Summit means that the Commission will present proposals for additional and possibly other types of new own resources in the future (European Council 2020, 64). It is unclear what type of form these proposals will take but there is a possibility that the Commission will present proposals for a possible digital own resource, which could further increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its *own* revenue, in other words, revenue that is collected independently of the member states (Tamma 2021).

The EU's recovery efforts represent a monumental step towards deeper fiscal integration as they increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect and spend resources, albeit temporarily. While the EU, before the crisis, could regulate parts of the member states'

national fiscal policies, it has had limited fiscal capacity (Hallerberg 2014). As the EU's crisis response increases the EU's fiscal capacity during the crisis it may create a precedent for further fiscal integration in the future. Further, by giving the Commission a central role in the disbursement of funds from NGEU, it also significantly strengthens the Commission, the EU's most important supranational institution. The EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis has thus resulted in deeper integration. It thereby raises further questions about what type of political system the EU is and where the integration process is headed.

1.3 Sweden in the EU

Sweden is a Nordic European state which has been a member of the European Union since 1995. Sweden joined the EU following a referendum and has been a member of the EU for more than 25 years. Despite this, the country has long been regarded as a Eurosceptic country and a "reluctant European" (Gstöhl 2002). Polls show that while less than half of Swedes wanted to remain in the EU between 2009–2014, a slight majority now want Sweden to remain a member of the EU (Weissenbilder 2021, 6). Sweden's skepticism towards the EU is also highlighted by the two Eurosceptic parties in its national parliament, the Riksdag, and its decision to remain outside the Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). While some aspects of Sweden's relationship with the EU can be understood in terms of skepticism towards the EU's policies, others are best understood as a form of "federoscepticism" (Miles 2005, 7). Lee Miles defines Federoscepticism as skepticism toward the EU where one accepts the EU as a type of supranational political system but opposes the idea that integration should lead to the creation of a federal state (7). Sweden's relationship with the EU thus appears to be characterized by support for some form of European cooperation but a strong skepticism towards supranational integration, where decision-making power is transferred from the member states to the EU's supranational institutions.

Ahead of the negotiations on the EU budget and NGEU at the EC Summit in July 2020, Sweden was a part of a group of EU member states that included Denmark, Austria, and the Netherlands, which was referred to as the "frugal four" because of the groups fiscally conservative views for the EU (Gill, McCaffrey, and Cavallone 2020). These countries were opposed to an increase in the EU budget and a recovery fund that would provide EU grants (Heikkilä and von der Burchard 2020). However, during the negotiations, Sweden and the frugal four decided to support the establishment of NGEU. Does Sweden's decision to support the EU's crisis response, which strengthened the Commission and may create a

precedent for further fiscal integration, mean that there has been a change in how parts of Sweden view the EU in connection with the COVID-19 crisis? To find out how Sweden views the EU and whether this has changed following the COVID-19 crisis it is necessary to look beyond the views and actions of the Swedish government and examine the stances of the political parties in Sweden. In representative democracies, political parties express visions and represent the views and interests of voters and therefore have an important function in “aggregating” the views held by citizens within a political system (Lindberg, Rasmussen, and Warntjen 2008, 1107; Fossum 2018, 91). Political parties also propose and debate policies within political systems. In addition to providing a much broader perspective on how Swedes view the EU, studying the political parties in Sweden is also of value because they themselves are important actors in the integration process. Parties have a direct and indirect role in the selection of representatives to the EU institutions. But they also because of the nature of Swedish politics are very involved in overseeing and influencing the government’s work in the EU.

Studying political parties in Sweden should therefore provide deeper insight into how different parts of Sweden view the EU and whether this has changed following the COVID-19 crisis. Much of the existing literature on Sweden and the EU was published in the first years of Sweden membership in the EU and has largely focused on Euroscepticism in Sweden. Raunio (2007) finds that the Swedish party system display strong support for Euroscepticism but that this is likely to decline over time. Gstöhl (2002) has examined why countries such as Sweden are reluctant Europeans and finds that economic interests along do not explain countries’ attitudes to European integration but are also influenced by domestic and geohistorical constraints.

The existing literature on Swedish political parties is also limited and has generally focused on Europeanization and Euroscepticism among Swedish parties. Kritzinger and Michalowitz (2005) have examined the effects of Europeanization on political parties in Sweden and find that European integration has changed parties in Sweden by increasing the salience of the EU in Swedish politics and by influencing parties’ positions on the EU. Johansson and Raunio (2001) have examined how political parties in Sweden and Finland respond to European integration. Their study finds that in Sweden public opinion and factionalism are the two strongest factors that explain Swedish party responses to the EU. The existing literature on Sweden and the EU has not systematically examined how Swedish parties view the EU in terms of political system. This thesis, therefore, aims to provide new

insight into how “Sweden” views the EU by examining how Swedish political parties view and understand the EU.

1.4 Research Question

The aim of this thesis is to examine how political parties in Sweden view and understand the EU, and whether this has changed following the COVID-19 crisis. The research questions of this thesis are as follows. What types of conceptions of the EU do political parties in Sweden have? And did their conceptions of the EU change following the COVID-19 crisis?

1.5 Outline of Chapters

The structure of this thesis will now be outlined. In the theory chapter intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism are presented as central theories on European integration. These theories are then reconceptualized as polity conceptions of the EU that come with a distinct set of assumptions about the EU and the integration process. The methodology chapter explains the research design and method used in this study, and the intergovernmental (IGC) and neofunctional conceptions of the EU (NFC) are operationalized. In the fourth chapter, the Riksdag parties’ manifestos from the Riksdag election in 2018 and European Parliament (EP) election in 2019, are assessed in terms of an IGC and NFC to find out what types of conceptions of the EU the parties had before the COVID-19 crisis. In the fifth chapter, the Riksdag parties’ views on the EU’s response to the COVID-19 crisis are assessed in terms of an IGC and NFC, to determine whether parties changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis. In the final chapter, the findings from the study are presented, before providing recommendations for future research.

2.0 Theory

The research questions of this thesis are: What types of conceptions of the EU do political parties in Sweden have? And did their conceptions of the EU change following the COVID-19 crisis? To determine what types of conceptions of the EU political parties in Sweden have, this thesis applies intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism as polity conceptions of the EU. In this chapter, I will first introduce the core features of intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism, before outlining how these theories can be reconceptualized as polity conceptions of the EU.

2.1 Neofunctionalism and Intergovernmentalism

Intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism are two theories or approaches to studying European integration and were launched in the 1950s and 60s. Since then, these theories have influenced not only the way in which scholars have studied the integration process but have also to large extent influenced the way central actors in the EU have perceived it. While both theories provide causal explanations of the integration process, there are few today who believe that these theories can explain all aspects and facets of the integration process.

2.1.1 Neofunctionalism

Neofunctionalism is a theory and an approach to studying European integration that is commonly associated with the work of Ernst Haas. The theory has also been associated with the works of several other scholars including Leon Lindberg and Philippe C. Schmitter who's contributions also further developed the theory. As neofunctionalism is a broad theory which comes in many forms, I will limit this overview to outlining some of the core features of neofunctionalism.

Three central features in neofunctionalism are the concept of spillover, transfer of loyalty, and supranational institutions. Spillover, which is at the very core of neofunctionalism, refers to the process whereby integration in a set of predominately economic policy sectors creates further pressures for integration in other nearby policy sectors. (Rosamond 2000, 59–60). Lindberg described spillover as a situation in which

integration driven by a specific goal creates a situation whereby the original goal only can be accomplished by further integration (Lindberg 1963, 10). From a neofunctional perspective integration is thus regarded as a linear and path dependent process where once integration first has taken place it will continue to create pressures for further integration. Furthermore, while integration is taken to start in economic sectors or areas of “low politics” integration is also expected to spill over into political sectors or areas of “high” politics and salience.

The process of spillover can also be viewed in the context of crises. Jean Monnet, the founder of the European project, claimed that “Europe will be forged in crises” (quoted in Guiso, Sapienza and Zingales 2016, 249). This view on the EU has also been associated with the idea of spillover. That the EU has tended to pursue integration in response to crises can be viewed in terms of the fact that the initial steps of integration often are deficient or incomplete. The high sunk and exit costs of choosing disintegration in the event of a crisis can therefore be viewed as forcing actors to fill the gaps in integration through pursuing further integration (Schimmelfennig 2018, 974).

A second feature of neofunctionalism is the central role of supranational institutions. As the integration process takes hold neofunctionalism expects that the supranational institutions created to oversee the integration to actively lay the groundwork for deeper integration (Rosamond 2000, 51). These institutions are expected to sponsor integration by facilitating agreement among actors on regional solutions (Niemann 2021, 119). A third central concept in neofunctionalism is the concept of loyalty. The transfer of loyalty was particularly important in Haas’s understanding of the integration process. He described integration as a process whereby political actors at the national level shift their “*loyalties, expectations and political activities toward a new centre*” (Haas 2004 [1958], 16). As integration proceeds actors at national level begin to re-direct their attention from the national to the supranational level. These actors themselves will therefore start to search for regional solutions to their problems (Rosamond 2000, 65–68).

2.1.2 Intergovernmentalism

Intergovernmentalism is another central theory on European integration which first was launched by Stanley Hoffman the 1960s is a theory that emphasizes the continued significance of the nation state and which in many ways was a critique of Haas’s neofunctionalism. Neofunctionalism is associated with an optimism towards the prospect of deeper integration and holds integration to be a process that once initiated creates pressures

for further integration. Hoffman's intergovernmentalism challenges these ideas and theorizes that while integration may occur more easily in areas of low politics and in predominately economic sectors it would stall in areas of high politics (Hoffman 1966, 882). Thus, while neofunctionalism envisions integration as a linear and path dependent process and therefore downplays the role of the nation state, intergovernmentalism presumes that they are the central actors in the integration process (Verdun 2020). Intergovernmentalism focuses on the interests of the member states and assumes that these will want as far as possible to retain control over their sovereignty. Alan Milward is another theorist who, like Hoffman, presented an intergovernmentalist perspective on European integration. In his well known work, *The European Rescue of the Nation-State* (2000 [1992]), Milward argued that rather than undermining the nation state integration helped European states retain the allegiance and support of its citizens (3). Milwards' intergovernmentalism is also associated with the view that it is the member states that are the primary actors in the integration process. His intergovernmentalist perspective also viewed integration as a process whereby states would surrender limited areas of sovereignty to supranational institutions (4).

2.2 Polity Conceptions of the EU

Intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism are theories that provide different causal explanations for the process of integration, but they are also theories that come with a distinct set of assumptions about what type of political system the EU is. Each theory encompasses assumptions about who the central actors in the EU are, what drives the process, what the scope of integration is, as well as what type of political system that results from this. In this thesis these theories are therefore not to be understood as causal theories, but as polity conceptions of the EU each of which provides a distinct conceptual perspective on what type of political system the EU is.

An intergovernmental conception of the EU (IGC) holds the EU to be a political system that is of and for the member states. It follows from this conception that the EU is a political system wherein the member states are the central actors in the EU and therefore both control the scope and pace of integration based on their national interests. The EU is thus a political system in which member states in specific policy areas delegate decision-making power to the EU, but where they ultimately retain control over these policy issues. So, while member states may be willing to delegate powers to the EU in specific policy areas, they will

resist integration in areas that are sensitive to national sovereignty. Consequently, the EU is also a political system that as far as possible should limit the loss of national sovereignty.

While Hoffmann made a distinction between areas of “high” and “low politics” and areas of high and low salience to denote those areas that were sensitive to national sovereignty an IGC conception incorporates Genschel and Jachtenfuch’s concept of core state powers. Core state powers refer to the resources that are commonly associated with states and that derive from its monopoly on coercion and taxation (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2014). These include policy areas that are associated with: military force, police power, border control, public revenue, and administrative rights (Genschel and Jachtenfuchs 2018, 181). As such, while member states may be willing to accept integration in some policy areas, they will oppose the integration of core state powers.

A neofunctional conception of the EU (NFC) holds the EU to be a political system wherein the EU’s supranational institutions are the central actors in the EU and the integration process. From this perspective integration is a process that is the result of interdependence between member states and the actions of the EU’s supranational institutions who to work facilitate deeper integration. It also follows from this conception that the EU is a political system which in the event of crises that threaten the state of integration (or expose gaps in integration) pursues deeper integration. An NFC does not make a distinction between different policy areas and therefore is also open to the integration of core state powers. Thus, because an NFC is characterized by an openness to the possibility of further integration and does not set a limit to the scope of integration, the political system that comes about from integration is a supranational EU.

The main features of an IGC and NFC are summarized in the table below.

Table 1

Conceptions of the EU	Intergovernmental Conception (IGC)	Neofunctional Conception (NFC)
Central Actors	- Member states	- Supranational institutions
Drivers of Integration	- National interests	- Interdependence - Crises - EU' supranational institutions
Scope of Integration	- Limited to areas that do not involve the integration of core state powers	- Unlimited
Political System	- Political system of and for the member states - Political system limited in scope - Intergovernmental decision-making (limited supranationalism)	- Supranational political system

In this chapter, the core features of intergovernmentalism and neofunctionalism as theories on European integration have been outlined. Further these theories have also been presented as polity conceptions of the EU, which are conceptual lenses through which the EU as a political system can be understood. In the next chapter, the methodological approach used in presented and discussed.

3.0 Methodology

3.1 Introduction

This chapter will explain the methodological approach used in this study. Firstly, I will explain the research design used to answer the research questions of this thesis. Secondly, I will operationalize the intergovernmental (IGC) and neofunctional conceptions presented in the theory chapter. Thirdly, I will explain the rationale behind the sources of data used and how data has been collected. Finally, I will discuss some of the methodological limitations of this study.

3.2 Research Design

This thesis is a study of how political parties in Sweden view and understand the EU in terms of political system, in other words, whether they conceive of the EU from the vantage point of the two theoretical conceptions presented here. The research questions of this thesis are, therefore, as follows. What types of conceptions of the EU do political parties in Sweden have? And did they change their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis?

The research design used in this study is informed by interpretivism. To answer the research questions of this thesis a multiple case study research design has been applied. Robert K. Yin defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the object of study and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009, 18). A multiple case study design differs from a single case study design in that rather than examining one unit, as is the case in a single case study; the former involves studying more than one case. A multiple case study design is thus suited when the aim of a study is to conduct a comprehensive investigation of several units, in this case, political parties represented in the Swedish Riksdag. As this study aims to provide insight into how political parties view and understand the EU as well as whether this has changed following the COVID-19, the study also makes use of a longitudinal design in which the parties’ conceptions of the EU are examined before the COVID-19 crisis as well as after.

As this study seeks to find out what types of conceptions of the EU political parties in Sweden have the study has aimed to include as many of the parties currently represented in the Riksdag as possible to increase the internal validity of the study. This study thus examines the Moderate Party, Christian Democrats, Centre Party, Sweden Democrats, Liberal Party, and the Left Party. Of the parties represented in the Riksdag in the period examined only the Social Democrats and the Green Party have been excluded. The main reason these parties were omitted from the study was due to limitations in the data which made it challenging and, in many cases, impossible to discern these parties' views on the EU from that of the Swedish government, which consisted of these parties. Including these two parties in the study would therefore have risked significantly threatening the validity of the findings. A brief overview of the Swedish government's position on the EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic will be outlined in the analysis but we cannot from this know precisely how each of the two parties viewed this issue. Further, while the chosen research design allows for a comprehensive analysis of the Riksdag parties' conceptions of the EU, the study does not aim to generalize the findings to other parties in Sweden, or parties in other countries.

3.3 Operationalization for Analysis (Before COVID-19 crisis)

To identify an IGC or NFC these conceptions are operationalized as specific views on the EU. These conceptions are identified based on two indicators. The first indicator relates to how parties view the role of the member states and the EU's supranational institutions. The second indicator relates to what the parties believe the scope of integration should be. An IGC holds that the EU is a political system that is of and for the member states. An IGC is therefore characterized by the view that it is the member states that are the main actors in the EU and that it, therefore, is their interests that are at the center of EU cooperation. It follows from an IGC that it is the member states that delegate competences to the EU's supranational institutions and that they thus retain control over these. An IGC also holds that it is the member states that should control the integration process and that they will oppose further integration of core state powers.

An NFC is characterized by openness or support for a supranational EU. This conception of the EU, therefore, holds that the EU's supranational institutions are important actors that should have autonomy vis a vis the member states. An NFC is consequently associated with openness or support for increasing the autonomy of the EU's supranational institutions. Furthermore, it follows from an NFC that integration is the result of interdependence between member states. This conception of the EU is therefore also

associated with openness or support for deeper integration including further integration in areas of core state powers.

The operationalization of the IGC and NFC is summarized in the table below.

Table 2

Indicators	Intergovernmental Conception (IGC)	Neofunctional Conception (NFC)
Role of Actors in the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The EU is a political system that is of and for the member states. - View the member states as the central actors in the EU - Interests of member states are at the center of EU cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open to or support the EU as a supranational political system - View the EU's supranational institutions as important - Open to or support strengthening the autonomy of the EU's supranational institutions vis a vis the member states
Scope of Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member states control the integration process - Set a limit to integration and oppose further integration in core state powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open to or support deeper integration including further integration in core state powers

3.4 Operationalization for Analysis (EU's Response to COVID-19 Crisis)

To identify an IGC and NFC and determine whether parties changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis, the two conceptions are operationalized in terms of two indicators. The first indicator relates to how parties viewed fiscal integration. The second indicator relates to how they viewed supranationalism. Based on these two primary indicators, secondary indicators for these conceptions are outlined. Below an IGC and NFC are operationalized.

3.4.1 Intergovernmental Conception of the EU (IGC)

It follows from an IGC that core state power such as fiscal policy should remain a competence of the member states. Parties with an IGC should therefore be opposed to further fiscal integration. Based on this, parties are expected to oppose the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis because it increases the EU's fiscal capacity, albeit temporarily. More specifically, it is expected that parties would oppose EU borrowing and new own resources that are not channeled through the member states because these increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect revenue. It is also expected that parties would oppose the disbursement of EU grants as part of NGEU because it increases the EU's fiscal capacity to spend revenue.

Furthermore, an IGC holds the EU to be a political system of and for the member states and, therefore, stands in opposition to supranationalism. Based on this, parties are expected to oppose features of the EU's crisis response because they strengthen the EU's supranational institutions. More specifically, it is expected that parties would oppose giving the Commission a central role in the EU's crisis response.

Thus, although the parties' views are expected to be consistent with the secondary indicators, parties will only have changed their conception of the EU if they change their views on the primary indicators.

The operationalization of the IGC is summarized in the table below

Table 3

Intergovernmental Conception of the EU (IGC)	Indicators
<p style="text-align: center;">Primary Indicators</p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>(Change in view on these indicators would mean parties have changed their conception of the EU)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oppose further fiscal integration - Oppose Supranationalism (Supranational EU)
<p style="text-align: center;">Secondary Indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Oppose fiscal capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Oppose EU borrowing b. Oppose own resources that would increase the EU’s fiscal capacity to collect its <i>own</i> revenue c. Oppose disbursement of EU grants - Oppose strengthening of the EU’s supranational institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Oppose giving Commission central role in EU’s crisis response

3.4.2 Neofunctional Conception of the EU (NFC)

It follows from an NFC that the EU is a political system that integrates because of interdependence between member states and in response to crises. It is therefore expected that during a crisis such as the COVID-19 crisis, which many viewed as an existential crisis for the EU, parties would support the EU’s crisis response that involves deeper integration and strengthens the EU’s supranational institutions.

As an NFC entails an openness to integration, including the integration of core state powers, it is expected that parties would be open to or support fiscal integration, such as

increasing the EU's fiscal capacity. More specifically, it is expected that parties would have been open to or supported features of the EU's crisis, such as EU borrowing, all types of new own resources, and the disbursement of EU grants. Furthermore, because an NFC entails openness or support of supranationalism, parties are expected to have supported strengthening the EU's supranational institutions. More specifically, it is expected that parties during the crisis would have supported giving the EU's supranational institutions a central role in the EU's crisis response.

Thus, although parties' views are expected to be consistent with the secondary indicators, parties will only have changed their conception of the EU if they change their views on the primary indicators.

The operationalization of the NFC is summarized in the table below

Table 4

Neofunctional Conception of the EU (NFC)	Indicators
<p align="center">Primary Indicators</p> <p align="center"><i>(Change in view on these indicators would mean parties have changed their conception of the EU)</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support or open to fiscal integration - Support or open to supranationalism
<p align="center">Secondary Indicators</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Support increasing the EU's fiscal capacity <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support EU borrowing b. Support all types of new own resources c. Support disbursement of EU grants - Support strengthening of the EU's supranational institutions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Support giving the Commission a central role in the EU's crisis response

3.5 Method of Analysis

To assess what type of conception of the EU the Riksdag parties had before and after the COVID-19 crisis, this study builds on a qualitative document analysis of relevant documents and texts. Glenn Bowen defines document analysis as “a systematic procedure for reviewing or evaluating documents—both printed and electronic (computer-based and Internet-transmitted) material” (Bowen 2009, 27). This qualitative method requires that data is examined and interpreted to provide meaning. Interpretation of the contents of documents is therefore central to this type of analysis. In this study, what the parties said and did before as well as during the COVID-19 crisis is assessed in terms of the indicators for an IGC and NFC.

3.6 Data Collection (Period prior to the EU’s COVID-19 crisis)

To find out what types of conceptions of the EU the Riksdag parties had before the COVID-19 crisis, data was collected from the parties’ party manifestos. It has become a norm for political parties in parliamentary democracies to publish manifestos in which they present their policy preferences and priorities for a given period (Suiter and Farrell 2011, 29). Party manifestos are official documents that the parties themselves publish and should therefore both be reliable sources and sources that provide insight into how parties view specific policy issues including the EU. Studies have shown that the extent to which parties focus on issues relating to the EU in their national election campaigns has continued to increase in recent years (Senninger and Wagner 2015, 1336). The fact that manifestos are sources that provide the parties’ official positions and views on issues makes these particularly useful sources when trying to find out how a party views the EU.

Data collection for the period prior to the COVID-19 crisis has been limited to what the parties said about the EU in their manifestos from the Riksdag election in 2018 and the EP election in 2019. Limiting data collection to manifestos from these two elections ensure that one gets a broader perspective on how the parties viewed the EU if only one of the manifestos had been included, while also ensuring that one gets the parties’ most recent view on the EU. Besides providing a broader perspective on how the parties viewed the EU, including manifestos from two different types of elections also avoids the risk that parties

may express different views on the EU depending on whether its views are being communicated in the context of a national election or an election to the EP. While the inclusion of manifestos does introduce the risk that parties may have significantly changed their views on the EU between the two elections, the proximity of the two elections, approximately five months, should limit this risk.

Furthermore, because there are differences in how the parties communicated their views to voters in the run-up to these elections data collection for the manifestos has included all data that was digitally available on the parties' websites in the period leading up to both elections. The data collection process involved extensively searching the parties' websites to find pages and PDF files in which the parties' views on the EU were presented. To ensure that the data on the websites was representative of what parties communicated to voters in the period leading up to the two elections the data was collected using Wayback Machine. Wayback Machine is a digital archive that allows users to access websites as they were at specific points in time. However, due to limitations in the Wayback Machine archive, it was not possible to collect data from the parties' websites at the same point in time. Data were therefore collected from the parties' websites as close to each other in time as possible. For the Riksdag election on September 9th, 2018, data for all the parties except the Centre Party was collected from the party websites on September 6th, 2018. In the case of the Centre Party, data was collected from their website on August 1st, 2018. To ensure that the data collected from the Centre Party's website was representative of what voters saw in the lead-up to the election, the web pages from August 1st were cross-checked with the Centre Party's website on September 17th, 2018. This showed that the Centre Party's web pages had not changed during this period. For the EP election in 2019, data collection was limited to the collection of the parties' EP manifestos that were digitally available on their websites.

3.7 Data Collection (EU's Response to COVID-19 Crisis)

To determine whether parties changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis, the parties' views and actions in relation to the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis are assessed. The study has been limited to assessing the Riksdag parties' views on the EU's recovery fund NGEU and the introduction of new own resources. The most central processes regarding the establishment of NGEU occurred between May 2020, when the Commission first presented its NGEU proposal, and May 2021, when NGEU was established after the ORD was ratified in the national parliaments of the EU's member states. As this was an

extended period, the study has been limited to assessing the parties' views and actions in relation to the EU's crisis response during three periods central to the establishment of NGEU.

The first period examined is between May 27th and July 16th, 2020. This period marks when the Commission first presented its NGEU proposal and the weeks leading up to the negotiations at the EC Summit at which the EU's recovery efforts and the EU budget were negotiated. The second period examined is between July 17th and July 21st, during which the negotiations at the EC Summit took place and resulted in the agreement to establish NGEU. The third period is limited to one day, March 24th, 2021, and is the date on the ORD was debated in the Riksdag. One of the reasons these three periods are examined in this study is to gain insight into what the parties said and did in relation to the EU's crisis response at these points in time. The main reason these three periods were examined was to provide a comprehensive understanding of how these parties viewed the EU's crisis response and to determine whether these parties changed their conceptions of the EU following the crisis.

For the first and second periods examined, data collection was limited to transcripts from meetings in the Riksdag Committee on European Union Affairs (CEUA) and news articles published in Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter in which the parties' views on the EU crisis response were presented. In Sweden, the CEUA has an essential role in Swedish EU politics. In the CEUA, the Swedish government consults the Riksdag parties on its position in the EU before meeting in the Council of Ministers and the European Council. While it is the Swedish government that represents Sweden in the EU, the government is expected to act in accordance with the views of the CEUA (Sveriges Riksdag 2022). During negotiations in the European Council, the CEUA gives the government a mandate which represents Riksdag's view on the position the government should take in the negotiations (Sveriges Riksdag 2022). The CEUA is a parliamentary committee in which the Swedish government, as well as the other Riksdag parties, present and discuss their positions on issues in the EU. Transcripts from meetings in this committee are therefore useful as they provide detailed and reliable information about what the parties said and did in relation to the EU's crisis response. While data were collected from news articles, in which the parties expressed their views on the EU's crisis response, only one of these articles included information about parties' views that were not expressed in the CEUA.

For the third period which is limited to the debate on the ORD in the Riksdag, only transcripts from the Riksdag debate were included. The decision not to include news articles in the data collection for the second and third periods was taken since the news articles

collected from the first period had provided little if any additional information about the parties' views than what was expressed in the CEUA and the Riksdag debate. So, while this could mean that parties may have expressed alternative viewpoints to those expressed in official channels, the analysis of the second and third periods has relied on what the parties said in the CEUA and the Riksdag.

3.8 Methodological Limitations

This study has aimed to find out how political parties in Sweden view and understand the EU in terms of political system and whether this changed following the COVID-19 crisis.

To determine how the parties viewed the EU, it has predominately focused on examining and analyzing what the parties communicated in a parliamentary setting rather than what they may have communicated elsewhere. To find out how the parties viewed the EU before the COVID-19 crisis, the study has focused on what the Riksdag parties said in their latest manifestos from elections in the Riksdag and EP. While documents released in connection with these elections should be reliable sources that provide insight into the parties' official views, it is also possible that other types of data could have provided an even broader and more nuanced understanding of how the parties viewed the EU during this period. Furthermore, to determine whether parties changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis, the study assessed the Riksdag parties' views on the EU's crisis response. Examining the parties' views on this issue over the course of three periods allows for a comprehensive analysis of whether the parties changed their conceptions of the EU during this process. However, the temporary nature of the NGEU means that while the study is suited to assess whether the parties have changed their conception of the EU during the COVID-19 crisis, it is also possible that it may yet be too early to know this for sure. Another limitation of this study is that it does not examine the Social Democrats and the Green Party. Thus, while this study has sought to determine what types of conceptions of the EU parties in the Riksdag have, the omission of these two parties, which make up the Sweden government, is a significant limitation of the study. The challenges of disaggregating the views of the Swedish government from that of the individual parties meant that it was not possible to include these parties in the study without threatening the validity of the findings. Therefore, future research could use triangulation and other data to disaggregate the individual parties' views from that of the government.

In the next chapter, the Riksdag parties' manifestos from the Riksdag election in 2018 and the EP election in 2019 are assessed in terms of an IGC and NFC to find out what types of conception of the EU parties had before the COVID-19 crisis.

4.0 Analysis: Political Party Manifestos of Sweden's Riksdag Parties

After the elections in 2018, eight political parties were represented in the Riksdag, Sweden's national parliament. The parties represented in the Riksdag are as follows: the Social Democrats, Moderate Party, Sweden Democrats, Centre Party, Left Party, Christian Democrats, and the Green Party. In the period following the 2018 election, and up until the ratification of the ORD in March 2021, the Swedish government was a minority coalition formed by the Social Democrats and the Green Party, with the Liberal Party and the Centre Party acting as supporting parties.

To find out what type of conception of the EU the Riksdag parties had prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the parties' manifestos from the Riksdag election in 2018 and the EP election in 2019 are assessed. Firstly, do the Riksdag parties view the EU as a political system that is of and for the member states, or do they express openness towards or support for an EU with autonomous supranational institutions? Secondly, do the Riksdag parties want to limit the scope of integration, and do they oppose the integration of core state powers? Or do they leave open the possibility of deeper integration including the integration of core state powers?

The indicators for the conceptions are summarized in the table below.

Table 5

Indicators	Intergovernmental Conception (IGC)	Neofunctional Conception (NFC)
Role of Actors in the EU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The EU is a political system that is of and for the member states. - View the member states as the central actors in the EU - Interests of member states are at the center of EU cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open or support the EU as a supranational political system - View the EU's supranational institutions as important - Open or support strengthening the autonomy of the EU's supranational institutions vis a vis the member states
Scope of Integration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Member states control the integration process - Set a limit to integration and oppose further integration in core state powers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Open or support deeper integration including further integration in core state powers

4.1 Christian Democrats

The Christian Democrats are a center-right Christian Democratic Party and is the sixth-largest party in the Riksdag following the election in 2018. In the EP, the Christian Democrats are part of the EPP party group. In its manifestos, the Christian Democrats state that they stand for democracy based on Christian views and values (Kristendemokraterna 2018c). The party supports Swedish EU membership and believes that the EU's purpose should be to protect

and preserve peace, strengthen democracy, and create prosperity (Kristendemokraterna 2018c). The Christian Democrats' view is that the debate about the EU is often based on two extreme positions: those who view every decision as a threat to Sweden as a nation, and those who believe that there is no limit to what can be decided in Brussels (Kristendemokraterna 2018d, 3). They state that their view on the EU does not correspond to either of these positions as they understand the importance of a "united" and "cohesive Europe" (3, my translation). The party believes that issues that cannot be solved by the member states on their own should be dealt with in "agreement" between the "countries of Europe" (3, my translation).

The Christian Democrats' manifestos indicate that the party believes that the member states are the central actors in the EU and that it is the interests of the member states that should dictate what the EU does. In its manifestos, the Christian Democrats emphasize the importance of ensuring that the EU is used in the "right way" (Kristendemokraterna 2018a, my translation). In other words, the EU should focus on cross-border challenges, decisions should be made at the "appropriate" level, and differences between member states should be respected (Kristendemokraterna 2018a, my translation). The party also states that the EU budget "must be guided by the role we want the EU to play" (Kristendemokraterna 2018d, 12, my translation). The fact that the Christian Democrats believe that the EU should focus on the right things and its view that the EU must be guided by the role "we" want the EU to play can be interpreted as a sign that it believes the EU should be *controlled* by the member states and that it does this by influencing the composition of the EU budget as well as how it is financed (12, my translation). This suggests that the Christian Democrats believe that the EU is a political system that should be guided by the interests of the member states.

Furthermore, the Christian Democrats' opposition to what they describe as a "prevailing orientation" among EU leaders to want to build a federal and centralized EU, demonstrates its opposition to a federal EU (Kristendemokraterna 2018b, my translation). While it is unclear what aspects of a federal EU it opposes this can be interpreted in the direction that it is opposed to an EU with institutions that have a significant amount of autonomy vis a vis the member states. Additionally, the Christian Democrats do not directly state that they are opposed to supranationalism. However, its opposition to this is highlighted by its stated opposition to supranationalism in areas such as social policy, where it believes that it is primarily through the internal market, and not through the "common" solutions at the supranational level, that the EU can contribute to increased growth and jobs (Kristendemokraterna 2018d, 6, my translation).

The Christian Democrats' manifestos indicate that the party appears to be willing to accept supranationalism in some policy areas, but that they oppose supranationalism in areas *they* believe are best handled at the national level (Kristendemokraterna 2018d, 6). This suggests that while the Christian Democrats may be willing to afford the EU's institutions autonomy in relation to *certain* policy areas, they are opposed to an EU where the EU's institutions would have enough autonomy to disregard the interests of the member states.

Moreover, the Christian Democrats' manifestos indicate that the party wants to limit the scope of integration and that it opposes further integration in core state powers such as fiscal policy. In their manifestos, the party states that the "Christian Democrats want a narrow and sharper EU with closer cooperation on security, the environment, migration and trade issues" (Kristendemokraterna 2018b, my translation). They also state that they believe EU cooperation is increasing and that the EU today "has influence in more issues than the Christian Democrats believe that the Union should have" (Kristendemokraterna 2018b, my translation). The party therefore believes the EU on a "number of issues may need to take a step back" (Kristendemokraterna 2018b, my translation). The Christian Democrats believe that decision-making power in some areas should be returned to the member states, but they are also open to the idea that decision-making power in other areas could be moved to the EU level (Kristendemokraterna 2018e). This suggests that while the party believes that integration in some areas should be scaled back, it is also open to the possibility that other policy areas could be moved to the EU level. This can also be viewed in terms of the earlier point that while the Christian Democrats accept supranational cooperation in some areas, they appear to want to retain control in areas *they* believe should be handled at the national level.

In its manifestos, the Christian Democrats state that they are opposed to Sweden's participation in the EMU (Kristendemokraterna 2018b). They also state that they are opposed to a common fiscal policy and EU taxation (Kristendemokraterna 2018b). The Christian Democrats' manifestos show that the party is opposed to monetary integration but the party's opposition to a common fiscal policy and EU taxation also strongly indicates that the party is opposed to further integration in core state powers such as fiscal policy.

The Christian Democrats' manifestos appear to indicate that the party views the EU's member states as the central actors in the EU and that it opposes an EU where the EU's institutions acquire enough autonomy to disregard the interests of the member states. They also highlight that the Christian Democrats want to limit the scope of integration and in some cases even scale back the level of integration. The Christian Democrat's opposition to EU taxation and a common fiscal policy indicate its opposition to further integration of core state

powers such as fiscal policy. The manifestos thus indicate that the Christian Democrats, prior to the COVID-19 crisis, had an IGC.

In this chapter, the Riksdag parties' manifestos from the Riksdag election in 2018 and the EP election in 2019 were assessed in terms of an IGC and NFC to determine what types of conceptions of the EU the political parties in Sweden had before the COVID-19 crisis. The analysis found that the Christian Democrats, Moderate Party, Centre Party, Sweden Democrats, and the Left Party had an IGC, while the Liberal Party had an NFC. In the next chapter, the Riksdag parties' views on the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis will be assessed to determine whether parties changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

4.2 Moderate Party

The Moderate Party is a center-right liberal-conservative party and was the second-largest party in the Riksdag following the election in 2018. In the EP, the Moderate Party is part of the European People's Party (EPP) party group. In its manifestos, the Moderate Party states that the EU is Sweden's most important international platform (Moderaterna 2018a). They state that "We have always loved Sweden, but we have also understood that Sweden is part of Europe and that we become better and stronger together (Moderaterna 2018b, 3, my translation).

The Moderate Party's manifestos indicate that the party believes the member states are the central actors in the EU. In their manifestos, the Moderate Party emphasizes that they "want to ensure that the EU does the right things and becomes relevant to the member states and citizens" (Moderaterna 2018b, 6, my translation). They state that they want to ensure that the EU budget "is used for the right things" (18, my translation). The Moderate Party's strong emphasis that the EU should do the *right* things, and its desire to use the EU budget to ensure that this is the case suggests that the party believes that it is the member states that should dictate what the EU does and that this should serve the interests of the member states. This is particularly evident in the fact that while the Moderate Party almost exclusively talks about Sweden's interests in the EU, it does not mention the role of the EU's institutions in European cooperation. Therefore, the fact that the Moderate Party scarcely mentions the EU institutions suggests that it does not view these as important. Besides stating that it believes the EU should focus on the right things, the Moderate party also stresses that cooperation should only be deepened in those areas where only the EU can play a "crucial" role

(Moderaterna 2018a, my translation). The Moderate Party believes that the EU is being challenged economically and politically and that this threatens the EU's stability. To tackle this the party suggests that Sweden needs to push the EU to focus on cross-border problems that "actually require common solutions" (Moderaterna 2018a, my translation). Its view is that the EU should focus on areas such as the internal market, migration, cross-border crime, the climate, and Europe's freedom and security (Moderaterna 2018a). However, while the Moderate Party believes the EU needs to focus more on these issues, it also states its opposition to Sweden's participation in the EMU and that it wants to protect Sweden's "self-determination" in areas such as taxation, the labor market, and family law" (Moderaterna 2018a, my translation). The Moderate Party's manifestos show that the party wants to limit the scope of integration and specifies the areas in which it believes the EU needs to focus. As with several other Riksdag parties, the Moderate party's opposition to EU taxation indicates that it opposes further integration of core state powers such as fiscal policy.

The Moderate Party's manifestos indicate that the party believes the member states are the most important actors in the EU. While the manifestos suggest that the Moderate Party believes the member states and their interests are at the center of EU cooperation, it is unclear whether this also means that it opposes an EU where its institutions have autonomy from the member states. The Moderate Party's manifestos show that the party wants to limit the scope of integration to specific areas. The party's opposition to EU taxation, which is linked to an EU fiscal capacity, also indicates that it opposes further integration of core state powers such as fiscal policy. The manifestos indicate that the Moderate Party, before the COVID-19 crisis, had an IGC.

4.3 Sweden Democrats

The Sweden Democrats are a nationalist right-wing party and are the third-largest party in Riksdag following the election in 2018. In the EP, the Sweden Democrats are part of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) party group. In their manifestos, the Sweden Democrats state, "The Sweden Democrats believe that European cooperation should primarily be carried out on an intergovernmental basis, where Sweden can participate to the extent that is appropriate from a Swedish perspective" (Sverigedemokraterna 2018a, my translation). They also state that since joining the EU, the EU has grown into a "major political and bureaucratic project" which has meant that Sweden has lost a significant amount of power to decision-makers in Brussels (Sverigedemokraterna 2018a, my translation). The

manifestos show that the Sweden Democrats believe that European cooperation should primarily be carried out on an intergovernmental basis and that Sweden has lost power to the EU since it joined. The manifestos, therefore, indicate that the Sweden Democrats believe that the EU should be a political system in which the member states are the central actors. As a result, the party wants the EU to be a form of cooperation in which the member states themselves decide the extent to which they participate, thereby limiting the loss of sovereignty.

Furthermore, the impression that the Sweden Democrats view the member as the most important actors in the EU and that it is their interests that should be at the center of European cooperation is further strengthened by the fact that its vision of Europe is characterized by “strong national democracies” where each “nation” should decide its own future (Sverigedemokraterna 2018b, 6, my translation). This understanding is further strengthened by the fact that the party advocates changing the EU’s Treaties to increase the EU’s “respect” for national self-determination (6, my translation). The party wants to change the EU Treaties in a manner where the member states’ ability to veto proposals in areas in which the EU “acquires power at the expense of the member states” is strengthened (4, my translation). This demonstrates that the Sweden Democrats want to reform the EU to protect the sovereignty of the member states by enabling them to veto proposals that they believe affect their sovereignty.

Additionally, the fact that the Sweden Democrats do not mention the role of the EU’s institutions in their manifestos further reinforces the impression that the Sweden Democrats view the member states as the central actors in the EU. In light of its desire to protect the sovereignty of the member states, the Sweden Democrats do not believe the EU should be a political system with supranational institutions that have a significant amount of autonomy vis a vis the member states. Instead, the Sweden Democrats want to retain as much sovereignty as possible by controlling the areas and the extent to which they participate in cooperation.

Moreover, the Sweden Democrats’ manifestos show that the party wants to limit the scope of integration and opposes the integration of core state powers such as fiscal policy. It believes the EU predominately should focus on areas such as the internal market and on maintaining cross border trade and that it should not get involved in areas such as social policy, insurance, criminal law, the labor market, and taxation (Sverigedemokraterna 2018a). In their manifestos, the Sweden Democrats also emphasize that they are strongly against Sweden’s participation in the EMU. They state that “we believe that decisions about a

country's budget and finances are entirely a national matter" (Sverigedemokraterna 2018b, 9, my translation). They state that taxation must "of course" remain a national competence and that Sweden's ability to conduct its own fiscal policy "must be safeguarded" (9, my translation). The Sweden Democrat's opposition to EU taxation, as well as its view that Sweden must use its veto to stop all proposals that would give the EU a right to tax, indicate that the party is not only against monetary integration but also the integration of core state powers such as fiscal policy. In its manifestos, the Sweden Democrats also state that Sweden in the long-term should work towards leaving the Schengen (4). In tandem with its belief that it should be easier for member states to restrict the freedom of movement in the internal market, this suggests, that the party opposes further fiscal integration and may want to scale back the integration of core state powers such as border controls (4). The manifestos thus indicate that the Sweden Democrats, prior to the COVID-19 crisis, had an IGC.

4.4 Left Party

The Left Party is a left-wing socialist party and is the fifth largest party in the Riksdag following the election in 2018. In the EP, the Left Party is part of the party group known as Now the People. In its manifestos, the Left party states that it works for a socialist Europe and wants to change the EU and turn it into a better form of cooperation. The Left Party is highly critical of the EU and makes it clear that its long-term goal is for Sweden to leave the EU (Vänsterpartiet 2018a). However, while the party wants Sweden to leave the EU, it also stresses that it wants to change the EU and wants to achieve its political goals from within the EU as long as Sweden remains a member (Vänsterpartiet 2018a).

The Left Party's opposition to the EU is partly based on its view that the EU is responsible for forcing right-wing economic policies on its member states and partly on what it views as the EU's development in a supranational and federalist direction (Vänsterpartiet 2018a). In its manifestos, the Left Party states that "the Left Party works against the EU's development in a federalist and supranational direction and works towards returning power to the people" (Vänsterpartiet 2018b, 6, my translation). Another reason why the party wants to return power to the member states because it believes the EU and its institutions are undemocratic. To make the EU more democratic, the Left Party believes that power should be taken from EU bureaucrats, Commissioner's, and judges and returned to national parliaments (6). The Left Party appears to view the EU as undemocratic because it does not believe the policies made at the EU level are for the good of European citizens. But the

primary reason the party appears to believe that the EU is undemocratic is that it opposes supranationalism and thus believes that only decisions that are taken at the national level are democratically legitimate (6).

The Left Party's opposition to supranationalism and its view that the EU's institutions are undemocratic suggests that the Left Party wants the EU to be a form of cooperation that respects the sovereignty of the member states. As a result, the Left Party's manifestos indicate that the party believes that it is the member states who should be the central actors in the EU and that it therefore opposes an EU where its institutions acquire significant autonomy from the interests of the member states.

However, the Left Party's manifestos provide little insight into what the party believes the scope of integration should be. Nonetheless, they do reveal that the Left Party believes the EU should focus more on policy issues such as the environment while also opposing Sweden's participation in the EMU (Vänsterpartiet 2018b, 6). Its view is that Sweden should have its own independent economic policy and that it needs to be possible for member states to leave the EMU if they desire (6). The manifestos highlight that the Left Party opposes both monetary and fiscal integration. Its view that member states need to be able to leave the EMU if they desire suggests that the party supports differentiated integration in the EU. The Left Party's support for differentiated integration supports the notion that the Left Party wants to protect the sovereignty of the member states. A greater acceptance of differentiated integration in the EU would allow member states themselves to decide which areas of cooperation they want to participate in and thereby increase their sovereignty. This view on the EU is also reflected in the Left Party's desire to return power to the member states. The fact that the Left Party wants to return power to member states suggests that it believes that the uniform integration, which has largely been the status quo in the EU, has meant that member states already have transferred too much power to the EU's institutions. Rather than simply wanting to limit the scope of integration, the Left Party wants the member states to retain sovereignty by allowing them to decide on the extent to which they participate in specific areas of cooperation.

The Left Party's manifestos indicate that the party believes that member states are the most important actors in the EU and show that it opposes supranationalism. They also indicate that the party believes that the member states should be able to control the scope of integration. The fact that it opposes Sweden's participation in the EMU, as well as fiscal integration, indicates that it opposes the integration of core state powers such as fiscal policy. The Left Party's manifestos indicate that, prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the party had an IGC.

4.5 Liberal Party

The Liberal Party is a liberal center-right party and is the seventh-largest party in Riksdag following the election in 2018. In the EP, the Liberals are part of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe. In their manifestos, the Liberal Party states that they want to stop “Swexit” and that the presence of two “relatively” large anti- EU parties in the form of the Sweden Democrats and the Left Party means that the risk of Sweden leaving the EU is greater than ever before (Liberalerna 2018a, my translation). The party describes itself as the opposite of the Sweden Democrats and the Left Party, who are parties that want to leave the EU (Liberalerna 2018a). Based on their praise for the EU and broader European cooperation, the Liberal Party appears to be the Riksdag party that is the most positive about the EU.

The Liberal Party’s manifestos show that the party wants to strengthen the EU’s institutions as well as make them more democratic. In its manifestos, the Liberal party advocates strengthening the EP by giving it its own right to initiate legislative proposals in the EU (Liberalerna 2018b, 39). It also advocates making the EP more democratic by introducing transnational voting lists. The Liberal Party states that “one step in the deepening of European integration would be to give EU citizens the opportunity to vote for candidates from other countries in the European election” (39, my translation). The Liberal Party’s desire to strengthen the EU’s supranational institutions suggests that it believes the EU should be a political system with a certain level of autonomy.

This impression is further strengthened by the fact that the Liberal party believes that it is “unacceptable” when member states refuse to implement “democratically taken EU decisions and violate the founding Treaties” (Liberalerna 2018b, 39, my translation). It believes the EU should be able to take action against member states that do not implement EU law correctly (39, my translation). This shows both that the Liberal Party views the decisions made by the EU’s institutions as legitimate but also that it does not believe that member states are above the decisions made at the EU level.

The Liberal Party’s manifestos, therefore, show that the party wants to strengthen the role of the EU’s institutions and that it believes the decisions they make are legitimate and that the member states therefore must respect the decisions made at the EU level. While the Liberal Party manifestos indicate that the member states have an important role in the EU, it believes the EU should be a political system wherein its institutions have autonomy vis a vis the member states. Moreover, in contrast to the other Riksdag parties which either want to

reduce or limit the size of the EU budget, the Liberal Party supports increasing the EU budget, if used to fund future investments in research, digitization, innovation, as well as increased joint commitments to security and safety in Europe (Liberalerna 2018a).

In terms of the scope of integration, the Liberal Party highlights specific policy areas which they believe should be prioritized by the EU. Their view is that the EU should become even more involved in policy issues such as democracy and human rights, the climate and environment, migration, trade, and the freedom of movement (Liberalerna 2018a). The Liberal Party is also of the view that Sweden should participate in the EMU and is the only Riksdag party that states that they want Sweden to join the EMU (Liberalerna 2018a). The Liberal Party is also the only Riksdag party that is positive of proposals for a joint EU finance minister and a common budget for the eurozone (Liberalerna 2018b, 17). The party advocates strengthening the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) stating that this would make the EU better equipped to deal with financial crises (17). Additionally, while many of the other Riksdag parties oppose EU taxation, the Liberal Party supports the introduction of a carbon dioxide and aviation tax at the EU level (Liberalerna 2018a). In its manifestos, the Liberal Party states that “Today, the revenue in the EU’s budget consists mostly of fees from the member states, in the future this should be supplemented with a common carbon dioxide tax” (Liberalerna 2018b, 38, my translation). The Liberal Party’s support for certain EU taxes indicates that the party does not necessarily oppose the prospect of taxation at the EU level, but it also suggests that the party supports giving the EU new revenue sources that are independent from the member states. The Liberal Party’s support for EU taxes, combined with its support for proposals for an EU finance minister and a common eurozone budget strongly suggests that the Liberal Party supports some form of fiscal integration in the EU and that it supports the integration of core state powers such as fiscal policy.

However, while the Liberal Party is open to more cooperation in some policy areas including in core state power such as fiscal policy, the party also highlights areas in which it does not believe the EU should be involved in. In its manifestos, the party states that the EU does not need a common policy for cultural issues, tourism, and the media (Liberalerna 2018a). Its view is that these are issues that are best handled by the countries themselves (Liberalerna 2018a). One way to interpret the Liberal Party’s manifestos is that the party believes that there should be a limit to the scope of integration. A more fitting interpretation is that the party expresses the view that in certain areas one does not “need” a common EU policy (Liberalerna 2018a, my translation). Thus, while the party does believe that there are certain areas where it does not believe the EU *needs* to get involved, it does not necessarily

rule out the possibility of the EU becoming involved in these areas either. This second interpretation is strengthened by the fact that while many of the other Riksdag parties stated that the EU “must” and “should not” be involved in specific areas, the Liberal Party’s use of the “need” suggests that it believed there was limited value of the EU becoming more involved in these policy areas (Liberalerna 2018a, my translation).

The Liberal Party’s desire to strengthen and make EU institutions, such as the EP, more democratically legitimate suggests that the party views the EU’s supranational institutions as important actors. It also believes that these institutions should have a certain level of autonomy vis a vis the member states. The Liberal Party, therefore, seems to view the EU as a political system that should have autonomous institutions. While it is not entirely clear if the Liberal party sets a limit to the scope of integration, the party does support deeper integration as well as the integration of core state power such as fiscal policy. The manifestos indicate that the Liberal Party, before the COVID-19 crisis, had an NFC.

4.6 Centre Party

The Centre Party is a Centre or Centre-right party that is the fourth largest party in the Riksdag following the election in 2018. In the EP, the Centre Party is part of the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE). In its manifestos, the Centre Party states that the EU is Sweden’s most important cooperation (Centerpartiet 2018a). However, while the party supports Sweden’s membership in the EU, it also believes that the EU needs to be developed to better deal with new challenges stemming from globalization and increased trade and become more efficient and comprehensible to citizens (Centerpartiet 2018a).

In its manifestos, the Centre Party emphasizes that the EU should focus on the “right things” (Centerpartiet 2018a, my translation). The Centre Party believes the EU should focus on issues that the member states have difficulties resolving on their own. It states that the party will continue to work to ensure “that the EU focuses on the right things” and that “the right decisions are made at the right level” (Centerpartiet 2018b, 12, my translation). The Centre Party’s intent to ensure that the EU focuses on the “right things” indicates that it believes that there are things the EU should and should not do (Centerpartiet 2018a, my translation). Its emphasis on ensuring that the EU focuses on the right things and that decisions are made at the right level, however, also strongly suggests that it believes that it is the member states that should determine this. This is evident in its view that the EU’s role is to work for the member states. In its manifestos, the party states, “There are forces that want

the EU to not primarily work for the member states but for the Union to grow at the expense of the member states” (Centerpartiet 2018b, 11–12, my translation). The party believes that this type of view on the EU “risks the future of the Union” (12, my translation). This highlights that the Centre Party believes that the EU first and foremost should serve the interests of the member states and strongly indicates that it views them as the most important actors in the EU. The view that it would “threaten” the EU’s survival if it were to grow at the “expense” of the member states can be interpreted as a sign that while the party may accept giving the EU’s supranational institutions a degree of autonomy, that it still opposes a situation whereby the EU’s institutions would acquire sufficient autonomy to be able to entirely disregard the interests of the member states (12, my translation).

The Centre Party’s manifestos show that the party believes that the EU should focus on “common” issues such as the environment and climate, migration, and trade (Centerpartiet 2018a, my translation). However, it does not want the EU to be involved in areas such as taxation, education, welfare, culture, and natural resources (Centerpartiet 2018a, my translation). The Centre Party specifically states that it is against Sweden adopting the euro because it wants to respect the Swedish people’s desire to remain outside the EMU (Centerpartiet 2018a). It also states that it opposes Sweden joining the EU’s banking Union because it believes it would put Sweden at a disadvantage because it is not part of the EMU and because it would involve “too much supranationalism” (Centerpartiet 2018a, my translation).

As a result, while the Centre Party appears to be open to closer cooperation in some policy areas, it also clearly opposes the EU’s involvement in others. The Centre Party thus wants to limit the scope of integration. However, its opposition to EU taxation, which is linked to a fiscal capacity at the EU level, indicates that it is opposed to further integration of core state powers, such as fiscal policy.

The Centre Party thus wants to limit integration, but it also advocates for an EU that develops at “different rates” (Centerpartiet 2018a, my translation). The Centre Party states that it wants it to be possible for some member states to pursue integration without the need for all member states to participate. Accordingly, the party advocates for an EU that accepts differentiated integration as a feature of the EU.

Differentiated integration refers to a form of integration where member states themselves can decide whether to participate in areas of integration and stands in contrast to uniform integration, where all member states in the EU participate equally (Schimmelfennig 2019). Its view is that an EU, which to a greater extent, allows for differentiated integration,

would be beneficial because it would ensure that the EU “does not become paralyzed because some countries say no to development and reform” (Centerpartiet 2018a, my translation). Another reason it believes this would be desirable is that it believes the EU’s four freedoms are too important for the only option to be that countries would have to leave the EU if they are dissatisfied with developments in the EU (Centerpartiet 2018a). This suggests that the Centre Party believes that member states should be given greater control over the integration process by allowing them to decide in which policy areas they delegate competencies to the EU.

The Centre Party thus appears to view the member states as the central actors in the EU. It wants to limit the scope of integration, including the integration of core state power such as fiscal policy. The Centre Party also believes that member states should be given greater control over the integration process by allowing them to decide on the policy areas which they delegate to the EU. The manifestos indicate that the Centre Party, prior to the COVID-19 crisis, had an IGC.

5.0 Analysis: The EU's Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

In this chapter, the EU's COVID-19 crisis and the EU's response to it, in the form of NGEU, will be introduced. A brief overview of the Swedish government's views on the EU's crisis response will be presented. Thereafter, each of the parties' views and actions in response to the crisis over the course of three periods will be analyzed to determine if their conceptions of the EU changed following the COVID-19 crisis. At the end of this chapter the findings from the analysis will be summarized and discussed.

5.1 Case Description: EU's Response to the COVID-19 Crisis

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Europe, what began as a health crisis quickly evolved into one of the greatest economic and political crises in the EU's history. Only a few weeks into the pandemic, German Chancellor Angela Merkel, called the COVID-19 pandemic the biggest test the EU has ever faced (Reuters 2020). France's president, Emmanuel Macron, stated that the EU's response to the crisis would determine whether the "European Union is a political project or just a market project (quoted in Mallet and Khalaf 2020). The EU's initially slow response to the economic and health crisis, as well as the decision by several member states to unilaterally close their borders and introduce export bans on medical equipment, contributed to the sense that the EU was failing and that there was a lack of solidarity between member states. As during the eurozone debt crisis, disagreements about how to respond to the economic effects created a rift between northern and southern member states. While the COVID-19 pandemic, its economic effects, had affected all member states, it did so disproportionately. There was a risk that if the EU did not adequately respond to the crisis, that it would increase distrust in the EU while also increasing the economic disparities between member states. The crisis threatened not only the survival of the euro, but that of the EU.

On May 18th, 2020, French president Macron and German Chancellor Merkel presented a Franco-German proposal to establish a €500 billion EU recovery fund that would empower the Commission to borrow money on behalf of the member states to provide grants to those member states particularly affected by the coronavirus pandemic (Rankin and

Oltermann 2020). On May 27th, 2020, the Commission presented its own recovery plan where it proposed the establishment of NGEU. In its proposed format, NGEU would be a temporary €750 billion recovery instrument at the EU level that would be used to respond to the economic effects of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as prepare the EU for the digital and green transition (European Commission 2020).

As part of NGEU, the Commission would borrow money on financial markets and issue debt on behalf of the EU's 27 member states to provide grants and loans to member states hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic. While several member states, including Germany and France, had supported the Commission's proposal ahead of the negotiations at the EC Summit in July of 2020, four EU member states consisting of Austria, Denmark, Sweden, and the Netherlands, had expressed strong opposition to a recovery fund involving EU borrowing for grants. These four member states were nicknamed the "frugal four". Instead, these countries advocated helping member states by providing favorable loans which they would be required to repay in the future (Bayer 2020).

Nevertheless, after the longest negotiations in the history of the EU, the EU's heads of state on July 21st, 2020, reached an agreement to establish NGEU. While negotiations led to changes from the Commission's original proposal, NGEU would still be a temporary instrument which would be used to help those member states most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic while also preparing the EU for the digital and green transition (European Commission 2022a). Whereas the Commission's initial proposal had envisioned offering €500 billion of the borrowed funds as non-repayable grants, now only €390 billion would now be provided as grants and €360 billion would be provided as loans (Herszenhorn and Bayer 2020). For member states to receive funds from NGEU they must submit NRRP's in which they must detail how funds are to be used. It is the Commission which assesses the member states' proposals, and which ultimately decides whether funds are disbursed to the member states (European Commission 2022b). As it is the Commission which borrows funds from financial markets and approves the disbursement of funds from NGEU, it has been given a central role in the EU's crisis response.

While the agreement made at the EC Summit in July of 2020 was central to the establishment of NGEU, another important part of the establishment of NGEU was the ratification of the Own Resources Decision (ORD) in the national parliaments of the member states. As part of the agreement made at the EC Summit the EU's member states also agreed to introduce a new own resource in the form of the plastics own resource to help finance parts of the EU's recovery efforts (European Commission 2022c). The ORD establishes how the

EU budget is financed and its ratification in the national parliaments was therefore a necessary precondition for the introduction of new own resources as well as the establishment of NGEU (D'Alfonso 2021, 1).

The decision to establish NGEU in response to the COVID-19 crisis is by many viewed as a historic moment in European integration. Besides representing an act of true solidarity between member states, the EU's response to the crisis is also significant because it represents a step towards deeper fiscal integration. For the first time, the EU will borrow large sums of money on financial markets and create joint debt at the EU level to help countries affected by the largest economic crisis in the history of the EU. Whereas the EU prior to the crisis had the ability to control aspects of the member states' fiscal policies through various means of coordination and rules, such as the Stability and Growth Pact (SGP), it had little fiscal capacity (Hallerberg 2014, 2). An EU fiscal capacity refers to the EU's ability to collect resources and through its institutions decide how to spend them (Zgaga 2021). As a result, the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis represents a shift in the EU because it increases the EU's fiscal capacity to collect and spend resources, albeit on a temporary basis (Zgaga 2021). While some have viewed NGEU as a case of deeper fiscal integration, and the beginning of a possible fiscal union, others including Vivien Schmidt are more cautious and highlight the temporary nature of NGEU to argue that it instead represents an opportunity for fiscal integration in the future if it succeeds in aiding the restoration of Europe's economy in the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic (Schmidt 2020).

How did political parties in Sweden view the EU's crisis response? And does Sweden's decision support the EU's recovery efforts in the form of NGEU represent a shift in how some of the parties in the Riksdag view the EU?

5.2 Swedish Government's Position on the EU's Crisis Response

As mentioned, ahead of the negotiations on the EU budget for 2021-2027, and the EU's recovery fund NGEU, the Swedish government and others in the "frugal four" expressed opposition to the size of the proposed recovery fund and the provision of non-repayable grants. Instead, the frugal four proposed a temporary recovery instrument that would last for two years and require member states to implement reforms that would prepare them for the next crisis (Heikkilä and von der Burchard 2020). However, while the Swedish government was critical of the Commission's proposal that EU borrowing would be used to provide

grants, the government during the negotiations at the EC Summit chose to support the establishment of NGEU and the introduction of the plastics own resource (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:68, anf. 3). In the Riksdag debate on the ratification of the ORD, the Social Democrats and the Green Party voted in favor of the ratification of the ORD.

5.3 Christian Democrats

The analysis of the Riksdag parties' manifestos found that before the COVID-19 crisis, the Christian Democrats had an IGC. In this section, the Christian Democrats' views on the EU's crisis response will be analyzed to determine whether its conception of the EU changed following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.3.1 First Period: Weeks Leading up to Negotiations at EC Summit

In the weeks leading up to the negotiations at the EC Summit, meetings in the CEUA show that the Christian Democrats were highly critical of the Commission's proposal to establish an EU recovery fund that would involve EU borrowing for grants (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56; 2019/20:57; 2019/20:59; 2019/20:63). The party's position during this period was that NGEU should be temporary, narrow in scope, and that support should be limited to loans that are targeted at those member states most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56; 2019/20:57; 2019/20:59; 2019/20:63). The party was also strongly opposed to the introduction of new own resources.

Meetings in the CEUA show that while the Christian Democrats were critical of the Commission's NGEU proposal, the party was particularly critical of how the Commission envisioned using the recovery fund in response to the crisis (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56; 2019/20:57; 2019/20:59; 2019/20:63). The party's view was that NGEU needed to be used in a "financially responsible way" and that all efforts needed to be limited in time and to the effects of the COVID-19 crisis (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56, anf. 38, my translation). The Christian Democrats wanted support to be distributed based on member states meeting country-specific requirements and to be used to promote values such as democracy, human rights, and the independence of the judiciary (anf. 38). The party believed that support should primarily go to those member states most affected by the current crisis, support should be made conditional on reforms aimed at increasing the financial stability of

member states (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56, anf. 38; 2019/20:63, anf. 12). The Christian Democrats did not during this period state that they wanted to limit the Commission's role in the EU's crisis response. However, the party's emphasis that the EU's recovery efforts should be limited in scope and duration, as well as its intent to limit the room for discretion in how funds from NGEU would be disbursed, can all be interpreted as signs that rather than wanting to give the Commission the authority to make decisions about how NGEU would be used, it wanted the member states to retain control.

The Christian Democrats' view was that EU borrowing during the crisis should only be used to provide support in the form of favorable loans (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56; 2019/20:57; 2019/20:59; 2019/20:63). Although the Christian Democrats were critical of the Commission's proposal, the party neither directly supported nor opposed the idea that EU borrowing would be used in the EU's recovery efforts. As a result, it is not clear what type of response to the crisis the Christian Democrats wanted, but it was open to some type of recovery effort based on EU borrowing if used to provide loans. While the Christian Democrats did not directly oppose EU borrowing for loans, the party was strongly opposed to the inclusion of a grant component in NGEU, as expected based on an IGC (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 119; 2019/20:59, anf. 12). Despite being opposed to a grant component, it is not clear why the Christian Democrats were opposed to this.

During this period, the Christian Democrats were also strongly opposed to the proposal that new own resources would be introduced to finance parts of the EU budget as and the EU's recovery efforts. The party's view was that these should be financed in "existing" ways and not with new own resources (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 119, my translation). The meetings in the CEUA during this period suggest that the Christian Democrats believed that the question of new own resources was linked to the question of whether the EU should be given a right to tax (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:63, anf. 12). This was particularly evident in one of the meetings in the CEUA where Desiree Pethrus, from the Christian Democrats, stated that the party agreed with the Swedish government's opposition to new own resources because it was "opposed to taxation at the EU level" (anf. 12).

This view on new own resources was also evident in an article in Svenska Dagbladet written by Sara Skyttedal, a member of the EP for the Christian Democrats. In the article published only a few weeks before the EC Summit in July of 2020, Skyttedal argues that the Commission, in connection with the discussions on how to finance the next EU budget, was proposing to introduce EU taxes. In the article, she argues that there are several reasons as to

why one should be opposed to EU taxes. One reason she argues is that Europe needs fewer, not more taxes. Another reason is that they would increase the amount of money that is wasted at the EU level. A third reason is that providing the EU with the ability to collect taxes would “create a situation whereby the EU Commission no longer would be required to take the ‘detour’ via the member states to finance its activities” (Skyttedal 2020, my translation). Skyttedal argues that the issue of new ways of financing the EU not only was a question about money, but a question of “how we want the division of power between the EU and the member states to look like” and that EU taxes would lead to a shift in power that had previously been “unthinkable” (2020, my translation).

Skyttedal’s views on new own resources predominantly apply to own resources that would not be channeled through the member states and which would provide the EU with an ability to collect its *own* revenue independently of the member states. Nevertheless, Skyttedal’s article does indicate that one of the reasons the Christian Democrats were opposed to new own resources was that they were opposed to providing the EU with a fiscal capacity that would enable it to finance its activities independently of the member states. This indicates that the reason the Christian Democrats were opposed to this was because they believed the member states should retain control over the EU’s activities. As such, Skyttedal’s article suggests that the party opposes an EU fiscal capacity. It also suggests that the reason the Christian Democrats opposed this was because the party believed that the EU should remain a political system where the member states retain control over the EU.

5.3.2 Second Period: Negotiations at EC Summit

The Christian Democrats changed their position on the EU’s response to the COVID-19 crisis over the course of the negotiations at the EC Summit. The party remained critical of NGEU and the proposal to introduce new own resources but chose to give the Swedish government a mandate to reach an agreement in the negotiations. The Christian Democrats did this in part because they did not believe it was a good idea for Sweden to leave cooperation with other frugal four, who now were willing to accept NGEU, and in part, because they did not want Sweden to singlehandedly prevent an entire agreement (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 10). But while the party did give the government a mandate to reach an agreement, it did not give its support to the parts of the agreement concerning EU grants and new own resources (anf.10)

In the weeks prior to the negotiations at the EC Summit, the Christian Democrats had been opposed to including a grants component in NGEU. It is unclear why the party had been opposed to EU grants, but Pethrus' statement in the CEUA during the negotiations that "We think it is problematic that the grant component will be so costly for Sweden" could indicate that the party was opposed to EU grants because of the costs associated with providing support as non-repayable grants rather than loans (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 10). When it became clear that it would be difficult for Sweden to reach an agreement that did not include some form of grant component, Pethrus stated that "We are strongly against the grant component" but that the party's ability to accept a grant component would depend on the "whole" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 9). While it is unclear what the party believed would make it possible for the party to accept a grant component, her statement does suggest that the party did not entirely rule out the possibility of EU grants.

The meetings in the CEUA during this period highlight that the Christian Democrats continued to oppose new own resources and that the party pushed the Swedish government to work towards removing this component from the negotiating table (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 14). In the CEUA, Pethrus stated that it was "precisely" new own resources which the party found to be a "very difficult" part of the negotiations (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:67, anf. 7, my translation). While Pethrus' statements in the CEUA show that the Christian Democrats were opposed to all new own resources her statements also indicate that the party was particularly concerned about new own resources which she referred to as the "digital fee" and the "financial transactions tax" (anf. 7, my translation). The specifics of the proposals for the digital and financial transactions own resources are not known. It is, therefore, not clear how these own resources would have been designed. However, the fact that Pethrus mentions these proposals, and not the plastics own resource, could indicate that the party was less concerned about the plastics own resource because it is an own resource that is channeled through the member states and would not increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue independent of the member states. This is also supported by the fact that besides not mentioning the plastics own resource, the Christian Democrats continued to believe that the proposals on new own resources were linked to the possibility of some form of taxation at the EU level. In the CEUA, Pethrus argued that "Several countries want to see the EU get a right to tax, and here they have of course taken the opportunity to get wording about this included" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 10, my translation).

Furthermore, Pethrus' statements in the CEUA show that the Christian Democrats believed the negotiations at the EC Summit had highlighted significant differences in the member states' views on the EU's role in the crisis. In one of the meetings in the CEUA during this period, Pethrus claimed that "We in the frugal four seem to have a similar view on this-that each country must address their own challenges rather than ask the EU to solve them" and that this was where Sweden differed from the other countries in the negotiations (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 10, my translation). On the one hand, her statement shows that the Christian Democrats believed that it was primarily the task of the member states, and not the EU to deal with the crisis. On the other hand, her statement also highlights that the party believed that this was one of the main differences between those that wanted the EU to take a central role during the crisis and those, such as Sweden, who wanted it to have a more limited role. Pethrus' statements indicate that the party did not change its view on fiscal policy because of the crisis and instead continued to believe that dealing with crises should remain a responsibility of the member states.

5.3.3 Third period: Ratification of the ORD in the Riksdag

On March 24th, 2021, the Christian Democrats chose to abstain from voting on the ratification of the ORD. Statements made by Hampus Hagman, from the Christian Democrats, in the Riksdag debate on the ratification of the ORD suggest that while the party did not vote against the ratification of the ORD, the party did not change its conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

In the Riksdag debate, Hagman argued that the party did not vote to block the ratification of the ORD because this would have benefitted Sweden (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 26). He claimed this was partly because "it is very unlikely that we would have had a better result in a new negotiation", and partly because it would have "thrown the whole of EU cooperation, including Sweden, into a deep crisis with unforeseen consequences" (anf. 26, my translation). He argued that it was clear that the agreement made at the EC Summit was not a success for Sweden, but that when the European Council had come close to reaching an agreement "we were in practice given a choice between the compromise and putting Sweden on the side, with incalculable consequences for us and for the EU as a whole" (anf. 26, my translation). Hagman's statements show that the Christian Democrats remained highly critical of the agreement made at the EC Summit, but the party also did not believe that it was in Sweden's best interest to block the agreement and thereby

damage Sweden's reputation and throw the EU into an even deeper crisis if there was no chance of securing a better agreement in a future negotiation.

However, while the Christian Democrat's decision to abstain, rather than vote against the ratification of the ORD means that the party ultimately accepted the EU's crisis response, the party did not change its views on fiscal integration or supranationalism following the COVID-19 crisis. In the Riksdag debate, Hagman stated that the party, throughout the process, had been opposed to the Commission's proposal for a recovery fund involving EU borrowing for grants. He claimed that the party's view had been that "fiscal policy is a national matter", but that the party due to the "strained situation" had been open to the idea of providing support in the form of loans (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 26). This shows that while the Christian Democrats' openness to a recovery effort involving EU borrowing deviates from what was expected based on an IGC, the party continued to believe that fiscal policy was a national matter.

Furthermore, this view on fiscal policy is emphasized in the party's view that the EU must respect that some issues are best handled at the national level. In the debate, Hagman argued that the EU's crisis response needed to be viewed in terms of the EU's role and legitimacy. Hagman argued that the EU is a political system that has developed in response to war and Europe's many challenges. He claimed that European countries could "hardly" stand on their own against the challenges that Europe faces and that this was why a "coordinated policy" where the EU, among other things, would be a voice for matters, such as human rights at home and around the world, was needed (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 26, my translation). The Christian Democrats' view was that for the EU to continue its important role, it needed to work on its legitimacy (anf. 26). Hagman argued that the EU needed to be good at what the EU "should do" (anf. 26, my translation). Therefore, it was necessary for the EU to focus on issues that the individual member states "themselves can not work on and resolve in an appropriate way" (anf. 26, my translation). The Christian Democrats' view was that the EU "must" respect that there are many matters, such as welfare, wage formation, and fiscal policy that are best handled at the national level (anf. 26, my translation). The party's view was that the Swedish government needed to work "actively" and "preventively" to ensure that this is respected (anf. 26, my translation). The Christian Democrats believed that NGEU now should play a role in strengthening public finances in the member states and that reforms needed to be implemented so that "financial issues in the future are handled at the national level" (anf. 26, my translation).

Hagman's statements in the Riksdag debate show that although the EU would acquire a fiscal role during the crisis, the Christian Democrats continued to believe that fiscal policy must remain a national competence. The party view now was that NGEU, and reforms in the member states should be implemented to ensure that fiscal policy remains a national competence in the future.

Another factor that supports the notion that the Christian Democrats continued to oppose fiscal integration is that the party remained opposed to new own resources which would increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue independently of the member states. While the party up until the ratification of the ORD had been opposed to all new own resources, the party now believed that it could accept the plastics own resource (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 26). Hagman's statements indicate that the reason why the Christian Democrats now believed the plastics own resource was less problematic was that the party now believed that this own resource resembled many of the EU's existing own resources (anf. 26). Hagman argued that "the fee on non-recycled plastic waste is not a tax" and that the plastics own resource "also does not mean that the EU acquires a right to tax" (anf. 26, my translation). He added that "just like other calculation bases this will be administered in Sweden by Swedish authorities" (anf. 26, my translation). As a result, while the Christian Democrats believed that they could accept this own resource, Hagman stated that Sweden "must also be clear that we are against all types of taxes at the EU level" (anf. 26, my translation). The Christian Democrats' position was that if concrete proposals for a "digital tax" and "financial transactions tax" are presented in the future that Sweden "must" use its veto (anf. 26, my translation).

On the one hand, Hagman's statements show that the Christian Democrats no longer believed that the plastics own resource, which would be introduced as part of the ORD, was a type of EU tax. On the other hand, his statements further support the notion that the party did make a distinction between those own resources that would be channeled through the member states, and those that would increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue and hence could be regarded as a type of EU tax. This demonstrates that while the Christian Democrats could support the introduction of the plastics own resource, as part of the EU's recovery response, the party remained opposed to new own resources that would increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue, as expected based on an IGC. Hagman's statement that Sweden must use its veto if proposals for these types of own resources were to be put forward in the future also further supports the notion that the

Christian Democrats, despite the EU's crisis response, would continue to work against fiscal integration in the EU.

The findings from the periods examined suggest that while the Christian Democrats did not directly oppose the EU's crisis response, they did not change their views on fiscal integration following the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, although the Christian Democrats in virtue of having accepted the EU's crisis response can be said to have accepted that the Commission would be strengthened, there is nothing that directly suggests that the party believed that the Commission should be given a central role in the EU's crisis response. The findings, therefore, suggest that the Christian Democrats did not change their views on supranationalism following the COVID-19 crisis. This means that the Christian Democrats did not change their conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.4 Moderate Party

The analysis of the Riksdag parties' manifestos found that before the COVID-19 crisis, the Moderate Party had an IGC. In this section, the Moderate Party's view on the EU's crisis response will be analyzed to determine whether its conception of the EU changed following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.4.1 First Period: Weeks Leading up to Negotiations at EC Summit

Meetings in the CEUA in the weeks leading up to the negotiations at the EC Summit show that the Moderate Party was highly critical of the Commission's proposal to establish an EU recovery fund involving EU borrowing to provide grants to member states affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. The Moderate Party believed that the EU's response to the crisis should be temporary and limited in scope and that support from the EU's recovery efforts should be targeted at those member states most affected by the COVID-19 (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57; 2019/20:63). The Moderate Party also opposed the introduction of new own resources. As a result, while the Moderate Party was critical of the proposal to establish NGEU, it did appear to be open to a temporary recovery fund where support would be provided as loans but not grants as proposed by the Commission (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56; 2019/20:57; 2019/20:59; 2019/20:63).

In the CEUA, Jessika Roswall from the Moderate Party argued that although they believed there were different views on how to deal with the effects of the COVID-19 crisis,

there was a general agreement between member states that this was an “unprecedented” crisis that all EU countries were experiencing and would require “ambitious, well-targeted and effective measures (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 7, my translation).

Roswall argued that the Moderate Party’s view was that while European cooperation had an important role to play in dealing with the current crisis, this was “first and foremost a task for the EU countries themselves” (anf. 7, my translation).

Roswall’s statements in the CEUA show the Moderate Party did view the COVID-19 pandemic as an “unprecedented” crisis and one which would require “ambitious” efforts (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 7, my translation). The statement highlights the view that the crisis primarily should be dealt with by the member states themselves. The Moderate Party’s acknowledged that this was an extraordinary crisis but appeared to believe that fiscal policy should remain a competency of the member states.

Instead of pushing the EU’s institutions to take on a central role in the response to the crisis, meetings in the CEUA during this period show that the Moderate Party may have wanted to constrain the Commission’s role in NGEU. This was evident in the Moderate Party strong emphasis that the EU’s recovery efforts needed to be temporary and limited in scope. Jan Ericsson from the Moderate Party argued that the proposed criteria for the disbursement of funds from NGEU were “very vague and not at all well-targeted” (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 17, my translation). The Moderate party’s position was that there was a need for more specific criteria for how funds would be used and that support from NGEU should be made conditional on reforms aimed at increasing growth and making member states better equipped to deal with future crises (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56; 2019/20:57; 2019/20:59; 2019/20:63). The Moderate Party’s representatives in the CEUA did not explicitly state a desire to limit the Commission’s role in the response to the crisis. However, the party’s desire to ensure that the recovery efforts would be temporary and limited in scope can be interpreted as a sign that the party wanted to retain control over NGEU.

However, the Moderate Party did during this period appear to be open to some form of EU recovery effort if limited to providing support in the form of loans. The Moderate Party’s willingness to continue to discuss the possibility of a recovery fund suggests that while the party was highly critical of NGEU, it was open to some form of EU borrowing in response to the COVID-19 crisis. During this period, the Moderate Party neither supported or opposed EU borrowing, but Roswall’s statement that the Commission’s proposed recovery fund would be a “major change in practice as the EU will now start to borrow” shows that the

Moderate Party viewed NGEU and EU borrowing as a significant change in the EU (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 117, my translation). The aspect of the Commission's NGEU proposal that the Moderate Party appeared most critical of was that support from NGEU would include the disbursement of EU grants.

However, despite its reluctance to accept a grant component it is unclear why it was opposed to this. Roswall's claim in the CEUA that the Moderate Party was particularly "critical" of the size of the proposed grants component, suggests that while the party at no point expressed a willingness to accept a grant component during this period that it may have been willing to accept a grant component if reduced in size (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 117, my translation). This could suggest that rather than opposing EU grants, because it did not want to give the EU an ability to spend resources, it instead simply may have opposed grants because it did not want Sweden to pay for the costs of a grant component.

In likeness with the majority of the other Riksdag parties the Moderate Party was opposed to the introduction of any new own resources. The Moderate Party position during this period was that the EU budget, as well as NGEU, should be financed using "existing" instruments, and not new own resources (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 117, my translation). Without providing further detail. Roswall stated that one of the reasons the Moderate Party was opposed to new own resources was that it believed that new own resources would be contrary to the principle of subsidiarity, but it is not clear why the Moderate Party believed this to be the case (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 7). While it is possible that the Moderate Party at the time merely opposed new own resources because it did not believe that the EU needed additional revenue sources, it also appears to have opposed this because it believed that this was linked to the issue of whether the EU should be given a right to tax. In the CEUA, Roswall stated that "the proposal for new EU taxes are simply out of the question" but also that "We from the Moderate side have been careful to say that we do not want the EU to be given a right to tax" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 7; 2019/2063, anf. 5, my translation).

Roswall's statements demonstrate that the Moderate Party believed that the discussions about new own resources were linked to EU taxation and that the party remained opposed to EU taxation. In one of the meetings, Roswall highlighted the "digital" and "financial services tax" as own resources that the party was against discussed (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:63, anf. 5, my translation). This could suggest that while the party may have viewed these own resources as a type of EU "tax", that this view did not apply to

all own resources being discussed (anf. 5, my translation). The Moderate Party's strong opposition to EU taxes suggests that besides opposing all new own resources the party may have been particularly opposed to new own resource that would increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect revenue independently of the member states, as expected based on an IGC.

5.4.2 Second Period: Negotiations at EC Summit

During the negotiations at the EC Summit the Moderate Party changed its position on the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis. The Moderate Party had been highly critical of the Commission proposal and strongly opposed to EU grants and new own resources. In response to a change in the Swedish governments' own position and the risk of a collapse in the negotiations, the party chose to give the government a mandate to reach an agreement. However, the Moderate Party did not give the government a mandate concerning the parts on EU grants and own resources (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 21).

As revealed by meetings in the CEUA, over the course of the negotiations at the EC Summit, the Moderate Party continued to strongly oppose EU grants but opened up to the possibility of accepting some form of grant component (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 5). In the CEUA Roswall stated that "from what I understand, one should not go ahead and discuss grants in the recovery fund" (anf. 5, my translation). Roswall now argued that there were "strong reasons to coordinate efforts due to COVID" and that these were "exceptional" times (anf. 5, my translation). She argued that "It is important that we somehow move forwards in the negotiations" (anf. 5, my translation). Roswall's statements in the CEUA show that while the Moderate Party had held its line that there should be no EU grants, the party now believed that it was necessary to discuss the possibility of a grant component to ensure progress in the negotiations.

Roswall's statements indicate that the Moderate Party changed its position on EU grants partly because it believed the EU's crisis was "exceptional" and that there were reasons to coordinate efforts, and partly because it believed that it was necessary for the negotiations on the EU budget and the EU's recovery efforts to progress. This suggests that the Moderate Party did not change its position on EU grants because it suddenly believed that NGEU should include a grant component to adequately deal with the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead Roswall's statement suggest that the Moderate Party opened for EU grants because it was worried about the consequences of a collapse in the negotiations. It had been unclear why the Moderate Party was opposed to EU grants. However, Roswall's statement that "generous loans would be significantly more effective than grants" indicates

that one of the reasons why it had been opposed to this was that it believed loans were a more effective way to provide member states with support (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 5, my translation).

While the Moderate Party did not end up giving the government a mandate to accept EU grants, its apparent willingness to accept the possibility of a grant component suggests that its opposition to EU grants may mostly have related to the costs associated with providing support as loans rather than non-repayable grants. This notion is further supported by the fact that even though the Moderate Party appeared willing to support some form of recovery effort based on EU borrowing, Roswall now argued that EU borrowing for grants rather than loans would be a “major shift in principle” and that the “Swedish position for a long time had been that the EU should not borrow money for current expenses” (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 5, my translation). This shows that while the Moderate Party had been willing to accept some form of EU borrowing as part of a recovery effort limited to providing member states support in the form of loans, it did not want to accept EU borrowing for grants. Roswall’s argument that the Swedish position had been that the EU should not borrow for current expenses suggests that it opposed EU borrowing for grants because it believed that it was fiscally irresponsible to create debt at the EU level. On the other hand, it could also support the assumption that the Moderate Party did not want to incur the costs associated with providing support as non-repayable grants rather than loans.

The Moderate Party’s position on the issue of new own resources did not appear to change over the course of the negotiations at the EC Summit. The Moderate Party remained strongly opposed to new own resources and pushed the Swedish government to ensure that no new own resources would be introduced as part of an agreement (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66). Roswall’s statements in the CEUA show that, at the time, the Moderate Party had hoped that Sweden’s decision to possibly open up to a grant component would have meant that other countries would become more “engaged” in “our” important issue that the EU budget and NGEU should not be financed with new own resources (anf. 5, my translation). Roswall’s statements therefore indicate that the Moderate Party viewed the issue of new own resources as one of the most important components in the negotiations.

During this period, Roswall argued that “the Moderates have every step of the process worked against EU taxes” and that “this time we see a direct threat towards future EU taxes” (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 6, my translation). Her statements show that the Moderate Party remained opposed to any form of EU taxation and that the party believed the agreement made at the EC Summit was a threat towards future EU taxation. It

remains unclear whether Roswall's statements mean that the Moderate Party believed that the plastics own resource included in the final agreement constituted a type of EU "tax". Another possibility is that the party did not view this own resource as a type of tax and that simply was concerned that introducing a new own resource would increase risk that new own resources that take the form of a type of tax could be introduced in the future.

5.4.3 Third Period: Ratification of the ORD in the Riksdag

On March 24th, 2021, the Moderate Party abstained from voting on the ratification of the ORD. Statements by Jan Ericson, from the Moderate Party, in the Riksdag debate on the ratification of the ORD, show that while the party did not vote against the ratification of the ORD, the party did not change its conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

In the Riksdag debate Ericson argued that besides being linked to the establishment of NGEU and how the EU budget would be financed, the ratification of the ORD was also linked to Sweden's rebates to the EU budget (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 15). Ericson stated that the Moderate Party had throughout the process been critical of NGEU, and, in particular, the proposal that EU borrowing would be used to provide loans and grants (anf.15).

The debate reveals that while the Moderate Party remained critical of the EU's crisis response and warned of the risk that NGEU could be used to support budgets in member states with "mismanaged economies", it now also believed that if used in the right way that NGEU could contribute to the EU's economic recovery (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 15, my translation). Ericson stated that "Sweden obviously benefits from the EU member states coping with the pandemic because the EU is an extremely important export market for Sweden" (anf. 15, my translation). Ericson's statements in the debate show that while the Moderate Party remained critical of NGEU, that there were several reasons as to why the party chose to abstain, rather than vote against the ratification of the ORD.

One factor is that the Moderate Party believed that it is the Swedish government that negotiates on behalf of Sweden in the EU and that the Riksdag, therefore, had to accept the decisions and compromises made by the government in the EU (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 15). The Moderate Party's view was that the Swedish government "has not fully succeeded in defending the Swedish taxpayers' interests" and had not achieved the "goals set by the Riksdag prior to the negotiations" (anf. 15, my translation). The party's view was that it was the Swedish government that was responsible for the fact that the

Riksdag had to decide whether to ratify the ORD bill (anf. 15). A second factor was that the party believed that for as long as Sweden remains a member of the EU, it is necessary to make the most of EU membership (anf. 15). Ericson argued that that as long as Sweden remains a member of the EU “one must make the most of membership in every issue and at every time” and that when the party assessed how to vote on the ORD bill, it was necessary to “assess the overall effects for Sweden” (anf. 15, my translation).

The Moderate Party’s view was that in the current situation, one was “forced to choose the least bad of several less good alternatives” (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 15, my translation). Ericson argued that if Sweden were to vote against what he described as a “comprehensive compromise between the EU’s 27 heads of state and government”, that it would seriously damage confidence in Sweden as a negotiating part in the future (anf. 15, my translation). Ericson stated that the Moderate Party did not want to be the party that “throws the EU into a political and economic crisis in the middle of a pandemic” (anf. 15, my translation).

Ericson’s statements show that the Moderate Party believed that it was given the choice between accepting the compromise agreement and potentially blocking the agreement, thereby damaging both Sweden’s reputation and putting the EU into a deep crisis. However, while this means that the Moderate Party in virtue of choosing to abstain rather than to vote against the ORD bill can be said to have accepted the EU’s crisis response, the party did not change its views on fiscal integration or supranationalism.

As previously mentioned, the Moderate Party’s openness to some form of recovery fund involving EU borrowing for loans deviates from the expectations based on an IGC. However, the party’s position had remained that dealing with the crisis was the responsibility of the member states (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 7). This suggests that its view on EU borrowing was not entirely consistent with what was expected based on an IGC, the party continued to believe that fiscal policy was a competence of the member states and not that of the EU.

Further, while the Moderate Party throughout the process on the EU’s recovery efforts had been open to EU borrowing, it had remained opposed to EU grants and new own resources. Ericson’s statements in the Riksdag debate show that while the Moderate Party now believed that it could accept the plastics own resource, it remained opposed to new own resources that increase the EU’s fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue. Up until the ratification of the ORD, the Moderate Party’s view had appeared to be that it believed the agreement reached at the EC Summit was linked to the introduction of some form of EU

taxation. The party's view now was that the ORD bill only included "loose wordings" that the Commission would work towards introducing a "direct" tax law in the future (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 19, my translation).

Ericson's statements during the debate can be interpreted as a sign that the Moderate Party had changed its view on the plastics own resource, included in the ORD. His statements can be interpreted in the sense that the party simply no longer believed that the introduction of this specific own resource in itself meant that other new own resources, which could take the form of a tax, would be introduced in the future as part of the agreement. Nevertheless, Ericson's claim that Swedish taxpayers, under the current proposal, would not have to pay "directly to the EU" suggests that it is precisely because the plastic own resource is a type of fee that is channeled through the member states rather than a fee that is paid *directly* to the EU resource (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 19, my translation). The Moderate party now believed it could accept this own. As a result, Ericson's statements suggest that while the Moderate Party now was willing to accept the introduction of the plastics own resource, the party remained opposed to own resources that would increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue, as expected based on an IGC.

Moreover, Ericson's view that the EU's crisis response was associated with a negative development in the EU towards increased supranationalism and deeper integration in areas that were best handled by the member states further supports the notion that the Moderate Party did not change its views on fiscal integration or supranationalism in the EU. In the Riksdag debate Ericson stated that "Both the case of the recovery fund and some other decisions and proposals show that the EU is on the wrong track towards increased supranationalism" (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 15, my translation). He also claimed that the EU with this development was showing an "appetite" for "taking over more and more decision-making power from the member states" in areas that were best managed at the national level (anf. 15, my translation). Ericson's arguments therefore strongly indicate that Moderate Party believed that the EU was moving in a more supranational direction, and more importantly, that it viewed this as negative development. This further supports the view that the Moderate Party had not changed its views on supranationalism and remained opposed to a supranational EU. The Moderate Party's view that the EU was getting increasingly involved in areas that the party believed to be best handled at the national level also further supports the notion that the party continued to oppose integration in areas such as fiscal policy.

The findings from the periods examined therefore suggests that while the Moderate Party chose not to vote against the ratification of the ORD, the party did not change its views on fiscal integration and supranationalism. This shows that that the Moderate Party did not change its conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.5 Sweden Democrats

The analysis of the Riksdag parties' manifestos found that before the COVID-19 crisis, the Sweden Democrats had an IGC. In this section, the Sweden Democrats' views on the EU's crisis response will be analyzed to determine whether its conception of the EU changed following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.5.1 First Period: Weeks Leading up to Negotiations at EC Summit

Meetings in the CEUA in the weeks leading up to the negotiations at the EC summit in July of 2020 show that the Sweden Democrats were among those Riksdag parties most critical of the Commission's NGEU proposal to establish an EU recovery fund in response to the COVID-19 crisis. In the CEUA, Martin Kinnunen from the Sweden Democrats described the negotiations on the next EU budget and NGEU as an "intensive stage in European cooperation" and claimed that these perhaps would be the "most important negotiations for Sweden since joining the Union (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 8, my translation). During this period, the Sweden Democrats' position was that Sweden should reject NGEU and the EU recovery efforts should be limited to member states in the euro area. The party's view was that Sweden should not be involved in the proposed recovery efforts because they did not actually relate to the internal market and instead were meant to increase the "political cohesion" of the Eurogroup (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:63, anf. 6, my translation).

Another reason why the Sweden Democrats appear to have opposed the Commission's proposed recovery efforts was that the party viewed these as associated with the EU's development in a more supranational or federal direction. Charlotte Quensel, another representative from the Sweden Democrats in the CEUA, described the Commission's NGEU proposal as a "shift" and a "major problem for the future of the EU" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56, anf. 34, my translation). It is not clear why Quensel described these as a major problem or what type of shift she believed these

represented. However, Kinnunen's statement that the EU, with its proposal for a large EU budget and a recovery fund based on EU borrowing was using the COVID-19 crisis as cover to take the "big step" towards "increased federalism", indicates that the party was opposed to the EU's recovery efforts because it believed these were moving the EU in a federal direction (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 8, my translation).

Meetings in the CEUA reveal that the Sweden Democrats were entirely opposed to the EU's recovery efforts. The party was also particularly critical of the proposal that EU borrowing would be used to provide EU grants. Quensel argued that the party was concerned that with the establishment of NGEU "certain countries in the EU will become a type of aid bank for the welfare of countries that do not manage their finances as they should" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56, anf. 34, my translation). Kinnunen stated that Sweden should oppose NGEU because "It is not reasonable for Sweden to finance these countries' poor preparedness" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 8, my translation). These statements suggest that one of the reasons the Sweden Democrats opposed NGEU, and more specifically a grant component, was that the party does not want the EU to be a political system whereby some countries would be expected to pay for others (anf. 8, my translation).

Furthermore, these meetings indicate that the Sweden Democrats were critical of the EU's crisis response because they were opposed to the prospect that the EU would begin to loan finance its activities. Kinnunen argued that "Now there is talk that it is an important principle that one should borrow to provide loans, but the previous important principle has been that the EU should not loan finance its activities" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 8, my translation). The Sweden Democrats' position was that "we should uphold this principle, just as no new own resources should be accepted" (anf. 8, my translation). He argued that "The Commission is now using the opportunity to start loan financing the ordinary budget" and that "We cannot start loan financing agricultural subsidies all of a sudden under the guise that this will be a one-off. This is not likely" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:63, anf. 6, my translation). Thus, while Kinnunen's statements show that the Sweden Democrats were opposed to all forms of EU borrowing and new own resources, they also show that the party was concerned that EU borrowing would create a precedent to start loan financing parts of the EU's activities after the crisis.

5.5.2 Second Period: Negotiations at EC Summit

During the negotiations at the EC Summit, the Sweden Democrats did not change their position on the EU's crisis response and did not give the Swedish government a mandate to reach an agreement on NGEU nor the introduction of new own resources (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69). In the CEUA, Kinnunen stated that "We do not think that Sweden should be afraid to put a spanner in the wheels for an agreement today" and that the party's view was that Sweden instead should work for new negotiations at a later stage (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 13, my translation). His statement shows that the Sweden Democrats were opposed to NGEU and the introduction of new own resources to the point where the party believed that Sweden should not be worried about the consequences of preventing an agreement and should instead work for new negotiations in the future.

Moreover, while the Sweden Democrats throughout the process on the EU's recovery efforts had been strongly against new own resources it was not clear why. Kinnunen's statement that the agreement reached at the EC Summit meant that many now would view it as a victory and would have the "impression that new EU taxes are in the pipeline", indicates that the Sweden Democrats were against the proposal to introduce new own resources and that it believed that this was linked to a form of taxation at the EU level (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 22, my translation). It is unclear in what way the Sweden Democrats believed that the agreement reached at the EC Summit was linked to EU taxes. However, the party's opposition to EU taxes could nevertheless suggest that it also was opposed to new own resources that would increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue, as expected based on IGC.

5.5.3 Third Period: Ratification of the ORD in the Riksdag

On March 24th, 2021, the Sweden Democrats voted against the ratification of the ORD. Statements made by Oscar Sjöstedt, from the Sweden Democrats, in the Riksdag debate on the ratification of the ORD show that the party did not change its conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis. The Sweden Democrats remained strongly opposed to NGEU and the agreement made at the EC Summit. The Party view now was that the other Riksdag parties that were critical of the agreement should join the Sweden Democrats and vote against the ratification of the ORD (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 16).

In the debate, Sjöstedt criticized the EU's recovery efforts and stated that it was wrong for Sweden to pay for the problems in countries with low retirement ages and citizen

salaries. He questioned how NGEU would affect the incentives in member states with “chronic” budget deficits if it now would be the case that as soon as there was a crisis, the “well-managed economies come to the rescue with a gigantic bailout operation” (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 16, my translation). The Sweden Democrats’ view was that it would be better to displease some people in the EU by blocking the ORD than to pass large amounts of debt onto future generations (anf. 16). Sjöstedt argued that “In my world, this is not only economically insane, but it is morally reprehensible” (anf. 16, my translation). His statements show that besides opposing the EU’s recovery efforts because they were against paying for other countries, the party also opposed them because it believed that it was wrong to pass on large amounts of debt to future generations.

Furthermore, Sjöstedt’s statements further support the notion that the Sweden Democrats opposed new own resources because they were against increasing the EU’s fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue. Sjöstedt argued that when it came to the issue of new own resources “the EU should not have any more so-called own resources at all” (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 16, my translation). By this, Sjöstedt meant that the EU should not have any more money that is “directly” available at its disposal (anf. 16, my translation). He argued that the Sweden Democrats’ view was that it did not matter how much money it was or what “tax domain” the EU was trying to “infringe” on because the “Swedish people have an ancient right to tax themselves” (anf. 16, my translation). Sjöstedt’s highlight that the Sweden Democrats viewed the issue of whether new own resources should be introduced as linked to the question of whether the EU should be given a right to tax. It is unclear if Sjöstedt statements mean that the Sweden Democrats viewed the plastics own resource as a type of EU tax. However, Sjöstedt’s claim that the EU should have no more money that is *directly* at its disposal strongly suggests that the party was particularly concerned about new own resources that would have increased the EU’s capacity to collect its *own* revenue, as expected based on an IGC.

The Sweden Democrats’ opposition to NGEU and new own resources throughout the period examined supports the notion that the party remained opposed to fiscal integration. However, Sjöstedt’s assertion in the Riksdag debate that “We must not take a single step, not a single, not a millimeter towards a further integrated fiscal union” clearly shows that one of the reasons the party was against the EU’s recovery efforts was because it believed that this would involve taking further steps towards a fiscal union (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 16, my translation). The Sweden Democrats’ strong opposition to a fiscal union strongly supports the notion that the party did not change its views on fiscal integration following the

COVID-19 crisis. Moreover, the fact that the Sweden Democrats had believed the EU was using the EU's crisis response to take the major steps in a more federal direction, indicates that the party was opposed to a more supranational or federal EU. As a result, the Sweden Democrats did not change their view on supranationalism following the COVID-19 crisis. The findings from the periods examined show that the Sweden Democrats did not change their conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.6 Left Party

The analysis of the Riksdag parties' manifestos found that before the COVID-19 crisis, the Left Party had an IGC. In this section, the Left Party's views on the EU's crisis response will be analyzed to determine whether its conception of the EU changed following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.6.1 First Period: Weeks Leading up to the Negotiations at the EC Summit

In the weeks leading up to the negotiations on the EU budget and NGEU at the EC Summit, the Left Party was the party that was most critical of the Commission's NGEU proposal (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56; 2019/20:57; 2019/20:59; 2019/20:63). The Left Party was opposed to the EU recovery efforts as it believed that these were linked to the introduction of some form of fiscal policy at the EU level and that they were an ineffective way to get out of the current crisis (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 127). The party believed that when one looked at the countries that would benefit from the Commission's proposed recovery efforts, it was clear that the primary aim of NGEU was to save the euro (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 11). The Left Party's position was, therefore that NGEU should be limited to countries in the EMU and that Sweden instead could have its own recovery efforts with countries such as Denmark (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 127). While the party did not want Sweden to be involved in the EU's recovery efforts, it believed that the EU should use existing institutions, such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) rather than establish new ones such as NGEU (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 11).

As a result, the Left Party opposed the EU's recovery efforts because it believed that these were intended to help save the euro. The party was also against these efforts because it believed that these efforts were associated with a common fiscal policy at the EU level. This

was evident in a statement by Jens Holm, from the Left Party, who stated that the party viewed the Commission's proposal as part of the introduction of a common fiscal policy at the EU level and that these efforts were best suited for member states in the EMU (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 121). This was also highlighted in a statement by Jonas Sjöstedt from the Left Party, who stated that it was clear that countries in the EMU would need a "more coordinated economic policy" as well as possibly "joint borrowing, bonds, and more fiscal policies and such," before emphasizing that Sweden had voted against the euro (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 11, my translation). Holm and Sjöstedt's statements demonstrate that the party believed that the EMU was associated with a need for a common fiscal policy. On the other hand, their statements also indicate that the Left Party wanted to frame these policies as something that was only relevant for member states in the EMU and not for Sweden, which remained outside.

Aside from being opposed to NGEU and thus also EU borrowing and EU grants, the Left Party was also opposed to the introduction of new own resources. In the CEAU, Ilona Szatmari Waldau, another representative from the Left Party, stated that the party was "skeptical" of the parts of the Commission's proposal relating to new own resources and that the party would not be open to accepting any new own resources (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56, anf. 14). Holm stated that "We do not believe the EU should create its own resources in the form of taxation and such to finance this growing budget" and that the EU budget should be financed in existing ways (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 122, my translation). Holm's statement shows that the Left Party was opposed to providing the EU with additional *means* by which to finance the EU budget. But it also shows that the Left Party viewed the issue of new own resources in terms of the question of whether EU taxes should be introduced.

5.6.2 Second Period: Negotiations at EC Summit

During the negotiations at the EC Summit, the Left Party remained opposed to the EU's recovery efforts and continued to believe that these efforts should be limited to countries in the EMU (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:63; 2019/20:65; 2019/20:66; 2019/20:67; 2019/20:68; 2019/20:69). When the Swedish government sought a mandate to reach an agreement on the EU budget and NGEU, the Left Party did not give the government its support (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 24).

The Left Party's view throughout this period was that the Commission's proposed recovery efforts were poorly linked to the COVID-19 crisis (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:63, anf. 11). The party believed that the EU budget and NGEU proposal reflected the Commission's desire to increase the size of the EU budget. The party believed that the proposal was linked to the Commission's desire to have EU borrowing to support member states with "large debt burdens" (anf. 11, my translation). Jonas Sjöstedt heavily criticized NGEU and argued that "It is a completely new principle in the EU that one should borrow and make future generations pay" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 8, my translation). He also stated that "we" had never agreed to this before. If "euro areas countries do it to have joint borrowing for a monetary union I think that is one thing, but they have chosen a path towards a common fiscal policy. I believe this is contrary to our established policy" (anf. 8, my translation). He stated that this "issue" had been decided in the referendum on the euro in which Sweden "chose not to go down the path of a common fiscal policy, common borrowing and other things" (anf. 8, my translation). Jonas Sjöstedt's statements clearly show that the Left Party was strongly opposed to the EU's recovery efforts because they opposed a common fiscal policy at the EU level. His statements demonstrate that the Left Party still believed that Sweden had said no to EU borrowing and measures associated with a common fiscal policy when it voted against joining the EMU.

Moreover, meetings in the CEUA during this period further indicate that the Left Party was against new own resources because it opposed taxation at the EU level. The Left Party's view was that the proposal to introduce new own resources should be removed from the negotiating table (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:67, anf. 6). Jonas Sjöstedt stated, "One thing I think is serious is the Commission's intent to produce its own resource. It should preferably disappear from the proposal. There is a clear direction towards a kind of right to tax in this document" (anf. 6, my translation). While it is unclear whether the Left Party viewed the plastics own resource, which was part of the final agreement, as a type of EU tax, Sjöstedt's statement indicates that the party was critical of this part of the proposal because it believed that it was linked to giving the EU a right to tax.

5.6.3 Third Period: Ratification of the ORD in the Riksdag

During the ratification of the ORD in the Riksdag, the Left Party voted against the ratification of the ORD. Ilona Szatmari Waldau's statements in the Riksdag debate on the ratification of the ORD show that the Left Party continued to be opposed to the EU's recovery efforts.

In the debate, Waldau reiterated the Left Party's view Sweden had voted against these types of measures when it voted against joining the EMU. She claimed that those who had opposed joining the EMU had warned about a "common economic policy", as well as the risk of "far-reaching coordination of economic policy with power over budgets and borrowing" (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 21, my translation). The party believed that the ORD bill, which the Swedish government was proposing, now meant that "we say yes to enter into a common policy with joint borrowing to save the monetary union that the Swedish people have said no to" (anf. 21, my translation). Waldau's statement suggests that the Left Party believed the EU's recovery response was associated with the introduction of a common fiscal policy at the EU level. However, her statement that the Left Party's "big" problem with the EU's recovery efforts was that they increase the EU's "power over the member states' economic policies" also suggests that it opposed the EU's recovery efforts precisely because it is against a common fiscal policy at the EU level (anf. 23, my translation).

Waldau's statements in the debate show that the Left Party believed that NGEU and the introduction of new own resources meant that the EU was moving closer to becoming a type of state. She argued that the introduction of the plastics "tax", as well as the Commission's plan to introduce several taxes in the future, meant that "we enter into deeper economic cooperation within the EU and hand over power to the EU Commission" (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 21, my translation). Waldau also believed that the EU, with these measures, was getting "closer and closer to a United States of Europe, a superstate" (anf. 21, my translation). While Waldau's statements in the debate suggest that the Left Party was opposed to fiscal integration, the party's view that the EU was becoming a type of state also suggests that it was opposed to the EU's development in a more supranational and federal direction.

The findings from the periods examined show that the Left Party was strongly opposed to NGEU and the introduction of new own resources. They show that one of the main reasons that the Left party opposed the EU's recovery efforts was that it was opposed to a common fiscal policy at the EU level. The findings indicate that the party remained opposed to fiscal integration. Moreover, the Left Party's opposition to the EU's development in a more federal direction indicates that the party remained opposed to supranationalism. The findings indicate that the Left Party did not change its conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.7 Liberal Party

The analysis of the Riksdag parties' manifestos found that before the COVID-19 crisis, the Liberal Party had an NFC. In this section, the Liberal Party's views on the EU's crisis response will be analyzed to determine whether its conception of the EU changed following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.7.1 First Period: Weeks Leading up to Negotiations at EC Summit

In the weeks leading up to the negotiations at the EC Summit, meetings in the CEUA show that the Liberal Party's view on the Commission's NGEU proposal, at first, closely resembled that of many other Riksdag parties. The Party initially wanted NGEU to be a temporary instrument where support was provided as loans and not grants (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56, anf. 39). However, at a meeting in the CEUA on June 12th, the Liberal Party changed its position on NGEU (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 121). The party chose to support the Commission's proposal to establish a recovery fund based on EU borrowing where support should be provided as grants as well as loans (anf. 121). The Liberal Party also supported the Commission's proposal that new own resources should be introduced to finance parts of the EU budget and NGEU (anf. 121).

In the CEUA, Tina Acketoft, from the Liberal Party stated that the party's new position was that the Commission's proposed recovery efforts were necessary to get the EU out of the current crisis (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 121). Its view was that the EU should borrow jointly during the crisis to finance investments aimed at restructuring the European economy (anf. 121). While the Liberal Party had initially agreed with the government, and the other Riksdag parties, that support should be provided as loans, it now believed that support should be a mixture of loans and grants (anf. 121). Acketoft argued that "Of course, loans are to be preferred, but if the EU is to develop, it requires that all member states have the opportunity to do so" (anf. 121, my translation). Acketoft's statement shows that the party would have preferred loans, but it also believed that grants were necessary to ensure that all member states would be able to recover from the crisis. This shows that the Liberal Party supported EU borrowing, which indicates that it supported increasing the EU's fiscal capacity in response to the crisis, as expected based on an NFC.

Acketoft's statements in the CEUA show that the Liberal party supported the introduction of new own resources. In the CEUA, Acketoft stated that the Liberal Party's view was that new own resources could not be "excluded" from the EU's recovery plans

(EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 121). The Party's view was that new own resources could be introduced to finance parts of the EU budget and NGEU, but that each of the proposed own resources would need to be evaluated on an individual basis (anf. 121). Acketoft also argued that the proposal for a carbon dioxide own resource could help achieve climate goals and that this own resource could be a "possible source of income for the EU" which could reduce the need to increase the member states' contributions to the EU budget (anf. 121). Acketoft statement indicates that the Liberal Party was open to providing the EU with new revenue sources that would not be channeled through the member states. Her statement suggests that the Liberal party supported the introduction of new own resources, which would increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue, as expected based on an NFC.

The Liberal Party believed that NGEU should be well-targeted, and that support should be made conditional on reforms and meeting specific predefined criteria for how funds should be used. However, in contrast to all the other Riksdag parties, the Liberal Party also believed that the Commission "ultimately" should be given the responsibility of approving the disbursement of funds from NGEU (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 121). This can be interpreted in the direction that the Liberal Party trusted the Commission and believed that it should have a central role in the EU's recovery response. This impression is further strengthened by the fact that while all the other Riksdag parties emphasized the need for these efforts to be temporary, the Liberal Party appeared to believe that NGEU could become a permanent instrument at the EU level. In the CEUA, Acketoft stated that the EU's recovery plans, in particular that EU borrowing would be used to fund investments in areas linked to the climate, digitization, and the EU's competitiveness, could become part of an "instrument" that is used to an "increasing extent" (anf. 121). The Liberal Party's view on the EU's response to the crisis suggests that it was open to permanently expanding the EU's fiscal capacity and that it supported strengthening the EU's supranational institutions, such as the Commission, as expected based on an NFC.

Furthermore, meetings in the CEUA show that the Liberal Party during this period, believed that Sweden needed to be at the core of Europe and that the other parties' critical stance risked isolating Sweden in the negotiations (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 121). Acketoft argued that Sweden's general position on NGEU was "exceptionally critical" and that it would be "unfortunate" if Sweden, because of its position that there should be no grants, would isolate itself in the negotiations (anf. 121, my translation). She argued that "We need to be part of the core of Europe" and that the "talk of solidarity in

Europe must be put into practice for the good of all member states” (anf. 121, my translation). Acketoft argued that the Swedish position was “shortsighted” and that a sidelined role could mean that Sweden would “lose power” and possibly “completely lack power in other negotiations within the EU” (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 13, my translation).

Acketoft’s statements show that the Liberal Party supported the Commission’s recovery efforts and that it believed that it was important to be part of this cooperation during the crisis. However, the party’s concerns about how Sweden’s position would be perceived by other member states could indicate that the party believes that Sweden should not take positions that involve the risk of losing influence in the EU.

5.7.2 Second Period: Negotiations at EC Summit

The Liberal Party did not change its position on the EU’s response to the COVID-19 crisis during the negotiations at the EC Summit. Meetings in the CEUA show that the Liberal Party continued to support NGEU and the introduction of new own resources, as expected based on an NFC. When the Swedish government requested a mandate to reach an agreement for a recovery fund involving EU grants, and new own resources, during the negotiations, the Liberal Party chose to provide it with an open mandate (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 10).

The meetings in the CEUA throughout the negotiations show that the Liberal Party continued to support NGEU because it believed that this type of recovery effort at the EU level was required to deal with the current crisis. This view on the EU’s response to the crisis was particularly evident in an exchange between Acketoft and Jonas Sjöstedt at one of the meetings where Jonas Sjöstedt, from the Left Party, argued that Sweden should oppose NGEU because it was linked to a common fiscal policy. He believed argued that NGEU would be an entirely new principle in the EU and would put future generations in debt (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 8). In response, Acketoft stated that while she agreed with the Left Party that this was a “whole new principle,” she also believed that this was a “completely new scenario that we are facing” (anf. 10, my translation). Acketoft’s statement shows that the Liberal Party acknowledged that the Commission’s proposed recovery plans represented a significant change for the EU and that the current crisis had made these measures necessary. This suggests that while the Liberal Party, before the

COVID-19 crisis, had been open to fiscal integration, the party now appeared to believe that the current crisis had made it necessary to increase the EU's fiscal capacity.

5.7.3 Third Period: Ratification of the ORD in the Riksdag

On March 24th, 2021, the Liberal Party voted in favor of the ratification of the ORD in the Riksdag. In the Riksdag debate on the ratification of the ORD, Arman Teimouri from the Liberal Party explained the party's decision to vote in favor of the ORD. The debate shows that the Liberal Party supported the agreement that was reached at the EC Summit the ratification of the ORD. Teimouri's statements in the debate suggest that the Liberal Party viewed the final agreement reached at the EC Summit as a good agreement and a "fair compromise" (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 38, my translation). Teimouri argued that "no one gets everything in negotiations, but everyone gets something" (anf. 38, my translation). He stated that while the Liberal Party had wanted a smaller grant component and more loans, other countries such as Germany had wanted more grants.

Teimouri's statements in the debate indicate that the Liberal Party viewed the EU's member states as interdependent and that therefore was no alternative to cooperation. Teimouri argued that the Riksdag parties needed to ask themselves the question of what the alternative to solving difficult situations together was. He stated that "The Liberals' answer is that the alternative is worse" (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 38, my translation). Teimouri believed that Sweden is a small export-dependent country that is "very dependent on what is happening in our part of the world" and that "if things are going well for Europe, things are going well for Sweden" (anf. 38, my translation). He argued that this was truer now than ever before. Teimouri stated that if member states, such as France, Italy, and Spain, which had required a significant amount of help had collapsed that this would mean that many in Sweden also would have lost their jobs (anf. 38). He claimed this was why Sweden "needs the EU" (anf. 38, my translation). Teimouri's statements in the Riksdag debate show that the Liberal Party viewed Sweden as interdependent with the rest of the EU's member states in line with what one would expect based on an NFC. The Party's view was that this meant that it was necessary to help member states during a crisis such as this one. The Liberal Party's view further supports the notion that while the party had been open to fiscal integration before the COVID-19 crisis, that the party's support for NGEU had been driven by its belief that this type of instrument at the EU level was necessary to deal with the current crisis.

The Liberal Party's views on the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis suggest that the party supported fiscal integration. However, Teimouri's statements show that the party continued to believe that member states needed to take responsibility for their own economies. Teimouri argued that it was important that Europe worked together but that "each country must also bear its own costs" (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 38, my translation). His statements indicate that the Liberal Party supported giving the EU a fiscal role during the crisis to help those states most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the party continued to believe that member states needed to take responsibility for their own economies. This means that while the Liberal Party may support giving the EU some type of permanent fiscal role, it did not believe that this now meant that member states did not have a responsibility to run their economies responsibly.

The findings from the periods examined show that the Liberal Party supported NGEU and the introduction of new own resources. This suggests that the Liberal Party did not change its views on fiscal integration. The findings also show that the Liberal Party supported giving the Commission a central role in the EU's crisis response. This indicates that it supported strengthening the EU's supranational institutions in response to the crisis. As a result, the Liberal Party did not appear to change its views on supranationalism. The findings suggest that the Liberal Party did not change its conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.8 Centre Party

The analysis of the Riksdag parties' manifestos found that before the COVID-19 crisis, the Centre Party had an IGC. In this section, the Centre Party's views on the EU's crisis response will be analyzed to determine whether its conception of the EU changed following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.8.1 First Period: Weeks Leading up to Negotiations at EC Summit

In the weeks leading up to the negotiations at the EC Summit, meetings in the CEUA show that the Centre Party was critical of the Commission's NGEU proposal. The Centre Party's view was that the EU's recovery efforts needed to be temporary, limited to providing loans, and targeted at member states most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic (EU-nämndens

uppteckningar 2019/20:56, anf. 35) The meetings in the CEUA show that the Centre Party was also opposed to new own resources (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 118).

During this period, the Centre Party's position was that NGEU should be temporary and limited in scope (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:56; 2019/20:57; 2019/20:59; 2019/20:63). In the CEUA, Annika Qarlsson, from the Centre Party stated that NGEU should be linked to the COVID-19 crisis and that support from NGEU needed to be targeted at member states most affected by the pandemic and "not those who have a generally poor economy" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 118). The party also believed that receiving support from NGEU should be conditional on reforms aimed at the digital and green transition (anf. 118). The Centre Party's view on the EU's crisis response can be interpreted in the direction that the party wanted to retain control over NGEU. It is also an indication that the Centre Party may have wanted to limit the Commission's discretion in deciding how funds from NGEU would be disbursed. While the Centre Party's clear demands indicate that the party wanted to retain control and limit the scope of NGEU, it is unclear if this was the case because it wanted to limit the Commission's discretion over how NGEU would be used in response to the crisis.

The Centre Party was critical of the Commission's NGEU proposal, but it was especially critical of the fact that it proposed that EU borrowing would be used to provide grants. In the CEUA, Qarlsson stated that the party's position was that "support for the recovery should be loans instead of grants" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:63, anf. 10, my translation). However, while the party was strongly opposed to a grant component, it is not clear why the party was opposed to EU grants.

Meetings in the CEUA show that the Centre Party was against the introduction of new own resources to finance parts of the EU budget and NGEU. However, while these meetings show that the party was opposed to all proposals for new own resources, they also demonstrate that the Centre Party believed that the introduction of new own resources could be viewed in different ways (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:57, anf. 9). Qarlsson argued that one way to view the discussions about new own resources was in terms of the question of how the member states' contributions to the EU budget should be calculated. Alternatively, another way one could view these discussions was in terms of "a new tax base at the EU level" (anf. 9, my translation). Qarlsson argued that it was in regard to this second interpretation that the Centre Party believed it was "important" to have "a clear line that we do not open for new own resources" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:59, anf. 9).

Qarlsson's statement indicates that the Centre Party did view the issue of new own resources in terms of whether the EU should be given a right to tax.

However, the fact that the Centre Party viewed the issue of own resources in this way also suggests that it made a distinction between those own resources that are channeled through the member states and those which would provide the EU with a new revenue source independent of the member states. Whereas this first type of own resource could be viewed as a member state contribution to the EU budget, the second type would increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue. The latter could be viewed as a type of tax because it is a revenue source that it would collect independent of the member states. The fact that the Centre Party appeared to be most worried about this second type of own resource indicates that it was opposed to new own resources because it was opposed to increasing the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue, as expected based on an IGC.

5.8.2 Second Period: Negotiations at EC Summit

Meetings in the CEUA show that over the course of the negotiations at the EC Summit, the Centre Party changed its position on the EU's recovery efforts. In the weeks leading up to the negotiations, the Centre Party had been critical of the Commission's proposal to establish NGEU and that EU borrowing would be used to provide grants. During the negotiations, the Centre Party decided to open up to the possibility of accepting a grant component in NGEU (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:68, anf. 8). At the conclusion of the negotiations, the Centre Party provided the government with a mandate to reach an agreement that included a grant component. However, it did not give the government a mandate to accept the aspects of agreement concerning new own resources (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 23).

The meetings in the CEUA during this period show that the Centre Party wanted to avoid the possibility of a collapse in negotiations. In one of these meetings, Qarlsson argued that "It is not a good negotiation position if the negotiations break down. There must be openings to continue negotiations" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:66, anf. 7, my translation). The Centre Party's view was that if negotiations were to succeed, it was "crucial" that everyone involved in the negotiations "gives" and "takes" (anf. 7, my translation). If the Centre Party was to accept a grant component, it was also necessary for other member states to make concessions (anf. 7, my translation). While Qarlsson's statement that it was necessary to find a compromise whereby the "whole" would be acceptable

suggests that the party believed it was important to find some type of compromise, the party was not willing to accept the parts of the proposal concerning new own resources (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:68, anf. 7, my translation).

The Centre Party eventually gave the government a mandate to reach an agreement but did not give it a mandate to accept parts of the proposal concerning new own resources. In the CEUA, the Centre Party's representatives continuously pushed the government to have the parts concerning new own resources removed from the negotiating proposal. In one of the meetings, Qarlsson stated that "We will not be able to participate in and in any way push this through at the next stage, we will be against this at every stage. On this part we, therefore, choose not to partake in the decision" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:69, anf. 23, my translation). Qarlsson's statement shows that the party continued to oppose the introduction of new own resources and remained adamant that it would continue to work against this in future decisions. In an earlier meeting Qarlsson had stated that "The possibility to collect taxes at the EU level must also be removed from the proposal" (EU-nämndens uppteckningar 2019/20:68, anf. 7, my translation). While her statement suggests that the Centre Party continued to believe that the agreement was linked to EU taxation, it is unclear whether this also meant that it believed that the plastics own resource was a type of EU tax. Thus, while it is possible that the Centre Party opposed new own resources because it was against providing the EU with additional revenue sources, the party's opposition to giving the EU an ability to collect taxes indicates that it also may have opposed these because it was against increasing the EU's fiscal capacity to collect its own revenue.

5.8.3 Third Period: Ratification of ORD in the Riksdag

On March 24th, 2021, the Centre Party voted in favor of the ratification of the ORD.

Statements by the Centre Party's representative, Lars Thomsson, in the Riksdag debate before the ratification of the ORD show that while the Centre Party voted in favor of the ORD, the party did not change its conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

Thomsson's statements in the Riksdag debate show that the Centre party believed that the decision on how to vote on the ORD was difficult because it pertained to large sums of money and involved 27 member states (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 36). Thomsson argued that the party believed that the decision was linked to "principles" such as the EU's long-term competitiveness and the principle of where tax competence should lie (anf. 36, my translation). He stated that the decision also was linked to principles such as being frugal with money, the principle of the rule of law, and the principle of solidarity with the EU (anf. 36).

He highlighted that the “Centre Party’s basic view on this issue is that the EU should not lose its competitiveness” and argued that to avoid this “you need strong, successful and prosperous companies” (anf. 36, my translation). The Centre Party’s view was that as a small export-dependent country, Sweden was “completely” dependent on things working for the rest of the EU because “if we are to succeed in our recovery, the EU needs to succeed in its recovery” (anf. 36, my translation).

Thomsson’s statements, therefore, indicate that the Centre Party had become significantly more positive about the EU’s recovery plans since the negotiations at the EC Summit. They demonstrate that the party viewed the agreement reached at the EC Summit and the ORD bill as part of a trade-off between competing interests and principles. Additionally, Thomsson’s view that Sweden’s recovery was dependent on that of the rest of the EU, suggests that the party believed that the EU’s member states, including Sweden, were interdependent and that this had been a contributing factor to why a common recovery effort was required.

At the end of his opening speech, Thomsson argued that despite being critical of the agreement from the EC Summit and the ORD bill, the Centre Party believed that the overall benefits of the agreement were still in favor of “joint action” to “rebuild areas and sectors that have crashed during the crisis” (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 36, my translation). Thomsson argued that the EU’s recovery efforts “benefits everyone, and it benefits not least Sweden” (anf. 36, my translation). He described the agreement as an agreement that was in the “broad midfield” and argued that this was precisely the type of cooperation the EU should pursue in the future (anf. 36, my translation). This shows that while the Centre Party believed there were significant drawbacks to the EU’s recovery efforts, it also believed that the benefits of the agreement outweighed the downsides. Thomsson’s statement that agreements in the “broad midfield” were the way in which the party believed that member states should cooperate on in the future can be interpreted in the direction that the Centre party believed that EU cooperation should be based on finding compromises and reaching agreements that satisfy the middle ground (anf. 36, my translation). The Centre Party’s decision to vote in favor of the ratification of the ORD deviates from the expectation that parties with an IGC would oppose the EU’s response to the COVID’19 crisis because it increases the EU’s fiscal capacity and strengthens the EU’s supranational institutions. Nevertheless, while the Centre Party did end up supporting the EU’s crisis response, it did not change its views on fiscal integration or supranationalism in the EU.

In the Riksdag debate, Thomsson highlighted several aspects of the EU's crisis response that the Centre Party was critical of. One of the reasons the Centre Party remained critical of the EU's crisis response was the fact that more than half of the support from NGEU would be provided as grants (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 36). The Centre Party's view was that such a large grant component would involve the risk of an "irresponsible economic policy in Europe" (anf. 36, my translation). This suggests that one of the reasons why the Centre Party had initially been opposed to a grant component was because it believed that providing grants rather than loans could negatively affect the fiscal responsibility of the member states receiving support.

Another reason why the Centre Party remained critical of the EU's crisis response was because new own resources would now be introduced as part of the ORD bill. Thomsson claimed that the plastics own resource was "a new revenue component that we are hesitant about" (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 36, my translation). Therefore, while the party had throughout the periods examined been strongly opposed to new own resources and had not given the government a mandate to accept this, it was now willing to accept the plastics own resource. However, it remains unclear precisely why the Centre Party was willing to accept this own resource. Nonetheless, the fact that Thomsson described this own resource as a new "revenue component", and not a tax, could be interpreted as a sign that it could accept this own resource because it is not channeled through the member states (anf. 36, my translation). A revenue source that is channeled through the member states stands in contrast to own resources which the EU would collect independently of the member states. This suggests that while the Centre Party was willing to accept providing the EU with a new revenue source, it remains opposed to new own resources that would increase the EU's fiscal capacity to collect revenue independently of the member states, as expected based on an IGC.

Furthermore, Thomsson's statements indicate that the Centre Party believed that the most significant downside of the EU's response to the COVID-19 pandemic was that NGEU gave the EU a fiscal role. In the debate, Thomsson argued that the Centre Party was critical of NGEU because it "is a facility that gives the EU a partial fiscal role, which the Centre Party really does not want because that role will remain with the member states" (Riksdagens protokoll 2020/21:99, anf. 36, my translation). Thomsson's statement, therefore, shows that one of the reasons why the Centre Party had been critical of the EU's crisis response was that it believed the NGEU gave the EU a "partial fiscal role" (anf. 36, my translation). However, his statement also reveals that the party viewed this as especially problematic because it believed that this role "will" remain with the member states. This suggests that while the

Centre Party acknowledged that NGEU would give the EU a fiscal role during the crisis the party continued to believe that this role *would* ultimately remain with the member states. The Centre Party's view on this is interesting because it highlights that even though the party now accepted that the EU would take on a fiscal role during the crisis, it also did not believe that this changed the fact that this *role* would continue to lie with the member states. This suggests that the Centre Party views NGEU and the EU's fiscal role during the crisis as a temporary feature of the EU and not one that should or would become permanent. While its decision to support NGEU deviates from what was expected based on an IGC, the party continued to believe the fiscal policy should be a national competence. Consequently, the Centre Party did not change its views on fiscal integration following the COVID-19 crisis.

Despite the Centre's decision to support the EU's crisis response there is nothing that suggests that the Centre Party believed that the EU's supranational institutions should be strengthened in response to the crisis. Instead, the party's desire to include clear criteria for the disbursement of funds from NGEU can be interpreted as a sign that the Centre Party wanted the member states to retain control. As a result, the Centre Party did not change its views on supranationalism following the COVID-19 crisis.

The findings from the periods examined show that while the Centre Party did decide to support the EU's crisis response, the party did not change its views on fiscal integration or supranationalism and, therefore, did not change its conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

5.9 Summary and Discussion

The analysis of the Riksdag party manifestos from the Riksdag and EP elections found that before the COVID-19 crisis, the Christian Democrats, Moderate Party, Centre Party, Sweden Democrats, and the Left party all had an IGC. The Liberal Party was the only party that had an NFC. The analysis of the Riksdag parties' views on the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis found that while there were differences in how the parties viewed and acted in relation to the EU's crisis response, none of the parties examined changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

The findings reveal that while all the parties with an IGC were critical of the EU's crisis response and opposed the distribution of EU grants, and new own resources, only the Sweden Democrats and the Left Party directly opposed the agreement made at the EC

Summit and the ratification of the ORD. The Sweden Democrats and the Left Party were opposed to the EU's crisis response throughout the period examined and opposed EU borrowing, EU grants, and all types of new own resources, as expected based on an IGC. They did not change their views on fiscal integration or supranationalism and consequently did not change their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

The Moderate Party, Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party were all opposed to EU grants and new own resources that would have increased the EU's fiscal capacity, as expected based on an IGC. However, the fact that these parties were open to some form of EU borrowing to provide loans during the crisis, deviates from what was expected based on an IGC. While the Moderate Party and the Christian Democrats throughout the period examined remained critical of the EU's crisis response, these parties, ultimately, chose to neither directly support nor oppose the EU's crisis response. In contrast, the Centre Party had initially been critical of the EU's crisis response as well, but, in the end, chose to support NGEU. As a result, while these parties did not oppose, or in the case of the Moderate Party and Christian Democrats directly oppose, NGEU, none of these parties changed their views on fiscal integration and supranationalism, and consequently did not change their conception of the EU. The Liberal Party was at first, hesitant about the Commission's proposed recovery efforts, but later changed its view and chose to support EU borrowing, EU grants, and new own resources, as expected based on an NFC. The Liberal Party did not change its views on fiscal integration and supranationalism and thus did not change its conception of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

However, while none of the Riksdag parties changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis, the analysis shows that there was an incongruity between some of the parties' conception of the EU and how they acted in relation to NGEU. Of the five Riksdag parties which had an IGC, only the Sweden Democrats and the Left Party acted to stop NGEU. The implication of this is that while the Moderate Party, Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party did not change their conceptions of the EU, they nevertheless can be said to have accepted that NGEU would strengthen the EU's supranational institutions and increase the EU's fiscal capacity, albeit temporarily.

The analysis therefore also highlights that while five of the Riksdag parties were found to have an IGC, there were nevertheless significant differences in how these parties acted in relation to the EU's crisis response. While the Sweden Democrats and the Left Party acted in accordance with their conception of the EU, the Moderate Party, Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party did not when they chose not to oppose the EU's crisis

response. The analysis shows that while the Sweden Democrats and the Left Party believed that NGEU should be stopped no matter the consequences, the three other parties did not. This suggests that although the Moderate Party, Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party were concerned about the consequences of NGEU, they also appear to have felt a certain responsibility not to throw the EU into an even deeper crisis and threaten the survival of the EU. The Moderate Party and the Christian Democrats believed that they, in effect, were given a choice between accepting the agreement made at the EC Summit or throwing the EU into a deeper crisis. This suggests that the parties believed that they were locked in and believed that they had no choice but to accept the EU's crisis.

The Moderate Party, Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party's decision not to oppose the EU's crisis response can be viewed in terms of a type of neofunctional logic. Neofunctionalism emphasizes the role of interdependence, path dependency, and the notion that the EU develops in response to crises. In this case, the Moderate Party, and the Christian Democrats' view that they had no choice but to accept NGEU resembles a neofunctional where rather than changing their views on the EU, actors in crises will perceive that they are locked in and that the costs of disintegration are significant enough that actors will refrain from halting deeper integration. The theoretical implication of this is that while these parties continue to have an IGC, their actions during the crisis can be understood in terms of a neofunctional logic of integration.

6.0 Conclusion

In the concluding chapter, the topic and research questions of this thesis will be revisited. Thereafter, the findings of this study and their theoretical implications will be discussed. Finally, recommendations for future research will be provided.

This thesis has aimed to study how political parties in Sweden view and understand the EU in terms of political system and whether this has changed following the COVID-19 crisis. The research questions of this thesis were as follows: What types of conceptions of the EU do political parties in Sweden have? And did their conceptions of the EU change following the COVID-19 crisis?

The analysis of the Riksdag parties' manifestos found that before the COVID-19 crisis, the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats, the Centre Party, the Sweden Democrats, and the Left Party had an IGC. The Liberal Party was found to have an NFC. This highlights that while parties across the political spectrum in Sweden have different views on specific policy issues in the EU, all but one of the parties examined have an IGC.

The analysis of the Riksdag parties' views on the EU's response to the COVID-19 crisis found that while there were differences in how the parties viewed and acted in relation to the EU's crisis response, none of the parties examined, changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis.

However, the analysis also found that while none of the parties changed their conceptions of the EU following the COVID-19 crisis, there was nevertheless an incongruity between some of the parties' conception of the EU and how they acted in relation to the EU's crisis response. While five of the Riksdag parties were found to have an IGC, only the Sweden Democrats and the Left Party acted to stop the EU's crisis response. The analysis, showed that while several of the Riksdag parties have the same conception of the EU, there were significant differences in how these parties acted during the crisis. The decision by the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party not to oppose the EU's crisis response means that these parties, ultimately, accepted that NGEU would strengthen the EU's supranational institutions and increase the EU's fiscal capacity, albeit temporarily.

The fact that the Moderate Party and the Christian Democrats believed that they had no choice but to accept the EU's crisis response suggest that their decision not to oppose

NGEU was influenced by mechanisms such as interdependence and lock-in. While the Sweden Democrats and the Left Party had wanted Sweden to reject the EU's crisis response no matter the consequences, the Moderate Party, the Christian Democrats, and the Centre Party appeared to feel a responsibility to preserve the EU and not to throw the union into an even deeper crisis. The theoretical implication of this is that while these three parties subscribe to an intergovernmental model of the EU, their decision not to halt further integration during the crisis can be understood in terms of a neofunctional logic of integration. This means that while these parties do not have an NFC, they nevertheless acted in ways that resemble the logic that underpins this conception of the EU. Consequently, while these parties continue to view the EU in intergovernmental terms, their actions during the crisis could in fact demonstrate some of the difficulties that actors face when trying to realize this conception in practice. In other words, the findings could suggest that there is a neofunctional ghost in the intergovernmental machine.

Future research could examine whether political parties in other member states view the EU in ways that can be understood in terms of the theoretical framework applied in this study. Studies could also examine whether EU crises, such as the COVID-19 crisis, have changed how parties in other member states view the EU in terms of political system. Further, NGEU strengthens the EU's supranational institutions and increase the EU's fiscal capacity, temporarily. This means that it remains unclear whether NGEU will lead to permanent integration in the future. As a result, future studies could also examine more broadly whether the decision by member states to establish NGEU in response to the COVID-19 crisis truly leads to deeper integration in the future.

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