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EXPERIENCING EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY

THROUGH COVID-19:

Analysis of Sweden's Fiscal Solidarity in the Union



(Image Taken from Independent.ie 2020)

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Table of Contents

<u>Abstract</u>	3
<u>Abbreviations List</u>	4
<u>Introduction to a European Conundrum</u>	5
<u>Sweden in Context</u>	8
<i>From Isolation to Globalization</i>	8
<u>Literature on Solidarity</u>	9
<i>Introduction to Solidarity</i>	9
<i>Humanitarian Based Solidarity</i>	12
<i>The Social Contract</i>	12
<i>Solidarity Through Interdependence and Mutual Responsibility</i>	13
<i>Conditional and Prerequisite Solidarity</i>	14
<i>Solidarity in the EU</i>	16
<u>Methodology</u>	18
<u>Swedish Discourse at Home and in Europe</u>	20
<i>The Government's Discourse</i>	20
<i>Riksdag Discourse</i>	22
<i>Swedish MEP Discourse</i>	26
<u>Concluding Discussion</u>	28
<i>Decades Long Identity Crisis</i>	28
<u>Conclusion</u>	34
<u>Bibliography</u>	36

Abstract

As Covid-19 was beginning to spread, European leaders were forced to debate not only the continued funding of the EU for the next 7 years, but a fiscal relief package as well. Sweden resisted calls to approve of the Commission's 3 trillion-euro plan, begging the question *how does Sweden justify its resistance to fiscal redistribution at the EU level in the face of a symmetrical crisis?* Solidarity is a complicated subject matter in the world of international affairs, to assist in better understanding a concept written into EU treaties this thesis created a comprehensive typology of solidarity, broken down into humanitarian and social contract subtypes, with the social contract possessing two further categories, interdependence/mutual responsibility, and conditional solidarity. To understand Sweden's positioning and messaging, the methodology employed was a discourse analysis by utilizing statements made by Swedish politicians and officials from the Government, Riksdag, and European Parliament to understand the messaging and ideas that were presented in their respective forums. This paper finds that Sweden predominantly utilizes conditional solidarity in its discourse, with modernization, trust and invertedly, identity, being primary factors in determining Swedish disposition of aid. Discourse and internal matters which were created from prior experiences in the early 1990s during a domestic financial crisis, that have bled over into Swedish-European relations. This in turn has opened a gap for anti-EU parties and politicians to mask their rhetoric as a new norm to push a narrative for the breakdown of Swedish contributions and interactions in the EU to prevent further interdependence between Member States.

Key words: European Union, Multiannual Financial Framework, Solidarity, Sweden, Folkhemmet, Identity, Covid-19

Abbreviations List

CD-Kristdemokraterna (Christian Democrats)

CPM-Civil Protection Mechanism

ECR-European Conservatives and Reformists

EP-European Parliament

EEC-European Economic Community

EIB-European Investment Bank

EPP- European Peoples Party

ESM-European Stability Mechanism

EU-European Union

MEP-Members of European Parliament

MFF-Multiannual Financial Framework

MP-Members of Parliament

MS-Member State

OECD- Economic Co-operation and Development

PM-Prime Minister

SAP- Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet (Social Democrats)

SD-Sverigedemokraterna (Swedish Democrats)

SEK-Swedish Krona

EXPERIENCING EUROPEAN SOLIDARITY THROUGH COVID-19:

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Introduction to a European Conundrum

In July 2020, after a near record breaking 5 days of negotiation, the European Council collectively gave approval to the next 7-year Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), the European Union (EU) budget. A near 2 trillion-euro package which included a Covid Recovery Fund, a 750 billion-euro financial relief plan split into two parts, “Next Generation EU” (NextGEN EU) and “RescEU”, created to revitalize the EU Member State’s (MS’s) economies due to the pandemic. On paper this should have been a symbol of EU solidarity in the face of a devastating symmetrical economic crisis affecting all members. Instead, we witnessed a bitter fiscal fight which resulted in the drastic cut down of what was originally a 3 trillion-euro EU budget and relief fund. This was not a crisis created by individual MSs poor mishandling of finances, nor would the impact of the crisis affect the MSs asymmetrically like the Euro crisis, rather it was a natural catastrophe with unpredictable consequences for individual states. This provides an intriguing test case to explore the preconditions for EU-wide solidarity, as such, this thesis will do so by investigating the discourses around fiscal redistribution in the MS of Sweden, with the primary query of: *How does Sweden justify its resistance to fiscal redistribution at the EU level in the face of a symmetrical crisis?*

Many academics have thrown their proverbial hats into the ring of understanding of solidarity, some by analyzing the humanitarian expressions of solidarity through individual citizens dispensing their own resources to foreign entities, while others at the legalistic aspects of solidarity within a state, as expressions of ‘institutionalized solidarity’. This paper delves into each of these forms of solidarity while organizing them into comprehensive typologies, which are related back to the discourse of Swedish government officials. The discussions on solidarity between nation states has its complexities due to the difficulty of examining a state, its mentality, and desire to express solidarity in comparison to that of individual people (Kotzur & Schmalenbach 2014, Pg.90). Albeit challenging, this paper contributes to the academic literature by better understanding the intentions and desires of MSs, specifically Sweden, which can be utilized to better improve EU cohesion in matters which may require transnational acts of solidarity and just how far it can

go. The Kingdom of Sweden is globally renowned as one of the most developed social democracies in Europe, having historically backed strong domestic societal solidarity via all-encompassing welfare policies and class unity since the Great Depression. Despite this, Sweden was among the group of countries (Frugal 4) that most loudly resisted redistribution, with Sweden seeking to predominantly funnel EU funds through conditional loans rather than grants. Sweden also provides somewhat of an outsider's perspective on the economic situation of the EU, in that it is a net contributor to the budget and is active in EU affairs yet has resisted joining core EU projects such as the Euro or EMU (European Union 2020). Sweden is also, currently run by a center-left government, the Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet (Social Democrats/SAP), a political movement which has been mixed yet growingly pro-EU since 1995, in addition to having been the party that build Sweden's welfare state, yet it was adamant about siding with the Commission (Miles 2001, Pg.306). Sweden also remains one of the most generous nations regarding international solidarity having one of the highest contributions to international aid development per capita (OECD 2013). Based upon these criteria of intense domestic solidarity and immense international generosity, we should have expected some convergence between these policies and for Sweden to have taken the side of Germany in wanting to deliver upon the 3 trillion-euro stimulus package. Except Sweden vehemently rejected it and did not stand behind their traditional EU negotiation ally (Germany) (Nannesson Interview 2021).

Discussing the EU in the context of solidarity is not new, what made this issue an intriguing topic is the recency of the Covid-19 pandemic, leaving it with room to be investigated within the context of EU-MS solidarity. From research previously conducted, this natural catastrophe should have triggered a more sympathetic EU environment, among individuals and on the inter-state level; yet we did not observe this (Genshschel & Hemerijck 2018, Pg.4). Rather, we bore witness to a select group of MSs (the Frugal 4) which came to dominate the MFF negotiations and defy the traditional Franco-German Axis power base. The importance of EU solidarity in an up-to-date context cannot be understated, as the word *solidarity* is directly written into EU treaties and at the core of the French Foreign Minister Robert Schuman Declaration at the start of the European integration process (Schuman 1950). To examine why EU MSs, while willing, were clearly hesitant to provide straightforward acts of solidarity in a crisis not of a MS's own doing, could indicate the increasing cost of solidarity in the EU and determine what MSs can expect to receive in the future. All these

factors justify why European solidarity in the context of the 2021-2027 MFF negotiation must be addressed.

This thesis will first analyze the literature on the concept of solidarity in the EU to distill a distinct typology of solidarity concepts, then analyze public discourse utilized by the Prime Minister (PM) and other government related entities, including Swedish Parliament (Riksdagen), and European Parliament (EP) via discourse analysis. This is to better understand the different arguments and concepts of solidarity that helped shape the Swedish position at the EU level of negotiations. This was accomplished by utilizing interviews, government documentation, and parliamentary records on the MFF negotiation as resources for research. Here we find two similar yet distinct rationales by the politicians of Sweden which are dependent upon the perspective of politicians have towards the EU and its MSs. First that some Swedish politicians on some level sympathize with MSs based on their own past experiences regarding fiscal struggles and spending, having concluded that MSs must undergo necessary, but tough, reforms to improve themselves in the long run. These changes then are brought upon via conditional solidarity mechanisms to induce reform to better become like Sweden. The second perspective is that Swedish politicians do not believe MSs identify with Swedish values of modernity and efficiency, thus conditionality is employed as MSs cannot be trusted to carry through reform on their own, or that Sweden should outright limit or not engage with these MSs at all. This mixed response to EU initiatives and attitudes to MSs feeds into anti-EU sentiments and parties there-of, who design their arguments similarly to what mainstream parties argue for, as it is contextually more palpable to most Swedes. However, for some this is a deliberate endeavor designed to further push Sweden away from the EU and to prevent further development of solidarity based upon mutual responsibility and interdependence.

These rationales are then dispersed across political parties, with some having come to fully embody one or the other of these beliefs, while most remain mixed. This uncertainty and discourse of pursuing the need undergo difficult reforms to improve in the long term appears to have originated with the collapse of the Swedish socio-economic ideology of the “Folkhemmet” in the 90s. Consequently, it has bled into Swedish-European affairs, with the ghost of the Folkhemmet continually being used by ethno-nationalistic parties like the Sverigedemokraterna (Swedish Democrats/SD) to assist in disguising an anti-EU rhetoric among a population which is generally pro-EU, yet federo-skeptic. The collapse of the Folkhemmet and joining the EU has also appeared

to create a political identity crisis for some parties, as total societal solidarity became replaced with a strong sense of conscientiously driven frugality for most Swedish parties, and for the SAP in particular. As they seek to improve MSs and provide solidarity based on their reforms in the 90s, however, in a restrained capacity, greatly contributing to the limitation of Swedish solidarity in the EU to humanitarian and robust conditionality. Additionally, this furthers the appearance of Sweden being a MS which is an “insider on the outside” and causing the ideal of EU solidarity via mutual responsibility and interdependence to remain distant.

Sweden in a European Context

From Isolation to Globalization

SAP can be credited for the expansive welfare system Sweden is renowned for, having backed a policy of total societal solidarity via an all-encompassing welfare state, class wage harmony, and striving for total employment of their citizens under the ideological umbrella of the “Folkhemmet”, literally translated as “People’s home” (Berman 2011, Pg.35; Erixon 2010, Pg.677). By the time the European Economic Community (EEC) came into being following the Second World War, Sweden had begun to reexamine its place in Europe, ultimately concluding that the EEC was unfit for Swedish interests having been condemned for being ‘too Catholic, Conservative and too Capitalistic’ by SAP, thus incompatible with the Swedish values of the Folkhemmet (Miles 2005, Pg.25). This sentiment did not last however, as the idea of joining the EEC, then EU, would begin to formulate in 1976 after SAP’s first electoral loss in 40 years and would culminate in a series of events leading to Sweden joining the EU in 1994, following a referendum victory of 52.2% thanks to a split in SAP (Pontusson 1994, Pg.28-29;34; Johansson & Raunio 2010, Pg.235;241)

Although Sweden voted to enter the EU, Swedish sentiment towards the Union remained complex with some, like Lindahl & Naurin (2005 Pg.85), describing Sweden as being “Janus-faced”. Sweden could understandably be described as a “Euro-sceptic” along the lines of Denmark and the UK’s intergovernmentalist approach to European projects, having rejected some major integration ventures such as the Euro and EMU (Lindahl & Naurin 2005, Pg.79-80). This paper will instead argue along lines of Miles (2001 Pg.329) and Lindahl & Naurin (Pg.85), that Sweden is not necessarily Euro-sceptic in the traditional sense of viewing the EU, rather, Sweden is better

described as “federo-skeptic” and increasingly pro-EU. Meaning, Swedes, or at least their political parties, (on average) do feel positive sentiment towards the EU. The trigger for this unease is that they remain unconvinced of the benefits of absolute integration into the Union (Ibid). What occurs then is a continual cost-to-benefit relationship, with Swede’s continually evaluating the benefits of total European integration while attempting to maximize preexisting benefits, relations, and interactions of being outside the Euro “club”, an “outsider on the inside” as it were (Lindahl & Naurin 2005, Pg.79).

Other areas where Sweden greatly differs from their Scandinavian cousin Denmark in attitudes to the EU is how Denmark has championed EU opt-outs, Sweden never followed suit and has left the door open to further integration, with the Swedish Statistical Authority conducting yearly surveys into the possibility of dropping the Krona in favor of the Euro, a subject which once had broad support from political parties (Campos et al. 2016, Pg.2). More recent evidence of Swedish cost-to-benefit evaluations of European integration comes from inquiries into the possibility of joining the European Banking Union as the Swedish Central Bank concluded the number of cross-border operations has increasingly made it more reasonable for Sweden to join (CNBC 2017; Reuters 2020). By combining these acts with opinion polls conducted to determine Swedish support for the EU, it would be reasonable to classify modern Sweden as generally pro-EU yet federo-sceptic nation, rather than a traditional Eurosceptic (Eurobarometer 2021; Kleider & Stoeckel 2018, Pg.13). How then does this translate to the understanding of solidarity in the EU?

Literature on Solidarity

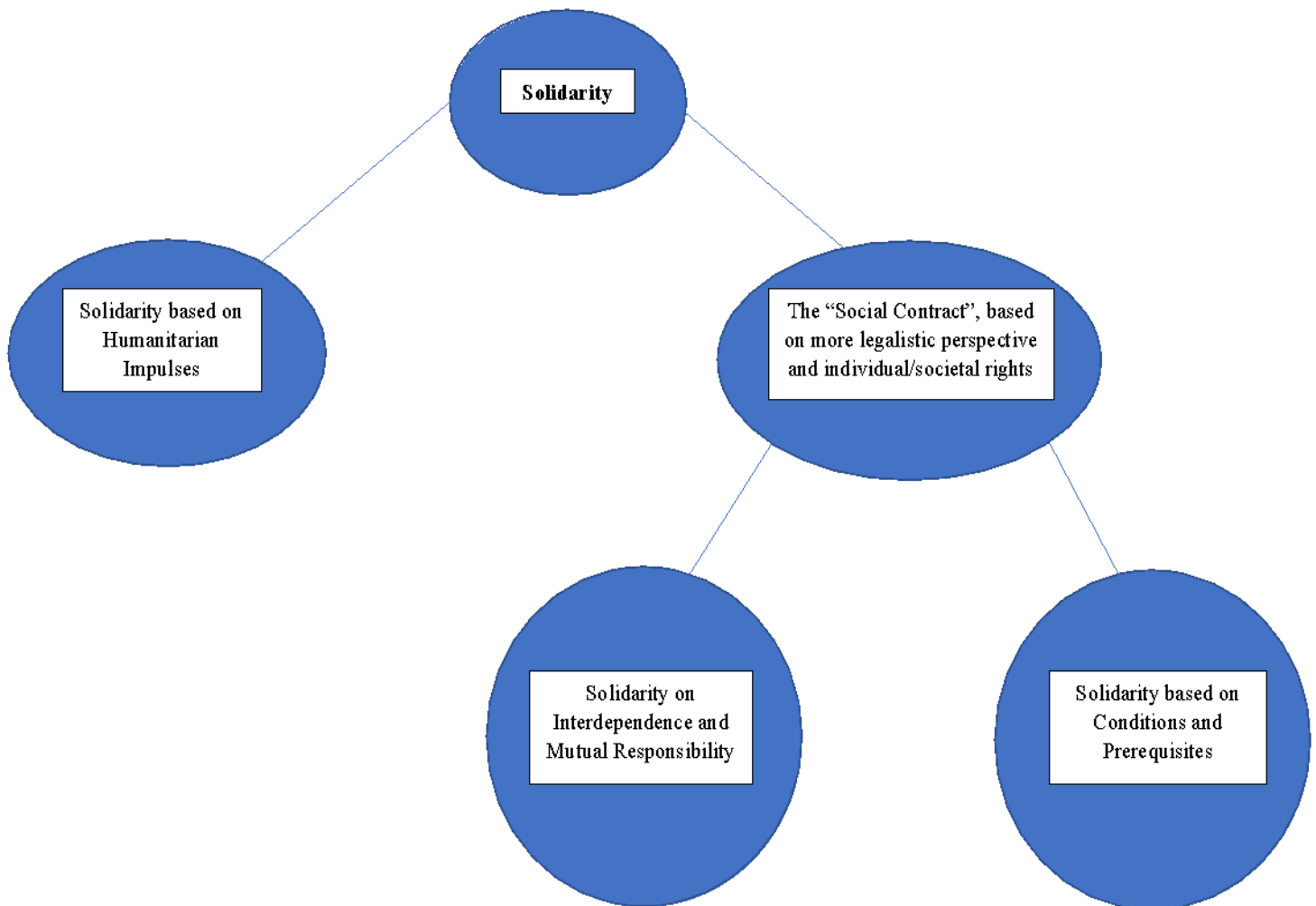
Introduction to Solidarity

When analyzing the literature on solidarity, both as a practical matter among individuals and as a societal construct, there exists various categories we can identify which relate to the EU. First is solidarity in its easiest form, based on a humanitarian or moral instinct, that an individual believes it is the ethical and humane thing to do, to help your fellow man in times of need (Steinvorth 2017, Pg. 10). This form of solidarity tends to be the easiest to identify in times of natural disasters or crises beyond anyone’s control. The other three legalistic perspectives of solidarity operate under a central tenant based on the “social contract” championed by Enlightenment thinkers like Rousseau and Hobbes (Williams 2014). The legal perspective is rather important, as unlike the

humanitarian basis for assistance, the social contract provides the basis for an individual to seek, via the law, assistance from the collective. Another aspect which must be discussed is an individual's ability to recognize themselves as part of various common communities. These communities can be based on any number of grounds whether cultural, political, national, or ethnic/racial. More importantly, is that these identities can both help trigger solidarity but may also be used as a motivator for people to reject engaging in acts of solidarity due to the development of a "we vs. them" mentality (Saunders 2008. pg. 227). Notions of identity are still a major factor still within the EU, especially with the rise of ethno-national populists across the Union (BBC 2019). As a result, addressing the matter of identity and its relationship to solidarity in a European context is ultimately unavoidable when discussing EU solidarity in times of the Covid Pandemic.

Two subsets of the social contract are based upon "interdependence and mutual responsibility" and "solidarity based upon conditionality and prerequisites". Solidarity generated by interdependence and mutual responsibility leans more upon the cultural and literal form of the social contract, where one is expected to take part and know one's place within society whether consciously or otherwise. This can be done either through some form of personal sacrifice or done by what is socially taught and expected by all for the greater good of society. Some of the academics and philosophers who evaluate and conceptualize this notion are the likes of Aristotle and Durkheim. Where Aristotle asks of the role of the individual, to which Durkheim would answer "so we can specialize our means of production as society develops" (Beutler 2017, Pg.23). On a related yet distinct end of the spectrum is based upon providing solidarity once certain prerequisites and conditions are met. That while one is willing to dispense personal resources to assist, there is an underlying mistrust or domestic cost for actor A to help actor B. Therefore, to bridge the gap one must create a mechanism to ensure good behavior and responsible usage of those resources provided. A diagram is provided to better conceptualize the typology we have identified.

Solidarity Typology Concept Map



It should be stated that analogous policies could be supported through different lenses of solidarity. The justification for which is created through deliberate political machinations to appeal to different, and possibly conflicting, notions of solidarity. For instance, one may believe that people pay taxes because they consider they owe a general debt to the community, while another could reason that they pay taxes explicitly to gain access to concrete services from the state. The motivation for why individuals contribute to the community funds is fundamentally irrelevant. What does matter is that at the end of the day the tax is designed to compel individuals to contribute to the pool for the betterment of all, one way or another.

Humanitarian Based Solidarity

Steinvorth describes Humanitarian solidarity as “the virtue of equals who help one another in misfortunes they are not responsible for.” (Steinvorth 2017, Pg.10). That we can recognize while some individuals are doing well, there are others who are less fortunate and thus we are obligated to help regardless of societally constructed identities like nationality, race, religion etc. (Ibid). However, there may be gradual and escalating resistance to engage in this form of solidarity. That it can become harder for the citizen to feel the urge to help at ever greater distances which they may have little connection to, whether physically, emotionally, or socially (Kotzur & Schmalenbach 2014, Pg.90). Kotzur & Schmalenbach (2014, Pg.71) identify this form of solidarity as a negative type of solidarity in global affairs, meaning “an immediate response of one or more international actors to a certain danger or demand”. It is an entity reacting to a crisis rather than having mechanisms and systems in place specifically designed in anticipation of a crisis. A recent example of this negative solidarity in action is when in early August of 2020 the world bore witness to a massive explosion in the city of Beirut, Lebanon, and France was one of many nations which sent aid to the people of Lebanon as an act of humanitarian solidarity (BBC 2020).

The Social Contract

Much more of the academic discussion on solidarity focuses on the legally enforced and socially expected acts of solidarity prescribed by the social contract. The progenitors of the social contract are the renowned thinkers of the Enlightenment with the likes of Rousseau and Hobbes, each adding their own take as to how humanity interacts within society. Rousseau himself created the concept of the “social contract”, the theory of how there exists an unwritten bond, between individuals and the state which guides their actions and controls their behavior and roles (Williams 2014). He also explains how there can be no solidarity, nor rule of law, among individuals if there is no greater community to which the individual is subject (Ibid). Hobbes, with his book *Leviathan*, suggests that without the state, society itself would collapse into chaos as humans require a larger power to assist in regulating interaction among individuals (Beutler 2017, Pg.24). While disagreeing on the nature of man, they both come to the same nexus, that the state is central to ensure and facilitate solidarity between communities and individuals which otherwise would not occur (Williams 2014, Pg.62).

Another aspect of the social contract form of solidarity is the opposite end of Kotzur & Schmalenbach's classification of negative solidarity, the positive form. Positive solidarity, as Kotzur & Schmalenbach (2014, Pg.90) describe it, as "encompasses mutual rights and obligations that are agreed upon in order to achieve a common goal". One example is a government that sets aside resources for local areas in preparation for an eventual catastrophe. From Kotzur & Schmalenbach (2014, Pg.76) we can infer that most international forms of solidarity are negative rather than positive. Attributed simply to a state's inherent desire to maintain sovereignty on matters such as policy and spending, because to coordinate and share one's own policy control measures and resources with another is to, in effect, limit one's own sovereignty and direct influence over those resources (Ibid).

On a practical level, regarding legally provided solidarity in the event of economical struggle, is that of the EU's older federal entity of unified states, the United States of America. Paul Krugman (2013) compares the US and the EU and their subsequent capacities to respond when a MS begins to fiscally struggle. Krugman (2013, Pg.442) describes how American Federal assistance to States is essentially automatic by nature, specifically pointing to Florida after the housing market collapse of 2008 as his case study (Ibid). Florida is famous for being a prime destination for pensioners, consequently resulting in a higher demand for large expenses on Medicare and Social Security (Ibid). Due to the Federal nature of Medicare and Social Security payments, Florida ends up paying less into the Federal government than it receives, even during national economic downturns (Ibid). Thus, Florida can always expect financial assistance from the US Government even when it fails to contribute its share. This is of course extended to all the American States within their Union, unlike in Europe where such transactions and debt coverings are largely prohibited (TFEU 2020, Articles 123-125).

Solidarity Through Interdependence and Mutual Responsibility

Aristotle asks, "What is the role of the individual to the collective?" to which there are several authors who attempt to tackle this question of mutual responsibility and interdependence. A key forefather in scientifically classifying solidarity is the oft-cited French Marxists philosopher, Emile Durkheim. He argues in his work "*The Division of Labour in Society*" that there exist two forms of solidarity, mechanical and organic (Beutler 2017, Pg.24). Durkheim explains that mechanical

solidarity is the primitive form, while organic is more complex, the one which we “advanced” human beings engage in today (Ibid; Knodt & Tews 2017 49-50). An organic society to Durkheim is “modern”, or advanced, because it is kept together by the ever growing, evolving and complex interactions among people as society evolves (Ibid). An organic solidarity is reliant upon people specializing in specific trades and talents for efficiency, increasing the specialization of labor so that others may fulfill roles which society has made available, creating a culture meshed in interdependence and deep cooperation among otherwise independent individuals (Ibid). Example being, in an industrial society not everyone is a farmer, nor needs to worry about personal food production as there are those who specialize in agriculture, which allows the remainder of the population to cover additional roles in society. While mechanical solidarity on the other hand may appear to be a political libertarian’s dream, it, however, implies a strong lack of individuality, as the individual ultimately possesses the same skill set as anyone else (Ibid). Akin to a primitive single cell organism, when removed from its colony, it has the resources and means to start a new colony of single cell organisms, yet it cannot specialize as it must focus entirely on all means to ensure its own survival (Ibid).

If we were to find real life examples of this civilian role in society, we need not look further than the concept of Civic Duty and Civic Responsibility. Steinvorth (2017, pg. 9-10) identifies how in France the concept of societal “Solidarite” was synonymous in the French revolution with the concept of “Fraternite” and the idea of people being akin to brothers without the bond of blood between them. This bond creates the “we” identity in a community of equals, where they become responsible for each other’s actions and wellbeing even when they do not intend it (Steinvorth 2017, Pg.10).

Conditional and Prerequisite Solidarity

Of the four typologies conditional solidarity is perhaps the most vital to understanding the EU, for it underlines that there is a desire to provide aid. However, there are limiting factors which prohibit or make unconditional solidarity difficult to deliver. A means to bridge this gap is by meeting conditions or prerequisites to gain access to aid. To contextualize this form of solidarity we need not look further than state-based insurance policies like state pensions or universal healthcare as acts of collective solidarity. These state programs are based upon the condition and prerequisite of

being a citizen, member, or contributor to that community. Meaning, it deliberately excludes others who are not part of the community for they do not contribute to the collective's wellbeing or resources which leaves those outside of the group to have no rights to community resources. Acts of placing conditional solidarity can be observed in the form of financial aid from the USA to states in Africa or the Middle East, provided that either they have large supervision over the finances, or the receivers of the aid must provide guarantees, like human rights development, to ensure some improvement for their expenses (Gyimah-Boadi et al.2020).

Steinvorth's criteria for what defines solidarity would argue this cannot be considered solidarity which should not be based upon a quid pro quo relationship. Rather, it should be a relationship of equals with no real attempt at domination over others (Steinvorth 2017, Pg. 10). Yet, this paper must contest this line of argument because there exist acts of solidarity which may be interpreted as built upon prerequisites or conditions, akin to state welfare programs. There also are plenty of politicians who framed solidarity in the mold of requiring conditionality, we need not look further than from the Frugal 4 (Löfven et al.2020). Whether it is due to a lack of trust, or because there is a need for, as Hobbes and Rousseau argue, to possess a dominant force (the state) to facilitate solidarity. Regardless, one can always find the means to link and interpret solidarity to conditions and prerequisites.

The "*Wealth of Nations*", by Adam Smith, describes how a metaphorical baker does not bake bread for others. He only bakes to sustain his own needs (within reason), thus demonstrating there is an intrinsically selfish nature to man, and solidarity is meaningless unless there is reasonable gain to be had acting in solidarity (Beutler 2017 Pg.25). Yet we can argue this indicates what triggers people's desire to engage in acts of solidarity. With Smith's interpretation, people are intrinsically selfish and consequently do not want to engage in solidarity, thus implying the need for a higher power to intervene in some capacity and triggers the development of a cost-to-benefit analysis of solidarity by individuals and politicians. Whereas, if the political or fiscal cost remains too great, then conditions are applied that could reduce the price on the provider.

Joseph Weiler (1991 Pg.2480) argues more for the idea of a cost-to-benefit relationship, in that the interests and concerns of the MSs must equally become the interest and concerns for all MSs. Thus, what Sweden seeks and desires on the global, European, or domestic stage should be factored and considered a part of the interest and concerns of all the other MSs, and vice versa. Until this

is done, MSs will contemplate solidarity at the EU level along a cost-to-benefit rationale, with Weiler (1991, Pg.2429;2481) referencing the Margret Thatcher government and how the chronic Eurosceptic UK calculated every interaction with the burgeoning EU. Furthermore, what drives these cost-to-benefit relationships can vary on a variety of factors. According to Sangiovanni (2013, Pg. 225) solidarity may be limited due to perceived risks. Risks which are further factored in by circumstances like specific issues which result in the possibility of short-term interests dominating long-term objectives and gains (Knodt & Tews 2017, Pg.54). Consequently, the context can greatly determine and influence what, how, and when solidarity can be provided (Knodt & Tews 2017, Pg.55). To reduce risk, solidarity can often be leveraged by linking multiple issues and institutional instruments to one another (Genshel & Hemerijck 2018, Pg.8). This becomes a clear interpretation of solidarity along conditional lines, something which is most desired by EU MSs' citizens, that by linking assistance to requirements or conditions aimed at "improving behavior" of the state in need, there will be less domestic political backlash for aiding a state that critics contend is acting badly. (Ibid). For example, to receive aid during the Euro Crisis conditionality was placed to force major austerity reforms, now institutionalized via the European Stability Mechanism (ESM) (ESM 2021). Lastly, Genshel & Hemerijck (2018, Pg.8) found that many EU MS's citizens are often uncertain about their attitudes to solidarity on a European scale, which they argue leads to an opening for European political leaders to exploit.

Solidarity in the EU

Schuman proclaimed "Europe...will be built through concrete achievements which first create a de facto solidarity" (Schuman 1950). Has Schuman's declaration been made manifest over the decades? Again, the subject is complex, as is the answer. The current version of a united Europe, acting upon the Treaty of the EU (TEU) and the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU (TFEU), lists out numerous acts of constitutional solidarity which could be enacted. Articles 2,3,21,24,31,32 from the TEU (2012) and articles 80,122,222 from the TFEU (2020), and numerous others, all applying solidarity onto what is effectively the constitutional and legal framework of the Union. However, in practice, the EU often struggles to meet the ideals of the Founding Fathers.

When Weiler (1991, Pg.2481) points to the UK, for its constant reevaluation of its relationship with the community in terms of costs to benefits to themselves, he adds that the European

Economic Community (EEC) is designed not to change what MSs are, rather it is an “arrangement, elaborate and sophisticated, of achieving long-term maximization of the national interest in an interdependent world”, a rather neo-realist perspective of the EEC. Although, when MSs sacrifice long term interest for short term gain, as Sangiovanni (2013) and Knodt & Tews (2017) suggest, it becomes clear that EU solidarity often gets limited to a humanitarian basis and conditionality. Whereas, the USA will cover the debts of its individual States, the EU was made to actively limit itself in the arena of mutualized debt (TFEU 2012, Articles 123-125). Therefore, MSs have collectively decided upon solidarity being a matter of good will instead of an expected and natural part of being a member of the European Community, leaving the mechanisms of EU solidarity based upon mutual responsibility ultimately underdeveloped when a need for it arises.

Weiler (1991, Pg.2480) also emphasizes that as integration occurs and all states continue this cost-to-benefit calculation, it will inevitably create an uneasy tension among states as they are forced to deal with their own senses of individuality within a community. A challenge we still observe with MSs like Poland and Hungary challenging the renunciation of elements of state sovereignty to the EU (Bogdanowicz & Taborowski 2020, Pg.306-308). To address this supply gap, Genschel & Hemerjik (2018, Pg.2) offer the “EU approach”, where treaties “are replete with exhortations of solidarity, social cohesion, mutual assistance, etc.” (Ibid). However, they concede that recent crises have highlighted how solidarity is not as unconditional as the EU would prefer, instead, discussions of solidarity turn into continual and recurring debates as to who “owes what to whom, when, and where” (Ibid).

Another solution to overcome, or at least mitigate this solidarity gap, could be the need for a European identity, a common image or bond to which all citizens of the MSs share to create that “we” mentality. The EU is known to lack this common “European” identity, or *demos*, but is this truly a necessary factor? Knodt & Tews (2017, Pg.49) argue against the requirement of a common European identity as a necessary factor in solidarity, which they confess flies in the face of many other academics on the matter. To reinforce their claims, they refer to Durkheim and the way he implies modern (organic) societies not requiring identities, but only need structural social contracts such as cooperative law, and the diversification of labor to cohesively function (Ibid). It is not the EU people who are the problem, rather they argue it is the MSs. For while solidarity can be a legal and virtuous matter, the context a MS may find itself in will greatly steer the course of action it

can take, such as elections or economic conditions (Knodt & Tews 2017, Pg.55). Though, just as it may inhibit solidarity, this could become a gateway to further solidarity as Genschel & Hemerjik argue; where uncertainty regarding solidarity can be swayed into serving acts of solidarity on the international stage, making discourse a potential facilitator in this battle of opinions.

Methodology

To overcome the difficulty of studying solidarity at the international level which Kotzur & Schmalenbach (2014, Pg.90) highlighted, we analyzed the discourse at the state level by looking at speeches and public statements given by Swedish politicians and government officials via press conferences, media reports and individual statements made in parliament; done specifically between late 2019 to early 2021. Part of what made analyzing the discourse on the subject matter of Swedish solidarity in the EU difficult was how intertwined the MFF became to the economic relief package, becoming a somewhat ad hoc response to the pandemic. While Covid-19 began to spread and the need for an EU response grew, these matters of finance and collective solidarity within the EU became inseparable and served to exacerbate the concerns Sweden already had going into the MFF debate. Due to this unique relationship, this thesis focuses on the areas of major political contention in relation to the relief package of the MFF, which were brought up by Swedish politicians before and during the negotiations, in turn relating these back to the development and dispensation of solidarity within the EU. The issues in question include the topics of overall size and distribution of the EU's financial plan regarding loans and grants, the linking of financial aid to the rule of law, green energy initiatives and the matter of endowing the EU with the capacity to develop more of its own resources. These are subjects which acted as the arena for conditional solidarity or could be utilized to build mutual responsibility down the line for Sweden and the EU.

The Riksdag debates selected, range from 2019 to 2021, discuss the conduct of the Swedish negotiating position to the final remarks just prior to votes pertaining to Swedish government's position and acceptance of aspects of the MFF and recovery package. The sub-Committees of the Riksdag were also looked upon, such as the Finansutskottets Betänkande (Swedish Financial Committee) and the EU-Nämndens (Swedish EU Committee), as they directly debate and provide

input on Swedish-EU affairs, with debates on the MFF being the most frequent matter discussed under their auspices. While the EP sources selected were also chosen across the same time frame and based on when Swedish parliamentarians were actively contributing or commenting to the developments of the MFF and RescEU package. Conscious effort was given to collect statements from each of the major parties involved, PM Löfven, his Ministers, 14 Swedish Members of Parliament (MPs) from the parties of SAP, Miljöpartiet de Gröna (Green party), Moderaterna (Moderates), SD, Vänsterpartiet (Left Party) and Centerpartiet (Center Party). Nine Members of European Parliament (MEPs) were also utilized, stemming from the Moderates, Kristdemokraterna (Christian Democrats/CD), Left, SAP, and SD. The debates and articles which were selected were closest to the negotiation, such as opening and closing remarks to the MFF negotiation, policy input by committees as to the Swedish negotiation strategy, statements made in conjunction with other Frugal state leaders, or were the central focus of the Riksdag or EP's agenda on that day. Due to the sheer quantity of debates on the topic and the limited scope of this research, not all debates could be analyzed, but position of parties and politicians that were quoted were consistent in scope and still provide an accurate representation of positions in Swedish politics. An hour-long interview was also conducted with a budget attaché for the Swedish representees in the EU which centered on Löfven's position during MFF debate with another interview conducted with retired political scientist, Leif Lewin, discussing the modern SAP and their ideology regarding fiscal policy.

Discourse analysis provides us a means to which we can understand in what manner Sweden frames their "frugal" position regarding EU finances. "Language is constructive. This means that discourse is a way of constituting a particular view of social reality" (Bryman 2012, pg. 530). Discourse analysis has limitations, the most important being that language is an intersubjective matter, one word or phrase can have various interpretations between individuals pending upon the reference and experiences of the individual in question. These interpretations are developed based upon previous assumptions, beliefs, or prior background knowledge on the subject which help shape either individual or public perception on a topic or issue. However, it is from this intersubjective perspective we want to analyze the Swedish position in the MFF. Politicians and government officials engage in deliberate wordsmithing to cultivate very specific or deliberate messages to their constituents, foreign audiences and to achieve objectives. It is also for this reason we need to analyze how solidarity is framed rather than looking purely at opinion polls because

the uncertainty in people's opinions regarding certain issues may be tipped based upon the arguments and experiences of the past. Due to how much of discourse is designed to either affirm or dispute the prior held beliefs of the audience as well as to "normalize" a message or intent. We utilize this by analyzing the debates in context and grouping them into three categories, the "Swedish Government", "Riksdag" and "European Parliament". The reasoning for this is that due to the inter-subjectivity and context mentioned earlier, each of these groups present a different forum for conversation, and thus attempt to communicate their thoughts and ideas to inherently different audiences. Consequently, we should expect some variation of discourse in the public inter-state, domestic and transnational parliamentary spheres respectively. From there the speakers, politicians, or government employee's discourse was grouped according to the theme or type of solidarity they reflected. The core subjects, terms and language were analyzed to identify common arguments and indication of long- and short-term Swedish objectives in the EU. In the context of the EU budget negotiations of 2020, discourse becomes a major factor in understanding what it was Sweden was messaging to the rest of the EU and what solidarity meant to them.

Swedish Discourse at Home and in Europe

The Government's Discourse

When analyzing Sweden there is one figure who cannot be overlooked, the SAP PM Stefan Löfven, who co-authored an article for the Financial Times together with by the PMs of the Netherlands, Denmark, and the Austrian Chancellor, in which they outlined their position on the original Commission relief budget proposal. In it he highlights the interconnectedness of the (Covid-19) crisis, underlining how "Volvo workers in Sweden and Philips workers in the Netherlands depend on economic development in Greece and Slovakia" and how "What we do in the EU is about solidarity" (Löfven et al 2020). He ends his statement with how solidarity goes hand in hand with sustainability, which ties into both the level of trust and the efficiency arguments (Ibid). Löfven further argues how the money the Commission proposes to spend must be combined with reforms to ensure growth in the direction of green and digital labor markets which are increasingly important to Sweden and an area which he believes the EU needs to be focus (Ibid). Their importance stems from his, and in turn Sweden's, desire to promote efficiency and modernity

within the EU budget, something which has long been an objective for the Swedish state in the EU (Ibid). That while the economic forecast looks poor, Swedish (and the Frugal 4's) principles should not be thrown out, questioning "how it could be responsible to spend 500 billion euros of borrowed money" linking this to conditionality for Swedish support (Ibid). Arguing how "the fundamentally sound way to use that money is to convert it into loans...harnessed by reforms, they can help kick-start the economy and make it stronger and more resilient in the future" (Ibid). The pandemic has created new priorities, as such MSs must also be ready to reprioritize, to which "we (the Frugal 4) are convinced that a compromise will be found that makes Europe greener, stronger and more resilient...making the union fit for the future" (Ibid).

It is this idea of looking farther into the future which drives much of the overall Löfven, and consequently Swedish narrative; money must go to where it needs to and only where it will "make a real difference" (Ibid). Löfven may appear somewhat contradictory as he emphasizes how he does not wish to burden EU citizens with debt, while being a strong proponent for loans. However, he argues it is this, loans for modernization of the MSs via green and digital investments, that will allow for the quickest economic returns (Ibid). On a subtextual level we can infer Löfven believes that money spent on the MS, in the form of grants, will be utilized only to perpetuate the status quo of the EU MSs with high debt and backwards economies. Thus, the most efficient and morally responsible solution which Sweden could provide in the MFF negotiations is to invest into the EU MSs through long term, low interest-rate loans which will push for long term gain. Just as Swedish economist Assar Lindbeck (et al. 1993) did when proposing socio-political reforms for Sweden in the 90s, Löfven has taken a crisis as an opportunity to push for "modernization", in this case taking the opportunity to attempt to reform the EU along a Swedish model of green energy and digitalization.

Löfven's comments through his article are further reinforced and expanded upon through the Budget Attaché to the Permanent representation of Sweden to the European Union, Frida Nannesson. Nannesson (Interview 2021) states that the Frugal 4 is not the term which would best fits the Swedish, Austrian, Dutch, and Danish collective. Rather, it is more desirable to be called the "friends of modern and prudent and realistic budgets", this notion stems from the Swedish fiscal crisis of the early 90s (Ibid). She also maintained that it should not be unreasonable to balance expenditure while respecting the Stability and Growth Pact (Ibid). She specifically

identifies how modernization and increasing the budget into areas such as science and development should be done via the reduction of the cohesion funds and agriculture investments, a common negotiation priority for Sweden (Ibid). This would then bring added value to the EU which she argues Swedes would be most in favor of, while being a happy net-payer into the EU budget (Ibid). She warned however, that there is a limit as to how much Sweden can pay into the EU without domestic backlash and how it comes down to “the political will” at the domestic front in terms of how quantifiable Swedish solidarity can be (Ibid). Even with the handicap of the Covid-19 in Sweden, she defended Löfven’s negotiation objectives and methods, pointing to how the EU budget was overall improved from the previous one (Ibid). That while the Commission’s original budget was reduced and the science, green energy sectors were reduced, the overall level of spending was upped from the prior budget, a compromise on Sweden’s end thus demonstrating that Sweden had shown solidarity to the rest of the EU (Ibid).

It is worth noting Knodt & Tews’ (2017) work, as to how solidarity can be limited upon short-term societal/political needs, be given a twist in this context. While there are short to middle-term factors limiting Sweden’s capacity to be a “good neighbor” such as the domestic Covid matter and Euro-skeptic political parties. Sweden, through Löfven, does appear to take a long-term approach in how to provide solidarity and that the pandemic can be utilized to achieve long-term objectives within the EU itself. In this case forcing perceived necessary economic change, through loans, for MSs to match Sweden and its economic set-up. It also strongly signals what best draws out Swedish funds and solidarity, that MSs need to focus on modernity, reduced agriculture spending, and further digitization. This well intentioned yet mixed response to assist EU MSs appears to be the embodiment of SAP policies in the modern era, where it has objectives entrenched in strong societal solidarity yet are limited by the costs and experiences of the 90s. Therefore, Swedish politicians need to be coaxed into solidarity through conditionality and prerequisites, resulting in a hybrid of short and long-term interests both promoting and demoting solidarity and leading to the appearance of a frugal Sweden in an otherwise pro-EU nation.

Riksdag Discourse

The Committee on Finance (2019) provided the would-be objectives of the MFF negotiations for Sweden and quite openly stated the intention to “work for restrictiveness in the treatment of future

annual budgets and the next multiannual financial framework.”. This describes how the government must adjust spending accordingly in relation to the UK leaving the Union, further signaling conditionality through fiscal efficiency when dealing with the MFF and any ongoing EU budgetary issues (Ibid). Leif Nysmed (SAP) echoes the sentiment by demanding to have “the EU put its mouth to the food bag” due to the UK leaving the EU and arguing how it should not become a burden which Sweden should have to cover alone (Riksdag 2019).

Jan Ericson of the Moderates, worries how the total Swedish contribution can still be increased via the elimination of rebates as the original Commission budget proposed, demonstrating a clear financial limitation to the Swedish means of providing solidarity (Finansutskottets Betänkande 2019). On the day of the Riksdag vote to approve of the decision to allow the EU to change rules regarding self-financing, Ericson was highly critical, labeling it a means to provide resources to mismanaged economies and threatening to be a sort of watchdog and utilize the Qualified Majority Voting mechanism to its full extent to ensure MS compliance with its conditionality (Finansutskottets Betänkande 2021). He does concede though that Sweden benefits from the EU developing a response to the economic downturn due to how interconnected Sweden is to the European economy, but he again fears the risk of fiscal mismanagement and the possibility of MSs working to “postpone important reforms in countries with mismanaged economies” (Ibid). There wasn’t a risk of Moderates rejecting the deal however as the current EU recovery package and notions of developing EU taxes was vague and loosely worded on how the Commission desired it and the Moderates were not willing to throw out the EU compromise during the midst of a crisis, regardless of how critical they are of it (Ibid). Björn Wiechel (SAP) takes a more optimistic approach to the subject of EU self-funding, arguing to stand against providing taxing powers to the EU for the same reason as Ericson, he reasons that some of these powers already exist (Ibid). That this is a matter of pragmatism for Sweden, that by introducing a fee on non-recycled plastics that would help fund the EU, it would in turn be expected to reduce the Swedish contribution to the budget (Ibid). Max Elger (SAP) the State Secretary to the Minister of Finance, comments that EU budget negotiations in the past 25 years were “marked by budgetary discipline and respecting the budget limits” which he argues also allows for “sufficient margins” to counter any uncertainty like that which came in 2020 (Riksdag 2020C).

Environmental policies received much attention by Swedish parties and signal a significant area in which Swedish conditionality for cooperation derives. Nysmed, Jonas Sjöstedt (the then Chairman of the Left Party), Martin Kinunnen (SD) and Amanda Palmstierna of the Green party all comment on EU contributions to environmental policy. Sjöstedt and Palmstierna admonish the lack of ambition from the EU negotiations regarding green policies, with Sjöstedt commenting that EU climate policy is multifaceted in both environmental policies, though he praises the shift in the European Investment Bank to no longer bankroll loans to fossil fuels (Riksdag 2019). While Palmstierna also seeks a more ambitious EU regarding green policies, wanting "all the MSs on the climate boat" (EU-Nämndens 2020). Nysmed and Kinunnen (SD), both advocate for diminished Swedish funding for assisting MSs in transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables, albeit for different reasons. Nysmed strongly advocates that whilst it is logical MSs seek funds from the EU to assist in carbon neutrality, he advises Sweden to not develop new funds, but instead utilize existing EU tools such as the Structural Fund from which Sweden can have a greater influence and make demands towards the MSs (Riksdag 2019). Kinunnen too believes more funds should not be dedicated to MSs via the EU to tackle targets, rationalizing how he doesn't think the EU's competitiveness will be improved, instead it will be up to the MSs to be ambitious in such matters (Ibid).

Economic efficiency and the problematic issue of the rule of law were also greatly debated for Swedish politicians in the Riksdag. Wiechel, Pål Jonson (Moderates) and Jessika Roswall (Moderates), Annika Qarlsson (Center) and Maria Strömkvist (SAP) would all commented on the desire for efficiency and expressed both support and dismay for Löfven's negotiating position. Wiechel reminds us how a tight budget has always been a Swedish priority and will continue to be so, especially when it comes to money being used to subsidize unproductive agriculture, just as Nannesson argued (Finansutskottets Betänkande 2019). Wiechel goes a step further and advocates the EU be just like Sweden in terms of fiscal discipline, claiming "It is this model - the social democratic Swedish...The ambition is for the EU to go in the same direction and become the peaceful, social, productive, justice and green project that it has the opportunity to become." (Ibid). Jonson (Ibid) meanwhile argues "The PM usually talks about a modern budget. Unfortunately, we are seeing cuts in modern areas, i.e., security, border protection and defense.". Jonson also points to how agriculture is being increased; an EU policy often attacked by Swedes for its inefficiency (Ibid). Roswall defended Löfven's negotiating decisions and supported the government's strategy

to maintain the Frugal 4 plus Finland throughout the negotiations, demanding Löfven press for a proper (rule of law) mechanism and that there are no downgrades made to such a system, going on to thank the EP for having the same opinion on the matter (Riksdag 2020B). Labeling it disturbing how Poland and Hungary are going to become the largest beneficiaries of the EU budget, while they continue to attack the EU as an oppressive power (Ibid). Nysmed, Palmstirena, Qaralsson, Strömkvist also highlighted the Riksdag's general support for Löfven to continue to be tough in the negotiations with the other MSs and the need to press for respect of the rule of law by other MSs, which he views as a requirement to receive fiscal support from the MFF (Riksdag 2019; EU-nämndens 2020, Riksdag 2020B). Elger commented on how "We are trying to cultivate in the European circle an understanding of our attitude by cooperating with like-minded countries", noting the Frugal 4 members whom Sweden will continue to cooperate with on budgetary efforts (Riksdag 2020C).

The SD can be argued to be the embodiment of mechanical solidarity throughout the negotiations, wanting to isolate Swedish resources to Sweden, with their party always seeking minimal relations with the EU. Arguing it would have been better for funds destined for the EU to remain in Sweden with Dennis Dioukarev (SD) declaring "Let us first save Sweden before we save the world" going further justifying his desire to diminish EU funds in the name of efficiency, believing how reducing the EU "a model where you do as little as possible at as low a cost as possible" (Finansutskottets Betänkande 2019). Oscar Sjöstedt (SD) rejected any notion of EU self-funding, labeling it a sovereign right for the Riksdag to tax its citizens and a failure by the Löfven government to not stand up for Swedish citizens as they will be covering the budget deficits and early retirements of MSs like Italy and Greece (Finansutskottets Betänkande 2021). Labelling both the EU recovery package and the notion of EU self-resources "financially insane" and "morally reprehensible", this will only lead to a long-term behavior of rewarding those who financially misbehave and punishing those who behave (Ibid). Kinnunen, as well, argues to avoid spending money in the EU, rather to "strengthen welfare, reduce taxes and try to re-establish a functioning judiciary in the country", and not bother assisting "mismanaged economies in southern Europe through loans." (Riksdag 2019; EU-Nämndens 2020). Even the Minister for Rural affairs Jennie Nilsson of SAP appears to break the narrative of most of her SAP counterparts and speaks a little along the SD lines. While she does mention party line of "keeping our rebate and keeping our membership fee down", she appears to concede and state something akin to what Dioukarev argued back in 2019, that "Every

krona that is not spent in Brussels, we can instead spend in Sweden (Riksdag 2020A). Treating membership of the EU like a club, more than a community.

Swedish MEP Discourse

Conditionality continued to play a strong role in the European Parliament as it did in the Riksdag, as MEPs advocated for necessary requirements for cooperation on the matter of the MFF. There were those such as Jörgen Warborn of the European People's Party (PPE) and member of the Moderates in Sweden, arguing that his (Moderate) party had made "a clear promise to not let the EU budget swell more than necessary which would mean a sharp increase in the Swedish fee" with the proposal at the table cited as being an increase of the Swedish fee by 40% being beyond anything he could accept (European Parliament 2019). He also laments how Europe faces grave issues when it comes to competitiveness and to "burden our citizens and our entrepreneurs with even higher taxes to finance increased EU fees" would be wrong." (Ibid). He concludes with the standard rallying cry of demanding the EU be more efficient with investments that will lead to economic growth such as "research and infrastructure" which will help the EU make a difference in people's lives (Ibid). Tomas Tobé (PPE) (Moderates) proclaims the necessity for a "powerful rescue package and a modern budget that builds Europe's competitiveness" with conditionality coming from the need for a "responsible economic policy" as such the fund must be orientated towards loans, emphasizing that they must be "repaid" (European Parliament 2020E). Tobé concludes on how he and his party stand for "European cooperation and solidarity" but cannot support the original Commission budget and recovery fund proposal unless conditions are met (Ibid). Malin Björk of the European United Left–Nordic Green party and Left party member in Sweden argues how the EU's "corrupt and inefficient agricultural policy must be fundamentally redone", believing that EU funds should be generated within the existing EU framework and not in any sense "boosted" through such methods like initiatives to allow the EU to self-finance (European Parliament 2020A). He goes on to condemn her fellow MEPs and the Commission who are "always calling for more EU money" and the "EU must keep its mouth shut". Believing that EU funds should be generated within the existing EU framework and not in any sense "boosted" through such methods like initiatives to allow the EU to self-finance (Ibid).

Trust in MSs was also a key factor, primarily through discussions such as the rule of law with Warborn, and Björk commenting on the matter. Warborn defines how trust is a basis for European cooperation, without it, taxpayers will not feel secure that their funds are being used properly. He also claims the new presidency proposal is “too pale and watered down” which demands much harder responses (European Parliament 2020D). He warns of a clear lack of trust among MSs and how those who “challenge democracy and “incite corruption” should not be “fed by the Swedish taxpayers” with Björk agreeing for conditionality via the rule of law and how democracy must be maintained, while those who fail to respect this should not receive EU funds (Ibid; European Parliament 2020A). Jessica Stegrud of the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and SD does praise how the EP and Swedish parties want to raise the requirements regarding the rule of law and EU funding yet calls out how it is “strange that they do not at the same time demand economic reforms, budgetary discipline and corruption measures (European Parliament 2020E). Heléne Fritzon of the European Social Democrats and SAP, called it gratifying to have a deal over the principles of the rule of law, labeling it a “historic decision” and a clear message to those MSs who choose not to respect the EU’s fundamental values will not receive money (European Parliament 2020F).

The size and nature of the overall package was also a matter of contention. David Lega of the PPE and CD took a more idealist approach to the EU Recovery Fund, emphasizing how important it is that these funds be agreed upon quickly to provide “predictability and respite” to the MSs, and which build resilience for the future against any other potential crisis (Lega 2020). He brought up the issue of the scale of the funds and how the Parliament lacks the ability to “control the distribution key between loans and grants” as an obstacle for his fellow PPE and CD member’s. Lega concedes that he could back the EU receiving more funds via its own taxes, but this is a separate issue and should not be used to finance the recovery package (Ibid). Erik Bergkvist of the European Social Democrats and SAP was more optimistic, arguing the MFF proposal is a fantastic opportunity to create a better Europe and how all signs point to the coming of a more united Europe (European Parliament 2020A). He advocates conditionality through the need for a stronger and expanded cohesion policy (Ibid). Björk, while critical, did concede this package “will contribute to a more equal EU” and that there will be an impact on the need for “green transition, jobs and social rights (Ibid). She warns though this is not enough and there will continue to be a need for the EP to be more ambitious, not just for this generation but for “our children and grandchildren”

and how she does not stand against EU climate related taxes, but such funds are needed for the welfare of the MSs (Ibid).

Those of the ECR and SD were particularly critical of the issue of indebtedment of future generations with Charlie Weimers criticizing MEPs, claiming the Moderates have accepted “Löfven’s summer failure at the negotiating table” and are consequently sacrificing bourgeois principles on the altar of the EU” (European Parliament 2020E). He continues by berating the Moderates, claiming they are “indebting future generations” through the borrowing for grants and the acceptance of the EU’s right to tax, and that the SD demand action against the “EU’s illegal indebtedness of children and grandchildren” through subsidizing mismanaged economies (Ibid). He makes a plea to Tomas Tobé and the Moderates that there is still time to change and together, “save billions and EU taxes for future generations” (Ibid). Stegrud too rebukes the idea to aid those who “mismanaged their economies in good times” further denouncing those MEPs which are prepared to introduce “new taxes and indebt future generations” that in turn, she argues, moves power away from the people and will achieve little in what the other parties seek to achieve such as climate measures (European Parliament 2020E). Peter Lundgren (European Parliament 2020F) proclaimed the day of the MFF and relief package vote as one of “sorrow”, labeling the Parliament as “fanatics” who seek to “crush all self-determination and create a United States of Europe”, lambasting how they should feel “ashamed that you are indebted to our children and grandchildren for a very long time in the future”, concluding that the EU has effectively given the future of Europe packages filled with coal (Ibid).

Concluding Discussion

Decades Long Identity Crisis

How then does Sweden present its resistance to solidarity and EU wealth redistribution policies in the face of a common crisis? Swedish discourse demonstrates that there are two intertwined narratives at play. One is that the legacies and memories of the past are continuing to greatly influence Swedish politics and in turn how they view engagement with EU issues, specifically the Swedish fiscal crisis of the early 1990s. This then feeds into the second narrative which aims to focus on the precedence of long-term objectives over short-term ones, on issues that relate to

modernization via digitization and green policies, where political parties and narratives begin to diverge is in their ulterior motivation with the EU, one which is uncertain as to what it ultimately wants to achieve, while another wants to breakdown Swedish-EU relations to a mechanical level. This thesis theorizes that the root cause of Sweden's justification and signaling of frugality through the MFF negotiations stems from two lines of thought, the most important being the 90s crisis, which birthed a Swedish identity "constrained by culture" and in turn "created new constraints" (Schall 2016, Pg.191). The result being Swedish parties, like SAP and the Moderates, becoming naturally prone to respond in a fiscally limited manner to crises and wanting to take the opportunity to try to develop MSs along lines familiar to the Swedish identity based upon prior experiences. This middling response feeds into the consequence of Swedish political parties lacking clear objectives regarding Swedish-EU policy, causing conflicting messaging for Swedish voters and foreign audiences. All the while feeding into federo-sceptic argumentation and opening a gap for anti-EU or EU skeptic parties, like the SD, to push for a more normalized, frugal, and anti-EU stance despite polling that indicates Swedes are in favor of "more Europe".

The 90s were referenced a couple of times by State Secretary Elgar and Nannesson, an era when Sweden faced a financial crisis so severe it was summarized as having come from aging institutions and ossified decision-making mechanisms" suitable decades ago, but have become inadequate, having delayed the necessary adjustments for decades (Lindbeck et al. 1993, Pg.219). It is from here we recognize and identify much of the discourse of Swedish political groups, forcing parties to take on new identities in the political spectrum. This identity crisis is particularly visible through the SAP, as since the end of the Folkhemmet philosophy, they have failed to adequately fill the ideological void that such an all-encompassing dogma would entail. One must reflect upon what "The Empire" means to the British, or what "The Revolution" means to the French, and how these concepts shape their national identities and global perceptions, to have an idea as to the impact the spiritual end of the Folkhemmet had on Swedish politics (Brown 2018). It has reflected in voter turnout as well as the SAP have never appeared to recover to their political heights of even the 70s and 80s after the beginning of the end of the Folkhemmet. Where they could once regularly rely upon at least achieving over 40% in the polls, it has been reduced now to barely braking 30% and it only appears to have stabilized in the mid-20s (Politico 2021). For the time being, it appears that joining the EU alone has not fully replaced an ideology which was so totally all-encompassing of

what it meant to be Swedish and what was a core political and social tenet for the SAP and Swedes. The result is a vacuum for populist politics to fill.

This milieu makes it difficult for Swedish political parties to take a more sympathetic approach to their fellow MSs, especially when it is difficult to argue against Sweden taking a moral stance to push MSs to improve. In some manner, politicians view this as a moral duty in it of itself, as another means of demonstrating solidarity as Nenneson and Löfven argue. However, even here there is mixed messaging, like when Löfven signals how he does not want to burden MSs with more debt, but it is viewed as the only means to push MSs to change, or Nysmed arguing that MSs cannot expect Sweden to kickback other's efforts to go green, even though it was widely seen as a pro-Swedish position and within their own interests. All the while, the Moderates with Ericson, took a rather hostile and critical approach as the opposition in the Riksdag, yet were unwilling to side with the SD and did not outright reject any of the propositions which came to the Riksdag, instead opting to abstain on most votes regarding the MFF. This demonstrates the continuation of the norm of Swedish mixed messaging regarding their desire to aid MSs, but also the regular occurrence of this event, all while providing a confusing picture to those looking at Sweden from the outside and without context. Appearing to make discussions about the EU as vague as possible when it comes to the potential of building the Union in the future, instead they attempt to debate on the EU issue by issue rather than provide a complete and harmonious image of what they desire of this project. As opposed to the SD who normalize a bleak picture of generations in debt (to the EU) and Sweden being deprived of funds for their own welfare state.

Compounding the evidence of this identity crisis is the difference between the discourse of Swedish politicians and what they ultimately agreed to in the MFF negotiations. There has been an overhaul of the Civil Protection Mechanism (CPM), the tool utilized by MSs when they become overwhelmed by a disaster, with a significant budget increases of a 3.26 billion euros total and administrative improvements like allowing the Commission to directly intervene in the event national officials become overwhelmed (European Commission 2021). Although appearing to be a part of the Social Contract side of the solidarity typology, prior to the pandemic, the CPM was a humanitarian-based solidarity tool in the EU due to the purely voluntary nature of the mechanism. A rather crippling detail when Covid-19 ripped through Italy in early 2020 and the Italian government requested material aid via the CPM only to be left with silence (Boffey et al 2020).

Ironically, it was this failure of EU MSs that gave credence to Sven-Olof Sällström's (SD's) belief that Sweden must ignore further developing EU tools of solidarity; rather Sweden must look to secure itself above all in the event of another crisis as MSs will naturally and evidently fend for themselves when facing a symmetrical crisis as evident by the failure of the CPM for Italy (Försvarsutskottets Betänkande 2021). The SD was the only party to clearly object to the CPM, likely attributed to the increase in firefighting capacities which have become an increased concern for Sweden following the record-breaking forest fire in 2018 (Ibid). Regardless, it has now been set on a path to move away from its humanitarian roots and begins to settle into the mutual responsibility typology.

The greatest evidence of the Swedish indecisiveness regarding solidarity comes from a radical departure from the norm of European fiscal policy, the mutualization of debt at the EU level. Mutualization or "risk sharing" is intended to spread the burden of debt as well as reduce the cost of borrowing on the capital market. The pandemic has apparently opened the door for what in effect is "interdependence through debt" (Dermine 2020, Pg.338-389). Restrictions built into the EU treaties prohibited borrowing on the capital market to fund the EU or run deficits like a normal nation state (Dermine 2020, Pg.350). Via Article 122 they have found a means to go "off budget" by describing these funds as "either external assigned revenue or back-to-back operations" (Ibid). While this is described as a "one-off" by the Commission, justified by the pandemic, and the use of back-to-back operations has been applied before, this thesis would argue and concur with Dermine, that any notion of this being a one-off would be at best naïve (Dermine 2020, Pg.344;350). Rarely do governmental organizations, even those with a pseudo level of state authority like the EU, surrender power once it has been bestowed upon it. This compromise may very well be viewed as a "crossing the Rubicon", akin to the creation of the ESM, and set a precedence for furthering the rise of mutual responsibility and financial risk sharing at the EU level in the name of "mobilizing solidarity" (Ibid;ESM 2021).

In an interview with Lewin (2021), he described the current SAP ideology as one which is "very vague and uncertain", further commenting that there does exist a division within SAP, between radical elements of the party who seek to return to, or renew, the policies of the Folkhemmet (Ibid). However, most of the SAP have come to favor liberal economic policies which are promoted by the current PM, Löfven and Finance Minister, Magdalena Andersson (Ibid). While the parties once

labeled the “bourgeoise coalition” (Moderates, Center and KD) who were in favor of joining the EU the longest, also appear to take this middling approach to the EU. Polling too indicates there is room for political parties in Sweden to take more pro-EU stance. A Eurobarometer (2021) poll indicates Swedish desire to increase engagement in Europe, especially in matters of disaster relief, with 97% of Swedish respondents agreeing that they should be prepared to assist when a disaster strikes and 90% agree a more agreeing to more EU coordinated mechanism for disasters should be created for the future. This is not some sudden realization brought on by the pandemic, as Genschel & Hemerjik (2018) had confirmed that the richer MS’s constituents were already more inclined to generate a solidarity pool for a “rainy day”. Kleider & Stoeckel (2018, Pg.13) as well back the idea showing how in 2014 Swedes showed the highest level of support for fiscal transactions and redistribution due to being a wealthier MS, highly cosmopolitan, and more educated regarding issues of the EU. So, there could well be political gain to be had for Swedish parties to promote stronger EU solidarity along mutual responsibility and interdependence.

Knodt and Tews (2017, Pg.49) argue identity is a negligible factor in the development of EU solidarity by utilizing Durkheim’s interpretation of organic solidarity. This thesis must disagree on this point, for while it may not be necessary factor to draw out solidarity, it does not make it any less important to specific nations. Especially in Sweden which is experiencing a massive and sudden rise in anti-immigration parties like the SD, which drives a narrative of ethno-nationalistic policies and a return to the “old Sweden” with a clear sense of what and more importantly “who” is Swedish and deserves solidarity (Elgenius & Rydgen 2017, Pg.355;357). In effect, the SD can be argued to have risen to such prominence because they possess a clear identity in their politics and “what it means to be Swedish” by offering a repackaged, rose-tinted vision of the Folkhemmet (Tomson 2020; Elgenius & Rydgen 2017, Pg.354). All SD politicians analyzed in the discourse were unanimously against further funding the EU, with the SD indirectly continuing their romanticized vision of the Swedish welfare “golden age”, via the constant references of wanting to spend money on the Swedish welfare state and not the EU or wasteful and mismanaged MSs (Ibid). In effect, this crisis has provided the SD, the means to further utilize nationalist rhetoric e.g., how Sweden has “lost its soul” and how the SD is the party to “revive and protect the nation from neglect” which SAP has allowed to transpire within the EU (Elgenius & Rydgen 2017, Pg.354;356). While polls strongly point to Swedes wanting a more integrated EU, contemporary political events and crises have likely assisted in impacting elements of this narrative. Specifically,

the migrant crisis in the mid-2010s has become an incredibly divisive issue in Swedish politics, when in 2016, 44% of Swedish voters claimed migration was their biggest issue, a massive boom from 8% in 2010 (Oscarsson & Holmberg 2017, Pg. 12; Holloway & Leach 2020, Pg.13). The consequence being political parties like the SD have effectively harnessed anxiety and concerns over welfare, immigration, and identity politics to generate votes for ethno-nationalistic ideology, and effectively an anti-EU consensus, even though Swedes are not generally on board with these thoughts (Ibid; Smith & Pettersson 2018).

We find this tactic continued here, where they quite clearly mask their anti-EU rhetoric with similar discourse to the “mainstream parties” with the caveat of alternative objectives. All parties converge in wanting to impact the EU and MSs, where they diverge is how the ECR and SD politicians look to a future with a greatly diminished Union as Dioukarev and Sjöstedt signaled. Thus, to package what is otherwise abnormal opinions of purely anti-EU rhetoric and wanting to leave the Union, they spin familiar arguments towards their objective of breaking down the EU and Swedish contributions into something more palpable. When they claim to look to the future, they seek not to saddle future generations with debt, when the EU MSs fail to provide aid in Italy, they argue it is reasonable to dedicate resources purely to Sweden. Lastly why should Sweden show solidarity with MSs that are morally (or fiscally) corrupt, or fiscally inept like Greece or Poland when that money could be spent on rebuilding the welfare state? They even argue they “want” the EU; this just happens to mean the dismissal of the organic/interdependent components of the Union as European trade is still intrinsic to the Swedish economy. These are not terribly unreasonable arguments to justify a frugal nature, and in many ways mirror what other parties, such as the SAP, propounded. The difference comes down to their ultimate objectives. It is here we find the SAP and the Moderates to be lacking in a goal, that while they once could afford to straddle the line of being pro-EU yet federo-skeptic, it has now helped to normalize indirect anti-EU rhetoric and argumentation for a solidarity more mechanical than organic, which the SD can later harness in elections. Consequently, there may be a need for SAP or the Moderates to provide a new norm for discourse regarding Sweden in the EU, one which normalizes and embraces a more organic EU that properly recognizes and embraces the increasingly interdependent nature of the Union, rather than constantly evaluating every expense to aid fellow MSs.

Conclusion

The Covid-19 crisis, a symmetrically impactful natural disaster, presented a perfect opportunity for the EU MSs to show to the world it could show solidarity to one another in the face of an overwhelming global catastrophe. Instead, the world witnessed a reluctant collective of MSs which sought a limited response, Sweden being one of them. Even though Sweden possessed a center-left wing government, traditionally known for backing strong societal mechanism and possessed parties which can be summarized as pro-EU, it demanded a drastic cut back along with other concessions and conditions to draw out Swedish solidarity. Thusly, we identified two typologies, with two subsequent subtypes, of solidarity in which much of the Union's solidarity tools are limited to humanitarian impulses or utilizing conditions and prerequisites.

Sweden predominantly justified its resistance to provide conditional solidarity predominantly on wanting to push through tough but necessary reforms, a similar experience to the painful reforms that Sweden adopted in the 90s, having abandoned total societal solidarity in favor of neo-liberal economic solutions to society's ills. Thus, conditionality was utilized to make MSs more "Swedish" via their interpretations of modernization and development. Others argued that MSs would never adapt themselves to be more like Sweden, thus Sweden should operate limitedly in the means of providing fiscal solidarity at EU level in the face of the crisis. Both arguments were not entirely embraced by most Swedish political parties, rather some like SAP, provided a rather mixed approach, both arguing for and diminishing EU solidarity along conditional lines, while the SD were harmoniously against any increase and actively sought to diminish Swedish contributions to the EU. This exacerbated the problem for Swedish political parties, like the SAP, of appearing to lack a clear objective of what they wish to achieve with the EU. Consequently, they domestically struggle to find a new political identity to replace the ideology that brought them so much success in the past, the Folkhemmet. The ghost of which is being used by the SD to haunt them, who use it to help justify attacks on the EU and for Sweden to reduce all interactions with the Union.

One solution available to political parties that seek further EU integration is to promote a new Swedish identity that capitalizes upon Swedish citizens strong inclination towards interdependence-based solidarity. An identity which could advocate elements of the Folkhemmet, its welfare and fiscal policies, onto a more European scale. This would provide Swedish voters an outlet and clear indication of Swedish political intent in Europe to improve the welfare state of

Sweden while providing an important step in synthesizing Sweden's past identity, prescribed under the Folkhemmet, with their new European ones. The inverse of this option is for political parties in the EU MSs to ignore discussing the sentimentality aspects of solidarity, to draw out Swedish aid, and instead focus on the discourse Swedish politicians are receptive to, by framing their need for financial aid as genuine efforts to modernize or make themselves environmentally friendly. This would again follow in line with Weiler's argument that the MSs need to intertwine each other's political interests and desires to allow for a more harmonious union and leaving it up to the MSs and Sweden to decide how far they're willing to go to improve solidarity amongst each other. Whether it be Sweden dabbling in more EU fiscal transactions and welfare to begin to replace the Folkhemmet, or for MSs to drop the narrative of expecting EU MSs too cooperate for the sake of it, in favor of focusing on what gets Swedish politicians to be more cooperative to their plights.

There is room to conduct additional studies, into how internal solidarity in the respective MSs has developed and how it impacts their beliefs and behaviors regarding solidarity at the EU level, specifically with the Frugal 4 MSs. By better understanding their motives we may better inform policy makers and politicians as to what can best draw out cooperation, as well as what tools need to be further developed to enhance the European social contract and fulfil Schuman's Declaration. Additionally, attention should be given paid to pre-existing solidarity mechanisms within the EU and how active states are regarding utilizing these pre-existing EU solidarity tools and if they would desire more development of such levers.

The solutions provided are not a guaranteed success and constitute a potential gamble for further EU integration as this also greatly ties into the issues of trust between Sweden and the other MSs, any party willing to promote EU solidarity may have to preface this with conditions and prerequisites due to countries like Poland and Hungary. Nations which the discourse has shown triggered an increase in resentment due to the perception of them no longer being in line with the democratic or social norms with which Sweden identifies. What will also have to be overcome is the perception that other nations are not budgetarily responsible, thus requiring strong prerequisites and conditionality to ensure compliance. The concessions from the MFF negotiations and lessons learned from this global event will undoubtedly have untold ramifications for Sweden, the building of European solidarity, and the ongoing march to an ever-closer union in the decades to come.

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