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Bachelor-thesis

The Swedish Aid policy in the Last 16 Years

Has the changing domestic politics affected it? With
focus on SD and the aftermath of 2015-refugee crises.



Author: Tuka Al-haboobi

Supervisor: Dr. Lennart
Wohlgemuth

Examiner: Dr. Jonas Ewald

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Abstract

For the last 60 years, Sweden has been known as a generous donor country. International development cooperation has become a principal objective of Swedish society.

My research aims to examine whether the recent changes in the domestic political scene concerning the uprising of the national right political party, the SD, has affected this international aid paradigm in Sweden. One particular focus of the study has been the aftermath of the 2015 migration crisis.

A qualitative desk study was adopted, and content analysis of official documents was conducted through abductive reasoning to make this study possible

The finding of this study is that solidarity and the moral duty towards those in need have been a very well consolidated motive in the Swedish aid thinking. Accordingly, no noticeable changes are yet to be observed as regards the official aid policy in Sweden. However, the SD's rhetoric is increasingly echoing in both the press debate and the political scene in Swedish society and is slowly influencing the thinking of both other parties and the society at large.

Key words

International aid, development cooperation, domestic politics, policy change, Sweden, SD.

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Lists of abbreviations:

CSOs:	Civil Society Organizations
DAC:	Development Assistance Committee
ecdpm:	European Centre for Development Policy Management
EU:	The European Union
GDP:	Gross Domestic Product
MS:	Multiple Streams
ODA:	Official Development Assistance
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PGD:	Policy for Global Development
SIDA:	Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency
UN:	United Nations

1. Introduction:

1.1. Background

Aid policy is often researched to assess its efficiency and the proposed outcomes in the recipient countries. However, another critical aspect of studying international aid is the motives that drive it. While some scholars argue for altruism and humanitarian aspects to be the main driver behind aid policy, others view foreign aid as an instrument of the foreign policy and demonstrate self-interest, security consideration, and economic aspects as some few among other motives behind foreign aid.

In the case of Sweden, The Government paper from 1962 the so-called” the Swedish aid bible” has more or less been a cornerstone for the Swedish development cooperation ever since. Solidarity and moral duties were expressed as the main motives behind Swedish international aid. The main objective of aid was formulated as follows “The goal of aid delivery is to raise the living level of the poor peoples. Concretely, this means abolishing starvation and mass poverty, eliminating epidemic diseases, reducing child mortality, and creating opportunities for decent living conditions in general (Government bill, 1962:100, p.7). The adopted methodology to achieve that was “help to self-help” (Wohlgemuth and Odén, 2019, p.7). However, things have not always been so smooth or agreed upon, and critiques towards the Swedish aid have always been raised locally in Sweden and by other development actors such as OECD/DAC (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2013, p.3).

The increased interconnectivity in today’s world means that no actor would be able to act alone; instead, an increasingly joint effort is needed to address global challenges. Hence, like other donor countries, Sweden cannot get away from the changing paradigm in international development cooperation (Wohlgemuth and Odén, 2019). Consequently, the development cooperation work today is not restricted to the so-called DAC countries that were established in the 1960s.

Increasingly new actors are emerging and joining the donor community. Both private foundations and development banks are now playing a crucial role as non-DAC-bilateral donors (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2013, p.39). However, concerns have been raised about their approach as they might “follow their own rules and logic, often creating parallel systems of their own with limited involvement by the recipients” (Wohlgemuth and Odén, 2019, p.10). The role of the CSOs is also getting more attention (Ibid, p.44). However, they have been experiencing increased pressure on their work as many governments of the aid partner countries are moving towards authoritarianism (ibid, p.26).

International aid can be given as multilateral or bilateral. However, the importance of multilateral aid has been repeatedly stressed, and more contributions have been dedicated and channelled through multilateral organizations, such as United Nations agencies, the international financial institutions, and the European Union. Sweden is not exempt from that, and multilateral aid has accounted for the most significant share of Swedish aid since the government bill in 1962. The exact percentage has, however, varied throughout the years. This is a part of the Swedish commitment to support the multilateral institutions and the trust in the UN as they are believed to be the most suitable way to achieve the prospected aid objectives in the best efficient manner (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2013).

However, despite supporting the multilateral aid system, it has been argued that bilateral aid should not be neglected either, as” The decreasing number of direct bilateral relations reduces the building of mutual trust between the development partners, which has been an essential feature of previous Swedish development cooperation” (Wohlgemuth and Odén, 2019, p.31).

The Swedish aid policy documents have always emphasized the importance of multilateralism. Most of the aid should be channelled through well-established organizations such as the UN, for it is the most suitable way to channel aid efficiently. as well as the increased need for joint efforts to

address the global challenges. That, however, is not a principle that has always been agreed upon.

Critics, on the one hand, have been raised against multilateral aid for being less efficient and more complex to structure in a way that would go in line with both the Swedish development objectives as well as with the needs of the receiving countries (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2009, p.51). It has been argued that “a) it is easier to control and influence the efficiency of the bilateral assistance and b) it is easier to direct the bilateral assistance towards specific objectives as we do not have to share the decision making with other countries” (*Cited in ibid*, p.55).

Other actors such as the CSOs are playing a crucial role in the development cooperation work in Sweden, and the so-called “popular movement” such as the trade unions and churches are very active. Although CSOs are formed based on different ideologies and religious affiliations, solidarity is the main driver behind their work in development cooperation. However, extra attention should be given when funding such kinds of CSOs, as the main principle of the Swedish development cooperation funding is that delivering own objectives should not be the motive behind development policies (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2009, p.47).

Recently, increased official support for the CSO has been experienced in Sweden. A government policy for that aim was adopted in 2009. It has been demonstrated that “A vibrant and pluralistic civil society in developing countries contributes effectively, using a rights-based approach, to reducing poverty in all its dimensions” (*ibid*, p.45). CSOs were seen as essential in fostering the democratization process in the developing country and a cornerstone for development and human rights establishment and capacity building.

However, due to the lack of democracy and the underdeveloped institutions in most developing countries, concerns have been raised regarding the

legitimacy and the representative extent of the local CSOs. That as in some contexts, the CSOs might be a subject of state control and censorship. Which is contradictory to the main principle of free and representative civil society. Hence, supporting CSOs in some developing countries might, in some cases, be counterproductive and instead re-enforce state autonomy rather than building civil capacity (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2009, p.46), which might be the case in different highly centralized regimes as well as in the so-called “fragile state” (ibid, p.57).

1.2. International Trends

Three main global Agendas have been influential and influenced by the Swedish development cooperation policy.

- The MDG, and later the SDG 2015:

Commitments were made to an increase in the overall volume of aid. On the one hand, some promising achievements have been made in the right direction regarding the numbers of people living in extreme poverty and hunger in the world. However, on the other hand, the overall amount of aid has been decreasing (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2013). An increased focus was placed on *Greening ODA*, so The Paris Agreement on Climate Change in 2015 came in place, and the Green Climate Fund (GCF) was created, to which Sweden was one of the most significant contributors to its relatively more minor economy (Wohlgemuth and Odén, 2019, p.19).

- The Paris declaration:

The focus of the Paris declaration in 2005 and the meeting that followed in Accra in 2008 and Busan in 2011 has been the importance of ownership and result-based management and policy coherence principles. Calls were made to restructure the international aid order around these principles.

However, new development actors that are either less or not committed to these agreed-upon principles were emerging, such as the BRICS countries and some new global funds. (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2013, p.8). These new

actors, such as China, India, and some private foundations, might have signed the Paris declaration. However, "their aid policy and systems are strongly based on bilateral agreements and the project modality" (ibid, p.56).

The share of international aid given by these actors cannot be overlooked, "In recent years, the lending of China Development Bank and China Export-Import Bank to developing countries exceeded that of the World Bank" (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2013, p.11). These new actors might have a different agenda, as investments might be a more pressing objective, while building capacity might be a high priority for most DAC countries (ibid, p.56).

- The Rio+20:

The environmental challenges and climate change were the focus. Consequently, a so-called "adjustment fund" was created to support the global south in making the needed adjustments in combating the environmental degradation and impacts on the climate.

Furthermore, the period when discussions intensified in the post-millennium goals era and after 2015 witnessed a global shift in development thinking in Sweden. While the result-based management still had the focus, the ownership principle, on the other hand, started to fade out (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2013, p.49).

Furthermore, it has been argued that real politics will be decisive "where the overall aim to a much larger extent will be the traditional nationally defined national interests." (Ibid, p.51). The increased focus on results seems to prevail, as calls have been made by the political actors to develop methods that would enable measuring the results. However, concerns have also pointed to the lack of reliability of the collected data in the receiving countries, otherwise supposed to be the base for designing development policies. As well as the time lag between collecting the data and publishing it. Furthermore, the recipient countries' point of view also raises some

concerns when thinking of the result-based approach that might be seen as conditionality and lack of trust (ibid).

In addition, the increased authoritarianism, nationalism, and populism today have also affected the aid paradigm, both locally and internationally. These changes entail negative consequences on some top priorities for the Swedish ODA and complicate dialogue opportunities with partner countries and lead to an increased need for humanitarian assistance given the increased numbers of conflicts and their aftermath (Wohlgemuth and Odén, 2019, p.21).

1.3. Previous research

Most of the aid literature focuses on the effectiveness of the given aid and the objectives of aid programs.

Carol Lancaster, however in her book *Foreign aid: Diplomacy, development, domestic politics*, published in 2007, was interested in looking at the matter from a different and often neglected perspective. Her main concern was investigating why aid is given and what shapes aid policies in the donor countries.

Historically, foreign aid started as a part of cold war diplomacy and gradually evolved into a shared norm that rich countries have the responsibility to help those lagging. The purposes behind aid today are much more mixed and varied. The motives range among other things, from humanitarian aspects to commercial interests and developmental goals.

Lancaster argues in her book that the domestic politics in the donor country plays a crucial role in shaping aid policies and affects the public attitudes and acceptance towards aid (Lancaster, 2007, pp.4-7). In that regard, the structure of the government and the political institutions are decisive factors in how aid policy is shaped and what decisions are made. According to Lancaster “aid-giving governments, themselves must create coalitions of support for foreign aid within their legislatures and publics to sustain aid expenditures

over time. The constituents of these coalitions in turn expect their political agendas to be reflected in aid programs. As a result, the purposes of aid are frequently as much the result of what happens inside of a donor government's borders as what happens outside them." (ibid, p.4).

Studying aid policies and how they are shaped and changed entails an understanding of the underlying purposes that drive such policies. The ongoing debate on the motives behind foreign aid is divided between those who hold a realist point of view and see "that aid policies are driven primarily by the strategic interests of nation-states" (Schraeder, Hook and Taylor, 1998, p.3), and those who rather have an idealist stand and look at foreign aid as a chance for developing countries to catch up and hence achieve a shared economic development. Finally, those with a more neo-Marxist point of view see aid policy as a straight arm to dependency theory and somewhat exploitative to the third world (ibid).

In the case of Sweden, it is widely argued that the main driver of the Swedish aid programs is moral commitments and humanitarian aspects. However, the ideological concerns cannot either be neglected.

The Swedish aid policy might further be understood from the perspective of the middle power theory. It applies to the case of Sweden as a developed country with high socio-economic standards but still cannot compete with the great power. In this regard, it has been demonstrated that Sweden adheres to the principle that says middle-powers should "restrict the geographical scope of their limited foreign aid budgets" (Schraeder, Hook and Taylor, 1998, p.10). During the 1980s, that limited geographical region for Swedish aid was southern Africa.

Furthermore, the Swedish political scene has been mainly dominated by the progressive Social Democratic Party from the 1930s to the early 1990s, reflected in the Swedish aid policy. One crucial guideline of Swedish aid has been the support of the "progressive, socialist-oriented regimes,"

“progressive (that is, socialist and Marxist) regimes annually received approximately 80 percent of Sweden's foreign aid to Africa during the 1980s. In contrast, countries maintaining close ties with the minority white-ruled regimes, most notably Malawi and Swaziland, were largely ignored in the Swedish aid hierarchy.” (Schraeder, Hook and Taylor, 1998, p.10). It has been shown that the recipient GNP per capita was more petite, if at all an aspect to consider when forming an aid policy. Further, confirm that the ideological component might play a crucial role in designing the Swedish aid policy then.

In the same regard, it has been argued that the national orientation of the donor country matters when it comes to designing an aid policy. That is true as “Countries that place a high premium on market efficiency (for example, the United States, United Kingdom, Sweden) will outsource aid delivery in poorly governed recipient countries to improve the likelihood that aid reaches the intended beneficiaries of services. In contrast, states whose political economies emphasize a strong state in service provision (for example, France, Germany, Japan) continue to support state provision” (Dietrich, 2015, p.65).

Furthermore, and according to Dustin Tingley (2010), conservative governments tend to be less open to foreign aid, and “changes in domestic political ideology through regularly occurring elections could introduce changes in aid levels, which in turn create volatility in aid” (Tingley, 2010, p.47).

On another note, the changing structure in aid policy might also be attributed to a more general and global shift in aid thinking than domestic factors such as the domestic political agenda. This might be an aspect to consider in the case of the Swedish context as it has been demonstrated that the Swedish aid policy has been changed in line with the Paris agenda that touches upon other aspects such as “ownership, alignment, harmonization, and accountability and the ability to deliver aid efficiently” (Bigsten et al., 2016, p.1).

The Swedish aid policy has recently witnessed a shift in aid of the channel given through. The most significant share of the Swedish aid has been chiefly given as bilateral aid by Sida and less as a multilateral by the foreign office.

There has recently been found an increase in multilateral aid channels. That as by 2016, multilateral aid accounted for half of the Swedish aid. that shift can be further seen as a step following a general shift of the multilateral aid towards Europe in an attempt to increase integration of Eastern Europe, that as “Generally the multilateral are spreading their activities over a broader spectrum of countries, partly because they have a UN mandate to deal with all countries” (Bigsten et al., 2016, p.14).

On the other hand, another noticeable change is the shifting focus of the Swedish aid has been occurring toward social infrastructure rather than the economic ones. As well as a shift toward policy reforms and institutions. That along with a changing of the forms of aid, as it is now more given in grants rather than loans. These shifts in the foreign aid agenda can be attributed to a general shift in development thinking (Bigsten et al., 2016).

1.4. Aim and research questions

Based on the theoretical and analytical frameworks discussed later, my research aims to look at the Swedish aid policy and the Swedish Democrats (SD) political party's perspective on Swedish International aid. The objective is to further examine whether the increased expansion and support of SD in the Swedish community has affected the Swedish aid policy (or not) between 2006-2022. As well as how the aftermath of the so-called refugee crises in 2015 might have contributed to the matter.

Furthermore, to examine whether this change in the domestic Swedish political scene has been reflected in the development aid policy framework. As well as how the SD nationalist slogan along the refugee crisis in 2015 has

been echoed in the Swedish press debate, and what might that have entailed to the Swedish aid policy.

Accordingly, my research questions will be the following:

- What are the main motives behind the Swedish foreign aid policy in the studied timeframe? How are these motives portrayed in the official government documents and budget bills?
- What are the main features of the SD's politics regarding international aid, and how do they differ from the mainstream Swedish aid policy?
- How has the increased support for SD in the Swedish community been reflected in the Swedish aid policy and echoed in the ongoing aid debate? especially in the aftermath of the so-called refugee crisis in 2015.

2. Methods:

I choose to do qualitative research that will be conducted through an abductive approach.

The qualitative research design was chosen since I am interested in analysing texts rather than quantities (Bryman, 2016, p.33). I am also interested in studying the perspective of SD, so my perspective as a researcher will be limited. "In qualitative research, the perspective of those being studied-what they see as important and significant-provides the point of orientation" (ibid, p.401).

I will start with the theoretical framework discussed later and the main concepts identified, which will guide my data collection process. I will aim to understand what I have found for data with the applied analytical frameworks and conceptualize it accordingly (Bryman, 2016, p.394). An abductive approach is much like inductive reasoning and can be considered a broad inductive. However, "what distinguishes abduction is that the theoretical account is grounded in the world view of those one researches"

(ibid). My research will be designed as a case study where I choose Sweden as my case, aiming to provide a more detailed and in-depth investigation of the subject matter in a one-case context (ibid, p.62).

Furthermore, I am interested in a longitudinal study to analyse any potential changes within the given time frame and before and after several major events, such as the increasing power of the right-wing Swedish Democrats (SD) and the refugee crises in 2015 and its aftermath. So, the choice of a qualitative design such as a qualitative desk study is a good choice as "Qualitative research is often depicted as attuned to the unfolding of events over time and to the interconnections between the actions of participants of social setting" (ibid, p.401). In addition, a longitudinal case study is often the choice when the aim is to examine the issue and look for potential changes over more extended periods, which is the case of my research (ibid, p.65).

I will be using text analysis as the primary method. The content analysis method will suit my research, as different underlying themes will be identified, and data will be categorized accordingly (Bryman, 2016, p.563). My primary data will be official documents from the Government of Sweden, aid policy frameworks, budget bills, and political motions to the parliament. The material I choose is policy frameworks that show the official setting for the Swedish development cooperation, SD motions to the parliament that reveals the party's political agenda regarding international aid and budget bills show how the budget for international aid is planned. I decided to take these official documents from three different years. Some are from 2012, a couple of years after SD entered the Swedish parliament and before the policy framework of 2013. Others are from 2016, which was the year when a recent actual policy framework came into place. and lastly from the year 2021/2022, to see the recent changes.

On the one hand, one major limitation to my study will be the difficulty of identifying a causality correlation in such a complicated matter where many factors are interconnected, such as international aid and domestic politics.

While on the other hand, I will de-limit my research to the chosen time and the focused events even though I am fully aware of other events that have been happening in parallel and which might have also partly contributed to my finding; an example of such event that I neglected is the economic crises in 2018.

3. Theoretical and analytical frameworks:

- *The Theoretical Altruism of Welfare States:*

Welfare states such as the Scandinavian states are often drawn under one category and studied as a unit with similar features and exemptions, not least regarding international aid policy and domestic politics. In these states, it has been argued that altruism is the main driver behind international aid. Hence, international aid policy is not subject to partisan division in domestic politics (Brech and Potrafke, 2014)

In this regard, Lumsdaine argued that "strong humanitarian convictions" is what shaped this international economic relation in the form of international aid and that the "influence of crucial moral principles" is what has been driving aid policies in these welfare state, that the stronger actor owes to help the weaker ones and those in need (Lumsdaine, 1993, p.29).

Accordingly, it has been demonstrated that giving aid has become a part of the identity of the welfare state. Hence changes in the domestic politics would slightly affect the design of the aid policies in such states (Lancaster, 2007).

- *The Multiple Streams Framework Structure (MS) by Nikolaos Zahariadis:*

The multiple streams approach (MS) developed by Nikolaos Zahariadis is concerned with how policies at the national levels are framed and designed when the policy outcomes are "ambiguity" and might not be straightforwardly defined (Sabatier, 2007, p.65).

The MS framework argues that the policy process consists of three separate streams: the problems stream, the policies, and the politics stream. According to this model, a policy change occurs when these three separate streams are linked together by the so-called policy entrepreneurs at the right time, which is called the *policy window*.

Ambiguity in this context can be understood as "a state of having many ways of thinking about the same circumstances or phenomena" (*cited in Sabatier, 2007, p.66*). Under such conditions, too much information is produced, and knowing what kind of information is reliable and relevant to the policy-making process is not an easy task.

The first component of the MS framework is *the problem stream*, which is the issue that both policymakers and the citizens are concerned about. In this regard, some issues get more attention than others. They are experienced conditions often coupled with specific values considered high priorities. Hence, any changes might increase concern among both people and policymakers and entail a problematic issue.

The second one is *the policy stream* which is about different ideas competing to get acceptance among the so-called policy networks. Indeed, not all the spelled-out ideas are worthy of consideration or accounts to be addressed. As "proposals that do not conform to the values of policymakers are less likely to be considered for adoption" (*ibid, p.72*).

The last stream in the MS model is *the politics stream*, in which three different components shape it, the "the national mood, pressure-group campaigns, and administrative or legislative turnover." The national mood is crucial to the policymakers as it might lead them to what ideas can be focused on and what should be dismissed. Hence, they are keen to monitor and follow any potential changes in public opinion and citizens' preferences.

A policy change happens when the so-called policy entertainers have enough discernment to acknowledge the critical time when these three streams might successfully be connected. This just-right moment is what Zahariadis calls the *Policy Window*. in other words, they are the "opportunit[ies] for advocates of proposals to push their pet solutions or to push attention to their special problems." (*Cited in* *ibid*, p.73).

Furthermore, different events in the political scene and the community might entail a Policy window that can be taken advantage of by these policy entertainers that enjoy some extent of power at that appropriate moment. According to the MS model, "Entrepreneurs must be not only persistent but also skilled at the coupling. They must be able to attach problems to their solutions and find politicians receptive to their ideas" (*ibid*, p.74).

4. Findings:

4.1. The PGD

A critical cornerstone of the Swedish aid at present is the so-called the Swedish Policies for Global Development (PGD) which was a bill under the name of *Shared responsibility* that the Swedish parliament approved in 2003 (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2009, p.21)

Four main features characterized the PGD at that time. The first one is the importance of fundamental values such as respecting human rights, democracy, and good governance. As well as the overriding goal of sustainable development, not only on the environmental basis instead of in other dimensions as well, such as the social and the economic ones. Another prominent feature was that global problems need cooperation and global efforts to be addressed and solved. Conflict management and security were also areas that the PGD addressed.

The PGD placed an increased focus on policy coherence. However, there is no widely agreed-upon definition of coherence regarding development

policies. Several reports and guidelines by the DAC countries touched upon the concept. They stressed the importance of the development actors in the development communities to be working together achieving the aims and objectives and avoid any "contradictory results" (Odèn and Wohlgemuth, 2009, p.22). Policies coherence and joint efforts were also crucial in achieving the MDGs. Furthermore, the PGD stressed the importance of a coherent policy not only on the national level but also on the regional and global levels. This should be reflected by the Swedish policy (ibid, p.22).

Increased efforts were later made in the implementation process of the PGD with the coherence concept to be one of its main principles, and several government communications addressed the issue. Critical areas such as environment, agriculture, trade, Migration, and security were identified. Suggestions on monitoring and fostering the implantation process were also proposed. One main major challenge to the implantation, according to the government communication 2005/06:204 to the parliament, was "to identify and realize potential effects of synergy, in which actions can be designed in a way, which promotes both the objectives of the policy area in question and a just and sustainable global development" (ibid, p.23).

Later, and when the newly formed conservative-centre government coalition took power in the parliamentary elections in 2006, calls were raised for a more focused and reformed PDG. Hence, two new concepts were formed to be the main concerns: the Equitable global development and the Sustainable global development. Concerns were raised due to several identified shortcomings regarding the implementation of the coherence policy (Ibid, p.24).

Consequently, the government communication to the parliament that came in March 2008, with its title *Global Challenges – Our Responsibility* (Government Communication 2007/08:89), was slightly satisfied with how the PDG was being implemented in the Swedish policy. It further identified six significant global challenges that should focus on development practices.

These challenges were Oppression, Economic exclusion, Climate change, environmental impact, Migration flows, Infectious diseases, other health threats, Conflicts, and fragile situations. The communication further stated that the policy implantation processes should not be underestimated; instead, more efforts should be carried on, not only on what a policy entails but also on the progress of the implementation process.

Furthermore, the 2008 communication was largely in line with the initial 2003 PGD bill when it comes to poverty reduction being an overriding objective of development cooperation. However, identifying the "equitable distribution as part of equitable economic growth" was missing in that communication. Instead, a general assumption was made of the growth's tackle-down positive effect on poverty reduction " (Odèn and Wohlgenuth, 2009, p.26).

4.2. Materials:

4.2.1. Policy frameworks

4.2.1.1. Government Communication 2013/14:131- Aid Policy Framework: the direction of Swedish aid.

As it was titled, this government communication in 2013 set the agenda of the Swedish aid policy by outlining its way of thinking, the main motives behind it, and its main objectives. It is based on the Swedish Policy for Global Development of 2003 and concentrates more on the implementation of that policy. Several points might be addressed, focusing on the aspects that evolve around my research questions.

One of the main focuses of the policy framework is the ownership principle, meaning that development is a process that should be owned and driven from the inside. and that development is the responsibility of developing countries themselves in the first place. Hence, any external support such as aid should only act as a contributor factor (Government Communication 2013/14:131).

According to the policy framework document, the Swedish Government adopts the multidimensional definition of poverty reduction. From their point of view, "The Government's thematic priority of democracy and human rights are integrated into the Government's multidimensional view of poverty and thereby the overarching objective of Swedish aid. For the Government, it is equally urgent to combat political oppression and promote human rights to combat economic poverty" (ibid, p.15).

Some other crucial focuses of this policy framework are human rights establishment and democracy promotion. The Swedish aid policy states that Sweden should act out in its best manner to promote any activities that owe to contribute to these two values based on the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights and other human rights conventions. The poverty reduction analysis should include the two essential aspects, democracy and human rights (Ibid, pp.10-14). In other words, human rights and democracy are crucial objectives when it comes to the hierarchy of The Swedish aid objectives.

Regarding countries' priorities and to whom aid should be given, the policy framework stresses the need to focus on the least developed countries. However, the Swedish Government is aware that increased numbers of the poorest people live in middle-income countries.

Furthermore, it is demonstrated that" the Government sees the main task of bilateral aid as focusing on people who live in poverty or under oppression in countries that have limited resources of their own, in other words, low-income countries" (ibid, p.47). While this statement is relatively straightforward, going through the Government Communication might give the reader another impact. As through most of the sections, both low and middle-income countries are mentioned together and categorized under the same division.

In the same regard, the Swedish Government values the increased cooperation with eastern Europe countries and seeks to continue its support for the ongoing reforms in these countries. The Swedish Government's stand in this matter is primarily based on its adopted comprehensive dimension of poverty reduction. It sees fostering democracy and human rights in these countries are crucial steps to improve the overall situation, including the economic aspect, as well as it appreciates the increased number of EU members and values close relation with the eastern European countries (ibid, p.48).

Furthermore, this policy document clearly states that aid is a much broader term than just the amount of money sent to developing countries; instead, other kinds of costs might also be classified under aid. An example of such costs is the needed budget for receiving refugees seeking asylum in Sweden. The refugee dedicated share of the national budget is according to the communication in harmony with the OECD-DAC aid regulations (Government Communication 2013/14:131, pp.7-8).

4.2.1.2. Government Communication 2016/17:60 - Policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.

In 2016 the new government presented a new policy framework for Swedish development cooperation and humanitarian assistance. This policy replaced the former policy of government communication 2013/14:131. This new policy came after the newly established global development paradigm following the work of the SDGs 2030 agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, and the Paris Agreement on climate change.

As mentioned in the policy framework, the main objective of the Swedish aid cooperation is, "as stipulated by the Riksdag, is to create preconditions for better living conditions for people living in poverty and under oppression" (Government Communication 2016/17:60, p.4).

In this new policy, more focus is placed on the broader definition of sustainable development with its three dimensions, economic, social, and environmental. One important point that might be addressed in this policy document is the continued importance of democracy promoting activities and human rights establishment being a cornerstone of the Swedish aid policy. The new policy places an increased focus on democracy issues and becoming even more concerned with the negative development due to the democracy regression trend in the world and increased human rights violations at that time.

Furthermore, the new policy sheds light on the issue of the newly emerging development actors whose democracy promotion and human rights facilitating are not of their concerns. "In this context, development cooperation faces challenges where non-traditional actors, including certain new donor countries, offer cooperation or economic investments without demanding progress in human rights and democracy" (ibid, p.9). The new policy further stresses incorporating principles such as accountability, non-discrimination, and gender equality into poverty alleviation approaches. It points out the three critical thematic perspectives crucial to Swedish development cooperation. These perspectives are conflict perspective, gender perspective, and environmental and climate perspective.

In the same manner, the policy framework confirmed Sweden's commitment to building up democratic institutions and strengthening the institutional capacities in aid recipient countries (ibid, p.18) and even expressed that "Sweden's ambitions on human rights, democracy and the principles of the rule of law are considerably higher than those agreed upon in the 2030 Agenda" (ibid, p.19). It further demonstrates that "Democracy facilitates people living in poverty to improve their living conditions and defend their human rights." (ibid, p.19).

Furthermore, the policy framework expressed the concern for Sweden over the protracted refugee crises and the increased numbers of forcibly displaced

people in fragile and conflict-torn countries. It further confirmed Sweden's commitment to contributing efforts to tackling the negative impacts of extreme poverty and forced migration. As well as working on improving the capacities of the least developed countries as a step towards laying the groundwork for more sustainable development. The policy document further expresses the importance of the Swedish bilateral aid to be focused on these least developed countries and in line with the 0,15- 0,20 percent of the GDP goal that was once again emphasized in the Addis Ababa Action Agenda (ibid, p.50).

This policy framework was the recent one regarding the Swedish development cooperation and still valid and in place as the primary compass of Swedish international aid today. It again emphasizes the Swedish commitment to the so-called one percent goal that Sweden has always aimed to achieve. It is proudly mentioned that Sweden was the first donor country to 1974 reach the 0,7 GDP objective set by the UN (ibid, p.4).

4.2.2. SD Motions to the parliaments (2012, 206, 2022).

4.2.2.1. SD Motion 2012/13: U288.

In a motion sent to the Swedish parliament by the Swedish Democrats, written by Jimmie Åkesson and others (Motion 2012/13: U288), the political party expressed their view on the Swedish aid policy. The main features of the SD's perspective on international aid can be identified in this motion and the following points might be addressed.

SD's views are not only concerned with the sectors and the countries that aid should be given to. Instead, there is an overriding goal for the SD: the whole volume of international aid should be reduced to only 0,7% of the Swedish GDP instead of the one percent target that has otherwise been the compass for Swedish aid.

On the one hand, Swedish Democrats are in line with the demand for more focused Swedish aid and that aid should be given to fewer countries and

fewer sectors. SD are also positive towards the world's multi-organizations such as the UN and the world bank. They further affirm Sweden's commitment to humanitarian assistance in catastrophic situations and that Sweden should act and do the best it can to mitigate the harsh consequences to those in need.

On the other hand, SD criticizes the lack of clarification in the government's budget bills regarding the division of the aid money and how much it is dedicated to each sector. This is despite that, according to SD's motion, Sida has been clear when it comes to which sectors the Swedish development cooperation will be used for (ibid, p.4). Furthermore, SD stresses the need to prioritize several sectors that they consider crucial, such as agriculture development as well as forestry activities. These areas, along with sanitation and clean water, are the main prerequisites to guarantee access to food for the poorest and save them from hunger and health degradation according to the SD's motion (ibid, p.3). SD further sees a shortcoming in the government's spending on aid in this sector.

According to the motion, in 2011, the Swedish government spent on this sector only 400 million of the total aid money through Sida and which accounts for only 2,48% of the bilateral aid, of which only 90 million were invested in sanitation. Therefore, SD wants a severe rise in that sector and believes that Sweden should give about 2 billion, i.e., about 16% of the bilateral aid given through Sida. And that Sweden should as well play a positive role in further advocating this area in the aid community (ibid, p.5).

Furthermore, both environment and agriculture are also one of the top priorities of SD, which urges for the ongoing deforestation in the tropical rainforest and its adverse effects on the environmental resources, the increased CO₂ emissions, and climate change. SD demonstrates that the lack of knowledge in agricultural practices along the underdeveloped means used are significant problems that undermine agriculture development in developing countries. The 800 million invested by the government through

Sida in this sector is not enough, according to SD, who further wants to increase this number to 2 billion. SD argues that aid channelled through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UN, and the World Bank is an essential part of this subject matter.

Furthermore, SD is also concerned with the education situation in the least developed countries and that millions of children do not get the chance to go to school. SD criticizes the amount and how the Swedish aid was spent on education in developing countries. In 2011 one billion went to this sector. However, not where it is most needed. Instead, a part was also spent in some European countries and China. SD calls for a re-prioritization of which countries the money should be used. As well as a rise in the dedicated budget up to 1,4 billion.

On another note, and regarding the health issues, SD also wants to see an increased effort to spread awareness about HIV/aids and how infection can be avoided. As well as increased knowledge about sexual health, especially among girls and women, which will, among other things, save them unwanted pregnancies and maternal mortality. Additionally, more knowledge should be spread about Malaria and the needed protective measures. SD aims to allocate 1,3 billion of the Swedish aid to contribute to these goals.

Furthermore, SD also mentions the importance of taking the needed measures to avoid wars and conflicts. Working for peace should be a primary objective of development cooperation. However, SD does not detail his intention of how much money should be dedicated to that matter.

The following are some crucial areas of concern to the SD that are either partly in line or some other stances somewhat contradictory to the Swedish aid policy:

- Democracy and Human Rights:

SD is critical to the Swedish aid policy and the government's work facilitating democracy and human rights in developing countries. SD

understands that civil and political rights are essential for human dignity. However, they believe that focusing more on social and economic rights should be prioritized.

It further demonstrates that a desire for a more democratic society should be driven from the inside and cannot be imposed or motivated from the outside. Knowing the local context is crucial in this regard. In SD's perspective, too much Swedish aid is given in the name of democracy and human rights promotion. Hence, more focus should be given to improving people's living conditions daily, which will eventually improve the overall situation.

SD also calls for supporting civil society instead and leaving working on the state level to the world's multilateral organizations such as the UN and the World Bank, rather than directing domestic politics in developing countries and promoting the Swedish model.

- Economic development:

SD stresses the importance of the main objective being that the developing countries should become independent of aid in the long run. To achieve that goal, SD appreciates the joint efforts between the private sector and businesses and sees it as a good potential against unemployment. Entrepreneurship thinking should as well be encouraged. Furthermore, efforts should be made for eased trade conditions in developing countries and efforts against corruption and capital outflow. For these objectives, the SD wants to detect 1 billion, which is a rise compared to the spent 724 million in 2011.

- Migration and Refugees.

One crucial area for SD is the migration and refugee question. In this regard, SD criticizes the current Swedish migration policy and considers it a failure. They demonstrate that statistics show that only a tiny part of the received refugees in Sweden in the 80s, for instance, have been subject to a deemed

risk. Moreover, only half of them meet the refugee definition according to the refugee convention.

SD considers the cut-off in aid money in favour of refugee reception in Sweden as a significant shortcoming in the Swedish policy. SD further calls for increased support to the UN as well as helping refugees where they are instead. That is considered a more effective way of helping, and receiving refugees in Sweden should not be at the expense of international aid, according to SD.

- Countries priority:

Given that aid money should be sent and used where it is most needed, and as much efficiency as possible is the main objective. SD, therefore, calls for more flexibility when it comes to choosing the partner country. Increased flexibility will, according to SD, lead to more efficiency as it will allow to easily redirect aid usage without being restricted by long processes and fixed commitments. SD is aware that the money is often most needed where it might be used in the least efficient way possible due to weak institutions and lack of capacity. Therefore, SD believes that aid in this least developed country should be channelled through civil society organizations.

Furthermore, SD believes that aid to middle-income countries such as China and South Africa should be ended. Moreover, more focus should be placed on fewer countries. SD also argues that supporting some European countries in their qualification process to be part of the EU cannot be considered a measure against poverty. Hence, SD aims to end the Swedish reform cooperation with East Europe in 2014.

- Budget support:

SD is critical towards such kinds of aid, although they understand the good intentions, such as building capacity and ownership in the developing countries. However, SD demonstrates that this kind of support often yields a counterproductive objective. It is channelled through the country's

government institutions which are often corrupt and misuse the money for other purposes such as military and weapons. SD wants to end budget support and focus more on CSOs and humanitarian assistance.

- Swedish organizations:

SD is positive toward the local Swedish organization and values their work on the ground in the partner countries. They further see their work as an effective way to channel aid in a better-contextualized manner in developing countries. Such organizations can better reach the people on the ground both locally in Sweden and the partner countries. Hence, SD calls for increased support for the Swedish organizations.

4.2.2.2. SD Motion 2016/17:2504.

In the motion 2016/17:2504 written by Jeff Ahl and others from SD, the "social conservative" party with a nationalist identity as they describe themselves are expressing their view and priorities regarding international aid.

The motion came after the so-called refugee crisis in 2015 and had, therefore, much focus on the refugee issue and how the development cooperation money might be better used where it has been needed the most from the SD's point of view.

SD had, in that motion, continued to express trust in the UN organizations and the multilateral aid. They once again stress the importance of the work carried out by the UNHCR and other UN-financed programs such as the World Food Program (WFP). Hence, SD wanted increased support to UNHCR by giving 9 billion SEK to them. And another 2 billion to the WFP.

SD is also positive towards channelling aid through local organizations and other institutions, such as churches on the ground in the crises and conflict-hit areas, as they are aware of their important work helping the internally displaced people (IDPs).

SD's primary argument was that investing money in areas close to the crisis-hit areas might be much more helpful than investing this money in refugees receiving in Sweden. That they criticized the steps taken by the Swedish government at that time in cutting off from aid budget in favour of financing the unprecedented wave of incoming refugees to Sweden (Motion 2016/17:2504, p.3).

They demonstrate that investing in these available human resources is the best possible way to help the affected countries sustainably. Educating these refugees makes them an excellent resource for building up the country again when the situations are settled. In this regard, SD further calls for an increased focus on education projects for the refugees living in refugee camps in the near areas. Additionally, SD wanted more support for the multilaterally financed projects created in the close conflict areas, such as in Jordan and Lebanon, aiming to help the local institutions in these countries and facilitate the needed services in the host communities. For that purpose, SD wanted to invest 1 billion SEK (ibid, p.4).

SD is also still critical of the aid work done under promoting human rights and building capacity. For SD, providing the developing countries with fundamental human needs is much more urgent than strengthening the institutional capacities and facilitating civilian and political rights.

Furthermore, SD stresses the importance of fully understanding that change should be driven from the inside rather than imposed from the outside. As well as being aware of the local contexts and the local needs on the ground. Hence, giving people the needed fundamental needs would be helpful and lead to increased development, although it is a long-term process.

In that regard, SD criticized the work done by the government at that time as about 47% of the aid work in 2015 had democracy and human rights promotion as the primary objective.

According to SD, the Swedish bilateral aid should be channelled directly to the people in the civil society. Increased support should be given to multilateral organizations such as the UN and the WB, which are the ones that might help countries forward on the state level. For SD, focusing aid money on the WB instead of shredding the given amount on several other regional development banks would be much more helpful and effective in achieving the aims of aid and the Swedish objectives.

Furthermore, SD supports aid to be channelled through the ministry of foreign Affairs and Sida's work on research and knowledge generating in helping developing countries. As well as they call for increased coordination regarding conflict management and security issues. SD shows continued support to aid channelled through multilateral organizations such as UN organs, the Red Cross, and the Swedish CSOs, given their essential work in development cooperation. However, SD calls for an increased effort in monitoring and valuation of their projects along the way.

SD is positive towards incorporating more business and the private sector in the development work on the economic aspect. That as they demonstrate the positive effects of trade and increased exports on the developing countries. Hence calls for the Swedish development cooperation to support the least developed countries in building their competitive ability to enter the market in both Europe and Sweden. In that manner, SD suggests that Sweden should make an industrialization help commitment to one of two developing countries so that "Sweden will take the initiative for a series of standards for domestic administration and a dispute resolution and insurance mechanism for foreign investments, as well as refraining from raising exchange rates. Assistance and work ensure that the recipient countries have better access to the Swedish market or the EU's internal market" (ibid, p.8).

In addition, SD shed light on the importance of imposing conditions on the recipient partner, such as taking anti-corruption measures whenever aid is given.

They further want to wind up the so-called budget support that is poured directly into the hands of the state. Given the proven shortcomings in such kind of aid, the money has been used in totally different, and opposite ends to its intended goals.

4.2.2.3. SD Motion 2021/22:2586.

In this motion to the Swedish parliament written by Mats Nordberg and others from the SD, the political party continues to express their politics regarding international aid and the Swedish development cooperation.

The party is still very critical of the one percent goal that has always been a cornerstone in the Swedish aid policy. According to the SD, focusing on this objective might lead to counterproductive outcomes instead of achieving the desired purposes. As the focus will be shifted to only giving them money, less attention will be placed on monitoring the effectiveness of the given money. This "unhealthy incentive of the expenditure target" entails, according to SD, increased shortcomings in the aid projects and quality decline (Motion 2021/22: 2586, p.6). To support their argument, SD points out to National Audit office analysis on Sida's guarantee operations in 2021, which shed light on that problem, demonstrating that Sweden, for instance, pays no attention to the share of the money that the aid receiving country should pay themselves when designing an aid project, only because the focus would instead be reaching the one percent goal.

From SD's perspective, the one percent goal should only be a "ceiling" that Sweden aims to reach. However, only through aid projects that qualify to a well-designed and high criterion that owe to achieve the proposed outcomes. For SD, the share of international aid should not be at the expense of the domestic needs in Sweden and the already strained economy. Instead, re-prioritize should be done, and more focus should be placed on the local needs in Sweden, especially in areas such as education, health care, and elderly care. Hence, once again, SD calls for drawing the share of international aid to 0,7% of the GDP. They further argue that even with that share, Sweden

would still be one of the most significant donor countries and fourth among the OECD countries (ibid, p.7).

Generally speaking, the general politics of SD regarding the international aid policy has not or slightly changed in recent years. Much focus is still on the same issues that have earlier been of concern to SD, such as the unjustified support to countries in eastern Europe from SD's point of view, as they are not one of the least developed and poorest countries in the world. As well as the increased focus on democracy and human rights promotion, and most importantly, the refugee issue and the cut-off in the international aid budget for covering refugees receiving in Sweden.

In this regard, SD instead calls for more focus on the so-called "återvändningsstöd" which is giving money to those who voluntarily choose to go back to their home country and re-establish their life there instead. This initiative will, according to SD, relieve the system here in Sweden as those who do not end up being self-sufficient place an enormous burden on the Swedish system (ibid, p.22).

Furthermore, SD calls to stop the support given to the Palestinian authorities as many reports have shown widespread corruption and misuse of aid money. As well as the Islamic relief fund that is sending money to al-Qaeda terrorist groups. SD is also sceptical of the Afghan reconstruction trust fund (ARTF), where there were not enough follow-up and practical inspections. Relatively widespread corruption was also proven. Hence, SD suggests suspending the Swedish support to this fund until better effectiveness can be guaranteed.

4.2.3. Budget bills (2012/13, 2015/16, 2021/22):

4.2.3.1. Budget bill 2012/13:1

According to the government budget bill for the year 2013 regarding the international aid area, the share of aid is to be 1% of the national GDP, which has always been expressed to be the objective of the Swedish development cooperation, and which will at that year account for 38,2 billion SEK.

While the main aid sectors fall under the OECD countries' definition of Official Development Assistance (ODA), other expenditures might also be part of where international aid money goes. These extra costs account for 7 billion SEK.

One of these costs is the money used to cover receiving refugees from low and middle-income countries in their first year in Sweden and which is estimated to go up to ca 4,4 billion SEK in 2013. The budget bill points out the Swedish development policy priorities like the following. The increased focus will continue to be on the MDGs crucial for the Swedish policy, such as decreasing children mortality numbers in the least developed countries that are either experiencing an ongoing conflict or are in a post-conflict phase. As well as improving mothers' health and pregnancy-related mortalities.

Furthermore, a continued commitment to contributing to the climate change fight and mitigation of the occurring environmental degradation was also clearly expressed in the budget bill. Another critical issue for the Swedish development policy is fostering democracy and human rights promotion. That as support will continue to be given to contribute to an improvement, among other things, press, expression, and religious freedom (prop. 2012/13:1, p.19). These already mentioned thematic priorities have officially been the main objectives of the Swedish development aid policies since 2007 (ibid, p.25).

However, according to the government bill in 2013, a need is calling for better-harmonized policy documents that give a more precise scope of the motives behind the Swedish aid policy. That is a more pressing concern as almost half of the Swedish aid is channelled through bilateral means. An increased consideration should be given to the specific context of the receiving aid country.

While in some contexts, aid is given to finance a long-term development project, in other contexts, the main focus is on capacity building and democratization process promotion. (ibid, p.26).

In this regard, two major factors affect how the donor-receiving aid cooperation is formed in Sweden, the local context and circumstances of the receiving country and to what extent the local authorities there are trustworthy. Furthermore, the bill sheds light on the importance of the result-based Strategy as the primary compass for the Swedish development cooperation, where "The performance strategies focus on results in selected thematic areas rather than traditional sectors in development assistance" (ibid, p.27).

4.3.3.2. Budget bill 2015/16:1

In the government budget bill regarding the international aid expenditure area in 2016, the share of aid is fixed to be 0,98% of the GDP.

The share of the additional costs that falls under OECD definition of ODA accounts for 11 billion SEK in 2016, about 25 % of the total aid budget, which is 0,4 billion less than the previous year when it reached 28% of the aid budget.

Part of these additional costs is the share used in refugees receiving in Sweden, which was expected to be less in 2016 than the unprecedented peak in the 2015 refugee crisis. The needed money in this matter is calculated to be 8,2 billion SEK, which accounts for 19% of the total aid budget. This is less by 0,7 than what it was in 2015. The contribution from the aid budget in covering asylum receiving costs in Sweden is aimed to be used for the first year of residence for asylum seekers.

According to a prognosis of how many refugees will seek asylum in Sweden in the year 2016 counted in estimation to how it was in 2015, the government suggests that 8,173,000 SEK is needed to cover the cost of receiving these refugees.

Furthermore, the budget bill shows that democracy promotion and human rights establishment are still high priorities in the Swedish aid policy.

The bilateral Swedish aid is still there as well. According to the 2016 bill and countries in Africa and the Middle East, Eastern Europe is still part of the Swedish development cooperation, Palestine among others (ibid, p.15). This sector accounts for ca 30 percent of Sida's total budget, considered the most crucial sector in the Swedish development cooperation (ibid, p.26).

According to the budget bill 2016, three global challenges are seen as essential and top priorities of Swedish aid. The first one is the *environment and the climate*. Sweden has always been an active advocate for these issues and one of the biggest donors to global funds working to mitigate the adverse effects of global warming and climate change.

The second priority is *gender equality*, a fundamental principle in Swedish policy where girls and women should be guaranteed their human rights fully and able to practice their rights and participate in society.

The third and last priority is *peace and state-building*. Sweden will continue to be active globally and through the FN and the WB in facilitating conflict analysis and prevention measures. In this regard, investing in capacity building and strengthening both the formal and the informal institutions is what should be done and what would lead to more stabilization in the long term (ibid, pp.51-52).

4.2.3.3. Budget bill 2021/22:1

In this budget bill about international aid expenditure, the Swedish government suggests fixing the Swedish international aid to the always desired 1% of the GDP, which will account for 57,4 billion SEK., of which 9,5 percent will be dedicated to other expenditure that also falls under the category of international aid. However, it might be used for other purposes, such as the cost needed to cover refugees receiving as well as the "contributions to democracy efforts in low- and middle-income countries,

which meet the OECD's criteria for official state development assistance" and which will this year be about 46 million SEK (proposition 2021/22:1, p.6).

The Swedish government expressed its continued commitment to the SDGs and the other international agreements regarding aid policy and set the global paradigm to the current international aid thinking. Such as the Addis Ababa Action Agenda and the Paris Declaration (ibid, p.8).

Furthermore, It mentions the importance of the result-management. The result will be reported in line with the main objectives of the Swedish development aid policy 2016/17:60 discussed earlier, which is still the current and most updated policy framework on international aid. On the top of these themes are, among other things, democracy, gender equality, and respect for human rights. Desired underlying outcomes under these sectors account for a significant percentage of the total bilateral Swedish aid (p.13).

Example of the Swedish efforts in this regard are:

- capacity strengthening and ensuring a more accessible and fair election in Afghanistan. As well as increased women's participation in the political scene in countries such as Burkina Faso, Malawi, and North Macedonia (p.16).
- In the year 2020, about 1,546 million SEK was given to the Strategy for reform cooperation with Eastern Europe, the Western Balkans, and Turkey. Additionally, about 810 million SEK was given to Afghanistan and 281 million SEK to Palestine in the same year (p.57)
- The Swedish Tax Agency (Skatteverket) has "has contributed to the capacity development and modernization of tax authorities in partner countries mainly in Eastern Europe and the Western Balkans" (p.28).

4.3. Press debate

SD has yet never been part of any Swedish government. However, no one can deny that they are a political party that increasingly gaining more and

more support from the Swedish electors. In the 2010 Swedish parliament election, SD exceeded for the first time the 4% threshold that is required to have a seat in the Swedish parliament (Rydgren and van der Meiden, 2018). SD's share of election results has been on the increase ever since. In the 2014 election, they got 12,86% of the total votes and 17,53% in 2018 (Valresultat - Valmyndigheten, 2021). SD has been eager to drive its political agenda and provoke debate in the Swedish domestic political scene. Not least on the international development cooperation question that has been one key feature of Swedish politics since the so-called "Swedish aid bible" in 1962.

As shown above, one of the overarching goals of SD regarding international aid has been to cut it off to the 0,7 % threshold, which is the agreed percent within the UN and the OECD. SD takes every opportunity to confirm their perspective on international aid, whether in a formal motion to the government, a budget suggestion, or a statement in the press.

One major event that provoked debate in Swedish politics was the so-called refugee crisis in 2015. In this regard, SD argued in a press conference that more aid money should be given to the UNHCR instead of using the money to cover the increased costs of receiving refugees home in Sweden. SD is still arguing that strengthening the UNHCR capacity with enhanced resources will be more efficient in helping refugees in need close to their home countries and not those who have the resources and the ability to finance their migratory journey and end up seeking asylum in Sweden. Channeling aid through the UN agencies is what can be "the real aid" from SD's point of view (Winbo, 2015).

In the same regard, the Swedish parliament member and the development policy spokesperson in SD Julia Kronlid published a reply in 2015-12-16 in *Svenska Dagbladet*, called "*Fel att ta 30 percent av biståndet*" where she argued that using 30 percent of the international aid money in financing refugee reception was a major mistake that the government did at that time. SD aimed to give 9 billion SEK in aid to these affected areas as a more

"humane and fair refugee policy," according to Kronlid (Kronlid, 2015). She further demonstrated that the government's intention to use even more than that from the aid budget is totally against what should be done in such crises and would only worsen the situation. She instead claims that money is much more needed were helping programs such as the World Food Program are working on the ground close to the crisis-hit areas.

Kronlid' reply came after the debate article of the minister for development aid at that time, Isabella Lövin, also published in SvD, where she confirmed the continued Swedish commitment to aid and humanitarian assistance, especially at that period with increased global challenges due to, among other things conflicts, worsening economic situations, and not least climate change and environmental degradation. Lövin argued that the one percent goal of the GDP to be given in aid is still a cornerstone in Swedish development assistance. However, due to the unprecedented numbers of refugees seeking asylum in Sweden during that period, money should be rather dedicated to refugee reception (Lövin, 2015).

Kronlid, in her debate article published 2016-04-10 in *Svenska Dagbladet*, called "*Liberalerna måste sluta hyckla om biståndet*" shed light on another issue that is of a high priority to SD when it comes to international aid, which is aid conditionality. That aid should not be given to recipient countries without requiring some demands. She attacks the liberal party for being responsible for giving billions of Swedish kronor to the non-democratic Palestinian regime with no conditionality at all. According to her article, the Palestinian regime is financing terrorism, and hence Sweden would also be responsible when giving aid money to this regime. Kronlid further demonstrated that SD has repeatedly pointed out this conditionality issue and its lack of Swedish aid money. In addition, the case of channeling aid through the Palestinian regime has concerned SD since 2011 with no response from the Swedish government. Rather than the political party, motions on that matter to the parliament were either denied or ignored. Additionally, calls from SD to stop the aid and budget support to the regime

in Afghanistan were also ignored. According to the same article, the regime is corrupt, several international organizations pointed out the misuse of aid money in among other things, opium trade or in financing private luxury life to those in charge in the regime.

Another issue that SD has been concerned about and that Kronlid brings to the debate in her article is the cut in the international aid budget in favour of the cost of refugees receiving locally in Sweden. This is an issue that SD argues that both governments, the Liberal (alliance) one before 2006 as well as the social-democratic one (the so-called rödagröna locally), have been responsible for. While on the other hand, SD has always been sceptical about this step (Kronlid, 2016).

Kronlid's debate article came as a response to what Birgitta Ohlsson from the liberal party some days earlier published in SvD. According to Ohlsson, the liberal party has also always been concerned with the aid money given bilaterally to the undemocratic states and directly to their regimes. This money is often misused, especially in recent periods when extremism is spreading and gaining more supporters worldwide. As well as the critical situation in Europe due to the increased extreme right politics and the unprecedented migration inflow (Ohlsson, 2016). Furthermore, Ohlsson stressed the importance of the conditionality issue regarding aid and development cooperation. In her words, "*jag menar att politik också är att välja*" meaning that the recipient of aid money and the way the money is channelled should be carefully chosen to be as effective as possible. Significantly when their share of aid is shrunk due to unexpected events such as the migration crisis (ibid). She also confirmed her party's point of view in supporting countries where democratic reforms and human rights enhancements are occurring. In their perspective, democracy and openness pave the way for development and economic growth and contribute to poverty reduction (ibid).

On another note, in later years, and before the parliament election in 2018, the leading Swedish political parties seated in the parliament had almost a shared perspective regarding the Swedish international aid policy. Although some critics were raised by some opposition parties, such as the moderates' concerns about the government transparency on the 2030-SDGs agenda, according to Sofia Arkelsten, the development policy spokesperson in the Moderates political party (M) (Rolfer, 2018).

However, in general, seven of the eight political parties in the Swedish parliament were positive towards the so-called one percent goal. The only party tweeting out the tune was the SD, whose main objective was to pull down the Swedish international aid to only 0,7 percent. As in Kronlid words, "it is about development aid being useful and not being pushed forward because we have a percentage target" (*cited in Rolfer, 2018*).

This rhetoric has been repeated in SD politics even after the 2018 parliament election, and that was clearly stated in the budget motion sent to the parliament regarding the 2019-year budget. SD wanted to save almost 25% of the international aid budget, which is about 11 billion SEK, and hence argued that this money is much more needed locally in Sweden in several sectors such as health care and elderly care. SD further claims that even after this saving, the aid level would still account for ca 0,75% of the GDP, which is within the recommended 0,7 threshold by the UN. SD demonstrated that they have earlier been even more generous in international aid as in 2018, they wanted to give 250 million SEK more than what the government did/ aimed to. That was as the government chose to cut off the international aid budget for using the money locally in Sweden for refugee reception, as mentioned above, which is a step that goes in line with the OECD legal framework (Kudo, 2018a). On that issue, the economic-political spokesperson for SD, Oscar Sjöstedt, argued that SD is open to aid where it is needed in humanitarian assistance and crisis-hit areas. Accordingly, the cut-off should be done in other aid sectors, such as those given to support human rights and foster democratization (*ibid*).

The SD's budget proposition of cutting off 11 billion SEK in the international aid budget in 2019 received harsh criticism from the sitting government. At that time, the minister of development aid, Isabela Lövin, stated that it was shameful to ask for cutting the aid budget by 25% as the SD aimed to. Moreover, she further said, attacking SD, "It is no coincidence that SD chooses to cut back on democracy, human rights, and gender equality, as it reflects their priorities" (Kudo, 2018b).

On another note, and due to the strained economic situation in the world and not least in Sweden due to Covid-19. SD politicians are retaking the chance to express their dissatisfaction with the Swedish international aid policy, as they argue in a debate article called "*villkora biståndet med avtal om återvändande*" published on 2020/10/21 in the Swedish newspaper *Aftonbladet* (Wiechel, Sjöstedt, Söder and Nordberg, 2020), they argue that despite the strained economic situation in Sweden in recent years, the share of international aid money has been on the increase since 2013 when it was ca 30 billion SEK to 44 billion in 2019. That is not logical, according to SD politicians, and the government should cut off the share of Swedish aid instead.

Furthermore, they call for a more focused aid policy as aid should be given to minor UN organizations and sectors, mainly to UNHCR, FAO, UNICEF, and WFP where the money can be used most efficiently. They also stress the importance of focusing on the poorest countries, which are often the countries that are sending immigrants. According to them, that will lead to less migration flow to Europe and not least to Sweden, which has received the most in the 2015 refugee crisis (Wiechel, Sjöstedt, Söder and Nordberg, 2020). In the same regard, they further argue that the Swedish aid money should be conditioned with the so-called "return agreement" that regulates migrants return (ibid). In other words, the main objective for SD, according to the article, is cutting off international aid and bringing it back to the 2013 level, incorporating more conditions for the given money, and increasing focus on fewer countries and fewer sectors.

What has been demonstrated above is the systematic and repetitive questioning of the size and content of the aid budget. We will now see what effect this has had on the actual development.

4.4. Recent developments

As demonstrated above, decisions regarding international aid do not occur in a vacuum; Changing paradigms and thinking ways both internationally and regionally affect the direction of how an aid decision is made domestically and other events and changes in the world.

The ongoing war in Ukraine is one of those events that have recently affected the aid budget in Sweden. It is estimated that about 76 000 individuals will seek asylum in Sweden in 2022, which entails an increased burden on the Swedish migration agency expenditure and the Swedish municipalities receiving the Ukrainian refugees. An increased share of the migration budget in Sweden should reach SEK 9,800,000,000. These additional costs will be partly covered by cutting off the international aid budget. A procedure that has been repeatedly applied in Sweden and other OECD/DAC countries in the past years (Regeringens proposition 2021/22:99, p.171).

According to the Swedish government, the number of Ukrainian asylum seekers in Sweden will be as estimated above. In that case, the cut off in the international aid budget will account for ca 10,3 billion SEK, which is about 18% of the total aid budget and less than what it was in 2015, the year that Sweden received the highest refugee numbers and when the cut off in aid budget reached about 22%. These figures are subject to change, depending on how many refugees are coming to Sweden (Regeringskansliet, 2022). Furthermore, the Swedish government has once again expressed its commitment to humanitarian assistance for being a crucial part of international aid and confirmed that this kind of aid would be kept and prioritized. Hence, cutting the aid budget would not affect this part of the aid. However, most other aid programs will be affected as payments will be postponed or paused (ibid).

Critiques have been expressed, and worries have been raised about this step taken by the Swedish government. Among others from Concord Sweden, the well-known ideal organization. They have sent a critical letter to the prime minister, minister for development aid, and for the leaders of the political parties expressing their concern regarding the cuts in aid budget to cover the cost of receiving refugees due to the recent war in Ukraine. Concord argues that the Swedish economy is doing well now, and there is no justification for cutting the aid budget. They also shed light on the increased need for international aid in times like today, where more people are suffering from the aftermath of the covid-19 pandemic and the increased climate change externalities (Brev Om Finansiering av Flyktingmottagande – CONCORD Sverige- CONCORD Sverige, 2022)

That Concord urged the Swedish government to take back or change its decision that was hasty and not very well prepared. Concord further adds that the reallocation within the aid budget towards Ukrainians refugees make "Sweden the largest recipient country of its development assistance" (Världens fattiga största förlorare i vårbudgeten – CONCORD Sverige, 2022). Concord sees it as a shameful step taken by Sweden, and that might lead to more donor countries taking after. Hence, the poorest people are those who will bear the brunt of that action.

Interestingly enough, SD is supporting the cuts in the aid budget despite their earlier repeated criticisms of similar actions taken in other refugee waves in Sweden. In the Ukrainian case, SD "welcome the fact that they choose to finance the costs of the Ukrainian refugee reception with settlements on development assistance," according to the party's economic policy spokesperson Oscar Sjöstedt (Larsson, 2022).

On another note, one more aspect of international aid that has also been recently controversial in the Swedish scene is the conditionality issue and whether there is a need to impose more conditions on the aid receiving countries. And in that case, what kind of conditions and under what terms.

One of the most discussed conditions in this regard is whether refugee sending countries should guarantee their citizens who have either got a denied asylum in Sweden or have voluntarily chosen to return home (Asplund Catot and Melchior, 2019).

In the same regard, the so-called *återvändnings stöd*, which is an offered support both practically and economically by the Swedish Migration Agency for those who will return home (Migrationsverket, n.d.), is one of these issues that keep coming to the discussion, especially after the refugee crisis in 2015. It is an issue that SD has frequently called for (Motion 2020/21:2552).

However, what is noticeable is that also other parties than SD, who are driving the issue now seems to be on board as well. That as, before the Europaparlamentsvalet in 2020, candidates from other political parties such as Christian Democrats (KD) and Moderate Part (M) were positive towards an increased conditionality and imposing the *återvändning krav* (return demand) on refugee sending countries. The Social Democrats' stand on the issue was not so clear. However, no straightforward refusal was expressed (Asplund Catot and Melchior, 2019).

In the same regard, the discussion on *återvändningsstöd* is not limited to the political scene domestically in Sweden; instead, the issue is getting increased attention even on the EU and the global level. That as "Policymakers in Europe and internationally have been giving renewed attention to sustainable return and reintegration of failed asylum seekers and irregular migrants" (Knoll, Veron, and Mayer, 2021).

On another note, according to attitude surveys done by SIDA, the issue of international aid has been gaining increased political attention in recent years, and polarization regarding the matter has been on the increase in the Swedish community. A recent survey from 2021 shows that more Swedish people are now critical of international aid, and a share of 38% are either

leaning towards giving less aid or stopping the Swedish international aid. This is a noticeable change in the community attitude as only five years earlier, this survey, i.e., in 2016, the share of critical people to international aid was much less. It did not exceed 22% (Larsson, 2021).

In this regard, and according to Henrik Ekengren Oscarsson, Professor of Political Science at the University of Gothenburg, people's attitude towards matters such as international aid is affected by their ideological beliefs and their position on the political spectrum. Ekengren Oscarsson further argues for a connection between the so-called refugee crises in 2015 and the changing attitudes towards international aid among the Swedish community. He said, "Since it blows to the right in public opinion, support for development assistance also falls" (Kronholm, 2021).

5. Analysis:

My analysis will be drawing on the above-reviewed findings and official documents and through the perspective of Zahariadis and his Multiple Streams frameworks (MS) outlined in the theoretical section and the theoretical altruism of welfare states.

While some of the SD objectives in aid policy might intersect or correspond to the Swedish aid policy, others are contradictory. The overriding controversial objective has always been the share of international aid money in relation to the national GDP. On the one hand, the one percent principle has shown to be a very well consolidated one in the Swedish aid policy throughout the years. While on the other hand, SD has repeatedly called to cut off this share to the 0,7 recommended threshold by OECD/DAC. This issue is one of the most competing ideas between the prevailing Swedish aid policy and the SD main objectives, and that we might refer to as the *policy stream* that is, according to the (MS) model discussed above, different opinions and competing ideas that are generated by different policy networks such as politicians, scholars, or bureaucrat.

Although, the one percent goal is still a cornerstone objective that has always been spelled out and aimed at in the different Swedish policy documents, such as in the latest Government Communication 2016/17:60, which is still in place and applicable for the Swedish development cooperation policy. The ease in which the decision to reallocate aid funds to cover migration costs in Sweden has been taken in the past ten years and in particular following the invasion of Ukraine shows that the SDs consistent campaigns have had some effect also on the general policy of Sweden.

At the same time an increased proportion of the Swedish community is getting critical of international aid, as some recent attitude surveys done by SIDA. Again, this points that the SD call to limit the Swedish aid to 0,7% of the GDP has started to gain some attention and acceptance. As shown above, other political parties, such as the Moderates party (M), are also on board on this issue.

Another example of these competing ideas is the *återvändningsstöd* (the return support) that has also surfaced in the political discussions, not only in Sweden but also on the EU and the international level. As demonstrated above, other Swedish political parties are getting more optimistic about the increased focus on the matter, and even the Social Democrats (S) have started leaning towards such suggestions.

Although these competing ideas are getting wider acceptance, they still did not reach enough approval among the so-called policy networks needed according to the (MS) frameworks. No severe changes have yet been happening in the official aid policy frameworks., at least not regarding the one percent principle that is still expressed to be the aimed goal of the Swedish aid.

According to Zahariadis's model, the other stream to be discussed is the *problem stream*. One of the recent most controversial areas in the Swedish community is the migration policy. The refugee crisis in 2015 and the

unprecedented numbers of refugees arriving in Sweden has been a significant event that provoked the debate in Sweden and changed its policies accordingly. This matter is increasingly a high priority to both the policymakers and the Swedish citizens. The debate regarding this matter has been getting more intense recently and has been highly politicized by SD and its sister parties all over Europe in a way that it also influences EU aid policies.

In a discussion paper titled *A sustainable development approach to return and reintegration: dilemmas, choices, and possibilities* published in January 2021 by *ecdpm* (Knoll, Veron and Mayer, 2021), the increased incorporated role of development actors in migration-related objectives has been addressed. It concludes: Development cooperation might be used to tackle the increased numbers of refugees and asylum seekers in EU countries. It has been noticed that "Accompanying return programs with development reintegration assistance can incentivize stronger cooperation of countries of origin on return as part of a partnership approach" (ibid, p.iv). Furthermore, suggestions were made to incorporate a migration logic into development cooperation programs. Addressing the context of the refugee sending countries and considering migration motives while working on long-term development programs might also contribute to a more sustainable reintegration/ return process (ibid, p.vii).

The third and the last stream in the (MS) frameworks is the *politics stream*, in which the national mood is an important aspect. Hence, the different political actors, such as the SD, closely follow the general political atmosphere and any potential changes in attitudes on the matters they aim to change. They drive the debate and hence affect the national mood as well. On the one hand, as demonstrated above, SD has been eager to generate its ideas and drive a debate both in the press and in the Swedish parliament regarding Swedish international aid. On the other hand, more people in the Swedish community are getting sceptical and holding a more negative

attitude towards international aid. That is to be noticed among other political parties as well as mentioned above.

Drawing a causation relationship between these recent changes in aid attitude and the increased prevalence of SD might be difficult and is not a straightforward direct correlation. However, it might be safe to argue that the repeated SD slogan has started to echo in the Swedish community, as shown above.

In addition, some crucial aspects can be noticed regarding the above stated controversial aspects of the Swedish development cooperation policy concerning the SD politics on international aid.

In general, minor changes in the main objectives or the directions have not been addressed in the official Swedish aid policy framework documents. However, as shown above, it seems that an increased debate on international aid issues occurs in today's Swedish political scene. Essentially, there are still no signs that predict any official change in policy documents regarding the one percent goal of Swedish aid. However, the Moderates (M) political party today also calls for cutting off Swedish aid to the 0,7 percent. While for different reasons, that target has not always been reached. However, it has been repeatedly spelled out and aimed to. The repeated commitment by the different governments in both the recent policy framework documents and the budget bills prove how well established that goal has been since the very early emergence of Sweden as a donor country.

Furthermore, cutting a share from the international aid budget to cover the increased and unexpected expenditure of refugees receiving in Sweden has also been justified again and again by the Swedish government. This fact is not satisfying for SD, who is critical of the government's migration policy and its practices of using a portion of aid money to cover the cost of receiving asylum seekers (Motion 2012/13: U288).

On another note, both SD and the Swedish aid policy are, to a large extent, in line regarding the ownership principles. Both stress the need for development to be driven and initiated from the inside and that aid should only be used as a catalyst that aims to provoke development in a transitional period and pave the way for take-off opportunities and self-maintenance. And not something that should be in place forever.

Furthermore, the Swedish aid policy goes with the SD point of view regarding countries' priorities and that aid should be focused on the least developed countries. Although, that has not always been the case, as many other factors have been taken into account when channeling aid money.

The increased support to the eastern European countries and the reform promotion programs are not one of SD's objectives. That as SD does not place any weight on supporting these countries to become qualified as EU members. Instead, repeated calls have been raised by SD to end the reform partnership with the eastern European countries.

In the same regard, some of the prioritized thematic aid sectors by the Swedish government have been very controversial for SD and clash with its main objectives. An example of that is the placed focus on human rights and democracy. SD believes that too much aid is dedicated to activities driven by the democracy and human rights platform and further argues that more focus should be placed on the objectives that directly deal with poverty reduction in its narrower definition (Motion 2012/13: U288). This issue has been one of the disagreements between the Swedish government's aid policy and the SD, which has repeatedly pointed out that building up democratic institutions should not be prioritized international aid activities. Instead, more focus should be placed on achieving the fundamental human needs in the form of food and clean water.

In conclusion, it seems that until now, there is no appropriate moment that enabled the so-called policy entrepreneurs to connect the three separate

streams discussed earlier together. In other words, there was no fitting *policy window* that would have been taken advantage of by, for instance, the SD to fully be able to drive their aid policy forward and get it through to be part of the official Swedish aid policy.

Furthermore, the exceptionalism of the Swedish case for being one of the welfare states and donor countries where solidarity has been a very consolidated motive behind its international aid thinking is an important aspect to consider when studying aid policy and any potential changes to the overall development cooperation policy. The so-called "Altruism of Welfare States" might further clarify why a fundamental change is not so likely to occur in Sweden, at least not in such a short period and not so easy. That as it has been argued that welfare states are not subject to the partisan division when it comes to international aid since altruism is the main objective in this case (Brech and Potrafke, 2014).

6. Conclusion:

My aim with this research has been to identify the main objectives behind the Swedish aid policies in the last 16 years and at the same time identify the SD's politics to further compare it to the mainstream policy and examine how they differ. In addition, to look at how SD's rhetoric has been echoed in the debate in the Swedish society, especially concerning the one per cent target and the so-called migration crisis in 2015.

To answer my research questions, I adopted a qualitative research method in the form of a desk study where I applied abductive reasoning to the selected materials and texts. Through a content analysis of the finding and with the help of the Zahariadis's *Multiple Streams Approach (MS)* and the *Theoretical Altruism of Welfare States*, Firstly I did find that, the main cornerstone of the Swedish aid policy has always been *solidarity*, where rising the living standard of the people in need and helping them to reach the point at which they can further help themselves. One percent of the national GDP has

therefore since 1968 been the target in aid allocation for that aim. That goal has been stressed and confirmed in both the studied official policy documents and the budget bills.

Secondly, this one percent goal has always been a point of controversy for SD that calls for aid cuts to 0,7% of the GDP. SD also thinks that funding part of the cost for refugees first year in Sweden should not be done through cuts from the aid budgets. Aid money should be used where it is most needed areas close to where conflicts and catastrophes takes place. SD further shares the slogan of other rights parties in the EU regarding aid and migration issues and calls for an increased focus on refugee return programs instead and urge for migration matter to be considered when designing an aid policy.

On another note, some thematic and countries priorities in Swedish aid policy, such as the ownership principle, humanitarian assistance, and the need to focus on the least developed countries, have been emphasized in the SD's politics. Other issues, such as supporting the democratization processes, fostering human rights implementation, and backing Eastern European countries in joining the EU, are not on SD's agenda.

SD rhetoric on intentional aid has recently gained more attention in the Swedish aid debate, both on the political scene within other political parties and in the press debate. It seems however, that the Swedish objectives still are well consolidated in the official aid paradigm, and any potential changes have so far not been easy to occur. More time might be required to see any profound changes take place.

It would be interesting to look at the matter later to see whether any changes in the Swedish aid policy can be identified, especially if SD becomes part of a Swedish government. Such a study would be recommended for further research.

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