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Walking the Tightrope: Europe between Europeanisation and Globalisation

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Swedish EU-Scepticism: How is it Compatible with the Support for Enlargement?

Therése Hultén

Introduction

The European Union (EU) is a project, an ideal and at the same time a very tangible reality for its currently more than 495 million inhabitants. It is a peace endeavour, an economical collaboration and has throughout the years increasingly become a political and cultural undertaking as well. The EU has grown enormously over time: from the initial six member states it now encompasses twenty-seven countries from east to west, north to south of Europe, making it thereby the third largest population in the world after China and India.¹ The Union is not to halt here though; it will keep on growing by continuously incorporating new member states into its realm, enlarging its boundaries to an extent that we can only make qualified guesses about today. At this particular point in time there are four official candidate countries, namely Macedonia, Croatia, Turkey and Iceland which, when they join, will imply an EU population roughly reaching 570 million inhabitants.²

The Swedish population contributes about 9 million people³ to the EU's total inhabitants. What makes these 9 million Swedes stand out in an EU perspective and what characterizes them? Well, it is "common knowledge" that Sweden is one of the most EU-sceptical countries within the Union. A country literally inside the EU, but in many ways it remains in the far periphery still,⁴ a fact at least superficially mirroring Sweden's geographical position at the periphery of Europe. As a country not fixed in its position/perception of belonging, it displays obvious liminality issues: being at the core of European integration concerning enlargement for instance, but on the other hand at the very outskirts when it comes to

¹ The European Union, "Key facts and Figures about Europe and the Europeans: Size and Population," http://europa.eu/abc/keyfigures/sizeandpopulation/index_en.htm (accessed 2 May 2010).

² The European Union, "Europas länder: kandidatländer," http://europa.eu/abc/european_countries/candidate_countries/index_sv.htm (accessed 14 February 2011).

³ Statistiska Centralbyrån (SCB), "Befolkningsstatistik: Sveriges befolkningsutveckling," http://www.scb.se/Pages/TableAndChart_224772.aspx (accessed 3 May 2010).

⁴ Sven-Eric Liedman, "Sweden Inside and Outside the European Union," in *European Peripheries in Interaction: The Nordic Countries and the Iberian Peninsula*, ed. Luis Beltrán, Javier Maestro and Liisa Salo-Lee (Puertollano: Ediciones Puertollano S.L., 2002), 303.

European Economic and Monetary Union (EMU)⁵ matters. Lee Miles, one of the leading experts on Sweden in the EU, stated the following concerning Swedish EU-scepticism, illuminating a cross-section of the 'general' opinion as voiced in foreign articles and/or other literary sources:

Sweden has often been regarded by outside observers as one of the more 'problematic' Member States of the European Union, a reputation that has been consolidated by regular public opinion surveys suggesting widespread scepticism amongst the public and also borne out by Sweden's decision to remain outside the 'Euro-zone'.⁶

Intention, methodology, research question and hypothesis

The two themes of this paper, EU-scepticism and enlargement, are each of them so broad and complex that it is impossible to cover all aspects in this paper. Such an endeavour would require in-depth research also into issues such as e.g. trade associations and security. This paper will delve into the fact that enlargement – meaning more power, more influence and more weight shifting towards the European Union⁷ – ought to be in direct conflict with Swedish EU-scepticism as it is a tool towards empowering the Union in many regards. A statement made by the former EU Commissioner for Enlargement, Olli Rehn, highlights the official EU-view on the impact of enlargement:

Enlargement has also increased the EU's weight in the world. We are today the world's largest economy, a global heavy-weight in trade, and a regulatory superpower. We are EU is [*sic*] in the lead in addressing climate change and development. And we have substantially increased our involvement in international peace-keeping missions. In all of this, size matters.⁸

The Swedish EU-scepticism is a fact often brought up in the European context. It is simply a common perception that has been reinforced by *Eurobarometers*⁹ and similar surveys since

⁵ Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå, "Rekordhögt euromotstånd," *Dagens Nyheter*, 9 April 2010, Internal affairs section, Online Edition, <http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/rekordhogt-euromotstand-1.107533> (accessed 9 April 2010).

⁶ Lee Miles, "Sweden in the European Union: Changing Expectations?" *Journal of European Integration*, 23, no 4 (2001): 303.

⁷ In recent times most evident by the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty.

⁸ Olli Rehn, "The EU Enlargement Process and Europe's Role in the World" (speech given at Princeton University, Princeton, the United States of America, 24 September 2009), <http://europa.eu/rapid/pressReleasesAction.do?reference=SPEECH/09/411&type=HTML> (accessed 6 May 2010).

⁹ European Commission, *Eurobarometer 57.1* "National Standard Report: EU på tröskeln till förändring – så tycker man i Sverige," European Commission, Brussels, October 2002 (accessed 10 May 2010).

the very close yes-referendum in 1994.¹⁰ In the fall of 2009 for instance, it was made clear that more Swedes are sceptical about the EU than the European average¹¹ as well as being well below average when it comes to the question of whether Sweden has benefitted from being a member of the EU.¹² The logical and immediate response to the Rehn statement must therefore be that Swedish EU membership goes against a number of Sweden's interests and "principles". The claim to neutrality being an important interest, as well as a majority of the population wishing to stay outside the EMU collaboration (not becoming a completely integrated part in the economy) being another. Also the claim to "regulatory superpower" must be seen in the light of Sweden opposing a federalist direction to the EU, something which will be explored later in the paper. These oppositions give rise to the following research question: How is it that Sweden, generally considered and constantly described as one of the most EU-sceptical countries within the Union, is and since its accession has been one of the strongest advocates for further EU-enlargement? The answer to the research question is based on the assumption as depicted by the following and guiding hypothesis: the type of Swedish EU-scepticism displayed, combined with a positive attitude towards democracy and human rights development in Europe, is of such a kind that it does not hinder the wish to improve others situation by facilitating their accession to the European Union.

There has been relatively little research done as to what Swedes are like in general but one of the most cited sources on the topic is the Swedish ethnologist Åke Daun with his publication "Swedish Mentality". However, it was written over twenty years ago, in the year 1989 to be precise. That says something as to the general interest in analysing the Swedish psyche and it is not notably different with regard to Swedish actions in a EU setting. It is therefore an interesting task to investigate the reason for the Swedish EU-scepticism. During the course of this paper it will become clear what Swedish scepticism entails, how it can be explained and two alternative discourses on the subject will be offered, namely those of periphery and liminality. Furthermore, it will be shown that Sweden differs somewhat from main attitudes and views concerning the benefits of enlargement: Sweden is more willing and sees it as less of a problem to contribute financially to enlargement and emphasises the

¹⁰ 52,3% voted in favour and 46,8% voted against, displaying an historical highpoint in voter-turnout at 83,3%. Regeringskansliet, "Genomförda nationella folkomröstningar," The Swedish Government, <http://www.regeringen.se/sb/d/2467/a/13454> (accessed 5 May 2010).

¹¹ European Commission, *Eurobarometer 72* "National Report Sweden: Allmänna opinionen i Europeiska Unionen," European Commission, Brussels, Autumn 2009, 16. (accessed 2 May 2010).

¹² European Commission, *Eurobarometer 71* "Public Opinion in the European Union," Brussels, September 2009, 96 (accessed 10 May 2010).

importance of democracy and human rights to a greater extent than (some) other member states.

EU-scepticism: a Swedish case study

The previous section raised the question of EU-scepticism in view of its influence over Swedish attitudes and actions in an EU-setting with special and specific regard to the issue of integration, in particular enlargement. This section will explore a definition of 'EU-scepticism' so as to offer a concise idea of what is referred to.

The following definition of EU-scepticism¹³ may be taken as a lead: "An opposition to increasing the powers of the European Union".¹⁴ This is also the general definition used to pinpoint EU-scepticism. This can in turn encompass many different positions, from "those having doubts about the form that integrations is taking, to having doubts about the benefits [...] of further European integration, to hostility to the whole enterprise."¹⁵ Sweden is far from being the only country described as EU-sceptical. In fact, *Eurobarometer 71* points out that the most sceptical states at present are Latvia, the United Kingdom and Hungary.¹⁶ Sweden, however, is at the lower end when it comes to trusting the EU.¹⁷

Lee Miles, professor of political science, points out that it is important to differentiate between "scepticism about whether a country should be a part of the EU at all and other forms, where full membership is accepted and opposition centres on the growing powers of the Union."¹⁸ Along this line a clear distinction between EU-scepticism and federo-scepticism should be introduced: EU-scepticism can also be divided into two subcategories of "hard"¹⁹ and "soft"²⁰ and can imply anything from a hard core resistance of any kind of political and economical integration in Europe to a more contingent or qualified opposition.²¹ Federo-scepticism, as the term itself indicates, reflects opposition to the Union transforming

¹³ Some sources refer to this as Euro-scepticism, others to EU-scepticism. In order to make the argument more stringent and easier to follow the description "EU-scepticism" will be used, regardless of sources' indications.

¹⁴ Lee Miles, *Fusing with Europe?: Sweden in the European Union* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing Limited, 2005), 126-127.

¹⁵ Miles, *Fusing with Europe?: Sweden in the European Union*, 127.

¹⁶ European Commission, *Eurobarometer 71* "Public Opinion in the European Union", 91-92.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 123.

¹⁸ Miles, *Fusing with Europe?: Sweden in the European Union*, 127.

¹⁹ Complete rejection of the whole concept of political and economical integration in Europe and opposing to join the EU/to stay members of the EU.

²⁰ A matter of "contingent or qualified opposition to European integration" sub dividable into "policy EU scepticism" and national-interest EU-scepticism".

²¹ Miles, *Fusing with Europe?: Sweden in the European Union*, 128.

into a federal European state but “does not assume that all forms of further integration are unacceptable.”²²

Swedish EU-scepticism

The definition above is a starting point for further investigation into the spirit and content of Swedish EU-scepticism. This kind of scepticism, which includes the so-called federo-scepticism can, as Miles goes on to explain, be one of the leading reasons for the display of what is generally referred to as simply EU-scepticism.²³ It is important to keep this in mind for the continuation of this paper.

Sweden is, as already has been pointed out, generally regarded as an EU-sceptical country. Surveys such as the *Eurobarometer* have made that evident for numerous years, ever since Sweden’s accession to the EU in 1995.²⁴ But the issue of defining scepticism is more intricate than just labelling it as a certain attitude and expecting the country to act accordingly. The argument that Miles carries out is thought provoking and enlightening, namely that the notion of federo-scepticism is “the one most accurate when it comes to describing the domestic debates on European integration in Sweden”,²⁵ because its main focus is opposing the “definite goal of a federal Europe”.²⁶ As political science professor Topan writes, it was a long-standing fear of the Swedes, previous to the accession and indeed afterwards as well, to lose national sovereignty whilst becoming dominated by other countries. The far biggest fear of all was that “the EC would be a first step towards a federation” a fact that Sweden “strongly opposed”,²⁷ although it’s important to highlight that there does not exist a definite resistance against taking part – to some extent – in a supranational version of the Union. The condition for this is that there must be significant benefits for the Swedish citizens and these must be clearly discernible at all times.²⁸ Miles feels it is relevant to emphasize that the Swedish public debate, more than anything, is stressing that increased federalism would mean more political power given and centralized in Brussels.²⁹

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ European Commission, *Eurobarometer* 57.1 “EU på tröskeln till förändring – så tycker man i Sverige,” 10.

²⁵ Miles, *Fusing with Europe?: Sweden in the European Union*, 128.

²⁶ Ibid., 128-129.

²⁷ Angelina Topan, *The European Integration Process: A Historical and Comparative Institutional Analysis*, (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2001), 72.

²⁸ Miles, *Fusing with Europe?: Sweden in the European Union*, 129.

²⁹ Ibid.

Impact of neutrality

In order to comprehend on a deeper level why Sweden has acted (and to a certain extent still acts) accordingly towards and within the EU, it is important to draw attention to one of the dominant reasons: neutrality. More aspects could be integrated into this part, e.g. the influence of the Swedish “welfare state”³⁰ and dominance of the Socialist Party, but neutrality is hereby recognised as the most relevant one in the present context. The issue of periphery/liminality will be addressed in the next section.

Even though Sweden had established close ties with the EU ever since the 1970s by means of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) and other agreements, it took until the beginning of the 1990s before Sweden handed in its accession application.³¹ The official reason for the “delay” was that the Cold War, the division of Europe and the presence of “superpowers”, which made membership in the Union impossible due to Swedish neutrality.³² With the fall of the Soviet Union and thereby also the end of the Cold War, the scope of possibilities was completely restructured and the Swedish Prime Minister, Ingvar Carlsson, explained that the government had reached an “unanimous understanding that a Swedish membership from hence on was compatible with the demands of the neutrality policy”.³³

The strict Swedish non-alignment model³⁴ had dominated Swedish foreign policy for so many years that in a way it had become part of the national identity. The fact that the importance of neutrality had been publicly proclaimed during all this time had made an impact on people; it was seen by many as the reason why Sweden got through the Second World War without the injuries most other countries suffered and it also offered a kind of comfort during the Cold War. It was furthermore something that set Sweden apart, which made it “unique” in an international setting.³⁵ The fact that the Swedish political course was altered so radically, so quickly (no other country that applied for membership had ever

³⁰ Lars Trägårdh, “Sweden and the EU: Welfare state nationalism and the spectre of 'Europe,’” in *European Integration and National Identity: The Challenge of the Nordic States*, ed. Lene Hansen and Ole Wæve (New York: Routledge, 2002), 151.

³¹ Daniel Viklund, *Att förstå EU – Sverige och Europa* (Stockholm: Norstedts Juridik AB, 1997), 262-270.

³² *Ibid.*, 272-273.

³³ Per Ahlin, *Det heliga utanförskapet* (Stockholm: AB Timbro, 2000), 8.

³⁴ Daniel Silander and Charlotte Wallin, “Being a Swede in a Transforming European Setting,” in *The Changing Face of European Identity*, ed. Richard Robyn (New York: Routledge, 2005), 209.

³⁵ Ahlin, *Det heliga utanförskapet*, 9.

finalized the accession in such a short period of time³⁶) can certainly account for much of the strong scepticism, as displayed in the first years after the accession: in 1997 only 29% considered the membership to be a good thing whereas 44% deemed it negative. The idea of Sweden “losing” or at least to some extent diminishing some of its much valued and previously indispensable neutrality is sure to live on to influence the minds and moods of a, perhaps diminishing, part of the population still today.

Sweden and European integration with regard to enlargement

Defining ‘European Integration’

What truly characterizes an integrated international organisation is the establishment of a “supranational organisation”.³⁷ In the case of the EU this would refer to the act of member states having transferred some of their political power – policy decision-making – to a single body representing all member states. The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), launched in 1951, was just that: the first step in a supranational direction on the European stage.³⁸ The initial strive, which marks the creation of the ECSC, was to gain stability and peace in the area. This development soon evolved to imply an integration of encompassing economic, social and political aspects, which are viewed as key integration areas today.³⁹

Enlargement is not a synonym for “integration” but it has always been a part of the EU’s profound strive and goal. Fraser Cameron, a well-known policy analyst, stresses that the decision to enlarge the Union further, and thereby include many of the eastern countries, was necessary in order to “finally bring the division of Europe to an end.”⁴⁰ This paper will not go into the existing discussions concerning “widening” and “deepening” but simply note that the practice in the EU seems to suggest that they go – more or less – hand in hand.⁴¹

Enlargement in the integration process is hereby proposed to be seen as a basic foundation, a basis and a means by which outspoken strives can be accomplished and attained. It could furthermore be described as a logical development since “Europe sees the EU as the core of

³⁶ Viklund, *Att förstå EU – Sverige och Europa*, 271.

³⁷ Martin Dedman, *The Origins and Development of the European Union, 1945-95: A History of European Integration* (London: Routledge, 1996), 7.

³⁸ Dedman, *The Origins and Development of the European Union*, 7.

³⁹ Fraser Cameron, *The Future of Europe: Integration and Enlargement* (New York: Routledge, 2005), ix.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Lisbeth Aggestam, “The European Union at the Crossroads,” in *The Enlargement of the European Union: Issues and Strategies*, ed. Victoria Curzon Price, Alice Landau and Richard Whitman (New York: Routledge, 1999), 93.

the idea of the good life”,⁴² a circumstance which will ensure a never-ending interest from further states to enter the Union in the coming years. Jochen Hille describes this development as “a strengthening of the core (Kerneuropa) [which] will attract the surrounding peripheries more and more.”⁴³

Periphery and/or liminality playing a role?

As seen above the concept of periphery (and core) is often used when talking of integration and enlargement aspects in the EU. How then does this idea influence actions and attitudes? The actual geographical borders of Europe might not – the accession of Turkey would probably change this viewpoint – be changing but the accession of ever more countries into the European Union certainly has rocked what might be called “perceived boundaries”. The six member states that set out on the endeavour to create a community, the present “core”, sat the Union firmly down in the middle of the European continent. This, however, was not always the case. Going back in history, the Roman Empire and Greece were in an absolute power position, hence the core of Europe was located in the Mediterranean area.⁴⁴ Depending on the chosen perspective the perceived border can be made to “move” without effort also in the present time.

In the case of Sweden there are without a doubt conflicting perspectives. The European objectivity tells us that “Northern Europe could easily define itself as a core of Europe – or at least as the northern part of the core in view of economic potential, religious belonging and human rights policies”.⁴⁵ However, as many scholars point out, “the North defines itself as a periphery”,⁴⁶ despite the apparent acknowledgements of it belonging to a European core in all essentials, perhaps excluding the geographical aspect. Uffe Østergaard illustrates the northern sentiment by pointing out that even though Sweden (and the other Nordic countries) undoubtedly belongs to the Baltic area and Northern Europe, in both a geographical and geopolitical sense, this has been overseen in the creation of their national identities.⁴⁷ Instead,

⁴² Jochen Hille, “The Northern Antipode to European Integration,” in *Encountering the North: Cultural Geography, International Relations and Northern Landscapes*, ed. Frank Moeller and Samu Pehkonen (Aldershot: Ashgate publishing Limited, 2003), 176.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Bo Stråth and Mikael af Malmberg, *The Meaning of Europe: Variety and Contention within and among Nations* (Oxford: Oxford International Publishers Ltd, 2002), 125.

⁴⁵ Hille, “The Northern Antipode to European Integration” in *Encountering the North*, 176.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Østergaard, “Nordic Identity between 'Norden' and Europe,” in *European Peripheries in Interaction: the*

most Scandinavians, regardless of political beliefs, think and perceive “‘Nordic’ political culture, social structure and mentality as fundamentally different from that of the rest of Europe.”⁴⁸ The northerners, as Østergaard further describes, have an identity set somewhere between “Norden” and Europe which can be described as a mental construct just as much as it is an actual historical region.

In academia “Norden” is often depicted and described by the word “periphery”. However, that approach and discourse is limited; it sets (in this case) Sweden at the outskirts without allowing much space for a change in position. However, as examples, such as enlargement issues or the climate debate, show, this is not always the case. Hence, however helpful the concept might be in certain aspects, such as helping to look for similarities with other peripheral regions/actors within Europe/the EU, it is too limited for what is to be described here: an in-betweenness, both mentally and in terms of action and real participation. This state is best described by the concept of liminality: a notion that aids in avoiding the somewhat one-sided description of Sweden as a ‘peripheral member state’. In short liminality can be said to be a state of in-between,⁴⁹ a blurring of boundaries, or as Turner is quoted to put it “an in betweenness”,⁵⁰ an “ambiguous, neither here nor there, betwixt and between all fixed points of classification”.⁵¹

This concept of in-between, or neither here nor there, is beneficial since it is a more all-encompassing way of describing Sweden’s position within the European Union. We have seen that the concept of Sweden as a peripheral actor in geographical, social and economic terms⁵² does not always reflect the reality. Sweden is sometimes in the middle of action, for example, during the meticulously outlined Swedish Presidencies when a number of core issues were discussed, and also in the periphery, for instance, when it comes to the EMU.

These concepts and perceptions are highly relevant to the issue of integration/enlargement. When reading Hille for instance, one stumbles across statements such as: “in discussions about the idea of northerness it tends to be an antipode to European integration, or at least incompatible to it,”⁵³ a sentiment often found in other, related research. It is logical to

Nordic Countries and the Iberian Peninsula, ed. Luis Beltrán, Javier Maestro and Liisa Salo-Lee (Puertollano: Ediciones Puertollano S.L, 2002), 154.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 151.

⁴⁹ Jon McKenzie, “The Liminal Norm,” in *The Performance Studies Reader*, ed. Henry Bial, (London: Routledge, 2004), 27.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Halle Ghorashi, *Ways to Survive, Battles to Win: Iranian Women Exiles in the Netherlands and the United States* (New York: Nova Science Publishers, 2003), 125.

⁵² Østergaard, “Nordic Identity between 'Norden' and Europe” in *European Peripheries in Interaction*, 154.

⁵³ Hille, “The Northern Antipode to European integration,” in *Encountering the North*, 177.

perceive a mental distancing as an impediment to integration; if one is so happily set in one's own periphery, how can there exist a wish for further integration? Hille states though that it is important to keep in mind that the antipode, as described, is not a "natural" result but in part "a product of the EU debate itself".⁵⁴

The Swedish official stand

Government policies is the best source in order to distinguish an official Swedish standpoint on EU integration in the form of enlargement. In the 1994 statement of government policies – the year of the public referendum – the process of integration was addressed. It confirms the wish to enter the European Union on 1 January 1995, as a means of influencing the important steps that are to be taken by the Union in the coming years, emphasising that "a closer association is needed between the European peoples" and "a further enlargement of the EU is highly desirable".⁵⁵ It goes on to emphasize the importance of "encompassing Central- and Eastern Europe in the economic co-operation".⁵⁶

This positive attitude and approach is repeated continuously, offering evident proof of the Swedish commitment, regardless of the political leadership of the country. The following statements illustrate this further: "Sweden's role in Europe [is] to democratize and expand the European collaboration",⁵⁷ "to be one of the driving forces when it comes to further enlargement of the EU",⁵⁸ and "with the enlargement of the EU and integration of Russia into the European collaboration we are seizing our historical opportunity to finally stop the European division into east and west. The government will actively work to ensure the enlargement is carried out".⁵⁹ The statement by the – at that time – newly elected Swedish government in 2006 illuminates the intentions extremely clearly: "the enlargement is one of the EU's greatest successes. The government will act as a driving force for the continued enlargement process".⁶⁰

The 2009 statement of government policies was more elaborate than usual; the Swedish EU Presidency presumably being the reason. It clearly mapped out the government's

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ The Swedish Government, "Statement of Government Policies 1994," 7 (accessed 8 April 2010)

⁵⁶ Ibid., 8.

⁵⁷ The Swedish Government, "Statement of Government Policies 1995," 2 (accessed 8 April 2010).

⁵⁸ The Swedish Government, "Statement of Government Policies 1997," 1 (accessed 9 April 2010).

⁵⁹ The Swedish Government, "Statement of Government Policies 2001," 8 (accessed 9 April 2010).

⁶⁰ The Swedish Government, "Statement of Government Policies 2006," 5 (accessed 11 April 2010).

intentions by intertwining the concept of “the core” EU (as opposed to previous periphery/liminality) with Sweden, saying that “this fall of 2009 Sweden is a part of the true core of Europe”.⁶¹ A whole section was dedicated to Sweden’s role in the EU and that the guiding principles as always and forever are to be democracy and human rights. Addressing the issue of further enlargement, it was underlined that Sweden has “always pointed out the many benefits this brings and will continue to pursue this course, even now as it is faced with so many challenges.” Worth pointing out in the statement is that Sweden, during the time of the Presidency, “is intent on seeing the Lisbon Treaty through, as we hope it will be the basis of a better and more efficient framework for the work of the EU in the future,”⁶² an ambition that contradicts the notion of Swedish EU-scepticism being a “problematic Member State”⁶³ in the sense of hindering evolution within the Union.

One of the most evident proofs of Sweden’s dedication to enlargement at this point is the issue of Turkey. In the EU as a whole, scepticism is steadily increasing about allowing Turkey to enter the Union at some point. Sweden has however, since the beginning advocated the advantages of the possible accession: promotion of human rights and democracy in Turkey. These goals were also the reason why, in the spring of 2010, Sweden increased the financial support concerning the Turkish accession procedure. “A strategy for development co-operation” it is called and stretches from 2010-2013. This step was described by the President of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) with the following motivation: “We view ourselves as a small actor on this stage but at the same time as an important complement to others. The focus of this strategy is the necessary and desired reforms that are in the making”.⁶⁴

The Swedish Foreign Minister, Carl Bildt, has for years furthermore openly underlined the importance of the Union not turning its back on Turkey for the sake of continued progress. In a speech in 2007 he made clear the government’s view and opinion towards Turkey and enlargement:

What is needed is a profound strengthening of the soft power of Europe. A critical part of the soft power of Europe lies in the continued process of enlargement. It should be crystal clear that we have a profound strategic interest in the eventual membership of Turkey in the European Union. [It] would have a decisively positive impact on the prospects for stability in the entire region of the

⁶¹ The Swedish Government, “Statement of Government Policies 2009,” 15 (accessed 12 April 2010).

⁶² *Ibid.*, 16.

⁶³ Miles, “Sweden in the European Union: Changing Expectations?” 303.

⁶⁴ Regeringskansliet, “Sverige stärker stödet till Turkiets EU-anslutningsprocess,” *Nyhetsartiklar* 2010, <http://www.sweden.gov.se/sb/d/12669/a/142178> (accessed 5 May 2010).

Eastern Mediterranean and the Black Sea. But our commitment must of course extend beyond the present processes in south-eastern Europe. In the decades ahead, I thus see a European Union that continues to enlarge. And thus would be better at securing the peace and promoting the prosperity of all its nations and citizens. We might go from the approximately 500 million citizens today to the approximately 600 million citizens of tomorrow - or perhaps to 650 million citizens.⁶⁵

Analysis

Sweden scores high in many international studies when it comes to domestic integration of immigrants, a fact that most likely contributes to the positive attitude and approach to integration also on the EU level. Being ranked as number one in the Migrant Integration Policy Index when it comes to “doing the most to help migrants settle” the study goes on to say that out of 25 EU member states “only Sweden scored highly enough to be classed as a nation entirely favourable to promoting integration.”⁶⁶

To discern further aspects of the Swedish characteristics than those already addressed here, the recent *Flash Eurobarometer 257* “Views on European Union Enlargement” is a good source in order to answer this paper’s research question: how is Swedish EU-scepticism compatible with a pro-enlargement attitude? It clearly states that the key issues for Sweden (and Denmark) are “freedom and democratic values.”⁶⁷ Granted, all states listed “freedom and democratic values” as their key issues, but Sweden and Denmark stand out as the strongest advocates of these views. However, what is interesting is the following. When the question “if increased spread of democratic values and [...] protection of human rights across Europe has been achieved through enlargement?” is posted, Sweden is just barely above the EU15 average. Denmark on the other hand, is in the top three most positive responses.⁶⁸ The conclusion must be that, since Swedish attitude is still favouring enlargement, the somewhat slow progress is not viewed as a failure. It is the case that desired levels of democracy and human rights have not yet been achieved, but the evolution is interpreted as being steps in the right direction, towards a more democratic and human rights influenced Europe. The

⁶⁵ Carl Bildt, “The Opening Ceremony Speech” (speech given at the College of Europe, Natolin, Warsaw, Poland, 12 November 2007), http://coleurope.eu/file/content/news/Speeches/20071112_Bildt_speech.pdf, 5-7 (accessed 10 May 2010).

⁶⁶ BBC News Europe, “Sweden Top for Welcoming Migrants,” <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/7043878.stm#EUROPEMAP>. (accessed 11 May 2010).

⁶⁷ European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 257* “Views on European Union Enlargement,” European Commission, Brussels, February 2009, 6 (accessed 15 April 2010).

⁶⁸ European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 257* “Views on European Union Enlargement”, 24.

perception seems to be that levels of democracy and the promotion of human rights can only be satisfyingly reached if more countries are to accede to the EU. By doing so they would be adapting to standards set within the Union, as the case of Sweden's argument for the Turkish accession lays bare.

The *Flash Barometer* survey goes further into the issue regarding the perception of member and candidate states of the "fall of the Iron Curtain". Swedes felt that the change brought new opportunities to all generations (as opposed to only the younger generation) and was the strongest opponent to the statement that "these changes were only important for the Central and Eastern Europeans"; almost 60% of Swedes felt that it was important for Europeans in general. Furthermore only 6% (again the lowest percentage) thought the situation before 1989 was better than today's.⁶⁹ These statements make clear the Swedish perception of the changes that took place; that the fall of previous barriers was beneficial to all of Europe as it tore down impediments that had been in place for decades, gave way to new possibilities to all and allowed for positive changes. As Bildt underlined (see above), the EU has a moral obligation to give the possibilities of membership to more countries and by doing so it will enable the growth of democracy, as well as keeping stability and promoting peace. According to the minister these are the highest goals of the EU.

Concerning enlargement after the 2004-2007 enlargement experiences, Sweden distinguishes itself as most positive (or least negative) on three particular accounts: "the feeling of insecurity in Europe has increased" (21% yes, 69% no), "it has lowered social standards in Europe" (18% yes, 68% no) and "it has contributed to job losses in our country" (33% yes, 58% no).⁷⁰ It would be easy to explain these statements by arguing that Sweden simply does not care enough to oppose enlargement since it is happy and "safe" in its geographical periphery, and indeed also at times mental periphery. Being "tucked away" all the way up in the north, Sweden might not be reaping some of the "less positive" effects of enlargement and is therefore more prone to agreeing to it. However, one of the effects of enlargement is that the EU keeps incorporating countries that become net benefactors as opposed to net contributors to the EU-budget. As it happens, Sweden is one of the latter and is therefore in a very real way, at least financially, negatively affected by each accession.

The financial aspect is important to bring up in this context: there are many who overwhelmingly characterize the enlargement by the statement: "it has led to Western

⁶⁹ Ibid., 14-19.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 32-35.

European countries making massive financial transfers to help these countries to modernize.” Luxemburg (86%), Germany (84%) and Austria (83%) are the ones most prone to this view whereas Sweden (63%) is at the lower end of respondents,⁷¹ and the lowest respondent of all net contributors. It is vital to bear in mind that Sweden is not just one of the net contributors, but also one of the largest. For example: in 2006 Sweden paid the second highest amount in view of what it also received in return,⁷² in 2007 it was the third highest contributor.⁷³ Undoubtedly Sweden spends more money (percentage wise) than most other countries, indeed more so than Luxemburg who feels the financial aspect most acutely of all.⁷⁴ In view of Sweden’s EU-scepticism it is logically surprising to find the largest willingness to contribute financially, and especially to that extent, to the EU undertakings. The reason for Sweden’s high position among the net payers is that it receives relatively little agricultural and regional support, again something that might provoke a negative reaction. As indicated by the *Flash Eurobarometer* statistics this however does not seem to affect the Swedish sentiment that enlargement, and with it – as proclaimed by the statement of government policies – the promotion of democracy and human rights in an ever growing number of countries, is worth paying for.

The research question of this paper was to find out how Sweden, despite EU-scepticism, can be in support of further EU-enlargement even though this implies a somewhat direct opposition to some of the guiding Swedish principles. The answer advanced is that the type of Swedish EU-scepticism displayed combined with a positive attitude towards democracy and human rights development in Europe, is of such a kind that it does not hinder the wish to improve the situation of others by facilitating their accession to the European Union.

Conclusions and further research

There is an EU-scepticism present in Sweden, as shown by examples in the first section, and it is predominantly of a so-called federo-sceptic character. This position implies opposing a

⁷¹ European Commission, *Flash Eurobarometer 257* “Views on European Union Enlargement”, 26.

⁷² Tidningarnas Telegrambyrå (TT), “Sverige näst störst nettobetalare,” *Dagens Nyheter*, 24 September 2007, First page news, Online Edition, <http://www.dn.se/nyheter/politik/sverige-nast-storst-nettobetalare-1.574019> (accessed 10 May 2010).

⁷³ Sveriges Television (SVT), “Sverige stor nettobetalare till EU,” SVT online, 14 May 2010, News Archive, http://svt.se/2.81000/1.1184273/sverige_stor_net_tobetalare_till_eu&lid=aldreNyheter_1026201&lpos=rubrik184273 (accessed 10 May 2010).

⁷⁴ Folketinget EU-Oplysningen, “Which Countries are Net Contributors to the EU-budget?” The Danish Government, http://www.eu-oplysningen.dk/euo_en/spsv/all/79/ (accessed 12 May 2010).

fixed goal of a federalist Europe but not necessarily affecting the wish to actually take part in a supranational version of the EU. That the EU-scepticism has actual effects can be linked to facts such as that Sweden still, 15 years after the accession, chooses to stand outside the EMU, which also is an evident example of a peripheral attitude. Liminality, however, is what enables Sweden to be a combination of two extremes: distant and peripheral in some aspects, engaged and active in others. Enlargement is one of the “other” aspects. The fact that enlargement contributes to an increased weight of the EU in international settings is not enough to defer Sweden – even though it very likely might be taking the EU towards a federalist direction and potentially could make the issue of Swedish neutrality delicate. The reasons for the overall very positive Swedish attitude toward the EU, as crystallized throughout this paper, in the official opinions as stated and voiced, as well as the unofficial ones, come down to the issue of promoting democracy and human rights, no matter the financial costs for instance.

The hypothesis stated at the beginning of the paper has been confirmed. What could furthermore be explored is to what extent the statement could be amended by additional aspects. One that has not been addressed in the course of this paper is economical benefits, derived from increased trade with new member states, for example, as incentive to a pro-enlargement attitude. In the 2004-2007 enlargement, the Baltic States entered the EU, states with which Sweden has close historical ties and at present strong economical interests through numerous banks and companies being settled there.⁷⁵

This could be one aspect of further research. Another could originate from recent developments, as depicted in the *Eurobarometer 72*, which suggests that some assumptions and formed opinions about the EU might not be as fixed as generally assumed. This barometer namely shows that Swedes in general are not that much more EU-sceptical than the European average.⁷⁶ The percentage of Swedes who regard membership favourably has in fact steadily increased since the country’s accession. In 1995 a mere 37% considered it a good thing to be a part of the EU community, a number that dropped in the following years to reach an all-time low in 1997 with 29%. The development since then has, however, been a steady rise, reaching the figure of 57% in 2009.⁷⁷ It is true that more Swedes are sceptical and

⁷⁵ Lars Nyberg, “Östersjöområdet i skuggan av den finansiella krisen” (speech given by the vice governor of the Swedish Central Bank at Intervalor och Baltic Property Trust, Stockholm, Sweden, 9 September 2009). <http://www.riksbank.se/templates/Page.aspx?id=32678> (accessed 14 May 2010).

⁷⁶ European Commission, *Eurobarometer 72* “National Report Sweden”, 16.

⁷⁷ European Commission, *Eurobarometer 57.1* “National Standard Report: EU på tröskeln till förändring – så tycker man i Sverige”, 10.

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fewer positive about the EU than the European average⁷⁸ but the differences are no longer that dramatic. The effect this might have on, in particular, the displayed federo-scepticism and its consequences would be most interesting to look at in future research.

⁷⁸ European Commission, *Eurobarometer 72* “National Report Sweden”, 16.

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