Swedish Political Parties and their Stance on Business and Human Rights

Maurice Ian Wee
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Abstract: The call for businesses to act more responsibly has been ever increasing especially with the development of recent soft laws, policies and frameworks as evident with the United Nations Guiding Principles leading to the development of the national action plan for business and human rights in Sweden. However, as the concept of business and human rights is still relatively new, political parties in Sweden have yet to take a stance in their political manifesto regarding the issue and its subsequent implementation. This could have far reaching implications for business regulation in Sweden and the Swedish stance in foreign policy especially within the European Union and the United Nations. Through analysis of manifestos and conducting structured interviews with political parties currently having a representation in the Riksdag (Swedish Parliament) the data is analysed and compared against theoretical perspectives on human rights and economic globalisation. The results, correlations and its significance to political ideology, business regulation and policy implementation are examined. Findings reveal that political ideology and alliance formation dictates a party’s perspectives on human rights and economic globalisation to varying degrees. As such, Swedish political parties’ stance on business and human rights highly depend on the level of regulation imposed on businesses, their theoretical conception on human rights and their views on economic globalisation.

Keywords: Business, Human Rights, United Nations Guiding Principles, Political Parties, Swedish Elections, Sustainable Development

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Summary: The need for businesses to be more responsible socially in their operations has been increasing globally leading to the development of legislation and frameworks on business and human rights. As the concept of business and human rights is still new, political parties in Sweden have yet to express their position on it. This can be problematic especially for voters who are concerned with corporate accountability. This uncertainty also extends to businesses operations and for stances in foreign policy on corporate accountability especially in regards to international organisations. By analysing political parties’ manifestos and conducting structured interviews with political parties that are currently in the Swedish parliament, the paper hopes to ascertain their stance based on theoretical perspectives on human rights and economic globalisation. Findings are looked at to determine if they have an effect on businesses, political ideology, policy implementation and political strategies. Findings reveal that political ideology and alliance formation dictates a party’s perspectives on human rights and economic globalisation to varying degrees. As such, Swedish political parties’ stance on business and human rights highly depend on the level of regulation imposed on businesses, their theoretical conception on human rights and their views on economic globalisation

Keywords: Business, Human Rights, United Nations Guiding Principles, Political Parties, Swedish Elections, Sustainable Development

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1. Introduction

1.1. The state of business and human rights in Sweden

“I am very pleased that Sweden is the sixth country in the world to adopt a national action plan for business and human rights. The plan is a step towards supporting Swedish businesses in their corporate social responsibility efforts in Sweden and abroad.”

(Damberg, 2015)

-Swedish Minister for Enterprise and Innovation-

Perhaps some words that come to mind when picturing human rights and large corporations in this age would include sweatshops, conflict minerals, child labour, discrimination, migrant workers, forced displacements and environmental degradation. Against this background, international instruments such as the United Nations Guiding Principles for business and human rights (UNGP) were adopted creating a framework for business and state operations in the human rights sphere (United Nations, 2011). Since the introduction of the UNGP, business and human rights have been paramount in establishing a framework for corporate accountability implementing international norms and standards such as the United Nations Global Compact and the Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development, OECD guidelines on multinational enterprises particularly on business impacts abroad. Negotiations are also underway for a proposed binding treaty on transnational corporations at the United Nations level which could potentially devise stricter regulations on businesses worldwide (United Nations Human Rights Council, 2014). The trend it seems, calls out for more responsible business conduct through regulation and other state actions.

With Sweden viewing itself as a global leader in sustainability (Regeringskansliet, 2017a), the government has published its national action plan on business and human rights becoming the sixth country worldwide to commit to implementing the UNGP nationally (Sweden, 2015). The document focuses in one of its three pillars on legislation, regulation, and state mechanisms to guide and compel businesses to comply with the law and respect human rights throughout their operations especially on business impacts beyond Swedish borders. However, the Swedish national action plan on business and human rights have been criticised for missing specific timeframes, goals and implementing bodies in addition to the failure to conduct a National Baseline Assessment to identify gaps and conflicting policies (ICAR and ECCJ, 2017). There is also evidence that there is a lack of Swedish legislation pertaining to human rights due diligence for businesses operating abroad to begin with (Aronsson, 2016). Eventually, some of the criticism was addressed after the government published a follow up report highlighting new legislation regarding business and human rights together with other policies implemented in public procurement, foreign policy and finally the commissioning of a national baseline assessment (Regeringskansliet, 2017b). However, much more must be done and analysed. Legislation concerning corporations operating transnationally has proven to be complex due in part to the complex nature of global value chains themselves exacerbated by regional differences in various business operations (Ruggie, 2015; Mares, 2017). The failed UN negotiations on codes of conduct for transnational corporation (1973-2003) are a testament to the complexity of devising a business and human rights legal framework at a global scale. The vagueness of the Swedish national action plan coupled with a relatively new UNGP soft law framework leaves much room not only for legislation on business and human rights in Sweden but also for discussion on how such a legislation will affect businesses, trade, civil society and most importantly those affected by human rights violations.
1.2. Significance of political parties in Sweden

Political parties are paramount especially in parliamentary democracies such as Sweden. The relationship of power from citizens, to representatives, to a cabinet, to a Prime Minister and further to line ministers requires a chain in delegation whereby problems may occur along those relationships (Bäck and Erlingsson, 2016). Political parties that are centralised, cohesive and policy oriented have a role in screening proposed parliamentarians and cabinet ministers, upholding the chain in delegation in parliamentary democracies (Müller, 2000). The importance of political parties in Sweden is further exacerbated by the fact that trust in political parties is on the rise in Sweden. Trust in Swedish politicians today has increased to the same level of trust in the 1960s and 1970s and a poll conducted revealed that Swedes prefer the representative model of democracy to the participatory model (Erlingsson, Kölln and Öhberg, 2016). The preferences for a representative model of democracy in Sweden indicate that citizens are comfortable with letting the party system decide on the line-up of the cabinet, Prime Minister and other similar public affairs.

Besides understanding the role of political parties in Sweden, it is also similarly crucial to understand the historical underpinnings of Swedish political parties. In the past, Sweden has been typical of the five-party ‘Scandinavian party system model’ which represented the social classes of the time basically up until 1988 (Arter, 1999). These ideologies include agrarianism, communism, conservatism, social democrats and liberalism which parties are now today named centerpartiet, vänsterpartiet, moderaterna, Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, and liberalerna respectively. Although Sweden has always been seen as a stable platform for political representation, recent changes has affected the conditions for political representation in Sweden increasing the five party system in the Riksdag to an eight party system in 2010 (Esaiasson and Wängnerud, 2016). Ever since 1988, new political parties have been present in parliament representing issues that have come under the spotlight. This included the greens or Miljöpartiet de Gröna, representing environmental issues, Christian democrats or Kristdemokraterna, representing conservative family points and New Democracy or Ny Demokrati, a right-wing, populist, economic conservative party that saw a brief rise and fall but is now replaced by the Swedish democrats or Sverige demokraterna on cultural and immigration issues (Aylott, 2016). As more issues gets the spotlight, more political parties have formed offering a certain perspective to the issue. The lines are now blurred from a traditional and informal bloc system whereby parties represented a left versus right or a bourgeois versus proletarian, to a more fluid alliance between political parties delivering pluralism in parliament. Thus, this necessitates the urgent need to understand what each political party is saying based not only on the diversity of political parties but also the complex alliances that they may form.

1.3. The politics of business and human rights in Sweden

Swedish political parties with representation in the parliament or Riksdag have yet to capitalise on the business and human rights as a magnifying glass for the current socio-economic order and to take position on the gaps in legislation. The new UNGP framework and the recent Swedish national action plan also contributes to parties’ not touching on the issue in their manifesto or have resisted specifics in their actions. This comes at a paramount time considering the national elections that will take place in 2018. Knowing political parties and their stances could bring about further analysis on the significance and consequences of such a standpoint. The need to identify stances is complicated by the fact that political parties are currently a fluid flow of alliances wherein member parties might have different and insufficiently articulated views on such a complex issue as transnational corporations operating on the globalised economic stage. Specifically, since a stance on business and human rights has potentially far reaching consequences towards businesses, consumers and foreign policy particularly in the European Union, United Nations and for further development of other frameworks or instruments. The need to understand the politics of business and human rights is aptly summarised by the quote below:
“The [human rights] law is important, but understanding human rights requires us to understand its politics”

(Freeman, 2017)

1.4. Aims and objectives
To address the gaps identified, the research seeks to identify Swedish political parties’ stance on business and human rights and to analyse the implications of such a stance. To achieve this, the research will:

- Interview and analyse specific party spokesperson and party manifesto respectively on business and human rights and determine stance thorough consolidated data
- Analyse the implications of party stance towards national and foreign policy particularly on stakeholders and instrument development
- Identify implications towards Swedish political processes

2. Measuring political stances
Placing political parties along a policy dimension has typically been conducted using four main approaches namely by conducting expert surveys, opinion polls, roll-call analysis and manifesto analysis (Dinas and Gemenis, 2010). Each method carries its own strengths and weakness. An opinion poll for instance is suitable to gather public opinion on an established and well known issue such as tax expenditures (Haselswerdt and Bartels, 2015) however the business and human rights sphere is niche, relatively new and not lauded by political parties in Sweden. The roll-call vote analysis is also discounted, as it is more suitable for the American legislative system of the congressional roll—call data.

A manifesto analysis is a textual approach in the form of documents that declare a party’s stance on various issues and is a more concrete way of analysing a political party’s stance. Particularly because a party’s manifesto is a statement of a party’s philosophy and identity, there can be disagreements within the party itself and thus could serve as a form of advertisement whereby policies stated are not adhered to at the end (Ray, 2007). Expert surveys address these gaps by employing experts to monitor a party’s stance traditionally on the left-right political dimension based on a number of points (Bakker et al., 2015). However, as this particular method relies solely on experts, it is prone to bias responses and data being affected by the author’s own ideology (Curini, 2010).

To counteract the drawbacks of these approaches, scholars have proposed to combine methods by means of triangulation instead of only selecting a single method of data procurement (Marks et al., 2007; Marks, 2007). A combination of a manifesto analysis and using expert surveys would reduce errors and biases caused by shortcomings offered by both approaches.

2.1. Dimensions of human rights
A widespread problem particularly noted in human rights research performed by scholars indicated that human rights is often taken as given (Coomans, Grünfeld and Kamminga, 2010). In that, it is not acknowledged that protections of human rights are often through laws and treaties based on state deliberation considering compromises and negotiations. As such, it would be improper to place political parties just on a scale of agree or disagree on a multidimensional issue such as human rights, and particularly in relation to business and human rights where the responsibilities and roles of
companies are still being debated and defined. To counteract assessing business and human rights in an overly narrow scale of vision, political parties will be placed in various schools of thought. Current literature gives credence to four schools of thought on human rights namely; the natural school, deliberative school, the protest school and lastly the discourse school (Dembour, 2010). The schools of thought proposed by Dembour is highly relevant as it not restricted to scholarly thinking and is based on two axes namely; a foundation in human rights and liberalism. The following four subsections are an elaboration of each school of thought as proposed by Dembour (2006).

The natural school
Overall, the natural school believe that human rights are a given and that they are universal, and a form of entitlement accorded to every human being. Natural scholars are highly favourable of human rights law and see international human rights law as a progress ever since its inception in 1948 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Natural scholars are the orthodox thinkers of human rights and currently represent mainstream the thinking of human rights. As such, a majority of organisations, individuals and states adopt the natural school of thought. Natural scholars are also seen as liberal in their stance. The embodiment of human rights in law is the main aim of natural scholars even if it may exist in several forms. Philosophers such as Immanuel Kant are typical inspiration of natural thinkers.

The protest school
Protest thinkers of human rights believe that human rights must be fought for and can only be attained through claims and aspirations for human rights. They differ from other schools in that they do not believe in the universality of human rights as human rights are for those who suffer from such violations as opposed to human rights benefitting the bourgeoisie. Protest thinkers have a distrust for human rights law and do not see that human rights have progressed since the 1948 declaration. This actual distrust stems from the fact that protest scholars believe that law corrupts the ideas of human rights. As a religious metaphor, protest thinkers can be seen as evangelist. Protest scholars tend to also stay clear from liberal ideas. Protest scholars can be said to seek inspiration from the works of philosophers such as Emmanuel Levinas.

The deliberative school
Deliberative thinkers can only conceive of human rights through law. Law is their only mode of existence for human rights and a manifestation of human rights in any other form is invalid. Deliberative thinkers do not believe in human rights as a faith in contrast with protest and natural thinkers. Deliberative scholars are different in that they see human rights law as solely for running society and keeping a level playing ground for all. In short human rights deliberative thinkers are something that is agreed upon. They can be compared metaphorically as atheist in their approach to human rights thinking. Just like natural scholars they are seen as liberals in their ideals. Jürgen Habermas is a philosopher that is closely associated to this school of thought with his theory of pragmatism.

The discourse school
Discourse thinkers are sometimes compared to nihilist in that they reject the contemporary idea of human rights and because of this do not feature very prominently compared to the rest. They believe that human rights are only talked about and although should be for those who suffer from human rights violations, often betrays them. They share the same view as protest thinkers in that human rights law has not seen progress. This similarity also extends to their non-liberal stance. Although they acknowledge that human rights law exists they see that these laws have little to no effect or have varying implications. While protest scholars believe in human rights, discourse scholars do not view human rights as a faith. Discourse scholars are essentially doubtful surrounding the hype that human rights instill and feel that this hype can inhibit other emancipatory discourses. Jacques Derrida is a
philosopher that can be associated with this school of thought with his use of the philosophical term ‘deconstruction’.

2.2. The role of economic globalisation and its spectrum
To investigate a business and human rights issue just on the basis of a human rights perspective is one-sided. In the business and human rights sphere, economic globalisation has been paramount in influencing how businesses operate. The United Nations Special Representative for business and human rights in fact identifies globalisation as a contributing factor in today’s business and human rights plight due to the governance gaps created in economic management and society’s capacity for resilience (Ruggie, 2008). An integrated global economy has also been noted in numerous cases of cultural appropriation and intellectual property disputes involving businesses that has had ramifications on human rights (Irr, 2016). Traditionally, economic globalisation’s impacts on business and human rights has been traditionally seen to only impact social rights such as labour law and employment especially in regard to trade (Perulli, 2007). However, it can be argued that economic globalisation impacts the whole spectrum of human rights. Many scholars have demonstrated and proven that economic globalisation has had an effect on a multitude of facets of human rights including cultures, minorities, poverty, access to health and more (Koen and Isa, 2005; Anderson, 2005; De Schutter, 2006). Furthermore the role of the economic globalisation cannot be ignored especially in the political sphere. As one scholarly article on economic globalisation asserts, politicians and business people behave and think according to cultural traditions and values within a state, upon which legislation by political authorities dictate how business transactions occur (Kelly and Prokhovnik, 2004). As globalisation is an ambiguous term, schools of thought on globalisation are grouped herein into globalists, inter-nationalists and transformationalists (Cochrane and Pain, 2004). This will be complemented by the economic globalisation perspective of Kelly and Prokhovnik (2004).

Globalists on economic globalisation
According to globalist thinkers, globalisation is an inevitable end point whose effects are tangible and cannot be resisted. The effects of globalisation are also complex and there are several interrelated drivers for change happening today. Globalists view the world as a web of interconnected systems that events can cause a ripple effect. Globalists can exist either as optimists whereby globalisation is a golden opportunity of change or be pessimists in that globalisation invites more downsides in diversity and increase homogeneity. From an economic standpoint, this can mean an increase in global trade and an increase in economic networks and interactions driven by labour mobility, technological advances, communication and financial flows. Globalist believes that globalisation has a huge impact on political, cultural and economic processes that occur locally and these changes are inevitable. Positive globalist view that globalisation benefits the majority in the long term while pessimist see it as a threat to a range of people including women, unskilled workers in the North and the poor in the global South.

Transformationalists on economic globalisation
Transformationalists however, principally believe in globalisation but challenge the significance of it. From an economic standpoint, they characterise this from several points. Firstly, transformationalist believe that economic factors shape political and cultural landscapes but do not determine them and that governments and states still have the power to impact global trading patterns and can work together to exercise control over global economic institutions and corporations. This is further exemplified in regional economic trade and groupings such as the European Union, which is seen by transformationalist as a regional grouping of states. Transformationalists also believe that an understanding of economic pressures and the way states react to this is paramount in framing the global economy. Transformationalist cite several evidence of states regulating their economy from the adverse effects of economic globalisation. The Asian financial crisis and the regulation of Asian
economies as shown by Park (2017), reveal that states still have a control over their financial processes and is an example often cited by transformationalist.

*Inter-nationalists on economic globalisation*

Internationalists can be characterised in contrast with globalists, as they believe that globalisation is not a new phase and has been highly exaggerated. Globalists are seen as misrepresenting or misinterpreting current economic data inflating historical trends. Inter-nationalist deem that current economic processes are just a reinforcement of past inequalities between rich and poor regions and that economic and political powerhouses are still dominating. They cite capital flows between G8 countries as the main evidence that past flows and processes in rich countries dictate the economic flows of other countries. They note the dominance of major economic powers. International bodies such as the World Trade Organisation are also seen as being dictated by national economic interest and not by the effects of globalisation. They view that the importance of global trade is still largely similar as it was a century ago. An example taken from Kelly and Prokhovnik (2004) shows American exports and imports as a percentage of GDP was the same in the 1990s as it was after the first world war which depicts that world trade has increase only because domestic output has also increased.

### 2.3. Analytical framework

While the links between human rights and economic globalisation exists between business and human rights, how this link interacts with business and human rights is less clear. For instance, a party who has been identified as a ‘globalist’ and belongs to the ‘natural school’ of thought in human rights may or may not promote legislation that can affect business and human rights. Politics is rife with political bargaining and selective attention. As Sweden has been governed by minority parties since the 1950s, forming alliances can sometimes be a simple decision of picking the lesser of two evils to disable a certain party to gain the upper hand (Bäck and Bergman, 2016). This could result in forming coalitions with parties that clash on ideological grounds making parties struggle to agree on a structure of legislation.

What this means for this research is that the political party’s stance on business and human rights cannot be two dimensional; pro or against business and human. Therefore, a multidimensional view of the issue must be offered so that this research does not risk over simplification of a complicated and multi-interpreted subject such as business and human rights. How this research can contribute is by offering a view of political party’s stance on business and human rights from the lenses of a global economic and human rights school of thought. Where explicit, party’s statement on business and human rights will be noted. Figure 1 describes the analytical process for the formation of the political party’s business and human rights stance.
3. Methods

All political parties in Sweden having a current seat in the Swedish parliament or Riksdag as per the 2014 Swedish general election will be analysed for this research. These political parties include; *Sverige socialdemokratiska arbetareparti*, *Moderata samlingspartiet*, *Sverigedemokraterna*, *Centerpartiet*, *Milorpartiet de Gröna*, *Vänsterpartiet*, *Liberalerna* and *Kristdemokraterna*. Two approaches as described in length in the previous section will be employed to ascertain the stance of the political parties.

Manifesto analysis simply calls for a textual analysis of the party’s published manifesto describing its philosophy and policies that could have an effect business and human rights. Only the latest manifestos publicly available on the political party’s website at the time of writing are chosen for analysis. Manifestos are then coded to identify statements that are human rights and economic globalisation related. These coded statements are then extracted for further analysis. Expert surveys require identifying party spokespersons best suited for the topic of business and human rights and conducting semi structured interviews with the each identified spokesperson. Due to the time limitation and availability, spokespersons allocated by the party were interviewed as well. The interviews lasted around 45 minutes optimally depending on the interviewee and at a venue of their choice. Audio recording of the interview with prior consent of the interviewee was also conducted. The recordings are transcribed, coded and analysed to identify statements pertaining to economic globalisation and human rights. Data from both approaches are collated and compared to identify a political party’s stance on business and human rights based on a set of pre-developed indicators. Besides that, direct quotes are sent back to the interviewee for their review and amendment before it is added into the paper if requested by the interviewee in the consent form. Only three political parties namely, *Liberalerna*, *Moderaterna* and *Sverigedemokraterna* could not be reached for an interview or for comment and thus, their spokespersons’ interview section will be not be added in the results section of this paper. Nonetheless, their significance and lack of reply is discussed further on in the paper.

By employing the indicators developed for assessing economic globalisation stances and the human rights stances, the political parties’ business and human rights tendencies will be examined. By considering specific policies and schools of thought, the implications of such a stance will be considered on national and foreign policy, legislation development and political strategies.
4. Party statements in manifests and interviews

4.1. Centerpartiet

4.1.1. Manifesto Analysis

Centerpartiet’s manifesto entitled ‘new leadership for Sweden’ is one of the most recent publications among other parties with a publication date on January of this election year (Centerpartiet, 2018). To set themselves apart from the other liberal parties, Centerpartiet refers to themselves as the liberal alternative party in Sweden that has a focus on humanity, cooperation and accountability to achieve its goals. However, the party has a lack of information in regards to its stance on human rights. While it does state that it stands up for human rights and freedom, the party does not elaborate much on the semantics of their stance or their definition of human rights in their election platform. A human rights stance is also not part of their foreign policy.

From an economic globalisation perspective, it is not a surprise that Centerpartiet is open to globalisation. The party believes that global flows and change are a constant and it is increasing in addition, an outward perspective is critical in maintaining a competitive edge. The party also thinks that these changes are to a large extent positive for living conditions and politics in Sweden and as such, globalisation is a phenomenon that is worth embracing. In addition, the party is quite open to trade and cooperation. Centerpartiet sees international organisations such as the European Union and the United Nations as useful tools to further Swedish interests, particularly from a trade and economic point of view.

“Developed trade, opportunities for people to cross national borders and active cooperation within the EU, the UN and other international bodies are vitally important for continued prosperity.”

(Centerpartiet, 2018, p.4)

Nonetheless, Centerpartiet’s manifesto lacks further data in both human rights statements and statements pertaining to economic globalisation. This can be attributed to their lack of an elaboration on their foreign policy. Instead the party focuses mainly on local issues such as the rule of law, job creation, climate and integration policies.

4.1.2. Spokespersons Interview

An interview was conducted with Stefan Hanna who is the chief of political operations for Centerpartiet at Uppsala, Sweden. The interview was held at 11.00am on the 26th of April 2018 at Stationgatan where the Uppsala municipality offices are located. The interview lasted around thirty minutes.

In general, the interviewee reflected the manifesto in its liberal views and elaborated the manifesto’s notion of human rights. As such, the interviewee exerted a traditional view of human rights throughout the interview basing it on the rationality that it belongs to and is inherent to anyone that is human without exceptions. The interviewee also noted that human rights have had stark improvements over the past decades. Hans Rosling, a prominent Swedish statistician, was cited as having brought proof that conditions worldwide are improving. The interviewee also gave an example of the rising middle
class, specifically in China which has caused civil society to gain traction in the region. This he attributes to global business development. Below is the interviewee’s take on human rights.

“So our perspective is that we have credibility that we believe in all human beings, that we should treat all human beings in a respectful way and that is a part of our DNA.”

(Hanna, S., 2018. interview, 26th April)

Trade liberalisation, openness and a laissez-faire attitude towards trade and economics is evident from the interviewee’s statements. An openness in trade is believed to help development and an abolishment of subsidies can help spur constructive competition in the business sector and facilitate meeting higher human rights standards. Tougher legislation for businesses operating worldwide was also discouraged with the interviewee stating that legislation in Sweden is adequate. Instead the interviewee stated that more effect could be gained if consumers, shareholders and civil society members were to put pressure towards companies and that companies had more to lose if companies did not respond to such pressure.

“Regarding our legislation I think it´s good enough within the Swedish jurisdiction if I operated as the Minister of Enterprise and Innovation in Sweden. I believe our laws give us a good enough foundation to push human rights perspective in a successful way. “

(Hanna, S., 2018. interview, 26th April)

In addition, the interviewee also pushed for companies to have better transparency in their supply chain and that companies can trace their materials from the acquisition of the raw material. The interviewee also wants to urge companies to be able to guarantee that human rights violations do not surface anywhere in the supply chain of a product or a service. In dealing with human rights violations, the interviewee advocated for dialogue with companies when Swedish companies have acted unscrupulously. However, the interviewee also prompted that local governments should be the one to ensure that the human rights are not violated, and the local government should enforce that protection. Any form of global or local governance of businesses especially in terms of legislation is contested by the interviewee as is consistent with the party’s liberal upbringing.

“I don’t believe there is a pragmatic way to manage it differently. It would be too administrative demanding… it wouldn’t fly. Period. If you would try to control all the small businesses, with all their suppliers which might be really awful from a human rights perspective, it would not work.”

(Hanna, S., 2018. interview, 26th April)

4.2. Kristdemokraterna

4.2.1. Manifesto Analysis

The Kristdemokraterna manifesto titled principprogram was published in 2016 after a parliamentary meeting in 2015 (Kristdemokraterna, 2016). Their party mainly advocates for Christian democracy,
which is defined by them to be democracy based on Christian values and viewpoints. Consequently, their view on human rights is highly orthodox with human rights values inherent to all who identify as humans and are based on universal and religious belief. In addition, their manifesto elaborates on the definition and semantics of being human listing down several characteristics that define humans and humanity. The manifesto also explains the need for politics to shape laws and regulations for better protection of human rights and a decent quality of life. This implies the notion that human rights should be embodied in law. The quote below captures the ideology behind human rights.

“Based on a personalistic perception of human beings, we want to protect all human life, freedom and dignity.”

(Kristdemokraterna, 2016, p.8)

Economically, Kristdemokraterna appears to be highly liberal in their views advocating for liberal economic policy. Particularly interesting is their view that trade liberalisation delivers prosperity particularly through trading freely products that low and medium income countries are best at producing. They garner that trade liberalisation, coupled with transparent and fair systems of trade can fill the gaps between richer and poorer nations.

“The market economy is based on people individually or in different forms of cooperation may freely own, acquire and manage property and companies. It gives humanity freedom of choice and outlet for their creativity.”

(Kristdemokraterna, 2016, p.117)

Going hand in hand with trade liberalisation, Kristdemokraterna are also keen on collaboration or working in conjunction with other global organisations such as the European Union, United Nations, and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation seeing these organisations as useful avenues for change. Kristdemokraterna also briefly touched on business and human rights vaguely stating a need to reinforce global ethical codes for business through globalisation.

“The relationship between business and human rights comes into focus through globalisation. This process increases the conditions for opinion formation and information in the service of human rights. That’s why it is important to strengthen the global ethical codes for business... All individuals and global actors as international organisations and multinational companies have a responsibility for their fellow human being’s situation.”

(Kristdemokraterna, 2016, pp.114–115)

4.2.2. Spokespersons Interview
The political advisor on business and energy policy David Burhn was allocated by Kristdemokraterna to be part of the interview, which took place at the Riksdag or the Swedish parliament at Riksgatan, Stockholm. The interview was held on Wednesday, the 28th March 2018 at 10.00 am.
The interviewee seems to follow in line with Kristdemokraterna’s view of human rights representing a natural school approach toward it. The interviewee sees human rights as a definite progress since 1948 and although the interviewee highlighted certain local events that have caused a decline in the respect for human rights, he views it as an improvement as a whole. However, it must be noted that the interviewee did not elaborate further on human rights and was more intent to discuss the effects of globalisation on human rights.

“If we look back some decades and even further, we have a quite sad story about how we have treated each other. Today, we see that we treat people better. Of course, we have examples where this is not the case but on the global scale, I would say that human rights are more and more respected.”

(Burhn, D., 2018. interview, 28th March)

The interviewee mentioned that he was an economist by training. From an economic globalisation perspective, the interviewee has shown to be an advocate for trade liberalisation believing that the economy is self-regulating. He believes that a business reputation is a crucial factor in restraining businesses from human rights violations and that consumers do have the power to demand more and more from businesses. The interviewee prefers to adhere to a policy whereby businesses maintain their freedom to operate preferring to engage with state in dialogue to remedy human rights issues. Below is the interviewee’s response to a question regarding responsibility on human rights violations citing Sudan as an example.

“Well first of all, it’s not possible… I don’t think it’s feasible either for the Swedish government to impose regulations on a company that worked in Sudan for example. But I do think it’s important that we perhaps work with the Sudanese government. That we use the tools available within the EU. That we encourage the companies to work within the frames for the UN human rights goals.”

(Burhn, D., 2018. interview, 28th March)

The statement above also reinforces the manifesto statement on strengthening global ethical codes for businesses. Nonetheless, the interviewee exhibits an optimistic view on globalisation and are open towards working with international organisations particularly the European Union. The quote below aptly describes the optimistic view of Kristdemokraterna’s trade and economic policy towards human rights.

“Everyone benefits from globalisation. When we as a consumer require that the companies do their part and when frameworks are working as they are intended to.”

(Burhn, D., 2018. interview, 28th March)

4.3. Liberalerna
4.3.1. Manifesto Analysis
Liberalerna’s manifesto analysis is based upon its party program after the conclusion of the party’s 2015 meeting entitled freedom in a globalising era (Liberalerna, 2015). As the name suggests, Liberalerna are a part of the liberal movement however the party includes a progressive perspective
onto their party with their manifesto claiming that they carry forward a socio-liberal mission. As such, they believe in the freedom of the individual and also the individual’s responsibility towards others.

From a human rights lens, the manifesto holds for a fact that human rights are inherent to all. They strongly believe that every person is entitled to ‘freedom’. However, beyond this, there is little explanation regarding their human rights concept. Their manifesto calls for stronger tools and capacity within international organisations such as the European Union, International Criminal Court and the United Nations but it is unclear if they view human rights as progressing or declining after the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In addition, while it is never explicitly stated, the party does seem to view human rights application mainly through the use of legislation via the international organisations mentioned above. It must also be noted that Liberalerna’s human rights statement is mainly in its foreign policy including relations and trade policies in the manifesto. The quote below encapsulated this idea.

“The EU neighbourhood agreement with the Union's neighbours south must include the same demands on democracy and human rights as the agreements with the neighbours to the east, and clear demands for respect for women's, children's and minority rights should be set.”

(Liberalerna, 2015, p.41)

Liberalerna also presents a typical liberalist view on economic globalisation. Their idea of globalisation is made manifest in the title of the document firmly believing in the effects of globalisation as an inevitable trajectory. Their message proves that globalisation is vastly shifting flows, operations, businesses and relationships on a global scale and that the Swedish state would have to adapt to shift to these changes. As such, Liberalerna advocates for lower corporate taxes, legislation to safeguard business competition on equal terms, less state intervention and monopoly, free trade, the introduction of the Euro and cooperation with global organisations and actors. Liberalerna increasingly sees globalisation as having a positive effect particularly by increasing competition, innovation, and that globalisation drives changes within the society for increased strength economically. A quote from the manifesto below illustrates this point.

“Globalisation changes the labour market. When old jobs and tasks disappear, an attractive business environment needs to be created which will allow new jobs to emerge. A social-liberal labour market is characterised by low thresholds and high mobility combined with strong security systems that help the individual return to work as soon as possible.”

(Liberalerna, 2015, p.18)

4.4. Miljöpartiet de Gröna

4.4.1. Manifesto Analysis

The green party or Miljöpartiet de gröna at the time of writing has not publicly disclosed its 2018 manifesto so herein, their latest manifesto translated into English entitled Party Programme prepared for the 2014 elections will be used for analysis (Miljöpartiet de gröna, 2013). In their manifesto, Miljöpartiet describes themselves as a part of the global ‘Green’ movement with a political goal of building a society that lives within nature’s boundaries with an emphasis on human interdependence
with nature. The party also claims to be an alternative movement to address current and future challenges facing humanity.

*Miljöpartiet* has quite a vast elaboration of humanity, explaining the rights and ideals that are inherent in humanity. Hence, *Miljöpartiet* presents an idea that human rights are inherent to all and is universal. The party also emphasises the need to project the universality of human rights beyond Swedish borders particularly using international organisations such as the European Union and the United Nations as effective tools. However, *Miljöpartiet* notes that the European Union needs better mechanisms to deal with human rights violations. Besides that, not only does *Miljöpartiet* assert that human rights are inherent to an individual but it also deems that the best mode of enforcing human rights is through legislation and foreign policy implementation.

“To make it possible for everyone to realise their dreams of a high quality of life, everyone must have equal rights. Everyone should be able to get the life, the education and the work they desire, without being limited by social structures. Socioeconomic background, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, disability, ancestry or age should never restrict anyone’s development.”

(Miljöpartiet de gröna, 2013, p.10)

On issues related to economic globalisation, *Miljöpartiet* have clearly acknowledged that the effects of local consumption have implications on a global scale. For instance, their manifesto states that the current unsustainable lifestyle in Sweden contributes to worsening environmental effects elsewhere and that responsibility must be taken for these environmental effects. The manifesto calls for all stakeholders to be involved in order to address environmental pollution and for economic globalisation to be positively profound. In a sense, *Miljöpartiet* appears to be very optimistic about the opportunities that globalisation can entail.

“Many people have raised their standard of living. Prosperity is spreading, life expectancy is increasing, and child mortality is going down. In material terms, many of those in what was previously called developing world are now rising from poverty.”

(Miljöpartiet de gröna, 2013, p.32)

Although the manifesto states that the party is open to trade and that an open economy is justified, it cautions that free trade should be done on fair terms. By this then, the party seems open to laws and rules that regulate trade and calls for an increase in taxes for consumers where necessary to bolster welfare and social services within the country. This is evident in its call to incorporate or reflect externalities into prices for goods and services. *Miljöpartiet* also has specific demands for business and human rights related issues. Specifically, it highlights the need to combat discrimination and abuse of labour migrants and that there is need to reform laws to protect these vulnerable groups both locally and for companies operating abroad. It also wants to implement laws that make it harder for foreign exports in Sweden when products or services are shown to be originating from production conditions that are deemed unacceptable. Additionally, it highlights that further funding should go towards organisations supporting human rights, democracy and development. The quote below captures best this agenda.
“Sweden must demand that imported goods are manufactured with concern for the environment, human rights and work conditions for those employed in the production countries. Organisations working for fair trade and developing control systems for monitoring this should be supported.”

(Miljöpartiet de gröna, 2013, p.36)

4.4.2. Spokesperson interview

An interview was conducted with Niclas Malmberg, a senior member of the Swedish parliament representing Miljöpartiet. Malmberg is currently in the committee for cultural affairs and the interview took place at Miljöpartiet’s Uppsala office at 5.00pm, 8th May 2018.

Malmberg’s take on human rights can be seen as taking human rights as a given and that they are universally accepted. Human rights belong to a particular individual for the very reason that the individual is identified as human. Malmberg is also optimistic on the progress of human rights. He points out that the increase networks and monitoring systems afforded by globalisation has enabled human rights to be extended globally. This increases pressure in other states to implement and afford its citizens protection in the form of legislation. In addition, Malmberg signals that human rights are best realised in the form of legislation. This is a clear clause that Miljöpartiet takes a natural school approach of human rights.

“Some countries would be isolated and could have a system where they don’t respect human rights. Nobody can do anything about it. But in an economy that we all share we can do something.”

(Malmberg, N., 2018. interview, 8th May)

Glancing at Miljöpartiet from the economic globalisation perspective, the party presents a unique view on globalisation. Free trade and openness is lauded as a standpoint that is best taken for progress but cautions that trade cannot come at the expense of human rights locally or abroad. The interviewee cites a recently proposed bill on organ harvesting in China, which prevents Swedes from purchasing organs harvested illegally. Malmberg noted that, as it is illegal to do so in Sweden it should also be illegal to do so in other countries and that it was a firm standpoint of the green party. Malmberg is quoted as saying:

"The green party always say that things that you are not allowed to do in Sweden, swedish companies shouldn’t do in other countries either. If we think businesses are too dirty in Sweden then it’s not okay that Swedish companies does that business in another country."

(Malmberg, N., 2018. interview, 8th May)

Miljöpartiet is actually one of the very few parties that seem willing to regulate businesses. When asked how the party balances regulating businesses and being open towards free trade and globalisation, Miljöpartiet believes that these two issues go hand in hand preferring to view that a human rights agenda in businesses to be beneficial for businesses in the long run. Malmberg argues
that while other parties may view economic growth as positive, Miljöpartiet maintains that whether economic growth is good or bad, has to be assessed in context to their social and environmental impacts. As such, Miljöpartiet does not focus solely on economic growth and are more willing to regulate businesses. They do acknowledge that this is not very popular with voters.

“So the parties that are talking in terms of economic growth as something that always is good… they are wrong.”

(Malmberg, N., 2018. interview, 8th May)

Another point that was brought up was the fact that Miljöpartiet was in an alliance with Socialdemokraterna, which made it harder to agree on certain issues as the social democrats had a different ideology. Malmberg stated that despite being in parliament with only 7% of the votes, they have managed to push their influence far past their weight although acknowledging that they have yet to achieve all their objectives.

4.5. Moderata samlingspartiet
4.5.1. Manifesto Analysis
At the time of writing, Moderaterna had not yet published its 2018 manifesto and as such, the results will be based on their 2013 manifesto titled Moderaternas Handlingsprogram - Ett modernt arbetarparti för hela Sverige (Moderaterna, 2013) which translates to Moderate’s action program, a modern worker’s party for the entire Sweden. The moderates describe themselves in the manifesto as a party with liberal and conservative values.

Unfortunately, Moderaterna in their manifesto have not adequately presented their definition on human rights although the party has emphasised the need to protect human rights. This need is most pronounced in its section on foreign policy matters where it sees the United Nations and the European Union as necessary tools in order to further human rights advocacy. Moderaterna also briefly mention human rights as a prerequisite for development cooperation between countries which most likely translates to foreign aid and foreign development.

“Democratic development and respect for human rights and freedoms within development cooperation remains a central value base.”

(Moderaterna, 2013, p.43)

Following their liberal agenda, Moderaterna are inclined to open trade agreements and thus pertain to laissez-faire relationship with the economy. This is evident in the party’s call to lower corporate taxes, which it believes would spur growth within the Swedish economy. The party also believes that free trade can trickle down to mutually benefit other countries. They also regard this openness as inherent to the Swedish identity. With this, they are also highly optimistic about the challenges that globalisation can bring to the global economy in terms of competition and innovation. A open economy drives up competitiveness and enables Sweden to be a better competitor according to Moderaterna viewpoint which again reinforces the invisible hand of the market. Moderaterna calls for the abolishment of agricultural subsidies and support gradually into the future. Internationally, they want to pressure the European Union in dismantling trade barriers and urge other nations to do the
same in order to create a fair playing field for trade and businesses. The quote below captures best Moderaterna’s optimistic globalist perspective.

“Globalisation creates opportunities and demands Sweden’s competitiveness. Free trade and openness to the outside world are crucial for securing well-being, but also for giving developing countries the opportunity to lift themselves from poverty. Swedish economic policy must be based on these conditions and in cooperation with the EU and the outside world.”

(Moderaterna, 2013, p.7)

It must also be noted that Moderaterna exhibit a restraint towards implementation of regulations and laws. They note that new legislations or regulations should not contribute to unnecessary hassle. In addition, they highlight that new laws need to be practical and cost efficient in order to avoid the red tape that could potentially limit economic growth.

4.6. Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti
4.6.1. Manifesto analysis
The social democrats political ideals will be based on their manifesto from the conclusion of their 2017 congress held in Gothenburg. Their manifesto titled; security in a new era, is a forty two page document containing their ideals of the ‘Swedish model’ which is defined by them as a joint effort and shared responsibility of everyone to further development with a goal of forming an egalitarian society (Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti, 2017). According to their manifesto, the social democrats are a movement advocating for democratic socialism. The social democrats are currently in government with an alliance with Miljöpartiet de Gröna.

With an egalitarian perspective, the party exhibits a natural school approach on human rights. The social democrats conceive human rights as a given, in that everyone is entitled to the same rights and privileges without discrimination. The social democrats also see the establishment of human rights mainly through the use of law and policy. For example, they seek to have the United Nations convention on the rights of the child to be part of Swedish law. Their feminist approach also highlights that they believe that women and men have equal rights. The social democrats are also optimistic with the progress of human rights highlighting that the decrease in global poverty and child mortality rates are exemplary effects of human rights progress in the past decades. A quoted text from the manifesto clearly highlights their natural school approach on human rights.

“The Social Democracy wants to shape society based on democratic ideals and the equal value and equal rights of all people. Free and equal people in a cohesive society is the goal of democratic socialism.”

(Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti, 2017, p.5)

Analysing the manifesto from an economic globalisation perspective, the social democrats are quite welcoming to the effects of globalisation. They reason that globalisation is unavoidable and as such business, industry and the labour market must adapt to the global changes that are happening. By welcoming the shifts that globalisation has initiated, the social democrats believe that this will keep Sweden competitive and relevant. As such they advocate for the creation of ‘green jobs’ as a solution
to climate change and to provide new job opportunities. The social democrats are also adamantly optimistic on the effects of globalisation labelling climate adaptation as an opportunity to create employment and increase the quality of life. Their policy on trade however is more ambiguous while the social democrats are open to decreasing trade barriers and progressive trade agreements, they caution that these must fulfil some preconditions on social, economic and environmental grounds. The social democrats also state their willingness to cooperate with international organisations. They highly believe in working with the European Union to further a joint climate ambition in that they believe in working with other states to address climate change. A quote below accurately encapsulates their belief in globalisation and their optimistic stance on the effects of globalisation towards a creating change.

“We face the future with new innovations, better education and rapid transitions.”

(Sveriges Socialdemokratiska Arbetareparti, 2017, p.10)

The social democrats have also quite a few statements that relate directly towards business and human rights. For example, the party advocates for better working conditions globally. They elaborate that for globalisation to benefit everyone, better working conditions for employees and increased dialogue between both employees and employers can create grounds for better working conditions. For example, they also have stated that they stand in solidarity with individuals in Tunisia advocating for better working conditions. As a matter of fact, the manifesto has a number of statements advocating and being representative of the rights of workers worldwide.

4.6.2. Spokesperson interview

An interview was arranged with Pyry Niemi, a senior member of the Swedish parliament who particularly deals with foreign affairs and trade with issues pertaining to the Baltic states, Nordic cooperation and the European Union. The interview took place at the Swedish parliament at 3.00 pm on the 3\textsuperscript{rd} of May 2018.

The interviewee presents a very orthodox view of human rights in that it is entitled to everyone which is reflective of the human rights view reflected in their manifesto. In addition, the interviewee does not contest the definition of human rights preferring to treat human rights as a given and an incontestable standard of living. Law and policy on human rights is also frequently mentioned as a way of enforcing and embodying human rights in writing. The interviewee for example, cites multiple international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation and the European Union as different layers for human rights law implementation on specific issues such as labour and human rights violations, the use of child labour and gender discrimination at work.

Looking at it from an economic globalisation standpoint the interviewee is an ardent globalist. Free trade is highly lauded by the interviewee as a leverage to widen human rights protection and increase human rights standards across the globe. Niemi argues that, states have more to lose by being oppressive and that by having an open policy and free trade, Sweden is able to insist on good working conditions and stricter demands in order for businesses to strive. If states were to continue being oppressive and not measure up to the said standards, these states would be at an economic disadvantage. From this statement, it can also be noted that the interviewee is a positive globalist as Niemi sees globalisation and free trade as an opportunity and a win-win situation for those involved.
“Instead of isolating them you try to have some kind of communication and trade is one way of looking into that.”

(Niemi, P., 2018. interview, 3rd May)

Another point that is noted from the interviewee is a hesitation to impose law, legislation or regulation concerning businesses. Instead, Niemi thinks that human rights should be addressed first and foremost by states regardless of the business or corporation’s point of origin. The interviewee feels strongly that it is a state’s duty to protect the rights of its citizens and that all the Swedish government can do is to criticise Swedish businesses that violate human rights. A state’s sovereignty is often cited as an obstacle in addressing human rights violations by Swedish businesses abroad. This is exemplified by a quote below where the interviewee used Vietnam as an example for a fictitious human rights abuse case involving a Swedish company.

“We should of course criticise them [Swedish companies] for doing that [human rights violations] and we should also be in contact with the ILO [International Labour Organisation] but as long as it is in Vietnam [for example], it should be the Vietnamese government that should address the issue and bring them to court.”

(Niemi, P., 2018. interview, 3rd May)

Niemi cited the Global Deal, an initiative brought on by the government in ensuring decent working conditions by signing an agreement with companies and governments in promotion social dialogue on working conditions. The interviewee states that since export is of major importance for Sweden, it is important that businesses are able to freely operate in foreign countries. As such, the interviewee sees agreements and frameworks such as the United Nations Guiding Principles as a more feasible tool promoting human rights standards across boundaries.

“You can in an ethical or moral sense try to do these kind of agreements as Mikael Damberg [Swedish Minister for Enterprise and Innovation] and the government has done because then you have some kind of a gentleman’s agreement in between the companies that we shouldn’t conduct violations against human rights in those countries where you have production.”

(Niemi, P., 2018. interview, 3rd May)

4.7. Sverigedemokraterna

4.7.1. Manifesto Analysis

The Swedish democrats have one of the latest manifestos available being published in 2018 with the document simply titled election platform (Sverigedemokraterna, 2018). Their manifesto is built around twenty core issues such as foreign policy, culture, healthcare, climate and defence. The Swedish democrats describe themselves as not pertaining to the usual left right spectrum of political policy making and thus labelling themselves as an alternative choosing policies based on their effectiveness. Nonetheless, the Swedish Democrats in their motto seems to advocate for security and tradition for the 2018 election.
Sverigedemokraterna has no compelling data can be attributed towards a stance on human rights. No indication or statement in their manifesto could reveal information on their elaboration of human rights if they see it as an improvement or regarding the basis of human rights and its forms implementation. They have also not clearly defined whom human rights should be for though it must be noted that they want to prevent countries with serious human rights violations to be part of any committee in the United Nations. However, their basis for this statement is not elaborated and they have not identified specific countries that have violated human rights. In contrast, they advocate for Jerusalem to be recognised as the state capital of Israel and seek to advocate for a strategy to promote freedom and human rights in Russia. Again, it is not evident why these countries were particularly chosen.

Their stance on economic globalisation is rather conservative as they wish to preserve national interests first. For example, they view the European Union as curtailing national sovereignty and as such are unwilling to collaborate or be part of international instruments unless it benefits Swedish workers and taxpayers. Instead, they seek to establish a Nordic regional collaboration with trading and working together in neighbouring countries. They also take this conservative approach with their environmental policy preferring to look inwards and avoid international cooperation. The Swedish democrats have an opinion that environmental problems can be solved by local mitigation and by taking care of one’s own environment.

“Sweden’s Democrats realise that Sweden cannot solve the world’s environmental problems, so we want to protect our unique natural environment and take our share of responsibility for global challenges, while our environmental concerns are based on the love and thought of their own [other states] homelands.”

(Sverigedemokraterna, 2018, p.18)

The Swedish democrats’ trade policy is also conservative with a focus on Swedish and small medium enterprises as a solution for job creation. Their trade and business policies are very focussed and specific on the labour market with no mention of trade barriers or trade agreements. While there is a statement on an openness towards international trade, there is no further elaboration on the subject.

4.8. Vänsterpartiet

4.8.1. Manifesto Analysis

Vänsterpartiet's recent and detailed manifesto was published a year after the party congress which took place on the 5th to the 8th of May 2016 (Vänsterpartiet, 2017). Generally, Vänsterpartiet describes themselves as a socialist and feminist party with an ecological foundation with the principles of democracy, solidarity and equality.

Human rights as described by the manifesto are only secured by the social movement’s struggle for liberty and justice. While the party does acknowledge the existence of human rights laws specifically the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Vänsterpartiet also notes that these laws still fail to protect those in need. For the party, human rights represent a constant struggle for its existence and status today. A translated quote describes best their basis of human rights:
As long as humanity has existed, there has been a struggle for the right to a better and more equal life. The progress that followed this untiring pursuit means that today we can talk about inviolable human rights.

(Vänsterpartiet, 2017, p.14)

As a party that describes themselves as socialist, deregulation and privatisation are certainly seen in a bad light with the blame put on economic neoliberal policies and the role of major economic powers such as United States undermining them. As such, Vänsterpartiet advocates for Sweden leaving the EU as it deems it a limitation on sovereignty in the social and economic sense.

“(…the EU is granted access to southern and eastern commodities and markets in exchange for a subordinate political, military and economic role towards the United States. This impedes EU social and economic development and pushing EU countries to abandon their welfare models.”

(Vänsterpartiet, 2017, p.24)

While Vänsterpartiet may seem restrained on trade, they do recognise that economic globalisation is real and tangible but question the benefit of economic globalisation stating that the economic and political prowess of other larger nations still dictate the global economy and thus only benefits certain individuals.

“(Capitalism has always been cross-border. In this regard, today’s internationalised economy means nothing new. At the same time, certain features emerge more clearly. The transnational companies are embarking on bigger markets and more power.”

(Vänsterpartiet, 2017, p.11)

The manifesto itself names several global actors in the economic sector such as the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the World Trade Organisation as having policies that greatly exploit the debt of poorer nations. This further indicated the party’s lack of trust of foreign and international organisations.

4.8.2. Spokespersons interview

Vänsterpartiet was contacted and the party provided its local political spokesperson in Uppsala, Ilona S. Waldau as an interviewee. Waldau is currently the kommunalråd or municipal commissioner for Uppsala representing Vänsterpartiet locally on issues such as human rights, consumer affairs, equality and social investment. The interview took place at Ilona Waldau’s office at Uppsala municipality’s Stationsgatan office on the 16th of March 2018 at 1.35pm.

A recurring statement from the interviewee was that she was speaking based on her opinion and that she was rather wary of speaking on behalf of the party. Nonetheless, the interviewee’s opinion on human rights echoes the manifesto in that a constant struggle is needed, though it must be noted that the human rights angle discussed is very much focused on the proletarian point of view. When asked what makes Vänsterpartiet different from other parties and why voters should vote for them from a business and human rights point of view, the interviewee stated:
“We see more to human rights than the companies because it is very important for us that workers have [a] good work environment and good pay. We want [to] change the laws for public procurement so we could say that every company must have collective agreement. Something we can’t do.”

(Waldau, I. S., 2018. interview, 16th March)

When asked what sort of specific legislation should be put in place towards business and human rights, the spokesperson could not provide specifics on corporate accountability preferring to generally state that:

“All step of the way to more human rights is good steps. But you can always take bigger steps. More steps.”

(Waldau, I. S., 2018. interview, 16th March)

From an economic globalisation point of view, the interviewee shares the same outlook with the manifesto in that the European Union is stifling sovereignty. Hence, Vänsterpartiet urges Sweden to separate from the union or at least encourage certain forms of reform with the European Union so that Swedish sovereignty and power over decisions is uncompromised. The interviewee implied that more laws should be put in place for businesses and trade.

“I think we have a big sort of problem when we are part of the EU [European Union], because of the laws about trading and companies which mean that we don’t have… not in our hands in Sweden to make laws in certain things concerning business. That is a problem.”

(Waldau, I. S., 2018. interview, 16th March)

However, a point of difference can be noted in the interviewee’s idea of globalisation. The interviewee is rather optimistic about globalisation as compared to the manifesto. However, no further elaboration was given on the interviewee’s optimistic outlook on globalisation.

4.9. Summary of Results
The data in Table 1 summarises the data collected as a result of the manifesto analysis and semi structured interviews conducted. The human rights school of thought and the economic globalisation perspective is indicated according to the results obtained from political parties and the method of analysis used. Although efforts were made to contact Liberalerna, Moderaterna and Sverigedemokraterna, interviews could not be conducted as there was a lack of response from the parties noted and as such their data is noted as unavailable. The significance of this is discussed in the following sections as to the speculated reasons behind the lack of a response from the three political parties. Results are also noted as inconclusive if a data collected is insufficient or does not seem to indicate any position taken up by the political party.
### Table 1

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5. Discussion

5.1. Political ideology on business and human rights

The effects of each school of thought on business and human rights policy are not straightforward. It would be too much of an abstraction to state that natural school political parties are better at business and human rights and transformationalist are the worst for example. However, these schools of thought are indicators which can be useful in determining more specific questions pertaining to a business and human rights policy adoption such as: which parties are more willing to regulate businesses, what are their attitudes on human rights laws, which parties are more protectionist or globalist? These questions can then help identify the willingness of each political party in dealing with the effects of a policy implementation. This is further exemplified with Donnelly (2013, p.33) stating that; ‘All human rights require both positive action and restraint on the part of the state’. An ultra conservative and nationalist Party for example could be more willing to pass laws increasing regulations for goods imported from a conflict region if the effects mean depending more on regional or local sources. Business and human rights policy implementation by a party then for instance cannot be seen as being better implemented in a leftist party than a right-wing party or vice versa.

However, political ideology seems to hold sway in both human rights school of thought and their outtake on economic globalisation. In fact, liberal parties tend to subscribe to a natural school of thought. This is particularly evident for an economic liberal or for a party open to free trade and liberalisation economics. A liberal believes that each individual is free with little or no obstruction to do as one wills or is self-autonomous and by being liberal, the recognition that each person has an inherent right is instilled (Howard and Donnelly, 1986). This supposed inherent right though has been
criticised to be attributed to the success of liberal societies and economies rather than to the moral reasoning of individualistic rights (Brown, 2012). Thus, parties that have a liberal economic policy tend to be natural school thinkers for this paper. This is true for parties like Centerpartiet, Kristdemokraterna, Liberalerna, Miljöpartiet de Gröna and Socialdemokraterna reinforcing Dembour’s (2010) statement that the natural school still represents the current and most dominant thought on human rights. This finding also reiterates Dembour’s (2006) theory that deliberative and natural thinkers tend to be on the liberal side of thinking however, she cautions that this is not a watertight seal as liberals can be juxtaposed into other schools of thought as well, such as the protest school and the discourse school. In addition, liberals being natural school thinkers, comes to no surprise as contemporary international human rights norms today is highly liberal as it rests on the idea that states protect the human rights of their citizens (Donnelly and Whelan, 2018).

Vänsterpartiet and Sverigedemokraterna are the only two parties that remain as outliers. Vänsterpartiet’s conservative economic approach and its place in the protest school of human rights thought supports Dembour’s (2006) theory which points out that discourse and protest school scholars are usually non-liberal in their ideals. Additionally, Marx (2000) was a known critic of the rights of man which he calls an egoistic and a selfish act to uphold men who are not part of or separated from the community. This does not mean to say Marxist ideology is one devoid of human rights but rather Marxist and socialists are critical of the individualistic focus of human rights law and the capitalist institutions that uphold it. Socialism’s contribution to human rights have been proven on several grounds including on workers rights and universal suffrage into influencing contemporary human rights law (Ishay, 2005).

Another trend that is noted is the correlation between economic globalisation and human rights school of thought. All positive globalist political parties seem to belong to a natural school of thought in human rights thinking. This can be attributed to the fact that they have a unifying factor that ties both the natural school and positive globalist together; liberalism. Economic liberals form a huge part of the positive globalist ideal believing that individual freedom is best enjoyed by the promotion and the role of the free market (Kelly and Prokhovnik, 2004). As the natural school of thought on human rights is currently the mainstream and popular thought on human rights, parties wishing to attain the popular vote would most likely avoid deviating from this orthodox view. On the other hand, pessimist globalist such Vänsterpartiet mirror Kelly and Prokhovnik’s (2004) theory that socialists and Marxists make the bulk of pessimist globalists by their view that capitalism is a form of trade based on exploitation. Figure 2 presents the relationship and the trends as elaborated on the axes of liberalism against positive/pessimist globalists to indicate the grouping that political parties in the human rights sphere. Two camps are noticeable in Figure 2 depicting the natural school on the upper right corner and the protest school on the bottom right.
Figure 2 Graph presenting the relative position of political parties against liberal and positive/pessimist globalist axis to illustrate their relationship and identify groupings

Sverigedemokraterna position in Figure 2 is a result of the ambiguity and lack of data regarding a human rights stance or economic liberal positioning. This could be attributed to the party’s single-issue stance focusing on culture and immigration issues which makes pinpointing a specific ideology towards other issues challenging. Evidently, Sverigedemokraterna has been noted to lack cohesive and coherent views by their failure to take a distinctive stance on political issues which is due in part to their lack of an ideological core (Erlingsson, Vernby and Öhrvall, 2014). Nonetheless, their transformationalist view in the economic globalisation spectrum is a tell-tale sign of their regionalisation, preferring to highlight economical structures at a regional level.

5.2. Political parties on business regulation for human rights
Maintaining a conducive environment for businesses is a hot topic for political parties especially since the outcome is perceived by voters and politicians to be connected to job creation and economic wellbeing. Political parties has been shown to be important in trust and power relations in the Swedish labour market (Öberg and Svensson, 2010). Sweden was in fact committed on the triple political-economic objective of full employment, rapid growth and high levels of social welfare from the middle of the 20th century (Lindvall, 2016). To this extent, political parties tread carefully on this issue and the results from the analysis is telling. All the economic liberal parties and parties that are positive globalist show restraint towards regulating business operations including Centerpartiet, Kristdemokraterna, Liberalerna, Moderaterna and Socialdemokraterna with the exception of Miljöpartiet de Gröna. Their liberal stance and laissez-faire economic stance makes them reluctant to impose regulations on businesses with most parties preferring that the responsibility of human rights rests on consumer power, local states for business operations abroad and business due diligence.

State sovereignty was frequently brought up as a reason to avoid regulating business operations abroad preferring to rely on reputational, consumer power, collaboration, dialogue and ‘name-and-shame’ tactics on the international arena. As Andersson (2016) points out, the idea of a market oriented welfare state is a fundamental one in Sweden and political parties that wish to gain popular support subscribe to the idea. Only Miljöpartiet de Gröna, stands out from the liberal group as the party does
not show much restrain towards regulating businesses preferring to see human rights and business regulation as a win-win situation. Vänsterpartiet also echoes Miljöpartiet’s stance on regulating businesses but this is no surprise due to their socialist and Marxist frameworks. Sverigedemokraterna’s stance on business regulation is rather ambiguous but can be placed with their favour for regionalisation and strong national interests. As such, Swedish business operations that directly benefit job creation or reflect strong and direct Swedish interest will be of paramount importance to them and thus be left alone. Though the same cannot be said for impacts that Swedish businesses have abroad. Figure 3 summarises the tendency for business regulation by political parties in Sweden on human rights relative to each other with their schools of thought on human rights showcased.

![Tendency for business regulation](image)

**Figure 3** Relative tendency for political parties in Sweden in regulating businesses from a human rights angle

Putting the aggregation of schools of thought aside, several parties have made direct pledges or mentions on business and human rights in their manifesto. These include Kristdemokraterna, Socialdemokraterna and Miljöpartiet on issues such as working conditions abroad, procurement, imported goods and fair trade. However, caution must be exercised when taking these statements literally as the statements are usually broad and is a shallow assessment of their stance. Instead, these statements can be used as an indicator of how political parties think about their voter base or how these issues are important to the public.

Despite this, one complicating factor is highlighted by the formation of alliances between political parties in Sweden. As Aylott (2016) points out, the formation of political alliances can complicate the decision making process as ideologies can compete between parties in an alliance. As compromises are necessary when parties form alliances, it is more challenging to form a firm stance for alliances as a whole and thus harder to predict the adoption of regulations, legislation or policies. To win the popular vote, it is possible that political parties forgo their ideologies just to be able to further their agenda. Nonetheless, political parties that align on their human rights school of thought, their perspectives on economic globalisation and on business regulation will most likely find it easier to agree on the framing of corporate accountability. An interesting case can be seen from the current alliance with the social democrats and Miljöpartiet. While they do align in terms of their approaches in economic liberalisation, as shown in Figure 2, they differ in their willingness to regulate businesses in Figure 3. This mismatch is evident in the interviews conducted with Miljöpartiet as the alliance struggles to agree on issues such as weapons export, which touches highly on business regulation of the arms industry in Sweden.
Looking at political parties’ stance on the international arena can be varied. Pessimist globalist like Vänsterpartiet can view the United Nations and European Union processes as skewed by other economic powerhouses. Other positive globalist would be more open towards these forms of collaboration and dialogue. The level of implementation of the United Nations Guiding Principles and perhaps a treaty on transnational corporations would also highly depend on the willingness to regulate businesses. A low willingness to regulate would imply that political parties’ would prefer a general framework as compared to specific regulations concerning corporate accountability.

6. Conclusion

Perhaps the question that a reader may ask is; who do I vote for if I am concerned with business and human rights? The answer that is explored in this paper is slightly more complicated. The first objective’s findings reveal that while all parties believe in human rights, their take on human rights differs based on its universality, form of realisation, embodiment and purpose. From an economic globalisation perspective, a political party’s position on globalisation coupled with its positive or pessimist view holds sway on a party’s stance. A bigger influence is a political party’s ideology which is the foundation forming these human rights and economic globalisation beliefs especially in the ideals of liberalisation. The second objective shows that as businesses are important stakeholders for political parties and their voter base, a political party’s willingness to regulate business also proves to be the decisive factor. The national and foreign policy stances on corporate accountability are highly influenced by a political party’s position on the effects that it will bring. The objective of identifying Swedish political strategy shows that it can boil down to just a question of choosing the best of two evils when ideological compromises are made in political alliances just to win a voter base. Otherwise, parties that have similarities in their willingness to regulate businesses, human rights thought and perspectives on economic globalisation will likely find it easier to agree on certain aspects of corporate accountability. The question then to gauge a political party’s stance on business and human rights should be; what will this policy impose on businesses in Sweden? Who will regulate these international business and human rights laws? Will these human rights laws affect us globally or regionally? Who stands to benefit and who stands to lose? The ripple effect of a business and human rights policy is a much more accurate picture in which to gauge political parties based on parameters that have been explored in this paper.

Should Sweden continue to see itself as an advocate for the United Nations Global Goals and as a key player in sustainability, the issue of business and human rights needs to come into the spotlight for political parties. If public interest were to also increase in these areas, political parties would have a lot to lose if specific stances are not made.

7. Acknowledgements

The author would like to extend his gratitude to three of the paper’s reviewers namely Associate Professor Radu Mares (supervisor), Associate Professor Christopher Mathieu (evaluator) and Mrs. Dovile Balciuniene (opponent) for their constructive input and time taken. Thanks, is also accorded to Swedwatch for providing material and logistical support needed in the research process and for extending their network to the author in the field of business and human rights. Special gratitude is also extended to colleagues Cecilia Hermansson and Emmi Kallio for their endless reviews and support in producing this paper.
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