The Swedish Parliamentary Debate on European Affairs – What Makes it to the Pages?

A quantitative content analysis of news media reporting from the Riksdag

Hanna Johansen

Uppsala University
Department of Government
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Supervisor: Thomas Persson
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1. Introduction

On the first of January 1995, Sweden entered the European Union (EU). The application for membership was initiated without further debate in the Swedish parliament. In the electorate, only a scarce majority voted “yes” (Riksdagen 2018) and scepticism characterized the first years of the membership. With time, the Swedish attitude towards the Union has turned increasingly positive and pragmatic (Michalski 2012), but the trend does not prevail across the union. Some consider the long-spun Brexit-process a symbol for a disconnection between citizens and high-level decision makers, and as a manifestation of lacking comprehension amongst citizens when it comes to EU affairs (Auel 2019). The need to close the gap between EU decision-makers and citizens was identified by the European Commission more than ten years ago (2006). As competencies had shifted from national to EU-level, it was stated that “Europe’s communication has not kept pace” (Commission of the European Union 2006, p. 2).

Advocates of closing the communication gap propose various strategies. While some argue that the legitimacy of the EU only can be achieved through a transnational democratic reform (Habermas 2015), others redirect focus to the potential remedies offered at the national level. More specifically, on national parliaments (hereafter parliaments) and the role they might play in communicating EU affairs to the wider audience (O’Brennan & Raunio 2017; Auel et. al 2015; Wetter Ryde & von Sydow 2019). By providing an arena for public debate and exercising oversight over the executive branch, parliaments can constitute “a linkage between citizens and legislatures” (de Wilde & Raunio 2018, p. 6). Meanwhile, others hold that the process of European integration restricts parliaments and reduces the level of political contestation. They argue Europe is undergoing a process of de-politicisation of national politics. In so, narrowing parliaments function as a forum for debate (Mair 2007; 2013).

Known for its consensus oriented political system, the Swedish Parliament (the Riksdag) has been considered a critical case in regard to facilitating conflicting positions in plenary debates on EU affairs (Loxbo 2014). The idea of a waning political debate has been supported by early students of the activities within the Riksdag’s own European Affairs Committee (EAC) (Hegeland 2006). Yet, subsequent studies propose the opposite (Loxbo 2014; Karlsson et al. 2018; Karlsson & Persson 2018). Instead, it is argued that “the
challenge, rather, is making sure that the opposition that does exist in the parliamentary arena travels to the public sphere and the electoral arena” (Karlsson & Persson 2018, p. 14). The need for the Swedish parliamentary debate to become public is further emphasized in the Swedish government’s official investigations (SOU 2016:10). It suggests that “actors with the greatest chances of exerting influence on the public debate – political parties and the media – increasingly refrain from explaining the connection between national policy and the EU,” further arguing that the media “generally do not convey political options or dividing lines in current EU affairs” (SOU 2016:10, p. 20).

The findings raise an essential question. Do Swedish news media communicate diverging positions on EU affairs, from within the parliament to the wider audience? In the later years, scholars have turned attention to news media and how they, in interplay with national parliaments, may connect citizens to EU decision-making (see de Wilde 2014; Auel et al. 2018; Auel 2019). Still, systematic investigations on how Swedish news media communicate the Swedish parliament’s debate on EU affairs, are yet to carry out.

1.2 Aim & Research question

This thesis aims to contribute to the existing literature on the role of national parliaments within the European architecture. More specifically, it turns attention to the Riksdag, and to how parliamentary debates on EU affairs are communicated to Swedish citizens. Earlier studies have provided valuable insights into how political opinions on EU affairs are presented in electoral manifestoes and behind closed doors in the Riksdag’s committees (see Loxbo 2014; Blomgren & Liljeqvist 2018; Karlsson et al. 2018; Karlsson & Persson 2018). By conducting a longitudinal, quantitative content analysis on Swedish news medias’ coverage of the Riksdag’s debate on EU-affairs, this study offers a first insight into how EU debates are, and have been, conveyed to the wider Swedish audience. Drawing on previous research on national parliaments and theories from the field of political communication, three hypotheses are formulated. By consulting the concept of opposition, empirical indicators for capturing core elements in parliamentary debates are provided. The thesis asks:

-How do Swedish news media present the Riksdag’s debate on EU affairs and how has the presentation altered over time?
The study commences by providing a short background, aimed to situate the reader within the ongoing debate on European integration. Thereafter, previous research from students of national parliaments and the role of news media within the European architecture is presented. The section is summarised with the formulation of three hypotheses that will guide the study. Next, the research design is presented, and methodological concerns reflected upon. The final two sections are dedicated to presenting the results of the analysis and to reflect upon its implications for national parliaments within the Union.

2. Background

One of the great debates within the field of European integration regards *politicisation*. It concerns whether it may reduce the distance to EU decision-making and improve the Union’s legitimacy (de Wilde 2011). For instance, it is argued that by strengthening the presence of partisan conflict, national and supranational channels of representative democracies can be strengthened as citizens are offered meaningful choices (Föllesdal & Hix 2006).

Therefore, the concept of *politicisation* is widely employed. Nevertheless, or as a result thereof, it is associated with “ambiguity to its exact meaning” (de Wilde 2011, p. 560). de Wilde et al. (2016) describe politicisation as a process made up out of four dimensions. First, as EU issues become more salient, societal actors attribute these issues more weight. Second, actors devote more resources to influence EU affairs. Third, opinions diverge in regard to what the EU should be and do, and finally more societal actors become engaged in EU affairs (2016, p. 4). In so, it is suggested that issues are to be considered politicised when they are salient, a diversity of opinions on EU affairs are presented and contested, and when debates are met with public demands on appropriate policies (de Wilde 2011, p. 561). A prerequisite for politicisation is that political contestation takes place on a public arena. Thus, de Wilde directs attention to the public sphere and to the forums where public debates reach the wider audience, amongst these *mass media* and *national parliaments* (de Wilde 2014).
Yet, scholars in the field of integration hold opposing views on whether the EU is experiencing politicisation, and whether it is desirable. On the opposing side, Mair argues that the EU is largely de-politicised. Member states undergo a “hollowing out of policy competition between political parties (...)” (2013, p. 114). This process of de-politicisation of national decision-making bodies reduce political conflict and generates fewer policy alternatives. In the absence of a European arena for public debate, where citizens can exercise opposition and hold European governance accountable, opposition towards policy will be organized towards the Union itself (Mair 2007; 2013). On the other hand, politicisation has been presented as an ongoing process, increasingly illuminating diverging EU-political positions, raising the salience of, and engaging the public in, EU affairs (Hooghe & Marks 2009; de Wilde 2011). According to scholars like Hoeglinger “(...) the crucial question is no longer whether European Integration is being politicised, but to what extent and in what ways” (2016, p. 139).

3. Previous Research & Theoretical Framework

The following section directs attention to national parliaments and provides an overview of previous studies where theories of politicisation and de-politicisation are put up against each other. It illuminates whether there is in fact an ongoing parliamentary debate on EU affairs and if so, how it may be communicated by news media.

The reasoning of de Wilde (2011) suggests that the process of politicisation is not a one-actor mission. While national parliaments play an essential role in facilitating informative debates (de Wilde 2014; Auel & Raunio 2014; Rauh 2015; de Wilde & Rauh 2018), mass media communicate them to the wider audience. Yet, it must be acknowledged that the media “operate according to their own logics of news values in choosing what to report on and in what way” (de Wilde 2014, p. 47). The following section seeks to take these two aspects into account.

3.1 National Parliaments within the European Architecture

National parliaments are often referred to as the losers of the European integration. The transfer of decision-making power to EU level, limited parliaments’ influence over the
policy process (O’Brennan & Raunio 2007). Yet, with time their position has improved. In 2006, the Commission President at the time, initiated a political dialogue. It was purposed to “reinforce the democratic basis of the Union by involving national parliaments of the Member States more closely into the EU policy-making process (…)” (Jančić 2012, p. 78). Later, formal powers were attributed parliaments, as the Lisbon Treaty (2009) was signed. The Treaty institutionalised a set of principles aimed to ensure that governments keep parliaments properly informed about EU affairs and gave parliaments the task to monitor that EU only decide on matters that cannot be achieved more efficiently on a national level. Some argue that these extended powers provide “a third chamber of representation linking the citizens to the EU” (Cooper 2018, p. 7). Others suggest it draws attention away from parliaments’ core functions. Namely, controlling governments and connecting to citizens (Raunio 2018, p. 311).

By facilitating open debates on EU affairs, it is argued that parliaments can make “EU more present in national politics and more accessible to and for their national public” (Auel et al. 2015, p. 284). What do evidence from previous studies on national parliaments in the European architecture suggest?

The evidence is mixed. Rauh and de Wilde (2018) find that both governments and parliaments, contrary to Mair’s (2007; 2013) thesis, respond to increased transfers of EU-authority by raising EU salience in plenary. In so, providing better conditions for holding decision-makers accountable. When turning to the Swedish parliament, consecutive studies provide ambiguous results. On the one hand it is argued that the EAC is characterized by consensus (Hegeland 2006) and that parliamentary parties fail to provide citizens information about their EU policy (Blomgren & Liljeqvist 2018). On the other hand, later studies suggest that the very same EAC facilitates an increasingly vivid debate on EU-affairs (Loxbo 2014; Karlsson et al. 2018; Karlsson & Persson et al. 2018).

When Loxbo (2014) puts Mair’s de-politicisation thesis (2007; 2013) to the test, he finds no support. His study on whether the debate within the Riksdag’s EAC contribute to the politicisation of the EU on a national level, suggests that the EAC is increasingly characterised by dissensus and conflicting political positions. Karlsson et al. (2018) follow in the same path. When turning attention to the EAC and the concept of opposition, the
relationship between parliaments and governments, they find political opposition offering both criticism and alternative positions in the debate on EU affairs. Moreover, the type of opposition has altered throughout the membership period. While opposition in the form of criticism was most common in the early stages of the Swedish membership, opposition parties have come to offer just as many political alternatives during the latest years. Just like Mair (2007; 2013), Karlsson et al. (2018) distinguish between modes of opposition. They suggest that opposition can be directed to either the substance of politics, EU as a system or the government's handling of EU affairs. Contrary to Mair's expectations, opposition towards the substance of politics, has increased over time. Nonetheless, the same seemed to be true for opposition towards EU as a system, somewhat pointing in the same direction as Mair (2007;2013). Irrespectively, Karlsson et al. concludes that the EAC's debate on EU affairs is vivid and far from consensus-oriented (2018).

3.2 National Parliaments in News Media

The Swedish EAC’s facilitation of opposition and debate is one thing, publicity another (Karlsson et al. 2018, p. 14). Though parliaments can politicise EU-issues internally, mass media play an essential role in ensuring EU-citizens’ stay informed (de Wilde 2014, p. 47). What can be expected when turning attention towards news media? In the following, a theoretical framework from the field of political communication is presented. It provides the rationale behind medias’ news coverage and is complemented with an overview of previous findings on national parliaments in the media. The section is brought to a close by formulating three hypotheses that will guide the study.

3.2.1. What makes it to the pages?

de Wilde assumes that both journalists and parliamentarians “interact in shaping the public debate (...)” (2014, p. 47). Yet, journalists act along their own logics and consider factors such as news values when reporting on parliaments’ involvement in EU affairs. News values are the elements that contribute to an event’s degree of newsworthiness. The more news values attributed to an event, the higher the likelihood that the event makes it to the pages (Tresch 2009).
Auel (2019) constructs a framework comprising three categories of news values. All have proven relevant for explaining how news organizations cover political events. High news values are attributed events that: 1) involve powerful actors or institutions (power/influence); 2) entail a dramatic or entertaining element (negativism/conflict); and/or 3) are of significant importance for a large audience (Auel 2019, p. 250).

3.2.2. What do we see in the news?

While news values explain what makes it to the pages, the notion of *biases* provides an image of the effects thereof. A *bias* can be defined as “any tendency in a news report to deviate from an accurate neutral, balanced and impartial representation of the ‘reality’ of events and social world according to stated criteria” (McQuail 2010, p. 549). One commonly distinguishes between three types of biases. These include visibility bias, tonality bias and agenda bias. A visibility bias occurs as political actors receive a disproportionate amount of news coverage relative to other actors. The tonality bias adds a qualitative dimension, asking how the story is presented. Finally, the agenda bias refers not only to politicians’ appearance in the media, but their opportunity to voice their agenda and policy position (Eberl et al. 2017).

The theoretical framework of *news values* generates expectations that elements of power, conflict and relevance improves the chances for political events to make it to the pages. Moreover, the notion of *news biases* turns attention to three factors guiding a study of news media; who gets a say? How is it said, and what opportunity do the actors get to raise their agenda? Now, what do we know about these factors in regard to national parliaments in news media today?

3.2.3. National Parliaments in the Pages

News medias’ role in EU politics attracts attention (Trenz et al. 2009; de Wilde 2014; Auel et al. 2016; Auel 2019). In a comparative study on Denmark, the Netherlands and Ireland, de Wilde (2014) study both newspapers and parliamentary activity in EU affairs and finds a discrepancy between how EU issues are debated in parliament and how it is presented in news media. He identifies an “executive bias.” Though parliamentarians make most claims in parliamentary EU-debates, governing parties receive more media visibility.
Moreover, the results indicate that media generally puts more emphasis on elements of conflict than do parliaments (de Wilde 2014).

Auel (2019) explores which parliamentary actors that receive most media attention and the degree to which “choices and political alternatives involved in European integration (are made) visible to the wider public they mean to represent” (Rauh, 2015, p. 117). The results suggest that differences in media visibility depends more on factors such as party groups’ share of seats, than on what they do in plenary. Finally, Auel (2019) problematize that most news coverage refer to parliament bodies as one institution, without distinguishing between the actors within it, and their diverging positions on EU affairs.

3.3 Hypotheses

How is the Riksdag’s debate on EU affairs presented to the citizens? The three following hypotheses are formulated in order to guide a first search for answers.

3.3.1 Hypothesis I: Criticism & Alternative Positions

When applying the framework of news values, it is expected that elements of political contestation in parliamentary debates generate higher news values in the form of conflict (de Wilde 2014), than do consensus and support. Earlier findings from Loxbo (2014) and Karlsson et al. (2018) suggest that the EAC increasingly facilitates debates where criticism and alternative positions are provided. Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H1: A larger proportion of articles will present criticism and alternative positions, relative to articles that present positions of support, or excludes competing positions altogether.

3.3.2 Hypothesis II: Government Bias

Turning to the theories of news values and biases, it could be expected that executives, enjoying more influence over EU politics relative to parliaments, are more likely to be prominent in news media. The theory is supported by de Wilde’s (2014) identification of an executive bias. Despite opposition parties making more claims in plenary debates, governing actors make it to the pages and set the agenda. Therefore, it is hypothesised that:
H2: The proportion of articles presenting governments as the main actor in news media, will be larger than the proportion of articles where the main actor is presented as opposition.

3.3.3 Hypothesis III: Policy Over Polity

The last hypothesis turns attention to the notion of *tonality bias*. It looks at *how* EU affairs are presented. Following the distinction between the three modes of opposition highlighted by Mair (2007; 2013) and Karlsson et al. (2018), the findings of the latter suggests that opposition in the Swedish EAC is increasingly directed towards policy, the substance of politics, rather than to the EU as a system or the government’s handling of EU affairs. Thus, it is hypothesised that:

H3: The proportion of articles presenting parliamentary debates on EU Affairs presented as a policy-concern, will be larger relative to articles presenting debates as a polity and/or procedural concern.

4. Methodology & Research Design

The following sections present the method, material and operationalisations that have been considered fruitful for answering the research question. Considerations encountered throughout the process of generating a reliable and valid study are reflected upon in the closing section. Finally, all following citations are translated by the author. The original citations are found in the corresponding footnotes.

4.1 Quantitative Content Analysis

A quantitative content analysis is a “a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (...) to the context of their use” (Krippendorff 2004, p. 18). The method is commonly applied in the field of political communication (Esaissson et al. 2017, pp.199) and it is purposed to test hypotheses based on what we know from previous research and relevant theory (Domas White & E. Marsh 2006). When studying a larger selection of material, the quantitative approach illuminates the frequency of the relevant content categories. Provided the aim of this study, that is a desirable characteristic.
Measures of the relative frequency of categories such as Government/Opposition or policy/polity provide relevant data for testing the hypotheses.

Previous studies of national parliaments in news media have chosen a similar methodological pathway. Albeit with explanatory ambitions, scholars have fruitfully conducted quantitative content analyses in order to test how relevant factors impact news coverage, over time and across the Union (see Kriesi et al. 2007; Auel 2019). That being said, another commonly applied method in studies of politicisation is “claims analysis” (see de Wilde 2011; Maricut-Akbik 2018). Its strength lies within the qualitative analytical framework’s ability to capture various dimensions of political contestation. It illuminates the degree to which politicians adhere to the public opinion, and how they might impact the legitimacy of the Union (de Wilde 2011). While such a qualitative study offers valuable insights, it is here argued that a quantitative method better serves the purpose of this study. Namely, providing a comprehensive overview of how the Riksdag’s debate over EU affairs is, and have been, presented in Swedish news media over a longer period of time.

4.2 Case selection: Consensus Sweden

There are two main reasons why Sweden is an interesting and strategic case for studying medias’ presentation of parliamentary debates on EU affairs. By way of introduction, it can be argued that Sweden is a critical case. The political system has long been recognized for being consensus-oriented and for cross-party cooperation (Dahl 1996, p. 354). The former Swedish prime minister even stated that the EAC was like a “coalition government over EU affairs”1 (Persson 2007, p 236). Moreover, research suggest that differences between Swedish political parties are on the wane in general, and when it comes to EU politics in particular (Hegeland 2006). These factors make Sweden a case with “least likely” conditions (Esaiasson et al. 2017, p. 154) for facilitating debates characterized by conflict and alternative positions. This has implications for the study’s external validity. If Swedish news media manage to portray a nuanced and informed debate on EU affairs in an allegedly consensus-oriented Sweden, they are likely to do so also under more favourable conditions. For instance, in other EU member states where the political landscape to a greater extent is characterized by diverging opinions and political

1 “(…) samlingsregering kring Europafrågorna.”
contestation. Secondly, the content analysis is based on national newspapers. By examining newspaper written in a familiar language, the analysis can be carried out efficiently and with better precision than would have been possible with an analysis based on material from other EU members.

4.3 Material Selection: Swedish Newspapers

The purpose of this study motivates an analysis of Swedish news media. With that said, multiple of considerations occurs in the process of identifying the right material.

4.3.1 Finding the Right Material

The first choice regards whether to include digital and social media. In today's society, one may argue that a faithful image of how the debate on EU affairs is presented should include digital platforms. Yet, there are arguments for limiting the study to print media. For instance, Bruell, Mokre and Pausch (2009) suggest that such a limitation provides a more coherent set of data material. While print media has kept its form during the past ten years, external factors, such as technological advancement, may have altered the digitally mediated image of EU debates over time. A second argument for not including social media is that those are unmediated forums. As de Wilde points out (2019), news media add a dimension of media logic that should be considered when studying the news coverage of EU affairs, and how it affects European integration.

The next choice regard what newspapers to examine. In this study, there are no expectations of systematic variations across daily newspapers put forward. By examining articles from the largest national tabloid, Aftonbladet, and the corresponding broadsheet Dagens Nyheter (Orvesto Konsument 2017:1, pp. 10), it is guaranteed that the analysed material reaches out to a wide audience. Certainly, that is an important argument when studying the Riksdag’s ability to reach out to the Swedish citizens.

A degree of delicacy is required when approaching the third consideration, finding the right articles. The Swedish media archive, Retriever, provides print and digital news media stretching back to the 1980’s (Retriever 2019). In order to distinguish the relevant articles from Aftonbladet and Dagens Nyheter, an appropriate search string must be
composed. One option is to use few specifications. That generates a wide range of hits, including a large number of articles not considered relevant for the purpose of this study. Correspondingly, if the search string is too specific it carries the risk of systematically excluding a large number of relevant articles. In order to find a tenable balance, subsequent pilot searches, using various different search strings, have been conducted.

The search string generating the largest share of relevant articles is; (eu* NEAR/10 riksdag*) OR (riksdag* NEAR/10 eu*). By using “NEAR/10,” it is ensured that the “EU” and “Riksdag” are never separated by more than ten words. This avoids results where the two topics are not linked. The search is further specified by adding the following set of keywords from which one must occur in the article; kammar* EU-nämnd* nämnd* utskott* plenis* plenum* debatt*. Words like “executive” or “government” are not included to avoid the risk of potentially distorting the resulting material. This may also make it less likely that unintentionally excluded articles systematically differ from those in the selection. For the selected time period, the final search generates a total of 793 articles to examine.

4.3.2 Identifying Relevant Articles

All types of articles are included. Interviews, news items and background analyses, as well as editorials, commentaries and op-eds all make the cut. There are indeed solid arguments against including opinion-based articles. For instance, one could question whether it impacts the explanatory power of the selected theories regarding news values. On the other hand, all published material pass through an editorship that ultimately decides what makes it to the pages. Finally, as the aim of this study is to investigate how the debate on EU affairs is communicated to the wider audience. Excluding articles that contribute to shaping citizens’ understanding may risk generating an incomplete picture of the mediated image.

In order to consistently and systematically separate articles that are relevant for the analysis from “non-relevant” articles, two selection criteria are formulated. Previous studies on presentations of political positions, have coded articles after whether they mentioned Eurosceptic- or non-Eurosceptic parties on their own, together, or not at all
(Auel 2019). It is here argued that elements central to an informed debate, such as political
alternatives, might be lost if the selection- and coding strategy is too general. Instead, the
selected material must meet the following criteria: 1) there is a clear spatial connection
to a discussion in the Riksdag, and, 2) The discussed issue concerns policy, polity or
procedure and is typically considered EU affairs.

The first criteria of a “clear spatial connection” to the Riksdag, includes government
declarations and all exchanges of meanings, in the Riksdag and its committees. It does not
include general party positions on EU affairs, as stated in political manifestoes or other
public arenas as it would lose the demarcation to parliamentary debates. Some guiding
selection considerations are provided in the following paragraph.

One article that clearly fulfilled both criteria contained the sentence “(i)n the Riksdag, all
parties supported the demand to repeal the ban on exports of snuff to other EU members”: (Brors 2019). First, it shows a clear link to exchanges of meanings in the Riksdag, and
second, it presents concerns related to the European internal market. Nevertheless, the
distinction between discussions taking place in the Riksdag specifically, or amongst
parliamentary actors more generally is not always clear cut. For instance, Kärrman (2012)
describes how party members want to play down their Eurosceptic position. Though the
article clearly presents the party’s position on a specific EU concern, what is on the party
agenda is not always what is on the table during parliamentary deliberations. As the
article does not reflect a spatial connection to discussions in parliament, the second
criteria is not met.

All articles are examined and registered. Those considered relevant for the study are
provided a register number in the form; AFT/DN YYMMDD-XX. The last two digits make
up the correct order number, starting from -01 each year. Articles not considered relevant
are given the ending number -99. The selection process generates a total of 187 articles
to analyse, 40 from AB and 147 from DN.

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2 “I riksdagen hade samtliga partier ställt sig bakom kravet på att exportförbudet på snus i EU-länderna
måste upphävas.”
4.4 Selected Time Period: The Lisbon Treaty and Onwards

This thesis aims to examine how the news media reporting from the Riksdag’s debate on EU affairs has evolved over time. With a longitudinal approach, the study can capture variations during both changes in EU-authority and in the partisan composition of governments. Undeniably, the ideal starting point would be the entering into force of the Swedish EU membership in 1995. But “(...) pragmatism determines the sampling and data collection” (Domas White & E. Marsh 2006, p. 29). Any ambitions to generalise the results to the population of articles covering national parliaments’ involvement in EU affairs, requires an examination of a large number of articles from each year. This can be achieved through limiting the study to a shorter time period. Combined with the presented search string, it is possible to carry out a full census study on all relevant articles for the selected time period.

It is here suggested that the time of the ratification of the Lisbon Treaty (2009), constitutes a good point of departure. The Treaty attributed national parliaments increased formal powers and involved them in EU decision making (Cooper 2018). The advancement turned parliaments into relevant actors within the union. Moreover, by selecting a ten-year period starting at the day of ratification, 1 December 2009, until the 1 December 2019, the study expands over two different terms of offices. Each lasting approximately five years. In so, enabling a discussion regarding potential differences between both terms.

4.5 Operationalisations

This thesis seeks to provide a first insight into how Swedish news media present the Riksdag’s debate on EU-affairs, and how the presentation has altered over time. Thus, a central concept to define and operationalise is the debate on EU Affairs. What is it, and how can it be measured?

First, debate, as proposed by the Encyclopaedia Britannica Academic Edition (2019), can be understood as a “formal, oral confrontation between two individuals, teams, or groups who present arguments to support opposing sides of a question generally according to a
set form or procedure.” When turning attention to national parliaments and their ability to facilitate debate on EU affairs, previous studies have put the element of opposition at their core (see Loxbo 2014; Karlsson et al. 2018; Karlsson & Persson 2018; Rauh & de Wilde 2019). Arguably, debates illuminating conflicting positions and political alternatives are not limited to the relationship between opposition parties and the government. Therefore, this study sets out to capture oral confrontations between all relevant parliamentary actors, as presented in newspapers. Yet, in order to measure the occurrence of relevant elements in newspaper coverage of the parliamentary debate, it is here suggested that the same empirical indicators that are used when studying opposition in its traditional sense, fruitfully serves the purpose. In the following, opposition will be defined and attributed empirical indicators.

4.5.1 Defining Opposition

Karlsson et al. turn to Dahl’s definition of opposition as “an expression of disagreement with the government” (Dahl 1966; Karlsson et al. 2018, p. 2). Further, the authors provide the distinctions considered necessary for constructing robust empirical indicators.

First, disagreement can come in two types, criticism or criticism together with an alternative. Criticism refers to the act where parliamentary actors seek to exercise control over the government. By disagreeing to the position held by the government, they are both signalling that government representatives will be held publicly accountable for their actions and distancing themselves from their current position (Karlsson et al 2018, pp. 2). Alternatives refers to the more informative act when disagreement with the government is accompanied by a political alternative. Additionally, actors may not express disagreement. Instead, they can present supporting positions (Karlsson et al. 2018, pp. 2). For the purpose of this study, both types of disagreement, together with expressions of support, will be referred to as positions. The concept is defined as “an opinion or an attitude towards a particular subject” (oxford dictionary 2019) and will here include all expressions of meanings from Swedish parliamentary actors.

Second, disagreement can come in three modes. That is, what object the positions taken by parliamentary actor’s concern. These can be narrowed down into three categories; policy, polity and procedure. If support or disagreement is focused on the substance of EU politics,
it is a matter of policy. Correspondingly, when positions concern the EU as a political system, it involves polity. Finally, if a position is not directed towards the system, nor towards the politics within it, it may concern how the government handle EU affairs, the procedure (Karlsson et al 2018, pp 2).

In the following, these empirical indicators are translated into variables and analytical questions and summarised in Table 1. The process of operationalisation will be problematised in a final section regarding the study’s validity and reliability. A full coding instruction with guiding examples is found in Appendix A.

4.5.2 Defining Units of Analysis & Variables

I. The Unit of Analysis

Every article constitutes one unit of analysis. It is the first encountered section with a clear, spatial connection to the Riksdag and a topic relevant to EU affairs that is coded. In articles referring to EU debates at different points in time, the most current paragraphs are prioritised.

II. Positions: How many parliamentary actors are presented?

Since this study deviate from the formal relationship between the government and its opposition, the analytical framework must be constructed to capture disagreement or support expressed by any two parliamentary actors. The first step is to identify whether more than one parliamentary actor’s position is presented in the article. Individual statements and discussions raised within parliament, may not correspond with what is presented in the news. If only one perspective is presented, there can be no criticism, nor alternative or support.

III. Main & Second Actor: Who is presented?

These two variables seek to identify who that is presented as the main actor, respectively the responding actor that may present a diverging position.

Two guiding principles are applied to distinguish between the actors; grammatical agent and order. The main actor is the first performer of an action in the article. The idea of order
(the first grammatical agent) is based on the assumption that the author will present the most important elements first. Then, the second actor is either the subject in the sentence (the one receiving an action), or the next actor that has a position presented. This is exemplified in the following citation.

“Today, the prime minister (main actor) will consult with the EAC (...). The Green Party had reported a dissenting opinion and now the Swedish Democrats wanted to join in on their position (second actors: MP & SD)” (Melin 2010).

IV. In what mode are EU affairs presented?

The mode-variable indicates what type of EU affairs that is presented as the main concern of the actor(s)’ position. It can take three values, policy, polity or procedure. There is often a tendency towards more than one mode. In order to descend what makes up the main tendency, two principles are set. First, one looks at what mode that take up the largest relative share of space, and second, if still difficult to determine, what concern that is most emphasized. An example of a consideration of the main tendency is presented below.

“(…) After the defeat in the EAC this Wednesday, the prime minister had to fight for the climate position of the Alliance parties in the EU and on some issues, that involved farther reaching requirements than the EU compromise (procedure).

The Swedish position, that was based on the demands of the Alliance parties (procedure), was a 40 percent emission reduction, but with additional 10 percentage if it was linked with foreign investments (policy)” (Melin 2014a).

The first paragraph entails words such as defeat and fight for and focus on how the Swedish prime minister handles EU affairs. On the other hand, the following section emphasize emission reductions, the substance of EU politics. While no clear difference is

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3 "Idag ska statsminister Reinfeldt samråda med EU-nämnden (...). De rödgröna hade redan före valet anmält avvikande mening och nu vill Sverigedemokraternas ledamot haka på."

4 "(…) Efter nederlaget i EU-nämnden i onsdags fick statsministern släss för alliansens klimatlinje i EU och på några punkter innebar det mer långtgående krav än i EU-kompromissen. Sveriges position, som alltså byggde på alliansens klimatkrav, innebar minskade utsläpp med 40 procent, men också med ytterligare 10 procentenheter om det kopplades till krediter för utlandsinvesteringar."
distinguished in regard to each mode’s relative share of space, the notions of how the prime minister had to fight for the Alliance parties’ position is constant throughout both sections. Therefore, the article was categorised as procedure.

V. What area does the activity concern?

The articles can be categorised after twenty different areas, as presented in the previous study of Karlsson et al. (2018, p. 9) and in Appendix A. If more than one area of EU affairs is presented, the rules of interpretation are first space, then order. The area that receives most space in connection to the position of the parliamentary actor is considered the main area, if two areas take up a similar amount of space, the order in which they are presented is decisive.

VI. What is the type of the second position?

If more than one position is presented, the type-variable identifies what type of position a responding actor presents. It can be support, critique or an alternative position. In some cases, a second actor is mentioned, but without a position. The actor is then categorised as only mentioned. Further, a principle of caution is applied. In those cases where it is difficult to discern whether an alternative position is presented, the articles is categorized as critique. For instance:

“When the new temporary asylum rules were adopted before the summer break, the Moderate Party (main actor) was the only Alliance party voting yes. The Centre Party (second actor) voted no” (Eriksson 2016).

Though “voting no” could be considered an alternative to “voting yes,” no further specifications of what type of asylum rules the Centre Party would prefer were presented in the article. Therefore, the article was categorized as criticism.

Table 1. Operationalising Debate on EU affairs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Analytical question</th>
<th>Categories</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Debate</td>
<td>How many parliamentary actors have their positions presented?</td>
<td>• No position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• One parliamentary actor put forward one position</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visibility</td>
<td>Visibility questions</td>
<td>Possible answers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------</td>
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<td>------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who is presented as the main actor?</td>
<td>Government, Opposition party/ies, Government &amp; opposition party/ies, The Riksdag/EAC/other committee, Other, The Riksdag/EAC/other committee or parliamentary party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Who is presented as the second actor?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What is the party affiliation of the main actor?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tonality/Mode of disagreement</th>
<th>Tonality/Mode of disagreement questions</th>
<th>Possible answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>In what mode are EU affairs presented?</td>
<td>Policy, Polity, Procedure, Other, Full list in appendix A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What area does it concern?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of disagreement</th>
<th>Type of disagreement questions</th>
<th>Possible answers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>What type of the disagreement is put forward by the responding actor?</td>
<td>Support, Critique, Alternative, Only mentioned, No other parliamentary actor mentioned</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 Reliability & Validity

The objective is to provide a valid and reliable study. In this study, the validity is determined by how well the relevant aspects of debates on EU affairs are defined and made measurable in the coding scheme (Domas White & E. Marsh 2006). In turn, the reliability, refers to the absence of non-systematic errors (Esaiasson et al. 2017, p. 65) and is fundamental for generating a replicable study. A robust analysis can be facilitated by constructing clearly defined and distinguishable categories (Esaiasson et al 2017, p. 207), and principles of interpretation for cases where qualitative interpretations are necessary.
Yet, applying the constructed coding scheme to the selected articles comes with challenges. One lies within the ability to construct a coding scheme that is rigid enough to carry out a systematic and reliable analysis, yet flexible enough to capture the interesting elements of the debates that are presented in Swedish news media. One example is how the coding scheme only captures the type on the position presented by the second actor. As the guiding rule of interpretation is that “the first encountered grammatical agent” is to be considered the main actor, there are some cases where the principle imposes a dilemma. This occurs when the main actor expresses the responding position. The following is an example of one such case.

“But a Swedish government ruled by the Social Democrats (main actor) will probably make their party colleagues in the EU disappointed. The Social Democratic Party has always supported the Alliance government’s (second actor) position (...) in the Riksdag”.

(Melin 2014b).

In this case, since the first position is undefined in terms of type, there is no variable that accounts for the Social Democratic Party’s supporting position. In so, the analysis may underestimate the occurrence of support, criticism and alternatives that readers are presented. If the principles of interpretation were less rigid, the coding scheme could potentially have been adjusted to better capture articles’ varying structures. But, potentially at the expense of a less consistent analysis.

Further, in order to test and demonstrate the study’s reliability, an intrareliability test was carried out. The test is performed by the same analyst at different points in time. Though it does not fully manage to examine the study’s replicability as adequately as a test carried out by another analyst, it can provide indications of strengths and weaknesses regarding the consistency of the measuring process (Krippendorf 2004, p. 215; Esaiasson 2017, p. 65).

The test was performed by randomly selecting one article from each examined year. The selection was then reanalysed using the same coding scheme and instructions. While the correspondence between the first and the second analysis reached 100 percent for close
to all form-variables, some deviations were identified for variables associated with more qualitative considerations. For variables essential for testing the hypotheses, the test generated various degrees of correspondence. While the “number of positions”-variable fully corresponded, the analysis of the main actor corresponded to 91 percent. The variables associated with most insecurity were type and second actor. The degree of correspondence reached 73 percent for the former, respectively 64 percent for the latter. The two variables may covariate. If the second actor is interpreted as someone else, the other actor may hold a different type of position. In so, a degree of caution must be taken into account when interpreting the results concerning the second actor and the corresponding type of position.

5. Results & Analysis

The following section presents the main findings. Under three subheadings the data retrieved from the analysis is displayed and discussed. Each discussion is guided by one of the three hypotheses formulated in the outset of the study. In a final section the results will be contextualized by returning to the overarching debate on politicisation and parliaments’ role in closing the gap between EU decision makers and its citizens.

5.1 Hypothesis I: Criticism & Alternative Positions

How many positions are presented in Swedish news media? Does the Riksdag provide political alternatives on EU affairs to the citizens? The first hypothesis takes off from the ongoing debate on whether European integration proceeds at the expense of diminishing conflicting political positions and ideological divisions in EU affairs. In so far, evidence has proven ambiguous. Yet, in the latest studies on the Swedish EAC, the EU debate is vivid
(cf. Mair 2007; Hegeland 2006; Loxbo 2014; Karlsson et al. 2018). When applying the logics of news values, it is expected that elements of conflict and negativity generate a larger proportion of articles presenting parliamentary actors voicing criticism and alternative positions, relative to articles presenting supporting positions or exclude competing positions altogether.

The hypothesis is not supported by evidence. First, looking at the relative share of articles presenting one, respectively more than one, position on EU affairs, Figure 1 reveals that only a scarce majority, 51 percent out of the 187 articles in the selection, present more than one position on EU affairs. In other words, only in half of the articles, parliamentary actors, other than the main actor, had their position on EU affairs presented. The following question then, is the number of presented positions altered over time?

**Figure 2.** Share of articles presenting no position, one position, one position presented by more than one actor, or more than one position, for each year during the time period 1 Dec 2009 – 1 Dec 2019 (%), n=187.

Figure 2 illustrates a great variance in the number of positions presented in Swedish news media over time. During the month of December 2009, only two articles fulfilled the selection criteria. Thus, inferences based on that year alone are limited. In 2010, 2014, 2015 and 2016, the share of articles presenting more than one position on EU affairs exceeds those presenting one position or no position. Up until 1 December 2019, the share of articles presenting more than one position on EU affairs corresponded with the share presenting only one. The year where the largest proportion of articles presents more than one position is 2016, peaking at 75 percent. The smallest proportion of articles presenting
more than one position occurred in 2013. Only 29 percent of the articles offered more than one position from parliamentary debates on EU affairs.

In those cases where more than one position is presented, the main actor has been accompanied by a responding parliamentary actor's position. Either with support or disagreement. In order to answer to the hypothesis, a closer look at the composition of positions is necessary.

![Composition of Position Types](image)

**Figure 3.** The share of articles presenting a second parliamentary actor voicing support, critique or an alternative position, 1 Dec 2009 – 1 Dec 2019 (%), n=97.

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of the 97 articles, out of the total number of 187, where the main actor has been accompanied with a position in the type of support, critique, or alternative. Out of the 97 articles presenting more than one position, the majority of the articles, 72 percent, present a second actor voicing either critique or an alternative position on EU affairs. The latter is most common. During the full ten-year period of study, an alternative position is presented in 40 percent of all 97 articles. In 32 percent of the articles, a responding parliamentary actor voices only critique, whereas just under 30 percent of the articles present a second parliamentary actor supporting the main position. Now, has the composition of responding positions altered over time? Karlsson et al (2018) found that the debate within the EAC generated a greater share of alternative positions over time. Can the same be said when it comes to news media?
Alternative positions constitute the most frequented second position for the full ten-year period. However, rather than increasing over time, Figure 4 reveals that it is only during 2014 and 2017 that alternatives make up the largest share of positions. Instead, the proportion of alternative positions stay relatively consistent. It extends from its smallest share at 27 percent during 2012, to its largest share at 71 percent in 2017. When it comes to the level of critique, it peaks during 2010. At that point, half of all articles presenting more than one position included a second actor that criticised the main position. On the other hand, no position expressing critique was presented during 2018. Finally, as with the alternative positions, supporting positions are presented each year throughout the time period. Interestingly, during 2010, 2014, 2017 and 2019, the share of support stayed below 15 percent of the articles. On the other hand, the category makes up almost half of all articles during 2012 and is the most prevalent type of position in 2018.

What do these numbers say in regard to the hypothesis? It was expected that a larger share of articles would present second actors expressing positions in the type of alternatives and critique, relative to those presenting supporting positions or excluding competing positions altogether. When only considering the total share of articles where more than one position is presented, the results do not contradict the hypothesis. 72 percent present of the second positions were criticism or alternative positions. The same cannot be said when the share of articles where only one position is presented is added.
to the share of supporting positions. Figure 5 illustrates how alternatives and critique only make up 36 percent out of the total number of 187 articles.

![Consensus or Alternatives](chart.png)

**Figure 5.** The total share of articles presenting positions of alternative & critique, relative to no competing positions and support, 1 Dec 2009 – 1 Dec 2019 (%), n=187.

What news values carry the Riksdag’s debates on EU affairs? It was anticipated that dramatic elements generated from conflicting parliamentary actors’ positions would generate a large proportion of articles presenting diverging positions on EU affairs. The analysis does not show strong enough implications of that being the case. One the other hand, most references to the Riksdag make up only a small share of the full-length article. News values in the form of conflict could in fact be incorporated in the articles, but through references to other political events. An illustrative example is provided in the article *The EU Giants on a Collision Course* (Brors 2012a). In the aftermath of the Euro crisis, statesmen within the union were to meet in order to settle on a strategy for attaining increased financial stability across the union. First, the article presents multiple conflicting views from influential leaders of France and Germany. In the reference to the Swedish Riksdag, the following is presented “(i)n the assembly gathered in the Riksdag’s EAC preceding the high-level meeting, both Fredrik Reinfeldt (M) and Lars Ohly (V) agreed to say no to Euro obligations” (Brors 2012b). The example illustrates how, in some cases, contestation and debates are in fact presented in the article, but situated in Brussels and taking place between government representatives, rather than between the actors of the Riksdag.

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7 “EU-jättarna på kollisionskurs.”
8 ”I riksdagens EU-nämnd inför toppmötet var Fredrik Reinfeldt och Vänsterpartisten Lars Ohly rörande överens om att säga nej till euroobligationer.”
What then, are the implications in relation to previous research on the Swedish EAC? The above-mentioned example illustrates how elements of support and consensus within the EAC are conveyed to the wider audience. Yet, when looking at the articles that did present more than one position on EU affairs, supporting positions made up only the minority of the articles. In so, the implications do not necessarily contradict the findings of Loxbo (2014) and Karlsson et al. (2018). Instead, rather than the issue being a lack of debate and conflicting positions in the EAC, the results suggest that in almost half of all the articles only one position makes it to the pages. The issue then, lies not within a consensus oriented and de-politicised Riksdag, but rather in the news values of respective parliamentary actor’s position. Furthermore, the illustrative example was published in 2012, a time dramatically shaped by the financial crisis that had hit Europe. It was also a year where the share of support exceeded both criticism and alternatives. When concerns of national interests top the agenda, perhaps a greater share of articles presenting supporting positions are to be expected.

5.2 Hypothesis II: Government Bias

The second hypothesis seeks to spread some light over which parliamentary actors that make it to the pages. It is grounded in the framework of news values, suggesting that characteristics such as power and influence increase the likelihood of attracting news coverage. Moreover, based on the notions of biases, de Wilde’s (2014) study suggests the prevalence of an executive bias. Now, is the government the main actor, setting the EU-political agenda in Swedish news media?

![Figure 6: The share of articles presenting the main actor as Government, Opposition, Government & Opposition, the Riksdag/EAC/Other committee and Other during the period 1 Dec 2009 – 1 Dec 2019 (%), n = 187.](image)
A prima facia, the government bias-hypothesis is supported by evidence. Figure 6 provides a first image of the relative share of articles presenting respective parliamentary actor as the main actor. In almost half of all articles the government is presented as the main actor in the parliamentary debate on EU affairs. It is followed by the Riksdag, albeit, almost 20 percentage points less frequently presented as the main actor. Representatives of opposition parties were presented as the main actor in just under 20 percent of all articles. While the former supports de Wilde’s finding of an executive bias (2019), the frequent references to the Riksdag as one actor agrees with Auel’s latest study, suggesting that medias’ presentation of parliamentary involvement in EU affairs often refer to the parliament as one institution, rather than distinguish between the varying actors and positions within it (2019).

Has the government always been presented as the main agenda setter? The results presented in Figure 7 points in that direction. It is only in 2013 that the government does not compose the majority of the main actors presented. Instead, 64 percent of the articles presented either the Riksdag, the EAC or any other parliamentary committee as the main actor. From 2017 and onwards, the share of articles presenting either the government, the opposition or the Riksdag is more evenly distributed, and the prominence of the Government not as evident.

Figure 7: The share of articles presenting the main actor as Government, Opposition, Government & Opposition, the Riksdag/EAC/Other committee and Other for each year during the period 1 Dec 2009 – 1 Dec 2019 (%), n= 187. *On 3 October 2014, the Social Democratic Party and the Green Party formed government. The last three months of the year are presented in “2014 Red-Greens.”
The peak in 2014 must be interpreted with care. After the general election in September of that year, the Social Democratic party and the Green Party, formed government after two terms in opposition. In order to distinguish between the two offices, 2014 is separated into two stacks. With the new government taking office on 3 October, only five articles remained in the material selection for the analysis. Nevertheless, all of them presented the government as the main actor. So, could it matter which actors that take office? A closer look at Figure 8 and the party affiliation of the main actors illuminates some interesting variations.

During both Government Reinfeldt and Löfven, each prime minister’s party, the Moderate and the Social Democratic party respectively, were presented as the main actor in the largest share of articles, relative to both coalition and opposition parties. Nonetheless, during government Reinfeldt, the Riksdag is presented as the main actor in a comparable share of articles relative to the Moderate Party. The finding is interesting. It suggests that a “government bias” is not always prominent in Swedish news media, and that the Riksdag is in fact presented as the main agenda setter in a great share of articles. Notwithstanding, it also further supports Auel’s findings (2019). When it comes to the debate on EU affairs, the Riksdag or the committees within it, is often referred to as one actor, rather than as a facilitator of a great diversity of positions on EU affairs. Finally, in order to paint the full picture, the responding actor must be revealed.

**Figure 8:** Relative distribution of the main actor’s party affiliation, as presented during Government Reinfeldt (1 Dec – 3 Oct) & Government Löfven (3 Oct – 1 Dec 2019) (%). *Observe that one article may be coded as presenting more than one party affiliation for the first actor. Government Reinfeldt, n=102. Government Löfven, n=106*
Figure 9: The share of articles presenting the second actor as Government, Opposition, Government & Opposition, the Riksdag/EAC/Other committee and Other during the period 1 Dec 2009 – 1 Dec 2019 (%), n= 129.

Figure 9 illustrates the degree to which the different parliamentary actors have been presented as second actors in Swedish news media during the full ten-year period. Due to the fact that not all 187 articles presented a second actor, only 129 articles remained in the selection when the analysis of the second actor was carried out. Amongst the articles presenting a second actor, the opposition and the Riksdag is now more frequently presented relative to the government. During the examined time period, both distinguished opposition representatives and the Riksdag were presented as the second actor in 33 percent of the 129 articles, to be compared with the government’s 29 percent. Since the total number of articles are fewer, further comparisons between the respective actor’s proportion of presentations as main, respectively second actor, must be handled with care.

The results indicate that when it comes to the relative visibility of respective parliamentary actor, news values of power and influence do seem to carry explanatory power. Yet, though the “government bias”-hypothesis was supported when studying the full ten-year period, the results deviate from the trend during the Reinfeldt government’s term of office. Rather, the Riksdag was presented as the main actor to a similar extent as the government. A finding that challenges the hypothesis. However, a few methodological concerns must be regarded. One first explanatory factor as to why there were a greater balance between the Riksdag and the Moderate Party, holding the prime minister position, may be illustrated in Figure 7. During 2013 the Riksdag was referred to as the main actor to a greater extent than during any other year, a peak that might not be
representative for the Reinfeldt Government’s full term. A second explanation could be that, with one exception, the category “others” contains references to “the Alliance.” Thus, the relative share of government references is in fact about 5 percentage points larger.

Ultimately, whether or not a “government bias” is present will, as Auel emphasizes, depend on where one set the benchmark (2019), and whether the findings deviate from it (McQuail 2010, p. 549). Both Auel (2019) and de Wilde (2019) compare the visibility of actors with their corresponding parliamentary activity. Without an exact point of reference, this thesis cannot make any inferences in regard to whether the relative visibility of governments correspond with their activity in parliament. It could be argued, that by the way in which the government’s relation to the EAC is designed, the pattern discovered in news media corresponds to the formal procedure in the EAC. There, the government present their strategy before the high-level meetings in Brussels, and the Riksdag (EAC) either supports or disagree with the government representative. The relative prominence as a main actor would then to some extent reflect the formal relationship between the government and the parliament within the European architecture. The government set the agenda and the Riksdag takes a position.

A final methodological consideration might impact the results. The criteria applied when categorising the main actor is either that the actor’s party affiliation is explicitly mentioned in the article, or that the actor holds a minister post and is considered a prominent representative of the party. As holding minister posts lowers the bar for being registered as the main actor, this could affect the distribution of references to the government as the presenting the main position.

5.3 Hypothesis III: Policy over Polity

In the absence of a European arena for debate, Mair anticipates a redirection of opposition from the substance of EU politics, towards the EU as a system (2007; 2013). Interestingly, both Loxbo (2014) and Karlsson et al. (2018) suggest that opposition consistently and increasingly is directed towards EU policy, rather than towards polity. Drawing on the notion of tonality bias, and to how issues are presented, it was hypothesised that news media increasingly would publish a larger share of articles where EU affairs were
presented as a policy concern, relative to the mode of polity and procedure. Now, are medias’ coverage of EU affairs focused on the handling of EU affairs by parliamentary actors, on the EU as a system, or on the policies within it?

The evidence is mixed. Out of all 187 articles, 42 percent concern EU Policy, the substance of EU politics. The corresponding share of articles concerned with polity, EU as a system, reach 27 percent, while articles presenting issues related to parliamentary actors’ handling of EU affairs reach 32 percent during the full ten-year period. In so, though Mair predicted a redirection of focus, from policy to polity, the same does not seem to hold in Swedish news media. Rather, the greatest share of articles is devoted to EU affairs presented either in the mode of policy or procedure. Next, Mair’s thesis suggests that the focus on polity would increase with time (2007;2013), Karlsson et al.’s (2018) findings suggest that focus increasingly should be turned towards policy. What can be said in regard to Swedish news media?
Up until 2017, Figure 10 illustrates how the share of articles presenting EU affairs as a policy-concern consistently exceeds the corresponding share concerned with polity. While the share of articles concerned with polity follows a positive trend from 2014 and onwards, the corresponding policy trend shows greater irregularity and reaches its lowest point in 2019. In line with Mair’s thesis (2007; 2013), and contrary to the expectations from Karlsson et al.’s findings (2018), the data suggests that news media is increasingly presenting the debate on EU affairs as polity-concerns. Looking at the trajectory of the share of articles concerned with procedure no trend is identified. Rather, the share of procedure-oriented articles peaks in 2012, 2014 and 2017 with intermediary low points, and where the proportion corresponds with the share of policy related articles in 2013 and 2016. The analysis raises a second question. Could it be so that what topic that is on the agenda impacts how it is presented? In other words, does the covered area of EU affairs have something to say in regard to the mode that is presented in the articles?

Figure 11 illustrates the distribution of articles focused on policy, polity or procedure, categorised after respective area of EU Affairs. Three out of the original twenty categories (see Appendix A), contained no units of analysis, “mobility,” “industry and research” along with “education and youth (EYCTS).” Thus, these categories were removed from the analysis. The result suggests that whether articles highlights the substance of EU politics, focus on the EU as a polity, or the handling of EU affairs varies across areas. Figure 11 indicates that it is mainly three areas of EU affairs that are associated with a focus on polity in Swedish news media.
That is, constitutional concerns, defence and economic coordination. Each area entails topics that might carry a high likelihood of being presented as a concern regarding EU as system. Articles categorised as “constitution” covers topics stretching from which parliamentary parties that promote a “Swexit,” to issues such as voting procedures or how to sustain the Swedish regulation of the press. The area “economic coordination” attracted great attention in the aftermath of the Euro crisis. Enhanced economic cooperation was on the agenda when government representatives assembled for high-level meetings. Their aim was to ensure a future financial stability. Like with the EU-membership, Sweden had to take a position in regard to being “in or out” the cooperation. The Swedish position was conveyed in an article stating that “(i)n the Swedish Riksdag’s EAC all parties agreed to say no to the EU president’s suggestion of an enhanced EU cooperation” (Brors 2012b). The example illustrates how the presentation of a certain area of EU affairs can be focused on polity. More precisely, on the issue of how far along in the European integration process Sweden is willing to go. Parallely, the very same topic

\* ”I svenska riksdagens EU-nämnd var alla partier rörande överens om att säga nej till EU-ordförandens förslag om ett fördjupat EU-samarbete.
may be covered by articles that employ a different angle. For instance, one that is more concerned with the parliamentary actors’ handling of the EU affairs. The same author wrote “(f)or the Swedish government this debate comes at an inconvenient time. The prime minister, Fredrik Reinfeldt, and Minister of Finance, Anders Borg, have gathered electoral support by criticising the countries in the south of Europe and the EU for how they handled the debt crisis compared to Sweden”\footnote{10} (Brors 2012c). Here, despite covering the same area of European affairs, economic cooperation, the angle is not “desired degree of integration” or what the policy implications of the cooperation might be. Rather, focus is directed to the procedure, how the Swedish, as well as other EU members,’ governments handle EU affairs.

Figure 11 casts a more nuanced light on the policy-over-polity hypothesis. While policy-focus seem to make up for the largest share of news medias’ presentation of areas such as transport, migration, EPSCO,\footnote{11} and indeed economic coordination, relatively more attention is directed towards the parliamentary actors handling of EU affairs in areas such as trade and foreign policy. Moreover, articles prove predominantly polity oriented when constitutional issues are on the agenda. If the area in questions have implications for how EU affairs are presented, some of the variations illustrated in Figure 10 would then be explained by what issue that is on the agenda at the time, rather than reflecting a general trend of de- or politicisation. Likewise, the example illustrates how authors have the capacity to decide what mode of EU affairs that is conveyed to the Swedish citizens.

Now, what do these results say in regard to the overarching debate within the field of European integration?

5.4 Discussion

At the outset of this thesis, the issue of how to connect the Union’s citizens with the decision-makers was presented. It was further argued that the process of politicisation carries the potential to involve citizens in EU decision-making. Two opposing theories

\footnote{10} För den svenska regeringen kommer den här debatten i helt fel läge. Statsminister Fredrik Reinfeldt och finansminister Anders Borg har tagit opinionspöäng på att kritisera krisländerna i Sydeuropa och på hur EU hanterat skuldkrisen till skillnad från Sverige.”

\footnote{11} Employment, Social Policy, Health and Consumer Affairs.
were put up against each other. From one side of the debate, it was argued that time had brought conflicting lines and diverging positions into EU affairs (Hooghe & Marks 2009; de Wilde 2011; de Wilde et al. 2016; Hoeglinger 2016). In the process, EU issues become more salient and citizens engaged. The inverse was anticipated from the opposing side. Instead, a situation where political conflict would be reduced, nations would lack an arena for informative debates, and the publics’ growing discontent with EU politics would turn into opposition towards the Union, was anticipated (Mair 2007; 2013).

The debate is at the core of this study. While it is known that the Riksdag facilitates debates offering conflicting positions on EU affairs (Loxbo 2014; Kalrsson et al. 2018), the question is how these are communicated, from within the parliament to the wider audience.

Throughout the analysis it is evident that media, to some extent, “operate according to their own logics of news values in choosing what to report on and in what way” (de Wilde 2014, p. 47). It is illustrated when the first hypothesis is put to the test. Interestingly, whereas only half of all articles contained more than one position on EU-affairs, for those who did, the absolute majority presented either criticism or alternative positions. The implications then, are not that the parliamentary debate is de-politicised and consensus orientated (cf Mair 2007;2013), but rather that the media to some extent add a filter. One that might exclude diverging positions. When it comes to the expectation that elements of “conflict” encourages writers to present diverging positions, the example presented in the analysis suggested that actors in national parliaments are not only competing to have their position heard amongst colleagues within parliament, but also with actors on other political arenas. If this would be the case, it could have implications for parliaments ability to connect to the citizens via media. Above facilitating debates of EU affairs, they would also have to ensure that the positions they express carry news values in relation to other relevant actors outside plenary. Further, though governments, as anticipated, were presented as the main actor in the majority of all articles, the Riksdag was close behind. This has two implications. First, in news media, the Riksdag is indeed competing with the government in being the main agenda setter. Yet, the very same finding implies that the Riksdag is presented as one actor. In that light, the concern presented by Auel (2019)
seem to carry relevance also in Swedish news media. It implies that the diverging positions, held by various different actors within parliament, are not always conveyed.

When attention is turned to how EU affairs are presented, the results deviate from what is expected from earlier studies on the EAC. While Karlsson et al. (2018) found that issues regarding the content of EU politics were increasingly put at the centre in EU debates, a corresponding trend was not distinguished in Swedish news media. Rather, whether articles focused on the substance of EU politics, on issues concerning the EU as a system or the handling of EU affairs, seemed to be more related to the topic of concern, than to a specific point in time. It was also evident that the very same topic could be presented using all three modes. The implications would then be that, irrespective of whether the Riksdag increasingly is debating the policy aspects of issues, the mediated image of the very same debate might still be presented as a concern of polity or procedure. If so, this would have implications for the Riksdag’s ability to impact the mode of the public discourse and in so, its opportunity to bring the politics within the EU system closer to its citizens.

6. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to contribute to the existing literature on how parliaments, in interplay with news media, connect EU-citizens with their decision-makers. Three hypotheses were formulated in order to answer to the question of how the Swedish news media communicate the Riksdag’s debates on EU affairs to the citizens, and how it has altered over time. A few humble insights were offered.

The first hypothesis tested whether Swedish news media provide citizens a diverse set of positions from the Riksdag’s debate on EU affairs. The hypothesis was not supported by evidence. However, rather than illuminating a consensus oriented Riksdag, the implications are that news values such as conflict or influence may still be accounted for by the media. But, by presenting positions from actors on other arenas. The second hypothesis tested which parliamentary actors that are most prominent in medias’ reporting from the Riksdag’s debate on EU affairs. A prima facia, the government-bias hypothesis was supported by the evidence. Yet, a closer look at the two terms of offices included in the analysis, illuminates that the bias is not consistent over time. Rather, the Riksdag is frequently presented as the main agenda setter. While it on the one hand
implies that the government is not a solo player in national EU politics, it also insinuates that often times, the Riksdag is referred to as one decision making body, without distinguishing the various positions within it. The third and final hypothesis turned attention to the mode in which EU affairs are presented in news media. The results proved ambiguous. Though almost half of all articles presented EU affairs as a policy concern, the trend was associated with great irregularity. Rather, the implications are that the Riksdag has limited abilities to impact the mode in which the debates over EU affairs are presented to the wider audience. Despite the emphasize in the debate being the substance of a specific EU concern, the angle applied in the article may be another.

As suggested at the outset of the study, the process of politicisation is not a one actor mission. When it comes to the Riksdag’s ability to communicate a nuanced debate on issues that concern EU affairs, news values like conflict, influence and significance do seem to carry explanatory power in regard to the final mediated image from the Riksdag’s debate.

This first overview opens up for various paths to walk onwards. Sweden was selected as a critical case with least-likely conditions. As the analysis found no strong support, for any of the three hypotheses, the generalising possibilities are few. Still, the analysis provided modest indications that various positions from the Riksdag’s debate on EU affairs to some extent are communicated to a wider audience. Thus, the next step is to situate the study in other EU states. Tentatively, where both the parliament and the media act under different conditions. Further, by using a comparative cross-national design, potential explanatory variables can be isolated and tested. For instance, across the Union the formal power of each parliament’s European Affair Committee differs. In the Swedish case, the committee possesses the competence to mandate the government before EU negotiations. Could it be so that a government bias appears more prominently in members states where the parliamentary committee has less influence over EU affairs?

Furthermore, the study’s methodological limitations carry implications for further studies. One is the potential tendency of the analytical framework towards underestimating the degree of diverging positions in news media. By not defining the type of position presented by the main actor, some diverging positions could not be captured. Moreover, a second challenge is to separate the positions from within the parliament,
from the positions expressed by actors from other arenas. An alternative method with the potential to offer remedy to both weaknesses, is a claims analysis. By mapping patterns of communications between actors on various arenas, the study can account for several dimensions in the process of politicisation, providing a wider understanding of the interplay between the Riksdag, the media and citizens.

Moreover, this analysis is limited to print media from two newspapers only. By including other media platforms, such as regional papers or social and digital media, subsequent studies can distinguish potential differences in how EU debates are conveyed across different forms of media. A last aspect regards the selected time period. This analysis commences at the time of ratification of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009. Extending the analysis to go all the way back to when Sweden entered the union in 1995, would generate a robust set of data for inferences when it comes to development over time. For instance, it would enable a study accounting for parliaments’ successive increase in influence and how it might impact parliamentary actors’ news visibility.
References


Appendix A: Coding instructions

*NB: All citations are translated by the author. The original citations are found in the corresponding footnotes.

1. Defining Unit of Analysis

Every article constitutes one unit of analysis. Would it be the case that a full article covers the Riksdags debate over EU affairs, the article is coded from the top. The debate includes any references to exchanges of meaning within parliament - from committee meetings, to plenary votes or government declarations. It is the first encountered section with a clear, spatial connection to the Riksdag and a topic relevant to EU affairs that is coded. Other, to the topic relevant actors, that are covered in the article but cannot be captured by the coding scheme are acknowledged with an extra set of dummy variables.

The articles commonly cover more areas than the Riksdag’s debate over EU affairs. If so, the first step is to determine what constitutes the relevant paragraphs. Words used in the search string are useful (e.g. EU, Riksdag, EU-nämnd).

**Example:** ‘(...) The no-voting EU members will probably continue to argue that the free movement within the EU is limited. (Start) In Sweden, the political debate over the EU salary rules might continue. All Alliance parties reported dissenting opinions when Ylva Johansson asked for the mandate to negotiate from the Riksdag”12 (Melin 2017a).

2. Variables

Form variables

**Variable 1: PAPER**
Dagens Nyheter/Aftonbladet

**Variable 2: DATE**
Date of issue, written in the format YYYY-MM-DD

**Variable 3: GENRE**
The articles are separated into two categories. Either day-to-day news coverage, or as opinion-based articles. The former refers to all articles aiming to objectively report on news events. This includes interviews, background analysis and shorter news items. The latter refers to all articles where the author presents their own opinion. This includes editorials, op-eds, commentaries and debate articles. The articles are classified based on the Media Archive’s own categorization.

Content Variables

**Variable 4: POSITIONS**
The variable measures the number of positions provided on any given topic. It can take five values: No position; one parliamentary actor’s position is presented; more than one

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parliamentary actor jointly express one position; more than one parliamentary position is presented, and finally when difficult to discern, the article can take the value “unclassifiable.”

**No position:** An article is coded as having "no position" if it presents only one parliamentary actor, and it is explicitly stated that the actor has not taken a position on EU affairs in parliament.

**Example:** “When a consultation took place in the Committee on Industry and Trade the members had a gag” 13 (Cassel 2012).

**Comment:** The author is referring to a discussion held in a committee of the Riksdag, thus both selection criteria for the section to constitute a unit of analysis are fulfilled. Yet, no position presented. Instead, the members of the committee were silenced.

**One position:** *One position* can be presented in two ways. Either, expressed by one actor only or, expressed by more than one actor jointly.

**Example of one position jointly put forward by more than one actor:** "During the meeting with the Riksdag’s EAC this Wednesday, the Centre Party’s Eskil Erlandsson and the Left Party’s Jonas Sjöstedt questioned whether the new EU proposals were compatible with the principle of subsidiarity.” 14 (Melin 2017b).

**Comment:** Though only one position is presented, the example suggests that there are more actors standing behind the position.

**More than one position is presented:** The category includes all articles where more than one parliamentary actor either supports, criticizes or provides an alternative to the main position in the article.

**Variable 5: 1-ACTOR**
The fifth variable regards who is presented as stating the main position. The variable can take five values: government, opposition party, government and opposition parties, RIK/EAC/other Committee and unclassifiable. In cases where more than one position is presented, one distinguishes between the main actor and the responding actors.

**Principles of interpretation:** Two guiding principles are applied, agent and order.
The main actor is first and foremost, the grammatical agent - the first actor taking a position (doing something) in the article. The idea of order (the first agent) is based on the assumption that the author will present the most important elements in the article first. The second position is then seen as either the subject in the sentence (the one receiving an action) or the following actors having their positions presented.

**Variable 6-15: PARTY**
Dummy variable: 1= yes, 0= no
Party affiliation/RIK/EAC/Other committee. If two parties jointly present a position, the dummy-variables allows an analysis of which parties that stand behind the position.

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13 "När det var samråd i riksdagens näringsutskott fick deltagarna munkavle."
14 "Under mötet med riksdagens EU-nämnd i onsdags ifrågasatte Centerpartiets Eskil Erlandsson och Vänsterpartiets Jonas Sjöstedt om de nya EU-förslagen är förenliga med principen om subsidiaritet (...)"
Variable 16: MODE
The MODE-variable indicates what type of EU affairs that is the main concern of the actor(s)’ position. The variable can take on four values.

Policy (what?): If the main concern regards the substance of EU politics, it is coded policy.

Example of policy: “The Greek debt exchange is good for the European stability. Together with the ECB- and fiscal arrangements it contributes to allay the level of stress in Europe, he said after a meeting with the Riksdag’s EAC”15 (Brors 2012).

Comment: Focus is to direct to political elements such as fiscal arrangements and its substantial effects. No attention is directed to the negotiation procedure, nor how the arrangements could lead to increased centralisations of power and concern the EU or national polity.

Polity: If the main concern regards the EU as a political system, it is coded polity. Polity refers to the EU competencies, the institutions and the decision-making procedures.

Example of polity: “Tina Acketoft (L), member of the EAC, have repeatedly argued that the Swedish government should say yes. -National prosecutors are not enough. Since we have crimes in common, we also need a common prosecutor in the EU, says Acketoft”16 (Melin 2016a).

Comment: Focus is directed to whether Sweden would agree on establishing a common European Public Prosecutor’s Office. Since the office would be an EU-institution, the example was coded as polity.

Procedure (how?): If the main concern is how the governing party acts or handles EU affairs, it is to be coded as procedure. The code is commonly used when the discussion concerns how the government should act or position themselves in high meeting negotiations.

Rules of interpretation: In many cases, policy, polity and procedural concerns are all addressed in the same statement. One should then seek to identify the main tendency. The principle consulted in order to discern the main tendency, and what value to attribute the article, is first the relative share of space and second, if it still difficult to discern, which concern that is most emphasized. A final guiding factor, if the main tendency has yet to be determined, is the article headline.

Variable 17: AREA
The categories are provided by the study of Karlsson et al. (2018, p.9). Further information on what topics to include in each category have been found on the European Commission (2019) website.

15 ”Det grekiska skuldbytet är bra för stabiliteten i Europa. Tillsammans med ECB-åtgärderna och finanspolitiska åtgärder så bidrar det till att minska stressnivån i Europa, sade han efter ett möte med riksdagens EU-nämnd.”
16 ”Tina Acketoft (L), ledamot i EU-nämnden, har många gånger argumenterat för att den svenska regeringen ska säga ja. -Det räcker inte med nationella åklagare. Vi behöver en gemensam åklagare i EU eftersom brottsligheten är gemensam, säger Acketoft.”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Areas</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Agriculture</td>
<td>CAP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Cohesion</td>
<td>The Cohesion Fund is aimed at Member States whose GNI/habitant make up less than 90 percent of the EU average. The fund allocates resources to activities concerning transport networks and the environment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Constitution</td>
<td>E.g. Brexit, criticism towards the system, secrecy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Defence</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Economic coordination</td>
<td>E.g. Monetary union, financial assistance.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Enlargement</td>
<td>E.g. negotiations regarding Turkish &amp; Ukraine EU membership</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. EPSCO</td>
<td>Employment, social policy, health care, consumer rights (e.g. the Social Pillar, minimum wages, tobacco directive, food safety).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. EU Budget</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. EYCTS</td>
<td>Education, Youth, culture, tourism and sports.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Fisheries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Foreign Policy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Industry, research &amp; innovation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Judicial Cooperation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Migration &amp; Home affairs</td>
<td>E.g. Asylum, Frontex, human trafficking, counter terrorism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. Mobility</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Trade</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Transport/Telecommunication</td>
<td>Amongst these; time (clock), data retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Unclassifiable</td>
<td>E.g. parliamentary debates regarding parliamentary actors’ way of acting in the EP, neglecting to present EU stance to the EAC before “meeting”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Principles of Interpretations
If more than one area of EU affairs is presented, the principles of interpretation are first space, then order. The area that receives most space in connection to the position of the parliamentary actor is considered the main area. If two areas attain a similar amount of space, the second step is to consider the order in which the areas are mentioned.

Unclassifiable area: Some cases do not reveal what area of EU affairs that are at centre. These are to be coded “unclassifiable.”

Example “Unclassifiable:” *Minister for Employment, Hillevi Engström, is criticized for failing to act in accordance to what the EAC decided*” 17 (Carlborn 2012).

Comment: Though Engström carries the title “Minister for Employment” no further specifications explain what Engstöm’s and the EAC had decided. Therefore, the article is coded as “unclassifiable.”

Variable 18: TYPE
The TYPE-variable identifies what type of position the second actor presents. It takes three main values: support, critique and alternative. In some cases, a second actor is presented, without a position. The 2-ACTOR is then coded as “only mentioned/passive.”

Support: Support is the value attributed to the articles were a second actor actor is presented and expresses support towards the main position/actor.

Example of support: “Sweden stay with the position that all member states shall receive refugees and the position of the government (1-ACTOR) has strong support in the Riksdag’s EAC (2-ACTOR)” 18 (Winiarski 2018).

Critique: The other distinction is between whether the position of disagreement is only criticizing the first position, or if an alternative position on EU affairs is presented.

Alternative: An alternative involves critique towards either policy, polity or procedure, followed by an alternative approach. In other words, the reacting position presents another desired substance of EU politics, a different EU line in regard to the system as a whole, or another way in which the government or the EU should act.

Principle of caution, in those cases where it is not clear whether an alternative is presented, it should be coded as criticism.

Only mentioned/Passive: The second to final mode is “only mentioned/passive.” The value is attributed articles where the first actor or the author acknowledges the second actor, but no position is presented.

17 Arbetsmarknadsminister Hillevi Engström kritiseras för att inte ha agerat i enlighet med vad riksdagens EU-nämnd beslutat.”
18 Sverige står fast vid positionen att alla medlemsländer ska ta emot asylsökande och regeringens ståndpunkt har starkt stöd i EU-nämnden i riksdagen.”
Example: "Today, Friday, the minister of finance Magdalena Andersson, meet with the Riksdag’s EAC in order to anchor the position the government seeks to pursue in the European Council for the ministers of finance" (Dagens Nyheter 2015).

Comment: The meeting is presented, but no position from the EAC as a unit, or of any of the parliamentary actors within it is presented. The 2-ACTOR is thus coded “only mentioned.”

No other parliamentary position: When only one parliamentary actor is presented.

Example: “I was in the Riksdag when the decision was made, and it was considered uncontroversial. It did not cause a debate, no one presented a counterproposal and there were no reservations in the committee on Finance” (Torstensson 2013).

Unclassifiable: If none of the above categories fit, the article takes the value “unclassifiable.”

Example: “Borg, who represents Sweden in the Economic and Financial Affairs Council configuration, answered avoidantly: I am thoroughly and constructively following the development within the EU” (Edberg et al. 2013).

Comments: The position is explicitly “unclear.” There is no criticism, support or alternative way of action presented. Nevertheless, Borg’s voice is raised. Albeit, unclassifiable.

V19: 2- ACTOR
The 2- ACTOR refers to the positions that are presented as a response to the first position. The range of actors included correspond with the variable values for the 1- ACTOR.

In some cases, more than one responding position is presented in the article. The principle of interpretation is that the first responding position is coded as 2- ACTOR. If the other following positions present a similar position, they are composited into one actor. Each party affiliation is then specified with the following dummy variables. If, on the other hand, the following positions deviate from the second position they are coded as “other relevant actor,” but are not regarded in the analysis.

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19 “I dag, fredag, kommer finansminister Magdalena Andersson till riksdagens EU-nämnd för att förankra den linje som regeringen vill driva på finansministrarnas möte.”
20 “Jag satt i riksdagen när beslutet togs och det ansågs okontroversiellt. Det föranledde ingen debatt, det lades inga motförslag och det fanns inga reservationer i finansutskottet.”
21 “Borg, som företrädare Sverige i EU:s råd för ekonomiska frågor, svarat undvikande: ”Jag följer därför det pågående arbetet inom EU noggrant och konstruktivt.”
Appendix B: Analyised News Articles

2009
Brors, Henrik. 2009b. Israel hoppas på franskt stöd i bråk om Jerusalem.

*Dagens Nyheter*. 5 December.

2010

2011

2012

*Aftonbladet*. 4 July.


2013

2014
Melin, Annika ström. 2014d. Så har svenskarne påverkat beslutet i EU-parlamentet. Dagens Nyheter. 27 April.
Sundin, Mathias. 2014. EU-domen ger oss chans att förbättra övervakningsläget. Dagens Nyheter. 11 April.
Stenberg, Ewa. 2014c. Wallström trotsade EU. Dagens Nyheter. 9 November.

2015
Rosén, Hans. 2015a. Sverige pressar på för att EU ska ge de fattiga länderna tydligare besked om fin.... Dagens Nyheter. 6 November.

2016
Eriksson, Karin. 2016. SD företräder en dålig politik som bygger på dåligaVärderingar, Dagens Nyheter. 9 October.
Larsson, Mats J. 2016e. Lövin tvingades backa i EU-nämnden. Dagens Nyheter. 15 October.

2018

2019