

Dealignment and Realignment: The Swedish parliamentary election of 2022

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The study argues that the Swedish parliamentary election of 2022 is related to major long-term changes in Scandinavian and European politics in general. Therefore, the aim is to analyze long-term changes in Swedish politics over time, in relation to significant short-term changes due to the Swedish parliamentary election of 2022. The study describes the Swedish party system and the election campaign preceding the 2022 Swedish parliamentary election as well as the short-term changes, relative to the previous election, that this election brought with it. The study also describes important long-term changes in the Swedish party system since the 1980s. In relation to these changes, starting in the 1950s, the study describes the increased mobility of Swedish voters and the decline of voting along the social class cleavage as dealignment. Moreover, the study addresses the ideological changes of voters along the subjective left-right scale, the economic left-right dimension, and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension in relation to the concept of realignment. In conclusion, the article shows the need to study the long-term processes of dealignment and realignment to be able to understand the transformed party system that

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became so clear in the 2022 Swedish parliamentary election.

Key Words: Sweden, dealignment, realignment, election, voting, voters, voter mobility, class voting, party identification, left-right, libertarian, authoritarian, ideology

Introduction

Almost every parliamentary election is perceived as historic when it takes place. The election to the Riksdag of Sweden in 2022 is no exception. Several associated events and results can be highlighted as both new and exceptional and as having the potential to change Swedish society. However, the Swedish parliamentary election of 2022 is not an isolated phenomenon, but is related to major long-term changes in Scandinavian and European politics in general. It is best to study such long-term changes over time. The aim of this study is accordingly to discuss long-term changes in Swedish politics over time, starting with significant changes related to the Swedish parliamentary election of 2022.

The extensive long-term changes in European politics, of which Scandinavian politics is largely part, have led to a major shift in Swedish politics. This has meant that politicians and parties have had to adapt to a transformed electorate. In this study, I argue that this political change is due to two decisive transformations among Swedish voters. First, Swedish voters have weaker loyalty to single parties and identities linked to social cleavages, meaning increased voter mobility in that more voters switch parties between two consecutive elections. Second, this increased mobility has created space for a new ideological dimension and for new parties related to this dimension, changing the Swedish party system. The first change exemplifies dealignment

and the second realignment (Dalton et al. 1984).

This study first describes the Swedish party system, followed by the election campaign preceding the 2022 Swedish parliamentary election as well as the short-term changes, relative to the previous election, that this election brought with it. The study then describes important long-term changes in the Swedish party system since the 1980s. The increased mobility of Swedish voters is then discussed in relation to the concept of dealignment. In the next step, the study addresses the ideological changes underlying the transformed party system that became so clear in the 2022 Swedish parliamentary election, relating these changes to the concept of realignment. Finally, the study summarizes its central conclusions about dealignment and realignment in Swedish politics.

The Swedish party system

Since the 1930s, Swedish politics has revolved around the center-left Social Democrats. The central position of the Social Democrats in Swedish politics was the reason why the party system was long characterized as primarily predominant (Sartori 1976). The Social Democrats repeatedly received around 45% of the vote and were the government party holding the position of prime minister uninterruptedly from 1936 to 1976. Although the Social Democratic governments were sometimes based on coalitions with parties to the right of them (mostly with the Center Party—formerly the Farmers’ Union), the Social Democrats could also form one-party minority governments with loyal support from the Left Party (before 1990, the Left Party – the Communists) in parliamentary votes (Möller 2019). Since the 1970s, the dominant position of the Social Democrats has declined and the struggle for government power came to be between two political blocs (Aylott and Bolin 2015). The composition of the two blocs has partly changed as new parties have been

added along with increased party fragmentation. Up to the 1990s, the socialist bloc (i.e., the Social Democrats and the Left Party) stood against the bourgeois bloc to the right. This latter bloc comprised the Moderates (a liberal-conservative party), the Liberals, and the Center Party (both center-right parties), and after 1991, the first time they were elected to parliament, also the Christian Democrats (a party close to the Moderates). Subsequently, a red-green bloc developed that comprised the Social Democrats, the Left Party, and the Green Party (Miljöpartiet de gröna, an environmentalist party that first won parliamentary representation in 1988). In response, the parties on the right deepened their cooperation under the name the Alliance (Alliansen). It was also the Alliance parties that formed the government in 2006-2014 (Hagevi 2014a). A coalition government between the Social Democrats and the Green Party succeeded the Alliance government. Late in 2021, the Green Party left the government, and the Social Democrats formed a one-party government (Bjereld et al. 2022).

The electoral success of the Sweden Democrats—which grew from being outside the Swedish parliament before the 2010 election to being the third largest party in the Riksdag in 2018—caused the Alliance to split (Aylott and Bolin 2019). Scholars characterize the Sweden Democrats as an authoritarian populist party (Mudde 2019; Norris and Inglehart 2019), and some of the organizations that formed the party in the 1990s were neo-Nazi organizations (Rydgren 2004). When the party won parliamentary representation, the established parties perceived the Sweden Democrats as a pariah party that none of them wanted to cooperate with (Hagevi and Enroth 2018) and formed a *cordon sanitaire* (Backlund 2020). The idea was to keep the Sweden Democrats away from political influence, which failed as the party's voter support increased. After the 2018 election, the Center Party and the Liberals chose to support the coalition government between the Social Democrats and the Green Party, but without formal government participation. The Moderates

and the Christian Democrats, on the other hand, gradually opened themselves to substantive political cooperation with the Sweden Democrats. However, neither the Moderates nor the Christian Democrats wanted the Sweden Democrats to be part of a future government. During their term of office, the Liberals changed their political strategy and declared the intention to be part of a government with the Moderates and the Christian Democrats, with the support of the Sweden Democrats (Bjereld et al. 2022). Before the election, the Center Party leader Annie Lööf clarified that her party intended to be part of a coalition government with the Social Democrats, which this party found very positive. Thus, the parties have now formed two new blocs (Aylott 2022) that, for lack of other names, are called “Team Magdalena” (i.e., the Social Democrats, Center Party, Green Party, and Left Party) after the Social Democratic party leader and Prime Minister Magdalena Andersson, and “Team Ulf” (i.e., the Moderates, Christian Democrats, Liberals, and Sweden Democrats) after the Moderate and opposition leader Ulf Kristersson.

Short-term effects: debated issues and election result

Ahead of the 2022 election campaign, journalists speculated about a “Greta effect” (named after climate activist Greta Thunberg), i.e., that global climate change would influence citizens to vote for more radical environmental policies (Ahlström 2022). Instead of increasing their support for more radical climate policies, however, many politicians claimed that Sweden had done enough to address climate change. The Left Party, which previously had a strong environmental profile, did everything to downplay its previous support for radical climate policies. The Green Party found itself increasingly alone in proposing stricter environmental demands, but without this issue gaining prominence in media coverage of the election campaign. The week before

election day, only 38% of voters stated that the climate and environment were among the most important issues when they decided what party to support in the parliamentary election (Novus 2022). Indeed, climate and environmental issues were not even among the voters' top five most important issues in the election. Instead, voters found healthcare (60% mentioned these as important), law and order (54%), energy policy (48%), school and education (48%), and migration and integration (47%) to be more important issues. Law and order has steadily increased in importance to voters and is often linked to the growing problem of gun violence and murders. Issues of education and immigration/integration have declined in importance to Swedish voters, perhaps because previously extensive negative media reporting on Swedish education has decreased and fewer people are immigrating to Sweden. Instead, energy issues increased in importance (Novus 2022) as prices for heating, electricity, and fuel increased strongly. The increased interest in energy costs made the Sweden Democrats, Moderates, and Christian Democrats reduce their focus on climate change, instead promising lower energy costs.

The Social Democrats and the parties that supported Andersson's candidacy for Prime Minister tried to link the increased energy prices to the reduced imports of Russian gas and petroleum products due to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Otherwise, issues of security policy were not significant during the election campaign (Gardell 2022). This may seem surprising since, shortly before election, the Swedish government changed its long-held security policy by abandoning the non-alliance strategy and instead—together with Finland—applying for membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). What was not abandoned, however, was the Swedish tradition of making major security policy decisions by political consensus. Only the Left and Green parties continued to oppose Swedish membership in NATO, though they scarcely pushed the issue in the election campaign. On the other hand, there is reason to suspect that the security situation in Europe increased voter support

for the incumbent government, which may be a reason why the Social Democrats increased their vote share in the Swedish parliamentary election (Hinnfors 2022).

Voters' important issues are usually reflected in the parties' election campaigns and in mass media coverage. The 2022 election campaign differed in this respect. The issues dominating mass media coverage concerned energy, the economy, defense, and law and order. Only after those came education and—the issue that most voters prioritized—healthcare and other types of social care, followed by immigration/integration, and welfare (Wiberg 2022). The issues that parties on the political right have traditionally have issue ownership of (Lefevere et al. 2015) were thus high on the mass media's agenda during the election campaign. In contrast, issues of healthcare and welfare were lower on the mass media's agenda.

Election night was exciting, and the results of the two political blocs were close (see Table 1). Early on election night, it looked as though Team Magdalena would win a majority. While Swedish government parties on average tend to lose over 3 percentage points of voter support during an electoral term (Hagevi 2022), the Social Democrats had increased their voter support by two percentage points. Green Party support had also surprisingly increased somewhat, but there were indications that this was due to a temporary influx of left-wing voters who wanted to prevent the party from falling below the parliamentary threshold of 4% of the total vote. A late turnaround on election night meant that Team Ulf won a majority, forming a government including the Moderates, Christian Democrats, and Liberals. The last three parties all lost voter support in the 2022 election. The reason why Team Ulf was able to form a government was the success of the Sweden Democrats, making it the second largest party in the Swedish parliament. Despite this, the Sweden Democrats were left out of the government. After the election but before taking office, the soon-to-be-government parties made an

agreement—the Tidö Agreement—with the Sweden Democrats about the government’s policies during the coming electoral term. In addition to policies, the agreement clarified that the Government Office would employ people from the Sweden Democrats to participate in government policy making during the electoral term.

<Table 1> The results of the Swedish parliamentary elections,
2018 and 2022 (percent)

Parties	2022	2018	Difference
Moderates	19.1*	19.8	-0.7
Christian Democrats	5.3*	6.3	-1.0
Liberals	4.6*	5.5	-0.9
Sweden Democrats	20.5	17.5	+3.0
Center Party	6.7	8.6	-1.9
Social Democrats	30.3	28.3*	+2.0
Green Party	5.1	4.4(*)	+0.7
Left Party	6.8	8.0	-1.2
Other parties	1.5	1.5	±0

Note: * Party in government; (*) party in government until 2021. *Source:* The Swedish Election Authority (2022).

After the election, several commentators mentioned that Swedish politics had experienced a paradigm shift (Furtenbach 2022). Unlike previous governments after the 1920s, this government was not anchored in parties of the centre-left or centre-right; instead, it was a pronounced government of the political right. It was also the first time that the Sweden Democrats, through their size and through the Tidö Agreement, had gained direct influence over government policy. Some noted that the new government had announced several new, and clearly conservative, government policies, not least concerning migration and integration.

Long-term changes

Let us take a step back and consider what has happened to Swedish politics and the party system that experts once perceived as among the most stable in the free world (Oscarsson 1998:3). For most of the 20th century, the Swedish five-party system was the prototype of what was perceived as the typical Scandinavian party system and was described as so stable as to be frozen (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). The last parliamentary election that resulted in a classic five-party system was in 1985. Let us compare that election result with the 2022 result and discuss the dramatic changes that occurred in this once-stable party system (see Table 2).

<Table 2> Results of Swedish parliamentary elections,
1985 and 2022 (percent)

Parties	2022	1985	Difference
Moderates	19.1*	21.3	-2.2
Christian Democrats	5.3*	—	+5.3
Liberals	4.6*	14.2	-9.6
Sweden Democrats	20.5	—	+20.5
Center Party	6.7	12.4	-5.7
Social Democrats	30.3	44.7*	-14.4
Green Party	5.1	1.5	+3.6
Left Party	6.8	5.4	+1.4
Other parties	1.5	0.5	+1.0

Note: *Party in government. *Source:* The Swedish Election Authority (2022).

Not only has the number of parties increased, but their relative proportions of support from the electorate have changed as well. The Social Democrats have declined the most. The Liberals and the Center Party have also declined in strength, while the Moderates have declined less (however, this party

peaked at 30% voter support as recently as 2010). The only party from the classic five-party system whose voter support has increased is the Left Party. Some of what previously deterred citizens from voting for this party disappeared with the fall of the European communist regimes in 1989-1990. Otherwise, it is new parties that hardly existed in 1985 that have gained in voter support, above all the Sweden Democrats, but also the Green Party and the Christian Democrats. For the Sweden Democrats, the increase in voter support has been steady without setbacks and has not been related to short-term changes such as fluctuations in the level of immigration. Short-term changes are therefore not the main explanation. Instead, there are explanations to be sought among long-term changes. To understand these changes, it is important to consider dealignment and realignment.

Dealignment in Swedish politics

In current politics, it is noticeable that the once-frozen Scandinavian five-party system (Lipset and Rokkan 1967) has thawed. The major force behind this change is individualization: a comprehensive social change in which more and more individuals emphasize their independence in social relations at the expense of collective belonging (cf. Giddens 1991). In older societies, people more often had one dominant social identity, often related to social class, religion, or rural versus urban residence. Today, a single social identity seldom dominates political choices in the same way. Instead, it is more usual that a person chooses to put on and cast off a multitude of social identities: IT consultant, parent, city dweller, musician, sports fan, book lover, parent, etc. A variety of identities also gives a variety of political interests. These various identities and interests mean that a voter less often sees a certain party as an obvious representative. As a result, voter loyalty to a

particular party is weaker at the same time as there is decreasing alignment between parties and different social groups as class, religion, and rural versus urban residence (Franklin et al. 1992; Oskarson 2005). This phenomenon is dealignment (Dalton et al. 1984).

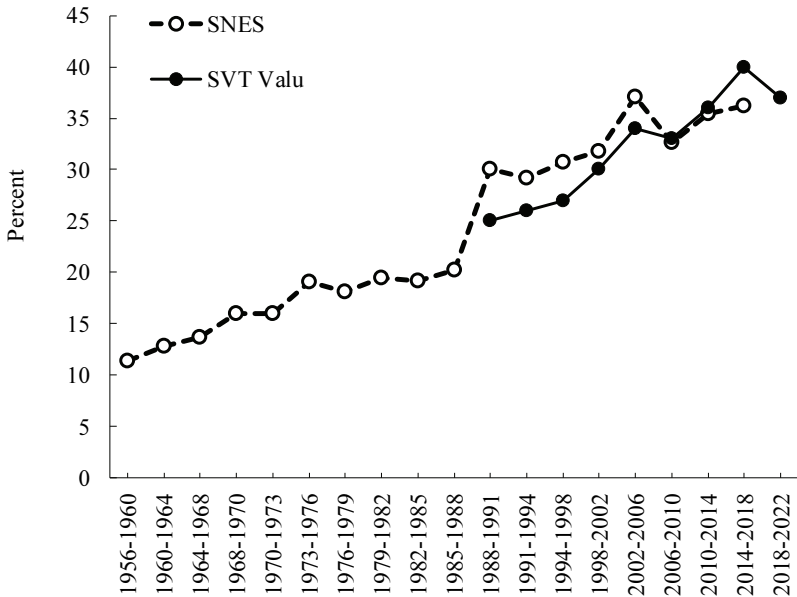
Scholars notice dealignment in many ways. One way is that the percentage of Swedish voters who perceive themselves as strong supporters of a particular party has decreased. In 1956, the first time scholars surveyed party identification, 45% of voters indicated that they were strongly convinced supporters of one political party, a figure that by the next election in 1960 had increased to 53%. Since then, the proportion with this strong party identification has decreased, and in 2018 (the latest published measurement point), only 11% stated that they were strongly convinced supporters of their most preferred party (Oscarsson 2020).

This decline in voter loyalty has facilitated voter mobility between parties, another sign of dealignment. Over a third of Swedish voters voted for a different party in 2022 than in 2018. By studying data from the time series that the Swedish National Election Studies (SNES) has compiled since 1956, and from SVT Valu (an exit poll conducted outside sampled polling stations after people have voted since 1991), one can see the change over time (see Figure 1).

As indicated by SNES data, the percentage of party switchers has increased since 1956, especially after the Scandinavian five-party system “thawed.” Even the shorter time series based on SVT Valu data indicates a corresponding increase in party switchers, although the percentage of party changers decreased somewhat in 2022. The picture of voter mobility evoked in Figure 1 is, however, somewhat exaggerated. Swedish voters do not move in an unstructured way between parties, but according to certain patterns. It is mainly within each political bloc, on the left and the right, that voters switch parties, while the percentage switching between parties in different blocs is

lower. The voters’ emotional identification both with one of the blocs and with a position on the left-right scale structures many citizens’ voting and switching between parties (Hagevi 2015a, 2022). Given that the parties have reconstructed their relations with the two blocs between the two most recent elections to Sweden’s Riksdag in 2018 and 2022, it is surprising that voter mobility did not increase between these elections.

<Figure 1> Voter mobility: voters switching between parties in two consecutive parliamentary elections, 1956–2022 (percent of voters that switch parties)



Source: Swedish National Election Studies (SNES) (Henrik Oscarsson 2020); SVT Valu 1991–2018 (Holmberg et al. 2020); SVT Valu 2022 (Näsman et al. 2022).

Since 1970, the Swedish parliamentary elections have shared election dates with the elections to 290 municipalities and 20 regions. Initially, few voters

split their voting between different parties in these three elections but vote splitting has increased over time. In the 1970 election, one of every seventeen voter supported different parties in the elections to the Riksdag of Sweden and in the local municipal elections (Persson 2020), but in 2022 over a third of voters split their voting in this way (Näsman 2022). Alongside increased voter mobility as an explanation of such vote splitting, there is also party fragmentation at the local level. Even within municipalities, dealignment has created latitude for party fragmentation, and more local parties without a national-level party organization are running in municipal elections (Erlingsson 2019). Anyone who votes for such a local party must choose another party at the national level in order to participate in the parliamentary election. Such circumstances also increase the percentage of party-splitting voters.

Dealignment also means that more voters now decide how to vote closer to election day. The first time scholars studied when voters decided how to vote was in 1964 (Oscarsson 2020). At that time, under a fifth of Swedish voters stated that they made their voting decision during the election campaign (a period starting approximately one month before election day). In recent elections, however, the corresponding proportion has been well above half of voters. This does not mean that every second voter has no idea how to vote before the election campaign starts or that they change party preference during the election campaign. Most people have a party preference but are open to the possibility that something may come up during the campaign that would justify a change of party preference. Usually, about a third of the voters who decide their party choice during the election campaign also change their party preference during this period and vote for a different party than originally intended when the campaign began (Oscarsson 2020).

Dealignment applies not only to voters' relationship with parties, but also to how they connect different identities with their voting. Dealignment means, among other things, that citizens' alignment with single social groups has

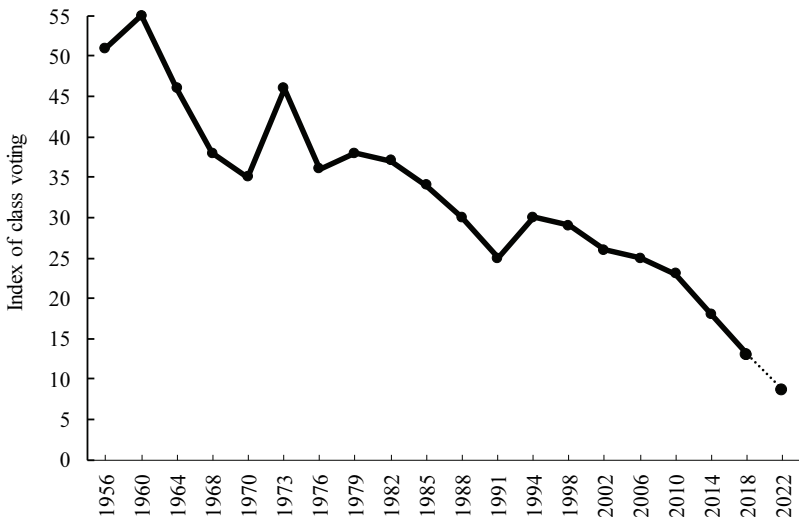
weakened. One reason for this is individualization (see above); another reason is weakening differences between social groups due to increasing economic development, improved communications, the expanding welfare state, and accessible education. This reduces voter demand for politics associated with social cleavages. Therefore, seen over a longer period, previous ideological differences between social groups have decreased (Dalton 2020). For example, fewer people engaging in manual labor identify themselves as part of the working class (Oskarson 1994). Some political scientists describe this development as the *embourgeoisement* of the working class, as they perceive few and very small differences between, for example, the opportunities and lifestyles of white- and blue-collar workers in society (Dalton et al. 1984). Overall, dealignment means that the class affiliation of voters now matters less for party choices in elections. If so, this would mean a decrease in so-called class voting.

One way to examine class voting is to use Alford's index of class voting. It is calculated as the percentage support for parties explicitly targeting the working class among voters who work in manual labor minus the support for the same parties among other voters (Alford 1964). In Swedish politics, the percentage voting for the Social Democrats and the Left Party among other voters is subtracted from the percentage voting for the Social Democrats and the Left Party among voters engaging in manual labor (Oskarson 1994). Strong class voting results in higher index scores, while weaker class voting results in lower index scores. Figure 2 shows the class voting pattern in Sweden since 1956.

Swedish class voting was a very strong and major factor that structured and stabilized citizens' voting, being crucial for the frozen party system. Compared with other countries, Swedish class voting was uniquely strong around 1960. No scholar has ever noted stronger class voting in other countries (Mayer 2009). Since then, Swedish class voting has decreased drastically. After 2010,

the growth of the Sweden Democrats among voters engaged in manual labor has reduced class voting even further, and the last index point in 2022 indicates a score of nine. It is no longer reasonable to consider the class cleavage to be politicized in Sweden. This represents a drastic change in Swedish political behavior: from a world record in class voting to a depoliticized class cleavage. This declining class voting is another strong indicator of voter dealignment in Sweden.

<Figure 2> Alford's index of class voting in Swedish parliamentary elections, 1956–2022



Source: 1956–2018 (Oscarsson 2020); 2022 (SVT Valu 2022, my own calculation).

Alongside class voting, the importance of other socio-economic factors for voting has declined in the Swedish electorate. The importance of religion for voting has decreased with increased secularization (Hagevi 2018). Regarding the urban-rural cleavage, there are different tendencies. Swedish urbanization

has resulted in one of Europe's most concentrated populations. After a long-term decrease, the economic differences between Swedish regions have increased since the 1980s (Enflo 2016). At the same time, a stable portion of the Swedish population (about 20%) lives in rural areas. Expanded communication options have in many ways dissolved the boundaries between city and country (Björling and Fredriksson 2018). The importance of the urban-rural cleavage for voting is declining (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2016), although some urban-rural differences in opinion remain (Larsson 2020).

As previously important social cleavages, in the form of socio-economic factors, are diminishing in importance, no other social cleavage has become established that can replace the great importance that, for example, class voting had in structuring voting in Sweden. Although the difference between how women and men vote has increased, this gender gap is nowhere near the strength that class voting once had in Sweden (Hagevi 2022).

Several indicators show extensive dealignment in Swedish politics. Such a change presents an opportunity for other changes. In a frozen party system with loyal voters in strong alignment with social cleavages and parties, the opportunities are slim for political change, new ideological conflicts, and new parties. Dealignment opens the voter market to new parties, new ideological orientations, and political changes.

Realignment in Swedish politics

Realignment means that parties' traditional electoral bases have shifted significantly, usually with a changed distribution of votes for parties as a result (Dalton et al. 1984: 13). For instance, new parties may represent an electoral segment in society with new ideological values. Comprehensive dealignment creates latitude for such a development. Yet, Swedish voters' ideological

identification is something that stabilizes Swedish politics. When voters think about politics, they may use related cognitive heuristics (Price 1992). The voter's relationship to the left and right can be one such cognitive heuristic (Inglehart and Sidjanski 1976). If voters know their own position on the left-right scale and find it possible to relate this position to a party, political proposal, or political event, they can relatively quickly determine whether they perceive the party, event, or proposal as good or bad. According to the theory of proximity voting, voters judge parties they perceive to be close to their own opinions as good, while they judge parties that they perceive to be far from their opinions as bad (Downs 1957).

As long as it has been possible to investigate, that is, for the last 40 years, Swedish voters' self-placement on the left-right scale has shown a constant and strong relationship with their party choice, of at least $\eta = 0.70$ (Oscarsson and Holmberg 2016). Also, compared with other countries, this relationship is very strong in Sweden. Speculations that the left-right scale is no longer important (Hellwig 2008; Mair 2007) have no support in empirical research on Swedish politics (Grenstad 2003; Hagevi 2022).

When parties and politicians want to communicate with voters, they use left and right in their political rhetoric. For both politicians and voters, however, it is a problem if many voters cannot relate the left-right spatial metaphor to central topics in politics. This may be the case if political conflict no longer consists of a single dimension between left and right, and another ideological dimension asserts itself (Rohrschneider and Whitefield 2012). In that case, there are several diverse ways of thinking about politics and mentally organizing political information (Bennulf 1994; Oscarsson 1998). Indeed, scholars report that the old politics of the economic left-right dimension has seen competition in recent decades from a new politics (Bornschieer 2010: 440).

At the center of the old politics is economic conflict over the government's role in the economy, economic equality, and the role of individual effort in

economic success. The new politics is instead about a conflict between libertarian and authoritarian values (Dalton 2010; Flanagan 1982; Inglehart and Flanagan 1987; Kitschelt 1994; Knutsen and Kumlin 2005; Hagevi 2022). Libertarian values are based on individualism, including rebellion against authorities, which causes individuals to emphasize themselves and to support the unlimited approval of individual lifestyles, norm criticism, and globalization (Bjereld and Demker 2005; Flanagan and Lee 2003; Gustavsson 2011; Kitschelt 1994). Authoritarian values instead feature a desire to create a national community through greatly reduced immigration, with clear authorities and traditional norms and harsh punishments for those who challenge these authorities and norms (Flanagan 1982; Flanagan and Lee 2003; Kitschelt 1994; Mudde 2019). Scholars link such an ideological dimension to an emerging cultural cleavage (Norris and Inglehart 2019) that complements older social cleavages (Lipset and Rokkan 1967).

Several theories suggest that the proportion of the population with libertarian values is likely to increase. The theory of intergenerational value change stipulates that younger generations tend to have a greater proportion of individuals with libertarian values than do older generations (Inglehart 1977). Based on this theory, the experiences of individuals during their most formative period—i.e., childhood and adolescence—are decisive for the values they develop. When individuals have passed this formative period, their values remain stable through adulthood, regardless of whether society changes. During their formative period, most individuals belonging to a generation in a society share certain central experiences. In Sweden, people belonging to older generations—especially those born before the Second World War—tend to have values formed during socially insecure conditions with war close to the national borders. Such experiences tend to foster material and authoritarian values. Sweden, and other post-industrial countries, have become richer and developed welfare states that, according to the theory of intergenerational value

change, reduce the demand for material and authoritarian values. People who had their values formed under these conditions tend to take them for granted. Individuals who grew up in socially safer and more peaceful societies instead develop libertarian values. Therefore, younger generations often hold more libertarian values, while older generations instead developed more authoritarian values. As younger generations replace older generations, the general values are changing in post-industrial societies to become more libertarian. Another theory emphasizes the social positions of individuals (Kitschelt 1994). Increased education, professions with great independence, professions in the public sector (operating in a market protected from competition), and norms usually developed by independent women are then assumed to lead to more libertarian values (Kitschelt 1994). A third theory emphasizes that individuals with the social positions just mentioned perceive themselves as the winners of globalization, and that they therefore develop libertarian values (Kriesi et al. 2008). In contrast, the decreasing number of people who work in industrial professions (in a competitive market), with low education and upholding norms that men often have, develop authoritarian values (Kitschelt 1994), or they perceive themselves as the losers of globalization and therefore develop authoritarian values (Kriesi et al. 2008).

Extensive empirical studies show that, with each new generation in post-industrial countries, the proportion of voters with libertarian values increases while the proportion of voters with authoritarian values decreases (Norris and Inglehart 2019). This also applies to Swedish voters (Hagevi 2022). Such a change in values may seem surprising in the face of authoritarian populist parties' success all over Europe—not least in Sweden. Some may argue that this indicates that authoritarian values have become more widespread. However, all the theories about value change mentioned above assume that authoritarian values, before the value change, were not only widespread but also accepted in general society. Voters with authoritarian

values could be found on both the left and right ends of the political spectrum and appeared in most parties. With the growth of libertarian values in society—among citizens and various power holders (Hagevi et al. 2022)—a growing number of people with predominantly authoritarian values perceived these to be under threat. As a backlash against the growing libertarian values in society, voters with predominantly authoritarian values are increasingly open to political mobilization based on these values. When they perceive an authoritarian populist party as a good representative of their values, people with authoritarian values start to vote for such parties as the Sweden Democrats. Paradoxically, then, the increased spread of libertarian values leads to a backlash, which means that authoritarian populist parties grow by mobilizing voters whose values they represent (Ignazi 1992; Inglehart and Flanagan 1987: 1303–1318; Norris and Inglehart 2019).

To examine libertarian and authoritarian values among Swedish voters, I have constructed an index representing the libertarian–authoritarian dimension. The index is based on four questions that Surveyinstitutet (the title of the study is Survey 2020), Linnaeus University, asked of a representative sample of Swedish voters in 2020 (Hagevi 2020). For each question, it was possible to respond using an 11-point scale (in addition, there was the possibility to respond “don’t know”), with the opposite ends of the scale representing libertarian and authoritarian values. The first question aimed to investigate how the respondents valued national sovereignty versus globalization (the wording is translated into English): “Some think it is best to have national sovereignty in which borders between countries are of great importance, while others think it is good to have globalization in which borders between countries mean less and less. Where would you place yourself on the national sovereignty–globalization scale?” The 11-point scale ranged from national *sovereignty* (0) to *globalization* (10). The second question aimed to examine values tied to traditional norms versus unlimited norm criticism and freedom of choice versus

adaptation to the mainstream: “In a society there are various informal norms about how people should be. Some think that those who deviate from the norms of the majority should adapt to them, while others think that those who deviate from the majority should be allowed to do so. Where would you place yourself on the adapt–deviate scale?” This time the scale ranged from *adapting* (0) to *deviating* (10). The third question concerned the view of a multicultural society versus a national common culture: “Some want Swedish society to have a common culture while others want Swedish society to be multicultural. Where would you place yourself on the scale of common culture–multiculturalism?” This scale ranged from *common culture* (0) to *multicultural* (10). The fourth question considered views of crime and punishment: “Some want offenders to be treated for while others want them to be punished. Where would you place yourself on the scale of treatment of offenders–punishment of offenders?” This response scale ranged from *punishment of offenders* (0) to *treatment of offenders* (10).¹ Those who gave answers emphasizing national sovereignty, adaptation, a common culture, and punishment for offenders were assumed to have more authoritarian values than those whose answers were closer to globalization, allowing deviation, multiculturalism, and treatment of offenders. To construct an index related to the libertarian–authoritarian dimension, the respondents’ answers were added together, and the sum was divided by four (the number of questions). The index, indicating a cultural dimension, ranged from authoritarian (0) to libertarian (10).

In the same way as for the libertarian–authoritarian dimension, an index for the economic left–right dimension was constructed based on three questions in Survey 2020. The first question was: “Some think that the government should have as large a role as possible in society’s economy, while others think that

1) In Survey 2020, the response scale ranged from *treatment of offenders* (0) to *punishment of offenders* (10), but in this study the responses have been reversed to be able to transfer the responses to an index.

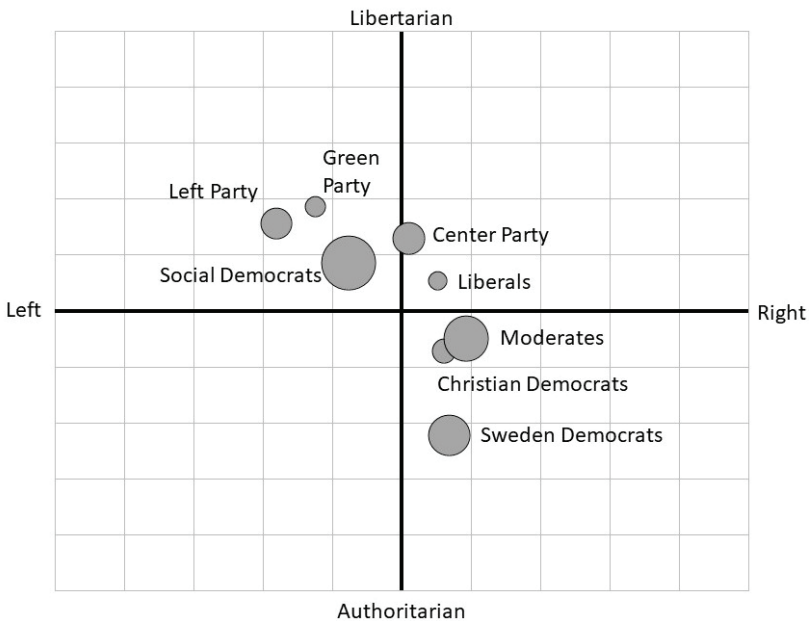
the government's role in society's economy should be as small as possible. Where would you place yourself on the scale large role for the government–small role for the government?" The 11-point scale ranged from *the government's role should be as large as possible* (0) to *the government's role should be as small as possible* (10). The second question was: "Some people think economic equality is important, while other people think economic equality is unimportant. Where would you place yourself on the scale economic equality is important–economic equality is unimportant?" Now, the 11-point scale ranged from *economic equality is important* (0) to *economic equality is unimportant* (10). The third question was: "When someone becomes rich, some people think it mostly depends on the individual's character and personal choices, while others think it usually depends on circumstances other than those the individual can affect. Where would you place yourself on the scale between the statements that financial success tends to depend on the individual and financial success tends not to depend on the individual?" The response scale ranged from *financial success tends not to depend on the individual* (0) to *financial success tends to depend on the individual* (10).²⁾ Respondents who declared themselves to be closer to believing that the role of the government should be as large as possible, that economic equality is important, and that economic success tends not to depend on the individual are assumed to be more to the left than those who answered that they were closer to believing that the role of the government should be as small as possible, that economic equality is unimportant, and that economic success tends to depend on the individual. To construct a scale for the economic left-right dimension, the respondents' answers were added together, and the sum was divided by three (the number of questions). In this way, an index indicating

2) In Survey 2020, the response scale ranged from *financial success tends to depend on the individual* (0) to *financial success tends not to depend on the individual* (10), but in this study the responses have been reversed to be able to transfer the responses to an index.

the economic dimension ranged from left (0) to right (10).

Voters must deal with two dimensions of opinion: one that relates left and right to economic views, and one that ranges between libertarian and authoritarian values. Figure 3 shows the average values for the supporters of each party on the economic left-right dimension and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension in 2020, two years before the most recent Swedish parliamentary election. The size of the circles indicates the extent of voter support for each party.

<Figure 3> Ideological positions of Swedish voters by party preference, 2020 (mean)

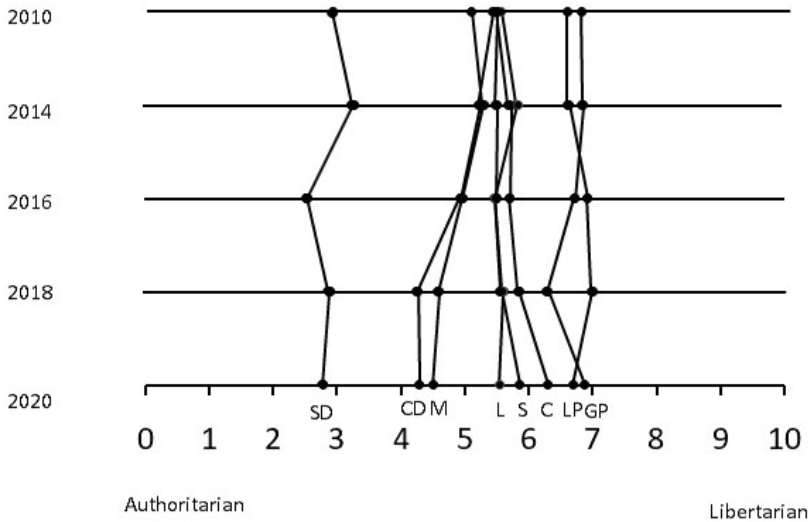


Source: Survey 2020, Surveyinstitutet, Linnaeus University.

Supporters of the Green Party tend to be closest to the libertarian end of the libertarian–authoritarian continuum, while supporters of the Sweden Democrats tend to be closest to the authoritarian end. On the economic left–right dimension, supporters of the Left Party tend to be farthest to the left, while the Moderate supporters tend to be farthest to the right. While these two parties also existed during the era of the frozen five-party system, both the Green Party and the Sweden Democrats have established themselves in the Swedish parliament after the extensive dealignment. The rising importance of libertarian and authoritarian values has increased polarization among Swedish voters. In 2020, ideological polarization was greater along the libertarian–authoritarian dimension ($\sigma = 2.09$) than along the economic left–right dimension ($\sigma = 1.73$). The internal ideological tensions of the two government alternatives reflect the ideological values of the sympathizers of each party. While the greatest challenge facing Team Magdalena is to be united on economic issues (note the difference between the voters for the Left and Center parties), the greatest challenge facing Team Ulf is to unite the government parties and the Sweden Democrats on matters relating to libertarian and authoritarian values (see the difference between the Sweden Democrats and the Liberals).

There have been interesting changes in the position of some parties' sympathizers on the libertarian–authoritarian dimension. As Surveyinstitutet has collected data on Swedish voters' libertarian and authoritarian values since 2014 (including recall data from 2010, collected in 2014), it is possible to study changes over time. Figure 4 shows the average value of each party's sympathizers on the libertarian–authoritarian dimension, 2010–2020.

<Figure 4> Position of Swedish voters on the libertarian–authoritarian dimension by party preference, 2010–2020 (mean)



Note: C = Center Party, CD = Christian Democrats, GP = Green Party, LP = Left Party, L = Liberals, M = Moderates, S = Social Democrats, SD = Sweden Democrats. Data from 2010 are recall data collected in 2014. *Source:* Survey 2014–2020, Surveyinstitutet, Linnaeus University.

It is mainly supporters of the Christian Democrats and the Moderates who have increasingly positioned themselves in the authoritarian direction, while voters who sympathize with the Center Party have positioned themselves closer to the libertarian end of the cultural dimension than before. There are two central explanations for the ideological change in the electorate of these parties. The first starts from political mobilization. With increased political saliency for libertarian and authoritarian values, the parties have started to mobilize voters along this ideological dimension. Thus, the voters' sorting between the parties based on these values has increased. The second is based on the different strategic choices of the parties. The Center Party has

increasingly positioned itself as green liberals with strong libertarian values (in addition to being pro-market). In line with this strategy, the party has rejected cooperation with the Sweden Democrats. Several pro-market libertarians therefore vote for the Center Party. On the other hand, the Moderates and the Christian Democrats have made opposing strategic choices to win votes or stop the flow of voters to the Sweden Democrats. Thus, more and more of the Moderates' and Christian Democrats' voters appreciate authoritarian values (Hagevi 2022).

In the short term, more voters have also adopted authoritarian values, which has benefited the electoral growth of the Sweden Democrats. Together with the changed ideological profile of the Moderates, Christian Democrats, and the Center Party, the growth of voter support for the Sweden Democrats means ideological polarization among Swedish voters with different libertarian and authoritarian values.

Concerning the economic left-right dimension, scholars have shown that voters who prefer a particular party have, during the last decade, placed themselves in roughly the same position (Hagevi 2015b, 2022).

The ideological change among Swedish voters has for many of them also meant a changed perception of what left and right mean in politics. Table 3 compares the correlation between voters' self-placement on the subjective left-right scale with their position on the economic left-right dimension and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension, 2014-2020.

While the correlation between voters' self-placement on the subjective left-right scale and their position on the economic left-right dimension is fairly stable (the lower correlation in 2014 is probably because the economic left-right dimension was measured slightly differently then), the correlation between voters' placement on the subjective left-right scale and their position on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension has strengthened each year. Regarding the correlation of the economic left-right dimension and the

libertarian–authoritarian dimension with the subjective left–right scale, the difference in strength was negligible on the last measurement occasion two years before the Swedish parliamentary election of 2022. Unlike a decade ago, when voters tended to perceive the meaning of the subjective left–right scale in economic terms, in 2020, it is about as common to associate left and right with libertarian and authoritarian values, respectively.

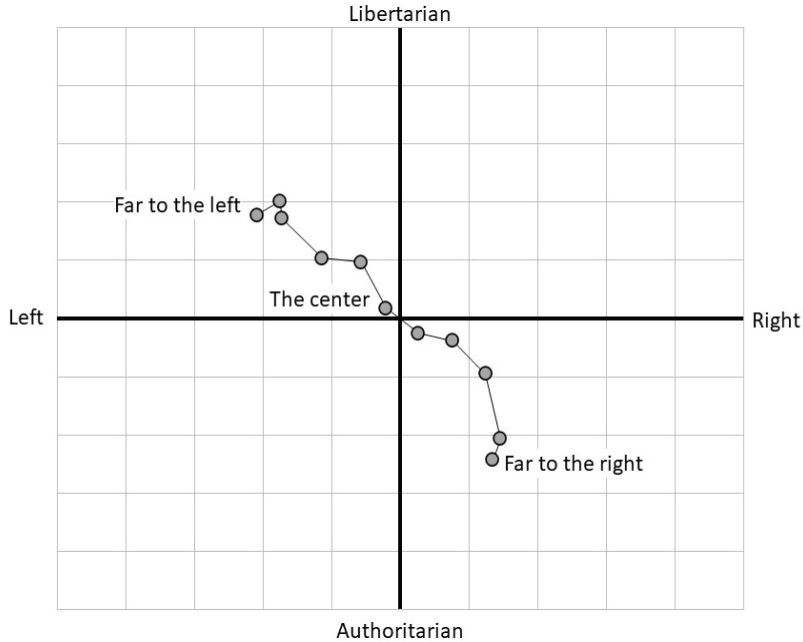
<Table 3> Correlation between subjective left–right position and positions on the economic left–right dimension and the libertarian–authoritarian dimension among Swedish voters (Pearson’s r)

	Economic left–right	Libertarian–authoritarian
2014	+0.52***	-0.26***
2016	+0.61***	-0.42***
2018	+0.62***	-0.43***
2020	+0.59***	-0.52***

Note: The index for the economic left–right dimension in 2014 is based only on the questions about the government’s role in society and the view of economic equality. This index of only two items is probably the main reason for the weaker correlation with the subjective left–right scale than in 2016–2020. Significance: * $p < 0.10$, ** $p < 0.05$, *** $p < 0.01$.

The weight attached to the economic left–right dimension versus the libertarian–authoritarian dimension differs depending on where the voters position themselves on the subjective left–right scale. In Figure 5, the average value of the economic left–right dimension and the libertarian–authoritarian dimension is reported according to where on the subjective left–right scale the voters placed themselves.

<Figure 5> Voters' positions on the economic left-right dimension and the libertarian-authoritarian dimension after their self-placement on the subjective left-right scale (mean)



Source: Survey 2020, Surveyinstitutet, Linnaeus University.

To some extent, it seems that left and right in politics tend to have different meanings depending on where the voters place themselves on the subjective left-right scale. While voters who place themselves slightly to the right of center distance themselves from left and center positions mainly by holding more right-wing economic values, voters who place themselves in the most extreme right-wing positions on the subjective scale tend to distance themselves from the center position and the more moderate right-wing positions based on more extreme authoritarian values. Concerning voters' attitudes regarding the left's most extreme subjective positions, on average, this

does not result in more extreme positions on the economic or cultural dimensions. Why this should be is currently not known, but it is possible that the different perceptions of the meaning of being left are part of a potential explanation. With some modest exceptions, however, the average subjective left position means that the distance from the center is about the same on the economic left-right dimension as on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension.

Swedish politics has thus experienced an extensive realignment. The increased importance of libertarian values has led to a backlash involving the mobilization of voters with authoritarian values, and, at least in the short term, a growing part of Swedish voters are prioritizing such values. This political realignment, which has meant increased party fragmentation in the Swedish parliament, has also meant that voters interpret politics differently than before. This can be seen from the fact that left and right in politics are no longer completely related to economics, but that voters also use these spatial metaphors to cognitively relate to libertarian and authoritarian values.

Conclusion

Over the short term, the Sweden Democrats and the Social Democrats gained voter support in the recent parliamentary election. The Green Party also increased its voter support, but there is reason to believe that their electoral success was largely based on tactical votes from left-wing sympathizers who wanted to prevent the party from falling below the parliamentary threshold. All other parties lost voter support compared with the previous parliamentary election.

Over the long term, the changes to the Swedish party system have been more radical. Here, I have argued that the result of the 2022 Swedish election should be understood based on these long-term changes. As several studies conducted in Western Europe have reported (Dalton 2020; Dalton et al. 1984;

Franklin et al. 1992), voting behavior has changed over time.

First, extensive dealignment has been noted, not least among Swedish voters. The level of party identification has declined among voters and voter mobility between parties is increasing (Berglund et al. 2005; Dalton 2012). Since the time when Swedish citizens' voting was largely based on class (Lipset and Rokkan 1967), this social cleavage has decreased drastically (Oskarsson 1994). The social class cleavage has now been depoliticized in the Swedish electorate (Hagevi 2022). In general, voters' relationships to the various traditional social cleavages have weakened without being replaced by other social cleavages (Dalton et al. 1984; Franklin et al. 1992; Oscarsson and Holmberg 2020; Thomassen 2005). Fewer voters now uphold a single identity—for example, being a blue-collar worker—that permeates their entire lifestyle. Instead, people often have several important social identities. This part of voter dealignment means that the previous alignment between a party and a particular segment of society is weakening (Franklin et al. 1992). Instead, a growing number of individuals base their voting on what happens during the election campaign (Hagevi 2022; Oscarsson 2020).

Second, this study identifies a marked realignment of Swedish politics. The pre-war generation's experience of closeness to war and fear of unemployment and sickness in the absence of a social safety net has disappeared among younger generations of voters, among whom it is more usual to take peace, economic growth, high consumption of goods, and basic welfare for granted. Based on the material abundance of post-industrial societies, the importance of an increased material standard of living has diminished for most people. Compared with citizens of the “poor Sweden” of the early 20th century, few Swedish citizens today experience an increase in the material standard of living as equally decisive for how life should take shape (Inglehart 2018). Among younger generations, increased levels of education and structural changes in trade and industry have also meant that many perceive an increased

independence associated with greater mobility on the labor market (Kitschelt 1994, 2004; Kriesi et al. 2006). Therefore, the importance of libertarian values has increased: self-expression, individualism, norm criticism, unlimited dissolution of traditional norms, rebellion against authority, free lifestyle choices, and support of globalization.

Among those who mistrust individualization, norm criticism, globalization, and the reduced importance of the nation and authorities, or who belong to social groups that do not perceive the labor market as allowing increased mobility, there has been a backlash. Those who have not changed their values in a libertarian direction, but who maintain authoritarian values, are obviously reacting against these developments (Hagevi 2015b, 2022; Inglehart and Flanagan 1987; Norris and Inglehart 2019). A new conflict has been born among citizens that pits libertarian against authoritarian values. The latter values emphasize a national community with strongly reduced immigration, with clear authorities and traditional norms and harsh punishments for those who challenge these authorities and norms (Flanagan 1982; Flanagan and Lee 2003; Hagevi 2022; Kitschelt 1994; Mudde 2019). The Swedish election campaign in 2022 was characterized more by this conflict than by economic left-right issues. The polarization among the Swedish voters was also more accentuated along the cultural dimension than the economic one. However, this does not mean that economic issues are no longer important to Swedish voters.

The election result of 2022 marks the latest step in the realignment of Swedish politics. Voters' reduced loyalty to individual parties means that the voter market is open for new parties to enter the Swedish party system. In the long term, the fragmentation of the Swedish party system will increase. Step by step, the old entrenched Swedish party system has dissolved and is being replaced with a new one. Old and previously significant socio-economic cleavages are fading away. Their significance for the political conflict between left and right is more a faded memory from the past than something that

mirrors the present reality.

In the 2022 parliamentary election, there were two dominant ideological dimensions in Swedish politics: an economic one between left and right and a cultural one between libertarian and authoritarian values. There are thus two ideological dimensions to consider when analyzing Swedish politics. The libertarian-authoritarian dimension has grown in importance for the Swedish voter. The economic left-right dimension has not lost importance for citizens when voting, but value changes have added the libertarian-authoritarian dimension to previously dominant economic considerations.

In the long term, the percentage of voters with libertarian values will keep increasing among Swedes, gaining more influence in society, even in the parties. A decade ago, all parliamentary parties were more libertarian than authoritarian (Hagevi et al. 2022). In response to this development, there has been a backlash among voter segments whose values are not libertarian. Voters with authoritarian values are being mobilized by parties such as the Sweden Democrats, which are growing in support among the voters. One short-term result is an increase in the percentage of voters who hold authoritarian values. This has meant that the Christian Democrats and Moderates, over the last decade, have increasingly adapted to the new demand and gained voters with predominantly authoritarian instead of libertarian values.

Tension between libertarian and authoritarian values has resulted in a realignment in Swedish politics, as voter groups have shifted their party preferences and new parties have emerged representing new ideological conflicts. Value changes have replaced the old Swedish one-dimensional party system with a two-dimensional system. Alongside voters' economic values, cultural values on the libertarian-authoritarian dimension must also be considered. Current conflicts in Swedish politics are now oriented along these two ideological dimensions. Swedish politics has thus not only taken steps towards how politics works in the rest of Scandinavia but has come closer to the politics of most European countries.

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<국문요약>

탈정렬(Dealignment)과 재정렬(Realignment): 2022년 스웨덴 총선

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이 연구는 2022년 스웨덴 총선이 스칸디나비아와 유럽 정치 전반의 중대한 장기 변화와 연관돼 있다고 주장한다. 그러므로 연구의 목적은 스웨덴 정치의 장기 변화를 2022년 스웨덴 총선으로 인한 중요한 단기 변화들과 연계하여 분석하는 것이다. 연구는 스웨덴 정당체제와 2022년 총선 과정의 선거 캠페인, 그리고 이전 선거와 비교해 이번 총선 결과가 불러온 단기 변화들을 기술한다. 연구는 또한 1980년대 이래 스웨덴 정당체제의 중요한 장기 변화를 기술한다. 이러한 변화와 관련하여 이 논문은 1950년대부터 시작된 스웨덴 유권자들의 유동성 증가와 사회계층적 균열에 따른 투표 감소를 탈정렬(dealignment)로 묘사한다. 나아가, 이 연구는 주관적 좌-우 척도, 경제적 좌-우 차원, 그리고 자유지상주의(libertarian)-권위주의(authoritarian) 차원에 의거해 유권자들의 이데올로기적 변화를 살펴보며, 이를 재정렬(realignment) 개념과 연관지어 다룬다. 결론에서 논문은 2022년 스웨덴 총선 결과 매우 명확히 드러난 정당체제의 변형을 이해하기 위해서는 탈정렬과 재정렬의 장기 프로세스를 연구할 필요가 있음을 보인다.

주제어: 스웨덴, 탈정렬, 재정렬, 선거, 투표, 유권자, 유권자 유동성, 계급투표, 정당 일체감, 좌-우, 자유지상주의, 권위주의, 이데올로기

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