Survival of the Motherland: Nationalist Party Views on Abortion

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Abstract
This essay examines nationalist party views on abortion. The abortion policies of the Sweden Democrats, the United Kingdom Independence Party, and Sinn Féin are studied through descriptive actor-centred idea analysis. Utilising theories on nationalism and abortion policy, the party policies on abortion are scrutinised in terms of which conception of abortion they subscribe to, and how actors and objects in relation to abortion are perceived. Subsequently these views are compared, showing a great overlap in terms of how abortion as a public issue is conceived, and how the objects and actors involved are perceived. All parties in the study subscribe to a moral conception of abortion to some extent, and the aborting woman and the foetus become the main focal points. In other regards party policies on abortion vary greatly.
# Table of content

1. Introduction: Nationalist Parties and Abortion in Europe ................................................................. 4
   1.1. Objective........................................................................................................................................... 5
   1.2. Research questions ......................................................................................................................... 6
   1.3. Abortion – Regulations and definitions ......................................................................................... 6
   1.4. Demarcation..................................................................................................................................... 7
2. Theory and previous research .................................................................................................................. 7
   2.1. Nationalism ...................................................................................................................................... 7
   2.2. Abortion Policy ............................................................................................................................... 9
   2.3. Nationalist rhetoric on abortion .................................................................................................. 10
3. Method .................................................................................................................................................... 13
   3.1. Analytical tools .............................................................................................................................. 14
   3.2. Material .......................................................................................................................................... 14
4. Analysis .................................................................................................................................................. 15
   4.1. Table of Nationalist Parties .......................................................................................................... 15
   4.2. Sweden Democrats ...................................................................................................................... 16
   4.3. United Kingdom Independence Party ........................................................................................ 20
   4.4. Sinn Féin ......................................................................................................................................... 23
5. Conclusions and discussion ................................................................................................................... 27
6. List of references ................................................................................................................................... 30
1. Introduction: Nationalist Parties and Abortion in Europe

In the past years, nationalism has been on the rise on the European political arena. Many EU countries have seen increasing support of right-wing anti-immigration parties in domestic parliaments, and many of these parties have also gained mandates in the European parliament (Ghosh 2011:189). Nationalist parties in Europe, aside from their focus on national self-determination, can display quite different characteristics. In economic matters, some (such as France’s National Front and The Austrian Freedom Party) lean to the left while others (like Party for Freedom in the Netherlands) subscribe to right-wing economic policies. A common feature shared by many of the newer nationalist parties is a scepticism towards what they perceive as an increased influence of Islam in European society (Rosenthal 2011:58-59). Then there are older nationalist parties rooted in historical and ongoing struggles for national self-government, such as Sinn Féin and the Scottish National Party, that display less negative attitudes toward immigration and ethnic minorities (SNP Policy Base; ‘Policy on Immigration’; Sinn Féin website, ‘A Republic for All’).

The report ‘Patriotism and Patriarchy – The impact of nationalism on gender equality’, published by the Kvinna till Kvinna Foundation in cooperation with the Expo Foundation, examines how nationalist rhetoric and policies affect the living conditions of women and LGBTQ persons:

“Nationalism has many enemies, which can all be grouped under the term “the Other”. These can include Muslims, immigrants, homosexuals, Jews, communists, transvestites or feminists, for example. The focus varies from country to country and from one political climate to another, but the rejection of feminists and women’s rights defenders is something that unites most nationalists. The role of women is primarily that of bearing the nation’s children and supporting men as the nation’s defenders. A woman should be the hub of the family, the smallest building block of the nation.” (Hamrud & Wassholm 2014:3)

Gender equality issues are hardly ever prioritised by nationalist parties, and several parties adhere to the belief that biological gender differences make women and men suitable for different tasks (Hamrud & Wassholm 2014:37). One issue in which the nationalist resistance towards women’s rights becomes manifest is abortion rights. In societies permeated by nationalism political leaders have a vested interest in harnessing female reproduction for national purposes, and they often join cause with religious leaders to encourage traditional gender roles and family patterns (Hamrud & Wassholm 2014:4).
A central aspect of any nation-building project is the people of the nation. Maintaining a stable population growth is important, and if the basis of the nation is cultural and ethnic the fertility rate may become a focus of attention. The total fertility rate – which is the mean number of children born to a woman during her lifetime, provided that her childbearing conforms to the age-specific fertility rates of a given year – in the EU has declined since the 1960s. The trend showed some signs of reversal at the beginning of the 2000s, but has since dropped again. This may partly be explained by a trend of delaying childbirth, indicated by an increase in the mean age of women at childbirth, and if so the total fertility rate would rise again after a ‘catching-up’ period. However, the current average total fertility rate in the EU was 1.55 in 2013, which is well below the replacement rate of 2.1 considered necessary to maintain a constant population size excluding the effects of inward or outward migration (Eurostat, ‘Fertility Statistics’ 2015-12-01). Eduards states that demands to restrict abortion tend to become more pronounced in times of low nativity (Eduards 2007:109). Historically, demographic arguments have been utilized when debating abortion policy. The Swedish Population Commission report on abortion in 1937 saw a robust population as a ‘peace factor’ and were concerned that an aging and decreasing population might make the country vulnerable to attack (Elgán 1994 in Eduards 2007:110). Eduards writes that the connection between demographic policy and the dream of a vital and important nation cannot be denied, and that this becomes particularly evident when an external threat – be it real or imagined – from others nations is perceived (Eduards 2007:110).

It follows that European parties aiming to build a community based on national or ethnic belonging should perceive the low European birth rate as a threat and adapt their family policy thereafter, and advocating for a restrictive abortion policy may be one aspect of such a change.

In this essay, I aim to examine the views on abortion held by nationalist political parties, and how these views relate to the context in which they are active as well as their particular brands of nationalism. The issue of abortion actualises an inherent tension between the project of national self-determination and feminist conceptions of bodily autonomy, between collective needs and individual rights. I want to examine the differences and similarities in how this tension manifests within diverse types of nationalist parties.

1.1. Objective

I aim to analyse the views on abortion expressed by nationalist parties in Europe, and how these views connect to ideas of nationalism and national identity. Not all nationalisms are created alike, and I have chosen to compare nationalist parties hailing from different ends of the political spectrum to increase understanding of how diverse nationalist ideologies view the issue
of abortion. While the parties are may be vastly different in other regards, the similarities and dissimilarities in their approach to the particular issue of abortion may elucidate the implications of nationalism on gender equality at large.

1.2. Research questions
- What conceptions of abortion policy do nationalist parties in Europe subscribe to?
- How is the relationship between different actors and objects involved in abortion perceived?
- How do these views diverge and converge between different nationalist parties?

1.3. Abortion – Regulations and definitions
Throughout the 20th and 21st century there has been a general trend of extending abortion rights throughout Western Europe. However, the abortion laws of Western Europe still cover the full spectrum from very liberal regulations to highly restrictive ones (Levels et al. 2014:95-96).

Besides the restrictiveness of the law, access to abortion services may be limited through measures such as requiring parental consent in the case of minors, mandatory counselling or waiting periods, or allowing physicians to refuse to participate in the procedure on grounds of personal or religious conviction (Levels et al. 2014:98).

Abortion on demand refers to the right to procure an abortion at will. This refers both to situations where the law explicitly states the freedom of abortion at the woman’s request as well as situations where the law is implemented in a way that only requires the woman’s consent for her to be able to acquire an abortion. In some countries the law formally requires that the pregnancy constitutes a situation of distress but no additional verification than the woman’s own admission is required, or the law formally requires approval of one or more doctors which in praxis is always granted. Most countries cap the right to abortion on demand to a certain gestation time, after which an abortion may not be carried through or requires further approval. Countries with such time limits are still considered to allow abortion on demand.

Advocacy groups aiming to ban or restrict abortion, primarily motivated by a conviction that purposely ending foetal life is immoral, usually label themselves pro-life. Propagators of abortion on demand call their alternative pro-choice, since they advocate for the right to choose whether to obtain an abortion or follow through with the pregnancy. Since abortion is a divisive issue there is an on-going semantic struggle, in which actors attempt to control the debate by labelling their opponents as ‘pro-abortion’ or ‘anti-choice’. For simplicity, I have chosen to use ‘pro-choice’ and ‘pro-life’, since these are names that each side of the spectrum identify with.
1.4. Demarcation

I have chosen to limit the scope of my research to three nationalist parties, representing different strands of nationalism: the Sweden Democrats, the United Kingdom Independence Party, and Sinn Féin. While a study encompassing a greater number of nationalist parties in Europe would be highly interesting, it would provide less opportunity to perform an in-depth examination of the specific forms of nationalism that these parties subscribe to, and a less detailed analysis of their respective policies on abortion. I have chosen to focus on three parties that represent quite diverse forms of nationalism in the hope to gain some insight concerning the range of nationalism in Europe. The Sweden Democrats are an example of a right-wing nationalist party, the likes of which has seen increased support in many of the Nordic countries over the last decade, and The United Kingdom Independence Party originated from EU-scepticism which is prevalent in many nationalist parties. Sinn Féin, on the other hand, are rooted in a long struggle of national self-determination, like several other parties in Ireland and the United Kingdom, due to the historical relationship between these countries and the internal composition of the United Kingdom. My aim is to compare the views on abortion held by parties subscribing to different conceptions of nationalism, and I believe that this selection achieves a good basis for making this comparison.

2. Theory and previous research

In this chapter I will review the theories of nationalism and abortion that my analysis is dependent on. The first section discusses the definition of nationalism and different types of nationalism, in order to understand the contexts by which modern nationalist parties have been shaped. In the subsequent section I introduce Mazur’s typology of conceptions of abortion as a public issue which I will utilise in my method of enquiry. Finally, the concluding section presents previous research on nationalist discourse on abortion which the views on abortion that are held by the parties in the study can be related to.

2.1. Nationalism

In ‘Political Geography’, Flint and Taylor define nationalism as an ideology that “ties group cultural identity to the construction of a state that has a specific territorial expression.” (2014:158) Persons are connected to a state based on their belonging to a national group, a membership which creates allegiance to the state and legitimises its existence. This order carries consequences on world, state and local scale: the world is politically divided into state entities; the (nation-) state is the main arena of politics; and national experiences and ideals take
precedence over local ones. Nationalism, as a way of perceiving the world rather than an explicit ideology, is so ingrained in our societies that other political ideologies have been forced to adapt and accept the pre-supposed nation-state as the given arena of politics (Flint & Taylor 2014:158-159). Nairn distinguishes between this universal theory of nationalism, and the particular nationalisms that pertain to different nations (Nairn 1977 in Flint & Taylor 2014:159). One unifying feature of nationalisms is that they emphasise a certain period of the nation’s past (real or imagined) as a ‘golden age’, and uses this as a model for the course that is to be set into the future (Flint & Taylor 2014:163). To illustrate this, Nairn describes nationalism as the ‘modern Janus’, after the roman god with two faces – one facing backwards, one forwards (Nairn 1977 in Flint & Taylor 2014:163). Flint and Taylor expand on this notion, calling nationalism a ‘double Janus’ that besides from facing two directions in time also faces inwards and outwards. Nationalism looks backwards and inwards to create a historically framed national identity, and forward and outwards to find the future of the nation in which it hopes to excel in comparison with other nations in the capitalist world-economy (Flint & Taylor 2014:164).

Based on the work of Orridge, Flint and Taylor present a typology containing five basic varieties of nationalism. I will briefly outline these types below (Flint & Taylor 2014:165-167).

- **Proto-nationalism**: The early nationalism of Europe. States within relatively stable territories developed a degree of cultural homogeneity, which preceded the rise of nationalism as an ideology during the 19th century. Examples are England, France and Sweden.

- **Unification nationalism**: Nationalism as a justification for uniting previously separate political entities and forming a larger and thereby more powerful state. Main examples are Germany and Italy.

- **Separation nationalism**: Aims to disintegrate existing sovereign states. Separation nationalism was rife in the early 20th century, when many new European states were born after the First World War and the subsequent dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian, Ottoman and Russian empires. Though most prominent in the wake of WWI, separation nationalism is still a political force to be reckoned with, as currently witnessed in Scotland and Catalonia.

- **Liberation nationalism**: Movements of national independence in European overseas colonies. Can be categorised as liberal or socialist, or divided into those led by European settlers versus indigenous peoples.
Renewal nationalism: A rediscovering of former greatness in nations outside the European ‘core’ with a long history as ethnic communities to build on, such as Iran, Turkey, and China. Israel is a radical example of the attempt to renew a nation by returning parts of a diaspora to its historical ‘homeland’.

This typology provides a fruitful basis for understanding the different contexts of nationalism that modern nationalist parties are sprung from. Nationalism has been utilised by political movements and leaders for a wide range of purposes, as an instrument of both liberation and repression. It is also not limited to either side of the left-right political spectrum, but can be combined with a variety of ideologies (Flint & Taylor 2014:167). The disparity between nationalist party ideologies can partly be explained by the differing historical circumstances preceding their formation, and by the current political context that they are active within and need to adapt to. The nationalism of Sinn Féin in Ireland and Scottish National Party in Scotland has its origin in Irish and Scottish struggle for independence vis-à-vis the United Kingdom, and can thus be classified as separation nationalism. The Democratic Unionist Party of Northern Ireland may be conceived as representing a form of unification nationalism, since they are of the opinion that Northern Ireland is and should continue to be an integral part of the United Kingdom, despite historically belonging to different nations. In Sweden and England a great degree of cultural homogeneity preceded the development of nationalist ideology, making them proto-nationalist states. The perceived historical homogeneity of Sweden (discounting the existence of the Sami) and the privileged position held by the English in relation to other nations within the United Kingdom can be presumed to have affected ideas of ‘nation’ and ‘nationality’ within UKIP and the Sweden Democrats.

2.2. Abortion Policy

Abortion policy according to Mazur’s definition in Theorizing Feminist Policy “involves the legalization, regulation, and provision of abortions.” (Mazur 2002:139) Mazur presents and adds to the different definitions of abortion as a public issue that Lovenduski and Outshoorn argue have been present over the past 200 years (in Mazur 2002:140):

- Criminal: abortion defined as an unlawful act. Abortion is controlled in criminal law and severe legal consequences may follow for persons performing, procuring or helping others access abortions.
- Moral: abortion defined in relation to the right to life of the unborn. This perspective is mainly emphasised by opponents of abortion and religious groups.
• **Medical**: abortion defined as an issue of medical regulation and profession. Suggests that decisions around abortion should be in the hands of medical professionals rather than legislators or women themselves. Proposed by moderate reformers and the medical profession in the 1960’s to push for legal and safe abortion in cases where deemed necessary.

• **Feminist**: abortion defined as a matter of women’s choice and bodily autonomy. This perspective was popularised by second-wave feminist movements. Has majorly influenced abortion policy debates but is still a divisive issue.

• **Natalist** (added by Mazur): abortion defined as a threat toward fertility and population growth.

As Mazur points out, the definition of abortion is central to abortion politics, and attempts to redefine the issue are frequently made by those advocating abortion policy changes. The moral conception of abortion, emphasizing the right of life of the unborn, has been embraced by groups promoting a more restrictive policy, while those supporting a liberal policy often utilize the feminist conception of reproductive choice as a central aspect of women’s bodily autonomy (Mazur 2002:140). Even though those subscribing to a natalist conception of abortion often do so to argue that abortions constitute a threat to desirable population growth, the natalist conception also has potential to those arguing in favour of legal abortion. In the debate preceding the introduction of legal (albeit requiring approval by a committee) abortion in Czechoslovakia, legalisation was argued to be a pro-population measure. It was believed that legalisation would not increase the number of abortions previously performed illegally and that legal abortions would prove less detrimental to women’s fertility, thereby preserving the potential to conceive again (Dudová 2010:956-957). Thus, it is not necessarily evident that actors subscribing to the same conception of abortion hold the same views on abortion policy.

### 2.3. Nationalist rhetoric on abortion

In the article ‘Too Many’ Millar analyses the link between white nationalism and concerns over abortion rates in Australia. Millar provides a framework for theorizing the meaning of abortions in relation to safeguarding white hegemony in Australia, and analyses how this becomes manifest in moral debate on abortion in the 1970’s and the 2000’s. The comparison reveals that in times of national crisis, fear that the central position of the white nuclear family is under threat becomes projected onto the issue of abortion (Millar 2015:83).
The nationalist idea of Australia as a land populated by white Christian families rests on a fragile foundation due to the colonial history and fundamental questionability of white belonging. This anxiety is managed by constructing a fantasy of a white nation through processes of disavowal of claim to the land by the indigenous people, exclusion of non-white immigrants from belonging to the nation, and a call for reproduction aimed at white women (Wolf 1994, Hage 1998, and Baird 2006b in Millar 2015:84). White women who have abortions thereby constitute a dual threat to this fantasy. Abortion laws in several states were liberalised during the 1970’s, a period that also saw other legal and cultural changes that undermined the privileges of white heterosexual men, such as anti-discrimination laws, recognition of indigenous citizenship, increased support for single mothers, and wider access to divorce. Firstly, the association of these changes and the extension of abortion rights caused abortion to be perceived as an even larger threat to traditional family values (Millar 2015:89). Secondly, abortion is construed as a demographic threat. In order to maintain population growth without depending on immigration, the fertility rate has to increase. Immigration by non-white people is seen to threaten the fantasy of Australia, and women who have abortions are assigned blame for the low fertility rate (Millar 2015:91).

Statistics and enumeration have been central to the moral panic surrounding abortion in Australia during the 1970’s and 2000’s. The number of abortions are compared with the number of births, and deemed to be ‘too many’. As Millar writes, “The very effects of enumeration and declaring something as constituting ‘too many’ suggest that moral panics over abortion relate to broader national anxieties pertaining to which bodies should populate the nation.” (Millar 2015:88) In the rhetoric of those who wish to decrease the number of abortions through legal restrictions, there is also an assumption that fewer abortions were carried out before the laws were liberalised. Millar states that the idea that ‘too many’ abortions are performed frames abortion as a collective issue of which the nation is the subject, and ignores the fact that abortions are had by individual women, and that abortions also take place where the practice is outlawed. The suggestion that no abortions took place in Australia before the laws were liberalised is simply a misconstruction of the past (Millar 2015:94).

Pro-natalist policies are aimed at white women, exemplified by paying out the “baby bonus” to Aboriginal women in the Northern Territory in instalments in order to discourage these women from having children simply to be able to claim a large benefit. This exception from the general rule of lump sums elucidates that reproduction of certain – non-white – women is deemed less desirable (Millar 2015:92). During different historical periods this anxiety is directed towards
certain objects, such as the image of the aborting woman. She is perceived as a threat to the white foetus, since Australian debates on abortion concern the abortions of white women unless explicitly stated otherwise (Baird 2006b in Millar 2015:83). Other objects onto which the nation projects its anxiety have varied. Australia at the beginning of the 20th century directed its fear at immigration from Asia, while lately this fear has been redirected toward Muslim immigrants (Millar 2015:85).

Resistance against liberal attitudes toward abortion can also play a part in the construction of national identity. In the article ‘Post-Colonial Fragments: Representations of Abortion in Irish Law and Politics’, Fletcher (2001) addresses the issue of abortion in Ireland, and why the Irish state has resisted the general European trend of liberalising restrictions on abortion. Fletcher argues that the anti-abortion stance of the Irish state is rooted in a post-colonial desire to create a genuinely Irish national identity in opposition to what is perceived as British colonial pro-choice culture (Fletcher 2001:569). Due to the disenfranchisement of Irish Catholics under British rule, Catholicism became a central marker of Irish national identity, and this strong association between Catholicism and Irish nationalism has since been utilised by those advocating restrictive abortion regulations (Fletcher 2001:573). The introduction of the 8th amendment in 1983, often referred to as the ‘pro-life amendment’ since it provides constitutional protection for the foetal right to life, was considered necessary to avoid gradual liberalisation of abortion law and thus prevent the loss of Irish national identity (Fletcher 2001:577).

In order to demonise abortion, the post-colonial anti-abortion rhetoric connects the procedure to the former oppressor, England. The law makes provisions for the right to travel and to access information about legal abortion services in other states, which due to geographic proximity means that England becomes the legal destination for abortion for many Irish women each year (Irish Family Planning Association, ‘Abortion in Ireland: Statistics’). As a result, the connotation between abortions and England is sustained (Fletcher 2001:584). Pro-life advocates also present the provision of abortion services to Irish citizens by English clinics as a form of capitalist exploitation (Fletcher 2001:588). Anti-abortion groups are not alone in drawing on nationalist conceptions of Irish identity in their rhetoric on abortion. Pro-choice advocates have responded by calling upon folklore evidence that St. Brigid performed abortions, to point out that the practice has existed in Ireland since pre-colonial times and to refute the idea that it is inherently un-Irish (Fletcher 2001:582).
3. Method

In order to examine the views on abortion held by nationalist parties, I will conduct a descriptive actor-centred idea analysis. Beckman (2005:11-12) defines idea analysis as the scientific study of political messages. Its focus can be to describe and interpret, assess the validity and coherence of, or explain the origin or consequences of political messages (Beckman 2005:14). Since the purpose of this thesis is to explicate party views on abortion, it belongs in the category of descriptive and interpretive idea analysis. Idea analysis can differ in regard to the emphasis put on actors versus ideas, depending on the focus of enquiry. If the aim is to assess the validity of the logical reason underpinning an argument, or how one idea relates to another, the context in which it is expressed may be of lesser importance. However, if the aim is to explain the meaning of a political message or the reason behind its expression, the context may be highly relevant (Beckman 2005:17). My aim is not to examine ideas or arguments surrounding the issue of abortion in general, but to specifically look at how nationalist parties relate to the topic of abortion – that context is of importance is evident by the formulation of objective and research questions.

According to Beckman, the objective of descriptive idea analysis is to undertake an analytical reading of a political message and thereby uncover meaning not manifest in the text itself (Beckman 2005:50). To describe a material is to make a claim about its character and contents which can be understood as a designation or valuation, placing it somewhere along an axis of one or several dimensions or comparing it to ideal types. Due to this, Beckman states that a descriptive idea analysis by definition contains an element of comparison, be it between our material and ideal types or dimensions, or between different cases (Beckman 2004:52-53).

Through the method of descriptive actor-centred idea analysis, I will compare the views on abortion held by nationalist parties in regard to two dimensions. Firstly, I will utilise Mazur’s typology of how abortion as a public issue has been defined to analyse which conceptions of abortion the parties subscribe to. Secondly, I will examine the way that objects and actors are constructed in the argumentation of abortion policy. This includes what role the state plays in abortion policy, how the women, fathers, and foetuses are perceived, and what role is given to medical professionals. I will then analyse how the views on abortion differ and overlap among the parties in the study.
3.1. Analytical tools

This section outlines the analytical tools used to respond to each research question. The first question aims to examine which conception of abortion policy that each party in the study subscribe to. To answer this, I will employ Mazur’s typology of different conceptions of abortion as a public issue, as detailed in section 2.2. Mazur’s typology divides public conceptions of abortion into five ideal types: criminal, medical, moral, feminist and natalist. Actual party views on abortion may be more multi-faceted and demonstrate aspects of several ideal types. I will analyse party views on abortion and seek to ascertain which ideal type that appears to be dominant in each party abortion policy, but also detail any contradictions or disparities that could be indications of other conceptions. Some of the ideal types in Mazur’s typology are primarily interested in the underlying motivations behind a stance on abortion, rather than abortion policy itself. A party may have a moral conception of abortion and therefore advocate for it to be outlawed, or they might argue that it is immoral but still ought to be legal. In the same way, a feminist conception prioritises women’s bodily autonomy, but may still be compatible with certain restrictions such as the gestation limits that most states implement. The criminal conception of abortion is the only ideal type that by definition advocates restrictive abortion legislation, but policy details may still vary. In conclusion: to assess which conception is being expressed, one has to examine the arguments and justifications made around abortion and not only the policies themselves.

The second question enquires which central actors and objects feature in party opinions on abortion, and how the relationships between them are perceived. The central objects and actors I have identified is the role of the state, the aborting woman, the father, the foetus, and the medical professionals involved in abortion services. I will examine the portrayals of these actors and objects, and what is said about the relationship between them.

To answer the last question, regarding how the views on abortion diverge and converge among nationalist parties, I will make comparisons between how the two first questions are answered. What conceptions of abortion to the parties in the study subscribe to? And how do they describe different actors, objects and relationships? What are the differences and similarities in these descriptions, and can any trends or patterns be discerned?

3.2. Material

In order to identify and examine party views on abortion I will as far as is practicable use official party sources, such as party websites, party policy databases, parliamentary debates and
motions. Other sources such as media articles where party representatives are raise their opinions will be included to further tease out the argumentation. Bryman presents Scott’s criteria for assessing the quality of documents (Scott 1990 in Bryman 2011:489):

- **Authenticity**: That the material is authentic and that from a known source.
- **Credibility**: The material is undistorted.
- **Representativeness**: The material is typical for the category to which it belong, and if not, that the degree of divergence is known.
- **Significance**: That the material is clear and intelligible.

Using these criteria, I will assess the material and point out any doubts about its quality. It is important to distinguish direct sources from indirect sources such as media articles, in which information is more likely to contain errors or be distorted. I will clearly express when an opinion or statement comes directly from the group or person, and when it has been quoted in a second hand source. Atkinson and Coffey writes about the reality of the document and proposes that documents should be perceived not as not as a means to capture an underlying reality, but as a distinct aspect of reality. Documents have to be assessed in terms of the context in which they are produced, what they aim to achieve, and their intended audience. The purpose of a document is partly to establish a certain conception of reality, partly to convey a positive image of its creators (Atkinson & Coffey 2004 in Bryman 2011:501). This should hold particularly true in the case of documents produced by political parties, given that they are claimants of political power and thus interested in gaining votes. Consequently, political parties both have reason to adapt to what is viable in the political and societal context in which they exist, and to persuade voters to accept their particular worldview.

### 4. Analysis

The first part of this chapter is a brief outline of the ideological affiliations of the parties in the study and their policies on some central issues related to nationalism in current politics. Then follows a party-by-party analysis of their respective views on abortion.

#### 4.1. Table of Nationalist Parties

It is important to remember that the nationalist parties examined in this enquiry cover a wide range of the political spectrum. They are joined by their focus on nationality as a basis of political organization, but their understanding of the nation and who can be considered a member of it differs significantly. My aim is not to bundle these parties together and claim that
they are made of the same stuff. On the contrary, due to the fact that the parties vary in their policies and conception of nationalism, I am interested to see the ways in which their approaches to abortion policy differ and converge. In the table below I have made a rough outline of some central distinctions between the parties, regarding ideology, certain central policy areas, and the context in which they operate. Information has been gathered by reading and interpreting policy and principle documents from the websites of each party.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Party name</th>
<th>Ideology</th>
<th>Anti-Immigration</th>
<th>Eurosceptic</th>
<th>Context</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sinn Féin</td>
<td>Socialist Irish Republicanism</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>No</td>
<td>Ireland, Northern Ireland and United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Kingdom Independence Party</td>
<td>Right-wing populism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, wants the UK to exit the EU</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweden Democrats</td>
<td>Social-conservative nationalism</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>Yes, wants to renegotiate membership terms</td>
<td>Sweden</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2. Sweden Democrats

The Sweden Democrats (SD) are a political party in Sweden, founded in 1988. They have gained seats in municipal councils since the early 90’s, but their breakthrough into mainstream politics came with the parliamentary election of 2010, when they won 5.7 % of the vote and obtained 20 mandates in parliament (SD.se, ‘Sverigedemokraternas historia’). In the most recent election (2014) their support increased to 12.86 %, thereby augmenting their position in parliament, where SD currently holds 48 seats (Valmyndigheten 2014-09-19; Riksdagen.se ‘Sverigedemokraterna’).

On their website, the SD offers this brief description of their policy concerning abortion:

“We view the high abortion rates with great concern. We want to bring about a national plan of action to decrease abortion numbers. The party favours, as do most countries in Europe, free abortion until the 12th week of pregnancy. For abortion past the 12th week due to medical or other substantial reasons, permission from the National Board of Health and Welfare shall be required.”

(SD.se ‘Vår politik A till Ö’ 2015-12-10, [own translation])
In the paragraph SD enumerates the issue of abortion by classifying the number of abortions as “high” and making the claim that this is a cause of concern that should be addressed with a plan of action to bring numbers down. This is similar to the discourse on abortion described by Millar, in which the process of enumeration turns abortion “into a ‘problem’ of government” (Millar 2015:88). The Swedish abortion rate is the highest among the Nordic countries at 17.5 abortions per 1000 women ages 15-49 (Heino & Gissler 2015:13), but Western Europe, Southern Africa and Northern Europe have the lowest abortion rates globally (Guttmacher Institute, ‘Facts on Induced Abortion Worldwide’). By speaking of abortions in terms of numbers and announcing that Sweden has a ‘high’ abortion rate, the Sweden Democrats seek to turn abortion into a ‘problem’ and legitimise legislative action on the issue. They propose a two-fold solution to tackle the issue of high abortion rates: a national plan of action, and lowering the limit of abortion on demand from 18 to 12 weeks. The measure of lowering the time limit is justified by presenting it as a harmonisation with regulations in other European countries.

During their time in parliament SD representatives have produced a number of motions on the topic of abortion. Suggestions include shortening the time span for abortion on demand to 12 weeks, conducting research to examine the reasons why women elect to have abortions and what can be done to prevent this, and introducing regulations to prevent selective abortion on the basis of sex or other foetal characteristics. A motion regarding preventive measures to decrease the number of abortions states that the Swedish abortion debate often is characterised by defining abortion rights solely in terms of women’s rights and freedom for women, but ignores the fact that many women experience pressure to terminate their pregnancies due to external circumstances and “feel bad” as a result (Motion 2015/16:2897 ‘Förebyggande arbete för att minska antalet aborter’). Another motion, proposing to lower the limit of abortion on demand to 12 weeks, states that not enough attention is paid to the ethical and moral implications of abortion, and that both the foetus and the woman ought to be seen as valuable individuals. SD suggests that the perspective on abortion has turned increasingly technical, and that the foetus as an individual worthy of protection is not given proper attention (Motion 2015/16:2913 ‘Gränsen för fri abort’). This suggests that SD are critical to the feminist conception of abortion, which primarily defines abortion as a matter of women’s choice and bodily autonomy.
Conception of abortion

Presenting a ‘high’ abortion rate as the problem may be a manifestation of moral or natalist conceptions of abortion. The moral conception would deem high abortion rates as problematic due to the emphasis it puts on the value of foetal life, while the natalist conception would deem high rates problematic because pregnancies not carried to term do not contribute to population growth. In previous party manifestos, SD have connected the issue of low fertility rate with abortion. Their 1994 manifesto claim that abortion rates are unacceptably high, comparing it to the rate of ‘mass immigration’, and that mainly ‘Swedish’ women have abortions (Sweden Democrat Manifesto 1994:11). Given the context, it is clear that ‘Swedish’ refers to women with a non-immigrant background. The manifesto calls for a restrictive abortion policy and changes in family policy, to facilitate domestic adoption and limit adoption of non-Nordic children (Sweden Democrat Manifesto 1994:11). However, no such links between abortion and maintenance of white hegemony are made in their current manifesto, which mentions neither abortions nor fertility rates, or any other documents relating to their abortion policy. A motion on the prevention of abortion poses the question if aborting women would view adoption as an alternative if presented with the option, but that measure may be motivated by moral concerns rather than natalist ones (Motion 2015/16:2897 ‘Förebyggande arbete för att minska antalet aborter’). It is hard to assess whether this entails an actual change in opinion or simply an adaption to better fit the current political climate, given that abortion on demand is widely supported in Sweden. Then again, it is not uncommon for parties to genuinely re-assess and change their policies over 20 years. SD’s current abortion policy emphasises that women should still have access to abortion on demand, but that this access should be subject to certain limitations to respect foetal right to life. The reasonable interpretation is that SD previously subscribed to a natalist conception of abortion, but that they have since abandoned the natalist perspective to favour the moral conception.

Central actors and objects

SD perceives the role of the state to protect, and to protect is to decrease abortion rates and control abortion services. The state should prevent selective abortions based on gender or other foetal characteristics by ensuring that no information about such characteristics is given to a woman while within 18 weeks of gestation, or that she by agreeing that the information be disclosed waives the right to abortion (Motion 2015/16:3086 ‘Könsselektiva och andra utsorterande aborter’). The state is obliged to provide increased legal protection of the foetus and the medical professionals.
Women are perceived as threatening the foetus, their ability to opt for abortion constitutes a threat to foetal life. It becomes the mission of the state to mitigate this threat. At the same time, women themselves are deemed to be in need of protection. SD proposes that many women experience mental issues as a result of going through an abortion, and that many have abortions due to external pressure or financial hardship. SD also emphasises that one benefit of lowering the limit of abortion on demand to 12 weeks is that later abortions are more strenuous to go through (Motion 2015/16:2913 ‘Gränsen för fri abort’). Thus, the role of the state is also to protect women, from their own choices as well as from societal pressure, by providing increased support and control. Women are constructed as selfish, for not wanting to take on the additional burden of a child with a medical diagnosis or choosing education before childbirth, but at the same time vulnerable and in need of protection from abortion.

The foetus is perceived as an individual worthy of protection, risking elimination due to undesirable characteristics such as gender or a medical diagnosis. SD aims to change the practice in relation to late-term abortions by introducing an absolute limit at 19 weeks, in order to ensure that no viable foetus would ever be aborted (Motion 2015/16:2898 ‘Ändrad praxis för sena abort’). The father is never mentioned alone, but implicitly included with the use of the term ‘parents’. This presupposes that the father will actually be involved in child-rearing. However, the aborting woman and the foetus are the main focal points.

In recent years Sweden has debated conscientious objection for medical staff, largely due to a high-profile case of a midwife suing the Jönköping County Council for discrimination due to the fact that they did not hire her after she stated that she would not participate in provision of abortion services (Roström Andersson, 2015-11-12). In this case the district court ruled in favour of the County Council, but it is quite likely that anti-choice groups will continue the legal fight for the introduction of a conscientious objection clause. SD expresses the opinion that doctors and midwives “trained to save lives” should not have to participate in the abortion of viable foetuses. Conscientious objection is viewed favourably as a measure of increasing the rights for medical professionals. Conscientious objection in health care is compared to weapon-free duty in the Armed Forces (‘Julia Kronlid (SD) Abort 2015-04-09’). This rhetoric equates abortions with actions of violence directed toward living persons. Medical professionals are perceived as needing protection and increased rights to choose which services to participate in. But to a certain extent, the medical profession is also distrusted: SD deems that it is not enough that an assessment is made when it comes to late-term abortions, they advocate a legal upper
limit for when an abortion can be carried out unless there is a medical emergency (Motion 2015/16:2898 ‘Ändrad praxis för sena aborter’).

4.3. United Kingdom Independence Party
The United Kingdom Independence Party (UKIP) was founded in 1993 as a single-issue party aiming to secure UK withdrawal from the European Union (Usherwood 2008:256). A British exit from the EU remains one of their priority issues, but is now joined by calls for lower taxation and restrictive immigration (UKIP Manifesto 2015). Originally their policy was to not take up any seats won in the European Parliament, refusing to recognize its legitimacy, but they have since pursued a more pragmatic strategy and utilised their EP representation to garner attention for their political ideas. Given that the first-past-the-post electoral system in the UK limits their ability to gain seats in Westminster, the EP offers UKIP an arena for political advancement (Usherwood 2008:256-257). In the UK general election of 2015 UKIP received 12.7% of the vote, but only won one constituency, losing one of their seats from the previous mandate period despite a substantial increase in votes (BBC 2015-05-14).

In the UKIP manifesto on Christian issues, UKIP state that they “will encourage compliance with the Abortion Act 1967 and seek to make gender abortions illegal.” (Coalition for Marriage ‘UKIP Policies for Christians: Overview’) While it is no shock that a manifesto dedicated to the preservation of the United Kingdom’s Christian heritage addresses the issue of abortion, the specific mention of sex-selective abortion is interesting.

Conception of abortion
The Abortion Act 1967 regulates medical termination of pregnancy in the United Kingdom, with the exception of Northern Ireland. One of the four grounds to legally obtain an abortion is that two registered medical practitioners (unless there is immediate risk of severe injury, in which case one practitioner will suffice) in good faith agree that carrying the pregnancy to term would cause greater harm to the physical or mental well-being of the pregnant woman or any existing children than would be caused by a termination (Abortion Act 1967, Section 1). This means that doctors are awarded the discretion of handling abortion services according to their own professional judgement, an embodiment of the medical conception of abortion as a public issue (BPAS 2013:5). UKIP stating that they will “encourage compliance with the Abortion Act” can thus be interpreted as subscribing to the medical conception of abortion. On the other hand, the practical implementation of the law is sometimes criticised. Women in Britain do not have abortion on demand, since they are required to state their reasons for wanting to obtain an
abortion receive the validation of two doctors. But given that no further verification of the stated reasons is required, the distinction between this interpretation of abortion ‘for cause’ and abortion ‘on demand’ is almost semantic. Seen in this light, UKIP’s statement might be a criticism of the current implementation of the Abortion Act 1967, calling for a stricter interpretation of the Act. However, since the spirit of the act is to allow the medical profession to manage abortion in the way they deem appropriate, I would interpret support of the Abortion Act 1967 – even with the caveat of wanting to impose further restrictions – as UKIP primarily defining abortion as a medical issue.

The second point made by UKIP is that they seek to make gender abortions illegal. The Abortion Act 1967 does not address sex-selective abortion. If a woman were to state the gender of the foetus as her reason for seeking a termination, it would fall within the discretion of the physicians whether to approve or reject the validity of her request. Choosing a manifesto on the preservation of Christian values to address the issue of gender abortion is interesting. It would suggest that the practice of sex-selective abortion is somehow less Christian than the practice of abortion in general. I interpret this as an attempt to present Christian values as equal and progressive, contrasted with reactionary values of non-Christian groups. Implicitly, this is directed toward non-European immigrants. In practice, amending the Abortion Act to ban sex-selective abortion would make little to no difference, since a person wanting to obtain an abortion could simply state a false reason. A ban on sex-selective abortion would serve a symbolic purpose rather than achieve practical change.

UKIP seem hesitant to express a clear stance on abortion. A plausible explanation is that it simply is not a priority policy issue – UKIP are focused on other issues such as the EU and immigration, and abortion may not be of great concern to their voters. UKIP may also refrain from addressing the issue due to a recent controversy involving UKIP candidate Geoffrey Clark. In 2012 Clark released a personal manifesto on his website, bringing up the idea of compulsory abortions for foetuses diagnosed with Down’s syndrome or Spina Bifida as a topic of discussion in relation to the future funding of the National Health Service, to avoid these children becoming “a burden” on the state and their families. UKIP initially supported Clark’s right to express personal views divergent from party policy, but withdrew their support following major public backlash (Walker & Quinn 2012-12-18).

While UKIP official stance on abortion remains somewhat unclear, party vice deputy Paul Nuttall is quite outspoken on the issue. As a Catholic he opposes abortion and favours lowering the limit for abortion on demand to 12 weeks of gestation. A New Statesman article quotes him
on the topic: “I feel very uncomfortable when I look at the figures and see that a city the size of Nottingham is aborted every year.” (Wigmore 2014, New Statesman) Comparing abortion to the loss of living citizens is a re-occurring feature in anti-abortion statements. Millar quotes conservative columnist Christopher Pearson criticising the Australian government’s lack of population policy in 2002 by stating that abortion had led to “the cumulative loss of well over a million citizens since the 1970s” (Millar 2015:91). The language of Nuttall as well as Pearson equates abortion with the loss of living citizens. Nuttall tweeted a comment about the social media campaign #ShoutYourAbortion, in which women shared their experiences of abortion on social media, expressing disagreement with the intention of the campaign by stating that “Having an abortion is not something to ‘shout’ about on social media.” (Paul Nuttall, Twitter. 2015-09-22). This indicates that Nuttall considers abortion a private matter, and the act of openly announcing having had one on social media as inappropriate. Nuttall’s opinions lean toward a moral conception of abortion.

UKIP have made efforts to appeal to socially conservative voters, exemplified by the previously mentioned manifesto on UKIP policies for Christians. Not expressing a clear party stance on the issue of abortion, but letting leading party representatives express them as privately held opinions, may be a way of garnering support from conservative groups while avoiding to alienate moderate voters. An example of such a strategy can be found in France’s National Front (NF). Party vice president Louis Aliot has claimed that some women use abortions as a form of contraception and advocated that these types of abortions ought not to be publicly financed, while NF party leader Marine Le Pen has expressed continued support for the French abortion law. The lack of specificity surrounding NF abortion policy has allowed them to satisfy the demands of both those who wish to restrict abortion and those who want it to remain free and legal (Hamrud & Wassholm 2014:29). UKIP’s rather vague policy wanting to uphold the Abortion Act 1967 in combination with Nuttalls’s more conservative views may constitute a similar strategy.

Central objects and actors

UKIP’s official policy is adherent to the medical conception of abortion, meaning that the role of the state is to let the medical profession handle decisions concerning abortion provision. The exception is gender-selective abortions, which UKIP want to ban altogether, making a departure from the confidence in the best judgement of doctors. UKIP policy demands the state to intervene in regard to sex-selective abortion by amending the law to explicitly forbid abortion on the ground of foetal gender.
In the official policy there are no explicit mentions of aborting women, men, or foetuses for that matter. In Nuttalls comments, the aborting woman is understood as someone who ought to not broadcast her experiences of abortion publicly. The father is not paid much attention in UKIP abortion policy. The implication of the support for the Abortion Act 1967 is that women are not perceived as able to make decisions about abortions completely on their own, the verification of two medical professionals is necessary. Medical professionals are thereby constructed as the appropriate decision-makers in matters of abortion, giving due regard to the interests of the aborting woman as well as the foetus. However they are not entrusted to make decisions on whether to allow gender as a reason for abortion, since UKIP wishes to see a complete ban on sex-selective abortions. The foetus is thereby implicitly constructed as a gendered being, in need of protection from the aborting woman, implicitly a woman not sharing the Christian values that UKIP wish to uphold as an integral part of British society. Although UKIP makes no mention of this in their policy document, media reports of sex-selective abortion in the UK clearly show that the concern is predominately aimed at certain ethnic groups of non-European origin (see Connor 2014 and Davies 2014 for examples). Both of these articles present gender abortions as illegal, which is a misinterpretation of the Abortion Act 1967 which does not state any particular causes as valid or invalid but awards the medical professionals with the power to make that judgement. They also present certain immigrant communities as responsible for sex-selective abortion, and portray the practice as a threat to society. When UKIP chooses to address the issue of gender abortions, the choice has to be seen in the light of this on-going debate, in which certain immigrant communities are portrayed as culprits and seen as a threat to British society and culture. In regard to sex-selective abortion, UKIP construct the aborting woman as a woman belonging to these ethnic groups of non-European origin, and thereby constitute a threat to the Christian cultural values that they wish to uphold. In this way, Christian values are connected to the protection of gender equality and mitigating the threat of the immigrant woman against the female foetus. Comparable with the debate around abortion and population in Australia reviewed by Millar, the immigrant woman becomes an object onto which the nation projects its anxiety (Millar 2015:85). In this case, the concern is that the practice of these ethnic groups due to their preference for male children will skew the gender ratio of the population, or lead to acceptance of reactionary values.

4.4. Sinn Féin
Sinn Féin (SF) is a left-wing Republican party seeking to achieve a united Irish Republic. They have a cross-border organisation and are represented in both the Irish parliament, Oireachtas
Éireann, and the Northern Ireland Assembly. Their roots trace back to early 20th century struggle for Irish independence, but they emerged as a major political force during the 1980's. Due to connections with the Provisional Irish Republican Army (IRA) they were banned as a political party in the United Kingdom until 1974 (Encyclopædia Britannica, ‘Sinn Féin’).

The 2015 Ard Fheis (annual conference) of Sinn Féin marked a change in policy on abortion. Motion 124, calling for the repeal of the 8th amendment and pledging to campaign in favour of this in any future referendum on the issue, was passed. As was Motion 122, which affirms Sinn Féin’s previous policy on abortion but amends it in respect of fatal foetal abnormalities, meaning a diagnosis entailing the likely death of the foetus in the womb or shortly after birth. A bill on fatal foetal abnormalities had been introduced in the Dáil in February 2015, at which point all Sinn Féin TD’s abstained from voting due to the lack of clarity on the matter prior to their Ard Fheis (BBC 2015-02-10). Motion 122 clarifies the new party line, stating that the issue of fatal foetal abnormalities is ‘complex’ and ‘requires compassion’, and that laws forcing women in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland to travel in order to access abortion in such cases adds further stress and may hinder those lacking funds or the necessary immigration status from accessing abortion services. The motion calls for a cross-border protocol on prenatal screening, and for the introduction of legal frameworks “that would allow women to access abortion services under these limited circumstances” if they so choose (Sinn Féin, ‘Ard Fheis 2015- Motion 122’). Unlike the earlier SF abortion policy, which supports the current Irish law, this opens up for abortion on other grounds than the pregnant woman’s life being at risk. However, this only applies in situations where the life of the foetus is beyond saving regardless of which choice the woman makes. The opposing motion, proposing that foetuses diagnosed with terminal illness or disabilities prior to birth should “receive the full protection of the state and that abortion not be permissible under law in these circumstances”, was defeated (Sinn Féin, ‘Ard Fheis 2015 – Motion 123). The passing of Motion 122 and defeat of Motion 123 signifies a rejection of the absolutist pro-life standpoint, according to which there is no situation in which it is ethical to terminate foetal life, not even when the foetus has no chance of survival outside of the womb.

The other motion passed regarding abortion, Motion 124, calls for SF to support the repeal of the 8th amendment to the Irish constitution, which reads as follows:

“The State acknowledges the right to life of the unborn and, with due regard to the equal right to life of the mother, guarantees in its laws to respect, and, as far as practicable, by its laws to defend and vindicate that right.” (Irish Statute Book, Eight Amendment of the Constitution Act, 1983)
Due to the wording of the amendment, according to which the state vows to defend foetal right to life as far as is practicable with equal respect to the life of the mother, its repeal is considered necessary to allow for legal abortion on any ground other than to save the life of the pregnant woman. Given that the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis voted in favour of allowing abortion in cases of fatal foetal abnormalities, voting in favour of repealing the 8th follows as a natural consequence.

Another motion concerning abortion, Motion 125, called for the Ard Fheis to acknowledge that a woman’s body, sexuality, and reproductive rights are to be under the control of the woman in question (Sinn Féin ‘Ard Fheis 2015 – Motion 125). This motion clearly expresses a pro-choice understanding of abortion, and was not adopted by the Ard Fheis. This constitutes a Sinn Féin rejection of abortion on demand, and thus a rejection of the feminist conception of abortion. The rejection of motions 123 and 125 shows that Sinn Féin do not align with hard-line pro-choice or pro-life views on abortion, but exists on a continuum between these two viewpoints, albeit with a heavy tilt toward the pro-life camp.

Sinn Féin are of the opinion that the 1967 Abortion Act, which regulates legal abortion in the United Kingdom, should not be extended to cover Northern Ireland (Sinn Féin ‘Sinn Féin comment on new Assembly pro-life working group’). Not wanting the Abortion Act 1967 extended to Northern Ireland can be seen as a resistance towards British influence. Sinn Féin would prefer Northern Ireland to be a part of the Republic of Ireland and as discussed in the article by Fletcher (2001) there is a long tradition of constructing anti-abortion sentiments as a part of Irish national identity. Advocating for provision of abortion services in limited circumstances, i.e. fatal foetal abnormalities, can be construed as an extension of Irish liberation from the United Kingdom. Abortion services should be provided in Ireland, albeit only in certain cases, instead of forcing couples or women to be dependent on care in England. This constitutes a small, but not insignificant change in Irish attitudes toward provision of abortion in Ireland, but a continuance of the aversion toward abortion services in the United Kingdom.

Conception of abortion

Current abortion law in Ireland criminalises both the woman obtaining an abortion and any person that helps her to do so. Support of this law could therefore indicate an understanding of abortion as a criminal issue. But Sinn Féin also places strong emphasis on the importance of foetal life. Calling for ‘compassion’ toward women facing unviable pregnancies constitutes a nuancing of the issue of abortion, but this compassion is only extended to situations in which the foetus has no chance of survival outside the womb, meaning that the compassion in fact is
heavily conditioned and that foetal life takes priority over the well-being of the pregnant person unless the situation is life-threatening or the foetus completely lacks chance of survival. Due to the fact that foetal life seems to be the main concern I would classify Sinn Féin as subscribing to a predominately moral conception of abortion.

Central objects and actors

The father is only mentioned in the context of ‘the couple’, however ‘the couple’ is frequently mentioned. This is possibly due to the fact that the only abortions being discussed are cases of fatal foetal abnormalities, which means that the reason for ending the pregnancy is not that it is unwanted, but unforeseen tragic medical circumstances. Since the pregnancies are assumed to be intentional and wanted, they are expected to take place within the context of a committed heterosexual relationship. While discussions of abortion on demand often imagines the aborting woman as being alone, the discussion of abortion due to fatal foetal abnormalities presupposes a couple, meaning that the aborting woman and the father of the foetus are viewed as an entity. Sinn Féin also discusses the situation of the aborting woman or couple from a perspective of social justice, by stating that some women cannot afford to travel or lack the right to travel due asylum seeker status. SF deems it unfair that some women thereby cannot access abortions abroad, and calls for the state to level this inequality by providing abortion services in Ireland. However, the justice perspective is only applied to cases with fatal foetal abnormalities. The women who travel to obtain abortions for other reasons are omitted from the discussion, and subsequently the impact of social inequality on their options is also excluded from the narrative.

A reoccurring word, both in the motion on fatal foetal abnormalities as a ground for abortion and in interviews with Sinn Féin representatives on the topic, is ‘compassion’ (BBC 2015-03-07; O’Connell 2015-03-04). Sinn Féin’s position is that the state must be compassionate toward couples experiencing pregnancies with fatal foetal abnormalities, and allow them to make the choice whether to terminate the pregnancy or not. Couples or women choosing abortion for other reasons are not encompassed by this compassion. Sinn Féin has already affirmed that they are opposed to abortion on demand, and thus such abortions are left out of the conversation. The state is constructed as having an obligation to level social inequalities and to show compassion toward women and couples facing fatal foetal abnormalities, as well as those women whose lives are endangered by their pregnancies as showed by their support of the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act 2013, but no obligations exist towards those obtaining abortions for other causes. Wanting to repeal the 8th amendment, which currently guarantees the right to life of the ‘unborn’ and thereby makes abortion illegal in any other case than when
the pregnant woman’s life is threatened, can be seen as a rejecting the absolutist pro-life stance on foetal right to life.

Sinn Féin still want abortion to be illegal in except in very limited circumstances, thus upholding the idea of the foetus as a person with a right to life but distancing themselves from the absolutist pro-life idea of the sanctity of life, according to which abortion can never be justified. The life and health of the woman is thereby given a certain priority. The medical profession is not mentioned to any great extent, except in the case of calling for the introduction of an all-Ireland protocol on pre-natal diagnostic screening (Sinn Féin Ard Fheis 2015 – Motion 122)

5. Conclusions and discussion

In the concluding chapter I will first summarise and compare party conceptions of abortion and the perceived roles of and relationships between central actors and objects. Subsequently I will reflect upon the results and their general implication on gender equality at large.

Conceptions of abortion

The Sweden Democrats, the United Kingdom Independence Party, and Sinn Féin have differing policies on abortion but they all incorporate some form of moral conception of abortion in their reasoning on the matter. In their support of the Abortion Act 1967, UKIP demonstrate a more medical conception of abortion than SD or SF do, but UKIP also include elements of a moral conception of abortion in their total condemnation of sex-selective abortions and in the comments of party vice deputy Paul Nuttall. SD and UKIP have both chosen to address the issue of gender abortions. Media coverage on the topic of sex-selective abortion in the UK indicates that this UKIP policy is implicitly directed toward certain non-European immigrant groups which they construct as a reactionary threat to British cultural values and society, and to gender equality. Such a connection is not apparent in the abortion policy of SD, in which gender abortions instead are connected to other forms of selective abortion such terminations due to a pre-natal medical diagnosis. SD are opposed to all forms of selective abortions, while UKIP only opposes selection based on gender.

All three parties in the study reject a feminist conception of abortion, to different degrees. UKIP support the Abortion Act 1967 which formally puts decisions around abortion in the hand of the medical profession, although it’s practical implementation is similar to abortion on demand. The Sweden Democrats favour abortion on demand but wish to lower the limit from 18 to 12
weeks, and express concern that the Swedish discourse on abortion in their opinion mostly focuses on women’s right to choose and does not give due regard to ethical considerations. Sinn Féin outright reject the idea of reproductive choice except in limited circumstances such as when a woman’s life is threatened or in cases of fatal foetal abnormalities. SF support of current Irish abortion legislation may be viewed as a partial subscription to a criminal conception of abortion, although emphasis primarily lies on the moral conception. There is no mention of actively prosecuting women who obtain abortions illegally in Ireland. None of the parties make references to a natalist conception of abortion in their current abortion policy, although SD have done so in previous policy documents. It is difficult to discern whether this is due to a change in opinion or simply an adaption to arguments viable in mainstream politics, but what is certain is that SD are currently not pursuing any policies indicating a natalist conception of abortion, with the exception of discussing adoption as an alternative to abortion.

Abortion policies in all three parties are to varying extent related to Christianity. In Ireland Catholicism permeates all discussion on abortion, and UKIP have chosen to address the issue of abortion in their manifesto on UKIP policies for Christians. The Sweden Democrats mainly express the connection between religion and abortion policy it in their support of conscientious objection and the emphasis on the value of foetal life and moral implications. Unlike UKIP, no overt references to Christian ethics appear in the Sweden Democrat discourse on abortion, possibly due to the lack of mainstream appeal of religious arguments in predominately secular Sweden. Framing the issue as caring, both for the foetus and for women who feel bad having abortions, might be a more viable strategy.

Central actors and objects

All parties in the study advocate for the state to play a part in the protection of foetal life. Of the three parties, UKIP abortion policy is the least interventionist. UKIP support of the Abortion Act 1967 means that nearly all decisions around abortion are delegated to the medical profession. The exception is sex-selective abortion, in which case UKIP want the state to intervene by legislating against abortion on the ground of gender. Sinn Féin, being against abortion on demand, have taken a stand to protect foetal life. SF argue that the state should be ‘compassionate’ by allowing for abortion in limited circumstances where there are fatal foetal abnormalities. In these cases the state ought to level social and economic inequalities by providing access to abortion services in Ireland. The Sweden Democrats perceive the role of the state as preventing abortion due to foetal characteristics such as gender or non-fatal medical conditions. The state ought to ensure that selective abortions are not carried out through
legislating that information on foetal characteristics cannot be divulged unless the time limit for abortion on demand has passed or the right to elect an abortion is waived. Additional limitation on late abortions should also be put into place by the state, to ensure that no viable foetus will be aborted. Aside from the foetus, the state should also protect medical staff by allowing for conscientious objection.

The foetus is constructed as a human being in need of protection, primarily from the aborting woman. UKIP and SD particularly focus on the foetus as needing protection due to foetal characteristics such as gender or a medical condition. UKIP implicitly focus on the threat to foetal life that women from certain immigrant groups constitute. SD construct the woman as both a threat and a victim, as someone who poses a danger to foetal life but who also should be protected from the danger of abortion herself, as this is believed to cause mental distress. The father is rarely mentioned on his own but sometimes referred to as ‘parents’ or ‘couple’, particularly by Sinn Féin. However, the aborting woman still seems to be the main focus of the discussion.

Medical professionals are perceived in a number of different ways. SD portray them as being in need of legal protection from having to take part in abortion provision against their will. UKIP perceive them as the proper agents of decision-making in regard to abortion, except in cases of gender abortions where their judgement is not trusted. Sinn Féin do not discuss the role of medical staff to any great extent. SD are the only party to discuss conscientious objection. This is most likely due to the fact that the Abortion Act 1967 already allows for conscientious objection in the UK, and that Irish law criminalises abortion in all but very limited circumstances. It would be unethical to call for the right of conscientious objection when a woman’s life is in acute danger, and cases of fatal foetal abnormalities are rare enough that few doctors will be asked to perform abortions on these grounds should they become legal. There is therefore little need for SF to address the issue of conscientious objection yet.

**General discussion**

It may be hard to distinguish between the views on the entire party or of certain MPs who are active in the question. Parties aren’t indivisible entities, they are made up by individuals whose views may diverge. Having a vague policy but allowing party representatives to express more restrictive views is a reoccurring pattern, as discussed in the section about UKIP. This may be a conscious strategy to appeal to voters who wish to see abortion restricted while not alienating those who do not. It is also difficult what importance is placed on the issue of abortion. UKIP
does not mention abortion in their main manifesto, only in a separate manifesto on UKIP policies for Christians, indicating that it is not a major election issue.

A common feature – that manifests in different ways – is using abortion as a way of positioning against the ‘other’. UKIP utilise the issue of sex-selective abortion to position the British and Christian values that they wish to uphold against reactionary values that they perceive as belonging to certain ethnic communities with non-European origin. Advocating against gender abortions follows a pattern that is common among European right-wing anti-immigrant parties, which is advocating for gender equality when it provides a chance to denigrate immigrant groups, the widespread debate concerning ‘the veil’ being the clearest example. Sinn Féin abortion policy can also be understood as a way of distancing oneself from the ‘other’, which their case is constituted by Britain. The resistance toward extending the Abortion Act 1967 to Northern Ireland can be seen as an expression of this.

Another common ground for all three parties in the study is the opinion that women ought not to make decisions around abortion entirely on their own. All parties advocate some extent of authority control. UKIP and SD both advocate for increased legal restrictions: UKIP primarily want this control function to be performed by medical professionals, SD wants to increase control by lowering the time limit for abortion on demand and preventing selective abortions. Sinn Féin actually wants to decrease state control by allowing for abortions on the grounds of fatal foetal abnormalities, but although this constitutes an increase in choice compared with current Irish abortion law, SF policy on abortion is still much more restrictive than the policies advocated by UKIP and SD. The wish to circumscribe bodily autonomy and the rejection of the feminist conception of abortion points to an inherent conflict between the abortion policies of these nationalist parties and the larger project of gender equality. Swedish abortion rates are deemed ‘too high’ by SD, and Paul Nuttall equates the British abortion rate with seeing the population of Nottingham obliterated every year. By the process of enumeration, reproductive choices made by individual women are redefined as collective loss of possible citizens. To speak with Millar’s terminology, the aborting woman becomes an object onto which national anxiety is projected (Millar 2015). By reframing the conception of abortion in moral terms, reproductive autonomy is called into question and gender equality is undermined.

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