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A HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE ON THE CONDITIONS FOR THE RISE OF FAR-RIGHT PARTIES IN SCANDINAVIA

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Summary

Subject and purpose of work: This article analyzes the factors depicted in the literature as essential for the emergence of far-right parties and assesses the importance of unemployment, immigration and political establishments in the failures of the far-right wing parties in Sweden and Finland in early 2000s.
Materials and methods: Multi-methods approach is used in this study including case studies and a novel technique based on Boolean algebra.
Results: The findings of this paper lead to the conclusion that the correlation between unemployment rates and the electoral strength of far-right parties is weak and does not support simplistic thesis such as high unemployment leads to extremism. Moreover, despite objectively favorable conditions in terms of high immigration rates, the presence of non-European immigrants in a country does not in itself explain the emergence of far-right parties.
Conclusions: The study points to the importance of political factors such as the differences between the mainstream parties and tackling the immigration issue by the Liberal Party in Sweden and the wide ideological span of the coalition government and the role of Finland's special relationship with the USSR that militated against the emergence of far-right parties in these countries.

Keywords: far-right parties, extremism, xenophobia, anti-immigration, nationalism

Introduction

Although the Western European countries have seemingly entered a peaceful, prosperous, and optimism-filled millennium, a striking feature of post-Cold war Europe is a rise or resurgence of extreme right-wing politics and parties. The electoral successes of the extreme right parties are by no means isolated cases: from the Progress Parties in Denmark and Norway to the Lega Nord in Italy, from the National Front in France to the Vlaams Blok in Belgium. These numerous cases illustrate that there is an upsurge of the far-right Western Europe. In a rising number of countries far-right parties already participate in government where their growing electoral support has often translated into significant influence over the shape and nature of government coalitions as well as sensitive policy decisions.

However, notwithstanding the Europe-wide leaning to the right, not all extreme right parties enjoy electoral success. While these parties have gained power in such places as Italy, Austria or Denmark, extremist parties have remained marginalized or almost non-existent in countries such as Finland (until 2015) and the United Kingdom. Although electoral outcomes in each country are influenced and shaped by specific circumstances - political, economic, historical and social, the picture remains highly complex given the disparities in the countries with seemingly similar economic and social conditions, specifically Scandinavian countries. Whereas Denmark and Norway have the history of strong far-right parties, Sweden and Finland generally do not conform to this trend. Although September 2010 parliamentary elections in Sweden resulted in a Swedish far-right party gaining 20 seats in the 349 seat Parliament for the first time, the far-

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right movement in Sweden has not been nearly as influential as it has been in Denmark and Norway. For several reasons, the analysis of this article primarily focuses on the events in the Scandinavian countries in early 2000s. First, the lessons from this time period, when the immigration was not nearly as explosive an issue as it is currently in all of Europe, can be used to understand and anticipate the future political events and inform public policies. Second, the author visited Sweden, Finland, and Denmark on several occasions in early 2000s and is deeply familiar with the pre- and post-election debates and issues of that time period in these countries.

Historical background: early 2000s

In the parliamentary elections of March 2003, the opposition Center Party won the Finnish general election narrowly beating the incumbent Social Democrats (SDP) of Prime Minister Paavo Lipponen (Eduskunta, 2006). The Center Party received 24.7% of the votes whereas the SDP got 24.5% and the extreme right party- True Finns- mustered 1.6% of vote (ibid.). Sweden represents yet another case where the radical right-wing party has failed miserably to gain an entry into government. For example, in the parliamentary elections of September 2002 and 2006, the far-right wing political party Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) gained less than 0.5% of popular vote and failed to cross the required minimum threshold of 4% to enter the government. The Social Democrats (*Socialdemokratiska arbetarepartiet*) won their third general election in a row and, for the first time since 1968 the party actually increased its share of vote, achieving nearly 40% against 36% four years earlier (Riksdag, 2006). The Swedish result was surprising as center-left governments throughout most of the rest of Europe were becoming less popular and were being squeezed out of governments. At the same time period, voters in France, Portugal, the Netherlands, Norway and Denmark voted against center-left governments. What, then, explains these Swedish and Finnish deviancies? And why did the extreme right parties succeed in Denmark and Norway but not in Sweden and Finland?

The recent developments in national elections have led to burgeoning literature that addresses the emergence of the far-right parties in selected countries. However, these studies typically investigate the successes of the extreme right parties and devote little attention to the negative case such as Sweden. Although the success of these parties is commonly associated with high levels of unemployment and immigration, the empirical and theoretical studies that actually examine the variation in the achievements of the extremist parties have often produced inconsistent results. Some studies claim that migration matters (Anderson, 1996), others that it does not (Mayer and Perrineau, 1992) and, to make things more puzzling, some argue it matters in only some countries (Givens, 2000). Likewise, the same contradictory arguments can be found for unemployment and political aspects.

The following sections of this study will therefore reexamine how the prevailing theories explain the emergence and growth of extreme right parties. While the geographic scope of this research is the whole region of Scandinavia, this paper will predominantly focus on Sweden and Finland as negative cases and will investigate the failures of the far-right wing parties in these countries, particularly in reference to the parliamentary elections in Sweden in September 2002 and in Finland in March 2003. In doing so, this article will analyze the factors depicted in the literature as essential for the emergence of far-right parties, and will empirically assess the importance of unemployment, immigration and political institutions. Were these factors absent in the Swedish and Finnish cases or were there other variables that worked against them? Understanding this will allow us to critically test earlier explanations of the emergence of extreme right parties elsewhere in the world "because it is important to identify the scope conditions of theories" (George, Bennett, 2004, 75). The study will utilize a multi-method approach to investigate the failures and success of the far-right in Scandinavia. First, the comparative analysis is conducted using techniques based on Boolean algebra because this method makes case-oriented comparisons as opposed to variable-oriented comparisons (Ragin, 2000). After all, social phenomena are causally complex, that is factors converge together at certain times to produce certain outcomes. Second, to obtain a deeper knowledge and to verify the findings based on Boolean method, two case studies will be used to analyze the negative cases,

Table 1. Western European countries with far-right parties in parliament in early 2000s

Austria	Austrian Freedom Party (FPO); Key figure- Jörg Haider
Belgium	Flemish Block (Vlaams Block), Front National; Key figure- Frank Vanhecke
Denmark	Progress Party (FPR), Danish People's Party (DPP); Key figure- Pia Kjærsgaard
France	National Front (FN); Key figure- Jean-Marie Le Pen
Germany	Republican Party, National Democratic Party (NPD), Union of German People
Italy	National Alliance, Northern League; Key figures- Umberto Bossi, Gianfranco Fini
Norway	Progress Party (FRPn); Key figure- Carl Hagen
Switzerland	Swiss People's Party; Key figure- Christopher Blocher
UK	British National Party; Key figure- Nick Griffin
Netherlands	Livable Netherlands, Pim Fortuyn List; Key figure- Mat Herben
Portugal	Popular Party, Key figure- Paulo Portas

Finland and Sweden, which will involve investigating the linkage of data on immigration, unemployment and political factors with the success/failure of the far-right parties. For the purposes of this paper, the parties considered will be referred to as far-right, extreme/radical right or populist right.

Emergence of Far-Right Wing Parties: Hypotheses under Investigation

Exploring the causal factors for the rise of the radical rightist movement is a difficult undertaking due to the complexity of the issues. Many factors - socioeconomic, social, psychological, and political among others - play important roles and are tightly linked with one another. Furthermore, a full explanation of the success and failures of extreme right parties requires a strong national perspective as the political and economic conditions in each country have been molded by unique historical events. However, based on the consensus in the relevant literature, these explanations will be categorized into the following sections that will subsume other important factors: socio-cultural (immigration), economic (unemployment), and political (policy convergence). Although it is impossible to clearly separate each set of factors from the others, they have different causal chains. Drawing from the theoretical literature, this article will explore the most dominant hypothesis on the emergence of far-right political parties- immigration, unemployment and political convergence. The other factors, though important, will not be analyzed in this study.

Socio-Cultural Factors: Xenophobia

Socio-cultural factors play a major role in providing the analytical tools necessary for understanding the milieu in which the far-right can emerge. Various features permeating modern European societies can be delineated including psychological crisis of society resulting from transformation from industrial to post-industrial economy, and cultural threat.

The crisis and insecurity of European society at the end of the twentieth century comes after decades of rapid social changes: war, revolution, the end of empires, economic competition, a crisis in religion and culture (Harris, 1996). Moreover, the major countries have had a psychological crisis combined with the economic and social crisis: Britain, France, Portugal, and Belgium lost massive empires; Germany was divided; Spain moved rapidly from being a police state to trying to be a modern democracy (ibid.).

Moreover, the emergence of the radical right parties is largely a "consequence of a profound transformation of the socioeconomic and socio-cultural structure of advanced Western European democracies" (Betz and Immerfall, 1998, 7). Scholars have argued that this transition is predominantly characterized by dissolution, fragmentation and differentiation, which are results of increased individualization (ibid.). These processes have implications for the cultures of contemporary Western societies where "established subcultures, milieus, and institutions, which traditionally provided and sustained collective identities, are getting eroded and/or being destroyed… and are giving way to a flux of contextualized identities" (ibid. 8). These developments underline the significance of cultural capital, flexibility and individual entrepreneurship for people's efforts to adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances of contemporary Western societies. Hence, those who possess these characteristics can be expected to be among the winners in post-industrial societies (ibid. 30).

Moreover, globalization encourages a politics of identity, and attempt to "find a harbor of calm in a turbulent sea of hyper-change" (Eatwell, 2000, 145). Rapid social changes bring insecurity and instability for many people thus contributing to feelings of alienation and resentment. The developments and integration in the European Union are crucial to the extremists as the EU is blamed for opening its borders to immigrants and refugees thus fueling xenophobia and aggravating the fears of imminent danger to Western Europe. The globalization of culture, both the threat of homogenization and hybridization, has diminished the capacity for people to differentiate among themselves, threatening people's national identity and resulting in a defense of the strong nation. The flamboyant Front National leader Le Pen announced in 2002 on several occasions that he would make an attempt to withdraw France from the EU if he was elected the president of France (CNNa, 2002).

By far the most important targets of contemporary right-wing radical populist resentment have been immigrants as demographic shifts and successive waves of immigration create new pools of people moving to Europe. The issue of immigration has been transformed into a salient political theme all over the continent. According to Betz and Immerfall (1998, 6), immigration has proven to be an "ideal" issue for radical right-wing mobilization because it offers a wide range of points of attack. Thus, in Western Europe the newcomers have variously been charged with taking away jobs from native workers, driving down wages, and exploiting the welfare system.

Analysts have attributed the rise of the radical right to the changing numbers, density, composition, or character of immigrants, often with some implication of a threshold (Schain, 2002). However, it appears that the relationship between immigrant presence and support for the radical right is more usefully understood as one element of a broader political process in which these parties are involved. Extremists have clearly been able to manipulate and foster racist sentiments to their favor and it is equally clear that the electoral exploitation of racism is facilitated by the presence of a target population that has been cast as racially and culturally distinct.

Obviously, xenophobia and hostility toward immigrants and asylum seekers are a key part in the appeal of the populist right anywhere in the world. Anders Widfeldt (2000, 491) notes how the Danish People's Party expressed its opposition toward

foreigners in its party program: "Denmark is not and has never been an immigration country, and the Danish People's Party objects to Denmark developing into a multiethnic society".

The immigration discussion "raises strong feelings, a guarantee that politicians will be tempted to enter the debate and harness it to their causes" (BBCa, 2002). The escalating number of immigrants entering the EU reinforces these fears. It may not matter at all if the growing number of immigrants and the presumed economic damage brought by them is an actual and immediate danger; it is apparent that there is a perception of imaginary decline and the accompanying feeling of threat among people. Usually individuals supporting far-right wing parties feel economically and socially disadvantaged and perceive their present economic situation as being bad.

Economic Factors

The industrial progression toward a regional and global economy during the past three decades has had a profound impact on the structure of European labor. The number of workers in the tertiary sector has grown at the expense of those in the primary and secondary sector, and workers in every sector increasingly find themselves influenced by economic forces that are no longer controlled by national governments (Ebata, 1997). Consequently, there has been a rise in part-time and temporary labor, consistently higher levels of unemployment compared with thirty years ago, particularly for youth, and a growth of long term structural under or unemployment (Kitschelt, 1995). Economic country characteristics are therefore often taken into account to explain variation in the popularity of right-wing extremism between countries (Anderson 1996; Schain 2002) and most studies have focused on unemployment levels.

Economically, the world is becoming more interlinked through growing trade, a process which poses a major threat to high wage economies unless they have features such as very high productivity and low taxes (Eatwell, 2000). Indeed, the threat has already become reality as unemployment rates have risen in most European countries since the mid-1980s. In addition to that, cultural globalization threatens a "McWorld" dominated by McDonald's, NIKE, Macintosh and MTV- a standardization around American corporate and social values (Barber, 1995). These changes are producing a bifurcation between people who see new opportunities (especially the more educated, or those in efficient industries) and those who feel threatened by such change particularly the unskilled and semi-skilled (Eatwell, 2000). The latter seem increasingly attracted to the idea that the economy should serve the nation while a welfare state is supported, but only for the "own people"- welfare chauvinism politics which is deemed as a means of protecting living standards (Betz and Immerfall, 2002).

In other words, when the economy is doing poorly, the citizens are more likely than ever to develop an acute sense of dislike towards immigrants who are often accused of exacerbating the economic and social problems. The perennial unemployment crisis as well as the stalling economy in the EU fuel the feelings of resentment aimed at immigrants. Additionally, increasing economic and social competition has created a pool of resentful citizens who seek social acceptance in modern Europe. Ebata claims that "the potential for right wing extremism exists in all industrial societies because of the contradictory processes of modernization that result in tremendous economic and cultural upheaval" (Ebata, 1997, 24). Those who feel ostracized from society by having lost their jobs tend to turn to parties promising the restoration of a better past and the elimination of social tensions. It seems to be a plausible explanation for the growing resentment towards immigrants who allegedly take away jobs. Waves of immigration create new pools of people striving to achieve security and prosperity in Western Europe, and, in this quest, they threaten to displace the status and security of those who have the most to lose by this new influx (Braun, 1997).

In order to answer the question of why bad economic circumstances and the influx of immigrants may be of importance in explaining extreme right-wing voting support, we should consider the role of economic interests. In countries where competition for scarce resources intensifies due to worsening economic conditions or an increasing number of immigrants, social groups are more likely to perceive stronger competition over these scarce resources (Eatwell, 2000, 418). Because people are not very likely to blame their own group (in-group) for these increasingly competitive circumstances they blame others, that is, out-groups. To preserve a positive in-group evaluation, out-groups are blamed and negatively valued characteristics are ascribed to them (Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers, 2002). Thus, increasing competition may result in exclusionary reactions.

Political Factors

Another approach to explain extreme right-wing popularity in Western Europe is to focus on political factors. While there are a variety of conditions deemed important in the literature, the bulk of the literature emphasizes the significance of political space. Thus, the development of the extreme right parties occurred as a result of an opening of political space, which encouraged the entry of new actors (Ebata, 1997, 26). A process of political radicalization was initiated with the rise of the new left and corresponding advance of the new right (Ignazi, 1992, 3).

Kitschelt (1995) has stressed the importance of opportunity structures for extreme right-wing parties. He argues that convergence between the major moderate left-wing and major moderate right-wing parties opens up the possibility for a radical party to position itself successfully on the extreme at either side. Additionally, Lubbers, Gijsberts and

Scheepers (2002, 350) propose to take into account the positioning of political parties with respect to their immigration policy because, if there is one issue with which the extreme right wing has made itself heard, it has been a restrictive position towards immigration. If other players in the political arena have picked up this theme too, we could expect those parties to have stolen a march on the extreme right-wing parties (Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers, 2002, 351). This idea has been put forward as an explanation of the relative failures of the extreme right in Germany (Betz, 1994) and the Netherlands (Lubbers, Gijsberts and Scheepers, 2002, 350). Because the ideological themes of the mainstream parties often overlap thus making the distinction between them blurry, the right extreme parties offer a clear-cut ideology, which renders them as different and enunciated. The observers of the French presidential elections agree on the fact that only Le Pen had something to offer to his supporters in early 2000s; most of the other candidates could not present a distinct approach of solving the country's growing problems (BBCb, 2002).

While traditional parties neglect popular concerns, as perceived by the public, radical parties present themselves as political alternatives by articulating ideas on various subjects such as immigration and nationalism. This way the extreme right mobilizes support at the expense of traditional parties. Many argued that the attacks on synagogues in France and the Netherlands in 2002 played into Le Pen's hands because his party accentuated the problem of the rising crime in France (CNNc, 2002).

Boolean analysis

The major reason for the use of Boolean algebra is that such a method alleviates the methodological obstacles posed by the limited number of cases (countries) under observation. If the focus of the study is about one small region- Scandinavia, the number of cases to study is low and we can easily incur the familiar "small-*N*" problem. Techniques based on Boolean algebra provide one means of resolving the small-*N* problem posed here. Boolean analysis involves describing the empirical relationships among dichotomous variables in a truth table and then using Boolean algebra to express those relationships in a more parsimonious fashion (Ragin, 2000).

I examine the dynamics of far-right success and failures in Scandinavia in the last parliamentary elections. The Boolean approach models the far-right success feasibility as a function of three independent variables represented jointly in the following expression:

$$FR = f(I, U, PC)$$

where FR is the presence of the far-right parties in the parliament in 2002; I is the presence of immigration in the country; U is the high levels of unemployment in the country; and PC is the presence of political convergence in the country. The variables have been operationalized in the following manner. The dependent variable FR is a country where the radical-right parties have more than 5% of the seats in national parliament. If a country has more than 3% of immigrants, it is defined as a country with high immigration (I). If this number seems negligible in comparison to other countries, we need to remember that the Scandinavian countries have traditionally been very homogeneous and even a seemingly small percentage of immigrants is considered an anomaly in these countries. Unemployment (U) is defined as high if it is exceeds 5% because international organizations such as the World Bank consider employment high when the rate exceeds that number. Finally, countries where political parties adhere to similar policy platforms are defined as having high political convergence (PC). Policy platforms are not deemed similar if the parties offer different policy proposals such as keeping or abandoning welfare state or if one party mentions an issue which other parties fail to mention (e.g. immigration).

Additionally, the Boolean analysis allows researchers to assess necessary and sufficient conditions. A cause is necessary if it must be present for an outcome to occur and the way to assess it is to work backward from instances of the outcome to the pertinent cause (Ragin, 2000). Necessary conditions are extremely important because they can serve preventive purpose. A cause is sufficient if it can by itself produce a certain outcome and a way to analyze it is for researchers to investigate if the cause always causes the outcome (Ibid, 92). The analysis utilizes the QCA software developed by Kris Drass and Charles Ragin.

Analysis of Boolean Results

Table II displays all possible configurations of the independent variables being examined as well as the number of cases in which far-right parties have succeeded and/or failed. Each row of the outcome displays one existing configuration of causes. Absence of a cause is displayed by small letters, the presence of a cause by capital letters. We can see that we have two cases where the outcome FR was present and the configuration is i+u+PC. Lack of immigration, lack of unemployment and political convergence have contributed to the rise of the radical right parties. Negative outcome (absence of FR) for Sweden is a result of the following combination- I+U+pc and for Finland it is I+U+PC.

We can also see that no cases exist for other configurations. These combinations appear feasible and a further study could incorporate more countries. The following table is the output of the Boolean analysis.

The emergence of far-right is then a function of the following equation: FR = i*u*PC The radical right parties emerge in this scenario- the low levels of immigration and unemployment together with high political convergence produce the environment favorable to the rise of far-right radicalists. This outcome does not support the relevance of

Table 2. Boolean analysis of the far-right emergence

Countries with this			
Configurations	**Cases w/o FR**	**Cases w/ FR**	**Configuration**
IUPC	1	0	Finland
IUpc	1	0	Sweden
IuPC	0	0	?
iUPC	0	0	?
Iupc	0	0	?
iuPC	0	2	Denmark, Norway
iUpc	0	0	?
Iupc	0	0	?

Note: In the configurations, an uppercase letter indicates the presence of an independent variable; a lowercase letter, its absence, where: I = Immigration, U = Unemployment; PC = Political Convergence. Dependent variable FR= Far-Right.

Table 3. Solution

Model: FR = I + U + PC
*** CRISP-SET SOLUTION ***
i*u*PC

immigration and unemployment discussed in the literature. Based on the veristic criteria (one negative case fails the theory), we do not have a sufficient condition (Ragin, 2000, 113). Ragin also talks about quasi-sufficiency because it is possible to assess whether a causal variable is "almost" sufficient" by using certain benchmark probabilities (Ibid, 109). However, we have only two successful cases out of four total cases, which gives us a 50% observed probability. If we were to use the binominal probability formula to assess the probability on only the far-right cases, we obtain the probability of 0.3753 which exceeds the conventional levels of significance, even the 0.20 level. This means that "a researcher would refrain from making any inference about sufficiency because we have less confidence that the observed proportion is superior to the benchmark proportion chosen (Ibid, 113). The small number of cases drastically affects the confidence that the proportion observed is indeed superior to the benchmark proportion. We cannot therefore conclude with certainty that we have sufficient or quasi-sufficient conditions.

Far-Right Success: Conditions

Murray Edelman (1988) contends that meaning is socially constructed, and political developments mean whatever observers construe them to mean. As a result, meaning is ambiguous since it is entirely a social construct. John Kingdon (1995, 92) also argues that conditions do not automatically translate into problems. Problems are brought to attention by systematic events, focusing events like crises, or by feedback from the operation of current programs. Policy makers or entrepreneurs define conditions as problems by comparing current conditions with their values concerning more ideal states of affair, by comparing their own performance with that of other countries or by putting the subject into one category rather than another (ibid, 111). Consequently, the far-right policy entrepreneurs need to have a fact or condition which they could manipulate to define it in their own terms. Are immigration, unemployment, and political convergence salient in the Scandinavian countries?

Socio-Cultural Approach: Role of Immigration and Xenophobia

It has often been argued that ethnic tension and anti-immigration sentiment play a crucial role in making a fertile ground for the populist right. Furthermore, many suggest that xenophobia and hostility to immigrants and asylum seekers represent a key part in the appeal of the populist right wing parties. The salience of the immigration issue coupled with xenophobic views has been important for the far-right parties as a mobilizing factor.

Sweden and Finland have indeed been countries of immigration for a relatively long period of time, and the influx of non-European immigrants increased during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. Of all Scandinavian countries, Sweden was the largest recipient of immigrants and, in Sweden in 2001, the percentage of non-EU citizens was about 4.5% in comparison to 3.5%, 2.9% and 2.6% in Finland, Denmark and Norway respectively (Eurostat, 2006). Furthermore, after Denmark enacted more stringent immigration laws in 2001, the flow of immigrants to Sweden increased (Rydgren, 2002).

The racist violence has been making the headlines throughout the Scandinavian region. In late 2000, the European Monitoring Centre on Racism and Xenophobia (EUMC) estimated that Sweden had the second highest level of racial and extreme right violence in the EU, behind Germany (EUMC, 2006). In the 1999 Annual Report, the EUMC stated that there were 2,363 reported crimes with racial or xenophobic motives. These incidents included cases of illegal threats, assaults and molestation, and signified a continuous increase since 1997. Nearly 1,000 crimes were committed by neo- nazi organizations, including four reported cases of murder, and four attempted murders.

Similarly, the number of racist crimes was increasing steadily in Finland. In 1996, the police recorded 97 crimes which had racist and xenophobic characteristics whereas, in 1995, the number was 87 (Pekonen, 1999, 38). Ten of the 97 crimes in 1996 were deemed despicable by the report and included a racist murder, another case where a skinhead stabbed a foreigner, in four cases foreigners were attacked with explosives and in another four cases foreigners were brutally beaten. The culprits of hate crimes have usually been a group of young skinheads with a criminal record. However, their violence has usually not been planned in advance, but has rather been spontaneous acts (Ibid, 39).

Table 4. Swedish opinion poll on immigration

Proportion who agree (in %), year	90	91	92	93	94	95	96	97	98	99
It is a good idea to reduce the number of refugees	61	56	65	59	56	56	54	54	50	47
There are too many refugees in Sweden	-	-	-	52	-	-	-	48	-	40
Would not like to see a relative get married with an immigrant	-	-	-	25	-	-	-	18	-	17

Source: Rydgren 2002.

As we can see from Table 4, a majority of the voters in Sweden have been receptive to the idea of reducing the number of refugees allowed into the country. This opinion reached a high of 65% in 1992, and has declined slightly during the last years of the decade.

Thus, despite objectively favorable conditions in terms of high immigration rates, the Sweden Democrats and True Finns failed to achieve a broad support in early 2000s. In Sweden and Finland the immigration issue did not play as important role in boosting the far-right parties' popularity as in other countries such as Norway or France. It is particularly interesting given the fact that Sweden and Finland receive a larger number of immigrants (non-EU citizens) than the other Scandinavian countries- Denmark and Norway for example, and this number has been gradually growing due to the stricter immigration laws enacted by the Danish Parliament in 2001.

Moreover, few would argue that Sweden or Finland was less characterized by multiculturalization than most other Western European countries. Consequently, we can argue that neither the presence of popular xenophobia nor the salience of the immigration issue guarantees the emergence of a far-right party. One explanation for this could be that the immigration issue has yet to be politicized, that is translated into political terms, at the level of the parties as well as at the level of the voters if the social phenomenon of immigration is to have an impact on the voters' choice how to vote. Kitschelt (1995, 62) has also argued that the presence of non-European immigrants in a country does not in itself explain the emergence of far-right parties.

Role of Economic Factors

According to Betz (1994) and Kitschelt (1995), a post-industrial economy is a basic condition for the emergence of radical right parties and, like other Western European nations, Sweden and Finland experienced the transition from industrial to post-industrial economy (Rydgren, 2002, 35). The level of unemployment is frequently assumed to be a very important aspect of economic crisis because of the frustration and social unrest stemming from widespread unemployment. Thus, one should expect that the higher the unemployment rate, the more opportunities for extreme right parties to manipulate the issue and receive support from the dissatisfied population. However, if we examine Table V on the next page summarizing the unemployment rates in 14 major Western European countries between 1994 and 2009, we cannot detect any strong or unambiguous relationship between the level of unemployment and the emergence or presence of far-right parties. While Finland has on of the highest unemployment rates of the countries included in the study, Austria has one of the lowest unemployment rates of all countries. How can we explain the success of the extreme right in Austria in 2001 with relatively low unemployment rates and the failure or radical parties in Finland which had one of the highest rates? Additionally, if we compare Sweden to the countries that are known to have strong extreme right parties, we see that on average the unemployment rates in Italy, France and Belgium were higher in early 2000s than in Sweden. At the same time, unemployment in Finland and Sweden is generally higher than in Denmark and Austria. Roger Eatwell notes that extreme right support collapsed in Britain during early 1980s when the unemployment rates rose dramatically (2000, 418).

Obviously, the relationship between unemployment rates and the electoral strength of far-right parties is weak. At the individual level, there could be some connection between unemployment and extremist voting. However, the correlation is weak and does not support simplistic theses such as that high unemployment leads to extremism.

Political Factors

Sweden

According to Kitschelt (1995), the convergence in the political space has a great impact on the possibility for the emergence of new parties. Convergence may result in a feeling that the established parties are the same and there are no essential differences between them (Kitschelt, 1995). Because it is difficult to find out how voters define the concepts of left and right, Rydgren (2002, 47) assumes that they typically make

Table 5. Unemployment rates in major Western European countries

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009
Belgium	10.0	9.9	9.7	9.4	9.5	9.0	8.7	6.8	6.9	8.0	8.1	8.4	8.2	7.7	6.9	7.3
Italy	11.4	11.9	12.0	12.0	11.9	11.3	11.2	9.5	9.0	8.0	7.7	7.8	7.7	6.1	6.6	6.9
Austria	4.0	3.8	4.3	4.4	4.5	3.7	3.6	3.8	4.2	4.4	5.0	5.1	5.1	4.5	4.1	4.5
Denmark	7.2	6.9	6.1	4.3	5.0	4.9	4.9	4.6	4.3	4.9	5.3	5.4	4.3	4.1	3.0	5.2
Finland	17.9	16.6	14.6	12.7	11.4	10.2	10.2	9.0	9.1	9.0	8.0	8.5	7.9	7.0	3.3	7.4
France	12.3	11.6	12.4	12.3	11.8	11.3	10.5	8.5	8.8	9.4	9.6	9.6	9.1	8.6	7.6	8.8
Germany	8.4	8.2	8.9	9.9	9.4	8.7	8.5	7.9	8.3	9.2	9.5	9.8	8.7	8.6	7.4	7.6
Ireland	14.3	12.4	11.7	9.9	7.6	5.7	5.0	4.1	4.5	4.5	4.4	4.5	4.2	4.6	5.6	10.6
Netherlands	7.1	7.0	6.3	5.2	4.0	3.3	2.7	2.3	2.9	3.8	4.8	4.9	4.0	3.4	2.8	2.8
Norway	5.8	5.4	4.8	4.0	3.2	3.2	3.4	3.6	3.9	4.4	4.7	4.3	4.6	3.5	2.5	2.6
Portugal	7.0	7.3	7.3	6.8	5.2	4.5	4.3	4.2	4.6	6.7	7.3	7.4	7.6	8.2	7.6	8.5
Spain	24.1	22.9	22.2	20.8	18.8	15.9	15.1	13.0	11.2	11.0	9.5	9.9	8.7	8.1	9.5	17.0
Sweden	9.8	9.2	9.6	9.9	8.3	7.2	6.6	5.1	5.0	5.6	6.5	6.6	7.3	6.6	6.0	7.8
UK	9.6	8.8	8.2	7.0	6.3	6.1	5.9	5.1	5.2	5.0	4.7	4.6	5.0	5.5	5.2	6.6

Source: Eurostat, ISSP.

their classifications on the basis of the economic cleavage dimension. So how different are the programs offered by the mainstream parties in Sweden?

Main Parties to the Left: The Social Democratic Party (Socialdemokraterna) - early 2000s

Although the Social Democrats' campaign had been considered lackluster, in the parliamentary elections of September 2002, they obtained 40.0% of the vote. Together with the ex-communist party of the Left and the Greens, the Social Democrats won over 53% of the vote, and gained 191 seats in the 349-seat parliament (Riksdag, 2006). The Prime Minister Göran Persson proudly announced after his party's victory: "This is an important moment for me as party leader - to win an election and go against a European trend, to win so clearly when in government" (BBCc, 2002.). According to the Prime Minister, many Swedes still supported the high-tax, high-welfare model which had kept Social Democrats in office for most of the last 50 years (ibid.).

The electoral results buttress the belief that there is still active support for the traditional welfare model in Sweden, where citizens pay some of the highest taxes in the world in return for generous social benefits. For the Social Democratic party one of the main issues in the campaign was education and the party favored more support for public schools and hospitals (Socialdemokraterna, 2006). In their pre-election campaign, the Social Democrats emphasized improvements in the welfare sector as they refused adamantly to cut taxes, or to reduce the lavish funding of the health and education systems (Socialdemokraterna, 2006).

The Liberal Party (Folkpartiet)- early 2000s

By obtaining 13.3% of the vote, the Liberal Party nearly tripled its share of the vote in 2002 by making immigration and the integration of foreigners a central campaign theme (BBCc, 2002). The party's main platform was immigration- "the Swedish Liberal Party (*Folkpartiet*) proposes a new Swedish integration policy as the previous policies have collapsed. In this policy it is proposed that immigrants' freedom of action be extended in several ways at the same time as they will also be required to take more responsibility for themselves" (Folkpartiet, 2006). The party offered to open Sweden's doors to labor immigrants, proposed more efficient language teaching for asylum seekers, wanted immigrants to pass a Swedish-language test before gaining citizenship and called for better integration strategies (ibid.). It should also be noted that the Liberal party did not oppose immigration; it only called for better and more effective integration strategies while supporting immigration. The Liberals emphasized the need for foreign labor: "During the next few decades, Europe and Sweden will need extensive labor force immigration in order to maintain future national welfare needs. If people from other countries do not immigrate into Sweden there will not be enough people of working age - there will simply be too few people to support the non-working population" (ibid.). The party leader Lars Leijonborg said "the party is not anti-immigrant and racists are doubly thick in the head if they vote for it" (Economist, 2002).

We can see that immigration definitely played a key role in the pre-election campaign in Sweden; it is not

like the immigration issue was absent or was of no high importance to Swedes. Indeed, it seems that the immigrant issue had provoked more interest among voters, with the Liberal Party vote shooting up to about 13%. "After four straight election losses it was about do or die. We won. Our message was change," said Liberal Party leader Lars Leijonborg (BBCc, 2002).

Main Party to the Right: The Moderate Party (Moderaterna)- early 2000s

The Moderate party was Sweden's leading non-socialist party which remained the largest opposition party on the national level. Between the years 1991-94 it formed government with Mr. Carl Bildt as Prime Minister. The party strongly favored tax cuts (Moderaterna, 2006).

For the main centre-right Moderates, the result of the 2002 elections was a major disappointment, particularly after opinion polls had predicted a much closer race. With 14.7% of the vote, the party came close to losing its position as the standard bearer of the right, in its worst performance since 1973 (BBCc, 2002).

It seems that the party leader Bo Lundgren failed to convince the voters that he could cut taxes yet preserve social benefits. Obviously, slashing taxes would require overhauling the generous welfare system and people were not willing to embrace such drastic measures. For instance, the Moderate party's program stated: "Share dividends are taxed twice- once by the company as profit and once by the person receiving the dividend. This is one explanation why companies leave Sweden for abroad. We wish to remove tax on share dividends" (Moderaterna, 2006). In sum, the party wanted to reduce income tax, tax on petrol and diesel, abolish real estate tax, and abolish capital tax (ibid.).

The breakthrough for the party came in 2006 general election when The Alliance for Sweden, a center-right coalition headed by Moderate Party leader Fredrik Reinfeldt, came to power ending 10 years of rule by the Social Democrat Party. Moderate Party obtained 93 seats in the Parliament and formed a center-right coalition with Centre Party, Liberal People's Party, Christian Democrats (BBCe). In 2010 election, the party received 107 seats versus Social Democrats' 112 and formed a coalition with the same parties as in it had done in 2006.

According to Angus Roxburgh: "for decades the Swedes have enjoyed a reputation as the cool-headed, moderate, sensible burghers of northern Europe and the last general election confirmed that [Swedes do not support radical changes]" (BBCa, 2002). Interestingly, the Moderate party's program did not explicitly mention immigration issue unlike the aforementioned parties.

Finland

Looking at the Finnish political landscape exposes interesting and peculiar characteristics. Since 1995, Finland was governed by an exceptionally broad-based "rainbow coalition" which included the leading party of the right (Conservatives) and both left-wing parties (Social Democrats and Leftist Alliance) together with the Swedish People's Party and, until spring 2002, Greens (Arter, 2003, 154). This made a mockery of conventional theories of coalition building and this hotchpotch government was a symbol of Finns' eagerness to work together (Ibid).

While the political parties in Finland maintained relatively different though overlapping programs in early 2000s, the existing structure of government had the widest ideological span of any in Europe thus making it more difficult for other parties to enter the government (Arter, 2003, 160). The ideological spectrum was so broad that only parties with radical programs such as anti-immigration would be able to differentiate themselves, but, due to the long history of discrediting the extreme parties (to be discussed in more detail shortly), people were reluctant to vote for these parties. The main assumption for the Finns was- "if it [government] works, why change it?" (Hynyen, 1999, 188). Analyzing the party programs of the Finnish political parties in early 2000s reveals that, while parties maintained distinct programs regarding welfare, labor and education, no party explicitly mentioned immigration issue, which contrasts with the clear distinction between the Swedish political parties.

Finnish political campaigns were described as being "dull as ditch water and virtually issue free" (Arter, 2003, 155). Moreover, with clear signs of an impending downturn in the economy, the parties competed among themselves to promise the voters as little as possible (ibid.). Tony Halme, standing as an independent on the Real Finn list in Helsinki, gained 16,390 votes (one seat in the parliament), more than the Centre leader Jäätteenmäki and the fifth highest poll of any individual candidate. Arter maintains that Halme provided a protest channel for young voters who would not otherwise have turned to vote (2003, 161). Indeed, statistics shows that the majority of Halme's support came from the poorest neighborhood in Helsinki notorious for its perennially low voter turnout. Moreover, Halme added much needed color to a drab campaign. For example, Tony Halme has stated that he would "send rapists, pedophiles and drug dealers to Russian prisons to serve sentences" (Ibid).

Finland and Sweden: Available Space for the Far -right?

Finland

What then explains the absence of strong far-right parties in Finland in early 2000s? One reason for the "silence" that has characterized the radical right in Finland has been the specific political history of Finland after World War II. According to Pekonen the explanation for the lack of relevant radical right-wing and racist organizations in Finland was the Moscow and Paris Peace Treaties of 1944 and 1947 (1999, 33). In the treaties, all radical, fascist-type

organizations, as they were officially defined, were first dissolved and then forbidden in Finland (until 1991). These treaties also led to a special relationship with the Soviet Union, which kept a rigid ostracism to whatever looked right-wing (Ignazi, 2003, 161). In general, the Finnish State, its security organizations and the public atmosphere have respected the demands of the peace treaties.

For Finnish government, the belief was that foreign policy came first, followed by other political questions, including internal affairs. During the long presidency of Urho Kekkonen, a national agreement regarding the pre-eminence of the Kekkonen foreign policy was established by all the major political parties. According to Ignazi, this climate discouraged any fascist movement, even disguised, from developing in Finland, so right-wing politics had no role within that political sphere (2003).

It seems the long absence of far-right political parties in Finland had become a norm in the Finnish society. Under Finnish law any recognized political organization must have a minimum of 5000 members, and the extreme right parties had been unsuccessful in obtaining this support. According to a survey conducted by *Helsingin Sanomat,* a Finnish newspaper, the parties that even remotely resembled neo-fascist or extreme parties, immediately became an object of ridicule among Finns (Helsingin Sanomat, 2006). Besides, these parties remained largely unknown due to the important role of media and the watchdog groups in stigmatizing radical groups and leaders (Kaplan, 1999, 215).

The wide ideological span of the "rainbow coalition" encompassed virtually every ideological stance- from the left to the right, which left little room for other parties to enter the government. If an outside party wanted to differentiate itself from the main parties, it had to offer policies and platforms drastically different from those of the mainstream parties. Yet, because of the broad ideological span, the new parties would stand out only if they offered extreme policies. Consequently, this new party would be deemed radical and the majority of people would be averse to voting for them due to the long tradition of condemning these parties.

Sweden

The leading Swedish far-right wing party in Sweden in early 2000s was the Sweden Democrats. Although it traditionally only obtained marginal voting results in national elections, it succeeded in sending a handful of deputies to local Parliaments. In 2001 election the party obtained 20 seats in the Swedish Parliament for the first time. The Sweden Democrats was founded in 1988 as a continuation of The Sweden Party (*Sverigepartiet*), which in turn was founded in 1986 as a result of the merging of The Progress Party and the racist and far-right group Keep Sweden Swedish (*Bevara Sverige Svenskt*) (Rydgren, 1998, 6). The Sweden Democrats has had contacts with radical-right parties in other countries, such as the Front National and the Republikaner, and has, like other extreme parties, tried hard to maintain a respectable facade and to present itself as a proponent for "true democracy" (Widfeldt, 2001). Yet, there were strong indicators that the party had not succeeded in this strategy and there were journalists that repeatedly reminded the public that several party members, some of them in leading positions, had allegedly been associated with nazi or racist organizations (ibid.). In the September 2002 and 2006 elections, the Sweden Democrats failed to cross the 4% electoral threshold and remains marginalized even though the Sweden Democrat campaign in 2002 was given quite a lot of attention in the media.

What can we conclude from the differences between party programs in Sweden in early 2000s? The Swedish Moderate Party consistently offered clear policy alternatives to those of the Social Democrats and was more radical in its economic policy, most notably taxation. The political field that has traditionally been split between the right and left does not allow much room for protest movements. Thus, the Moderate party could absorb at least some of the voters' discontent that could have otherwise served as a mobilizing factor for extreme right-wing parties. There was a very low degree of convergence between Swedish political parties as each of the main parties hold to a distinct program. The Swedish media was not surprised about the success of this far-right party: " …it seems clear that a fair share of the public is unhappy with how governments on both sides [Moderates and Social Democrats] have handled the integration and immigration issues through the years. It does not mean that they necessarily think that the Sweden Democrats is the answer to these questions - but it does mean that politicians have to start addressing these issues, and not just pointing fingers" (BBCf).

Moreover, it is wrong to assume that there was no real debate about immigration in Sweden. As we could see from the pre-election party issues, there was an intense debate about this issue. What differentiated Sweden from other countries was that the mainstream, non-radical parties had picked up this issue by offering reasonable solutions such as more efficient integration strategies to the problems related to immigration.

Conclusions

This article examined and tested the main theories that earlier research deems as being of high significance for the emergence of extreme right parties. Evaluating and applying these theories led to the conclusion that neither high levels of unemployment, nor large numbers of foreigners provide sufficient conditions for the birth of far-right parties, at least in the context of Scandinavia in early 2000s. Political convergence led to the rise of the far-right in the cases of Norway and Denmark in early 2000s but failed to produce the same outcome in Finland. Undeniably, some of the conditions might be necessary. The Scandinavian countries that have successful far-right political parties, Denmark

and Norway, had in common low immigration and unemployment and high political convergence. The Boolean analysis also revealed that high political convergence is one of the factors leading to the rise of the radical right (see Tables II and III). We saw that in 50% cases high political convergence has led to the emergence of far-right political parties.

Boolean analysis would prove useful in testing these conditions in a further study, especially if we add more independent variables and more countries. We need look for the right combinations of factors and discover how they relate to each other as a full explanation of the success and failures of extreme parties requires a strong national as well as local perspective.

Sweden and Finland: why not far-right parties?

In early 2000s, Sweden and Finland stood out against its Scandinavian neighbors Denmark and Norway where radical right parties had gained significant power in government. Sweden had been more successful in its policy of integration than its neighbors and Finland's history played a significant role in marginalizing the extremists. This does not mean, however, that right wing populism cannot raise its head in Sweden or Finland as well, especially if issues such as immigration are not handled correctly and decisively, particularly to the public satisfaction. The parliamentary election in Sweden in 2010, where the far-right Sweden Democrats party obtained 20 seats in the 349 seat Swedish Parliament for the first time in Swedish history, illustrates the danger of ignoring sensitive policy issues such as immigration by the mainstream political parties. The findings of this paper point out the factors that worked against the emergence of a strong radical right political party in Sweden and Finland in early 2000s. The theoretical literature discussing political factors related to the success of radical right parties proved its validity whereas the other two conditions- immigration and unemployment- failed to account for successes and failures of radical right parties in Scandinavia. No mainstream party can dare blatantly call immigrants as the cause of the society's problems or consider eliminating immigration as a solution to these problems. Yet, precisely because the mainstream parties will not put society's blame on immigrants, the radical-right parties manage to convey the meanings of their ideas to large audiences who are expecting somebody to offer a solution.

Edelman (1988, 122) demonstrates how socially constructed stories crafted to attract the interests of the audience rather than to provide a realistic portrayal of events, contribute building a political spectacle. This spectacle consists of a set of symbols that continually construct and reconstruct one's self conception, the meanings of the past and present, expectations of the future and the role of the politicians. This political spectacle ascribes the meanings to social problems and events, leaders, enemies and ideologies. The radical right policy entrepreneurs define the conditions in their own terms and typically focus attention on existing or "imminent" crisis. According to right-wing extremists, immigrants are responsible for all that ails society from unemployment to crime to the general depression of the country and this task is made easier with the pervasiveness of mass media. This is probably the reason why immigration and unemployment have become such salient issues while, in practice, they cannot explain by themselves the emergence of far-right political parties.

Research implications

This article has straightforward policy implications. Policy makers need to address controversial issues such as immigration because the price for ignoring them can be too high in the end. The success of the extremists in Europe shows that there are groups in Western Europe (though not only there) who feed off hatred, inequality and violence and that these groups are willing to seize any opportunity to get access into the political scene. The growing number of racist attacks in Scandinavia and elsewhere illustrates this alarming trend. It is essential to better understand the conditions and reasons behind these forces. This would enable a more comprehensive discussion of the distinction between the political elements of right-wing extremism and the other political movements, for the consequences of the extremists' joining mainstream politics are unpredictable and could be dangerous.

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