

Sweden and the Radical Right



[Keep Sweden Swedish- The Sweden Democrats]

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On the 20th September 2010 Jimmie Åkesson, leader of the Sweden Democrats [*Sverigedemokraterna*], stood amid balloons, cameras and cheering party supporters (Sdvalvinst2010 2010). For the first time in the party's history they had crossed the national electoral threshold; after gaining nearly 350,000 votes (5.7%), the Sweden Democrats had secured 20 seats in Parliament [*Riksdagen*] (Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 42; Rydgren and Ruth 2011a: 202). This was the Swedish radical right's most momentous result since 1991.

The Sweden Democrats new found political influence is however far from unique; across Western Europe, radical right parties sit in institutions of power. From the Freedom Party [*FPÖ*] in Austria to the Danish People's Party [*Dansk Folkeparti*], 'the extreme right for the first time since the Second World War constitutes a significant force in West European Democracies' (Betz 2001, cited by, Rydgren 2003: 45-6). But what factors have influenced the rise of these parties, and which of these can be applied to the Swedish case?

It is interesting to note that the Swedish radical right have traditionally been presented as an example of short-lived success, failure and exceptionalism (Rydgren 2002: 28; Loxbo 2010: 297). As Rydgren (2002: 28) has observed, countries have tended to be split into 'positive' and 'negative' cases, those with successful far right parties, and those without, and it is into the latter which Sweden has often been placed, a condition reflected in the limited engagement of the country in numerous radical right studies. As Larsson (1992: 102) wrote, 'Sweden has never been much of a market for the lunatic fringe of the far Right', a classification which has been perpetuated by the country's self-image as a place of tolerance and

equality. As Hübinette and Lundström (2011: 45) have observed, the nation has branded itself as 'the most tolerant and liberal of all (Western) countries and (white) people in the world'. Fascism and racism, it has been suggested, is not a Swedish problem, but something which happens elsewhere and is fundamentally 'un-Swedish' in its nature (Larsson 1991: 102; Berggren 2002: 396). Yet does the recent election of the Sweden Democrats contradict this utopian ideal?

This paper seeks to examine and assess Sweden and the radical right. The paper is split into three sections; the first explores the development of the radical right in Sweden, from skin-heads to suits, Nazi-fringe groups to elected parliamentary members and documents the key groups who have presented this ideology to the general population. The second section will give a brief history of Swedish immigration and patterns of racism, examining the effect of the country's shift from a perceived 'homogenous' nation to one of official multiculturalism. The final part of the paper seeks to assess three traditional factors which are often used to explain the vote for the radical right (immigration and xenophobia, unemployment and economic environment and the radical right's interaction with mainstream parties and media) and intends to ascertain to what degree these hypotheses fit the Swedish case. The conclusion is drawn that the election of the radical right into the Swedish parliament questions the classification of the Swedish radical right as a negative case and also disputes the self-image of the nation as one of the most tolerant in the world. Furthermore, the paper will argue that the factors often attributed to the rise of the radical right across Western Europe are not always universal, with many of these 'litmus tests' failing to show a positive result in

Swedish conditions, therefore showing the importance of taking account of national factors.

Two: The Swedish Radical Right: Past and Present

Before examining explanations for the rise of the radical right vote it is important to ascertain a picture of the history and nature of the parties who have attracted this electoral following. This section will focus on the term of the 'radical right', the development of these groups and will finally examine the two most electorally successful radical right parties in Sweden, New Democracy and the Sweden Democrats.

Who are the radical right?

There has been much debate about the terminology to describe the groups of which this investigation is concerned and it is the 'radical right' which has been chosen for this paper¹. The term refers to those groups which promote an anti-immigrant message, are populist in nature, 'claim to be the spokesperson for unarticulated opinions' and have 'a core of ethno-nationalist xenophobia' (Betz 2002: 199; Givens 2005: 19; Rydgren 2002: 29; Rydgren 2007: 242). Furthermore, it is pertinent that the 'radical right' has been used to describe parties who, whilst promoting an anti-establishment message and portraying themselves as the proprietors of 'true' democracy, adapt, to work within the country's political and electoral framework rather than operating on its periphery (Eatwell 2000: 411; Givens 2005: 20; Rydgren 2002: 34); a clear feature in the Swedish case. Therefore, whilst the term 'extreme-right' conjures images of 'groups well beyond the legal boundaries of democratic politics that are willing to use violent direct actions', the

¹ The term 'radical right' was first popularised by Daniel Bell in *The Radical Right* published in 1963 (Norris 2005:46).

'radical right' reflects the conscious transformation of a number of Swedish extreme right groups from violent skin-heads to suit-wearing politicians (Norris 2005:45). An example of such a case was the merging of the extremist right-wing party Keep Sweden Swedish [*Bevara Sverige Svenskt*] with the more moderate Progress Party [*Framstegspartiet*] to form the Sweden Party (Larsson 1991: 105). Similarly, the Sweden Democrat's ban of uniforms also signals a shift of image (Rydgren and Ruth 2011: 205)². However, this modernisation process has not been confined to the Nordic state; in a number of Western European countries including France and Britain a process of rebranding is evident.

However, it is important that the 'paternity' of these modern parties should not be ignored and it is acknowledge that whilst the current party 'image' may not be one of violence, the parties origins and the actions of factions of party supporters should not be discounted (Eatwell 2000: 411). For example, Anders Behring Breivik's manifesto citing the Sweden Democrats as in part inspiration for the Norwegian massacre in July this year is a case in point, although the party remained unscathed in the polls (Vinthagen Simpson 2011).

Nazi-sympathisers, skin-heads and suits

So what is the background of these parties? The radical right literature has tended to classify the Swedish party as a 'failure' and thus in some cases has paid relatively minimal attention to the country (Rydgren 2002: 28). Whilst the confines of

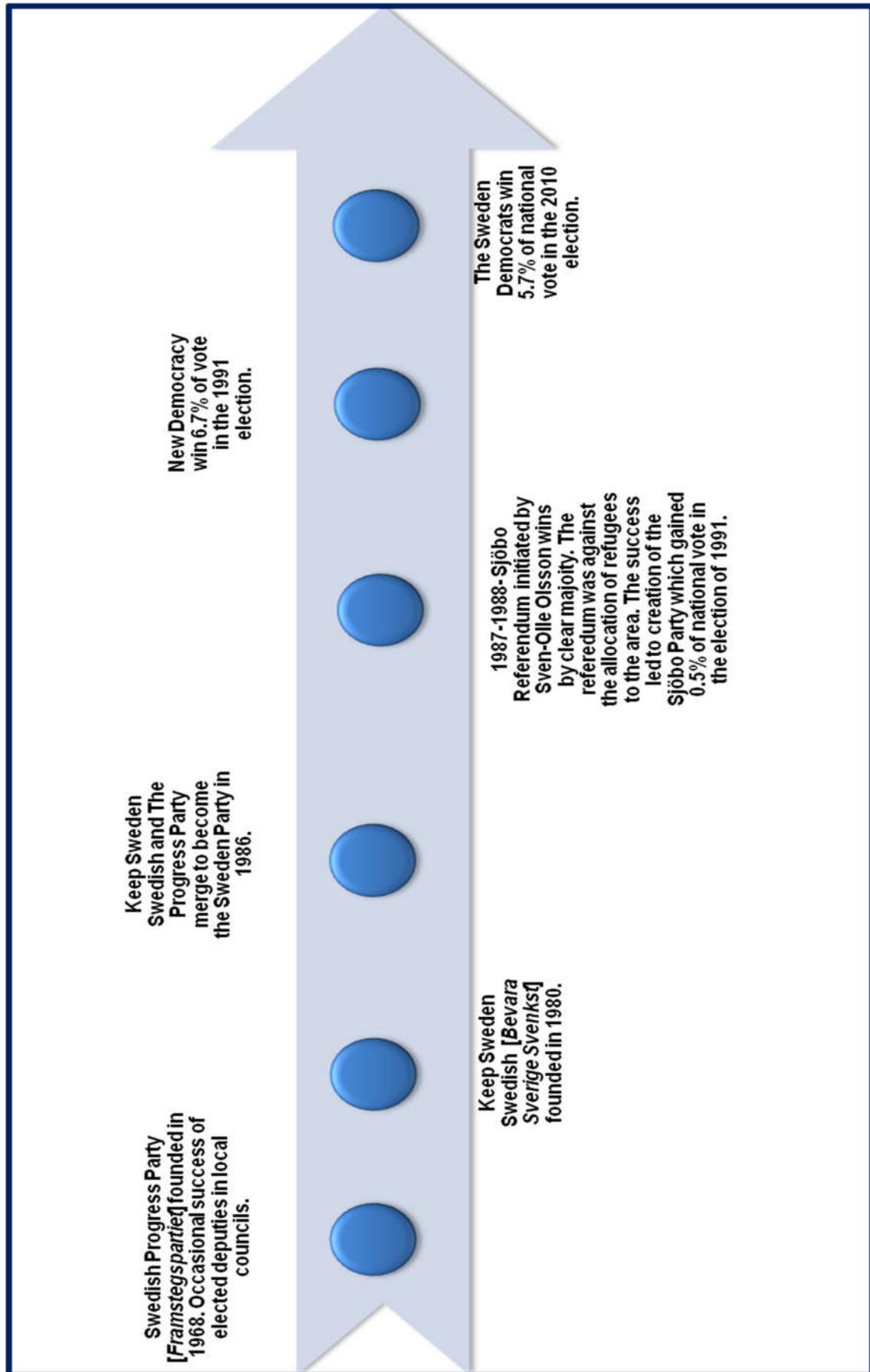
² The refreshing of the radical right's party image is however far from a new phenomenon in Swedish politics. As early as 1938, the rebranding of the Swedish extreme right National Socialist Labour Party [*Nationalsocialistiska Abetarepartiet*] took place; the party changed its name and its symbol from a swastika to a wasa sheath (Berggren 2002: 403).

this paper do not permit a deep historical analysis of these groups there are a few key points to be raised; namely the connection between Sweden and German Nazis, the reawakening of the dormant radical right during the 1980s and the present day parties in this field.

The first fascist party in Sweden was the Swedish National Socialist Federation [*Nationalsocialistiska Frihetsförbundet*] founded in 1924 and Larsson (1991: 103; Berggren 2002: 398) has pointed to the 'strong nazi undercurrent' during the 1930s. Whilst the country remained officially 'neutral' during the Second World War, it has been suggested that there was a fine line between 'neutrality' and partial 'collaboration' (Nordic Noir 2010: 1). Whilst the Swedish role in harbouring Jewish refugees should not be overlooked, the extensive market collaboration between Germany and Sweden during this period has led to much criticism (Petropoulos 2000: 1)³. One could point to the 'long tradition of cultural, scientific and other exchanges between the two countries' as explanation for this 'collaboration' (Berggren 2002: 399). Despite this, the fascist party in Sweden secured a relatively marginal proportion of the vote during this period, gaining just 0.7% in the election of 1936 (Berggren 2002: 408). So what were the factors that caused this discrepancy of support in the two countries? Berggren (2002: 409) has suggested that Swedish Nationalism acted as a binding force between 'class' and 'ideology', whilst limited immigration and general religious homogeneity (National Lutheran) also restricted the political advancements of the movement.

³ Sweden supplied raw materials as well as credit to Germany 'which allowed the delivery of vast quantities of military equipment to the Wehrmacht' (Petropoulos 2000: 1).

Figure 2.1: Timeline of the key events in the history of the radical right in Sweden.



After this limited success, the various factions of the fascist movement were left simmering during the 1950s and 1960s and it was not until the 1980s that the groups began to show signs of boiling over (Larsson 1991: 103 Ignazi 2003: 159). During the next three decades, a number of radical right parties, varying in extremity and approach appeared on the Swedish scene (see Figure 2.1) and it was these which tried to move away from the traditional hard-line, skin-head image to a more 'respectable' facade, some with more success than others (Larsson 1991: 104). As Larsson (1991: 108) notes, 'today, skinheads are out of fashion, unless, they conform to the new suit and tie image of up-to-date racists'⁴.

The Radical-Right in Parliament

The first radical right party to gain entry into the national parliament was New Democracy [*Ny Demokrati*], a party which proved to have a very short life span. Formed in 1990, the party gained 24 seats in parliament in the 1991 election. By 1992, the party had fallen dramatically in the opinion polls; it then failed to gain any seats in the 1994

Figure 2.2: New Democracy Logo



(The WAG Blogg 2009)

election and by 1998 had almost vanished from the political stage (Rydgren 2002: 34; Norris 2005: 67). The party 'was populist both in style and content', with a smiling

⁴ The most well known racist groups operating in Sweden currently include the National Socialist Front, the White Arian Resistance, Blood and Honour, Info-14, Yellow Cross, Legion Wasa, the National Democrats and the Sweden Democrats (FRA 2005; Bunar 2007: 166); whilst the latter has had the greatest political success the National Democrats have in the past won seats on a local level (Larsson 2004:1).

face as their logo, a specially recorded song and a campaign which Rydgren (2002: 34) has compared to a 'stand-up' routine.

But what impact did New Democracy have? Whilst in parliament the party called for 'the reduction and/or reallocation of (sizeable) government aid to the third world, for a total ban on immigration, and for a national referendum on the issue', none of which were successful (Ignazi 2003: 158). The fleeting success of the party has been attributed to its failure to impact on its core issue immigration, the lack of organisation within the party, the group's political 'amateurism' and the right-leaning shift of the mainstream Conservative Party and 'internal leadership squabbles' (Betz 2002: 198; Norris 2005: 67; Ignazi 2003: 159; Givens 2005:19). Nonetheless, Betz (2002: 197) has suggested that if one looks at the history of Scandinavian populist parties, 'a dramatic decline in electoral support does not necessarily mean political extinction', a prediction which was to prove true in the 2010 election.

This electoral revival on the national stage came in the form of The Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna, SD*). The party was formed in 1988 from the Sweden Party, who were the fused Progress Party and Keep Sweden Swedish (Rydgren 2002: 34; Larsson and Ekman 2001, cited by, Rydgren and Ruth 2011: 205). As Rydgren (2002: 34) has noted, whilst the party has attempted to portray itself as the torch bearers of democracy, their non-democratic origins are still fresh in the memories of many. As Norris (2005: 44) has observed, the use of the word 'democratic' in the party's title could be interpreted as 'Orwellian doublespeak' (Norris 2005: 44). The Sweden Democrats during their first year in the *Riksdag*, like their predecessors, have had little political influence over the immigration issue, although one could suggest that they have raised the profile of the subject.

Nonetheless, their pivotal role in the defeat of a number of parliamentary bills and the adoption of elderly care as one of the party's top three issues is perhaps a sign that the party has learnt from New Democracy's fatal errors (Vinthagen Simpson 2011; Sweden Democrats 2011)⁵.

Summary

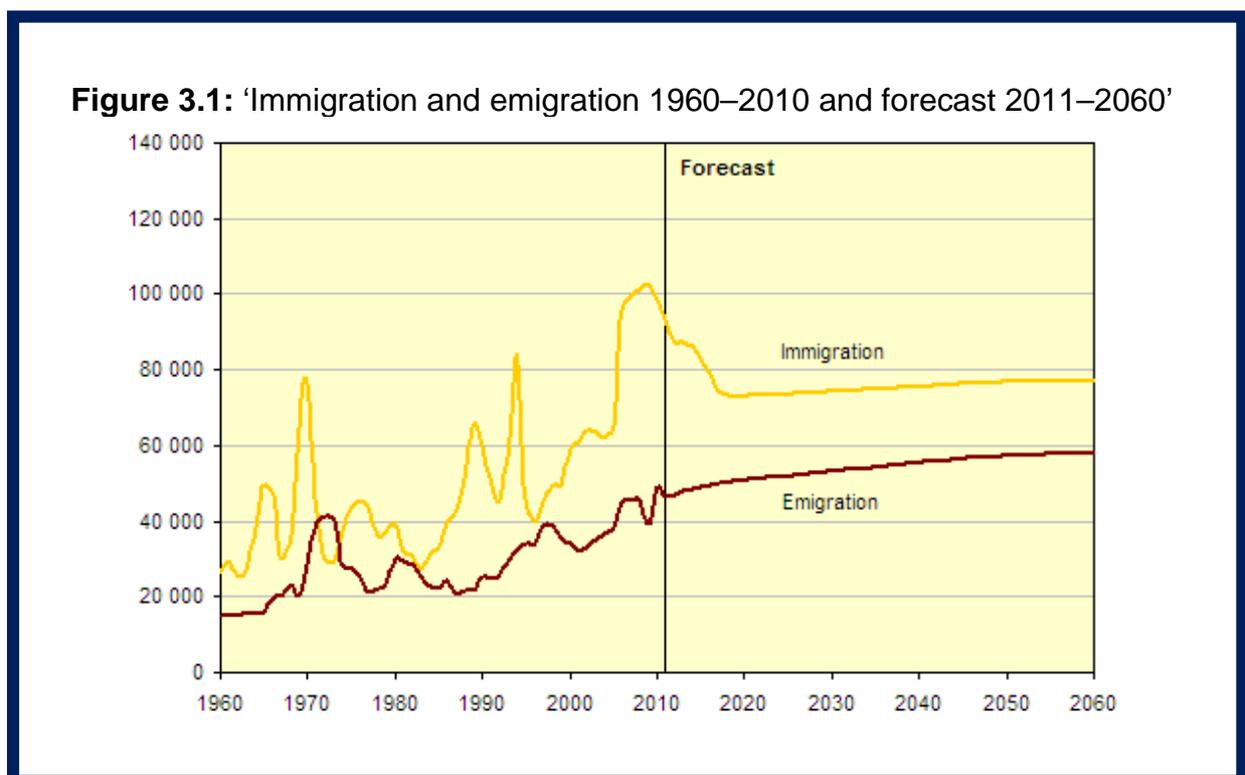
To summarise, whilst there has always been a faction of right-wing extremists in Sweden, this group were less evident in mainstream politics until the 1980s. However, it was not until the parties rebranded themselves into 'populist' and more 'legitimate' opponents that their electoral fortune began to improve. Nonetheless, historically, their success has proven to be short-lived and limited in influence which has resulted in the body of radical right studies paying marginal attention to the country. The question is, will the Sweden Democrats current political influence be as fleeting as New Democracy's was if the party is unable to exert influence on the group's weight-bearing pillar, immigration, and it is to this topic that the paper now turns.

⁵ The Sweden Democrats blocked bills to sell 'share holdings in a number of state-owned companies including power utility Vattenfall and telecoms giant TeliaSonera' a move arguably ideologically pertinent to protect Swedish industry from non-Swedish influence (Vinthagen Simpson: 2011).

Three: Immigration and Racism: The Swedish Case

Before examining factors which influence the electoral viability of the radical right in Sweden, it is important to establish the history of immigration and racism in the country. This is key as it is the former which has tended to be the radical rights primary platform of policy and the latter which has underscored it (Betz 2002: 206). However, the relevance of these factors in voter behaviour has been questioned and will be discussed in the following section (Norris 2005: 169). First, it is important to explore the changing nature of immigration and the presence of racism in Sweden in order to begin to understand the rhetoric of the far right.

The changing nature of immigration to Sweden



(Statistics Sweden 2011)

Prior to the twentieth century Sweden, it has been suggested, was 'remarkably homogenous in culture and ethnic background' (Hammar 1985: 21; Larsson 1991:102; Runblom 1994: 623). For instance, in the Swedish Census of 1930 less than 1% of the population were recorded as 'foreign stock' (Runblom 1994: 628). These were predominantly Finns from Tornedalen and North Sweden, Lapps [*Samer*], Jews and Gypsies (Hammar 1985: 22). The nomenclature of these groups as 'foreign stock' seems inaccurate as the majority of the groups had lived in Sweden for more than 500 years, hence Norman's (2006: 206; Runblom 1994: 628) terminology of the 'internal Others'. However, the demographic of the country has changed significantly since this point. Whilst in the 19th century Sweden was described as an *emigration* country, when between 1890 and 1920 around 20% of the population immigrated to America, presently, as 25% of the population 'have some kind of foreign background', Sweden has been described as an *immigration* country (Hammar 1985: 17; Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 45-6; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008: 615). At present the biggest groups of immigrants in Sweden in size order of population are Finns, Iraqis, Yugoslavians and Poles (BBC News 2010: 1).

Since the 1960s there has been a significant increase in the level on immigration to Sweden (see Figure 3.1). During the 1970s, much of the migration into the country was labour focused, the result of planned recruitment by Swedish industry and 'formal agreement[s]... between the Swedish government and governments in Central and Southern European Countries' (Larsson 1991: 102; Runblom 1994: 627). This was done in order to fuel the burgeoning Swedish industrial base, which 'tripled its production between 1950 and 1975' (Andersson

2002: 1). During the 1980s however, ‘refugee immigration’ replaced ‘labour immigration’.

Figure 3.2: Number of refugee and asylum seekers entering Germany, Sweden and the UK during the 1990s as a percentage of population.

Country	Number of Refugees and Asylum (1990s)	Population (Year 2000)	Refugees as % of Population
Germany	1,000,000	82,163,475	1.22%
UK	200,000	58,785,246	0.34%
Sweden	175000	8,861,426	1.97%

(Adapted from Eurostat 2011; Norris 2005: 12)

As shown in Figure 3.2, in a comparative context, Sweden has received some of the highest numbers of asylum seekers and refugees in proportion to population in Western Europe. Furthermore, a study by the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees showed that whilst the number of asylum seeker applications in both the industrialised world and Europe was falling (including other Scandinavian countries), the number increased in Sweden by 32% (Division of Programme Support and Management 2010). Ignazi (2003: 159) has explained this by pointing to Sweden’s ‘most generous’ legislation for refugees.

Hübinette and Lundström (2011: 45) have observed how discourse in the public and private sphere when talking about immigrants, tends to refer to the 8% of the population (700,000) ‘who have their origins in a...so called Third World country in Asia, Africa or South America’. Lappalainen (2005: 8) notes how ‘immigrants’ have been constructed as the ‘opposite’ to ‘Swedes’, whilst Trondman (2006: 435)

observes how 'immigrant' has also adopted the meaning of 'social problem'. Furthermore, Bunar (2007: 170) points to the way in which the description of 'immigrant' is assigned to different groups; Muslims for example are considered 'immigrants', whilst Jews are recognised as a 'national minority group'. This case was supported when, during a British interview, Jimmie Åkesson (2011), leader of the Sweden Democrats when discussing immigration seemed to be purely talking about 'Muslim immigration'.

Racism and Swedish Self Image

But exactly how racist is Sweden and what is the historical legacy and cultural conditions in which the radical right operate? Berggren (2002: 396) has suggested that racism has been seen 'as something very unfamiliar to Swedish mentality and culture'. Similarly, Hübinette and Lundström (2011: 44) have shown how Sweden presented itself as a 'non-racist and post-racial utopia'. This 'moral superpower' since the 1960s and 1970s has been a 'supporter of decolonization and anti-colonial[ism], anti-segregation and anti-apartheid movements and [presented itself as] the world's most radical proponent of social justice,...constructing itself as a colour-blind country' (Lappalainen 2005: 5; Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 45). In short, Sweden has been seen as 'different' from other countries (Lappalainen 2005: 5). During the 1980s and 1990s the exceptionalism of racism was common rhetoric with 'racism...and hate crimes [being portrayed as]... ideologically, politically, and practically isolated from the structural foundations of society and made into an anomaly' (Rydgren 2002: 28; Bunar 2007:169). However, the aptly-titled book '*Even in Sweden*' (Pred 2000), shows that the country may not have been as free from

racism as the Swedish self-image would have us believe. Similarly, in popular culture, international best-selling books by Swedish authors Henning Mankell and Steig Larsson have also challenged the racism free image of Sweden (Armstrong 2010: 1; Brown 2010)⁶.

But racism is far from a new phenomenon here (Law 2010: 33; Tydén 2000, cited by, Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 44). The historical treatment of the *Sami* and *Roma* is a case in point (Lappalainen 2005: 5) In addition, from the 18th century to early 20th century, Swedish individuals were responsible for some of the most major 'findings' in race science, from Carl Linnaeus' 'first modern scientific system for race classification' to the invention of the 'skull or cephalic index' by Anders Retzius (Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 44)⁷. In addition, in 1922 the Swedish Institute for Race Biology was founded by the government and the state also pursued an agenda of racial eugenics until the mid-1970s including a sterilization programme which affected over 60,000 individuals (Broberg 1995, Tydén 2000, cited by, Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 44; Law 2010: 33).

But how does racism fair in Sweden now? A government report, *The Blue and Yellow Glasshouse* (SOU 2005), which examined institutional racism at various levels of society including welfare, education, employment, the criminal justice system and housing has challenged the view of racism as 'exceptional' in Sweden. Furthermore, the placing of Sweden as having the second highest number of racial crime incidences in the 2010 European Agency for Fundamental Rights report,

⁶ Henning Mankell wrote the Wallander series, whilst Steig Larsson authored the Millenium Trilogy and founded Expo, an anti-racism and extreme right groups magazine (Expo 2011: 1).

⁷ Despite Carl Linnaeus' role in race science, the Stockholm University Linnaeus Center for Integration Studies (SULCIS) still bears his name (Stockholm University 2011: 1).

suggests that this region is far from racist free, although we might attribute this high placing to Sweden's comprehensive recording procedure for racist crimes (FRA 2005: 140; Bunar 2007; Goodey 2007; FRA 2010: 35).

But beyond this more explicit form of racism there are perhaps more subtle and complex undercurrents at work. As discussed previously, prior the 1950s, Sweden had been a primarily 'homogenous nation'. As a result of this it has been suggested that 'the idea of being white without doubt constitutes the central core and the master signifier of Swedishness and thus of being Swedish' (Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 44). It has been proposed that whiteness has been used 'as a form of power [that] is defined, deployed, performed, policed and reinvented through a multiplicity of practices' as well as a means for the 'reproduction and maintenance of systems of racial inequality' (Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 44; Hartigan 1997: 495).

In the Swedish case, Hübinette and Lundström (2011: 43) suggest that Swedish 'whiteness' has a 'double binding power', incorporating the 'whiteness' of 'the old Sweden' and 'the new Sweden'. The former refers to the longing for the 'homogenous society' forgone and traditional 'Swedish' values (Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 43). The Sweden Democrat's slogan 'Security and Tradition' [*Trygghet och Tradition*] can be seen to tap into this notion of earlier national values and traditions (Sverigedemokraterna 2011)⁸. The second part of Hübinette's and Lundström's 'Swedish whiteness' refers to 'the new Sweden' as 'an anti-racist and

⁸ Jimmie Åkesson's choice of favourite books [*Fogelströms Stadserie*], revealed on the Swedish Democrats website, also attempts to evoke images of 'old Sweden', the series, based in Stockholm during the late 19th century, follows the everyday working lives of people in the city (Sverigedemokraterna 2011).

feminist country'. The paradox here is that whilst this mentality promotes an equality message, the privileging of 'Swedish white culture' is at its forefront. For example, the Swedish government promotes the equal sharing of childcare; therefore, the 'white' Swedish couple who share their childcare equally are seen as doing the culturally 'right' thing, whilst an immigrant family where the mother stays at home to care for her child is seen as 'passive and repressed' and a 'welfare abuser' (Lappalainen 2007: 6; Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 49). This chauvinism of the 'white Swedish' modern culture whilst presenting an image of acceptance and accommodation to different cultures, at the same time encourages the critique of other cultures.

It is also significant, that despite an active anti-racist movement in Sweden, the majority of these campaigners are in fact 'white Swedes' (Hübinette and Lundström 2011: 49). Whilst the importance of multi-ethnic collaboration for this cause should not be dismissed, the apparent marginal role of ethnic minorities in the fight suggests a 'white Swedes know best' mentality.

Summary

The changing demographic and increased immigration to Sweden during the past half century has seen the government shift from a policy of assimilation to one of official multiculturalism [*mångkulturellt samhälle*]. Proportionately Sweden has had some of the highest numbers of immigrants in Europe, a process which began with the planned recruitment of 'guest workers' during the 1960s and 1970s and is now dominated by those seeking refuge and asylum. However, whilst the Swedish self-image has been one of racial tolerance and inclusion, this reality has been

questioned; a history of racist practices, evidence of institutional racism, high levels of racist crime and the privileging of 'old' and 'new' Swedish whiteness all point to a more complex and less tolerant society than the 'exceptionalist' nature of racism portrayed to the outside world. It was perhaps at the start of the parliamentary session in 2010 when members of the Sweden Democrats took their seats in the national parliament, that the argument for Sweden as a tolerant utopia was explicitly questioned and it is the factors which led to this electoral success which this paper now seeks to address.

Four: Explaining the Radical Right Vote in Sweden

So why, in the 2010 September election of last year did nearly 350,000 people put a cross next to a Sweden Democrat parliamentary candidate? The section will focus on the degree to which three areas, often cited as principle factors in explaining the vote for the radical right, may have influence in the Swedish case namely; immigration and xenophobia, unemployment and economic crisis and the interaction between the radical right, mainstream parties and the media. It is argued that traditional features often attributed to the vote for the radical right do not necessarily fit neatly into the Swedish case, therefore suggesting that country-specific investigations are beneficial.

Immigration, xenophobia and the radical right vote

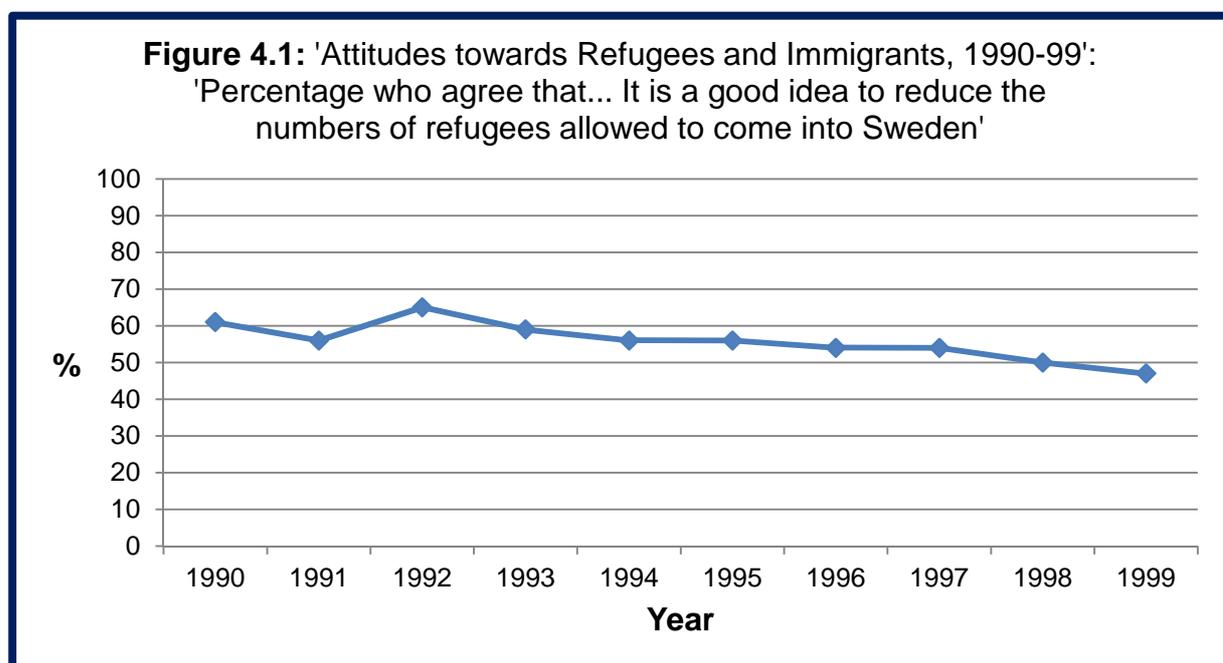
Has Sweden's increased levels of immigration influenced the radical right's chances of electoral success? Betz (1994: 81, cited by, Norris 2005: 169) has argued that increased immigration (particularly of refugees) to Western Europe corresponds to the rise of this group of political parties, where increasing levels of 'xenophobia and open racism' create a perfect market for a radical right party to gain electoral support, tapping into a growing anti-immigrant sentiment. This notion has been supported by a number of other studies including Golder (2003) and Lubbers et al. (2002, cited by, Norris 2005: 169-70). However, the empirical validity of this connection has been questioned. Kitschelt (1995, cited by, Norris 2005: 169) when examining 'the proportion of the foreign-born population in a country, the change in rates of immigration during the 1980s, and the share of political refugees in a population' found that there appeared to be 'no significant correlation' between these factors. For example, whilst Norway has had far fewer immigrants than Sweden, the

former has had a more prominent radical right (Norris 2005: 169). So how do these theories fair in the Swedish case?

As we have already ascertained, Sweden has proportionally seen some of the highest levels of immigration in Western Europe. According to Betz's theory this would lead to increased xenophobia creating a favourable environment for a radical right party. But how xenophobic are the Swedish people, and how has immigration influenced this xenophobia?

A European Social Survey (2002, cited by Norris 2005: 180) revealed that Sweden had the lowest anti-immigrant attitudes out of 22 countries studied. Thus contradicting Betz's suggestion that increased immigration leads to xenophobic views, as Sweden, whilst having proportionately one of the highest levels of immigration, has the lowest level of xenophobia. However, despite Sweden's having the lowest percentage in this investigation, should these matters be judged purely by comparison? Goodey (2007: 570) highlights the empirical discrepancies when comparing on an international scale, for example what might be understood as xenophobic sentiment. Moreover, the results of a study by Demker (2006: 206, cited by, Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008: 616) give further evidence why looking solely at a country 'in comparison' may prove misleading. Using data since 1990 Demker reveals that the majority of Swedes would like fewer refugees on a typical scale of 2:1. The result of this study raises two main points. Firstly, whilst Sweden may not be shown to be xenophobic comparatively, this does not mean that these views are not held extensively. Added to this, Betz's argument that the presence of xenophobia leads to the rise of the radical right is contradicted as whilst this study

took place, although anti-immigrant sentiments were prominent, the radical right only managed to secure seats in parliament once. Furthermore, a previous study by Demker (see Figure 4.1) shows that this xenophobia was actually steadily declining year on year, despite the fact that immigration was increasing. This further contradicts Betz's hypothesis showing that in the Swedish case anti-immigrant sentiment, whilst undoubtedly being high, was in fact steadily declining whilst immigration was rising.



(Adapted from Demker 2000: 62-3, cited by, Rydgren 2002: 38)

Furthermore, a study by Rydgren and Ruth (2011a: 222; 2011b: 8) revealed that in the national elections of 2006 and 2010 the vote for the Sweden Democrats in fact correlated negatively with 'the proportion of non-European immigrants'. Although interestingly, there was a strong positive correlation between a vote for the party and the level of immigrants from EU and EFTA countries, a discrepancy which one could attribute to competition theory, where immigrants from these countries may have been seen as direct competition for jobs. Nonetheless, due to the weaker correlation

for non-EU immigrants and the vote for the radical right, one could suggest that there are other factors which need to be considered when assessing the party's electoral success in Sweden. As Norman (2006: 206) puts it, 'migration and immigration cannot in themselves explain racism'.

For example, Givens (2005:7) has highlighted how simply looking at national statistics when connecting immigration to voter support for the radical right, ignores regional differences. In this vein Rydgren and Ruth (2011: 8) found using the 'halo effect' that those living on the outskirts of areas densely populated by immigrants were more likely to vote for the radical right vote in Sweden than those living within the areas. This is explained by the limited interaction of the two groups, the process of 'othering', creating a state of 'us and them', where the two communities are close enough to perceive differences but too far away to recognise similarities, or as Rydgren and Ruth put it (2011: 13), the consequence of the 'imagined other' rather than the 'experienced other'.

The discrepancies in the hypothesis that increased immigration leads to the rise of the radical right has led Rydgren (2002: 38) to argue that it is not increased immigration which guarantees the success or even existence of a radical right party, but whether the issue is politicised or not. Ignazi (2003: 158) suggests that the politicising of immigration took place in Sweden 'precisely at the turn of the decade' where between 1980 and 1989 immigration almost doubled from 34,400 to 58,900. One could perhaps point to the election of New Democracy in 1991 to show the effect of this supposed politicisation, yet one must question the degree to which this has actually taken place. Between the elections of 1981 and 2002, a study found that

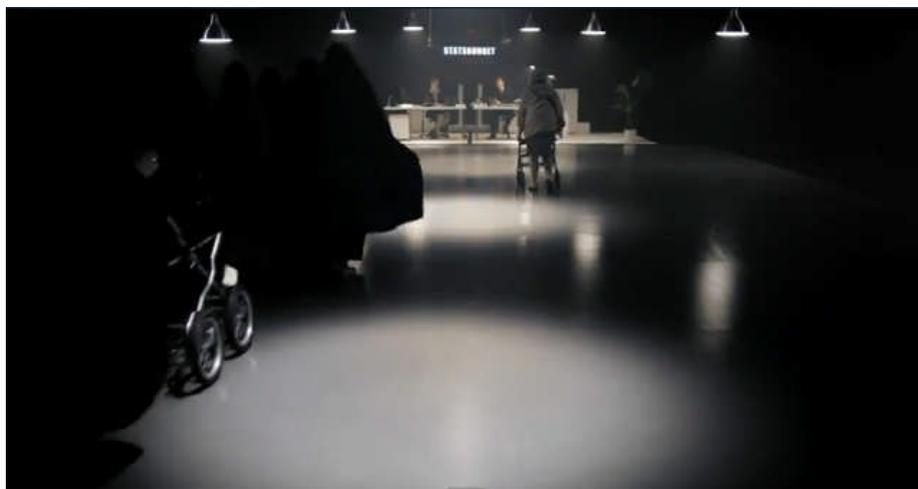
on average parties manifestos only contained 1.23% of text on immigration (Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008: 619). In addition, questions relating to refugees and immigrants during the parliamentary sessions between 1987 and 2004 did not rise over 0.8% (Green-Pedersen 2005, cited by, Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008: 619). Moreover, the immigration issue has not necessarily been of great salience for the Swedish people (Rydgren 2003: 47). Holmberg and Weibull (2006, cited by, Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008: 617) point to an annual survey since 1989 which investigates 'what [voters]... think the most important [issues are] in Sweden today', where on average immigration has only accounted for around 12.5% of responses. Therefore, as Hammar (1985: 43) notes, 'immigration policy is not one of the traditionally "big" issues in Swedish politics, but it has on occasion received increased political attention'. With this in mind one could suggest that whilst attitudes to immigration may be relatively negative in Sweden, the importance placed on these is marginal and cannot be used as a primary indicator for the radical right vote.

However, the discrepancy between the attention given to immigration by mainstream parties (1.23% of manifestos and 0.8% of questions about immigration) compared to the numbers of Swedish citizens (12.5%) highlighting immigration as an important issue perhaps points to a void between political and public sentiment. This could be a factor contributing to the current vote for the Sweden Democrats as mainstream parties have failed to place the same value on the issue as the electorate and may have created an opportunity for the success of a party pushing immigration to the forefront of its policy. Similarly one could point to the consensus on immigration by Swedish politicians to explain the political success of the radical right, where the 'convergence in political space...[fuels]...popular distrust...and

discontent' (Green-Perdersen and Krogstrup 2008: 627). In summation, whilst rising immigration in itself does not appear to have had a significant role in causing the vote for the radical right, the lack of interaction by the mainstream parties with the issue may have been influential.

Unemployment and Economic Environment

Figure 4.2: Freeze-frame from the Sweden Democrat's 2010 advertisement



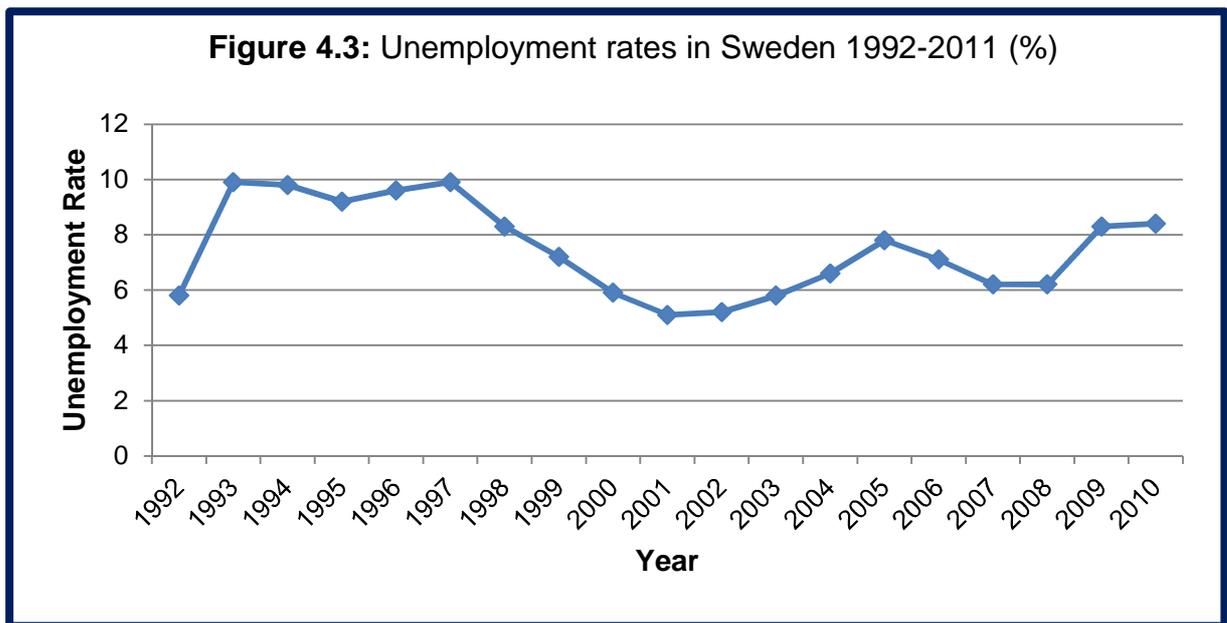
(Bulletproofcourier 2010)

A further common factor attributed to the rise in votes for the radical right is the level of unemployment and the economic environment (e.g. Betz 1994; Kitschelt 1995). It is argued that these elements affect those who are 'socioeconomically more marginalised' and may 'lead to increased frustration, which may be canalized through outbursts of xenophobia' which become manipulated, distorted and actively encouraged by the radical right (Rydgren 2002:32; Ruth and Rydgren 2011a: 203). Two hypothesis of explanation have been applied to two cohorts, 'relative deprivation theory' which accounts for those who fear or have suffered a fall in market placement

and ‘modernisation losers theory’ which focuses on the ‘losers’ of a shift from a industrial economy to a post-industrial one (Ruth and Rydgren 2011a: 206). Pred (2000: 10) has argued that ‘the conditions of capitalist hypermodernity breed experiences that are apt to be culturally and politically reworked into expressions of racism’. Although it is important to highlight that racism was evident in Sweden long before this change (e.g. the persecution of the *sami*), is there some substance in this argument in explaining the *vote* for the radical right in Sweden (Lappalainen 2007:3)? The ‘scapegoating of immigrants, refugees, and long-resident minorities’ by the radical right, who portray them as ‘illegitimate rivals in the struggle for scarce resources’ may in part explain the effect unemployment and economic crisis may have on the level of the vote (Pred 2000: 10; Hargreaves and Leaman 1995, quoted by, Pred 2000: 10; Rydgren 2003: 52); whilst framing the immigrant as a ‘cardinal solution’ to any conceivable social problem or ill’ may be exacerbated during periods of economic decline (Rydgren 2003: 53). For example, the banned Sweden Democrats’ 2010 advertisement (see Figure 4.2) tapped into this notion by showing an older woman being pushed aside by a stampede of women wearing Burqas on their way to claim welfare support (Brown 2010; The Economist 2011).

However, studies seeking to tie the effect of unemployment to the vote for the radical right cross-nationally have often come unstuck, with studies showing conflicting results (Lubbers et al. 2002: 349; Rydgren 2002: 35). So what is the result in the case of Sweden? A study by Rydgren and Ruth (2011a: 212) found that there was indeed a negative correlation between the vote for the Sweden Democrats and the GRP/capita in national and local elections. However, there appeared to be no positive correlation between the level of unemployment and votes for the Sweden

Democrats in national elections as opposed to local elections. One could add to this argument by stipulating that despite the Scandinavian financial crisis of the 1990s and unemployment peaking at this time, no radical right party was elected to the national assembly during this period, therefore questioning its influence (see Figure 4.3; Rydgren 2002:35-6).



(Adapted from: Eurostat 1996-1999, cited by, Rydgren 2002: 36; Statistics Sweden, cited by, OECD 2011)

Mainstream parties and media

An additional element which might be attributed to the vote for the radical right is the reluctance by Sweden's two leading parties the Social Democrats and the Conservatives to engage in debate over immigration, arguably allowing the Sweden Democrats to take ownership of the issue. It is this gap in the market which Rydgren

(2003:50-1) argues is 'one of the most important niches for the emergence' of a radical right party, although undoubtedly it is the manipulation of this opportunity that is key. Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup (2008: 626) explain the Conservatives unwillingness to engage with this issue (although ideologically a prominent cause) as a consequence of the Swedish proportional representation system, where the party is reliant on other parties within the Right Alliance [*Alliansen*] who would find a more hard-lined stance controversial.

However, it has not only been the mainstream parties failure to engage in debate over immigration which has contributed to the vote for the radical right, but the failure to address and counter the arguments of the Sweden Democrats in the run-up to the election (Mankell 2010). Jimmie Åkesson's ban from the official televised leadership debates is an example of such an instance (Hellström and Nilsson 2010: 56). But what are the consequences of this move? A study at the local level of Swedish politics by Loxbo (2010: 296) found that the 'isolate and ignore' approach in fact improved the Sweden Democrats chances of success. Equally, Heinö (quoted by The Local 2011) has suggested that the Sweden Democrats 'have much to gain by playing the martyr'. Furthermore, the refusal by one of Sweden's leading newspapers to print advertisements from the Sweden Democrats enabled the party to frame themselves as the 'democratic victims' and 'democratic underdog', denied their right to freedom of speech and ostracised in a country claiming to promote equality and inclusion, arguably giving credence to their 'anti-establishment' platform (Helin and Mellin 2009: Hellström and Nilsson 2010). What is more, whilst in earlier elections such an approach by mainstream parties and media may have restricted the public's access to party material, the digital age means that these

tactics no longer have the same influence. For instance, banned adverts such as the one discussed above can easily be found on YouTube, their popularity arguably increased by the videos banned status.

Summary

To summarise, the traditional explanations for the radical right vote in the Swedish case have been both successful and less so. In the case of economic, media and political environment the hypotheses have proved true, yet when examining unemployment, increased immigration and xenophobic sentiment predicted patterns appear less evident. One must therefore conclude that the value in country specific analysis should not be undervalued.

Five: Conclusion

To conclude, the study set out to explore Sweden and the radical right. The paper began by mapping the history of the country's parties, tying the present-day modernised groups to those of the past. It was argued that whilst there was evidence of a Nazi undercurrent during the 1930s, it was not until the 1980s that the dormant volcano of the Swedish radical right was to stir. However, it took ten years before the radical right took its first seats in the national parliament despite some earlier local success, although this status on the national stage proved short-lived. Dismissed as a failure and a negative case, the Swedish radical right led Sweden to be seen by numerous studies as a country warranting only minimal attention. However, the recent election of the Sweden Democrats in September of last year perhaps marks a turning point, although the ability of the party to manifest longevity will be a matter for future study.

The second part of the essay turned to the changed demographic of Sweden and the level of racism found there. It was argued that proportionally Sweden had received some of the highest levels of immigration, and had in turn transformed from a 'homogenous' country to one official multiculturalism. The section suggested that the image of Sweden as a 'tolerant' society, where racism was exceptional was misguided, with evidence of institutional discrimination, racist violence and privileging of 'old' and 'new' 'Swedish whiteness'.

Finally the paper examined three principle factors often linked to the vote for the radical right and assessed their validity in the Swedish case. It was found that

these determinants did not all slot neatly into the country specific analysis. Whilst in the case of economic environment and the interaction of the radical right with the media and mainstream political parties, common explanations for the vote appeared true, in respect to unemployment, increased immigration and xenophobic sentiment, trends did not match those proposed, thereby showing the value of studying countries individually.

But what does the future look like for the Swedish radical right? Will the Sweden Democrats manage to maintain their vote in 2014, or will their success be as brief as their predecessors and thus prove the labelling of the parties as 'failures' accurate? Opinion polls and commentators predict not, suggesting that the Sweden Democrats will maintain, although not necessarily increase their share of the vote (Vinthagen Simpson 2011). The question is, if the mainstream parties' failure to engage in debate over immigration and contest the arguments of the Sweden Democrats was in part to blame for the radical right vote, is it now too little too late, after 350,000 individuals have put a cross next to the party on the ballot paper? Once the genie is out of the bottle, can it be put back in again?

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