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Swedish Migration Politics: Have the Sweden Democrats Taken Over the Political Agenda?

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SWEDISH MIGRATION POLITICS: HAVE THE SWEDEN DEMOCRATS TAKEN OVER THE POLITICAL AGENDA?

by

SOFIA SEDERGREN

A master’s thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, The City University of New York

2019
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Sofia Sedergren

This manuscript has been read and accepted for the Graduate Faculty in Political Science in satisfaction of the thesis requirement for the degree of Master of Arts.

Date

John Bowman, Thesis Advisor

Date

Alyson Cole, Executive Officer

THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
Abstract

Swedish Migration Politics: Have the Sweden Democrats Taken Over the Political Agenda?

by

Sofia Sedergren

Advisor: John Bowman

The Sweden Democrats’ anti-immigration rhetoric has gained increased influence over Swedish politics in recent years as mainstream parties have adopted an increasingly restrictive attitude towards immigration. Despite this rapprochement to the Sweden Democrats, mainstream parties continue to articulate their opposition to the party. My thesis examines if and how the Sweden Democrats have impacted mainstream parties’ immigration rhetoric in their election manifestos, and if changes on immigration postures have impacted political issues related to immigration, such as foreign policy and welfare; I also assess if the Sweden Democrats have introduced new policy issues and views to the political discourse. I discover that, while the Sweden Democrats have successfully impacted the debate on immigration and directly related issues by making mainstream parties more restrictive, the party has been unable to introduce new political issues or influence mainstream parties’ positions on topics which do not relate to immigration. I further conclude that the convergence between the Sweden Democrats and mainstream parties occurs in both directions; while mainstream parties are moving closer to the Sweden Democrats’ immigration posture, the Sweden Democrats are also becoming more mainstream by developing policy positions on issues other than immigration.
Acknowledgements

Without the encouragement from my family in Sweden, and my extra family in America, I would not have successfully completed this project. Despite the distance, my parents have provided unlimited support for my endeavor to study in the United States; I also want to thank my extra mom and dad in North Carolina who have given me a second home, providing well-needed rest and a quiet place to work. My partner’s endless support has also been indispensable in all stages of this process.

John Bowman has been a tremendous resource throughout this project and has granted me great academic freedom and wise guidance. His kindness and broad perspectives have moved me to explore new paths and provided a greater understanding for all aspects of academic life. I also want to acknowledge my former advisor’s central role in the completion of this project; Allison Palmadessa’s continuous encouragement and feedback have been vital for the development of my research.

Lastly, I would like to thank Gålöstiftelsen and Alpha Chi for their generous scholarship programs; without their financial support the completion of this project would not have been possible, and I would not have been able to fulfill my dream of studying in the United States.
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Introduction

Right-wing parties have increased their political presence in Europe since the 1980s and have contributed to an increasingly negative debate surrounding immigration.¹ In Sweden, the Sweden Democrats were elected to the Swedish Parliament in 2010, but mainstream parties have continuously refused to formally collaborate with the party.² Despite the mainstream parties’ isolation of the Sweden Democrats, they have adopted a more restrictive migration rhetoric and passed policy proposal which align with the Sweden Democrats’ anti-immigration agenda.³ The emergence of stricter immigration rhetoric and policy suggests that the Sweden Democrats’ rhetoric has spread within the political establishment, radicalizing mainstream parties.⁴

Recent events, including the increased influx of immigrants to Europe in 2015, and the growing electoral strength of the Sweden Democrats, have certainly driven mainstream parties to adopt more restrictive immigration policies, but is it also true that these events influenced Swedish politics more broadly by impacting the parties’ political vision of Sweden? Immigration policy and rhetoric do not exist in a vacuum, but have clear connections to other policy areas, such as education, foreign policy, social issues etc. These political issues are central to the

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mainstream parties’ plan for Sweden, both for the relationship between the state and the people and for the role of Sweden in Europe. Changing views of migration can, therefore, impact the development of other policy issues, which affects Swedish politics far beyond immigration. In this study, I look beyond the immigration issue as narrowly conceived and examine Sweden’s three largest parties’ public positions on a wider range of political issues. A broader examination highlights to what extent the vision of Sweden’s future, as offered by the mainstream parties, has been impacted by the Sweden Democrats. By extension, I assess to what degree the Sweden Democrats impact politics, despite being excluded from collaboration with other parties. 5

I proceed through a systematic analysis of the Moderates’ (Moderaterna, mainstream right party), the Social Democrats’ (Socialdemokraterna, mainstream left party), and the Sweden Democrats’ (Sverigedemokraterna, right-wing party) election manifestos. Unlike statements made in the heat of campaigns, election manifestos represent a more comprehensive and closely considered image of the future as envisioned by the political parties. Election manifestos inform the voters of the parties’ plans for the country and are also well-suited for examining degrees of conflict between the parties. 6 Accordingly, shifts in rhetoric and policies presented in the manifestos reveal longer-term changes in the parties’ political positions than gambits presented during the election campaign.

The impact of rhetoric on politics has been studied for centuries, beginning with Aristotle. 7 Since then, the study of political rhetoric has expanded to not only include rhetoric itself, but also the ways in which rhetoric changes people’s understanding of reality. The rhetoric


deployed by politicians both communicates the party’s political position and shape the view of the world.\textsuperscript{8} Immigration rhetoric more specifically can be used either to transfer and develop the social aspects of racism,\textsuperscript{9} or to advance a counternarrative to xenophobic accounts depending on the chosen rhetorical frame.\textsuperscript{10} Political rhetoric’s profound impact on politics is exemplified through my analysis of the Swedish parties’ election manifestos. The examination highlights how the rhetoric adopted by the Swedish parties (1) communicate their position on immigration, (2) impact the view of the immigrant, and (3) influence the parties’ view of the world.

My research of shifting rhetoric and policy proposals in Swedish politics is guided by three research questions: 1. Has the rhetoric surrounding migration in the Moderates’, the Social Democrats’, and the Sweden Democrats’ election manifestos changed 1998-2018? 2. Has the increased focus on migration impacted other political issues in the parties’ election manifestos? 3. Have mainstream parties adopted new issues or views which originated with the Sweden Democrats? I expect that the Sweden Democrats’ migration rhetoric has remained stable in the party’s election manifestos since 1998, while the mainstream parties have adopted an increasingly restrictive rhetoric in relation to migration.\textsuperscript{11} I further anticipate that rhetoric pertaining to immigration in the mainstream parties’ election manifestos has gained increased importance in later years and is more clearly connected to other political issues. In the Sweden Democrats’ election manifestos, I only presume a minor shift, as immigration has been central to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{9} Jan-Paul Brekke and Tordis Borchgrevink, “Talking about Integration: Discourses, Alliances and Theories on Labour Market Integration in Sweden,” 2007, 15, \url{https://brage.bibsys.no/xmlui/handle/11250/177583}.
\end{itemize}
the party since its founding. I also anticipate that the Sweden Democrats have successfully influenced the mainstream parties’ political views on issues linked to immigration, but that the party has been unable to alter the political agenda on issues which are not tied to migration in the political debate.12

The Sweden Democrats’ impact on Swedish politics has been examined from several perspectives, but there is only limited research on the party’s impact on political issues beyond immigration.13 My research on shifts in immigration rhetoric in Sweden adds to the scholarly literature by providing a critical analysis of how and if the Sweden Democrats’ rhetoric influences mainstream parties’ political positions beyond migration, even when the party remains outside the accepted political domain;14 my examination also adds to the political debate in Sweden as it clarifies the parties’ long-term vision of Sweden. To set the stage for the analysis of the manifestos, I provide an overview of the rise of the Sweden Democrats in Swedish politics, followed by a summary of voter preferences and the Swedish political context.

The Rise of the Sweden Democrats in Swedish Politics

Since the Sweden Democrats’ founding in 1988, the party has gone through several reformation processes and has shifted its position from biological racism to “cultural national chauvinism.”15 This transformation created a respectable façade for the party, increasing its

support among voters. The current party leader, Jimmie Åkesson, was elected in 2005, and has continued the work to reform the party by moving away from overt Nazism and racism. In 2012, Åkesson proclaimed a zero-tolerance policy for racism within the party; however, racism scandals related to high-profile Sweden Democrats continue to unfold.

The Sweden Democrats were first elected into the Swedish parliament in 2010 with 5.7% of the votes, and gained additional voter support in the 2014 general election, which made the party the third largest in the Swedish parliament. The Sweden Democrats have continued to increase their voter base, and won 17.5% of the votes in the 2018 general election. Thus, the Sweden Democrats’ legitimacy among Swedish voters has increased significantly. However, this has only recently started to spread to the political elite, and the majority of mainstream parties still consider the Sweden Democrats a pariah party.

Despite most mainstream parties’ refusal to formally collaborate with the Sweden Democrats, the party’s stance on migration has gained increased acceptance among Swedish political parties. In 2015, the Swedish government proposed a more restrictive migration policy..

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22 Hamidi-Nia, “KD-ledaren öppnar för SD-samarbete.”
23 Based on parliamentary praxis, the Sweden Democrats’ representative Björn Söder received the position as second vice speaker of parliament in 2014, but lost this role after the 2018 general election when the Left Party put forth a challenging candidate for the position. Riksdagsförvaltningen, “Urban Ahlin vald till ny talman,” September 29, 2014; Riksdagsförvaltningen, “Andreas Norlén vald till ny talman,” September 27, 2018.
after a shift in the immigration debate following the increased influx of migrants to Europe.24 The Swedish government (consisting of the Social Democrats and the Green Party) reached an agreement with the Alliance (consisting of the Moderate Party, the Center Party, the People’s Party/the Liberals, and the Christian Democratic Party) in October 2015 to temporarily restrict migration to Sweden.25 Additionally, Sweden imposed ID controls on its border with Denmark to further decrease the inflow of migrants.26 These regulations are still in place as of April 2019, and the Social Democrats and the Moderates have proposed making these changes semi-permanent or permanent.27 The shift in the mainstream parties’ approach to migration suggests that their political positions have moved closer to the Sweden Democrats, despite the ongoing rejection of the party.28

Swedish Voter Preferences and the Political Context

In the following section, I provide a brief overview of voter preferences and the broader political context in Sweden to better understand the parties’ focus in the election manifestos and their description of Swedish society. Voter preferences are established by examining the five most important topics to voters by election, and the interest in immigration as a political issue. In regard to the political context, I examine data for immigration levels, the number of reported crimes, unemployment levels, and education results. These variables were chosen as they


25 Temporary residency permits and an economic self-sufficiency requirement to be granted family reunification are examples of provisions introduced through the new bill. Regeringen och Regeringskansliet, “Insatser med anledning av flyktingkrisen,” October 23, 2015.


connect to recurring topics discussed in relation to immigration in the political debate. Changes in these factors are significant as they impact the political context, and by extension, the parties’ rhetoric and political agenda.

The trend for voter preferences is relatively stable and welfare/healthcare, education, and employment are consistently ranked as top issues (see Table 1); immigration did not occur as a top five issue until the 2014 election, though 10% of voters ranked it at the top in 2002. Since immigration has only recently appeared as a prioritized issue, mainstream parties are less likely to emphasize immigration in the earlier manifestos.

Most Important Issues for Voters in General Elections 1998-2018

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Employment</th>
<th>Welfare/Healthcare</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Pensions/Elder Care</th>
<th>Pension/Elder Care</th>
<th>Taxes</th>
<th>Immigration/Refugees</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>34%</td>
<td>Welfare/Healthcare 36%</td>
<td>Education 29%</td>
<td>Pensions/Elder Care 20%</td>
<td>Pension/Elder Care 17%</td>
<td>Taxes 17%</td>
<td>Immigration/Refugees 3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Employment 35%</td>
<td>Welfare/Healthcare 37%</td>
<td>Welfare/Healthcare 31%</td>
<td>Pensions/Elder Care 21%</td>
<td>Pension/Elder Care 19%</td>
<td>Taxes 15%</td>
<td>Immigration/Refugees 10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Welfare/Healthcare 37%</td>
<td>Employment 26%</td>
<td>Education 24%</td>
<td>Pensions/Elder Care 21%</td>
<td>Pension/Elder Care 19%</td>
<td>Taxes 15%</td>
<td>Immigration/Refugees 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>Welfare/Healthcare 43%</td>
<td>Education 41%</td>
<td>Employment 23%</td>
<td>Immigration/Refugees 23%</td>
<td>Education 27%</td>
<td>Climate and Environment 20%</td>
<td>Integration 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Welfare/Healthcare 52%</td>
<td>Immigration/Refugees 45%</td>
<td>Crime 34%</td>
<td>Integration 23%</td>
<td>Integration 23%</td>
<td>Integration 23%</td>
<td>Integration 23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>Healthcare 52%</td>
<td>Education 27%</td>
<td>Education 27%</td>
<td>Integration 23%</td>
<td>Integration 23%</td>
<td>Integration 23%</td>
<td>Integration 23%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1. Self-reported priority of political issues ahead of general elections 1998-2018. Data for 1998-2014 was retrieved from the Swedish National Election Studies at the University of Gothenburg and data for 2018 is based on polls from Metro.se. Voters have answered an open-ended question regarding what political issues are most important to them.

In relation to the Swedish political context, the availability of data varies, and data is not available for all variables for the entire time period. Figure 1 shows changes in immigration over

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time and highlights three major shifts in immigration reception in Sweden: first, there was a sharp increase in immigration between 2005-2006; second, immigration began to increase steadily after 2011 with a sharp upsurge in 2015; third, there was a significant decrease in immigration after 2016.

![Number of Immigrants per Year, 2000-2018](image)

Figure 1. Number of immigrants arriving in Sweden per year 2000-2018. Data was retrieved from Statistics Sweden.  

The number of reported crimes and unemployment levels have not changed significantly 1998-2018 but varies throughout the time period. Reported crimes and unemployment levels do, thus, change unrelatedly to immigration flows in Sweden. Results for Swedish students in international comparisons have dropped since 2000, despite grades improving during the same time period; this development suggests that Swedish students are learning less compared to

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students in other countries. Results for Swedish students also appear to develop independently from shifts in immigration, since the changes have been steady. These results are significant in relation to the parties’ rhetoric connecting these issues to increased immigration.

This thesis has four main parts: first, I offer a review of the literature related to the increase in anti-immigration rhetoric and policy in Europe and Sweden; second, I outline the methodology for the project, followed by the analysis of the parties’ election manifestos. Lastly, I summarize the results of the analysis by highlighting both differences and similarities between the parties and by offering some reflections on the impact of my research and the possibilities for future research.

**Literature Review**

Before examining rhetoric pertaining to immigration in Swedish election manifestos and its impact on other political issues, I assess the current literature on right-wing parties in Europe and the Sweden Democrats to situate my research within the current scholarly debate. These two areas of scholarly literature highlight different aspects which are relevant to understand the Sweden Democrats’ influence on Swedish politics and are discussed in more depth below. Since the 1980s, right-wing parties have advanced their political positions all around Europe. However, the research examining the role of right-wing parties in European politics has been inconclusive—scholars have reached mixed conclusions on right-wing parties’ relative

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influence. As for the Sweden Democrats more specifically, the party’s advancement occurred late compared to other Nordic countries, due to the view of the Sweden Democrats as extremist and militant. Yet, the Swedish case suggests that the Sweden Democrats have influenced political rhetoric and policy on a national level in recent years, despite mainstream parties publicly opposing the party and refusing to collaborate with them. Due to the increased strength of right-wing parties in Europe and Sweden, it is necessary to look at what previous scholars have concluded to better understand how the Moderates, the Social Democrats, and the Sweden Democrats relate to one another and how they have changed over time.

Right-wing Parties in Europe

I study two aspects of the strengthening of right-wing parties in Europe to situate the Sweden Democrats in the broader European context, and to compare Sweden Democratic rhetorical strategies with developments in Europe. First, I assess the scholarship on right-wing party influence in Europe, which highlights the practical and rhetorical impact of right-wing parties on European politics. The current research outlines distinct immigration narratives in different European countries, which I relate to dominant immigration discourses in the Swedish debate. The rhetoric in the Swedish election manifestos can be assessed based on the strategies employed by right-wing parties in Europe to gage how the development in Sweden fits with the changes in other countries; consequently, my research adds additional clarity regarding the

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immigration narratives which dominate the political debate. More broadly, my examination of Swedish election manifestos highlights the complexity of anti-immigration rhetoric and its connection to other political issues. This complexity makes it arduous, if not impossible, to isolate one effect which increases the influence of right-wing parties, as a plethora of factors impact the parties’ success. Second, I examine analyses of the factors which impact right-wing party support. While my research does not examine people’s reasoning for supporting stricter immigration positions, these explanations are useful to understand the arguments the parties’ make in their election manifestos. In the same manner as the examination of right-wing party rhetoric in Europe provides a framework for analyzing the types of anti-immigration rhetoric in the election manifestos, the explanations for right-wing party support offer potential approaches for the parties to use to catch voters’ attention.

**Right-wing Party Influence**

A main reason for the disagreement on right-wing party influence in Europe is that there are major methodological challenges leading scholars to draw distinct conclusions regarding right-wing party support. Michelle Hale Williams notes that a main reason for the division in previous scholarship is that influence is often difficult to measure, and scholars use different strategies to gage the impact of right-wing parties; these methodological variances makes it difficult to cross-examine right-wing parties’ success.\(^{36}\) Williams further argues that to only examine electoral outcomes does not accurately measure right-wing party success, as right-wing parties do not only impact policy, but the party system as well; the latter effects are often greater

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\(^{36}\) Williams, “Are Radical Right-Wing Parties the Black Holes in Party Space?”
than the former.\textsuperscript{37} Right-wing parties arise in a policy vacuum and that their position is identified in relation to mainstream parties; right-wing party impact is contingent on both the party system competition and mainstream party agency.\textsuperscript{38} Ernesto Dal Bô, Frederico Finan, Olle Folke, Torsten Persson, and Johanna Rickne highlight a similar process, where mainstream parties’ platform conversion opened up an ideological space for right-wing parties to mobilize.\textsuperscript{39} Bô et al. and Williams’ findings stress the importance of examining both the convergence, and the shift among mainstream parties on issues relating to immigration. Along these lines, I study both the concrete policy proposals which have changed among mainstream parties after the rise of the Sweden Democrats and the shift in the parties’ relationship to one another, thereby using Sweden as a practical example of Bô et al. and Williams’ theories of right-wing party advancement.

The difficulty in isolating right-wing parties’ impact on policy issues and the political system is illustrated by Jennifer Hochschild and John Mollenkopf, who conclude that European political and state actors have adopted and legitimized some of the radical rights’ claims due to its increased strength. The mainstream parties’ newfound acceptance gives right-wing movements greater influence over politics and suggests a break from previously established histories of ignoring right-wing parties.\textsuperscript{40} This conclusion is confirmed by Michael Minkenberg, who finds that the shift from exclusion to partial collaboration with right-wing parties have strengthened their position in relation to mainstream parties.\textsuperscript{41} However, these results are mixed and full collaboration has, in some cases, resulted in a weakening of the right-wing party while

\textsuperscript{37} Williams, 1333.
\textsuperscript{38} Williams, 1329.
\textsuperscript{41} Michael Minkenberg, “From Pariah to Policy-Maker?” 11.
other parties have remained stable.\textsuperscript{42} Hochschild and Mollenkopf argue that the influence of right-wing parties in Europe is limited and while they have advanced their positions politically, their overall impact on immigration policy is minor.\textsuperscript{43} If Hochschild and Mollenkopf are correct, the mainstream parties in Sweden will have embraced some of the Sweden Democrats’ rhetoric, but refrained from adopting far-reaching policy proposals which align with the Sweden Democratic anti-immigration agenda.

Another central aspect of right-wing party influence is their ability to shape the political agenda. Teun A. van Dijk and Ruth Wodak find that prejudice and racism would be less influential if stories about immigrants were not communicated by the ‘elite.’\textsuperscript{44} Their conclusion emphasizes the importance of examining political discourse due to its impact on people’s view of immigration. Dijk also summarizes several dominating themes in anti-immigration rhetoric by identifying 15 types of discourses:

“Too many of them [immigrants] are (coming) here, immigration should become stricter, they make us feel unsafe on the streets, the neighborhood is being run down by them, they are aggressive and involved in crime, some of them work hard but many of them are lazy and on welfare (for which we pay taxes), they take our houses and jobs and are unfairly favored by the government, they do not adapt to our ways, do not speak our language or do have strange religion and other customs, they do not value education as we do, have too many children, do not respect their women, live in dirty places, and in general are different and have different mentality–they do not belong here.”\textsuperscript{45}

The above quote highlights the many forms anti-immigration rhetoric can take and provides a crucial aspect of my analysis of Swedish parties’ anti-immigration rhetoric. By examining the parties’ rhetoric in relation to these different narratives, I can determine if there is one dominant

\textsuperscript{42} Minkenberg, 12.
immigration story in Sweden or if the parties employ a multitude of approaches to describe immigration. I employ Dijk’s categories of racist discourse on a new set of data by looking at rhetoric in election manifestos rather than accounts in the media, fiction, or interpersonal communication which have been emphasized in the past. This approach will highlight whether or not political rhetoric align with discourses in other forums.

Dijk’s summary of anti-immigration rhetoric is not all-encompassing but focuses on the description of the immigrant. Dorine Boumans offers a different perspective on anti-immigration rhetoric by emphasizing the rhetorical separation between “the pure people” and “the corrupt elite.” Her conclusion that the relationship between the people and the elite is important to the rise of right-wing parties is supported by Frank Mols and Jolanda Jetten, who find that an emphasis on voter victimhood is central for right-wing party support. Mols and Jetten conclude that right-wing party rhetoric in Australia and the Netherlands focuses on creating a division between “hard-working taxpayers,” on the one hand, and the elite and immigrants, on the other. These are examples of a different narrative to track in the Swedish parties’ election manifestos, namely ‘the people versus the elite,’ to examine if it is a strategy employed by Swedish parties.

An additional explanation for the increased acceptance of anti-immigration rhetoric in Europe is the change in focus, from racism to Islamophobia. Minkenberg concludes that Islamophobia is widespread in Western Europe, which gives right-wing parties an opportunity to look more mainstream compared to their previous racist and anti-Semitic discourses. The same
idea is advanced by Farid Hafez, who discovers that “… Islamophobic claims are regarded as much less ‘problematic’, and a much more widely held form of racism in western societies, than antisemitism.” This conclusion aligns with Ferruh Yilmaz’s finding that the sustained focus on Muslims and Islam in right-wing discourse highlights cultural differences between immigrants and natives. Right-wing parties’ employment of these narratives results in a portrayal of Muslims as culturally inferior, while they also pose a threat to Western civilization. The emphasis on immigrants’ distinctive culture is also evident in the Swedish political discourse; Disa Hasselberg argues that Swedish parties have shifted from racist ideas to an emphasis on culture. The shift from focusing on racial attributes to an emphasis on culture made it easier for right-wing parties to express anti-immigration sentiments without appearing racist. The examination of Swedish election manifestos highlights if this rhetoric has spread from political debates to the parties’ vision of the future as outlined in the manifestos. Hasselberg’s research on immigration rhetoric in Sweden is discussed in more depth in the section on the Sweden Democrats.

Right-wing Party Support

In addition to the analysis of right-wing party influence on the political system and rhetoric, right-wing party success is also studied by examining the factors that motivate voters to support right-wing parties. These two discussions are largely developing separately, with little

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55 Hasselberg, 23.
consideration for how the two processes impact one another. Right-wing voter mobilization is explained by several distinct factors: socio-political, rhetorical, and spatial. Valeria Bello focuses on the socio-political factors which impact citizens’ attitudes toward immigrants, and concludes that if inclusivity is highlighted as a central socio-political value, individuals show more positive attitudes toward immigrants. Bello’s conclusion suggests that the state has tremendous influence over people’s opinions and that politicians, by crafting either an inclusive or exclusive social identity for the country, can impact general attitudes toward immigrants.

However, Miriam Cihodariu and Lucian-Stefan Dumitrescu suggest that anti-immigrant dialogue is often confusing and that integration, assimilation, and multiculturalism are often used interchangeably. Due to the ambiguity of what integration entails, multiculturalist policy failures are blamed on immigrants. By including both Bello’s, and Cihodariu’s and Dumitrescu’s perspectives, I suggest that while there is an opportunity for politicians to create more inclusive public sentiments, the confusion in the debate has obstructed such a development, leading to a more negative view of the immigrant. Bello’s conclusion suggests that Sweden is moving from more inclusive to more restrictive socio-political identity constructions, which increases the level of intolerance towards immigrants. In combination with the lack of clarity in the debate, as outlined by Cihodariu and Dumitrescu, the blame for the failure of previous policies is placed on the immigrants.

The spatial relationship between immigrants and the majority group is also important for understanding right-wing party support. Carl Berning, Jocelyn Evans, Myles Gould, Eelco

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59 Cihodariu and Dumitrescu, 64.
Harteved, and Gilles Ivaldi find that in areas with lower ethnic diversity, people are more prone to vote for right-wing parties, especially if neighboring areas have higher levels of ethnic diversity.\(^{60}\) The difference in attitudes toward immigration in a Swedish setting is examined by Sarah Valdez, through the study of how the influx versus the residency level of immigrants impact right-wing party support. She finds that much of the support for right-wing parties on a district level “… can be accounted for by the percent of non-western residents in adjacent neighborhoods.”\(^{61}\) The manner in which immigrants and the majority group (i.e. Swedes) interact with one another is crucial for how contact between the two groups impacts right-wing party support. Valdez concludes that meaningful contact (i.e. friendships) makes people overcome prejudice, while superficial contact (i.e. day to day interactions) increases prejudice.\(^{62}\) Robert Miles articulates a similar distinction by differentiating between the experienced and imagined other, where the former generates more positive and the latter more negative attitudes toward immigrants.\(^{63}\) These findings are exemplified in Bó et al.’s study which concludes that high numbers of immigrants in the commuting zone results in higher support for the Sweden Democrats.\(^{64}\) While my examination of election manifestos does not treat spatial variance in right-wing party support, Valdez, Miles, and Bó et al.’s conclusions are important to understand the parties’ imagination of the immigrant and their arguments relating to segregation.

Last in the examination of right-wing party support, I turn to Jens Rydgren and Patrick Ruth’s study on how the origin of immigrants impacts right-wing party support. Rydgren and Ruth find that, while the origin of migrants (i.e. Nordic, European, or non-European immigrant)


\(^{62}\) Valdez, 166-67.


\(^{64}\) Bó et al., “Economic Losers and Political Winners: Sweden’s Radical Right,” 18.
matters for the salience of right-wing party support, immigration from non-European countries is negatively correlated with support for the Sweden Democrats, which suggests that non-European immigrant presence by itself is not enough to increase right-wing party support.\(^\text{65}\) Rather, socioeconomic factors play a central role in explaining support for the Sweden Democrats.\(^\text{66}\) This is in line with Bó et al.’s finding that increased inequality leads to increased support for the Sweden Democrats, and that vulnerability is a crucial aspect of right-wing party support.\(^\text{67}\) These discoveries suggest that politicians’ rhetorical focus on non-western immigrants as different from the majority group, as highlighted by Yilmaz, Hasselberg and others, is not an effective way of increasing support for an anti-immigration agenda, but that parties should highlight the conflict between a high living standard and immigration to increase people’s dissatisfaction with immigration. My study highlights if Swedish parties emphasize this perceived conflict, or if the parties stick to the narrative of the culturally distinct other.

The overview of the literature on right-wing parties in Europe highlights the diverse perspectives presented by scholars on the topic of right-wing party advancement. Previous research concludes that right-wing party success is largely dependent on mainstream parties’ actions, and that mainstream parties adjust their position to align with anti-immigration rhetoric once right-wing parties have gained further support. Additionally, right-wing party scholarship highlights different types of immigration rhetoric deployed by right-wing parties to increase their voter base. By complementing this research with manifesto data from the three largest parties in Sweden, I add additional vigor to the theories describing the relationship between mainstream and right-wing parties through an example of how mainstream and right-wing parties interact with one another in Sweden. My data also highlights which rhetorical strategies among right-

\(^{65}\) Rydgren and Ruth, “Contextual Explanations of Radical Right-Wing Support in Sweden,” 723.
\(^{66}\) Rydgren and Ruth, 726.
wing parties in Europe that have dominated the Swedish immigration debate. However, to examine immigration rhetoric is not enough to understand the full extent of right-wing party influence, and I expand the scope of issues studied to determine if the Sweden Democrats have impacted mainstream parties’ rhetoric and policy beyond immigration, and, by extension, altered the mainstream parties’ central vision of Sweden. This adds a broader perspective to the current literature on right-wing parties’ impact on politics by highlighting how anti-immigration rhetoric can influence other topics as well.

The Sweden Democrats

To complete my examination of the existing literature, I engage scholarship which focuses on the Sweden Democrats more specifically. Although no decisive conclusions on the impact of right-wing parties in Europe have been reached, general trends about the Sweden Democrats’ advancement have been identified by scholars studying right-wing party presence in Sweden. Researchers have examined why the Sweden Democrats gain increased support, and how the party impacts policy and mainstream party relations, both in its emergence and once elected to political assemblies. In addition, there is an increasing body of literature on the Sweden Democrats’ politics more specifically and the party’s impact on political rhetoric.  

Despite the diligence of previous examinations, the recent changes in Swedish immigration policy, and the growth of the Sweden Democrats’ influence over immigration rhetoric warrants further examination of the topic. Not only is it a chance to confirm previous developments in the localities on a national level, but it also offers an opportunity to expand the examination of

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Sweden Democratic rhetoric and its impact on other parties. Both these topics have been examined before, but the majority of previous studies have focused solely on the issue of immigration, not related topics. By including this additional perspective, my research highlights if the Sweden Democrats influence politics more broadly. Additionally, most previous studies do not include changes in the political debate after the increased influx of migrants to Europe in 2015, which significantly impacted the discussion on immigration. The inclusion of the 2018 election manifestos highlight how recent developments have impacted party relations in Sweden.

The Sweden Democrats’ influence on politics is examined by Niklas Bolin, Gustav Lidén, and Jon Nyhlén, who identify instances in which the Sweden Democrats have successfully influenced the politics in local municipalities. They find that the Sweden Democrats can exercise either direct influence, by participating in government, or indirect influence, where mainstream parties adopt the Sweden Democrats’ political positions in an attempt to limit the party’s influence on politics. Bolin et al. conclude that gaining representation is not enough for the Sweden Democrats to exercise influence; the Sweden Democrats’ main issue, immigration, must also gain popular attention for the party to successfully exercise political influence. Additionally, the party must hold the balance of power in legislative assemblies to gain influence over the political agenda. These results are significant as they provide guidance for developments on the national level, where immigration has emerged as a significant issue for voters in recent elections and the Sweden Democrats have held the balance of power in parliament. My examination of the Swedish parties’ election

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70 On a national level, there are only examples of the latter as no political parties have begun any formal collaboration with the Sweden Democrats. Bolin, Lidén, and Nyhlén, 326.

71 Bolin, Lidén, and Nyhlén, 328.

72 Bolin, Lidén, and Nyhlén, 335.
manifestos highlights if the Sweden Democrats have been able to impact the national political agenda in a way similar to what Bolin at al. have seen on the local level.

The Sweden Democrats’ impact on politics is further examined by Karl Loxbo, who shifts the focus from the party’s policy influence to whether or not its presence impacts mainstream parties’ political behavior in relation to one another.73 In opposition to many European studies of right-wing parties, Loxbo argues that small successes for the Sweden Democrats have a stronger impact on mainstream parties than previously perceived.74 Loxbo’s research focuses on the importance of mainstream party response in facilitating right-wing party success;75 he finds that the Sweden Democrats increase political conflict, which makes it harder for mainstream parties to collaborate.76 Anders Hellström and Tom Nilsson also note the Sweden Democrats’ polarizing effect, and find that the Moderates and the Social Democrats tend to blame one another for the Sweden Democrats’ success in an attempt to distance themselves from the party.77 Accordingly, the mainstream parties’ response to the Sweden Democrats is central to the party’s political success.

The findings that Sweden Democratic presence increases political conflict and decreases collaboration across political differences78 is especially noteworthy in relation to Loxbo’s later finding: increased policy convergence on immigration issues fuels further support for the Sweden Democrats if the voters construe the mainstream parties’ positions as too similar.79

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74 Loxbo, 312.
75 Loxbo, 295.
76 Loxbo, "The Impact of the Radical Right," 300, 309.
77 Hellström and Nilsson, “‘We Are the Good Guys,’” 68.
78 Loxbo, "The Impact of the Radical Right," 300, 309.
Loxbo predicts that the isolation of the Sweden Democrats will improve the party’s chances in later elections, as it positions the Sweden Democrats as an alternative to mainstream parties.\textsuperscript{80} Taken together, Loxbo’s two studies suggest that the Sweden Democrats enjoy increased support if mainstream parties’ positions on immigration align, but also that the emergence of the Sweden Democrats increases political polarization and makes it more difficult to form political coalitions. It is not clear, however, how these processes work together and what it means for the Sweden Democrats’ future success if the projected polarization among mainstream parties occur. My examination of the rhetoric on immigration related issues in the election manifestos will highlight if the Moderates and the Social Democrats have continued to converge on immigration or if the increased presence of the Sweden Democrats have increased the area of conflict between the parties.

To better understand the Sweden Democrats’ relationship to other political parties, I turn to Björn Lindqvist who approaches the study of the Sweden Democrats from a different angle. Rather than examining how the party impacts other political actors, he analyses the development of Sweden Democratic political proposals over time. He concludes that the Sweden Democrats’ political vision has remained largely stable since the party’s founding, and that the increased support for the party is due to changes in public opinion, not changes in the Sweden Democrats’ political policies.\textsuperscript{81} Instead of developing divergent policies, the Sweden Democrats have used established political positions and made them more radical, which has allowed them to navigate the political spectrum more easily.\textsuperscript{82} Like Loxbo, Lindqvist attributes the success of the Sweden Democrats to the failure of mainstream parties to address the grievances behind the party’s rise.

\textsuperscript{80} Loxbo, “The Impact of the Radical Right,” 296.
\textsuperscript{81} Lindqvist, “Sverigedemokraternas Migrationspolitik: En studie av partiets politiska förslag under perioden 1989-2012 / The Sweden Democrat’s migration policy: A study of the party’s policy proposals during the period 1989-2012,” 44.
\textsuperscript{82} Lindqvist, 6.
Instead of openly discussing the issues the Sweden Democrats highlight, mainstream parties have classified the party as extreme and isolated them in an attempt to avoid anti-immigration influence on political policy; this isolation has led to increased support for the Sweden Democrats. In this regard, the mainstream parties have prioritized the defense of liberal values over respecting the democratic legitimacy of the Sweden Democrats’ representation in Swedish politics. Mainstream parties have also continued to describe the Sweden Democrats as ‘the ugly duckling’ to invalidate their political position. If the Sweden Democrats’ success is due to the lack of repositioning among mainstream parties on the issue of immigration, it appears unlikely that the party has influenced the broader political debate, as the party’s success is entirely based on immigration. As Lindqvist’s research only examine the Sweden Democrats’ party platforms and political proposals in parliament, adding data from the election manifestos help confirm his picture of the Sweden Democrats as a stable party.

The conclusion that the Sweden Democrats have not successfully impacted the greater political debate is confirmed in Anders Widfeldt’s study of immigration rhetoric among Swedish parties in the 2002, 2006, and 2010 general elections. By examining Swedish parties’ election manifestos, Widfeldt discovers long-standing tensions among mainstream parties’ coalition partners on issues of immigration, and the parties have decreased their emphasis on immigration in an attempt to avoid revealing this conflict. Additionally, Widfeldt finds that the mainstream parties focused less on migration as the Sweden Democrats increased in size, and the party’s rise

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83 Lindqvist, 11.
84 Jenny Kiiskinen and Sigrid Saveljef, Att dansa i otakt med väljarna: Socialdemokraternas och Moderaternas strategiska bemötande av Sverigedemokraterna, Malmö studies in International migration and ethnic relations 9 (Malmö: Internationell migration och etniska relationer, Malmö högskola [u.a], 2010), 230.
85 Kiiskinen and Saveljef, 17.
87 Widfeldt, 413.
did not significantly impact the mainstream parties’ view of immigration.\textsuperscript{88}

However, Widfeldt’s conclusions were drawn based on data before the shift in migration flows in Europe in 2015; I choose to examine later developments in Swedish politics to fully grasp the extent to which the Sweden Democrats interact with the Moderates and the Social Democrats on different political issues. While I have no reason to assume that my findings in 2002, 2006, and 2010 will be significantly different from Widfeldt’s, my analysis will expand both the time frame and the scope of study, by including election manifestos from 1998-2018, and by examining both immigration rhetoric as such and issues which relate to immigration. Hence, it is possible to discern if the migration debate has changed since Widfeldt conducted his study, and whether or not immigration rhetoric impacts other political issues. I expect that the Sweden Democrats will have had a greater impact on immigration policy in later years, especially after the increased influx of migrants to Europe in 2015. Additionally, I anticipate that mainstream parties take a more restrictive position on other political issues as well, as they adopt a more restrictive immigration rhetoric.

Some of the work I set out to do, has already been tested; Hasselberg examines if the Sweden Democratic rhetoric impacts mainstream parties’ discourse on immigration in parliament and the media 2006-2016.\textsuperscript{89} Hasselberg identifies the increased influx of migrants to Europe in 2015 as a catalyst for a more restrictive migration position among Swedish political parties, but she is not able to isolate the effect of Sweden Democratic rhetoric from the impact of the perceived crisis of increased immigration. Hasselberg is, therefore, hesitant to draw any wide-ranging conclusions about the impact of Sweden Democratic rhetoric.\textsuperscript{90} Regardless of the

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\textsuperscript{88} Widfeldt, 412.
\textsuperscript{89} Hasselberg, “The Limits of Hospitality: The Impact of SD on Immigration Discourses among the Swedish Political Elite 2006-2016.”
\textsuperscript{90} Hasselberg, 60.
motivation, the shift in mainstream parties’ approach to migration suggests that their political positions have moved closer to the Sweden Democrats. This has increased the Sweden Democrats’ impact on the political debate, despite the mainstream parties’ ongoing rejection of the party.\footnote{Hasselberg.}

Hasselberg proposes that the continuous opposition to the Sweden Democrats is based in mainstream parties’ desire to self-identify as immigration friendly.\footnote{Hasselberg, 35.} Such identification feeds into “… self-glorifying images of Swedish hospitality and goodness,”\footnote{Hasselberg, 22.} which leads to expressions of covert nationalism, as notions of what is good is linked to the nation. Swedish parties can then frame immigrants who depart from the Swedish norms of gender equality and tolerance as bad by opposing immigration based on culture rather than racist ideals.\footnote{Hasselberg, 15, 24.} The focus on cultural difference allows the Sweden Democrats, and more recently mainstream parties, to oppose immigrants on a universal, liberal democracy basis instead of appearing intolerant.\footnote{Hasselberg, 58.}

Hasselberg’s conclusions align with the development in the rest of Europe, where cultural differentiation rather than ethnic disparities is highlighted.\footnote{Hafez, “Shifting Borders: Islamophobia as Common Ground for Building Pan-European Right-Wing Unity.”} Her research also suggests that the Sweden Democratic rhetoric has impacted the political debate in a manner which has not been acknowledged by other scholars. I continue to explore this shift by examining election manifestos published 1998-2018 to discern the Sweden Democrats’ impact on both immigration and other political issues, which Hasselberg does not examine.

The scholarly research on the Sweden Democrats shows a clear trend towards more Sweden Democratic presence in Swedish politics, on both a local and national level. However,
since the Sweden Democrats’ rhetoric has only recently impacted Swedish immigration politics, more current data are needed to fully understand the impact of the party. Not until after the shift in migration flows in Europe did Sweden change its migration legislation, which highlights the importance of studying the changes in immigration rhetoric in the most recent election. Additionally, research on the Sweden Democrats’ impact beyond migration is limited, though immigration is often discussed in relation to other political issues. My research broadens the scope of study to determine the extent to which the Sweden Democrats impact mainstream parties’ political positions on both immigration and relating issues. The use of election manifesto data, rather than data from political debates, also reveals if the Sweden Democrats have influenced politics beyond debate gimmicks, by impacting the mainstream parties’ medium- to long-term vision of Sweden as presented in the manifestos.

Methodology

As evidenced by the discussion above, the scholarly examination of political rhetoric and the influence of right-wing parties is extensive, but there is no agreement on the exact role of right-wing parties on European politics. In several countries, right-wing parties have grown and increased their political significance, and the emergence of the Sweden Democrats in Sweden is no exception. Historically, mainstream parties have successfully blocked the Sweden Democrats from influencing Swedish politics and the policy process.\(^7\) However, with the increased influx of migrants to Europe, and Sweden, in 2015, mainstream parties’ rhetoric surrounding immigration has hardened, but the parties continue to emphasize their differentiation from the Sweden Democrats.

\(^7\) Henrik Torehammar et al., *Det Politiska Spelet: En bra kris och nya katastrofer*, vol. 5, Det Politiska Spelet (Stockholm, 2014); Widfeldt, “Tensions beneath the Surface - The Swedish Mainstream Parties and the Immigration Issue.”
Hasselberg’s research on political rhetoric in the media and parliament, and Widfeldt’s examination of immigration rhetoric in Swedish election manifestos most closely mirror my own investigation, but there are some significant differences; neither study includes questions about how the political landscape has shifted more broadly due to parties’ connections between immigration and other political issues, but only examines immigration rhetoric more narrowly conceived. I examine mainstream parties’ potential rapprochement to the Sweden Democrats by investigating the rhetoric used in relation to immigration in election manifestos from the Moderates, the Social Democrats, and the Sweden Democrats, and how immigration is connected with other political issues, which determines the scope of the shifts in immigration rhetoric. This approach helps answer the three research questions for this project: 1. Has the rhetoric surrounding migration in the Moderates’, the Social Democrats’, and the Sweden Democrats’ election manifestos changed 1998-2018? 2. Has the increased focus on migration impacted other political issues in the parties’ election manifestos? 3. Have mainstream parties adopted new issues or views which originated with the Sweden Democrats?

Case Selection

I chose Sweden as a case study for three main reasons. First, the upswing in anti-immigration rhetoric since 2015 has been evident in Swedish politics, with several mainstream parties radically shifting their rhetoric surrounding migration in political speeches, interviews, and debates.98 This change accentuates a shift in politicians’ view of migration and an increased acceptance for anti-immigration rhetoric. However, since mainstream parties still openly oppose

98 Hasselberg, “The Limits of Hospitality: The Impact of SD on Immigration Discourses among the Swedish Political Elite 2006-2016.”
the Sweden Democrats, it is important to examine how the shifts in immigration rhetoric impacts politics more broadly to better understand how the parties relate to one another.

The second reason for choosing Sweden as a case study is that many European countries have historically had larger right-wing party presence than Sweden. In Denmark, for example, the Danish People’s Party gained ground in the 1990s and has played a crucial role in Danish politics ever since; Austria provides another example, where the Freedom Party of Austria has gained increased political influence over the years. However, scholarly research has previously shown that right-wing party influence on politics is mixed, and that right-wing parties have either moved towards the middle once in a position of power or articulated a more moderate position. In Sweden, on the contrary, Sweden Democratic political proposals have been rearticulated by mainstream parties without the party holding any formal position of power. Accordingly, the development in Sweden suggests another path for right-wing parties to increase their influence over national politics, without any formal recognition of their increased power. By examining Swedish parties’ election manifestos, it is possible to discern to what extent the Sweden Democrats have been able to influence central political ideas in Swedish politics. Lastly, the language barrier for examining Swedish election manifestos is minimal, as Swedish is my first language.

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Sources

My analysis covers election manifestos from the Moderates, the Social Democrats, and the Sweden Democrats 1998-2018. The selection of these three parties is based on their relative position in Swedish politics. The Moderates, Social Democrats, and Sweden Democrats are the three largest parties in the Swedish parliament; the Moderates are the largest mainstream right party, while the Social Democrats are the largest mainstream left party; the Sweden Democrats are the only right-wing party in Sweden with representation on the national level. Previous studies on voter mobility have also compared these three parties, which also highlights the important dynamic between them. The timeframe 1998-2018 was chosen as it allows me to examine Swedish Democratic manifestos published after the large reform project in the Sweden Democratic party to become more respectable in the mid-1990s. This timeframe includes manifests from the election before immigration was properly politicized in Sweden in 2002, through the election after the shift in immigration flows in Europe in 2015. Lastly, the Swedish parliament updated one of the four fundamental laws in the Swedish constitution in 1994, which changed the election cycles from three to four years; the new regulation went into effect January 1, 1995 and the election in 1998 was the first after the change. In total, 18 election manifestos are analyzed, six from each party.

Due to the circumstances of Swedish politics, there are some limitations to the source selection. First, there is no comprehensive record of Swedish election manifestos, and though the

103 Valmyndigheten, “Valresultat 2018.”
106 Rydgren and Ruth, “Contextual Explanations of Radical Right-Wing Support in Sweden.”
Swedish National Data Service (SND) provide access to many party manifestos, their collection of manifestos is incomplete. Consequently, other online platforms have been used to find the election manifestos which are not available through SND.

Another limitation is that the Moderates published joint manifestos with other mainstream right parties through the Alliance collaboration before the 2006, 2010, and 2014 general elections. Those platforms include propositions which originated with other mainstream right parties as well as proposals from the Moderates. To parse out which political proposals originate with the Moderates, I used newspaper commentary to supplement the content analysis of the 2006-2014 election manifestos. Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen, and Svenska Dagbladet, which are four national newspapers, were chosen for the analysis as they have a nation-wide reader base and are published daily. Thus, the newspapers provide continuous coverage of the election seasons. Since the Moderates are the largest mainstream party on the right it is warranted to study the 2006-2014 election manifestos, despite them being published by the joint right coalition; additionally, three out of the four parties in the Alliance, including the Moderates, had similar positions on immigration in the 2002 election, which further validates the use of the joint election manifestos.

The newspaper articles were gathered through the article search engine Artikelsök and were collected based on several search criteria. I used the general search term “allians” (Alliance in Swedish) to cast a broad net for articles related to the Alliance. I further established the time-frame 2005-2015 (i.e. one year before the first, and one year after the last election in

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which the center-right appeared as a joint coalition) to capture the entire discussion of the parties’ joint proposals. The search was also narrowed to only include full-length newspaper articles to avoid gathering incomplete data. The search generated 701 results; 141 articles were published by *Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen*, or *Svenska Dagbladet* and are included in the analysis. Each article was examined for information about the different parties’ political positions on specific issues, as well as sources of conflict or consensus within the Alliance.

Another complicating factor is that the parties’ election manifestos are only available in Swedish, which give rise to many linguistic challenges when translating materials from one language to another. As language and words are not static, they must be understood within the societal context which creates and gives meaning to them.\(^\text{112}\) The election manifestos are produced to present a party’s political proposals to the voters. This impacts the rhetoric being used, and “...there will never be one completely fixed meaning of a word and [the] meaning is always relational.”\(^\text{113}\) In translating these documents, there is a risk of losing the context, since a word can mean and symbolize different things in distinct cultural settings, i.e. the Swedish versus the American context. To balance this ambiguity, I offer additional explanation of some words when the translation does not fully capture the meaning of the word in the source language, or there is no appropriate translation. Aside from instances where the essence of English and Swedish differ, I keep the translation as close to the original as possible.

Procedure

The examination of election manifestos is conducted in two steps. First, I produce descriptive statistics for immigration rhetoric in each election manifesto by party; all analyses were conducted on stemmed language to avoid different grammatical forms of the same word being counted separately; the terms relating to immigration, which form the basis for the overall percentage of immigration rhetoric in the election manifestos, are listed in Appendix A. Due to the substantive focus of the research, each occurrence of these terms was also examined in their textual context to ensure that the reference to the words occurred in relation to immigration. This process was particularly important for references to ‘Sweden’ and ‘Swedish’ as these terms often occurred in other contexts as well; all instances in which the term appeared without relating to immigration were excluded. Based on results from the word count, I ran several n-gram analyses (2, 3, 4, and 5-grams). Through the n-grams, it is possible to discover broader trends and patterns in the data. The word counts produce an overview of the prevalence of immigration rhetoric in the parties’ election manifestos, while the bigrams make it possible to discern if new verbs or adjectives were used in combination with immigration rhetoric; the other n-grams show the context within which immigration was discussed. This gives an initial idea if immigration was generally discussed in positive or negative terms.

However, since the goal for my research is to track both the changes in immigration discourse, and the influence of migration rhetoric on other political issues, quantitative measures are not enough. In the second part of the analysis, I conduct a content analysis of the election manifestos to understand the connections made between immigration and other political issues. First, I analyze these connections over time within a party, and then compare the changes among the parties, across years. This portion of the analysis highlights the political areas which have
shifted the most over time, and whether immigration rhetoric has become more inclusive or exclusive. Changes in immigration rhetoric also highlight if the mainstream parties have moved closer to the Sweden Democrats’ restrictive immigration ideology. The linking between immigration rhetoric and other political issues emphasizes the more profound impacts of immigration on parties’ political vision; the content analysis also highlights if there are new issues introduced by the Sweden Democrats which are then picked up by mainstream parties. Through this examination, it is possible to infer medium- to long-term political shifts in the parties’ view of Sweden.

Analysis

The ways in which the Sweden Democrats have impacted immigration rhetoric specifically, and the political climate more broadly, are presented below. The results from the descriptive statistical analysis align with findings from previous scholarly research: the frequency of immigration related language among mainstream parties has increased in recent years; however, the percentage of words relating to immigration decreased in the Sweden Democrats’ election manifestos once they entered parliament in 2010. The percental decrease in immigration rhetoric in later Sweden Democratic manifestos is due to the increase in length of the manifestos, which included a greater variety of political issues in 2014 and 2018 (see Table 2). Rather than a decrease in immigration rhetoric, the debate regarding other issues increased, reducing the percentage of immigration rhetoric in the manifestos (see Figure 2).

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114 Hasselberg.
Table 2. Total number of unique words in each party’s election manifesto by year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Moderates</th>
<th>Social Democrats</th>
<th>Sweden Democrats</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>1029</td>
<td>742</td>
<td>983</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>1257</td>
<td>821</td>
<td>287</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>2109</td>
<td>1016</td>
<td>564</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>2535</td>
<td>687</td>
<td>570</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>3362</td>
<td>1327</td>
<td>1260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2018</td>
<td>2204</td>
<td>1253</td>
<td>1613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>12496</td>
<td>5846</td>
<td>5277</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 2 demonstrates that the percentage of immigration rhetoric has decreased in the Sweden Democrats’ election manifests after they entered parliament in 2010, while the immigration rhetoric in the Moderates’ election manifests increased post-2010. In the Social Democrats’ manifests, there was no increase in immigration rhetoric until 2018, which suggests that the increased influx of migrants to Europe in 2015 spiked the interest in immigration among Social Democrats, rather than the Sweden Democrats’ entrance into parliament. The increase in immigration rhetoric in the Alliance’s 2014 election manifesto suggests a departure from Widfeldt’s finding that mainstream parties decreased the focus on immigration with the rise of the Sweden Democrats; however, the decrease in immigration rhetoric in the Social Democrats’ manifesto confirms Widfeldt’s conclusion. Though the result for immigration language in the Social Democrats’ 2014 election manifesto appears to be zero in Figure 2, this is not the case. The immigration discussion was limited in relation to other topics highlighted and did, therefore, not yield a significant percentage for the overall manifesto. However, the word immigrant, citizen, racism, segregation, Nordic, and asylum all appeared one time in the 2014

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115 This is in line with Hasselberg’s finding that the increase in the influx of immigrants worked as a catalyst for anti-immigration rhetoric among mainstream parties. Hasselberg, “The Limits of Hospitality: The Impact of SD on Immigration Discourses among the Swedish Political Elite 2006-2016,” 59.


117 The model only includes word totals equal to or greater than 0.1 % of the total manifesto. Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, “Ett bättre Sverige. För alla.: valmanifest 2014.” (Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, 2014).
Social Democratic manifesto, while Sweden and Swedish appeared three and two times respectively. Hence, immigration was highlighted by all three parties 1998-2018, though the precentral significance of immigration varies significantly between the years.

![Percentage of Immigration Rhetoric by Party and Year](image)

**Figure 2.** Aggregate word percentages relating to immigration by party and year. The words included in the graph are listed in Appendix A.

Despite the difference between the Moderates and the Social Democrats in 2014, when the Moderates increased the party’s immigration rhetoric while it decreased among Social Democrats, the two mainstream parties closely follow one another in relation to the amount of immigration debate in the manifestos. There was a clear increase in immigration rhetoric in 2002, and similarly, both parties recorded the highest level of immigration discourse in 2018. In 2002, more voters listed immigration as an important issue when selecting a party,¹¹⁸ and *Dagens Nyheter* reported that it was one of the most prominent questions in the 2002 election.¹¹⁹ Widfeldt also concludes that the Liberals’ increased focus on immigration politicized the

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¹¹⁸ Svenska Valforskningsprogrammet, “Väljarnas viktigaste valfrågor,” 2.
issue. The content analysis of the election manifests found an increased emphasis on openness and improved immigration processes in the mainstream parties’ 2002 election manifests.

To further explore how immigration rhetoric has changed since 1998, I ran several n-gram analyses. Though there were few recurring phrases within the parties’ manifests, there are some trends worth noting. In line with what could be expected based on the wordcount, the number of phrases relating to immigration increased in the Moderates’ election manifesto in 2018; most notably, the phrase “gender, class, and clan” occurred as one of the most frequently used trigrams in the 2018 manifesto and appeared four times, which suggests an effort to tie these three topics together as main areas of political concern. Additionally, there were several phrases emphasizing the problems with integration, a framing which did not appear as frequently in the Moderates’ earlier manifests. In the Sweden Democrats’ election manifests, the opposite was true; there were more references to immigration in the 1998 election manifesto than in later documents. In the bigram analysis of the Sweden Democrats’ 1998 manifesto, a common Swedish culture and multiculturalism emerged as prominent themes, but these did not continue to be significant in later manifests. Lastly, though it is not as noteworthy as the development in the Moderate and the Sweden Democratic manifests, there was some language in the Social Democrats’ election manifests which indirectly relates to immigration. In the four-

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122 I examined the top ten n-grams for each election manifesto and all phrases with the same frequency as the tenth phrase; “Ngram Analyzer,” accessed January 21, 2019, http://guidetodatamining.com/ngramAnalyzer/.
123 Kön, Klass, Klan.
gram analysis of the 2006 manifesto, the phrase “Sweden [is] the world’s best country”\textsuperscript{124} appeared two times, but it is not clear from the n-gram analysis if this phrase appears in relation to immigration or not. Regardless of the context, it highlights the pride in Sweden as a country, which forms the foundation for culturally motivated anti-immigration rhetoric.\textsuperscript{125}

Since the occurrence of common phrases in each manifesto is relatively limited, I also examined all the manifestos for each party together. In these analyses, the bigrams were the only analysis which generated a significant result relating to immigration.\textsuperscript{126} The bigram analysis indicates that the Sweden Democrats emphasized ‘Swedishness’ more than the other parties. The phrase the “Swedish cultural heritage”\textsuperscript{127} appeared eight times across the Sweden Democratic manifestos, and the expression “Swedish culture” or “the Swedish culture” appeared twelve times.\textsuperscript{128} The Sweden Democrats also highlighted “foreign citizens,” six times,\textsuperscript{129} and the phrase “the Swedish people” and “the Swedish language” both appeared five times.\textsuperscript{130} The analyses of Moderate and the Social Democratic manifestos did not generate any significant results related to immigration. Instead, the parties focused on the economy, education, jobs, and welfare. These results are expected since immigration only appeared as a prioritized political issue among mainstream parties in the past few years. Historically, education, jobs, and welfare have been the most important questions to Swedish voters, and it is not surprising that the mainstream parties

\textsuperscript{124} Sverige världens bästa land.
\textsuperscript{125} Hasselberg, “The Limits of Hospitality: The Impact of SD on Immigration Discourses among the Swedish Political Elite 2006-2016,” 22.
\textsuperscript{126} I only examined phrases which occur with a > 0.05 percent frequency, which creates a generalizable standard to look at data across manifestos and parties through bigram, trigram, four-gram, and five-gram analyses; “Ngram Analyzer.”
\textsuperscript{127} Svenska kulturarvet.
\textsuperscript{128} Svensk kultur and svenska kulturen.
\textsuperscript{129} Utländska medborgare.
\textsuperscript{130} Svenska folket and svenska språket.
focused on these issues.\textsuperscript{131} The Sweden Democrats, on the contrary, emphasized the political issue which distinguishes the party from mainstream parties, namely immigration.

Because immigration is a recurring topic in all the manifestos, I conduct a content analysis of the texts to better understand the impact of a shifting immigration discourse and its relation to changes in other policy areas. I examine both what rhetoric is used in relation to immigration specifically and assess how immigration is connected to other political issues. In this examination, I rely on the results from the wordcount analysis and include paragraphs which contain the words listed in Appendix A, as well as other words which were used in relation to immigration in the election manifestos, but which were not used frequently enough to generate a significant percentage (see Appendix B). Together, these lists will capture instances in which the parties discussed immigration and highlight the relationship between immigration and other political issues. I also read the entire manifesto to examine if there are new issues introduced in the mainstream parties’ election manifestos which originated with the Sweden Democrats.

The content analysis of the election manifestos highlights some major trends. Though the parties emphasized diverse aspects of immigration and tied migration to different political issues (see Appendix C for a comprehensive list), the topics discussed relating to immigration fall into six major categories: foreign policy, integration, migration policy, norms, social issues, and welfare (see Table 3). There is one exception: the Moderates also discussed immigration in relation to the economy. However, the discussion of immigration economics is not represented in the analysis, as the Moderates are the only party discussing it (see Appendix C). The categorization into political themes is somewhat simplified, as many of the political issues fall

\textsuperscript{131} Svenska Valforskningsprogrammet, “Väljarnas viktigaste valfrågor.”
into more than one group. For example, ‘socially and criminally exposed areas’* could be categorized either in the integration-category or the social issue-category, as exposed areas is one aspect of the failure to integrate immigrants on the housing market but is also considered a major social issue.

**Political Issues Relating to Immigration**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Foreign Policy</th>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Migration Policy</th>
<th>Norms</th>
<th>Social Issues</th>
<th>Welfare</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>European Union (EU)</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Asylum/Refugees</td>
<td>Antisemitism</td>
<td>Crime</td>
<td>Healthcare</td>
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<td>United Nations (UN)</td>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>Citizenship</td>
<td>Culture/Cultural heritage</td>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>Welfare</td>
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<td>Housing</td>
<td>Deportation</td>
<td>Diversity/Multiculturalism</td>
<td>Honor related</td>
<td>Taxes</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Language</td>
<td>Economic self-sufficiency requirement</td>
<td>Equality</td>
<td>Marriage</td>
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<td>Swedish values</td>
<td>Immigration</td>
<td>Extremism</td>
<td>Moral police*</td>
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<td>Labor migration</td>
<td>Gender equality</td>
<td>Openness</td>
<td>Segregation</td>
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<td>Repatriation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Residency Permits</td>
<td>Xenophobia</td>
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<td>Exposed areas</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Political issues relating to immigration by theme. Issues listed occurred in 2 or more parties’ election manifests.

The findings from the content analysis of the manifests are presented below by party; a comparison between the parties is presented in the results section.

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* Utanförskapsområden is a commonly used word for describing suburbs to larger cities. The majority of these neighborhoods were built during the government building boom in the 1950-70s, which was mainly comprised of high-rise buildings where many immigrants now live. These areas often have less social, educational, and economic opportunities than other urban areas and the apartments are generally considered being of lower quality.

* Moralpoliser refers to people who attempt to control what other people, mostly women, in socially and criminally exposed areas do. These people limit others’ actions based on a specific moral code, often less tolerant than what is believed to be acceptable based on Swedish norms.
The Moderates

In 1998, the Moderates highlighted three of the political issues in Table 3: integration, migration, and welfare. In relation to integration, the Moderates wrote that, “our integration policies aim to decrease the reliance on government allowances and reduce the time [during which people receive payments], provide good knowledge in the Swedish language, and require employment and personal contribution.” 132 This sentiment was reiterated in the discussion on welfare, and the Moderates advocated to “decrease government allowance dependency” and the period in which immigrants received allowances. 133 Lastly, on the topic of migration policy, the positive aspects of immigration were highlighted: “we want a Sweden which is open to individuals from other countries and cultures. Diversity is a powerful force in the renewal of our society. Sweden can benefit from entrepreneurship from other countries and from immigrants who build bridges to their home countries.” 134 Hence, the Moderates’ immigration rhetoric in 1998 was mostly positive, highlighting the possibilities with immigration.

In 2002, the opportunities produced by proper integration were emphasized: “immigrants who are received well and offered reasonable chances to work and integrate into society can contribute greatly to development and prosperity.” 135 The Moderates wanted “Sweden to remain a sanctuary for persecuted people who need asylum,” 136 a proposal which was reiterated in the Alliance’s 2010 manifesto. 137 However, the Moderates also stressed the issues facing immigrants in Sweden by stating that it is unacceptable “… that immigrants are shut out from possibilities to provide for themselves, whether it is due to failed integration policies or employers – public or

133 Moderaterna, §19.
134 Moderaterna, §18.
136 Moderaterna, §188.
private – which do not hire people other than native Swedes.”138 Education was considered central to successful integration and the Moderates highlighted the need for a more effective Swedish education for new Swedes;139 civics and language requirements for citizenship was also proposed.140

The 2002 welfare debate was, in line with the 1998 manifesto, largely focused on government allowances; the party argued that immigrants “… deserve a better life than being dependent on government allowances and [living] in alienation.”141 The Moderates also stated that they “… do not accept undemanding government allowance dependency… [giving] immigrants an opportunity to over-exploit the welfare systems.”142 Consequently, in line with Widfeldt’s finding, the party’s rhetoric was more restrictive in 2002, and highlighted both a societal and an immigrant responsibility to move from government dependency to providing for oneself.143 However, immigration was still largely considered an asset to society.144

After the disastrous election in 2002, the Moderates rebranded their party and began the Alliance collaboration with the other mainstream right parties ahead of the 2006 election.145 The joint manifesto highlighted the importance of language and employment for proper integration, and the Alliance wrote that “the best ways to integrate [immigrants] are through employment and [improved] language skills. We want to improve integration… and counteract discrimination.”146

139 Moderaterna, §193.
140 Moderaterna, §195.
141 Moderaterna, §182.
142 Moderaterna, §185.
The Alliance proclaimed that “Swedish integration policies have failed,”¹⁴⁷ and focused on the societal responsibility to ensure proper integration: “a consistent feature of our integration policies is to tear down obstacles and to increase opportunities.”¹⁴⁸ Media reports around the 2006 election noted that integration was a central issue for the People’s Party/Liberals which likely impacted the Alliance’s joint position;¹⁴⁹ however, these positions are largely in line with the Moderates’ 2002 proposals, and the party’s disproportionate share of the voters’ support also impacted its influence on Alliance policy.¹⁵⁰

On the issue of migration, the Alliance highlighted the need to upgrade the meaning of citizenship through the expansion of “citizenship ceremonies.”¹⁵¹ The topic of deportation of criminal foreign citizens also emerged in 2006, when the Alliance suggested that “in cases of serious crimes, the main rule should be that foreign citizens get sentenced to deportation.”¹⁵² However, the parties also highlighted how “Sweden should be an open society, where differences and diversity is affirmed…”¹⁵³ as “the diversity in our country enriches society, through people with different experiences, origins and cultural and religious identity.”¹⁵⁴ Though the Moderates view largely matched the Alliance’s joint position on migration, the party was pushed to a slightly more liberal stance through the collaboration with the other right parties,

¹⁴⁷ Allians för Sverige, 13.
¹⁴⁸ Allians för Sverige, 13.
¹⁵² Allians för Sverige, 15.
¹⁵³ Allians för Sverige, 5.
¹⁵⁴ Allians för Sverige, 5.
who had some more liberal positions on migration. However, the rebranding of the party itself also shifted the Moderates more towards the middle of Swedish politics which also contributed to more liberal positions. After the increased influx in migrants to Europe in 2015, the Moderates have tried to emphasize a long-standing opposition to liberal migration legislation, despite the party’s support for liberalizing immigration proposals in previous years.

The discussion on social issues in relation to immigration in 2006 was dominated by discrimination. The Alliance parties were concerned about ethnic discrimination both in social and professional contexts; they stated that “young immigrant guys should feel just as welcome as others at bars and night clubs,” and that “we must vigorously fight ethnic categorization on the Swedish labor market.” The parties also discussed honor related violence and crime among immigrants: “to fight honor related violence, and support people who are subject to these crimes, is highly prioritized.” Crime in more general terms was also discussed: “though most immigrants do not commit crime, the proportion of criminals among foreign born people is twice as high as among the domestically born population. This is a social problem which needs to be taken more seriously… the main course to fight criminality is always to obviate social causes.” In relation to welfare, the language softened compared to previous manifestos; the parties wrote that “there is no need for more control or lower government allowances for immigrants specifically, but rather a politics which liberates people’s inherent power.”

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159 Allians för Sverige, 14.
160 Allians för Sverige, 13.
161 Allians för Sverige, 14.
162 Allians för Sverige, 13.
After four years of government collaboration, the 2010 Alliance election manifesto highlighted both the integration achievements during the Alliance’s time in power, and the remaining problems. The parties contended that “new influences have enriched Sweden culturally, economically, and knowledge wise through all times. Simultaneously, large deficiencies remain in the systems to integrate immigrants into society... [resulting in] high unemployment rates and social issues in city suburbs. We also see [issues] with poor educational results [among immigrants] and discrimination on the labor market.”

The importance of education for better integration was specifically highlighted, as it would help immigrants get established on the labor market and ease integration, among other things. The parties reinforced the importance of getting a job, learning Swedish, and added the significance of “learning how society works;” this is the first instance in which societal values are included in the integration project. The focus on employment aligns with the Alliances broader emphasis on employment and the economy, which were main issues for the Moderates, especially after the financial crisis in 2008 and 2009. Ahead of the 2010 election, the Alliance collaboration had solidified, and the parties’ joint position meant more for their success than either party’s individual position.

The Alliance’s discussion on welfare focused on equal access: “opportunities to get good health care in time should not be dependent upon if you are a man or a woman, young or old, native or immigrant to Sweden, have a higher or lower education level or income, or where in

164 Alliansen, 20.
165 Alliansen, 31.
the country you live.” The parties also advocated for an open society, and the Alliance described Sweden as a “…country with a tradition of openness towards the world.” The parties attested to “the equal worth of all people…” and argued that “background, ethnicity, or race should not decide which choices you make or what you can do in life.” In regard to citizenship, the Alliance highlighted both its practical and symbolic value and the rights and obligations connected to it. The positive tone surrounding immigration was, thus, solidified in the 2010 election manifesto, highlighting the opportunities with immigration and a diverse society.

The 2014 election is the last to date in which the Alliance presented a joint manifesto. Foreign policy emerged as a new topic relating to immigration, and the Alliance-parties articulated that “… more legal ways into the EU are needed. Sweden is taking a great responsibility for the European refugee reception and we think that more EU countries should take a greater responsibility…” The Alliance also stated that, “… Sweden should continue to be a country which takes responsibility for the most exposed people. Sweden, and other European countries can do that, despite recession and internal challenges;” these statements are similar to the positions the Moderates had articulated in previous years. The Alliance defended “… a welcoming society which is characterized by respect, tolerance, and openness,” also highlighting that “all people should take part in our society, regardless of

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169 Alliansen, 30.
170 Alliansen, 30.
171 Alliansen, 7.
172 Alliansen, 31.
174 Alliansen, 50.
175 Nandorf, “Alliansen har olika syn på asylfrågorna.”
religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, or gender.”177 This position is in line with the migration agreement the Alliance reached with the Green Party in 2011 regarding more liberal refugee and family reunification policies.178

The problems of integrating immigrants were also discussed in 2014, but the Alliance highlighted the improvements it had made to Swedish integration, “with a focus on employment and language for a quicker introduction to society… [however,] it still takes too long for newly arrived immigrants to get a job and we need to get better at cultivating the competence people bring to Sweden.”179 A main focus in the education debate was language acquisition and education as a complement to employment; the Alliance wanted “foreign grades and merits to be validated faster”180 while stressing the need for youth and newly arrived immigrants to learn Swedish.181

In relation to norms, extremism emerged as a new topic in the 2014 manifesto, and the Alliance parties stated that “violent extremism must… be met with preventative measures and defector programs. To counteract recruitment to anti-democratic movements, and radicalization are prioritized issues.”182 This new extremist trend was also noted as an emerging social issue: “we can never accept a development where the family, gangs, or other groups take on the public’s responsibility and appoints justice or places blame.”183 The parties wanted “… to uplift ‘socially and criminally exposed areas’ and ensure that new Swedes have the opportunity to grow through their own power.”184 In 2014, the Alliance highlighted the issues with immigrant

177 Alliansen, 13.
180 Alliansen, 53.
181 Alliansen, 12, 59.
182 Alliansen, 112.
183 Alliansen, 85.
184 Alliansen, 13.
dependency on government allowances and the improvements the parties had made to the system: “the ‘omhändertagandementalitet’* … has been broken and a person who comes to Sweden now encounters the question of what they can contribute with rather than which grant system they should be in.”\textsuperscript{185} But the parties also emphasized immigrants’ positive impact on welfare: “a commonality for all of them is that they contribute to our common welfare…”\textsuperscript{186} Though the parties in the Alliance pointed to some issues with integration in 2014, the general view of migration remained positive, and the parties considered immigration a societal asset.\textsuperscript{187}

In 2018, the Moderates presented their own election manifesto after three elections of Alliance collaboration. The party continued to highlight the need to be open towards the world, but posited openness against Sweden’s national interest: “it is natural to affirm openness towards the world—and, at the same time, safeguard Sweden’s national interests through regulated migration.”\textsuperscript{188} The party also maintained that “…migration policies must be developed with regard to the great refugee reception we have had, and the extensive integration problems we face. Due to this, Sweden must receive fewer asylum seekers and have a permanently strict asylum legislation… Rules and regulations should be developed to align with our neighboring countries.”\textsuperscript{189} The Moderates also called for a common refugee system in the EU, since Sweden had taken a disproportionate responsibility for refugees in the union.\textsuperscript{190} These proposals are more restrictive compared to previous manifestos, likely due to the shift in migration flows to Sweden in 2015 and 2016.

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* Omhändertagandementalitet has a negative connotation in Swedish, suggesting that previous governments have not been serious about jobs, but rather allowed people who can work to depend on the welfare system through government allowances.
\textsuperscript{185} Alliansen, “Vi Bygger Sverige,” 53.
\textsuperscript{186} Alliansen, 53.
\textsuperscript{187} Alliansen, 52.
\textsuperscript{188} Nya Moderaterna, “Nu Tar vi Tag i Sverige: Valmanifest 2018,” 14.
\textsuperscript{189} Nya Moderaterna, 15.
\textsuperscript{190} Nya Moderaterna, 15.
The previous focus on employment for proper integration was downgraded, and Swedish values appeared as a central aspect of the integration project. The Moderates wrote that “integration is about more than employment and economic self-sufficiency. It’s also about values and community. In Sweden freedom, laws, and ‘arbetslinjen’* applies equally to all—and is not to be limited by ‘gender, class, or clan.’** The Moderates also suggested that decreasing the number of immigrants would ease integration, transferring the ownership of integration issues from society to immigrants.*** The party remained optimistic, however, and concluded that “it will not be easy [to tackle the integration issues]… But the problems can be solved.”****

The focus on language acquisition in previous manifestos continued in 2018, but the language of opportunity shifted to one of obligation. To avoid that asylum seekers became passive members of society, the Moderates advocated for “… a stronger focus on the Swedish language, employment, and education from day one.” The party also wanted to “increase education and … introduce civics test for all newly arrived people.” The Moderates continued to emphasize the need for a higher symbolic status for Swedish citizenship, in combination with stricter citizenship requirements; the party proposed tests for knowledge in Swedish and civics to attain citizenship and also wanted to increase the residency requirement for citizenship from five

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* ‘Arbetslinjen’ was coined as a term during the Alliance collaboration and is a political push for employment which aims at moving people from living on government assistance to the labor market, giving them jobs. A part of the arbetslinjen was the pushed for so called make-work-pay reforms to encourage people to move from government assistance into the workforce by decreasing taxes for employed people.

** ‘Kön, klass, klan’ was introduced as a slogan in the Moderates’ 2018 election manifesto, highlighting the three social structures which the party considered limiting to people in society: gender, class, and clan.


**** Nya Moderaterna, 5.
to seven years. The Moderates moreover endorsed revoking citizenship for foreign citizens who committed serious crimes or provided incorrect information on the citizenship application.\footnote{Nya Moderaterna, 17.}

The rhetoric on social problems in relation to immigration was intensified in 2018: “the development towards cruder gang criminality… places new demands on the judicial system.”\footnote{Nya Moderaterna, 11.} The Moderates also highlighted the issue with “a growing underground society” where people whose asylum request has been rejected continue to live and work;”\footnote{Nya Moderaterna, “Nu Tar vi Tag i Sverige,” 14.} later in the manifesto, the party stated: “if we do not stop this development, it will lead to a permanent underground society dominated by exposure, exploitation, and criminality.”\footnote{Nya Moderaterna, 17.} The Moderates supported the deportation of foreign born criminals,\footnote{Nya Moderaterna, 13.} and advocated for temporary rather than permanent residency permits. The party also proposed stricter requirements for receiving a residency permit, including an economic self-sufficiency requirement for family reunification.\footnote{Nya Moderaterna, 15.} The need for more illegal immigrants to repatriate or get deported was moreover highlighted, an issue which previous manifestos did not discuss.\footnote{Nya Moderaterna, 5, 14, 17.} The Moderates also advocated for an “increase [in] the number of implemented deportations and internal immigration controls.”\footnote{Nya Moderaterna, 17.}

Discussions on norms focused on Swedish equality norms in opposition to other norms. The first paragraph of the Moderate manifesto states that “here [in Sweden] we believe in equality between men and women and in tolerance and respect for different life choices,”

\footnote{‘Skuggsamhället’ emerged as a term in the Swedish election debate in 2018 and describes a parallel, criminal society which has emerged in Sweden due to the large undocumented population. This underground society is exploited by criminal gangs who use undocumented immigrants for drug trade etc. Many employers also employ undocumented immigrants in the so called ‘skuggsamhället’ and pay them under the table to avoid taxes and gain access to cheap labor.}
presupposing a ‘there’ where equality is not valued. The three categories ‘gender, class, and clan’ were also regularly referenced, in opposition to equality and rights, which indicates these as markers constraining Swedish society; clan was introduced as a new parameter in the 2018 election while gender and class had been referenced in previous manifestos as well. Inequality was also highlighted as a specific issue among immigrant groups: “the view of equality in some immigrant groups… is different from the norms and values which characterizes Swedish society,” suggesting that immigrants increase inequality in Sweden.

The idea that immigrant groups have distinctive norms was also evident in the Moderates’ discussion on extremism: “there has previously been a compliancy towards some individuals and groups which do not accept values of equality, individual freedom and rights, and religious freedom which to us are obvious. This must end.” Though this excerpt does not specifically mention immigrants, the reference to religious intolerance is a common marker to refer to organizations connected to Islam. Hence, anti-immigrant rhetoric is articulated through an opposition to Islam, as highlighted by Minkenberg and others. These sentiments ties into the Moderates’ discussion on honor related issues: “violence in close relationships is a serious societal problem, as is honor related violence and honor oppression.” In order to fight honor related oppression the party suggested “stricter punishment for honor crimes through the introduction of a specific offense,” and to “criminalize the so called moral police who limit women’s everyday lives.”

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205 Nya Moderaterna, 5.
206 Nya Moderaterna, 5, 15, 36, 37.
207 Nya Moderaterna, 37.
208 Nya Moderaterna, 36.
210 Nya Moderaterna, 37.
211 Nya Moderaterna, 38.
The 2018 discussion on welfare positioned generous immigration in opposition to welfare expenditures, which is a new position for the Moderates; the party wrote: “the expenses [for immigration] are… large for the national and local government. Money which could go to the welfare system’s core is instead used for different forms of government allowances.”

By tying access to welfare to work or permanent legal residency in Sweden, the party suggested limiting immigrants’ access to welfare:

By living in Sweden, one gets… access to the rights of a welfare state. This means that newly arrived people immediately get access to most of these [systems], without working or paying taxes. This [scheme] risks minimizing the motivations to work, and at the same time questions the legitimacy of the Swedish allowance system… People who come to Sweden should therefore gradually get access to different allowances and social compensation...

The examination of the Moderate election manifestos illustrates that the party’s position on migration in 2018 was more restrictive than in previous manifestos. A few examples of these shifts are that, the Alliance wanted EU to implement more generous immigration policies in 2014, while the Moderates preferred to realign Sweden’s immigration politics with more restrictive policies in other EU countries in 2018. Integration policies were consistently highlighted by the Moderates, and all manifestos focused on language and employment to improve integration. However, the Moderates’ rhetoric surrounding integration shifted from centering on society’s role in 2006 and 2010, to focusing on what is expected of immigrants to integrate in 2018. Additionally, the Moderates emphasized the importance of Swedish norms for integration in 2018, a topic which had only been briefly mentioned before. The connection between immigration and welfare was also consistent in the Moderate election manifestos, but

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212 Nya Moderaterna, 14.
213 Nya Moderaterna, 17.
214 Nya Moderaterna, 17.
not until 2018 did the party articulate a conflict between immigration and generous welfare policies.

The Social Democrats

Between the end of the Second World War and 2006, the Social Democrats governed almost uninterrupted—the center-right only managed to win two general elections during that time period.\textsuperscript{215} Accordingly, the Social Democrats have had a profound impact on the development of Swedish politics. The 1998 election followed four years of Social Democratic rule, and the party’s manifesto focused on high unemployment rates, and suggested the introduction of “measures… which increase the employment frequency, which… ensure elders’ and immigrants’ place in working life.”\textsuperscript{216} The party also called for “… a society where all people can develop and influence their own living situation, … where men and women have the same rights, despite ethnic or cultural background…;”\textsuperscript{217} the Social Democrats moreover wanted to “… leave intolerance, racism, and egoism in the 20\textsuperscript{th} century.”\textsuperscript{218} In relation to health care, the Social Democrats wanted to “improve the quality of health care—especially in ‘socially and criminally exposed areas.’”\textsuperscript{219} The 1998 manifesto also proposed “… special resources [to increase employment in]… the worst affected areas: in rural areas and in cities ‘socially and criminally exposed areas;’”\textsuperscript{220} a point which was reiterated in 2006.\textsuperscript{221}

\textsuperscript{217} Socialdemokraterna, §42.
\textsuperscript{218} Socialdemokraterna, §60.
\textsuperscript{219} Socialdemokraterna, §17.
\textsuperscript{220} Socialdemokraterna, §27.
In 2002, the Social Democrats expanded their discussion relating to immigration by including foreign policy as an issue tied to migration. The party “… wanted to develop a common refugee system within the EU, which is dominated by humanitarianism, openness and responsibility;”\textsuperscript{222} this position was reaffirmed in 2014.\textsuperscript{223} The Social Democrats also stressed the importance of a humane, solidary, and judicially fair* refugee reception,\textsuperscript{224} and that “the rule of law for asylum seekers must get better and the turnaround times in the refugee process shorter.”\textsuperscript{225} The discourse was also dominated by migrant rights: “the right to the Swedish language” was highlighted, and the Social Democrats wrote that “language is crucial to entering working life and standing strong as a parent.”\textsuperscript{226} The manifesto also highlighted the Social Democrats’ intent to support immigrant children in reaching the course requirements in school.\textsuperscript{227} The party noted that “segregation must be broken – in the labor market, education, and housing – and discrimination must be pushed back.”\textsuperscript{228} In relation to norms, the Social Democrats stated that “xenophobia and racism must be combated,”\textsuperscript{229} and that “diversity is an asset we should defend.”\textsuperscript{230} Immigration was thus discussed mainly in positive terms, highlighting how to improve life for immigrants.

In 2006, the election was dominated by employment issues, which also impacted the discussion on immigration.\textsuperscript{231} The Social Democrats wrote that “the basis for integration is

\textsuperscript{222} Socialdemokraterna, “Tillsammans för trygghet och utveckling,” §41.
\textsuperscript{223} Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, “Ett bättre Sverige. För alla.,” 45.
* The Swedish term ‘rättssäker’ can also be translated as legally secure.
\textsuperscript{224} Socialdemokraterna, “Tillsammans för trygghet och utveckling,” §41.
\textsuperscript{225} Socialdemokraterna, §41.
\textsuperscript{226} Socialdemokraterna, §25.
\textsuperscript{227} Socialdemokraterna, §25.
\textsuperscript{228} Socialdemokraterna, §25.
\textsuperscript{229} Socialdemokraterna, §25.
\textsuperscript{230} Socialdemokraterna, §25.
employment for adults and a good education for children…“232 and suggested improved Swedish education for immigrants and additional support for immigrant children in school.233 Moreover, the party continued to combat discrimination, and contended that “all discrimination is unacceptable – regardless if it is due to gender, ethnicity, disabilities, sexual orientation, religion, or age.”234 In line with discussions in 2002, the Social Democrats stressed the importance of a humane and fair refugee reception,235 and also advocated that “any person who is in need of protection should get a safe haven in our country;”236 the call for these provisions continued in 2014 with almost identical phrasing.237 In relation to welfare, the Social Democrats encouraged “special investments in elder care in many languages,” but did not directly reference immigrants.238

The 2010 election followed four years of Alliance rule and occurred in a political climate dominated by the financial crisis. Employment in relation to integration continued to be at the center of Swedish politics; the Social Democrats proposed that “more newly arrived people… should get established on the labor market.”239 Though the Social Democrats acknowledged that “fear is increasing and with that xenophobia,”240 the party “… wanted Sweden to be a country of opportunity for all, where each and every one – despite background – gets the chance to realize

233 Socialdemokraterna, 11.
234 Socialdemokraterna, 11.
235 Socialdemokraterna, 12.
236 Socialdemokraterna, 12.
237 Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, “Ett bättre Sverige. För alla.,” 44.
240 Socialdemokraterna, 25.
However, the discussion on immigration in 2010 was limited, and the manifesto was focused on other political issues.

In 2014, after eight years of Alliance rule, the Social Democrats highlighted issues which had occurred during the party’s time in opposition; the party argued that with Social Democratic politics “divisions which pull Sweden apart will decrease, between men and women, urban areas and rural areas, Swedish born and immigrant, rich and poor, and young and old.” Discriminating structures were also highlighted, and the Social Democrats wanted to fight “ethnic discrimination and the discrimination of people with disabilities in working life.” The Social Democrats’ major focus in the immigration debate was on equalizing policies which improve life for all people.

The Social Democrats and the Green Party formed a government after the 2014 election, and the Social Democrats ran for re-election in 2018. The 2018 election was the first after the increased influx of migrants to Europe in 2015, and the importance of immigration as a political issue was amplified. Because of the centrality of the EU for immigration related issues, the Social Democrats called for a common refugee system in the union in 2018; but while the party “… defend[ed] the right to seek asylum,” it stated that, “[Sweden cannot take] a disproportionate amount of responsibility for refugee reception… but the responsibility must be held in common.” The party proposed to “keep the new [stricter] asylum legislation until common regulations in the EU are in place which means that fewer asylum seekers come to Sweden and more to other countries.”

241 Socialdemokraterna, 2.  
243 Sveriges socialdemokratiska arbetareparti, 21.  
244 Bergman, “Yougov.”  
246 Socialdemokraterna, 16.  
247 Socialdemokraterna, 17.
UN international ratio refugee system so that the responsibility is dispersed among more countries,” and also suggested to “give strong support to UNHCR’s [United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees] work to help refugees in the conflict vicinity…” The above proposals are the first in any Social Democratic election manifesto which openly discuss limiting migration to Sweden, though the party has opposed labor immigration in the past. In 2018, the party suggested “limiting labor migration so that jobs with low educational requirements, where there are no labor shortages, are given to unemployed people in Sweden.” The Social Democrats also wanted to “ensure that a denial of an asylum application also results in the person… leaving the country.”

The debate on discrimination also changed in 2018, and the Social Democrats focused on the issue of moral police in immigrant dense areas, rather than the discrimination of immigrants which had been noted in previous years; the party stated that it can “never tolerate that neighborhoods are restrained by self-appointed moral police.” This example highlights a shift from focusing on discrimination in society writ large, to emphasizing suppressive structures among immigrants. The 2018 election manifesto also highlighted the societal expectations on immigrants: “there are no shortcuts – the adult, able-bodied person who wants to be a part of Swedish society must work and speak Swedish.” The Social Democrats also proposed language requirements and mandatory language training for asylum seekers and people living on government allowances who need to learn Swedish to get a job; these proposals imply that the party does not believe enough immigrants work. Housing was also considered a major

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248 Socialdemokraterna, 17.
249 Widfeldt, “Tensions beneath the Surface - The Swedish Mainstream Parties and the Immigration Issue.”
251 Socialdemokraterna, 17.
252 Socialdemokraterna, 16.
253 Socialdemokraterna, 15.
254 Socialdemokraterna, 15.
integration issue: “overcrowding and unsafe neighborhoods limit … people’s opportunity to get a job, learn Swedish and live their own life;”\textsuperscript{255} the party wanted to limit immigrants’ opportunities to choose their own housing to hinder too many immigrants from moving to the same neighborhood.\textsuperscript{256}

Though the Social Democrats only proposed one concrete policy change, in relation to the EU, the 2018 election manifesto points to a shift in focus. In 2002 and 2014, discussions relating to the EU were focused on a more solidary refugee reception, whereas the party started promoting more restrictive measures in the 2018 election manifesto. The emphasis also shifted from generous migration measures and the opportunities immigration brings, to stressing the need for stricter migration policies and the issues which arise with immigration. Despite the calls for stricter immigration legislation, the Social Democrats described Sweden as “… one of the most liberal countries in the world…”,\textsuperscript{257} confirming Hasselberg’s conclusion that it is important for mainstream parties to appear tolerant, even if they propose stricter immigration policies.\textsuperscript{258}

The general trend in the Social Democrats’ manifestos is that the former highlight opportunities while the 2018 manifesto emphasizes issues facing Sweden. Another recurring theme in the manifestos was welfare, but this issue was only connected to immigration in two instances, both highlighting the need to improve welfare services for the immigrant population. This suggests that the Social Democrats’ positive position on welfare results in less discussion of unfair use of the welfare system which has dominated the debate on welfare and immigration among other parties. One clear distinction between 2018 and previous manifestos is that the 2018 manifesto

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[255] Socialdemokraterna, 16.
\item[256] Socialdemokraterna, 16.
\item[257] Socialdemokraterna, 25.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
focused more on solving perceived integration problems rather than creating opportunity for immigrants.

The Sweden Democrats

The Sweden Democrats’ political project is based in the party’s strong opposition to immigration and a critique of mainstream parties’ inability to tackle integration issues. Consequently, immigration has been central to all Sweden Democratic election manifestos. The 1998 manifesto highlighted that “…criminality and unemployment among immigrants”259 is a significant cost for society; the party estimated that “between 80 and 90 % of street crime in cities are committed by immigrant youth.”260 The Sweden Democrats also wrote that “due to the fact that the entry control into the country has been below all criticism, many terrorist organizations have chosen to establish bases in Sweden.”261 Another theme discussed in the 1998 manifesto was multiculturalism as a threat to democracy: “in Sweden we want to preserve democracy. Therefore, we consider a multicultural society an impossibility.”262 Immigration was also highlighted as a threat to the Swedish culture, and the Sweden Democrats suggested that “a repatriation system to safe home countries for non-Western immigrants is needed to ensure our cultural survival.”263

The 2002 election manifesto covered a broad range of issues which were tied to immigration. Specific social issues were not articulated in relation to immigration in 2002, but the Sweden Democrats contended more broadly that “Sweden has received too many immigrants

260 Sverigedemokraterna, 9.
261 Sverigedemokraterna, 8.
262 Sverigedemokraterna, 3.
263 Sverigedemokraterna, 14.
in too short a time. This has resulted in grave economic and social issues."\textsuperscript{264} The general sentiment that Sweden has received too many immigrants also informed the remainder of the party’s political positions. The Sweden Democrats argued for more employer freedom when hiring personnel, and “employers should not be forced to hire someone because of their gender or ethnicity."\textsuperscript{265} The party also wanted to increase repatriation efforts: “foreigners without the need for protection and the opportunity to provide for themselves should return to their home countries.”\textsuperscript{266}

The Sweden Democrats also emphasized the connection between a strong Swedish identity and a sense of societal security: “it is natural to be proud of one’s country, and the heritage from previous generations is worth preserving. If people feel secure in their own identity, society too can be secure and harmonious.”\textsuperscript{267} Relatedly, the Swedish language’s importance was discussed, and the party claimed that “the Swedish language’s position must be defended.”\textsuperscript{268} Another issue discussed in the 2002 election manifesto was citizenship: “a basic requirement should be long-term, permanent residency in Sweden and mastering the Swedish language both verbally and in writing, and that one has absorbed the Swedish culture.”\textsuperscript{269}

In the 2006 election, the Sweden Democrats stressed the importance of international collaboration. Since the party advocated to leave the EU until early 2019, the main focus was on promoting collaboration in the United Nations.\textsuperscript{270} The party suggested deepening interstate collaboration on several issues, including conflict resolution and refugee aid.\textsuperscript{271} As for Swedish

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{265} Sverigedemokraterna, §10.
\textsuperscript{266} Sverigedemokraterna, §6.
\textsuperscript{267} Sverigedemokraterna, §11.
\textsuperscript{268} Sverigedemokraterna, §11.
\textsuperscript{269} Sverigedemokraterna, §6.
\end{flushright}
migration policies, the Sweden Democrats wanted to “stop mass-immigration and return to a responsible migration politics where immigration is limited to a level which is not higher than our neighboring countries.”

The party also stated that “temporary, not permanent, residency permits should be the rule.”

Stricter requirements for immigrants in Sweden were also proposed; the party suggested “dismantling tax financed native language education,” a proposition which was reiterated in both 2010 and 2014. Additionally, the Sweden Democrats advocated for “returning to the assimilation politics in place in the middle of the 1970s, which meant that the immigrant should conform to Swedish society, not the other way around.”

The party claimed that “the irresponsible and undemanding Swedish integration-and immigration politics have … resulted in segregation, uprooting, criminality, and increased conflict.”

The generous migration legislation was specifically a problem since “… only a fraction [of the immigrants] had been refugees. This has resulted in immense economic, social and cultural problems in our country, and has, simultaneously, decreased our capacity to improve support to truly distressed people around the world.”

Gender relations was also considered an issue, and the party stated that “the arrangement of forced marriages, which are common among certain immigrant groups, should be counteracted and punished.”

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272 Sverigedemokraterna, §41.
273 Sverigedemokraterna, §41.
274 Sverigedemokraterna, §20.
276 Sverigedemokraterna, "Valmanifest 2006," §44.
277 Sverigedemokraterna, §39.
278 Sverigedemokraterna, §39.
279 Sverigedemokraterna, §30.
To ensure that more immigrants voluntarily left Sweden, the party proposed to “increase the repatriation grants and encourage foreigners… to return to their home countries.”\textsuperscript{280} To become a citizen, stricter requirements were also advised. In addition to permanent residency, and linguistic and cultural assimilation,\textsuperscript{281} the party added that citizenship applicants also needed to be “law-abiding” to acquire citizenship.\textsuperscript{282} Assimilation was considered necessary, as “multiculturalism and the lack of respect for the Swedish cultural heritage have undermined the Swedish identity and the community in our society.”\textsuperscript{283} Welfare in relation to immigration was also discussed in 2006, and the Sweden Democrats highlighted the unfair treatment of Swedish retirees: “no Swedish retiree should have a monthly income which is lower than the elder support the government bestow upon elder immigrants.”\textsuperscript{284} The party also contended that “no political party can credibly talk about improved public services or lower taxes… without first accounting for how immigration expenses should decrease.”\textsuperscript{285} Thus, decreasing immigration was central to the Sweden Democrats’ funding of the welfare system.

The 2010 election manifesto highlighted a range of immigration related issues. The Sweden Democrats recommended to “… introduce Swedish as the only approved communication language in schools,”\textsuperscript{286} to ensure its dominant role in society. The party also argued that they wanted a Sweden in which “… citizens feel a cultural affinity, and thereby a natural trust to other citizens, the judicial system, and the legislature.”\textsuperscript{287} Additionally, the Sweden Democrats wanted “increased support to women who live under religious or honor

\textsuperscript{280} Sverigedemokraterna, §43.  
\textsuperscript{281} Sverigedemokraterna, §46.  
\textsuperscript{282} Sverigedemokraterna, §46.  
\textsuperscript{283} Sverigedemokraterna, §62.  
\textsuperscript{284} Sverigedemokraterna, §5.  
\textsuperscript{285} Sverigedemokraterna, §39.  
\textsuperscript{286} Sverigedemokraterna, “99 förslag för ett bättre Sverige,” 3.  
\textsuperscript{287} Sverigedemokraterna, 2.
related oppression in Sweden.” In regard to welfare, the party proposed changing the access to healthcare for immigrants. The party wanted to “abolish the free health- and dental-care for illegal immigrants,” and also suggested “the introduction of mandatory health inspections for newly arrived immigrants.” The 2010 election manifesto also proposed to “… increase the support for the millions of the world’s distressed refugees through an increase in support to … UNHCR.” The party further wanted to “… stop the Islamization of Swedish society,” and introduce a “ban against wearing hijab in public places.”

In 2014, the Sweden Democrats continued to push for more interstate collaboration on several issues, and to increase the support to UNHCR. In addition to these, previously articulated claims, the party also wanted to “… increase the number of ratio refugees among the asylum seekers which are granted residency permits…” in Sweden. The Sweden Democrats further proposed that switching from refugee reception to helping migrants in the conflict vicinity would benefit both Swedes and refugees as it would “…free funds for Swedish welfare and, simultaneously, be just as helpful to the world’s poor people and refugees…”

The Sweden Democrats also suggested a “…limitation to asylum- and family reunification-migration” to decrease the number of immigrants in Sweden. Additionally, the party defended the current Swedish labor legislation by proposing to decrease the time foreign workers could be stationed in Sweden. The party also wanted to abolish general labor

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288 Sverigedemokraterna, 2.
289 Sverigedemokraterna, 3.
290 Sverigedemokraterna, 3.
291 Sverigedemokraterna, 2.
293 Sverigedemokraterna, 2.
295 Sverigedemokraterna, 7.
296 Sverigedemokraterna, 21.
297 Sverigedemokraterna, 7.
298 Sverigedemokraterna, 8.
migration,\textsuperscript{299} and create “a Sweden where immigration politics are shaped in a responsible way [making] immigration an asset, not a strain, to society.”\textsuperscript{300} The Sweden Democrats moreover proposed stricter controls to hinder any “… exploitation of the welfare systems,”\textsuperscript{301} and “… making agreements with other countries to be able to deport people” from Sweden.\textsuperscript{302} A proposal for “an increase in punishment, and increased efforts against genital mutilation, forced marriages, and sexual and honor related violence”\textsuperscript{303} was also advised.

Previous assimilationist mandates were rearticulated through the party’s opposition to native language education. The 2014 proposal moved the responsibility for native language education to the localities rather than the national government, and the Sweden Democrats proposed to “… abolish the legal mandate for localities to offer native language education.”\textsuperscript{304} The Sweden Democrats also suggested to “eliminate all national integration policies with the exception of Swedish education, mandatory civics, and the validation of professional experience…” to not provide more support to immigrants than native Swedes.\textsuperscript{305} Moreover, the party lifted the importance of “increased knowledge about the Swedish language and increased knowledge, understanding and respect for the Swedish cultural heritage” for immigrants to successfully integrate into society.\textsuperscript{306}

The party’s cultural pride was also highlighted in 2014: “we are proud of our culture, our traditions, and our beautiful cultural sites.”\textsuperscript{307} The Sweden Democrats also reiterated their preference for “a country with a strong inner cohesion and solidarity, build on a common

\textsuperscript{299} Sverigedemokraterna, 7.  
\textsuperscript{300} Sverigedemokraterna, 7.  
\textsuperscript{301} Sverigedemokraterna, 4.  
\textsuperscript{302} Sverigedemokraterna, 4.  
\textsuperscript{303} Sverigedemokraterna, 17.  
\textsuperscript{304} Sverigedemokraterna, 7.  
\textsuperscript{305} Sverigedemokraterna, 7.  
\textsuperscript{306} Sverigedemokraterna, 12.  
\textsuperscript{307} Sverigedemokraterna, 3.
The party promoted a society “… which is open towards the world but which, simultaneously, safeguard our common community and our own unique culture and identity.” The Sweden Democrats restated their proposal to increase the status of citizenship through the “… introduction of language and civic tests” and to increase the length of the residency requirement.

In 2014, the Sweden Democrats also proposed to abolish free health- and dental-care for immigrants, as the party wanted “a Sweden in which the law-abiding, resident population is not discriminated against within the healthcare system in relation to foreign citizens who are residing illegally in the country;” the party also proposed mandatory health inspections for immigrants to “… quickly treat sick people and effectively protect Swedish society from the spreading of contagious disease…” Additionally, the party wanted to “limit newly-arrived immigrants’… access to the welfare system during their first year in the country.”

In 2018, the Sweden Democrats expanded the repatriation argument by proposing to “… invest in the reconstruction [of former conflict areas] and give generous support for people who voluntary repatriate.” Accordingly, the Sweden Democrats’ foreign policy position remained stable between 1998-2018. The focus on repatriation is central to the party, as “a very high level of asylum- and family-reception has… hollowed out the welfare system;” a common identity “… is particularly important in a society with a solidary funded welfare-model, as the solidarity which builds the system is reliant on a common identity and a strong sense of

308 Sverigedemokraterna, 3, 7.
309 Sverigedemokraterna, 7.
310 Sverigedemokraterna, 7.
311 Sverigedemokraterna, 11.
312 Sverigedemokraterna, 11.
313 Sverigedemokraterna, 7.
314 Sverigedemokraterna, 7.
316 Sverigedemokraterna, 15.
317 Sverigedemokraterna, 4.
community.” Hence, immigration and multiculturalism stand in opposition to a well-functioning welfare state.

The Sweden Democrats described Sweden as “… a divided country, divided between immigrants and Swedes, urban and rural areas, [and] older and younger people.” The party also worried about growing antisemitism in Sweden: “Jews flee Swedish cities while antisemitism is growing stronger.” Though the statement on antisemitism is not directly tied to immigration, it is expressed in the context of a dysfunctional immigration system, which suggests that immigrants are anti-Semitic. The party urged Swedes to “… congregate around common norms and values, collective memories, common myths, holidays, traditions, customs and practices to stick together.” The Sweden Democrats, furthermore, wanted to “fortify the cultural affinity through local cultural guides with the task of collecting, marketing, and integrating the local cultural heritage into welfare operations, and establish Sweden Centers in the country’s most ‘socially and criminally exposed areas.’”

The ‘socially and criminally exposed areas’ were also connected to crime: “the number of unsafe and ‘socially and criminally exposed areas’ in Sweden increases, the neighborhoods become more and more overcrowded and segregation is spreading.” The party stated that “women, children and elders are hesitant to go outside by themselves at night, while brutal civil wars are fought between rivaling gangs.” The party also noted that “honor related violence and oppression has been established as a phenomenon and many young girls are limited daily regarding association, clothes, and activities.” To battle this development, the party suggested

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318 Sverigedemokraterna, 20.
319 Sverigedemokraterna, 3.
320 Sverigedemokraterna, 20.
321 Sverigedemokraterna, 3.
322 Sverigedemokraterna, 8.
323 Sverigedemokraterna, 5.
324 Sverigedemokraterna, 13.
“... a special offense for honor related crimes, instituting a 24-year age rule for marriages between foreign citizens, banning gender segregation in public functions, and improving health care for genital mutilated people, and banning non-medical circumcision of minors.”

To properly integrate immigrants, education is central, and the party wanted to “ensure that immigrant children and youth do not get thrown into the Swedish education system before they are ready through the implementation of special preparation schools.” The Sweden Democrats also wanted to “fight the underground society by giving the police tools and resources to search for people who are residing in the country illegally, and increase the number of holding facilities and make it possible for longer stays...” at those facilities if deportation is not immediately possible.

To limit the number of immigrants arriving in Sweden, the Sweden Democrats proposed to restrict immigration by “…only receiving asylum seekers from our neighboring countries and to stop all asylum reception as long as Sweden’s vicinity is safe.”

The latter proposal highlight how the Sweden Democrats moved even further toward restricting immigration policies when other parties adopted the party’s original position. The Sweden Democrats also promoted an expansion of “…the civics education offered to immigrants, … making it mandatory to obtain residency permits,” and revoking residency permits if the basis for granting them changed.

Lastly in 2018, the Sweden Democrats emphasized the spirit of citizenship: “Swedish citizens understand both his/her obligations and responsibilities, and his/her rights,” and, by extension, “… show their willingness to take on the collective responsibility for Sweden.”

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325 Sverigedemokraterna, 13.
326 Sverigedemokraterna, 3.
327 Sverigedemokraterna, 4.
328 Sverigedemokraterna, 4.
329 Sverigedemokraterna, 3.
330 Sverigedemokraterna, 4.
331 Sverigedemokraterna, 3.
right to access welfare should be linked more clearly to citizenship, thus increasing the meaning of being a citizen.\textsuperscript{332} Additionally, the abolishing of free health and dental care for immigrants was proposed,\textsuperscript{333} and immigrants were seen as a main reason for the problems with housing shortages.\textsuperscript{334} Consequently, the discussion on immigration in the 2018 manifesto focused on several distinct political issues, with the main focus of immigrants respecting and adapting to Swedish society.

The above review highlights that immigration is a dominating and constant issue in the Sweden Democratic election manifestos. The party has focused on several distinct political issues, but continuously emphasized the need to limit migration and the importance of immigrants assimilating to Swedish society. The position on immigration has been largely consistent 1998-2018, though some proposals on immigration has become more restrictive while others are less emphasized. The outline of the manifestos has also changed, and the Sweden Democrats have introduced a wider array of political issues which are not dominated by immigration. This change highlights how the party has shifted from talking almost solely about immigration to addressing other political issues as well. This suggests that the Sweden Democrats are moving away from exclusively focusing on immigration, to emphasizing other political issues as well to gain ground among new voter groups.

\textbf{Results of Findings}

The examination of the Moderates’, the Social Democrats’ and the Sweden Democrats’ 1998-2018 election manifestos suggests both significant differences and similarities between the

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{332} Sverigedemokraterna, 3.  
\textsuperscript{333} Sverigedemokraterna, 2.  
\textsuperscript{334} Sverigedemokraterna, “Vi väljer välfärd,” 23; Sverigedemokraterna, “Valplattform 2018: Sverigedemokraternas valplattform 2018,” 8.}
parties. It also highlights the ways in which Swedish parties are discussing immigration in relation to other political issues, and the broader influence the Sweden Democrats have had on Swedish politics. My broader perspective on immigration rhetoric distinguishes my research from previous examinations. As a result, my findings trace rhetorical changes on immigration as well as other political issues, which increases the significance of the Sweden Democrats’ impact on Swedish politics.

Differences Between the Parties

Historically, there have been clear differences between the Moderates, the Social Democrats, and the Sweden Democrats on policy issues relating to immigration. The Moderates and the Social Democrats have focused on the positive aspects of migration and society’s obligation to properly integrate newly arrived people. More specifically, the Moderates have articulated a positive view of labor migration and argued that migration enriches Swedish society and the welfare system. The Social Democrats have also had a positive view of migration, but have more actively defended Swedish labor laws, which make them more reserved when it comes to labor migration. However, the party has remained a strong advocate for liberal migration policies in relation to refugees and emphasized how cultural diversity enriches society.335

The Sweden Democrats, on the contrary, articulate a long-standing opposition to immigration and present an alternative to the liberal migration policies proposed by mainstream parties. This opposition is rooted in both an ideological and practical opposition to immigration; the Sweden Democrats see immigration as both a threat to Swedish cultural survival and a strain

on the welfare system. The ideological opposition to immigration has historically differentiated the Sweden Democrats from the two mainstream parties who have only emphasized the practical issues with immigration. The distinction between ideology and practice became somewhat blurred in the 2018 Moderate election manifesto, which highlights the opposition between Swedish and immigrant norms and the need for immigrants to adopt Swedish values to integrate in society.

There is also a difference between how the Moderates and the Social Democrats have reacted to the rise of the Sweden Democrats and the shift in migration flows in Europe. In the Social Democratic election manifestos, the emphasis continued to be mainly practical, and focused on education, employment and language to better integrate immigrants into society. In the Moderates’ 2018 election manifesto, the party emphasized the need for immigrants to adopt Swedish norms and values to integrate into society, which marks a shift in focus. This is a step away from previous mainstream parties’ position on immigration which emphasized the importance of physical, not cultural, integration. The shift in the 2018 election manifesto moves the Moderates closer to the Sweden Democrats’ assimilationist position.

Similarities Between the Parties

As the previous section notes, the parties had significantly different positions on issues relating to immigration 1998-2014. However, in 2018 a shift occurred, and the mainstream parties’ positions on immigration related issues moved closer together. Both the Moderates and the Social Democrats shifted their rhetoric to focusing on challenges facing Swedish society due to immigration and the need to decrease immigration to solve those issues. This is in line with the longstanding Sweden Democratic argument that immigration is a threat to Swedish society,
and some of the party’s language has been directly transferred to the mainstream parties. The Social Democrats, for example, proposed to focus economic support to refugees in the conflict vicinity, a proposal which the Sweden Democrats articulated in both 2010 and 2014.\textsuperscript{336} The Moderates have also adopted policy proposals from the Sweden Democrats, and the party shifted from a position highlighting opportunities for the welfare state with increased immigration to emphasizing the conflict between immigration and the welfare state.\textsuperscript{337} The Moderates also adopted the Sweden Democrats’ proposal to deport immigrants who commit crime.\textsuperscript{338}

In 2018, there was also an increased emphasis on requirements and/or obligations for immigrants in Sweden. Previous Moderate and Social Democratic manifestos had highlighted how to best integrate immigrants into society, but in 2018 the parties shifted from placing the burden of integration on society to assigning it to the immigrants. The migrants’ obligation to fulfill economic, linguistic, and educational requirements was highlighted,\textsuperscript{339} policies which the Sweden Democrats have driven for many years. Hence, the focus among mainstream parties has shifted from society’s obligation to integrate newly arrived people, to migrants’ responsibility to adapt to Swedish society.

**Significance**

The significance of this study is twofold. First, my research adds new data to the study of immigration rhetoric among Swedish parties. Recent investigations at Lund University show that


\textsuperscript{337} Sverigedemokraterna, “Vi väljer välfärd,” 7; Nya Moderaterna, “Nu Tar vi Tag i Sverige,” 17.


the parties generally deliver on their election promises, and it is, therefore, important to examine how these promises change over time.\textsuperscript{340} Secondly, this study looks at both immigration rhetoric, and its impact on other political issues. This is significant as it underscores the interrelatedness of political issues by highlighting how changes in one policy area can impact other areas of public policy. The fact that mainstream parties have aligned their proposals with the Sweden Democrats on several immigration related issues, thus decreasing the gap between the parties, is particularly significant in relation to mainstream parties’ continuous opposition to the Sweden Democrats.

Limitations and Future Research

A main limitation of this study is the lack of previous research on the topic, which decreases the resources available for comparison; accordingly, it was not possible to determine if the study could render significant results until after the analysis was completed. Additionally, since the study only includes a single case, more research is needed to draw international conclusions on the impact of anti-immigration rhetoric on political policies. Although the results are significant for Swedish politics, it is not possible to extrapolate any conclusions to other countries. Future research should expand the study to additional countries to infer the international impact of right-wing party rhetoric. Studies comparing the Swedish case with other European countries are especially beneficial, due to the similarity between Sweden and other cases in Europe. An expansion of the study to include all Swedish parties would add additional relevance to the case as it would capture both the dominant immigration narrative, and potential counter narratives.

Conclusion

I set out to examine how the Moderates’, the Social Democrats’, and the Sweden Democrats’ immigration rhetoric has changed between 1998-2018, and if such a shift has impacted mainstream parties’ position on other political issues. Ultimately, such changes would highlight whether the Sweden Democrats have been able to introduce new issues or views to the mainstream parties’ political agenda. The election manifestos show a clear shift in both the Moderates’ and the Social Democrats’ immigration rhetoric. However, this shift did not occur until 2018, which is in line with Hasselberg’s conclusion that the increase in the influx of migrants to Europe in 2015 functioned as a catalyst for amplified immigration opposition, rather than the rise of the Sweden Democrats.341 The lack of change among mainstream parties on immigration issues before 2015 suggests that while the presence of a right-wing party is important to advance anti-immigration rhetoric, societal conditions must also be favorable.342 This confirms the conditions for Sweden Democratic influence on the local level, as outlined by Bolin et al., on a national level: before the party is able to influence politics, the Sweden Democrats must gain political representation and the issue of immigration must attract popular attention; the advancement of one or the other does not seem to significantly impact the mainstream parties’ positions on immigration.

The examination of the similarities and differences between the Moderates, the Social Democrats, and the Sweden Democrats 1998-2018 highlights that Swedish mainstream parties, which have successfully blocked the influence of the Sweden Democrats in the past, are not so different from other mainstream parties in Europe. In line with developments in other European

countries, the Sweden Democratic emergence on the political stage occurred during a period of policy convergence on immigration among mainstream parties; the Sweden Democrats’ increased strength also led to the advancement of Sweden Democratic rhetoric and policy among the mainstream parties. This development runs contrary to Hochschild and Mollenkopf’s finding that right-wing parties only have a limited impact on immigration policies in Europe. Despite the mainstream parties’ shift on immigration and other related issues after 2015, and the Sweden Democrats influence on political policy, these developments have not resulted in a similar acceptance of the Sweden Democrats, and most mainstream parties still maintain a cordon sanitaire against them. This development highlights that anti-immigration frames can be successful despite the right-wing party advancing them being publicly opposed by mainstream parties. Consequently, collaboration is not necessary for right-wing parties to influence politics.

The increased focus on immigration policy in recent years has also amplified the discussion of migrants as a threat to Swedish society. Out of the 15 themes outlined by Dijk, the parties include eleven in their anti-immigration rhetoric. The parties critique the (1) volume of immigration by proposing (2) stricter immigration policies and (3) highlighting safety concerns. They also critique (4) immigrant neighborhood takeover, and (5) crime in relation to immigration, in addition to (6) immigrants as welfare chauvinist with (7) distinct norms, (8) language issues, and (9) different customs. The parties also emphasize (10) gender inequality among immigrants and (11) their overall differentiation from Swedes. The parties have also advanced an Islamophobic narrative in their election manifestos, as outlined by Hafez and others, despite Rydgren and Ruth’s finding that immigration from non-European countries does not increase anti-immigration sentiments among voters. The cultural opposition to immigration derives from the Sweden Democrats’ ideological opposition to immigrants and is prominent in

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Dijk, Communicating Racism, 385–86.
all their election manifestos. The party’s resistance to immigration has spread to the mainstream parties and appear both as rhetorical gimmicks in political debates and as a central aspect of the parties’ medium- to long-term strategy for immigration, as outlined in the election manifestos. However, the ‘people versus elite’-narrative, as defined by Boumans, and Mols and Jetten, was not a strong theme in the Swedish election manifestos; only the 1998 Sweden Democratic manifesto highlighted this narrative.\(^{344}\) This divergence from previous studies highlight that, while there are commonly recurring themes in the anti-immigration debate, there is no mold that fits every country. The recent developments in Swedish politics highlight the importance of continuously reexamining theories of mainstream parties’ relationship to right-wing parties. While my findings align with Widfeldt’s conclusion that the rise of the Sweden Democrats initially decreased the focus on immigration, the party’s continuous salience on the national political stage and recent societal developments have impacted the rhetoric used by mainstream parties to express opposition to immigration.

My examination of Swedish parties’ rhetoric on immigration and relating issues adds additional support to some of the previously established theories on right-wing party influence, while some models do not apply to the Swedish case. This does not mean that those theories are not applicable to right-wing parties more broadly but highlights that the immigration debate varies greatly between countries depending on the societal context. My wider approach to immigration rhetoric, which includes immigration as well as related issues, is what sets my research apart from previous attempts to trace right-wing party influence, both in Sweden and in Europe; the extent to which right-wing parties can impact issues beyond immigration has not been thoroughly examined in the past, though other issues are often directly connected to anti-

immigration agendas. By examining issues relating to migration, as well as immigration rhetoric more specifically, implications on the political system beyond immigration can be determined.

Based on my findings, I conclude that the mainstream parties in Sweden have not only changed their position on immigration to a more restrictive posture. They have also shifted their view of who the government should serve, from focusing more broadly on government services for all people in Sweden, to highlighting the differences between services for citizens versus non-permanent residents. These discussions are based on an anti-immigration frame, but spread to discussions on education, welfare etc. as well. Thus, the Sweden Democrats, through their impact on the immigration debate, have impacted the mainstream parties’ articulations on the relationship between the government and the people. However, while the mainstream parties have adopted a stricter view on immigration, which has impacted political issues directly tied to migration, the Sweden Democrats have not successfully introduced any new issues to the political debate. Instead, the party has expanded its policy positions on other issues to broaden its political appeal, moving the Sweden Democrats closer to the mainstream parties on certain issues. This development suggests that the success of the Sweden Democrats has radicalized the mainstream parties’ position on immigration and other related issues, but deradicalized the Sweden Democrats by increasing the party’s focus on issues beyond immigration. This change highlights how both mainstream parties and right-wing parties reposition themselves to attract voters in a changing political climate, which severely impacts the relationships between the parties.
### Appendices

#### Appendix A

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Words included in Appendix A are words which showed a significant percentage in one or more election manifestos.
Appendix B

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<th>Translation</th>
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<th>Translation</th>
<th>Sweden Democrats</th>
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Words included in appendix B are words which did not show a significant percentage by party in the election manifestos.
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<td>Elder care (welfare)</td>
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Words included in Appendix C only appeared in one party's election manifesto.
Bibliography


