

THE NORDIC MODEL(S) OF IMMIGRATION: HOW AND
WHY SWEDEN AND DENMARK PRESENT TWO
DIFFERENT ANSWERS TO THE QUESTION OF MIGRATION
TO SCANDINAVIA

by

COLE JENSEN

A THESIS

Presented to the Department of Political Science
and the Robert D. Clark Honors College
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts

May 2022

An Abstract of the Thesis of

Cole Jensen for the degree of Bachelor of Arts
in the Department of Political Science to be taken June 2022

Title: The Nordic Model(s) of Immigration: How and Why Sweden and Denmark Present
Two Different Answers to the Question of Migration to Scandinavia

Approved: James Conran, Ph.D.
Primary Thesis Advisor

Sweden and Denmark, from the view of most of the world, are largely similar nations. Both are Scandinavian and maintain many similar aspects of culture, political structure, and general geographic location. Given these similarities, many would assume that the way each country handles immigration would be similar, but this is not the case. Sweden and Denmark present two opposing perspectives on immigration to Europe, Sweden being very generous and open to outsiders and Denmark being very closed off and suspicious of outsiders. This thesis dives into why these two countries diverge so far and how they have evolved over time. After looking at their histories, party structures, political cultures, what I conclude is that the biggest determinant as to why they have such varying policies on immigration is their differing global self-image. Sweden tends to view themselves as exemptional, as humanitarian leaders who want to be beacon to the world. Denmark alternatively also sees themselves as exceptional but feels their unique social-democracy is in need of protection and that their country cannot be open to any foreigner who wishes to come. This analysis provides a unique look at why countries can evolve so differently even in similar contexts and could provide a roadmap of what to look at in the future when trying to explain immigration policies around the world.

Acknowledgments:

First, I would like to thank Professor James Conran for the support he has shown me throughout the thesis process as primary thesis advisor. When I needed a boost most, he supported me and gave me the confidence to keep going. Without his assistance, I would not have a final version of the thesis to turn in. I would also like thank Professor Lars Skalnes for accepting the role as my second reader and for offering his expertise in the area of Scandinavian politics. He provided much needed critiques and edits that helped shape my thesis. Another thanks goes to Professor Michael Moffitt, who served as my CHC Representative and has helped me hone my writing skills over my time as an undergraduate, always giving me specific and helpful feedback. Additionally, I would like to thank Professor Daphne Gallagher, who guided me through the thesis prospectus. At the time I was struggling with motivation, but her gentle encouragement and expertise made me feel like I could do this paper.

Finally, I would like to thank my friends and family. I would not have stuck with the thesis for as long as I have without knowing I had others who were struggling through similar work. They showed me it was possible and reminded me that it is important to take on challenges even when they are daunting. My family has molded me to be the academically driven person I am today. Without their support and help through all my years I would not be the person I am in college. They showed me that hard work is important and to make sure I am pushing myself in all areas of life.

Table of Contents

Introduction.....	1
Methods:.....	3
Historical Review.....	5
Historical Overview of Immigration Policy in Denmark:	5
Current Differences in Migration Policy	15
Attainment of Citizenship:.....	16
Integration Policies:.....	18
Economic Standing of Migrants:.....	22
Paired Comparison Analysis.....	25
Possible Explanatory Variables	28
Rise of Far-right Parties and Political Coalitions:	28
Bibliography	45

Introduction

From the perspective of most in the United States, Denmark and Sweden are viewed as the models for social democracy in the modern world. They both are viewed as extremely similar in most regards, having high standards of living, valuing human and individual rights, and maintaining levels of happiness in their respective populations above almost all the rest of the world. At times, many including myself have assumed that Denmark and Sweden, other than the slight geographical difference, are basically the same country.

This perception is shaken when one dives deeper into the immigration policies held in these two nations. On the issue of immigration, Sweden and Denmark are vastly different in their approaches. Sweden has long maintained an open and liberal immigration system, allowing for almost any migrant who sought out Sweden to be able to live there. The Social Democrats, the party that has long controlled political power and defined Swedish politics over the last 100 years, aimed to make into the county into a *folkhem*, which is Swedish for “people’s home.” The sentiment of *folkhem*, which has become baked into Swedish politics over the last 100 years, basically asserts that all are welcomed and will be supported in Sweden. Even conservative political actors in Sweden, like the center-right Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt has held that Sweden strives to be a “humanitarian superpower” in the world, who helps the globe not by waging wars but by aiding those in need.

Alternatively, Denmark has maintained a far more restrictive immigration system, limiting who can come into the country in a variety of ways. Through the rise of the far-right Danish People’s Party (DPP) and the shift in immigration policy of most moderate

and left-wing parties to be in line with the DPP, Denmark has charted a much different course. They have restricted asylum applications, with their current Prime Minister, a member of the left-wing Social Democrats, claiming they have a goal of 0 new asylum applications during her tenure. This is on top of policies that serve to increase requirements for citizenship that make the process take additional years, policies that allow the government to take valuables from incoming migrants as payment for their stay in Denmark, and bans on the wearing of burqas in public.

Given the two countries similarities on a whole host of policies and aspects of culture, the fact they diverge so deeply on the one issue of immigration raises the question as to why that came to be the case? By exploring both countries' histories and present-day policy, I was able to investigate this question and come up with potentially explanatory variables as to their divergence on the issues surrounding immigration policy. Those variables being that both have handled the rise of far-right parties in extremely different manners and that both have differing global self-conceptions, meaning they view their role in the world differently. In comparing the two potential explanatory variables, it became clear that while both surely influenced how the countries have dealt with immigration, the difference in global self-conception of the two countries had the largest effect on immigration policy. The Swedish government sees Sweden as a home for all those in the world and look to welcome any who come to their borders in need. The Danish government is more likely to worry about domestic political systems and social welfare programs, fighting to maintain a far more ridged national identity that revolves around Danish cultural ideals. I will further explain and detail these factors in the pages below by providing a methodology, historical review of immigration policy,

analysis of explanatory variables, and a conclusion as to what has had the largest effect on policy and why.

This analysis can help provide an understanding of why immigration policy unfolds the way it does, in this case differently, even in extremely similar countries. By looking at similar explanatory variables in other contexts, I hope this analysis can provide some reasoning as to why countries may pursue the different immigrations policies that they do all over the world.

Methods:

To investigate the research question, I will be using a paired comparison method of research and more specifically a most similar case design. This design entails selecting two countries who have many overlapping variables and then an explanation as to what can explain their difference in one specific area. Due to the fact that Denmark and Sweden have very similar national characteristics, many potential explanations for their divergence on immigration policy can be ruled out, as they are similar in both Denmark and Sweden. These would be things like the political system, culture, language, and geographic location.

As stated in the project description above, the reason I selected Denmark and Sweden as case study countries was due to their extremely similar characteristics. Through my preliminary research, I have gathered that they are similar in economic status, cultural background, geographic location, political system, and a variety of other variables. One area that they are different in is in their acceptance and embrace of immigration. My goal in this project will be to work backward from that point of difference and investigate what the largest explanatory variable will be.

When determining potential explanatory variables, I will look at party alignment and the rise of far-right parties in each country as well as differences in global self-image that each country maintains. Above, I have noted that cultural similarities are one of the constant variables that I will hold between both Sweden and Denmark, yet global self-image (how a country views its role in the world in relation to other nations) is in many ways a subset of culture in each country, or at least of the political cultures within each country. I believe that there is a distinction between the subset of culture I will look at (global self-image) and national culture more generally. Most of the culture in the general sense (food, religion, language, music) does remain constant between the two nations and is still considered a constant in this analysis. What will be considered as an explanatory variable is the narrow political cultural ideas surrounding each country's role in the world and how they view themselves in relation to the rest of the world.

Historical Review

Historical Overview of Immigration Policy in Denmark:

Denmark has maintained a mixed bag of immigration policy over the last several decades. Moving from a net emigratory nation in the early 20th century, Denmark became a destination for migrants in the mid 20th century. From then on, they have transitioned back and forth from relaxing to tightening immigration policy as political parties and political opinion have shifted within the country. As Junge notes in their 2009 article on immigration and labor, “before 1970 what was known as guest workers came to Denmark mainly from Turkey, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, and Morocco. The guest worker program ended in 1973 and – as in Sweden – this policy [of ending the guest worker program] is still effectively in place.” The change in policy was due to growing unemployment in Denmark, as migrants were largely wanted for labor in Denmark and as unemployment grew, demand for more immigration subsided (Olesen 2019). Following the suspension of the guest worker program, Denmark adopted a program of family unification as its most frequent means of letting migrants enter the country. This has also been described as “chain migration”, where family reunification led to new migrants who would then apply for family reunification and bring in more members of their family from their home country (Junge 2009, 22).

In 1983, the Danish parliament passed the Aliens Act, which loosened controls on immigration in various ways. It was known as Europe’s most liberal immigration policy at the time and resulted in a substantial increase in migration (Olesen 2019). It was considered the most liberal or open immigration policy at the time in Europe because it went further than the recommendations given in the United Nations Convention on

Refugees, by allowing “The right to asylum [to be] granted as long as a person’s case on asylum or family reunification with a refugee or asylum seeker was being processed” (Olesen 2019). This granted temporary asylum to almost anyone who applied, with the potential to extend asylum if approved. More than just effecting refugees, the new 1983 Aliens Act, “set down in law that foreign citizens with a permanent residence permit or refugee status in Denmark had the right to obtain family reunification, and this did not only apply to children and spouses, but also to parents over the age of 60 as well as more distant relatives in certain cases” (Olesen 2019). This expansion of the family reunification allowance made it so more migrants were able to come into the country if they had anyone in the country from their family already residing there.

From 1983 to 1986, foreign migration increased from over 11,000 migrants to 22,000 migrants annually in Denmark. As the numbers of asylum seekers increased due to the new policy, political pushback eventually also arose and caused Denmark to amend its more liberal immigration policy. This pushback came from both the center-right parties in government, but also from the Social Democratic and Progress parties, who were worried about integration of many new immigrants coming from the middle east. Initially the need to reform and push for limits to asylum claims was pushed back against by the center-left coalition in parliament during the mid to late 1980s, which was made up of the Social Democratic Party, the Social-Liberal Party, and the Socialist People’s Party. These parties felt that immigration was a matter of principle and should not be thought of as an economic or political calculation (Olesen 2019). As asylum seekers increased, “pressure from asylum seekers induced a tightening in asylum laws in 1986 and 1992. As in Sweden, the new legislation made it harder to obtain Danish citizenship

and easier to deport immigrants with a criminal record.” (Junge 2009, 22). This was supported broadly by most parties at the time, as opinion had shifted on the issue of immigration, especially within the left-wing parties. This was due to multiple reasons, “firstly, the number of refugees arriving continued to increase and, secondly, Social Democrat mayors had expressed concern over problems with integration, especially in areas of social housing in the municipalities surrounding Copenhagen” (Olesen 2019). This shift became a defining feature of migration policy in Denmark when left-wing parties began to side with right-wing parties on the issue of immigration and lead to more policies that limited the entrance of migrants. This marked the beginning of the harsh policies on migration that are still held among the Social Democrats to this day and outline the beginning of the divergence between Sweden and Denmark view of immigration.

Moving into the early 2000s, the Danish People’s Party (DPP), a right-wing populist party began to play a bigger role in party politics. Working with more moderate center-right parties, Venstre and the Conservatives Peoples Party, they were able to maintain power from 2001-2011 in parliament. While conservative coalitions have had power at times in the past, it had been since 1924 that the Social Democrats did not win the most seats in parliament, with Venstre winning the most seats in 2001. Right-wing populist parties such as the DPP were able to attract votes through ‘welfare chauvinism’. Welfare chauvinism is defined as “proclaiming support for generous access to welfare benefits while simultaneously arguing that access to these benefits should be limited to the members of the native ethnic community, thereby excluding immigrants, refugees and other ‘foreign’ individuals” (Careja et al. 2016, 437). This mix of traditionally left-wing

policy on welfare with a typically right-wing position on immigration poses a serious threat to left-wing parliamentary control in many Nordic and European states and allowed for the right-wing coalition to form in Denmark in the early 2000s. During the rise of this coalition, trends emerged indicating that immigration was playing a larger and larger role in the voting choices of Danes. A survey that asked, “which issues people think are the most important for politicians to address” saw “the number of people listing refugees and immigrants rose steadily during the 1990s, and at the 2001 election, 51% of the respondents mentioned it” (Green-Pederson et al. 2008, 617).

From 2001-2011, many policies were introduced that made Denmark one of the most restrictive countries in all of Europe when it came to immigration (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016, 254). Those policies aimed to change the composition of the immigrant population to Denmark to one more aligned with Denmark’s preexisting demographic composition, namely immigrants that were ‘western’ in origin (Jørgensen 2014, 2). These policies included making it “more difficult to obtain family reunification and asylum (abolished the *de facto* protection category) but easier to enter as a labour migrant or student” (Jørgensen 2014, 2). The effect of that policy was to move away from migrants who would need assistance from the Danish government to those who are more likely to contribute economically immediately. This allowed for the right-wing coalition to not as openly push for restrictionist policy (as they were making it easier to enter for some) while reshaping the immigrant population that was coming in to fit more of their preference. That would include having more western migrants and fewer refugees or asylum seekers from the Middle East.

Moving into the last decade, the election of 2011 again brought a shift in party control in the Danish parliament. While Venstre remained the largest vote getter, the conservative coalition that Venstre led lost several seats, specifically the Conservative Party, giving control of parliament back to a center-left coalition led by the Social Democrats, Social Liberals, and the Socialist People's Party. While control switched back again to a conservative coalition in 2015, throughout the previous decade there has remained a consistent political push for restricting immigration and refugees from entering the country. The policies that have been implemented to this end include a law that allows the Danish government to take up to \$1,500 USD worth of assets from asylum seekers to pay for their stay in the country (specifically targeted at taking personal jewelry), a law passed that allows Denmark to send refugees back into Syria during the ongoing civil war (though they are currently unable to due to lack of diplomatic relations with Syria), and a law that forces rejected asylum seekers to live on an island off the coast of Denmark, not allowing them to remain in Denmark until deportation. These recent changes to immigration law have made immigrating and staying in Denmark increasingly uncomfortable for migrants. All of this goes to show that the trajectory of Danish immigration law has not been linear. From its extremely progressive origins, Denmark has now become known as one of the most restrictive countries in all of Europe regardless of which party may be in direct control of power.

Historical Overview of Immigration Policy in Sweden:

Like Denmark, up until the end of the Second World War Sweden had higher levels of emigration than immigration. Primarily, Swedes were leaving to countries like the United States or Australia, looking to escape poverty or to practice their religion of

choice that was not allowed in Sweden at the time. Following the end of WWII, industry boomed, and Sweden was in need of more labor. Sweden initially looked to immigration to fill the labor gap, accepting migrants from Central, Southern, and Northern Europe (Kupsky 2017, 51). These migrants were needed to quickly fill labor shortages that remained following the war, but many stayed in Sweden for generations to come. During this time as well, the Nordic countries of Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Norway, and Iceland signed the Helsinki Treaty, which bound the five countries together on a number of issues. One of the issues included creating a unified labor market and allowing easy movement between countries and easier attainment of citizenship (Treaty of Cooperation 1962). Specifically, the agreement provided “to facilitate the acquisition by citizens of one Nordic country of citizenship in another Nordic country” (Treaty of Cooperation 1962). This provision allowed for a significant number of Finnish citizens to immigrate in the 1950s and 1960s, with over 500,000 Fins doing so, but most eventually returned to Finland (Kupsky 2017, 51). Importantly, at the end of the 1960s, the Swedish parliament passed a law that extended welfare benefits to all guest workers in the country (Skodo 2019). This laid the groundwork for how Sweden would look at immigrants for the next many decades, viewing immigrants as equal participants in society as Swedes and extending benefits in an effort to bring new migrants into the fold of society.

Moving into the 1970s, again like Denmark, Sweden experienced a saturation in the labor market and started to slow the stream of migrants coming into the country for labor purposes. In 1972, the Swedish government put an end to all labor-based immigration, outside of those coming from other Nordic states (Kupsky 2017, 51). This meant that now the majority of those accepted into Sweden were asylum seekers or those

wishing to be reunified with their family in Sweden. This led to an immediate drop in total migration, which took until the 1980s to again reach similar numbers of migrants as seen prior to 1972. Because the number of asylum seekers were so low initially in the 1970s and early 1980s, the issue was not at the forefront of Swedish politics and most asylum seekers were accepted (Kupsky 2017, 51). In 1975, Sweden even “became one of the first countries to officially adopt a policy of multiculturalism, embracing ethnic and religious diversity and state support to safeguard minorities’ identity and culture” (Skodo 2019). This meant that Sweden acknowledged that countries of origin, language, and cultures different from Swedish culture should be honored and accepted as equal in Sweden. This was radically different than most of the world and especially different from how Denmark looked to handle migrants, which demanded far higher levels of integration into domestic language and culture. Sweden even promoted ‘mother-tongue’ instruction in their primary schools which meant that students could learn the language of their country of origin, not only Swedish (Skodo 2019). While both Denmark and Sweden had moments during the 20th century that changed immigration law to be more restrictive and more liberal at varying times, the multicultural identity of Sweden that was formed in the 1970s became a bedrock value that has remained solid through the present day. This is another clear historical indicator of how immigration policies over the next several decades would begin to diverge.

As the number of asylum seekers grew from about 3,800 in 1981 to about 24,800 in 1989 in terms of annual inflows, asylum policy became more controversial (Westin C., Dingu-Kyrklund E. 1997). During this time, most refugees coming to Sweden were either from the Middle East, such as the Kurds who were fleeing prosecution in Turkey, Iran,

and Iraq or leaving Chile following the coup of President Salvador Allende (Westin 2017). Moving into the 1990s, following the rapid increase in refugees' applications during the 1980s, the Swedish government, under control of the Social Democrats, changed policy to no longer accept asylum seekers by their own more open policy and restricted all asylum seekers to follow a stricter policy of asylum application as outlined in the 1951 Geneva Convention (Westin 2017).

This meant that reasons allowed when applying for asylum were limited to those outlined in the convention, which were tighter than previously accepted by the Swedish government. The changes primarily limited asylum to politically persecuted people and had less room for acceptance of asylum seekers who were coming primarily for economic reasons. This was in an effort to discourage hundreds of thousands of ethnic Turks in Bulgaria from coming into Sweden at the time, but was quickly abandoned as a policy in 1991, as centrist parties feared that right-wing parties were gaining too much support and did not want to associate with anti-immigrant policy to counter them. The change in direction was specifically spurred by results in the 1991 parliamentary election, where a right-wing populist party known as New Democracy won seats for the first and only time in history. New Democracy's emergence worried moderate parties on the right and left and started a shift away from tightening immigration controls and towards a more liberal policy that it held before the 1980s. This was also during a time that the Social Democratic Party in Sweden, which had remained in power for most of the 20th century, had begun to lose its grip on parliament. In 1991, it had produced its worst electoral results since the 1920s and looked to differentiate itself from right-wing parties by liberalizing immigration policy.

Throughout the 1990s and into the 2000s, Sweden had mixed policy regarding immigration. In 1997 a government led by the Social Democrats passed laws that restricted the age limit for family reunification of children from under 20 to under 18, and limited the ability of elderly parents, widows, or widowers to reunite with their children. This put a variety of caps on who would be able to apply for family reunification and limited numbers of people who came in through that mechanism (History of Migration 2020). The relatively liberal stance on immigration that made Sweden stand out compared to most other countries in the world was maintained into the 2010s, as in 2013 all people residing in Sweden, even without permission, were determined to be entitled to the same subsidized health and medical care as asylum holders (History of Migration 2020). Later that year, Sweden “granted permanent residence permits to all Syrian and other stateless persons who ha[d] arrived from war-torn Syria” (History of Migration 2020) once again lending a hand to refugees in a way that many other countries were reluctant to do.

Finally in 2015, at the peak of the refugee crisis from Syria and the surrounding region, Sweden introduced temporary border controls (History of Migration 2020). This was a major shift in migration policy and in some way a reversal of policy just two years earlier that welcomed Syrian refugees. In 2016, temporary identity checks were introduced at the border to limit refugees from entering. All asylum seekers who did not voluntarily remove themselves from the country after a failed application for asylum had their benefits revoked including their allowance and accommodations that they were granted during the application process (History of Migration 2020). This turn towards restrictionist policy, while not nearly as severe as seen in other countries, was a major

departure from the norm for decades in Sweden. The change in policy shows that even very pro-immigration countries can turn towards restrictionist policy under specific circumstances.

Current Differences in Migration Policy

In the last five years, which will be the timespan I will be focusing on for my specific comparison of immigration policy, both countries have evolved their immigrations policies to deal with changing trends in global and domestic politics. While historically Denmark has maintained a more restrictive stance towards migration than Sweden, the gap that separated the policies and outcomes of integration of migrants has closed over the last five years. According to the most recent OECD data in the tables below, there are several statistics that outline this trend, while others indicate clear differences that are still maintained between the countries. While the primary thrust of this analysis is to look at policies and not outcomes of immigrants, some of the statistics below document outcomes. These statistics aim to contextualize some of the likely effects the policies each country pursues has had on immigrant and is not an attempt to explain specific outcomes of immigrants, as there are too many variables to analyze when trying to account for outcomes beyond just national policies, such as socioeconomic standing or education level of migrants before migration.



 Sweden <small>Destination with significant humanitarian migration</small>	Current outcomes for foreign-born population, 2017 <small>colour: compared with OECD avg. values: %</small>	Foreign-born vs. native-born populations, 2017 <small>colour: compared with OECD avg. values: % points</small>	 Denmark <small>Destination with significant humanitarian migration</small>	Current outcomes for foreign-born population, 2017 <small>colour: compared with OECD avg. values: %</small>	Foreign-born vs. native-born populations, 2017 <small>colour: compared with OECD avg. values: % points</small>
Employment	66.5	-13.5	Employment	64.9	-10.9
Unemployment	15.2	10.7	Unemployment	9.9	4.8
Long-term unemployment	27.6	13.0	Long-term unemployment	33.8	12.2
Labour market participation	78.5	-5.3	Labour market participation	72.0	-7.8
Working in low-skilled jobs	10.5	7.6	Working in low-skilled jobs	23.4	15.6
Overqualified workers	30.1	19.1	Overqualified workers	28.6	17.4
Self-employed	8.2	0.6	Self-employed	7.8	1.0
Advanced host country language proficiency	65.0	-	Relative poverty	22.1	9.5
Relative poverty	31.3	16.7	Self-reported health status	60.4	-8.2
Self-reported health status	67.1	-6.3	Unmet medical needs	12.6	4.4
Unmet medical needs	13.1	2.8	Living in overcrowded housing	11.2	5.0
Living in overcrowded housing	23.2	13.6	Living in substandard housing conditions	22.0	3.3
Living in substandard housing conditions	18.5	5.5	Voter participation	90.9	-3.9
Voter participation	85.0	-9.1	Acquisition of nationality	45.9	-
Acquisition of nationality	86.8	-	Perceived discrimination	14.7	-
Perceived discrimination	11.9	-	Sense of belonging	93.2	-2.9
Sense of belonging	91.6	-4.1			

Figure 1 (<https://data.oecd.org/sweden.htm>)

Figure 2 (<https://data.oecd.org/denmark.htm>)

The statistics will compare the status of immigrants in each country, with the policy difference between the two countries noted as well. The statistics that stand out as most relevant for comparison also must be couched in an understanding of the context in which they were taken. As noted above, Sweden maintains far larger proportions of its population that are immigrants (14% - OECD) than that of Denmark (8% - OECD). Additionally, the biggest difference is in total number of immigrants, at 1.3 million foreign born citizens in Sweden, compared to 400,000 in Denmark. Both countries have experienced significant upticks in migration over the past 5 years with Sweden accepting more refugees per capita than any other European nation (Christophersen 2020). Understanding these factors and given the OECD statistics are from 2017, much of the statistics reflect conditions of migrants during and after the uptick in migration in 2015.

Attainment of Citizenship:

The statistic that first indicates the challenges that migrants face when trying to integrate into these countries is the number of migrants who were able to attain citizenship. There is a massive disparity in this statistical category, with Sweden having 86.8% of its migrants eventually achieving citizenship within the country and Denmark only having 45.9% of migrants achieve citizenship according to the OECD. While these statistics are from 2017, the process for becoming a citizen has only become more difficult in Denmark since then. As noted by the European Commission, “Danish requirements for naturalization are already some of the toughest in the world, and the government has just pushed forward a political deal adding further restrictions” (Denmark Tightens Rules 2021). In 2021, Denmark put forth a variety of rules tightening the requirements for citizenship to an extreme level by excluding all who have received a

criminal sentence from becoming a citizen, requiring any applicant to maintain a fulltime job for three and a half of the last four years and still be employed at the time of application, and added an additional waiting period of two years for applicants to apply after achieving a permanent residence permit, which itself normally requires a stay of eight years (Denmark Tightens Rules 2021). This is already in addition to harsh rules that existed prior to the 2021 enhancement, which require that migrants must not have received social benefits for more than four months over the five years leading up to applying for citizenship, passing the Danish language skills exam, and participating in a ceremony that requires one to physically shake the hand of a town official. While this last requirement may seem innocuous, it is a source of significant controversy. Some migrants who are Muslim do not believe in physical contact with those of the opposite sex if that person is not their husband or wife. The law which requires the handshake got approved by parliament in 2018, aimed explicitly at Muslims who do not believe in the practice of shaking hands of those of the opposite sex (Sorensen 2018). Practices such as these outline the nature of how migration is viewed in Denmark by the Danish government. They are more interested in subjecting migrants to integration tests such as the handshake rather than assessing other more empirical standards regarding immigrants

Sweden in comparison has much less restrictive standards for migrants to become citizens, even given their recent slight turn away from liberal immigration policy. Sweden maintains a significantly lower wait time for migrants to attain citizenship, at only 5 years to attain residency, which then allows for one to apply for citizenship (Brochmann and Midtbøen 2021). Currently, Sweden maintains no language requirement to become a citizen, unlike Denmark which requires both an oral and written examination that is held

nationally. The Swedish parliament has recently put forth a proposal to implement a language test for citizenship and for permanent residency applications which would put them in line with most of the rest of Europe and with Denmark, requiring applicants to pass a national exam to be considered for citizenship (Nikel 2021). This proposal is not thought to be close to being implemented and would not come into practice until at least 2025 but does indicate a shift in immigration policy on the horizon.

The nature of Swedish citizenship policy, which still has held true through the tightening of immigration standards in recent can be defined as being,

“characterized by a striking, liberal elite consensus that citizenship in the country should be hardly conditional. A central part of this ‘philosophy’ is that Swedish national identity, culture or traditions are illegitimate bases of citizenship, and that civic integration requirements are irrelevant measures for citizenship acquisition.” (Brochmann and Midtbøen 2021).

The idea that citizenship should not be predicated on a kind of national identity still is largely the guiding idea behind Swedish citizenship policy. This sets them apart from most countries in the world, including Denmark. While there may be a shift underway, moving towards a policy that centers some ideas of national identity and higher standards for those attempting to gain citizenship, it can still be held that the ability for one to gain Swedish citizenship is significantly easier than that of Denmark, as suggested by the far higher proportion of migrants to Sweden who were able to attain it.

Integration Policies:

Beyond policies pertaining to attaining citizenship, they are other provisions in both Denmark and Sweden that are meant to integrate their migrant populations into the respective countries and cultures. As noted above, as with citizenship, both Denmark and Sweden maintain different self-images when it comes to their national identities. Broadly,

Sweden has viewed itself as a pluralist, multicultural society where anyone who chooses to come to the country can be seen and embraced as part of Swedish culture. This identity has been longstanding in Sweden, dating back to at least the 1970s. In other words,

“In Swedish politics, the nation’s identity is presented as moldable, being shaped in processes of collective negotiation. At the individual level, national identity is seen as something one can choose. In other words, immigrants can become part of the dynamic Swedish nation by actively choosing to belong” (Simonsen 2019).

Additionally, as noted in the previous section, there has been a consistent and stable consensus within the country for many decades. While there may be a slight shift away from this notion in the last 5 years, due to the increased migration from Syria in 2016, this still is an accurate descriptor of how the nation views itself in relation to immigration. Sweden does not see integration to specifically Swedish cultural values as central to one being considered ‘Swedish’ and has allowed for immigrants to maintain more of their culture while living in Sweden than Denmark has.

Denmark on the other hand is much more rigid in its identity as a nation, demanding immigrants adhere to cultural principles to a far greater degree than Sweden. While both countries are relatively homogenous nations, with large majority population of similar cultural identity, they have both experienced increased immigration in the past decades. Where Sweden began to adjust its understanding of nationhood to accommodate the increases in immigration, Denmark looked to try and maintain its national image while immigration increased. As an expert put it, Denmark had two real choices when dealing with increases in immigration,

“An acceptance of the increasingly multicultural society and an adjustment to the new conditions. This means acceptance of somebody not eating pork, acceptance of children not participating in school swimming activities for both genders, acceptance of women wearing headscarves, acceptance of holidays other than the traditional Christian

ones, etc.” or “A protection of the continuation of the normal Danish traditions: ‘It is the host, not the guests, who decides the menu.’” (Kærgård 2010, 477)

To this point, it appears Denmark has accepted the latter option, compared to Sweden which has embraced the former. Some of Danish integration policies that outline this difference include bans on wearing burqas or niqabs in public, provisions that mandate daycare for children as a means of forcing integration and limiting the proportion of non-western populations in specific neighborhoods to prevent the emergence of ‘parallel societies.’

In Denmark, the burqa ban provision passed in May of 2018 and aimed to ban any garment that hides the face in public. This was a move that didn’t specifically target Muslim immigrants in the text of the law but had a disproportionate effect on Muslim immigrants who are the most likely to wear a face covering as a part of their religious practice. As described by the Danish Justice Minister at the time Søren Pape Poulsen,

““In terms of value, I see a discussion of what kind of society we should have with the roots and culture we have, that we don't cover our face and eyes, we must be able to see each other and we must also be able to see each other's facial expressions, it's a value in Denmark" (Denmark Passes Ban 2018).

The quote above outlines the true purpose of the burqa ban, to hold on to and try to shape migrants into Danish culture as opposed to adapting and accepting the cultural practices of the immigrants who are coming to Denmark. The law again outlines the differences between Swedish and Danish national conceptions. Bans of similar nature have been brought up for debate in Sweden but have yet to pass on a national level. Additionally in some municipalities that have attempted to pass such a ban, Swedish courts have struck down the laws. According to a report by the US State Department, multiple bans of this nature have been struck down by Sweden,

“In September, the Malmo Administrative Court overturned the Bromolla Municipality’s ban on prayer during working hours. In November, the Malmo Administrative Court overturned the ban on hijabs, burqas, niqabs, and other face- and hair-covering garments for students and employees in preschools and elementary schools introduced by Skurup and Staffanstorp Municipalities” (2020 Report on International Religious Freedom).

The Danish ban, though put forth by a center-right government, experienced broad support in parliament from both sides of the political spectrum. On the left, many supported the ban as a means of fighting what they perceived as oppression of women. On the right, Danish politicians framed the ban as a form of cultural preservation. This is in juxtaposition to Sweden who, while maintaining a portion of the population who would support a burqa ban, refuses to implement one due to its self-image as a multicultural society. The consensus on what integration means in each country is notably different.

A second major difference in integration policy is the current provisions in Danish law that allow for the breakup of parallel societies. Parallel societies are defined, “based on residents’ income, employment status, education levels, number of criminal convictions and [proportion of people from a] ‘non-Western background’” (Barry and Sorenson 2018). If a community falls into multiple of these categories, meaning that they have high levels of unemployment or criminal convictions in the community, or are low income and have a relatively low level of education, while having more than 50% of their population come from a ‘non-western background’ they are subject to new rules and regulations that limit their ability to interact in society. This includes harsher penalties for misdemeanor crimes in those communities and even the potential for migrants to be forcibly evicted and moved from public housing in communities with large immigrant populations. There are somewhere between 20-30 communities that fall into that category

today, all which have high proportions of immigrants living in them. Currently the restrictive provisions include things like,

“Starting at the age of 1, “ghetto children” must be separated from their families for at least 25 hours a week, not including nap time, for mandatory instruction in “Danish values,” including the traditions of Christmas and Easter, and Danish language. Noncompliance could result in a stoppage of welfare payments. Other Danish citizens are free to choose whether to enroll children in preschool up to the age of six.

Denmark’s government is introducing a new set of laws to regulate life in 25 low-income and heavily Muslim enclaves, saying that if families there do not willingly merge into the country’s mainstream, they should be compelled.” (Barry and Sorenson 2018)

Once again, this outlines the vast differences in integration policy between Denmark and Sweden. Where in Sweden immigrants are invited to maintain their mother tongue and cultural practices, Denmark opts for a more forceful push for assimilation to Danish values. Immigrants are actively discouraged, through threat of penalty or forfeiture of their homes, from living in communities together. This is an area, like citizenship requirements, where Sweden and Denmark hold different values and goals for their respective migrant populations. The divergence is stark in these two areas.

Economic Standing of Migrants:

The economic standing of immigrants in Denmark and Sweden are not as different as seen regarding citizenship or integration policy. This is partially because many of the economic statistics on immigrants are reflective of upstream policies that effect the economic prospects of immigrants. Those would include the ability for migrants to get into a country, gain citizenship, or who is allowed to work in a country. These upstream policies effect the kind of migrant that these statistics are reporting on. In the case of Denmark and Sweden, this means that many of the immigrants that can make it to Denmark and live there have had to undergo a more difficult process to stay,

compared to Sweden where there are far lower barriers to entering the country, attaining citizenship, and being able to work. The more selective nature of Danish immigration policy has the effect of allowing in a more educated and wealthier migrant population than that of Sweden.

According to the OECD, both countries have similar employment levels of immigrants, both hovering around 65%. Denmark maintains lower levels of relative poverty, at 22.1% compared to 31.3% of foreign-born populations in Sweden. Denmark has a higher proportion of immigrants working in low skilled jobs than Sweden, with 23.4% compared to 10.5%. The numbers remain largely similar through most metrics of socio-economic status in the country including self-reported health status, levels of unmet medical needs, and labor market participation which are all very similar for both migrant populations in Sweden and Denmark.

In conclusion, despite the extreme differences in the areas of integration policy and attainment of citizenship, the socio-economic outcomes of migrants are similar between the two nations. Again, as noted above, some of this is likely due to the differing amounts and proportions of immigrants that live in each of these countries. With Denmark having harsher policies and less migrants, and Sweden having the opposite, those upstream policies likely have downstream effects on socio-economic metrics. To put it in another way, when restricting immigration to favor those that are highly educated and of higher socioeconomic status, statistics may show that immigrant populations in Denmark are doing better than those in Sweden.

This is not necessarily because life is better in Denmark for immigrants, but instead because many potential migrants are excluded from the statistics and from entering the country by Danish policies.

Paired Comparison Analysis

Before analyzing differences in immigration policy between the two countries, it is important to first assert the reason why these countries were selected for the paired comparison analysis in the first place. Paired comparison is an analysis that rests on looking at two subject which have many similar attributes, as a means of isolating a specific problem or variable to look at. In other words,

“Most-similar systems design, in which common systemic characteristics are conceived of as “controlled for,” whereas intersystemic differences are viewed as explanatory variables” (Przeworski & Teune 1970, 33)

Using this method of analysis, Denmark and Sweden were selected as countries to look at for case study as they maintain many similarities across various national metrics and cultural identifiers. Both countries maintain similar levels of taxation on their economies, with Sweden and Denmark taxing 42.6% and 46.5% in 2020 respectively ranking them in the top 5 of OECD countries. Both countries maintain high level of GDP per capita, at \$60,244 USD for Denmark and \$55,038 USD for Sweden. Once again this puts them both well above the OECD average and ranks them near the top in the world. Both countries maintain similar levels of employment, hovering around 75% of their available workforce having a job, and both countries mirroring each other over the past couple decades in the rises and falls in their employment rate. Both are consistently ranked in the top 10 of OECD countries and well above the OECD averages in employment levels throughout most of the previous couple of decades. Both countries have high levels of government spending, at 52.6% and 53.4% of their GDP respectively, and both ranking well above the OECD average. These statistics express a relative

similarity in economic standing in the world and a similar policy regarding taxation and employment.

The systems of governance are similar in both countries as well. Both countries maintain constitutional monarchies, with royalty who are largely symbolic in their role. They both have parliamentary systems of representation, both with multiple parties consistently seated in parliament with the leading coalition selecting a prime minister as the head of government. Both countries have high levels of voter participation in elections, with 87.1% of registered voter voting in Sweden and 84.6% of registered voters voting in Denmark, well above the global and OECD average (DeSilver 2021).

Both countries rank similarly in education levels, having low numbers of their respective populations with less than secondary education 16.1% and 18.6%, with high levels of their populations attaining tertiary education, at 39.3% and 44.6%. Both educational statistics put them slightly better than OECD averages, again putting them at a relatively similar level of education. Both countries have relatively small populations, 10.4 million people in Sweden and 5.8 million people in Denmark and have similar fertility rates (1.66 and 1.67 children born to each woman on average). The population growth of Sweden is higher than that of Denmark, with Sweden growing at .7% annually compared to .2% annually, placing Sweden above the OECD average of .4% and Denmark slightly below. Part of the discrepancy in this statistic could have to do with their varying rates of migration effecting their population growths while maintaining almost identical fertility rates.

Both countries have culture similarities as well as similarities regarding demographic and economic statistics. Both maintain high levels of trust in government at

67.1% and 71.6% for Sweden and Denmark according to the OECD, which again places them above the OECD average and in the top 10 of all OECD countries. Both countries have low levels of religious identification, with only 10% and 8% of Sweden and Denmark respectively identifying as “highly religious” (Evans, Jonathan, and Baronavski 2020). Additionally, geographically these countries exist in extremely close proximity and are even connected by a bridge, placing them in similar position in regard for the ability of migrants to reach each country. Finally, these countries also have overlapping similarities in language and culture, as their populations have been interacting and intermixing for hundreds of years.

These statistics indicate the similar nature of these nations and why they are fit for a most similar paired comparative analysis. Given the similar political systems, geography, demographics, and economies much of the variables that could affect a countries position on immigration can be isolated for the most part. Additionally, to migrant populations, both countries (if one is ignoring the variable we are studying, immigration policy) should be equally attractive for migrants, leading to the conclusion that Sweden’s larger immigrant population may be due to immigration-specific policies.

Possible Explanatory Variables

Rise of Far-right Parties and Political Coalitions:

One potential explanation as to why Denmark and Sweden have diverged on the issue of immigration to a large degree is the way in which party politics have emerged in differing fashions. Both Sweden and Denmark have experienced an emergence of far-right parties within electoral politics, though the parties exist in different contexts. The way each country has responded to the rise of far-right parties is another area of great divergence between Denmark and Sweden.

Denmark and Sweden respectively each have one major party that has a far-right policy platform, in addition to minor parties that have emerged in recent years. For this analysis, I will just focus on the largest far-right parties who have been able to gain significant seats in each parliament. In Denmark, it is The Danish People Party (DPP) and in Sweden it is the Sweden Democrats. Both parties put forward a political program largely aligned with other right-wing populist parties throughout Europe. That includes policies that advocate for limits to immigration, protection of domestic culture, and a mix of social conservatism and nationalism. According to the Sweden Democrats official manifesto,

“Sweden needs a safe and protected border in order to keep organized crime, human trafficking and terrorism out. We welcome those who contribute to our society, who abide by our laws and who respect our practices. In contrast, those who come here to take advantage of our systems, commit crimes or put our citizens in harm’s way are not welcome.”

“We feel that Swedish welfare should be for Swedish citizens.”

“We want a Sweden where we together rejoice in our success and together help out in adversity. We will never give space to Islamism or any other extremism, this is a land of democracy and equality. In our Sweden, we are proud of our culture and our

traditions. We value and wish to cherish what we inherited from previous generations” (About Us in English 2022).

While some of this sounds moderate or less radical that one could imagine, in Sweden there is an understanding that what the Sweden Democrats look to achieve is far more radical than just these words. It is widely known that the Sweden Democrats originated and were initially supported by politicians who had connections to white-nationalism and neo-Nazi movements. In the past decade the Sweden Democrats have tried to clean up their image by ousting members openly espousing racism and softening the way they spoke about issues such as immigration. Though they have transitioned to soften some of their most harsh policy positions, they still advocate for aggressive limits to immigration and critique non-western culture in a manner bordering on racist and xenophobic.

The Danish People’s Party similarly puts forth a program based around nationalism and distaste for immigrants coming from non-western origin, whom they claim are taking advantage of their welfare system. According to the Danish People’s Party platform, they believe that,

“The country is founded on the Danish cultural heritage and therefore, Danish culture must be preserved and strengthened. This culture consists of the sum of the Danish people's history, experience, beliefs, language and customs. Preservation and further development of this culture is crucial to the country's survival as a free and enlightened society.”

“Denmark is not an immigrant-country and never has been. Thus we will not accept transformation to a multiethnic society. Denmark belongs to the Danes and its citizens must be able to live in a secure community founded on the rule of law, which develops along the lines of Danish culture.

“It ought to be possible to absorb foreigners into Danish society provided however, that this does not put security and democratic government at risk. To a limited extent and according to special rules and in conformity with the stipulations of the Constitution,

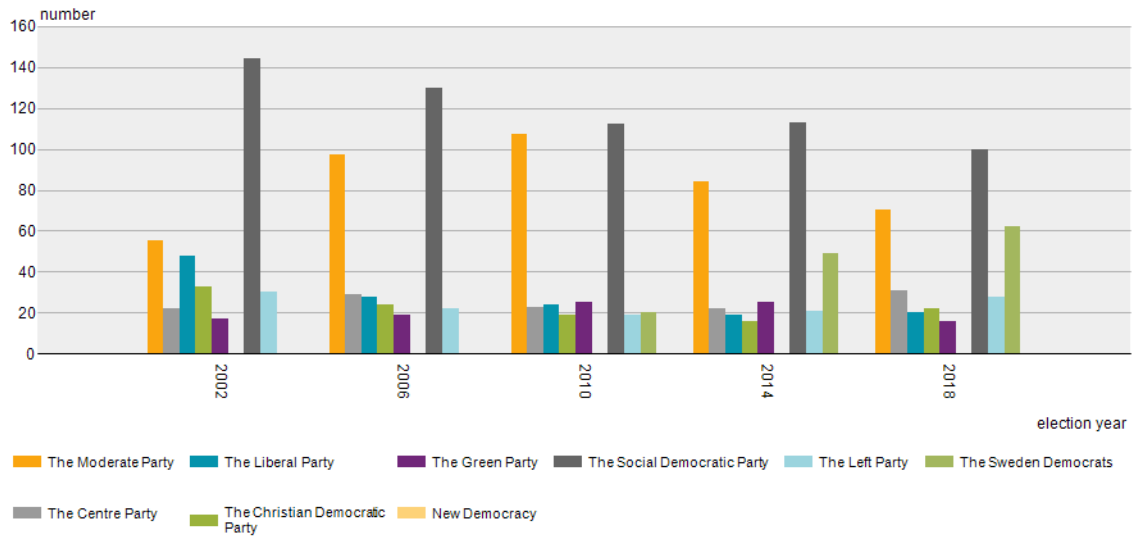
foreign nationals should be able to obtain Danish citizenship” (The Party Program of the Danish People's Party 2017).

While the DPP does not have the same ties to radical neo-Nazism as the Sweden Democrats, they have been viewed as being far-right and radical to those in the center of Danish politics. The distinction though, between the origin of the DPP and the Sweden Democrats, one emerging from neo-Nazi origin and one being far-right but having no ties to neo-Nazism does shape how they are viewed in each country. No matter how hard the Sweden Democrats work to rehabilitate their image, they will never fully cleanse themselves from the neo-Nazis that once controlled the party. This likely is a large explainer as to why the Danish parliament has been more readily able to work with the DPP, where the Sweden Democrats have received far more resistance in their effort to play a role in parliament.

Where both parties diverge from typical right-wing parties in the US is their approval of widespread welfare benefits to their respective populations. In the US we often imagine right-wing parties as being inherently against expanding social benefits, but this is not the case with the Nordic states. Both the Sweden Democrats and DPP are not ardent supporters of changing the social democratic model in each country, but more modifying it to serve more nationalist purposes. They both push for chauvinistic welfare policies that focus on cultural and ethnic Swedes and Danes over those who are immigrating into the country, especially those from non-western countries. Due to their approval of welfare policies generally, they both have been relatively electorally successful, pushing more mainstream parties to consider their positions as they have grown in influence.

The graphics below outline the rise of these parties over the past two decades in both the Danish and Swedish parliament.

Seats in the Swedish parliament by party and election year.



Source: Statistics Sweden

Figure 4 (Statistical Database)

Time:

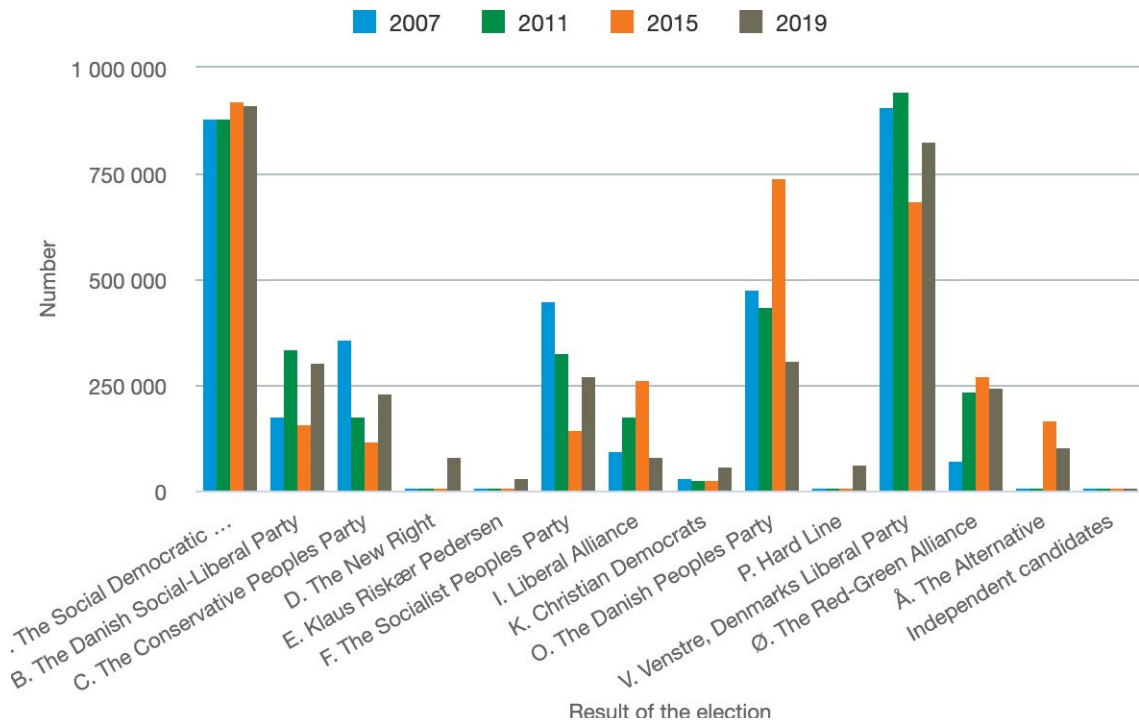


Figure 3 (General Elections)

The graphs above are not formatted in the same manner, with the graph looking at elections in Sweden indicating the number of seats in parliament by year, and the graph looking at elections in Denmark comparing vote totals for each party in each year corresponding with a bar. What both show though is an emergence of far-right parties in the 21st century, though both countries had different evolutions to how the parties came to hold power.

Though the party was founded in 1988, the Sweden Democrats did not reach the 4% threshold to earn a seat in parliament until 2010. Again, emerging out of fascist and white-nationalist roots, it took a long time for the party to rid itself of the image that it was too radical on issues of immigration and race. After breaking through in 2010, the Sweden Democrats rapidly increased their influence in parliament, from holding 20 seats in 2010, to becoming the third largest party by 2014 with 49 seats and increasing their share of the votes in 2018, now holding 62 seats. In both 2014 and 2018, the Sweden Democrats only lagged behind the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party, both who attempted to form coalition governments as two separate blocks. Where again Sweden diverges from Denmark is how their parliament handled the inclusion of the Sweden Democrats. Though the ruling coalition from 2006-2014 was led by the Moderate Party, and aligned itself as center right,

“when the Sweden Democrats became the Riksdag’s third largest party in 2018, this coalition split, with the Liberals and Center Party offering support to the Social Democrats and refusing to make common cause with the Sweden Democrats to form a conservative government” (Thomsen 2022).

In this moment of solidarity, the Moderate Party and their center right coalition called “The Alliance” refused to form a government with the Sweden Democrats, even though they would have had a parliamentary majority if they were willing to include them. As

“The Alliance” broke down, they splintered off with some parties, namely the Liberals and the Center Party supporting the government they had previously been in opposition to, led by the Social Democrats. This exclusion of forming governments with the Sweden Democrats was a consistent pledge by both sides of parliament in Sweden for many election cycles leading up to the election of 2018 which delivered a significant number of seats in parliament to the Sweden Democrats and thus a significant amount of power. By excluding the Sweden Democrats, even while they gained power, the Sweden Democrats were framed as politically untenable and unable to work with mainstream parties. This included mainstream parties even refusing to meet with party leaders of the Sweden Democrats to negotiate on votes in parliament. This significantly limited their power in parliament, compared to parties in the past that won similar portion of seats and would normally have sway in parliament even if not in the leading coalition.

While some believe that trends indicate a new political future for Sweden where center-right parties like the Moderate Party may soon embrace the Sweden Democrats, the long-standing exclusion has been effective at slowing the growth of anti-immigrant policy. By excluding the Sweden Democrats from governing coalition, they haven’t had the chance to gain leverage in parliament like other right-wing parties across Europe. This contrasts with how the Danish parliament handled the rise of the DPP in their parliament.

While the DPP has also been effectively left out of governing coalitions since their introduction to parliament, they have been more welcomed into parliament by other mainstream parties and have leveraged their seats in parliament far more effectively than the Sweden Democrats. This is because while they haven’t been in direct coalition

governments, they have worked together on bills in parliament with other parties unlike the Sweden Democrats. From its inception into parliament in 1998 with 13 seats and 7.4% of the vote, the DPP has grown rapidly, peaking in 2015 with 21.2% of the vote, gaining 37 seats and becoming the second largest party in the Danish parliament. As shown in the graph above, this was followed by a significant loss of 21 seats in the 2019 election, which will be explained below.

After becoming the third largest party in parliament during the 2001 general election, the DPP immediately began to have a large effect on immigration policy in Denmark. While they were not directly in government, they supported the conservative coalition, and the DPP was able to spend,

“the past two decades using their mandates for a single purpose: They only vote for bills concerning other issues if they get restrictions on foreigners in return. Step by step, the Danish People’s Party has dragged all the other parties in their direction — none more so than the Social Democrats with whom they compete for working-class voters” (Bendixen 2021).

The divergence between Denmark and Sweden that could explain differences in immigration policy was heavily contributed to by the frequent negotiation and willingness of parties in the Danish parliament to work with the DPP on other electoral priorities while giving them support on harsh immigration reforms in return. The DPP managed to drag almost all the parties in parliament along with them on immigration and policies that had once been radical and only supported by far-right parties like the DPP became mainstreamed, including by the largest parties on the left like the Social Democrats. This was largely due to an electoral strategy by the center left parties, who saw the DPP as challenging their relatively consistent rule in parliament (O’Leary 2019).

The left in Denmark saw the threat from the DPP gaining seats in parliament and changed their electoral strategy in response. The primary change seen on the left was reframing the issue of immigration. Instead of avoiding the issue of immigration reform as one that was too politically controversial, the Social Democrats overhauled their party agenda to make immigration reform a left-wing project,

“The Social Democrats formulate opposition to immigration as an integral left-wing position, necessary to protect the party’s traditional working-class voter base from immigrants who would compete for their jobs and send their children into their schools” (O’Leary 2019).

In this reframing of the immigration problem, they could claim immigration reform as an effort to protect working class Danes, who have long been their voter base. By shifting to the right, they could answer calls from the DPP and other far-right parties that they were “soft on immigration”. This co-option of immigration reform has effectively limited the power of the DPP, as they are being closed in by parties who are further to the right of them, like Hard Line or The New Right claiming the DPP isn’t harsh enough on immigration, while also having the Social Democrats move in from the left.

This combination proved successful in the 2019 general election as the DPP did lose a significant portion of power in parliament. While many would see this in comparison to the success that the Sweden Democrats had in 2018 as sign that Sweden has moved farther to the right than Denmark, this would not be the case. While the power of the DPP has been limited, it has only been limited through a concerted effort by left parties to shift right on the issue of immigration. Thus, the Overton Window regarding immigration policy has shifted radically to the right over the last 20 years. Policies once unimaginable in Denmark, especially on the left, have become the norm and are now supported widely on the left such as policies that,

“transfer asylum seekers who arrive in Denmark to a non-European country (most likely in Africa), where their cases will be processed. If they are granted asylum, they will stay in that third country.”

or that,

“Danish authorities ruled that the security situation around Damascus has improved, despite evidence of dire living conditions and continued persecution by Bashar al-Assad’s regime. As a result, they stripped 94 refugees of their right to stay in the country” (Bendixen 2021).

In conclusion, the way in which far-right parties were dealt with in their respective parliaments has been vastly different, resulting in different levels of immigration restriction pushed by each legislature in Denmark and Sweden. In Sweden, the outright refusal to work with the Sweden Democrats has limited their ability to effect legislation so far. While they are still gaining in power, they are still firmly positioned on the far-right of the political spectrum and don’t warrant serious consideration from most of the major parties yet. In contrast, the DPP was able to integrate into parliament in Denmark much quicker and worked on bills as soon as it won a moderate number of seats in parliament. It was able to become the second largest party in parliament and shifted the stance on immigration in the Danish parliament to be closely aligned with their previously radical positions. As noted above though, this can at least partially be accounted for by the origins of each party, not necessarily because the Swedish parliament has stronger convictions to stop far-right parties. If the DPP had similar neo-Nazi origins as the Sweden Democrats, they may have received similar pushback as the Sweden Democrats have. Whichever being the reason though, it is still true that Sweden has more effectively held far-right parties out of power than the Danish parliament. By mainstreaming harsh immigration policy, Denmark has passed numerous restrictive laws

regarding immigration. The differences in party alignment are one of the major causes of divergence in immigration policy between Denmark and Sweden.

Cultural Differences in their Global Self-Image

The second area of difference that I believe can explain the divergence between Denmark and Sweden is in the different manners in which each country views itself in relation to the world. The self-identity of each nation is extremely different and has effects on how each sees their role in the world, especially regarding migrants fleeing poor or war-torn areas. While these countries both maintain extremely similar cultural characteristics in almost all areas, the way in which they view themselves in connection to the rest of the world is extremely different. Again, as noted in the opening of this paper, culture has been held as a constant in my analysis even if the global self-images (a subset of political culture) are different between the two countries. This is because most of the culture (language, food, religion) remains extremely similar and I will be focusing in only on one aspect of political culture.

Sweden has historically and still does presently view itself as the model for social democracy in the world and consistently aims to uphold this image. This understanding of being a model for the world can be informed by the word "*folkhem*" which is Swedish for "people's home". In a famous speech in 1928, Per Albin Hansson, the leader of the Swedish Social Democratic Party at the time, used the term *folkhem* when describing the society he wished to create by pursuing the values of social democracy. In the speech, Hansson articulated a vision of Sweden,

"The good home knows no privileged or misfortuned, no favorites or undesired. There no one looks down on the other. There none try to gain benefits at the others expense, the strong do not oppress and plunder the weak. In the good home reigns equality, kindness, cooperation, helpfulness."

While the word itself has been contested over time, both by politicians within the Social Democrats and from external political entities like the far-right Sweden Democrats, its definition has remained consistent for most Swedes. That definition being that Sweden should be a supportive, safe, and generous nation to all, regardless of their circumstance. The Social Democrats would go on to be in government for over 40 years consecutively shortly following the speech by Hansson and the values of the Social Democrats became synonymous with the values of Sweden more generally. Social democracy became an identifier of Swedish society. The word *folkhem* describes much of the values that the Social Democrats instilled in the nation. *Folkhem* is the underlying commitment to the welfare state and the principle that all in Sweden should be taken care of. In other words,

“central to this organizing concept is an understanding of the nation as something like the “good home” where everyone takes care of one another and no one is left behind. The state, too, is implicated in this image as the guarantor of care.” (Schall 2016, 5)

This view of the government as the guarantor of care and that Sweden should be a safe place for all bled its way into other policy areas beyond just tax and spend welfare policy, specifically immigration. Across the political spectrum, at least between the most extreme parties in Sweden like the Sweden Democrats, it is a widely held belief that it is the duty of Sweden to take on the migrants coming into the country. In a more modern context, Sweden views itself as a “humanitarian superpower”, a phrase coined by Moderate Party Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt regarding his view on how Sweden should be perceived by the rest of the world (Simons and Manoilo 2019, 2). It was more than just an effort to affect the way Sweden was viewed from abroad, but also “was an emotional call for the Swedish public to accept the coming mass migration” (Simons and

Manoilo 2019, 2), coming from a center right party leader. This consistent view that Sweden should embody the values of *folkhem* regarding citizens who are Swedish and those who are newly migrated is consistent across the political spectrum, save for the far-right parties.

This unified vision of Sweden as a humanitarian nation, that looks to be involved in the world through peaceful means has been consistent for most of Sweden's history. Their willingness to be independent, in this case far more progressive in relation to migration than most of its neighbors, can be seen in many different areas of politics in Sweden, especially in foreign policy. Sweden has historically been an outlier in Europe. Sweden is not a member of NATO and has remained neutral and outside of military alliances for its entire history. Denmark on the other hand was one of the founding members of NATO. Sweden didn't join the European Union until 1995, where Denmark joined the EU in 1973. Sweden was extremely critical of both the Soviet Union and the US throughout the Cold War, especially regarding what they perceived as human rights abuses domestically in the USSR and abroad by the US military in Korea and Vietnam. Additionally, the Swedish government was critical of the invasion of Iraq questioning whether it was a violation of international law. They simultaneously were extremely critical of the regime of Saddam Hussein but did not feel there was justification for military intervention. This is in great contrast to Denmark who actively participated in the invasion and has deep military involvement of NATO's continued presence there even today.

While this may seem unrelated to the issue of immigration, it outlines the varying degrees to which Sweden sees itself as an outlier amongst other similar western nations.

It has maintained its neutrality in military conflicts and maintains an immigration policy that is similarly not in line with the surrounding countries. Sweden views itself as a moral leader of the world and wishes to be out-front, showing that there is a different path that countries can take than the binary that is often presented in global politics between the East and the West, or the first world and the third world. Sweden wants to be a player in global politics, but not play the game in the same manner as most of Europe and North America and therefore they are willing to stand relatively alone in embracing migrants to a degree rarely seen in the rest of the world.

Denmark frames their position in the world differently than Sweden does in a variety of ways. The independent streak that Sweden holds dear does not apply nearly to the same degree as in Denmark. As noted in the passages above, Denmark has been a part of NATO since its founding and has long been a member of the EU, well before Sweden joined. Denmark regarding humanitarian issues has long been an advocate of human rights to similar degrees to the rest of Western Europe, but again have been far less critical of other western nations unlike Sweden which has been more radically critical of all countries they see as failing on humanitarian issues.

The biggest difference between the two countries though regarding their self-image in relation to the rest of the world. Denmark, like Sweden, is very proud of the welfare state they have created and sees it as a model for the rest of the world. Where they diverge though is that Sweden tends to see itself as a model and has allowed anyone who is willing to come to their country and embrace the civic culture of social democracy to participate in their society. Denmark on the other hand sees itself as a model for the world but fears a future where migrant populations do not integrate fully and degrade

their social democratic system because they do not understand the civic culture that underlies it. It can be described as follows,

“Denmark’s national identity, in contrast, is presented as historically determined, and immigrants must engage in long processes of socialization to become Danish. This view may explain the recent focus on compulsory childcare and early initiatives to socialize the children of immigrants, born in Denmark.” (Simonsen 2019)

Many in Denmark believe that if more migrants come to Denmark and do not fully integrate into Danish society, they will take more than they pay into the social system, thus undermining the system for all people in Denmark, born domestically or those who come as immigrants. This reactionary feeling is seen in the increasingly frequent ‘welfare chauvinism’ put forth in Danish social policy. Welfare chauvinism is the idea that welfare should be reserved for those within civic culture and excluded from those coming from the outside (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016, 333). These chauvinistic ideals are represented in various policies that have had drastically harsher effects on immigrant populations being able to attain social benefits than domestically born Danes, even if on their face they do not appear to be written to target immigrant populations.

“These included the ‘start allowance’ (starthjælpen), which granted substantially lower social benefits to persons who had not resided legally in Denmark for seven of the last eight years; from 2002 to 2012 this amounted to half the amount paid out in regular social benefits. (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016, 339).

Additionally, while “These initiatives were universal and in principle targeted everyone living in Denmark, but in practice they were ethnically biased; most of the people affected were from ethnic minority groups” (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016, 339). Estimates showed that 95% of people who were affected by the ‘300-hour rule’ (a rule that required married couples to have both partners with 300 hours of paid work in the

previous 12 months) were of an ethnic minority background (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016, 339).

Beyond the policies listed above, Denmark also started to create separate “integration benefits” which was welfare that went to those who had not yet attained permanent residency or citizenship. The benefits only offered half the number of benefits compared to those who have residency or citizenship. These chauvinistic policies underly the belief that the welfare state in Denmark cannot and should not support those that wish to immigrate just to take advantage of benefits. Policies such as the ones listed above have been put forth by all factions in Danish politics, from right, center, and left-wing parties. Even the Social Democrats and Socialist People’s Party in Denmark, both left wing parties, support some level of restriction of the rights of immigrants to access social benefits like welfare and unemployment insurance, demanding that it is wrong to travel around looking for benefits from whatever country one may move to and outlining the need to ‘protect’ the Danish welfare system (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016, 342).

This is because some principles have remained unchallenged in Danish politics. While each party has framed their push for restriction on rights in slightly different terms, they have all agreed on principles that should exist, namely:

“The extent of welfare policy has been the subject of lively political discussion in Denmark, but three critical assumptions have remained unquestioned: all citizens need to contribute, wealth and resources should be secured, and foreigners cannot come to the country and immediately claim social benefits” (Jørgensen and Thomsen 2016, 341).

The far-right Danish People’s Party may put forward their push for restriction of immigrant’s access to benefits in the context of protecting native Danish taxpayers, and the Socialist People’s Party may frame it in the context of protecting their robust welfare system for future generations, they both have similar effects regarding policy. The

welfare system is sacred and should not be openly extended to anyone who makes their way into the country.

This is the where the cultural differences between Sweden and Denmark can be expressly seen. While both view themselves as models of social democracy to the world, the Danes see their social democracy as a system primarily built to support their own, where the Swedes view their system as one open to anyone willing to embrace it. This cultural divergence in self-image drives policies that decides who to let into the country, the ability of those in the country to gain citizenship, and the ability of those in the country to access social benefits. More than any other variable, I believe that this cultural divergence is the primary cause for these two extremely similar countries to diverge on immigration policy.

Conclusion:

Looking back over the research, my conclusion is that the largest explanatory variable as to why Sweden and Denmark diverge on their migration policy is due to their differing perceptions of what their roles should be in the world. The self-image that Sweden and Denmark have in relation to their role in the world determines the policies that are considered mainstream or extreme in each parliament. In Denmark, the understanding of their country as a welfare state built for the Danish people leads politicians to put forth policies that protects the welfare state for the Danish people at the cost of immigrant's ability to access welfare. It also leads to policies which restrict the ability for immigrants to enter the country or gain citizenship.

Conversely, in Sweden, the self-image as a 'humanitarian superpower' has led the country to embrace high levels of immigration and maintain less fear of their society

becoming multicultural. The Swedes independent streak in global politics leads them to be outliers in the area of migration, where Denmark falls in line with movements to limit immigration going on in most of Europe during the 21st century, even being more restrictive than most western counties on many policy issues.

While I think party alignment has a lot to do with why the immigration policies in these two countries differ, I think it has smaller effect than political cultural view of how each country interacts with the rest of the world, because I think that the same political cultural understanding has effects on party alignment. While they are two separate factors which interact with one another, I believe that the political cultural factors have more of an effect than the party systems in place because the party system likely changes due to changes in the political cultures of each country. Additionally, the Sweden Democrats origin out of neo-Nazism has raised the guards of all parties in parliament and spurred major parties to exclude them from politics to the greatest extent possible. The Danish People's Party on the other hand does not have those same ties to neo-Nazism and thus is viewed merely as a hard-right party. If the DPP had similar origins, it could have experienced similar exclusion, but the political culture that allowed for the acceptance of harsh immigration policies would have still existed. For all those reasons, the greatest explanatory variable as to why these countries differ in the policy area of migration, is their distinct understanding of their relationship to the rest of the world.

Bibliography

- “2020 Report on International Religious Freedom - United States Department of State.”
U.S. Department of State, U.S. Department of State, 17 Nov. 2021,
<https://www.state.gov/reports/2020-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>.
- “About Us in English.” *Sverigedemokraterna*, Sweden Democrats, <https://sd.se/english/>.
- Barry, Ellen, and Martin Selsoe Sorensen. “In Denmark, Harsh New Laws for Immigrant 'Ghettos'.” *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 2 July 2018,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/07/01/world/europe/denmark-immigrant-ghettos.html>.
- Bech, Emily Cochran, Borevi Karin, and Mouritsen Per. "A ‘civic Turn’ in Scandinavian Family Migration Policies? Comparing Denmark, Norway and Sweden." *Comparative Migration Studies* 5.1 (2017)*ProQuest*. Web. 19 Oct. 2021.
- Bendixen, Michala Clante. “Denmark Has Gone Far-Right on Refugees.” *POLITICO*, POLITICO, 9 Mar. 2021, <https://www.politico.eu/article/denmark-has-gone-far-right-on-refugees/>.
- Brochmann, Grete, and Arnfinn H. Midtbøen. “Philosophies of Integration? Elite Views on Citizenship Policies in Scandinavia.” *Ethnicities*, vol. 21, no. 1, Feb. 2021, pp. 146–164, doi:10.1177/1468796820950453.
- Careja, Romana, et al. “Direct and Indirect Welfare Chauvinism as Party Strategies: An Analysis of the Danish People’s Party.” *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 39, no. 4, Dec. 2016, pp. 435–457. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1111/1467-9477.12075.
- Christophersen, Eirik. “These 10 Countries Receive the Most Refugees.” NRC, Norwegian Refugee Council, 2020, <https://www.nrc.no/perspectives/2020/the-10-countries-that-receive-the-most-refugees/>.
- “Denmark Passes Ban on Niqabs and Burkas.” *BBC News*, BBC, 31 May 2018,
<https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-44319921>.
- “Denmark Tightens Rules for Citizenship Once Again.” *European Website on Integration*, European Commission, 4 Apr. 2021, https://ec.europa.eu/migrant-integration/news/denmark-tightens-rules-citizenship-once-again_en.
- DeSilver, Drew. “In Past Elections, U.S. Trailed Most Developed Countries in Voter Turnout.” *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 28 May 2021,
<https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/11/03/in-past-elections-u-s-trailed-most-developed-countries-in-voter-turnout/>.

- Evans, Jonathan, and Chris Baronavski. "How Do European Countries Differ in Religious Commitment? Use Our Interactive Map to Find Out." *Pew Research Center*, Pew Research Center, 31 May 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/12/05/how-do-european-countries-differ-in-religious-commitment/>.
- "General Elections." *Statistics Denmark*, <https://www.dst.dk/en/Statistik/emner/borgere/demokrati/folketingsvalg>.
- Götz, Norbert. "Folkhem." *Aarhus University*, Aarhus University, 25 Feb. 2019, <https://nordics.info/show/artikel/folkhem>.
- GREEN-PEDERSEN, CHRISTOFFER, and JESPER KROGSTRUP. "Immigration as a Political Issue in Denmark and Sweden." *European Journal of Political Research*, vol. 47, no. 5, Aug. 2008, pp. 610–634. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1111/j.1475-6765.2008.00777.x.
- "History of Migration." *Migration*, Swedish Migration Agency, 2020, <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/Migration-to-Sweden/History.html>.
- "INDVAN: Immigration by Sex, Age, Country of Origin and Citizenship." *Statistikbanken*, <https://www.statbank.dk/INDVAN>.
- Inglehart, R., C. Haerpfer, A. Moreno, C. Welzel, K. Kizilova, J. Diez-Medrano, M. Lagos, P. Norris, E. Ponarin & B. Puranen et al. (eds.). 2014. *World Values Survey: All Rounds - Country-Pooled Datafile*
Version: <https://www.worldvaluessurvey.org/WVSDocumentationWVL.jsp>
Madrid: JD Systems Institute.
- Jørgensen, Martin Bak, and Trine Lund Thomsen. "Crises Now and then--Comparing Integration Policy Frameworks and Immigrant Target Groups in Denmark in the 1970s and 2000s." *Journal of International Migration and Integration* 14.2 (2013): 245-62. *ProQuest*. Web. 7 Dec. 2021.
- Jørgensen, Martin Bak, and Trine Lund Thomsen. "Deservingness in the Danish Context: Welfare Chauvinism in Times of Crisis." *Critical Social Policy*, vol. 36, no. 3, 2016, pp. 330–351., <https://doi.org/10.1177/0261018315622012>.
- Jørgensen, Martin Bak. "Mainstreaming Denmark - Migrationpolicy.org." *Migration Policy Institute Europe*, Migration Policy Institute Europe, Sept. 2014, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/sites/default/files/publications/Mainstreaming-Denmark.pdf>.
- Journal of Public Affairs*: Vol. 1: Iss. 1, Article 8.
<https://doi.org/10.15760/hgipa.2016-1.8>

- Junge, Martin, and Rockwool fondens forskningsenhed. *Immigration of Qualified Labor and the Effect of Changes in Danish Migration Policy in 2002*. Odense: University Press of Southern Denmark, 2009.
- Kupský, Adam. "History and Changes of Swedish Migration Policy." *Journal of Geography, Politics and Society* 7.3 (2017): 50-6. ProQuest. Web. 7 Dec. 2021.
- Kærgård, Niels. "Social Cohesion and the Transformation from Ethnic to Multicultural Society: The Case of Denmark." *Ethnicities*, vol. 10, no. 4, Sage Publications, Ltd., 2010, pp. 470–87, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23890263>.
- Marx, Paul, and Gijs Schumacher. "Do Poor Citizens Vote for Redistribution, against Immigration or against the Establishment? A Conjoint Experiment in Denmark." *Scandinavian Political Studies*, vol. 41, no. 3, 2018, pp. 263–282., <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9477.12119>.
- Neli Esipova, John Fleming, and Julie Ray. "New Index Shows Least-, Most-Accepting Countries for Migrants." *Gallup.com*, Gallup, 11 June 2021, <https://news.gallup.com/poll/216377/new-index-shows-least-accepting-countries-migrants.aspx>.
- "Net Migration - Sweden." *Data*, <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SM.POP.NETM?end=2017&locations=SE&start=1982&type=points&view=chart>.
- Nikel, David. "Sweden Considers Language Exam Requirement for New Citizens." *Forbes*, Forbes Magazine, 30 June 2021, <https://www.forbes.com/sites/davidnikel/2021/01/16/sweden-considers-language-exam-requirement-for-new-citizens/?sh=7ed392db5a15>.
- O'Leary, Naomi. "Danish Left Veering Right on Immigration." *POLITICO*, POLITICO, 18 Apr. 2019, <https://www.politico.eu/article/danish-copenhagen-left-veers-right-on-immigration-policy-integration/>.
- Olesen, N. Wium. "Danish Immigration Policy, 1970-1992." *Aarhus University*, 7 Nov. 2019, <https://nordics.info/show/artikel/danish-immigration-policy-1970-1992-1>.
- Prokic, Uros (2016) "How Has Religiosity Influenced the Restrictiveness of Marriage Immigration Policy in Serbia, Denmark, and the United States?," *Hatfield Graduate*
- Poulsen, Regin Winther. "How the Danish Left Adopted a Far-Right Immigration Policy." *Foreign Policy*, 12 July 2021, <https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/07/12/denmark-refugees-frederiksen-danish-left-adopted-a-far-right-immigration-policy/>.

- Przeworski, Adam, and Henry Teune. *The Logic of Comparative Social Inquiry* [by] Adam Przeworski [and] Henry Teune. Wiley-Interscience, 1970.
- Simons, Greg, and Andrey Manoilo. "Sweden's Self-Perceived Global Role: Promises and Contradictions." *Research in Globalization*, vol. 1, 2019, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.resglo.2019.100008>.
- Simonsen, Kristina Bækker. "Political Approaches to Immigration in Scandinavia since 1995." *Aarhus University*, Aarhus University, 18 Feb. 2019, <https://nordics.info/show/artikel/political-approaches-to-immigration-in-scandinavia-since-1995>.
- Skodo, Admir. "Sweden: By Turns Welcoming and Restrictive in Its Immigration Policy." *Migrationpolicy.org*, Migration Policy Institute, 27 May 2019, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/sweden-turns-welcoming-and-restrictive-its-immigration-policy>.
- Sorensen, Martin Selsoe. "Denmark, with an Eye on Muslims" *The New York Times*, The New York Times, Dec. 2018, <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/12/20/world/europe/denmark-muslims-handshake-law.html>.
- Sørensen, Ninna Nyberg. "Coherence and Contradictions in Danish Migration-Development Policy and Practice." *The European Journal of Development Research*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2015, pp. 62–75., <https://doi.org/10.1057/ejdr.2015.73>.
- Schall, Carly Elizabeth. *The Rise and Fall of the Miraculous Welfare Machine : Immigration and Social Democracy in Twentieth-Century Sweden*, Cornell University Press, 2016. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, <https://ebookcentral-proquest-com.libproxy.uoregon.edu/lib/uoregon/detail.action?docID=4531581>.
- "Statistical Database ." *Statistics Sweden*, Statistics Sweden, https://www.statistikdatabasen.scb.se/pxweb/en/ssd/START__ME__ME0104__ME0104A/.
- "The Party Program of the Danish People's Party." *Dansk Folkeparti*, Dansk Folkeparti, 18 May 2017, <https://danskfolkeparti.dk/politik/in-another-languages-politics/1757-2/>.
- Tomson, Danielle Lee. "The Rise of Sweden Democrats: Islam, Populism and the End of Swedish Exceptionalism." *Brookings*, Brookings Institute , 9 Mar. 2022, <https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-rise-of-sweden-democrats-and-the-end-of-swedish-exceptionalism/>.

Treaty of Cooperation between Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden: Entered into Force on July 1, 1962. Published Jointly by the Royal Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs and the Nordic Council, 1962.

van Klingeren, Marijn, et al. "Real World Is Not Enough: The Media as an Additional Source of Negative Attitudes Toward Immigration, Comparing Denmark and the Netherlands." *European Sociological Review*, vol. 31, no. 3, Oxford University Press, 2015, pp. 268–83, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24479946>.

Westin C., Dingu-Kyrklund E., 1997, Reducing Immigration, Reviewing Integration: The Swedish Rimet Report 1995, CEIFO, Edsbruk.

Westin, Charles. "Sweden: Restrictive Immigration Policy and Multiculturalism." *Migrationpolicy.org*, Migration Policy Institute, 2 Mar. 2017, <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/sweden-restrictive-immigration-policy-and-multiculturalism/>.