

## **Ideology and Entry Policy: Why Non-Socialist Parties in Sweden Support Open Door Migration Policies**

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*The Puzzle of Centre-Right Parties Favouring Open Immigration Entry Policies*

On the morning of 20 September 2010 Swedes woke up to a new political landscape. The openly xenophobic “Sweden Democrats” (SD / *Sverigedemokraterna*) had, with 5.7% of the votes at the general election, comfortably gained *Riksdag* (parliament) representation for the first time. However, although newly elected, signs had existed for nearly a decade of its impending political breakthrough, as SD had steadily increased its representation in the country’s regional and local political administrations throughout the 2000s. Moreover, while the party’s success may have been a sea change in Swedish politics, it was not the first time a far-right populist party had broken through nationally. The “New Democracy” (NYD / *Ny Demokrati*) party gained nearly seven percent of the seats during the 1991 *Riksdag* election, before losing practically all of its votes in 1994.

Conventional wisdom, as presented in a host of previous research, would expect existing parties, and the centre-right parties (or in a slightly wider sense, the non-socialist parties<sup>1</sup>) in particular to react to the new party system context and voter threat by adopting anti-immigration policies (Bale 2003, 2004). Strict immigration policies as a feature of right-of-centre parties have been described as the norm in Western Europe (Neumayer 2005), as well as for Sweden’s Nordic neighbours (Green-Pedersen & Odmalm 2008; Gudbrandsen 2010). Thus, the pressure towards stricter policies among Swedish non-socialist parties

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<sup>1</sup>While much of the literature uses the label ‘centre-right parties’ we prefer the term ‘non-socialist parties’ in order unequivocally to include the Greens. NB please note that the non-socialist cabinets in place 1991-94 and 2006- have not included the Greens.

should have been apparent at least during the 1991-94 period and increasingly, from the early 2000s onward.

However, throughout this period, Swedish non-socialist parties have refrained from adapting to anti-immigration sentiments and moving towards stricter entry policies. Moreover, they have done the exact opposite, formulating more open policies, and when in government, implementing these measures. Sweden clearly appears to be a deviant case (Dahlström & Esaiasson 2010). In different entry policy instances, and at different times, various non-socialist parties have been present and leading the charge to make it easier for people to enter and settle in Sweden. It is not an exaggeration to say that where there is a debate over entry policy in Sweden, at least one non-socialist party advocating a less restrictive stance.

This puzzling development of non-socialist parties formulating open entry policies appears to be a distinctive feature of the overall 1991-2011 period. However, it applies particularly well to the 1991-94 period as to the post 2002 period. Not only was the xenophobic threat heightened then, but non-socialist parties were either serious contenders for government or in governing coalitions and should have been particularly vulnerable.<sup>2</sup>

Moreover, several of these comparatively open entry policies were formulated amid fierce opposition from the Social Democrats. In 1993, the non-socialist government granted 50,000 Bosnian refugees permanent residence permit – the Social Democrats instead proposed temporary permits and efforts to keep the refugees closer to their homeland, a policy the party had introduced already in 1989. Likewise, against strong Social

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<sup>2</sup>The Moderates (“Moderaterna”), the Liberals, the Centre Party and the Christian Democrats.

Democratic opposition, in 2008 the non-socialist government lifted most bars, in place since the late 1960s, against labour migration for third-country nationals (TCNs) (Hinnfors et al 2011). While these less restrictive measures were heavily criticised by the xenophobic parties, non-socialist parties did not accommodate them through support for restrictive migration policies.

In sum, we are presented with several puzzles concerning the surprising immigration entry policy openness found among Swedish non-socialist parties. Why do non-socialist parties formulate open policies where previous research would expect them to be restrictive? In the following we consider various potential explanations for these comparatively open stances adopted by Swedish non-socialist parties. Table 1 provides a preliminary overview of Swedish parties' 1989-2011 immigration entry policy stances.

#### **TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE**

In this paper, our aim is twofold. First, we describe the entry policy preferences of Swedish political parties towards labour migrants, refugees and asylum seekers, with a special focus on non-socialist parties. Second, following our documentation of the open stance adopted by non-socialist parties, we discuss some explanatory challenges regarding why parties formulate open entry policies, calling attention to ideology as an under-utilized variable and strong contender in the cases at hand. We stress that our focus is only on formal entry policies, and does not address integration policy measures for those migrants who have been legally admitted.

#### *Theoretical Challenges*

While this paper represents a work in progress, and further analysis is required, we nonetheless develop an argument that conventional explanations alone are insufficient for understanding the entry policy preferences of non-socialist parties. Mainstream parties all, to a greater or lesser extent, operate in a strategic climate where inter-party competition, public opinion, and the desire to implement effective policy matter for shaping preferences. But, as we will show, none of these factors – alone or in conjunction with one another – are sufficient determinants of the stances adopted by non-socialist parties. A more nuanced understanding of how non-socialist parties make sense of the strategic environment associated with entry policies also requires a consideration of the potential role played by party ideology.

With few exceptions, previous research on parties and immigration policy has focused on the phenomenon of populist xenophobic parties and their consequences. In particular, research has asked why parties formulate restrictive policies, i.e. why parties drift towards limiting the numbers of refugees and labour migrants by limiting the number to be admitted or tightening conditions for their admission. Another strand of literature highlights whether immigration policies become politicised (Perlmutter 1996; Dahlström & Esaiasson 2010; Odman 2010; Money 1999). Moreover, almost exclusively, previous research has equated restrictive immigration entry policies with right-of-centre/non-socialist political parties, whereas open policies have been equated with left-of-centre/socialist parties (Schain 2008: 468). However, as our introductory puzzle indicates, and as discussed in Hinnfors et al (2011) this generalization may not necessarily apply in all cases. In Sweden, the Social Democrats have continuously proposed a number of policy changes either to make entry policies stricter or to preserve strict elements.

While only very few studies on left-of-centre parties exist, there is a rich and varied literature on non-socialist parties' entry policies, almost all of which aim at explaining why these parties choose to formulate strict immigration entry policies. Among the various explanations, key ones include vote maximisation (Money 1999), party system threat from new xenophobic parties (Green-Pedersen & Krogstrup 2008; Schain 2008), and agenda setting capacity of the xenophobic right (Schain 2008: 469).

Our aim is not to present a white-washed picture of the behaviour of non-socialist parties when it comes to migration policy preferences. Indeed, as we will show, these parties have not consistently supported liberal migration policies, particularly in the instance of asylum policy. Our data does allow us to make two claims though. First, the portrayal of non-socialist parties' migration policies as being predominantly restrictive is dramatically exaggerated. Over the past several decades it is traditional centre-right parties, and the Greens (collectively termed as the non-socialist parties), that have been at the forefront of the push for more open doors when it comes to immigration to Sweden, and not the centre-left (in particular the Social Democrats). Second, not all non-socialist parties have consistently formulated open policies. On many issues, the Moderate Party<sup>3</sup> have formed an alliance with the Social Democrats regarding refugee policy. However, in 1991-94, as well as from the early 2000s onwards, the appearance of the xenophobic parliamentary

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<sup>3</sup> Please note that in the Swedish party system the Moderates ('*Moderaterna*') occupy roughly the same position as 'Conservative' parties would occupy in many other party systems. However, whereas conservatism as an ideology may still be part of the foundation for many European parties the Swedish Moderates gradually shed most of its conservative roots in favour of a distinctly more liberal underpinning between 1982-91. Lately the party has made further moves to the centre ground adopting positions based on social liberalism.

threat to the right triggered off a chain of events resulting in drastically more open Moderate Party policies, in line with the three other coalition partners and the Greens. The stance of the Moderate party only adds to our puzzlement. Overall, the non-socialist group of parties has behaved in a way that contradicts the image of 'right' being restrictive and 'left' being 'open'. What is more, each individual non-socialist party, including the Moderates, has acted completely against what would be expected when the threat from xenophobic parties was at its peak in Swedish political history.. In this paper we will discuss these puzzles, which boil down to the key question: why have Swedish non-socialist parties formulated open immigration policies?

A popular theme in the migration policy literature is an emphasis on vote-maximising as a key explanatory variable (Money 1999). Right-wing and populist parties are by far the most common objectives of these studies (Bale 2008; Green-Pedersen and Krogstrup 2008; Green-Pedersen and Odum 2008; Kitschelt 1997; Rydgren 2005; Rydgren and Widfeldt 2004; Smith 2008). Naturally, vote maximising is important as parties need to win elections. However, something must be missing in earlier research. Our analysis shows that non-socialist support for generous entry policies is largely consistent over the past several decades, regardless of efforts by far-right populist parties, or the left-of-centre parties, to see more restrictive entry policies enacted. Nor have non-socialist parties' policies varied according to public opinion development. Swedish centre-right parties have been at the fore of all major liberalizations in Swedish migration policy in the last two decades, including wide-scale permanent residence permits for refugees, and a dramatic liberalisation of labour migration policies. Thus, we feel it might be warranted to put a question mark around vote maximisation and minimisation of party system threats as explanatory variables on their own.

Alongside these more traditional accounts, we call attention to the potential explanatory role of ideology. In their mapping of migration policy formulation within the European Parliament, Hix and Noury (2007: 198) come to the conclusion that regardless of the MEP's left-right position as such 'MEPs from member states with general more liberal political cultures are more pro-migration.' This suggests the extent of 'liberalism' might be a key aspect behind the degree of openness. In the same vein, a number of previous studies dwell fleetingly on ideology, but, consistently within a vote maximising context. For instance, Freeman and Kessler (2008: 669) note 'Left parties [being] torn between fealty to the indigenous working-class component of their base and responding to their intellectual and professional supporters' concern to protect the interests of migrant workers', reflecting an ideological concern over welfare state goals and over economic policies. Along similar lines, Perlmutter (1996: 377) claims that 'Mass parties are more likely to downplay the issue, because they face cross-cutting cleavages that affect their core constituencies'. Odalm (2011: 1071; c.f. Schain 2008) suggests 'a set of potentially conflicting ideological streams – market liberalism vs. value conservatism (for the centre-right) and international solidarity vs. welfare state/labour market protectionism (for the centre-left) – create framing dilemmas', thus highlighting the fact that contradictory ideological pulls within the same party might dissuade the party leaders from politicising immigration policies. Moreover, as suggested by Hinnfors et al (2011) ideology appears to have played an important role behind the Swedish Social Democrats' formulation of immigration entry policies.

Parties do not just emulate their opponents or follow the majority voter position (Bale et al 2010) in a crude Downsian fashion. These studies leave unexplained the fact that parties



normally operate within a certain ideological framework, which substantially will reduce the policy options open to a party leadership. In this paper we will follow the centre-right parties' policy preferences concerning immigration entry policies from the late 1980s to the present. This period includes instances with right-wing populist-party threats, as well as different public opinion climates, thus allowing us to make at least some claims about the importance of ideology in relation to other variables. Throughout, we relate ideology to the centre-right parties' policy formulation and our claim that the formulation of open entry policies can be better explained by adding party ideology to the explanatory brew.

Odmalm's study merits special attention. While we find his observation that immigration 'subjects parties to certain ideological "pulls"' (Odmalm 2011: 1077) fruitful, his claim that the ensuing framing dilemmas will lead the parties to non-competition, which will explain why immigration is a 'non-issue in Swedish politics' (Odmalm 2011: 1072) is less convincing. Immigration entry policies have been a recurring theme in Swedish politics since at least 1989, and have been so both in periods when anti-immigration parties existed and when they did not. As shown in Hinnfors et al (2011) the Swedish Social Democrats have been very consistent in their aim for either a status quo regarding entry policies or leaning slightly towards more restrictive policies. In the present paper, we will show that among the centre-right parties the same consistency, albeit in favour of more open policies, is true for all the four parties apart from the Conservatives, who have oscillated between open and strict policies.

*Labour Migration Policy Debates: Third-Country Nationals (TCNs) EU Enlargement and Circular Migration*

As the Swedish economy rapidly expanded at the start of the new millennium, and as demographic forecasts pointed towards the spectre of a rapidly graying workforce, the Confederation of Swedish Employers (*Svenskt Näringsliv* / SN) began a sustained campaign for the relaxation of Sweden's strict labour migration policies for third-country nationals (Fahimi 2001). Since the early 1970s, similar to most other European states, labour migration to Sweden had been sharply limited, with short-term temporary work permits being the norm, and with virtually no opportunities for conversion to permanent residency. In an initial report, authored by an upcoming Liberal Party politician, a key proposal was that employers – and not labour market authorities – should have decision-making authority as to whether a given potential migrant was appropriate for the position at hand, and should be granted a permit (Fahimi 2001:16). SN economists followed up with a more detailed report in spring 2002, as that autumn's parliamentary election campaign increasingly took shape, reasserting the need for employers to have discretion over work permit applications as well as freedom of movement for the migrant throughout the sectors of the economy and a relatively quick path to permanent residency (Ekenger & Wallen 2002). The ruling SAP bitterly opposed proposals for a more open labour migration policy, with then Prime Minister Göran Persson (2002) dismissing such calls as 'the dumbest thing we could do' and MPs characterizing the proposals as a 'neo-liberal wedge' designed to break up the Swedish welfare model (Riksdagen: svar på fråga 2002/03:696).

Both the Greens, who had declared that 'a more open Sweden leads to a richer society' (*Miljöpartiet* 2002) and the Liberals, who stressed that "Sweden needs more immigrants, not fewer" (*Folkpartiet* 2002) were enthusiastic and early supporters of the calls for a substantially less restrictive labour migration policy. The four bourgeois parties collectively mocked the ruling SAP for 'happily criticizing us for our desire to let more

people come to our land and contribute to both their own and everyone's well-being' (Lundgren, Svensson, Olofsson, Leijonborg 2002). Similar criticisms of the SAP insistence that labour migration was not desirable while domestic unemployment rates remained high was also expressed by individual bourgeois parties, such as the Moderate Party's admonishment that 'it's up to us to decide whether immigration (will be seen as) as a resource for, or a drain on, our society' (*Moderaterna* 2002). The central argument advanced by all five parties in favour of more open labour migration policies was the demand for labour – both short term as evidenced in the number of jobs that were going unfilled in certain sectors, as well as long term, in the face of dire labour shortages that would have an impact across the Swedish economy.

Despite the SAP victory in the 2002 election, labour migration gained traction when, in early 2003, the Greens published a proposal for a socially responsible labour migration. SAP policy was portrayed as embodying the principles that 'global development involves open borders for goods and capital, but closed borders for people' and 'those who live here first have to get jobs before we let others in' (*Miljöpartiet* 2003). In its place, the Greens proposed a new set of regulations that were largely similar to those of SN and the Liberals. This proposal paved the way for a Blue-Green sponsored parliamentary committee investigation into the relaxation of TCN labour migration policy, a move that was firmly opposed by the SAP. When the committee released its final report in autumn 2006, just one month after the SAP had suffered a historic defeat at the hands of the four-party bourgeois alliance, the majority SAP – Left Party proposals offered little in the way of concrete relaxation of the existing rules other than the possibility for limited permit renewals and eventual sector-wide access for migrants to job opportunities (Bucken-Knapp 2009). Yet, with the support of the Greens, the non-socialist government

implemented its desired reform in 2008, stripping unions of their veto power over applications, and creating a path to permanent residency for labour migrants that provided them with ever broader access to the sectors of the Swedish economy (Regeringens proposition 2007/08:147). In justifying its far-reaching reforms, Minister of Migration Tobias Billström stressed how a more liberal entry policy could play an important role in preserving a desirable dependency ratio between active workers and the elderly, as well as the possibility for knock-on employment effects (Sveriges Radio 2007).

Simultaneous to the battle over the reform of Sweden's TCN entry policy, parties were embroiled in a debate as to whether transitional rules for citizens from the ten states acceding to the EU in May 2004 ought to be adopted.

Initially, the SAP opposed rules that would block the free movement of labour to Sweden from Europe's newest citizens (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2002). Yet, this changed in the spring of 2003, when a parliamentary committee report (title in English??) highlighted the prospect that generous Swedish social services could serve as a powerful pull factor for Eastern European migrants (SOU:2002:116). Following the broadcast of an investigative television program focusing on the impact of EU enlargement for Swedish welfare state services, Prime Minister Göran Persson speculated that transitional rules might be necessary to prevent cases of 'benefits tourism' (*Aftonbladet* 2003). By spring 2004, the SAP had shifted firmly in favor of transitional rules, proposing that work permits and job offers be required for the first year that citizens from the new EU member states were resident in Sweden, and reserving the possibility that a test of labour market conditions could be introduced if deemed necessary – thus potentially putting new EU citizens and TCNs on similar footing when seeking employment in Sweden (Skr. 2003/04:119).

While the four non-socialist parties were opposed to the SAP's proposal, they did not adopt a joint stance rejecting transitional rules. Centre Party leader Maud Olofsson sharply criticized Göran Persson, noting that 'in the zeal to maintain power, and to avoid taking responsibility, (Persson) is feeding an unhealthy welfare nationalism' (*TT Nyhetsbanken* 2004a). Leading Christian Democratic candidates for the 2004 EU parliamentary elections also underscored the party's opposition to transitional rules, arguing that 'free movement (of peoples) is a fundamental right' and that any conditions imposed on entry would further foster the sense within the new EU member states that they were not being admitted as equal members (*TT Nyhetsbanken* 2004b). In contrast, both the Liberals and the Moderate emerged with separate counter-proposals to that of the SAP. The Liberals advocated that migrants would need to document being in possession of sufficient funds for their first year in Sweden (a stance consistent with their concerns about TCN access to welfare state services), but opposed work permits. This was, however, a deeply divisive issue within the party and key members, such as current party chair Erik Ullenhag and current EU Minister Birgitta Ohlsson, openly opposed the parliamentary party's decision. Non-socialist allies also expressed disappointment, with one leading Christian Democrat noting that it felt 'particularly difficult that a party that stands for social liberalism would succumb to the government's populism' (*TT Nyhetsbanken* 2004c). Senior Moderate Party politicians attacked the ruling SAP's call for transitional rules, noting that while previously 'a wall kept people trapped in Eastern Europe, the Social Democrats want to erect a wall around Sweden that will shut them out'. Yet, the Moderates too advocated some brand of transitional rules. Stressing that the party valued 'free movement and the right of people to build an independent life based on their own work,' the Moderates proposed residence (not work) permits be granted to migrants with offers of employment, and suggesting that

phased-in social benefits should be considered (Reinfeldt, Carlsson & Westerberg 2004). For their part, the Greens had focused their efforts on joint propositions with the Left Party, emphasizing the need for better regulation of migrants seeking independent contractor status. Despite a last minute effort by the SAP to secure a compromise deal with the Liberals, in which support would be thrown behind legislation allowing for implementation of work permits 'at a later date' if necessary, no deal could be reached (*Sveriges Television* 2004). The SAP, Liberals and Moderates each voted in favor of their respective propositions, while the remaining parties opposed transitional rules.

While the Blue-Green reform of TCN labour migration policy in 2008 paved the way for non-EU citizens to work and settle permanently in Sweden, the governing bourgeois alliance was also keenly interested in exploring the degree to which circular migration of foreign labour to Sweden could be better facilitated, establishing a parliamentary committee of investigation to that end in 2009 (Dir 2009:53). Here too, the Greens played a key role, with a leading figure on the party, MP Mikaela Valtersson, being named chair of the committee. Given our contention that Sweden's non-socialist parties have been at the forefront of efforts to implement more open entry policies, it may seem counterintuitive that the current government's support for circular migration – an ongoing pattern in which migrants regularly spend time in both the sending and receiving countries – should be counted in that column. Yet, it should be stressed that support from non-socialist parties for circular migration does not represent a retreat from the policy allowing TCNs to settle permanently in Sweden. Indeed, the governing alliance and the Greens regularly highlight their desire to extend their liberal migration policies, where possible. Rather, circular migration was deemed warranted both for its potential contribution to development policy goals (Skr. 2007/08:89). While the government acknowledged clear economic benefits for

Sweden in terms of greater levels of circular migration (*Svenska Dagbladet* 2010), such as through increased tax receipts, a particular emphasis was placed on how circular migration could boost both the economy of the sending country, as well as its level of social capital (Dir 2009:53 2). The committee's final report, published in April 2011, proposed a number of measures that embraced the principle that migrants ought to have the opportunity to move back and forth between their homelands and Sweden. Underpinning all proposals was a broad logic that increased migration could make a contribution to counteracting demographic trends within Sweden, improve economic development opportunities within sending countries, and 'to the extent where it is possible, people should get to choose where and how they will live their lives' (SOU 2011:28 73). Key among these was the proposal that migrants in possession of Swedish permanent residency would now be able to leave Sweden for a period of five years without having their permit revoked, as opposed to the current one-year rule, provided written notification was submitted to the Swedish Migration Board (SOU 2011:28 102). The authors also proposed, among other changes, that migrants in possession of Swedish unemployment insurance could, under certain conditions, continue to receive payments for a period of three months while looking for employment abroad (SOU 2011:28 188), and the ability for students who have completed their education to receive a six-month residency permit in order to pursue employment (SOU 2011:28 150).

Perhaps the most controversial reform to emerge in the committee report had to do with the proposed ability for asylum seekers to 'switch tracks' and pursue legal residency in Sweden as labour migrants. Hardly a new proposal, this had been one of the most contentious points of division between the Liberal Party and the SAP during over labour migration during the 2002 parliamentary election campaign (Bucken-Knapp 2009). While

some possibility existed for asylum seekers to remain in Sweden as labour migrants if their application for asylum was unsuccessful, the committee proposed a path for doing so that made this a prospect much more within reach (SOU 2011:28 123-25). SAP committee members issued a written dissent on this point, requesting that the ‘switching tracks’ issue be analyzed separately, but also noting concern that even with the existing limited possibilities for asylum seekers to obtain work permits, ‘cynical employers’ had been exploiting immigrants and forcing them to accept working conditions that were not in keeping with prevailing agreements (SOU 2011:28 297). For committee chair Valtersson though, the emphasis was clearly on the positive. Circular migration was framed as a ‘triple bonus... partly for the individual, partly for the receiving country that benefits from competence and new impulses, and partly for the sending country that gets back new knowledge’ (Riksdag & Departement 2011).

Taken jointly, some key themes do emerge when considering the proposals put forward by the bourgeois parties and the Greens. First, there is an indictment that Social Democratic entry policy has been a protectionist instrument, privileging the political and institutional interests of trade unions over that of the shifting needs of the Swedish labour market. Second, the desire to break with restrictive stances is partially motivated by arguments about the general virtues of openness in a globalized world. Individuals, the respective sending and receiving societies, and the international community as a whole are thought to benefit economically and culturally from eased cross-border labour flows. Finally, to a great extent, Blue-Green arguments in support of more open entry policies also reflect a view of policymaking chiefly as one of problem-solving: in the face of a demographic crisis, where a substantially larger labour pool will be necessary, and where an appropriately skilled set of workers is not always on hand, labour migration emerges as a



means of achieving economic growth and a sound financial basis for Sweden's generous welfare state services.

### *Refugee Migration Policy Debates*

It is frequently argued that while immigration is very much an 'issue' for mainstream parties in Europe, it is rarely a dividing factor for Swedish parties (Hammar 1999; Rydgren 2002; Odmalm 2011). Rather it is assumed that there has been a broad consensus among Swedish political parties when it comes to overall migration ambitions and the strategies to fulfill them. Although the above assumption may largely be accurate regarding the political behavior of the two largest parties the Social Democratic Party (SAP) and the Moderate Party (M) regarding refugee policy, this assumption is not accurate for mainstream political parties as a whole in Sweden. In fact, the last three decades of refugee policy making in Sweden can be characterized as highly dynamic and far from consensual. Over the years, Swedish refugee policy making has fluctuated between restrictive and open features. In this section, we outline the decisions in support of open policies made by centre-right political parties in the period 1991-2011.

After the election of 1991, the new centre-right government was formed by the four parties: the Centre Party, the Liberal Party (Folkpartiet), the Moderate Party, and the Christian Democrats. One of the new government's first actions was to withdraw the previous SAP government's bill 'An active immigration and refugee policy', proposed in early 1991. In essence, the bill suggested that refugees seeking asylum in Sweden should be granted temporary residence permits rather than permanent ones. Instead, refugees should be helped back to their home countries as soon as possible, the argument being that this would

constitute a more humanitarian and ‘holistic’ policy than inviting the refugees to become Swedish citizens with possible future burdens on the welfare state system (Tollefsen & Altamirano 1998). The Liberals, with 9.1 percent of the vote, paid extra attention to the new government’s asylum policies. The Liberals held the Department for Cultural Affairs (which dealt with immigration issues at that time) and were able to mold government refugee policies in an increasingly open direction. According to Birgit Friggebo, Liberal Minister of Immigration representing in the centre-right coalition government, members of her party regarded the refugee policy of the previous SAP government as becoming increasingly restrictive (Riksdagens snabbprotokoll 1993/94:76)

The principal object of the Liberals’ criticism was the decision of the SAP government in December 1989 popularly known as the ‘Lucia-decision’. The ‘St Lucia’ (a Swedish 13 December festival related to Christmas) decision in 1989 was tantamount to a drastic tightening of asylum rules; only a strict application of the Geneva convention was to be utilised. In a statement, Maj-Lis Lööv, then Social Democratic minister for immigration affairs, held that limitations to refugee numbers were essential in order to safeguard a dignified reception in the new country (Lundh & Ohlsson 1994: 91). However, the new centre-right government took immediate action to reverse this policy by replacing the interpretation of the SAP with the previously generous practices of the Aliens Act.

The next step towards more open immigration policies was taken in 1993. On the initiative of the Liberals, the centre-right government granted 40,000 Bosnian refugees permanent residence permits. In 1992, other European countries, including the Nordic states, had already applied Temporary Protection as their means for addressing the refugee wave stemming from the Yugoslav crisis (Tollefsen & Altamirano 1998: 90). As a direct result

of the centre-right government's decision, Sweden accepted the greatest number of Bosnian refugees among Nordic countries. Other Nordic countries accepted more modest amounts, with Denmark accepting 19,000; Norway 10,000; and Finland 1,000. To grant permanent residence to Bosnian refugees was by no means straightforward or simple. Three policy alternatives were debated prior to the Bosnian decision (Appelqvist 2000; Tollefsen & Altamirano 1998.). The first option was to bide one's time, i.e. take no action. The second option was to grant the Bosnians temporary residence permits with a subsequent conversion into permanent residence permits should the situation in Bosnia deteriorate. Finally, the third option was to grant permanent residence permits from the outset. The SAP and Moderate Party advocated temporary permits. The SAP argued that the Bosnian National Organisation wanted its citizens back for post war reconstruction and that those who received permanent residence permits would lose touch with their motherland. As the Swedish standard of living would be higher than in the country of origin, it was argued that the refugees would lack incentives to return and thus, Sweden would not contribute to reconstruction. Instead, Sweden should make repatriation easy and thereby avoid creating new groups of social security dependents. Repeatedly, the Social Democrats have been eager to avoid any extra burden on the welfare state. Initially, this position was shared by the Moderate Party. However, the Liberals opposed the temporary permits proposal and instead advocated permanent residence permits. A contributing factor behind the Liberal stance was the fact that many of the refugees had been in the country for quite some time. Security and the refugees' right to regain control over their lives were important arguments in favour of the permanent solution (Riksdagens snabbprotokoll 1993/94:76). Migration minister Birgit Frigebo noted that:

One can say that the decision was chiefly made within the Liberal Party.

For me, it wasn't any obvious decision. What made it decisive was the

situation in the camps. We received ongoing reports throughout the spring that (conditions) were just too awful. So, it was purely humanitarian, when we thought that ‘at least they’ll know -- that in any event they’ll feel safe in the knowledge that they can stay.’ (Tollefsen/Altamirano, 1998:104.)

After internal centre-right Government negotiations, permanent residence permits became Government policy, which can be regarded as a dramatic break with earlier ongoing moves towards ever-stricter policies. The decision to grant permanent residence can be interpreted as an expression of liberal ideology. The motives that guided the Liberals’ decision focused upon the individual and upon his or her needs and requirements in terms of coping with the situation. During the Bosnian crisis, the Liberal line held that very little suggested an improvement in conditions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and that it would be unreasonable, inhuman and destructive to individual refugees to wait for the situation to settle. The party’s arguments emphasised core liberal ideas about individual freedoms. It is also important to understand the centre-right government’s decision in a wider perspective, which is related to the Liberals’ understanding of refugee policy making in general. During the period of being a party in opposition, the Liberals were known to criticise the refugee policy of both the SAP and the Moderates. On various occasions, the Liberals had articulated the view that the generous humanitarian goal of the Swedish refugee policy was diminishing. Seen from this perspective, the granting of permanent residence to the Bosnians represented the articulation of the particular interests of the Liberals, who with three other parties comprised a coalition government. Once in power, the Liberals were in a position to reverse a policy it regarded as deeply restrictive.

The 1993 decision on permanent residence permits can be regarded as a brief parenthesis of openness. When the SAP returned to office in 1994, they reverted to the policies of the late 1980s. The 1995 Parliamentary investigation 'Refugee Policies in a Global Perspective' held that *'it's a human right to be able to return to your country. Encouraging voluntary returns should constitute an important part of refugee policies'* (SOU 1995:75, 205). A 1996 Government bill added emphasis to the policy by facilitating voluntary returns for all, including those who held permanent residence permits (Government bill 1996/97:25). Furthermore, a heated debate erupted over purported simulation of semi or total paralysis and apathy among young children in families who were about to be expelled after having been denied residence permits. The SAP minister in charge, Barbro Holmberg, strongly defended a report from the Cabinet's special co-ordinator, which claimed the children were 'up and running' at nights when reporters were away and that the children were either intoxicated or otherwise induced by their parents to act in order to persuade the immigration authorities to grant residence permits to the family. The allegations caused a furor among parts of the centre-right opposition and five of the *Riksdag*'s parties: The Liberals, The Christian Democratic Party, The Centre Party, The Left Party and The Green demanded the children and their families be given amnesty, including permanent residence permits. The demand was turned down by the combined Social Democratic and Moderate party votes in a subsequent *Riksdag* vote.

After 1995, the numbers of newly arrived asylum-seekers fell rapidly (Migrationsverkets statistik). In 2006 and 2007, however, Sweden once again became an important destination country for asylum-seekers. In 2007, the Swedish Board of Migration registered a total of 36,207 applications for asylum, more than any other EU state. The high figures experienced by Sweden can primarily be explained by a significant increase in the flow of

refugees from Iraq since 2006, a result of the enactment of a temporary asylum Act, in force from November 2005 to March 2006. The Act made it easier to obtain a residence permit, especially for families with children who had been in Sweden for a lengthy period. The Act was pushed forward by a grand coalition of grassroots movements, religious communities and political parties, again with the exception of the SAP and the Moderates.

In the spring 2011 the four government parties (The Moderates, The Christian Democrats, The Centre Party, and The Liberals) forged a comprehensive framework agreement with The Greens. Among other things, the agreement aims to give illegal immigrants the right to healthcare and education and would give them the right to run businesses. The move follows long negotiations between the smaller governing parties (The Centre, The Liberals and The Christian Democrats) who have long argued for more rights for undocumented migrants, and the Moderate Party, which opposed the idea. Migration minister Tobias Billström (M) has previously argued that giving such entitlements would legitimize people who have no right to be in Sweden (SR Ekot 30/10 2008).

### *Concluding Remarks*

Thus far, we have been able to show that Swedish non-socialist parties have a strong record of supporting comparatively more open entry policies for both labour migrants and asylum seekers. In this section, we attempt to make sense of what is, for many, a counter-intuitive result. After all, the Swedish case has emerged as something of a mirror image to that of the standard portrayal of entry policy preferences held by mainstream political parties: among mainstream actors, it is not the non-socialists who have championed restrictive measures, it has been the centre-left -- the once

hegemonic SAP. In reflecting on the Swedish case, it is not our aim to argue that the support of Swedish non-socialist parties can be accounted for by one factor alone.

Rather, we wish to highlight how the preferences held by these parties indicate limitations of several key contenders used for analyzing party behavior in the realm of immigration policy, and how the limits of their explanatory capacity allows us to take the first critical step in another direction: considering the role of party ideology.

As shown in Table 2, several non-socialist parties have more or less consistently formulated open policies. These empirical observations are counter-intuitive, provoking us to seek new explanations concerning the emergence of open immigration entry policies. Apparently, open policies were formulated by non-socialist parties in spite of success at the polls for anti-immigration parties. At the same time, the main contender for government power, the SAP, did not move in an open direction. Likewise, there is no immediate relationship between public opinion trends and the stance on entry policies taken by neither the non-socialist parties nor the SAP. Table 2 provides the fundamentals for a formalized explanatory analysis concerning party policy choice given various strategic contexts. By using the information provided by the table's columns we are able to indicate the degree of 'Anti-Immigration Party' and Xenophobic Public Opinion' threats the mainstream parties have been exposed to at various 1989-2011 intervals. The columns to the far right indicate whether the parties have formulated 'Restrictive' ('R') or 'Open' ('O') policies. As can be readily shown through Table 2, 'High' and 'Low' levels of 'Anti-Immigration Party Threat' do not correlate with non-socialist immigration policy (nor with those of the SAP). These results cast doubt on the vote maximization arguments.

**TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE**

It is comparatively easy to demonstrate how the Swedish case does not square perfectly with the logic of prevailing accounts. Unlike literature emphasizing how shifts in the party system will provide certain inducements for centre-right actors to back restrictive entry policies -- chiefly as a result of the increased electoral fortunes of populist parties -- this has not been the case in Sweden. In the four electoral cycles when anti-immigration have constituted a realist party threat to the established parties, 1991-94, 2002-06, 2006-10 and 2010-, Swedish non-socialist parties have made support for various open entry policy measures a visible component of their politics, both in terms of labour migration and refugee /asylum seekers. Over the course of the last three periods, the populist SD steadily grew in strength, capturing significant numbers of seats in local government and achieving its long-held goal of Riksdag representation in 2010. Yet, Swedish non-socialist parties have remained the key actors pushing for implementation of policies making it comparatively easier for foreigners to come and settle in Sweden. Even prior to the formal advent of SD, non-socialist parties made their mark on Swedish migration policy by implementing a distinctly more open entry policy for refugees and asylum seekers in the early 1990s -- the period in which the populist New Democracy had its brief but strong parliamentary success. Moreover, although the populist ND and SD parties' were heavily criticised by all mainstream parties it has not been the case that strict immigration entry policies have been anathema as such. As strict labour migration policies were continuously standard SAP policy and, at times, stricter refugee /asylum policies too, it would have been perfectly easy for the non-socialist parties to join them in order to stave off any right-wing threats -- but they did not do so. Moreover, in spite of the SAP's overall party system interest in creating a red-green bloc against the centre-right government post-2006, the



SAP has not been able to share policies with the Greens on the issue of immigration entry policies. Our suggestion is that the underlying ideologies differed between the SAP and the non-socialist parties, thus preparing the triumph for different policies.

By the same token, public opinion is only of limited utility for making sense of the stance by Swedish non-socialist parties in support of open entry policies. As one example, surveys in 2002 and 2003 showed that substantial majorities favoured allowing TCNs with employment offers to come to Sweden (Bucken-Knapp 2009). Likewise, studies show that public opinion regarding refugee numbers have dropped from the 1990s to the 2000s (although still relatively high). At first glance, such evidence would appear to cast doubt on our claim that public opinion is not crucial for shaping a given party's entry policy preferences. After all, if public opinion is strongly supportive of labour migration, and political parties visibly support it, wouldn't one argue this has the makings of a causal linkage? And if voters become more understanding and accepting about relatively high refugee numbers and parties actually formulate and implement more open policies, wouldn't that indicate an explanatory relationship? However, we doubt that public opinion is such a strict determinant of entry policy preferences for one important reason: at the same time as the Swedish public was strongly in support of more relaxed entry policies, the ruling SAP was vehemently opposed to it. Indeed, in 2002, support for a less restrictive migration policy was high even among SAP voters (63 percent) and a majority of LO members (59 percent). Further, in 2003, the respective percentage of SAP supporters and LO members supporting labour migration had increased (Bucken-Knapp 2009). In the same vein, we notice that while voter support for refugees increased (Demker 2010), the SAP refrained from joining the various centre-right policy agreements regarding less strict legislation concerning refugees. If parties formulate entry policies with one eye on voters,

be it the electorate as a whole, or their most loyal support base, then we would have expected that all mainstream Swedish parties would have moved sharply in the direction of open entry policies and not just the non-socialists. Moreover, there was no denying that populist parties had in fact attracted substantial numbers of voters who supported restrictive entry policies. Indeed, the SAP's unwillingness to move in a more open direction could be interpreted as as a Downsian form of policy adaptation to public opinion moods. Again, a comparison between the parties reveal flaws in the argument, as non-socialist parties took a completely opposite policy path from that of the SAP. Given that there is nothing in the public opinion hypothesis that suggests it is limited to only one party of families, we find this hypothesis lacking.

Yet, if non-socialist parties are not driven to support open entry policies on the basis of inter-party competition or the pulls of public opinion, is it possible that opening Sweden's borders to increased levels of migration can simply be regarded as the rational act of policymakers solely interested in solving pressing economic problems or ensuring compliance with international norms for humanitarian treatment of displaced and persecuted peoples? Here too, at first glance, one might think the Swedish case lends support to the thesis of policymakers as problem-solvers. As Bleich (2002) notes, this literature portrays actors as 'responding to problems by implementing new and better policy solutions arrived at through processes of learning.' Cross-national differences in policy responses are thought to stem from differences in local conditions and the lessons learned from previous attempts at solving the given policy problem. However, this more technocratic account is ill-suited for application to the Swedish case. Given that both non-socialist parties and the SAP are facing the same policy challenge – be it in the form of demographic shortages or foreign citizens seeking protection – a problem-solving

perspective cannot be utilized for making sense of sharply divergent responses by competing actors.

Thus, if both conventional accounts of migration policy preference formation, and more technocratic accounts of policy makers as problem-solvers have clear limitation, what possible explanation is left? We argue that in order to make sense of why Swedish non-socialist parties have such a strong record of backing open entry policies, one needs to consider the role of ideology as the missing explanatory factor. Even though we concede that parties may have contradictory elements within their overarching ideologies, we believe previous research has exaggerated the extent to which these elements are equally influential. One or the other of the ideological strands most likely takes the upper hand and will do so more or less continuously. This helps to clarify why it is that political battles over immigration entry policies have come back so regularly and have been so similar and the contestants so predictable over at least thirty years.

When one looks at the overall picture, there is a sufficient trail of evidence pointing towards the role of ideology in shaping the entry policy preferences of Swedish non-socialist parties. Quite consistently, open policies have been supported by referring to liberal principles about basic human liberties. As regards labour migration, a recurrent theme has been about market-led immigration rather than state planning as the norm. Likewise, arguments about more open policies have been sharply critical of social democratic, corporatist solutions involving tri-partite arrangements where the state, the unions and the employers strike bargains and reach political compromises.

The non-socialist parties have not always acted as a unified bloc regarding entry policies. Occasionally, the Moderates have perceived refugee migration flows to Sweden as problematic. However, given the Swedish party structure, the Moderates have had many reasons to close ranks with the other non-socialist parties to present a government alternative. These strategic fundamentals would perhaps lend some credence to the party system explanatory factor and we do indeed acknowledge its importance. However, at the same time, we emphasize that it has been the Moderates' overarching ideological goal to challenge the SAP's vision of how Swedish society ought to be organized and administered. Moreover, even prior to the establishment of the four-party non-socialist alliance in 2004, the Moderate Party has advocated -- on its own and in conjunction with the other non-socialist parties -- a labour migration reform chiefly relying on market dynamics.

Throughout, the Liberals and the Christian Democrats have advocated strong moral and ethical values inherent in the responsibility to protect refugees with The Christian Democrats referring to Christian moral values and the Liberals to individual rights. For example, during the Bosnian refugee crisis the 'individualism line' held that it would be unreasonable, inhuman and destructive to the individual refugee to wait for the situation to settle or to take individual responsibility for any 'national' or 'state' Bosnian considerations.

Swedish debates over immigration policy have, in fact, substantially mirrored the respective visions held by the socialist bloc (Social Democrats and the Left Party) and the non-socialist bloc (the Moderate, Centre, Liberal and Christian Democrat's and perhaps Greens) towards both the welfare state and the regulation of the labour market. Even though welfare state institutions rarely change overnight, it appears that the political

paradigms of different welfare states represent useful analytical tools when it comes to understanding different attitudes towards migration. The Swedish socialist parties traditionally advocate a strong welfare state with benefits, rights and duties for all its citizens. This system is thus highly redistributive in accordance to its norm of ensuring equality. On the contrary, the Swedish Liberals construct their policies on the political and ideological assumption that does not centre on the dismantling of the Swedish welfare state. Rather, while the Liberals and other non-socialist parties broadly support that the broad entitlements of the welfare state should remain intact, these should only be accessed after the individual has exhausted most reasonable attempts at securing employment.

On balance then, the contribution of this paper is a modest, albeit important, one to debates over political parties and entry policy preference formation. At the most empirical level of analysis, we have clearly documented that non-socialist parties in Sweden have been at the forefront of open door policies, both with regards to labour migration and those concerning refugees and asylum seekers. This stands in sharp contrast to both research literature -- and a popular perception -- that parties of the centre-right and their allies are generally the sources of restrictive immigration policies. Whether this pattern is borne out in other settings remains to be seen. In terms of prevailing theoretical accounts of parties and entry policy preferences, the Swedish case highlights the need to consider more a more nuanced set of dynamics. There is no doubt that parties have a chief aim of securing votes in order to govern or exercise influence. To that end, both an awareness of inter-party competitive dynamics and the tides of public opinion are crucial. But parties do not move about in this strategic environment blindly when formulating entry policy. As we have argued, they do so with the aid of ideology. The task for researchers now is to better specify how ideology exerts an influence on the formation of migration policy preferences -- both for non-

socialist and socialist parties, and both in Sweden and beyond. There is no denying that earlier research has convincingly shown that right-of-centre parties in many European settings have indeed moved towards stricter immigration policies. However, for future studies, we suggest a more narrow exploration of whether and how ideology matters, particularly where conclusions have perhaps prematurely been reached as to the decisive role of far-right populist parties in shaping the European immigration policy agenda. To a great extent, this will involve a re-analysis of many settings where the politics of migration policy have previously been examined. This is undoubtedly a complex and time-consuming process-tracing exercise, but it is a valuable one.

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Table 1. Swedish Parties 1989-2011 Immigration Entry Policy Stances\*

Swedish Guvernements	Key Policy Decision and Restrictiveness/Openness (R = Restrictive, O = Open)	Supporting Party(ies)
1989-1991 SAP	<b>R:</b> Strict application of the Geneva convention + temporary residence permits only (1989)	SAP+M
1991-1994 NON SOC (M, L, C, K)	<b>O:</b> Permanent residence permits reintroduced; notion of 'refugee' widened (1993)  <b>O:</b> Decision to grant permanent residence to Bosnian refugees.  <b>R:</b> Temporary residence permits reintroduced (permanent possible)	NON SOC (L, C, K, M)  NON SOC (L, C, K, M)  NON SOC (L, C, K, M)+SAP
1994-2006 SAP	<b>R:</b> Labour migration restrictions regarding new EU member states** (2004)  <b>O:</b> No labour migration restrictions regarding new EU member states** (2004)  <b>R:</b> Deportation possible even in cases where child suffers from 'apathy stress syndrome' (2006)  <b>O:</b> Enactment of a temporary Asylum Act. The Act made it easier to obtain a residence permit for, primarily, families with children who have been in Sweden for a long time.	SAP+Left party  NON SOC (M,L,C,K,G)  SAP + M  NON SOC (L,C,K,G)+Left party
2006-2011 NON SOC (M, L, C, K)	<b>O:</b> Labour market immigration from non EU countries reintroduced (2007)  <b>O:</b> Measures to facilitate greater circular migration debated and proposed  <b>O:</b> Asylum seekers whose application for residency has been rejected but who remain in the country without permission, have received an increased right to education, health care and the right to run businesses	NON SOC (M,L,C,K,G)  NON SOC (M,L,C,K,G)  NON SOC (M,L,C,K,G)

SAP: Social Democratic Party; M: Moderate Party; L: Liberal party; C: Centre Party; K: Christian Democrats, G: Green Party

\*) R = Restrictive = Parties refer to their policies as 'strict' and/or declare that the number of entrants should be limited and/or declare that current legislation should be implemented 'efficiently' and/or declare that entry legislation should become tighter/stricter and/or declare that asylum should be given on the condition of return and/or declare that various abuses of the asylum system should be penalised; O=Open= Parties refer to their policies as 'open' or 'liberal' or 'humane' and/or declare that the number of entrants should be increased and/or declare that current legislation should be interpreted liberally and/or declare that immigration rights should be extended to new groups (Gudbrandsen 2010: 254 f.).

\*\*) Please note that the minority SAP government's restrictive proposal for transitional arrangements for citizens from the new EU member states was defeated in parliament by the joint votes from non-socialist and green parties in favour of an open policy.

Table 2. Immigration Policy Decisions in Relation to Several Strategic Contexts

Swedish Governments	Anti-Immigration Party Election Result	Degree of Anti-Immigration Party Threat	Degree of Public Opinion Xenophobic Threat	Key Policy Decision and Restrictiveness/Openness (R = Restrictive, O = Open)	Supporting Party(ies)
1989-1991 SAP	0	None	No Data	R: Strict application of the Geneva convention + temporary residence permits only (1989)	SAP+M
1991-94 NON SOC (M, L, C, K)	91-94 (ND): 6.7%	HIGH	HIGH	O: Permanent residence permits reintroduced; notion of 'refugee' widened (1993)  O: Decision to grant permanent residence to Bosnian refugees.  R: Temporary residence permits reintroduced (permanent possible)	NON SOC (L, C, K, M)  NON SOC (L, C, K, M)  NON SOC (L, C, K, M)+SAP
1994-2006 SAP	94 (ND): 1.2%  98 (SD): 0.4%  02 (SD): 1.4%	LOW	94-98: HIGH  99-01: MEDIUM  02-03: MEDIUM/HIGH  04: HIGH  05-06: MEDIUM	R: Labour migration restrictions regarding new EU member states (2004; NB rejected by the <i>Riksdag</i> )  O: No labour migration restrictions regarding new EU member states (2004; NB carried by the <i>Riksdag</i> )  R: Deportation possible even in cases where child suffers from 'apathy stress syndrome' (2006)  O: Enactment of a temporary Asylum Act. The Act made it easier to obtain a residence permit for, primarily, families with children who have been in Sweden for a long time.	SAP+Left party  NON SOC (M,L,C,K,G)  SAP + M  NON SOC (L,C,K,G)+Left party
2006-2011 NON SOC (M, L, C, K)	06 (SD): 2.9%  10 (SD): 5,7%	HIGH	07-11: MEDIUM	O: Labour market immigration from non EU countries reintroduced (2007)  O: Measures to facilitate greater circular migration debated and proposed  O: Asylum seekers whose application for residency has been rejected but who remain in the country without permission, have received an increased right to education, health care and the right to run businesses	NON SOC (M,L,C,K,G)  NON SOC (M,L,C,K,G)  NON SOC (M,L,C,K,G)

