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## **WELFARE CHAUVINISM: IMMIGRATION POLICY AGENDA OF FAR-RIGHT POLITICAL PARTIES IN SCANDINAVIA**

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### **Abstract**

Welfare chauvinism prioritizes welfare of its own citizens over immigrants or outsiders. This approach builds a narrative against immigration by using challenges of economic crisis, security and xenophobia. Rise in immigration became a significant topic in the political discourse and also the main reason for success of Far-Right Political Parties in the European region. They are also known to be Populist Radical Right, Anti-Immigrants and Nationalist parties. Anti-immigrants discourse also impacted the public voting behaviors and gave rise to Far-Right parties in Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Sweden and Norway). The study focuses on welfare chauvinism and immigration policy agenda of the Far-Right parties. Main objective is to analyze the impact of Far-Right parties on immigration policy and to see the challenges associated with it in Scandinavia. Qualitative research based on secondary sources of data collection was conducted to observe the Far-Right impact on immigration. Methodologically three emerging Far-Right parties from Scandinavia were taken, Danish Progress party, Swedish democrats and Norwegian Progress party. Theoretically Tore Bjørgo and Lars Erik Berntzen's Model based on Far-right typology was used. Data was analyzed through content analysis of the debates, party manifestos and speeches by Far-Right parties. Far-Right parties are found gaining power and becoming a part of coalition governments in European democracies. In Scandinavia, political parties adopted exclusionary and restrictive policies toward immigration and built a narrative against immigrants and linked crimes, unemployment, security and welfare scarcity with them. It is concluded that Far-Right parties are gaining clout and adopted strict approach towards immigration. They also declared certain cultures and religions intolerant against democracy and their national values.

### **Keywords**

Far-right, Immigration, Welfare Chauvinism, Scandinavia



## 1. Introduction

Welfare Chauvinism is a political philosophy which focuses that welfare benefits must be kept for the natives and such welfare benefits not to be shared with immigrants. It also emphasizes on the demand of increased benefits for the natives and reduced benefits for the outsiders (Mudde *et al.* 2017: 35). Welfare chauvinism concepts mainly focus on the betterment and maximum benefit sharing with nationals of the country. This approach started emerging due to welfare benefits sharing with many immigrants all over the world. Immigration is considered to be a burden by many welfare states. Sharing of state resources is one of the greatest concerns in the welfare state. Recent flow of immigrants and refugee crisis 2015 in Europe created burden on welfare resources. Refugee crisis 2015 has been high on the Nordic policy agenda due to massive inflow of immigrants and refugees. It includes men; women and minors (Liebig, T. 2018). The population of the Nordic Region has increased in recent decades, rising by 16 percent between 1990 and 2017 (Nordic Council Ministries 2018:20). Due to massive inflow of people, emerging concerns like economic scarcity and threat to national culture leads to ideology of welfare chauvinism. Furthermore, Welfare Chauvinism emphasizes on substantial and improved benefits for the native people and reduced benefits for people out of the states. It also promoted exclusion of immigrants in the region. This approach builds a narrative against immigration by using challenges of economic crisis, security and xenophobia. However it is seen that such conditions occurs when outsiders are considered to be threat to the wellbeing of the

welfare state and taking more state resources (Hjorth, 2016). Immigration is becoming significant focus in European political discourses, especially due to increase of immigrants and refugees. They also created impact in form of rise of Far-right and challenges of xenophobia, intolerance and future policies in Europe. Far-rights are also known as Right wing and Nationalist parties all over the world. These parties took immigration issue as main agenda of the parties and won election in many parts of the European countries. Furthermore, Europe's populist revival proposes that the mainland's craving for globalization might be satisfied. Immigration particularly is trying European buoyancy. Noticeable scholastic voices pledge that immigration has prodded the recoil of multiculturalism (Ethan, 2019). Across Europe, derision discourse, bigotry, racism, and violent and sadistic Far Right Extremism (FRE) are gaining a momentum. This is encouraging a developing disavowal of political and popular redressal of grievances by governmental institutions, breeding cultural antagonism and polarization, and could prompt the emergence of profound divisions between far-right extremists and their rivals and can further generate backlash from minorities and refugees. FRE is an umbrella term for the revolutionary and extreme right, and it incorporates a scope of different belief systems that exist together with other FRE philosophies like National Socialism and fascism (Ran Local, 2019). In recent years, far-right parties come into power as they focus on threat of immigrations, unemployment and crimes. They are to some extent promote rise of xenophobia and anti- democratic sentiments among the general

public. Immigrants are blamed for lack of jobs available earlier to low paying native born citizens. Scandinavian countries are characterized by strong welfare states. These states treat every one with equality even the immigrants. Large number of social services is shared with immigrants in those states. But immigration is considered a political issue and highlighted by Far-Right political parties as a threat to their culture and economy. In this article, Main objective of the study is to focus on welfare chauvinism and immigration policy agenda of the Far-Right parties in Scandinavian countries. Research is based on following questions: 1) what is meant by Welfare Chauvinism? 2) What is Immigration policy agenda explained by Far-Right parties in Scandinavia? 3) What are the factors contributed to success of Far-Right Parties in Scandinavia? 4) What are their perceptions about immigrant's religion and culture? Moreover to analyze and to see the challenges associated with it in Scandinavia. With this study, we contributed to the increasing literature on right wing politics and concerns toward immigration especially in welfare states of Scandinavia. Our analysis is of great significance for other countries develop and developing where nationalist party culture is promoted and focusing only on insiders or natives.

## **2. Literature Review**

Mudde *et al.* (2017) focus on describing the concept of Welfare Chauvinism. This political philosophy promotes more social welfare benefits need to be given to the natives and not to be shared with immigrants. Katrine Fangen & Mari Vaage (2018) focus on case study of Norwegian Progress party, it highlighted that Immigration is the main issue in

mobilizing the voters and promotion of right wing political parties. They portray immigration it as a dangerous act for the country. In 2013, Norway progress party made alliance with mainstream political party and formed a coalition government. Later in 2017 both parties re-elected. The related immigration policy with Muslim immigration and consider them a threat for the state. A narrative was build that Islam is a threat to our liberal cultural values. Elisabeth Niklasson & Herdis Hølleland, (2018) focus on European politics, where in past few years radical change in the form of far-right political parties started emerging and secured entrance in national parliaments. Study focus on three leading far-right parties; Sweden democrats, Danish people's party and Progress party (Norway). Their main concerns are the preservation of cultural heritage through political debates. Lewis Davis and Sumit S. Deole (2017) Immigration brought many policy challenges for European countries. Those policies related to the sharing of social services, refugees and also the rise of far-right political parties. Michelle Falkenbach and Scott L. Greer (2018) study focus on basic concepts of political parties and how they impacted the policy making. It further explains about the impact of radical right parties on policies. These parties are impacting in three ways; first focusing on migrants, security and crimes and ignoring welfare. Secondly they are implementing exclusionary policies and lastly it's not clear yet that whether they become beneficial for the natives, whom they claim to represent and safe guard of their benefits. Ulrike M. Vieten & Scott Poynting (2016) focus on far right populism in Europe, in the form of anti-immigration, anti-asylum seeker, rise of Far-Right

populism and situation against the Muslim communities in Europe. There is a division on the bases of us and them as they are othering the religious communities. They are also against the integration process. Furthermore, Anders Buch *et al.* (2018) explain about Integration process is used to adjust immigrants and refugees in host countries. Different laws and initiatives are arranged for the integration by Nordic countries like language education, employment services, training and internships.

### **3. Methodology**

For the collection of the data, qualitative research based on secondary sources of data collection was conducted to see the Far-Right political parties' impact on immigration in Scandinavia. Furthermore, historical approach is also used to see the emergence and leading circumstances for the far-right political parties. Methodologically three emerging Far-Right parties from Scandinavia were taken, Danish Progress party, Swedish democrats and Norwegian Progress party, comparative approach is used to see common concerns raised by the above mentioned three parties.

#### *3.1 Danish Progress Party*

In 2010, Danish progress party whole political program consisted of the main ideas like stop immigration, tight security check on the border, against integration procedures and policy and strict treatment with immigrants and especially refugees.

#### *3.2 Sweden Democrats*

The Sweden Democrats came into existence 1986 under the leadership of Jimie Akesson 2005. From 1990-2000 this political parties welcome the immigration and asylum in Sweden but there

perception and policies changed after the massive influx of refugees in 2015. In 2018 Sweden Democrats became the largest party in Sweden. They also consider immigrants as burden and against the integration policy. They also criticize the immigration policy. They are considered to be threat to cultural foundations and economically pressurizing the economy of the state. According to them, Immigration has become a threat for society, economy, national identity and societal cohesion. They are also threat for solidarity of the state. They are against integration and multiculturalism practices. They want immigrants to send back to the country of their origin and strict border control need to be implemented. They consider immigration and integration policy is a failure. Sweden democrats are against multiculturalism and want migrants to return back to their country. They want refugees must remain in their specified locations.

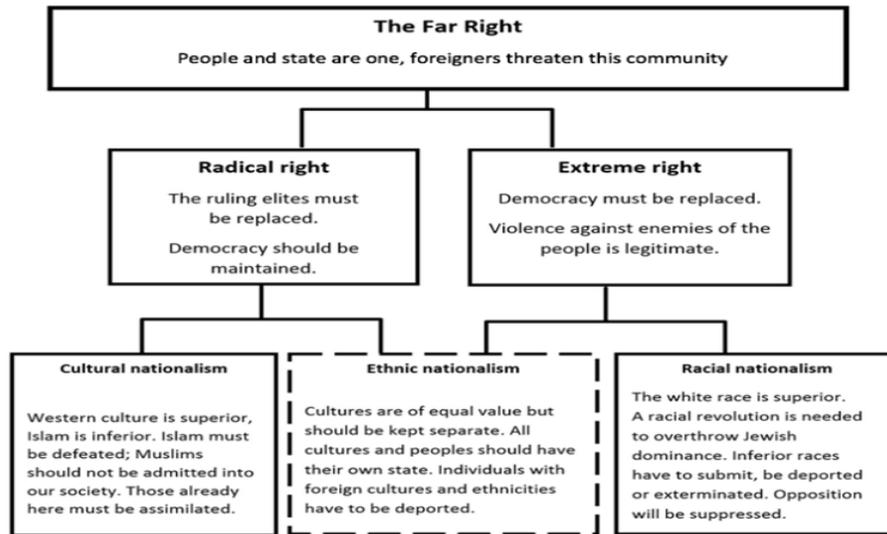
#### *3.3 Norwegian Progress Party*

Norwegian Progress party came into existence in 1973 by Anders Lange. Now it's become the third largest political parties and with constant support of natives becoming part of main stream political parties in parliament. Different politicians of this political party are in leading positions like Sylvi Listhaug worked as first minister of Immigration and integration during time period of 2015-18 in Norway. Siv Jensen current party leader and Norway Minister of Finance (2013-2020) are ruling in mainstream. Historically from 1990 Progress party focus on welfare and economic aspects of immigration policy, for them immigration put constrains on the welfare state. In 1993 they start talking about integration politics in party programs.

Moreover after refugee crisis of 2015 changed the political situation, Norway is among the countries that accommodated large number of refugees on humanitarian grounds. Resettlement and integration of the immigrants and refugees were the main task of the government. But the parties in opposition demanded more restrict immigration policy which most of the time explained as anti-immigration. Case study of Scandinavian countries is taken because it has a welfare state. As welfare states believes in equal distributions of state resources for all its members. The main common factor chosen among all parties is there Immigration stance as in such times refugee crisis is impacting all over the European states. Main reason for selection these parties if there political ideologies, as all three

political parties are on similar grounds against immigration, refugees and immigrants.

Data collection started with the literature review on the concepts like Welfare chauvinism, Immigration and Far-Right political parties so the researcher has conceptual clarity. Their stance for immigration is taken. Immigration is becoming a great political issue in European politics. Data was analyzed through content analysis of the debates, party manifestos and speeches by Far-Right parties. Even their official websites and social media pages were also studies to know about their ideology against immigration. Theoretically Far-right typology developed by Tore Bjørgo & Lars Erik Berntzen is taken as it focuses on radical right views on promotion of cultural and racial nationalism.



**Figure No 1.** Tore Bjørgoand Lars Erik Berntzen's Model

Far-right typology developed by Tore Bjørgo, together with Lars Erik Berntzen is displayed below:

**Source:** Tore Bjørgoand Lars Erik Berntzen's Model,Norwegian Center for Research on Extremism(C-REX) RAN

LOCAL meeting in Rotterdam (Netherlands) on 23 and 24 January 2019.

This model describes main thinking of far-right that only natives are associated with state and rest of outsiders creates problem for community. Furthermore, it encourages democratic values and

people who are against these values need to be punished by the state. Far-right also speaks about nationalist superiority and preservation of their culture, race and ethnic community.

#### 4. Results and Discussion

Welfare chauvinism demands primarily emphasis on the betterment of its own citizens rather immigrants. Far-right builds this narrative against immigrants and linked hate crimes, unemployment, and security threats with them. They also vindicated that certain cultures and religions are intolerant against democracy and their national values. Scandinavian countries are practicing policies of the welfare states sharing equal opportunities and rights for people living in those states. That's why large number of immigrants prefers such states where rights are shared equally among community members, but on the other hand data shows that Far-Right Political parties are gaining strength in those welfare states. It is seen that in Scandinavia anti-immigration sentiments is increasing among the society which is further leading to strict immigration policy and concerns. Moreover Ethno nationalism and welfare chauvinism provided a productive ground for the growth of far-right political parties. In current scenario, rise in immigration became an important topic in the political discourse and also became the main reason for success of Populist Radical Right (Far-Right) Parties in Europe. Anti-immigrants attitudes impacted on the voting behaviors of the people and gave rise to Far-Right parties in Scandinavian countries. In Scandinavia, Sweden Democrats, Danish People's Party, and the Norwegian Progress Party have achieved notable level of electoral success. In 2015 election, Danish People's Party received 20% of vote, achieving largest share of the vote of any right-wing party (Nardelli and Arnett, 2015). In 2018 Swedish election, the Sweden Democrats grasp 62 seats in the

parliament (Mudde, 2018). In 2013 Elections, Norwegian Progress Party became a part of coalition government (Nardelli and Arnett, 2015). Far right parties are gaining more powers in Sweden as compare to Norway and Denmark. It is found that in Scandinavia 20 percent of voter support was gained by far right parties. In 2018 election, Sweden far right party gain 18 percent of votes due to infusing anti-immigrants and Islamophobia posts (Widfeldt, A. 2018). It is seen that immigration rate to Sweden are higher as compare to Norway and Denmark. It's due to more accommodating immigration laws in Sweden (Jakobsen *et al.*, 2018). In 2017, about 2.5 million of the population migrated to Sweden (Statistics Sweden, 2017). It is noted that Norwegian progress party become the third largest political parties and with constant support of natives becoming part of main stream political parties in parliament. Different politicians of this political party are in leading positions like Sylvi Listhaug worked as first minister of Immigration and integration during time period of 2015-18 in Norway. Siv Jensen current party leader and Norway Minister of Finance (2013-2020) are ruling in mainstream. Far-Right populism is a political ideology, which focus more on the native people and want to implement policies against anti-immigration. Political parties who belong to such school of thought are radical right political parties. These radical right parties are against the immigration in Europe. Situation become worse after the 2015 refugee crisis as large number of people immigrated to European countries. Many European considered immigrants a threat to their culture and national identities of Europe. They also presume that with

increased number of immigrants will promote crimes and scarcity of resources for natives. They think immigrants are of different culture, they are creating issues in jobs for natives and increasing burden on social welfare care benefits. Earlier these were the countries who were welcoming large number of immigrants and refugees.

#### *4.1 Factors Contributed to Success of Far-Right Parties*

Far-right emphasize on the promotion of democracy and participatory of natives in governmental affairs. They also allow and encourage legalize violence against the immigrants. It is seen that three dimensional nationalism is endorsed by them; racial, ethnic and cultural nationalism. Furthermore superiority and inferiority discrimination is also promoted by far-right political parties. They endorsed superiority of white community and western cultural values. It is also noticed that derogatory remarks for other religions and cultural values are promoted by far rights political parties. There are some factors which contributed toward breeding ground for the success of right-wing political parties. Among them is increasing level of immigration and unemployment rate. Immigration is at peak in these recent years. Immigration has influenced the society and economy of the Scandinavian countries. According to far-right immigrants are considered to be threat for the local communities. In early 2018, the unemployment rate was 4.8% in Denmark, 4% in Norway, and 6.2% in Sweden (Eurostat, 2018).It mainly affects people on low-paying jobs.

#### *4.2 Islamophobia and Cultural Threats and Return of Immigrants and Refugees*

Majority of immigrants in Scandinavia are from Muslim countries. Moreover common factors among three political parties are there views for strict border control, no support for integration and hatred for multiculturalism approach. All three parties advocated for Islamophobia policies, all want refugees and immigrants to return back to their countries, secure border policies, want homogeneous and conservative society and have anti-immigrant stance. Far-right political parties linked Immigration with Muslims and Islamic values, claims that western culture can't adjust them and want to distance them from all the benefits. Moreover far-right promoting such stance that people of other cultures isn't welcomed here because Muslims are threat to their ethnic and cultural nationalist values.

In Ethnic dimension it is seen that far-right are less respectful toward other culture and discourage multicultural policies. They also want immigrants should return back to their own countries.

#### *4.3 Immigration Policy Agenda of Far-Right Parties in Scandinavia*

Immigration has become a political issue and especially after the refugee crisis. Far-Right parties which are critical to immigration have entered the mainstream governmental politics. In Sweden in 2014-2016 numbers of immigrants increased from 20% to 45% (SOM Institute survey 2016).Denmark has imposed strict immigration law; The Danish Far-Right party very clearly influenced state policies in welfare chauvinist direction (Careja *et al*, 2016).The Danish Far-Right party has imposed authoritarian, ideas towards immigration agenda, there are different cases seen where refugees were confiscated and immigrants areas were called as ghetto areas

(Berry 2018). It is found that Far-Right parties are gaining power and becoming a part of coalition governments in European. They are becoming the part of mainstream politics and democracies. In Scandinavia, Swedish democrats, Danish Progress party and Norwegian Progress parties made issue of immigration politicized. These parties adapted exclusionary and restrictive policies toward immigration and integration. Furthermore build a narrative against immigrants and linked crimes, unemployment, security and welfare scarcity with them. It further observed rise of Far-Right politics and parties in Scandinavian countries is linked with xenophobia and nationalism. It also promoted

exclusionary and anti-democratic politics in those areas. It is seen that immigration, culture and unemployment are the main factors that contributed to the accomplishment of them in Scandinavia. In many cases immigrants are blamed for the lack of job opportunities for low paying native citizens. Ideological differences also add toward the success of these political parties, like Ethno-nationalism and Welfare chauvinism. These parties focus on preservation of Nationalism and Cultural, Ethno and racial Nationalism. All three parties were agreeing on the following points regarding immigration policy:

**Table 1: Shows the points regarding immigration policy**

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1. Restoration of borders and border control product
  2. Ban on Immigration
  3. Stringent Treatment with immigrants and Refugees
  4. Confronting Integration policy and Multiculturalism
- 

Mostly it is seen that they provoke hatred for immigrants in the eyes of the citizens, strict border control on the sea and also set restriction on the states who are sharing access to ward Scandinavian region. Such measures were suggested by them; to set ban on the immigration process. Restricted treatment with the immigrants and especially toward the refugees as state must set some conditions to providing them social benefits. Moreover states must stop receiving refugees on the humanitarian grounds, as they are putting burden on the state economy and taking states benefits which will be kept or shared for their own citizens. Furthermore, far-right criticizes the present government policies regarding immigration and rejects initiatives which promote integration and multicultural acceptance.

## 5. Conclusion

It is concluded that Far-Right parties are gaining power and adopted strict approach toward immigration. They also regarded certain cultures and religions intolerant against democracy and their national values. The idea that a common enemy, a Frankenstein is always useful for political mobilization also stands true in this scenario, the Far-Right parties use the tried and tested strategy of divide and rule and polarization to develop a vote bank and a favorable political space. Nevertheless, the factors that have led to the success of these parties remain relevant and powerful triggers for a support base, especially with media and a global campaign involving Islamophobia and immigration policies. Scandinavian states are generally known

for their successful welfare policies, and are considered among the most livable countries in the world. However, the size of population is a significant and contributing factor in establishment of a successful welfare system, with influx of refugees and foreign immigrants, it is likely that welfare policies in Scandinavian states require a review and need to be designed keeping in view the increase in population. Therefore, the hurdle in the way of a review and redesigning of welfare policies is an obvious and necessary need to increase the allocation of finances leaving a burden on the economy of Scandinavian states, and this gives a solid ground for the Far-Right parties to peddle their political narrative. A rising and existing global divide is an important ingredient at the center of this issue as previously more homogeneous societies are moving towards heterogeneous trends with the rise of multiculturalism; this has paved way for the protagonists of homogeneity, cultural and racial superiority to adopt an appealing agenda for political maneuvering.

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