The European Migrant Crisis and the fortune of right-wing populist parties

Are mainstream parties' policies fueling Europe's right-wing populist parties?

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Abstract

In 2015, Europe faced one of the most extensive refugee flows since the Second World War. The situation forced European Governments to take actions on immigration issues to handle the increasing inflows of asylum seekers. We draw on Meguid's theory on party strategies to examine whether mainstream parties policies of immigration affects the public support of right-wing populist parties. Simultaneously, we include theories claiming that the amount of asylum seekers is crucial to public support of right-wing populist parties. These theories are the basis of our study when examining what may be fueling the success of right-wing populist parties in Sweden, Denmark, France and Italy. Our empirical findings concludes that there are no monocausal connection between mainstream parties' strategies and the amount of asylum seekers. The outcomes are variating between the examined countries. However, levels of immigration are in most cases more essential than strategies used by mainstream parties to affront with migration issues. Mainstream parties policies seemingly plays a more insignificant role when the asylum reception is extensive. Accordingly, our conclusion is that multiple variables need to be included to completely determine what impacts of right-wing populist parties public support.

Key words: Right-wing populist parties, mainstream parties, European Migrant Crisis, party strategies, migration flow.

Words: 9921

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1   Introduction

The ongoing stream of people migrating from Northern Africa, South Asia and the Middle East is described as one of Europe's greatest challenge since the Financial Crises in the 00's (Brinded 2016). Due to political instability in the these regions, proximately 1,3 millions have applied for asylum in numerous European countries, which classifies this refugee flow as one of the biggest since World War II (BBC, 2016). The humanitarian disaster is estimated to have cost the lives of 3,770 migrants that have tried to reach Europe crossing the Mediterranean sea, and the issue has been increasingly debated in media and political contexts, putting pressure on European governments (BBC, 2016).

Contemporaneously, the rise of right-wing populist parties has spread itself across Europe since the late 80's, a rise that was long unexpected and thought of as temporary (Zaslove, 2008). Nevertheless, several parties are now represented in both national parliaments and the European Parliament. In the elections of 2014, the *Sweden Democrats* received 12,86% of the national votes, an increase of 7.6 percentage points since the last elections and , and the Danish People's Party is the second largest party in Denmark since the national elections in 2015 (Valmyndigheten 2014; DIPD 2015). These events have caused the re-evaluation of the persistence of right wing parties. Anti-Immigration rhetoric and Xenophobia, being core issues of the parties' main policies, are claimed to rise in times of grievance (Ivarsflaten, 2008). Therefore, several scholars have investigated whether levels of migration flows have an impact on the support of right-wing populist parties (i.e Swank & Betz, 2003; Rydgren, 2004). Other scholars claim that the success of right-wing populist parties depends on the behaviour of mainstream parties (Meguid, 2005, Dahlström & Esaiasson, 2013). By taking previous research into account, the combination of migration flows

and mainstream parties policies, contributes to a relevant analysis of explanatories to the fortunes of right-wing populist parties, leads us to the following question:

Are Mainstream parties' policies regarding the European Migrant Crisis fueling Europe's Right-Wing populist parties?

The purpose of this thesis is to examine the impact of mainstream parties policies on the success of right- wing populist parties. Due to the current Migrant Crisis, the policy stances examined will regard various migration issues. Our aim is to evaluate whether mainstream parties policies and levels of migration, affects the public support of right-wing populist parties. Our hypothesis is that the strategies to deal with migration issues can either enforce or decrease the success of right-wing populist parties, particularly in combination with frequencies of asylum seekers. Since the focus of this thesis lies on the ongoing European Migration Crisis, we will be using material mainly from 2015 and the first two months of 2016, i.e. the years in which the Crisis has obtained most attention, and it is also the period in which most political decisions regarding the crisis can be found.

Furthermore, this research paper aims at contributing to the extensive debate concerning the rise and fortunes of right-wing populist parties. Even though these issues have been covered in multiple analyses, previous research shows a research gap related to mainstream parties' policies and right-wing populist parties fortune during the European Migrant Crisis. Although the field of right-wing populist parties have been covered in several forums before, their success becomes particularly interesting to analyse in times of increasing migration flows in Europe.

This thesis will start by setting out the context of this study, discussing previous research and the theoretical framework that mainstream parties and right-wing populist parties should be accounted to. Hence, we will discuss how this thesis

will be methodologically conducted, followed by collection of empirical data. Finally, the results of the thesis will be presented in the empirical section, analysed and discussed in our between-case analysis and conclusion.

2   Theoretical framework

2.1   Literature overview

Right-wing populist parties are not a recent phenomenon, neither are they unexplored. The research on right-wing populism is extensive and has been covered in many sub-disciplines of social science, but despite the academical consensus about the sense and danger of the phenomenon, there is currently no universal definition of right-wing populism, creating difficulties when labelling a party (Hainsworth, 2008). Betz (1993) describes right wing populist parties as:

> [R]ight-wing in their rejection of individual and social equality, in their opposition to the social integration of marginalized groups, and in their appeal to xenophobia, if not overt racism, [... and] populist in their instrumentalization of sentiments of anxiety and disenchantment and their appeal to the common man and his allegedly superior common sense (Betz, 1993).

Even though populism is described as more of a style and approach to channel the policy, rather than an ideology, it is also said to be a common feature of far-right wing parties (Hainsworth, 2008:21). In fact, according to Heinich, "The striking fact about many of the radical political movements that have emerged in the 'new politics' of post-industrial and post-cold war Europe is that they are both right-wing *and* populist" (Heinich, 2010). However, the definition of

right-wing populist parties is differentiated from radical in the sense that they neither seek to diminish the role of the state or reject (totally or partially) the sociopolitical system that characterizes the society they exist in (Frisch 1990: 8–9, Betz 1993). There is also a distinction from right-wing extremism, which is defined by some as "rooted in fascism"(Klandermans, 2013:60). According to Heinich, extremism and populism go hand in hand in right wing populist parties (Heinich 2008) According to Swank and Betz (2003), the evolution of the "new" far right cannot be linked to fascism but rather to sociopolitical factors that have been made possible due to conditions following the second World War. Indeed, many scholars agree on the fact that the period after the Second World War was a time of economical growth and political stability . In addition, the shock caused by the recent genocide was followed by a de-legitimization of far right, even though it did not last for long. (Betz, 1993). Due to a increasing distance from the 30- 40's and political instability caused by the introduction of a fragmented left, the   80's gave way to a resurrection of right wing political parties (Betz, 1993). Nonetheless, the consensus about the explanatory factors following the aforementioned historical events differ. The research on the current success have illustrated a number of variables detected as a hypothetical reason for right wing populist party success, creating confusion regarding the crucial explanatory variables of the discussed party family. Most research focus on either contextual factors or sociopolitical and economical factors (Baimbridge et al. 1994, 1995; Betz 1994, 1998; Jackman & Volpert 1996; Knigge 1998). or party strategy-related (Downs 1957; Meguid 2005; Esaiasson 2013) .

2.1.1. Asylum Seekers and Party Strategy

Among the latter variables, one has been particularly investigated, i.e. the populistic approach to channel resentment and grievance concerning migration issue. Especially correlated to the number of asylum applicants. The theory, first brought up by Swank and Betz (1991) showed a positive correlation between the number of asylum seekers and the number of votes received by right wing populist parties (Swank and Betz, 2003). The authors have also demonstrated that an increase of asylum seekers, being one of the outcomes of globalization, showed a positive correlation with the support for right wing populist parties. Although there are scholars claiming the overestimation of the effect of refugee flows. One possible explanation offered by Jens Rydgren is that it is not so much the inflow of asylum seekers in itself. It is rather the politicization of the migration issue directly connected to a refugee crisis, that can explain an increase in the support for this party family (Rydgren, 2004).

Among the studies conducted on institutional factors instead, one of the explanatories to the persistence and fortune of right-wing populist parties regards other parties political behaviour. Downs (1957), considered as the father of the party strategy field, believed that political parties in democracies are mainly office-seeking. According to him, policy seeking intentions are not the parties' main goal. What influences the policy stands is vote maximizing, which leads parties to "create" ideologies. However, Downs primary focus was on existing parties during the 50's, which today are considered as mainstream,

Studies concerning niche parties have been conducted by Meguid. She defines niche parties as those which stands out from parties with traditional socialist, liberal and conservative ideologies. The mainstream parties instead, is the parties channeling the largest amounts of votes the right side of the political scale and similarly with party on the left side. According to Meguid, the existence of niche parties was not identified until the 60's, when changes in the political climate led to the creation of these parties in several countries (Meguid 2005; Esaiasson 2013).

Furthermore, Bonny Meguid (2005), argues that mainstream parties behavior influences electoral fortunes of new, niche parties. According to her, niche parties differ from mainstream parties in multiple ways. The primary focus of niche parties is seldom class-based with prioritization on economic demands. It is rather a politicized sets of issues which spotlights other dimensions of political concerns that formerly belonged outside the party competition. For instance, right-wing populist parties demanded an increase of national values and a new political orientation, concentrating on immigration, during the 80s and 90s. Issues without strong attachment in previous party policies. To summarize, the niche parties chooses to concentrate on societal topics that the mainstream parties cover relatively little in order to create a pragmatic niche profile.

Meguid argues that mainstream parties react on the threat of new niche parties of strategical reasons which she categorizes in three terms of political behaviors. The mainstream party may ignore the issue brought up by the niche party (dismissive strategy), or approach it by addressing the issue into their policies (accommodative strategy), or thirdly, declare an oppositional stance to the niche

party and their arguments (adversarial strategy). The dismissive strategy is used when mainstream parties are seeking to withdraw attention from the niche party's main issue. To exemplify, by addressing the themes of immigrant issues into the political debate, the right-wing populist parties tend to draw attention to themselves in one way or another. To make sure that the niche party will not get monopoly on a certain issue (such as immigration), mainstream parties can choose to address an accommodative strategy. Even if the new party heavily emphasizes this issue area, it will not become a niche party when other parties already focuses on immigration, or begins to do so.

2.2. Theory and Hypothesis

In connection to the previously mentioned work on right- wing populist party success, our hypothesis is that:

H.1: The strategy used by mainstream parties to deal with migration issues can either enforce or decrease the success of right-wing populist parties.

We argue that mainstream parties accounts for leading positions within the political arena, channeling the majority of the votes from each side of the political right-wing scale. The mainstream parties both represent and pursue politics concerning the societal establishment, which implicates their potential of being agenda setting. However, according to Downs (1957), parties are considered as rational and vote-maximizing. Consequently, when niche parties, such as right-wing populist parties, clearly become associated with distinct policy issues leading to a more apparent position within the political arena, mainstream parties' strategies becomes of greater importance.

Europe is currently facing a migration crisis which is economically and politically challenging to the European Governments. Even though we believe

that mainstream parties policies affects the public support of right-wing populist parties, we argue that the frequencies of migration flows has a crucial impact for the fortunes of right-wing populist parties. Accordingly, our second hypothesis is:

H.2: The amount of asylum seekers is significant to the fortunes of right-wing populist parties.

As stated by Rydgren (2004), when a country is facing a drastical increase of asylum seekers, a political vacuum emerges, creating the possibility to politicize the migration issue. Being one of the right-wing populist parties biggest concerns, the opportunity to politicize the migration issue is more than often seized by these parties. The chance to gain public support increases when attention is drawn to core issues, generally belonging to right-wing populist parties.

In summary, we assume that both mainstream parties' policies and migration flows, affects the support of right wing populist parties. Furthermore, we believe that the Migration crisis influences the choices and outcomes of the different strategies, leading us to our final hypothesis:

H.3. A dismissive and adversarial strategy increases the support of right-wing populist parties. An accommodative strategy instead, decreases the support.

According to Meguid, the strategies decreasing the support of right wing populist parties are the dismissive and accommodative strategies, while the adversarial strategy increases its support. However, we believe that when witnessing an increase in the amount of asylum seekers, mainstream parties are forced to mainstream parties to take a stand on the issue. The refusal to do so would automatically lead to an increase of support for the right-wing populist party. The same is expected for an adversarial strategy. Nevertheless, an

accommodative strategy would lead to a decrease of the support for right-wing populist parties. The dismissive strategy could affect the right-wing populist negatively, only on the premise that a country does not receive a significant increase of asylum seekers. In that case, the need to address the issue is not as great. Likewise, the adversarial strategy. Furthermore, we believe that a distinguishable decline in the amount of asylum seekers is caused by a policy change, affecting the support for right wing populist parties.

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3   Method and research design

3.1   Method used

In this thesis, we intend to examine the fortunes of right-wing populist parties in Europe. Our aim is to explain variations in right-wing populist parties' public support by looking at migration flows and mainstream parties strategies as concerns the current European Migrant Crisis. We will be looking at material from the beginning of 2015 to February 2016 and the phenomenon will be analysed in Sweden, Denmark, Italy and France.

To investigate whether the strategy used by mainstream parties to deal with migration policy enforces or decreases the success of right-wing populist parties, we will be conducting a *disciplined-configurative* study, using an already existing theory to explain four different cases. In disciplined-configurative studies, the aim is to determine whether the chosen theory complies with the empirical cases (Esaiasson m.fl, 2012: 98-102).

One of our two independent variables is *mainstream party strategies on migration issues*, referring to policy stances and political measures during the European Migrant Crisis. The other independent variable is *the amount of asylum seekers* . We seek to examine the effect of these two variables on our dependent variable, *the support of right-wing populist parties*.

Our intention is not to examine mainstream parties' policy directly responding to right-wing populist parties. Rather, we seek to investigate how strategies to affront the migration issue affects the success of right-wing populist parties. Being a central part of right-wing populist party policy, any posture regarding the migration issue may influence the right-wing populist party. However, for the purpose of this research, our focus lies on the effects of policy stances.

To evaluate a mainstream party's original policy stance on immigration, we will analyze its party manifesto To identify whether the mainstream party changes strategy, we will analyse their submitted legislative documents and other documented policy proposals regarding migration issues. The material will be scrutinized by a qualitative content analysis, where the coding of the material will be based on main statements in the documents and their party manifestos (Bergström & Boréus, 2012:50-52).

After evaluating which strategies are used by the mainstream parties in various migration issues, we will label them as either *accommodative, adversarial or dismissive*. To further clarify, we will exemplify by a coding of a law bill.

"Sentences and paragraphs from the law bill *"Temporarily reintroduce border control at internal borders"* submitted by the Swedish Social Democrats, is found sufficient to represent a taken policy stance towards the issues *concern about illegal immigration*. Due to its recognizing of migrant smuggling across Swedish borders, emphasizing it as problem since it is "putting pressure on the Swedish asylum reception". Accordingly, the strategy label is accommodative. An accommodative coding is appropriate since the Sweden Democrats advocate a decrease in levels of immigration and express concerns about illegal immigration."

We are aware of the difficulties when labeling a strategy as dismissive to migration policies, due to a need of addressing the large-scale flow of immigrants. Nevertheless, a party can still be addressing certain parts of the migrant policy, or choose to address it without taking further political stances. Therefore, a dismissive strategy will be used as a label when the party avoids to address a certain unit of analysis. We will label the strategy to a affront an issue as *accommodative*, when the mainstream party proposes a law bill which policy stance generally belongs to the right-wing populist party.

To measure the impact of the strategies on the public support of right-wing populist parties, we will look at opinion polls from the beginning of the research's timeline and throughout the chosen time period. Furthermore, by looking at the first time asylum applications, we will be able to trace whether changes in refugee flows are related to, or caused by, policy changes.

In the section below, selected countries and parties can be observed

3.2   Selection of cases

Being a few cases study, the choice of cases are important to avoid selection bias (Esaiasson et al, 2012: 102-103). We have chosen to analyse four Western countries; Sweden, Denmark, France and Italy. Given one of our independent variables, the selection of countries are based on the variating amount of asylum seekers (Eurostat, 2016). The selection of countries are based on several crucial similarities, such as being liberal democracies with similar electoral systems, enabling new parties to become established and influential. Furthermore, they have experienced an increasing stream of asylum seekers during the current European Migrant Crisis, but i various degrees. The increase of asylum seekers, albeit the differences in volume, makes it possible to determine whether the

amount of asylum seekers plays a significant role to the success of right-wing populist parties. Additionally, all countries have a presence of right-wing populist parties. [1]

As aforementioned, we base our selection of mainstream parties as on Meguids definition: the party on the right side of the political scale which channels the majority of votes, and likewise on the left side. This method culminates into the following parties in each country:

Countries	Mainstream Party Right	Mainstream Party Left	Right-wing populist party
Sweden	*Moderates Party*	*Social Democrats*	*Sweden Democrats*
Denmark	*The Liberal Party*	*Social Democrats*	*Danish People's Party*
Italy	*Forward Italy*	*Democratic Party*	*Lega Nord*
France	*The Republicans*	*Socialist Party*	*National Front*

[1] In this thesis, we are not examining the existence of right-wing populist parties, although, to evaluate the support of these parties a presence of them is necessary.

3.3 Material

The material used in this thesis comprises legislative documents, documented policy proposals, statistics on the asylum seeker flow and opinion polls. Moreover we will take party manifestos into account to supplement mainstream parties' policy stance and their ideological background. The time interval will be delimited to the year 2015 and the the first two months of 2016

The majority of the material used in this thesis is gathered from official, primary sources. Party manifestos and documented policy proposals are retrieved from the parties' and Governments' official websites, while the legislative documents can be found in the National Authorities' websites, i.e. the Parliaments and Senate. The material will be collected from the parliament's official websites. In cases when law bills are not available, we are required to rely on party manifestos to identify policy stances. Although, if a mainstream party has not submitted a law bill or similar document regarding immigration issues 2015 and the first two months of 2016, this indicates that they have not changed their policy strategy. We have purposely chosen not to include political statements in media, due to the amount of material and the validity dilemma when distinguishing which statements to use.

To analyse a change in amount of asylum seekers we will be using statistical data from the Statistical Database of the European Commission (Eurostat) that measures "First time asylum applicants by citizenship, age and sex: Monthly data", covering the refugee flow to all the chosen countries.

The opinion polls used are gathered from databases *Novus, Berlinske Barometers, BVA and Termometro Politico*, Even though the confidence interval and institutional measures differ from case to case, the choice of databases is based Sources with the highest numbers of interviews made and the weighting of most institutional measures in each country.

3.4 Operational indicators

Our units of analysis are inspired by United Nations measurement of restrictive vs. nonrestrictive migration policy: "Definition of Migration Policy Variables" (UN, 2016)

Policy on [levels of] immigration: Policies to influence the level of documented immigration into the country, including terminologies of refugees, asylum seekers and irregular immigrant irregular immigrants referring to migrants lacking proper documents.

Policy on permanent settlement: Policies to influence the possibilities for permanent settlement in the given country.

Policy on integration of non nationals: Policies or programmes aimed at integrating non-nationals into society. These may include provisions for social services, involvement in civil and community activities and language training. It also includes identity based aspects of integration, such as culture, religion and traditions.

Policy on return of migrants to their home countries: Policies encouraging or facilitating return of migrants to their countries of origin.

Concerns about illegal migration: Indicates whether there is a concern about illegal ways into given country caused by smuggling or human trafficking.

The overall strategy is a combination of all the units of analysis that composes the migration policy variable. Hence, the strategy that accounts for the majority of units of analysis is the general approach on migration issues we find representative. To exemplify, if two of the units are labeled as dismissive, and

two as accommodative, but the predominant amount of units result in adversarial, then the final outcome is an adversarial strategy.

However, we will take saliency and clarity of policy stances into account. In cases when only brief statements in party manifestos are expressed regarding migration issues, we will look into distinct approaches as concerns certain units of analysis. To exemplify, if a mainstream party has a dismissive strategy in some units of analysis, but emphasizes others with clear policy stances, this contributes to the impression of the overall strategy. The accommodative or the adversarial strategy might result as the concluding strategy if we find arguments for some units of analysis being clearly addressed or specifically underlined.

3.5 Limitations of the study

In this thesis, we will use the terminologies asylum seekers, migrants and refugees, as they are variously referred to in our material. We are aware of an existing distinction between these terminologies, but we recognize that the terms are used parallelly within the immigration policy discourse.

The current Migrant Crisis goes under many names, but is mostly conceptualized as *the European Migrant Crisis* in media and political contexts. Therefore, we will be referring to the ongoing migrant stream as the European Migrant Crisis.

Moreover, we recognize the importance of transparency and the labeling of strategies is partly based on our interpretation, but likewise on reasonable operational indicators regarding migration issues. Accordingly, we consider the overall process reliable when evaluating whether party has a restrictive or a non-restrictive migration policy.

Finally, we will not discuss or problematize whether the right-wing populist parties in each country can be defined as such or not. Commonly, right-wing

populist parties dodge labeling themselves as a right-wing populist party (Hainsworth 2008:5). Therefore we will solely refer to and utilize Betz's definition of right-wing populist parties.

4   Cases

The disposition of this section is as follows. Initially, we will present the mainstream parties and briefly describe the right-wing populist party. Thereafter summarize main statements of migrations issues from mainstream parties' manifestos, which accounts for their original strategies . Afterwards, we will seek for policy changes by investigating legislative documents in chronological order. Subsequently, we will outline changes in migration flows and lastly, present opinion polls of right-wing populist parties, from the first of January 2015 to the 29th of February 2016.

4.1 Sweden

We will build our analysis of mainstream parties in Sweden on policies from the right-wing *Moderates Party* and the left-wing *Social Democrats*. The Social Democrats govern with the Green Party, whom together forms the red-green government coalition. The Moderate Party was a part of the governmental coalition during the previous election period. This thesis analysed right-wing populist party in Sweden is the *Sweden Democrats*, whom fulfill Betz (1992) criteria for being labeled as such. According to their official party website (Sverigedemokraterna, 2014), the party rejects the political division of a right-left party scale and do not position themselves within it. Their inspiration is based on traditional and conservative ideas and the party advocates an absolute minimum level of immigration. They argue that illegal immigration contributes to an increased level of migrants to Sweden, which threatens the public order and the Swedish culture. The ambition is to make Sweden create more restrictive immigration laws, arguing that focus should be in helping people in their home countries, rather than granting settlement in Sweden. Temporary residence

permits should only be granted when consequences of returning to the home country are fatal. Whereas permanent residence permit has been granted, the migrant needs to become integrated within Swedish culture, traditions, religion and learn the language. However, state- subsidies should not be given the work on asylum reception. Focus should be on community, not multiculturalism (Sverigedemokraterna, 2014). During the national elections 2014, the party obtained 12,9% of the votes and became the third largest party in Sweden (SCB).

4.1.1 Social Democrats

Party manifesto

	Policy on integration of non nationals	*Policy on permanent settlement*	*Policy on return of migrants to their home countries*	*Concerns about illegal immigration*	*Policy on levels of immigration*	*Overall strategy*
Social Democrats	AD	AD	DIS	ACC	ACC	AD

As seen in the table above, the Social Democrats accounted for an adversarial strategy when summarizing their policy stances toward several migration issues. Their main statements regarding migration issues follow below.

According to their party manifesto, the Social Democrats advocated:
- ❏ The benefits of cultural and religious differences as something that contributes to the development of Sweden.
- ❏ Improving the education for migrants and create opportunities for them to become a part of the labor market.
- ❏ A regulated immigration, yet the right to seek for asylum in Sweden is fundamental.

They also expressed concerns about illegal immigration, emphasizing worries of migrants smuggling and human trafficking. The party manifesto is not bringing up any discussion about the return of migrants to their home country, which makes that particular migration variable dismissive (Socialdemokraterna, 2014).

Due to our operational indicator of saliency in policy stances, the final outcome accounts for an adversarial strategy. Even though two migration variables are accommodative, distinct policy stances as regards integration of non-nationals and permanent settlement, contributes to an overall adversarial strategy. The Social Democrats encourage state-subsidies to finance integration projects while the Sweden Democrats clearly opposes financial support in favour of migrants and their integration. Furthermore, the Social Democrats support a regulated migration flow but emphasizes the rights to seek for asylum in Sweden. These statements pervades the parts of the party manifesto speaking of migration issues, which, according to their saliency, contributes to an adversarial strategy.

Law bills and policy changes

As seen in *appendix 1*, the Social Democrats submitted a majority of law bills and made several policy changes concerning integration and migration, during the end of 2015. The initial submitted legislative texts, show that the party maintained an adversarial strategy towards several migration issues, just as in their party manifesto. However, a distinct policy change became visible in November 2015. According to the Social Democrats, the increase of migrants seeking asylum in Sweden, resulted in an unsustainable burden to public order and services. Hence, a crucial policy change occurred between November and December 2015, when the Government established border controls and identity checks on public transports. They also made law amendments which aimed to drastically limit the possibilities of permanent settlement in Sweden. The Social Democrats clearly emerged into an accommodative strategy during this period of time, adopting policy stances normally belonging to the Sweden Democrats. Even though certain policy stances continued to be adversarial, such as policy on integration, focusing

on providing health care, education to migrants and state-subsidies to religious and societal communities, the overall strategy appeared to be accommodative during November and December 2015.

However, in February 2016, the adversarial strategy gradually became visible again. Although border controls continued to be established, as well as identity checks when crossing the Swedish internal border, policies on integration and concerns about illegal immigration, demonstrated an adversarial strategy. Creating legal channels to seek for asylum in EU and promoting internship opportunities for migrants, speaks for an adversarial strategy. Nevertheless, due to the continuation of border controls and more restrictive possibilities to be granted permanent settlement in Sweden, the overall strategy in the end February 2016 will be labeled as accommodative.

4.1.2 The Moderate Party

Party manifesto

	Policy on integration of non nationals	*Policy on permanent settlement*	*Policy on return of migrants to their home countries*	*Concerns about illegal immigration*	*Policy on levels of immigration*	*Overall strategy*
The Moderate Party	DIS	ACC	ACC	DIS	ACC	ACC

As seen in the table above, the Moderates Party accounted for an accommodative strategy when summarizing their policy stances towards several migration issues. Their main statements as regards migration issues follows below.

According to their party manifesto, the Moderate Party advocated:

❏ State-subsidies to support improved school education in exclusion areas and building more residences to conquer with the increased frequency of migrants.

❏ That temporary residence permit will solely be granted for those who arrive in Sweden on their own.

❏ A return of migrants to their home countries which must be functioning. There needs to be a difference between a yes and a no when it comes to residence permit.

❏ A regulated asylum reception due to the "unsustainable situation".

Concerning illegal immigration, the party manifesto does not mention anything on the subject. Furthermore, they emphasize the importance of religious freedom and demand support to religious communities to work towards religious violent extremism. However, they are not addressing any policy stances which concerns issues of integration, culture and language learning in their party manifesto, which results in a dismissive strategy towards that specific migration variable (Moderaterna, 2014)

Legislative proposals and policy changes

As aforementioned, the party manifesto belonging to the Moderate Party showed an accommodative strategy towards a majority of the migration variables. As seen in *appendix 2,* the party solely submitted a few legislative proposals, mainly in the end of 2015. It was not until October 2015 that the party submitted legislative proposals by virtue of migration and integration issues. Albeit emphasizing improved education for migrants in their native language and stating that temporary residence permits could become permanent after three years, the party withheld an accommodative strategy within most of the investigated areas.

In December 2015, the accommodative strategy concerned migration issues of, what we find, less relevant, such as financial support to social activities on behalf newly arrived migrants. However, the proposal of granting permanent settlement when a migrant are employed, indicates an adversarial policy stance towards an significant migration variable. Due to the noticeable accommodative strategy towards several migration variables during December, we experience that the overall strategy maintained a similar policy stance as in the party manifesto. Notably, the accommodative strategy became even more apparent as greater emphasis was put on policy on levels of immigration and decreased possibilities to be granted permanent settlement. Accordingly, the accommodative strategy accounts for the final outcome of legislative proposals from the Moderate Party.

Asylum Seekers
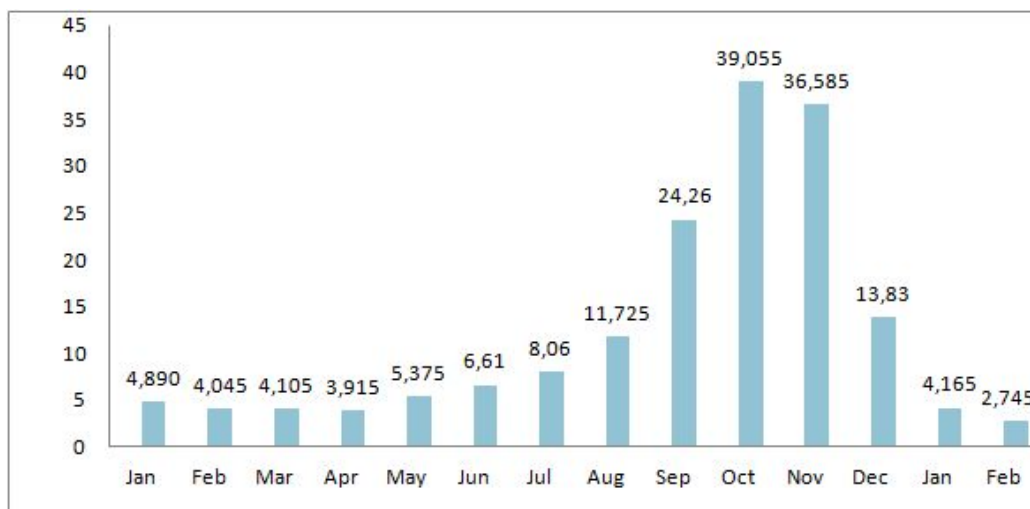
As seen in the chart above, Sweden accounted for a consistent asylum reception from January to May 2015. Approximately 4000-5000 migrants seeked for asylum on a monthly basis until June, when the migration flow gradually increased. During the autumn of 2015, and particularly between September and October, Sweden experienced a significant increase of asylum seekers. As the chart presents, Sweden reached its peak in asylum seekers during October and November 2015 when they nearly received 40 000 asylum seekers. The first noticeable decrease of asylum seekers occurred in January 2016. The amount of

monthly asylum seekers reverted to a similar level as in the beginning of the year. In February 2016, the migration flow was at its lowest, during our analysed period of time **(**Eurostat, 2016).

Opinion poll

Below, the opinion poll regarding changes in the public support for the Sweden Democrats is presented. In January 2015, the public support for Sweden Democrats showed 13,1 %, but throughout the year, the public support gradually increased. The highest percentage points were visible during the last months of 2015 (SCB, 2016)
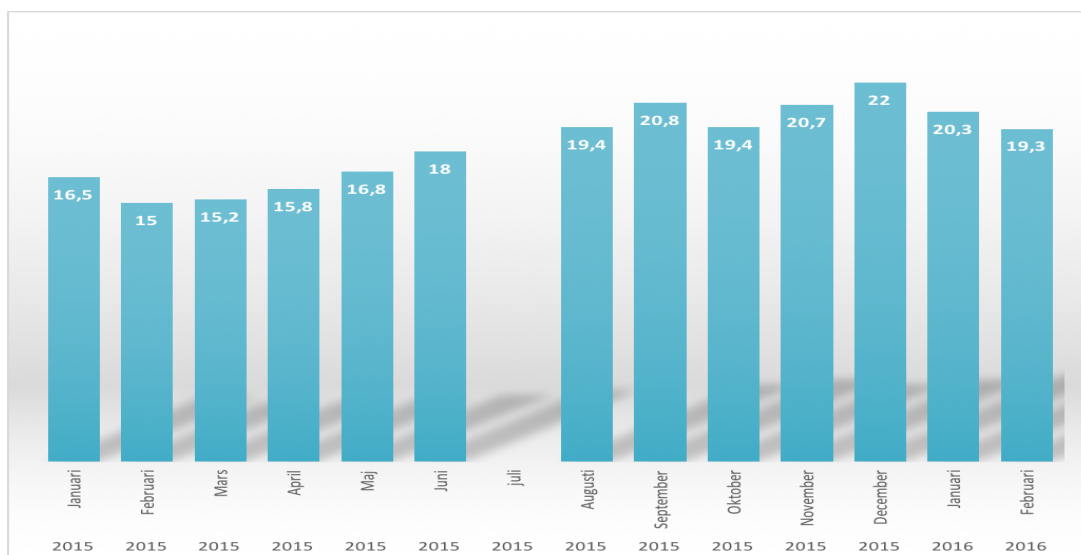
4.2. France

The mainstream parties dominating the French political arena are the left-wing *Socialist Party* and right-wing *The Republicans*. Led by Sarkozy, the Republicans (Union Pour Un Mouvement Populaire until 19 of March 2014) were elected in 2007 but lost to the Socialist Party, who has been governing since 2012. However, the political success is shared with the right-wing populist party *Front National*, who received 19% of the voters support in the elections of 2012 (Kauffman, 2011).

Front National was created in 1972, with the aim to unite all the nationalistic voices in France, and has since 1984 been its major representative (Kauffman, 2011). The party is strictly conservative and far-right on the scale, although the party itself rejects the left-right party division. The party's core issues are no tolerance on crimes and a restrictive migration policy (Front National, 2008). In their party manifesto, Front National claim that immigration is a big cost and the reason for why the salaries in France are low. The party stresses that measures stopping both legal and illegal immigration and should be taken. The granting of asylum should also be dramatically decreased, since assimilation and integration are not possible to achieve in a context of mass immigration. Furthermore, they claim that in workplaces, where several individuals have similar qualifications to become an employee, people with french nationality shall be prioritized.

4.2.1 The Socialist Party

	Policy on integration of non nationals	*Policy on permanent settlement*	*Policy on return of migrants to their home countries*	*Concerns about illegal immigration*	*Policy on levels of immigration*	*Overall strategy*
The Socialist Party	DIS	AD	DIS	ACC	DIS	DIS

As seen in the table above, the Socialist Party accounted for a dismissive strategy when summarizing their policy stances towards selected migration variables.

In its party manifesto, the Socialist Party emphasizes:

❏ Humanity as a mean when organizing the overall policy on migration, claiming that each nation must take its share of the world's misery. However, they argue that the work of guaranteeing the right of asylum and the combat of illegal immigration network, are tasks mainly belonging to the The European Union and other sovereign powers.

Although, they neither propose any concrete measures or take a clear stance on the subject. The overall criteria of saliency is not fulfilled, thereby classifying the general strategy of the Socialist Party as dismissive.

Legislative documents and policy changes

As seen in *appendix 3,* the measures taken by the governing Socialist Party concerning immigration are extensive, which serves as an explanation for the low number of legislative documents. Both the *Asylum Right Reform* and the *Foreign Law* have taken numerous months to be approved from the National

Assembly and the Senate. The Asylum Reform as an example, being a European directive from June 2013, was adopted in July and came into force in November 2015 (Legifrance 2015). The Foreign Law, instead, was presented to the National Assembly in 2014, revised throughout 2015 and put into effect in March 2016. The overall tendency is an adversarial strategy towards the migration issues, focusing on increasing the effectivity to revise and grant asylum to those being qualified to such. The only issue where the position is accommodative concerns policy on illegal immigration. It is important however to take into account that the policy of Front National is highly restrictive concerning immigration policy in general. Even though the government uses extensive resources to combat illegal and irregular migration, the crucial difference dividing the methods is the Socialist party's focus on reintegrating the migrants into their countries of origins, thereby explaining the adversarial points.

4.2.2 The Republicans

	Policy on integration of non nationals	Policy on permanent settlement	Policy on return of migrants to their home countries	Concerns about illegal immigration	Policy on levels of immigration	Overall strategy
The Republicans	ACC	DIS	DIS	ACC	ACC	ACC

As seen in the table above, the Republicans accounted for an accommodative strategy when summarizing their policy stances towards several.

.According to their party manifesto, they emphasize:
- ❏ A tolerant and pluralist general view.
- ❏ Enabling every citizen regardless of origin and [social] position, to participate in the "common destiny of the Republic, cultural diversity and the protection of world heritage"

❏ need to defend their territory against the hostile threats that this world has to offer, and that The European Union should protect its borders.

❏ the need for foreigners to adhere to French values and the embracing of French identity.

Legislative proposals and policy change

As can be seen in *appendix 4*, there are similar policy trends to noted in their law proposals and policy on migration. Looking at the first proposition, the proposed policy compels measurements to fight against the smuggling of migrants. The emphasis lies on the prevention of life losses. It is important to note that this is the only motion launched before September. However, the Republicans made public a guidance document on immigration in the 16th of September, addressing the migration issue and clarifying their stand regarding the Migration Crisis. Here, they address critique, both against the far-right for their "exaggerated view", and the left-wings "excessive openness" (Les Republicains 2015). The policy in this document differs remarkably from the party manifesto. As can be seen in the law bills, the discussion regarding migrants takes an increasingly adversarial standpoint throughout the year. Infact, as noted in the table, all the following law bills concern restricts and expulsions.
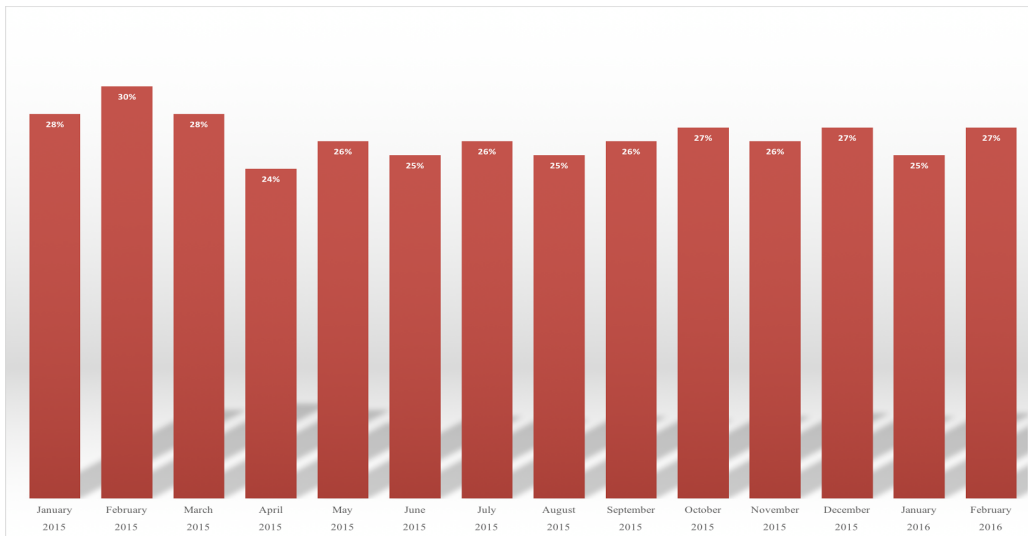
Asylum seekers
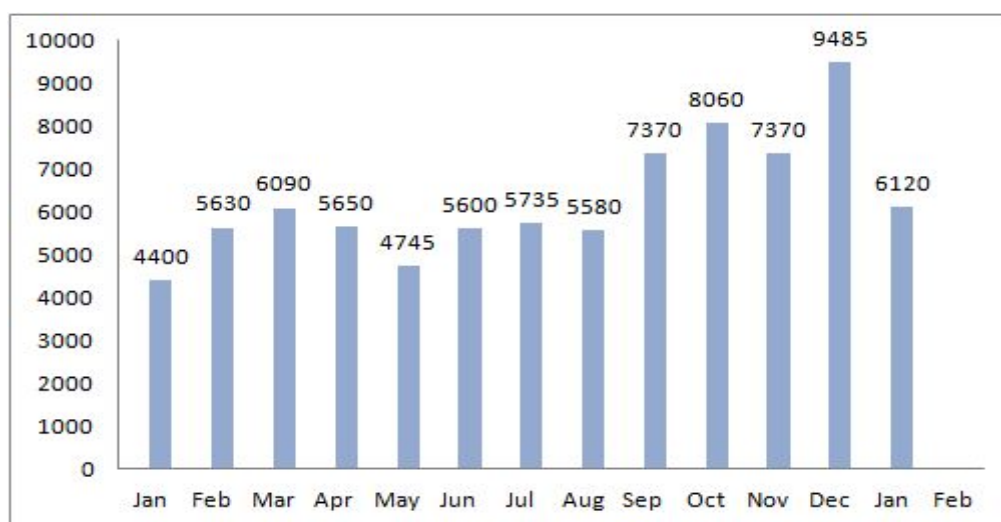
As seen in the table above, , the amount of asylum seekers has been relatively stable, with an increase in September. The increased number of asylum seekers lasted for three months, until the frequency decline in December again (Eurostat, 2016).

Opinion poll

As can be seen in the table above, Front National maintained an equal public support during our analysed period of time. It is barely possible to see any changes at all. However, they obtained a general public support with high amounts of percentage points (BVA, 2015).

4.3 Italy

Italian politics are often referred to as an enigma, being too complicated to understand by most people (Ruzza & Fella 2012:224). Hence, identifying the mainstream parties in Italy becomes rather difficult. Since 2014, The left-wing *Democratic Party* lead by Matteo Renzi, has been governing the country, thereby making the party a suitable centre-right mainstream party for this thesis. The main centre-right party on the other hand, is far more difficult to identify. The

Berlusconi-led *Forward Italy (Forza Italia)* was during a remote period the strongest centre-right party in italian politics (The Economist, 2014). In 2009, the party was dissolved and merged into the *The people of Freedom* together with *National Alliance*. The 2013 elections resulted in the dissolving of the coalition, and the former Berlusconi-led *Forward Italy* was re-created. This time however, the party did not become as popular as the its prequel, and today the second most popular party after the Democratic Party is today the anti-establishment, eurosceptic *Five Star Movement party (Movimento 5 Stelle) (The Economist)*. Accordingly, the analyzed mainstream parties in Italy are the *Democratic Party* and *Forward Italy.*

Despite Five Star Movement though, there is yet another party competing for the populist vote identified in italian Politics, i.e. Lega Nord (also known as "Per L'indipendenza della Padania") (Lega Nord). Lega Nord is a regionalist and right-wing populist party, created in 1989 (ibid.). Its origins can be found in the will to self-proclaim an autonomous region, "Padania", consisting of Parts of Northern Italy (Ibid.). From 2001-2006, Lega Nord participated in the Berlusconi Government, and was a part of the centre-right coalition "Centro-Destra" in 2013. Lead by Matteo Salvini since 2013, the party has gone through some significant changes and although regionally fragmented in the beginning, the party is today united against another cause: Immigration. Indeed, according to the party, the only accepted form of migration is work related. There is a no-tolerance policy against irregular and illegal immigration and the right of asylum should only be granted with caution, to avoid letting it become a way in for economical immigrants.

4.3.1 The Democratic Party

Party manifesto

	Policy on integration of non nationals	Policy on permanent settlement	Policy on return of migrants to their home countries	Concerns about illegal immigration	Policy on levels of immigration	Overall strategy
The Democratic Party	AD	DIS	DIS	AD	AD	AD

As seen in the table above, the Democratic Party accounted for an adversarial strategy when summarizing their policy stances towards several migration issues. Their main statements regarding migration issues follows below.

According to their party manifesto, the Democratic Party emphasized:

❏ A distance from a restrictive migration policy.

❏ migration as an asset that can be integrated with the needs and interests of the national community, if handled right

❏ integration is portrayed as a necessary process in the globalized world, and multicultural and civic resources should be valorized

❏ A responsibility of asylum reception

❏ That the culture of human rights should go beyond political, geographical and religious barriers

As noted here, the party presents several clear standpoints on the subject.

Law bills and policy changes

As can be seen in *appendix 5*, the overall policy adopted by the Democratic Party is centered around integration and the granting of asylum, taking a clear adversarial stand on the subject. However, the EuNavfor Med, an European Union-led military operation, launched on May 18th and initiated on June 22th, was taken part of by the Italian Government. The operation was led to fight the smuggling of migrants and to prevent further life losses, which was later amended through a Decree-law in Italian legislation, granting the Government with capital and personnel. The operation, although concerning a decrease of life loss, is less adversarial compared to previous law bills and policy stands. However, it is important to highlight that the intervention was not initiated by Italy, and therefore, although being a drastical measure compared to the aforementioned law propositions, it might not be part of the party strategy. Nevertheless, the following bills presented continues on the subject of integration and rights of foreigners, and can be illustrated by the revision of the citizen-law, e.g. making it possible for children born within Italian borders, although having foreign parents, to get a citizenship.

4.3.2 Forward Italy

Party manifesto

|	Policy on integration of non nationals	Policy on permanent settlement	Policy on return of migrants to their home countries	Concerns about illegal immigration	Policy on levels of immigration	Overall strategy
Forward Italy	ACC	DIS	DIS	DIS	DIS	DIS

As seen in the table above, Forward Italy accounted for an dismissive strategy when summarizing their policy stances towards several migration issues.

The strategy of Forward Italy is not as easily detected. In their Party Manifesto, Forward Italy claim in vague terms that its values consist of tolerance and pluralism, and that international politics should be based on peace, freedom and rights. Nevertheless, they also claim that to to preserve freedom, the national identity shall be put first and prioritized to immigration (Forza Italia 2013). Although, a clear majority of the policy stances are dismissive, since not bringing up several issues of immigration.

Legislative document and policy change

As seen in *appendix 6*, One of the few proposals, presented on June 9th 2015, criticizes the Government's actions when confronting the Migration Crisis, and stresses the need of a bigger intervention from The European Union. In October however, the approach shifts to economical and liberal values, changing the view on migration, focusing on the economical and liberal cooperation with "African Countries", to limit the migration on the long-term. These are the only two motions put forward by the party. During the chosen period, no law proposals have been submitted, thereby.

Asylum seekers
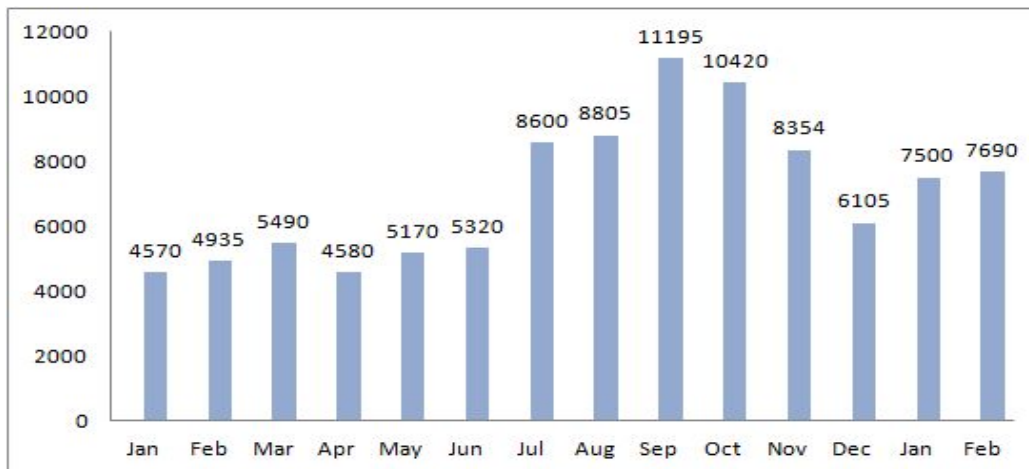
As seen in the table, Italy reached a peak in the asylum reception in September 2015. During the first months of 2015, the asylum reception obtained a equal level of immigrants. The increase of asylum seekers started during the summer time and declined a little in December (Termometro Politico, 2016)

Opinion Poll
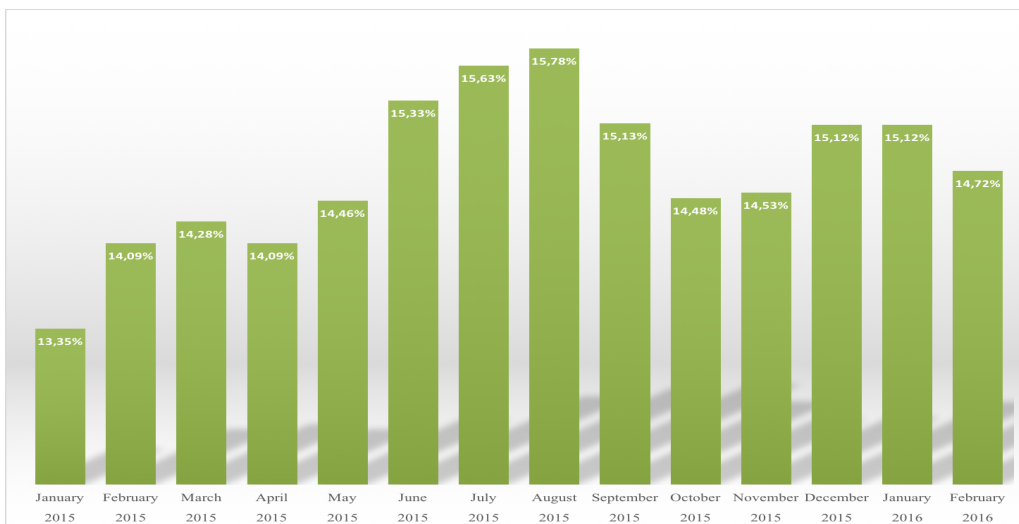
As seen in the table above, the public support of Lega Nord maintained rather equal during the period of time examined. A gradual increase in the opinion poll, starts early during the year, but a more apparent increase is primarily visible during the summer, particularly in August 2015.

4.4 Denmark

We will build our analysis of mainstream parties in Denmark on policies from the right-wing *Liberal Party* and the left-wing *The Social Democrats*. Since June 2015, the Government has consisted of the Liberal Party (Denmark.dk, 2016) During the previous election period, the Social Democrats governed together with the Radical Liberals and the Socialist People's Party. This thesis analysed right-wing populist party in Denmark is the *Danish People's Party,* whom fulfill Betz (1992) criteria for being labeled as such. According to their party manifesto, they stress the importance of preserving the Danish cultural heritage and maintaining a society where Danish beliefs, language and customs are central. One of their aims is to strengthen their country's internal and external security and they claim that Denmark is not an immigrant-country and never has been. Thus, they will not accept transformation to a multiethnic society. Finally, they proclaim that Danish citizenship exclusively should be granted to foreign nationals in a very limited extent. Migrants lacking valid documents of entering Danish borders will not be granted residency in Denmark. (Dansk Folkeparti, 2015). During the national elections 2015, the Danish People's party obtained 21,1 % of the votes and became the second largest party in Denmark (Election Sources, 2015).

4.4.1 Social Democrats

Party manifesto

	Policy on integration of non nationals	*Policy on permanent settlement*	*Policy on return of migrants to their home countries*	*Concerns about illegal immigration*	*Policy on levels of immigration*	*Overall strategy*
Social Democrats	AD	ACC	ACC	DIS	ACC	ACC

As seen in the table above, the Social Democrats accounted for an accommodative strategy when summarizing their policy stances towards selected migration variables. Their main statements regarding immigration follows below.

According to their party manifesto, the Social Democrats advocated:

❏ The benefits of multiculturalism, although emphasizing the importance of withholding Danish core values.

❏ Stricter asylum rules due to strains on the asylum reception.

❏ The priority of facilitating the return of migrants to the country of origin as soon as conditions permits it.

❏ Limited possibilities to be granted permanent settlement in Denmark.

The party manifesto does not mention anything on the subject of *illegal immigration,* which makes that particular policy stance dismissive.

Legislative proposals and policy changes

As seen in *appendix 7*, the Social Democrats did not submit a high amount of legislative proposals during 2015 or in the beginning of 2016. The only legislative proposals to be found during our analysed period of time concerning migration

issues, were in June 2015 and February 2016. However, the proposals contained several policy stances which made them able to adopt into our units of analysis.

In June 2015, the Social Democrats submitted a compound of proposals, emphasizing various migration issues. The compound contained proposals regarding stricter demands on employment and mandatory Danish language education. They further proposed a prioritization of sending refugees back to their country of origin when the threat of returning was not fatal, as well as decreased opportunities to be granted permanent settlement in Denmark.

Aforementioned policy stances indicates a continuation of the accommodative strategy, which is seen in their party manifesto. Accordingly, no intention of changing strategy became visible in June.

The subsequent legislative proposals that indicates policy stances in migration issues, was submitted in February 2016. The proposal contained statements concerning establishment of more residences in Denmark due to the increase of asylum seekers, demand on learning the Danish language and the importance of employment while living in Denmark.

Accordingly, the Social Democrats maintained the an accommodative strategy towards immigration in February, as before. Hence, we have not seen any significant policy changes during the analysed period of time.

4.4.2 The Liberal Party

Party manifesto

	Policy on integration of non nationals	*Policy on permanent settlement*	*Policy on return of migrants to their home countries*	*Concerns about illegal immigration*	*Policy on levels of immigration*	*Overall strategy*
The Liberal Party	ACC	ACC	DIS	DIS	DIS	DIS

As seen in the table above, the Liberal Party accounted for an dismissive strategy when summarizing their policy stances towards selected migration variables. Their main statements regarding migration issues follows below.

According to their party manifesto, the Liberal Party advocated:
- ❏ A multiculturalist society.
- ❏ A duty for migrants to learn Danish language and understand Danish values.
- ❏ A demand for asylum seekers to become self-sufficient to be granted citizenship.

Although the party emphasizes issues regarding integration, we have not found statements in their party manifestos speaking of levels on immigration, illegal immigration or policies on return of migrants to their home country.

Even though the Liberal Party advocates multiculturalism, they underline the importance of learning the Danish language and quickly becoming aware of crucial cornerstones within the Danish society. Hence, the policy stance as regards integration on non-nationals is labeled as accommodative.

Due to the operational indicator of saliency in policy stances, the overall strategy is being labeled as dismissive.Their party manifesto very briefly accounts for the Liberal Party's policy stances in general, which consequently contributes to weaker statements in more specific matters. Since several policy stances on migration flows and other immigration issues neither is being discussed or even brought up, the labeling is accordingly dismissive.

Law bills and policy changes

As seen in *appendix 8*, the Liberal Party made their first policy changes during the last months of 2015. The party did not emphasize migration issues in a large extent in their party manifesto, which accordingly resulted in a dismissive strategy. However, in October 2015, the Liberal Party made an extensive compound of legislative proposals and amendments regarding several migration issues. The compound contained suggestions of stricter citizenship requirements and decreased possibilities to be granted residence permit when migrants show poor motivation of becoming integrated into the Danish society. Additionally, several "integration-relevant criterion" must be fulfilled in order to be granted permanent settlement, which makes it harder to obtain a permanent residence permit.

In December 2015 and January 2016, the party submitted further bills and made legislative amendments, which continued to emphasize decreased opportunities to obtain permanent residence permit.

Taking these clear policy stances into account, the law bills and legislative amendments affirms a strategy change from a dismissive strategy in their party manifesto, into an accommodative in their legislative texts.

Asylum seekers
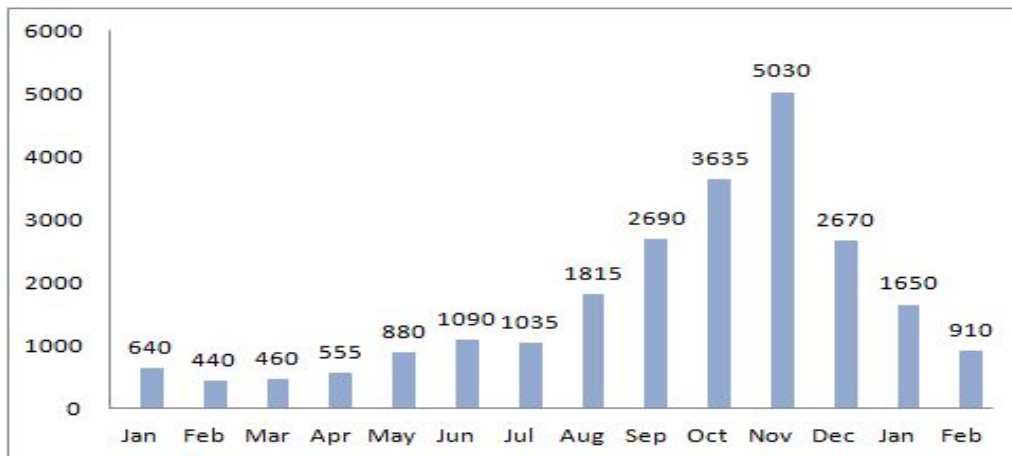
Statistic shows that Denmark is not characterized for an extensive asylum reception (Eurostat, 2016). During 2015 and the first two months of 2016, the asylum reception normally accounted for approximately 500-1000 asylum seekers per month. Although, two changes in the asylum reception are noticeable during our analysed period of time. The country reached its peak of asylum seekers in November 2015 when Denmark received 5,030 migrants. And a decrease of asylum seekers in January 2016, when the amount declined to 901 people (Eurostat, 2016)

Opinion poll

Below, the opinion poll of changes in the public support for the Danish People's Party is presented. The party have obtained a rather consistent public support during our analyzed period of time. Simply minor changes can be seen, for instance after the National Elections in June 2015, when the public support increased with a few percentage points (Politiko, 2016).
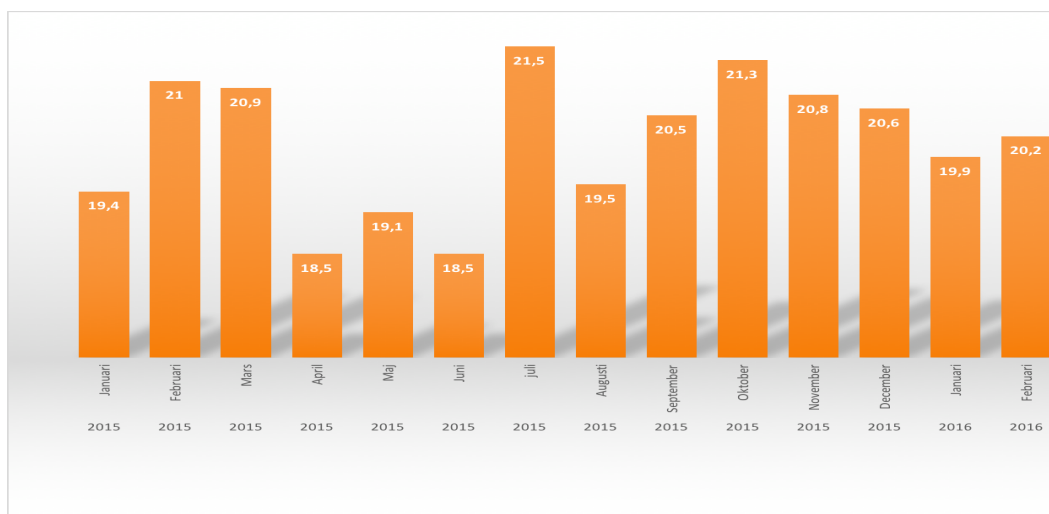
5 Between-case analysis

In this part of the thesis, we will summarize our empirical findings in connection to our hypothesis. Initially, we will be discussing the impact of mainstream policies on the fortunes of right-wing populist parties. Further on, we will include our second hypothesis, regarding asylum seekers as a contributor to the phenomenon.

An overview on the empirical data shows us a general increase in the migration flow during the last months of 2015. This has also been the period in which most legislative documents have been submitted, accordingly resulting in either changes of political strategies, or in some cases, the strengthening of policy stances.

Sweden confirms the aforementioned pattern. The Social Democrats started out with an adversarial strategy. However, they clearly changed the overall strategy when the migration flow drastically increased. The Moderate Party did not change strategy toward migration issues, although, the emphasis on more restrictive asylum rules became visible during the months in which Sweden received their largest amount of migrants. By that reason, the original accommodative strategy as the Moderate Party accounted for, became even more accommodative in combination with an increased migration flow. The above mentioned accommodative policy stances, taken by the mainstream parties in Sweden, indicates the significance of the amount of asylum seekers.

In December 2015, the public support of Sweden Democrats was among the highest, even though the mainstream parties accounted for an accommodative strategy. This indicates that mainstream parties' policy stances towards migration issues, cannot be considered as a decisive factor to impact the public support for the Sweden's right-wing populist party. In comparison with other countries,

Sweden received a notably high amount of asylum seekers during the investigated period of time. Accordingly, the Moderate Party and the Social Democrats emphasized the huge burden on public services, which made it impossible to continue maintaining an adversarial strategy. Nor was is possible to adopt a dismissive strategy due to an already pressed situation, challenging the internal public order.

Even though the mainstream parties accounted for an accommodative strategy during the largest extent of the migration flows, the opinion poll shows that the Sweden Democrats did not face a decrease in voters support. Rather, the voters support increased by a few percentage points. The outcome implies that the Sweden Democrats policy stances regarding immigration, is so restrictive that mainstream parties accommodative strategies are not restrictive enough to decrease the public support. Accordingly, this shows that a high amount of asylum seekers more apparent affects the success of the right-wing populist party, rather than mainstream parties strategies.

Several patterns can also be traced in the empirical findings from Italy. In Italy, the Democratic Party, already emphasizing a quite strong adversarial immigration policy, worked towards an even more adversarial strategy, while Forward Italy almost completely disappeared from the political arena regarding immigration.

The propositions, brought forward by the Democratic Party in the beginning of 2015, focused on a deeper integration of non nationals, However, from July 2015 and during the upcoming months, the focus shifted towards policy stances which granted asylum rights and concerned about both regular, irregular and illegal immigration. When looking at the number of asylum applications, which is peaking from July and onwards, there seems to be legitimacy to advocate for a shift in priorities. Indeed, these were the months in which the EuNavFor Med were active. During this time, the public support for Lega Nord started to increase, reaching its peak in August 2015. In October 2015, one of the months

with the highest recipients of asylum seekers, the law on citizenship was passed. Moreover, this was the month when Forward Italy presented their motion on liberal and economical peacebuilding, although not discussing any of the migration policy issues.

However, even if such premises should cause an augmentation of immigrants according to our hypothesis, the migration flow decreased by 2000 asylum seekers in November. Simultaneously, a decrease of public support of the right-wing populist party can be observed. Thereby, during this time, another change towards the focus on integration can be noted. Once again, the amount of immigrants show a clear impact on the priorities of the mainstream parties. The support for the right wing populist party did not increase, although being surrounded by one party adopting adversarial policy stances and the other party adopting a dismissive one. Yet, is important to keep in mind that Lega Nord is not the populist party in Italy. Hence, the competition with the populist Movimento Cinque Stelle might interfere with the correlation.

The correlation between the variables in France is equally unclear. The support for the right- wing populist party has remained relatively stable, although experiencing small but observable increases of support in February 2015, and then again in November - December, even if smaller. During this time of the year, no policy changes detected in our empirical findings had been published yet, neither had there been any significant changes in the number of asylum seekers. Nevertheless, when the number of asylum seekers was increasing from October 2015 and onwards, the support of Front National remained rather stable.What is important to note, are two mainstream parties heading into different directions in France. The Socialist, being labeled as dismissive in its party manifesto, became much more adversarial from June and forward. While the Republicans drastically increased their accommodative tone on their policy stances in September, continuing throughout the year. Here, the joint effect of two mainstream parties remain unknown, as it is not clear how an adversarial and an accommodative strategy by the two parties may affect the right- wing populist

party. Especially not when both parties enforce their own policy stances simultaneously.

In this thesis, Denmark stands out from other countries by several reasons. Compared to the countries above, the levels of immigration is seemingly not the crucial factor to affect the opinion poll of the Danish People's Party. Neither are the mainstream parties strategies towards migration issues. Even though most legislative documents were submitted during the months of which the country received the highest amount of asylum seekers, the voters support of the Danish People's Party neither decreased or increased. Although, the migration flow in Denmark was notably low, compared to the other countries. And the public support of the Danish People's party have been markedly high and consistent.

The Social Democrats started out with an accommodative strategy in their party manifesto, which they continued to encompass throughout the analysed period of time. The Liberal Party's party manifesto was labeled as dismissive, but the strategy changed into an accommodative, as soon as they submitted legislative proposals. In summary, above mentioned findings implies that neither an accommodative strategy or an increase of asylum seekers, even if low, played significant roles for the fortunes of the right-wing populist party in Denmark.

A hypothesis is that Denmark represents an unique political climate, resting on a normalization of restrictive migration policies. This contributes to various effects, such as greater opportunities for right-wing populist parties to obtain public support, feasibilities for mainstream parties to take restrictive policy stances on immigration and a possibility of decreasing the asylum reception to a minimum.

In general, being a governmental party naturally authorize them to submit a higher amount of legislative proposals. The distinctions on the numbers of submitted proposals between a governmental party and the other mainstream party, is thereby reasonable. Accordingly, this thesis showed a pattern of governmental parties taking an accommodative policy stance in combination with high amounts of asylum reception. We argue that there have been a notable

stream of immigrants, making it impossible not taking an accommodative strategy, to reduce pressure on internal borders and public services.

6 Conclusions

We have concluded that a monocausal connection between mainstream parties' strategies and the amount of asylum seekers, is difficult to find. Our empirical findings tell us that there must be multiple variables correlating to determine the impact of right-wing populist parties success. Although, in this thesis, the combination of mainstream parties policies and the amount of asylum seekers plays a role when evaluating whether the right-wing populist parties have obtained an increase in voters support. Following dilemma is noticed when excluding one of the variables in our evaluation: when ignoring the levels on immigration, it is impossible to decide whether the strategies towards migration issues are crucial or not. Similarly, when the strategies are not investigated, we are not able to determine whether the success of the right-wing populist party solely have changed due to levels of immigration.

Furthermore, the European Migrants Crisis is an unique situation, whereas a similar migration crisis have not occurred since the World War II. Accordingly, our conclusions solely refers to the cases analysed in this thesis. Other countries may have treated the crisis differently, depending on the presence of right-wing populist parties, the amount of asylum seekers and political and cultural climate. Therefore, we have concluded that we do not have a possibility to draw general conclusions of our empirical findings. Rather, this research highlights a general trend in policy stances, but we are aware of the fact that policy stances also are made within other platforms, such as media and closed door debates.

In summarization, our hypothesis did not correlate with the actual outcome. The amount of asylum seekers apparently affected the fortunes of the right-wing populist parties in a larger extent than the parties strategy. An accommodative

strategy did not result in a decreasing support of the right-wing populist party and an adversarial strategy did not increase the support of the these parties. However, we were right in the assumption of low possibilities of using a dismissive strategy.

Finally, we believe that a consistent support of a right-wing populist party have a long term explanation. Our study is based on a short time interval, which might contribute to a lower chance to change preferences of political parties. We believe that voters support of political parties needs to be investigated in a broader context and in a long term evaluation. Accordingly, the fortunes of right-wing populist parties can not be determined by mainstream parties policies and levels of asylum seekers, when simply examining a fourteen months period of time.

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