A Study of the Rise of Sweden Democrats (SD)

In Partial Fulfilment of the Degree of Bachelor of Science
International Migration and Ethnic Relations (IMER)
Department of Global Political Studies
Faculty of Culture and Society
Malmö University
15 ECTS

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Spring 2015
Abstract:

The rise of the populist parties in last decades throughout the Europe provide the ground for researches and studies. The recent success of Sweden Democrats (SD) in Swedish 2014 elections, and getting third major party position has been subjected to several studies. The present study for the dramatic rise of Sweden Democrats (SD), is based on the analysis of economical and cultural factors to find out this success, provides an analytical basis for understanding the reasons behind this phenomenon. This study tests two hypotheses by statistical data analysis, and analyses the economic and cultural perspectives by scholarly literature and provide new findings by testing these hypotheses. The study provides outcomes that reasons for the rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) in Swedish society lies somewhere in economic conditions and cultural diversity intolerance.

Key Words: Economy, Culture, Sweden Democrats, Unemployment, Western European Populist parties.
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Chapter 01: Introduction

Since the last two decades, many populist parties are emerging, and enjoying their growing support at the regional, local and national levels in European countries; and “this [Populist parties] growing electoral support has often been translated into significant influence over the shape and nature of government coalitions, important policy decisions, and the electoral strategies of mainstream parties” (Golder, 2003; 432-433). There are number of studies available on this issue; which were done to find out and explain that why these populist parties are gaining support and enjoying electoral success. If we look few decades back; populist parties were not popular. In elections they were not able to get 5% of voters’ support, which is minimum requirement to enter in parliament in many European countries. In Sweden minimum requirement is 4% of voter support to enter in parliament. In last decades populist parties’ support has gone up so much, for example 28% in Austria, approximately 70% in Hungarian parliament and approximately 13% in Swedish parliament by 2014.

The case for this research paper is the rise of Swedish most debatable, controversial, and successful populist party, the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna SD). This party was formed in 1988 which is now a popular party in Sweden. This party has been able to get huge support in last Swedish elections which were held in 2014. In 2010, the Sweden Democrats (SD) gained parliamentary representation through national election for the first time. This party emerged from neo-fasict and neo-Nazi subcultures. Since then this party has been gradually and moderately broadened, and influential over the passage of time. This fact leads to the primary question of my research: Why populist party such as Swedish Democrats (SD) gained more support in national election over last decade? It has grown much bigger now in recent elections of 2014, and became a third force in Swedish parliament. This is a surprising fact that SD’s support has grown more than double since last election of 2010. Although Populist parties are on the rise throughout the Europe; this paper will use Sweden as a case study; and will find out the main reasons behind the rise of the Sweden Democrats (SD) during last two elections.
This paper will look deeper into different causes such as cultural, political and, economical behind the success of Sweden Democrats (SD) in the Swedish society. A society that is known for being modern, educated, and tolerant in other part of the world.

1.1 Significance of the Study:

One can ask the significance of studying the trend on the rise of Sweden Democrats (SD), and possible connection of other factors behind their success. The shift of the European societies towards the populist parties is very surprising as well as alarming. The most surprising thing is that rise of populist parties in those countries that has been usually associated with the liberalism and multiculturalism, such as Switzerland, Belgium and Sweden. Emergence of populist parties in these countries provides the reason to study this trend. The rise that has been seen in popularity and support of SD from last two parliamentary elections, make it significantly important to study this phenomenon. The recent change in Swedish society’s face value from liberal to the sudden rise of a populist party provides a significantly important topic to study. Finally, a prominent success of Populist Party in Swedish politics can be an indication of polarization in Swedish politics, and a warning signal for other societies in Europe. To getting knowledge of this explanatory phenomenon can provide a better understanding and catalyst for future studies on this topic.

1.2 Purpose of study:

The aim of this study is to understand, explain and find out the support of Populist Party; The Sweden Democrats (SD). I find it very interesting topic. My interest in studying this topic developed after 2014 Swedish elections. Sweden Democrats’ success was a surprise for me and provided the reason to find out why? I will keep my study limited to the Swedish society, and will use the Sweden Democrats (SD) as a case study through a limited investigation. My aim is not to come up with solution, rather I wish to point out underlying causes of this issue,
because I feel there is a wide gap and lack of studies in case of Sweden. This study addresses the connection between rise in support of Sweden Democrats (SD) and factors behind this rise; such as economical and cultural.

1.3 Research Questions / Hypotheses

To fulfil my aim in studying Sweden Democrats (SD); I want to test two hypotheses for the rise and success of Sweden Democrats (SD).
- Hypothesis #1: Economical factors are most responsible for the success and rise of Sweden Democrats (SD).
- Hypothesis #2: Cultural factors are most responsible for the success and rise of Sweden Democrats (SD).

My task in this paper will be to test each hypothesis through different statistics, and find out which hypothesis can give me the best explanation for current and sudden rise of Sweden Democrats (SD).

1.4 Limitation of the Study

This study has some limitations. First, I bound myself not to use my own perceptions while studying this phenomenon. I want to rely totally on the study’s findings and will avoid making influence of my own opinion and perception that I already have about this study. Secondly, this study is based on Swedish events therefore; I had difficult time to find sources in English. However, I have to translate from Swedish to English in different parts of this study. My aim is to contribute in the society through this research with providing possible outcome of the study for the rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) in Sweden. Although, I try to find very good scholarly material for building up my arguments, but there can be some misunderstanding while choosing and weighing literature. On a positive note, my limitations on this topic can encourage other researchers to find out more on this topic in future studies.
1.5 **Structure of the Study:**

Beginning with the next section, which is consisting of chapter 02, I will explain the methods that I will use to conduct this study. Next section, chapter 03 will present a historical background overview of populist parties in European society including the Sweden Democrats (SD) in Sweden. Up next in chapter 04, I will review the scholarly literature and theories to find out the possible connection between economical and cultural factors in rise of populist parties. This will provide me the ground to test my hypotheses based on this theoretical framework. Chapter 05 will consist of the empirical part of this study, where I will explain the statistics and test my hypothesis according to this empirical study. Finally, chapter 06 will be the discussion section, where I will discuss the outcome of my hypotheses and study, and in chapter 07; I will present the conclusion of this study.
Chapter 02: Methodology

This section is a short preview of those methods which I apply in this study. I use a method called case study which is best suited method for my research question. In the process of analyse this study; I will be consulting to theory again and again. According to the nature of my research question and to test my hypotheses, my conclusion is that this research will provide best outcome through quantitative methods.

2.1 Research Module - Single Case Study

Case study is a method which allows researchers to study close, detailed examination of a subject as well as its related perspectives. According to Yin (2006) “compared to other methods the strength of the case study method is its ability to examine, in-depth, a ‘case’ within its ‘real-life’ context” (2006: 111). In this study; I would try to find out the dramatic rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) in Swedish society, and test it through two hypotheses to get an idea of factors behind their popularity and support. In order to do so, Sweden Democrats’ (SD) rise in popularity would be my case study, and this method will allow me to choose best criteria for evaluating or testing my hypotheses, which is based on cultural and economical factors; because case study research provides a better ground to investigate the important research topics which other methods do not do. Yin (2003) states that “the strength of the case study method is that it allows a combination of various different data collection techniques, such as archival records, interviews, focus groups, observations and so forth” (Yin 2003). I would definitely prefer this method over others, because it gives me freedom to choose data from different sources and allow me investigate freely. My main theme for testing hypotheses will revolve around the quantitative method which is best suited for this case study.
2.2 **Quantitative Method:**

My Research topic and two hypotheses demand me to do a quantitative method. I will use this method because it is more scientific, and can give a more solid answer or results for my research question; “the quantitative view is described as being ‘realist’ or sometimes ‘positivist’, while the world view underlying qualitative research is viewed as being ‘subjectivist’” (Mujis 2011, 03). Using quantitative method will allow me to find out best possible outcome of my hypotheses. The definition explains the meaning of quantitative research method very well and provide a reason why I choose this; Quantitative research is “explaining phenomena by collecting numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods (in particular statistics)” (Mujis 2011, 01).

2.2.1 **Statistical Data Collection Method**

To examine my case from different dimensions, I choose official data from various databases such as Ekonomifakta and Mångfaldbarometern, which help me to get the best indication and provide an opportunity to test my hypotheses.

2.2.2 **Economic Indicator**

I am going to analyse Sweden Democrats’ (SD) success in Sweden, and I want to analyse it through economical and cultural perspectives. In order to do so, I choose unemployment rates in Swedish society as one of the economical indicator, and collect data for unemployment for the time period from 2001 to 2014 from EkonomiFakta (all data are official on this site). I make graph showing unemployment rates to get the possible outcome that if it is the economic situation which provides a reason to a voter to vote Sweden Democrats (SD). For making connection between economic indicator and Sweden Democrats (SD): I compile a graph showing their voter support ratio throughout the time period of their existence (1988-2014). I take the statistics from Riksdag (Swedish parliament) and Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats) official website.
2.2.3 Survey Results to Measure Cultural Diversity

My second hypothesis belongs to cultural diversity, and I want to test that how much cultural diversity participated in the success of Sweden Democrats (SD). To get the best results; I choose the statistics from the survey done by the Mångfaldsbarometern with the partnership of Gävle University on cultural diversity among Swedish population. I compile these survey results in graph from the year 2005 to 2014. Sample of the survey is based on the data consisting 44% percent male respondents and approximately 56% female respondents from age 15 to 66. First; I test only cultural diversity towards immigrants to know if Swedish population thinks that immigrants are threat to Swedish culture. Secondly, my other tool for testing cultural diversity is through religion. I use religion diversity graph to find out what Swedish population feel about religion.

Chapter 03 Background

3.1 Populism

There can be three different approaches while defining populism (see Jagers, 2006; Pauwels, 2012). First, populism can be seen as a particular form of political organisation. For example if we look at the “Latin American literature, it is often emphasized that a populist movement is characterized by a strong leader who receives uninstitutionalized support from a heterogeneous group of people (Germani, 1978; Di Tella, 1997; Weyland, 2001). Similarly, in Western Europe, populism has been associated with loose movements with a strong, charismatic leader at the apex (Taggart, 1995, 2000). Secondly, populism can be conceptualized as a political style. Finally, populism can be defined as a particular ‘thin-centered ideology’ (see Albertazzi & McDonnell, 2008b; Canovan, 2002; Mudde, 2004, 2007) or ‘discourse’ (Hawkins, 2009, 2010; Laclau, 1977, 2005)” (Golder, 2003; 440).

I prefer Mudde’s definition in that he stated that populism is “an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, “the pure people” versus “the corrupt elite”, and which argues that politics should be an expression of
the volonté générale (general will) of the people” (2004: 543). Populist parties use policy, which is anti-establishment. These parties use this strategy to attract common people and try to paint that they are more democratic than other parties. In support of Populist parties, common people exclude elite class and, ethnic minorities and immigrants with them (Ibid.).

3.2 Western European Populist Parties

From the last several years, populist parties have gained an impressive electoral support in many European countries. There surge in political arena has “obscure the fact these parties hardly form a homogeneous party group” (Betz, 1993; 663). In general, one can differentiate between neo-liberal and national populist party, and “both types of parties are a response to profound economic, social, and cultural transformation of advanced societies interpreted as transition from industrial welfare to postindustrial individualized capitalism. National populist parties primarily working-class parties which espouse a radically xenophobic and authoritarian program” (Betz, 1993; 663). Political situation in advanced democracies of Western Europe is transforming into a new relationship between political parties and voters. Since the end of the era of 1980s, Western European democracies are under pressure from radical right-wing Populist parties. These parties are new to the political skies of Western Europe, and because of their growing success and progressive growth; these parties are becoming most significant challenge to political class and political establishment. In recent time, these populist parties have gained significant support in Scandinavian countries such as Denmark, Norway and Sweden. These parties reject the idea of “established socio-cultural and sociopolitical system”: and demand for the individual achievement, a free market place, and limited role of the state; they reject the “individual and socially equality”; they oppose the “social integration of marginalized groups and the extension of the democratic rights to them”; and they promote “xenophobia, if not overt racism ; their populist instrumentalization of diffuse public sentiments of anxiety, envy, resentment, and disenchantment”, and they appeal for the “allegedly superior common sense of the common people against the dominant culture and political consensus” (Betz, 1993; 664).
3.3 The Political State in Sweden

Politically speaking, there is a prominent change in political mindset of the Swedish people that can be seen in current election results. These changing phenomena such as fewer members of parties, a significant decrease in class voting, party identity crisis, and distribution of votes for different parties on different levels (national, regional and local) has changed the electoral system’s prediction and it is not like that as it was before. Now it is less predictable what result will be? (Aylott 2002). Furthermore, political issues such as immigration, integration and labor market become main agendas of political parties, and these issues are giving strength to populist parties such as Sweden Democrats (SD) to attract voters. The issue of immigration increased in 1990s after a surge in asylum seeker applications at the time of recession in Sweden. At that time asylum became the part of political debate and New Democracy party came into lime light, and raised this issue. This party secured 6.7 percent of votes in 1991 parliamentary elections and became a nationally significant party, but this issue lost its attraction with time, therefore in 1994 they could gained only 1.2 percent of votes (Rydgren 2002, 33). Now Sweden Democrats (SD) is the Populist Party in Sweden. In 2006, SD gained some seats on local and regional level (Green-Pedersen & Odmalm 2008, 375).

3.3.1 Sweden Democrats’ (SD) Historical Background

The Sweden Democrats or Sverigedemokraterna (SD) came into existence in 1988. It took them long struggle of almost two decades until 2010; when they could get into the parliament (Riksdag) for the first time in their political timespan. This was an achievement for them and it gave a boost to their agenda. Anders Klarström was the first party leader chosen in their first party’s annual meeting after formation of the party in 1988 (Hellström and Nilsson, 2010: 57; Sverigedemokraterna.se, 1991). Many of the members at the time of formation of the party had been involved in relationships with “violent extreme right movements such as Nordiska Rikspartiet as a neo-Nazi party, Vitt Ariskt Motstånd (White Arian Resistance) and Bevara Sverige Svenskt (Keep Sweden Swedish)” (Hellström and Nilsson 2010: 57). Moreover, a list of their foreign partners was published same year in their party’s bulletin was
consist of “the Front National in France, pro-apartheid newspapers in South Africa, a Ku Klux Klan affiliated journal in the USA and the journal Spearhead, published by the notorious neo-Nazi John Tydall in England” (Ibid.). This background of party members and their allies categorized them at this primary level; as fascist. According to Larsson and Ekman’s (2001), “mapping of the party’s origins leaves no doubt that those who founded the party in the late 1980s were deeply embedded in neo-Nazi networks. Partly because of its affiliations to hardcore neo-Nazi movements and explicit anti-immigrant profile, the SD was electorally marginalized in the 1990s, gaining less than 0.25 percent of the votes in the 1994 and 1998 parliamentary elections” (Erlingsson et al 2011, 03). In later years, party tried to reshape their policies and tried to pretend as a “democratically legitimate party”, but this try was a failure for them.

At the end of 90s, party maintained its neo-Nazi state and “became more moderate” (Art, 2011: 90). This move was successful, and they started improving on election charts. By the 2006, SD gained 2.9 percent in parliamentary elections and chose their 15 representatives on county level (Sverigedemokraterna.se, 2010). It was a major breakthrough in Swedish politics, and SD’s popularity gained big media attention. In 2010, SD’s popularity got higher, and the rise of their popularity took them into the parliament for the first time with the representation of 5.7 percent votes, and with 20 seats in parliament, and 612 seats in 216 municipalities. It was not the end of their popularity in 2010. From 2010 until 214; Sweden Democrats (SD) attracted massive number of voters with their agenda and got a booming and surprising more than double support and secured 12.86% votes with 49 parliamentary seats and 1324 municipalities’ seats.
If we look at the picture number 01; one can see that the biggest party was Social Democrats with 113 seats in parliament in 2014 election, while New Moderate party which was in government throughout from last two elections became number two party, and could gain only 84 seats in 2014 elections. On the other hand; Sweden Democrats (SD) were nowhere near parliament before 2010 elections; and won parliamentary support in 2010. This party is the third largest force in Swedish Parliament with 49 seats with 12.86 % voters’ support in 2014. Now Sweden Democrats (SD) is one of the prominent parties of the parliament in Sweden.

The Sweden Democrats (SD) believes that multiculturalism is a threat to the Swedish society. They do not consider themselves as right or left party but rather they see themselves as saviour of Swedish culture, and whatever is best for Sweden. They are against integration of immigrants and put more pressure on assimilation instead. They emphases that, they “should stand up to the West's view of the values of democracy, equality, welfare and human rights” (Sverigedemokraterna.se.).

After 2014 election, SD is a big force in Swedish parliament. This sudden rise of popularity of SD provides us a study ground to find out the factors behind this rise.
Chapter 4: Theoretical framework/ Literature Review

In the process of review the scholarly literature from very well known authors of these fields, I have identified two main explanations (economical and cultural) for the rise of populist parties and their rising dramatic support over the last decade. I will discuss these two main explanations in this study; which will give an idea that economic situation and cultural reasons are the main factor behind the rise and success of SD or not. This section will also consist of literature review, and I will present my own study’s analysis in upcoming discussion sections (see chapter 06).

There are many studies available to explain recent rise of the populist parties in Europe. There are different empirical studies have been done for investigating the reasons behind the rise of populist parties, but results are very inconsistent and varies, “for example, some studies find that immigration matters (Anderson, 1996; Knigge, 1998; Martin, 1996), others that it does not (Mayer & Perrineau, 1989), and still others that it only matters in some countries (Givens, 2000). The same inconsistent results can be found for unemployment and electoral institutions. Jackman and Volpert (1996) argue that electoral thresholds influence the support for extreme right parties, whereas Swank and Betz (1996) provide evidence to dispute this. Knigge (1998); claims that unemployment can reduce the support for extreme right parties; whereas Jackman and Volpert (1996) conclude the opposite. Lewis-Beck and Mitchell (1993); state that the effect of unemployment depends on the level of immigration” (Golder, 2003; 433). Therefore; this study will look deeper into this phenomenon, and will find out what other scholars and theories have to say about same topic.

4.1 Economical Perspective of Rise of Populist Parties

According to Van Der Brug, three main variables, which play very important role in voting pattern for far-right parties, are social, economical and structural based (2013:71). For Oiskarson and Demker; it is the declining trust of the traditional political parties that brought a rise in far-right parities support, and it is not the class struggle (2013: 189). Many argued that economic situation can affect electoral pattern. In one of the “exhaustive survey” of voting literature for economic, Beck and Stegmaier (2000) summarize that voting patterns are
definitely and strongly can get affected by economic fluctuations; whether it is real or perceived, and variation in “economic indicators” necessary effect a lot to the government’s support (Golder, 2003, p. 439). Political parties can get punished and rewarded due to their economic performances, “because people traditionally think of left-wing parties as more competent to deal with unemployment, it might actually be more reasonable to assume that these parties are better positioned to benefit from high unemployment levels” (Ibid. : 440).

4.1.1 Unemployment as an Economic Indicator

Populist parties propagate opinion against immigrants in their policies, and connect unemployment and immigration in their electoral strategies and campaigns (Golder, 2003; 438). For example, in Germany, France and Austria these populist parties used number of immigrants against unemployment “Jean-Marie Le Pen [a politician] used the slogan “Two million immigrants are the cause of two million French people out of work” during the 1984 European elections in France (Mitra, 1988). The Republicans in Germany had campaigned under a similar slogan: “Eliminate Unemployment: Stop Immigration” (Ibid.). Another attempt to link the issue of immigration and unemployment can be seen in “Haidar’s “Austria First” petition drive and Le Pen’s publicly stated desire to repatriate immigrants and give French citizens preference in the job market. These slogans seem to be explicit appeals to voters who fear that their material well-being is threatened by the influx of immigrants” (Golder 2003; 438). Many researches show that there is not much evidence about it that Immigration is the cause of unemployment (Borjas, 1994, 1995; Friedberg & Hunt, 1995; Zimmerman, 1995). According to Borjas, “It all depends on the assumptions made about whether the economy is open or closed to international trade and the degree of substitutability between immigrants and natives (1995:5). The empirical evidence that immigration causes unemployment is not very strong either. Many studies indicate that immigration does not have an effect on wages or unemployment” (Altonji&Card, 1991; Borjas, 1994). Far right anti-immigration or populist parties are main player in fuelling and raising the connection between economic problems and anti-immigrants sentiments. They are very active to form and shape public opinion in this matter. These parties always try to link immigration to the social and economic problems; but their main success is unemployment.
Far-right parties invariably do prime citizens to blame immigrants for unemployment, but these frames do not go unchallenged by other elites and by other parties. As a result, we conjecture that far-right economic frames are more likely to resonate, they are more likely to ‘win-out’, in effect, when the unemployment rate is high than when it is low. (Cochrane and Nevitte 2012; 03).

4.1.2 Economic Strife: Anti-immigrants Sentiments

Some analysts treat the connection between economic insecurity and anti-immigrant sentiment as an individual-level phenomenon, and “according to the ‘ethnic competition’ hypothesis, vulnerable segments of native-born populations turn against immigrants, because they are seen as competitors for scarce resources” (Cochrane and Nevitte; 2102; 01). Some analysts see this as group based phenomenon. For instance, they see that at the time of bad economic situation; native born population’s sentiments turn against the immigrants, because they think that immigrants are the threat for their living conditions, and they are the reason of bad economy (Blumer, 1958); If country’s economy is not good and falling down then this propaganda seems to have more attraction, and “the ethnic competition hypothesis posits a connection between personal economic misery and anti-immigrant sentiment, the group-threat hypothesis posits a connection between aggregate economic misery and anti-immigrant sentiment” (Golder 2003; 428). But the important point is this, though, that both point out economic misery is the important factor of raising anti-immigrants sentiments. In case of Sweden Democrats (SD); they take “a clear position against internationalization, neo-liberalization, globalization and related buzz-words of our time. Therefore; SD has a potential to attract voters from disillusioned Social Democrats who fear immigration and globalization” (Hellström and Nilsson, 2010: 09).
4.1.3 Scapegoating

Populist parties use immigrants as scapegoat in their policies (Golder, 2003; 438) and some anti-immigrants sentiments lead to the rise of racism and xenophobia in the society. Native-born population thinks immigrants are reasons for their miseries, and often thinks they are the ones who are responsible for the entire crisis in the society, such as health budget cuts, unemployment and other social benefits. These groups use immigrants as scapegoat, and “Scapegoat Theory suggests that difficult economic and political woes cause people to lash out against a convenient out-group” (Stowe, 189). The scapegoat theory is an excuse for native born population and it is a kind of blame game. However;

the basic logic behind this theory is that people simply blame foreigners for causing social ill, stealing their jobs and making economic crisis even worse. Foreigners are simply turned into a scapegoat which people can blame their misfortune. This process is also called “externalization of internal conflicts” (Rärthzel 2002, p.18f), and it is argued that this externalization of internal conflicts is an unconscious mechanism of individuals, furthermore a political process used to gain control and power (Schmiedel & Simonsson 2014: 08).

4.1.4 Economic Recession

Economic analysts from different fields of life agreed upon that since 2008 there were financial crisis and it gave a rise to recession, it was a biggest recession than 1929-33 and they call it great recession (Mattick, 2011: 11; Roberts, 2010). Different field of economic analysts provided different explanation for the causes of this recession. Marx argued in the “Marx’s law of tendency of the rate of profit to fall” theory that there is a need to change of system because at the time of crisis; capitalism becomes much weakest and put a horrible disadvantage on worker’s living condition, but it provides an opportunity to change the system (Hobsbawm, 1995: 104).
Analysts argue that there is a connection between economic crisis and political extremism or rise of populist political parties (which is my main point to prove in analysis section). After the great recession in 2008 far-right political parties have gained a significant part in parliamentary politics in European countries as well as in European Parliament. In some of the countries these populist parties could get the third party position in national elections, and “second or even first place in European Parliament elections. The National Front in France, the Freedom Party of Austria, Jobbik in Hungary, the Party for Freedom in the Netherlands and Golden Dawn in Greece are among the most striking examples of far-right success in elections in the last few years. The results of the 2014 European Parliament elections have proved that the phenomenon has a pan-European dimension” (Klapsis 2014). Normally, these parties can have difference of opinion and different approaches on various subjects, but generally; if we look at their agendas and characteristics, they have more or less same policy in political arena, and “one additional characteristic that binds them together is that they have profited from the economic crisis” (Ibid.). Some of the countries which have not been affected by the crisis still shows attraction toward extreme political parties because of the fear of other society’s crisis; however, the crisis plays definitely an important role in creating a climate where these extreme political parties grow and shine. For example “the seeds of authoritarianism, nationalism, racism, xenophobia, anti-semitism and so on had been planted well before the bursting of the US housing bubble and the collapse of Lehman Brothers in 2008. The crisis made the ground more fertile for these seeds to grow” (Ibid.). These parties’s message become more attractive to the voters because of these crisis. Voters become more cautious and their anxieties and fears can have effects on political pattern and election’s results (Ibid.).

4.2 Cultural Perspective of Rise of Populist Parties

Bornschier and Kriesi had dismissed the importance of economic factor for rise of populist parties. They presented the cultural analysis and linked it to rise of populist parties’ support. They argue that “cultural world-views” is the main player behind this rise (2013; 24). Immigrants are the main culprits in this situation who poses serious threat to national identity and culture. This cultural explanation lead to the support of those people who are more
worried about growing immigration, and have no other option then to vote extreme right parties. According to Freeman (1995), since main parties of country neglect this immigration issue “as much as possible” and do not talk about it in political debate, therefore extreme right parities use this and take advantage of this situation, and portray their competitors as “conscious agents of a multiculturalism that undermines national cohesiveness. Although much of the main-stream right has responded by strengthening its position on the immigration issue, it has not always been successful at countering the appeal of the extreme right. This is not surprising, given that only extreme right parties make immigration a central tenet of their electoral campaigns. People who are truly concerned with the cultural threats posed by immigration simply do not believe that voting for the mainstream right is a credible means of significantly altering immigration policy” (Golder, 2003; 440). Mitra (1988) analyses that 39% of the voters considered immigration as the main reason; when they voted in French National Front in the 1984 European elections (1988). Populist parties successfully paint that cultural identity is “under great threat” and there is an urgent need to protect it (Taggart, 2000: 93-94).

Sweden Democrats (SD) sees Swedish culture and identity as sacred entity, and denies the multiculturalism. They are opponent of European Union integration and “they state in their action programme that: Sweden should be a sovereign and an independent state [...] to abolish a nation state and jeopardise the survival of a culture is something awful” (Hellström & Nilsson, 2010:11). Their address to significance of the culture attracts many people’s emotions and appeal voters. On the other hand “the party members do not seem to share a clear idea of what constitutes this well-appreciated Swedish culture, ...... Whereas all their concerns about problems in contemporary Sweden is attributed to “other cultures”, and most predominantly Islam” (Ibid: 14).
4.2.1 Cultural Strife; Identity Crisis

Analysts claim that the rise of the populist parties in Western European countries is due to growing immigration, ethnic, religious, and cultural diversification in last decade. Many populist parties have been successful in promoting this idea that our culture and identity is in danger due to extensive immigration, and immigrants are threat to our culture. If we look at the political debates during the last decade; the most heated political debates in Europe are about concerning integration of immigration and Muslims. Majority of debates revolve around building mosques, wearing veils, schools and other cultural stuff, “more recently, criticism of Muslims and of Islamic practices and traditions has become a central part of the programme of most populist radical right parties” (Ivarsflaten & Gudbrandsen 2012:03). Populist parties have been successful in painting the image of multiculturalism as something bad for society and reject the multiculturalism and integration even European integration in defence of national sovereignty, culture and identity. In Netherlands a populist party PVV (partij voor de Vrijheid) under the leadership of Geert Wilders is enjoying public support from a long time, also it has good chance to do very well in 2016 elections. LPF (Lijst Pim Fortuyn) party started their ways towards populist strategies. This party was started under a murdered politician Pim Fortuyn; who started opposing multiculturalism and Islam. These sentiments were surprising for Netherlands, because Netherlands was progressing well with multiculturalism; “at first just as in Sweden, the rise of populist parties was played down by the conventional parties, but gradually the presence of strong populist rhetoric became a reality within Dutch politics” (Willbrick 2014).

Sometimes voters support populist parties even out of their desires, just because they want to defend their national identity, reject multiculturalism, and they deny the equal rights for immigrants (Malone; 2014, 24). According to Sweden Democrats (SD); culture is very important and they want to save Swedish culture. Hellström and Nilsson (2010:14) quotes social democratic parliamentarian Luciano Astudillo; when he says that “the vision of what Sweden should be like in the future is not due to party politics….. and the whole of Europe is tackling the same problem, the identity. That question is larger than the question of immigration. The image of our self-image”. According to Lind, politics of culture is about
society’s values and ideologies, and she relates major events to this; such as Middle East crisis, terrorism, fundamentalism and other events. She concludes, “the politicians have not realized that culture is not merely about recreation, but rather about everything that matters. Everything from dreams and ideology to form and politics” (Ibid.).

In one of the recent program which was on immigration politics; the Sweden Democrats (SD) defines that what is Swedish identity to them, “Swedish applies to the one who has a principal Swedish identity, and is from her own perspective and by others regarded as Swedish…… The rhetorical figure underpinning this message is based on the well-known dichotomy of that: we [the Swedish] are not like them, [‘the non-Swedes’]” (Ibid. 15).

4.2.2 Cultural Crisis and Xenophobia

Cultural problems can be a good indicators to know that why there is rise of xenophobic sentiments in many European societies. It has an old history (Hamilton, 1982, pp. 9–14), but it has been born again most recently. Xenophobia can help in explaining the reasons of rise of anti-immigrant emotions or phobias in Western European and other countries’ native born population (Jackman and Volpert, 1996; Golder, 2003). Populist parties use scapegoat theory as a tool for opinion making in public, and it leads to further xenophobic sentiments in the followers of those parties or other common people. According to definition;

xenophobia is a result of individual values and social norms where people tend to divide citizens into groups. The first group includes oneself, family and friends. Since people think good about oneself, this group is given all positive qualities while the “other group” is given bad qualities. The other group is often foreigners who suffer from being (often arbitrary) categorized with negative features as a result of the other citizens attempt to increase their self-esteem and qualities (Schmiedel & Simonsson 2014: 08).

A society which is more diverse can have increase sentiments of xenophobia or racism. Saull (2010) argues that: “the far-right ideological armoury consists of a tendency
towards xenophobia, inequalities in the spheres of gender, race, nationality and ethnicity, that combine with a strong dosage of anti-individualism whereby the autonomy of the individual is supposed to submit to the will of the nation via the state. This is anti-individualism” (2010; 07).

Chapter 5: Empirical Study

Description of the Case

Here I am going to test my two hypotheses. The focus of my study is Sweden Democrats (SD) and their dramatic popularity since last decade. I am going to test the factors behind their rise, whether these are economical factors or cultural factors. I will use different resources and method (see chapter 02) to test these hypotheses, and will get the result which hypothesis is true in this study and matches the situation in best manner.

5.1 Is Economic Situation in Sweden Reason behind Sweden Democratic Rise

After literature review; I feel ease to make this statement that according to many economic analysts: unemployment can give a rise to populist parties’ vote bank. It means, if a country have higher unemployment ratio than it have higher chances that a populist party can get more support from voters. Many populist party’s politicians use unemployment in their election debates and use as strong indicator of economy. They create link between unemployment and immigration and get benefit in form of more support from the society (see section 4.1). To test my first hypothesis (is SD’s success due to economic reasons?); it would be best to use the unemployment as strong economic indicator. Applying unemployment rates as an economic indicator would be best suited application for the present study. This explanation will give a correlation between the economic situation in Sweden and the rise of SD. According to Eknomifakta; “a person is counted as an unemployed if not employed but can start a job within 14 days and has actively sought employment in the past four weeks or awaiting to start a job within three months after the reference week” (Translated from EkonomiFakta). For these findings, I have compiled the data from EkonomiFakta for
unemployment (Arbetslöshet) in Swedish society from year 2001 till 2014 and formed a graph on it. This is consisting of line chart that gives an idea with its curves that how unemployment was fluctuating during this period.

One can see in figure 5.1; there have been an inconsistent movement in Swedish economy in the form of unemployment. This figure is consist of interval of ages from 16 years to 64 years. This cyclic movement shows some points where unemployment was slightly high and these years were 2004, 2005, but again in 2009 and 2010 unemployment rates were more higher than ever before. These were the highest unemployment duration in Swedish economy. While on the other hand; 2001, 2002, 2003, 2007 and 2008 were the years when unemployment ratio was on its low. The decline in the unemployment rates in 2007 and 2008 is the most remarkable. If we look at the figure carefully we can get a clear picture of two divisions before year 2008, and after year 2008. We will find out that before the great recession 2008 there were lowest unemployment rates, but after 2008 rates had increased.

FIGURE; 5.1
Unemployment Rate (2000-2014)

Source: Data collection Ekonomifakta
significantly and still it has not come back to the that level again. The trend is still continue with almost same percentage each year from 2009 to 2014 (8.4, 8.7, 7.9, 8.0, 8.1, and 8.0) respectively. This shows that from 2009 until 2014 was the era of higher unemployment ratio.

On the other hand; for finding out the comparison between economic condition and SD rise; I chose the data and formed a graph of percentage of their votes from the day party has started participating in elections until last elections (1988-2014).

The figure 5.2 is showing the elections results for Sweden Democrats (SD) since its formation in 1988. In this figure; we can see that their popularity started showing after 2002 elections with small percentage. The support for Sweden Democrats was almost nothing until 2006; but it keeps on increasing in all the next elections. There is not any lowest point after 1988. While 2014 elections were the most favourable elections of Sweden Democrats (SD) and in these elections Sweden Democrats (SD) gained the most support. In 2010 election their voters percentage was 5.70% and it was almost double in figure since 2006, when voters’ percentage was 2.93%. Nevertheless, if we analyse 2014 election results then we can
see their support rose more than double in recent election with the highest ever percent of votes and overwhelming support of approximately 13%. Since 1998 until 2014 Sweden Democrats (SD) support rose almost four times. By comparing both figures 5.1 and 5.2; we can see a correlation between these two events. I will discuss this correlation later in discussion section.

5.2 Has the Swedish Population becomes less Tolerant when it Comes to Multiculturalism and Religious Diversity?

Literature review provided the explanation that according to many analysts populist parties’ rise is hidden somewhere in cultural intolerance (see section 4.2). That is why I have chosen culture as indicator to test the rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) in Sweden. Therefore; I want to test my second hypothesis that is based on cultural perspective, and it will give me an idea if the Swedish society thinks that immigrants are threats to Swedish culture. If answer is in yes; then it can be the reason behind the rise of SD in Sweden. For testing my hypothesis, I chose survey results data from “Mångfaldsbarometern” and formed graph based on these data. Mångfaldsbarometern “wants to contribute to the discussion about diversity in Swedish society”. They think that, “knowledge of the Swedish people's attitudes is important because they can have a big impact on the future of the social climate” (Translated from University of Gävle webpage). This survey measures the attitude of Swedish people towards diversity of society. There are many kinds of survey available on attitudes, but I chose to go with two types of results of the surveys: one with cultural tolerance and other with religious tolerance. Studying these results will give me an idea about diversity in Swedish society.
The figure 5.3 is the result from survey done by “Mångfaldsbarometern”. In this survey people were asked about four statements:

1- There are groups of immigrants who cannot manage to integrate into our culture.

2- Most immigrants teach their children values that are different from those needed.

3- The cultural diversity means that some of our values are lost.

4- Immigrants are a danger to our culture.

The figure shows the survey results from 2005 to 2014. I chose two questions’ data (best suited for my study) and compiled into a graph to find out the outcome.
5.2.1 There are Groups of Immigrants who can not Manage to Integrate into our Culture

In figure 5.2.1, participants were asked that immigrants do not want to integrate in our culture.

A vast majority of 64% of Swedish population completely disagree this statement that there are certain groups who do not want to integrate in Swedish society. This trend can be seen more or less same since 2005. Only 10% of Swedish Population agreed on this statement;
while a prominent figure of 26% population said nothing and keep themselves distant to make an opinion about it (figure 5.2.1).

5.2.2 Immigrants are a Threat to our Culture

In figure 5.2.2: participants were asked if immigrants are danger to our culture.

In figure 5.2.2; Participants who strongly agreed were 27.6% while a sizeable number who do not agreed were 52.5 percents. Participants who strongly agreed are continues on rise in this survey after 2009. The strange thing is the participants who did not answer the question were almost 20 Percent in 2014. There are sizeable numbers who do not talk about it and distance themselves. However, people who think that immigrants are threat to our culture are increasing since 2009.
5.2.3  

**Attitude towards Diversity in Relation to Religion**

In figure 5.2.3; people were asked about some values of religion, such as religious holidays for those who do not celebrate Swedish holidays, call from prayers from mosque and Christian are more modern than Muslims. Their attitudes were measured on a four-point scale ranging from very negative to not at all negative.

In figure 5.2.3, we can see a large number of Swedish population is against the diversity of religion and have a negative feeling for religion. In 2014, 19.5 percent were very much negative, with 27.3 percent negative. While 40 percent population was not much negative which means they have some differences at some point. Point to be noted in this figure is that very much negative population graph has been on rise. People who are very negative have been rise from 11% in 2005 to 19.5% in 2014. It shows a significant change in the mindset of population. It is the same case in “not at all negative” category, and this...
percentage is decreasing with passage of time. It was 15% in 2005 and decreases to 12.7% in 2014. This shows a shift of people’s opinion towards more negative. Overall index shows that Swedish population is against or have little tolerance level about religions.
CHAPTER 06: Analysis & Discussions

After a careful review with scholarly literature on the topic of dramatic rise of populist parties in Western Europe, and choosing Sweden as case study and Sweden Democratic Party (SD) as a tool to measure its dramatic rise in Swedish society; I brought forward two hypotheses for explaining this event. My chosen hypotheses are as under:

- Hypothesis #1: Economical factors are most responsible for the success and rise of Sweden Democrats (SD).

- Hypothesis #2: Cultural factors are most responsible for the success and rise of Sweden Democrats (SD).

Since the Sweden Democrats' (SD) success dramatically rose in last decade, I started wondering what can be the causes behind their success. After literature review, I have found two possible reasons, which can give me an explanation, are economical or cultural. Therefore, I chose two hypotheses to test that which one is best fitted explanation in this regards. The evidences, which I collected for testing these hypotheses, were based on statistical data from different official and private sources. In this chapter, first I will test my hypotheses by connecting rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) in relation to economical factors, and secondly by finding a correlation between cultural factors and rise of Sweden Democrats (SD).

6.1 The Rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) in Relation to Economical Perspective

Historically speaking; when we talk about the economical factors, there are many different factors available to study which make or break the economy of the state. But in particular case such as the rise of a populist political party, there is a pretty permanent tool available to study, and every populist politician talk about this; is unemployment (see section 4.1). We come across a lot of discussions on this topic while dealing with populist parties in chapter 4. Economical studies have many indicators to show the condition of economy, and unemployment is one of the main tools to judge the economic conditions. Therefore, I chose unemployment rates in Swedish society as an economic indicator to test my hypothesis. By
comparing both unemployment rates and Sweden Democratic rise ratio, we got the correlation between them.

Returning towards the case of Sweden Democrats (SD); If we compare figure 5.1 and 5.2 respectively; we will see a clear correlation between these two figures. Figure 5.1 explains the unemployment rates throughout from 2001 to 2014. If we compare highs and lows of this figure (5.1); we will find out that 2009 and 2010 were the years when unemployment was on its peak in Sweden. The trend from 2011 until 2014 is almost consistent with high unemployment than other years, and this unemployment level did not go lower after economic recession of year 2008. After analysing this figure (5.1); one can safely say that unemployment rates in Sweden are higher from last six years then before. If we look at the same graph in valuation; it will tell that until 2008 unemployment rate were around 6% and it has jumped to it peak in 2009 with 8.4%. This was the era of economic instability while there was an economical recession throughout the world. After 2008, unemployment rates never touched the figure as low as 6% again in Sweden (figure 5.1).

On the other hand; If we analyse figure 5.2; we can get the idea of the success trend of the Sweden Democrats (SD) from 1988 to 2014. Until 2002 they had less than 2% of voters’ support. But they got remarkable support in 2010 when they entered into Swedish parliament. If we compare 2010 and 2014 elections then SD’s success in this period can be seen as dramatic rise of their popularity. From 2010 to 2014, they got more than double in support with 5.7% in 2010 to approximately 13% support in 2014 elections. If we compare both figures 5.1 and 5.2; we can find that the time when unemployment was higher; it was the same time when Sweden Democrats’ (SD) support had been dramatically risen. After the recession when unemployment rose in Sweden, there was also a significant increase in the Sweden Democrats (SD) popularity. After recession in 2008 there were election held in 2010 in Sweden, which tell us why SD got remarkable support. It means people were insecure from economy and unemployment and they trusted SD more than ever before.

This is the fact that figure 5.1 and 5.2 have connections; when it comes to unemployment and rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) at the same interval of time. This is an evidence that higher unemployment rates in Sweden had influenced those people who voted for SD, and provided support in rise of Sweden Democrats (SD). It proves that my first
hypothesis (economical factors are most responsible for the success and rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) is correct.

6.2 The Rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) in Relation to Cultural Perspective

According to known cultural and social analysts; culture plays a big role in shaping society. Culture also is a big factor when we talk about the politics. Political leaders use culture to form the public opinion and populist parties use culture in their slogans and party agendas, and propagate things around it. Analysts argued that there is a correlation between culture and political support; for example if anti-immigrants’ sentiments are higher in society, it can give a boost to populist parties support (see section 4.2). Therefore, for testing my second hypothesis, I chose the cultural diversity of the Swedish society. I evaluated the survey results showing tolerance level of the Swedish people towards immigrants and cultural diversity. After examining this trend, we get the evidence for the second hypothesis that cultural factors are responsible for the rise of Sweden Democrats (SD).

By analysing the figure 5.2.1; we see the results of the question; (There are the groups of migrants who fail to integrate into our culture). By studying these result one can finds out that perception about integration of immigrants is not negative in vast majority (64%) of Swedish people, and by looking at the time span from year 2005 to 2014; one can finds out that opinion is consistent throughout the time with slight changes. Majority of Swedish population has positive sentiments towards immigrant’s integration consistently.

Another question asked to the respondents was about immigrants are threat to Swedish culture (see figure 5.2.2). To answer this, around 27.6 % population strongly agreed with this statement, and the a sizeable numbers almost 20% of population is silent on this issue and do not want to talk about it. Figure (5.2.2) shows a sudden rise in the negative opinion of Swedish population from 2010 to 2014 with almost 8% increased ratio in this period. It shows that negative attitude of those people who think immigrants are threat to the Swedish culture have been on risen.

When it comes to measure attitude towards religion; we can see on four scale level (figure 5.3) that people who are against religion are 19,5% in 2014 including with much negative 27,3% and little negative 40,5%. Only 12,7% people have opinion in favour of
religion and they do not think negative about it. The figure (5.3) is explaining attitude of Swedish population is negative towards religion. While if we look at the trend from 2005 to 2014 then it clearly show that negative trend is on rise specially after 2010-11. It goes up from 14% to 19.5% respectively. By comparing three figures (5.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.3); we got the mixed results, but the rising trend on charts tells us that negative attitude towards immigrants have been on increased in Swedish population. Figure 5.2.1 shows the ratio of population who disagreed that immigrants do not want to integrate is 64% in 2014 and have been consistent, but on the other hand people who think that immigrants are threat to our culture are on rise in numbers. If we talk about the Swedish population’s attitude towards diversity of culture; one can see that intolerance in society towards other cultures is getting higher. Many people think that diversity is a threat to our culture. By comparing time interval between rise of Sweden Democrats (SD) support (see figure 5.2) and rise of intolerance level in Swedish Society towards cultural diversity and religion (see figures 5.2.1, 5.2.2, and 5.3), specially growing insecurity towards cultural threat, one can easily judge that cultural insecurity has fuelled the success of Sweden Democrats (SD), because Swedish, who agree with Sweden Democrats (SD) party agenda that immigrants are threat to Swedish culture, are on rise. Therefore, both events have connection between them.

Rising cultural diversity and religion intolerance of Swedish population provides support to Sweden Democrats’ (SD) success, and it is evidence that my second hypothesis (cultural factors are responsible for the success and rise of Sweden Democrats (SD)) is right. This is an evidence that cultural insecurities help promote negative sentiments which provide a reason to the public to vote to the populist parties such as Sweden Democrats (SD).
Chapter 07: Conclusion

Numerous recent studies have been done to systematically explain the change in success of populist parties. Western Europe has been an area of study for populist parities success, but recent added countries such as Scandinavian countries are quite new phenomenon emerging in sense of rise in populist parties. This paper have studied the recent rise of one of the most debatable populist party Sweden Democrats (SD) in Sweden. This paper’s main contribution is to provide an analysis of the rising factors behind the rise Sweden Democrats (SD) in Swedish society. Since this rise is quite recent and 2014 elections were the main elections when Sweden Democrats (SD) became third force in Swedish parliament, therefore; this study is very good addition to contribute in the society to know the reasons behind this electoral shift.

Based on the statistical data and historical literature, I presented my historical comparison and my hypotheses to verify. I developed hypotheses on analytical bases to understand the recent success of Sweden Democrats (SD) in Swedish parliamentary elections, and its correlation with cultural diversity and economical crisis (see section 5 and 6). I chose unemployment as an economic indicator and compared it with Sweden Democratic’ (SD) rising voters’ support in elections, and analysed the result between their relationship. The present study then showed a similar trend on graphs. Higher unemployment rates and populist party’s (SD) support are directly proportional to each other. If unemployment rates go higher then populist party (SD) support go also higher. On the other hand; I chose cultural diversity attitude and religion tolerance attitude of Swedish population to find out possible cultural reasons behind increasing support of SD (see section 5 and 6). The result showed negative attitude of Swedish population towards cultural diversity and religion. The trend also showed the rise in negative attitude of Swedish population towards cultural diversity at the same time span when Sweden Democrats’ popularity was rising.

Finally, I can say after empirical study that my both hypotheses were proved right and correct, therefore based on this study one can argue that there is a correlation between economic instability, cultural instability and the rise of populist party, and in the case of this study; rise of Sweden Democrats (SD).
Suggestions for Further Research

Further research in this field will open the door for new possibilities and outcomes. For further suggestion: I would recommend that comparison of SD with other Populist Parties can give a chance to understand the reason for its success. I would suggest Swedish researchers to work in this field and record the people’s opinions and then study this phenomenon. Finally, I would suggest studying the upcoming elections trend and investigating the public sentiments.
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