

Radical Right Populism in Sweden: Still a Failure, But for How Long?

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Although radical right populist (RRP) parties were successful elsewhere in Western Europe during the 1990s, Denmark and Norway included, the Swedish RRP parties have been more or less failures. Besides the short-lived party New Democracy, which disappeared in 1994, no Swedish RRP party has managed to escape electoral marginalization. The main purpose of this article is to explain this failure. Such an explanation is approached by using explanatory factors identified from earlier research on RRP parties elsewhere. We find some factors that have worked against the emergence of a strong Swedish RRP party, namely: enduring class loyalties, especially for working-class voters; an enduring high salience of the economic cleavage dimension (and a corresponding low salience of the sociocultural cleavage dimension); a relatively low salience of the immigration issue; and finally, a low degree of convergence between the established parties in political space. However, we also find some important indicators that there may be an available niche for the emergence of a Swedish RRP party in the near future, namely: widespread popular xenophobia; a high level of discontent with political parties and other political institutions; and a potential available niche for an anti-EU party of the right. Hence, this article concludes that if a sufficiently attractive party emerges in Sweden, with a certain degree of strategic sophistication and without too visible an anti-democratic heresy, it might be able to attract enough voters to secure representation in the Swedish parliament.

Introduction¹

During the last decade and a half, Europe has witnessed the emergence of a new political party family: the radical right populism of the French Front National, the Austrian Freedom party (FPÖ), and many others. These parties are affiliated by a doctrinal and rhetorical core of ethno-nationalism or regionalism (which implies an ardent xenophobia), authoritarian views on sociocultural matters (e.g. law and order), and political and cultural populism.

The literature on these parties suffered for several years a lack of comparative perspective. Scholars studied one party at a time, with little or no effort to seek a more comprehensive picture of the wider phenomenon. The

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result was good empirical descriptions (sometimes) of the parties, their history, and voters, but theoretically underdeveloped explanations of the conditions that brought them into existence. Reading some of the books and articles of these one-country studies reveals that they often contradict each other; what the study of one country depicts as essential for the emergence of radical right populist (RRP) parties is falsified by the study of another, and vice versa. In short, the lack of a comparative outlook resulted in the fallacy of *ad hoc* theorizing.

However, there have been improvements since the middle of the 1990s. Betz (1994), Kitschelt (1995), and others have presented more sophisticated and elaborate works on radical right populism from a comparative perspective. Yet, there still is a tendency to draw too heavily upon positive cases, that is, countries in which RRP parties have succeeded in becoming electorally significant, while ignoring negative cases, i.e. countries in which no electorally significant RRP parties have emerged (however, cf. Eatwell 1992; 2000a; Backes & Mudde 2000; Mudde & Van Holsteyn 2000). Still, in comparative analysis negative cases are as important as positive cases.

This paper focuses on Sweden as a negative case. Since the short-lived party New Democracy (*Ny Demokrati*), which had deputies in the Swedish parliament between 1991 and 1994, and which turned out to be a relative failure, Sweden has had no electorally significant RRP parties at the national level (although the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*) have had a few deputies elected in a handful of local councils). Why is that? I will address this question by looking at factors depicted in the literature as essential for the emergence of RRP parties. Are these factors absent in the Swedish case, or are there other factors that counteract them? By answering these kinds of questions, I will address two aims. First and foremost, I will seek an explanation of Swedish exceptionalism. Moreover, as the title indicates, I will be able to consider whether or not there is a possibility that a successful Swedish RRP party may emerge in the near future. Second, this procedure will put me in a position to critically examine earlier explanations of RRP parties elsewhere. If the same factors that are used to explain the emergence and electoral successes of RRP parties are present also in the Swedish case, can we still regard them as valid?

Since I make claims to be writing about a specific party family, it should be of utmost importance to provide a definition that distinguishes this party family from other party families. This is especially important because of the lack of consensus on core definitions, as well as on which parties should be included in the family (Mudde 1996). However, the limited space of this paper does not allow an elaborate discussion of definition. Instead, the reader will have to be content with my claim that my definition fulfils the conditions needed for a good definition (i.e. it should be simultaneously inclusive and exclusive, and it should be based on common and essential

features of political parties *per se*).² Nevertheless, my definition of radical right populism is based on the essential features of ethno-nationalism or regionalism,³ which implies ardent xenophobia, an authoritarian view of sociocultural matters (e.g. law and order), and populism in both ideology and style (for the concept and ideology of populism, see Ionescu & Gellner 1969; Canovan 1981; Taggart 2000).

In this way, I will argue that the RRP parties are a mixture of right-wing extremism and fascism, on the one hand, and traditional populism, on the other.⁴ More specifically, I will argue that the RRP parties have their strong ethnic nationalism and xenophobia in common with right-wing extremist and fascist parties, and their populism in common with protest parties (Fennema 1997, 486). However, because (openly anti-democratic) right-wing extremist parties lack the ability to attract voters who are critical of the political establishment but nonetheless not anti-democrats, they cannot escape electoral marginalization (cf. Schedler 1996).⁵ Protest parties, on the other hand, lack 'positive' ideological appeal (i.e. ethno-nationalism and xenophobia), which typically makes them short-lived. By combining these two components, however, RRP parties may, under certain circumstances, attract substantial and enduring popular support.

The remainder of this paper is divided into three major parts. In the first part, I will, from earlier research, identify and present some factors seen as essential for explaining the emergence and electoral successes of RRP parties. These will be set against the Swedish case in the third section, after the Swedish RRP parties have been introduced in the second section. Besides summing up the paper, in my concluding remarks I will propose some additional explanatory factors for the emergence of RRP parties, which in my opinion deserve more attention in the study of radical right populism. The question whether or not there may exist a situation favorable for the emergence of a successful Swedish RRP party in the near future will be discussed and commented on throughout the article.

Explanations for the Emergence of Radical Right Populism

I will base this section on the writings of Betz (1994) and Kitschelt (1995), the two authors who in my opinion have presented the most comprehensive and theoretically elaborate explanations and who in addition have written from a comparative perspective.⁶

Betz and Kitschelt both take off from the same point of departure: that the emergence of the RRP parties is largely 'a consequence of a profound

transformation of the socioeconomic and sociocultural structure of advanced Western European democracies' (Betz 1994, 26–27), and more specifically from an industrial to a post-industrial economy.⁷

According to Betz, this transition is largely characterized by dissolution, fragmentation and differentiation, which are results of increased individualization. These processes also have implications for the cultures of contemporary Western societies, in which, according to Betz (1994, 29), 'established subcultures, milieus, and institutions, which traditionally provided and sustained collective identities, are getting eroded and/or are being destroyed ... and are giving way to a "flux of contextualized identities"'.

Taken together, these developments increase the importance of cultural capital, flexibility, and individual entrepreneurship for people's efforts to adapt to the rapidly changing circumstances of contemporary Western societies. Hence, those who possess these characteristics can be expected to be among the winners in post-industrial societies (Betz 1994, 29–30). However, the losers, those who are unable to cope with the 'acceleration of economic, social, and cultural modernization' and/or are stuck in full or partial unemployment, run the risk of falling into the new underclass and becoming 'superfluous and useless for society' (Betz 1994, 32).

This situation may favor the emergence of RRP parties in three ways. First, 'the losers' of the post-industrialization processes can be supposed to become anxious, bewildered, insecure, and resenting (Betz 1994, 33), sentiments that may be canalized into support for policy proposals that stress the need to return to the 'traditional values' of the *status quo ante*. Second, as a response to the established political parties' inability to cope with the (at least perceived) perverted effects of the rapidly ongoing economic and cultural transformation processes, many have become increasingly discontent and disenchanting, which has opened up a niche for parties ready to exploit popular political discontent in order to win protest votes. Third, the fragmentation and individualization of post-industrial societies lead to a decline in cleavage politics, i.e. to a decreased salience of the economic cleavage dimension, which may open up a space for parties addressing new issues, such as the 'immigration question' (Betz 1994, 34–35).

Kitschelt (1995) too uses the transformation from an industrial to a post-industrial economy as a point of departure. However, whereas Betz focuses mainly on *emotions* caused by these processes, Kitschelt is concerned rather with *preferences*. More specifically, the emergence of the RRP parties was made possible because of structural changes in the economy, i.e. the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, which brought about changes in citizens' preferences. According to Kitschelt, political preferences in post-industrial societies differ from those during the first decades of the post-war era.

Hence, the underlying assumption of Kitschelt's explanation is that the recent transformation of the economy has resulted in a new voter distribution within political space. More specifically, in contemporary Western European democracies there has arisen, especially among social groups experiencing deprivation of life chances, a 'limited but distinctive demand for a political combination of ethnocentrism, authoritarian, and free market liberal appeals' (Kitschelt 1995, 5). As a consequence, Kitschelt (1995, 9) predicts that the potential to vote for RRP parties is higher than average among blue-collar workers, petty bourgeoisie, and lower-salaried employees.⁸ Nevertheless, as a result of this new niche in the electoral arena, RRP parties should present themselves as both authoritarian and pro-capitalist (and anti-statist) in order to capture voters.⁹

In addition, Kitschelt (1995, 273) argues that the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, through the polarization between winners and losers in the new economic order as well as through the decline in established modes of mass organization, has brought about a potential for social unrest, which can be exploited by racist political entrepreneurs. Hence, according to Kitschelt, racism and xenophobia are partial causes of the emergence of RRP parties.

However, whether or not an RRP party emerges within a given democracy is also dependent on the opportunity structure of party competition. In order to be attracted by a new political party that stresses right-authoritarian themes, voters first have to be sufficiently dissatisfied with the moderately conservative and the moderately leftist parties (Kitschelt 1995, 14–15). The level of disaffection with the established parties, in turn, depends on the distance between the parties in political space: convergence between the established parties provides a favorable opportunity structure for RRP parties. The reason for this is that the voters may see no difference between the established parties, which may make the voters susceptible to populist rhetoric stressing the homogeneity of the 'political class' (Kitschelt 1995, 16–17).

We can thus conclude from the writings of Betz and Kitschelt that the emergence of RRP parties can be explained by the transition from industrialism to *post-industrialism* (i.e. no RRP parties are supposed to emerge in societies still characterized by an industrial economy), which has led to (1) changed political preferences for groups of voters (i.e. right-authoritarian issue preferences) and/or (2) an increased level of frustration, anxiety, resentment, and discontent among the losers in the transformation processes. This latter implies that the *protest* dimension plays a role in the emergence of RRP parties. Whether or not the protest dimension becomes salient depends on the degree of *convergence* between the established political parties within the political space. In addition, xenophobia and racism are thought to be partial causes (although not sufficient causes). We

can also conclude from the writings of Betz and Kitschelt that support for the RRP parties is most likely to come from the losers in contemporary societies – from unskilled and semi-skilled workers, from people with little cultural capital, etc.

In addition to the explanatory factors identified in the writings of Betz and Kitschelt, others have argued that the emergence of the RRP parties can be explained by:

1. *Right-authoritarian reaction.* The emergence of the RRP parties is seen as a reaction against prevailing ecological and left-libertarian parties and issues. According to this perspective, the RRP parties mobilize voters on the same issues as the left-libertarian parties by taking opposing positions (cf. Karapin 1998).
2. *The economic crisis and the high level of unemployment.* These crises are assumed to lead to increased frustration, which may be canalized through outbursts of xenophobia and other kinds of right-authoritarian manifestations.
3. *The character of the elections.* A proportional voting system and elections of minor importance during the breakthrough years are seen as necessary conditions for the emergence of RRP parties (e.g. Ignazi 1996b, 67).
4. *Experience of issues (or referenda) that cut across the old party cleavages.* (cf. Andersen & Bjørklund 1990; 2000.) This experience is supposed to speed up the decline in party-identified voters, which in turn may open up a space for new parties.

To sum up, therefore, we can state that according to the research literature the emergence of RRP parties is favored by:

1. A post-industrial economy.
2. Dissolution of established identities, fragmentation of the culture, multiculturalization.
3. The emergence or growing salience of the sociocultural cleavage dimension.
4. Widespread political discontent and disenchantment.
5. Convergence between the established parties in political space.
6. Popular xenophobia and racism.
7. Economic crisis and unemployment.
8. Reaction against the emergence of New Left and/or Green parties and movements.
9. A proportional voting system.
10. Experience of a referendum that cuts across the old party cleavages.

I will below argue that several of these conditions (i.e. 1, 4, 6–10, and partly 2) were fulfilled in Sweden during the second half of the 1990s, which did not see the emergence of a successful RRP party. Yet, conditions 3 and 5 were not, or only partly, fulfilled. However, before discussing the justifications for these claims and elaborating their possible future consequences, I will briefly describe the history of radical right populism in Sweden.

Radical Right Populism in Sweden

Although populist parties emerged in Denmark and Norway in the early 1970s, no Swedish populist party succeeded in escaping electoral marginalization (e.g. Fryklund & Peterson 1981; Andersen & Bjørklund 1990; 2000; Widfeldt 2000). Although a Swedish Progress Party was founded in 1968, its successes were limited to some occasional deputies elected onto local councils (Lodeniuss & Larsson 1994, 57–76). In addition, *Skånepartiet* (Skåne is a region in the south of Sweden), a populist separatist party, had some local successes in the 1980s, but did not have any impact at national level (Peterson et al. 1988).

Xenophobic, anti-immigration sentiments were manifested in the small town of Sjöbo in 1987–88, when the local Center Party leader Sven-Olle Olsson initiated a local referendum on the issue of hosting political refugees. The referendum resulted in a clear majority against accepting refugees in Sjöbo, and the outcome of the election, as well as the election campaign, drew the attention of the national media. After being excluded from the Center Party (*Centerpartiet*), Sven-Olle Olsson founded the Sjöbo Party, which was relatively successful in his home region, and which received 0.5 percent of votes in the 1991 national election (Fryklund & Peterson 1989; Widfeldt 2000).

However, a Swedish RRP party of national significance did emerge in the early 1990s, when New Democracy obtained 6.7 percent of votes in the 1991 parliamentary election. The party was founded as late as 4 February 1991, its prehistory having begun on 25 November 1990, when Bert Karlsson and Ian Wachtmeister published a debate article in one of the leading Swedish newspapers, *Dagens Nyheter*. Both Karlsson and Wachtmeister were already well known to the Swedish public: Bert Karlsson was a fun-fair and record company owner, and had achieved a political reputation by criticizing food prices; Ian Wachtmeister was a businessman, associated with the right-wing think tank ‘The New Welfare’ (*Den nya välfärden*), and had written popular books in which he ridiculed Swedish politicians and bureaucracy (Taggart 1996; Westlind 1996).

New Democracy was populist both in style and in content. The style of the election campaign in 1991, which drew much media attention, was more like stand-up comedy than the traditional type of political campaign meetings. In addition, New Democracy recorded a song and selected a smiling face as their party logo (Taggart 1996). The content of their message was based on four themes: first, that the established political parties and politicians do not represent the ‘people’; second, that the level of taxation should be reduced and that parts of the public sector should be privatized; third, that the immigration rate should be reduced;¹⁰ and fourth, that ‘politics should be fun’¹¹ (Rydgren 1995; Taggart 1996, 7; Westlind 1996, 133; Widfeldt 2000).

However, New Democracy turned out to be short-lived. After Ian Wachmeister had resigned from his position as party leader, the party’s fall in the opinion polls (which had already started in 1992) became precipitous. In the 1994 election, New Democracy obtained only 1.2 percent of votes, and has practically disappeared since then.

Instead, the leading Swedish RRP party today are the Sweden Democrats. Although they have obtained only marginal voting results in national elections, they have succeeded in sending a handful of deputies to local councils. The Sweden Democrats were founded in 1988 as a continuation of the Sweden Party (*Sverigepartiet*), which in turn was founded in 1986 from the merging of the Progress Party and the racist and far-right group Keep Sweden Swedish (*Bevara Sverige Svenskt*) (Lodenius & Larsson 1994, 13–56; Lodenius & Wikström 1997, 124). The Sweden Democrats have had contacts with RRP parties in other countries, such as the Front National and the Republikaner (Lodenius & Larsson 1994, 13–56; Larsson 1998), and have, like other RRP parties, tried hard to maintain a respectable façade and to present themselves as proponents of ‘true democracy’ (cf. Widfeldt 2000). Yet, there are strong indicators that the party has not succeeded in this strategy; the Sweden Democrats’ obscure prehistory remains fresh in memory for many voters, and, in addition, some journalists have repeatedly reminded the public that several party members, some of them in leading positions, are or have been associated with Nazi or racist organizations (Widfeldt 2000).

To sum up, we can see that the Swedish RRP parties have been, more or less, failures. Except for New Democracy, which had a brief success, disappearing in 1994, no Swedish RRP party has succeeded in attracting more than a marginal element among the voters. In the following sections, I will try to find an explanation for this relative failure. By doing this, hopefully I will be in a position to discuss the universal validity of the factors presented in the research literature as essential conditions for the emergence of RRP parties.

Economic Crisis

Let us start with the economic factors presented in the literature as important for the emergence of RRP parties. First, there is no doubt that Sweden is as marked by the post-industrial economy, with all that comes with it, as other Western European democracies – a characteristic that according to Betz (1994) and Kitschelt (1995) is a basic condition for the emergence of RRP parties.¹²

Second, the economic crisis in Sweden during the 1990s was at least as deep and extensive as in other Western European countries. At a subjective level, this is revealed by the fact that for every year between 1990 and 1997, the proportion of voters that thought that ‘the economy has changed for the worst’ was considerably bigger than the proportion that believed that ‘the economy has changed for the better’. This was true both for people’s estimation of the Swedish economy, and, more important in this context, for their own private economy. However, from 1998 this relationship was reversed (Holmberg & Weibull 1999, 24). The proportion who stated that their own private economy had been impaired increased from 25 percent in 1991 to 37 percent in 1994, but sank back again to 16 percent in 1998 (Holmberg 2000, 141).

Hence, for a large proportion of voters during the 1990s, one’s private economy was at least perceived as getting worse. This indicates that in Sweden during the 1990s there was the type of economic situation commonly depicted as a breeding ground for RRP parties. However, this situation was most manifest in the early and mid 1990s, and improved during the last two years of the decade.¹³

Unemployment

The level of unemployment is often assumed to be a particularly important aspect of economic crisis in this context, because of the frustration and social unrest that results from widespread unemployment. However, if we examine Table 1, which summarizes the unemployment rates in 13 Western European countries between 1992 and 2000, we cannot detect any strong and unambiguous relationship between the level of unemployment and the presence/strength of RRP parties. Whereas Finland (where no RRP parties were successful during the 1990s) has the second highest unemployment rate of the countries included in the study, Austria (where the biggest and most successful RRP party prospers) has the lowest unemployment rates of all. If we compare Sweden with countries that harbor successful RRP parties, we see that the Swedish unemployment rate is lower than in Italy, France, and Belgium, but higher than in Denmark and Austria. Moreover, we can see

Table 1. Unemployment Rates in Europe, 1992–2000 (Percent)

	Mean 92–00	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000 (Jan.)
1. Spain	20.1	18.5	22.8	24.1	22.9	22.2	20.8	18.8	15.9	15.1
2. Finland	13.8	13.0	17.7	17.9	16.6	14.6	12.7	11.4	10.2	10.2
3. France	11.6	10.4	11.7	12.3	11.6	12.4	12.3	11.8	11.3	10.5
4. Italy	11.2	9.0	10.3	11.4	11.9	12.0	12.0	11.9	11.3	11.2
5. Ireland	10.8	15.4	15.6	14.3	12.4	11.7	9.9	7.6	5.7	5.0
6. Belgium	9.2	7.3	8.9	10.0	9.9	9.7	9.4	9.5	9.0	8.7
7. Germany	8.5	6.6	7.9	8.4	8.2	8.9	9.9	9.4	8.7	8.5
8. Sweden	8.5	5.8	9.9	9.8	9.2	9.6	9.9	8.3	7.2	6.6
9. Britain	8.0	10.1	10.4	9.6	8.8	8.2	7.0	6.3	6.1	5.9
10. Denmark	6.9	9.2	10.1	8.2	7.1	6.8	5.6	5.2	5.2	5.0
11. Portugal	5.8	4.2	5.7	7.0	7.3	7.3	6.8	5.2	4.5	4.3
12. The Netherlands	5.3	5.6	6.6	7.1	7.0	6.3	5.2	4.0	3.3	2.7
13. Austria	4.1	–	–	–	3.8	4.3	4.4	4.5	3.7	3.6

Source: Eurostat (1996, 57); Eurostat (2000, 57). For Austria the mean is based on the period 1995–2000 rather than 1992–2000.

from Table 1 that the Swedish unemployment rate was increasing sharply in the early 1990s, from 3 percent in 1990 (Holmberg & Weibull 1999, 24) to 5.8 percent in 1992 and 9.9 percent in 1993. However, here too the situation has improved since 1998.

Since we know that young voters are overrepresented among the RRP parties' support, there are reasons to assume that the unemployment rate of young people would have a particular influence on the strength of RRP parties. However, when we examine Table 2, which summarizes the

Table 2. Unemployment Rates in Europe, Persons under 25 Years of Age (Percent)

	Mean 92–00	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000 (Jan.)
1. Spain	36.7	34.6	43.4	45.0	42.5	41.9	38.9	35.4	29.5	27.9
2. Italy	32.0	27.1	30.4	32.3	33.2	33.5	33.1	33.8	32.7	31.8
3. Finland	30.6	32.6	41.8	42.2	38.2	28.0	25.2	23.5	21.4	22.5
4. France	26.3	23.3	27.3	29.0	27.3	29.1	29.2	26.3	23.6	21.5
5. Belgium	22.7	16.2	21.8	24.2	24.4	23.2	23.1	23.1	24.7	23.5
6. Sweden	17.9	13.6	22.6	22.6	19.4	20.5	20.6	16.6	13.6	12.0
7. Ireland	16.9	24.4	25.2	22.8	19.5	18.2	15.4	11.3	8.3	6.9
8. Britain	15.2	16.7	17.9	17.0	15.9	15.5	14.2	13.6	13.0	12.7
9. Portugal	12.8	10.1	12.9	15.1	16.6	16.8	15.1	10.6	9.0	9.3
10. Denmark	10.3	12.7	13.8	11.0	10.1	10.6	8.4	7.9	9.7	8.5
11. The Netherlands	9.4	8.5	11.1	11.4	11.6	11.7	9.5	8.0	7.2	5.4
12. Germany	8.9	6.4	7.9	8.7	8.8	10.0	10.8	9.9	9.0	8.9
13. Austria	5.8	–	–	–	5.6	6.2	6.7	6.4	5.0	4.7

Source: Eurostat (1996, 58); Eurostat (2000, 58). For Austria the mean is based on the period 1995–2000.

unemployment rates for persons under 25 years of age in 13 Western European countries, we obtain the same picture as above. In fact, it is even more difficult here to detect a strong, unambiguous relationship between unemployment rates and the strength of RRP parties. Moreover, we see that the Swedish unemployment rate for persons under 25 years of age had a mean of 17.9 percent for the period between 1992 and 2000, that it reached a high of 22.6 percent in 1993 and 1994, and stayed at a level of about 20 percent until 1997. Hence, in this respect too, conditions were favorable for a Swedish RRP party – even after the disappearance of New Democracy in 1994.

Let us draw some conclusions from these findings. We have seen that Sweden is not exceptional in regard to economic crisis and unemployment. More specifically, we have seen that the relationship between unemployment rates and the electoral strength of RRP parties is weak. However, we have also seen that the economic situation in Sweden was at its worst in the early and mid 1990s. Moreover, the decline of the economy and the increase in unemployment rates were sharpest during the years between 1991 and 1994, when the RRP party New Democracy was present in the Swedish parliament. Yet, support for New Democracy, as reflected in the opinion polls, decreased from the fall of 1992 (Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB) 1994; Rydgren 1995). In addition, this does not explain the fact that no new RRP party emerged during the following years, before the economy began to improve.

Immigration, Xenophobia and Racism

Sweden has been receiving immigrants for quite some time, and the influx of non-European immigrants increased during the 1970s, 1980s and early 1990s. Hence, as Kitschelt (1995, 62) has argued, the presence of non-European immigrants in a country does not in itself explain the emergence of RRP parties. Moreover, few would argue that Sweden is a less multicultural society than most other Western European countries.¹⁴

However, the salience of the immigration issue, together with the fact that a majority in most Western European countries support xenophobic views (Betz 1994, 103), has been important for RRP parties as a mobilizing factor and a catalyst (Kitschelt 1995, 103, 276). In fact, xenophobia provided RRP parties with one of their most effective rhetorical means, that is, to find a scapegoat to blame for all social problems. Accordingly, even though the RRP parties cannot be seen as one-issue parties that stress only the (anti-)immigration issue (Mudde 1999), xenophobia is nonetheless a *sine quo non* for RRP parties. Although not all voters with xenophobic attitudes vote for an RRP party, almost every voter who *does* vote for a RRP party has xenophobic attitudes (cf. Mayer 1999).

Table 3. Attitudes towards Refugees and Immigrants, 1990–99 (Percent)

Percentage who agree that:	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
It is a good idea to reduce the numbers of refugees allowed to come to Sweden	61	56	65	59	56	56	54	54	50	47
There are too many refugees living in Sweden	–	–	–	52	–	–	–	48	–	40
They would not like to see a relative marry an immigrant	–	–	–	25	–	–	–	18	–	17

Source: Demker (2000, 62–63).

Table 4. The Most Important Issues, 1987–98 (Percent)

Question: ‘Which question/questions do you think is/are the most important today in Sweden? Do not mention more than three issues/societal problems.’

Issue	1987	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
Law and order	20	13	38	11	15	8	9	11	25	14	13	15	16
Immigration/ refugees	7	8	11	14	13	19	25	12	14	13	10	8	13

Source: Bennulf (2000, 70).

As we can see from Table 3, in Sweden too a majority of voters have been positive about the idea of reducing the numbers of refugees allowed to come to Sweden. This opinion reached a maximum of 65 percent in 1992, and declined slightly during the last years of the decade. However, this slight decline should be seen in the light of the fact that immigration to Sweden was reduced after 1994–95 (SCB 2000, 44).¹⁵

The salience of the immigration issue increased during the 1980s and 1990s in several Western European countries (Solomos & Wrench 1993, 4). In Sweden, as Table 4 indicates, it reached its peak in 1993, when 25 percent of respondents believed that the immigration issue was one of the three most important issues of the day in Sweden. The salience of the immigration issue decreased slightly during the last years of the 1990s.

Still, neither the presence of popular xenophobia nor the salience of the immigration issue guarantees the emergence of an RRP party. One reason for this imperfect relationship is that the immigration issue has to be politicized, i.e. ‘translated’ into political terms, at the level of the parties as well as at the level of the voters (Campbell et al. 1960, 29–32) if the social phenomenon of immigration is to have an impact on voters’ choice of how to vote. As we can see from Table 5, the immigration issue has not been

Table 5. Important Issues for Voters' Choice of Party in Elections, 1979–1998 (Percent)
 Question: 'Think about the election this year. Are there one or several issues that are/ were important for your choice of party in the Parliament Election?'

Issue	1979	1982	1985	1988	1991	1994	1998
Occupation/employment	18	29	25	5	23	41	34
Welfare, social policy, health care	4	12	19	15	22	21	28
Pensions	5	8	8	9	20	9	17
Taxes	17	8	20	19	18	9	17
Economy	9	14	14	8	20	30	14
EU	0	0	0	1	10	14	6
<i>Immigration and refugee issues</i>	0	0	1	2	8	5	3
Law and order	1	1	0	1	3	1	2

Source: Holmberg (2000, 114). It should be noted that these statistics exclude those who abstained from voting.

especially important to Swedish voters (with the partial exception of in 1991, when New Democracy emerged).¹⁶

It may be instructive to compare these figures with studies on French voters, for whom the immigration issue has been of great importance for 15 years. For instance, in the 1997 election (first round), 22 percent of French voters declared that the immigration issue was of primary importance for their choice of party (Perrineau 1997, 178).¹⁷

To conclude, in this section we found that the proportion of voters with anti-immigration attitudes is as large in Sweden as in other Western European countries. However, the immigration issue is not as salient (as a politically decisive issue for Swedish voters) as in countries in which successful RRP parties have emerged. Since the 1994 election, the immigration issue has practically disappeared from the list of political issues that influence the voters' decision on how to vote. In Sweden the economic crisis seems to have resulted in the increased importance of traditional issues related to the public economy and the welfare state, rather than an increased salience of the issues of immigration and law and order (cf. Table 5).¹⁸

Negative Attitudes towards the European Union

In this section I will discuss the importance of the European Union (EU), and in particular the EU referendum. We know from earlier studies (e.g. of the Front National and the FPÖ; cf. Perrineau 1997) that many RRP parties have been able to use the widespread negative attitudes towards the EU as a way to attract voters.¹⁹ In addition, the experience of a referendum *per se* may facilitate the emergence of an RRP party.

Andersen and Bjørklund (1990; 2000) have suggested that the experience of national referenda may create favorable conditions for the emergence of an RRP party, because of the ‘prevalent mood of political distrust and deteriorating bonds between voters and their parties’ (Andersen & Bjørklund 2000, 194), this being the result of a major issue cutting through established political cleavages and party bonds. The emergence of the Danish and Norwegian Progress Parties in 1973 followed in the aftermath of European Community (EC) referendum campaigns. In Sweden, there was no such referendum, since Sweden had not applied for membership of the EC, which according to Andersen and Bjørklund partly explains why no Swedish RRP party emerged in the 1970s. However, since then Sweden has had referendum campaigns, in both the 1980s (on the issue of nuclear power) and the 1990s (on the issue of membership of the EU). Although the referendum in 1980 seems to support Andersen and Bjørklund’s hypothesis (the Swedish Green Party emerged, and got its electoral breakthrough eight years later), the EU referendum in 1994 has had no such effect.²⁰ Why is that?

I will argue that there are four, more or less related, causes to this. First, an alternative political cleavage dimension, which partly included a populist dimension, had already developed. Second, the issues of immigration and national identity had low salience in the referendum. Third, the referendum campaign in 1994 was relatively modest. Fourth, as a consequence, other parties, i.e. the Green Party (*Miljöpartiet*) and the Left Party (*Vänsterpartiet*) (and partly the Center Party), could capture most Swedish voters who were negative about the EU.

Oscarsson (1996) argues that the cleavage dimensions arising from the issue of nuclear power (in the 1970s), the environmental issue (in the 1980s), and the issue of membership of the EU (in the 1990s) had common denominators. All three cleavage situations put the Left Party, the Green Party, and the Center Party against the Conservative Party (*Moderata Samlingspartiet*), the Social Democratic Party (*Socialdemokratiska Arbetarpartiet*), and the Liberal Party (*Folkpartiet Liberalerna*).²¹ There were also ideological similarities between the three cleavage situations. They all put small-scale production against large-scale production; and centralization of production, power, and political decision making against decentralization. To put it bluntly, there are elements of fear about major changes and innovations, as well as elements of revolt against the political establishment, inherent in all these three cleavage dimensions (Oscarsson 1996, 246). Hence, there was a strong element of populism in these cleavage situations. However, there were actors already rooted in this niche, which diminished the scope available to new populist parties to operate there.²²

Second, issues related to xenophobia and nationalism were of low salience in the referendum campaign. Although, as expected, xenophobic

voters were more likely to be opposed to the EU, the correlation was very weak. Nor did the nationalist cleavage dimension have much impact on voters' attitudes towards the EU (Oscarsson 1996, 254–55).

Third, the referendum campaign was relatively minor, and did not signify any major event of deep controversy. In fact, it was more minor than a parliamentary election campaign. There were no large, organized events to mobilize the voters in favor of a yes or a no vote, only a few street meetings and rallies; there were fewer campaign posters than in ordinary national elections; there were practically no major TV debates; and, not least important, leading politicians and other molders of public opinion made unusually few controversial statements (Esaiasson 1996, 35). Hence, there are reasons to assume that the Swedish EU referendum campaign did not cut through traditional cleavage dimensions and established party bonds in a way as dramatic as in other countries.²³

Fourth, partly as a result of the reasons discussed above, the Green Party and the Left Party could capture most of the voters with negative attitudes towards the EU. In 1995, only 9 percent of the Green Party's voters were in favor of Swedish membership of the EU, whereas 82 percent were against. Similarly, only 10 percent of the Left Party's voters were in favor of Swedish participation in the EU, whereas 79 percent were against (Lindahl 1997, 165). This is logical, since the voters saw these two parties as being most negative about the EU: when they were asked to place the parties on a dimension ranging from 0 for the most negative to 10 for the most positive attitudes towards the EU, the Green Party scored 1.1, the Left Party 1.6, the Center Party 5.3, the Christian Democrats 6.3, the Liberal Party 7.1, and the Conservative Party 9.4 (Oscarsson 1996, 244).

In conclusion, the Swedish EU referendum did not create favorable conditions for the emergence of an RRP party. Still, we should not disregard the possibility that the issue of the EU may have prolonged and enduring effects, which may favor the emergence of a Swedish RRP party in the longer run. When European voters were asked in 1998 if the EU had had positive effects on their own country, the Swedish voters were the ones most inclined to give a negative answer (Lindahl 1999, 374). Hence, there may be a considerable proportion of voters who are against the EU but do not share the basic values of the Green Party and the Left Party, and might consider voting for a new anti-EU party of the right (cf. Widfeldt 2000, 499).

Political Dissatisfaction and Alienation

Political discontent and alienation have been depicted as important causes of the emergence of RRP parties. These are thought to be the most

important of the negative forces, because of their repelling voters from the established parties and, as a consequence, freeing resources and opening up niches for new parties. Hence, political dissatisfaction and alienation may be important in two ways: first, in a direct manner, as a prerequisite for popular protest (which is a basic condition for the emergence of protest parties); and second, in a more indirect manner, by releasing voters from their bonds to the established parties (which is a prerequisite for the emergence of all kinds of new parties). Here, the decreased level of party identification and class voting (which will be discussed below) is of particular importance.

Even though in all known democracies, at all times, there have been people who are dissatisfied with the political system and its institutions (Ménu & Surel 2000, 23), the extent and depth of this kind of political dissatisfaction are not constant. In fact, confidence in political institutions as well as in politicians has been declining for some time in most Western democracies. In a recent survey of Western European democracies, the US, and Japan, Putnam et al. (2000, 14) conclude that confidence in politicians is declining in 12 of the 13 countries for which there are systematic data available. At the same time, public confidence in parliament has declined in 11 of the 14 countries represented in the survey (Putnam et al. 2000, 19). Among the various societal institutions, as we can see in Table 6, the political ones are accorded the least confidence. Especially important to note is that the political parties, with the partial exception of in the UK, enjoyed by far the least confidence.

Sweden is no exception in this respect. In fact, since the late 1960s the Swedish people's confidence in political institutions has decreased more than in most other Western European democracies (Möller 2000, 52). However, we should keep in mind that the decline started from an exceptionally high level; Sweden was for many years one of the countries that showed

Table 6. Confidence in Societal Institutions in Europe, 1998 (Percent)

Institution	EU	France	Germany	Italy	UK
<i>The government</i>	37	37	29	27	46
<i>Parliament</i>	40	38	35	29	46
<i>Political parties</i>	16	12	13	13	18
The church	50	36	47	55	54
The legal system	43	36	50	31	48
Unions	38	36	39	29	36
The press	40	51	42	34	15
Radio	63	62	62	49	67
Television	56	46	59	42	65

Source: Ménu & Surel (2000, 159), based on the EU's 1998 Euro barometer.

Table 7. Confidence in Political Institutions in Sweden, 1996 and 1998 (Percent)

Institution	Very high		Rather high		Neither high nor low		Rather low		Very low	
	1996	1999	1996	1999	1996	1999	1996	1999	1996	1999
Parliament	3	3	16	24	39	42	25	20	17	11
The government	2	3	16	19	35	38	27	25	20	15
Local governments	2	2	13	17	40	45	28	24	17	11
Political parties	–	1	–	12	–	41	–	29	–	18

Source: Holmberg & Weibull (1997, 81); Holmberg & Weibull (2000, 28).

the highest popular confidence in political institutions (Holmberg & Weibull 1997, 79).

Nevertheless, as we can see in Table 7, today the Swedish voters have low confidence in political institutions: of the various societal institutions in Sweden the political parties enjoy the lowest confidence.

Nor are the Swedish voters more satisfied with the way democracy works, compared with other European voters. As shown in Table 8, in Sweden satisfaction with the functioning of democracy is considerably lower than in Denmark (where successful RRP parties have emerged), and at roughly the same level as in Austria and France (the two countries that harbored the two most successful RRP parties during the 1990s).²⁴

Table 8. Level of Satisfaction with the Functioning of Democracy, Spring 1996

Question: ‘On the whole, are you very satisfied, fairly satisfied, not very satisfied or not at all satisfied with the way that democracy works (in your country)?’

Country	Very or fairly satisfied (percent)
1. Denmark	84
2. Ireland	70
3. The Netherlands	64
4. Finland	63
5. UK	61
6. Germany (West)	57
7. Sweden	55
8. Austria	53
9. Spain	52
10. France	51
11. Portugal	49
12. Belgium	45
13. Germany (East)	39
14. Italy	20

Source: Holmberg (1997, 338).

Moreover, the Swedish people's dissatisfaction with the way democracy works and with politicians has increased during recent decades. For instance, the proportion of voters who agreed with the proposition 'The Parliament [*Riksdagen*] doesn't pay much attention to what ordinary citizens think' increased from 46 percent in 1968 to 60 percent in 1982, 70 percent in 1991, and 75 percent in 1998. Similarly, the proportion of voters who agreed with the statement that 'parties are interested in people's votes, not in their opinions' increased from 37 percent in 1968 to 60 percent in 1982, 68 percent in 1991, and 75 percent in 1998 (Holmberg 2000, 34).²⁵

In conclusion, the Swedish voters are at least as discontented with political institutions (most notably the political parties) and politicians as voters in countries in which RRP parties have emerged and successfully sustained substantial popular support. From this fact we may draw two conclusions. First, widespread popular disenchantment and dissatisfaction with political institutions do not provide sufficient explanations for the emergence of RRP parties. Yet, they may be a necessary part of such an explanation. Second, this conclusion may indicate that there exists a favorable situation for the electoral breakthrough of a Swedish RRP party in the near future. Although there are some indicators that the conditions for such an event were more favorable in the mid 1990s, there still seems to be high potential for parties willing (and able) to exploit protest votes.²⁶

Decline in Party Identification and Class Voting

As mentioned above, two important indicators of the stability, or instability, of voter behavior are party identification and class voting. The notion of party identification is used to characterize the individual voter's affective orientation to a political party (Campbell et al. 1960). Although this identification can be experienced to varying degrees of intensity, it is normally assumed that party identification is a relatively stable and enduring factor in the overall voting pattern. To put it bluntly, voters with a high degree of party identification always vote for the party they identify with, unless something extraordinary happens.

Traditionally, party identification has played a major role for voters. In fact, it is possible that the electoral behavior of most voters still is governed mainly by party identification. Yet, the proportion of voters with a high degree of party identification has diminished in Western Europe during recent decades (Putnam et al. 2000, 17). The same is true for Sweden. The proportion of voters with strong party identification decreased from 53 percent in 1960 to 34 percent in 1982, 21 percent in 1991, and 19 percent in

1998 (Holmberg 2000, 41). Consequently, Swedish voters have become more mobile. The proportion of voters that moved from one party to another between the elections of 1994 and 1998 was 30.7 percent, which compares with 20.2 percent between the elections of 1985 and 1988. There are now also more voters who declare that they make their decision how to vote during the election campaign: 57 percent in 1998, compared with 40 percent in 1988 (Holmberg 2000, 19–22).

Similarly, class voting represents a relatively stable and enduring component in explaining voting behavior. We usually talk about class voting when people belonging to the same social class vote, statistically, in the same way. This is assumed to be the result of their common interests, which are based on their shared socioeconomic position (e.g. Nieuwbeerta & De Graaf 1999).

Class voting, measured by the Alford index, has declined in every country where data are available (Clark & Lipset 1996),²⁷ and, hence, in Sweden. However, we should be aware that the Swedish decline started from a high level (Nieuwbeerta & De Graaf 1999, 32), from 77 percent class voters in 1956 to 56 percent in 1998, and that the decline did not continue during the 1990s. Moreover, the degree of class voting is still very high among workers, even though it decreased slightly during the 1990s. Among blue-collar workers, 75 percent voted for the left (either for the Social Democrats or for the, former Communist, Left Party) in the 1998 election. For other workers the proportion was 63 percent (Holmberg 2000, 65–66).

This is of great importance, since we know from earlier research that voters from the working class are among the most susceptible to being attracted by RRP parties. Still, on the other hand, the number of abstainers is proportionally highest among voters from the working class: 26 percent of blue-collar workers and 23 percent of other workers abstained from voting in the 1998 election. Moreover, among the unemployed the proportion of abstainers was 40 percent in the 1998 election (Holmberg 2000, 68, 100).²⁸

In sum, we have seen that Sweden is no exception when it comes to the degree of party identification. In fact, these figures indicate that there may be a niche for a Swedish RRP party, or another kind of protest party, in the near future. When it comes to class voting, on the other hand, we have a more ambiguous picture. Class voting has diminished in Sweden but is still at quite a high level, especially among working-class voters. This is a factor that may work against the emergence of a Swedish RRP party. In addition, the still high level of class voting, together with the fact that Swedish unions have the highest membership rate (as a percentage of the working force) among the countries in the EU (Ebbinghaus & Visser 2000; Kjellberg 2000), indicate enduring class loyalties in Sweden. As a consequence, this indicates that in Sweden the ‘traditionally provided and

sustained collective identities' are not getting as eroded or being destroyed to such an extent as Betz (1994, 29) argues.²⁹ How about the 'new underclass', then, which according to Betz has evolved as a result of the structural transformation from an industrial to a post-industrial economy? Is it not mainly the old, well-established trades that sustain their class loyalties? Yes, possibly, and if so, it is likely that a great part of the 'new underclass' is found among the abstainers (this is, for instance, indicated by the extremely high proportion of abstainers among the unemployed). Hence, it is possible that the voters of the 'new underclass' so far have chosen 'exit' rather than 'voice' as a response to their increasing marginalization (cf. Hirschman 1970). Still, we should not disregard the fact that an upcoming protest party (e.g. an RRP party), with sufficient appeal, may very well change this situation.

At the same time there is a substantially large part of the electorate, working-class voters included, who base their voting decisions on neither social class nor party identity. Moreover, an increasing part of the Swedish electorate does not vote at all, especially among voter groups that we know are particularly susceptible to being attracted by RRP parties (i.e. blue-collar workers, unemployed, young voters below the age of 30). In addition, in the 1998 election 18 percent of blue-collar workers and 21 percent of lower-middle-class voters (another group that has traditionally been attracted to populist parties) stated that they lacked any party preference whatsoever (Holmberg 2000, 45). These findings indicate that there is space available for the emergence of a new party, possibly an RRP party. This indication is strengthened by the fact that 52 percent of the abstainers (compared with 43 percent of all voters) believed it to be a good idea to 'receive less refugees in Sweden' (Holmberg 2000, 133). Hence, 10 percent of Swedish voters both are xenophobic and abstain from voting, and so these voters could potentially provide a niche for the emergence of a Swedish RRP party in the near future.

Why not in Sweden, then? Although the picture has been ambiguous, some factors presented so far have indicated that there is a potential niche available for the emergence of a Swedish RRP party. I will argue that in order to approach a more comprehensive answer to this question, we have to move from the demand-side of political space, which has mainly been discussed so far, towards the political supply-side. In agreement with Kitschelt (1995), I do believe that the degree of convergence in political space (which will be discussed in the following section) has great impact on the likelihood of new parties emerging. Finally, I will also argue that we should not disregard the possibility that the supply-side may fail to come up with an attractive alternative, even if there is an available niche on the political demand-side. The reasons for this kind of failure will be briefly discussed in my concluding remarks.

Convergence in Political Space?

The degree of convergence in political space is of importance for two reasons. First, convergence may result in a feeling that the established parties 'are all the same', i.e. that there are no essential differences between them. This, in turn, may fuel the popular distrust in and discontent with politicians and political parties, and create an audience receptive to RRP parties' discourse about a degenerate political class. Second, convergence in political space may also have direct effects. If we assume, following spatial theory (Downs 1957; Sjöblom 1968), that voters vote for the party that is closest to their own preference position in an attitudinal space, convergence results in niches in which new political parties may emerge (provided that the voters' preference distribution approximates a normal curve).³⁰ Put differently, a convergence in the political space may create an 'expansion in political opportunities' that is beneficial to the emergence of a new political party (McAdam 1996).

It is thus of explanatory value to observe that no convergence has occurred in Swedish political space. When Swedish voters were asked to place the political parties' position in a dimension ranging from left (0) to right (10), the Conservative Party was given 8.9 in 1979 and 1982, 9.0 in 1985, 8.9 in 1988, 8.7 in 1991, 8.8 in 1994, and 8.9 in 1998. Similarly, the Left Party during the same period was consistently placed between 0.9 and 1.4 (Holmberg 2000, 124). However, with this method we cannot be sure how the voters themselves define the concepts of right and left. There are reasons to assume that they make their classification mainly on the basis of the economic cleavage dimension. At the same time, we know that the sociocultural cleavage dimension (involving issues of nationalist and ethnic identity, abortion, law and order, etc.) is more important in the emergence of RRP parties (cf. Perrineau 1997). Hence, there is a possibility that there may arise a convergence in this alternative cleavage dimension.³¹

However, as we have seen, this alternative sociocultural cleavage dimension has been of relatively low salience for Swedish voters (cf. Oscarsson 1998).

Concluding Remarks

I have in this paper addressed the relative failure of Swedish RRP parties during the 1990s, especially the absence of a Swedish RRP party during the second half of the 1990s. Although an ambiguous picture has emerged from the discussion above, we have found some factors that have worked against the emergence of a Swedish RRP party. First, we have found indicators of enduring class loyalties in Sweden. This is of importance because it indicates

that established identities and loyalties have not been eroded to the same extent as elsewhere, which in turn indicates that the need to reduce frustration and the sense of loss of meaning by searching for new identities, such as ethno-national identity, is less acute in Sweden. It also indicates that the economic cleavage dimension is still of great importance for Swedish voters, which reduces opportunities for new parties to capture votes on alternative (e.g. sociocultural) cleavage dimensions.

Second, we saw that the ‘immigration question’ has been of relatively low salience for Swedish voters. Although many have regarded it as an important issue, it has had little influence on their choice of party. In Sweden the economic crisis, and the high unemployment rates that came with it, led to increased leftist sentiments in the economic cleavage dimension rather than to authoritarian and xenophobic sentiments on the sociocultural cleavage dimension. Third, we found a low degree of convergence between the established parties in political space. The Conservative Party has consistently been perceived as a real right-wing alternative, which has counteracted perceptions that the established parties do not differ in any substantial way.

However, we have also found some important indications that there may be an available niche for the emergence of a Swedish RRP party in the near future. First, widespread popular xenophobia exists in Sweden. Although the immigration issue is of low salience for the moment, it may be made more manifest by political actors or by unforeseen events in the near future. Second, Sweden has a high level of political distrust in and discontent with political parties and other political institutions, which might be turned into political protest if an attractive protest party were to present itself at the political supply-side. In addition, the proportion of party-identified voters is decreasing, which is releasing an increasing number of voters from their bonds to established parties and therefore freeing resources for new political parties. Moreover, the number of abstainers has increased to a high level in Sweden, especially among workers and the unemployed, voter groups that traditionally have been among those most susceptible to being attracted to RRP parties. Third, there is possibly potential for an emerging RRP party to exploit anti-EU sentiments. It is a plausible assumption that there are voters whose anti-EU sentiments are combined with, or in fact based upon, xenophobic and authoritarian attitudes and preferences. These voters do not share the basic value premises of the Left Party and the Green Party (which until now have been able to more or less monopolize the anti-EU position), and may therefore be attracted by an RRP party stressing an anti-EU policy.

Hence, although the available niche for the emergence of a Swedish RRP party perhaps was bigger before 1998, when the economy was worse and the level of unemployment was at a higher level, it still exists. That no RRP party has emerged has, in my opinion, mainly to do with supply-side

factors: partly the low degree of convergence in the political space, as discussed, and partly the fact that the RRP parties that have presented themselves at the political supply-side as possible alternatives have not been attractive enough. Since the fall of New Democracy in 1994, the Sweden Democrats have been the leading RRP party alternative. However, as mentioned above, the Sweden Democrats have had problems in maintaining a respectable façade, i.e. convincing voters that they are against the established political parties, as well as the system of representative democracy, but nonetheless are not anti-democratic. To put it differently, the Sweden Democrats have used the ‘anti-political-establishment-strategy’ (Schedler 1996) unsuccessfully. As long as the party is seen as anti-democratic, it has no chance of attracting protest voters and little chance of avoiding electoral marginalization, at least as long as an overwhelming majority of voters highly value the idea of democracy.

Let us turn to the second aim of this article, to critically examine some of the factors presented by earlier research as being of crucial importance for the emergence of RRP parties generally. More specifically, the aim was to evaluate these factors’ universal validity by setting them against a negative case. If we take a look at the factors identified as crucial for the emergence of RRP parties, we see that neither ‘a post-industrial economy’, economic crisis, high unemployment, multiculturalization, popular xenophobia, widespread political discontent, experience of referenda that cut across the old party cleavages, nor a proportional voting system – in isolation or combined – provides sufficient conditions for the emergence of RRP parties. Of course, some of them might be necessary conditions.

On the other hand, the results of this study underline the importance of considering supply-side factors (such as the level of convergence in political space) as well as the shifting salience of issues (e.g. the immigration issue) and cleavage dimensions (e.g. the sociocultural cleavage dimension). It is mainly in these two factors that we find an explanation for the exceptionalism of the Swedish case.

One conclusion arising from this article is that we should be aware of the pitfalls associated with using these factors (demand related as well as supply related) in a deterministic way. As has been demonstrated, several of them are equally valid in negative cases. In fact, some of them (e.g. unemployment) have been shown to be particularly bad instruments of prediction. Although I do not want to argue that the theories of Betz, Kitschelt, and others are ‘falsified’ in a Popperian sense of the term, they have been shown to be too vague and incomplete. In my opinion, we should put greater effort into creating hierarchies of the various explanatory factors, i.e. determine which ones are necessary and which ones – if any – are sufficient. To me, it seems improbable we will find any single sufficient explanatory factor. Instead, we need to look for the right combination of

factors and specify how they are related and by means of which mechanisms they operate. Although this work in part has to be theoretical, comparative studies involving both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ cases would be invaluable for this process of elaboration.

To turn once more to the list of explanatory factors discussed above, I will argue that politicized xenophobia and ethno-nationalism are the most important of the ‘positive’ demand-related factors, whereas political discontent is the most important of the ‘negative’ demand-related factors. If only the latter is present, an RRP party may have some successes as a pure protest party. However, if it is not combined with one or both of the former factors, its support is unlikely to persist over time. Although the transition from an industrial to a post-industrial society might create these kinds of sentiments and preferences, we should in my opinion be open minded about the possibility that other processes might create them as well. In any case, we have to be precise about which mechanisms are involved in the transition from the macro-level to the micro-level (cf. Hedström & Swedberg 1998).

Yet, although the ‘right’ mixture of politicized xenophobia, ethno-nationalism, and political discontent exists, there might be supply-side ‘failures’. An emerging RRP party needs a certain amount of resources, as well as a certain amount of strategic skill and ideological sophistication. Further, and of particular importance in this context, its leaders may fail to create an image of the party as sufficiently detached from openly racist and anti-democratic parties and organizations, but nonetheless in clear opposition to the political establishment.

NOTES

1. An earlier version of this paper was presented at the European Consortium for Political Research (ECPR) Standing Group on Extremism and Democracy meeting at Joint Sessions of the ECPR, Grenoble, 6–11 April 2001. I would like to thank all the participants in the workshop for valuable suggestions and remarks.
2. There are two things that distinguish radical right populism from fascism and neo-fascism. First, RRP parties do normally reject all connections with fascist parties and movements (which, of course, neo-fascist parties do not); second, RRP parties openly declare themselves to be ‘democratic’ and in fact the only proponents of ‘true’ democracy. Moreover, the RRP parties are radical in that they (more or less) reject the established political system (i.e. representative democracy) and the established sociocultural value system (e.g. human rights). This distinguishes them from the mainstream right parties.
3. Smith (1991) distinguishes between two kinds of nationalism: territorial nationalism and ethnic nationalism. Whereas territorial nationalism conceives of the nation as a rational association, ethnic nationalism regards it as an organic historic community of culture, held together with family-like bonds of solidarity. More specifically, territorial nationalism is more voluntaristic, whereas ethnic nationalism is deterministic. According to territorial nationalism every individual must belong to a nation but can choose which one to join. The ethnically defined nation, on the other hand, you are born into. Hence, ethno-nationalism is also implicated in the populist conception of the ‘Heartland’ (Taggart 2000).

4. However, in studying the phenomenon of radical right populism, we should be aware of the fact that the degree of populism and right-wing extremism differs between the RRP parties. The FPÖ, for instance, involves more populism than the Vlaams Blok (cf. Ménu & Surel 2000, 257).
5. This is true as long as an overwhelming majority of the electorate in Western Europe value the idea of democracy as something strongly positive.
6. There are, of course, others who have tried to formulate an explanation of RRP parties from a comparative perspective. Their articles are not seldom found as introductions or concluding remarks in anthologies bringing together single-country research on RRP parties (e.g. Beyme 1988; Hainsworth 1992; 2000; Weinberg 1993; Betz 1998; Eatwell 2000b). However, see also Mayer (1999).
7. Ignazi (1992; 1996a) and Inglehart (1997) present similar explanations.
8. More specifically, in discussing change in voters' political preferences Kitschelt (1995, 5–7) distinguishes two factors of importance for this kind of formation process: (1) individuals' market situation, and (2) individuals' communicative experiences and capabilities. From these two factors, Kitschelt derives the hypothesis that (1) orientation in the economic left–right dimension primarily is 'a matter of occupational qualifications and employment sector rather than economic class', that is, that employees in the public sector and in private non-trading sectors are more positively disposed to redistributive social policies, whereas employees in internationally exposed manufacturing industries or in financial and business services are more favorably disposed to 'enhance market flexibility over further re-distributive policies', and (2) individuals working in symbol and client processing organizations are more inclined to be in favor of egalitarianism, whereas individuals working in strategic and instrumental settings are more inclined to favor authoritarianism (Kitschelt 1995, 7).
9. As many have argued, Kitschelt put too much emphasis on the importance of pro-capitalism and economic neoliberalism (e.g. Perrineau 1997). During the 1990s, most RRP parties have drifted in a protectionist and economic centerward or even leftist direction.
10. More specifically, New Democracy criticized the Swedish asylum and immigration policy. The party also linked immigration to criminality (Widfeldt 2000). Although xenophobic overtones were already evident in the 1991 election campaign, the xenophobia was radicalized in the summer campaigns of 1992 and 1993, when, for instance, Vivianne Franzén expressed her fear that Swedish children in the near future would be forced to convert to Islam (Rydgren 1995). Moreover, this theme also includes a strong emphasis on law and order.
11. This theme also includes the liberalization of the alcohol laws.
12. In this article 'post-industrial society' denotes that the importance of the production of services has outgrown the importance of industrial production, which implies a re-evaluation of skills and virtues – and which over time is likely to restructure not only the economy but also the structure of social stratification (cf. Bell 1976).
13. This change is also shown on a more objective level: the Swedish growth of gross domestic product increased from 1.1 percent in 1996 to 2.0 percent in 1997, 3.0 percent in 1998, and 3.8 percent in 1999 (Eurostat 1999, 4).
14. In this context, 'multicultural society' simply denotes the actual presence of multi-ethnic groups.
15. The influx of immigrants has declined since 1994 in the other Western European countries as well. Generally, immigration to Western European countries peaked in the period 1990–94 (Okolski 1999, 149–50).
16. These findings are consistent with Oscarsson's (1998, 273–75) demonstration that the xenophobic cleavage dimension was weak in Sweden during the period between 1979 and 1996.
17. Similarly, 35 percent of French voters mentioned 'law and order', another of the RRP parties' core issues, as a primary cause of their choice of how to vote (Perrineau 1997, 178).
18. Why this happened lies outside the scope of this article. One possible reason is the (actual as well as historical) strength of the working-class organizations (i.e. the Social

- Democrats and the Labor Union). Another possible reason is that the takeover of power by non-socialist parties in 1991 – and, not least, the fact that the Prime Minister was a Conservative – coincided with a major economic crisis.
19. However, there are also RRP parties that have tried to win voters by a pro-EU program, especially during the 1980s. New Democracy, for instance, was in favor of Swedish membership of the EC. The Sweden Democrats, on the other hand, are, like most contemporary RRP parties, ardent opponents of the EU.
 20. The EU issue was already becoming acute in 1990–91, when the Social Democratic Party suddenly changed its opinion (declared in September 1990) and applied for Sweden's membership in July 1991 (Gilljam & Holmberg 1993, 13). However, it is hard to see that this event had any major effects on the emergence of New Democracy, which was in favor of Sweden's membership.
 21. The former three parties were against nuclear power and the EU, and were seen as parties that put the environment before economic growth. The latter three parties took opposite positions on these issues. Moreover, the Green Party did not emerge until the 1980s, and after 1991 the Christian Democratic Party [*Kristdemokraterna*] should also be included in the latter group of parties.
 22. This actualizes the importance of timing for social as well as political processes. As proponents for the historical institutionalist school have argued, in what order events occur does matter (e.g. Steinmo et al. 1992; Papakostas 1995). In Sweden, the traditional economic right–left cleavage dimension was broken for the first time by the issue of nuclear power (although this, in a way, was anticipated by the student movements of the late 1960s), which established an alternative cleavage situation, and this in turn structured new party positions and voter orientations on issues arising later.
 23. One indication of this is that only 37 percent of voters knew all seven Swedish political parties' positions on the issue, i.e. whether they were in favor of or against Swedish membership of the EU. Compare this with the referendum on nuclear power in 1980, in which 66 percent of voters knew all the parties' positions on the issue (Oscarsson 1996, 239).
 24. Of course, since we are discussing political processes, we are mainly concerned with *political* pessimism. However, at the same time we should remember that political phenomena are not necessarily caused by other political phenomena. Hence, 'subjective well-being', i.e. the level of personal pessimism and dissatisfaction (whether caused by economic or social worries), is, I would argue, at least as important as the specific *political* dissatisfaction if we want to understand the dynamics underlying outbursts of political protest. However, the proportion of Swedish voters (in 1996) who answered that they were very satisfied 'with the life they lead' was considerably lower than in Denmark, in which RRP parties are prosperous (65 percent in Denmark, 35 percent in Sweden), and at roughly the same level as in Austria (33 percent). Hence, Sweden does not stand out as an exception in this case (Nilsson 1997, 358).
 25. However, although there is declining confidence in politicians and political institutions, both in Sweden and elsewhere, there is still a high level of support for democratic principles (Norris 1999). In 1994, 93 percent of Swedish voters supported democracy as an ideal form of government. This is roughly the same as in other Western European democracies included in the World Values Survey, in which (with the exceptions of Ireland and Northern Ireland) between 74 and 93 percent of the voters believe that democracy is the best form of government. The popular support for democracy 'as an idea', or 'ideal', is even greater, and varies between 93 and 99 percent (Dalton 1999, 70; Klingemann 1999, 44).
 26. If we take a look at the Swedish voters' confidence in parliament, for instance, we see that the proportion with fairly or very low confidence decreased from 42 percent in 1996, and 38 percent in 1997, to 29 percent in 1998 (Brothén 1999, 252). However, as Brothén (1999) stresses, the confidence in parliament has a tendency to decrease during national election years, so we should be careful not to overestimate this decline.
 27. However, Evans (1999) argues that data measured in the Eriksson-Goldthorpe schema do not provide the same unambiguous support for the thesis of decline in class voting.

28. In addition, the proportion of abstainers was considerably higher among younger voters. In the 1998 election, 28 percent of voters younger than 21, and 25 percent of voters between 22 and 30 years of age abstained from voting (Holmberg 2000, 82).
29. There may be historical reasons for Sweden's exceptionally high level of class voting. As Lipset has argued, the historically given complexity of cleavage structures is of great importance. In countries such as France and Belgium, there have always been other important cleavage dimensions (e.g. religion, ethnicity, regional variations) that have cut through class loyalties. The decline of the economic cleavage dimension has been faster in these countries. Sweden, on the other hand, has historically had a relatively simple cleavage structure, with high salience of the economic cleavage structure and strong class loyalties (Lipset, in Mair et al. 1999, 313).
30. The spatial theory has been criticized for being unrealistic. Most electoral behavior, the critics claim, is governed by party identification, class loyalty, etc., rather than rationality. However, although much of this critique has been justified, the importance of party identification and class loyalty is decreasing. This, I would argue, makes it plausible to assume that the spatial theory, in its soft form, has increasing validity in explaining electoral behavior. Hence, I will assume that a substantial proportion of voters chose to vote for the party that was closest to their own preference position in an attitudinal space.
31. There are certain indications of such convergence, at least when we look at the established parties' voters. When voters in the 1998 parliament election were asked about their attitudes towards 'multicultural society', voters for the Conservative Party had a mean of 58 (on a scale where 0 = very bad and 100 = very good); the voters for the Center Party had a mean of 59; the Social Democratic Party's voters had 60; the Christian Democratic Party's voters had 61; the Left Party's voters had 65; the Green Party's voters had 71; and the Liberal Party's voters 73 (Holmberg 2000, 134). We might expect there to be a niche available for voters who think that 'multicultural society' is a bad thing.

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