The limits of hospitality: The impact of SD on immigration discourses among the Swedish political elite 2006-2016

Disa Hasselberg

Supervisor: Anthoula Malkapoulou
Department of Government
Uppsala University
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Abstract

This thesis is about immigration discourses among the political elite in Sweden. The focus of interest has been to establish if the racist and assimilationist discourses of the Sweden Democrats (Sverigedemokraterna, SD) has been influential on the political party elite, and more specifically on whom, and how. Parliamentary debates and opinion pieces written by party elites has been the basis of material for the enquiry, covering the time period 2006 – July 2016. As SD had their political breakthrough in 2010, it is assumed that, provided that they have been influential on the immigration discourses of the mainstream political elite, new elements in the elite discourse mirroring the discourses of SD should emerge after 2010. The results show that some of the assimilationist ideas and negative discourses on immigration pre-existed the breakthrough of SD. The elite of the political mainstream articulated a strong resistance towards SD’s discourses during their first election cycle. However, more negative discourses bordering those of SD emerged in tandem to the so called refugee crisis in late 2015. The crisis can thus be understood as a catalyst breaking some of the taboos regarding negative immigration discourses. At the same time, although assimilationist discourses emerged among other elites than SD, they where always presented in much milder forms than SD’s discourses, who remain radically different from the other parties. These assimilationist ideas and discourses where mainly adopted by the right wing parties the Moderates (Moderaterna, M) and the Christian Democrats (Kristdemokraterna, KD), as well as the Liberal party (Liberalerna, L). I conclude that the adjustments in discourse to that of SD is less than expected, perhaps as a result of the cordon sanitaire.
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Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background and Problem statement

Over the last couple of years there has been an emerging sense that Sweden’s political landscape is rapidly transforming. Sweden was for a long time considered to be an exception to the successes of racist and anti-immigration, radical right-wing populist parties (RRWP) across Europe. But since Sverigedemokraterna (the Sweden Democrats, SD) had its parliamentary breakthrough in the election of 2010, they have steadily increased their popularity among the Swedish electorate, in spite of being shunned by the media. Since their emergence, they have been contained through the use of a *cordon sanitaire*, a practice by which the mainstream parties exclude radical right wing populists from political collaboration and reject their prescribed xenophobia. Nevertheless, they have brought in a radically different discourse into the Swedish public realm, with their anti-immigration stance and assimilationist ideas. Consequently, Sweden’s ‘exceptionalism’ seems to be fading.

During the peak of the refugee influx in Sweden in the autumn of 2015, Prime Minister Stefan Löfvén appeared at Stockholm’s central square during a *Refugees Welcome* manifestation and promised to keep Sweden’s borders open. A month later the Swedish parliament (*Riksdag*) made a 180 degrees’ turn and set up temporary border controls. Sweden’s immigration policy shifted from one of the most generous to become one of the strictest in Europe. Such a simultaneous change in the policy and the political landscape – with the breakthrough of SD – is not necessarily a coincidence. To be sure, 2015 was a record year in terms of influx of refugees, and Sweden has historically tightened its immigration policy during times of intense refugee immigration. But there are other worrying signs of change. There are some indications that SD’s rhetoric has had an impact on the non-radical right-wing Swedish press. In the highly salient debate that has followed the record influx of refugees in 2015, there seems to be a shift in both how immigrants and asylum-seekers are framed and what kind of immigration policies the Swedish political parties are presenting. There are tendencies in the Swedish press to talk about the refugees by framing them as a

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2 SD is classified as Radical Right Wing Populists (for example) by Jungar, A-C., Jupskås Ravik, A., 2014.
3 Rydgren, J. 2010.
5 Kjellgren, T., 2015.
‘problem’, i.e. as a threat to Swedish norms and values. This indicates a partial endorsement of anti-immigration rhetoric and an adjacent failure to keep the SD at bay. Has the systematic attempt to marginalize SD in parliament and media backfired, so that their anti-immigration/racist discourse is creeping in from the backdoor?

SD has challenged the political mainstream on how to talk about immigration with discourses that seems to have gained momentum and influence. Immigration has become one of the most salient issue in the Swedish political debate. My aim is to explore if SD’s immigration discourses have been influential, and thus adopted by the political elite. What I mean by elite is top politicians such as ministers, members of parliament, and members of party leadership such as party leaders, party secretaries and such. An underlying assumption of this thesis is that discourses are powerful tools that shape how we interpret and think about the world. The political elite has a privilege to legitimize certain discourses through their power position in the public debate. Therefore, if we want to better understand SD’s impact in Swedish politics it is crucial to explore their influence on the political elite.

1.2 Research question
To fulfill this research objective, which is to answer if there has been shifts in the Swedish elite immigration discourses, and if so how? I will proceed in answering the following interrelated questions:

1. What competing discourses on immigration can be identified among the political elite during the time period of 2006-2016?

2. What ideas about immigration (e.g. racism) does the SD bring into the elite discourse?

3. Is there any resistance to SD ideas?

4. Has there been a shift in the political elite discourse(s) on immigration since 2010?

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6 Eg. Bush Thor, Ebba, Carlson, Andreas, Dagens Nyheter, 2016-01-12.
7 Gran-Hinnfors, G. Göteborgsposten, 2016-04-16.
5. If yes, does this shift gravitate towards the ideas produced by SD?

The first three questions can be understood as preparatory questions in order to answer the fourth and fifth question, which is the main research objective of this thesis. The first task to fulfill my aim will thus be to describe what discourses the political party elites produce on immigration. I will need to establish what discourses SD bring into the production of ‘immigration’ that did not exist before they became a party in the Parliament, in order to establish if any other parties have adopted discourses that gravitates towards SD. The time period of 2006-16 has been chosen to allow me to compare the trends from before and after the parliamentary breakthrough of SD in 2010.

1.3 Hypothesis
My first hypothesis is that SD’s immigration discourse has been influential on the political elite. As in many other European countries, it seems likely that mainstream parties in Sweden have adjusted their discourse in an attempt to regain lost voters. As a consequence, my second hypothesis is that the discursive production of ‘immigration’ has been (more) influenced by racist, nationalist and xenophobic sentiments, as RRWP often bring this kind of articulations into the discursive production of ‘immigration’.

A potential shift might also have occurred due to the refugee crisis in itself, if society as a result became more ‘anti-immigration’, due to the increase in immigration. It could thus be expected that the ‘crisis’ triggered many more anti-immigration discourses, and that we could expect a large influence of the discourses propagated by SD. However, as late as in September 2015 the Swedish Statistical Bureau showed that the public wanted a more generous refugee reception.\(^8\) On the other hand, studies conducted later in the autumn 2015, indicated that the opinion was shifting towards a much more negative view of immigration.\(^9\)

Nevertheless, as a third hypothesis, I also expect pro-immigration discourses to remain strong and fierce in Sweden, as it is a political struggle with high stakes. In addition, because the SD continues to be contained through a cordon sanitaire, it is very risky to be associated with

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\(^8\) Brandel, T. SvD, 2015-09-07.

breaking it. The *cordon sanitaire* will be used as an analytical tool to understand the institutional constraint to move too close to SD’s immigration discourses.

1.4 Previous research and theory
One of my starting points is Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s Discourse Theory, in which antagonism and discursive struggle play a central role in politics and identity formation. This understanding is important also when reviewing previous research as much of it is informed by the ideational as well as the linguistic turn that discourse theory is an important contribution to. I will draw on previous research on the RRWP including the extreme right, on immigration discourses, and on racism. Radical right-wing parties often develop what has been coined ‘issue ownership’ of immigration, which means that they become agenda-setters of the issue, having a policy that stands out in competition to their political opponents. ¹⁰ Their discourses often hinge on, even openly, racist ideas and essentialist logics, articulating xenophobic, nativist ideas about national cultural supremacy and the incompatibility of mixing different cultures.¹¹ In fact, there is a correlation between the rise of radical right-wing populism and the salience of immigration issues in Europe.¹²

Since the 1980s, there has been a return to policies of assimilation along with a growing skepticism towards multicultural policies.¹³ This has also led to a shift in focus of the content of immigration policy: from rights to obligations.¹⁴ Research on immigration discourse in other countries, taking stock of anti-immigration rhetoric, shows that the influence of the articulations of the New Right has been very influential on both media discourse but also on the political party mainstream.¹⁵ Some scholars even argue that what we are witnessing is a shift in *hegemony* from the old multiculturalist narratives to a nationalist and assimilationist hegemony.¹⁶ Media and the political mainstream have picked up on the ideas of the ‘immigrant’ and particularly Muslim immigrant as being culturally different, and assumedly unable to embrace ‘Western’ liberal democratic ideals.¹⁷

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¹¹ Eg. See Mondon, A., 2013, and 2015.
¹⁴ Ibid.
¹⁷ Ibid.
There are a few studies on how RRWP has affected the elite discourse, but these have been limited to a couple of cases of exceptionally influential politicians. Research on racism on the other hand has covered elite-produced discourse in a more extensive way, but there is surprisingly little dialogue between research on the effects of RRWP on the political elite and research on discursive racism. On top of that, little attention has been paid to the discursive resistance to the formulations of the radical right. I will draw on both of these strands of research, and look at how SD has been both resisted by and influential on the political elite.

1.5 Methodology and Research Design
The time frame of the study is between 2006 until July 2016. I will look into a material produced during this time period that is closely interlinked to the elite in forms of debates: parliamentarian debates as well as opinion pieces authored by elite politicians. This will allow me to identify any gradual changes, and to determine if a shift in discourse has been correlated with context specific events such as the refugee crisis. The material will consist of a combination of textual material, parliamentary debates and opinion pieces written by party elites and published in the Swedish national press. Since my subject of inquiry is discursive change in the immigration debate, I will use some methodological tools of discourse analysis. I will apply text-analytical tools from discourse analysis, drawing particularly on Norman Fairclough as well as Wodak and Van Dijk’s tools for analyzing immigration discourses. This will be my basis for answering the questions of whether the political elite has adopted any of the discourses of SD.

1.6 Structure of the paper
After having presented the background of the research problem in Chapter 1, I will present an overview of related previous research in the following chapter (Chapter 2). First, some of the key points from Discourse Theory will be discussed. Following this I will (a.) tap into previous research on elite discourses of immigration, (b.) briefly discuss the relation between the extreme right and the radical right, (c.) and investigate expressions of racism and the Radical Right, as well as the radical right’s effect on immigration discourses. I will also present the

background of the Swedish case, including (d.) the domestic discourse on immigration and (e.) an analysis of SD.

In *Chapter 3* I will describe my research design and material, and the method for analysis, before outlining the risks and limitations to my design. In *Chapter 4* I will present my findings based on a selection of tropes from my material. It is divided into three parts according to the three time periods under investigation (i) 2006-2009, (ii) 2010-2013, and (iii) 2014-2016, which will be analyzed separately. I will then continue with a synthetic and comparative outlook (*Chapter 5*), where I will make a lengthier analysis of discursive developments over the entire time period. In the final chapter (*Chapter 6*), I will present the theoretical implications of my findings and a summary of my conclusions.
Chapter 2. Theory and previous research

2.1 Discourse theory
As was mentioned briefly in chapter 1, one of the underlying assumptions of this thesis is that discourses matter. They play a crucial role in how people think and act politically, in identity formations, in ideological production as well as in the production of knowledge and norms. Discourse theory also assumes that collective identity is a constitutive part of human existence. Discourse theory will be the theoretical framework of this thesis, it informs much of the previous research of immigration discourses, as well as the analytical tools for interpreting discursive struggles.

Discourse theory is a theory about how socially constructed power relations and social order can be obtained, challenged and changed. The starting point of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe’s discourse theory is that discourse constructs the social world in meaning. Collective identities, the social realm and our understanding of the material world is conveyed through discourses and can be meaningfully interpreted through our social construction of it: it is ‘superimposed by language’. I will use discourse as defined by Louise Phillips and Marianne W. Jørgensen, treating it as “a particular way of talking about and understanding the world”. Discourse theory draws on the Sassurian idea that there is a discrepancy between a word (sign) and the object it is representing (signifier). This implies two things: there will never be one completely fixed meaning of a word and that meaning is always relational, thus discourses can be conceptualized as a matrix of relational meanings.

Meaning can be constructed in two relational ways, firstly by establishing its positive relation to other words and discourses: creating a chain of equivalence. Meaning can also be established through a chain of difference ascribing meaning through a dialectic understanding of what something is not. This kind of ‘negative’ identity reflects a subordinated position to the ‘positive’ identity which it receives its meaning from. Meaning cannot be completely

\[\text{\textsuperscript{20}}\text{Mouffe, C. 2005. p.38.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{22}}\text{Ibid. p. 1.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{23}}\text{Laclau, E., & Mouffe, C. 2001. p.127.}\]
\[\text{\textsuperscript{24}}\text{Ibid. p. 128.}\]
fixed by one discourse, and therefore there will always be parallel discourses ascribing meaning to the same object. This implies that discourses will change as they interact, but it also foreshadows the emergence of a discursive struggle.\textsuperscript{26} When discourses of the same sign mutually exclude each other, antagonism arises.\textsuperscript{27} Laclau and Mouffe call this a “failure of difference”; antagonism renders a plurality of meaning impossible. Competing discourses are engaged in a battle for hegemony\textsuperscript{28}, to be the dominant meaning structure that establish the social order. A hegemonic order creates certain naturalized discourses that are seen as truthful and objective.

Laclau and Mouffe present three analytical concepts to illustrate how hegemony operates and how it can be challenged by competing counter-hegemonic discourses.\textsuperscript{29} Firstly, there are hegemonic practices, i.e. political activities which can be built on different “articulated identities and subject positions in a common project.”\textsuperscript{30} Secondly, out of the hegemonic practices, hegemonic formations take shape, creating a certain social order.\textsuperscript{31} This could for example establish an order where multiculturalism is legitimated by tenets of liberal democracy. Thirdly, there are hegemonic interventions, ruptures and challenges by counter-hegemonic practices. These can result in new hegemonic constellations.\textsuperscript{32} Discourse thus evolve in dialogue to other discourses, but also radically depart from the norm. SD has thus through their radically different discourses, brought in hegemonic interventions into the political debate. The question is, using this theoretical language whether their counter-hegemonic discourses have been influential and adopted by other political actors?

2.2 Elite discourses on immigration, racist and counter-racist topoi
Racism and elite discourses on immigration has perhaps most extensively been covered in \textit{Racism at the top}, edited by Ruth Wodak and Teun Van Dijk.\textsuperscript{33} In this anthology, Wodak and Van Dijk develops a methodological framework for immigration discourses that was applied to country specific case studies of elite institutional racism in six different European

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{26} Ibid. p.111-113.
\item \textsuperscript{27} Ibid. p.122.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Phillips; Jørgensen, 2002. p. 47.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Ibid. p.48.
\item \textsuperscript{30} Phillips; Jørgensen, 2002. p. 45.
\item \textsuperscript{31} Laclau; Mouffe, 2001. p. 136-137.
\item \textsuperscript{32} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{33} Wodak, R.;Van Dijk, T., 2000.
\end{itemize}
parliaments. This study does not aim to localize immigration discourses to different party ideologies, though of course RRWP parties often are presented as examples of the most bluntly racist sources of parliamentary racism. Instead they aim to localize general patterns of racism in parliamentary debates. They found that some justifications for argument for or against immigration, *topoi*, was reoccurring in all of the of the six cases. In the concluding chapter they listed the following reoccurring racist and anti-immigration topoi:

1. *Immigrants abuse the system*
2. *Criminality*
3. *Lax immigration encourages illegal immigration*
4. *Threat to employment & work illegally*
5. *Topos of numbers*[^34]

The first topos is quite self-explanatory, as it represents claims that immigrants abuse the system without contributing to society, a welfare chauvinistic argument. The second topos, *criminality*, reveals a discourse that immigrants are involved in, and are more prone to criminality, implying that immigrants are morally inferior and a threat to society.[^35] The third topos involves the idea that a soft policy will cause illegal immigration, another threat, while the fourth is welfare-chauvinistic arguments that immigrants come and steal all the job opportunities from the majority population. The fifth topos presents the cheer size of immigration being disastrous, often in a dehumanizing way, speaking about immigration as a disease, or as a natural disaster.[^36] They also analyzed arguments that refuted these kinds of claims. Countering these topoi were the following counter-arguments often appealing for a humane & egalitarian policy:

1. *Harsh immigration contradicts human rights*
2. *Tighter rules encourage illegal immigration*
3. *Civilized & tolerant countries must help those in need*
4. *Immigration is important for labor market functioning*
5. *Diversity is important for Europe*

[^35]: Ibid.
6. Harsh immigration laws encourage racism. The first three, as well as the final sixth topos argues for universal solidarity, framing immigration as a moral obligation. They also direct or indirectly warns against racism, and thus moral decay. The fourth and fifth topos presents arguments for the good benefits of immigration. The analysis of immigration discourses of the elite is rather schematic as it presents arguments, merely for and against. It is helpful to understand the arguments and reasoning in the debate, and the values embedded in the arguments. But immigration discourses are often broader than this, and when taking on a more actor-centered perspective it provides few insights into the contradictions and ambivalence that might occur. What is missing is nuances among more immigration friendly discourses, and above all discourses that might be contradictory. Could we not expect elite politicians to be both positive to immigration but still hinging on racism? As studies on racisms have shown, negative ideas about others are often only hinted, rather than being bluntly presented. In the next section I will present a background to different logics of racism and how racist discourses has evolved, much due to an active intervention of the far right.

2.3 Racism and Anti-racism
Racism creates much confusion in public as well as in academic debates. This is much due to the fact that many still sees racism as biological racism – where racist ideology, discourse, attitudes etc., rests on notions of racial hierarchies. According to scholars, often drawing on post-colonial perspectives, this is a reductionist understanding of racism.

Diana Mulinari and Anders Nergaard argues that we can distinguish two distinct logics of racism – a racism of exploitation and a racism of exclusion. The exploitative form is understood as an integral aspect of global capitalism, where policies and practices create and maintain vertical hierarchies where social class and privileges often becomes conflated with ethnicity. A key term in order to understanding exploitative racism is therefore how processes of racialization works to produced racialized individuals that can be exploited.

38 Ibid.
Racialization renders people visible through characteristic ascribed to their imposed or self-imposed group identity. David J. Roberts and Minelle Mahtani argue that the neoliberal world order “actively produce racialized bodies”. Discourses on immigrants and other racialized groups is often “coupled with anti-market behavior” and they become intertwined with the “antithesis of the ideal neoliberal citizen”.

The *racism of exclusion* is a form of constructing a negative “other” that is perceived as a threat and a dangerous deviation from the norm. This racism is often used by parties such as SD to create support for their anti-immigration and assimilation policy. These logics can feed into each other and be used to legitimize one another. Discourses on immigrants constructing them as the antithesis of the ideal citizen will legitimize arguments of exclusion. Isabel Awad has drawn a close link between neoliberalism and assimilation, arguing that neoliberalism offers only a narrow form of social inclusion to well-adjusted immigrants who embody the (neoliberal) national model citizen. Racist discourses then, can be summarized as discursively forming hierarchized identity formations where the “other” is ascribed negative and inferior attributes in relation to the majority self.

2.3.1 The Anti-racist hegemony

At the end of the Second World War the scientific racism was rejected as morally despicable by the victorious allies. Out of this moral consensus an anti-racist hegemony took form. Nobody wanted to be associated with the racism of slavery, nazism and fascism, through notions of ‘race’ and ‘blood’. Anti-racist became an important catchword to present oneself as morally superior in opposition to the evil racists. Shifts in racist discourse has therefore been developed for strategic reasons by the far right. In the 1960’s Alan de Benoist, the leader of French New Right (*Nouvelle Droite*), sought to sanitize the extreme right in order to increase their cultural influence. He sought to unite the ultra-nationalist movements in

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43 Ibid.
45 Awad, I., 2012.
49 Wollenberg, D., 2014.
Europe through ideas of *Pan-Europeanism*: the idea that it existed a common European identity based on European history, Judeo-Christian values and the secular values of the Enlightenment. He claimed that Europeans were radically different from non-Europeans, and in particular Muslims. He thus created a new form of hierarchized identities, but based on culture rather than race and ethnicity. De Benoist legitimized his claims through an argument that all culture has a right to difference and to “preserve its distinctiveness”. In tandem to this, de Benoist also claimed that the age of capitalist globalization and rapid immigration was harmful both to host and alien cultures. His ideas and the mobilization of the new right can be understood as a counter-hegemonic intervention set to break the hegemony of Anti-racism.

The idea of the ‘irreducibility of cultural differences’, implying the superiority of one cultural group over the other has come be known as *new racism* or *neo-racism*. The term is closely related to the ideas of nationalism, the conviction that each nation should inhabit one distinct nation-state. It is linked to the belief that cultures ought to be homogenous within a nation. Some scholars on racism have pointed out that it is problematic to speak of old or new racisms as there has always been, even in older forms of racism, claims of cultural supremacy of one’s own race. Nevertheless, I think the concept of new racism serves the purpose of pointing out how racist ideas has discursively transformed into an emphasis on culture. The critique rather pinpoints the close kinship between the racist discourses based on arguments of biological differences to that of cultural differences.

2.4 Towards a new immigration discourse?
In his book *Mainstreaming of the Extreme Right in France and Australia: A Populist hegemony*? Aurélien Mondon argues that the extreme right’s linking of neo-racist reasoning with populist anti-austerity calls has been crucial for its political success in Europe. But it has also been a successful strategy among more moderate right-wing parties, when they

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50 Wollenberg, D., 2014.
51 Ibid.
52 Bar-On, T., 2011.
53 Ibid.
56 Wollenberg, D., 2014.
started to borrow the xenophobic and populist language of the far right.\textsuperscript{58} Mondon argues that this has led to a change in the political mainstream, so that what were previously unacceptable views have become \textit{comme il faut}.\textsuperscript{59} The appropriation by moderate right-wing politicians of the language of the far right mimicked the logics of populism, speaking in the name of the people and rejecting the destructor of the national culture (through multiculturalism), i.e. the political elite.\textsuperscript{60} Mondon argued that the populist framework helped to produced a hegemonic shift in immigration politics, towards more racist discourses.\textsuperscript{61}

This is also illustrated in a study on racism and anti-Semitism in Austria by Ruth Wodak and Martin Reisigl, were they concluded that racist discourses were prevailing in Austria even though these kinds of discourses were considered taboo.\textsuperscript{62} But with the success of FPÖ – a typical RRWP party - it was easier to circumvent these taboos.\textsuperscript{63} The radical right has according to them been influential in breaking the anti-racist norms of the political elite.

There are many more examples of the negative shifts in immigration discourses. Ferruh Yilmaz argues that we are witnessing a growing shift in immigration discourse, a shift produced by the radical right that traces back to the 1980s.\textsuperscript{64} They have managed to put Islam and Muslim immigrants at the center stage of the political debate and ‘culturalized’ the category of immigrant.\textsuperscript{65} This means that the problems and stigmas that are connected to immigration are pivoting around ideas of culture, either as in cultural antagonisms between the host and the immigrant, or as a discourse portraying immigrants as “liberal dissenters”.\textsuperscript{66} This term expresses the idea that immigrants, and particularly Muslims, refuse to embrace values of liberal democracy, which is understood as a refusal to participate in ‘Western’ society. This has created a new hegemony where the two new antagonizing categories of immigrants vs. Europeans have become common sense in the social structure.\textsuperscript{67} However,

\textsuperscript{58} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{59} Mondon, 2013. p. 19.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{63}Ibid.
\textsuperscript{64} Yilmaz, 2012.
\textsuperscript{65} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{66} Akkerman, 2005.
\textsuperscript{67} Yilmaz, 2012.
Yilmaz concludes that this would not have been possible if assimilationist and differentialist ideas had not previously been embedded in the political mainstream discourse.\textsuperscript{68}

Talal Asad claims that the fear of Muslims is deeply rooted in Europe. Not even Bosnian “white” Muslims can be integrated into the conceptions of “Europeanness”; they are also excluded like any “immigrant Muslim”.\textsuperscript{69} This separation is embedded in Europe’s historical narrative, and according to Asad, the European narrative contains certain elements of essentialism that is neither a stranger to liberals, nor to the extreme right.\textsuperscript{70} David Wollenberg would also agree that the idea of Pan-Europeanism cannot be ascribed to the far right alone, but has also been inspired by scholars that have proclaimed the idea of the ‘clash of civilizations’, such as Bernard Lewis and Samuel Huntington. These authors claimed that ‘the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts will not be between classes but between different ‘cultural entities’.\textsuperscript{71} They have produced a \textit{chain of equivalence} of ‘The West’ to nodal points such as modernity, democracy, equality & secularism while non-Western immigrant cultures are discursively constructed as ‘backward’, ‘illiberal’, ‘authoritarian’ & ‘patriarchal’. This negative image of “cultural others” could be used to legitimize ideas of assimilation into the imagined culturally superior host country.\textsuperscript{72}

Titje Akkerman argues that this constructed antagonism between liberal values and Islam has given rise to \textit{a civic form of nationalism} which embraces the idea that Islam is endangering liberalism and the ideas of the Enlightenment.\textsuperscript{73} This form of nationalism is different from nationalism based on ethnicity as its propagators sees themselves as defenders of the liberal core of Europe rather than a specific national culture.\textsuperscript{74} Per Erik Nilsson has shown that writers in \textit{Secular Retaliation}, a French radical anti-immigration online magazine unites a diverse group of nationalists on the far right, liberals and communists against the perceived Muslim threat, in defense of ‘French secular and liberal values’\textsuperscript{75}. It thus seems that the previous ideological identity formations of these authors have become secondary to their

\textsuperscript{68} Yilmaz, 2012.  
\textsuperscript{69} Asad, 2016.  
\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{71} Wollenberg, 2014.  
\textsuperscript{72} Asad, 2016.  
\textsuperscript{73} Akkerman, 2005.  
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{75} Nilsson, P. E., 2015.
nationalist identity, creating an unlikely alliance between those that would be otherwise understood as primary antagonists in the classical left-right divide.

The growing tendency to link Muslims with the negative effects of immigration have produced other effects, for example the so-called “ethnicization of sexism” and critical declarations about the failure of multiculturalism. From this perspective, Muslims as a group are seen as a particularly patriarchal and backward culture. This could imply that left-wing parties might also oppose Muslim immigrants in light of a defence of feminist values. This has happened to some degree in Norway, where some of the fiercest critique of Islam comes from feminists of the left.

To summarize, there is a rather strong consensus that the discourse on immigrants is shifting towards the ideas formulated by the New Right. What is worse, the hegemonic framing of Muslims seems to intersect the political field in Europe. Even though there is some resistance against the stigmatization of Muslims or the culturalization of immigrants in general, the influence of multicultural ideologies and anti-racist norms seems to be fading. Whether it is a new paradigm or new hegemonic social order – the old dominant discourse is being seriously challenged. It could also be concluded that nationalism in Europe is becoming more closely linked with liberal values – and cries for gender equality are being used to frame immigrants and particularly Muslims as hostile to the foundation of society. In some cases, these ideas seem to have migrated into the concept of European identity, and the far right has managed to cultivate anti-Muslim or general anti-immigrant sentiment by appealing to a Pan-European liberal culture.

2.5 Immigration discourses in Sweden
Discourses on immigration does not only reveal ideas about immigrants but also the national identity as immigration discourses reveals the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Immigration discourse will also be colored by the more overall ideological projects of how to organize society. In their study of Swedish integration discourses Jean-Paul Brekke and Tordis Brochhervink illustrates how discourses on integration and immigration is intertwined, just as the Swedish immigration policy is intertwined with labor market participation and the

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76 Christoph, R., 2010.
welfare state policies. The discourses on integration that exist in Sweden can therefore also be understood as proxies for competing political and social theories of how to secure equal rights, obligations and opportunities for all.\textsuperscript{78} The discourses of integration identified by Brekke and Brochgrevink present a good background to how the political elite in Sweden produce immigration discourses.

2.5.1 A typology of discourses of integration

According to Brekke and Brochgrevink the Swedish integration debate has been revolving around five discourses: the \textit{discourse of structural discrimination}, the \textit{social liberal discourse}, the \textit{social democratic discourse}, the \textit{assimilation discourse} and perhaps a tentative fifth discourse coined the \textit{critical humanist discourse}. These discourses represent competing ideas of “what caused the differences, which measures should be implemented and what ideal society would be like for minorities and the majority.”\textsuperscript{79}

First, the \textit{structural discrimination discourse} rests on the assumption that racism is embedded within the institutional framework of Sweden. Legislation must focus on undermining discrimination, and according to this discourse the most fundamental problems of integration originate primarily from the majority’s repression of the minorities.\textsuperscript{80} Proponents of this discourse are \textit{Miljöpartiet} (the Green Party, MP) and \textit{Vänsterpartiet} (the Left Party, V) scholars of postcolonial perspectives and for a short period \textit{Socialdemokraterna} (the Social Democrats, S), i.e. when Mona Sahlin was the party leader.\textsuperscript{81} It is first and foremost a discourse that opposes assimilationist discourse, which is understood as the most unequivocally racist discourse. It can be understood as a discourse that operates under the logic of anti-racism.

The \textit{social liberal discourse} favors deregulation of the integration process, it perceives a heavily involved State in the integration process as patronizing and wasteful, a policy that undermines personal freedom and disempowers immigrants.\textsuperscript{82} This discourse is propagated

\textsuperscript{78} Brekke, J-P., Brochgrevink, T., 2007. p. 23.
\textsuperscript{79} Ibid. p. 35.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid. p. 16.
\textsuperscript{81} Brekke and Brochgrevink, 2007. p.36-37, 40-45.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid. p. 47-51.
by Folkpartiet (the liberal party, FP), Moderaterna (the Moderates, M), Centerpartiet (The Centre party, C) and Kristdemokraterna (the Christian Democrats, KD). This view would probably not accept the assumptions of neither proponents of assimilation, nor fully the idea that racism is embedded in society. This discourse rests on some neoliberal, or at least liberal underpinnings as the emphasis is on the individual and there is a hostility towards market regulations and a strong focus on active participation on the labor market and abolishing obstacles for job integration.

Third, the social democratic discourse argues that responsibilities and rights must be balanced and they see a heavily involved State as a necessity in order to accomplish this. Proponents are the S and Landsorganisationen (LO), the biggest trade Union of Sweden.

Fourth, the assimilation discourse had at the time of the report by Brekke and Brochgrevink was written highly negative connotations. Assimilation is in Sweden associated with historical abuse of the Sami and Finnish minorities. It is a discourse that stresses the necessity of adaptation to the culture of the recipient society, a discourse that has only been used by SD.

Finally, Brukke and Brochgrevink tentatively raise a fifth possible discourse, the critical humanist discourse. This discourse consists of articulations that are highly critical of a large immigration and integration project, but from a different perspective than the assimilationists. Their view focus on the immigrants themselves, and argue that isolation from the majority society will be equally bad for them and for the society as a whole; from this perspective, integration can only proceed slowly. They do not per se propagate the survival of national culture but the concern seems to stem from a fear that immigrants that become secluded in small communities, risks becoming socially excluded. My suggestion is that it would lie in between the structural discrimination discourse and the social liberal discourse as it has a focus on the minority but a rather unclear position towards assimilation or integration.

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83 In 2016 they changed their name to Liberalerna, L.
85 Ibid. p. 61.
87 Ibid. p. 64-65.
88 Brekke and Brochgrevink, 2007.
These discourses will be intermixed and be affected by ideas of the ‘immigrant’. They will be entangled with discursively constructed norms of what is acceptable to say about immigrants and general common-sense discursively created “truths” about immigrants. Integration discourses are in Brukke and Brochgrevink intimately associated with the political elite. In the next section we turn to discourses on immigration in Swedish media.

2.5.2 Immigration and national identity in Swedish media discourse

There are extensive studies on immigration discourses in the Swedish public discourse. In a historical overview of media studies on immigrant narratives in Sweden, Gunilla Hultén concludes that the pervasive narrative is that immigrants are constructed as threats, problems, deviant from the norm, and often associated with crime.89 One such study has been conducted by media scholar Ylva Brune, a study of discourses on refugees in news reports.90 She makes two interesting claims. One is that within the majority discourse, different waves of refugees during different time periods have varied greatly.91 She notices that the reporting on the Syrian Christian refugees in the 80s was conducted with empathy and where refugees were often given a voice. This stands in stark contrast to the covering of different waves of refugees from Muslim majority areas, for example the wave of Iranian refugees in the 80’s or Afghans and Iraqis that came in the late 90’s and early 00’s. These refugees were in general being presented very differently, with mainly negative connotations. However, even in the positive images there was some racism involved:

If the rhetoric of the news texts in 1976 was characterized by care and social pathos it was still a concern that often assumed an evolutionary perspective; a view that “we” have climbed far on the development ladder and that “we” step by step must transform the non-modern people and make them adjust to the higher level that we have achieved. (My translation)92

The second important point by Brune is that different waves of political refugees have invoked particular support among the political parties depending on the political conflicts that the refugees were seeking asylum from.93 Sympathy with immigrants and

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93 Ibid.
refugees seems to be partially conditioned by the political “color” of the regime whose oppression and persecution of which they fled from. But no party seems to have taken extra measures to show concern for Muslim refugees, implying that they invoked little identification and sympathy among any party.  

Recurring metaphors that have been used in Swedish press during refugee crises are metaphors such as *invasion* and *flood*. But there are also counter-images where the focus is instead on the evil racist Swedish people. The ‘good’ people in these images were those that opened their hearts and joined anti-racist movements. This kind of self-glorifying images of Swedish hospitality and goodness are recurring and can be understood as expressions of a latent nationalism and pride of what is deemed to be the *good* Sweden ascribing Swedenhospitality, candor and generosity. There has been an evident uneasiness in Sweden when it comes to pointing out problems among specific aspects of minority groups. Aje Carlbom argues that this is a result of the multiculturalist paradigm guided by multiculturalist ideals, which has obscured “important cultural and social aspects” of Muslims as a very heterogeneous group.

The hegemony of multiculturalism also stigmatizes individuals who are critical of immigration as racists. This uneasiness to discuss negative aspects of Muslims’ identity/lifestyle/culture resonates with a taboo around talking about culture-specific problems, as noted in the study by Brekke and Brochgrevink. They make an interesting observation in their study of immigration discourses, namely that many of their informants are reluctant to discuss cultural differences with regard to immigrant groups:

But if «culture» is such a nonstarter, why does Sweden celebrate multiculturalism? It could be that there is a vision embedded in this seeming self-contradiction - something in the vein of a «multiculturalism without culture»?

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95 Hultén, 2009. p. 11.
96 Ibid. p.15.
98 Ibid.
Here they draw a parallel from the behavior of their respondents to Anne Phillips’ observation that proponents of multiculturalism often embrace is diversity in a shallow manner.\textsuperscript{100} This observation is similar to one made by Slavoj Zizek, that there are practices where the other is welcome, but the unwanted and alien aspects of the other are denied until the ‘decaffeinated other’, as he calls it, is reduced to a shadow of its former cultural identity.\textsuperscript{101} This implies that through multiculturalism there can be hidden norms of assimilation and nationalism.

Hultén points out that the values ascribed to ‘Swedishness’ are often projected on ‘good immigrants’ as a way of ‘Swedifying’ them.\textsuperscript{102} There are also studies that show that there is a reluctance to depict Sweden as prejudiced or racist.\textsuperscript{103} This resonates a claim of Tobias Hübínnette and Carin Lundström, namely that there is a strong anti-racist national identity emanating from the ideas of anti-racism and perhaps also multiculturalism as a form of moral superiority. The breakthrough of SD subjected this nationalist self identity to a crisis and can be interpreted as an explanation for the strong emotional resistance towards them.\textsuperscript{104}

2.6 A brief background to SD
SD is classified as cultural racist,\textsuperscript{105} anti-immigrationist or as radical right-wing populist, belonging to a distinct but slightly heterogeneous Nordic family.\textsuperscript{106} They were founded in 1998 and have their roots in neo-Nazi movements such as Bevara Sverige Svenskt (Keep Sweden Swedish).\textsuperscript{107} As the party has matured it has tried to shed its extremist and racist label and legacy and they now define their ideological core as nationalism and social conservatism.\textsuperscript{108} Like many other extremist parties’ intent on shedding the racist label they do not use the word race, but as Mulinari and Neergaard have pointed out “ethnicity, culture and religion are used in a racializing manner”.\textsuperscript{109} After the election of 2006, they abandoned the talk of ethnic differences in favor of an idea about the importance of culture and cultural

\textsuperscript{100} Phillips, A. (2005).
\textsuperscript{102} Hultén, (2009). p.22.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{104} Hübínnette, T., Lundström, C., 2011.
\textsuperscript{105} Mulinari; Neergard, 2014.
\textsuperscript{106} Jungar; Jupskås Ravik, 2014.
\textsuperscript{107} Hellström A; Nilsson, P. 2010.
\textsuperscript{108} Sverigedemokraterna, Principprogrammet 2005.
\textsuperscript{109} Mulinari; Neergaard, 2014.
differences. They have avoided positioning themselves on the Swedish left-right spectrum arguing that they bring in a fresh completely different approach than the old political establishment. In Swedish press they have mostly been considered extreme, but of late there has been a shift. Jungar and Jupskås Ravik for example claim that the extreme-right epithet of SD is waning.

They have attracted voters from all parties and more or less evenly from the entire political spectrum. They have used a populistic rhetoric, arguing that they represent the common people that has been neglected in favor of a costly mass immigration. Their argument builds on two main pinnacles: one is welfare chauvinist that Swedish welfare should go to “those that contributed to it”. Secondly, they demand that those that come to Sweden have to be assimilated. They speak of a society endangered when people of different cultures fail to embrace Swedish norms and values.

Anders Hellström claims that SD radicalized the traditional party politics and rhetoric, giving a voice to a fear of an imagined cultural threat from immigrants and Muslims in particular. Mulinari and Neergaard agrees to some extent that SD has radicalized the discourse on immigrants. At the same time, they understand SD’s cultural racism as a radical rework of ideas about ‘us’ and ‘them’ (immigrants) that was already “embedded in European Liberal democracies”. They argue that the difference SD bring into the political discourse are radical solutions to immigration and integration, and a particular form of racism, mostly drawing on the exclusive logic of racism. The turn to an emphasis on cultural differences have created a discourse where immigrants are seen as deviating from the majority norms (‘Swedish norms’) on gender equality and tolerance.

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111 Sverigedemokraterna, Princippogrammet 2005.
112 Jungar; Jupskås Ravik, 2014
113 Norocel, O. C. 2013.
114 Ibid.
117 Mulinari; Neergaard 2014.
118 Ibid.
The main task when moving on to the empirical investigation is whether SD brought any new elements into the political immigration discourse that was not prevalent before. As much literature on immigration discourses in Sweden has revealed, ideas about Sweden’s cultural superiority has been present in the public discourse.
Chapter 3. Method

3.1. Timeframe and Material
The material will be a selection of text materials from the years 2006-2016. This timeframe is justified by the goal of/aims at bringing out the potential changes in the immigration discourse from the years prior to SD’s entry into the Swedish parliament up to its consolidation as a parliamentary party. The analysis will be periodized according to three time periods 2006-09, 2010-13 and 2014-16. This reason that 2010-16 is divided analytically is because there are reasons to believe that SD might have been influential early on, but there are also reasons to expect SD to have become more influential later wards.

In the first period, from 2006 to mid 2010, SD had not yet crossed the parliamentary threshold, but their influence was steadily growing; 2006 also marked a political shift when a centre-right government was formed by the so-called Alliance: Moderaterna (M, the Moderates), Folkpartiet/Liberalerna (FP/L the Liberals), Centerpartiet (C, The Centre party) and Kristdemokraterna (KD, the Christian Democrats), breaking the 12-year consecutive government rule by the Social Democrats. In the autumn of 2010 SD entered the parliament. The election of 2014 marks a consolidation of SD’s position in Swedish politics when they doubled their parliamentary mandate; at the same time, a new minority government was formed by the Social Democrats and the Greens (Miljöpartiet, MP). The strengthening of SD’s position in 2014 might very well have increased their impact on the discourse of the mainstream party elites.

The selected texts reflect my focus on party elite discourse. My ambition is to look at both how elite politicians express themselves in the political arena as well as in the public debate. I have considered parliamentarians, ministers, party secretaries and party leaders (including party leaders of the youth party branch) to be included in my definition of elite politicians. I have therefore selected my material from two different sources: (1) debates in the Parliament and (2) opinion pieces in the national press authored by party elites. I have chosen to look at parliamentary debates as it is the designated arena of the political elite. Here they will engage in direct debates which will demand rhetorical skills and well developed debating techniques, the elite will need to follow party procedure and ideology in a strict manner. The opinion pieces on the other hand is a way to communicate directly to the public, discourses produced
here will not only operate under the media logic but also under the constraints of both public appeal and partisan politics. The strategies used for identifying the relevant material from each of these sources are presented below:

**Parliamentary debates**

As Teun A. van Dijk has pointed out, parliamentary debates as a discursive genre is seldom studied, even though they play an integral part for policy formation. I have chosen one debate in the chamber that relates to refugees and immigration issues for each selected time period. These limitations are due to the extensive length of each debate. An exhaustive study of all debates would not have been possible, since a simple search in the Parliament’s open online archive for the time period of ten years, using words ‘invandring’ (immigration), ‘flykting’ (refugees) and ‘integration’ (integration) produces more than 1400 documents.

Three debates from the years 2008, 2013 and 2016 have been chosen due to their high ‘relevance’ in the search engine of the Swedish Riksdag. It ranks the relevance of a protocol according to the number of hits of the search words. Many hits imply that the issue of ‘immigration’, ‘integration’ and ‘refugees’ has been discussed thoroughly during a session. I have reasoned that the higher the number of participants and the longer the debate, the better.

**Opinion pieces written by party representatives**

I will also look at the immigration discourse performed by party representatives in public media. In order to limit the material, I will use debates published in Sweden’s biggest national newspapers: Svenska Dagbladet (Conservative), Aftonbladet (Social Democratic), Dagens Nyheter (Liberal) and Expressen (Liberal) as well as a few smaller newspapers, as the alliance parties are clearly overrepresented in the national newspapers. I have used the keyword ‘immigration’ when looking for data in these papers’ online archives, as well as in the database Artikelsök, a database-collection of printed press material. Opinion pieces with little relevance have been excluded from the analysis. All in all, I have started off with 68 opinion pieces as material for my analysis, but I have after careful reading only quoted about 39 of them, as they exemplify the general trends in the material.

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121 All material for the last 20 years has been transcribed and published online.
3.3. Analytical tools

The first step analytically will be to deconstruct the texts and identify discourses in a way that is inspired by Norman Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis. As the authors are top politicians much of the text will revolve around policy suggestions. I will focus on topoi, as it is will be a good tool both for comparison of how the party discourses might change over time, but also as to compare with Wodak and Van Dijk; this will be complemented with some specific text analytical tools from Fairclough’s Critical Discourse Analysis Toolbox.

**Topoi**

What reoccurring arguments are presented in connection to immigration and immigrants? What topoi are used for and against immigration? Topoi can be understood as a primary category of analysis while the following tools will allow for more sophisticated analysis. This is a tool also to distinguish not only ideas used to motivate a positive or negative stance, but it also involves a process of constructing modality: how truth claims are produced. What facts are presented, and how is legitimacy created?

**Wording**

I will pay attention to wording as this reflects values ascribed through positive or negative wording. Wording helps untangle what kind of values might be ascribed to immigration and immigrants and to uncover negative biases such as racist articulations.

**Metaphors**

Metaphors are interesting and important when looking at identity constructions as they ascribe and link meanings to objects and subject to a common cultural imagery. Metaphors have a crucial function in subject positioning’s, as well as for creating and strengthening collective identities, as well as rejecting elements that do not fit into the imagery of a certain discourse.  

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123 Ibid.
3.4. Limits and risks

There are of course certain risks and limitations in conducting a discourse-analytical study. Firstly, discourse analysis is rarely exhaustive and the selection of material has to be well motivated. It is a qualitative method that in this approach is inductive-deductive, these tools will limit how I interpret text materials and the limited selection in itself produces great risks in terms of both validity and reliability.

This is a problem, but my assumption of discourse and dominance is that if there have been more general shifts in discourse, it will be noticeable in small sample, as long as it is representative of the political elites rather than a few individuals.

Secondly, research based on discourse analysis often lacks transparency when it comes to both the choices of selection material and whether the material is representative for answering the posed research question or not. In order to give the reader a fair chance to evaluate the validity of a discourse analysis, it is crucial to be transparent, to carefully motivate the choices made in the material selection and to reflect on alternatives that were left out of the study. As my analysis does not provide excerpts from all of the material if used, there is a certain lack of transparency, a trade off that I made, as I believe it is equally important not to draw conclusions from a very small sample. Many actors and ideological positions are included in this study, and in order to discriminate between the different shifts in party discourses, a too small sample would not have allowed me to do so.

Thirdly, my decision to combine two different types of sources of elite-produced discourse means that I have also left out other sources, such as tv debates, speeches and such. My motivations for limiting the selected material is not theoretically motivated but rather based on practical reasons, there is simply not enough space to cover too many discursive genres. I also reason that the audience addressed in the opinion pieces is similar to that of other forms of public debates, speeches and such. I would argue that sources I have chosen are representative for elite political discourse.

125 But I keep the printed material in a Securitas-bag, for anybody willing to see.
In sum, the research design has broad scope, which is necessary as the aim is to study many political actors’ contributions to the immigration discourse, covering the political spectrum, over a longer time period. I intend to capture the general trends and implications, rather than an in-depth analysis of one specific discourse.

Chapter 4. Results

The opinion pieces and debates in the parliament are presented together, as these debates overlap and several reoccurring topoi refigure in both of them. I will present the analysis of each time period by dividing the re-occurring topoi in a thematic order. This is because many discourses are shared among the majority of the elite, while SD is presented separately. Positive immigration discourses, negative immigration discourses and counter-discourses to negative immigration discourses will be presented separately.\textsuperscript{126} The idea of counter-discourse is borrowed from Wodak and Van Dijk, as there is a difference between generally positive discourses and discourses produced to refute negative topoi.

4.1. The Swedish immigration debate 2006-2009

Background of the debate

When the right wing-coalition Allians för Sverige (the Alliance), consisting of M, FP, C and KD, won the national elections in September 2006 they set out to reform the labor market along with a plan to cutting down taxes and slimming down the welfare expenses. They introduced specific reforms (rut- and rot- avdrag) to subsidize household-, renovation- and small size construction services as a measure to increase employment, consumption and countering the assumed black market of these kinds of services. Many of their integration reforms followed these ideas when the Alliance reintroduced labor immigration, allowing the employers to offer their jobs in foreign competition, thus offering residence permits for all

\textsuperscript{126} All translations in this chapter are my own.
with a job contract in Sweden. At the time Sweden’s immigration had almost solely consisted of refugee immigration for many years.\textsuperscript{127}

The reform was opposed by S and V, mainly due to the suggested deregulation of work security, as they feared this would open up for exploitation and wage drops in low income sectors, when cheaper labor could be obtained from abroad. Mona Sahlin (S) and others suggested that \textit{Arbetsförmedlingen} (the Swedish employment bureau) should first examine employers wishing to employ foreign labor.\textsuperscript{128} However, the labor migration reform was voted in without compromises. The parliamentary debate that I have chosen for the time period is a migration debate of November 27, 2008, preceding the decision to open up for labor migration, along with other budget suggestions concerning migration.\textsuperscript{129} Much of what was covered in the debate was also brought into the public debate in the selected opinion pieces. The debate around immigration during this time period revolved heavily around integration into the labor market; but also social integration, humanism and asylum; discrimination; as well as culture specific problems being linked to immigrant minorities such as violence related to the ‘honor culture’.

4.1.1 Positive immigration topoi

\textit{Civilized and tolerant countries must help those in need}

The most frequently invoked discourse in the debate was the need for Sweden to maintain its perceived altruistic migration policy. From the right to the left there was a prevailing consensus that Sweden ought to have a large and generous migration policy. Keeping a generous refugee policy was seen as a moral obligation and there was a strong emphasis on the needs and rights of immigrants during this time period, regardless of political color.\textsuperscript{130}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[129] Ibid. p.1-2.
\end{footnotes}
Sweden’s Golden Heart and positive multiculturalism

Swedes were presented as particularly positive to immigrants, an exceptionally open and tolerant people with a high trust in society.\textsuperscript{131} Andreas Carlgren (C) argued that the problems Sweden had with immigration and integration were minor compared to other countries, when so many positive results had come from openness and diversity.\textsuperscript{132} This kind of idea could also have intended to express national pride among the elite. Sweden was repeatedly projected as a global role model by several of the Alliance parties, as well as S.\textsuperscript{133} Several MP’s drew on a narrative of Swedish historical legacy of successful immigration. Representatives of FP, S and C argued in a similar vein that immigration had made Sweden wealthier, more open and culturally richer.\textsuperscript{134} There were thus reoccurring claims all over the political spectrum in which the cultural diversity brought by a traditionally large immigration is prescribed an intrinsic value but it also a value for the economy.

Immigration will spur economic development

The discourse of an open, diverse and tolerant Sweden was used to legitimize labor migration. Mikael Cederbratt (M) claimed that labor immigration would create opportunities “to fulfill one’s dreams and create a better future”.\textsuperscript{135} Migration Minster Tobias Billström (M) used the metaphor of a ‘sick’ Swedish labor market stating that Swedish work places were “in desperate need of international oxygen”.\textsuperscript{136} This creates a prevailing sense of Sweden not being able to provide for itself, in need of health injections from labor migration.

4.1.2 Negative immigration topoi

Social exclusion and segregation

Many problems connected to immigration were implicit rather than directed at immigration or immigrants directly. Social exclusion and segregation was a reoccurring negative discourse in the debate. The problem was often presented in the manner that many immigrants are

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{131} Carlgren, Andreas, (C) ”Sverige har världens mest avvikande folk”, Dagens Nyheter, 2006-03-21.
\textsuperscript{132} Carlgren, Andreas. (C), ”Sex av tio invandrare i arbete placerar Sverige i världstoppl”, Dagens Nyheter, 2006-04-19.
\textsuperscript{133} Zander, Solveig (C), Riksdagens protokoll Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:37, p. 59, Streijffert, Magdalena. (S) Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:37, p.19.
\textsuperscript{134} Streijffert, Magdalena. (S) Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:37, p.19, Carlgren, Andreas (C), ”Hur kan invandringen utveckla Sverige?”, Dagens Nyheter, 2006-07-18.
\textsuperscript{135} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{136} Billström, T. (M), ”Ställ tydligare krav på invandrare”, Dagens Nyheter, 2008-08-25.
\end{flushleft}
socially excluded as they are unemployed, dependent on welfare and live in relatively poor areas where the majority is foreign born.\textsuperscript{137} The image is also complemented by a discourse of segregation: immigrants living in areas with few native born Swedes are seen as a problem for integration and social cohesion.\textsuperscript{138} The Government pointed towards discrimination being a problem to some extent\textsuperscript{139}, but insisted that the primary reason was the mentality of the previous Social Democratic governments, with their lack of incentives and with their caretaker mentality.\textsuperscript{140} The image is mixed, on the one hand immigrants failing to learn Swedish and participating outside their minority cultural communities is seen as a problem, implying that they should participate in the majority society. On the other hand, the concern stems from a fear of their precariousness, or lack of opportunities to contribute to society.

\textit{A discourse of cultural difference}

Several top politicians of M and FP claimed that Swedish culture was exceptional, while immigrants were portrayed as coming from a traditional culture “very different from our own”.\textsuperscript{141} Sweden was presented as a haven of openness and freedom, while immigrants bring elements of backwardness which needs to be tackled through more targeted measures.\textsuperscript{142} This discourse of cultural differences as a result of inferior foreign elements juxtaposed to ‘superior’ native ones were launched mainly by M and FP.\textsuperscript{143} Integration minister Nyamko Sabuni (FP) argued that civic orientation for immigrants was a necessary complement to integration. She stated that it was important to realize that “not all aspects of multiculturalism were good”.\textsuperscript{144} Sabuni wrote several opinion pieces on how to tackle honor culture related domestic violence. She presented unfortunate girls “being trapped between the modern values of Sweden and thousand-year-old traditions”.\textsuperscript{145} She linked honor culture to immigrant groups, while she at the same time argued that it could not be tied down to a specific religion or country.\textsuperscript{146} She thus created a sense of it being an alien practice in Sweden, while at the

\textsuperscript{137} Billström (M), \textit{Dagens Nyheter}, 2008-08-25.
\textsuperscript{138} Billström, Tobias (M), \textit{Riksdagens protokoll} 2008/09:37, p.74-75.
\textsuperscript{139} Borg, Anders (M) & Sabuni, Nyamko (FP), ”Vi satsar 2 miljarder på snabbare integration”, \textit{Dagens Nyheter}, 2008-09-18.
\textsuperscript{140} Nilsson, Ulf (FP), \textit{Riksdagens protokoll} 2008/09:37, p.65.
\textsuperscript{141} Kristersson, U., Svantesson E., Billström T. (M), ”Ta medborgarskapet från kriminella invandrare”, \textit{Dagens Nyheter}, 2009-02-16.
\textsuperscript{142} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{143} Kristersson, Ulf, (M) ”Protest mot hedersväld inte rasism”, \textit{Svd}, 2007-03-27.
\textsuperscript{144} Sabuni, Nyamko (FP), ”Samhällsorientering nyckel till integration”, \textit{Svd}, 2009-09-03.
\textsuperscript{145} Sabuni, Nyamko (FP), ”Kontrollera underlivet på alla högstadieflickor”, \textit{Expressen}, 2006-07-17.
\textsuperscript{146} Sabuni, Nyamko (FP), ”Hedersväldet ska bort från Sverige”, \textit{Expressen}, 2007-03-07.
same time trying to avoid stigmatizing any specific religion or cultural background or origin. She repeatedly pointed out that her own orientation aimed at emphasizing human rights and not at establishing what was and what was not Swedish.\textsuperscript{147} But the idea that Sweden is somehow culturally superior, through its modernity, was mediated through this discourse. This prevailing sense of negative cultural aspects brought in by immigrants is highlighted further in the next identified topos. One other thing to note is that M’s party secretary Per Schlingmann raised a suggestion to introduce a citizen contract, which gained a rather lukewarm response from the party itself, as well as the other Alliance parties.\textsuperscript{148} The suggestion created a strong reaction among the left, something I will come back to in the counter-discourses.

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\textit{We must dare to speak of the problems of integration}\textemdash

Several top politicians of M demanded that citizenship of criminal immigrants should be annulled, claiming that Sweden needed to see the truth and that serious questions of immigration problems had been left unanswered.\textsuperscript{149} Tobias Billström (M) claimed that Sweden needed to more actively promote Swedish values and practices to immigrants, something a general fear for being misunderstood as xenophobic had undermined.\textsuperscript{150} This becomes a sort of meta narrative about the discourses of cultural problems, that on the one hand exists but on the other hand are suppressed.

4.1.3 Counter-negative topoi

The intention of this subheading is to present how negative immigration discourses was countered in the debate. The first one, \textit{immigration is important for the labor market} means that immigrants are important for the good functioning of the labor market. This is not disputed in the debate, but the Government used it to frame V and S as xenophobic because of their opposition to the labor migration reform. Mikael Cederbratt (M) openly accused them of being against immigration: “You are actually saying that you are happy that so few are coming here ”.\textsuperscript{151} Migration minister Billström (M) also suggested that the party leader of S,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{147} Sabuni, N. (FP), \textit{Svd}, 2009-09-03.
\item \textsuperscript{148} (Not an opinion piece) Hanson, M., ” M: Svenskkontrakt för invandrare”, \textit{Svd}, 2008-11-23.
\item \textsuperscript{149} Kristersson, U., Svantesson E., Billström T. (M), 2009-02-16.
\item \textsuperscript{150} Billström, T. (M), 2008-08-25.
\item \textsuperscript{151} Cederbratt, Mikael (M), \textit{Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:37}, p.55.
\end{itemize}
Mona Sahlin should take a stance against previous Prime Minster Göran Persson’s (S) view of labor immigrants as “social tourists.” Billström called this an outdated view on immigrants as parasites, one that border xenophobic sentiments. He suggested that the resistance towards labor migration reflected a negative view of immigrants in general, implying that being positive to immigration is identical to being in favor of a liberalized labor market.

Cederbratt (M) also argued that labor migration would counter human smuggling, and that the Left’s opposition risked forcing immigrants out on the black labor market. Kalle Larsson (V) and Bodil Ceballos (MP) retorted that the cynical refugee policy was actually the cause of human smuggling. We thus see that being immigration friendly is an important attribute in the self identification over the political spectrum.

**Swedish values?**

The talk about cultural differences was generally met with a lot of skepticism by the Left. Magdalena Streijffert (S) and Kalle Larsson (V) found the suggestion to introduce a citizen contract to be questionable. Larsson attacked it as a token of a wish for assimilation, that M wanted immigrants to "learn to be quiet and fit in."

Streijffert rhetorically asked what the Swedish values really were and “whether not everybody should sign such a contract?” It is clear that the citizen contract was conveyed as a symbol of assimilation with highly negative connotations. It was ridiculed and it appeared to create uneasiness among several of the right wing parliamentarians. Lars Gustavsson (KD) for example reasoned that universal values could not be claimed to be ‘Swedish values’, while also seeing a point in transferring common values in the Swedish society through less formalized means.

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152 Billström, Tobias, (M) ”Lär dig av Sydeuropa, Mona Sahlin, Expressen, 2008-07-02.
153 Ibid.
154 Ibid.
155 Cederbratt, Mikael (M), Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:3, p.28-30.
156 Ceballos, Bodil (MP), Larsson, Kalle (V) ”Skapa lagliga asylvägar”, Sydsvenska Dagbladet, 2007-12-10.
157 Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:3, p.60.
158 Larsson, Kalle (V), Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:37, p.25.
159 Streijffert, Magdalena (S), Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:37, pp. 19-21.
160 Larsson, Kalle (V), Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:37, pp.76-77. Streijffert, Magdalena (S), Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:37, pp.80-82.
161 Gustavsson, Lars (KD), Riksdagens protokoll 2008/09:37, p. 69.
Concluding remarks
What is striking with the whole debate about Swedish values and conformity is perhaps that proponents of this idea are not propagating nationalism as such, but they are however concerned with the perceived inferiority of some immigrant cultures that need to be enlightened. In a sense these are ideas of assimilation, but in a mild form as there is no talk of assimilation in the sense of adopting the new Swedish identity, only adopting the Swedish superior values and practices.

4.2. The Swedish immigration debate 2010-2013

Background
In the election of 2010, The Alliance once again came out as the winner and formed a new Government. This time however, they did not reach majority but formed a minority government simultaneously as SD entered the parliament with a decisive role in the balance of power between the left wing and right wing blocs. This period’s debate and opinion pieces revolved heavily around labor migration just as the previous period had. There was also a strong theme of fighting racism and intolerance and promoting humanism. It can be argued that demands on immigrants hardened a bit over this period, which was best exemplified in an opinion piece by three government ministers claiming that Sweden should be open and tolerant but also demand *quid pro quo* for state subsidies, such as mandatory language training, active job seeking, and acceptance of job offers.\(^{162}\)

The selected parliamentary debate is an integration debate from December 11, 2013. This debate was part of the Government’s budget proposals involving the targeted areas integration, gender equality and anti-discrimination policies.\(^{163}\) It revolved around refugee reception, general integration, discrimination and labor market policies.


\(^{163}\) *Riksdagens protokoll* 2013/14:44.
4.2.1 The discourses of SD

Mattias Karlsson (SD) repeatedly claimed that immigrants were a threat to employment.\textsuperscript{164} He introduced and cultivated discourses of welfare chauvinism, arguing that more immigration would only worsen unemployment.\textsuperscript{165} There was also the topos of criminality, and of immigrants abusing the system: as Karlsson claimed that those that come to Sweden for humanitarian reasons were a clear minority.\textsuperscript{166} He thus implies that the majority of immigrants were bogus immigrants. Karlsson accused the government of state-sanctioned reversed-discrimination,\textsuperscript{167} claiming that immigrants should not be privileged over inborn Swedes through positive special treatment as “ethnicity is not a handicap”.\textsuperscript{168} SD thus denied that there was such a thing as structural discrimination that should be targeted with special measures. He rather suggested that anti discrimination policies led to the slow destruction of Swedish traditions and claimed that the Discrimination Ombudsman should be abolished as it had become “an authority opposing traditional Swedish practices at work places”.\textsuperscript{169}

SD also claimed that the ‘irresponsible multicultural doctrine’ was promoting ‘mass-immigration’.\textsuperscript{170} There was a prevailing narrative creating negative images of immigrants overflowing the borders of Sweden.\textsuperscript{171} The idea of immigrants being a threat is also developed further in their discourse of immigrants and Swedes being fundamentally different, leading to a clash of cultures. Karlsson claimed that the introduction of “vastly separated norms, identities and values” had caused harm both to the social trust and cohesion of Sweden.\textsuperscript{172} He used a metaphor of the political elites’ immigration policies as an ill gone social experiment.\textsuperscript{173} There was also a prevailing discourse of SD about the failure of integration, and they repeatedly spoke of a systemic breakdown being lurking just behind the corner as immigration was straining the welfare system to the limits.\textsuperscript{174}

\textsuperscript{164} Karlsson, Mattias (SD) \textit{Riksdagens protokoll} 2013/14:44. p. 62.
\textsuperscript{165} Ibid. p. 43-46.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{167}Ibid. p. 43-46.
\textsuperscript{168} Ibid. p. 57.
\textsuperscript{169} Ibid. p. 50.
\textsuperscript{170} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{171} Åkesson, Jimmy, ”Invandringspolitiken har skapat en ny underklass”, \textit{Aftonbladet}, 2013-05-31.
\textsuperscript{172} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{173} Karlsson, Mattias (SD) \textit{Riksdagens protokoll} 2013/14:44. p. 43-47.
\textsuperscript{174} Åkesson, Jimmy, \textit{Aftonbladet}, 2013-05-31.
Karlsson portrayed the multicultural policies as a hinder, and misinformed: “how are they going to fit in if we make them believe they are not Swedes?” 175 Karlsson presented the mainstream parties as delusional as they “could not let go of the mirage of a multicultural utopia”. 176 He argued that they were locked into these positions out of a desire to be good, rather than doing what was wise and fair. 177 SD thus liked to present themselves as realists, as seeing the situation of Sweden for what it was. To sum up, SD used a language often containing symbolic racism, such as dehumanization, and repeatedly portrayed immigrants as being different and too many, but also culturally inferior.

4.2.2 The pro-immigration discourses of the other parties

Many of the positive discourses in the debate before 2010 remained much the same, as party representatives from all over the spectrum invoked the discourses of all the benefits of immigration. For example, we see the discourse of Sweden’s moral obligation to keep a generous migration, as well as in the idea that Swedes are highly positive to immigration. 178 The argument about the many positive benefits of immigration and about cultural diversity is also consistent through an emphasis on multiculturalism as something good. 179 There was a more prevailing urge in the debate to talk about fighting racism and xenophobia and to protect the cherished multicultural and democratic society of Sweden. Cecilia Malmström (FP) for example saw it as her duty to counter xenophobia while portraying immigration as a good force – “for intellectual, social, economic and cultural development”. 180 The antiracism also became more pronounced during this period, perhaps a rather natural consequence of SD’s presence.

175 Karlsson, Mattias (SD) Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:44, pp. 43-47.
176 Ibid.
177 Ibid. p. 47.
180 Malmström, Cecilia (FP), ”Vi behöver invandring för att klara välfärden”, Göteborgsposten, 2010-07-26, Höj Larsen, Christina (V), Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:44, p.52.
Kaplan, Mehmet (MP), Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:44, p.42.
4.2.3 Negative immigration topoi among the other parties

*Social exclusion and segregation*

As before, blame for immigrants so called social exclusion was targeted at failed policies and slack demands, but it did create a discourse linking immigrants to negative trends. The discourse of social exclusion was also used to motivate several suggestions by the government to introduce citizen orientation courses.\(^{181}\) A problem raised by Equality Minister Nyamko Sabuni\(^{182}\) and Integration Minister Erik Ullenhag (both FP) was ‘love immigrants’ and particularly women immigrating because of marriage, but end up being abused by their Swedish husband.\(^{183}\) This article was rather unique as it actually portrayed Swedes as the source of problems, in this case domestic abuse, and as such an obstacle to gender equality. To target this problem, they suggested that Swedish civic orientation could be empowering, as it would inform immigrant women about their rights and where to turn to for help.\(^{184}\) In a similar vein several other opinion pieces were written with the good intention of introducing not Swedish values but democratic values, along with Swedish history and traditions.\(^{185}\) There was thus a prevailing discourse of immigrants in need of education as they were assumed to be deprived of orientation in democratic values.

The demands for social adjustments by several representatives of the Alliance parties emphasized gender equality and empowerment.\(^{186}\) There were, however, some dubious hierarchies prevailing, based on portraying Swedish modernity in contrast to backward alien practices. There is a mild conformism going on in some of the discourses, but it is often coupled with an idea of giving space for several cultural identities. This was very well expressed by Erik Ullenhag (FP) when he claimed that there was no intention to force people to give up one’s old identity, but rather emphasize that one can be both “Chilean, Somali or Afghan and Swede” (my emphasis); to take “the best from both two worlds”.\(^{187}\) There was

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\(^{181}\) Ullenhag, Erik (FP), "Invandrare behöver mer än en klapp på huvudet", *Dagens Nyheter*, 2010-11-17.

\(^{182}\) The government decided to split her previous minister post where she headed both integration and equality into two separate minister posts.

\(^{183}\) Sabuni, N. and Ullenhag, E. (FP), "Bättre stöd till kärleksinvandrare", *SvD*, 2012-07-12.

\(^{184}\) Ibid.


\(^{186}\) Ibid.

\(^{187}\) "Medborgarskap ska uppgraderas", *Svd*, 2012-01-16.
quite few examples where discourses of cultural difference were prevalent, and it thus seem that SD had no effect on sidetracking those kinds of discourses.

There was also less of the topos *We must dare to speak of the problems of integration*, perhaps as an effect of the presence of SD. Instead there was much more talk of racism, and accusations that immigration hostility by other parties would push people into the direction of SD. For example, Staffan Danielsson (C) argued that Sweden had to remain humane and open, but that immigration needed to be discussed more widely so that people do not turn to “SD and other extreme forces for answers.”

He relates this to Europe’s darker history of nationalistic isolationism that gave rise to the two world wars, to illustrate the gravity of the situation. There was thus a discourse that putting the lid on immigration issues would play ‘concerned’ citizens into the hands of SD.

**Structural discrimination does not exist**

Hanif Bali (M) claimed that discrimination was a problem, but not big enough to explain why immigrants participate to a lesser extent on the labor market, the left’s ideas of structural discrimination were in his mind only a myth. He suggested instead that immigrants were passive on the labor market, something not seen as their fault, but a mentality that had been informed by patronizing policies and a “blame-it-on-racist-companies’ attitude.” He downplayed the concern about discrimination by claiming that Sweden was by far the most tolerant country in the world. Further on he argued that the tools for integration would be enough to “prevent building an ethnic underclass.” Jasenko Selimovic (FP) agreed with Bali’s claims as he argued that the rhetoric of structural discrimination was vastly exaggerated, as “Sweden is not full of sneaky racists.”

The denial of structural discrimination also worked to legitimize a neoliberal labor migration policy. If discrimination is acknowledged it is more difficult to justify a de-regularized labor migration policy. Further more, it denies the notion that the majority population could be the

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188 Danielsson, Staffan (C) ”Vi behöver se över reglerna för invandring”, Svd, 2012-12-03.
189 Ibid.
190 Ibid.
192 Ibid. p. 58.
193 Ibid.
194 Jasenko Selimovic, ”Vallöftet som ökar diskrimineringen” Expressen, 2013-03-22.
cause for the immigrants sometimes precarious situation. As was shown above, this discourse propagated by SD, although it was interlinked with racist ideas of immigrants own fault. This discourse therefore needs to be examined more.

4.2.4 Counter-negative topoi of the other parties

Opponents of labor migration are just like SD
Just as before, there was tendencies of the Alliance to accuse the opposition to labor migration of being protectionist and xenophobic. Annika Karlsson (C) for example claimed that Social Democrats rejection of the government’s labor market policies targeted at immigrants reminded her of SD: “that the jobs should go to Swedes first.”

Structural discrimination can only be countered by equality
This discourse remained a strong theme in the debate, propagated by above all the Left and the Greens. This connected to the general fear of growing racism, but also to the priorities of subsidizing jobs rather than measures to tackle racism. Mehmet Kaplan (MP) stated that anti-discrimination is not about looking good and humane but simply a matter of guaranteeing equal rights for all. Christina Höj Larsen (V) was concerned about the government reforms, as they would increase the vulnerability on the labor market, thus perhaps stigmatizing immigrants that already were in a precarious situation in Sweden.

The growing threat of racism
Mehmet Kaplan (MP) presented an image of Sweden as a country of free speech and opinion, now being endangered by an emerging threat of racism. Erik Ullenhag (FP) argued that Islamophobia was a growing problem that Sweden was not spared from, and that myths and prejudice needed to be countered. This often became interwoven into a discourse of presenting oneself as anti-racist, the opposite of SD. The MP party leaders Peter Eriksson and

195 Karlsson, Annika (C), Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:44, p. 63.
196 Kaplan, Mehmet (MP), Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:44, p.57-58.
197 Ibid.
198 Ibid.
199 Kaplan, Mehmet (MP), Riksdagens protokoll 2013/14:44, p.52.
Maria Wetterstrand used the need to oppose SD as the primary reason that they supported the governments deepening of the labor migration reform.\textsuperscript{201} MP also took pride in the fact that SD was seeing them as their main political opponents. \textsuperscript{202}

**Concluding remarks**

The previous negative immigration discourses of the political mainstream were actually less pronounced during this time period than before the breakthrough of SD. This could perhaps be understood as a consequence of the fierce resistance towards the racism of SD. As the general discourse of the positive effects of immigration was dominating and the government wanted to continue legitimizing their labor migration policy, it seems to had an effect of producing more anti-racist discourses, and perhaps made the elite more self aware of how to talk about immigration.

4.3 The immigration debate 2014 – July 2016

**Background**

After the election of 2014, S and MP formed a new minority government as they (together with V) formed a bigger bloc than the Alliance. Since SD became the third biggest party, but no bloc was willing to collaborate with them the balance of power became even more fragile than in the previous election cycle. This manifested itself later when SD voted for the budget of the Alliance which produced a constitutional crisis that almost triggered a re-election. The debate in this time period revolved to a large extent around the increasing number of asylum seekers, which culminated in the late autumn of 2015. It was followed by an agreement between the Government and the Alliance parties to restrict the immigration policy, introducing border controls and offering only temporary residence permits.\textsuperscript{203} As of June 2016, the Swedish Parliament voted for a new temporary legislation severely restricting the

\textsuperscript{201} Wetterstrand, Maria, Eriksson, Peter (MP), ”Så här vill MP göra upp om invandringspolitiken”, Dagens Nyheter, 2011-02-04.
\textsuperscript{202} Ferm, Maria, Wallner, Anders, (MP) ”Vi är gärna Åkessons huvudmotståndare”, Aftonbladet, 2012-07-0.
\textsuperscript{203} Regeringen, ”Överenskommelse och insatser med anledning av flyktingkrisen”, http://www.regeringen.se/contentassets/6519e46a9780457f8f90e64afefed1b04/overenskommelse-insatser-med-anledning-av-flyktingkrisen.pdf
right for family reunification (*anhörighetsinvandring*), i.e. the possibility to grant asylum for family members of individuals who have been previously granted asylum.

The chosen parliamentary debate is a Party Leader debate from January 13, 2016. This debate revolved heavily around the challenges produced by the record number of immigrants arriving in 2015. The topics of the debate was for example related to ideas of integration into the labor market, but there was also a debate about problems associated with cultural differences, assumedly by some to have been emerging along with the influx of refugees, and especially issues about gender equality. This concern followed the massive headlines after a series of sexual assaults where many of the perpetrators were recognized as asylum-seeking gangs of men during the infamous events in Köln on New Year’s Eve, but also after reports of similar events at various Swedish festivals.

4.3.1 The discourses of SD

These events were used by SD to validate their discourse of immigrants bringing in problems and endangering the native population, as Jimmie Åkesson (SD) argued that the events of “bigger groups of refugees attacking and abusing young girls” was “a new phenomenon in Sweden”. He implied that this was a behavior of men from a completely different culture, something he claimed seriously endangered gender equality in Sweden. This sense of threat was amplified by his use of the *topos of numbers*, claiming that all these negative trends were a result of “mass immigration”. He called the autumn of 2015 “one of the darkest time periods in Sweden”, ascribing it words like ‘chaos’ and “breakdown”. He tried to portray a consensus around this by claiming that, “apart from the worst extremists”, referring to V, “everybody could agree that the situation was unsustainable. [---] What had been called ‘racism’ “he said “was now ‘realism’, and “that which was ‘inhumane’ now was to be ‘responsible’”. This idea of a *systemic collapse* is also recognized from SD’s earlier discourse. Mattias Karlsson (SD) added other layers to the image of *immigration as a bringer*
of destruction to security and social cohesion as he linked it to a force “ripping apart our country politically, socially and culturally”. The quote provides a good illustration of how they provide arguments of the situation being impossible, and that this realization is to be pragmatic, rather than being racist. On top of this Åkesson claimed that new diseases were brought in by the “refugee flood”, thus dehumanizing immigrants even further.

4.3.2 The discourses of the other parties: less-positive immigration topoi?

The positive tone towards immigration seems to have started waning in this time period. The growing influx of immigrants in 2015 is intimately interlinked to the growing discourse of a system of immigration and integration that could not remain intact. This created a strong ambivalence as the positive attitude to immigration often was expressed while the decision to temporary restrict immigration had to be defended. For example, the Vice Prime Minister and Minister of the Environment Åsa Romson (MP) emphasized that the Swedish policy came to be “temporarily less humane”, while maintaining that it was a decision forced upon the parliament.

The golden heart of Sweden and the limits of generosity

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven claimed that the autumn had proved to be the greatest humanitarian contribution in Swedish history, calling Sweden the most responsible nation of Europe. He legitimized the controversial decision to put up temporary border controls and tighten the refugee influx by claiming that there was no other way and repeatedly claimed that there was nothing to be ashamed of. Several representatives from all of the right wing parties also agreed with this narrative: Jan Björklund (L) called Sweden a “humanitarian super power”, while Tomas Tobé (M) claimed that Sweden had been exceptional throughout the refugee crisis. All in all, representative from MP and S to the alliance parties drew a narrative of Sweden being the light in a dark Europe but that the situation had become impossible, and several MPs of the right-wing opposition claimed that the system

212 Romson, Åsa (MP), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p.38.
213 Ibid.
214 Löfven, Stefan, (S), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p.5.
215 Ibid. p.7.
was breaking down. This modality of portraying the situation as if no other options were available functioned to legitimize the decision, but it also functioned to deny agency, and thus responsibility.

4.3.3 The negative immigration topoi of the other parties

*Integration has failed, the system cannot cope*

Tomas Tobé (M) argued that the restrictions should have been introduced much earlier to prevent the “temporary collapse of the system”. The new government was repeatedly blamed for a “failed integration” by the opposition. The discourse of a systemic collapse was used by the Alliance parties to justify their reform suggestions to de-regularize work security on the labor market. Annie Lööf, Anders W Jonsson and Martin Ådahl (C) also used this to batter the government – that had “abdicated from any responsibility for integration – just like SD”. Mikael Sandström (M) argued that while SD stood for xenophobia the government stood for wishful thinking and a detachment from reality. The opposition thus used a similar rhetorical figure as SD, claiming that talking about the problems generated by immigration was to be sensible and realistic. At the same time this was done in tandem with a critique launched at SD – accusing them of using the situation to spread more fear and xenophobia rather than presenting any real solutions.

*A clash of cultures?*

Jan Björklund (L) brought up honor culture in the parliamentary debate and argued that it *had to be discussed* without the debate being corrupted by either SD or ‘anxious left wing feminists’, and claimed, as we have seen in the debate of 2006-2009, that it was an thousand-year-old and alien practice brought in by immigrant cultures. Several right-wing parliamentarians, such as Andreas Carlson (KD), emphasized that the perpetrators in many

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218 Ibid.
219 Tobé, Tomas, ”Vi borde ha bytt politik långt tidigare”, Aftonbladet, 2015-12-12.
220 Ibid.
222 Ibid.
223 Sandström, Mats (M), ”Tro inte att den akuta migrationskrisen är över”, Dagens Nyheter, 2016-07-02.
224 Kinberg Batra, Anna (M), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p. 18, Björklund, Jan (L), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p.33-34.
225 Björklund, Jan (L), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p. 58-59.
cases of the earlier discussed attacks had been asylum-seeking men.\textsuperscript{226} Carlsson claimed they had misused “our hospitality” and therefore “were not welcome any more”.\textsuperscript{227} He also called it “a provocation”, claiming that “we have built our civilization on firm values: freedom, western humanism and Christian ethics.” His speech then turned to the theme of Islamic terrorism, which he repeated was “threatening the freedom, western humanism, civilization and Christian values”.\textsuperscript{228}

His claims are very interesting in this context as it provides a clear example of a fear of ‘the other’ i.e. the Muslim, being fundamentally different. The reference to Islamic terrorism in a debate about immigration is quite unusual among the political elite as there has been hardly any examples of this in my material, apart from appeals to the public not to stigmatize Muslims as terrorists.\textsuperscript{229} But there were other representatives of KD, such as Göran Hägglund who made implications that immigrants, if socially excluded and segregated risked slipping into religious extremism.\textsuperscript{230} This idea of immigrants being a cultural threat was further enforced by Gulan Avci (L) and three of her party colleagues. They argued that one could not ignore that there were big cultural differences between Sweden and the countries that the majority of refugees were coming from.\textsuperscript{231} They also claimed that the culture clashes would have a negative effect on gender equality.\textsuperscript{232}

This sense of threat to the Swedish society could perhaps explain why we in the summer of 2016 witnessed a call to invigorate Swedish values by several right wing elite politicians. A call that both party leader Anna Kinberg Batra (M) and party leader Ebba Bush Thor (KD) launched. Kinberg Batra and Andreas Norlén (M) claimed that Sweden, “as the most secular and individualistic country in the world”, needed to invigorate the discussion about Swedish values, claiming that these were “gender equality, individualism and freedom of speech”.\textsuperscript{233} There was a double claim that these values had become challenged by misconceptions about

\textsuperscript{226} Carlson, Andreas (KD), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p. 66-67.
\textsuperscript{227} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{228} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{230} Hägglund, Göran (KD), ”Sverige behöver en integrationsminister”, Expressen, 2015-01-25.
\textsuperscript{231} Avci, Gulan, Nilsson, M., Westerlund, U., Hannah, R. (L), ”Genusperspektiv behövs i svensk migrationspolitik”, Dagens Nyheter, 2016-02-05.
\textsuperscript{232} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{233} Kinberg Batra, A. Norlén, A. (M), ”Svenska värderingar behöver försvaras”, SvD, 2016-06-06.
‘honor’, but that the challenge also came from extremists and hateful people. They also wrote that: “It is very serious that gender equality is threatened by fundamentalist and traditionalist conservative forces that have grown strong in socially excluded areas (utanförskapsområden).” This piece was published on the Swedish National Day to evoke sentiments of national attachment. Both ‘honor’ and ‘fundamentalists’ imply immigrants in this context as honor culture is seen as something brought in by immigration while fundamentalists are almost exclusively used for Islamic fundamentalists.

Ebba Bush Thor (KD) went further and made the claim that Swedish values were in a state of crisis. This could be interpreted as an attempt to regain the voters lost to SD by embracing a nationalist rhetoric, while at the same time adopting a milder version of SD’s claims that immigrants produced social problems through their assumed cultural inferiority.

A topos of numbers

But there were also voices from the mainstream party elite stratum that demanded that the “economic and cultural costs” of the large immigration influx needed to be acknowledged. Mikael Sandström (M) claimed that the government needed to fully understand the extent of the “volume of people” coming to Sweden. Sara Skyttedahl (KD) called for “an upper limit to how many refugees Sweden would take.” She argued that only if there were limits could human smugglers be tackled and the border controls restored. She ridiculed the calls for more humanism and called it hypocritical (godhetshyckleri). The idea that the political mainstream avoids speaking about the negative aspects of immigration echoes some of the claims by for example Mattias Karlsson (SD), that immigration policies can be gravely misdirected. This can be seen as an attempt to do away with a Swedish identity of being good and humane; it is striking that Skyttedahl used two of the same topos that Mattias Karlsson (SD) used in the debate.

234 Kinberg Batra, A. Norlén, A. (M), ”Svenska värderingar behöver försvaras”, SvD, 2016-06-06.
235 Ibid.
236 Bush Thor, Ebba (KD)” Våra värderingar är hotade”, Svt.se, 2016-06-06.
237 Skyttedal, Sara, ”Dags för ett slut med den hycklande och dysfunktionella asylpolitiken”, Expressen, 2016-06-06.
238 Sandström, Mikael (M), ”Tro inte att den akuta migrationskrisen är över”, Dagens Nyheter, 2016-07-02.
239 Ibid.
240 Skyttedal, Sara, Expressen, 2016-06-06.
4.3.4 Counter-discourses to negative topoi

A race to the bottom

The only clear opposition to the discourse of a systemic collapse was the discourse of V, as Jonas Sjöstedt (V) instead of talking about a Sweden on its knees called the autumn of 2015 “a historical failure of the asylum right”.241 He used a domino-effect metaphor to describe how the turnaround had led to a chain reaction were Norway, Finland and Denmark as a direct effect of the Swedish asylum reform hardened their legislation as well.242 He intervened with a counter-hegemonic discourse, claiming that the situation was not a systemic collapse caused by the refugee crisis but rather a collapse of the asylum right. 243

Let’s not talk about cultural differences

The call for Swedish values came under attack by four parliamentarians of S that argued that Ebba Bush Thor (KD) presented a misconception by equaling universal values to Swedish values.244 They called this talk of ‘Swedish values’ “national romantic humbug”.245 This stance of S was emphasized further by PM Löfven who did not assign any direct blame on refugees after the events of sexual assaults, even though the media debate had put a lot of emphasis on the fact that many of the perpetrators were asylum-seekers. He claimed that it made no difference if a crime was committed by someone born in Sweden or someone who only had been there a couple of months.246 He insinuated that it was a general patriarchal problem rather than a specific phenomena brought in by refugee men.247 There was thus an opposition to pointing out cultural blame, which was shared also by MP and V. Sjöstedt (V) for example called SD “racist feminists” for only acknowledging misogyny when the perpetrator was foreign,248 while Romson (MP) argued that SD “despised feminism” and only used it as a tool to hound people with a foreign background. 249

241 Sjöstedt, Jonas (V), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p. 52-54.
242 Ibid.
243 Ibid.
245 Ibid.
246 Löfven, Stefan, Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p.4-5
247 Ibid.
248 Sjöstedt, Jonas (V), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p. 52-54.
249 Romson, Åsa, Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p.18.
You want integration to fail
SD’s discourses kept being disregarded as racism, as Anna Kinberg Batra (M) for example claimed that M “would never start dividing people into ‘us’ and ‘them’, like SD”. SD’s policies were also attacked for their lack of touch with reality, apart from their racist content. Jan Björklund (L) rhetorically asked “how can SD be taken seriously without any integration strategies in their assimilation policy?” and accused SD of wanting integration to fail.

We are the real Sweden
Erik Ullenhag (L) took the opportunity to claim on the National Day of Sweden 2014, that the politics of SD were “hostile to Sweden” (sverigefientlig) in their opposition to “the most typical Swedish traditions: gender equality, openness and tolerance.” When the refugee number rose in the late summer of 2015, Pernilla Gunther (KD) wrote an opinion piece about the political silence after Åkesson demanded a referendum about immigration. “A ghastly suggestion”, she called it, asking how it resounded with Swedish values about the equal rights of all.

Concluding remark
We begin to witness a growing convergence to the discourses of SD, as the topos of numbers as well as a more pronounced discourses of cultural differences in opposition to ‘Swedish-ness’, was articulated by M, KD and L at the end of the period. This could perhaps be a response to reclaim lost ground to SD, or to break their monopoly of Swedish nationalism by offering their version of it, an attempt to discredit a type of nationalism which is exclusive, and counter it with a nationalism which seems to embrace a more open idea of Swedish-ness, although conditioned on an embrace of liberal democratic values. This manifests itself both in to direct claims to invigorate “Swedish values” and portraying SD’s version of “Swedish-ness” as false. But can we really talk of a shift of discourse within the political mainstream? In the next chapter the different time periods will be compared to identify any substantial changes in discourse.

250 Kinberg Batra, Anna (M), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p.19.
251 Björklund, Jan (L), Riksdagens protokoll 2015/16:5, p.32-33.
252 Ullenhag, Erik (FP/L), ”SD:s politik är sverigefientlig”. Aftonbladet, 2014-06-05.
Chapter 5. Analysis

This chapter is divided into two main parts, the first is a summary and a comparison of the discursive developments in the material, while the second part of the chapter will be spent on a comparison with the previous research that was introduced in chapter 2.

5.1.1 Immigration discourses produced by SD

We can recognize at least seven immigration topoi that are pervasive of SD’s discourse. First of all, we have several discourses embodying racist myths of immigrants being a homogenous and inferior group, such as the discourse of *immigrants being culturally different*. This manifests itself in SD’s concern about social cohesion, of an endangered Swedish culture as well as a concern for immigrants actually being hindered to assimilate through devastating multicultural policies of the political elite. It also manifests itself in a concern for Swedish gender equality as immigrant men are portrayed as backward, and linked to sexual violence.

Here are the main topoi repeated frequently in SD discourse:

(1) The topos of *numbers*, i.e. that immigrants are just ‘too many’ for a successful assimilation to take place, this produces several dehumanizing discourses such as linking immigrants to diseases and natural catastrophes that bring destruction.

(2) The idea of the *endangered social cohesion* could be said to be the primary immigration discourse produced by SD. This danger is proposed to reside in the idea of *cultural clashes*, in which immigrant cultures are inferior and a threat to Sweden’s superior and well-developed culture.

(3) Immigrants are being portrayed as a *threat to employment prospects* for the native population.

(4) Immigrants are being stereotyped as being involved in *criminality*.

(5) There is also a reoccurring tendency of describing bogus refugees who are *abusing the system*. A claim that as most immigrants are bogus immigrants, they are not actually in need humanitarian help.

(6) The discourse of *structural discrimination being fiction* denies that racism is a fundamental problem of society, and it does not acknowledge any problems connected to the majority population in relation to immigration.
(7) The final topos I want to revisit is that ‘integration has failed’, i.e. the system cannot cope with immigrant integration successfully, where blame is not put on the immigrants, but the argument is framed rather as a populist strategy to blame the political elite of bringing destruction on Swedish society through their lack of responsibility and foresight.

Through these seven discourses, SD creates an image of a Sweden in decay due to immigration, which ultimately can only be restored by radically cutting down migration and assimilating those that had immigrated.

5.1.2 Immigration discourses of the political elite prior to SD’s breakthrough

The negative discourses that was present in the debate 2006-2009 could a bit simplified be summarized as mainly the following three:

(1) A discourse on social exclusion and segregation. There is a prevalent idea that immigrant communities should be more mixed up with the majority population, and that socially excluded (immigrant) areas are less safe, have high rates of unemployment and high rates of crime. It could be discussed if this really is representative of a negative view, but a point can be made that it expresses a desire for immigrants to become more invisible and an integrated part of the majority, as well as an idea that these kind of low quality areas would not evolve if immigrants where scattered evenly rather than concentrated in particular areas.

(2) The discourse of *cultural difference* was present among the elite before SD became part of it. This discourse illustrates that immigrants are sometimes portrayed as deviant and culturally inferior to the majority culture. This was often expressed in mild forms, often mixed with ambivalence, as this kind of ideas seemed to go outside the comfort zone of those who expressed them.

(3) The discourse of *cultural difference* combined with a discourse that “We must dare to speak of the problems of integration”; in other words, the ideas of cultural differences become more pronounced as a threat.
This presence of negative discourses should perhaps come as no surprise as previous research has shown that the immigration discourse in Swedish media has been full of negative frames and images of immigrants.\textsuperscript{254} It is a reminder that even well-meaning, generally immigration-positive discourses can contain ideas of Sweden being more modern and more developed, with an implicit idea of cultural superiority to the alien culture of ‘the immigrant’, as Ylva Brune illustrated.\textsuperscript{255} It also connects to the general trend in Europe where demands have become more visible and ideas of immigrants, often being equaled to non-European immigrants, being culturally different, are presented in a slightly or openly racist way.\textsuperscript{256} The articulations of cultural problems and demands of social and cultural conformity are however mildly formulated in this time period. The immigration discourses of the political mainstream before 2010 were vastly different from those brought in by SD.

5.1.3 Immigration discourses among the mainstream party elites after SD’s entry into parliament, 2010-16

\textit{Discourses neighboring SD’ ideas}

‘Othering’, is a practice hard to overcome when describing different groups, so it is perhaps not always completely fair to consider some of the discourses where ‘othering’ is present as anti-immigration discourses. On the other hand, when ‘othering’ occurs, a boundary is always set up between the subject position and the object, a ‘we’ and ‘them’ is created. There were several discourses of cultural difference, which increased over the time period. Not all of them displayed hierarchical differences between ‘Swedes’ and ‘immigrants’ but some of them did. Therefore, the topos of \textit{cultural difference} produced by the mainstream is interpreted as a discourse bordering to, but still being much different from SD’s mixophobic discourses on cultural differences; besides, it is often coupled with democratic ideals rather than nationalistic ones. There was also less of a discourse in line with the idea that “we must dare to speak of the problems of integration”, which had been present in 2006-9, perhaps as an effect of the presence of SD. The resistance and defiance to SD’s discourse seemed to have created a much more polarized immigration debate where the mainstream elite felt that they had to distance themselves to SD’s negative immigration discourses as much as possible.

\textsuperscript{254} I.e. Hultén, 2009.
\textsuperscript{255} Brune, 2000.
\textsuperscript{256} Ibid.
Proposing that there was a culture of silencing immigration issues would imply that SD could be right. But this discourse resurfaced in 2015-16 when there was a more general discourse that immigration was becoming so large-scale that it was producing problems. The following two discourses could be argued to border the ideas of SD:

(1) The idea of immigrants living in social exclusion and segregation was re-occurring and although it first of all expressed a concern for the well being of immigrants it was often used to legitimize ideas of orientation programs and citizen contracts, to increase demands and adjustments to Swedish society. A lot of emphasis was on teaching immigrants’ democratic values. It thus created a prevailing sense of immigrants in need of education as they are assumed to be deprived of orientation in democratic values.

(2) There was a clear denial among right wing parties that structural discrimination was a problem. SD used it in order to legitimize their negative biases and racist ideas, while this discourse was rather used by the right wing parties to legitimize neoliberal policies. Regardless of purpose of the discourse though, it still denies that there is a problem stemming from the majority’s treatment of the minority. Although it was a discourse that was prevailing already before SD entered the parliament, it became more pronounced to counter criticisms of labor migration regulation.

**Discourses shared with SD**

(1) The idea of a *clash of civilizations* took form in the later half of 2015 and onwards, among some of the right wing parties, namely M, KD, and L who emphasized above all the endangered gender equality of Sweden. It is expressed in discourses portraying immigrants not only as culturally different through mild forms of derogative implication of cultural inferiority. In the discourse of cultural difference prior to SD’s breakthrough there was not really a sense of a threat, which is prevalent in this discourse. This conception of immigrants posing a threat is further reflected in the idea that ‘Swedish values are endangered’.
The discourse of speaking of the immigration influx as crossing the limit, that immigrants were too many, the topos of numbers, emerged during the refugee crisis in 2015. It might very well be a rather context bound discourse, but as it contained several dehumanizing formulations, by speaking of volumes and “upper limits” it clearly borders a discourse of SD. It was legitimized as a form rationality, thus echoing SD to a rather large extent.

The idea that “integration has failed; the system cannot cope” was used by S and MP to legitimize the specific temporary restrictions of the borders and the asylum right, while the Alliance parties used it to propel their neoliberal labor market policies, claiming that the situation demanded reforms for simple jobs. But some elite politicians of KD and M also used it to talk about a need of a limit to immigration influx, this discourse was thus used to legitimize the topos of numbers as well.

What is new?
Some negative discourses clearly preexisted SD’s electoral breakthrough, as mainstream parties had previously expressed the idea of mild clashes and cultural inferiority between Sweden and immigrant cultures. To be sure, these discourses have to be seen in relation to their context. There was a general understanding among almost all parties (except V), which produced a more general discourse that the Swedish reception came to the breaking point at the end of 2015. It was a discourse vastly different to MP’s previous more or less open-borders policy, but on the other hand it seems that S used a lot of coercion to make MP yield to the decision. MP produced this discourse with great ambivalence. Hence, it is hard to distinguish how influential SD might have been in this discursive production of the discourse of a systemic breakdown caused by immigration.

The growth of the interrelated discourses regarding a clash of civilizations and that ‘Swedish values are endangered’ is a lot more worrying. Though we have seen the idea of cultural difference and inferiority before, the discourse of a more fundamental clashes of civilizations is new, it is a discourse adopted from SD. These discourses embrace the idea of immigrants being ‘liberal dissenters’ at least in the sense of gender equality, but above all the perception that they are a threat to the fundamental values of civic society and social cohesion.

257 Akkerman, 2005.
These discourses were however opposed by several interventions of the left. We have for example the discourse of ‘Violence is not culturally specific’, a discourse produced by S, a sort of general debunking of the idea (at its extreme) that gender equality should be protected by ‘Racist feminists’, the counter-racist topos produced by V and MP.

Most discourses on immigrants remained genuinely positive among the elite up to the end of the studied time period and the idea of Sweden’s moral obligation to take a great responsibility remained strong although it slipped into a discourse of Sweden not being able to share all the burden of Europe.

5.2 Previous research revisited
The emerging emphasis of culture in relation to immigration by the right wing elite in Sweden is an indication that the practice of ‘culturalization’ of the category of the immigrant is to a certain extent present in the Swedish elite political discourse. It is interesting to note that the talk of culture became less pronounced among the elite during the first parliamentary cycle of SD in the parliament, perhaps as a defence against SD’s discourses. The culturalization seems to have gained momentum again in 2015/2016, as this way of talking about culture and immigration seems to becoming normalized.

Talk of cultural backwardness related to immigrants or refugees is often presented in vague terms. Unlike the anti-Muslim trends in Europe that Ferruh Yilmaz spoke of, blame targeted at Muslims seems to be strictly avoided by the mainstream political elite and there is very little mentioning of Muslims as a separate category, although the conception of Muslim is hinted at, through the use of nodal points often linked to the negative discourse on Muslims as threat, with the use of words such as fundamentalism and radicalization. Mostly though, we see a pattern emerging: the idea of cultural differences becoming almost solemnly an issue of a threat to gender equality. In this regard it seems that the presence of SD has made it easier to circumvent taboos regarding talking about immigration in certain ways.

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When comparing the immigration topoi of SD with the immigration-hostile topoi identified by Wodak and Van Dijk\(^{259}\), I would say that there are many similarities between their findings and the discourses produced by SD in my material. They listed the following racist topoi: 1. *Immigrants abuse the system* 2. *Criminality* 3. *Lax immigration encourages illegal immigration* 4. *Threat to employment & work illegally*.\(^{260}\) All of these five discourse are mirrored by SD. However, the topos of immigrants as a cultural threat is missing in their analysis, which is perhaps one of the most dominating discourses of SD. Their study is from year 2000, which might explain why the cultural specific topoi were not prevalent in their findings.

There were also several similarities to the counter-topoi identified by Wodak and Van Dijk. We can draw close parallels between discourses portraying immigration as a moral obligation, presenting immigration as a source of positive economic and societal development and diversity as something positive for society. The fear of racism is also mirrored in my data. But, compared to the findings of Wodak and Van Dijk the general political discourse in Sweden was much more dominated by positive than negative topoi. The overall positive discourses on immigration and immigrants are strong over the entire political spectrum in Sweden, apart from SD. It is almost exclusively in terms of culture that we find racializing discourses. We can on the other hand identify more nuances and more variety among the mainstream parties when looking at discourses of integration.

As a reminder, the Brekke and Brochgrevink typology of integration discourses consisted of the *discourse of structural discrimination*, the *social liberal discourse*, the *social democratic discourse*, the *assimilation discourse* and, to some extent the *critical humanist discourse*.\(^{261}\) The ideological positioning of Swedish party elites remained much the same as this typology indicated during the time period examined: the discourse of *structural discrimination* was produced by V and MP, and from time to time S, who mostly remained within the ‘comfort zone’ of the *social democratic discourse*. The Alliance retained the *social liberal discourse* and SD were the main advocates of the *assimilation discourse*. In addition, on the basis of my findings I would argue that the *critical humanist discourse* grew in strength and was used

\(^{259}\) Wodak; Van Dijk. 2000. p.157-158.

\(^{260}\) Ibid.

\(^{261}\) Brekke; Brochgrevink, 2007.
above all by several of the top members of L, who often emphasized gender dimensions of immigration and immigrant groups.

But although Swedish elites’ positions remained within the integration discourses where we would expect them to, this does not mean that the ideological spectrum remained static. Rather the integration discourses themselves partially transformed. During the end of the period under examination we see that the social liberal discourse did move to some degree towards the assimilationist discourse. Some members of the right-wing elite induced the need to reclaim Swedish values, which can be interpreted as a form of civic nationalism. Swedish values were to a large extent conflated to liberal democratic values, and immigrants are being portrayed as in need of education and reform, a milder form of assimilation into the superior ideal liberal democratic culture of Sweden. And this civic nationalism that is emerging is only prevalent among the conservative parties’ M and KD and the liberal party L. By contrast, C and the parties to the left do not articulate those kinds of ideas in the material.

By invoking a call for Swedish values, and claiming they were endangered, while at the same time declaring that the greatest threat was racism, racists in the form of SD and their supporters where equally or more ‘othered’ than the rather vague threat of asylum seekers in need of orientation in gender equality norms. For what was claimed to be Swedish was above all liberal values, which were endangered not only by ‘liberal dissenters’ in the shape of immigrants, but above all by the kind of liberal dissenters embodied by racist and xenophobic forces. The racism of exclusion that SD represents has not been adopted by any party. In a sense then, at least in terms of the elite, SD has not had such a radical effect on the immigration discourse as for example Anders Hellström claimed, although he might have been referring more to the public discourse rather than that of the political elite specifically. At the same time my analysis confirms that many of the negative ideas about immigration that SD embodies where present among the political mainstream before SD became a party in the parliament, as Mulinari and Neergaard argued.

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262 Akkerman, 2005.
263 Wodak; Van Dijk, 2000, p.159-160.
264 Mulinari; Neergaard, 2014.
Another point that should be made is that the anti-racist norms were so strong that they resisted the many counter-hegemonic interventions in immigration discourse produced by SD. The emerging *civic nationalism* proclaiming the need to invigorate above all universal values of liberal democracy and gender equality can be seen as an extension of the anti-racist norm and general positive attitude to liberally tamed multiculturalism. The idea of an exclusive Sweden however, is still far too alien for the political elite.

Surely then, SD is far from having produced a hegemonic shift. The trends that Aurélien Mondon described in France and Australia where xenophobia has been normalized to a large extent among the elite cannot be claimed to be true in Sweden. In that sense it may very well be that the *cordon sanitaire* have been effective.
Chapter 6. Conclusions

Several of the negative discourses of immigration were present in mild forms before SD’s political breakthrough. Some of these ideas, such as on cultural differences, could be said to rest on assumptions of cultural inferiorities and superiorities. SD did bring in many racist formulations into the elite political discourse. SD portrays Sweden as an embattled ground, where the social cohesion and cultural survival is at stake. The initial response of the political mainstream was that SD endangered the idea of what made Sweden uniquely wonderful and prosperous, the country culturally enriched through its hospitality. In this sense SD has had an immense effect on the political elite, as they have created an enormous emotional response mediated as a counter-movement towards the ideas they produce. The immigration politics of SD and their construction of Sweden not only stood in stark contrast to the self-image of the political elite as immigration supporters, but amplified this self perception. The political elite maintained not only the idea of being the land of tolerance and goodness, but also drew on a neoliberal agenda of opening up Sweden for global competition on the labor market.

The political elite of Sweden remained positive to immigration, up to the refugee crisis. The crisis seems however to have worked as a catalyst, as the right-wing parties’ the Moderates (M) and the Christian Democrats (KD), as well as the Liberal Party (L), adopted some discourses bordering those of SD. There is an emerging discourse among these party elites that some of the core values of Sweden are being challenged by the perceived cultural values brought in by many of the new residents of Sweden. The proclaimed refugee crisis is of course a discourse in itself, and in a sense partially a social construction. In this way, the refugee-crisis was linked to a discourse about a system nearing a collapse due to the immigration influx. This discourse came to dominate the debate. These ideas where portrayed by the right wing parties, but partially also by the Social Democrats (S) and reluctantly by the Greens (MP) that used it to motivate the controversial decisions taken to limit the influx of refugees.

My answer to the key question of this thesis is thus that there are some shifts in the immigration discourse of the elite, gravitating towards the discourses of SD; moreover, it is a shift that has taken place among parts of the right wing and liberal political elite. There is a shift in the Social democrats and the Greens discourse too, but it is limited to the topos of
numbers and the discourse of a systemic crisis, and does not involve any ideas of immigrants as bearers of negative cultural attributes that must be reformed. However, as the immigration influx increased ‘dramatically’ in 2015 it would be expected that anti-immigration and assimilation discourses would increase to a larger extent. The proclaimed crisis allowed for more radical departures of how immigrants diverse cultural backgrounds can be discussed negatively. There have been some concessions to SD preformed by KD, M and L, which has more ‘openly’ articulated problems ascribed to the refugee immigration, and refugees specifically as a group. It thus seems that the discourses of SD themselves were not enough to break the taboos of speaking about immigrants in a more openly negative manner. At the same time, the anti-racist norms remain strong and have clearly worked as a shield towards being influenced by the discourses of SD. SD remains too extreme; they remain the ‘racists’ in opposition to the idea of the multicultural utopia still embraced by the elite. The sudden craze for Swedish values was for example clearly positioned in opposition to the ascribed xenophobia of SD, and xenophobia and racism is often declared to be the most non-Swedish thing there is, all across the political field.

Therefore, I would say that SD has had a much smaller discursive influence than could be expected during the crisis. We cannot isolate the discursive adjustment to SD from the discursive changes influenced by the perceived crisis and the decision taken that had to be legitimized somehow. It thus however suggests that the cordon sanitaire has been effective in constraining discursive adaptation to SD.

6.1 Suggestions for further research
As my conclusions regarding SD’s influence are strongly interlinked to the discourses emerging from the refugee crisis, I would suggest that it is highly relevant to look further into the debate emerging along and following the crisis. It raises mainly interesting questions about how the discourses evolved and how they were justified. For example, did populism become more pronounced by other parties than SD, since they brought it into the debate? I would also suggest that the effect of SD on the broader public discourse on immigration needs to be studied further, as well as the relationship between the elite political discourse and the public discourse. Just how influential are the political elites on shaping public perceptions? How influential does that make SD if they participate in and affect the elite
discourse? Further, as my ambition has been to present a broader picture, looking at the entire political spectrum of the elite, the understanding of each party discourse is rather limited. As M, KD, and L has drifted closest to SD it would be very relevant to look more deeply into this party’s production of immigration discourses to get a more nuanced and detailed picture.

Finally, I want to add that this study has a clear disadvantage of being situated too closely to the process and changes that I have tried to capture. We might be witnessing only the beginning of a shift towards a much more negative immigration discourse, but it might very well be that this shift will only prove to be a fluctuation produced largely by the perceived extra-ordinary circumstances of the refugee crisis. Each day new nuances and complications are added to the Swedish debate on immigration. This makes my questions both impossible to answer satisfactorily but it also keeps it highly relevant for times to come.
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