

A fourth phase of the extreme right?

Nordic immigration-critical parties in a comparative context

Anders Widfeldt

Summary

In recent years much attention, in the media as well as in scholarly publications, has been paid to extreme right parties. This distinctive party family, which challenges the political establishment with criticism against immigration as a prioritised issue, is not new. It can, at least, be traced back to the early post-World War II years, and is thus older than, for example, the green party family. With the German scholar Klaus von Beyme's distinction into three historical phases as point of departure, this article discusses the development of the extreme right party family from the late 1940s to date. It is argued that, to von Beyme's three phases, it is now appropriate to add a fourth phase. This most recent phase is characterised by increased legitimacy and political influence for extreme right parties. As shown by the illustrative example of Denmark, the fourth phase has far-reaching potential political and societal consequences.

Zusammenfassung

Sowohl in den Medien als auch in wissenschaftlichen Publikationen haben rechtsextreme Parteien in den vergangenen Jahren an Aufmerksamkeit gewonnen. Dabei ist diese besondere Parteienfamilie, die die etablierten Parteien vor allem mit ihrer Kritik an Zuwanderung herausfordert, keineswegs neu. Sie lässt sich mindestens bis in die frühen Nachkriegsjahre zurückverfolgen und ist somit älter als zum Beispiel die grüne Parteienfamilie. Seinen Ausgang von Klaus von Beymes Unterscheidung dreier historischer Phasen nehmend, möchte dieser Artikel die Entwicklung der rechtsextremen Parteienfamilie seit den späten Vierziger Jahren bis zum heutigen Tage diskutieren. Es wird argumentiert, dass von Beymes drei Phasen heute eine vierte hinzugefügt werden muss. Diese neueste Phase kennzeichnet sich durch zunehmende Legitimität und politischen Einfluss der rechtsextremen Parteien. Wie am anschaulichen Beispiel Dänemarks gezeigt wird, kann diese vierte Phase weitgehende politische und soziale Folgen haben.

Dr. Anders Widfeldt is a lecturer in Nordic Politics at the University of Aberdeen. He obtained his doctoral degree in 1997, with a study on party membership in Sweden. His research interests include right wing parties, as well as political parties in general. Contact: a.widfeldt@abdn.ac.uk

Introduction

Even politically interested persons may find it difficult to name many French prime ministers. Yet hardly anyone, even those with only a lukewarm interest in politics, are unaware of a politician who has never held a government position, and only for brief periods been a member of the National Assembly: *Front National* leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. Similarly, few Austrian politicians (former president Kurt Waldheim possibly excepted) have been better known outside Austria than Jörg Haider, who never had a place in the federal government. Haider and Le Pen are, perhaps, the most striking cases, but there are several other examples. From the northernmost part of Europe, people like Pia Kjærsgaard, Mogens Glistrup and Carl I. Hagen are – or have been – better known internationally than the prime ministers of those same countries.

As such, extreme right parties are not a new phenomenon. In his article from 1988, German political scientist Klaus von Beyme identified three phases in the post-war development of the Extreme Right in Western Europe, the first phase beginning immediately after the end of World War II.¹ As a “party family”, therefore, extreme right parties have existed longer than, for example, their green counterparts. For many years, however, extreme right parties had limited political impact. They were not considered as viable coalition or co-operation parties – they were political pariahs. More recently the picture has changed. Extreme right parties have grown in legitimacy and influence, to the extent that they may be on the verge of becoming a “naturalised” part of the European party systems. This development is highly significant, for the extreme right parties as well as for European politics as a whole, to such an extent that a fourth phase can be added to the three phases identified by von Beyme.

The separation of this development into different phases is primarily of descriptive value. It provides structure to the overview of the historical development of extreme right parties that is the main purpose of this article. This analytical ambition does not stop there, however. The fourth phase is something more than just another piece in a chronological chain – it represents a new political situation. A previously isolated party family, with an agenda seen as illegitimate by all other parties, is making inroads into

¹ von Beyme, Klaus: “Right-wing extremism in post-war Europe.” In: *West European Politics* 11 (1988:2), 2–18.

the established political system. Previously ostracised parties are now able to have an effect on policy-making. The consequences of such a development are potentially far-reaching. The remainder of this article will sketch the historical development of extreme right parties through these four phases. The Nordic extreme right parties will be placed into this broader context. Particular attention will be paid to Denmark, which is an illustrative case of the fourth phase. By looking at Denmark we can learn a lot about the fourth phase; its causes, its mechanisms and, importantly, its consequences. First, however, the appropriateness of the label “extreme right” will be discussed.

Extreme, right – and extreme right

Political parties are often divided into “party families”, with an ideological core as the common factor. There are many such party families, mostly with widely agreed-upon family names, often based on well-known “isms”. There is a liberal, conservative, socialist (social democratic), Christian Democratic, (post)communist/left radical and a green (ecologist/environmentalist) party family.² There is also fairly broad agreement that there is a separate party family consisting of anti-establishment, immigration-critical parties. There is, however, no agreement about the name for this family.

The literature contains a wide range of suggestions. One, nowadays rather small, group of writers speak of neo-fascist parties, implying a direct link to historical fascism.³ A second group emphasises the right-wing position in the ideological spectrum, with labels such as “extreme right” (with derivations, such as “right-wing extremist”), “far right” or “radical right”.⁴ A third group uses populism as their point of departure, with labels such as “populist right”, or “right-wing populist”.⁵ In addition there are several

² The seminal work on party families, or *familles spirituelles*, is von Beyme, Klaus: *Political Parties in Western Democracies*. Aldershot 1985.

³ For example Eatwell, Roger: *Fascism. A History*. London 1995; Cheles, Luciano, Ronnie Ferguson and Michalina Vaughan: *Neo-Fascism in Europe*. London 1991.

⁴ For example Hainsworth, Paul: *The Extreme Right in Western Europe*. London and New York 2008; Davies, Peter and Paul Jackson: *The Far Right in Europe. An Encyclopaedia*. Oxford and Westport 2008; Norris, Pippa: *Radical Right Voters and Parties in the Electoral Market*. Cambridge 2005.

⁵ For example Betz, Hans-Georg: *Radical Right-Wing Populism in Western Europe*. Basingstoke 1994.

combinations, such as “populist radical right”, or “radical right-wing populist”. Less common suggestions include “anti-political establishment”, or “anti-immigration” parties.⁶ The list could be extended, and it keeps growing as new publications come out.

In this article, the term “extreme right” will be used. This decision is not based on any claim that the family name issue once and for all has been resolved. It does, however, rely on two important arguments. First, that the parties in question are “extreme” and, second, that they are to the “right”.

Beginning with the first argument, the word “extreme” has two primary meanings: a party can be extreme relative to the existing political system or relative to other parties in the same party system. Extremism in the former meaning (rejection of the existing political system) is hardly applicable here. Very few, if any, contemporary parties are in principle opposed to the existing democratic system, and have any plans, explicit or hidden, to fundamentally change it. These parties may express criticism of how democracy works, and may advance reform proposals, such as more frequent use of referendums, but there is no rejection of democracy itself.⁷

Extremism relative to other parties, however, is more relevant. Understood this way, extremism means that a party is at or near the end of an ideological dimension, at a clear distance from the other parties. What this dimension is can of course vary, but in the context discussed here, the socio-cultural dimension (issues related to national culture, identity and migration) is the most important. Extreme right parties are markedly different from other parties concerning this socio-cultural dimension. They want to go further in restricting immigration, and they are opposed to multiculturalism. Thus, it can be argued that the parties in question are “extreme” – not relative to the political system, but relative to the other parties.

But are they also to the “right”? Many extreme right parties themselves would vehemently deny this, and in one way they have a point: extreme right parties are not neces-

⁶ For example Fennema, Meindert: “Some conceptual issues and problems in the comparison of anti-immigrant parties in western Europe.” In: *Party Politics* 3 (1997:4), 473–492; Schedler, Andreas: “Anti-political establishment parties.” In: *Party Politics* 2 (1996:3), 291–312.

⁷ For a more detailed conceptual discussion on anti-system parties, see Capoccia, Giovanni: “Anti-system parties: a reassessment.” In: *Journal of Theoretical Politics* 14 (2002:1), 9–35.

sarily to the right, or at least not very far to the right, on economic issues. There are examples of parties that combine right-wing economics with strident nationalism and criticism of immigration, but this is by no means universal. Many immigration-critical parties are centrist, in some cases even left-leaning on economic issues. So how can it still be argued that “right” is an applicable label?

The left-right dichotomy can be traced back to the French revolution. Its exact meaning has varied, but the common denominator has been that “left” has been associated with equality and “right” with inequality or privilege. A left-wing position is that equality among all human beings is desirable, and possible, while a right-wing position is the opposite: equality is not desirable and/or not possible. This comparison can be applied to more than one dimension of political conflict. Concerning the socio-economic dimension (issues of ownership, taxation and market regulation) a right-wing position could be the view that effort and endeavour should be rewarded, which leads to inequalities in income and wealth. Concerning the socio-cultural dimension (issues of nationality, culture and migration) a right-wing position could be the view that population groups should stay separate, and that the interests of one’s “own” group should be prioritised.⁸

To sum up, an extreme right party is a party which *prioritises the socio-cultural dimension*, is *far to the right* on that dimension and is significantly *different from other parties* on that dimension. This not only justifies their inclusion in the “extreme right” family, but can also serve as a definition of the extreme right party family itself. Other possible labels, such as “populist”, or “radical”, right may also have been possible, but have been discarded. The word “populist” is not used because the name of a party family should refer to the ideological core, and it is questionable whether populism is ideological, or “just” a political style, or mode of communication. There are scholars who argue that there is an ideological dimension to populism, for example containing a producer ethic, the belief in a harmony of interests and the rejection of class conflict.⁹

⁸ This discussion draws heavily on the first chapter in Ignazi, Piero: *Extreme Right Parties in Western Europe*. Oxford 2003.

⁹ Betz, Hans-Georg: “Introduction”. In: Hans-Georg Betz and Stefan Immerfall (eds.): *The New Politics of the Right. Neo-Populist Parties and Movements in Established Democracies*. New York 1998, 1–10, here: 4; Rydgren, Jens: *From tax populism to ethnic nationalism: Radical right-wing populism in Sweden*. New York 2006, chapter 1.

A key ingredient of populism, however, is that it lacks core values, something which is difficult to reconcile with any kind of ideological content.¹⁰ The word “radical” could superficially be seen as synonymous with “extreme”, but on closer inspection this is not quite the case. Derived from the Latin word “radix”, which means root, radical implies the ambition to pull everything up by the roots or to get to the root of a perceived problem. This could be taken to imply some sort of fundamentalism, which is not the same as extremism, at least the way it is used here. To be extreme relative to other parties is not necessarily the same thing as wanting to get to the root of something.

The debate about the family name will continue – there are even examples of writers who have difficulties agreeing with themselves.¹¹ The above discussion does not claim to have resolved this debate, but hopefully, it will bring some clarity to the remainder of this article.

Phases in the development of extreme right parties

As already mentioned, von Beyme identifies three phases in the post-World War II development of extreme right parties.¹² During the first phase, which started at the end of the war, and lasted until the mid-1950s, the extreme right consisted mainly of surviving, or revived, fascist and Nazi parties from the inter-war period. These parties were mostly very small, often minuscule. Fascism and Nazism were discredited throughout Europe, and the successor parties were isolated politically. In some cases, such as the German *Sozialistische Reichspartei*, they were outlawed. The most impor-

¹⁰ Taggart, Paul: “Populism and the Pathology of Representative Politics”. In: Mény, Yves and Yves Surel (eds.): *Democracies and the Populist Challenge*. Basingstoke 2003, 62–80, here: 68.

¹¹ Two examples: 1.) Mudde, Cas: *The Ideology of the Extreme Right*. Manchester 2000; Idem: *Populist Radical Right Parties in Europe*. Cambridge 2007. 2.) Widfeldt, Anders: “Scandinavia: Mixed success for the populist right parties.” In: *Parliamentary Affairs* 53 (2000:3), 486–500; Idem: “Contemporary Right-wing Extremism.” In: Roland Axtmann (ed.): *Understanding Democratic Politics. Concepts, Institutions, Movements*. New York 2003, 280–290.

¹² von Beyme 1988, as footnote 1.

tant party during this phase was the Italian *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI), which in practice was a successor party to the Mussolini fascists.¹³

Unlike most other first-phase extreme right parties, MSI was continuously represented in the national parliament, largely due to a relatively small, but loyal, support base in southern Italy. Outside Italy, extreme right parties were for the most part little more than small sects, which occasionally made the media headlines but were politically without any significance whatsoever. An illustrative example was the Union Movement, formed by the British fascist veteran Oswald Mosley in 1948. Mosley had been a member of parliament for the Conservative as well as Labour parties, and served in a Labour government, before turning to fascism in the 1930s. Eloquent, experienced and well-known to the public, Mosley did attract some occasional media attention. For the most part, however, the Union Movement was seen as little more than a curiosity, and Mosley's attempts at the polls were dismal failures.¹⁴

Attempts were made to create a pan-European co-operation organisation for the first-phase extreme right parties. A number of meetings to constitute such an organisation were held in the early 1950s, including one in Malmö in 1951. Hosted by Per Engdahl, leader of *Nysvenska Rörelsen* (a Swedish coterie of pro-fascist and pro-corporatist intellectuals), the Malmö meeting led to the formation of the *European Social Movement* (ESB). The Malmö conference appears to have been something of a personal triumph for Engdahl, who was elected as the head of the ESB international office, which was placed in Malmö. The ESB soon split, however, and although it continued for several years it did not get the significance that it had initially hoped for.¹⁵

Apart from Per Engdahl's involvement in the, ultimately unsuccessful, attempt to unify Western Europe's extreme right, the first phase had little or no impact in the Nordic countries. Engdahl's own group *Nysvenska Rörelsen* was little more than a discussion club for intellectuals, which did not try its hand in elections (it had made one such at-

¹³ For an overview of the development of the MSI, see Ignazi 2003, as footnote 8, chapter 3.

¹⁴ Mosley's political activities, before as well as after World War II are discussed in, for example, Skidelsky, Robert: *Oswald Mosley*. London 1975, and Thurlow, Richard: *Fascism in Britain. From Oswald Mosley to the National Front*. London 1998.

¹⁵ *Säkerhetsjänst, nazism och högerextremism* (= Sveriges Offentliga Utredningar SOU; 2002:94), 51–55; Lodenius, Anna-Lena and Stieg Larsson: *Extremhögern*. Stockholm 1991, 92–96.

tempt in the 1930s). In Norway and Denmark, attempts to rehabilitate fascism and Nazism were doomed to failure, and in Finland *Isänmaallinen kansanliike*, the Patriotic People's League (IKL), which had been the strongest Nordic fascist party in the 1930s and 40s, had been outlawed in 1944 as a consequence of the peace treaty with the USSR. Ultimately, first-phase extreme right parties were insignificant and isolated. They were stigmatised by their association with inter-war fascism, they were sometimes subject to repression by the authorities and they had very little electoral and political impact.

The second phase, which began in the mid-1950s, was in many ways entirely different, and had a much greater impact in the Nordic countries. Called the "Populist Protest" phase by von Beyme, it consisted of parties with no links to inter-war fascism or Nazism. Instead, second phase parties grew out of a reaction against the post-war social and economic modernisation process. The catalyst of the second phase was the French *Union de Defense Commerçants et Artisans* (UDCA), usually referred to as the *Poujadistes* after its founder and leader Pierre Poujade.

The *Poujadistes* were a protest movement for farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs, such as small shop-owners, against the growth of economic modernisation in the shape of, for example, large-scale food production and supermarkets. Coupled with vitriolic anti-establishment rhetoric, the *Poujadiste* message was initially very effective, and the 52 seats gained by UDCA in the 1956 election to the National Assembly looked like a political breakthrough. The party could not, however, adapt to the changes brought about by the Algerian crisis, and did not survive the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic.¹⁶ There were relatively few other parties in the early stages of the second stage, with the Dutch *Boerenpartij* (Farmers' Party), and the Finnish Rural Party (*Suomen Maaseudun Puolue*) being rare exceptions.¹⁷

The second phase regained its momentum in the 1970s. A first breakthrough came in Finland, where the Rural Party polled over 10 per cent in the 1970 election to the Fin-

¹⁶ Lorenz, Einhart: "Fra Boulanger til Poujade og Le Pen. Høyrepopulistiske bevegelser i Frankrike." In: Tor Espen Simonsen et al. (eds.): *Høyrepopulisme i Vest-Europa*. Oslo 2009, 205–225, here: 210–215.

¹⁷ Academic literature dealing with the *Boerenpartij* appears to be scarce. See von Beyme 1985, as footnote 2, here: 130.

nish parliament. Led by the charismatic Veikko Vennamo, the Rural Party largely represented economically deprived small-scale farmers, many of whom had been resettled following land losses to the USSR at the end of the war.¹⁸ Three years later, breakthroughs occurred in Denmark and Norway. In Denmark, the Progress Party (*Fremskridtspartiet*) was formed by the outspoken lawyer Mogens Glistrup in 1972.

In the following year the kennel owner Anders Lange formed the Norwegian counterpart, which took the cumbersome but illustrative name Anders Lange's Party for Strongly Reduced Taxes, Fees and Public Intervention (*Anders Langes parti til sterk nedsettelse av skatter, avgifter og offentlige inngrep*; the party was usually referred to as *Anders Langes Parti*). Both parties entered the respective national parliaments in 1973. Their political message was well summarized by the name of the Norwegian party – they were a protest against the alleged tax burden and state bureaucracy. Both parties were isolated, and not taken seriously by their political environment, but they were there to stay. Anders Lange died suddenly in 1974, and in 1977 the party was renamed *Fremskrittspartiet* (Progress Party), in accordance with its Danish counterpart.¹⁹ In the same year the party lost its parliamentary status, but it returned in 1981 and has since remained present. The initial electoral impact of the Danish Progress Party was much greater, with 15.9 per cent in its first election. This result has not, so far, been surpassed by the Progress Party, nor by its successor, the *Dansk Folkeparti* (Danish People's Party)

Second-phase parties shared a number of key characteristics. The emerging parties were to a large extent based around a single personality. Glistrup, Poujade and Vennamo were very charismatic; Lange perhaps somewhat less so, but he too developed a personal following. The content of the political message was not identical. Vennamo advocated increased support to deprived farmers, and did not seem to mind if the bill was paid by the taxpayer. Lange and Glistrup were not, perhaps, articulate exponents of libertarian philosophy but they were principled opponents of taxes and wanted to reduce the size of the state bureaucracy. Indeed, libertarian ideas did later gain a foot-

¹⁸ The origins and early years of the Finnish Rural Party are given a thorough treatment in Fryklund, Björn and Tomas Petersson: *Populism och missnöjespartier i Norden. Studier av småborgerlig klassaktivitet*. Lund 1981, chapter 9.

¹⁹ Iversen, Jan Martin: *Fra Anders Lange til Carl I. Hagen. 25 år med Fremskrittspartiet*. Oslo 1998.

hold in both of the Progress parties, although they never became the dominant party ideology.

What Poujade, Vennamo, Glistrup and Lange had in common, however, was a profound dislike of the political establishment. They fit the populist stereotype of a simplistic “us and them” dichotomy; “us” being the “common man” and “them” being the rogue politicians and bureaucrats. Especially Glistrup and Vennamo were efficient communicators, often scoring points against the establishment with humour and drastic metaphors. Electorally, the second phase was characterised by instability. There are examples of remarkable election results, such as France in 1956, Finland in 1970 and Norway and (especially) Denmark in 1973, but for the most part the parties were unable to build on these successes. The unorthodox style of the leaders may have contributed to the popular support, but it also meant political isolation. Glistrup, Lange and Vennamo were heroes among their supporters, but elsewhere they were regarded as buffoons, which could not be taken seriously.

The third phase, which began around 1980, had two key characteristics. First, extreme right parties gained in electoral support. Secondly immigration, which had played a minor role during the first and second phases, became a key issue. The catalyst of the third phase was the French *Front National* (FN), which had been formed in 1972 but made its electoral and political breakthrough in the mid-1980s. Initially, FN broke through in local politics; more specifically in the municipality of Dreux, east of Paris. The party was accepted into an electoral alliance with the centre-right. The ad-hoc alliance was successful in ousting the left-wing council leadership, and it gave FN momentum and legitimacy. In 1984 the party entered the European parliament, and in 1986 it took 35 seats in the election to the National Assembly.²⁰ The 1984 and 1986 successes were largely due to the use of a proportional electoral system. In the case of the 1986 parliamentary election, the change from the traditional French system of first-past-the-post in single-member constituencies in two rounds into proportional representation was for all intents and purposes a ploy by the Socialist president Mitterrand to reduce the size of an expected centre-right victory.²¹ The new centre-right government re-introduced the old majority system, which has stayed in place since.

²⁰ Eatwell 1995, as footnote 3, chapter 13.

²¹ Stevens, Anne: *The Government and Politics of France*. Basingstoke 1996 [1992], 188.

Small parties are not necessarily disadvantaged in the French electoral system. The vast majority of seats are decided in the second round, in which the main parties on the left and right avoid standing against each other. This *désistement* can sometimes benefit smaller parties, such as the Communists and Greens, as well as various small parties and independent candidates on the right and centre-right. *Front National*, however, has never so far been allowed into these second round cartels, and has therefore effectively been excluded from parliamentary representation.²² The party did win a single seat in 1988, and again in 1997, but these were isolated successes – and in both cases the seat was lost within a year. Nevertheless, *Front National* did build up a respectable support base, regularly getting over 10 per cent in the first round of the parliamentary elections.

At least as significant, party leader Jean-Marie Le Pen made steady gains in the presidential elections of 1988 and 1995, and in 2002 he caused a sensation by progressing into a second round against the Gaullist Jacques Chirac, beating the Socialist candidate, the then prime minister Lionel Jospin, into third place. This result aroused much international attention, and could be said to have had a long-term impact on French politics, but it did not prove to be a final breakthrough for Le Pen and his party. Le Pen was soundly beaten by Chirac in the second round of the presidential election, the party saw its share of first round votes go down in the subsequent parliamentary election, and both Le Pen and *Front National* saw their share of the vote drop significantly in the 2007 elections.²³

Front National was the first party to gain international attention during the third phase. Indeed, the successes of FN in the mid-1980s were widely interpreted as a catalyst of change in European politics, where a party with a strident anti-immigration agenda could make significant electoral gains. The strident and outspoken Le Pen became something of a symbol for this development, and he soon established himself as one of the best-known French politicians outside of France. Soon, however, *Front National*

²² Ibid.

²³ Bell, David S. and Criddle, Byron: “Presidentialism Restored: The French Elections of April-May and June 2002.” In: *Parliamentary Affairs* 55 (2002:4), 643–663; Bell, David S. and Byron Criddle: “Presidentialism Enthroned: The French Presidential and Parliamentary Elections of April-May and June 2007.” In: *Parliamentary Affairs* 61 (2008:1), 185–205.

was joined by other parties. In Belgium *Vlaams Blok*, which combined Flemish separatism with vitriolic criticism of immigration, emerged around 1980, and soon started to make gains.

Another party that combined separatism and anti-immigration was the north Italian *Lega Nord*, formed in 1991 as an amalgamation of separate regional leagues in northern Italy.²⁴ The German *Die Republikaner*, formed in 1983, looked like they were on the verge of a national breakthrough when they gained six seats in the European parliament in 1989 and entered the federal state parliament in Berlin, the *Abgeordnetenhaus*, in the same year.²⁵ In Austria the *Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs* (FPÖ) abruptly changed from centrist liberalism into an extreme right position, when Jörg Haider took over as leader. Before Haider the party's support base had been eroding, but the new direction proved to be a successful recipe, and the party's electoral fortunes improved dramatically.²⁶

In the Nordic countries, the third phase also had an impact. The already existing Progress parties that had emerged during the second phase adopted criticism of immigration as part of their platform – this soon became a key theme. In Norway and Denmark this happened in the latter half of the 1980s. Especially in the Norwegian case, this reorientation went over well with the voters, and the party made massive gains in the subnational elections of 1987 and the parliamentary election of 1989. In the latter election, the party went from two to 22 seats in the Norwegian national parliament, the *Storting*. In the Danish and Finnish cases the success was not quite as unequivocal. In Finland Heikki Riihijärvi, who had succeeded Veikko Vennamo's son Pekka as party leader, led the party to adopt a strident anti-immigration position in the 1991 election campaign – he even stormed out of a TV debate in protest against the other parties' unwillingness to discuss the issue. It was not a vote-winner, however.²⁷ The Rural Party lost ground in the election and folded, due to bankruptcy, in 1995.

²⁴ Betz, Hans Georg: "Against Rome: The Lega Nord." In: Betz and Immerfall 1998, as footnote 9, 45–57.

²⁵ Mudde 2000, as footnote 11, chapter 2.

²⁶ Riedlsperger, Max: "The Freedom Party of Austria: From protest to radical right populism." In: Betz and Immerfall 1998, as footnote 8, 27–43.

²⁷ Arter, David: "Black faces in the blond crowd: Populist racialism in Scandinavia." In: *Parliamentary Affairs* 45 (1993:3), 357–372, here: 364f.

In Sweden, *Ny Demokrati* (New Democracy) emerged from nowhere in 1991. Initiated by the aristocratic businessman Ian Wachtmeister and the show business manager Bert Karlsson, it combined a very right-wing economic programme, a strongly pro-EC/EU position and criticism against immigration. Presented in a package of drastic rhetoric and humour, sometimes bordering on outright buffoonery, this formula was instantly successful and the party entered parliament at the first attempt. *Ny Demokrati* was in a potentially very powerful position in parliament, holding the balance of power between the main political blocs on the left and right, but it was never able to make political use of this position. When, on a couple of occasions, the party threatened to unseat the centre-right coalition government, it eventually backed down. The reputation of *Ny Demokrati* was damaged by a lack of internal discipline and the unpredictable behaviour by some of its parliamentarians. When Wachtmeister announced his resignation as party leader in the winter of 1994, full chaos ensued, and the party was annihilated in the 1994 election.²⁸

The demise of *Ny Demokrati*, however, was an exception. For the most part, extreme right parties consolidated and strengthened their positions during the third phase. The immigration-critical stance proved electorally profitable, and became the most important part of the extreme right message. This is not to say that extreme right parties were positive, or even indifferent, to immigration during the first two phases, but it was not a prioritised issue. In many cases it was more or less absent. During the third phase it became the most central campaign theme. That this really was the case is well documented in the academic literature. Examples are too many to mention, but one of the best known was a slogan used by *Front National*: “Two and a half million unemployed – that is two and a half million immigrants too many”.²⁹ This quotation is also an example of the populist element of the extreme right message – the advocacy of simple solutions to complex problems.

The growth in electoral support was not universal. Great Britain, Sweden and Finland were examples of countries where the extreme right suffered a decline, or failed to

²⁸ Rydgren, Jens: *From Tax Populism to Ethnic Nationalism: Radical Right-Wing Populism in Sweden*. New York and Oxford 2006, chapters 3 and 4.

²⁹ Idem: *Political Protest and Ethno-Nationalist Mobilization. The Case of the French Front National*. Stockholm 2002, 237 ff. The exact wording of the slogan has varied.

gain a foothold. In Germany, *Die Republikaner* were completely wrong-footed by the unification, declined in the 1990s and are today more or less insignificant. But on the whole, support for the extreme right grew. Existing extreme right parties grew, and newly created parties gained footholds. This is not a universal shift – seven out of the 15 EU member nations after the 1995 enlargement did not have an extreme right party in the national parliament at any point during the 1990s – but the long-term trend was clear. In 1980, extreme right parties had only on rare occasions achieved double-digit vote percentages in parliamentary elections. By 1999, extreme right parties could count on at least ten per cent of the vote in France, Italy, Belgium, Norway and Austria. In addition, the democratization of Eastern Europe led to the growth of several extreme right parties in several post-communist countries.³⁰

During the third phase, extreme right parties tended to lean to the right in economic policy. In some cases, such as *Ny Demokrati*, the market liberal and pro-capitalist message was particularly pronounced, but it was also evident in, for example, *Front National*, FPÖ and in the Danish and Norwegian Progress parties. This led a number of scholars to assume that right-leaning economics was an integral part of the extreme right ideology. Herbert Kitschelt, in his rightly famous study of factors behind extreme right success, argues that right-wing economics is part of the extreme right “winning formula”, and is at least as important as criticism against immigration. As it has turned out, however, this was nothing more than a passing phase in the development of extreme right parties.³¹ They prioritise the socio-cultural dimension, which means that they can afford to be quite pragmatic on economic matters. Consequently, it is very difficult to find any clear and stable pattern in their economic policies – except the firmly held belief that immigration is negative for the economy. This inconsistency was soon to become evident.

³⁰ For an academic treatment of eastern Europe see, e.g., Mudde 2007, as footnote 10; and Mudde, Cas (ed.): *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe*. Abingdon and New York 2005.

³¹ Kitschelt, Herbert: *The Radical Right in Western Europe*. Ann Arbor (Michigan) 1995. Kitschelt has been criticised for this part of his theory, but he provides a spirited defence in idem: “Growth and persistence of the radical right in postindustrial democracies: Advances and challenges in comparative research”. In: *West European Politics* 30 (2007:5), 1176–1206.

During the third phase the extreme right parties made significant electoral gains. They were no longer irrelevant, and they attracted increasing media attention. They were, however, politically isolated. Other parties did not want to co-operate with them, and an extreme right party in government was still unthinkable during the third phase. This was to change, however.

A fourth phase?

Klaus von Beyme's article, where he divides the development of extreme right parties into three phases, was a very apt summary of the situation as it was when the article was written. In fact, his three stages stood the test of time very well for over a decade. But around the year 2000 something began to happen. The pivotal event was the Austrian election, held in November 1999, in which FPÖ finished second. The margin to the third biggest party, the catholic-conservative ÖVP, was only 415 votes, but it was enough to put an end to the grand coalition between ÖVP and the social democratic SPÖ, which had ruled the country since 1986. Protracted and difficult government negotiations followed, and in February a coalition between ÖVP and FPÖ took office.

The reaction was instant, and strong. There were street protests in Vienna, and the other EU member nations subjected Austria to an informal boycott, reducing all contacts to the formal diplomatic level. In response to the reactions Jörg Haider stayed out of the government, and later resigned the party leadership. FPÖ's behaviour in government could hardly be described as extremist, and the EU sanctions were lifted after a commission of inquiry, the so-called "Three Wise Men", had exonerated the Austrian government in a report presented in September 2000. With various twists and turns FPÖ stayed in government for over six years, despite suffering serious losses in an election held in the autumn of 2002.³² In 2005 Haider and his followers defected to form a new party, *Bündnis Zukunft Österreich* (BZÖ), which took over the FPÖ's position in government, which it held until a new SPÖ-ÖVP grand coalition took office after the 2006 election. The remaining FPÖ was re-radicalised after the split, but the party made significant advances in the elections of 2006 and 2008; on the latter occa-

³² Luther, Kurt Richard: "The self-destruction of a right-wing populist party? The Austrian parliamentary election of 2002." In: *West European Politics* 26 (2003:2), 134–152.

sion reaching 17.5 per cent of the vote. BZÖ, meanwhile, has an uncertain future after Haider's death in a traffic accident in autumn of 2008.³³

Developments in Austrian politics since the 1999 election are intricate, and cannot be delved into here. The important point, however, is that the inclusion of FPÖ in the government was a pivotal event not only in Austria, but in European politics as a whole. It was, in fact, not the first time an extreme right party had entered a government. Both *Lega Nord* and the post-fascist *Alleanza Nazionale* had joined a coalition led by Silvio Berlusconi's *Forza Italia* in 1994. But the formation of the Italian coalition in 1994 took place in an extraordinary situation: in the wake of the *Mani Pulite* investigation into political corruption, which caused several leading Italian parties to fold. The 1994 Berlusconi government, furthermore, was not long-lived, and was forced to resign before the end of the year.³⁴

The ÖVP-FPÖ government in 2000, however, was a turning point. A year later *Alleanza Nazionale* and *Lega Nord* returned to government in a coalition led by *Forza Italia*, this time under more "normal" circumstances – and this time to stay. *Alleanza Nazionale* and *Lega Nord* have been in government from 2001-2006, and from 2008 to date. Neither of these governments led to an international reaction like the one in Austria, and other countries followed suit. In 2002 the newly created *Lijst Pim Fortuyn* joined a Dutch coalition government, after a breakthrough in an election held shortly after the assassination of the party's founder and leader Pim Fortuyn.

At least as importantly, the *Dansk Folkeparti* (DF) took a central role in Danish politics after the election held in November 2001. *Dansk Folkeparti* had been formed by defectors from the Progress Party in 1995, after a particularly vitriolic party congress. Pia Kjærsgaard, who belonged to the "realist" faction in the Progress Party, which sought routes to co-operation with the other parties, became the leader. Politically, DF took a different direction compared to the Progress Party. Demands of tax cuts and attacks on state bureaucracy were abandoned in favour of what is best described as welfare chauvinism, where the welfare state is accepted, even embraced – but with the important qualification that its benefits should only be available to the "own" people.

³³ Idem: "The revival of the radical right: The Austrian Parliamentary election of 2008". In: *West European Politics* 32 (2009:5), 1049–1061.

³⁴ Ignazi 2003, as footnote 8, here: 44f. and 56f.

Danish nationalism, and criticism against immigration, became core ingredients in the party ideology. It relatively soon became apparent that DF had more electoral potential than the remnants of the Progress Party, which finished well below the two per cent representational threshold in the 2001 election, and has since then not been able to collect the required number of signatures to participate in parliamentary elections.

Immigration was a central theme in the 2001 election campaign. This played into the hands of *Dansk Folkeparti*, which gained support as well as legitimacy, and after the election DF agreed to provide parliamentary support for the Liberal-Conservative minority coalition government that took office. *Dansk Folkeparti* did not formally become part of the government, and has not occupied any ministerial posts, but in exchange for the parliamentary support the party has made a number of agreements with the government, which have led to further restrictions in refugee and immigration policy. For example, the requirements on local councils to provide housing for refugees, demands on refugees' command of Danish were tightened, as were restrictions on reunions of families and spouses. The government also introduced a number of other restrictions with support from DF, although they were not the consequence of formal agreements.³⁵

There is little doubt that *Dansk Folkeparti* has benefited from the arrangement, where it takes active part in the policy making process without being a formal member of the government. The party has been able to get its core policies through, at the same time as it has been able to avoid more divisive areas, such as EU-related issues, where the government has been able to look for alternative majorities. Thus, despite not formally in government, *Dansk Folkeparti* has been very influential in Danish politics since 2001 – arguably at least as influential as *Lega Nord* and FPÖ, which have been in government for several years. The arrangement has also been beneficial to DF in terms of electoral support. The party has defied predictions that its successes in concrete policy terms would make it redundant, and made gains in the 2005 as well as 2007 elections.

The developments in Austria, Italy, Denmark and to a lesser extent the Netherlands were highly significant. Before 2000, extreme right parties were political pariahs. To co-operate with them, never mind include them in government, was unthinkable. In

³⁵ Sommer, Nikolaj and Sune Aagaard: *Succes. Historien om Pia Kjærsgaard*. København 2003.

Austria a grand coalition between the two main parties on the left and right was in government for 13 years, mainly in order to keep FPÖ out of government. In Denmark, DF and its predecessor the Progress Party had for many years been regarded as political mavericks; perhaps entertaining to listen to, but not considered as suitable for serious co-operation. All of a sudden these parties were more or less fully accepted by the centre-right. They had moved from the political fringes into a position of legitimacy and respectability.

We could also add Switzerland to the picture, although the Swiss situation is not entirely comparable with other countries. *Schweizerische Volkspartei* (SVP) is an old centre-right party, which for a number of years gravitated towards the right, until it eventually became a fully-fledged extreme right party. It is difficult to ascertain exactly when this development was completed; arguably not until late 2008, when a number of opponents to the leader of the party's right-wing, Christoph Blocher, left to form a new party, the centrist *Bürgerlich-Demokratische Partei Schweiz* (BDP). The Swiss political system, with a form of permanent coalition government (the *Bundesrat*), has meant that SVP has been represented in government for a long time. When the key personality behind the right-wing turn, Christoph Blocher, entered the *Bundesrat* in 2003, it could be argued that the fourth phase had also reached Switzerland.³⁶

Switzerland is a special case – the structure of the political system meant that Blocher could enter the *Bundesrat* due to his party's electoral strength rather than direct acceptance by the mainstream centre-right parties. Elsewhere, such acceptance has been the key to the fourth phase. Exactly what brought about this fairly abrupt change of attitude by the established centre-right parties is not easy to pinpoint in general terms. Nation-specific factors will no doubt have played a part, but an interesting general approach was presented by the British political scientist Tim Bale in a thought-provoking article from 2003.

Bale argued that the centre-right political blocs needed an extra party to meet the challenge from the centre-left – which had been reinforced by the acceptance and addition of green parties. The Green change from a position above bloc politics into affiliation with the centre-left had given new votes to the centre-left blocs. The acceptance of

³⁶ Skenderovic, Damir: *The Radical Right in Switzerland: Continuity and Change 1945–2000*. New York 2009.

extreme right parties into the centre-right blocs can thus be seen as a counter-measure. It brought new votes, but it was also a way of reaching into parts of the blue-collar vote, a segment of the electorate which is normally out of reach for the established centre-right parties.³⁷ Bale's argument is somewhat tentative, based as it is on observations of a development still in its early stages, but it is compelling. Parties may often turn to moralistic rhetoric, but ultimately they are rational organisations seeking to protect and promote their own position. If the meeting of this end requires the help from previously ostracised parties, such an option cannot forever be ruled out.

Developments since 2000 strongly suggest that von Beyme's three phases, which provided a very apt summary of the development up to and beyond the late 1980s, are no longer sufficient. It is highly justified to speak of a *fourth phase*. Beginning around the year 2000, this phase can be called the *legitimacy phase*. The pivotal event was the inclusion of FPÖ into the Austrian government, but other countries later followed suit. We must remember that formal government inclusion, important though that is, does not tell the whole story. In terms of concrete political impact, Denmark is at least as significant as Italy or Austria. Denmark is, therefore, a very good case study of the fourth phase – the Danish case can help us to understand the underlying conditions and the political and societal consequences of the legitimacy phase.

The case should not be overstated. In many countries, extreme right parties are still far from government positions. *Front National* has been weakened, and is still not allowed into the centre-right cartels in the second round of parliamentary elections. In Belgium *Vlaams Belang* (formed in 2004 after *Vlaams Blok* had been forced to close, having been deemed to be racist by the Court of Cassation) is still subject to a *cordon sanitaire*, an agreement among the other parties not to cooperate with *Vlaams Belang*.³⁸ In Austria no extreme right party has been in government since early 2007. Elsewhere, extreme right parties have still not made it into parliament. In Germany, for example, the extreme right parties are far below the levels of support required for representation

³⁷ Bale, Tim: "Cinderella and her ugly sisters: The mainstream and extreme right in Europe's bipolarising party systems." In: *West European Politics* 26 (2003:3), 67–90.

³⁸ Erk, Jan: "From Vlaams Blok to Vlaams Belang: The Belgian Far-Right Renames Itself." In: *West European Politics* 28 (2005:3), 493–502.

in the *Bundestag*, while in countries such as Ireland, Spain and Portugal extreme right parties are minuscule.

Still, it is no exaggeration that the political landscape has changed. In a number of countries the unthinkable has become reality, and it is not unreasonable to expect that, with time, the threshold for a similar development in a growing number of countries will gradually get lower. The fourth phase also has other characteristics. One has already been hinted – the right-leaning economic position of the third phase has been replaced by welfare chauvinism. This should not be over-interpreted – extreme right parties have not turned to fully-fledged socialism – but they have a much more positive, or at least less negative, view of the welfare system and the public sector they had during the second and third phases. Criticism of immigration remains a core ideological feature, but is increasingly focused on criticism against Islam, and the alleged dangers of “Islamisation” of European countries. Attacks on the political establishment continue to be a core part of the rhetoric, but is increasingly directed at the EU.

The situation in the Nordic countries

It has already been argued that Denmark is a key case in the fourth phase. Denmark was not the first country to enter this phase – the elevation of extreme right parties to political legitimacy happened earlier in Italy and Austria – and the Danish People’s Party has not, so far, reached government status. In terms of actual and tangible policy influence, however, it is difficult to find a more clear-cut case than the Danish one. Elsewhere in the Nordic countries the situation is less clear. In terms of electoral support, the Norwegian Progress Party is much stronger than the Danish People’s Party, reaching 22.9 per cent in the 2009 election to the *Storting*. The party also had a position of some influence after the 2001 election, when its support was needed to form a centre-right minority coalition. According to the British newspaper *The Guardian* the Norwegian far right “got a slice of power[...]for the first time since the second world war”, thereby questionably implying a similarity to Vidkun Quisling’s *Nasjonal Samling* (National Assemblage), which formed a puppet government during the German occupation. The article went on to predict that the Progress Party would be able to ex-

ert considerable influence on the government.³⁹ This did not happen, however, at least not to the same extent as in Denmark. The position of the Progress Party was that it wanted to be in government, but this was vehemently opposed by the Prime Minister, the Christian Democrat Kjell Magne Bondevik. The party supported the government in the vote of investiture in 2001, but it declared that its continued support for the government was not unconditional, and there was no systematic subsequent co-operation.⁴⁰ The Progress Party did participate in a number of budget deals during the 2001-2005 parliamentary term, but the cooperation was not continuous – in 2003 the government passed the budget with support from the Labour Party.⁴¹

The relationship between Hagen and Bondevik was openly hostile, and a few months before the 2005 election Hagen declared that his party would no longer support a government with Bondevik as prime minister. Of the other non-socialist parties, only the Conservatives left an opening to inclusion of Hagen's party in a possible government. The election, which resulted in a narrow centre-left majority, made the question academic.⁴² Four years later the situation was largely similar. The Conservatives were, in more explicit terms than four years earlier, open to government co-operation with the Progress Party, but the Christian Democratic and Liberal parties remained opposed.⁴³ Given that the Progress Party baseline position remains clear – it wants to be part of a “bourgeois” government – its support cannot be taken for granted as long as it is not accepted as a coalition partner by all the other non-socialist parties.

Thus, despite the considerable electoral strength of the Progress Party, Norway has not quite entered the fourth phase. It does, however, only seem a matter of time before this

³⁹ “Far right to share power in Norway.” In: *The Guardian*, 18th October 2001.

⁴⁰ Valen, Henry: “The Storting Election in Norway, September 2001.” In: *Electoral Studies* 22 (2003:1), 179–185.

⁴¹ Aalberg, Toril: “Norway.” In: *European Journal of Political Research* 43 (2004:7–8), 1099–1105.

⁴² Aalberg, Toril and Tove Brekken: “Norway.” In: *European Journal of Political Research* 45 (2006:7–8), 1221–1230; Valen, Henry and Hanne Marte Narud: “The Storting Election in Norway, September 2005.” In: *Electoral Studies* 26 (2007:1), 219–223; Sitter, Nick: “Norway’s Storting Election of 2005: Back to the Left?” In: *West European Politics* 20 (2006:3), 573–580.

⁴³ “Jensen: Frp og Høyre kan få flertall.” In: *Aftenposten*, 10th May 2009; ”Slik vil Sponheim stoppe Jensen”. In: *Aftenposten*, 26th August 2009.

becomes the case. The Liberal and Christian People's parties, which have continued to resist Progress Party inclusion in a centre-right government, were punished by the voters in the 2009 election, and are now so weakened that little remains of their veto power. Predictions are always difficult, but it is difficult to imagine how the Progress Party can be overlooked next time there is a centre-right majority in the *Storting*. At the same time it should also be noted that the classification of today's Progress Party as extreme right is not entirely unequivocal. The party describes its own ideology as "liberalist", and has disowned the Sweden Democrats.⁴⁴ Siv Jensen, who succeeded Hagen as party leader in 2006, has said in a radio interview that her party's nearest equivalent in Denmark is the liberal *Venstre*; not the Danish People's Party. When asked, however, Jensen also said that there were "parallels" with the Danish People's Party in terms of immigration policy.⁴⁵

The situation in Finland has some parallels to that of Norway, although there are also important differences. The True Finns Party (*Perussomalaiset*), which was formed in 1995 out of the ashes of the bankrupt Rural Party, was completely insignificant for several years, but started to make progress in the 2000s. In the 2007 parliamentary election, the True Finns got 4.1 per cent and five seats in the Finnish national parliament, the *Eduskunta*, and in 2009 the party got 9.8 per cent in the election to the EU parliament. In 2010 the party has been above 12 per cent in some opinion polls. The recent surge in support largely associated with the popular leader Timo Soini, whose humour and comparatively mild-mannered populism comes across well on TV, at the same time as he commands some grudging respect in the established parties.⁴⁶ Up to now the party, which combines a comparatively mild form of immigration scepticism with EU criticism and attacks on the political establishment, has been politically isolated. The surge in support in recent years, however, could mean that the party becomes relevant in the government formation process after the election scheduled for April 2011. Soini has already made public statements with preferred ministerial posts

⁴⁴ "Svenske nasjonalister vil lære av FRP". In: *Aftenposten*, 14th September 2009.

⁴⁵ *Ekots lördagsintervju*. Interview with Siv Jensen, broadcast on *Sveriges Radio*, 30th December 2006. (<http://www.sr.se/webbradio/?Type=broadcast&Id=393055&isBlock=1>, 9th August, 2010).

⁴⁶ "Sannfinländarna går förbi sfp". In: *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 17th March 2008.

as well as coalition partners.⁴⁷ It is too early to tell whether these ambitions will be realised in 2011, but this cannot be ruled out. Reasons include a) there is a historical precedent in that the fact that the predecessor Rural Party was involved in government coalitions in the 1980s; b) Soini does not suffer from the same amount of stigmatisation as many leaders of comparable parties; c) the party could end up with so many seats in the election that it will be difficult to bypass.

In Sweden the fourth phase is further away than in Norway or Finland. The disappearance of *Ny Demokrati* left a void that remained unoccupied for many years, until it was filled by the Sweden Democrats (*Sverigedemokraterna*). Formed in 1988, the party actually antedates *Ny Demokrati*, but it was an irrelevant fringe party for many years until it started to make gains in the 2000s. The eventual breakthrough came in the 2010 with 5.7 per cent of the vote, and 20 seats in the *Riksdag*. The 2010 result also meant that party holds the balance of power between the four-party centre-right Alliance (consisting of the Moderate, Liberal, Centre and Christian Democratic parties), and the three-party opposition bloc (consisting of the Social Democrats, the Greens and the Left Party). The Alliance formed a majority government in 2006, and will continue in office after the 2010 election as the bigger of the two blocs, despite losing its outright majority. There was much discussion, before as well as after the election, about how the established parties should handle a situation where the Sweden Democrats hold the balance of power between the two main blocs. At the time of writing, shortly after the election, it is too early to predict exactly what will happen in the forthcoming parliamentary term. It is, however, very unlikely that any kind of systematic co-operation involving the Sweden Democrats will take place in the foreseeable future.

There are several reasons why the Sweden Democrats are further away from a position of legitimacy than its Danish, Finnish and Norwegian counterparts. The first is that the Sweden Democrats have a very burdensome history. Their origins can be traced back to a militant anti-immigration subculture, which included the *Bevara Sverige Svenskt* (Keep Sweden Swedish) network. The first “proper” leader of the Sweden Democrats, Anders Klarström, had previous involvement with the openly Nazi *Nordiska Rikspartiet*, and the party’s first auditor Gustaf Ekström was a *Waffen-SS* veteran and had been

⁴⁷ “Soini tackar nej till SFP och De gröna.” In: *Hufvudstadsbladet*, 7th September 2010.

a member of the national socialist party *Svensk Socialistisk Samling* in the 1940s. During its first election campaign in 1988, a candidate for the Sweden Democrats was charged with a physical attack on a 14-year old immigrant. These are just a few examples.⁴⁸ As a party, the Sweden Democrats were never Nazi or fascist, and the party of today is drastically de-radicalised compared to the early years. Nevertheless, such origins and early history would be a heavy burden to carry for any party in search of legitimacy.

Another reason is that it takes time to build up the experience and competence required to get political results in a national parliament, and the Sweden Democrats are probably not yet ready for direct involvement in central political decision-making. When the Danish People's Party eventually were accepted as a co-operation partner, it was after a long learning process. Pia Kjærsgaard had been a parliamentarian for nearly 18 years before she was able to have a concrete political impact. The Sweden Democrats have built up some experience from local and regional councils, but the step into the national parliament will be a big one for the party. It also remains to be seen whether the Sweden Democrats will be able to avoid selecting candidates who will become an embarrassment to the party. As we have seen, the "oddball factor" was one of the reasons for the demise of *Ny Demokrati*.

At least as importantly, there is not much to suggest that the established parties are ready for co-operation with the Sweden Democrats. Party leaders on the left as well as right have disowned the Sweden Democrats, and ruled out any kind of systematic co-operation on the local as well as central political level. Thus, the most likely scenario seems to be that it will take one or several four-year terms of the Sweden Democrats in parliament before the fourth phase reaches Sweden. It has already reached Denmark, and the next Nordic country to follow suit appears to be Norway.

From ostracism to acceptance

The main argument in this article is that a fourth phase in the development of extreme right parties can be added to the three phases proposed by von Beyme. The key charac-

⁴⁸ Larsson, Stieg and Mikael Ekman: *Sverigedemokraterna. Den nationella rörelsen*. Stockholm 2001, here: 117f; 125–128.

teristics of the fourth phase is increased legitimacy and political influence for the extreme right. The significance of this development can hardly be overstated. A group of parties, which until the late 1990s were seen as pariahs, are increasingly able to take part in the decision-making process. Arguments, perspectives and policies that used to be regarded as unacceptable are becoming an accepted part of the political culture.

This development, which is still only in its infancy, will have many potential consequences; two of which will be touched on here. A first consequence is that public policy is likely to be affected. As the Danish example shows, influence from an extreme right party will lead to stricter policies on immigration, asylum etc. There may also be consequences for European integration. Besides immigration, the extreme right parties will push other parts of their agenda, which contains EU scepticism as one of its key components. EU scepticism also has the strategic advantage that it is not an extremist position *per se*. It is not extremist to oppose introduction of the euro, or the adoption of new EU treaties. This puts the extreme right parties into a favourable negotiating position; they can demand concessions on EU-related issues, they can cite popular EU scepticism to support their demands – and they cannot easily be dismissed as extremist for doing so.

Additionally, it is also possible that the increased legitimacy for the extreme right parties will have consequences for the societal and political climate. As the development in Denmark suggests, a party with an immigration-critical agenda can, with persistence and strategic skill, make a significant impact on the political climate. It is difficult to back this up with systematic empirical data, but anecdotal evidence suggests that the debate about immigration is different in Denmark compared to, for example, neighbouring Sweden. Some statements used in the Danish debate, not only by *Dansk Folkeparti*, would cause an outrage in Sweden. Some would say that the Danish development is deplorable; others would no doubt argue that it has made the Danish political debate more open and free.

Leaving such normative discussions aside, the development in Denmark is indicative. Extreme right parties are no longer ostracised and irrelevant. They are increasingly accepted as “normal” political parties. From this position they will be able to exert considerable political influence, on concrete policy making as well as on the climate of political debate in general. Thus, the fourth phase will have implications well beyond the extreme right party family itself.