Meso-level Reasons for Racism and Xenophobia

Some Converging and Diverging Effects of Radical Right Populism in France and Sweden

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Abstract

Increases in popular xenophobia and racism in a society may (partly) have meso-level reasons. The presence of a xenophobic Radical Right Populist (RRP) party may cause increases in racism and xenophobia because (a) it has an influence on other political actors; and (b) because it has an influence on people's frame of thought. I will identify and discuss various mechanisms that will be put against two empirical cases, France and Sweden. Both have witnessed the emergence of RRP parties during the 1980s and 1990s, respectively. However, although they pursued similar xenophobic programmes and used similar anti-immigration frames, only the emergence of the Front National resulted in a dramatic increase in manifest, politicized xenophobia, whereas the emergence of New Democracy had no such effect. Some important factors behind these diverging effects will be elaborated and discussed in this article.

Key words

■ framing ■ racism ■ re-alignment ■ right-wing extremism ■ xenophobia

During the last decade and a half, Europe has witnessed the emergence of a new political party family, the Radical Right Populism of the Front National, FPÖ and many others. In 1999, the Radical Right Populist (RRP) parties were represented in the Parliament in Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Italy, Norway, and Switzerland, and were in addition substantially represented at a regional and local level in France and Germany (Betz, 2001: 407). Since then, as we all know, Austria and Italy have formed governments involving the Freedom Party and the Northern League, respectively. Hence, it is not an exaggeration to claim that the extreme right for the first time since the Second World War constitutes a

significant force in West European democracies (Betz, 2001: 407).[1] These parties can be treated as a party family because of the common doctrinal and rhetorical cores of ethno-nationalism (which implies an ardent xenophobia), authoritarian views on socio-cultural matters (e.g. law-and-order) and political and cultural populism (Rydgren, 2003).[2]

Many have argued that the presence of a widespread popular xenophobia is an important, though not the only, reason for the emergence of RRP parties (e.g., Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995). Few, however, have paid much attention to the dual character of this relationship, i.e., that the emergence of a RRP party may also be a reason for the reinforcement of xenophobia and racism in a society.[3]

The overall aim of this article is to show how an emerging RRP party under certain conditions may cause an increase in racism and xenophobia. More specifically, I will identify and discuss various *mechanisms* that link the event of an emerging RRP party (i.e., a change at the meso-level) to increases in the level of xenophobia (i.e., changes at the micro-level, which in turn might generate changes at the macro-level).[4]

This task is of importance for many reasons, two of which can be singled out. First, it may help us to reach a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics involved in changes in the level of popular xenophobia. Although the presence of a RRP party does not provide a full explanation of such changes, it stands out as an important aspect (which is commonly disregarded). Second, since most studies on xenophobia and racism focus either on macro- or micro-level factors, I believe that it is of a certain theoretical interest to elaborate how meso-level factors may influence racism and xenophobia.

The mechanisms to be discussed can be divided into two main categories: one dealing with how the emergence of a RRP party changes the structure of the political space, as well as influences other political actors; and the other dealing with the influence an emerging RRP party has on people's frame of thought.[5] The former category of mechanisms is of importance because it (a) may influence the way other political actors talk about immigrants (and other ethnic minorities), which in turn may influence people's frame of thought, and/or (b) because it sometimes results in an increasing legitimization of xenophobic and racist beliefs and attitudes. As a result of the legitimization effects, these kinds of beliefs may spread to groups of individuals who earlier refrained from xenophobic beliefs and attitudes because of the stigma associated with them. The latter category of mechanisms is of importance mainly because it provides a means of reducing negative emotions and affections (e.g., fear, frustration, anxiety, resentment). Nevertheless, I will argue that taken together, these mechanisms show how the already existing popular xenophobia may be lifted to a manifest level by the intrusion of a RRP party in the political space. Once at a manifest level, xenophobic ideas are more likely to spread, because manifest xenophobes are more inclined than latent xenophobes to try to persuade others.

However, in order to reach a deeper understanding of how this process works, i.e., when and why the emergence of a RRP party results in increases in xenophobia and when and why it does not, the identified mechanisms will be

discussed in the light of two concrete empirical cases, France and Sweden. As will be demonstrated below, there are important similarities as well as differences between France and Sweden in this context, which makes it meaningful to use them as comparative cases.

In France, the Front National emerged on the national scene in 1983–84, and captured between 10 and 15 percent of the votes in all elections between 1984 and 1997 (Mayer, 1999; Perrineau, 1997). Although the Front National split into two in 1999, Le Pen was supported by 16.9 percent of the voters in the first round of the 2002 presidential election. In Sweden, the xenophobic, populist party New Democracy emerged in 1991, when it received 6.7 percent of the votes and won representation in the Swedish Parliament (Gilljam and Holmberg, 1993). However, the party declined rapidly after Ian Wachtmeister in 1994 resigned from his position as a party leader. In the 1994 election, New Democracy obtained only 1.2 percent of the votes, and has practically disappeared since then. Since 1994, Swedish RRP parties have only obtained marginal voting results in national elections, although the Sweden Democrats in the 2002 elections succeeded in sending almost 50 deputies to local councils (Rydgren, 2002).

Nevertheless, although we can observe a high level of popular endorsement of xenophobic attitudes in both France and Sweden, as well as in other West European democracies (EUMC, 2001),[6] there are important differences between the two countries concerning the level of manifestation and politicization of xenophobic attitudes. To take the political salience of the immigration issue as an indicator, we see that between 1988 and 1997, 22 to 31 percent of the French voters declared that the immigration issue was of prime importance in their decision how to vote (Perrineau, 1997: 178; Schain, 2001: 292). In Sweden, in the elections between 1985 and 1998, only 1 to 8 percent of the voters perceived the immigration issue to be of prime importance in their choice of party (Holmberg, 2000: 114). Moreover, which is particularly important in this context, the electoral breakthrough of the Front National seems to have had a profound effect on the subsequent salience of the immigration issue. The immigration issue was of relatively low interest for the French voters at the time of the electoral breakthrough of the Front National, but of very high importance only four years later. In 1984, only 6 percent of the French voters declared that the immigration issue had a major impact on their decision how to vote, in 1988 it was 22 percent and in 1993 it was 31 percent (Schain, 2001: 292). In Sweden, on the other hand, the emergence of New Democracy in 1991 had no such effect. Although the proportion of the voters who declared that the immigration issue was of importance for their choice of party increased from 2 percent in 1988 to 8 percent in 1991, it fell back to 5 percent in 1994 and 3 percent in 1998 (Holmberg, 2000).

The remainder of this article will proceed in the following way: First, in order to clarify and to avoid unnecessary semantic misunderstandings, I will start with a short account of how to define 'racism' and 'xenophobia'. Second, I will briefly present a way to explain the emergence of, and electoral support for, RRP parties in Western Europe. Third, I will discuss mechanisms that are grouped together

because they may have an influence on people's frame of thought. Fourth, I will continue with a discussion of mechanisms that influence other political actors. The latter discussions will continuously be put against the French and Swedish case, and factors that may explain the divergent effects of the Front National and New Democracy on the level of manifest, politicized xenophobia will be elaborated.

Racism and Xenophobia

'Racism' is traditionally understood as an ideology that claims the fundamental inequality and hierarchical order of different biologically defined races. However, after the Second World War, and the experience of German Nazism, this traditional racism has lost much of its power in Western Europe. Yet, in the post-war era a new type of racism has emerged (Barker, 1981; Miles, 1989; 1993; Wieviorka, 1998). This new form of racism, which Taguieff (1988) calls *racisme différencialiste* and Wieviorka (1998) calls *racisme culturelle,* is not based on biology and hierarchies but on culture and difference. In other words, this new racism does not argue that some races are superior or inferior, but rather stresses the insurmountable difference between culturally defined *ethnies* (Wieviorka, 1998: 32).[7] According to the new cultural racism, a merging of different ethnic groups would lead to an abolition of the unique qualities that constitute the *ethnies*, which accordingly implies that different ethnic groups should be kept separated.

   This type of 'new' or 'cultural' racism comes close to the conception of 'xeno-phobia', that is, fear of individuals who are different or 'strange'. Like the new cultural racism, xenophobia also is characterized by a belief that it is 'natural' for people to live amongst other of 'their own kind', and a corresponding hostility towards the presence of people of a 'different' kind (Miles, 1993: 36). At this point, I find it appropriate to introduce the distinction between 'latent' and 'manifest' xenophobia. Latent xenophobia mainly consists of more or less unar-ticulated negatively prejudiced stereotypes and beliefs, which normally are 'taken for granted', while manifest xenophobia in addition consists of more elaborated beliefs and attitudes, which implies a higher level of consciousness. Finally, it could be argued that the new cultural racism, which the RRP parties embrace, is an 'ideologicalized' form of manifest xenophobia. This article deals mainly with how popular latent xenophobia under certain conditions may be lifted to a manifest or even ideological level by the intrusion of a RRP party into the political space.

Explaining the Emergence of Radical Right Populism

Let us first of all acknowledge the fact that xenophobia is not the only reason for the emergence of RRP parties (cf. Mudde, 1999), and nor is all xenophobia

caused by the presence of a RRP party. If that were the case, this would be a vicious circle, unable to know whether to start with the hen or the egg. I will rather argue that popular xenophobia exists prior to the emergence of the RRP parties, but that under certain conditions it may be lifted to a higher level of manifestation as a result of the intrusion of the RRP parties into the political space. In turn, this higher level of manifestation may cause popular xenophobia to spread to wider groups of people.

I will argue that the notions of *ethnic mobilization* and *mobilization of political protest* best can explain the emergence of the RRP parties (Rydgren, 2003). However, although the presence of xenophobic attitudes is a necessary condition for the emergence of RRP parties, I will argue that there are other, more important factors. A substantial popular xenophobia has always existed among the West European electorates, whereas the voters only act on their xenophobic attitudes under certain conditions. It is only when they perceive of the immigration issue or any other issue concerning ethnic minorities as politically more salient than other issues that xenophobic attitudes are likely to result in electoral support for the RRP parties.

In order to explain the emergence of RRP parties, we have to consider both opportunity structures, created by demand and supply-side factors alike, as well as the ability of the various RRP parties to take advantage of the available opportunities (cf. Diani, 1996 and Kitschelt, 1995 for a similar explanatory structure). There have been two changes in particular that have created opportunity structures for the RRP parties: (a) the partial re-alignment of cleavages, which has increased the importance of the socio-cultural cleavage dimension at the expense of the economic dimension; and (b) the growing discontent with political institutions, in particular the established political parties (Rydgren, 2003).

However, it can be argued that both these processes have similar causes, consisting of structural changes that have affected all West European democracies in similar ways. Of particular importance is the transformation from an industrial to a post-industrial economy, which has tended to affect the salience of the economic cleavage dimension in a negative way, and the political internationalization and globalization that have reduced the political autonomy of the nation–state, and in this way contributed to the decline in confidence in (national) political institutions. The transition from an industrial towards a post-industrial economy has affected groups of individuals differently dependent on their position within the social space. While some have won, others have lost, which has resulted in feelings of absolute and relative deprivation. Of no less importance in this context is the fact that this transformation process has changed the structure of social comparison. Individuals with low amount of cultural capital have increasingly found themselves in a situation of social decline and status deprivation, which have made them susceptible to political entrepreneurs promoting a return to the status quo ante and who are stressing themes of ethno-national identity (cf. Lipset and Raab, 1970: 23–4). Similarly, because of the feelings of anxiety, frustration, and resentment resulting from poverty and unemployment, people finding themselves in situations of absolute deprivation have

become increasingly susceptible to be attracted by political actors using xeno-phobic themes of welfare chauvinism, i.e., to put the blame of unemployment and financial problems of the welfare state on immigrants (Rydgren, 2003; cf. Betz, 1994; Kitschelt, 1995; Kriesi, 1999).

Hence, although left-wing extremists traditionally have capitalized on the 'never-hads' while right-wing extremists have been able to attract the support of the 'once-hads' (Lipset and Raab, 1970: 23–4), the RRP parties have been able to draw support from both categories. Initially, most RRP parties were supported mainly by the 'once-hads', i.e., by middle-class groups affected by the structural changes. This is also today reflected by the fact that voters with an intermediary level of education are the ones most likely to vote for the RRP parties (Betz, 2001: 416). Whereas the low educated know that they cannot aspire to 'good' jobs, those with an intermediary level of education have recently been affected by the 'grade inflation' caused by the 'knowledge society' (i.e., their degree is not worth as much as it was ten or fifteen years ago). However, during the 1990s the RRP parties have been increasingly successful in attracting blue-collar workers and unemployed, and have in many countries become the biggest or second biggest 'working-class party' (e.g., Mayer, 1999; Minkenberg, 2001; Rydgren, 2003).

Together with the fact that the salience of the socio-cultural cleavage dimen-sion has increased at the expense of the salience of the economic cleavage dimen-sion (e.g., Betz, 1994; Inglehart, 1997; Kitschelt, 1995; Perrineau, 1997), this transformation process has created a situation favourable to ethnic mobilization.

Hence, on the demand side, macro-changes resulted in a changed distribution of the voters' attitudes and preferences in the political space. Yet, the parties are not as flexible as the voters; to shift position is a process that takes some time for a political party, because of constraints such as ideological commitment and identification, democratic but 'inefficient' party organization, etc. Normally, there exists a considerable time lag between the voters' and the parties' move-ments within the political space. Consequently, a rapid change in the voter distri-bution creates a gap between the political demand side and its supply side. If a political party can position itself in this gap, or niche, it may have a good chance of capturing votes, at least if the amount of party identified voters have decreased below a certain level. In fact, niches in the electoral arena will be considered one of the most important 'opportunity structures' (McAdam, 1996), which facili-tate the emergence of RRP parties, and I will argue that ethno-nationalism and xenophobia, which both belong to the socio-cultural cleavage dimension, have been the two most important niches for the emergence of the RRP parties. However, of equal importance has also been a 'negative' factor. The political transformation process has resulted in a growing discontent with political insti-tutions and politicians, as well as in a decrease in party-identified voters (Putnam et al., 2000). This situation has facilitated the emergence of the RRP parties by freeing resources and opening up niches on the electoral arena, which has made it possible for some RRP parties to take advantage of the opportunities for ethnic mobilization. In addition, this situation has made it possible for the RRP parties to foment popular discontent and mobilize political protest.

However, neither an extensive xenophobia nor political discontent by themselves can explain the electoral successes of the RRP parties. In fact, these factors are equally present in countries in which no successful RRP party has emerged (EUMC, 2001; Holmberg, 1997: 338). Hence, we also have to look at supply factors, i.e., the RRP parties' ability to use mobilizing strategies in a successful way. Among the most important mobilizing strategies for the RRP parties is their ability to put forward a populist programme (Diani, 1996) or populist 'appeal' (Fryklund and Peterson, 1981), which may attract discontented voters, or even foment the sentiments of conflicting interests between the 'establishment' and the 'ordinary people' (for the concept and ideology of populism, see Canovan, 1981; Ionescu and Gellner, 1969; Rydgren, 2003; Taggart, 2000). Put differently, the RRP parties' have to use the 'anti-political-establishment strategy' (Schedler, 1996) in a sufficiently successful way. Another crucial mobilizing strategy is to politicize and/or frame the immigration issue in a favourable way, as well as to ensure that it stays on the political agenda. Both these strategies will be further discussed below.

However, not all RRP parties have managed to use these and others mobilizing strategies in a successful way. I will argue that the following factors facilitate a successful mobilization. First, a RRP party needs some essential resources, although these can be relatively small at an initial stage, as well as sufficient organizational order and party discipline. Second, it needs sufficient strategic skill. Third, it needs to be sufficiently free from the burden of an ideological baggage deriving from its party history (i.e., by ideological commitments that are at odds with its strategic interests). Fourth, which is perhaps the most important point in this context, it needs to be sufficiently detached (in the eyes of the voters) from anti-democratic political currents. Since an overwhelming majority of the West European voters are in favour of democracy,[8] and view anti-democratic and non-democratic parties and movements as illegitimate, the opportunities to win votes are more or less closed for parties that are perceived as anti-democratic. Hence, it is of utmost importance to present the party as democratic, or, which indeed is the most common way for RRP parties, as representatives of the 'true democracy', rather than opponents of democracy *per se*. As long as the voters associate a RRP party with anti-democratic currents like fascism and Nazism, it has, under contemporary Western conditions, no chance of breaking out of its marginalized existence. However, if a RRP party succeeds in detaching itself, in the eyes of the voters, from such anti-democratic currents, it has the potential to attract voters outside the small, marginalized groups of voters who are prepared to support straightforward anti-democratic parties.

Moreover, we should bear in mind that it is not only the RRP parties that determine the possibilities of successful mobilization. Also historical conditions (e.g., the complexity of the cleavage situation, the heresy of right-wing extremism, etc.), as well as the action of other political actors determine their chances for successful mobilization. The immigration issue may be politicized by established parties, who may also legitimize the RRP parties by adopting similar policy proposals and rhetorical styles, and/or by cooperating with RRP parties in political assemblies at different levels.

Hence, *xenophobia* and *racism* are only partial reasons for the emergence of the RRP parties, but still very important, not least because they provide the RRP parties with one of their most effective rhetorical means, that is, to find a scapegoat whom to ascribe all social problems and ills.

RRP Parties Have an Influence on People's Frame of Thought

The presence of a RRP party of significant size may influence people's frame of thought. This fact is well known within the social movement theory, where these kinds of processes are discussed in terms of 'framing' and 'frame struggle'.[9] For Goffman (1986), frames are those basic elements that organize people's experience and govern their 'definition of a situation'. Hence, frames or frameworks are for Goffman equivalent to schemata and other schemes of interpretation (1986: 10–21). In this way, what Goffman calls frames and what cognitive social psychology calls cognitive schemas (e.g., Augoustinos and Walker, 1998; Fiske and Taylor, 1991; Nisbett and Ross, 1980) are pretty much the same thing, denoting the importance of socially mediated *a priori* forms for our perception and understanding of the surrounding world (cf. Boudon, 1994: 27, 60).

Nevertheless, it could be argued that the ideology and propaganda of xenophobic parties or movements offer a frame in which people's more or less unarticulated stock of xenophobic beliefs can be articulated in a more comprehensive way. Hence, in a way similar to Bourdieu's (1984) argument on political taste, people's beliefs and attitudes are not always throughout articulated until they are confronted with the 'already-made-explicit' line of thought presented by the political supply side. Put differently, the 'ethos of popular xenophobia' may not find its form until an articulated and (sufficiently) comprehensive programme of ideas (but also slogans etc.) is offered by the supply side of the social/political production of opinion (pp. 459–60). In this perspective, the articulation of the demand side is never prior to the offered alternatives of opinion. Yet, at the same time, the ideology and propaganda offered by the supply side have to be sufficiently attuned to people's preconceptions of reality if they are not to fall flat (cf. Merton, 1968: 572–3). Differently stated, in order to be successful, offered frames have to be sufficiently culturally resonant (cf. Benford and Snow, 2000). Nevertheless, with the emergence of the RRP parties, and the attention they attract, a new alternative frame of thought is offered, which may help people to articulate their previously more or less unarticulated stock of xenophobic beliefs and attitudes, especially if the frame offered is in line with their psychological wants (Merton, 1968: 572–3). This, I will argue, may lift the latent popular xenophobia to a manifest level. More specifically, there are three partly overlapping reasons why people, consciously or not, may find politicized xenophobia an attractive frame of thought.

First, to start with the most general reason, the cultural racist ideology of the RRP parties may offer a theory of guidance in black-box situations, i.e., a way to

make the complex social and political reality meaningful (cf. Boudon, 1994; Tversky and Kahneman, 1982: 117). In this way, it may provide a means of reducing fear and anxiety. This is most likely to attract people who have little knowledge of society and politics and/or who have low trust and confidence in political institutions (most notably, political parties) and established information sources (cf. Rydgren, 2000a; 2000b). For these people the level of uncertainty is higher, at least in this context. There are also reasons to assume that the need for such a theory of guidance is most acute in periods of rapid social change (e.g., post-industrialization), when established traditions, ideologies, and identities are dissolving (cf. Betz, 1994). Moreover, to connect this mechanism to the next section of this article, there are also reasons to assume that more people will adopt a cultural racist ideology as a theory of guidance, if it is sufficiently legitimized.

Second, which will be further discussed below, the xenophobic political ideology of the RRP parties has a powerful tool in its ability to reframe unsolved political problems. In fact, it claims to offer a 'cardinal solution' to any conceivable social problem or ill. As Winock (1998) argues, in the case of the Front National, for the RRP parties 'everything comes from immigration, everything goes back to immigration' (e.g., unemployment, personal insecurity, the financial problems of the welfare state, AIDS, etc.). These unsolved political problems, representing issues that affect people in a very direct and fundamental way, lead to negative emotions in two ways. They are not only a reason for frustration for people who are subjected to these problems, and to worry and anxiety for those who are not affected; they may also lead to distrust in and dissatisfaction with political institutions because of the perceived inability of these institutions to cope with these essential problems. The cultural racist ideology of the RRP parties may offer a way to reduce – or at least channel – these kinds of negative emotions. In the case of feelings of growing personal insecurity (whether caused by crime or diseases), it may provide a means of reducing the diffuse fear and anxiety arising from not knowing what or who to fear. Since a belief that immigrants are criminal, for instance, may result in a reduced level of self-perceived uncertainty (i.e., 'you know who you should look out for'), it may have positive effects for individuals living under this kind of stress. In the case of negative emotions resulting from unemployment, it may reduce the frustrating feeling that you yourself (or your relatives, friends, etc.) lack the qualifications needed to find a job (i.e., 'it is the immigrants' fault, not ours').

The third mechanism may be found in this latter kind of psychological factors. Hence, the cultural racist ideology of the RRP parties may also offer a way to reduce the level of personal frustration, e.g., by offering themes of *ressentiment*, a theme particularly likely to attract people who feel impotent (i.e., unable to satisfy their wants), who are excluded from society, and/or whose discrepancy between ambition and reality has become acute (i.e., people in situations of absolute or relative deprivation). Themes of *ressentiment* have in common that they aim at a re-evaluation, i.e., at a negation of the established value order (Scheler, 1998: 49). If ethno-nationality, for instance, were valued higher than social class and/or education, this would have positive effects for people of the

lower classes with low education. Similarly, those who do not possess flexibility, knowledge in languages, computer skills, etc., which are depicted as important values and qualities in the post-industrial society, may be attracted by an ideological programme that stresses the supreme values of tradition, authority, and not least, of ethno-national belonging.[10]

Considering France and Sweden, we may find important similarities as well as differences in these respects. Both France and Sweden have been affected by structural transformation processes during the 1980s and 1990s. However, the levels of unemployment and economic inequality have consistently been higher in France than in Sweden. In France, the unemployment rate increased from 8.7 percent in 1982 to 9.9 percent in 1984, and has since then been below 10 percent only in 1990 and 1991 (Eurostat, 1986: 44; 1988: 42; 1990: 46; 1994: 44; 1996; 57; 2000: 57). In Sweden, the unemployment rate was kept on a low level during the 1970s and 1980s. For the period between 1975 and 1991, the unemployment rate exceeded 3 percent only in 1982–84. However, this situation changed in the early 1990s. The unemployment rate increased from 1.7 percent in 1990 to 2.9 percent in 1991, 5.3 percent in 1992, and 9.9 percent in 1993. After that, the Swedish unemployment rate did not drop below 9 percent until 1998 (Eurostat, 1996; 57; 2000; 57; SCB, 1985: 200; 1995; 190). Similarly, by taking the discrepancy in wage income between the lowest decile and the median as an indicator of economic inequality (e.g. Esping-Andersen, 1999), we find that the French level of economic equality is lower than the Swedish. In France, between 1973 and 1991 the lowest decile earned between 62 and 66 percent of the median income. In Sweden, the figures varied between 74 and 77 percent during the same period (OECD, 1993: 159–60).

Hence, there are some indications that the level of social and economic stress might have been higher in France than in Sweden, which might help explain the divergent effects of the emergence of RRP parties on the level of manifest, politicized xenophobia. However, although Sweden went through a severe economic crisis during the mid 1990s, the emergence of New Democracy did not cause an increase in manifest, politicized xenophobia. Rather, in Sweden the economic crisis, and the high unemployment rates that followed, led to a left mobilization, i.e., to increased leftward sentiments in the economic cleavage dimension rather than to authoritarian and xenophobic sentiments in the socio-cultural cleavage dimension (cf. Rydgren, 2002).

Hence, I will argue that the differences in stress caused by unemployment and economic inequality only play a minor role in this context (especially when considering the depth of the economic crisis in Sweden during the early and mid-1990s), while diverging effects of the group of mechanisms discussed below will be more important.

RRP Parties Have an Influence on Other Political Actors

We will now turn to a discussion on mechanisms that are grouped together because they have to do with the RRP parties' influence on other political actors; an influence that may have certain effects on the level of manifest xenophobia in a society. More specifically, I will, in accordance with Bourdieu (2000), argue that the supply side of the political space (which Bourdieu calls the political *field*) is characterized by the symbolic struggle over the legitimate principles of division, and ultimately over the power of categorization (and, hence, over how to perceive and apprehend the socio-political reality). The entry of a new political actor into this field may have consequences on the dynamics of the field (Bourdieu, 2000).

First, the entry of a RRP party may increase the salience of the already existing socio-cultural cleavage dimension. If this dimension is gaining in importance, it will be more important for the other political actors to talk about politics in terms of categories and division lines belonging to the socio-cultural dimension. More specifically, I will argue that there are always several cleavage dimensions existing simultaneously (cf. Hout et al., 1996; Przeworski and Sprague, 1986), most of them ultimately based on social identity or interests. Contemporary West European democracies are characterized by two major cleavage dimensions: the economic cleavage dimension, which puts workers against capital, and which concerns the degree of state involvement in the economy; and the socio-cultural cleavage dimension, concerning issues such as immigration, law and order, abortion, etc. Together, these two cleavage dimensions constitute the basic contours of the political space; and as Converse (1966) observes, two dimensions represented in a Cartesian space can always be perceived in three different shapes: (1) one where the x and y axes are equal, (2) one where the x axes is seen as more important, and (3) one where the y axes is seen as more important.

Hence, at a voter level, it is not uncommon that people at the same time endorse the attitudes that 'I am a worker, and I do not like capitalists' and 'I am French (or Swedish, etc.), and I do not like immigrants.' However, the *salience* of these cleavage dimensions are historically contingent. Although xenophobia has existed at an attitudinal level all through the twentieth century, the economic cleavage dimension has structured most of the political behaviour since the Second World War. Yet, by being mainly concerned with the socio-cultural cleavage dimension (most notably the division between ethnically French, or Swedish, etc., on the one hand, and immigrants and other ethnic minorities, on the other), the entry of a RRP party into the political space has challenged this major cleavage dimension.[11] Hence, partly as a result of the emergence of the RRP parties the salience of the economic cleavage dimension has decreased, which means that many who previously defined themselves (as well as their adversaries) in terms of economic position, now instead define themselves and their adversaries in terms of ethnicity and nationality.

However, there are important differences between the West European countries in respect of the de-alignment or re-alignment processes. Most important, the cleavage structures may be of different degrees of complexity. While Sweden

has a relatively simple cleavage structure, dominated by the economic dimension, France has a much more complicated one. In France, other cleavage dimensions (e.g., religious, ethnic, regional) have for a long time cut through economic class bonds and loyalties, which has made the impact of social class on political behaviour lower (Lipset, in Mair et al., 1999: 313). It can be argued that stronger bonds of class loyalties may evolve in countries that have been dominated only by the economic cleavage dimension, such as Sweden, which delays the re-alignment process. This would be a partial explanation for the observed difference between the effects of RRP parties in France and Sweden on the political salience of anti-immigration issues. However, we should here also acknowledge the fact that the Front National is a much 'purer' RRP party than New Democracy, which as much focused on economic (tax) populism as on xenophobia and socio-cultural authoritarianism (Taggart, 1996; Westlind, 1996; Widfeldt, 2000). Hence, contrary to France no pure RRP party has entered the Swedish political system at a national level (the Sweden Democrats is a pure RRP party, but still marginalized), which indicates that the economic cleavage dimension has not been as forcefully challenged in Sweden as in France.

Second, an emerging RRP party may politicize the immigration issue, i.e., 'translate' the social phenomenon of immigration into political terms. In order to deem an issue politicized in the full sense of the term, this translation process should embrace the level of political actors as well as the level of the voters, i.e., both voters and political actors should talk about immigration in political terms (Campbell et al., 1960: 29–32). A politicization of the immigration issue permits people to think and talk of immigration as being *caused by* political processes, as well as being the *reason for* other political and social phenomenon. As I will show below, especially the latter may have an impact on the level of racism and xenophobia in a society.

In France, the immigration issue was not politicized by the Front National. Although the Front National promoted the issue in the 1970s, and had incorporated anti-immigration themes at its ideological core, the party was far too small and marginalized to be able to politicize the issue. In addition, although intellectuals of the *Nouveau Droit* (in particular Alain de Benoist) formulated a xenophobic ideology of the 'right to be different' during the 1970s, they were not in a position by themselves to politicize the immigration issue. Instead, it was the French Communist Party that politicized the immigration issue. On Christmas Eve 1980, a group a PCF sympathizers, led by the elected Communist Mayor of Vitry, used a bulldozer to destroy the power supplies and staircases of a hostel used by immigrant workers. This brutal action was later backed up by the PCF's national leadership, when George Marchais wrote that he approved of the Vitry Mayor's 'refusal to allow the already high number of immigrant workers in his commune to increase', as well as linking immigration to the housing crisis, the cost of social services, schooling problems, etc. (Marcus, 1995: 77–8). As Schain (1988: 606) has argued, this was the first time in the post-war era that an established French party had defined the immigration issue in terms of a source of social and economic problems. In fact, it could be argued that this event to a

great extent formulated and established the general diagnostic frame, which could be drawn upon and further developed by the Front National. In Sweden, on the other hand, the immigration issue was more or less put on the national political agenda by the emergence of New Democracy in 1991, although a local dissident from the Centre Party drew the attention of the national media to it some years earlier.[12]

However, if the immigration issue is already politicized, as it was in France, the presence of a RRP party of significant seize may increase its salience and keep it on the agenda. This is partly due to the RRP party's own propaganda, but, more important, also to the fact that it catches the media's attention. This latter is partly caused by the fact that the presence of a RRP party tends to lead to the mobilization of counter-movements, which in turn results in a situation of increased polarization. As we have seen, here the divergence between the French and Swedish case seems to be the greatest. While the emergence of the Front National increased the salience of the immigration issue and made it stay in a central position on the political agenda for two decades, the emergence of the New Democracy had no such effects.

Third, by being considered a relevant political actor (by, at least, significantly large groups of the electorate), the RRP parties are entitled to take part in the frame struggle over how to define social and political issues. They have occasionally been successful in these frame struggles, which is indicated, for instance, by the way many established political actors, in several West European democracies, have accepted the general diagnostic frame that immigration and immigrants (or other ethnic minority groups) are problems. Accordingly, the debate has occasionally been more about the prognostic frame, i.e., how the problem should be solved (on the notions of 'diagnostic' and 'prognostic' frames, cf. McCarthy et al., 1996; Snow and Benford, 1988). However, this is not to say that the established political actors and the RRP parties have framed immigrants as problems in exactly the same way. Established political parties have, like the RRP parties, occasionally framed immigrants as problems in terms of competition for scarce resources (most typically, for state subsidies, public housing, etc.). Moreover, other political actors (e.g., the media) have, like the RRP parties, implied a connection between immigrants and criminality and other forms of social unrest. Still, they have usually not expressed the same concern for the preservation of national identity. Nevertheless, I will more specifically argue that the RRP parties have framed immigrants as problems in four different ways: (1) As a threat to the ethno-national identity, i.e., the immigrants' 'otherness' combined with their sheer numbers threaten to undermine the 'truly French', the 'truly Swedish', etc. (2) As a reason for unemployment (e.g., 'they are taking our jobs'). (3) As a major cause of crime and other kinds of social insecurity (e.g., 'they are criminal and violent; they steal, fight, sell drugs and rape women'). (4) As abusers of the generosity of the welfare states of Western democracies, which results in lesser state subsidies etc. for 'ourselves', i.e., for 'us' belonging to the 'right' ethno-nationality (e.g., 'they are only living on state subsidies'; 'they do not work, and can nonetheless afford fancy cars, etc.').[13] As we easily can see, all these variants

of anti-immigration frames fall within the categories of injustice frames (Gamson, 1992) and adversarial frames (Gamson, 1995).

In looking more in detail at how RRP parties in France and Sweden have framed the immigration issue, I will argue that frames have been constructed in three different but overlapping ways. The first process is usually described as *frame amplification*, the second as *counter-framing*, and the third as *frame transformation* (e.g., Benford and Snow, 2000). Most anti-immigration frames employed by RRP parties in France and Sweden draw upon and try to amplify already existing 'knowledge' and beliefs. Le Pen draws on familiar myths and representations when taking about immigration. In one often quoted example, he uses the metaphor of the family: 'I like my daughters better than my nieces, my nieces better than my cousins, my cousins better than my neighbours. It is the same thing in politics; I like the French better' (Le Pen, speech 13 May 1984, quoted in Souchard et al., 1997: 23, my translation). In another, he uses the strongly emotive image of wartime invasion, of which many voters still have personal memories: 'It is the existence of the French people that is at stake. It was not necessary to mobilize France against Germany in 1914 and 1940 if we today are going to tolerate an invasion – this time peaceful – of our national territory' (quoted in Davies, 1999: 156). Further, the RRP parties often build up their political rhetoric by starting off from actual observations of existing distinguishing cultural traits, such as the wearing of 'headscarves', and build up a phantasmagoria of what might happen in the future. This is exemplified by the following quotation from Le Pen: 'The Muslim immigrants want to impose their customs on us: the mosques and the "headscarves" and veils today, polygamy and the law of the Koran governing marriage and civil life tomorrow' (Le Pen in *Présent*, 28 October 1989; quoted in Duraffour and Guittonneau, 1991: 201, my translation). This frame is echoed by Vivianne Franzén of New Democracy, who in 1993 expressed her fear that Swedish school children in the near future would be forced to convert to Islam (Granath, 1993). In fact, the RRP parties boast of the fact that their anti-immigration frames often are based on popular beliefs. This can be seen as a way of reducing the stigma associated with their political programmes. According to Le Pen, for instance, he only says 'out loud what people are thinking inside – that uncontrolled immigration leads to disorder and insecurity' (*Le Monde*, 9 March 1983, quoted in Marcus, 1995: 54).

However, many anti-immigration frames are also constructed by means of counter-framing and even frame transformations. By using concepts originally employed by proponents for a multicultural society, such as 'the right to be different' and 'cultural enrichment', in another context, RRP parties may change the original understanding of these concepts and in fact generate new ones. The right to be different was originally stressed by political actors fighting against assimilation policies, and who wanted to assure immigrant groups and other ethnic minorities a right to maintain cultural traditions and ethnic characteristics in their country of settlement. In the usage of the RRP parties, the ethnic identity of the 'original' population is threatened by immigration, and the only way to maintain ethnic and cultural differences is to keep ethnic groups separated (which

implies a total stop of further immigration and a repatriation of immigrants already living in the country). Further, the Sweden Democrats consistently use the term 'cultural enricher' for immigrants who have committed crimes. A third example can be found in the use of the concept of anti-French racism, which is commonly used by the Front National. More specifically, the Front National denies being racist, but on the contrary claims that the only existing racism is directed against the 'original' French citizens: 'The French is the last in the . . . queue to the HLM [i.e., public housing]. Yes, racism exists: the anti-French racism in our country' (Le Pen, speech 23 March 1984; quoted in Duraffour and Guittonneau, 1991: 218, my translation).

Finally, we now turn to mechanisms that not only involve the supply side of the political space: an emerging RRP party may 'force' the established political parties to adjust their position in the political space in a more xenophobic direction. Since one or several of the already established parties within each party system have lost parts of their electorate as a result of the emergence of the RRP parties, they have, in the logic of spatial theory, an incitement to adjust their position in the political space (cf. Downs, 1957; Sjöblom, 1968). One way of doing this is by approaching, or even 'pinching', policy propositions from the newly emerged RRP party, especially one or several of the core issues (i.e., anti-immigration and law and order). By aiming at the core issues, they hope to capture dissident issue-voters as well as those who based their vote on a RRP party on its party image (cf. Sartori, 1976). This phenomenon, which can be observed in several West European countries, legitimizes xenophobic beliefs and attitudes by making the line between established democracy and political extremism blurred and fuzzy. As a consequence, xenophobic beliefs and attitudes may spread to wider groups of people within a society; groups that earlier refrained from these attitudes, at least in their more manifest and elaborated forms, because of the stigma associated with them. Of course, this legitimization effect will be stronger in cases where established parties are in a position to legislate on, and implement, policy propositions influenced by, or stolen from, the RRP parties.

Also here, we find important similarities as well as differences between France and Sweden. Established parties in both France and Sweden have tried to adopt or at least accommodate policy proposals from the Front National and New Democracy, respectively. In France, during the government led by Chirac between 1986 and 1988, Minister of the Interior Charles Pasqua implemented policies that made it easier to deport illegal immigrants, as well as giving the police greater authority to question suspected illegal immigrants. Moreover, the government proposed changes in the French National Code, which for instance involved a change from *jus soli* to *jus sanguinis*, which was one of the Front National's pet issues (Marcus, 1995: 82; Simmons, 1996: 90–1). This proposal fell flat because of the huge opposition it met, but was implemented in modified form by Balladur's 1993–95 government (cf. Hargreaves, 1995: 165–176).[14] Although Jospin's government reinstated the National Code after 1995, these events made the immigration issue stay a highly salient issue in France. In Sweden, the immigration laws and regulations were made stricter in 1993 and

1996. In 1993 the non-socialist government imposed visa restrictions on Bosnian citizens. In 1996, the Social Democratic government approved a government proposal, which implied a tightening of the immigration policy: the concept of 'de facto refugees' was abolished and certain grounds for asylum, including refusal to serve in military forces, were removed (Widfeldt, 2001). Although it is difficult to prove that the Chirac-led government in France or the Social Democratic government in Sweden were responding mainly to the recent emergence and electoral success of the Front National and New Democracy respectively, the fact remains that these initiatives followed immediately after, as well as involved several aspects that the Front National and New Democracies had stressed in public.

However, the established parties in Sweden have been better at upholding a *cordon sanitaire around their public statements* than their French counterparts. We cannot find any leading representatives of the Swedish established parties who have adopted a xenophobic rhetoric. In France, on the other hand, in particular immediately after the electoral breakthrough of the Front National in 1983–84, the established right parties tried to win back voters by using similar xenophobic anti-immigration frames as the Front National. In October 1984, for instance, Chirac remarked that, 'if there were fewer immigrants, there would be less unemployment, less tension in certain towns, and a lower social costs' (Marcus, 1995: 136). In 1991, after polls had shown increasing support for the Front National, Chirac tried to attract voters by a story about

> . . . the worker who lives in Goutte d'Or together with his wife, who also is working. Together they earn about 15 000 francs per month. In the same HLM landing they have a family consisting of the father, three or four wives, and some twenty kids, who lift 50 000 francs per month in social allowances, of course without working. To this you could add the noise and the smell, and the French worker on the same landing goes crazy. (quoted in Perrineau, 1997: 71, my translation)

Similarly, in September 1991 Valéry Giscard d'Estaing talked about 'the invasion of immigrants' (Mayer, 1999: 254), which, as we have seen, corresponds to a frame used by the Front National. Hence, also here we find important differences between the French and the Swedish case, which helps explain the divergent effect of the emerging RRP parties on the level of manifest, politicized xenophobia. In France, the mainstream right parties did little to keep the xenophobic rhetoric down, but rather contributed to its legitimization.

Conclusion

To sum up, I have argued that increases in popular xenophobia and racism in a society may (partly) have meso-level causes. More specifically, the presence of a xenophobic RRP party may cause an increase in racism and xenophobia because (1) it has an influence on people's frame of thought; and (2) because it has an influence on other political actors.

In the first case, I have argued that the emergence of a RRP party, because it presents a new alternative political ideology, or 'line of thought', offers a frame in which people's more or less unarticulated stock of xenophobic beliefs and attitudes can be articulated in a more comprehensive way. The xenophobic, ethnonationalist ideology of the RRP parties may also offer a 'schema of perception' or a 'theory of guidance', which reduces the feeling of uncertainty, as well as other negative emotions (such as fear, anxiety, and resentment). Hence, in this way the emergence of a RRP party may lift the latent popular xenophobia to a manifest level. Once at a manifest level, the popular xenophobia is more likely to diffuse, because manifest xenophobes (which have gained in number) are more likely than latent xenophobes to propagate and to try to persuade others.

I have in the second case showed how the emergence of a RRP party may cause an increase in the level of racism and xenophobia in a society, because it (1) may increase the salience of the socio-cultural dimension at the expense of the economic cleavage dimension (which makes people more inclined to define themselves, and others, as well as important political problems, in terms of ethnicity and nationality, rather than in terms of social class); (2) may be successful in the frame struggle over how to define the immigration issue (i.e., it may impose its diagnostic frame that immigrants are 'problems' on other political actors, and, as a result, on people in general); and (3) because it may 'force' the established parties to adjust their position in the political space in a more xenophobic direction, which leads to a legitimization of xenophobic beliefs and attitudes. This in turn may make them spread to wider groups of people within a society – groups who previously refrained from these attitudes, at least in their more elaborated form, because of the stigma associated with them.

By discussing these mechanisms in the light of two empirical cases, France and Sweden, I have identified some important factors that influence whether or not the emergence of a RRP party will result in increases in manifest, politicized xenophobia. Although RRP parties have emerged in both France (in the 1980s) and in Sweden (in the 1990s), which both have pursued similar xenophobic programmes and employed similar anti-immigration frames, the emergence of the Front National resulted in a dramatic increase in manifest, politicized xenophobia, whereas no such effect can be observed in Sweden.

In the first case, I have shown that the level of social and economic stress probably was higher in France than in Sweden. However, more important was the fact that the economic crisis and high unemployment in Sweden during the mid-1990s led to a mobilization of leftward sentiments in the economic cleavage dimension rather than to a mobilization of xenophobia and nationalism in the socio-cultural cleavage dimension, as it did in France.

Consistent with this finding, I have in the second case shown that the Swedish cleavage structure is – and has during most of the twentieth century been – much simpler than the cleavage structure in France. In Sweden, the economic cleavage dimension has traditionally been dominant, which delays the re-alignment processes. I have also shown that there are important differences between France and Sweden concerning the *cordon sanitaire* on public statements. Although

established parties in both France and Sweden have appropriated and accommodated anti-immigration policies originally propelled by the RRP parties, the established parties in Sweden have been better at upholding a *cordon sanitaire* on public statements than their French counterparts. In France, the established right parties have repeatedly appropriated the Front National's xenophobic rhetoric and used the same or similar anti-immigration frames, which we may expect have had a strong legitimizing effect.

However, there is one additional factor, which has not been discussed above, that may explain a part of the diverging effects of RRP parties on manifest, politicized xenophobia in France and Sweden. It is always of strategic interest for political parties and social movements to link their pet issues to other issues of high and enduring political salience. By doing that, they may extend the mobilization cycle. In the 1990s, the issue of the European Union has been of high salience and has played a major mobilizing role within most West European democracies. The Front National, like most RRP parties, did switch position on the issue of the European Union: from a more neutral or even pro-EU position during the 1980s to an ardent anti-EU position during the 1990s. More specifically, the Front National has put great effort in trying to frame the issue of the European Union in xenophobic and ethno-nationalist terms. However, New Democracy committed the strategic mistake of remaining pro-EU, and consequently missed the opportunity to link together xenophobic and anti-EU frames. Instead, the Green Party and the Left Party obtained a 'freedom of framing', and could capture most of the voters with negative attitudes towards the European Union.

Hence, I will argue that the emergence of a RRP party is likely to cause an increase in manifest, politicized xenophobia when (1) there is a situation of economic and social stress; (2) the economic cleavage dimension is under real challenge from the socio-cultural cleavage dimension; (3) when established parties and other political actors adopt or accommodate policy proposals originally propelled by the RRP party, and employs similar frames and xenophobic rhetorical styles; and (4) when the RRP party succeeds in linking its anti-immigration frames with other issues of high and enduring political salience.

Notes

1 If we take a look at the electoral support for the RRP parties in recent elections, we see that the FPÖ received 27 percent of the votes in the 1999 Parliament election in Austria; Vlaams Blok received 16 percent in the 1999 election to the Flanders Parliament in Belgium; the Danish People's party received 12 percent of the votes in 2001 Parliament election in Denmark; Le Pen received 17 percent of the votes in the 1997

Parliament election in France; the German People's Party (DVU) received 13 percent in the 1998 election to the Parliament in Saxony-Anhalt in Germany; the Northern League (Lega Nord) received 10 percent in the 1996 Parliament election in Italy (but considerable lower in the 2001 election); the Progress Party received 15 percent in the 2001 Parliament election in Norway; and the Swiss People's Party received 23 percent in the 1999 Parliament election in Switzerland (Eatwell, 2000: 408, cf. Ivaldi, 2001: 54; www.electionworld.org). It should be noted that the French Front National split in 1999, and that the two factions only received 9 percent (together) in the 1999 European election (Eatwell, 2000: 409).

2 There are RRP parties, like the Lega Nord and Vlaams Blok, which actually works against the nation-state they belong to. However, their aim is to break free from Italy and Belgium, respectively, in order to form new nation-states, which they believe corresponds to ethnicity in a purer way. Hence, these parties are still ethno-nationalist parties, although we might call them micro-nationalists (cf. Eatwell, 2000: 409).

3 The same is partly true for other xenophobic and racist parties and movements, such as (neo-)fascist and (neo-)Nazi parties and movements. However, in this article I will only address the importance of RRP parties, because they have, contrary to fascist and Nazi groups and parties, obtained a substantial popular support and political impact in contemporary West European democracies. Yet, a more elaborate study on this issue would without doubt have to include also other types of xenophobic and racist parties and movements.

4 For a discussion on social mechanisms and how to link different levels, see Hedström and Swedberg (1998).

5 Hence, I will not discuss the obvious possibility that the RRP parties might take over power (at a local, regional, or national, level) and implement policies of discrimination that can be assumed to have an influence on the level of xenophobia.

6 In the 2000 Eurobarometer, 20 percent, on average, tended to agree with the proposition that 'legally established immigrants from outside the European Union should be sent back to their country of origin', and more than 50 percent, on average, tended to agree with the propositions that minority groups 'abuse the system of social welfare'; are 'a reason for unemployment'; and 'are more often involved in criminality than average' (EUMC, 2001). As will be shown below, these attitudes correspond to great extent with the xenophobic frames promoted by the RRP parties. We can also see that xenophobic attitudes were more common in France than in Sweden.

7 Yet, the new cultural racism occasionally implies traditional biological racism. For instance, the RRP parties often recommend people to 'take a look in the streets, in the schools, etc.' in order to 'verify' that there are too many immigrants. This means that a person with a darker tinge to his or her skin (i.e., a biological characteristic) will serve as a proof of the RRP party's statement, even though he or she is French (or Swedish, etc.) citizen of third or fourth generation and knows of no other culture than the French (or Swedish, etc.) one.

8 In 1994, between 74 and 93 percent of the voters in the West European democracies included in the World Values Survey, with the exception of Ireland and Northern Ireland, believed that democracy was the best form of government. The popular support for democracy 'as an idea', or 'ideal', was even greater, and varied between 93 and 99 percent (Dalton, 1999: 70; Klingemann, 1999: 44).

9 The concept of 'frame' was developed by Goffman (1986), and was picked up by the theory of social movements, where the concepts of 'frame struggle' and 'frame

alignment' have been widely used. See Benford and Snow (2000); McCarthy et al. (1996); Snow and Benford (1988); Snow et al. (1986); and Zald (1996).

10 Perrineau (1997) argues that *ressentiment* plays an important role for the emergence of the Front National.

11 However, we should not disregard the fact that also the emergence of New Left and Green Parties has increased the salience of the socio-cultural cleavage dimension. In this way, by decreasing the salience of the economic cleavage dimension, the emergence of these kinds of parties could paradoxically be said to be a partial reason for the subsequent emergence of the RRP parties.

12 In 1987–88, the local Centre Party leader Sven-Olle Olsson initiated a local referendum on the issue of hosting political refugees. The referendum resulted in a clear majority against accepting refuges in Sjöbo. After being excluded from the Centre Party, Olsson founded the Sjöbo Party, which was relatively successful in his home region, and which received 0.5 percent in the 1991 national Parliament election (Fryklund and Peterson, 1989; Widfeldt, 2000).

13 Some of these, and a lot of other, examples of xenophobic views are presented in Wieviorka (1992: 9–16).

14 For instance, the new law stated that 'children born in France to Algerian parents would be French from birth only if one of their parents had lived in France for at least five years prior to the birth' (Hargreaves, 1995: 174).

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