Radical Right Populist Parties and the use of Religion in Rhetoric

A textual analysis of the framing strategies used by the Danish People’s Party and the Sweden Democrats when constructing Islam as a religious threat.

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Abstract

The aim of this case study is to examine differences in the political framing of immigration questions by the Danish People’s Party and the Sweden Democrats in relation to religious sentiments. The material analysed consists of speeches in records from Danish and Swedish parliamentary debates, and through textual analysis it is found that variations exists regarding how religion is used to highlight homogeneity and heterogeneity. The Danish People’s Party and the Sweden Democrats both use religion to assemble heterogeneity, and emphasise human rights to demonstrate how Islam fundamentally opposes a modern Western worldview. However, the Danish People’s Party makes more extensive use of religion to emphasise homogeneity than the Sweden Democrats do, and this framing strategy seems to have superimposed a sense of religious conflict on the debate in Denmark. A perceived dispute between Islam and Christianity has made the Danish People’s Party set forth proposals aimed to strengthen religious homogeneity, protect Christian dominance, and restrict the influence of Islam in the social sphere. The empirical findings are discussed in relation to different secular paths in Denmark and Sweden, and to theories that take into account the constitutive elements of a Scandinavian religious identity, and the circumstances under which religious identity may attain renewed significance.

Keywords
Migration, anti-immigration attitudes, Religion, Islam, Christianity, radical right populist parties, the Danish People’s Party, the Sweden Democrats, political framing, framing theory, public opinion.
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Introduction

The migration landscape has changed extensively throughout the twentieth century. Europe has become an immigration destination, and several European countries are experiencing rapid immigration from non-EU countries, as well as increased mobility within the borders of the EU (Bohman, 2014:1). Denmark and Sweden are countries that have experienced increased immigration. However, where the composition of immigrants changed quite suddenly in Denmark in the 1980s, from guest workers to non-EU immigrants, the immigration history is longer in Sweden, with generous immigration policies and increase in non-EU migration from the 1970s onward (Rydgren, 2010:66). In 2013, the foreign-born populations of Denmark and Sweden were, respectively, 8.5% and 16% of their total populations (OECD). The increase in immigration inflows has been particularly rapid throughout 2015. The number of asylum seekers went from 640 in January 2015 to 3,645 in October 2015 in Denmark, while in the Swedish context the increase has been more drastic, rising from 4,895 asylum applicants to 39,060 over the same period (Eurostat). This increase has been in part due to the war in Syria, and has been referred to as a European migration crisis. The migration crisis has made it apparent that EU countries have diverse approaches and answers when it comes to solving immigration challenges. Different approaches have also been seen in Sweden and Denmark, where a tougher stance on migration and integration questions has generally been taken in Denmark.

Researchers had recognised the different approaches to migration question in Denmark and Sweden also before the European migrant crisis (Rydgren, 2010; Hjerm & Nagayoshi, 2011; Green-Pedersen & Odmalm, 2008), and wondered why Danes, with a lower proportion of immigrants, perceive immigrants as a greater threat than do Swedes (Rydgren, 2004:159; Lindberg, 2014:568). To account for this difference it is considered possible that salient national rhetoric reinforces the threat that immigrants represent, and the political cultures in Denmark and Sweden may influence public perception of immigration differently. Potential differences in rhetoric among radical right populist (RRP) parties can shed light on why public opinion formation has taken different routes in otherwise similar countries. The RRP parties are likely to have influenced the debate regarding immigration issues substantially, with rhetoric that revolves around anti-immigration (Rydgren, 2007:242). Politicising immigration issues has been crucial to the RRP parties’ electoral successes, and it is argued that:
Radical right parties did not begin to succeed in the 1980s until they discovered that concerns about the immigration could benefit them at the polls. The immigration issue did not become important because of ethnic diversity or immigrant influxes; rather it arose and benefited far-right parties only if they could dominate the construction of the issue (Karapin, 1998:224).

Therefore, social actors, not changes in the structure per se, contribute interpretations and create meaning in situations of collective uncertainty (Karpantschof, 2003:28). Regarding collective understandings of issue definition, the particular interest of this thesis is how RRP parties construct meaning in relation to religious sentiments. It has been found that religion can be used for nationalistic purposes by defining belonging (Barker, 2009:11), and political frames that relate to such longstanding cultural values are likely to influence public opinion (Chong & Druckman, 2007a:112). Increased immigration to Denmark and Sweden has resulted in increased religious diversity (Lindberg, 2013:124). In 2010 religious diversity was considered high in Sweden and moderate in Denmark (Pew Research Center, 2014), which is relevant since national identity tends to strengthen with religious homogeneity (Riis, 1998:253). More pronounced religious homogeneity in Denmark, and thereby assumingly stronger national identity, culturally important disputes over religious diversity such as the Muhammad Cartoon Controversy, as well as the emergence of the Danish People’s Party (DPP) in a time where secularisation was less extensive than when the Sweden Democrats (SD) gained political power, makes it possible that religious frames are politicised more by the DPP than by the SD.

**Purpose and research question**

My aim is to examine potential differences in rhetoric use between the DPP and the SD during the period of the European migration crisis. The study is limited to the way religious sentiments have been used in the debate regarding immigration, in order to support the RRP parties’ political claims. The political frames are examined with the use of parliamentary records of proceedings in the respective chambers, with emphasis on the qualitative content of the political speeches. In the light of longstanding differences in the perception of immigration between Sweden and Denmark (Rydgren, 2010), it is of interest to analyse how immigration is articulated as an issue in the contemporary political debate. In this way, an insight will be gained into how RRP parties in Denmark and Sweden are trying to evoke anti-immigration attitudes in their respective populations. A comparative approach is crucial because differences between RRP parties’ framings of immigration may contribute to an understanding of
cross-national variation in the public perception of immigration. Thus, the aim of this study is to compare the rhetorical use of religious sentiments by the Danish People’s Party and the Sweden Democrats, and discuss differences in framing strategies that are likely to have influenced the public perception of immigration.

Clear signs of hostility towards immigrants are seen in both Sweden and Denmark. There is a danger in the increased political power of the SD, with racist ideas and actions towards ethnic minorities may become normalised and legitimised (Crouch, 2014). The UN has warned about increased xenophobia in Sweden after several incidents of violence against immigrants, as well as vandalised asylum centres (von Hall, 2016). In Denmark, the European Commission against Racism and Intolerance (ECRI) has brought to people’s attention that discrimination has worsened, particularly towards Muslims, and therefore stressed a general concern regarding the tone of public and political debates (ECRI, 2012). My focus will centre on Islam as the main perceived religious threat, which is a stance that corresponds with the increase in Islamophobia in Europe to a point where it is considered the most significant form of cultural racism (Lindberg, 2015:65). More pronounced legitimation of anti-immigration attitudes and intolerance might result in ethnic minorities being frustrated with their social surroundings. This dissatisfaction may push ethnic minorities towards forming parallel communities or even towards radicalisation and religious fundamentalism, since racial and religious discrimination, as well as economic and social exclusion, contribute to a higher risk of violent radicalisation (Reinares et al, 2008:17-19). Researchers are examining the process of radicalisation with concepts such as “socialisation into violence” and “socialisation into terrorism,” and posit injustice, perceived humiliation, and dissatisfaction with the political and/or social surroundings as some of the factors that may lead to this (Ibid). Therefore, the political construction of “Swedishness” or “Danishness” in opposition to “otherness” can ultimately be seen as threatening integration and provoking radical outburst. It is considered crucial to take a deeper look at anti-immigration attitudes, and the channels through which ideas may propagate and contribute to the construction of immigration as a religious threat.

Religion may be a source of power for politicians, through which the ideals of a “good society” can be meaningfully formulated. Religion can, in this sense, be seen as an integrating force that contributes to feelings of uniformity, belonging and social cohesion. However, religion may also constitute a potential source of conflict that gives rise to social distance, intolerance, and discrimination, or in some cases even violence and war (Bilimoria, 2014:34). There can be implications, in a globalised world, of having a national policy that is rooted in one privileged religion, and it can challenge the sound integration of people who do not hold
the religious belief of the majority. If the structuring of a society corresponds to certain religious premises and practices, and struggles to incorporate religious diversity, it can be claimed that freedom of religion in that society is only superficial, or even that minority discrimination is apparent (Nielsen, 2014:245). Some of the most challenging problems in contemporary society are to find ways of conducting politics while allowing religious diversity. The structuring of a society in accordance with religious principles can also challenge concerns about rationality. In modern society there is an idea about rationality within institutions and organisations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), but this formal blueprint may be merely a myth in cases where religion interferes with rational concerns, and inefficient political practices may occasionally be adopted due to their strong cultural and historical embeddedness (Quadrio, 2014:41). Discussions regarding whether it is possible to unite religion and evidence-based knowledge have been held in both Denmark and Sweden. In a Danish context it has been debated whether a Christian theologian can properly take on the task of being Education and Research Minister (Vincent & Johansen, 2015). It has been claimed that a conflict exists when a minister who believes in God as the creator of the world is responsible for politics regarding education and research, because religious belief and scientific knowledge are distinct spheres (Ibid). This debate indicates that religious beliefs are expected to lie outside the political and scientific world. This is one of the essential aspects of several conceptualisations of secularisation, in which scientific knowledge takes over in an instrumental, pragmatic, and rational public sphere (Bruce, 2003:251). The abandonment of religious beliefs that were previously used to explain various phenomena can be regarded as a shift in thinking, towards reason and away from faith, which is associated with a secular society.

**Background**

**The Danish People’s Party and the Sweden Democrats**

The DPP and the SD have histories that differ substantially from one another. I will, in the following, describe their emergence and electoral achievements to highlight the specific features of each case. This background information is essential for understanding their sources of ideological inspiration, as well as their different positions within the political landscape.

The DPP is an RRP party that was established in 1995, after a small fraction of politicians from the former Danish Progress Party decided to break out on their own, with Pia Kjærgaard as the front figure. Immediately after the separation, the DPP received support
from radical right protest groups (Karpantschof, 2003). One of these protest groups, the Danish Association, which has worked against immigration to Denmark, has played major roles both in ideological inspiration and the inclusion of prominent political profiles in the DPP (Karpantschof, 2003:35). Central figures within the DPP were active members of the Danish Association before they become politicians, such as the priests Søren Krarup and Jesper Langballe. In 2001 the DPP experienced, after a rather short period of time as an established party, an influential position as support party to the VK government (a Liberal-Conservative government), in which the DPP was needed to obtain a parliamentary majority (Karpantschof, 2003:26). The DPP has been quite dominant in Danish politics, and as one of the parties with the closest cooperation and influence on government policies, they have affected legislation and pushed Denmark towards stricter immigration policies (Rydgren, 2010:58). The party has a 21,1% share of the vote after the latest election, in 2015. However, they chose not to be part of the formal government, even though they are the largest right-wing party. They have defended this decision by claiming that the liberal party was not sufficiently prepared to negotiate and compromise on issues such as border control, and therefore the DPP could not support the basis of the government (Lund, 2015). Prior to the 2015 election, their vote share was more or less stable throughout the twenty-first century, ranging from 12% to 13,9%, with their lowest share of 12% in the 2001 election (Manifesto Project).

In Sweden, the SD were established in 1988, but have experienced a rather long period of marginalisation and limited influence (Rydgren, 2010:58). The party has roots in Swedish fascism and was originally a part of the white supremacy movement (Rydgren, 2007:246; Poohl, 2010). Because of their radical political standpoints and their relationships with extremist groups, the SD have been experienced as an extremely disruptive party, and may have unwittingly provoked a Swedish pro-immigration consensual culture. In 2010, the SD achieved a 5,7% share of the vote, and since this exceeded the 4% threshold, the party was voted into the parliament. The party gained increased support in the 2014 election, with 12,9% of the votes. Despite parliamentary representation since 2010 and electoral progress since then, the SD have continued to experience marginalisation and isolation, and, by refusing to cooperate with them, the other political parties have been able to exclude the SD from exerting any real influence (Aylott, 2015).

**Characteristics of radical right populist parties**

RRP parties have gained increased support in Western Europe throughout the past two decades, with anti-immigration as their main message (Rydgren, 2007:242). Some researchers
have addressed the winning formula for RRP parties, and the importance of an authoritarian position on socio-cultural issues (as opposed to socio-cultural liberalism) is generally agreed upon (Jungar & Jupskås, 2014:219). RRP parties tend to emphasise ethno-nationalism, wherein the nation is defined in terms of shared ethnicity, and ethnical homogeneity is sought after. Ethnic heterogeneity is perceived to threaten the continuation of distinctive cultural properties, and in order to preserve national identity, RRP parties maintain the rights of nations, cultures and races to be different, with the use of an ethno-pluralist doctrine (Rydgren, 2007:244). They claim that different ethnicities are incompatible, and any attempt to unite people will ultimately contribute to cultural extinction (Ibid). Their position in relation to socio-economic issues is less agreed upon. Some scholars have argued that an ideological feature of the party family is that they tend to adopt a centrist position on socio-economic issues (Kitschelt, 2004; de Lange, 2007; Eger & Valdez, 2014), but other researchers consider economic policy as a secondary priority to this party family (Rydgren, 2007:243; Mudde, 2007:132). The parties are considered radical in the sense that they have major transformations of society in view, in relation either to the future or a past that was better than the present time (Rydgren, 2007:246). RRP parties attract voters with anti-establishment sentiments, and they tend to frame themselves as alternatives to established parties, claiming that they represent the true will of the people (Mudde, 2007:221). This populist framing is, within RRP parties, regarded as an ideological feature and not merely a political style. It is essential for the parties, in order to be perceived as legitimate, to find a balance between contesting the current policy consensus while still being perceived as democratic right-wing radicals (Rydgren, 2007:243).

**Religion and the state church**

To comprehend the potential cross-national variation in framing strategies with reference to religious sentiments, it is essential to understand tendencies towards secularisation, and the different secular paths taken in Denmark and Sweden regarding the role of the state church and religious primacy. This will be elaborated in the following.

That the role of religion was generally in decline in Western Europe was agreed upon until the 1970s (Casanova, 1994:17). After this period with consensus, Berger brought forward that the supposed degree and irreversibility of secularisation was overestimated (1974:16). Several incidents make it clear that religion continues to intrude in political affairs, for instance, 9/11 in 2001, the Muhammad Cartoon Controversy in Denmark in 2005, the attack at Charlie Hebdo in Paris in 2015, and the attack at the airport and metro station in Brussels in 2016. These
occurrences, together with many others, have led researchers to make claims about de-secularisation of the West (Sharpe & Nickelson, 2014:5). It is argued that religion constitutes “one of the most powerful social forces known to man. It can shape the way we view the world, frame our concepts about right and wrong, and inform our sense of morality” (Barker, 2009:1). Yet the ways in which religion is used as a powerful social force are unclear, and there is a lack of knowledge about religion’s interference in politics to the point where “we are approaching the close of the modern western dichotomy between religion and politics” (Barker, 2009:12).

To examine tendencies towards secularisation, it is essential to recognise that multiple secularisations can be present at once (Chaves, 1994; Nielsen, 2014:271). A broadly acknowledged conception of secularisation is Taylor’s three senses of secularity. The first sense of secularity is characterised by a public sphere free from religious sentiments, and with the separation of the state from the church (Taylor, 2007:1). Law and political decisions are rooted in reason and rationality, as opposed to religious belief, so that religiously diverse individuals will nonetheless accept the law (Bilimoria, 2014:21). The second sense is related to the presence of God in the social sphere, and characterised by the general decline of religious beliefs and practices in public (Taylor, 2007:2). The third sense is more abstract, and it concerns the conditions for belief, and the existence of alternatives to belief in God (Taylor, 2007:3). Similarly for many conceptions of secularisation are that they operate on different analytical levels, where societal, social and individual levels are frequently included (Bruce, 1999; Chaves, 1994; Taylor, 2007). This makes it possible to approach different aspects of secularisation distinctively, and grasp processes of secularisation that may happen asymmetrically.

Freedom of religion was granted in Denmark in 1849, whereas in Sweden a gradual dissolution was seen. The legal right to leave the church in order to enter another state approved congregation was granted in the 1860s, and the unconditional right came with the Religious Freedom Act in 1951 (Nielsen, 2014:250; Jänterä-Jareborg, 2010:671). Despite freedom to resign from the church, the Evangelical Lutheran church still accounted for 79% of the population of Denmark, and 68% of the population of Sweden, in 2013 (Lindberg, 2014:569; Lindberg, 2013:123). The membership rates have, however, been in steady decline throughout the last decades (Barker, 2009:11). Sweden and Denmark have experienced secularisation with modernisation and are, in an international comparison, considered some of the most secularised countries. This may be understood when looking at church attendance, where the proportion of people that actually attends church at least once a week is approximately 4-5% (Lindberg, 2013:123). When looking at the associations between the church and the state, Denmark is
considered an exception among the Nordic countries. A particular configuration of secularisation has occurred here, and, unlike Sweden, where the church was formally disestablished in 2000, Denmark has maintained the links between the state and church (Nielsen, 2014:245; Kühle, 2011:205+206). It is still stated in the Danish constitution that "The Evangelical Lutheran church is the Danish People’s Church and is supported as such by the state” (DK Const. chap. 1, § 4). The DPP is one of the parties that has fought for preservation of status quo, and Christian Langballe has stated that the church should maintain governmental tasks due to the “historical, cultural and spiritual ties we see between church and state, and between Denmark and Christianity.” He fears that a greater differentiation would ultimately “destroy the Christian foundation, on which Denmark is built” (mtg. 82, sph. 32). The lack of differentiation between state and church fosters legal inequality between different religious communities in Denmark, because the Evangelical Lutheran church is given a privileged position in comparison with the religious communities of minorities (Nielsen, 2014:245). The commitment to religious pluralism is greater in Sweden, where equalisation of the church and other religious communities has been attempted through a system of church taxes that has been extended beyond the Evangelical Lutheran church (Kühle, 2011:210).

In Denmark, the church performs tasks for the state, including administrative tasks of the civil register, is the official burial authority, and fulfils the legal obligation to preserve Christian culture (Nielsen, 2014:254). In Sweden, some of the church’s previous tasks have been taken over by alternative authorities, such as the Swedish Tax Registration Offices, who are now in charge of the civil register. Nevertheless, some advantages are granted the church in Sweden, such as administration of funerals and graveyards. This has been explained as a compromise between the ideal of equalisation among religions and the wish to preserve Christian cultural heritage (Jänterä-Jareborg, 2010:673). In both Sweden and Denmark, the annual public holidays correspond with Christian traditions, and in Denmark in order to be regarded as a “true” Dane, one is required to obtain knowledge about Christian traditions. In the highly debated citizenship test, questions regarding the theological meaning of Easter and the Reformation are found (Dansk Statsborgerskabsprøve). To many, this appears to be in conflict with the society's high individual secularization, and how immigrants are to make use of this knowledge is extensively debated. Christian religious supremacy is also seen in the sense that in both Denmark and Sweden, the end of a term in primary school is celebrated in the Evangelical Lutheran church (Jänterä-Jareborg, 2010:670), and religious teaching in Danish primary schools is centred around Christian culture - a fact which the name of the course, ‘Christianity’, clearly indicates. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (ECRI)
has recognised these challenges, and claimed that a lack of teaching of cultural and religious diversity is present within the Danish school system (ECRI 2012). These aspects matters for the influence the church can potentially have on state institutions, and vice versa, and it is claimed that in comparison with the other Nordic countries: “Denmark is the country where the threat of the state controlling the majority religion is greatest” (Kühle, 2011:212). Regarding secularity in Taylor’s second and third senses, these processes have been quite pronounced in both Sweden and Denmark. A low tolerance towards religious symbols in public spaces is apparent in Denmark, and restrictions have been made regarding face-covering religious headwear for court personnel, such that it is prohibited by law to wear symbols that could express a religious or political affiliation (Nielsen, 2014:269). Also, a high level of individual secularity can be seen, given the proportion of people who actually believes in a God is 23% in Sweden and 31% in Denmark (Special Eurobarometer, 2005). To summarise, viewing Scandinavia as the “Lutheran North” can compromise recognising variation in the different processes of secularisation. Denmark should be considered a peculiar case in comparison with the rest of Scandinavia, because individual and social secularisation has happened at a much faster pace than societal secularisation. Following Taylor’s framework, Denmark correlates only with the second and third senses of being secular, while Sweden correlates more broadly with all three senses.

Previous research

It is of particular importance to situate this thesis in relation to the work of others, in order to identify a gap in the literature and more clearly comprehend the contribution of this study. This thesis is rooted in more than one research tradition, as both political sociology and the sociology of religion are important sources of inspiration. Within political sociology, the RRP parties constitute the most discussed party family, and the number of books and articles written about them exceeds other party families by far (Mudde, 2007:2). A substantial amount of research has been carried out with the aim of identifying characteristics of RRP parties that transcend national borders (Eger & Valdez 2014; Jungar & Jupskås 2014; Mudde 2007; Rydgren 2007). Despite valuable work that highlights resemblances within the RRP party family, further context-specific clarification is needed in order to grasp the grounds on which
the parties may diverge from one another. The emergence of RRP parties in Denmark and Sweden has been studied, in an attempt to understand the counterintuitive situation where an RRP party has been electorally successful in Denmark and not - or at least not before the 2010 election - in Sweden (Rydgren, 2010). It has been found that immigration issues have been politicised to a larger extent in Denmark than in Sweden. The politicisation of immigration in Denmark has taken over much of the focus from former socio-economic dimensions, and created a good opportunity for an RRP party to strategically situate in a niche, and emphasise problems related to immigration (Rydgren, 2010:63). Emphasis on, respectively, socio-cultural and socio-economic issues in Denmark and Sweden has influenced the perception and priority of political issues, such that Danes, to varying degrees in different years, have viewed the migration question as a more serious political issue than have the Swedes (Rydgren, 2010). Viewing migration as a high priority political problem is, furthermore, according to Demker, associated with xenophobic attitudes (as cited in Rydgren, 2010:66).

Researchers recognised the different approaches to migration questions in Denmark and Sweden long before the European migration crisis (Green-Pedersen & Odalm, 2008; Hjerm & Nagayoshi, 2011; Rydgren, 2010). Different types of explanations have been given to account for the varying levels of xenophobia, frequently in relation to either the changed demands of the public or the political supply. The empirical findings in Scandinavia have been considered counterintuitive (Rydgren, 2010:59), particularly in the light of a massive amount of research that focuses on demand-side explanations when trying to explain cross-national xenophobia levels (Hjerm & Nagayoshi, 2011:816). Macro-level socio-economic developments are commonly seen as a precondition of the emergence of RRP parties, and researchers have pointed towards structural changes wrought by modernity when explaining xenophobia, such as globalisation, outsourcing, loss of job and loss of status (Rydgren, 2007:247-248). However, this demand-oriented perspective only has weak explanatory power, when the aim is to analyse cross-national variation in countries that share similar cultural and institutional arrangements. Therefore, looking at, for instance, the proportion of immigrants in relation to native people seems inadequate for explaining differences in xenophobic attitudes, or electoral successes of RRP parties, cross-nationally (Rydgren, 2004:159). The association between “objective” threat and xenophobia is complex, and when comparing Denmark and Sweden it is found that the Danes, with a relatively low proportion of immigrants, are more xenophobic (measured indirectly by the success of RRP parties) than Swedes, who have a substantially higher proportion of immigrants (Rydgren, 2004:159; Lindberg, 2014:568). Claiming that objective threats can explain variation in xenophobia levels has proven unsatis-
factory in cross-national comparisons, and a reason may be because the importance of perceived threats is neglected. It is essential to recognise that perceived threats can have real consequences, in the sense that natives’ actions towards immigrants will reflect their perception of a threat, no matter if this is true or not (Thomas & Thomas, 1928:572). Politicians influence the construction of perceived threats, which has lead some researchers to conclude that supply-oriented perspectives, that interrogate the role of political parties themselves, are lacking (Mudde, 2007:4; Bohman 2014). This thesis contributes to fills the gap in the literature by looking at the political supply in Denmark and Sweden that has likely influenced public perceptions of issues, and fostered different sentiments in the populations.

The traditions of political sociology and the sociology of religion are closely related, in the sense that the idea of a nation presupposes some sort of boundary between the included natives and the excluded “others”, and religion can be a powerful way of defining belonging (Barker, 2009:11). As will be elaborated in the theory section, it has been found that nationalism with references to religion can be used strategically in politics when religion constitutes a common denominator that can assemble a “we-feeling”. Within the sociology of religion, researchers have compared different structural arrangements and secular trends in Denmark and Sweden (Jänterä-Jareborg, 2010; Nielsen, 2014; Kühle, 2011), and compared the use of religious sentiments in the Nordic party platforms (Lindberg, 2013; Lindberg, 2014). An overview of the changes in the politicisation of religion has been given for the periods 1988-1989, 1998-1999 and 2008-2009 (Lindberg, 2014:565), and that study fits into a larger research field, in which the potential return of religion in politics has been a particular interest (Casanova, 1994; Riis, 1998; Barker, 2009). By looking at the number of references to religion in parliament, it has been found that religion is politicised to a larger extent in Denmark than in Sweden. This pattern becomes even more clear when specific religious orientations are taken into account, where references to Christianity have decreased in both Denmark and Sweden, but emphasis on Islam has increased substantially in the political debate in Denmark, and only minimally in Sweden (Lindberg, 2014:573). The use of framing strategies with reference to religion among RRP parties is not agreed upon by scholars. Mudde has argued that RRP parties generally do not emphasise religion (2007:28), whereas Lindberg has found that the DPP is the political party that most frequently makes references to religious sentiments, when compared with all other parties in the Danish parliament (2014:580). It is furthermore found that the number of references to religion in the Swedish parliament increased when the SD gained parliamentary representation in 2010 (Ibid). This recent empirical finding indicates that these nationalistic RRP parties may very well make use of religious sentiments (Ibid).
Lindberg has focused on quantitative variations in the use of religious sentiments, but the qualitative ways in which the RRP parties use religion is not yet known. Therefore, studies that emphasise the RRP parties political construction of immigration as a religious threat, and which focus on their qualitative framing strategies, are called for. Based on the findings of previous research, this makes an interesting case since Danes have, on average, stronger anti-immigration attitudes than Swedes, and both migration questions and religion have been exposed to more extensive politicisation in Denmark than in Sweden.

Theoretical approach

The theoretical contributions have been identified in correspondence with an abductive approach, where the theory, that explains the empirical findings in the most reasonable and likely manner, has been included. I will include theory on framing as well as theoretical contributions on religious nationalism, cultural defence, and religion as Protestant Humanism, to understand why some RRP parties may find religious sentiments a favourable framing technique when constructing the perception of immigrants as a religious threat.

Framing theory

How a problem or occurrence is characterised will influence how an audience understands it, and the underlying assumptions that justify such characterisations involve philosophical considerations. My ontological stance rests on the view that reality is a social construction. In Berger and Luckmann’s theoretical framework, there is a dialectic understanding of social reality, where ongoing processes of externalisation, objectification and internalisation, are vital for the maintenance and reproduction of society (Berger & Luckmann, 2008:143). Externalisation refers to “society as a human product”, and it is through externalisation that an individual takes part in the construction of culture, by externalising their own meanings into the world of which (s)he is already a part (Ibid). Objectification is associated with the notion that “society is an objective reality”, and objectification is experienced when institutions, roles or identities take on more constant forms, and come to represent external factualities with their own existence (Berger & Luckmann, 2008:96-97). Internalisation refers to “man as a social product”, and the point here is that the reality that has been objectified will be incorpo-
rated in the human consciousness, such that the objective facticities of the social world will ultimately become subjective facticities as well (Berger 1967:26-28). The social construction of meaning should therefore be understood through these processes. Speeches in the parliament chamber are a process of externalisation, as politicians portray immigrants in a certain light. These externalised frames may become objectified, for instance with laws criminalising the behaviour of Muslim minorities - prohibiting court personnel from wearing face-covering headwear, - or the frames may merely be objectified by the wide acceptance of a dominant and legitimised way to perceive immigrants. Therefore, framing can ultimately be perceived as an act of objectification, and studying how political elites make use of frames may shed a light on their role in constructing public opinion and common sense knowledge.

A political issue can be viewed from a variety of different angles, and situated as an issue in relation to different values and considerations. To frame “is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (Entman, 1993:52). It gives a particular conceptualisation of a given issue, and it is essential that political parties can select views and contribute “frames of thought”, or interpretative models, to make sense of complicated situations (Goffman, 1974; Bohman, 2014:11). When examining speeches in parliaments, particular interest lies in frames in communication, which refers to “the words, images, phrases, and presentation styles that a speaker uses when relaying information about an issue or event to an audience” (Chong & Druckman, 2007b:100). Framing is a useful tool in shaping public opinion, and therefore particularly powerful in political contexts, which some researchers have considered a disturbing fact, in cases where framing may become “freewheeling exercises in pure manipulation” (Kinder & Herzog, 1993:363). It has been found that an individual’s willingness to allow the Ku Klux Klan to stage a rally, for instance, is highly dependent on the type of frame used. When the question is framed in relation to the phrase “given the importance of free-speech,” 85% of the respondents are in favour of the rally, while only 45% are in favour when prompted with “given the risk of violence” (Sniderman & Theriault, 2004). This indicates that if a political party can “establish the relevant terms of debate over an issue, it can successfully persuade individuals to support its position” (Chong & Druckman, 2007b:102), and it fosters an opportunity for strategically and politically winning in contests for public opinion. It is found that opinions tend to be of “low quality”, meaning that unstable, inconsistent and uninformed perceptions are rather common (Chong & Druckman, 2007a:103). This leaves room for influence by others, and some sources of influence are particularly persuasive when it
comes to affecting public opinion. Frames that encompass longstanding cultural values, such as religion, are very influential (Chong & Druckman, 2007a:112), but certain individuals are also more influential than others in constructing interpretative models. Political elites, who possess democratic legitimacy, may in this regard be seen as moral entrepreneurs with the potential to exert great influence on political discourse.

Researchers have addressed challenges in the operation of a democratic political system, and questioned the extent to which public preferences should be seen as the bedrock of social choice, given that individuals, while trying to comprehend political issues, rely on the “self-interested communication of elites” (Disch, 2011:100). Even though politicians are influential in the construction of meaning, the effect of frames may become severely restricted when different frames are in tense conflict. Competition within the political landscape leads to various social frames of understanding existing simultaneously, because politicians focus on a subset of potentially relevant considerations. It has been suggested that competing frames can actually cancel one another out and make framing strategies less influential on public opinion (Chong & Druckman, 2007b:102). Another potential constraint may be that the targeted population do not perceive the speaker as legitimate, honest and knowledgeable (Druckman, 2001:4). Perceived source credibility is therefore an important prerequisite for successful framing, indicating that citizens are not just “puppets” who respond uncritically to whatever frame may appear, but rather individuals are seeking guidance from politicians whom they find credible and trustworthy (Druckman, 2001:12).

**Legitimation through religion**

When constructing feelings of national belonging, it is essential that unifying factors be present (Barker, 2009:9). The unifying factors that constitute different nations are diverse, and may include language, literature, religion, history or other kinds of shared culture. However, while defining the constitutive elements of a nation, religious nationalism may be a particularly influential asset in setting the boundaries between those who belong and those who do not belong. According to Jelen, nationalism with religious sentiment infused is a gain for democratic politics in the sense that societal cohesion and grounds for moral and ethical consensus can be obtained (as cited in Lindberg, 2015:47). It has also been claimed that without a common worldview, more legislation and coerciveness would be required in order to obtain and maintain security and stability within national borders (Gregory, 2012). However, as touched upon earlier, religious cohesion comes with the price of potential exclusion, as national dis-
tinctiveness calls for someone against whom to profile oneself.

According to Bruce, religion is undermined by modernity when it continues to fulfil the traditional role of mediating the natural and the supernatural world (1999:267). However, religion continues to exist when it takes on untraditional social roles, and while it may largely have lost its theological role, it is claimed that religion has gained significance in relation to concerns such as national identity and social cohesion (Riis, 1989; Barker, 2009; Bruce, 2003). The non-religious roles that religion comes to play may serve the purposes of cultural transition or cultural defence (Bruce, 2003:258). Bruce claims that when major social changes occur, religion is used to ease transitions, but this temporarily increases in religious awareness lacks explanatory power at a macro level, when it comes to continued religious importance. More importantly for this thesis, religion may retain societal importance when it functions as cultural defence. Bruce has claimed that where “culture, identity, and sense of worth are challenged by a source promoting either an alien religion or rampant secularism, and that source is negatively valued, secularization will be inhibited” (2003:259). In cases where an external threat is faced, religion may function as a “guarantor of group identity”, and call for a new sense of religious loyalty. It is therefore argued that the role of religion is at a crossroad, where one of two alternatives is likely: societies will either follow secular trends and give up on religion, or engage in painful struggles over religion (Bruce, 1999:271).

While the role of religion has decreased in a theological sense, few have attempted to reconstruct the role of religion in the modern world. What is perceived as religion differs across context and time, and a range of phenomena considered religious outside Europe are considered pre-modern and naïve religious beliefs within the European context. Western evolutionist pride has restricted the range of possible religious phenomena, in the sense that “Westerners are not supposed to hold the kind of naïve, superstitious thoughts that are ascribed to the primitive outsiders” (Riis, 1989:139). Riis has attempted to capture the constitutive elements of Scandinavian religious identity, by examining what is held in awe and what is considered taboo. The term “Protestant Humanism” is used to describe a modern worldview characterised by individual human rights, individual-oriented values of self-fulfilment and the continuation of the networks of kinship and friendship, which are described as contemporary values with roots in Christian values and traditions (Riis, 1989:143). The Declaration of Human Rights has to a large extent taken over as the basis of a norm system, and the Ten Commandments that previously guided the legal system have become secondary to human rights (Riis, 1989:141). The modern religious worldview is used as a legal platform to express a we-feeling to citizens in countries with a high degree of religious homogeneity, whereas the use
of religion as a common denominator may be vague in countries characterised by severe religious diversity (Riis, 1989:142). Protestant Humanism, and the understanding of religion’s role in a wider sense, is a new type of private religion that contributes to the legitimation of the modern structuring of society and the common values rooted within it (Riis, 1989:137). While looking for the basic norms and values that represent Scandinavian religious identity and unite the population into a moral community with a shared consciousness, Riis claims that “Protestant Humanism has no well-defined set of dogma, like Islam or Catholicism; but its basic tenets are well expressed in the declarations of human rights” (1989:144). This is not to say that Muslims and Catholics cannot respect the Declaration of Human Rights, but rather that Islam and Catholicism are religions rooted in theology, whereas the modern religion of Protestant Humanism is rooted in an individualistic creed with a sacred status given to the Declarations of Human Rights.

Method and material

I seek with this case study to conduct an intensive and detailed study of two single units, with the goal of elucidating the unique features of each case for the purpose of understanding variation through comparison (Bryman, 2012:68). With a comparative approach, I study how political framings of immigration vary in use of religious sentiments. The RRP parties in Sweden and Denmark are interesting cases, since the two countries have similar institutional arrangements, for instance, the universal welfare state, and cultural attributes, such as the Evangelical Lutheran majority church. The strength in a comparison lies in the ability to comprehend the particularities of one case by seeing it in relation to another; it is an analytical process that has been referred to as “the engine of knowledge” (Dogan & Pélassy, 1990:8-10).

Data source

A natural point of departure for the study of the construction of information by political elites is their actual articulations in the parliament chamber, where they embrace their role as representatives of a political party. How RRP parties frame immigration using religious terms is examined, using records of the proceedings in the two parliaments. The speeches are examined during the period of the European migration crisis, but this is not to say that attention is
paid only to the speeches in parliament that relate specifically to topics surrounding the current migration crisis. Rather, statements addressing a range of different issues related to immigration and religion under the period of the contemporary migration crisis are considered.

The use of documentary sources of information is a secondary data source that provides mediate access as opposed to proximate access (Scott, 1990:3). Typical ethical considerations, such as voluntary participation, informed consent, and anonymity (Bryman, 2012:135), have not been addressed in the usual manner, since I use public documents from public persons, and the material is not sensitive in nature (Bryman, 2012:149). Using official state documents as the units of analysis is advantageous in the sense that records of parliamentary debates give an overview of the political culture, and the documents can be openly accessed through the parliaments’ databases. The records from the parliaments make it possible to compare the political debate on similar grounds. Newspapers, on the other hand, are likely to represent different political orientations, which may lead to a skewed comparison due to potential selection bias. Besides, if media articles were to be included, while seeking to comprehend the construction of meaning among the political elite, it would also be necessary to filter out the journalists’ own arguments. Moreover, it is hard to guarantee balanced journalistic reporting between various and sometimes contradicting frames, which is why the “raw” material from the chamber is favoured (Entman, 1993:56).

**Practical aspects in data collection**

The relevant speeches were identified using keywords which reflect an operationalisation of religion. It is widely debated how religion should be defined, but definitions tend to take one of two forms: either substantial or functional aspects are stressed (Lindberg, 2015:26). I aim to examine one of the functions that religion may have in politics, and lean against Durkheim’s largely functional definition of religion. Here, religion is understood as “a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden - beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church, all those who adhere to them” (Durkheim, 1965:62). It is recognised that this definition may be imperfect in the sense that it is skewed to the West with emphasis on the Christian Church. Besides, the idea of religion as a unified system that reinforces a single value system may be challenged by the diversity and religious pluralism in contemporary society, where it can be argued that a fragmented collective consciousness exists.

The keywords included in the data search are: **Religion, Islam, Christianity, Muslim, Chris-**
tian, church, mosque, Jesus, God, Allah, Prophet, Muhammad, imam, Bible, Quran, hijab, cross, Ramadan, Christmas (as well as other religious traditions) religious community, secular, secularisation, and these have been translated into equivalents in Danish and Swedish. I have restrained from including spiritual concepts in these keywords, such as angels, spirits, and meditation, since these tend to be used in a range of non-religious ways, and this choice corresponds with the functional definition of religion. The webpages for the Danish and Swedish parliament are digitally searchable, but the digital search has been combined with manual tests to examine the reliability of the results, and account for possible bias in search terms and potentially missed material. I have read through the speeches to sort out material that, despite correspondence with the search terms, turned out to be of no relevance. Only the speeches in which politicians from the DPP or the SD refer to religious sentiments in relation to immigration questions are taken into consideration. The data was collected during the period 1 January 2015 to 11 March 2016, and it consists of 145 speeches from the Danish parliament and 45 speeches from the Swedish parliament. The speeches have been identified by only one researcher with the same premises for inclusion and exclusion applied. The data are comparable in terms of data-collection method and have been extracted from comparable sources, i.e. records of the proceedings in the chambers. The variation in the number of identified speeches is therefore likely the result of an actual difference, and not because of biased data collection with selection bias. The higher number of references to religious sentiments in the Danish parliament should be seen in relation to the DPP’s more prolific position within the political landscape. However, the reader should not give too much significance to what seems, at first glance, like a large difference in the speeches identified. While counting the number of speeches, information regarding their length was omitted, and the difference between a brief remark and a rapporteur talk is not considered. When referring to the material in the analysis below, the name of the politician who gave the statement, the meeting number (mtg), and the order of speech number (sph) are included, which will make it possible to find the data material from the parliaments webpages.

Assessing the quality of the data

Potential methodological issues when handling documentary sources can be addressed by assessing the quality of the data. A disadvantage of using existing documents is the lack of control of data quality, which is why a systematic way to assess the quality of the data is needed, where the four aspects, authenticity, credibility, representativeness and meaning are
considered (Scott, 1990:6).

Authenticity regards whether the data is genuine and of reliable origin (Ibid). From the protocols, it is clear which political speaker is expressing themselves. However, although authorship is clear in a physical sense, the politicians may have received guidance when preparing their speeches. This may, to some extent, challenge the concept of authorship and integrity, since they are staged presentations, rhetorically designed to influence people in certain ways. Because the speeches are seen as merely reflections of party policy, delivered by different politicians, this is not considered a problem. Credibility as a quality criterion concerns whether the evidence is free from error or distortion (Mogalakwe, 2006:226). The records of parliament speeches represent raw material from the chamber, with no editing applied, which avoids difficulties regarding point of view and accuracy in coverage. An additional advantage of these documents is that no researcher has influenced or distorted the data production. Since the documents have not been produced at the request of a researcher, and no researcher has directly interfered with the activities of interest, reactive effects can be disregarded as a limitation to the validity of the data (Bryman, 2012:543). Representativeness regards whether the evidence is typical of its kind (Mogalakwe, 2006:227). Here, the data source can openly be accessed, and denial of access in relation to certain confidential documents (which could affect the representativeness of the data source) has not occurred. The results are likely to reflect a period during which exceptional attention was paid to migration questions, and in which (religious) nationalist and xenophobic sentiments may have reached new heights. However, it is an advantage that this untypicality, with the European migration crisis, has been experienced in both Sweden and Denmark. The final criterion, meaning, concerns whether the evidence is clear and comprehensible, and emphasises a distinction between a document’s literal and interpretative meanings (Ibid). In order to comprehend the interpretative meaning, “the researcher relates the literal meaning to the context in which the documents were produced in order to assess the meaning of the text as a whole” (Ibid). This hermeneutically inspired understanding requires that a researcher has a comprehensive understanding of the political context, in order to be able to comprehend the interpretative meaning. This is also the case since the documents are removed from the larger debate they were originally situated in, which raises challenges when the politicians refer to each other. In order to meaningfully understand the speeches, I have needed to become familiar with the context in which the statements have been given, which was a time-consuming process (Bryman, 2012:559).
Abductive reasoning

Abductive reasoning has been essential since it captures aspects of both inductive and deductive reasoning. One of the benefits of a deductive approach in framing analysis is the possibility to include a large amount of empirical material, with the words that mark the presence of a frame, identified with the help of computer programmes (Matthes & Kohring, 2008:261). A deductive approach is therefore rather straightforward to replicate. It requires the researcher to know what to look for, with an initial coding scheme often originates from previous research. There is a risk of overlooking frames that have not been defined prior to data collection, and an obvious limitation is the lack of sensitivity to the emergence of new frames. The inductive approach, can reveal the array of possible frames more fully, since the empirical material speaks for itself (Bryman, 2012:568). Inductive reasoning is closely related to and developed in relation to grounded theory (Bryman, 2012:575), and in this regard it is related to frame building. Since a gap in the literature exists on the topic of this thesis, it is difficult to rely on previous research to conduct an initial coding scheme, which is why frame building is more appropriate. However, while it is possible to capture the complexity in the political debates with an inductive approach, this tends to have negative consequences for the sample sizes, due to labour-intensive manual coding, and the reliability may likewise be lowered.

I aim to derive frames with great sensitivity to the empirical material, but not without respect to theoretical contributions and previous research. In line with a hermeneutic point of departure, an individual’s preconception should not be regarded as an obstacle, but rather a precondition for understanding the world in which one is embedded (Langergaard et al, 2011:126). In order to understand the field, it has been crucial to comprehend, for instance, the defining characteristics of the RRP party family, which has contributed to knowledge about what to expect of the framing from these parties. I have reflected on general theoretical considerations that could serve as an explanation to my empirical findings, and moved back and forth between these assumptions and the empirical material in order to focus on this potential confirmation, as is consistent with abductive reasoning (Bryman, 2012:577). Going back and forth between the empirical material and theoretical contributions assures a close linkage between the two. This linkage is important to avoid arriving at a theory, which has no roots in empirical reality, as well as empirical observations which lack the level of abstraction that gives observations significance beyond individual annotations. The theoretical contributions are crucial to make sense of the data in a systematic and abstract sense, and interpretations that involve a higher level of abstraction require a move beyond the descriptions of the
themes generated from the empirical material (Creswell, 2013:187). However, I have attempted to maintain only loose preconceived notions, and to bracket these in the initial coding process, to be able to distance myself from these notions and thus avoid the problem, flagged by Popper, of a researcher’s directedness or horizon of expectations becoming determining for the conclusions they can potentially draw (Vengsgaard, 2012:149-150).

Analysis procedure

Clear guiding principles about how to identify a frame in communication do not exist (Chong & Druckman, 2007a:106), and it is challenging to describe in detail how qualitative frames have been extracted from material. There is a tendency to claim that frames “emerged from the analysis” or simply that “frames were found”, and thereby neglect the analytical process that took place (Matthes & Kohring, 2008:259). This poses some challenges for the transparency and replicability of a qualitative framing analysis, but with the aim to be as transparent as possible, the steps that took place to extract frames from the raw material will be described. Moreover, throughout the analysis there are quotations and examples from the empirical material, to assure the reader of the validity of the claims.

While there are different approaches to framing analysis I will with inspiration from a hermeneutic approach (Ibid), and interpretivism as an epistemology, set out to analyse the qualitative content in-depth (Bryman, 2012:560). The focus is on bringing out the actors’ subjective meanings and facilitating an understanding of human social action and intention (Bryman, 2012:28). The emphasis is on frames in communication, but with particular focus on the content, rather than linguistic aspects, of the material. At the heart of a qualitative content analysis which searches for themes lies a thorough coding (Bryman, 2012:559). As a first step, an overview of the different aspects of the data has been acquired with a systematic and inductive coding. Each sentence has been marked with a description in content-specific terms (Creswell, 2013:184). This has resulted in a range of descriptions, which may be regarded as subtopics or first-cycle coding. A speech tends to contain several themes, and while each speech could, for the sake of clarity in quantitative terms, have been coded with only one descriptive code representing the key consideration emphasised, this procedure would limit and harm the complexity of the data, as material would be disregarded when not identified as a key consideration. Step two, or the second-cycle coding, refers to broader themes, which group the descriptive labels into analytically comprehensible categories (Creswell, 2013:180). This is an attempt to see patterns in the data material, and is possible to carry out since some
of the descriptions from the first-cycle coding describe the same overarching topic. Structuring the analysis according to a thematic structure, derived from the empirical material, makes a comparison feasible between the SD and the DPP because differences in their frames can be comprehended according to separate topics in a layered analysis (Bryman, 2012:578).

The final analytical step, which attaches frames to the inductively identified themes, will contribute knowledge about the buttons that the RRP parties are trying to push in order to evoke anti-immigration attitudes in the populations of their respective countries. This analytical approach can be characterised as frame building. In order to be able to recognise the presence of a frame, different techniques will be identified, in relation to four commonly recognised functions of a frame, which are: problem definition, diagnosing causes, moral evaluation and prescribing solutions and/or treatment recommendations (Entman, 1993:52). Problem definition concerns the primary argument or central issue which the politicians emphasise in the hopes of encouraging voters to think of an issue along particular lines. The diagnosis of causes regards the identification of the forces that create the problem, whereas moral evaluations tend to take the form of the benefits or risks associated with a problem. Suggestions of solutions concern the justification of treatment, and the prediction of the likely effects that a problem may have (Ibid). A frame may not perform all of these functions, but with roots in the theoretical definition, it is nevertheless essential that, in order for a frame to be present, an articulation should work to describe, interpret and/or evaluate a complex reality to the general public. In this sense, framing theory has been used not only in a theoretical sense but also as a methodological influence, because an operationalisation of the theoretical definition of a frame has been carried out in order to empirically locate the constitutive elements of a frame.

**Methodological concerns**

This case study gives a holistic picture of a complex phenomenon, with a narrow and fine-grained analysis of political representation, but with some limitations in respect to reliability and external validity. It has been debated whether external validity is an appropriate quality criterion for a case study, since the strength of a case study is the context-specific knowledge it provides, which ultimately makes it difficult to generalise from one study to others (Bryman, 2012:69). The aim here is to appreciate the complexity of the situation and unravel a paradox regarding anti-immigration attitudes; not necessarily to generalise beyond the case, even though some findings are likely to apply to also other contexts, at least in terms of analytic generalisation (Bryman, 2012:406; Creswell, 2013:101). Attempts have been made to
strengthen this study’s reliability and validity by being as transparent as possible, and aware of the potential problems that methodological concerns may pose. It is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to neutralise the impact of the researcher when building frames (Chong & Druckman, 2007a:108), and it is a worry that qualitative-oriented framing analyses may result in “researcher frames” rather than political frames (Matthes & Kohring, 2008:259). However, I have challenged my findings and paid attention to negative cases in the data to avoid a biased picture. Abductive reasoning has been beneficial in order to arrive at empirically determined, as opposed to subjectively defined, frames, with the initial approach being largely inductive. While there are challenges involved in this design, challenges would also appear with a more “objective” quantitative approach. Identifying frames with word counts through computer-assisted methods may yield reliable results, but has limitations in terms of validity. This type of analysis reduces frames to clusters of words, and examining specific vocabularies may miss the meaning behind the relationships between words (Matthes & Kohring, 2008:262). Where the computer-assisted method struggles to contribute nuanced insights, the manual coding approach gives this thesis the considerable advantage of comprehending the complexity and richness of human language and it is strong in terms of validity (Ibid).

It is not possible to draw causal conclusions from these results, and the extent to which differences in political framing can actually account for variations in the perception of immigrants as a threat is hard to outline specifically. The relationship between anti-immigration attitudes and framing by the RRP parties is merely, based on the abductive approach, reasoning to the most likely explanation. This thesis makes a complex empirical reality understandable, and should be seen as a contribution to a larger complex puzzle.

Analysis

In the following analysis, it will be seen that the politicians make use of statistics and claims in order to bring about a particular conceptualisation of a given issue. Whether the rationale behind the claims is justified or not, is however of minor importance in this study. The crucial element lies in the trends in defining issues, which meet the public as objectified frames of reference they can lean against. Considering the truth in political framing as merely a social construction is reasonable since it has been found that the inclusion of factual information has
no significant impact on the strength of a frame. Frames that highlight specific emotions or utilise analogous arguments are as influential as factual frames (Druckman & Bolsen, 2009). Therefore, assessing whether a given conceptualisation has any factual value is meaningless for the present thesis, when it comes to the impact frames can have on public opinion formation. As researchers have shown, RRP parties tend to approach the migration question in a similar vein, but in this analysis I will examine rhetorically different framing techniques in line with the research question, and similarities will therefore be given less significance. On behalf of the inductive coding strategy, the four themes, migration flows and citizenship, religious buildings and education, Islam as a violent and problematic religion, and threatened Christians and Christian values have been identified.

Migration flows and citizenship

The presence of Muslim immigrants

Opposing a liberal migration policy is key to RRP parties, which is an element that also the DPP and the SD have emphasised greatly. Martin Henriksen from the DPP has argued that “the massive influx, that we have seen, and are still seeing, from especially Muslim countries, is shaking the foundation of the Danish society and tend to increasingly question some of the most basic values and principles in Denmark” (mtg.21, sph.84), and it is implied that “Muslims cannot in practice be integrated in Europe” (Kenneth Kristensen Berth, mtg.61, sph.28). The presence of Muslims in Denmark is considered a problem because their religious orientation is fundamentally different from the way in which Danes exercise Christianity, and it is claimed that “when celebrating Christmas, one distinguishes between the religious and the worldly. This lies within Christianity. When one celebrates Ramadan, it all melts together - the worldly and the religious” (Alex Ahrendtsen, mtg.62, sph.104). Arguing that Christians, but not Muslims, are able to distinguish between the non-religious and the religious spheres is a way to stress that the primitive religion of Islam is incompatible with a modern secular society, whereas Christianity represents a more modern worldview. Christians do supposedly not live their lives with obedience to religious authority, but rather have been rescued from this naïve religious faith. Religious orientation is in this sense perceived as an important aspect when debating a person’s comparability with Danish society and, ultimately, citizenship, to the extent that the DPP has claimed that extreme imams should be denied entrance to Den-
mark (Peter Skaarup, mtg.62, sph.407). As for the SD, Mattias Karlsson has emphasised that Islam is a highly problematic religion, and claimed:

For every year it becomes increasingly clear that Islam is the evil of our time and that this misanthropic ideology must be fought with the same energy and the same level of uncompromising as we have previously fought other anti-democratic ideologies such as National Socialism and Communism (Mattias Karlsson, mtg.45, sph.43).

Therefore, it is considered highly problematic by the SD that some politicians fail to acknowledge that not all immigrants require the same amount of support. Martin Kinnunen claims that some politicians intend to “connect all immigrant groups with each other - much like there is no difference between people, and that Norwegian immigration and immigration from the Middle East would affect Sweden in the same manner, and require the same preparedness and response” (mtg.35, sph.91). Immigrants from Muslim countries are perceived as different from Swedes, and it is stressed that disparities between social groups constitute an inescapable source of conflict. Kent Ekeroth has argued that even small ethnic and religious differences lead to conflicts, and this is considered a fact, based on a range of examples, which once and for all falsifies the notion that a multicultural society is one to strive for. Problems exists between Muslims and Hindus in Kashmir, between Tutsis and Hutus in Rwanda, and there are disputes between the Chinese and Uighurs in China: “these conflicts are characterised by great brutality and the enormous suffering of many people - all based on religious and ethnic conflicts, which is the normal state of the world we live in and has been so since the beginning of history” (Kent Ekeroth, mtg.58, sph.154). This can be seen as an attempt to naturalise religious and ethnic conflicts, and thereby reject the postulation that problems associated with religious diversity in a multicultural society can actually be solved. The right for nations, cultures and races to be different is placed within an ethno-pluralist doctrine, such that it is maintained that culturally and religiously diverse groups should essentially be kept apart to preserve unique national characteristics. Even though Islam has been depicted as “the evil of our time”, it is more common for the SD to frame ethnic diversity and multiculturalism as the reasons why migration should be restricted. However, the greater the disparity between groups, the more likely it is that conflicts will emerge, which is why they have questioned: “when even Flemings and Walloons in Belgium cannot get along, do you believe in all seriousness that the disparate groups that you import to Sweden will do so?” (Ibid). While it is accentuated that Muslims are different from Swedes, it is not specified that it is their religious orientation, which is incompatible with the Swedish society, and I have not found incidents of politicians from the SD setting the religious faiths of Muslims and Chris-
tians against each other, as members of the DPP do.

The SD do not make use of Christianity as a common denominator, which may be because Swedish identity is less infused with religious nationalism. According to Riis, religion is vague as a common denominator in countries with high religious diversity, where Christianity as a legitimate platform to express a we-feeling can be inhibited. The more pronounced religious homogeneity in Denmark has likely resulted in stronger national religious identity, and when national identity is threatened by the external source that Islam comes to represent, the Christian cultural heritage may be used as an important instrument for distinction and, according to Bruce, as guarantor of group identity. The possible greater identification with Christianity in Denmark enables the DPP to infuse a sense of religious conflict to the political debate, so that issues regarding religious diversity get framed as struggles between Islam and Christianity. The presumably weaker Swedish identification with Christianity, which is implicitly confirmed by the SD not adopting this framing, makes it harder for the SD to portray the conflict in strictly religious terms, and conflicts are therefore framed in relation to multiculturalism more broadly.

**A request for additional control**

The need to criminalise terrorists travelling and bar citizenship from returning IS warriors is one of the topics emphasised the most by the SD, and they request an examination of “how a withdrawal of citizenship may look, even if it makes someone stateless” (Julia Kronlid, mtg.58, sph.40). The SD oppose a tax-financed support program for returning IS warriors (Julia Kronlid, mtg.58, sph.48), and stress that social benefits, as for instance healthcare and priority access to housing, should be regarded as a national as well as an international problem. By helping to stabilise IS warriors, they argue, Sweden is making it possible for its enemies to return to conflict zones and continue their fight for IS (Björn Söder, mtg.108, sph.68). Assistance to returning IS warriors is thought of as “a punch in the face to our Christian, Kurdish and Yazidi friends in the conflict zones, who are the ones hardest hit” (Markus Wiechel, mtg.119, sph.128), and religion is in this sense used to distinguish between social groups and determine where solidarity lies. In accordance with Durkheim’s definition, religion can be seen as a collective phenomenon that has an important function in relation to group identification, solidarity and value consensus.

The DPP has, in a similar vein, demanded that citizenship should be withdrawn from returning IS warriors (Martin Henriksen, mtg.43, sph.69), but they tend to discuss citizenship to Muslims in national terms more frequently than international. The DPP stresses broadly that
citizenship for Muslims, who do not respect Danish culture, is a fundamental problem, and it is suggested that when filing for Danish citizenship, an interview should be conducted as a supplement to the declaration of loyalty (Christian Langballe, mtg.s617, sph.74). The DPP wants to secure that individuals who apply for citizenship can articulate how core values are understood and appreciated, because they see a problem with individuals applying for citizenship who are not answering truthfully on the declaration of loyalty. This may be due to a perception of Muslims in mosques as two-faced, with “one face internally, which is extreme and encourages people to break the law, while on the other hand they have a face to show the public, which preaches cooperation and integration” (Alex Ahrendtsen, mtg.62, sph.107). It is emphasised that it is difficult to have faith in Muslims’ sincerity, which is why an interview control is requested when filing for Danish citizenship. This control is particularly targeted towards Muslims, which is expressed explicitly by Christian Langballe who calls for extraordinary inspection of Islam. He argues that Islamists who have filed for Danish citizenship have deceivingly signed the loyalty declaration despite having visions about the Danish constitution being replaced with Sharia law (mtg.s617, sph.84). The extensive examination should help to assess whether individuals acknowledge Danish core values (Christian Langballe, mtg.s617, sph.74). It is acknowledged that PET (the Danish Security and Intelligence Service) works to identify individuals that pose a threat to national security, but Christian Langballe claims that while PET focuses extensively on terrorists, there is a lack of focus on intolerable utterances, such as statements that go against democracy, human rights and the constitution (mtg.s616, sph.62+70). The screening of immigrants should, according to him, “check that someone does not speak out and, for example, signify that they will overthrow the Danish democracy, or that they will replace the constitution with Sharia law” (mtg.s616, sph.62). Greater control of utterances is considered essential for preventing Muslims, and imams in particular, in radical environments from using their citizenship as a shield to invoke the Constitutional opportunities of freedom of speech, and preach Sharia law in Denmark (Kristian Thulesen Dahl, mtg.62, sph.333).

There is a paradoxical inconsistency within the DPP in relation to freedom of speech issues. On the one hand, the DPP focuses extensively on the perceived negative consequences of living in a multicultural society when they claim that restricted freedom of speech is felt when Danes have to assert self-censorship to avoid offending Muslims. This will be elaborated further in this analysis. On the other hand, the tolerance among the DPP for propaganda perceived as “extreme accordingly to Western standards” (Christian Langballe, mtg.97, sph.36), and utterances that are offensive to Danish core values is very low. The DPP wants to use law
and order to monitor deviant behaviour and utterances, while framing appropriateness in relation to a shared moral order, rooted in a Christian cultural heritage. The request for sanctioning people who ideologically oppose democracy is a dramatic shift in thinking and it can be seen as an attempt to combat anti-democratic attitudes with anti-democratic methods. The proposed restrictions on individuals’ rights to express themselves may challenge liberal democracy, and point towards a modern religious worldview surrounded by taboos and prohibitions, in which democracy and human rights are elevated to sacred values.

Regarding framing strategies seen in relation to the theme “migration flows and citizenship”, the SD and the DPP have taken similar approaches when it comes to problem definition, as they see liberal migration policies and especially immigration from Muslim countries constituting the burden. The forces creating this problem diverge however, and the DPP frame the cause as struggles to integrate Muslims, who cannot in practice be integrated in a Danish society. The SD, on the other hand, emphasise multiculturalism more broadly, within an ethno-pluralist doctrine, which stresses clashes between cultures. Regarding moral evaluation, the DPP sees a threat in the presence of Muslim ways of life, especially in the form of imams, that shakes the foundation of the Danish society. It is feared that the Danes may come to appear as infidels (Christian Langballe, mtg.62, sph.40), which is an indication of the perceived conflict over religious dominance between Christianity and Islam. The SD tend to highlight the allegedly negative direction in which Swedish society is heading, with radicalisation and a national state blinded by humanitarian goals, who fails to take national security seriously, resulting in improved circumstances for IS warriors. It is a different framing of the Muslim threat, as the DPP tends to focus on debates regarding the citizenship of Muslims and imams, who can spread Islam in Danish society as a threat that may even go beyond IS warriors; at least because these considerations are emphasised more. The solution that both the SD and the DPP propose is a restrictive migration policy in general, but the DPP has also brought forward specific recommendations, such as the request for a screening unit to control the citizenship of, particularly, Muslims, and make sure that potential Danish citizens do not hold attitudes that go against the Danish constitution.

**Religious buildings and education**

**Mosques**

Religious communities and the public funding of them are not a hot topic for the SD, but it is
nevertheless claimed that more inspection is needed of Muslim organisations, to avoid a situation of “tax financing of associations and organisations that have allowed for a very questionable or directly anti-democratic agenda” (Aron Emilsson, mtg.114, sph.27). The SD argue that the state support to religious communities that deliberately reduce the role of women in society and actively resist gender equality should be withdrawn (Ibid). It is furthermore stressed that organised recruitment to IS takes place in mosques, and to control and restrict these networks it is crucial to take a deeper look at their ties to international fundamentalism (Markus Wiechel, mtg.119, sph.128).

The DPP has taken a tougher stance, and claimed that the most debated mosques, namely the Grimhøjmoske that was recently portrayed in a documentary, should be closed and the building of another Great mosque in Copenhagen should not be permitted (Søren Espersen, mtg.62, sph.411; Martin Henriksen, mtg.97, sph.2). It is also debated whether one of the larger Muslim organisations, the Islamic Society in Denmark, should have their recognition as religious community withdrawn (Martin Henriksen, mtg.97, sph.60). These topics have by far been the most frequently stressed, and substantially more stressed by the DPP than by the SD, although the recent Danish documentary has undoubtedly pushed the debate in this direction. The DPP demands drastic action be taken, different from the regular integration plans and “soft circle dialogues” (Christian Langballe, mtg.62, sph.173). The DPP has defended the idea that religious communities and religious buildings can be dissolved despite constitutional binding to freedom of religion, and claimed that the religious practices within mosques are in conflict with other paragraphs in the constitution. The DPP claims that the actions and utterances within the mosques involves community distraction and should be condemned according to the paragraph which stresses that: “citizens have the right to unite in the community to worship God in the manner consistent with their convictions, provided that nothing is taught or done contrary to morality and public order” (Martin Henriksen, mtg.97, sph.6). It is emphasised that freedom of religion has boundaries, and that associations that operate by violence or encourage to violence should be closed (Peter Skaarup, mtg.62, sph.74). Thus, the DPP sets out to criminalise the activities in mosques by referring to constitutional violation, even though it is recognised that it is not possible to prove that these religious communities actually operate by violence (Ibid). It seems that the DPP has a broad depiction of what constitutes community distracting activities, and it includes more than the widely debated Grimhøjmoske. Christian Langballe claims “if you can close one, then you can also close ten” (mtg.62, sph.96), and there is a desire to set a precedent with the Grimhøjmoske and use it as inspiration and justification in similar cases (mtg.62, sph.44). This is considered an important
step in the right direction because, ultimately, "we from the Danish People's Party do not wish for the presence of great mosques in Denmark – period" (Martin Henriksen, mtg.97, sph.6).

**Teaching in Islam and Christianity**

It is suggested by the DPP that education in Christianity should be compulsory in public school, so that parents cannot exempt their child from this teaching (Martin Henriksen, mtg.87, sph.54). The proportion of children currently exempted is not significant, and the debate is essentially a symbolic struggle over a policy that is required to "ensure the Danish people’s cultural rights in Denmark by implementing an end to discrimination against Danes and Danish culture in public institutions" (Ibid). The compulsory teaching of Christianity is related to a debate regarding the premises that should guide public institutions. It is clear that Christianity is considered an implicit element of public institutions, whereas heavy opposition greets Muslim rules that are perceived to be micromanaging the daily life of Danes (Martin Henriksen, mtg.87, sph.14). It is remarkable that while the ECRI points towards a lack of teaching in cultural and religious diversity within the Danish school system, the DPP does not consider this as a problem, and proposes instead that the teaching, which is skewed towards Christianity, should be obligatory for all Danish citizens regardless of religious orientation. This points towards a request for assimilation over integration. Regarding the teaching of Islam, greater control and transparency in Muslim environments is sought. This is not only requested by the DPP, but even the Socialist People’s Party has suggested that imams should undertake instruction in democracy and Danish values. Marlene Harpsøe from the DPP has argued that this suggestion lacks “realism” because it is foolish to believe that imams will actually obey these instructions after a short course (mtg.62, sph.391), and Martin Henriksen has challenged the practicalities of this suggestion and questioned “if they want to drag him there” (mtg.62, sph.313). It is claimed that the suggestion requires severe sanctions, and the DPP requests that both the religious community and imams who teach without state approval should experience sanctions, to the extent that the imam should run the risk of losing his residence permit in Denmark (Martin Henriksen, mtg.62, sph.317). In the Swedish context, the SD request that courses within popular education should be closed if they actively promote “religious and extremist contradictions within society” (Aron Emilsson, mtg.82, sph.121). They find it troubling to tax subsidise associations that strengthen and preserve cultural and religious differences, which is essentially a lack of desire to support multiculturalism. Education in Islam is not necessarily stressed as the crucial problem even though an example is giv-
en of problematic associations that strengthen Swedish-Muslim identity. It is the segregating tendencies of associations aimed at certain segments of the Swedish population that are considered problematic since these associations do not contribute to contact across social groups, when few Swedes participate in meetings to strengthen, for instance, Swedish-Muslim identity (Ibid).

Regarding framing strategies used when discussing “religious buildings and education”, both the SD and the DPP tend to see mosques and religious teaching as problematic, though to varying degrees and with different solutions suggested. Where the SD demand greater surveillance of these environments and a potential withdrawal of tax subsidies, the DPP argues that a more drastic stance is needed, namely that Great Mosques should not even exist in Denmark. They argue that the “carrot-approach” has been tried with the Muslims in the Grimhøjmoske, but, according to Christian Langballe, it is not possible to regulate and modify only slightly Muslim communities because “in that mentality the only thing that works is the stick” (mtg. 62, sph. 96). Also, Islamic teaching that occurs without Danish state approval is seen as highly problematic, and it is considered a risk that it does not correspond with the constitution. The SD value the courses within popular education that strengthen a multicultural society negatively, whereas the DPP more specifically fears that the cultural privileges of the Danes will become neglected. The DPP and the SD therefore both oppose religion in the social sphere, and this can, in relation to Taylor’s second sense of secularisation, be seen as a secular trend towards a social sphere free from religious beliefs and practices. The SD oppose teaching that contributes to cultural and religious barriers being preserved, but contrary to the DPP, they do not suggest that these potential religious or cultural barriers should be valued positively when it comes to teaching in Christianity. The DPP asks for greater restrictions on and sanctioning of Islam in the social sphere, while on the other hand they demand governmental regulation of the social sphere in favour of Christianity. This apparent inconsistency can be seen in relation to the peculiar Danish case of secularisation, which has seen individual and social secularisation occur at a much faster pace than societal secularisation, meaning Denmark should not be regarded as secular in the first of Taylor’s three senses. The ties between the Danish church and the state that continue to exist have a symbolic value in the sense that they signify that Denmark and Christianity go hand in hand; which the previously mentioned test for citizenship, and the questions in it regarding Christianity, are an indication of. However, the DPP is not satisfied with a symbolic value, and they want this peculiar constellation to influence also the practical structuring of the Danish society.
Islam as a problematic and violent religion

Democracy versus Muslim rules

Islam is frequently portrayed as a problematic and violent religion by the DPP, and as a religion ultimately in conflict with human rights and democracy. It is stressed within the DPP that Muslims lack the aspiration for democracy in the sense that “a large group, perhaps even intelligent individuals, actively dismiss democracy while actively choosing Sharia, which is anything but democracy” (Claus Kvist Hansen, mtg.62, sph.56). The politicians within the DPP frequently make references to the 2012 election in Egypt, where a president with roots in the Muslim Brotherhood freely was elected at the expense of a more secular candidate. This is interpreted as a failed chance to prove the compatibility of Islam and democracy. The fear of Sharia and Muslim rules that challenge democracy are not only viewed as a problem on the international stage, but rather, it is argued by Alex Ahrendtsten, that the same sentiments are to be found in Danish society, where four out of ten Danish Muslims wish for the Quran to be part of the Danish constitution (mtg.62, sph.48). Islam is therefore thought of as threatening Danish values, democracy and the constitution. Kristian Thulesen Dahl has also argued that a problem exists because some Muslims “try to maintain that people must base decisions on Sharia law instead of the Danish society’s rules and laws” (mtg.62, sph.189). The SD do not articulate the idea that Sharia or Muslim rules are a threat to the Swedish constitution, even though they do maintain that “Sharia law is by definition undemocratic” (Markus Wiechel, mtg.119, sph.131). It seems plausible that religion is disregarded as a threat in this respect because religion in general is omitted from the Swedish constitutional act. This may clarify why a debate regarding religious dominance and the structuring of society is politicised in Denmark, while it is not in Sweden. The separation of the state and the church in Sweden could have contributed to the perception, that it is unlikely that an external religious threat, such as Islam, can come to dominate areas of public life, when religion generally lacks a connection to state affairs. It is a sign of greater contextualisation by the DPP of the alleged threat that Islam poses to the Danish society, where the ties between the state and the church may have nurtured struggles over religious primacy, as it is accepted that the dominant religion will influence the structuring of society. Therefore, the DPP sees the perceived advance of Islam’s power in the public domain as potentially threatening to Danish ideals, which may impose a greater sense of religious conflict in Denmark. Following Bruce’s (1999) prediction that societies either follow secular trends or engage in painful struggles over religion, it seems
that Sweden has to a larger extent followed the secular path, whereas Denmark has engaged in struggle for religious dominance.

**Socio-cultural left-wing arguments**

Both the DPP and the SD use traditional socio-cultural left-wing arguments when discussing Islam as a problematic religion, which may seem like a rather peculiar approach for political parties with strong authoritarian positions. However, a reasonable assumption is that this is done in order to strategically disguise their criticism of Islam. Julia Kronlid finds it troubling that the political parties that usually fight for equality between the sexes seems to neglect this fight when it concerns women’s oppression in radical Muslim environments (mtg.58, sph.78). It is argued that problematic religious denominations exist in Sweden, “that teach that a woman is subordinate to a man” (Aron Emilsson, mtg.114, sph.27), and oppression of Muslim children is also emphasised through the claim that it is “oppression when I look at my daughter's [Muslim] friends who are not allowed to associate with whomever they want” (Mikael Eskilandersson, mtg.122, sph.100). Islam is also problematised with socio-cultural left-wing arguments by the DPP, where Marlene Harpsøe finds the lack of interest in Muslim women’s rights troubling, and claims that some politicians “make an effort for educated women who would like directorships in Danish companies, but as soon as it comes to Muslim women and their struggle for freedom (...), then one is very subdued” (mtg.62, sph.205). Imams advising Muslim women to stay in abusive marriages and denial of divorce to women have been discussed, as well as the prohibition of same-sex marriages in mosques (Marie Krarup, mtg.62, sph.219; Pia Kjærsgaard, mtg.48, sph.116+276).

Both the SD and the DPP politicise issues of human rights and gender equality in order to push the alleged threat of Islam. They use human rights and gender equality in order to make differences between religions stand out more markedly. While presenting their arguments, with humanitarian and liberal socio-cultural aspects accentuated, they are contributing to a perception of Islam as a violent religion that cannot be united with the Western modern religion, Protestant Humanism. Religion is in this sense used strategically to emphasise heterogeneity, with the Declaration of Human Rights as an advantageous starting point from which different worldviews can be distinguished and compared. Protestant Humanism may, in this comparison, come to represent a life lived according to higher moral standards than the naïve religious community of Islam. While both the DPP and the SD make use of socio-cultural left-wing arguments to frame Islam as a religion that violates human rights, these issues are contextualised differently. The DPP sees these tendencies as a problem because the presence
of Islam in Danish society influences Danish values and changes ideals of freedom such as equality of the sexes (Pia Kjærgaard, mtg.48, sph.2). However, the contextualisation in Sweden concerns the highly problematic and unfortunate situation for Muslims who experience having their human rights violated, but this it is not necessarily claimed to affect the lives of the native non-Muslim Swedes.

**Perception of Muslims as largely moderate or radical**

According to the DPP’s Alex Ahrendtsen, “Christmas symbolises values such as generosity, charity and peace, while Ramadan is the symbol of Islam, whose values, which are preached in these mosques, include, as we have seen in a television broadcast, that it is okay to beat women” (mtg.62, sph.193). While he marks a sharp difference between celebrating Christmas and Ramadan, he also points to claimed parallels between Muslims who celebrate Ramadan and Muslims in the radical environments that have been depicted in the television broadcast to which he is referring. In this way, the perceived radical environments in the mosques are related to Muslim traditions, and Muslims who celebrate Ramadan are potentially a threat to Danish ideals, because their religious traditions urges them to beat women. In addition, Marie Krarup maintains that what are perceived as “freedom hostile” attitudes among Muslims spring from “the tradition interpretation of Islam” (mtg.62, sph.165). This indicates that it is not just radical preaching in the mosques, but Islam and Muslim traditions more generally, that cause distress. The religious community of Islam is depicted as problematic, regardless of whether it takes a radical form or not. Søren Espersen has even questioned whether moderate imams exist, and asked “where are those moderate imams, who we thus may support? I have not met any of them yet, but I am really looking forward to press the hand of the first” (mtg.62, sph.153). Alex Ahrendtsen also claims that it is “the majority of the imams that are rotten apples” (mtg.62, sph.291). It has been stressed by the Liberal party that a revolt among young Muslims is needed to create distance from radical Muslim environments, but the DPP argues that this revolt is already taking place, but it deviates from expectation. It is claimed that Muslim youths revolt from Danish society and turn towards radical Muslim environments, rather than the opposite (Alex Ahrendtsen, mtg.62, sph.375). Presenting a Muslim revolt against Danish society is a point of departure different from the rhetoric used by the SD, which frequently highlights a distinction between what are perceived as moderate and extreme Muslims. According to Mattias Karlsson:

*It is clear that we should not blame all Muslims for the outrages committed in the name of Islam. The moderate, reform-minded Muslims who believe in Democracy and the values that have formed the*
Politicians within the SD portray themselves as fighters against the stereotypical picture of Muslims. They emphasise the unfortunate situation where radical organisations are “too often allowed to represent almost all Swedish Muslims” (Markus Wiechel, mtg.119, sph.131). This concern is emphasised repeatedly and framed as solidarity with Muslim minorities. The SD suggest that structural changes are needed, first and foremost a restricted migration policy, in order to solve integration challenges and avoid an unpleasant situation whereby “people start putting all Muslims and Islam under one roof” (Aron Emilsson, mtg.114, sph.32).

Regarding “Islam as a problematic and violent religion”, there is convergence in problem definition as both the DPP and the SD experience Islam as a problematic religion that tends to violate human rights. Both the DPP and the SD highlight the consequences this has for Muslim minorities who are at great risk of having their human rights violated. However, Islam is also perceived by the DPP as a risk for Danish society, because it is feared that Sharia and Muslim rules may come to interfere with the structuring of society. The political parties diverge on the diagnosis of the cause, and where the DPP sees the presence of Islam as a threat regardless of whether it takes a radical form or not, the SD tend to distinguish between moderate and radical Muslim groups. Even though a difference exists, it is possible to find cases where the SD do not maintain a distinction between Islam and radical Islamism, for instance when Islam is portrayed as “the evil of our time” (Mattias Karlsson, mtg.45, sph.43). Nevertheless, the general tendencies points towards a differentiation between moderate and radical forms of Islam within the SD, and a lack of differentiation within the DPP. It is essentially a difference in the political framing, with the criminalisation of Islam by the DPP and the criminalisation of radicalisation by the SD. This is likely to influence the public perception, and contribute to more pronounced scepticism in Denmark when Islam is more or less equated with radical fundamentalism.

**Threatened Christians and Christian values**

**Tolerance taken so far that the intolerant is tolerated**

One of the topics often stressed by the SD is the discrimination against Christians internationally, with particular focus on harassment, violence, discrimination, and the vandalism of Christian places of worship in Europe (Julia Kronlid, mtg.108, sph.102), as well as the ethnic
extinction of Christians in Iraq (Julia Kronlid, mtg.100, sph.69). It is claimed that freedom of religion is taken less seriously when it comes to the violated human rights of Christians. The DPP tends to approach threatened Christians and Christian values differently, where discrimination against the Danes is one of their most stressed topics. They emphasise that Danes become restricted in their everyday life as Islam dominates additional areas of the public domain. The DPP highlights the negative development they claim has taken place, where Danes have been forced to exert self-censorship and restrict the freedom of speech to avoid offending Muslims (Pia Kjærsgaard, mtg.48, sph.332). According to the DPP, Muslims demand religious privileges and special regard, which they should not be given since this would establish a system with privileges given only to some. It is stated that it should not be tolerable in a Danish society that companies choose to abandon the Christmas party on the pretext that not all employees are Christians (Ibid). It is highlighted that stand-up comedians decide not to perform because they receive threats from Muslim communities when “making fun of the Prophet” (Ibid), and also that Danish schools are perceived to give in to Muslim demands, with separate bathrooms and gender-segregated swimming lessons (Pia Kjærsgaard, mtg.48, sph.46). Day care in Denmark, is according to Pia Kjærsgaard, also subject to changes as some institutions are abandoning the traditional services in the Christian Church around Christmas, and change the traditional Danish menu, which usually includes pork, to a menu without pork to cater for religious diversity (mtg.48, sph.332). Some of these observations are supported by referring to a concerned father who wrote a column in a Danish newspaper, describing his struggle to appreciate Islam as part of his everyday life. While looking for day care for his child, the father claimed, according to Martin Henriksen:

Only in one of the institutions (the smallest and most torn-down), could they offer traditional food to the Danes as well as Islamic food to Muslims. In the other three (that accounted for 90 pct. of the capacity) they could not offer traditional Danish dishes such as pork or meat that is not halal meat. In the newest and finest of the four institutions, (...) the premise to go there is to celebrate a week of Ramadan Bayram (mtg.87, sph.54).

In this sense, the DPP emphasises national challenges related to the everyday lives of Danes, and by making extensive use of stories, analogies and anecdotes to show the practicality of the problems, the Muslim threat gets contextualised in Denmark. Religion is used heavily as a common denominator to communicate collective values when aiming to construct an “us” against “them” perception. Christianity comes to represent the common Danish interests and in this sense it is used as a unifying factor to emphasise homogeneity and evoke nationalist sentiments, but with the presence of Islam it is challenging to preserve these common Danish
interests. Instead of viewing Muslims as oppressed minorities that have to adapt to Danish society, they turn the association on its head and claim that Danes are actually the oppressed people who have their rights violated by showing tolerance and embracing the multicultural society. It is therefore claimed that Muslims constitute a burden on individual freedom, because Danes accept discrimination, suppression, and subjugation, and “one can almost feel the ropes getting tighter” (Pia Kjærgaard, mtg.48, sph.332). In order to guard Danish values it is suggested that regulations are needed, and “this is where Christiansborg [the parliament] must take the lead” to ensure that the cultural rights of the Danes are not neglected (Søren Espersen, mtg.62, sph.6). In a resolution, it is proposed that decision-making power should be restricted locally so that “it is not possible to decide, regularly and for several years in a row, that other cultural festivals, such as the Ramadan celebration, should be marked” (Martin Henriksen, mtg.87, sph.54). Even in day care centres with 80% Muslim children, it should according to Martin Henriksen not be possible to substitute the Danish Christian traditions with Muslim ones, since all Danish citizens are expected to participate in culturally important traditions, regardless of their religious orientation, as a natural step in a process of integration (Ibid). This is a pronounced tendency towards cultural defence and a clear attempt to safeguard the dominance of Danish traditions. The demands for the celebration of Danish Christian traditions, and the elimination of competition by prohibiting the influence of Muslim traditions in public institutions, correspond with Kühle’s fear that the Danish state regulates and controls the majority religion. The perceived advance of the power of Islam in the public domain, influenced by the framing of a competition for dominance between religious orientations, may have superimposed a sense of religious conflict on Denmark, and set these tendencies towards cultural defence in motion. It is clear that a duality regarding secular trends is apparent also here, in the argument for the maintenance and protection of Christian dominance in public institutions, while simultaneously suggesting restrictions and obstacles to Islam.

**Radical Islam as problematic for Muslims**

When contextualising issues related to Islam, the SD has taken a different approach. To support their claims about a Swedish society that moves in a wrong direction, with, for instance, radicalisation in the Swedish suburbs, the SD refer to Muslim minorities whom they claim also experience these changes and value them negatively (Aron Emilsson, mtg.114, sph.27). It is stressed that Muslim minorities who have escaped extremism, and who do not sympathise with radical terror organisations, are experiencing in Sweden what they previously fled. Fe-
male Muslims in Swedish suburbs are, according to the SD, experiencing that “they cannot live as before, dress as they like, go to cafes or go out without having to cover themselves” (Ibid). The SD stress that radicalisation, to which both native Swedes and moderate Muslims are subjected, should be fought. It is plausible that this framing is used both to show the severity of the circumstances by drawing parallels between Swedish suburbs and radical environments in Iraq and Syria, as well as to present an authentic account from individuals who have had these first-hand impressions. This strategy, where ethnic minorities are positively presented and expected to have the same desires as the Swedish non-Muslim population, influences the perception of a distinction between “us” and “them”. It is a distinction between religious extremism and moderate religious faith, while the DPP on the contrary use a distinction between Christianity and Islam and imply that one of the religions is moderate, while the other is radical.

When framing “threatened Christians and Christian values”, the SD see oppression of Christians as a substantial problem, but highlight this on an international stage, and thus place the Islamic threat, in relation to discrimination of Christians, at a geographical distance. The DPP emphasises the national context greatly and claim that Danes are restricted and bothered by the presence of Islam. The different approaches when it comes to application of political frames, is likely to spring from a stronger identification with Christianity among the Danes. A framing strategy which places emphasis on the contextualisation and practical meaning of religious conflicts can be used more beneficially to distinguish between Christianity and Islam when people identify with these categories. However, it is essential to keep in mind that this should not be interpreted as if the SD never contextualises migration questions in Sweden, but rather that a difference exists in the way struggles over religious diversity are contextualised by the DPP and the SD. The cause is, according to the DPP, a lack of commitment to defend Christian cultural heritage, alongside Muslims who demand unreasonable and unrighteous religious privileges. Regarding moral assessment, the DPP maintains that the Danes’ freedom is at risk while some ethnic minorities are in a beneficial position, which is seen when Pia Kjærsgaard provocingly stated that some politicians seem to think “freedom should be given only to fanatical imams and Hizb ut-Tahrir” (mtg.48, sph.49). The DPP therefore emphasises what is perceived as paradoxical circumstances in which the Danes are restricted in their everyday lives because of a fear of offending Muslims, who experience a richer extent of freedom. As a solution, the DPP has highlighted state intervention and regulations to assure that Danes’ cultural rights are preserved, which looks like assurance of the dominant position of
Christianity. The SD suggest more support to Christians on the international scene, but apart from a more restrictive migration policy it is not possible to find nationally directed recommendations.

Discussion

The aim of this study has been to compare the use of religious sentiments by the DPP and the SD, and to discuss differences in their framing strategies. Studying how political elites frame issues is crucial since they have an important role in constructing public opinion and common sense knowledge. Citizens are subjected to the impact of the political construction of immigration, and in this sense, the objective social reality is likely to become internalised. Variation in political framing can be seen as one of the important aspects of understanding why public opinion formation has taken different routes in otherwise similar countries.

In this cross-case comparison it is found that differences exist regarding how religion is used to highlight homogeneity and heterogeneity. Both the DPP and the SD use religion to assemble heterogeneity, with human rights emphasised, to demonstrate how Islam violates these and fundamentally opposes the modern Western worldview of Protestant Humanism. The DPP frame disputes over religious diversity as an outspoken conflict between Christians and Muslims, which is seen when discussing Sharia law against the Danish constitution, teaching in Islam versus teaching in Christianity as well as debating whether Christian or Muslim traditions should guide public institutions. The SD tend to frame disparities in a multicultural society as inescapable sources of conflict, but they do not set the religious faiths of Muslims and Christians against each other. In order to frame a battle between Christianity and Islam it seems that it is necessary to make use of framing strategies with emphasis on religious homogeneity. The SD appear to be restricted from framing struggles over religious diversity as a fight between “us” and “them” because they are unable or unwilling to portray Swedish uniqueness with reference to Christianity. The DPP makes much more use of religion as a legitimate platform to demonstrate homogeneity than the SD do, which may be due to more pronounced religious homogeneity in Denmark and stronger affiliation with Christianity. This use of religion to assemble homogeneity can be seen as a populist tendency, which allows common Danish interests to be communicated. This framing strategy may have super-
imposed a sense of religious conflict on the debate in Denmark, and because Islam is perceived to threaten Danish core values and ways of life, the DPP can contextualise issues regarding religious diversity in Denmark, and emphasise the practical meaning this has for the Danes. The SD highlight allegedly negative consequences of living in a multicultural society but they do not present Islam as a threat for Swedish national identity. The tendencies to contextualise issues regarding religious diversity are likely to affect public perception, and the feeling of a present religious threat may be greater in Denmark because of this framing. The perceived threat that Islam constitutes becomes even more pronounced because fundamentalism leads the critique of Islam in Denmark. The DPP stresses that the vast majority of Muslims cannot in practice be integrated in Denmark, whereas the SD tend to highlight a distinction between people perceived as moderate and extreme Muslims and focus on a minority, particularly the ones who choose to fight for IS, who cannot be integrated in Sweden. The SD tend to emphasise citizenship to returning IS warriors, while the DPP demands screening units when applying for citizenship to handle intolerable utterances from Muslims. The DPP request sanctioning of utterances when Muslims ideologically oppose democracy, and this implies that democracy has attained a sacred status and is surrounded by taboos and prohibitions. The perceived “stand-off” between Islam and Christianity has made the DPP set forth several proposals aimed to strengthen religious homogeneity and protect Christian dominance, while restricting the influence of Islam in public institutions and the social sphere. These differences in the rhetoric of the DPP and the SD are likely influenced by the different structural arrangements regarding church and state relationships. In particular, the peculiar Danish case of secularisation seems to set the stage for struggles over religious dominance and, ultimately, set the wheels of cultural defence in motion.

These explanations do bring clarity regarding differences in rhetoric of the SD and the DPP, but there are also alternative interpretations to consider. The DPP possess a more advantageous position in the political landscape in comparison with the SD, and the differences in framing strategies may not be reflecting humanitarian or ideological differences, but rather variation caused by different opportunities and restrictions in the respective political cultures. Restrictions and opportunities can be seen in relation to a dialectic process where the debate climate in Sweden influences what can be stated with legitimacy, while the SD also affect this debate climate with their utterances. Because the utterances brought forward by the DPP would likely not be tolerated in a Swedish context, this influence the entire climate, which is prone to be less harsh. The SD, as a relatively new parliament party with a rather dark past could be “making amends” and strategically work to avoid being labelled as xenophobic or
racist, by portraying themselves as fighters of the stereotypical picture of Muslims. This may be a strategic move, and an attempt to find a balance, where the current policy consensus on migration issues can be contested while they are still perceived as legitimate democratic right-wing radicals (Rydgren, 2007:243). The tendency within the DPP to more or less equate Islam with radical fundamentalism is a beneficial framing strategy only as the political culture in Denmark allows such harsh rhetoric towards Muslim minorities. These aspects are related to convergence and divergence on immigration issues in the political landscape. In Denmark not only the DPP has taken a tough stance on immigration questions, but also the Social Democrats have tried to “exploit authoritarian attitudes on the socio-cultural dimension” (Rydgren, 2010:60). It has been found that competing frames can cancel each other out (Chong & Druckman, 2007b:102), and it is likely that the Swedish tradition of left-wing governments has set the tone regarding immigration more strongly, and resulted in frames set forward by the SD appearing as less legitimate and persuasive as they are frequently contested. Political frames by the DPP may have been perceived as rather determining for the perception of social reality when left-wing parties, have struggled to counter-frame the DPP’s claims. In Lindberg’s study it is found that the RRP parties in both Denmark and Sweden lay great emphasis on religion (Lindberg, 2014:580), whereas Mudde has argued that RRP parties generally do not emphasise religion (Mudde, 2007:28). Based on my findings it seems that religion indeed is an important aspect when constructing the perception of “the other,” but the ways religion is strategically used diverge in otherwise similar countries. This study sheds a light on politicisation of religion and the diverse roles religion can play when used politically in different national contexts. Even though the aim has been to address a specific cross-national paradox in-depth, the tendencies discussed may also transcend the Danish and Swedish cases in terms of analytic generalisation. The case is an example of how different structural arrangements and variation in religious homogeneity and affiliation is likely to influence framing strategies and set the boundaries for what can be claimed with legitimacy. These findings are vital as it has implications in a globalised world, if national policy is rooted in one privileged religion and struggles to incorporate religious diversity, since it contributes to a situation where freedom of religion may appear as only superficial.
References


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