

Europe's migration crisis may swing Sweden to the right

Like many European countries affected by an influx of Syrian migrants and refugees, immigration policy has become central to Sweden's election. And after more than a half-century of soft, center-left policies there, analysts predict that voters on Sunday will elect anti-immigration candidates to the country's highest governing body. NewsHour Weekend Special Correspondent Malcolm Brabant reports.

- **Malcolm Brabant:**

More than any other election in recent history, this is a battle for Sweden's soul. Often idealized as a model society, Sweden is now divided between those who want it to remain generous, egalitarian and open to foreigners and others who vigorously oppose immigration and multiculturalism. Gustav Kasselstrand heads one of the most extreme right wing parties that advocates mass deportations

- **Gustav Kasselstrand:**

We have the Swedes on our side. And with our healthy political ideas, we are starting a new phase, a renaissance in Sweden.

- **Malcolm Brabant:**

For one face in the crowd, this election has become personal. He's a 23 year old refugee from the Syrian city of Homs. Abed Allmugharbel left Syria when he was 17 before he could finish his high school education. In September 2015, we met Abed at this mosque in Izmir on the Turkish coast, where hundreds gathered before taking rubber dinghies to the Greek islands en route to Northern Europe.

- **Abed Allmugharbel:**

I'm planning to go to Sweden. If I study there, I'm willing to give back to Europe what they gave me. They gave me shelter, I give them back my whole energy, to build their country.'

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

Abed managed to reach Sweden before the refugee trail to Northern Europe was closed. Since then he has almost finished his high school education. And did so in Swedish. He has two jobs to pay for his tuition fees. He does not receive welfare benefits. He hopes to study psychology at university but fears the rise of the right will thwart his ambitions.

The anti immigrant parties are try to sell to the people that the Muslims which are the majority of the immigrants who have sought asylum in Sweden that they are trying to invade the country that the Muslims have organised and are trying to invade the country, that Swedish traditional culture is under attack which is completely false not true

The party Abed was protesting against may only be on the fringes of the campaign. But what's significant is that until recently supporters of the so called Alt Right, like Lot-ten Peterson were shy about airing their opinions. Now, being anti immigration is no longer taboo.

▪ **Lotten Peterson:**

Oh it costs a lot because they don't work very much. I mean they have a very low percentage in work if you compare it to Swedes. The Swedes pay the taxes. And welfare is free for everybody and the left who have been screaming here say that no people is illegal. I mean what kind of language is that.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

At the peak of the European crisis, 200,000 refugees and migrants made it to Sweden, encouraged by the government's offer of sanctuary for Syrians.

▪ **Immigration official:**

'398,399, very big family.'

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

It wasn't just Syrians who came. There were asylum seekers from across

the developing world, lured by the prospect of subsidized housing and generous welfare benefits. Malmo in the south was a particular magnet. Sweden hoped other European countries would follow its example. The then Migration Minister Morgan Johansson was frustrated that many EU partners closed their borders instead.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

What do you say to those people who think your immigration policy, your open door policy is naive.

▪ **Morgan Johansson:**

Just turn on your television set and see for yourself what these people are fleeing from.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

As Sweden found itself overwhelmed by the influx, it sealed its formerly open border with Denmark to the south, to try to stem the flow. It was like closing the stable door after the horse had bolted, say those on the right, like the Alternative for Sweden's Gustav Kasselstrand.

▪ **Gustav Kasselstrand:**

The politicians have forced policy upon us, with mass immigration that we have never ever voted for, never ever supported.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

Prime Minister Stefan Loven presided over the influx, which has strained the hallowed welfare system. And changed Sweden to the point where one in four of the population now comes from a foreign background. His center left social democrat party advocates high taxation to pay for the cradle to grave safety net.

▪ **Stefan Loven:**

If we can continue four more years, at least four more years, we will continue to invest in the Swedish welfare system and that is what people need now. We need to build solidarity and trust between the citizens of

Sweden and that's what we want to do.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

This is a Social Democrat campaign video.

▪ **Social Democrat campaign video:**

What would I like? I'd like a society where security comes before tax cuts and we can hire more people in the medical sector so everybody gets the help they need in time. That the police get more colleagues and better conditions.'

▪ **Stefan Loven:**

This is a referendum on the Swedish welfare system.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

Isn't it a referendum on immigration.

▪ **Stefan Loven:**

No, it's not about crime.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

It is perhaps telling that the Prime Minister responds to a question about immigration with an answer about crime. On the day he was in Malmo, violence raised its ugly head. Superintendent Glen Sjogren is based in Rosengard Malmo's biggest ghetto. We're on our way to a murder scene in a neighboring ghetto. Hundreds of gang members are fighting for control of the lucrative cannabis and cocaine trade. According to the police, almost all of those involved have immigrant backgrounds.

▪ **Superintendent Glen Sjogren:**

This year, so far, eleven homicides and shootings involved.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

And who are the victims mainly?

▪ **Superintendent Glen Sjogren:**

The victims are for us, known people.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

Criminals?

▪ **Superintendent Glen Sjogren:**

Criminals that's right.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

For many Swedes, the gang war symbolizes a failure of integration. It fuels resentment against immigrants. The latest victim was 20 years old. He was killed next to a local mosque. The fact that rivals are killing each other is of little comfort, because the number of shootings is on the rise, and often there's crossfire.

▪ **Superintendent Stefan Wredenmark:**

And here we have a supermarket in a small square, and a primary school over there. There were not lesson, but there were pupils and people close to the murder scene last night.

▪ **Superintendent Glen Sjogren:**

The citizens of Malmo feel unsafe because the shooting(s) occur in the evening. Not at night. Sometimes in the middle of the day.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

So it is having an effect?

▪ **Superintendent Glen Sjogren:**

Yes, of course. People feel unsafe.

▪ **Sweden Democrats campaign video:**

My name is Jimmie Åkesson and I will do everything in my power to solve

this chaos that you Social Democrats and you Liberals have created.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

Jimmie Akkesson's is benefiting most from Sweden's growing sense of insecurity. He leads yet another far right party, the anti immigrant Sweden Democrats. The party has neo-Nazi origins, but it has jettisoned its more extreme policies and members who espouse openly racist views. Despite becoming more mainstream, the Sweden Democrats are widely regarded as pariahs. In one election video, Akkesson paints an apocalyptic image of Sweden that critics say whips up the climate of fear.

▪ **Sweden Democrats campaign video:**

Mass immigration hasn't paid off. . We know that today. And we know that in reality it inflicts enormous costs and a huge burden on our society. You have created a Sweden where families are forced to move because they no longer feel safe in their own homes.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

One reason why the right is gaining ground is that many working and middle class voters have abandoned the center left Social Democrats, because they believe the party ignored their concerns over immigration.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

According to the latest opinion polls Prime Minister Loeven's center/left Social Democrats will get the most votes. But they won't get a majority, which means that in order to govern they'll need to form a coalition. And even though the far right Sweden Democrats are on course to become the second biggest party, the Prime Minister intends to prevent them from exerting influence

▪ **Prime Minister Stefan Loven:**

For me one thing is very clear. No cooperation or dependence on the Sweden Democrats.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

But that's ignoring a large percentage of the Swedish people who perhaps have those views isn't it?

▪ **Prime Minister Stefan Loven:**

This is a party with values so far from mine. They do not protect, that each individual has the same human value, they speak bad about minorities, they threaten media, this is not just another party, this is an extreme party.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

A party with some unexpected support. Nima Gholam Ali Pour is a rare creature. He's both a refugee and candidate for the Sweden Democrats. His parents fled from Iran thirty years ago to save his brother from being conscripted as a child soldier. Despite the Prime Minister's stance, Ali Pour is convinced the voice of his party's supporters will be heard.

▪ **Nima Gholam Ali Pour:**

A lot of political parties said they would not change on the migration issue. And they change overnight. So we will see after the election. They need a government that functions. And if we get a lot of support, you know they need support in parliament, So they have to seek our support somehow.

▪ **Malcolm Brabant:**

If the right wing does as well as expected this will herald a substantial shift in the foundations of a traditionally Social Democratic society. It will provide a warning to the rest of Europe's liberal elite. If it can happen in cozy little Sweden, it can happen to you. Ignore the working class at your peril.

Source: <https://www.pbs.org/newshour/show/europes-migration-crisis-may-swing-sweden-to-the-right>

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