

National Identity and Refugee Policy: The Divide Between Sweden and Denmark

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Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the College of Literature, Science, & Arts at the
University of Michigan in partial fulfillment for the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor of Arts (International Studies with Honors) 2017

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ABSTRACT

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International Studies, 2017

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Sweden and Denmark are widely regarded as similar countries culturally and politically, especially as beacons of the Scandinavian-style welfare state model. Prior to the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe, the two countries also had relatively similar refugee policies and integration programs. However, in response to the crisis, Sweden and Denmark have adopted vastly different refugee policies. This thesis argues that the effects of national identity on Swedish and Danish welfare state policy are similar to national identity's effects on their refugee policy but that a moral distinction between the two regarding honoring rights claims from non-nationals results in different refugee policy outcomes. Swedish national identity has integrated liberal universalist values, resulting in inclusionary refugee policy, whereas Danish national identity favors nationalist values, resulting in exclusionary refugee policy.

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Acknowledgements

This thesis would not have been undertaken nor completed without the influence of my advisors, peers, friends, and family. I would first like to thank my primary advisor, Greta Uehling – your insights, advice, and critique inspired and pushed me forward on this project. Thank you for your guidance and for instilling confidence in me throughout the year. Thank you, also, to Dr. Marcum, for your feedback over the course of the year. This project has challenged me in innumerable ways – your understanding and encouragement helped me over every hurdle.

To my thesis cohort, your comments helped me hone the thesis into a feasible project. Thank you for being a weekly focus and support group, as we shared our struggles and triumphs together each semester.

I would never have endeavored to write this thesis without the inspiration of the former staff of the Michigan Journal of International Affairs. Daniel, Hannah, Laurel, Leslie, Stuart, and Trevor – you all inspired and motivated me, and continue to do so. I miss you all and thank you for your friendship and mentorship. The current Editorial Board of MJIA also deserves my thanks. Ali, Brendan, Connor, Marnie and Vineet – you are among the most ambitious, intelligent people I know, and your friendships encourage me to challenge myself academically and professionally. I found my home at Michigan in our group of passionate, brilliant, and engaging students.

Thank you to Emma, Meher, Shoham, and Liam for supporting me throughout the year, tolerating my stress, and suffering through frequent all-nighters with me. I'm so glad to have you as friends and could not have made it through this year without your patience and never-ending jokes.

Finally, thank you to my mom, Michael, Nina, Sarah, and Amy. Your unwavering confidence in my ability to succeed – with this thesis and in general – has helped me more than you know. You all form my greatest support system. Thank you for listening to my daily calls and messages, understanding even when you didn't *quite* understand, and for always being on my side.

Introduction

The United Nations' 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees comprise the foundation of international refugee law. Refugees are, according to this definition, those individuals who are forced to flee their home countries owing to the “well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion.”¹ Refugees are thus specified as a unique category of human rights victims – unable to make human rights claims within their home countries and requiring international protection – who should be accorded special protection and benefits in the states that receive them.²

Under the protection of this convention, authorities in receiving countries cannot compel refugees to return home if to do so would place them in further danger (a principle called “nonrefoulement”), and refugees have a right to apply for asylum and secure their refugee status within the receiving nations. Furthermore, the convention affirms that refugees should be treated fairly by host states and be given assistance to help sustain them initially. However, international law provides only the minimum standard of what should be offered – it is the individual host state's prerogative to determine the level and type of assistance that they will give.³ This thesis explores the specific policy reactions of two states – Sweden and Denmark – to the Syrian refugee

¹ United Nations General Assembly, *Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, 28 July 1951, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 189, p. 137. Available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/3be01b964.html>.

² Gil Loescher, introduction to *Refugees in International Relations* ed. Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 8.

³ *Ibid.*, 9

crisis and examines the role that national identity has played in making refugee policy choices.

Chapter 1 explains the shared history of these two countries regarding refugee policy and asks why the two have diverged in reaction to the contemporary refugee crisis in Europe. The second chapter lays out the theoretical framework of the thesis. It explores liberal universalism and nationalism, the theories of duties to nationals versus non-nationals that manifest differently in Swedish versus Danish refugee policy-making.

Chapters 3 and 4 detail Swedish and Danish refugee policies prior to and following the effects of the Syrian refugee crisis in Europe. In Chapter 3, the explanation of Swedish refugee policy is followed by an examination of Swedish national identity – which I argue is influenced by liberal universalist values – and its effects on refugee policy. Chapter 4 then turns to Danish refugee policy changes, and examines Danish national identity and its effects on Danish refugee policy. Chapter 5 serves as a final comparison and the conclusion of my findings.

Chapter 1 – Brief Background and Research Question

I. Overview of Swedish and Danish Cases

The international community has generally regarded Sweden and Denmark as extremely similar nations, applying the “Scandinavian” or “Nordic” monolith to them and their neighbors, Norway and Finland. Though on the periphery of Europe, they have been central to the international perception of Scandinavia, representing the older Scandinavian nation-states in terms of national independence.^{4 5} Their histories as prominent Protestant nations, their mutually intelligible languages, and even their flags – exactly the same but for the color scheme – contribute to an international perception of uniformity. Most notably, both are considered beacons of the successful Scandinavian socialist welfare state model.⁶

In the realm of refugee protection, both Sweden and Denmark have similarly long traditions of not only participating in, but being at the forefront of, international refugee protection. Denmark was the first country to ratify the United Nations’ 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, and both were among the first to implement the

⁴ Stephen Richards Graubard, *Norden: The Passion for Equality* (New York: Norwegian University Press, 1986), 87.

⁵ Erik Jørgen Hansen, ed. *Welfare Trends in the Scandinavian Countries* (Armonk, N.Y: M.E. Sharpe, 1993), 6.

⁶ Ana Powell “Scandinavian Responses to the Refugee Crisis: How Denmark and Sweden Differ in Their Approaches.” *St Andrews Foreign Affairs Review*, November 6, 2015, <http://foreignaffairsreview.co.uk/2015/11/scandinavian-responses-to-the-refugee-crisis-how-denmark-and-sweden-differ-in-their-approaches/>.

Convention and the 1967 Protocol,⁷ the foundational documents of international refugee law. Denmark and Sweden are both considered among the set of nine “traditional resettlement countries” that work closely with the United Nations’ High Commissioner for Refugees in solution-seeking on global refugee issues and provide comprehensive integration support to those seeking asylum within their borders.⁸ In 2013, Sweden ranked first and Denmark ranked seventh on the list of asylum-seekers received per capita among the nations of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)⁹, attracting asylum-seekers with their strong welfare states and integration policies. Their resettlement and integration efforts have historically been backed by a general acknowledgement in each that resettlement is a vital tool for international refugee protection, a key instrument in seeking durable solutions to refugees’ problems, and helps to share responsibility internationally.¹⁰

The wider Nordic region (Sweden, Denmark, Finland, and Norway) has offered generous integration programs to refugees, exceeding the minimum standards of duties prescribed in the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol. Integration programs in the region include the provision of free language training, cultural programs, vocational training and other courses aimed at cultural integration. Refugees also have access to state-funded education and healthcare systems, and numerous nongovernmental organizations provide

⁷ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, *States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol*, United Nations, Available at: <http://www.unhcr.org/protect/PROTECTION/3b73b0d63.pdf>

⁸ Mette Honoré, “Resettlement in the Nordic Countries,” *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute* (September 1, 2003): 1.

⁹ George Arnett “Sweden – the OECD’s Highest Per Capita Recipient of Asylum-seekers” *The Guardian*, December 2, 2014, <https://perma.cc/HF99-39HA>

¹⁰ Honoré, “Resettlement in the Nordic Countries,” 2

additional reception, integration, and counseling functions in tandem with national and local governments.¹¹

The refugee flows from Syria have tested these asylum and integration programs. The Syrian refugee crisis, which began in 2013 and continues presently, has had a profound impact on refugee policy in both countries; yet despite their shared progressive history concerning refugee policy and the similar problems that the crisis has imposed on the two, Sweden and Denmark have diverged dramatically over contemporary refugee issues.

Initial Swedish reactions to the crisis were to grant all Syrians temporary residency as asylum-seekers and to raise taxes on native Swedes by approximately 7 billion kronor to support the newcomers, who would receive the same state benefits as native Swedes. Conversely, Denmark gained a reputation as one of the most inhospitable European countries for Syrians seeking asylum and actively discouraged refugees from settling there by cutting welfare benefits and increasing bureaucratic hurdles to gaining residency status.¹²

II. Research Question

This thesis seeks to answer one central question: why have Sweden and Denmark, countries with shared progressive histories in international refugee protection, taken such different approaches to refugee policy in the wake of the Syrian crisis? The disparity in refugee acceptance and integration between Denmark and Sweden has created a

¹¹ Ibid., 3

¹² Powell, "Scandinavian Responses to the Refugee Crisis: How Denmark and Sweden Differ in Their Approaches."

knowledge gap as to why two otherwise similar nations would adopt different policies when experiencing the same refugee crisis.

This work provides a synthesis and analysis of existing literature on modern Swedish and Danish refugee policy, ethics in policy-making and refugee policy, and the different cultural and moral structures of Danish and Swedish societies as a way to explain the aforementioned difference. There is vast literature on the way that Swedish and Danish national identity has impacted and been impacted by their strong welfare states, yet very little regarding of their refugee policies and integration programs.¹³ This is a study of how national identity manifests in current refugee policy in Denmark and Sweden.

I argue that national identity affects Swedish and Danish refugee policy in a similar fashion to how it affects welfare policy, and that the moral underpinnings of each country's national identity vary in how they morally prioritize duties to nationals versus non-nationals. Swedish national identity includes a dedication to liberal universalist, humanitarian values, which influence inclusive refugee policy-making. In the Swedish case, national pride is bolstered when humanitarian goals, such as accepting and aiding refugees, are met. Danish national identity has not centered liberal universalism, but nationalist values that prioritize rights of nationals over those of non-nationals and contributing to exclusionary refugee policies. In contrast to the Swedish case, Danes do not perceive their national identity as affirmed by accepting refugees, but instead perceive a threat in the huge influx of culturally dissimilar Syrian refugees. Danish

¹³ See: Robert Erikson, *The Scandinavian Model: Welfare States and Welfare Research*; Erik Jørgen Hansen, ed. *Welfare Trends in the Scandinavian Countries*; Muriel Nissel, *The Welfare State: Diversity and Decentralisation*; Markus M. L. Crepaz, *Trust beyond Borders: Migration, the Welfare state, and Identity in Modern Societies*.

refugee policy in reaction to the Syrian crisis follows a trend of growing nationalism in the country and in Europe, as signaled by the shift in Danish elections since 2001 that has elevated more conservative and anti-immigration parties and advanced their agendas.

III. Contributions and Implications of this Work

Examining the development of Danish and Swedish national identities and their relation to refugee law will provide valuable insight into the asylum and integration policies of these two nations. A comparative study of the two is useful, not only in identifying the similarities and differences between the ways they each justify their integration policies, but also in identifying the factors that explain why the two have sought different solutions to similar challenges. The thesis thus helps to fill this knowledge gap concerning the contemporary refugee crisis and differing policy reactions to Syrian refugees within Scandinavia and Europe at large. Further, this research could inform other broader analyses as to the motivations behind inclusive or exclusive refugee policy globally by considering national identity has an important factor in policy-making. The work demonstrates how the moral beliefs that justify welfare states' generous domestic policy-making can be used to justify refugee policy-making – either by extending the benefits that citizens enjoy to refugees, or by excluding refugees from accessing them.

Chapter Two – Theoretical Framework

I. Introduction

This chapter serves as an introduction to the two sets of values that this thesis focuses on when analyzing refugee policy in Sweden and Denmark: liberal universalism and nationalism. Their relevance to refugee policy is first explained and contextualized in the Swedish and Danish cases. Each value set is then analyzed individually - liberal universalism's prevalence in international human rights and refugee law is explained, while nationalism's relevance to domestic refugee policy is further explored.

The final section of the chapter describes the ways in which the international community and individual states implement policies with liberal universalist or nationalist values, balancing the two to suit their interests. This section draws on several European examples and reconnects the moral discussion to the Swedish and Danish cases, to be elaborated upon further in Chapters 3 and 4.

II. Ethics in Refugee Policy

Refugee rights are currently framed within two sets of values that justify refugee policy-making: liberal universalist values and nationalist values.¹⁴ The current international refugee law regime embraces liberal universalist values, but individual nations enact a variety of inclusionary or exclusionary policies motivated by some balance of these value sets according to their political interests. Though they conflict, these value

¹⁴ Christina Boswell, *The Ethics of Refugee Policy*, Ethics and Global Politics (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005), 15.

sets are not mutually exclusive; countries implementing refugee policy must balance their international humanitarian interests and national interests when enacting refugee policy.¹⁵

When evaluating the policy choices of Sweden and Denmark, a divide between liberal universalist and nationalist values can be seen in both policies and rhetoric. Liberal universalist policies are inclusive – they grant that refugees have a valid claim to rights within a country, and include measures to accept asylum-seekers and sufficiently integrate them into the host society. These are the values that characterize Sweden’s policy reactions to the crisis, whereas Denmark’s policies have followed a trend of nationalist exclusion. Exclusionary policies toward refugees, such as policies or actions that restrict access to state resources or attempt to deter refugees from applying for asylum in the first place, are generally motivated by nationalist values that prioritize national interest over international obligations.

Liberal universalist policies can be motivated by nationalist values, if national identity is in part rooted in a commitment to liberal universalist goals, as I will argue is the case in Sweden. There are, however, instances where restrictive policy has been enacted, yet framed within liberal universalist and utilitarian rhetoric about European burden-sharing and regional solidarity.

III. Liberal Universalist Values and Humanitarianism

Liberal universalist values are those that give equal moral weight to the rights and welfare of all individuals, regardless of membership in any certain social group. With regards to nationality, universalism holds that the only morally relevant features of

¹⁵ Gil Loescher and Laila Monahan, eds., *Refugees and International Relations*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 3

individuals are those that are common to human beings in general, and thus nationality does not affect the weight of one's moral claims.¹⁶ The modern iteration of liberal universalist values obligates states as rights protectors.¹⁷

The emergence of universal conceptions of personhood as dominant in international law was a major development of the post-war period, formalized by a multitude of international codes and laws that ascribed universal rights to individuals regardless of their citizenship. State signatories to international charters and conventions such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the European Convention on Human Rights, and, of course, the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and subsequent 1967 Protocol, were obligated to *not* make distinctions on the grounds of nationality regarding civil, social, and political rights.¹⁸ According to Soysal, universalist values come across most clearly in the case of refugees, whose membership status in host societies relies exclusively on an appeal to moral humanitarian values granting them individual rights.¹⁹

Liberal universalist values are integrated into refugee policy-making in various ways. Within a liberal universalist framework, the host society has no justification for privileging the rights of nationals over non-nationals, as there is no moral distinction between the two groups, and the host society has a duty to assist refugees. Restricting the influx of refugees or choosing not to assist them is thus not justified unless admission

¹⁶ Boswell, *The Ethics of Refugee Policy*, 48

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 20

¹⁸ Yasemin Nuhoglu Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship: Migrants and Postnational Membership in Europe*, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1994), 145.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 142

would infringe on the equally valid universal rights of fellow nationals. Proponents of refugee rights generally draw on universal rights to justify their policy claims.²⁰

More nuanced iterations of liberal universalism in refugee policy are impacted by consequentialist utilitarianism, which considers interest in happiness or wellbeing to be the most important characteristic of humans regarding rights claims. Like liberal universalism, it still does not give any special moral relevance to nationality but prioritizes the maximization of the wellbeing of all.²¹ Utilitarianism can thus be employed to expand and justify liberal universalist duties to non-nationals. In this vein, states can institute special measures to benefit the interests of refugees, given that to a certain point, the average refugee's happiness will increase substantially more than any national citizen's will decrease owing to the refugee's presence in the country.

Consequentialist utilitarianism can be also used to justify rescinding liberal universalist policies. In line with liberal universalism, utilitarianism claims no moral justification for restricting refugees' access to the state, but utilitarianism reaches a limit when admission of refugees would infringe upon the rights of nationals to an equivalent or greater degree as denying the refugee.²² Consequentialist utilitarianism provides moral justification for pragmatic limits on the implementation of liberal universalist-motivated policies.

²⁰ Boswell, *The Ethics of Refugee Policy*, 49

²¹ *Ibid.*, 47

²² *Ibid.*, 49

IV. Nationalist Values and Neo-nationalism

Nationalist values, in contrast to universalism, prioritize national interests over obligations to other groups.²³ They are founded upon the idea of a nation – a community bound to a common territory, governed by a sovereign authority, with a shared history. This conception of a nation gives rise to the notion of defined national identity, a sense of shared characteristics and common purpose that bind the people of a certain territory together and connect them to a sovereign government. Though the rights of citizens are grounded in a universalist conception of equal rights²⁴, they make a distinction between nationals and non-nationals as to whose rights the state is most obligated to protect.

The idea of a concrete national territory is “fundamental to the national imagination,” according to Skey, especially in relation to a linked past that is articulated in terms of a national history in that territory and the present national identity as “embodied through daily and mass ‘national’ rituals,” which contribute to ensuring a secure national future.²⁵ These national rituals add a cultural dimension to nationalism, establishing systems that create social norms and values.²⁶ Broadly, nationalism is tied to the nation as an “administrative territorial unit” with sovereignty and a socially shared belief system.²⁷

Gingrich and Banks observe that in the 20th century, nationalist values have manifested in ‘neo-nationalism’, the reemergence of nationalism in response to new

²³ Boswell, *The Ethics of Refugee Policy*, 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 21.

²⁵ Michael Skey, *National Belonging and Everyday Life: The Significance of Nationhood in an Uncertain World*, (New York: Springer, 2011), 11.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 11.

²⁷ Mikael Hjerem and Annette Schnabel, “Mobilizing nationalistic sentiments: Which factors affect nationalist sentiments in Europe?,” *Social Science Research* 39, no. 4, (July, 2010), 528.

global and transnational issues.²⁸ Neo-nationalism contrasts with old European nationalism by reframing national kinship rhetoric as metaphorical. Neo-nationalism sees the state as a ‘motherland’ or ‘fatherland’, or conceives of the state as one metaphorical family²⁹, where old nationalism presented the nation as a literal family with a shared ancestry. The neo-nationalist ideology uses culture as the basis of kinship and reacts to the ‘threat’ of globalization as a threat against local culture. Neo-nationalist agendas thus favor strict state sanctions regarding immigrants, illegal aliens, or ethnic minorities.³⁰

The importance of nationality and citizenship in political space relies upon the simultaneous existence of the ‘other’, the ‘foreigner’³¹, and other constructions of non-members, non-nationals, who pose a threat to the cohesion of the nation-state. In nationalist terms, Gingrich sums it up nicely: “We know who ‘we’ are and what constitutes our sameness, precisely because we know who ‘we’ are not and what constitutes our difference from others.”³² These constructions of foreigners rely on the “reproduction of ideological narratives of national and cultural belonging, with their... definitions of inclusion and exclusion.”³³

²⁸ André Gingrich and Marcus Banks, eds., *Neo-Nationalism in Europe and Beyond: Perspectives from Social Anthropology*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2006), 2.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 8.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 17-18.

³¹ Emma Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society: Between Sovereigns*, Cambridge Studies in International Relations 106, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 57.

³² Gingrich, *Neo-Nationalism in Europe and Beyond*, 9.

³³ Leila Simona Talani, ed., *Globalisation, Migration, and the Future of Europe: Insiders and Outsiders*, Routledge Research on the Global Politics of Migration, (New York: Routledge, 2012), 13.

V. Brief History of Liberal Universalism, Nationalism, and Refugee Policy

In the early twentieth century, refugee policy was influenced by nationalist values, as a large number of refugees fled persecution or were casualties of state consolidation in the 1920s.³⁴ At the time, there was no recognition of international legal duties to refugees, but international cooperation began on a temporary basis via the League of Nations' efforts to assist refugees from Russia and the Caucasus. Under their mandate however, universalist values were not invoked – refugees were defined by their nationality or religion. There was no generally applicable concept of 'refugee' on an international basis. Refugee assistance during this period was more often tied to the labor needs of the receiving state and their security concerns, rather than a universalist or humanitarian sense of duty to the displaced.³⁵

A sense of liberal universalism began to emerge in international refugee policy following World War II, when there was a shift from defining a refugee by their nation of origin to defining a refugee by their experience of persecution regardless of origin.³⁶ This universalist shift in refugee policy mirrored the larger universalist turn in human rights policy regionally within Europe and globally.³⁷ Liberal universalist values continued to be incorporated into the definition of 'refugee' and then further incorporated into international law and institutions to assist refugees.

The establishment of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in 1950 marked a universalist shift in refugee policy-making – dedicating an international body to protecting refugees and affirming their right to protection regardless

³⁴ Boswell, *The Ethics of Refugee Policy*, 24.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

³⁷ Soysal, *Limits of Citizenship*, 145.

of national origin or destination reflected universalist values. The UNHCR's definition of refugee as one fleeing their country of origin "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion"³⁸ was based on a universalist theory of rights that regardless of group membership, one has a right to freedom from persecution. The UNHCR's mandate was initially limited, but throughout the 1950s began to expand to cover refugee rights in developing countries outside of Europe, resulting in the 1967 Protocol that applied the formal definition of 'refugee' globally.³⁹

Despite the universalist foundation of international refugee law, nationalist values began to take precedence regarding refugee policy in the 1970s and 1980s, when racial tensions and low labor demand in refugee-receiving countries prompted national legislative action to halt immigration flows into Europe. This decline prompted prospective economic migrants to apply for refugee status, despite not meeting the international legal definition, ultimately overwhelming European state bureaucracies with requests.⁴⁰ When dealing with this decidedly mixed migration flow, determining real from 'bogus' requests for asylum created an administrative burden that forced states to reevaluate their liberal universalist obligations to international refugee protection and their nationalist concerns about immigration, economic success, and security.⁴¹

In the post-9/11 West, the figure of a culturally dissimilar asylum-seeking outsider is additionally "burdened with negative meanings which can easily become

³⁸ United Nations, *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*, Article 1A.

³⁹ Boswell, *The Ethics of Refugee Policy*, 28

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 28

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 29

complicated by and confused with the image of the ‘Islamic terrorist’.⁴² The insider-outside narrative that nationalist values rely upon in constructing identity is compounded by the general perception that outsiders pose a security risk to insider-states – a perception that has been exacerbated by radical Islamic terrorist attacks in Europe and the War on Terror. This risk, if perceived as valid by the refugee-receiving nations, can justify exclusionary refugee policy by claiming that refugees pose a significant physical threat to the country.⁴³ In this way, refugees are criminalized by “nationalist tropes” that obscure the truth of their situation, lumping them into a broader category of ‘other’ that includes other criminalized groups such as undocumented economic migrants.⁴⁴

VI. Balancing Liberal Universalist and Nationalist Values in Policy-Making

The dichotomy between liberal universalist and nationalist values does not mean national law always reflects nationalist values. Though the value sets must be balanced, they are not a binary – implementation of nationalist value-based policy does not always constitute a moral failure and the implementation of liberal universalist-based policy does not render a nation morally superior.⁴⁵ Nationalist values are considered in domestic policy by their very nature, but states may also opt to embrace liberal universalist sentiment in refugee policy. Liberal universalist values can also be incorporated into nationalist values such that national identity is affirmed by fulfilling humanitarian goals.⁴⁶

⁴² Talani, *Globalisation, Migration, and the Future of Europe*, 17.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁴⁵ Boswell, *The Ethics of Refugee Policy* 157.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 150-151.

Liberal universalist action by the state could be motivated by nationalist values in some cases as well. For example, a state considering enacting inclusionary refugee policy might be concerned about the effect on their economy. Information that welcoming refugees has had a net positive or neutral effect on host communities' economies and wages⁴⁷ could therefore incentivize a government to enact liberal universalist policy even if not motivated by the liberal universalist sentiment that non-nationals have an equal claim to rights as nationals.

However, liberal universalist values still provide the moral foundation of the current body of international human rights and refugee law, grounded in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the 1951 Convention Relation to the Status of Refugees and 1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees. These documents' application is not limited to persons from particular countries, but they hold that every individual regardless of membership in any particular social groups have a right to protection.⁴⁸

A tension between elevating humanitarian values and protecting nationalist values results in a national-level balancing act in implementing policy motivated by liberal universalism or nationalism. States face a dilemma in managing the bureaucratic burden of determining the authenticity of asylum requests. In addition, the admittance of refugees poses a perceived security threat, especially for states hosting Muslim refugees post-9/11. To sustain the universalist international institutional framework that responds to refugee problems, states must subordinate their immediate political interests to address

⁴⁷ Ana Swanson, "The big myth about refugees," *The Washington Post*, September 10, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2015/09/10/the-big-myth-about-refugees/?utm_term=.7443f77b7f7f.

⁴⁸ United Nations, *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees* as amended by the *1967 Protocol Relating to the Status of Refugees*.

humanitarian concerns. This can have domestic political costs and states may choose to enact restrictive policies to avoid the problems associated with refugee admittance.

These national political considerations affect the implementation of universalist international refugee law. International law states that refugees have the right to state assistance, and are shaped by the principle that refugees should enjoy the same rights as the receiving state's citizens. In practice, however, it is the state's prerogative as to how much assistance they will provide. States make the majority of decisions on asylum and the quality of care, and remain the "decisive actors in refugee affairs."⁴⁹ The universalist body of law attempts to set a minimum standard, but at the intra-state level there is little control.⁵⁰

While liberal universalist values and nationalist values can be balanced and combined to implement refugee policies that advance international and national goals, in their purest forms they inherently conflict in a way that is difficult to overcome. Liberal universalism dictates that non-nationals, in this case refugees, be treated the same as nationals, while nationalism entitles nationals to certain rights that non-nationals are not entitled to.

Despite the possibility of striking a balance between liberal universalist and nationalist values, individual state policy-making since the 1970s and 1980s has favored nationalism. Countries who are party to the 1951 Convention, obligating them to assist refugees, have implemented policies aimed at deterring refugees from applying for

⁴⁹ Loescher, *Refugees and International Relations*, 19

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 8

asylum in the first place, thus hoping to avoid their international obligations.⁵¹ This turn toward nationalist values began with the aforementioned concerns regarding racial tension and labor integration, and now includes concerns over societal heterogeneity, the war on terror and national security, and maintaining state sovereignty.⁵² Particularly in European countries and the West, there are a number of perceived threats and associated fears that foreigners who bring crime, poverty, and anti-Western sentiment will engulf refugee-receiving nations.⁵³

The global trend has leaned toward policies motivated by nationalist values, yet some states have enacted policies motivated by the liberal universalism that underpins international refugee law. The European Union, though its individual Member States have varying refugee policies, has advocated for its Member States to support and integrate refugees via the 1999 Tampere Programme, the 2004 Hague Programme, and the 2004 Common Basic Principles for Immigrant Integration framework.⁵⁴ This inclusive framework is complicated by the Dublin Regulation, which establishes the Member State responsible for evaluating the asylum application, normally the State where the asylum-seeker first entered the EU. This regulation, though designed to provide common standards across the EU and give asylum-seekers similar protections in

⁵¹ Alperhan Babacan and Linda Briskman, eds. *Asylum Seekers: International Perspectives on Interdiction and Deterrence*, (Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars, 2008), 1.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 1.

⁵³ Derek McGhee, *Intolerant Britain: Hate, Citizenship and Difference* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), 90 cited in Babacan, *Asylum Seekers*, 3.

⁵⁴ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), *A New Beginning: Refugee Integration in Europe*, (Vienna: United Nations, 2013), 34.

all EU Member States, has often increased bureaucratic pressure on southern Member States. As a result, asylum-seekers have received different treatment across Europe.⁵⁵

Recognizing the heavy burden that certain Member States initially bore owing to the Dublin regulation, some Member States began to enact inclusionary policies in response to the Syrian refugee crisis. Germany, which took in more than one million refugees in 2015, maintained its open-door approach to refugees throughout 2016 despite several terror attacks committed by extremists posing as refugees. Chancellor Merkel framed humanitarian action and inclusionary refugee policy as important to German national values of unity, cooperation, and openness.⁵⁶ Germany was not alone – Norway expanded integration services to include sexual education for refugees,⁵⁷ Portugal more than doubled their relocation quota, and their Foreign Minister Silva stated that serving refugees was not about gaining capital, but about welcoming refugees per their “obligation under international law.”⁵⁸

Sweden maintained one of the most open refugee policies in Europe throughout much of the crisis, initially granting blanket permanent residence status to all Syrian

⁵⁵ United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and European Council on Refugees and Exiles (ECRE), “The Dublin Regulation”, (Series of releases titled Asylum in Europe: Now It’s Up To You), <http://www.unhcr.org/4a9d13d59.pdf>.

⁵⁶ Angela Dewan and Jason Hanna “Germany’s Merkel stands by refugee policy despite ‘terrifying’ attacks,” *Cable News Network*, July 28, 2016
<http://www.cnn.com/2016/07/28/europe/germany-merkel-security-refugee-policy/>.

⁵⁷ Andrew Higgins, “Norway Offers Migrants a Lesson in How to Treat Women,” *The New York Times*, December 19, 2015,
<https://www.nytimes.com/2015/12/20/world/europe/norway-offers-migrants-a-lesson-in-how-to-treat-women.html>.

⁵⁸ Paul Ames, “Portugal to Syrians: Come West,” *POLITICO*, March 22, 2016,
<http://www.politico.eu/article/portugal-to-syrians-come-west-refugee-crisis-portuguese-prime-ministerantonio-costa/>.

asylum-seekers from late 2013 through 2015.⁵⁹ This is but one of several inclusionary policies enacted, in addition to their extremely generous preexisting integration policies. Sweden maintained their open stance toward refugees, and when enacting exclusionary policies, used rhetoric implying liberal universalist and utilitarian sentiment behind the policy changes. Sweden's initial policies and reactions to the crisis are further explored in the Chapter 3, followed by a discussion of the role Swedish national identity played in formulating and justifying these policies.

⁵⁹ "Sweden grants blanket asylum to Syrian refugees," *Special Broadcasting Service*, September 6, 2013, <http://www.sbs.com.au/news/article/2013/09/06/sweden-grants-blanket-asylum-syrian-refugees>.

Chapter Three – Sweden

I. Introduction

In reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis, Sweden initially enacted inclusionary policies that reflected liberal universalism's place in their national identity. This chapter provides a background on Swedish refugee policy and frames it within Swedish national identity and liberal universalism. Sections II, III, and IV detail the history, background, and policy changes that followed the Syrian crisis reaching Sweden. Section V describes the immediate policy reactions in terms of Swedish national identity and commitment to liberal universalism, while Section VI notes more recent legislative restrictions to refugee access to Sweden. Section VI continues, however, to contextualize these changes within liberal universalist and consequentialist utilitarian value systems, rather than nationalist reactions to refugee influxes. As a whole, the chapter provides a basis for comparing Swedish and Danish refugee policies and national identities.

II. History of Swedish Refugee Policy

Prior to the 1950s, Sweden was not considered an important actor on refugee issues – they did not sign the League of Nations' 1933 Convention Relating to the International Status of Refugees, nor were they a member of the International Refugee Organization.⁶⁰ Only a small number of refugees arrived before 1933, and the first major refugee flows to the country occurred during the Second World War. The most notable refugee influx from this period occurred in 1944, when the Swedish government offered

⁶⁰ Jean-Pierre Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, (London: George Allen & Unwin, Ltd., 1953), 382.

asylum to approximately 7,500 Danish Jews. However, most refugees were not permanently resettled in Sweden, and instead returned to Denmark following the end of World War II.⁶¹

Sweden has been leader in the international refugee regime since the 1950s, when they signed the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and later, the 1967 Protocol, which extended the Convention's application to refugees globally. Their refugee acceptance and integration program was established in 1950, and policy has been developed and changed on an ad hoc basis since then.⁶² It is today considered one of the nine "traditional" resettlement countries – those countries that refugees tend to favor as a destination and that are relatively more receptive to refugees than others states. Sweden also works closely with the UNHCR to seek global solutions to refugee issues.⁶³

About half of Sweden's foreign-born population – approximately 16% of the population – originally arrived to the country as refugees or family of refugees. This is in part due to Sweden's humanitarian reputation – between 2005-2014, Sweden had the largest share of humanitarian migrants in total migration flows of any OECD country.⁶⁴ In addition to unstructured refugee flows, Sweden receives refugees through the UNHCR's quota program and the government continually negotiates to increase the number of quota refugees received.

⁶¹ Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, 380.

⁶² Schuster, Liza. "A Comparative Analysis of the Asylum Policy of Seven European Governments." *Journal of Refugee Studies* 13, no. 1 (March 1, 2000): 118–32. doi:10.1093/jrs/13.1.118.

⁶³ Honoré, "Resettlement in the Nordic Countries," 1

⁶⁴ Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), *Working Together: Skills and Labour Market Integration of Immigrants and their Children in Sweden*, (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2013), 13-17.

The central legislation on Swedish refugee policy is the Aliens Act, which adheres to the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol's definition of refugees and offers asylum. The act also offers subsidiary protection for other asylum-seekers who do not qualify as Convention refugees, widening the definition to include those who fear the death penalty, torture, or indiscriminate violence.⁶⁵ Sweden also adheres to the European Union's Dublin Regulation, which states that refugees in Europe should apply for asylum in the first EU country they reach.⁶⁶

Concerning integration, the cornerstone of Swedish integration policy is a two-year program that includes language training, as well as civic orientation and activities aimed at labor market integration.⁶⁷ The state has offered Swedish language courses to all immigrants, including refugees, since 1950.⁶⁸ Asylum-seekers receive free housing and monetary support while their status is determined by the state.⁶⁹ Newly arrived refugees granted residence are enrolled in a work integration program through the Swedish Public Employment Service (*Arbetsförmedlingen*), not the migration board nor a municipal council. Most aspects of integration are handled by the government office that handles these same requests for Swedish nationals, giving refugees the same treatment as nationals as soon as possible.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ UNHCR, *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Country Chapter – Sweden*, (UNHCR, 2011, chapter rev. 2016), 2.

⁶⁶ Elin Hofverberg, ed., *Refugee Law and Policy: Sweden*, from the Library of Congress, (March 2016).

⁶⁷ OECD, *Working Together*, 14.

⁶⁸ Vernant, *The Refugee in the Post-War World*, 387.

⁶⁹ Hofverberg, *Refugee Law and Policy: Sweden*.

⁷⁰ Miguel Peromingo, "Work and refugee integration in Sweden," *Forced Migration Review* 48 (November 2014): 76.

Arbetsförmedlingen supports and guides job seekers by providing training courses to explain the Swedish job market and employment customs. The office also works with potential employers to identify those who are willing to hire refugees and negotiate with those who are less ready. After securing a job, the service continues to assist refugees in order to ensure “sustainability of employment.”⁷¹ Policy initiatives to increase integration have worked to enhance transparency on refugees’ skills and temporarily lower the hiring cost by providing wage-subsidies to refugee-hiring employers, while other policies have focused on empowering refugees’ existing skills by streamlining the qualification recognition process.⁷² Refugees express their work expectations to a job advisor, who helps assess skill levels based on formal qualifications, employment history and relevant experience.⁷³

Asylum-seekers can also request help in finding housing through the state-assisted settlement program. The state-run program conducts a cross-country housing search, in an effort to reduce the risks of overcrowding or de facto segregation. Asylum-seekers can also decide to locate their own housing and thus choose where they resettle.⁷⁴

This integration model, while comprehensive, is not one-track-fits-all. The government has established different integration programs and courses for refugees with different goals: “Coming to Sweden,” “Having Influence in Sweden,” and “Growing Old in Sweden” are examples of units offered.⁷⁵ These varying integration models recognize the range of refugees’ desires and serve to integrate them into Swedish society in a

⁷¹ Peromingo, *Work and refugee integration in Sweden*, 77.

⁷² OECD, *Working Together*, 14-15.

⁷³ Peromingo, *Work and refugee integration in Sweden*, 76.

⁷⁴ OECD, *Working Together*, 18.

⁷⁵ Peromingo, *Work and refugee integration in Sweden*, 77.

mutually beneficial way. By acknowledging the different goals that refugees may have while living in Sweden, the integration model grants them individual agency and dignity. “I can help myself. I can work,” stated one Syrian refugee, Bilal, who hoped to reunite with his family within two months. “This is my goal, to make a new life in Sweden,” he said, emphasizing that he did not want to burden the system, but wanted to work within the integration model.⁷⁶ This model is particularly generous in comparison to integration standards within Europe and globally – in some EU countries refugees may not receive any form of assistance, effectively cutting them off from society.⁷⁷

The Swedish integration system does not rely on assimilation to Swedish culture as a marker of success. Rather, success is measured by the other ways a refugee integrates into society via attaining a job, speaking the language, and understanding the ways that their personal goals can be achieved within Sweden. This contrasts with Danish integration policy, to be detailed later, which measures success via cultural assimilation. In terms of integration and support, “Sweden is the best country for Syrians, and everyone knows it,” said one young Syrian refugee, who had proudly renamed himself Johannes.⁷⁸

III. Syrian Refugee Crisis in Sweden

The Syrian refugee crisis began to affect Sweden early, as its strong welfare state and integration programs have long attracted refugees. Legislation from 2013, when the impact of the crisis first began to be felt in the country, granted Syrian asylum-seekers

⁷⁶ Chris Morris, “Sweden’s asylum offer to refugees from Syria,” *British Broadcasting Company*, October 23, 2013, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-24635791>.

⁷⁷ Peromingo, *Work and refugee integration in Sweden*, 76.

⁷⁸ Morris, “Sweden’s asylum offer to refugees from Syria.”

permanent residence automatically and attracted high numbers of Syrians to the country. However, 2015 was a landmark year for the country, as the number of asylum-seekers (approximately 163,000) was almost double the number for 2014. This was the highest per capita inflow of refugees to any OECD country that year. The relatively favorable labor market conditions and highly developed, longstanding integration policies in the country signaled that they were well-equipped to deal with the influx of asylum-seekers.⁷⁹

However, the migration authorities struggled to find sufficient housing and education opportunities to accommodate the asylum-seekers. The housing system struggled with delays and postponements, especially when attempting to address the needs of the approximately 71,000 asylum-seekers who are under 18.⁸⁰ The crisis also stoked fear and tension in the country – concerns about crime, terrorism, and the economic burden that refugees posed were raised.⁸¹ However, immediate policy reactions to the crisis did not work to deter or exclude refugees based on these fears and challenges, but accepted their presence and worked to establish them within Swedish society as soon as possible.

IV. Policy Reactions to the Syrian Crisis

Rather than enact legislation to limit the number of asylum-seekers that could resettle in the country or scale back their social welfare programs to render the country

⁷⁹ OECD, *Working Together*, 13.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 17.

⁸¹ Richard Wike, Bruce Stokes and Katie Simmons, *Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs*, Pew Research Center, (2016): 3.

less attractive to asylum-seekers, Sweden amplified their existing measures and launched new initiatives to deal with the Syrian crisis.⁸²

As early as September 2013, the Swedish Migration Board had announced that asylum-seekers from Syria would be granted permanent residence to live and work in Sweden under the same conditions as native Swedes and be granted family reunification rights. The number of Syrian applicants tripled in the two months following the announcement, and the blanket residency offer extended until November 2015.⁸³ ⁸⁴ By the end of 2013, the number of Syrian asylum-seekers in the country had more than doubled from 7,814 in 2012 to 16,317. The number drastically increased in 2014, with 30,583 asylum applications, and again in 2015, when 51,338 applications were received from Syrian asylum-seekers alone.⁸⁵

The decision to grant permanent residence to Syrian refugees, rather than a preliminary temporary residence, allowed the country to begin the integration process immediately. Mikael Ribbenvik, the deputy director-general of the Swedish Migration Board at the time, stated that the policy change was determined after an evaluation of the ongoing violence in Syria as well as a review of Sweden's past policy responses to refugee flows from Bosnia-Herzegovina in the 1990s.⁸⁶ The country learned via the

⁸² OECD, *Working Together*, 17.

⁸³ Yermi Brenner, "Sweden's refugee policy sets high standard," *AlJazeera*, November 24, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/11/sweden-refugee-policy-sets-high-standard-2013112485613526863.html>.

⁸⁴ Hofverberg, *Refugee Law and Policy: Sweden*.

⁸⁵ Migrationsverket, "Applications for asylum received 2000-2016," Migrationsverket, <https://www.migrationsverket.se/download/18.585fa5be158ee6bf362fd5/1485556063080/Application+for+asylum+received+2000-2016.pdf>.

⁸⁶ Yermi Brenner, "Sweden's refugee policy sets high standard."

1990s Bosnian crisis that early integration is key for refugees' long-term success⁸⁷, and Ribbenvik noted that permanent residence status, more so than temporary status, grants refugees long-term security in the country, providing them with more incentive to integrate into the culture and labor market.⁸⁸

In addition to these measures, Sweden sought other ways to support the large wave of asylum-seekers arriving to the country. The country raised an additional 7 billion kronor (approximately \$771.2 million) in municipal taxes to support asylum-seekers, made efforts to create more low-wage jobs for refugees, and began building temporary housing.⁸⁹ In 2015, they submitted a request to the European Commission to reduce their contribution to the EU budget and allocate that money toward dealing with the refugee crisis.⁹⁰

In September 2015, Swedish Prime Minister Stefan Löfven presented policy recommendations for the European Union's refugee system, calling on all European countries to take more responsibility in receiving refugees.⁹¹ This signaled a coming shift in Swedish refugee policy, as Sweden began to observe the limits of their open-door policy. This shift, to be further detailed in Section VI, aligns with liberal universalist values as characterized by consequentialist universalism.

⁸⁷ OECD, *Working Together*, 18

⁸⁸ Yermi Brenner, "Sweden's refugee policy sets high standard."

⁸⁹ Amanda Billner and Johan Carlstrom, "Refugee Crisis Shapes Swedish Budget as More Seen as Not Enough," *Bloomberg Markets*, September 19, 2016, <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2016-09-19/refugee-crisis-shapes-swedish-budget-as-more-seen-as-not-enough>.

⁹⁰ Hofverberg, *Refugee Law and Policy: Sweden*.

⁹¹ Prime Minister's Office of the Government of Sweden, "The Government's ten standpoints to reform the EU's refugee policy," *The Government of Sweden*, September 8, 2015, <http://www.government.se/articles/2015/09/swedens-ten-standpoints-to-reform-the-eus-refugee-policy/>.

V. Swedish National Identity, the Welfare State, and Refugee Policy

Swedish cultural ideals and their collective national identity are integrated into and form the underlying principles of policy. This is notable in their overarching welfare state, which was established in the 1930s. Their welfare model is connected to the Swedish concept of *folkhemmet*, “the people’s home.” *Folkhemmet* in the context of the welfare state assures Swedes that the state considers equality and cooperation when enacting policy, inspiring confidence in state institutions on the part of the people.⁹² In essence, the Swedish welfare model rests on an optimistic belief – held by the state and by the population – in a continuous progress toward a better society.⁹³

Largely the result of Sweden’s experience in the aftermath of World War II, the welfare state was idealized and transformed in the post-war period through the 1960s. The post-war Swedish experience of having been safe and prosperous while its European neighbors were weak helped further develop many of their modern moral and cultural values surrounding welfare and the duty of the state.⁹⁴ A sense of an internationally focused national identity was cemented during this period. By aiding Western European countries in recovering from the war, Swedes came to see themselves as a social ‘great power’.⁹⁵ Humanitarian action has since been organized from top-to-bottom.⁹⁶

⁹² Thorleif Pettersson and Yilmaz R. Esmer, eds., *Changing Values, Persisting Cultures: Case Studies in Value Change*, European Values Studies v. 12, (Boston: Brill, 2008), 126.

⁹³ Pettersson, *Changing Values, Persisting Cultures*, 140.

⁹⁴ Graubard, *Norden*, 59.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 58-59.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 95.

That both domestic welfare and international humanitarian action are considered first and foremost the responsibility of the state, rather than that of private individuals and civic society, affects Swedish refugee integration policy. Swedish federal integration programs invest in each refugee by recognizing that refugees face particular challenges that native Swedes do not. The state takes an active role in subsidizing jobs for refugees, providing preparatory courses, searching for housing, and tailoring the job search experience to meet refugees' individual needs by discussing expectations. Though the state is deeply involved in this process, refugees are still treated as native Swedes – they are expected to take their fair share of responsibility in employment efforts.

Arbetsförmedlingen handles this process for native Swedes as well as refugees, rather than a migration board or municipal council specifically for refugees as is the case in Denmark.⁹⁷ A guiding principle of international refugee law embedded within the 1951 Convention and 1967 Protocol is that refugees enjoy the same treatment as receiving states' citizens,⁹⁸ and Sweden's integration program is thorough in realizing this goal.

In post-war Sweden, “the war on poverty had been won” and the welfare of individuals in the state did not depend on the “charitable whims of the wealthy, on a humble and pious attitude on the part of the recipient, or on the persuasiveness of his pleas for help.”⁹⁹ This aspect of the welfare state has also expanded to Sweden's refugee policies. In the over two years that Syrians were universally granted permanent residency based solely upon their nationality, they did not necessarily have to meet the 1951 Convention's definition of ‘refugee’ as one who has a “well-founded fear of being

⁹⁷ Peromingo, “Work and refugee integration in Sweden,” 76-77.

⁹⁸ United Nations General Assembly, *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*.

⁹⁹ Graubard, *Norden*, 94.

persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion”¹⁰⁰. Rather, they were granted asylum because they were fleeing indiscriminate violence. The protection of the individual was not contingent upon how strong their individual claim of fear of persecution (“the persuasiveness of his pleas”) was, but rested on an assumption that Syrians, as a group, had a well-founded fear of indiscriminate violence, if not persecution. This extremely generous and inclusionary policy is far from the norm in Europe, where some states have taken the exact opposite approach by pursuing ‘zero refugee’ policies or siphoning refugees into squalid camps and detention centers.^{101 102}

This low emphasis on the importance of nationality in seeking refuge reflects the national sentiment of Sweden – or rather, the lack thereof. There is not a traditional sense of nationalism or national heritage in Sweden¹⁰³, and political culture has been “far less dominated by [Swedish] national history than most of the other countries of Europe.”¹⁰⁴ Among European countries, it has gone the farthest in defining itself as a multicultural

¹⁰⁰ United Nations General Assembly, *1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees*.

¹⁰¹ Lili Bayer, “Hungary’s ‘zero refugee’ strategy,” *POLITICO*, September 20, 2016, <http://www.politico.eu/article/hungary-zero-refugee-strategy-viktor-orban-europe-migration-crisis/>.

¹⁰² Sakhr Al-Makhadhi, “Syrian refugees: ‘Britain is the dream’,” *AlJazeera*, October 21, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/features/2013/10/syrian-refugees-britain-dream-201310179396166775.html>.

¹⁰³ Graubard, *Norden*, 255.

¹⁰⁴ Margaret Cole, *Democratic Sweden: A Volume of Studies Prepare by Members of the New Fabian Research Bureau* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1938), 2, quoted in Stephen Richards Graubard, *Norden: The Passion for Equality* (New York: Norwegian University Press, 1986), 256.

society¹⁰⁵, and according to a 2016 Pew Research Center, Swedes are the least exclusionary when it comes to national identity. Of those surveyed, 45% state that having been born in the country is “not at all important” for being truly Swedish, and 34% stated that it was “not very important.”¹⁰⁶ This ‘open-borders’ conception of national identity lends itself to their inclusive refugee policy, as it implies faith in the eventual social integration of refugees – you do not need to be born in Sweden to attain ‘Swedishness’.

Like other European countries, the majority of Swedes believe that sharing national customs and traditions is “very important” or “somewhat important” in being truly Swedish.¹⁰⁷ While this could signal an unwillingness to accept those who are culturally dissimilar, 36% of those polled indicated that an increasingly diverse society makes the country a better place to live – the highest of any European country polled. Though another 26% believe that growing diversity makes the country a worse place to live,¹⁰⁸ refugee policy in this area seeks to address and integrate refugees into national customs and traditions, with integration packages designed to address specific refugee needs and information on how to integrate into Swedish society. Specific tracks tailor information to refugees’ needs – helping inform refugees on Swedish customs and how refugees can best achieve their goals in a ‘Swedish’ way.¹⁰⁹

Another aspect of national identity that impacts Swedish refugee policy is their secularism. The Swedes – like other Scandinavians – are not particularly religious.

¹⁰⁵ John L. Campbell, ed., *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism: The Danish Experience*, Studies in Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict 4, (Montreal: McGill Queens University Press, 2006), 404.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce Stokes and Rhonda Stewart, *What It Takes to Truly Be ‘One of Us’*, Pew Research Center (2017): 18.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 18.

¹⁰⁸ Wike, *Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees*, 12.

¹⁰⁹ Peromingo, “Work and refugee integration in Sweden,” 78.

Political culture is characterized by a low adherence to ‘traditional values’ and a high appreciation for ‘self-expression values’, primarily related to social trust, social activism, and tolerance for minorities.¹¹⁰ In 2003 surveys, Bondeson found that among Scandinavians, Swedes had the lowest rating of confidence in church institutions and were more accepting of religious minorities than other Scandinavian countries.^{111 112} Surveys administered by the Pew Research Center in 2016 complement these findings; 57% of Swedes believe that being a Christian is “not at all important” and 27% believe it is “not very important” to truly be Swedish.¹¹³

Liberal universalist values do not ascribe special importance to membership in any social group, including religion. Sweden’s religiously tolerant and secular national identity, complemented by their liberal universalist values, is conducive to enacting inclusionary refugee policy, as the vast majority of Syrian refugees coming to Sweden are Muslim. As Christianity is widely considered to be unimportant to assimilating into Swedish culture, Muslim refugees are less likely to be targeted as un-assimilable on account of their religion. Common interpretations of the challenge of Muslim integration portray a conflict between Muslim immigrant groups and native citizens of Christian-heritage societies.¹¹⁴ Religiosity and Christianity have not been incorporated as an important aspect of Swedish national identity nor Swedish culture, thus Muslim refugees are not regarded as too culturally or religiously dissimilar to integrate.

¹¹⁰ Pettersson, *Changing Values, Persisting Cultures*, 129.

¹¹¹ Ulla Bondeson, *Nordic Moral Climates: Value Continuities and Discontinuities in Denmark, Finland, Norway, and Sweden* (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 2003), 52.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 110

¹¹³ Stokes, *What It Takes*, 22.

¹¹⁴ Claire Adida, David D. Laitin, and Marie-Ann Valfort, *Why Muslim Integration Fails in Christian-Heritage Societies*, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 19.

The Swedish perception of criminality also contributes to constructing a society that is more open to refugees. Swedes are more likely than other Nordic countries to commit a variety of illegal activities and are willing to let crimes go unpunished if they did not directly harm another individual.¹¹⁵ While Bondeson's surveys found that Swedes believed "claiming state benefits which you are not entitled to" was the third least morally justifiable criminal behavior,¹¹⁶ the majority of Swedes reject the notion that refugees are a burden on the welfare state for taking jobs and social benefits – 62% believe that refugees will make the country stronger with their work and talents.¹¹⁷ While there is a widespread stereotype in Denmark of refugees as 'freeloaders' that drain the welfare state of resources, that stereotype appears to be less prevalent in Sweden.¹¹⁸ The Swedish belief that refugees will strengthen the country economically is complemented by research from Bruegel, a Belgian think tank, that found that skilled and unskilled migration can have a positive effect on a host country's productivity. Bruegel notes that migrants' skills must be matched by host economies' needs, and that *Arbetsförmedlingen* is one of the most useful sources of information on migrant skills, integrating information on skills as part of their establishment program.¹¹⁹

Rather than constructing the intense attachment to nation and countrymen that resulted in occupied countries during the war, WWII shifted Swedish patriotism toward the idealization of material values, social services, and maintaining a high standard of

¹¹⁵ Bondeson, *Nordic Moral Climates*, 264.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 60-61

¹¹⁷ Wike, *Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees*, 31.

¹¹⁸ Campbell, *National Identity*, 403.

¹¹⁹ Nuria Boot and Reinhilde Veugelers, "Can mass migration boost innovation and productivity?," *Bruegel*, February 10, 2016, <http://bruegel.org/2016/02/can-mass-migration-boost-innovation-and-productivity/>.

living.¹²⁰ Organized top-down humanitarian action has since been commonplace and a source of national pride.¹²¹ Rather than centering ‘Swedishness,’ Swedish national identity is characterized by a role of conscience to the world, and an emphasis on humanitarian and moral responsibility to asylum-seekers and refugees is central to Sweden’s self-image as a state.¹²² This aspect of Swedish national identity in particular – a commitment to humanitarian action – incorporates liberal universalist values. The belief that non-nationals have an equal claim to rights as nationals and therefore providing assistance when non-nationals make rights claims is central to liberal universalism and is central to Swedish refugee policy and integration programs. Swedish national identity is characterized not only by liberal universalist values, but also by multiculturalist values that reject the notion of cultural incompatibility. Multiculturalist policies realize successful integration if diversity is celebrated and the government acknowledges minority cultures as having equal value to that of the mainstream culture.¹²³ Sweden has defined itself as a multicultural society, relying less on a sense of national heritage based on shared history or culture to define their identity and more on shared values, such as humanitarian commitment, faith in the welfare state, *folkhemmet*, and civic participation.

VI. Most Recent Responses

Following wide acceptance of refugees throughout 2015, Sweden was administratively overwhelmed with asylum requests and processing integration measures. Despite their comprehensive integration system, the sheer volume of refugees entering

¹²⁰ Bondeson, *Nordic Moral Climates*, 59.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 255

¹²² Schuster, *A Comparative Analysis*, 119.

¹²³ Adida, *Muslim Integration*, 13.

the country became “untenable,” according to press releases from the Ministry of Justice.¹²⁴ Between 2014 and 2015, for example, the process time for asylum applications increased from 140 to 250 days. Housing shortages postponed commencement of language and job training, placing extended strain on social welfare programs that support asylum-seekers prior to employment.¹²⁵ The Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency reported in November that the refugee crisis had become a health and life risk to Swedes, as healthcare providers, the police, and civil servants could not keep up with requests.¹²⁶

Following calls for the European Union and its Members to better manage and coordinate refugee resettlement, Sweden began to enact more exclusionary refugee policies. The government’s goal in scaling back refugee acceptance, according to the Ministry of Justice, was to “ensure a sustainable migration policy” in Sweden and the EU. Temporary measures were thus introduced to reduce the number of those seeking asylum.

In November 2015, the government first introduced temporary border controls and identification checks between public transport to Sweden from Denmark, and this decision has been extended several times to apply up until May 2017.¹²⁷ The government ended the blanket permanent residence for Syrians in November 2015 as well.¹²⁸

¹²⁴ Swedish Ministry of Justice, *Fact Sheet - Sweden’s Migration and Asylum Policy*. February 2017, <http://www.government.se/491b3d/contentassets/26536c43ab3b41df90c064c2049b1bce/swedens-migration-and-asylum-policy>.

¹²⁵ OECD, *Working Together*, 18.

¹²⁶ Hofverberg, *Refugee Law and Policy: Sweden*.

¹²⁷ *Fact Sheet – Sweden’s migration and asylum policy*, 1.

¹²⁸ Hofverberg, *Refugee Law and Policy: Sweden*.

Throughout 2016, the Swedish government made proposals for legislative changes that reintroduced temporary residence permits and limited family reunification rights – a significant source of migration to the country – in an attempt to reduce the amount of asylum-seekers flowing into the country.¹²⁹ Additional changes ended assistance to those asylum-seekers whose applications had been denied and were non-appealable.¹³⁰

To compensate for their new restrictive proposals, the government emphasized that, though a shift from their previous inclusive policies, these measures were necessary in order to maintain the strength of Swedish introduction and integration programs for asylum-seekers. To continue offering generous reception benefits to refugees, the government had to reduce the number of asylum-seekers granted these benefits. The government advocated for burden sharing in the European Union and proposed measures to reform the introduction and integration programs to better serve asylum-seekers and administrators.¹³¹ Prime Minister Stefan Löfven spoke to the European Parliament in favor of an asylum system in which asylum is sought with the European Union, not individual Member States, and called for a “move from chaos to control.”¹³²

¹²⁹ Swedish Ministry of Justice, *Proposal to temporarily restrict the possibility of being granted a residence permit in Sweden*, April 8, 2016. <http://www.government.se/press-releases/2016/04/proposal-to-temporarily-restrict-the-possibility-of-being-granted-a-residence-permit-in-sweden/>

¹³⁰ Swedish Ministry of Justice, *Government proposes amendments to asylum seekers' right to assistance*, March 24, 2016, <http://www.government.se/press-releases/2016/03/government-proposes-amendments-to-asylum-seekers-right-to-assistance2/>

¹³¹ Swedish Ministry of Justice, *Measures to tackle the refugee crisis*, 2015, <http://www.government.se/contentassets/f8effa03946941c5987f7ae76b356a02/agreement-measures-to-tackle-the-refugee-crisis.pdf>

¹³² “Swedish Prime Minister on refugee crisis: ‘We must move from chaos to control’,” *European Parliament News*, March 9, 2016,

These changes indicate the presence of liberal universalist values in the country as tempered by consequentialist utilitarianism. While they could be interpreted as indicative of a nationalist turn in the country, the government has continued to offer their integration program to refugees and has framed the policy changes as reactions to an overburdened bureaucracy. Swedish diplomats feel strongly that Sweden should receive as many asylum-seekers as possible, but that to do so is no longer pragmatic. Sweden's Prime Minister Stefan Löfven stated in a press conference that it pained him to enact exclusionary policies but that Sweden "simply [could not] do any more" to receive refugees. Deputy Prime Minister Åsa Romson was moved to tears when announcing the stricter rules regarding refugee acceptance.¹³³

To continue accepting refugees would impede the distribution of benefits and services to accepted refugees and affect the quality of such services. In some cases, the burden on healthcare providers and the police – as noted by the Swedish Civil Contingencies Agency – could infringe on the quality of care that not only refugees receive, but that native Swedes receive.¹³⁴ Owing to this, the Swedish government did not give any special moral relevance to nationality, as in nationalist value systems, but rather considered the impact of their open refugee policies on all participants in the welfare system – emblematic of consequentialist utilitarianism.

http://www.europarl.europa.eu/pdfs/news/public/story/20160304STO17407/20160304STO17407_en.pdf.

¹³³ Aamna Mohdin, "The most refugee-friendly country in Europe is growing weary," *QUARTZ*, September 7, 2016, <https://qz.com/774427/the-most-refugee-friendly-country-in-europe-is-growing-weary/>.

¹³⁴ Hofverberg, *Refugee Law and Policy: Sweden*.

IV. Conclusion

Initial policy reactions to the Syrian crisis in Sweden – expanding services, raising taxes to support the newcomers, and granting blanket protections to Syrians in particular – were characterized by liberal universalism, doing what was necessary to treat refugees the same as native Swedes, without nationals as more deserving of state benefits than non-nationals. The aspects of national identity that impact welfare policy impact refugee policy as well, with liberal universalist values encouraging the extension of the welfare state to benefit non-nationals as well.

When faced with challenges to the system and the ability of the welfare state to protect all those that the Swedish state endeavored to, the government was forced to rescind some of its generous provisions, particularly concerning granting permanent residence to Syrians. While these legislative changes were, in effect, exclusionary toward refugees, the statements made by government agencies and representatives reflect a continued commitment to bettering the situation for refugees in Sweden. The government maintained their dedication to liberal universalism, but recognized that this was not a perfectly feasible goal, framing the exclusionary changes in consequentialist utilitarian rhetoric.

Chapter Four – Denmark

I. Introduction

In contrast to Sweden's response, Denmark has enacted exclusionary policies toward refugees following the Syrian refugee crisis. This chapter provides a background on Danish refugee policy and frames it within Danish national identity and nationalism, which has seen significant growth in the country since 2001. Sections II, III, and IV detail the history, background, and policy changes that followed the Syrian crisis reaching Denmark. Section V describes the immediate policy reactions in terms of Danish national identity and nationalism. The chapter details the ways in which Danish national identity has affected refugee policy, serving as the second case study in the thesis.

II. History of Danish Refugee Policy

Denmark has a long tradition of participation in international refugee protection. It was the first country to ratify the 1951 Convention and one of the first to implement both the 1951 Convention and the 1967 Protocol via the Danish Aliens Act.¹³⁵ In 2013, Denmark received the seventh highest amount of asylum-seekers per capita among the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development countries¹³⁶ and their Danish Refugee Council, a humanitarian group funded by the Danish government, is a prominent actor in supporting refugees globally.¹³⁷ The country is a generous actor in administering

¹³⁵ UNHCR, *States Parties to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol*.

¹³⁶ Elin Hofverberg, ed., *Refugee Law and Policy: Denmark*, from the Library of Congress, (March 2016).

¹³⁷ Edward Delman, "How Not to Welcome Refugees," *The Atlantic*, January 27, 2016 <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2016/01/denmark-refugees-immigration-law/431520/>

global aid— one of only four of the OECD countries, along with Sweden, that donates more than the target .7% of their national income on foreign aid.¹³⁸ Denmark has long prided itself on its commitment to humanitarian aid and openness to refugees in their egalitarian society.¹³⁹

The country's resettlement program was established in 1979 and has worked with the UNHCR in resettling refugees in the country, approving an annual allocation of resettlement places to refugees. From July 2005 until December 2016, Denmark operated a flexible quota program, resettling 500 refugees annually.¹⁴⁰

Two central acts constitute the foundation for Danish immigration and integration – the Aliens Act and the Integration Act. Denmark has historically provided comprehensive integration services and support for refugees, whose status is defined in the Aliens Act and whose entitlements outlined in the Integration Act.¹⁴¹ Beginning with a pre-departure orientation, the Danish Immigration Service has provided language and culture classes to refugees, and then delegated integration services to the municipalities where the refugees were to be resettled.¹⁴² The municipalities are tasked with resettlement in order to ensure that refugees are evenly dispersed throughout the country, avoiding de facto segregation. Refugees are offered an integration program, under the

¹³⁸ Naomi Larsson, "Foreign aid: which countries are the most generous?," *The Guardian*, September 9, 2015, <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/sep/09/foreign-aid-which-countries-are-the-most-generous>

¹³⁹ Reva Jaffe-Walter, *Coercive Concern: Nationalism, Liberalism, and the Schooling of Muslim Youth*, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2016), 13.

¹⁴⁰ UNHCR, *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Country Chapter – Denmark*, (UNHCR, 2011, chapter rev. 2015), 2.

¹⁴¹ Tina Gudrun Jensen et al., "Analysis of integration policies and public State-endorsed institutions at national and regional levels in Denmark," *The Danish Centre for Social Research (SFI)*, (2009): 3.

¹⁴² ¹⁴² UNHCR, *UNHCR Resettlement Handbook, Country Chapter – Denmark*, 11.

1999 Integration Act, that lasts three years and includes housing, Danish language classes, courses on Danish society and employment or education advice. Until refugees are employed, the government's Danish Social Services provides them cash benefits – contingent on the refugee's continued involvement in the integration program.¹⁴³ Since July 2013, the municipalities have been responsible for providing refugees with preliminary physical and mental health services, employment and education services.¹⁴⁴

Expedient integration is seen as essential to maintaining cultural homogeneity and social egalitarianism.¹⁴⁵ Successful integration is measured by educational performance and labor market integration and economic self-reliance, along with language acquisition and active participation in Danish society.¹⁴⁶ The hallmark of successful integration is one of successful inclusion in and acculturation to Danish culture and traditions, especially their egalitarian and secular values.¹⁴⁷ In the minds of Danes, this assimilationist approach guarantees moral order, social cohesion, and the continued success of their welfare state. The Danish reaction to the Syrian crisis, as detailed in Sections III and IV, aims to protect this order under the 'threat' of immigrants who may be uncomfortable with the Danish way of life and challenge it.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴³ "National resettlement programmes – Denmark," European Resettlement Network, European Union, <http://www.resettlement.eu/country/denmark#integration-in-practice>.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ulf Hedetoft, "Denmark: Integrating Immigrants into a Homogeneous Welfare State" *The Online Journal of the Migration Policy Institute*, (November 1, 2006).

<http://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/denmark-integrating-immigrants-homogeneous-welfare-state>

¹⁴⁶ Jensen et al., "Analysis of integration policies and public State-endorsed institutions at national and regional levels in Denmark," 6.

¹⁴⁷ Hedetoft, "Denmark: Integrating Immigrants."

¹⁴⁸ Hans Branner and Morten Kelstrup, eds., *Denmark's Policy towards Europe after 1945: History, Theory and Options*. (Odense: Odense University Press, 2000), 173.

III. Syrian Refugee Crisis in Denmark

The Syrian refugee crisis profoundly impacted the Danish asylum system. The number of asylum applications tripled from 2013 to 2015, with over 20,000 applications in 2015. Syria, Iran, and Afghanistan were the top three countries of origin, accounting for more than two thirds of the total applications.¹⁴⁹ Approximately 81% of the initial decisions on asylum in 2015 were positive¹⁵⁰, and the country struggled to accommodate the needs of refugees in their welfare state, which guarantees free healthcare and education to every citizen.¹⁵¹

The influx did not only strain the country's welfare system, but also raised tensions regarding social stability; the value placed on cultural homogeneity was tested when such a large population required extensive integration efforts. The Danish culture minister, Bertel Haarder, claimed that Muslims do not easily integrate because of their 'patriarchal culture,' but there are also implicit parts of integration, such as norms regarding public speaking volume or jaywalking, that grate on Danish nerves.¹⁵² Danish history also left a legacy of national vulnerability,¹⁵³ and refugees exacerbate this vulnerable feeling. The refugee crisis and the threat of terrorism are linked in the minds of Europeans¹⁵⁴ and Muslims are widely perceived as a menace by host populations in

¹⁴⁹ OECD, *International Migration Outlook 2016*, OECD (Paris: OECD Publishing, 2016), 252. http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/migr_outlook-2016-en.

¹⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 252.

¹⁵¹ Delman, "How Not to Welcome Refugees."

¹⁵² David Zucchino, "I've Become a Racist: Migrant Wave Unleashes Danish Tensions Over Identity," *The New York Times*, September 5, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/06/world/europe/denmark-migrants-refugees-racism.html>

¹⁵³ Campbell, *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism*, 25.

¹⁵⁴ Wike, *Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees*, 3.

Christian-heritage societies.¹⁵⁵ The fear that Muslim refugees from Syria, Iraq, and Afghanistan are not assimilable also prompted legislative changes to the Danish Aliens Act and Integration Act to limit access to the country.

IV. Policy Reactions to the Syrian Crisis

The 2015 refugee crisis prompted a number of changes to Danish asylum laws and policies once the full impact of the influx began to be felt nationally.¹⁵⁶ Legislative changes were implemented to not only limit the amount of asylum applications and make asylum seeking in Denmark more difficult, but also to deter refugees from applying in the first place.¹⁵⁷

One of the first major legislative changes came in August 2015, when the Danish government cut refugee benefits by approximately 45%.¹⁵⁸ Implemented that September, social assistance was lowered from a monthly 10,849 DKK (approx. \$1,500) to 5,945 DKK before tax for single adults with no children. This change applied to those who had resided in Denmark for less than seven of the previous eight years—targeting newly

¹⁵⁵ Adida, *Muslim Integration*, 4.

¹⁵⁶ Hugh Eakin, “Liberal, Harsh Denmark,” *The New York Review of Books*, March 10, 2016, <http://www.nybooks.com/articles/2016/03/10/liberal-harsh-denmark/>.

¹⁵⁷ Mary Pascaline, “EU Refugee Crisis Update 2016: Denmark’s Asylum Application Numbers Show Massive Drop,” *International Business Times*, December 21, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.com/eu-refugee-crisis-update-2016-denmarks-asylum-application-numbers-show-massive-drop-2463632>.

¹⁵⁸ Orlando Crowcroft, “Denmark: How the refugee crisis caused Europe’s liberal darling to lose its way,” *International Business Times*, June 8, 2016, <http://www.ibtimes.co.uk/denmark-how-europes-refugee-crisis-caused-liberal-darling-lose-its-way-1563836>.

arrived refugees as well as those who had been relatively recently resettled.¹⁵⁹ Aiming to encourage social cohesion, the legislation also provided a financial incentive to learn Danish, giving a 1,500 DKK increase to social benefits if the recipient passed a Danish language exam.¹⁶⁰ The Ministry of Employment stated in a press release that these legislative changes were direct attempts to make Denmark less attractive to refugees and to incentivize already-resettled refugees to work and contribute to Danish society.¹⁶¹

These changes were widely criticized, and the UNCHR released a statement that the cuts were in violation of the 1951 Convention, which provides that signatories give refugees the same treatment as nationals when it comes to public relief services and social security services. Despite the Danish government's claims that that these regulations would be equally applied to Danish nationals who have lived outside the EU, the UNHCR noted that refugees were disproportionately affected by the legislation.¹⁶²

Following the benefits cuts, the Danish Ministry of Immigration, Integration and Housing placed advertisements in Lebanese newspapers to urge refugees to apply for asylum elsewhere, describing the August legislative changes. Lebanon has taken in more than one million Syrian refugees, many of whom hope to continue on to Europe, and the advertisements stressed that refugees who were not approved for asylum would be quickly removed from Denmark.¹⁶³

¹⁵⁹ "Denmark enacts cuts to refugee benefits," *The Local DK*, August 26, 2015, <http://www.thelocal.dk/20150826/denmark-passes-controversial-refugee-benefit-cuts>.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² "UN: Refugee benefit cuts violate convention," *The Local DK*, August 11, 2015, <http://www.thelocal.dk/20150811/denmarks-refugee-cuts-violate-un-convention-unhcr>.

¹⁶³ "Denmark places anti-migrant adverts in Lebanon newspapers," *British Broadcasting Company*, September 7, 2015, <http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-34173542>.

In November 2015, the government launched a 34-proposal package to change asylum regulations, and adopted one third of the regulations, allowing the easier return of rejected asylum applicants, loosening regulations on refugee housing, and granting new authority for the police to control foreigners' entry and stay in Denmark.¹⁶⁴ On the 20th of November, the Danish Parliament passed legislation that the police could detain asylum-seekers whose applications had been denied, and that in exceptional cases no court order would be necessary in order to arrest aliens for 72 hours.¹⁶⁵

That same month, the government announced it was indefinitely suspending its participation in the UNHCR quota-based resettlement program, which it had participated in since 1979. This program only resettled approximately 500 refugees a year – a relatively small number considering the 143,000 quota refugees the UNHCR was responsible for settling in 2016 alone.¹⁶⁶ The program was postponed, according to Integration Minister Inger Støjberg, in order to allow Denmark time to cope “economically, culturally, and socially” with the large influx of 18,000 refugees in 2015, and allow municipalities to better assist the refugees they had already resettled.¹⁶⁷ Comparatively, 163,000 refugees sought asylum in Sweden that year.¹⁶⁸ The Danish government later cut other forms of support to accepted refugees, demonstrating a lack of

¹⁶⁴ Jon Kvist, *Recent Danish migration and integration policies*, European Social Policy Network, (Brussels: European Commission, 2016), 1.

¹⁶⁵ Elin Hofverberg, ed., *Denmark: Law to Stem Asylum-Based Immigration*, from the Library of Congress, (February 2016). “<http://www.loc.gov/law/foreign-news/article/denmark-law-to-stem-asylum-based-immigration/>.”

¹⁶⁶ Leo Dobbs, “UNHCR report sees 2017 resettlement needs at 1.19 million,” *UNHCR News*, June 13, 2016, <http://www.unhcr.org/afr/news/latest/2016/6/575e79424/unhcr-report-sees-2017-resettlement-needs-119-million.html>.

¹⁶⁷ Mary Pascaline, “EU Refugee Crisis Update 2016.”

¹⁶⁸ “Why do refugees prefer Sweden to Denmark?,” *The Local SE*, January 4, 2016, <https://www.thelocal.se/20160104/why-do-refugees-prefer-sweden-to-denmark>.

commitment to better assistance and rather, a desire to deter other refugees from applying for asylum in Denmark.

In January 2016, Denmark reintroduced border controls on the German border with random identification checks. The number of asylum-seekers entering the country dropped from approximately 1,200 per week in November 2015 to only 640 in the first week of January, hitting a record low of 223 in the third week of January.¹⁶⁹

Parliament also approved a second part of the November 2015 asylum package in January 2016, which proved controversial but moved forward nonetheless. The most controversial portion of the package was the amendment to the Danish Aliens Act that approved the search and seizure of refugees' valuables worth more than 10,000 DKK (approx. \$1,453), with exceptions for items of "sentimental value."¹⁷⁰ The amendments also extended the time requirement for resettled refugees to apply for family reunification rights - the applicant family member now has to have resided in Denmark for three years, when the law previously allowed refugees to apply for family reunification after only one year of residency.¹⁷¹ The amendment reduced state financial aid to refugees by another 10%, increased the minimum time requirement for awarding permanent residency, and introduced a fee for applying for family reunification and a fee for converting temporary residence permits to permanent permits. Furthermore, the law reduced asylum-seekers'

¹⁶⁹ Kvist, *Recent Danish migration and integration policies*, 1.

¹⁷⁰ Arwa Damon and Tim Hume, "Denmark adopts controversial law to seize asylum seekers' valuables," *Cable News Network*, January 26, 2016, <http://www.cnn.com/2016/01/26/europe/denmark-vote-jewelry-bill-migrants/>.

¹⁷¹ Hofverberg, *Denmark: Law to Stem Asylum-Based Immigration*.

agency in finding housing, requiring that they live in special housing centers and were no longer permitted to find their own housing.¹⁷²

Local municipalities also gained international attention for policies that were considered Islamophobic and targeting toward refugees. In January 2016, the city of Randers passed a proposal to require that pork be served on school lunch menus.¹⁷³ Proponents of the proposal said that pork was a traditional Danish food and was essential to preserving national identity, while critics claimed that it stigmatized and targeted Muslims. The proposal stated that pork must be served on “an equal footing” as other foods, though it does not obligate anyone to eat the pork served.¹⁷⁴ Other municipalities have witnessed harsh backlash against offering girls-only swim classes – popular among Muslim women and girls. The city of Aarhus voted to end girls-only swimming lessons, claiming that they impede integration and uphold patriarchal beliefs about women’s separation.¹⁷⁵

The legal crackdown on refugees has not only affected refugees themselves – the government has started charging native Danes with smuggling if they assist refugees travelling through Denmark en route to Sweden or Norway.¹⁷⁶ Almost 300 Danes have been charged with smuggling refugees, in an apparent attempt to not only dissuade

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Dan Bilefsky, “Denmark’s New Front in Debate Over Immigrants: Children’s Lunches,” *The New York Times*, January 20, 2016, <https://www.nytimes.com/2016/01/21/world/europe/randens-denmark-pork.html>.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ “Danish city council bans women-only swim classes, citing need for integration,” *Reuters*, February 3, 2017, <https://www.rt.com/news/376254-womens-swimming-muslim-banned-denmark/>

¹⁷⁶ Lizzie Dearden, “Denmark ‘criminalising decency’ with crackdown on helping refugees, says woman prosecuted for giving lift,” *The Independent*, March 12, 2016, <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/denmark-criminalising-decency-with-crackdown-on-helping-refugees-says-woman-prosecuted-for-giving-a6927676.html>

volunteers from helping, but to also signal to refugees outside of Denmark that they will not easily receive help on their journey.¹⁷⁷

V. Danish National Identity, the Welfare State, and Refugee Policy

National identity runs deep and strong in Denmark, and according to Ostergard, the modern Danish state represents a rare case of “virtual identity between state, nation, and society”.¹⁷⁸ Danes have a “tribe mentality” that is closed and values consensus and cultural homogeneity.¹⁷⁹ According to Campbell, the perception of national vulnerability has had a profound impact on Danish national identity,¹⁸⁰ and the perception of national vulnerability as a small state is resurging with an influx of refugees.

National identity in Denmark is in large part built around a shared Danish “historical heritage”¹⁸¹ and cooperation in their guiding social covenant – that in return for the universal welfare state and high benefits, there is an expectation that people will work hard and pay into the system.¹⁸² The Danish social welfare state was established via cooperation between the classes; Danes feel that the welfare state was built from below and thus feel closely integrated into the state. There have always been close ties between the state, voluntary associations, and the general population that compound this feeling.¹⁸³ Struggles over the issue of immigration and refugee integration challenge the

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Uffe Ostergard, *Peasants and Danes: The Danish National Identity and Political Culture*, Comparative Studies in Society and History, 34, no. 1, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, January 1992): 3

¹⁷⁹ Bondeson, *Nordic Moral Climates*, 10.

¹⁸⁰ Campbell, *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism*, 4.

¹⁸¹ Bondeson, *Nordic Moral Climates*, 132.

¹⁸² Zucchini, “I’ve Become a Racist”.

¹⁸³ Pettersson, *Changing Values, Persisting Cultures*, 163.

welfare state – politicians and the media have elevated the issue of immigration to the forefront of national thinking, claiming that the influx of refugees has put undue stress on the welfare state.¹⁸⁴ Over the past 60 years, the welfare state, more than anything else, is what has grounded the nation in the heart of the Danish people,¹⁸⁵ and when faced with large immigrant influxes, Danes perceive a threat of sovereign erosion and a challenge to their politico-cultural framework. Immigration is perceived as putting the Danish model of combined egalitarian political participation and consensual trust in the state in jeopardy.¹⁸⁶

This perception of sovereign erosion and national vulnerability is tied to the Danish history as an occupied nation during World War II, and immigration from Muslim-majority countries is often overtly compared to German occupation. In the 2001 parliamentary elections, MP Søren Krarup of the right-wing Danish People's Party (DPP) compared contestation of a Danish Muslim presence to resisting Nazism during the war, stated that the hijab is equivalent to the swastika, and that like Nazism, Islam must be fought off.¹⁸⁷ Jesper Langballe, another DPP representative, claimed Islam was a "Pest Over Europe," referencing a 1930s anti-Nazi, anti-communist Danish book.¹⁸⁸ An MP from Denmark's Liberal Party, Inge Dahl Sørensen, also claimed that "certain people pose a security risk solely because of their religion," while MP Mogens Camre of The Progress Party explicitly stated "Muslims are just waiting for the right moment to kill

¹⁸⁴ Campbell, *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism*, 35.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 158.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 400.

¹⁸⁷ Peter Hervik, *The Annoying Difference: The Emergence of Danish Neonationalism, Neoracism, and Populism in the Post-1989 World*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011), 1.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 1.

us.”¹⁸⁹ Danes from various political parties perceive Muslim immigration as a threat to their national security and state stability, conceptualizing these immigrants and refugees as an occupying force.

In addition, the Muslim presence in Denmark dilutes their cultural homogeneity, to which the strong sense of national identity in Denmark is closely tied, as evidenced in their assimilationist integration policies for newcomers. The government and the public both believe that the continued success of the welfare state is contingent upon maintaining this cultural homogeneity.¹⁹⁰ There is great pressure to ensure cultural, linguistic and political homogeneity in the state, as this homogeneity is, in the minds of Danes, linked to welfare, well being, and success.¹⁹¹ The vast numbers of culturally dissimilar Syrian refugees seeking asylum in the country have threatened this cultural homogeneity, though the country’s population is still majority native-born. Whereas with the refugee flows from Iran, Iraq, and Lebanon that characterized the 1990s, the numbers were moderate and the Danish integration and welfare system could accommodate them, the rapid influx of Syrians do not fit this model. This has resulted in a backlash against refugee flows from Syria and the rest of the Middle East.

Prior to this crisis, most immigrants came from other Western countries and refugee flows from developing countries were fairly small. The 1990s saw a rise in the arrivals of Middle Eastern refugees, but their presence was not fully felt until the end of the 1990s and 2000s, when their families began growing and diluting the valued cultural

¹⁸⁹ Gingrich, *Neo-Nationalism in Europe and Beyond*, 92.

¹⁹⁰ Hedetoft, “Denmark: Integrating Immigrants.”

¹⁹¹ Campbell, *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism*, 400.

homogeneity of Denmark.¹⁹² Unlike Swedish national identity, which does not regard ethnicity or place of birth as relevant to being truly ‘Swedish,’ Danish identity is firmly rooted in ancestry, language, and blood – belonging to the ethno-national Danish group as opposed to an ethnic minority.¹⁹³ The “integration crisis” in Denmark is thus presented as the problem of Muslim and Middle Eastern immigrants, refugees, and citizens who insist on maintaining their culture, language, and attachments to their home countries. To maintain this identity is seen as a failure to embrace Danish and European values.¹⁹⁴

In Denmark, ethnification – the process of identifying and ‘othering’ groups based on ethnicity or race, or constructing a perception of this ‘other’ – is reflected in their integration program. In the majority of policy documents, the main focus is on the immigrants’ or refugees’ alleged shortcomings, with less focus on the barriers that migrants face, such as discrimination.¹⁹⁵ Of the Nordic countries, Denmark has the strongest ethnification component in their integration policies, ascribing negative characteristics based on stereotypical beliefs. According to Harsløf, the stronger the ethnification process is, the more punitive the introductory program will be, and this is evident in Denmark.¹⁹⁶ This ethnification process’ prevalence in Denmark contributes to their exclusionary refugee policies, as Syrian refugees belong to a distinct ethnic group that is ascribed the stereotype of being more passive – in terms of finding work and integrating into society – than the rest of the population.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² Hedetoft, “Denmark: Integrating Immigrants.”

¹⁹³ Branner, *Denmark’s Policy towards Europe after 1945*, 175-176.

¹⁹⁴ Jaffe-Walter, *Coercive Concern*, 16.

¹⁹⁵ Ivan Harsløf and Rickard Ulmestig, eds., *Changing Social Risks and Social Policy Responses in the Nordic Welfare States*, (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 213.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 212-213.

¹⁹⁷ Harsløf, *Changing Social Risks*, 212.

Like Swedes, Danes consider claiming state benefits to which one is not entitled to be the third least morally justifiable crime, yet Bondeson found in her surveys of Danes that they are far more condemning of illegal behavior. In addition, Danes demanded harsher punishments for criminal behavior.¹⁹⁸ Refugees in Denmark are routinely branded as ‘welfare scroungers’ or ‘refugees of convenience’ – only coming to the country to benefit from the welfare state, and not based on any real well-founded fear of persecution. They are seen as unfairly taking advantage of a system that was not intended for their benefit, but for the benefit of native/ethnic Danes.¹⁹⁹ This perception of refugees as claiming benefits they are not entitled to lends itself to the creation of exclusionary refugee policy, as the perception of refugees as ‘welfare scroungers’ exists regardless of whether they are within the territory or not, and this crime is believed to be one of the least justifiable crimes within Denmark. Thus, exclusionary refugee policy deters refugees from entering the territory and makes it difficult for them to access their ‘undeserved’ benefits once they are there.

Denmark’s strong sense of national identity, paired with their relatively homogeneous population and only moderate immigration flows until recently,²⁰⁰ has resulted in a nationalist refugee policy backlash, following a trend of growing nationalism in the country since 2001. Danish national identity does not regularly surface in such bold forms unless criticized or threatened by foreigners who find fault with anything ‘Danish’.²⁰¹ As Denmark negotiates the transition from being a culturally and ethnically homogeneous society to one with significant proportions of ethnic minorities,

¹⁹⁸ Bondeson, *Nordic Moral Climates*, 264.

¹⁹⁹ Campbell, *National Identity and the Varieties of Capitalism*, 403.

²⁰⁰ Hedetoft, “Denmark: Integrating Immigrants.”

²⁰¹ Ostergard, *Peasants and Danes*, 24.

there has been a wave of nationalist discourse that positions immigrants and refugees as outsiders.²⁰² This discourse has been exacerbated by the conflicts and violence surrounding a Danish's newspaper's solicitation of cartoons of the Prophet Mohammad in 2005 and the 2015 Paris Hebdo shooting – flashpoints in Danish debates about preserving freedoms and the value of their cultural homogeneity,²⁰³ perceived as a safeguard against these forms of violence.

A key theme of parliamentary and local government elections since 2001 has been immigrants and refugees, and the issue has remained at the forefront of Danish political life as voters across the political spectrum suspend their traditional preferences and vote for right-wing parties with nationalist agendas.²⁰⁴ Contemporary Danish nationalism has centered on the redefinition of a Danish nation consisting of people who rightfully defend themselves from those from non-Western countries, particularly Muslims.²⁰⁵

VI. Conclusion

Denmark's policy reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis has been to turn further inward, cutting benefits to refugees and accepting less asylum-seekers. Not only do these measures serve to harshen the environment for refugees within Denmark, they are also clear signals to would-be asylum-seekers outside of Denmark that it would not be hospitable towards them. These deterrence mechanisms prioritize the rights of ethnic Danes to access the welfare state benefits over the rights of non-nationals to access these benefits. Even if accepted into Danish society, asylum-seekers still must wait and 'earn'

²⁰² Jaffe-Walter, *Coercive Concern*, 13.

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 13.

²⁰⁴ Gingrich, *Neo-Nationalism in Europe and Beyond*, 92

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 93

these benefits. These policy reactions that actively discourage refugees from seeking asylum in the country reflect nationalist values – Danish citizens are the preferred recipients of Danish welfare benefits. Rather than adjust or expand the system to better accommodate refugees' needs, the Danish government has enacted nationalist value-motivated policies that restrict the ability of non-Danes to access the system and thereby ward off the 'threat' of immigration.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

I. Introduction

The previous chapters have described liberal universalist and nationalist values and explored these values in the context of Swedish and Danish refugee policies. Swedish initial reactions to the crisis were more inclusionary, while Denmark's were more exclusionary. The following section will more thoroughly compare the two policy reactions and finalize the argument that Sweden's refugee policy is impacted by a national identity that values liberal universalism, and that Denmark's national identity prioritizes nationalist values which are then reflected in their refugee policy.

II. Comparing the Cases

In both countries, national identity affects Swedish and Danish welfare and refugee policies. The cultural ideals that underpin the welfare state in both are used to justify refugee policy, but it is the difference between the two in prioritizing liberal universalist or nationalist values that result in divergent refugee policies.

On the one hand, Swedish national identity has incorporated liberal universalism, which does not value the rights of nationals over non-nationals and thus serves as justification for their inclusionary refugee policy. Their national pride is affirmed by meeting humanitarian goals, such as welcoming and successfully integrating refugees. The Swedish iteration of national identity does not value ties to the national history or cultural heritage, but rather relies on a commitment to Swedish moral values, which can be appreciated by anyone, regardless of origin. These values include the aforementioned humanitarian commitments, but also include faith in the welfare state and civic

participation. In this way, refugees can acquire ‘Swedishness,’ which is not perceived to be the case in Denmark. Liberal universalism in the Swedish case implies an extension of the welfare state to non-nationals and inspires inclusionary refugee policy.

Denmark, on the other hand, incorporates nationalist values into policy and Danes do not thus feel a sense of duty to non-nationals as they do to nationals. The influx of culturally dissimilar refugees has been perceived as a threat to the national ideals that form the foundation of their welfare state – particularly cultural homogeneity – and thus as something that must be pushed back against. This sense of national vulnerability and combined with a high sense of duty to protect the rights of nationals rather than non-nationals has resulted in exclusionary policies that aim to ensure that the Danish welfare state remains stable for native Danes. When the welfare state is perceived as threatened in this way, nationalist values influence a turn inwards and enactment of exclusionary refugee policy to protect the system’s stability.

While Sweden’s more recent turn toward exclusionary policies could be interpreted as a nationalist reaction in line with Denmark’s initial policy changes, the hesitance with which Sweden has approached the changes and the way they have framed them indicates differently. Rather than discussing refugees as a security threat or inassimilable, as is the case in Denmark, the Swedish government has lobbied for other European Union Member States to accept more refugees, as their systems are overwhelmed. To accept more refugees would not be in line with liberal universalism, as the already-accepted refugees as well as native Swedes would actually suffer as the system becomes too administratively burdened. Consequentialist utilitarianism thus tempers their liberal universalist inclination, protecting the rights of native Swedes as

well as already-present refugees by providing that their claims to rights are equal to those claims from outsiders, but not less important. If to accept more refugees would impede the quality of services that those already in Sweden enjoy, then the number that Sweden takes in must be stemmed.

This is contrasted by the Danish case, whose restrictions are not motivated by a dedication to ensuring that both nationals and approved non-nationals have access to the welfare state. Nationalist sentiment in Denmark prioritizes only the rights of nationals, particularly ethnic Danes, and thus excludes refugees from accessing a system that was not intended for their benefit. Non-Danes do not have a valid moral claim to Danish welfare state benefits, according to nationalist values. Culturally dissimilar refugees are not believed to be able to attain ‘Danishness’ because ‘Danishness’ is tied to a national heritage, language, and the creation of welfare system in itself that refugees have not had a role in.

III. Concluding Remarks

In reaction to the Syrian refugee crisis, Sweden and Denmark have altered their refugee policies in drastically different ways, diverging after sharing long histories as prominent humanitarian actors on refugee issues. Several factors of national identity impact welfare policy and refugee policy in both countries, but a moral distinction between the two regarding who is entitled to access the welfare state has resulted in differing refugee policy reactions. Sweden’s much more inclusive policies have reflected liberal universalism as a factor in their national identity, justifying expanding the welfare state to include as many as possible and benefitting non-nationals in ways similar to

nationals. Danish policy reactions have contrastingly prioritized the rights of native Danes to access the welfare state, reflecting nationalist values.

After identifying these policy differences, the preceding chapters have aimed to explore Swedish and Danish national identities and the ways in which differing policy reactions are affected by national identity. The two countries' national identities vary in what they prioritize as important to national sentiment and how 'Swedishness' versus 'Danishness' can be attained. Further, there is a moral distinction between the two in how they prioritize the attainment of 'Swedishness' versus 'Danishness' as a prerequisite for receiving state benefits.

An explanation of this moral distinction is valuable in truly understanding the motivations and justifications for refugee policies in Sweden and Denmark. This understanding can be extended to policy outside of these two countries, as national identity among all European Union Member States experiencing the current refugee crisis also likely plays a role in creating refugee policy. Identifying the similarities and differences in policy is useful, but it is particularly useful to understand why states seek different solutions to similar challenges. Refugee flows from Syria are expected to continue as the conflict enters its seventh year²⁰⁶, and more general refugee flows will continue until global solutions to the causal factors behind forced migration are universally reached. Thus, the national-level implications of these flows will remain relevant.

²⁰⁶ Samer Abboud, "Syrian conflict does not end here," *AlJazeera*, March 15, 2016, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/2016/03/syrian-conflict-160315072807168.html>.

The existing literature on migration and refugees is heavily focused on these causal factors and their international political solutions,²⁰⁷ but wider research can benefit from closer analysis of national moral frameworks and policymaking. The policies that individual states enact have profound effects on the wellbeing and success of refugees in the integration process, as well as on the native citizens and host governments. This thesis' analysis of the Swedish and Danish integration programs and their cultural roots therefore fills a knowledge gap that is significant for the broader literature on migration and refugees.

²⁰⁷ See: Haddad, *The Refugee in International Society: Between Sovereigns*; Steiner, Mason, and Hayes, *Migration and Insecurity: Citizenship and social inclusion in a transnational era*; Hathaway and Neve, *Making International Refugee Law Relevant Again: A Proposal for Collectivized and Solution-Oriented Protection*; Loescher and Monahan, *Refugees and International Relations*.

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