

The Rise and Success of the Far-Right in Western Europe: A Comparative Case Study of Danish and Dutch Far-Right Parties & the Use of Anti-Immigrant Rhetoric

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Background

Over the last two decades, Western European states have seen a surge in the electoral success of far-right parties. My research sought to understand the trends of success on a statewide-level and how waves of immigration have impacted the popularity and success of these parties.

What is the “far-right”?

Throughout my research, I define the “far-right” as:

- **Anti-materialist**
- **Anti-parliamentary**
- **Conspiracy theory**
- **Anti-cosmopolitan**
- **Authoritarian**
- **Xenophobic**
- **Racist**
- **Refusal on the equality of persons**
- **Rejection of socio-cultural and socio-political systems and individual and social equality**

What is anti-immigrant?

During my analysis, I decided that any rhetoric that is:

- **Dehumanizing**
- **Demonizing**
- **Xenophobic**
- **Racism**
- **Indication of “European culture/history”**
- **Ethnonationalism**
- **Nativism, etc.**

Hypothesis

Anti-immigrant rhetoric → Far-right electoral success



Anti-immigrant sentiment in population

Methodology and Research Design

An observational small population cross-national comparative case study using Method of Difference:

- Far-right parties in Denmark
- Far-right parties in the Netherlands

Independent Variable: the presence of anti-immigrant rhetoric affects the electoral success of far-right parties

Dependent Variable: the level of electoral success by far-right parties in each state's lower chamber of parliament

Findings

- **Anti-immigrant rhetoric succeeds.**
- **Danish parties are more publicly anti-immigrant.**
- **Immigration leads to increased fear of immigrants:** 2015 showed far-right electoral success in Denmark and the Netherlands, which directly corresponds with the migrant crisis of individuals from the Middle East and Northern Africa in 2015.
- **Laws against far-right parties have proved to be effective:** there is a stark difference between the levels of anti-immigrant rhetoric in Denmark and the Netherlands because, in the latter, there have been cases into or on far-right parties and racist and hateful rhetoric.
- **Far-right immigration views have shifted the political spectrum to the right.**

Table 4.2: Percentage of interviewees that answered immigration as a main issue for their country from Eurobarometer Data

| Year | DK | NL |
|------|------|------|
| 2004 | 25%* | 7% |
| 2008 | 17% | 18% |
| 2011 | 8% | 9% |
| 2015 | 60%* | 56%* |
| 2021 | 17% | 11% |

(* indicates significant data)

Table 4.1: Danish and Dutch Far-Right Parties' Electoral Success (2001-2021)

| Year | Total # of Seats | | % of Vote | |
|-------|-------------------------|------------------------|-----------|-------------|
| | Denmark | Netherlands | Denmark | Netherlands |
| 2001 | 22 (out of 179); 12.3% | . | 12% | . |
| 2003 | . | . | . | . |
| 2005 | 24 (out of 179); 13.4% | . | 13.24% | . |
| 2006 | . | 9 (out of 150); 6% | . | 5.90% |
| 2007 | 25 (out of 179); 14% | . | 13.86% | . |
| 2010 | . | 24 (out of 150); 16% | . | 15.50% |
| 2011 | 22 (out of 179); 12.3% | . | 12.32% | . |
| 2012 | . | 15 (out of 150); 10% | . | 10.10% |
| 2015* | 37 (out of 179); 20.7%* | . | 21.1%* | . |
| 2017 | . | 24 (out of 150); 16% | . | 16.70% |
| 2019 | 20 (out of 179); 11.2% | . | 12.90% | . |
| 2021* | . | 33* (out of 150); 22%* | . | 20.83%* |