

Introduction

Though Sweden is generally thought of as a strong country with a very high standard of living for its citizens, it, too, has a share of challenges. Specifically, the influx of immigration into Sweden has put strain upon some of its governmental systems and increased the amount of xenophobia prevalent amongst the Swedish population. This, in turn, has led to an increase in popularity for far-right organizations that may advocate for a stop in immigration. Sweden has also experienced a recent rise in firearm violence, despite having strict gun laws. This has been coupled with a history and continued problem of alcohol abuse in the country, creating a challenging situation for policy-makers. All of these current challenges have been further compounded by the current COVID-19 pandemic and Sweden's somewhat problematic response. Specifically, Sweden's assumptions that asymptomatic individuals can not be carriers and that developing herd-immunity was the best defense against the virus. This annotated bibliography seeks to further delve into all the aforementioned challenges, understanding some of the relevant literature and their opinions on the topic.

Annotated Bibliography

Åberg, J.H.S. Is There a State Crisis in Sweden?. Soc 56, 23–30 (2019).

<https://doi.org/10.1007/s12115-018-00320-x>

This journal publication focuses on understanding whether or not nationalist sentiments exist in a large enough capacity to be considered truly problematic in Sweden, and why they may have come about. Specifically, Åberg argues that while Sweden is understood to be a high performing country with a high GDP and a top-level standard of living, there exist many challenges which may contribute to somewhat of a crisis within Sweden. Most notably, there has been an increase in the amount of "vulnerable areas," areas which are deemed by the Swedish police to have the potential for higher crime rates and resistance to authority. Åberg finds that more of these vulnerable areas have cropped up throughout Sweden with an increase in immigration, leading to greater tensions in Sweden as a whole. Åberg then connects the rise in tensions and potential xenophobia to an increase in popularity of Sweden's far-right political party, the Sweden Democrats. Åberg then conducts an analysis of nationalism in Sweden, comparing the historically low amounts of xenophobia in Sweden to current sentiments. He then concludes by explaining the effects of tensions on potentially grid-locking decision-making and increased polarization in Swedish politics.

This paper is written by a Swedish political science professor and has been published in a well-respected journal. As such, it is most likely very unbiased. The tone of the paper is largely objective, though some parts of the analysis seem to be based on a few un-cited sources. As a whole, though, the paper makes good use of citations and remains factual throughout.

This publication is important to understanding challenges in Sweden because it provides an insider look at some Swedish challenges. Specifically, because the author is a Swedish author,

he may have some insight into the actual problems within Sweden. Furthermore, the paper investigates cultural and ethnic tensions that have been rising, which has been noted as one of Sweden's biggest current challenges by other literature.

Anthony, I., Weintraub, C. (2018). (Rep.). NATO Defense College.

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/resrep17616>

This is a research paper regarding Sweden's current military security deficits which leave them vulnerable to hostile takeovers and general attacks. Specifically, this research paper outlines Sweden's relationship with NATO and its currently lackluster military forces and military allies. Anthony and Weintraub analyze empirical effectiveness of the Swedish army, their current size, and the role that the Swedish army plays in both the government and security of Sweden. Following this, a discussion is formed regarding the reliability of Sweden's military allies both in and outside of NATO. Finally, a recommendation is formed regarding steps Sweden should take to be more involved militaristically in NATO. Ultimately, Anthony and Weintraub conclude that Sweden lacks important elements of a strong military and that Sweden is vulnerable to attack. This is because it is questionable which, if any, of its military partners will aid Sweden in case of an attack. Furthermore, the Swedish army is currently underutilized, with few military exercises being conducted in Sweden. While Anthony and Weintraub find that Sweden is making significant strides in changing the nature of collective security in Europe, they are currently ill-equipped for many military tasks.

This research paper is extremely credible. Because the paper was published by the research division of NATO on behalf of their NATO Defense College in 2018, the paper is recent, relevant, and factual. Furthermore, there is bound to be little bias in the paper as it considers Sweden for NATO membership from a militaristic perspective. It is in the best interest of the researchers on behalf of NATO to therefore conduct a comprehensive, clear, and unbiased

study in order to determine Sweden's capabilities.

Finally, this paper is relevant to the topic studied by this annotated bibliography because current militaristic shortcomings in Sweden have significant potential to overflow into many bigger current challenges, especially if aggression increases in eastern Europe. As a whole, Sweden's military might (or lack thereof) is a current challenge which may compound into a much bigger challenge if it remains unaddressed.

Ardavan Khoshnood (2019) Holding Sweden hostage: firearm-related violence, Forensic Sciences Research, 4:1, 88-93, DOI: 10.1080/20961790.2019.1570665

This journal publication provides a unique insight into the causes and problems related to Sweden's recent increase in gun violence. Specifically, Khoshnood provides the reader with a summary on recent firearm violence statistics in Sweden and is able to derive a clear pattern of an increase in shootings in Sweden. Next, Khoshnood argues that the reason for this increase in shootings is an increase in both the power and number of street gangs within Sweden. Critically, this leads to an increase in firearm smuggling and gang-related violence which contributes significantly to the amount of gun-related deaths in Sweden. Lastly, Khoshnood enumerates his policy prescriptions to this problem as follows: [1] increase collaboration between Swedish police and those of other Nordic countries to prevent firearm smuggling, [2] make smuggling laws harsher, and [3] increase the power that customs and enforcement wields in border control of Sweden.

This publication seems to be largely trustworthy as it was a part of the Forensic Sciences Research. Furthermore, much of the presented data in the paper is not simply a result of research conducted by the author. Rather, the author analyzes multiple trusted data sources in order to come to his conclusions. As a whole, then, this publication seems to be both

reliable and credible.

This publication is important to understanding Sweden's current challenges because it exposes both the current problem posed by gun violence, its causes, and the potential solutions.

Jon Pierre (2020) Nudges against pandemics: Sweden's COVID-19 containment strategy in perspective, *Policy and Society*, 39:3, 478-493,

DOI:10.1080/14494035.2020.1783787 <https://doi.org/10.1080/14494035.2020.1783787>

This publication explains Sweden's COVID-19 strategy holistically, reflecting upon the poor decision-making that took place by Sweden's government when it came to controlling the pandemic effectively. While Pierre does not deem the response by Sweden as a whole to be problematic, he attributes a significant amount of the death toll to faulty decisions. Specifically, Pierre notes that Sweden has performed comparatively badly with respect to other Nordic countries with a similar population size and demographic. This is largely due to some incorrect assumptions, notably that asymptomatic individuals are not infected with COVID, and the lack of infrastructure investment for decentralized, specialized healthcare. Pierre does note that elderly care and financial support for citizens was done well by the Swedish government, a key factor in keeping the death toll lower than it could have been otherwise.

This publication comes from the Taylor & Francis Group, an international company which publishes books and journals. The paper itself was written by a professor of the University of Gothenburg in Sweden. The paper does not seem particularly biased, especially as it comes from an academic, though the paper often leans towards focusing on the problematic pandemic policy, rather than balancing equally between beneficial and harmful policies. While this might have been fine for a paper that expressly wants to provide a critique of Swedish

policy, this paper presents itself as an unbiased, holistic view. As a result, there may be some bias here, but it is minimal.

This paper is absolutely critical to a discussion of current challenges in Sweden. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected every country in the world and Sweden made international headlines for their approach to the pandemic, which largely included keeping every school building open and relying on herd immunity. As such, this comprehensive analysis of Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic is relevant as the pandemic continues on today, still affecting Sweden alongside the rest of the world.

Sterbudd, Katarina (2020) One Drink too Many: A Spotlight on Alcohol Dependence, Karolinska Insitute,

<https://ki.se/en/research/one-drink-too-many>

This article from the Karolinska Institute in Sweden sheds some light on Sweden's significant alcohol problem. The article pulls data from a variety of sources to show the reader that alcoholism is a significant problem in Sweden affecting people of all age groups and wealth demographics. The article explains how this problem is often hidden from society but can have very severe harms upon both the alcoholic and those close to him/her. Finally, the article enumerates different solutions that can be instituted by the government to help curb Sweden's growing alcohol problem and provides some hope for the future.

This paper was significant as it provided both a quantitative and qualitative of Sweden's challenges with alcohol. Furthermore, the article was written on behalf of the Karolinska Institute, one of Sweden's largest medical universities and research centers. Because this is largely a scientific and research-focused source, there exists very little bias in the source and it can be trusted. While the paper certainly does suggest policy prescriptions, these seem

to be non-partisan and unbiased as they focus on types of medical treatment and simply disseminating information.

This article is important because it details a large, but often overlooked challenge Sweden is currently dealing with. By providing critical statistics and an understanding of the scope of this problem, this article helps categorize alcohol abuse as one large challenge Sweden is currently dealing with.

Tomson, Danielle Lee (2020) The Rise of Sweden Democrats: Islam, Populism and the End of Swedish Exceptionalism, Brookings Institute.

<https://www.brookings.edu/research/the-rise-of-sweden-democrats-and-the-end-of-swedish-exceptionalism/>

This working paper by the Brookings Institute examines the rise of the Sweden Democrats, a far-right, populist group in Sweden that is actively advocating against the influx of Muslim migrants and immigration as a whole. The working paper provides a comprehensive history of the Swedish Democrats and how their values have changed over time. The article also includes a significant analysis of the Sweden Democrats' popularity over time, how their views clash with those belonging to other Swedish political parties, and why the rise of the Sweden Democrats may be particularly troubling to democracy and peace in Sweden. Specifically, Tomson argues that the rise of the Sweden Democrats has raised questions about whether or not Sweden should have such a robust social welfare system, which people constitute "real Swedes," and the reasons for an increase in crime within Sweden. Tomson eventually concludes that while the Sweden Democrats aren't a monolith and often take efforts to clarify that they are not racist, many of the party's origins are deeply rooted in Xenophobia. Furthermore, Tomson observes that it is only after the Sweden Democrats secure a foothold in the government (a phenomenon she believes is not unlikely), will their results be compared

to their rhetoric.

This paper is beneficial as it provides a complete understanding of one of Sweden's growing challenges with immigration, and the potentially harsh responses that citizens may turn to as a result of an influx in immigration. The information also seems reliable as the Brookings Institute is a large think-tank with little bias. While the think-tank often receives donations from Democratic candidates, their reporting is highly factual.

This paper was beneficial in understanding current challenges Sweden may face because it describes two potential challenges: [1] with an significant rise in immigration and the effects that has had on the country, and [2] with the potential rise in right-wing nationalist groups as a response to the aforementioned immigration.

References

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