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In From the Cold? Christian Parties in Scandinavia

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The combination of extreme religious homogeneity and advanced secularization is a special feature of the Scandinavian societies as compared to the rest of Europe. This difference largely explains why Christian parties have remained small compared to the rest of Europe. This article surveys the creation and popular following of the Christian parties in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden. The four parties acquired an image of "moral vigilantes" from the beginning. Their best electoral results, however, are a result of a more general political protest. Despite the recent success of the Swedish party, the parties are not likely to reach a position beyond that of a minor party with basically a moralist image.

The strongholds of European Christian parties are to be found outside Scandinavia.[1] For a religiously based organization to rise to prominence, religious *conflicts* are necessary. Thus, in countries where the relationship between Church and State was a central bone of contention over long periods of time, Christian parties established themselves to defend the Church's point of view. In Central Europe, for example, separate parties originally emerged as representatives of the Protestant and Catholic populations. In several cases this cleavage has been bridged during recent decades; instead of representing catholicism or protestantism, these parties today promote general Christian values in politics. The historical background for these parties is nevertheless to be found in important contradictions involving Church, State and religious affiliation.

The Scandinavian region, by comparison, largely lacks experience with overarching political conflicts related to religion. The four countries are confessionally extremely homogeneous. Moreover, the level of secularization in terms of religious *activity* in Scandinavia is higher today than in basically any other world region. Finally, the Lutheran Church itself is mainly a state institution rather than a conspicuously religious actor (Gustafsson 1985, 238–65; Flanagan & Dalton 1990, 233; Lijphart 1990, 259; Madeley 1982, 149–153; Madeley 1977). This being the case, it is somewhat surprising that at present Christian parties share in government power in two of the four Nordic countries – Finland and Sweden. In Denmark, furthermore, the Christian People's Party (*Kristeligt Folkeparti*)

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participated in Poul Schlüter's four-party cabinet from 1982 until 1988. Norway, finally, has electorally the strongest Christian party in all of Scandinavia; the Norwegian Christian People's Party (*Kristelig Folkeparti*) can scarcely be characterized as a minor party in the Scandinavian multi-party context. Are we witnessing a breakthrough for the Christian parties in Scandinavian politics? If that is the case, what is the background for this development? Have the Christian parties managed to activate a politically relevant cleavage based on religiously defined values? From where does their popular following originate? And finally, what are the prospects for continued growth of the Christian element in the Scandinavian party setting? These are the questions addressed in this article.

From Nil to Small to Medium-sized?

Religious parties are "latecomers" in the political arena of Scandinavia. When they emerged the population had to a large extent already been mobilized by the older parties. The Christian parties have therefore faced major difficulties in gaining a foothold among the electorate, as is readily demonstrated in Table 1.

Because of its long history and its relatively strong electoral position, the

Table 1. Results of Scandinavian Christian parties in Parliamentary Elections, 1933–91 (Percent of Valid Votes).

Norway		Finland		Sweden		Denmark	
Year	Percent	Year	Percent	Year	Percent	Year	Percent
1933	0.7	1958	0.2	1964	1.8	1971	2.0
1936	1.3	1962	0.8	1968	1.5	1973	4.0
1945	7.9	1966	0.4	1970	1.8	1975	5.3
1949	8.4	1970	1.1	1973	1.8	1977	3.4
1953	10.5	1972	2.5	1976	1.4	1979	2.6
1957	10.2	1975	3.3	1979	1.4	1981	2.3
1961	9.6	1979	4.8	1982	1.9	1984	2.7
1965	8.1	1983	3.0	1985	2.5*	1987	2.4
1969	9.4	1987	2.6	1988	2.9	1990	2.7
1973	12.3	1991	3.1	1991	7.1		
1977	12.4						
1981	8.9						
1985	8.3						
1989	8.5						

The parties are in Norway: *Kristelig Folkeparti*, in Finland: *Suomen Kristillinen Liitto* (*SKL*), in Sweden: *Kristen Demokratisk Samling*, since 1991 *Kristdemokratiska Samhällspartiet* (*KDS*) and in Denmark: *Kristeligt Folkeparti*.

* KDS share of ballots cast for the electoral alliance with the Center Party (Source: Wörlund 1988, 80).

Norwegian Christian People's Party constitutes a special case among the Nordic Christian parties. This party was established in 1933 in Western Norway, and during its first ten years was basically a regional party for the Hordaland area. In the first post-war election, however, the party rose to national significance, a position which it has been able to maintain and even to some extent strengthen since then. The Christian League (SKL) in Finland has never gained comparable shares of the popular vote. Nevertheless, in 1970 the party won its first seat in parliament, and it has managed to maintain parliamentary representation ever since. The Christian Democratic Union (KDS) in Sweden also remained a peripheral party over a long period; its chances of exceeding the 4 percent threshold required for representation in parliament seemed decidedly poor. In the 1985 election, however, the KDS joined forces with the Center Party. This electoral alliance gave the Christian party leader Alf Svensson a seat in parliament. But in the following elections, the two parties again ran on separate tickets, and Svensson failed to maintain his seat. Against this background, the 1991 election result was all the more sensational. The Christian Democratic Union had no trouble exceeding the 4 percent barrier clause on its own, and the party suddenly commanded 26 seats in parliament. As for the Christian People's Party in Denmark, its electoral peak seems to have occurred in the 1970s. The party, nevertheless, has managed to stay above the 2 percent limit required for representation in *Folketinget*, the Danish parliament, and it presently holds four seats.

A Frame of Reference – on Critical Thresholds

Every political movement must pass certain critical thresholds in order to be able to gain significance. Conversely, every party must strive not to fall below these limits again. These thresholds are particularly awkward from the point of view of movements and parties which have not been part of the political scene "from the beginning", that is, from the first crucial phase of mass democracy during which basic party constellations were established. Mogens Pedersen is one of the authors who has theorized in terms of such thresholds, and he writes among other things about the *threshold of declaration*, the *threshold of representation* and the *threshold of relevance* (Pedersen 1982, 6–9).

The first threshold, the *threshold of declaration*, simply implies that a group of citizens get together in a conscious and openly declared attempt to organize a political party, to participate in elections and to seek to influence the use of social and political power. Their ability to do this naturally depends on their resources – economic and social as well as other kinds of resources. How successful the establishment of a party is and what

character it attains is also largely influenced by the historical and political situation in which the attempt is made. The historical opportunities for different movements naturally vary to a great extent. The context in which a party constituted itself frequently marks its activities and orientation for many years to come.

As for the *threshold of representation*, it goes without saying that numeric strength is of crucial importance. However, many other factors play a role as well. Some parties enjoy the support of clearly defined segments of the population, while others rely on a more varied popular following. The foothold that a party manages to gain in the social structure is often crucial for the stability of its electoral support and for its possibilities to enter into cooperation with intermediate organizations, such as interest groups and popular movements. Geographic strongholds are also important, but sometimes problematic: on the one hand, a party with nation-wide ambitions will not wish to be too strongly associated with a particular geographic region; on the other hand, regionalism is often the best guarantee for the fundamental stability of a party's electoral following. Of particular significance for newly introduced parties is whether they can win relatively stable electoral segments from other parties or whether they are compelled to create an electoral base from a variety of social and geographic elements. In connection with these considerations, Fisher's (1980, 610) proposition about the decline of major parties is also worth examining. According to Fisher, "several of the conditions associated with the decline of the major parties in Western political systems appear conducive to increased minority party activity and success". The counter-hypothesis would be that the electoral gains of the Christian parties originate from the losses of other marginal parties rather than from the decline of the largest parties.

Crucial to the *threshold of relevance* of parties is quite obviously their "raw force" in terms of parliamentary representation. As for Scandinavia, the period during which one-party parliamentary majorities were a distinct possibility definitely seems to have become a matter of history. The question of which parties are to be reckoned with in the parliamentary game is therefore quite complicated. Parties with limited parliamentary representation may, depending on the interplay between arithmetic constellations and political distance, suddenly emerge as highly relevant partners or opponents.

To what extent and in which situations have the Christian parties been able to posit themselves as "relevant coalition partners" in the parliamentary game? What are the prospects for them to establish themselves as recurrent "*cabinet makers*" in Scandinavia? Is their best hope one of attaining the status of *supplementary parties* in relation to the larger parties? What risk do they run to be defined as permanent *outsiders* in parliamentary coalition politics? It is to these questions which we may now turn.

"Declaration" – the Emergence of the Christian Parties

The Christian People's Party in Norway is not only the oldest and electorally strongest Christian party in Scandinavia. Its emergence and activities also came to influence the rise and orientation of the three other parties. The process of its establishment displays several features which are characteristic of the "declaratory phase" of Scandinavian Christian democracy at large.

Especially in West Norway, Low Church opinion strongly associated with revivalism and missionary activities had rallied behind the agrarian liberal party *Venstre* after the introduction of universal suffrage. From the point of view of the religious activists, however, the Liberal Party's profile concerning moral and religious questions was somewhat problematic. The party was known to be "culturally radical" in the Oslo region, and it did not make things better that the party leader Johan Mowinckel was a well-known free-thinker. Attempts at placing "*Christians*" sufficiently high on the Liberal Party's tickets had not been successful. It seems to have been particularly significant that perhaps the most respected Christian activist, the Bible School principal Nils Lavik, had been placed so low on the Liberal ticket in Hordaland that he failed to gain a seat in parliament. The calls for a separate Christian party, which had been voiced for some time already, now gained momentum (Lomeland 1971, 19–30).

The decisive impetus behind the establishment of a Christian party, however, seems to have originated from a conflict about a theater play. It would later turn out that these kinds of conflicts frequently provoked active Christian elements to voice protests in Scandinavian politics. In the fall of 1932 it became known that the National Theater of Oslo would present "The Green Pastures, A Fable" by Marc Connelly. This caused an outcry among active Christians, who regarded the play as strongly blasphemous. The protest grew to be somewhat of a popular mass movement. The leading Liberal daily *Dagbladet*, which had, among other things, carried articles in support of the play criticizing narrow-minded Christians, was in this connection subjected to severe criticism (Sæter 1985, 8–10; Lomeland 1971, 35–43).

Popular protest gave rise to a parliamentary debate resulting in a resolution asking the cabinet to assure effective enforcement of legislation against blasphemy. The cabinet failed, however, to respond by adopting any clear standpoints or measures. Instead, eight out of the nine Liberal ministers accepted an invitation to attend a special performance of the play. In religious quarters this was perceived as still another example of a nonchalant attitude towards Christian opinion. Those who worked for the establishment of a separate Christian party had one more argument at their disposal (Johansson 1985, 72).

This opinion was reinforced by what was known as the Överland Contro-

versy. Arnulf Överland, a well-known author, had appeared before student associations with a speech carrying the strongly provocative title "Christianity – the Tenth Plague". In the debate about this question a conflict arose between Christian opinion and, among others, the Liberal daily *Bergens Tidende* (Sæter 1985, 9–10).

In addition to these "scandals", there were controversies concerning the democratization of congregational work and differences between the Liberal Party leadership and Christian party activists on temperance policy. Taken together these events constituted the immediate historical background of the establishment of the Christian People's Party in the province of Hordaland in 1933. This marked the beginning of a political movement which was to gain national significance in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War.

As is frequently the case in comparative Nordic studies, it is necessary to take into account the phenomenon of *diffusion* (Karvonen 1981) when studying the character and background of the Christian parties in Scandinavia. The second oldest of the four parties, the Finnish Christian League (SKL), was founded in 1958 under strong inspiration from the Norwegian Christian movement. In fact, the first program of the SKL turned out to be more or less a verbatim translation of the corresponding Norwegian document (Arter 1980, 146). The political and historical context in which the Finnish party came into existence, however, displayed some special features.

Indeed, it would seem as if the *general political background* was of somewhat greater importance in Finland than in the case of the other three parties. The entire post-war era had been a strongly offensive period for the Finnish Communists. In the second half of the 1950s they experienced a strong upward trend among the electorate, which was to result in their best electoral performance ever in 1958. At this election the Communists won 50 seats in the *Eduskunta*, the Finnish parliament, a result which made them the largest party in parliament. The Communists and their allies, the "People's Democrats", conducted a strongly "system critical" line of policy, meaning, among other things, that the system with an Established Church as well as the strongly conservative profile of the Church were subjected to severe criticism. Withdrawals from Church membership increased markedly towards the end of the 1950s, and this tendency was clearly connected to communist electoral strongholds (Sundback 1991, 277–278).

The fact that Christian activists in Finland chose to establish a separate party instead of trying to work through existing bourgeois parties appears to be related to the social foundation on which the party was supposed to be based (Johansson 1985, 24). The strong position of atheist communism in the labor movement had evidently alienated Christian workers and smallholders. It was primarily these people that the SKL wished to appeal

to, and these population segments could not be expected to rally behind the established bourgeois parties.

Generally speaking, in short, perhaps the most important impetus behind the creation of a Christian party in Finland was the proliferation of politically motivated secularism and atheism. In the course of the 1960s, the party gradually attained a clearer image of a "moral vigilante" as various "scandals" became topical on the political agenda and important issues concerning such matters as religious instruction in schools were to be decided (Arter 1980, 148; Arter 1987, 32).

The emergence of the Christian Democratic Union (KDS) in Sweden is closely associated with several heated debates on religion and morality. At the beginning of 1964 there was a debate around what was known as the Petition of the 140 Doctors, a document signed by professors of medicine as well as by practicing physicians. The petitioners expressed their concern about increasing promiscuity, the proliferation of venereal diseases and the increased number of abortions. According to the petitioners, sexual instruction given in the schools, and the cultural and sexual policies of the government bore a major responsibility for this state of affairs. The ensuing debate became highly polarized, especially with respect to the question of abortion. The 140 doctors received strong support from Christian organizations and debaters.

Parallel to this development, a memorandum from the National Board of Social Affairs about a religious sect known as Maranata gave cause to additional friction between religious activists and the government. The Board had deemed it necessary to advise all municipalities to take proper measures to prevent children under 16 years of age from attending "ecstatic meetings" (Johansson 1985, 80). In non-conformist circles this was seen as an attempt to limit the freedom of religion.

The question of religious instruction at schools was still another incentive behind the decision to create a political organization based on explicit Christian values. A plan aiming at reforming the curriculum of the secondary schools proposed a reduction of the share of religious instruction. Moreover, the subject itself was to have a character of an objective social science only loosely connected with confessional protestantism. Those who protested against this plan decided to launch a mass petition in order to stop it from being implemented. This turned out to be a highly succesful enterprise, inasmuch as 2.1 million people (out of some five million adult citizens in toto) signed the petition in the course of a few months. This fast mobilization represented a hopeful sign from the point of view of those who argued for the establishment of a separate Christian party.

Still another debate on morality caused by the film "491" helped mobilize the Christian opinion. This picture, which among other things contained advanced sex scenes, was first prohibited altogether by the Government

Motion Picture Agency. Later, however, the cabinet decided to lift the ban after certain scenes were cut. Christian activists were at the forefront of this debate, and several of them have later underlined the importance of this question for the decision to create the Christian Democratic Union in 1964 (Johansson 1985, 90–95).

The early history of the Christian People's Party in Denmark in many ways repeats what has been said about the Christian Democratic Union in Sweden. The 1960s had witnessed a considerable radicalization, especially with respect to issues relating to sexuality and morality. This process entailed the liberalization of, among other things, legislation on pornography and abortion. "Danish sin" became a widely known concept throughout the world. Parallel to this, school reform plans proposed a steadily decreasing share for religious instruction in school curricula (Riis 1985, 29). The Christian People's Party was established in 1970 as a direct and explicit reaction against these tendencies in Danish society. The struggle against liberal abortion policies seems to have been particularly important. The program presented by the party, moreover, stressed the importance of continued confessional religious instruction at all levels of the school system, sexual instruction was to be "marriage oriented", "border control of hippies" was to be made tougher, both private and public consumption was to be cut back, and tax and inheritance legislation was to encourage people to save (*Nordisk kontakt* 1971:10, 615).

In sum, the emergence of Christian parties in Scandinavia can be characterized in the following manner:

1. The Norwegian party became the archetype which largely set the standards for the programmatic orientation of the parties, and it inspired the establishment of the other parties.
2. The parties acquired the character of "protest parties" from the beginning; they capitalized on negative reactions to current social phenomena and gathered strength from debates on these questions.
3. The parties at no time represented the "official standpoint of the church" or some sort of an average opinion among church members. The center of gravity at all times lay among nonconformist and revivalist groups and among the lay activists of the Lutheran State churches. There were some clearly negative reactions on the part of the Church against the formation of the parties. This was at least in part explicable in terms of the support the Church had traditionally received from the conservative and agrarian parties, which were now presented with competition. Seen from the point of view of the average voter or church member, the Christian parties can be said to have stood out as a fairly *exclusive society*. In contradistinction to the Christian democratic parties on the

continent, the Nordic Christian parties represented a demonstratively and offensively Christian posture in their national settings.

"Representation" – Sources of Strength and Weakness

Electoral Law and The Christian Parties

Since 1945, when the Norwegian party launched its first nation-wide electoral campaign, it has never had less than ten seats in the *Stortinget*, the national parliament.[2] The peak was reached in 1973 with 21 seats. Since the 1989 election the party has been represented by 14 MPs. The absence of a barrier clause which would stipulate a minimum share of the vote necessary for parliamentary representation from the very beginning made the Christian People's Party a realistic alternative for the electorate.

The Finnish Christian League has also benefited from liberal electoral laws. To be sure, the d'Hont Method, which continues to be applied in Finland (the other three countries have switched to the Saint Laguë variety) to a certain extent favors the largest parties. On the other hand, there is no barrier clause in Finland, either. Moreover, the parties are entirely free to form electoral alliances with each other, and this is decided at the constituency level depending on the regional constellations among the parties. Despite the low Christian share of the total vote, the Finnish Christian League received its first seat in parliament in 1970 through an electoral alliance with the Center Party. Since then, the party has been one of the most active and successful participants in electoral alliances (Noponen 1988, 111). Since the 1991 election, the Christian League has had eight seats in the 200 seat *Eduskunta*, a result of highly favorable electoral alliances.

It is in Sweden that electoral law has created a major obstacle for the Christian party. The first electoral result of the Christian Democratic Union, 1.8 percent in 1964, was as such far from impressive. Still, it brought the party reasonably close to its first seat in parliament. Four years later, after a thorough constitutional reform, the prospects seemed hopeless despite the fact that the party had maintained its share of the vote. The 4 percent barrier clause introduced in connection with the reform seemed at once to put parliamentary representation far beyond the reach of the Christian Democrats (Johansson 1985, 221–41). An electoral alliance between the Christian Democratic Union and the Center Party in 1985, which gave the Christians their first seat in *Riksdagen*, the Swedish parliament, was criticized by the Social Democrats as unlawful. The 1991 election, however, finally lifted KDS easily over the threshold and made the party

a factor to be taken into account even from the point of view of electoral arithmetic.

The Danish party just barely reached the 2 percent limit required for representation in 1971, but it fell a few hundred votes short of a seat in parliament. In elections since then, it has managed to gain and maintain parliamentary representation, although in a few instances its share of the vote has fallen dangerously close to the 2 percent threshold. The 1990 election entailed the same number of seats (four) as the previous election.

Electoral Peaks: Christian Parties as a "System Protest"

The 1970s entailed the greatest electoral success yet for the Danish, Norwegian and Finnish parties. In the first two countries, the rise started in 1973 and reached its peak in the following elections (1975 and 1977 respectively). The Finnish party followed suit a couple of years later. In Sweden, by contrast, the corresponding rise of the Christian Democratic Union came considerably later. There was, to be sure, a weak but noticeable upward trend through the 1980s. However, this trend was dwarfed by the electoral success of the KDS in 1991.

The fact that the Swedish party suddenly managed to surpass the electoral threshold quite without the help of electoral alliances, can only be comprehended in terms of a more general electoral protest against the "system". It can be argued, however, that the best electoral results of Scandinavian Christian democracy can in *all cases* be seen as an expression of such a protest. The ascendancy started in 1973 in Norway and Denmark in the wake of a heated debate about EC membership. Parallel to this, the dominant Social Democrats met with their greatest electoral disasters in the entire post-war era. The Danish Social Democrats, for example, plunged from some 37 percent of the vote to some 25 percent two years later, whereas in Norway, the Labor Party lost 11 percentage points as compared to 1969 and wound up with 35 percent of the vote in 1973.

When Sweden repeated the pattern in 1991, the Social Democrats did not suffer quite as dramatic a loss: they retreated from 43.3 percent in 1988 to 37.6 percent. Nevertheless, this was the poorest electoral performance of the Social Democrats since 1928. The election was preceded by a number of "scandals" and debates about betrayed promises in which the Social Democratic Party was portrayed in a very awkward light. The dominant atmosphere surrounding the election, it would seem, was one of fatigue with prolonged social democratic rule in the country.

The Finnish party system lacks a clearly dominant party comparable to the social democratic parties in the other three countries. Nevertheless, the Christian electoral peak in 1979 can be interpreted in terms of a similar protest against the political "establishment". The year before, the position

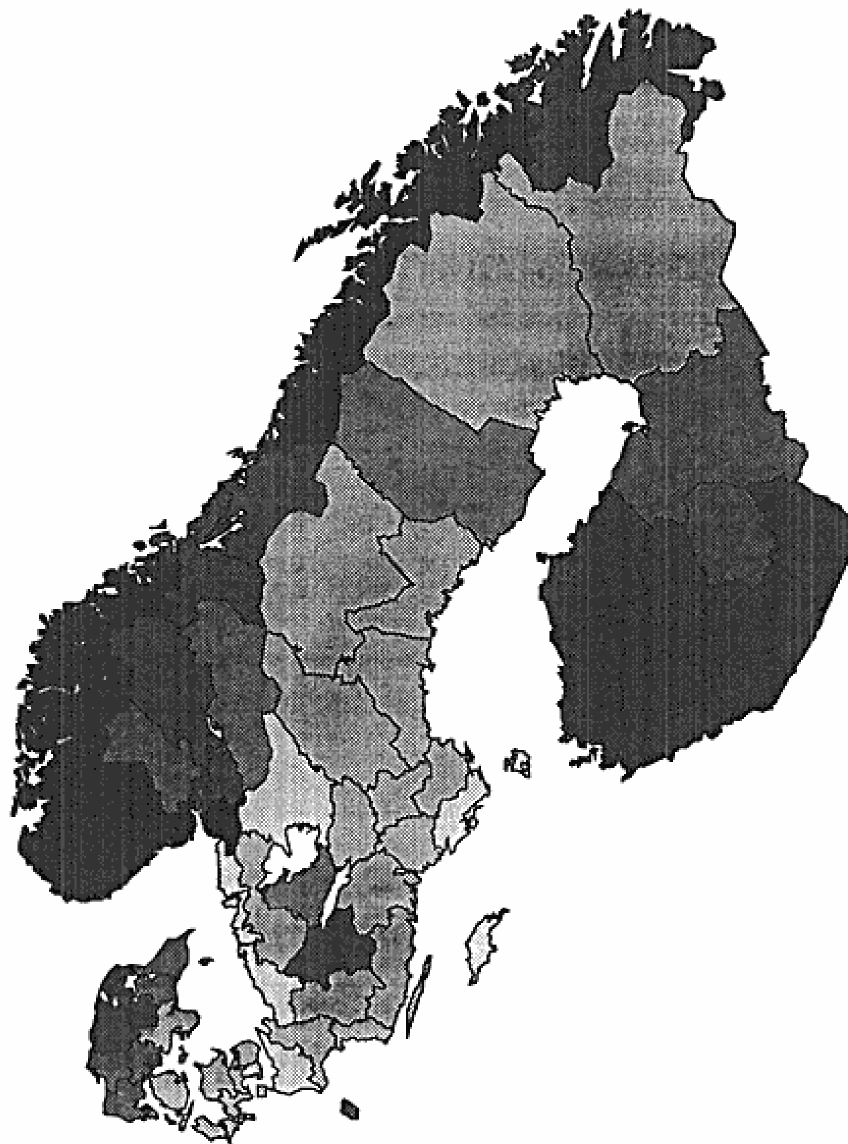
of President Urho Kekkonen as the real power center in Finnish politics had been manifested in a demonstrative way, as all major parties rallied behind him in the presidential elections. The Christian League, however, had nominated its own candidate for the presidency, the party leader Raino Westerholm. His campaign was generally deemed to be competent and serious, and his share of the vote was more than double the Christian vote in the 1975 parliamentary elections. A major part of the protest against the lack of real alternatives in the 1978 presidential elections had apparently been expressed through votes for Westerholm (whom nobody really expected to be able to challenge Kekkonen). In the 1979 election, the Christian League evidently managed to hold some of the "extra votes" its presidential candidate had brought home the year before.

The electoral successes of the Scandinavian Christian parties seem to confirm Fisher's proposition about the connection between the proliferation of minor parties and the decline of major parties. In Denmark, Norway and Sweden, the Christian electoral peak coincides with a protest against the dominant party. Generally speaking, these electoral successes can be explained with reference to the fact that the parties managed to capitalize on – in addition to the original moral protest – a more general *political protest*.

Electoral geography

The electoral geography of Scandinavian Christian democracy is fairly stable over time, but one can hardly speak of an unambiguous Scandinavian pattern. The strongholds of the Norwegian party have always been the Western and Southern parts of the country, particularly Hordaland county in the West (see Fig. 1). Large portions of the narrow coastal strip in central and Northern Norway have also displayed Christian voting above the national average. The weak spots of the party are equally easy to pinpoint: East Norway, i.e. Oslo and the counties surrounding it in the North and the East, has consistently displayed Christian shares of the vote below the national average. The exception has been Östfold county in the extreme Southeast. In Stein Rokkan's classic conceptual map of Norwegian politics (1967, 367–444), the Christian People's Party is undoubtedly a part of the "cultural periphery" in the West and South.

A look at the electoral geography of the Finnish Christian League may at first glance point in the opposite direction: it is in the Southern half of the country that the party's electoral support has reached the highest level. In the real periphery of the North and the East it has been considerably more difficult for the SKL to gain an electoral foothold. In particular, Oulu and Lapland counties in the North have been difficult to conquer electorally. This is notable, since these are the strongholds of Leastadianism, one of



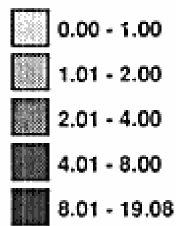


Fig. 1. Regional Distribution of the Christian Vote in Scandinavia About 1980 (Percent of Valid Votes).

the most important revivalist movements inside the Finnish Lutheran Church. Still, it would be an exaggeration to depict the Christian League as "a party of the center". Its main strongholds have been the Kymi and St. Michael counties. Although situated in the Southern half of the country, they certainly do not belong to the core of urban Finland. Rather, the electoral geography of the Finnish Christian party might be characterized as "semi-peripheral".

Over a long period, the electoral geography of the Christian Democratic Union bore a striking resemblance to the map of Swedish non-conformism: the counties of Västerbotten and Jönköping in the North and in central South Sweden, respectively, were the main strongholds of both. This means that the party electorally relied more on the periphery than on the center, although at least Jönköping cannot be considered as a part of the extreme periphery. The 1991 election brought about a major change, however,as the party advanced strongly and uniformly across the entire country, including such previously weak spots as Stockholm and the areas surrounding it. Nevertheless, the greatest percentage growth occurred in the traditional stronghold in Jönköping county. In this electoral district, the KDS is now the third largest party, quite comparable to the Conservatives. Only the Social Democrats are clearly stronger in this region.

The Danish Christian Party has consistently had its strongholds on the West coast of Jutland. The island of Bornholm in the Baltic Sea has also displayed figures above the national average. In other parts of the country, particularly in the Copenhagen area, the Christian People's Party has met with little success. The Danish party clearly repeats the Norwegian and earlier Swedish pattern with strongholds in the non-conformist and revivalist areas of the periphery.

In sum, it appears as if the Norwegian and Danish parties face the greatest difficulties of electoral mobilization in the populous areas in and around the national capitals. Until the last election, this was true of the Christian Democratic Union in Sweden as well. The Finnish party, by contrast, has had higher shares of the vote in the southern half of the country than in the northern periphery.

Voters and Sympathizers

When it comes to individual-level data, Norway once again occupies a special position thanks to the simple fact that the Christian People's Party is large enough to be represented by a sufficient number of respondents in a normal survey sample. Generally, access to individual-level data has been best for Norway and Denmark and most limited for Finland. Since identical data sets do not exist for the four countries, no strict numerical comparison will be presented here. Instead, characteristic features of Christian party

voters and sympathizers will be presented in a less stringent form for each country separately.

Data for Norway are drawn from electoral surveys conducted in connection with the 1973 and 1989 parliamentary elections (Norwegian Election Studies 1973, 1989; N: 1973=177, 1989=107). The continuity to be observed over the decade and a half is striking. The prototype of a Christian party supporter in Norway 20 years ago as well as today is an elderly woman in Western Norway who is married or a widow. She frequently speaks the more peripheral "new Norwegian" (*nynorsk*) and is against Norwegian membership in the European Community. By the same token, one would not expect to find a Christian party sympathizer who is a younger industrial worker, divorced and living in Eastern Norway.

In moral questions – here represented by the attitude towards alcohol – the followers of the Christian People's Party are in a category of their own. By contrast, they hardly differ from national averages concerning socio-economic characteristics or general political and social views. They are least numerous in industrial occupations, and especially in 1973 they were overrepresented in the lower income brackets. Generally speaking, however, their distribution over occupational groups and social classes came close to the national statistical average. Moreover, as to class identification, political interest and attitudes towards immigration, Christian party sympathizers represent a middle course. Unfortunately, longitudinal data are not available on all these questions. The "deviations" on moral questions, as well as age, sex and regional location, do not spill over to general political attitudes, however. In the light of this empirical evidence its seems reasonable to characterize the Christian People's Party as a party of the political center.

Danish surveys available for the present study contain a limited number of Christian party voters. In the 1981 Danish Election Study only 25 respondents said they had voted for the Christian People's Party and survey data for the 1988 election contain only 63 Christian party voters. Even given these limitations, it seems rather clear that the Danish party is also a "women's party", and that particularly the youngest age cohorts (under 30 years) are clearly underrepresented. In the 1981 sample, Western Jutland and the island of Lolland seem somewhat overrepresented. The 1988 survey similarly points to an underrepresentation for Zealand including the Copenhagen area and for the island of Funen, whereas Northern and Western Jutland again are overrepresented. Also in Denmark, married and widowed people are overrepresented among Christian party voters. As to occupation and income level, there is some overrepresentation in 1988 for functionaries and pensioners. In 1973 as well as 15 years later, Christian voters represented the lower rather than the higher income brackets. Again, as to political interest and attitudes towards social and economic policies, Christian voters came close to the national average.

As for Sweden, Göran Johansson's dissertation (1985, 221–279) contains data for all elections from 1964 until 1982. However, only two variables are included: occupational group and previous party choice. Sample size is limited, providing between 35 and 60 Christian Democratic Union voters depending on the election. In one respect the results are nevertheless unambiguous: the largest single group of KDS voters during this period consisted of mid-level functionaries. This group was consistently overrepresented among the party's voters. A survey carried out by Swedish Television in connection with the 1991 election, however, shows that the Christian Democratic Union has managed to make inroads into all occupational categories. The percentage change was greatest among farmers, but in absolute figures the greatest gains came from functionaries (Valu91/STV). It has already been noted that in 1991 the KDS achieved a general breakthrough in the geography of Swedish elections. The survey results suggest that the party managed to break some barriers in a socioeconomic respect as well.

Finnish survey data are scarce and the smallness of the samples is troublesome if one wishes to study Finnish Christian League voters. The number of respondents who say that they vote for the party is usually 20–30 in a normal survey. This being the case, questions pertaining to socioeconomic or attitudinal correlates of SKL voting are difficult to analyze in a statistically reliable way. Yet, even with these limitations in mind, one may note that SKL voters in both 1973 and in 1991 came closer to the national average than the supporters of any other party in terms of occupational distribution. In 1973 the majority (64 percent) of Christian League voters were workers, whereas in 1991 functionaries were the largest category (54 percent) (Sänkiaho 1991, 38). This corresponds to the general social change in Finland. As to class identification and income categories, there was some overrepresentation of a working-class identification among Christian voters. In 1991 this is no longer the case; Christian League voters have a class identification which corresponds to the averages among voters at large. A constant feature found in 1983, 1987 as well as 1991 is the overrepresentation for voters who describe themselves as low-wage earners (Sänkiaho 1991, 41). What there is of survey data for Finland indicates that Christian voters in Finland are to be found somewhere in between working class and the lower bourgeoisie.

From what parties have Christian parties in Scandinavia gained votes? Unfortunately there are no data concerning, for instance, the important period immediately after the Second World War in Norway. Data for more recent periods, however, are available to a certain extent. The Norwegian Election Studies for 1973 and 1989 show, for example, that the electorate of the Christian People's Party has been highly faithful to the party. Mobility has concerned the two parties which are closest to the Christian Party in

general political terms – the Center Party and the Liberal Party. These are the two parties which to a certain extent have lost voters to the Christian Party. In the Finnish case, there are transition matrices for both 1979–83 and 1987-91. As for the 1983 election, the main conclusion is that the Finnish Christian League lost votes and that the remaining voters had already voted for the party in 1979. There is greater mobility in the 1991 election. The Christian League seems primarily to have attracted previous non-voters but also some voters from all minor parties, including the populist Rural Party (Risbjerg Thomsen 1990, 60–61; Berglund 1991, 338).

As to Sweden, Johansson (1985, 221–273) demonstrates that the Christian Democratic Union gained votes from other centrist parties, while at the same time an important part of the party vote originated from newly enfranchised voters and previous non-voters. The 1991 election again brought about a change, as practically all parties seem to have lost votes to the KDS. The percentage loss was greatest for the Liberals and the Center Party. Of roughly equal importance to the Christian Democratic Union, however, were the voters it won from the Social Democrats (ValU91/STV). Finally, Christian voters in Denmark have normally originated from the Radical Liberal Party and to some extent from the populist Progress Party (Risbjerg Thomsen 1990, 52–53).

A common feature for the four countries is that the Christian parties have normally not won votes from the major parties, especially the Social Democrats. In this respect, the 1991 Swedish election represents a certain change. Nevertheless, the typical "loser" to the Christian parties has been a small or medium-sized party in the political center. Fisher's thesis that the decline of major parties has been conducive to the proliferation of minor parties is of course true for the Christian parties as well; this decline has made it easier for minor parties to gain an electoral foothold. Even so, in terms of direct voter mobility, the flows between major parties and the Christian parties have been limited.

In sum, the Christian voter in Scandinavia is primarily singled out through his or her attitudes on questions of morality and ethics, be they related to alcohol, sex, marriage or school. In Norway and Denmark, the Christian party supporters have a clearer regional identity than in Finland, whereas the Swedish party has recently managed to become genuinely nationwide in its electoral appeal. Women and older age cohorts are overrepresented among Christian party sympathizers, but in socio-economic or general political terms they are not particularly different from national averages. Typically, the Christian electorate consists of lower bourgeoisie plus some farmers and non-industrial workers. The traditional representatives of these groups, the centrist parties, have most clearly felt the electoral competition from the Christian parties.

"Relevance" – the Christian Parties in Coalition Politics

The relevance of parties is determined by their numeric *strength* and their *utility*. Numeric strength is easy to pinpoint and measure, "utility" defies every attempt at an exact definition. The stronger a party is, the more difficult it becomes to ignore it. Being big, however, is of little avail if a party is not utile, if ideological and programmatic abysses separate it from other parties or if it in other respects represents unwelcome competition for other parties.

Nordic parliamentarism at large has drifted increasingly farther away from the classic Anglo–Saxon ideal with alternating majorities. This has in fact never been a reality in Finland. During recent decades, Finnish politics has made a virtue out of the necessity of coalitions, which has made for considerable stability in cabinet politics. The other three countries, by contrast, have moved towards increasing instability with a stronger element of minority parliamentarism and temporary coalitions in individual policy sectors and around separate issues. The process at large has increased the potential significance of minor parties as coalition partners or as allies for parliamentary oppositions (Damgaard 1990b, 176–190).

The Christian People's Party in Norway is the only one of the four parties which at no time has been a *quantité négligeable* in the parliamentary game. In the entire post-war era, the party has been one of the central actors of the divided non-socialist camp in Norway. As the prolonged social democratic reign ended in 1963, the Christian Party entered into the short-lived bourgeois minority coalition led by John Lyng. Since then, the party has participated in five out of the six bourgeois cabinets; the exception was Kåre Willoch's conservative one-party cabinet in 1981–83. In 1972–73 the Christian party leader Lars Korvald headed a bourgeois coalition formed by non-socialist opponents of EC membership after the majority of the voters had turned down full Norwegian membership in the Community (Rommetvedt 1990, 51–54).

The central factor in the arithmetic of Norwegian coalition politics has been the predominance of the left. Up until 1961, the Social Democrats commanded a majority of their own in parliament. Even after that, they have more often than not been able to count on the support of the Socialist Left Party on the extreme left. In all situations, the cooperation of the Christian Party has been a necessary, but normally not sufficient condition for a non-socialist majority cabinet. Two such cabinets have appeared: the first one led by Per Borten in 1965–71, the second led by Kåre Willoch in 1983–86.

Up until the crisis created by the EC Referendum, the distances between Norwegian parties were clear indeed: all bourgeois parties stood closer to each other than to the Social Democrats in terms of roll-call behavior in

parliament. Since about 1972–73, however, these distances have been blurred somewhat. Among other things, there has been a *rapprochement* between the Social Democrats and the Christian Party (Rommetvedt 1990, 88). Among non-socialist parties, European integration and regional policies are some of the important issues that have given rise to conflicts. Conservative Party stands on these issues differ widely from those of the centrist parties, particularly the Christian People's Party. Simultaneously, the emergence of the populist Progress Party has split the non-socialist front further and made the coalition puzzle even more complicated. Today, the crucial question of Norwegian policies vis-à-vis the European Community constitutes a watershed right across the non-socialist camp. The Christian People's Party policies are clearly more restrictive than those of the Conservatives and the Progress Party. Another topical issue which may develop into a deep conflict around the very core of Christian ideas is the fact that the Conservatives have signalled their readiness for a programmatic reorientation concerning the relationship between Church and State.

The relevance of the Norwegian Christian People's Party in coalition politics seems to be decreasing. Their parliamentary strength has declined somewhat since their heyday in the 1970s. At the same time, their "utility" has also been called into question due to conflicts around central political issues.

Danish coalition politics was shaken even more thoroughly as a result of the electoral protest of the early 1970s. The Danish party system has since then had a "Finnish appearance". In contradistinction to Finnish politics, however, broad coalitions bridging the divide between socialists and non-socialists have been all but absent in Denmark.[3] The power center of Danish politics has increasingly been found in parliament itself. More and more, Danish politics have been based on deals and agreements on individual issues and policy sectors reached inside parliament with varying constellations of parties supporting such deals (Damgaard 1990a, 15–17).

The entrance of the Christian People's Party into the Danish parliament in 1973 was in itself an element in the dramatic loss of political stability in the country. The party at once became a player in a highly complicated political game, where the main goal was to create temporary majorities for individual decisions. Up until 1982, the Christian People's Party actively participated in such deals with both non-socialist and Social Democratic minority cabinets. In 1982, the Conservative Party leader, Poul Schlüter, managed to form a cabinet including his own party, the Agrarian Liberals, the Center Democrats and the Christian Party. This was formally a minority cabinet, but in 1983–87 it commanded a *de facto* majority in parliament. In certain important policy areas, including defense policy, however, the cabinet must rely on "alternative majorities". The electoral success of the populist Progress Party in 1988 once again complicated the party pattern

further and the four-party coalition resigned (Damgaard 1990a, 23–24). The 1990 election points in the direction of a renewed Social Democratic ascendancy. Together with the increased complexity of the party pattern on the non-socialist side this may render it very difficult to achieve broad bourgeois coalitions. Consequently, it may come to limit the role of the Christian People's Party in future coalition politics as well.

Finnish parliamentarism has run counter to the development elsewhere in Scandinavia. Fractionalization of the party system has, to be sure, increased to a certain extent in Finland as well. The response, however, has been radically different from that in the neighboring countries. Instead of unstable minority parliamentarism, the past two decades have entailed cabinets based on considerable majorities in parliament. Cabinets across the socialist-non-socialist gap have been the rule rather than the exception in Finland. A major impetus behind the process leading to an overarching political consensus was the entrance of protest parties into parliament in the early 1970s. These consensual mechanisms among the major parties have naturally restricted the potential of the Finnish Christian League to exert parliamentary influence by tipping the balance in the favor of one of the blocs (Anckar 1990, 141–143).

Finnish parliamentarism displays a greater number of critical thresholds than normal majority parliamentarism. This is due to constitutional stipulations which provide a minority of one-third of the MPs with effective means of obstructing legislative work. A minor party can therefore be "pivotal" in three different ways: it can provide a cabinet with an absolute majority, it can help give it a two-thirds majority, and it can help the opposition to reach the necessary minority to defer legislation.

The Finnish Christian League has had the possibility to play a pivotal role only once during its parliamentary life. In 1979–82 Mauno Koivisto led a cabinet which was one seat short of the magic two-thirds majority in parliament. However, there was very little in the way of an effective opposition in parliament despite the fact that the parties outside the cabinet commanded the necessary minority of 67 seats. For instance, these parties did not issue one single joint declaration (Anckar 1990, 154–155). One main reason was the fear of the small non-socialist parties that such cooperation would render them the image of mere auxiliaries of the largest opposition party, the Conservatives (Anckar 1990, 156). In sum, the Christians have normally been *unable* to play a pivotal role in opposition, and when it was at least arithmetically possible they did not *wish* to play that role.

Even the entrance of the Christian League into government in 1991 goes to emphasize the supplementary role of the party in Finland. Cabinet majorities normally require the participation of at least one of the minor parties. In order not to give a minor party – normally the Swedish People's

Party, which is a more or less permanent cabinet participant – disproportionate influence, the larger parties frequently include two minor parties in the cabinet. These balance each other out, since one of them is, strictly speaking, superfluous. Consequently, when Esko Aho included a Christian League minister in his cabinet, a major motive was to make sure that the Swedes would toe the line. To be sure, this gave the Christians an opportunity to influence policy in the field of development aid, where they presently hold a cabinet post. Still, they are themselves well advised to toe the line in all important issues in order not to risk being ousted from government.

In the Swedish case, the Christian Democratic Union became "relevant" overnight in 1991. Before that, the party had been a *quantité négligeable* in Swedish parliamentary politics. The entrance of the KDS into the bourgeois coalition led by Carld Bildt was not, however, sufficient to give the cabinet a majority status. Bildt must rely on the support of either the Left or the controversial populist party New Democracy for parliamentary majorities. Yet the Christian Democratic Union is clearly stronger in the cabinet than its Finnish counterpart. Its parliamentary strength makes it a fairly equal partner to both the Center Party and the Liberals. Only the Conservatives clearly carry more weight in the cabinet. The three posts held by the Christians – Communication, the Interior and Development Aid – do not belong to either the most prestigious or the most peripheral ministerial posts.

The Christian Democratic Union road to parliament and cabinet was characterized by an energetic attempt to amend the profile of the party. It no longer wished to stand out as a Christian single-issue movement but as a humanist and liberal party with a pronounced interest in social welfare questions (*Nordisk kontakt* 1991:9, 84–86). In the negotiations preceding the formation of the cabinet, therefore, the party displayed great flexibility, avoiding all stands which might endanger the party's entry into cabinet politics.

In sum, the role of Christian parties in Nordic coalition politics does not constitute a clear joint pattern. The Norwegian party has at several instances in the post-war era played the role which the Swedish Christian Democratic Union assumed in 1991. At the same time, there are features in Norwegian politics today which may render the position of the Christian People's Party more difficult in the future. In Denmark the Christian People's Party carries limited parliamentary weight, but it has been able to play a role thanks to the complicated parliamentary constellations. The Finnish Christian League participates in the cabinet "at the mercy" of the larger parties; its role is clearly supplementary. Moreover, the rapid rise of the Swedish Christian Democratic Union to government position rests on one single election result. It is too early yet to judge whether this reflects a passing electoral protest or a more permanent foothold in the Swedish electorate.

Concluding Remarks

The Christian parties of Scandinavia emerged as parties of moral protest, and they have more or less retained this image through the years. To be a Christian party voter in the Nordic countries has meant a stand which goes beyond a conformistic church membership or an identification with general Christian values. The Christian parties have been far more "deviant" in Scandinavia than their continental counterparts have been in their political settings. Church and religion contain little political potential that might be exploited by parties in Scandinavia. The Christian parties lack the natural historical and structural preconditions on which Christian democracy farther south has thriven. The threshold created by the active stands taken by the Scandinavian parties in moral questions continues to be too high for the average voter.

The Scandinavian Christian parties have largely retained their characteristic voter profiles: overrepresentation for women and elderly persons side-by-side with highly normal distributions with respect to socio-economic groups and general political attitudes. How clear and definite the recent Swedish change may be, is uncertain at the moment.

The traditionally strongest of the four parties, the Christian People's Party in Norway, has gathered strength from the classic coincident cleavages of Norwegian politics; i.e. religious revivalism, economic structure and language make for dynamic "politics of cultural defense" outside the dominant Eastern part of the country, particularly in Western Norway. The Swedish and Danish parties have also had their geographic strongholds, but these have not been as extensive and socially dynamic as the Western and Southern peripheries in Norway.

While the core of Christian party support has always consisted of a moral protest, the parties have reached their electoral peaks thanks to more general waves of political protest. The turbulence created by the EC membership controversy in Denmark and Norway in the early 1970s paved the way for the hitherto best results of the Danish and Norwegian parties. The protest against the dominant position of President Kekkonen and against the lack of real political alternatives also largely explains the best results of the Finnish Christian League at the end of the 1970s. Similarly, it is difficult to understand the rise of the Christian Democratic Union in Sweden without reference to the general political protest in Sweden at the beginning of the 1990s.

As for coalition politics, the best days of the Norwegian and Danish parties may be over. The complex party structure which has in itself been a precondition of their "relevance" has acquired traits which make it more difficult for the Christians to play a pivotal role. Cabinet participation of the Finnish party is not necessary for the survival of the government coalition; the Christian League is in every respect supplementary in the

present coalition. By comparison, the Christian Democratic Union in Sweden is currently important in the parliamentary game, yet it is not able to provide the present government coalition with a necessary majority.

It would therefore be highly exaggerated to speak of a general upswing of Christian politics in Scandinavia. Quite to the contrary, three of the parties face considerable difficulties in trying to reach beyond their traditional supporters. The combination of fundamental religious homogeneity and the image of the parties as moral vigilantes is a definite disadvantage in this regard. By and large, the Danish, Finnish and Norwegian parties lead a defensive struggle against increasingly difficult odds.

Against this background, the recent success of the Christian Democratic Union in Sweden is all the more noteworthy. In connection with the 1991 campaign, it seemed as if the party had indeed managed to define a political line beyond the traditional moralist message. The general humanistic approach offered by Alf Svensson and his party appears as a new element in the Swedish political debate. Could it become a source of lasting success for the KDS?

The electoral record of the non-socialist parties in Sweden certainly calls for caution in this regard. Both the Conservatives, the Center Party and the Liberals have had considerable ups and downs during recent decades. The Environmentalist Party fell from parliament in 1991 after a rise largely similar to that of the Christian Democratic Union today. The non-socialist parties are each other's major rivals in electoral terms. In this competition, the KDS may soon find itself on the losing side. The electoral wind which blew in the favor of the party this time is no different from the relatively recent but already vanished successes of the other parties. If and when the wind turns against the Swedish Christian Democratic Union, we will suddenly be reminded of the fact that 7 percent of the vote lies merely three percentage points above the most critical of all thresholds.

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NOTES

1. In this article, unless otherwise noted, "Scandinavia" is used to include Finland as well as Denmark, Norway and Sweden.
2. Until 1973 the number of seats in the Norwegian parliament *Stortinget*, was 150. From 1973 to 1985 there were 155 seats, from 1985 to 1989 157 seats, and in 1989 the number was increased to 165.
3. The exception is the 1978 coalition between the Social Democrats and the Agrarian Liberals (*Venstre*). This was also a minority cabinet.

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Coping with Poverty: The Impact of Fiscal Austerity on the Local Budgetary Process in Norway

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This article examines the impact of public sector austerity on the budgetary process in local government. We initially propose that resource squeeze influences the criteria of resource allocation. More specifically, we suggest that austerity tends to generate a greater emphasis on performance-based criteria such as cost-benefit assessments, while arguments relating to production costs, previous commitments and relative standards of service supply tend to carry less weight. A regression model is developed to test these hypotheses. Response variables, drawn from a survey conducted among Norwegian local government officials, measure the success of a menu of arguments which justify increased appropriations, and we examine whether austerity affects the perceived success of these arguments. Consistent with previous studies, we find no impact of stress on decision-making behavior in local government. We do not believe that this result can be dismissed as merely a by-product of our research design. This conclusion leaves us with at least two possible interpretations. One suggests that austerity affects the criteria of resource allocation if, and only if, decision-makers perceive the squeeze to exert a persistent and inescapable pressure which requires a fundamental redefinition of managerial style. This has hardly been the case in Norwegian local government. The other interpretation suggests that the criteria for resource allocation in fact remain unchanged, even in situations when austerity is believed to be persistent. Inertia can be caused by (a) the disproportional disutility attributed to budgetary cut-backs compared to the benefits of appropriation increases, (b) the propensity to attribute austerity to "external" rather than "internal" causes, and (c), problems related to aggregating individual preferences and criteria into a coherent organizational policy of resource allocation.

All organizations must somehow adapt to resource constraints. Both governmental agencies and private enterprises must cope with fluctuations in revenues and changes in the demands for goods and services. Since the mid-1970s, the public sectors of most Western countries have experienced some degree of economic retrenchment, and lower public sector growth. Some scholars have described the situation as an instance of "organizational decline" (Levine 1978), or as a "resource squeeze" (Newton 1980), others as a "scissors crisis" of public finance (Tarschys 1983).

Most of the research so far reported on organizational responses to financial pressures focuses on budgetary strategies. *Economic* strategies

present coalition. By comparison, the Christian Democratic Union in Sweden is currently important in the parliamentary game, yet it is not able to provide the present government coalition with a necessary majority.

It would therefore be highly exaggerated to speak of a general upswing of Christian politics in Scandinavia. Quite to the contrary, three of the parties face considerable difficulties in trying to reach beyond their traditional supporters. The combination of fundamental religious homogeneity and the image of the parties as moral vigilantes is a definite disadvantage in this regard. By and large, the Danish, Finnish and Norwegian parties lead a defensive struggle against increasingly difficult odds.

Against this background, the recent success of the Christian Democratic Union in Sweden is all the more noteworthy. In connection with the 1991 campaign, it seemed as if the party had indeed managed to define a political line beyond the traditional moralist message. The general humanistic approach offered by Alf Svensson and his party appears as a new element in the Swedish political debate. Could it become a source of lasting success for the KDS?

The electoral record of the non-socialist parties in Sweden certainly calls for caution in this regard. Both the Conservatives, the Center Party and the Liberals have had considerable ups and downs during recent decades. The Environmentalist Party fell from parliament in 1991 after a rise largely similar to that of the Christian Democratic Union today. The non-socialist parties are each other's major rivals in electoral terms. In this competition, the KDS may soon find itself on the losing side. The electoral wind which blew in the favor of the party this time is no different from the relatively recent but already vanished successes of the other parties. If and when the wind turns against the Swedish Christian Democratic Union, we will suddenly be reminded of the fact that 7 percent of the vote lies merely three percentage points above the most critical of all thresholds.

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NOTES

1. In this article, unless otherwise noted, "Scandinavia" is used to include Finland as well as Denmark, Norway and Sweden.
2. Until 1973 the number of seats in the Norwegian parliament *Stortinget*, was 150. From 1973 to 1985 there were 155 seats, from 1985 to 1989 157 seats, and in 1989 the number was increased to 165.
3. The exception is the 1978 coalition between the Social Democrats and the Agrarian Liberals (*Venstre*). This was also a minority cabinet.

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