

The Rise and Fall of the Miraculous Welfare Machine: Immigration and Social Democracy in Twentieth-Century Sweden


By Carly Elizabeth Schall



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Sweden is well known for the success of its welfare state. Many believe that success was made possible in part by the country's ethnic homogeneity and that the increased diversity of Sweden's population is putting its welfare state at risk. Few, however, have suggested convincing mechanisms for explaining the precise relationship between relative ethnic homogeneity/heterogeneity and the welfare state. In this book Carly Elizabeth Schall acknowledges the important role of ethnic homogeneity in Sweden's thriving welfare state, but she argues that it mattered primarily because political elites—especially social democrats—made it matter.

Schall shows that diversity and the welfare state are related but that diversity does not undermine the welfare state in a straightforward way. Tracing the development of the Swedish welfare state from the late 1920s until the present day, she focuses on five historical periods of crisis. She argues that the story of Swedish national identity is a story of elite-driven hegemony-building and that the linking of social democracy and national identity colored the integration of immigrants in important ways. Social democracy could have withstood the challenge posed by immigration, but the faltering of social democratic hegemony opened a door for anti-immigrant sentiment. In her deft analysis of the relationship between immigration and the welfare state in Sweden, Schall makes a compelling argument that has relevance for immigration policy in the United States and elsewhere.

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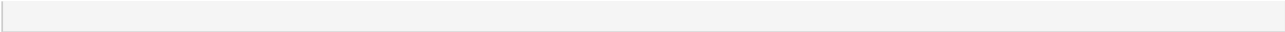
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Editorial Review

Review

"*The Rise and Fall of the Miraculous Welfare Machine* explores the evolving relationship between conceptions of Swedish nationhood and the dominance of social democracy in Sweden. Carly Elizabeth Schall's fascinating and insightful account shows how the Swedish social democrats turned their reformist project into a national project and how other political forces have recently been able to turn the national question against social democracy. Her book represents an original and important contribution to the literature on Swedish social democracy."?Jonas Pontusson, University of Geneva, author of *Inequality and Prosperity: Social Europe vs. Liberal America*

"Carly Elizabeth Schall provides a fascinating account of how the process of ethnic closure has been crucial to the development of the Swedish welfare state, meticulously documenting how an ethnic definition of the nation, supplemented with civil values, allowed the Swedish Social Democratic Party to successfully develop an understanding of 'Swedishness' that rested on core social democratic values. This book is an essential read for those wishing to consider how nation, nationalism, and processes of both ethnic hetero- and homogeneity have critical importance for welfare state development."?Gregg Bucken-Knapp, University of Gothenburg, author of *Defending the Swedish Model: Social Democrats, Trade Unions, and Labor Migration Policy Reform*

About the Author

Carly Elizabeth Schall is Assistant Professor of Sociology at Indiana University–Purdue University Indianapolis.

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