

Winning the Internet, Losing the Elections

The Case of Alternative for Sweden

Henrik Sundbom

Leading up to the Swedish parliamentary elections on September 9, 2018 the newly founded radical far-right party Alternative for Sweden (AfS) came into the limelight. With its harsh rhetoric, questionable international contacts and a huge social media presence, AfS made for a thankful topic to cover for journalists.

Nonetheless, election results showed that AfS failed to convert its online engagement to actual votes. AfS failed massively with just over 0.31 % of the votes. Alternative for Sweden turned out to be the party that won the internet but lost the elections.

How did this happen, and what lessons can be learned by the case of a radical fringe party that managed to enter the limelight of national elections without any substantial popular support?



HENRIK SUNDBOM is a fellow at the Stockholm Free World Forum and an independent researcher/consultant specialized on influence operations and digital media. He has contributed with research on the international ties of extremist groups for several major media outlets and is frequently engaged as an expert on authoritarian influence operations. He has recently published reports for the Swedish Institute of International Affairs and the Atlantic Council.

Leading up to the Swedish parliamentary elections on September 9, 2018, the newly founded radical far-right party Alternative for Sweden came into the limelight. With its harsh rhetoric, questionable international contacts and a reportedly huge social media presence, AfS made for a thankful topic to cover for journalists. About one thousand articles in Swedish print media and approximately two hundred articles in English mentioned AfS from its establishment in March to election day in September.

The rise of an extremist Swedish political party fit well into a narrative portraying Sweden as a country failing to manage the largest challenges of our time: migration, crime, Islamic extremism, etc. Media that typically portray Sweden as a paradise lost were increasingly interested in writing about AfS. The Russian propaganda outlet Sputnik News was one of few international media outlets that dedicated full articles to cover the party. With 21 articles mentioning AfS, the party was the third most featured Swedish political party in Sputnik after the Sweden Democrats (57) and the Social Democrats (34).

The journalistic interest in AfS was partly justified. AfS was indeed one of the most popular topics trending on Swedish social media. In the last weeks leading up to the elections, AfS was second only to the Sweden Democrats in Facebook engagement.¹

Nonetheless, election results showed that AfS failed to convert its online engagement to actual votes. AfS failed massively, obtaining just over twenty thousand votes (0,31 % of the electorate). Alternative for Sweden turned out to be the party that won the internet but lost the elections.

The case of AfS underlines lessons learned from other recent elections including the American election of Donald Trump as U.S. President; social media is certainly important in order to engage with voters, but its impact can be easily exaggerated by journalists and scholars who place too much emphasis on online engagement reflecting potential election results.

This report begins with a short background of Alternative for Sweden, explaining how the party started as a more radical offspring of the Sweden Democrats. The following sections examine how the party managed to gain traction on social media, its relation to so-called “alternative” media outlets, and its less successful physical campaign. The international relations of AfS are also important to mention, since they add context to the party’s establishment and online success. Later sections review the election results and address how AfS’ online activists reacted.

¹ Likes, shares, comments and other interactions with the Facebook Page of the party.

”Alternative for Sweden turned out to be the party that won the internet but lost the elections.”

The concluding section analyzes and identifies lessons to learn from the AfS case of a radical fringe party that entered the limelight of national elections without any substantial popular support.

Background:

In 2015, the Sweden Democrats (SD) – Sweden’s leading right-wing populist party – cut all ties to its youth branch, Swedish Democratic Youth (SDU). There were two reasons for this decision: On the one hand, leading members of SDU were challenging the leaders of its mother party. And on the other, the SDU was developing in a more radical direction while its mother party was adopting a zero-tolerance policy for racism thereby excluding the Sweden Democrats’ most radical elements. The chairman of SDU, Gustaf Kasselstrand, was considered too close to the so-called Identitarian movement, a white-nationalist movement that draws inspiration from the Russian ideologue Alexander Dugin.²

In March 2018, Kasselstrand and his former SDU deputy William Hahne established the party Alternative for Sweden. AfS was branded as a more radical alternative to SD, not only on immigration policy but also on international issues. Three Members of Parliament (MP) from the Sweden Democrats and a fourth MP who had been excluded from SD due to her anti-Semitic statements joined AfS within its first few months. Among these four MPs was the former party leader of SD, Mikael Jansson, who until that point was a member of the Parliament’s Defence Committee and defence spokesperson of the SD.

Social Media

Early in the election campaign, it became clear that AfS was successful in gaining attention on social media. During the last weeks leading up to the elections, the AfS Facebook page obtained more than one thousand likes per day, reaching almost 60,000 page likes by election day. AfS was the third most engaging party on Facebook in August, beaten only by the Sweden Democrats and the Moderate Party. During the final weeks before the elections, AfS was second only to SD in Facebook engagement; the percentage of engagement on AfS’ Facebook posts was remarkably high in relation to other political parties.

Creating unauthentic engagement on Facebook is rather difficult. It requires setting up fake profiles, which is a time-consuming task when done in large quantities. To create a fake profilee, one must develop a credible persona, post updates,

² ”Striden mellan SD och SDU”, Expo, 28 November 2014

The Agenda of AfS

Anti-immigration

The single most important issue for AfS is tougher rules on immigration. The party even labels itself “the repatriation party”, arguing that 500,000 immigrants should leave the country. Islamic influence is one of its major themes, but some of the representatives indulge in old school anti-Semitism.

Anti-establishment

AfS argues that all other parties in Swedish politics including the Sweden Democrats are branches on the same tree. The political establishment is considered an enemy, reflecting the wider narrative of a powerful “deep state” ruling the world that is gaining popularity worldwide.

Isolationism

AfS is against cooperation with NATO and wants Sweden to leave the EU.

Pro-market

Compared to the Sweden Democrats, AfS is economically more conservative, arguing for flat taxes etc.

Media

AfS has risen from an environment where media is seen as a tool of left-wing propaganda. The party wants to replace public service media with alternatives that follow their ideology.

join groups, interact with and befriend actual people. If organized troll activities were behind the popularity of AfS on Facebook, it was most likely organized by grassroots efforts from within Sweden. AfS has a large quantity of dedicated followers who engage with each social media post. Even though many of these followers are anonymous, nothing indicates that such accounts do not belong to authentic activists. It is likely that key individuals involved with the AfS campaign maintain several Facebook profiles/accounts and use them to boost AfS posts. After Facebook launched temporary and permanent bans of people who engage in hate speech, maintaining multiple social media accounts has become the standard operating procedure among far-right activists.

Twitter is different. On Twitter all you need is a taken name and a stolen image, and automating a handful of Twitter accounts only takes a couple of minutes. In a recent report, the Swedish Defence Research Agency (FOI) mapped the presence of automated accounts, so-called “bots,” on Twitter in connection with the 2018 Swedish elections. The study showed an increase of automatized activities, but also showed that most bots expressed traditionalist, authoritarian or nationalist views. 47 % of the analyzed bots supported the Sweden Democrats and 29 % supported Alternative for Sweden.³ In the study *Smea- ring Sweden – International Influence Campaigns in the 2018 Swedish Election*, the authors claim to have found at least 55 highly active and anonymized single-issue accounts supporting AfS in the weeks before the elections, and that many of these accounts seemed likely to be automated accounts.⁴

Jakub Janda, Director of the Czech think tank European Values, a leading centre of expertise in this field, attempted to match usernames involved in Swedish far-right social media campaign with lists of known Russian bots and trolls from the U.S., Ukraine and the Baltics, but didn't find a single match. His conclusion was that “this is homegrown, although the execution is similar to Russian bot activities in other elections.”⁵

AfS was the most the most searched Swedish party on Youtube the week before the elections. However, this shouldn't be interpreted as popular support for the party. Most of the YouTube video views likely came from curious political opponents who were following their campaign. It should also be mentioned that

³ [The Swedish election and bots on Twitter](#), FOI, 12 September 2018

⁴ Colliver et al, [Smearing Sweden – International Influence Campaigns in the 2018 Swedish Election](#), ISD/LSE, October 2018

⁵ [Jakub Janda on Twitter](#), 7 September 2018

”If organized troll activities were behind the popularity of AfS on Facebook, it was most likely organized by grassroots efforts from within Sweden.”

YouTube's ban of AfS (explained in the following chapters) may have boosted interest. Users may have searched for AfS content simply to see if the party had actually been censored by the video platform as it had claimed.

Support from Alternative Media

The Swedish media landscape has become heavily polarized. Self-proclaimed "alternative" far-right media platforms are gaining popularity by writing about immigration and criminal justice system currently in place. Most of these platforms have traditionally favored the Sweden Democrats, and representatives of SD have been active in both organizing and sharing their work with alternative media. Alternative media is generally seen as an important component of SD's success. But over the past year, their relationship changed.

Out of the most influential alternative media outlets, only a minor publication owned and operated by the party firmly remains loyal to SD. As the elections neared, several of the most influential alternative media outlets published articles in support of AfS.

Several of these publications have ties to the East. The publication *Samhällsnytt* employs a Russian-born man who writes under the pseudonym Egor Putilov; he previously worked for the Sweden Democrats and has operated under several other false names. *Fria Tider* enjoys a symbiotic relation to *Sputnik*, frequently sourcing material from and providing material to the Russian propaganda outlet. *Nya Tider* and its two editors Vavra Suk and Sanna Hill are deeply involved in Russian influence activities by providing biased election monitoring and enjoy a close relation with writers such as Alexander Dugin. Both Suk and Hill have joined AfS on trips to Russia and Syria.

Alternative for Sweden has received substantial support from the Nordic Alt-Right movement. Representatives of the group have attended and shown agreement at its public meetings, and their closed meme groups on social media have produced hundreds of images promoting AfS and Kasselstrand. The Nordic Alt-Right movement is run by Christofer Dulny, a former Sweden Democrat employee, and Daniel Friberg, a veteran in Swedish far-right groups. Both men have a connection to Richard Spencer in the U.S., and Friberg works tirelessly with various projects aimed at uniting radical groups around the world – notably in Russia.

A few of these online movements have been extremely successful in gaining traction on social media. *Fria Tider* is the most viral publication that favours AfS, and over the six months before the elections it received nearly 1.8 million

engagements on social media.⁶ This can be compared to other large tabloids with only 640,000 engagements on the editorial page of Aftonbladet (social democrat) and 550,000 engagements on the editorial page of Expressen (liberal).

The ten most popular posts of Fria Tider over the last six months before the elections reached between ten and thirty thousand social media engagements each. All the top posts were about immigration-related crimes, while the most viral post about AfS received only 3.4 thousand engagements. A debate article by Kasselstrand received only 780 engagements.

Upon analyzing the engagement data, it seems Swedish alternative media have been successful in promoting a far-right worldview, but their posts supporting political parties tend to go virtually unnoticed. As is illustrated in the previous section, a large share of the social media engagement on posts about AfS could possibly be attributed to automated accounts, known as “bots”.

Far-Right Election Campaigning

In addition to its extensive online campaign, AfS organized 50 public meetings in nearly as many Swedish towns dubbed “the repatriation tour”. The meetings generally attracted a handful of dedicated supporters, small crowds of curious listeners and in some cases even activists who demonstrated against the meetings.

Swedes were not particularly responsive to the harsh rhetoric and PR stunts that AfS performed. Dressing up in burqas and posing with IS-like flags is probably one step too much even for SD voters who dislike and fear Islam. Additionally, AfS repeatedly shouting “Sweden belongs to the Swedes” brings back memories of neo-nazi marches that took place in the early nineties.

All the AfS meetings were live-streamed on Facebook, and the overall audience online was probably larger than the actual audience offline. Judging from the comments on the videos, a large share of the viewers on Facebook were opponents of the party rather than sympathizers or supporters.

Provocative leaflets were distributed by the thousands, the most noteworthy featuring the phrase “Time to go home” on the front page. Photos of the leaflets went viral on social media. 10 million ballot papers were printed and distributed by post and to voting stations.⁷ AfS managed to pull through an extensive and

⁶ A total of all engagements on Facebook, Twitter, Reddit and Pinterest, analysed with Buzzsumo

⁷ [AFS beställde tio miljoner valsedlar](#), Expressen, 18 September 2018

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expensive election campaign that appeared to exceed the reported income of its crowd funding campaign.

Fundraising

Immediately after its launch in March, AfS published a video targeting Trump supporters in the U.S., asking for financial assistance to “save Sweden”. The video gained international attention, not least from the Russian propaganda channel Sputnik News that republished it on its website. The advertisement was also translated into French, aimed towards supporters of the National Front. The party claimed to have raised about 3.4 million SEK.⁸

“Censorship”

The party’s last meeting ahead of the elections took place in Kungsträdgården in downtown Stockholm and attracted roughly a few hundred to one thousand people. The Mayor of Stockholm at the time, Social Democrat Karin Wanngård, attempted to stop the meeting referencing a hate speech reported by the police during an earlier AfS meeting. The freedom of expression is strong in Sweden and AfS chose to conduct the meeting anyway – but not according to the original plan featuring a large stage in the middle of the park.⁹ Two unintended consequences of Wanngård’s attempt was an increased public interest in the party, both in media and online, as well as a lawsuit against the City of Stockholm for its censorship of the party.

This wasn’t the first time AfS claimed to be victims of censorship. In May, YouTube deleted an AfS video with reference to their rules on hate speech, and in late August YouTube blocked the party’s videos for Swedish users. The block only lasted for a couple of days. Private companies like YouTube have the right to decide what to publish and what to remove. Removing content that violates community guidelines does not equate to censorship. Nevertheless, this situation was enough to make censorship a prominent theme in tweets and comments about the party.

Actions by Wanngård and YouTube obviously did not result in increased support for AfS, however comments on social media indicated that people related to the Sweden Democrats became more sympathetic to the party after the censorship incidents.

⁸ Alternativforsverige.se

⁹ [AFS trotsar avbokning – demonstrerar ändå](#), TT, 3 September 2018

International Relations

The Sweden Democrats, Sweden's largest right-wing populist party with 17.5 % of the votes in the 2018 elections, has struggled to find its place in international politics. Parties like the National Front in France have shown interest in SD, but SD has chosen not to be affiliated with what many consider to be its political counterparts abroad. AfS has picked up many loose ends left by SD and seem to be better integrated into the European far-right.

These relations are interesting in regards to AfS' social media footprint. Several far-right parties with close relations to Russia as well as the Assad-regime in Syria have received substantial support on social media, and there are reasons to believe that they learn from each other, use similar tactics and receive assistance from e.g. Russian bot nets and fringe media with Russian support.

Prior to the Sweden Democrats' entry to the European Parliament in 2014, SDU and Kasselstrand co-founded the European far-right youth alliance YEAH – Young European Alliance for Hope – in partnership with the youth branches of the National Front in France, FPÖ in Austria and Vlams Belang in Belgium. As SD joined the Eurosceptic party group Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy led by the U.K. Independence Party (UKIP), instead of co-operating with the National Front, SDU left YEAH. The Sweden Democrats ceased contact with parties like the National Front, FPÖ and Vlams Belang, but the former leaders of SDU seem to have transferred these relations to AfS.¹⁰ As chairman of SDU, Kasselstrand stood out as one of the most pro-Kremlin representatives of the party.

In June 2018, Kasselstrand, Jansson, and a third representative from AfS attended the International Forum “Development of Parliamentarism” in Moscow hosted by Leonid Slutsky and featured Sergey Lavrov as the keynote speaker. Apart from seeking increased relations with the Kremlin, Kasselstrand declared on the party's Facebook page that Alternative for Sweden was attempting to network with other nationalist parties such as the National Front, Vlams Belang and FPÖ, but also parties like Lega from Italy and Alternative for Germany. During the conference, Jansson gave “special thanks to President Putin for Russia's contribution in destroying the Islamic State.”¹¹

¹⁰ SDU lämnar Europasamarbete, Expo, 12 June 2014

¹¹ Mikael Jansson at International Forum on Development of Parliamentarism in Moscow 2018, Nya Tider, 15 June 2018

”AfS has picked up many loose ends left by SD and seem to be better integrated in the European far-right.”

In late August, Jansson travelled to Damascus to discuss repatriation of Syrian immigrants with the Assad-regime accompanied by two editors from Nya Tider, one of Sweden's most frequent far right-wing publishers of Russian geopolitical narratives. Among others, Jansson met the country's top Muslim leaders with ties to President Bashar Assad and the speaker of the Syrian parliament.¹²

On September 7, two days before the elections, AfS was joined by some international guests at a meeting in downtown Stockholm.¹³ From the Belgian party Vlams Belang came notable figure Frank Creyelman, whom in an interview with Sputnik News following the Yalta Economic Forum earlier in 2018, had exaggerated his own merits as a Trojan horse by stating he "was the guy, who brought all the right-wing parties to make a turn towards Russia."¹⁴ However, it is clear that he plays an active role in the Kremlin's PR machinery acting as an elections observer for Russian GONGOs (government organized non-governmental organizations) and as a frequent guest on Russian propaganda channels.¹⁵

From the Italian far-right party Lega came Alessandro Sansoni, a frequent contributor to Geopolitica.ru and Katehon, two Russian far-right platforms affiliated to the ideologue Alexander Dugin and oligarch Konstantin Malofeev. Malofeev is a close friend of several influential Russian leaders and a self-described monarchist who supports the idea of a full return of the Russian Empire. Ukrainian security services consider Malofeev to be a key financier of rebels in Eastern Ukraine on behalf of the Russian government.¹⁶

The international network of AfS reaching from Moscow to Damascus via far-right parties around Europe makes them a small player on a bigger team. Similar methods and actors seen in the AfS campaign – including fringe media, botnets and fake profiles in social media – have been applied by or supported most of these political actors. Such political movements learn from each other; to what extent the shared learning is organized or externally funded is a question for further research.

¹² [Avhoppade SD-ledamoten Mikael Jansson träffade syriska diktatorns närmaste man](#), Dagens Nyheter, 31 August 2018

¹³ [Lega Nord och Alternative für Deutschland talar på Alternativ för Sveriges valfinal i Kungsträdgården](#), Alternativ för Sverige, 7 September 2018

¹⁴ ['Chem Attack' Designed to Damage Russia - Belgian Honorary MP](#), Sputnik News, 20 April 2018

¹⁵ Anton Shekovtsov, *Tango Noir: Russia and the Western Far Right*, Routledge 2017

¹⁶ [Konstantin Malofeev: Fringe Christian Orthodox Financier of the Donbas Separatists](#), Jamestown Foundation, 8 August 2014

”During the conference, Jansson gave ‘special thanks’ to President Putin for Russia’s contribution in destroying the Islamic State.”

The international network of AfS, as well as patterns and behaviors by and in support of the party, indicate that it may have received support from Russian actors.

The Failure

When Alternative for Sweden was launched in March, it presented an opinion poll that showed 13 % of the Swedish voters were open to voting for AfS, and that the preference for a party tougher on immigration than the Swedish Democrats was growing¹⁷. AfS was not only ambitious to enter parliament, but held the expectation that it was plausible. By the end of March, one opinion poll showed public support for AfS at about 2 %.¹⁸ The party began to prepare for a landslide.

As the party became more familiar to the public, opinion polls stopped indicating public support as leading polling institutes predicted AfS support between 0.2-0.5 %.¹⁹ However, this did not stop online activists from being optimistic. Research institutes have always found it difficult to measure support for radical parties such as the Sweden Democrats and Alternative for Sweden. Supporters assumed and critics feared that the online support for AfS equated a large number of unreported votes in the polls. They turned out to be wrong. With just over twenty thousand votes or 0.31 % of the electorate, the party had failed in its ambition of obtaining significant public support in the 2018 elections.²⁰ Both supporters and critics of AfS seem to have been fooled by their filter bubbles.

After the Elections: Accusations of Electoral Fraud

As Kasselstrand accepted the defeat of AfS and announced its next goal of election into the European Parliament in 2019, online activists found themselves a new favorite topic: electoral fraud. Isolated incidents were spun into conspiracy theories, claiming that the “establishment” or “deep state” rigged the elections to keep AfS and the Sweden Democrats away from gaining power. In the study *Smearing Sweden – International Influence Campaigns in the 2018 Swedish Election*, the authors note that variations of the term “valfusk” (electoral fraud) were

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¹⁷ 13 % kan tänka sig att rösta på Alternativ för Sverige, Alternativ för Sverige, 13 June 2018

¹⁸ *Yougov: Alternativ för Sverige börjar få stöd i opinionen*, Metro, 21 March 2018

¹⁹ *Enorma på sociala medier – osynliga i mätningar*, Expressen, September 6 2018

²⁰ *Sweden's Election Authority*

used just over 42,000 times on Twitter from September 2 to 28.²¹ Such stories were picked up by foreign far-right publications such as Breitbart as proof that Sweden's democracy is dysfunctional.²²

The Election Review Board has so far received roughly 900 reports about election fraud from citizens, about four times as many as they had following the 2014 elections. According to the Board, hundreds of the reports are identical copies from an online campaign, while others report actual incidents.²³

The electoral system in Sweden does have flaws, mainly concerning the placement of the stands with the ballots – something that was pointed out by democracy foundations linked to the Liberal, Social Democratic, Centre and Green parties after the 2014 elections.²⁴ This issue has been addressed by the Ministry of Justice and a proposition is planned to be discussed by Parliament suggesting that changes will be implemented in January 2019, well in advance of the election to the European Parliament in May.²⁵

However, the online campaign spreading actual incidents and conspiracy theories regarding election fraud bear a striking similarity to narratives spread in Germany before and after its election in 2017. Tweets with the hashtag #wahlbetrug and #AfD were amplified by a network of Russian bots. Maks Czuperski and Ben Nimmo at the Atlantic Council's Digital Forensic Research Lab concluded that if the AfD should fail to perform well at the election, "it is likely to lead to online accusations of election fraud, potentially undermining the legitimacy of the vote."²⁶

21 Colliver et al, Smearing Sweden – International Influence Campaigns in the 2018 Swedish Election, ISD/LSE, October 2018

22 Högerextremister klagar på valfusk - medveten strategi, Expressen, 10 September 2018

23 Anmälningarna om misstänkta oegentligheter vid valet ökar, Sveriges Radio, 2 September 2018

24 Rapport från valövervakning av de svenska valen till riksdag, kommun och landsting 14 september 2014, Olof Palme International Center/Green Forum/Swedish International Liberal Centre/Centre Party International Foundation, 2014

25 Stärkt skydd för valhemligheten, regeringen.se, 28 August 2018

26 #ElectionWatch: Final Hours Fake News Hype in Germany, DFR Lab/Medium, 23 September 2017

Analysis

The immense amount of attention on and political failure of Alternative for Sweden shows the risks of judging politics from social media. The biggest “fraud” concerning AfS was the party’s social media engagement ranking which was boosted using a combination of bots, multiple accounts and a small number of dedicated, active supporters.

Alternative for Sweden’s opposition to Sweden’s close relationship with NATO, its admiration of Russia and its close ties to both the Kremlin and pro-Kremlin parties around Europe make the party by far the most openly pro-Russian force in Swedish politics. The fact that the party obtained unproportionate news coverage from Russian propaganda media outlets and that its representatives paid visits to Moscow and Damascus, had personal relations and expressed outright support for the Kremlin’s views begs the question of whether Russia played a role in the AfS campaign. The social media campaign of AfS appears to be a grassroots effort but shows striking similarities with campaigns by parties that belong to the same international network as AfS. In the case of AfS, there are several similarities between the Russian modus operandi and how the party pursued its campaign. Nonetheless, at this time it is not possible to attribute the digital success of AfS to Russian interference.

How then should we understand the fact that the AfS was so successful on the internet, but failed to mobilize significant voter support?

The breakthrough of AfS on social media largely took place on Twitter, and only 12 % of the Swedish population consider Twitter to be an important source of political information.²⁷ International cases show that trending topics on Twitter are easily manipulated by bot networks with the aim of reaching traditional media. In doing so, different actors can influence the media agenda in a country or distract journalists from covering actual news. Journalists, however, should think twice before basing their articles on Twitter trends.

Swedish alternative media does play an important role in shaping people’s opinions, but the AfS case indicates that readers might be more likely to read and listen to alarmist “news” rather than place their vote based on alternative media’s preferences.

The election of Donald Trump drew global attention to Russian influence operations in social media. To what extent they were successful is widely debated. To

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²⁷ [Svenskarna och Internet valspecial 2018](#), IIS, June 2018

a certain extent, this debate has been destructive for the larger understanding of authoritarian influence operations because the results of digital influence operations are inherently difficult to measure. By focusing too much on cents payed boosting individual Facebook posts or counting anonymous troll accounts, the more important question of *intention* might be overshadowed.

Analysis of potentially foreign-funded social media campaigns should be put into context of the larger phenomenon of foreign influence operations and not be judged as solitary activities. If analyzed as solitary actions, the more serious issue of authoritarian influence operations appear either phony or exaggerated. In the case of Russia, its ambitions and strategies are full-spectrum, ranging from financial pressure to military threats via information warfare. Other illiberal states follow in Russia's footsteps and are becoming increasingly involved in propagating disinformation on a larger scale. In the same way that extremist groups adopt successful tactics from one another, Russia and other authoritarian states share best practices. This forms a bigger picture of a conflict with multiple fronts aimed to undermine Western liberal democracy, something far more complex and serious than isolated social media campaigns.

For Sweden, albeit the failure of AfS to gain popular support, the party has shown signs of functioning as a bridge between the Sweden Democrats and outright Nazi groups, as well as a bridge to the international far-right movement and the Kremlin. Even though the party failed to gain support in the 2018 parliamentary elections, this example should motivate future attention to this ongoing phenomenon – not least for the 2019 elections to the European Parliament.

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