I got 40 million in my pocket

- A functional idea analysis on a selection of President Donald J. Trump's Tweets

in relation to political populist theories

Remi Lafvas Devismes

Abstract

Through a functional idea analysis, this study explores and discuss what possible strategies President Donald J. Trump has on Twitter based on a selection of Mr. Trump's tweets. The material is based on six tweets within three policy categories (Healthcare, the U.S./Mexican Border Wall and the Media) with two tweets in each category. The tweets were selected from the highest respectively lowest amount of retweets. The methods for the functional idea analysis are based on Evert Vedung's theories and the theoretical framework is based on theories on political populism. The assumption was that President Trump uses populist rhetorical strategies in the tweets with the highest amount of retweets. In the least retweeted messages, the assumption was to find less populist strategies. The purpose of this study was to explore the functions of the tweets through the lens of populism in order to examine what can be said on Mr. Trump's rhetorical approaches on Twitter. The findings show that Trump uses rhetorical populism throughout the material, regardless how many retweets the message had. Through the functional idea analysis and political populist theories, this study finds that the selected material consists of classic populist rhetorics which are strategically outlined in order to cover facts behind often anti-establishment arguments.

Acknowledgements

First of all, I want to thank my supervisor Michael Hansen at the Department of Political Science at Lund University for his excellent inputs and comments throughout this entire process. I also want to thank Erik Utterström for constant support and helpful comments. I want to direct a special thank you to Victor, Anton and Oscar for three years of interesting conversations, challenging debates and stimulating inspiration. Last but not least, a loving thank you to Amanda for her unending support and humor and for countless inspiration sessions.

1.   Introduction

With over 45 million followers on Twitter, President Donald J. Trump is one of the most followed world leaders on social media. Since Trump took office as the President of the United States of America, Trump's Twitter account reflects his policy ideas, critics, opinions and thoughts on a regular daily basis. The way Trump uses Twitter is fascinating and not seldom confusing. With his loud, outspoken, frank and not always thoughtful tweets, the President takes the stage sometimes up to 16 times per day and delivers political messages with the world as his audience.

1.1.   Problem and purpose

With a multi million audience on Twitter, every tweet can have potential power. Through the simple and fast means of Twitter, political messages and personal opinions can be shared with millions of people in just seconds. With that level of communicative power, it is of importance to study how the platform is used for expressing political messages signed the President of the United States. Through a functional idea analysis and through theories on populism, a selection of Trump's tweets will be studied in order to examine if Trump uses populist rhetorics in these selected political messages on Twitter. The ambition with this study is to investigate what Mr. Trump's possible rhetorical communication means are within the chosen tweets. By analyzing the selected tweets and further on matching the findings with existing theories on political populism, this study wants to examine how Trump's Twitter rhetorics in the selected tweets can be interpreted. The research question for this thesis is:

Through a selection of The President's tweets: How can Donald Trump's Twitter rhetorics in the selected tweets be understood in relation to populist theories?

The hypothesis is that President Trump has populist rhetorical strategies for his twitter use, where he strategically tweets out political messages with well picked populist rhetorics in order to strengthen his own position as the President. By appearing as the one who defends the 'common people' and at the same time criticizing almost everything that goes against his personal opinions and furthermore his presidency, Trump's way of using Twitter can pretty often seem to be aggressive and furthermore populistic. A fairly common assumption is that Trump uses populism in his speeches and political messages. This study wants to explore if this assumption can be showed through a scientific text analysis, linked to theories on political populism. A second hypothesis is that the more retweets a post has, the more populistic is the political message. According to this hypothesis, the most retweeted post contain a more controversial populist message than a less retweeted post. In that case, the least retweeted post might contain more political content such as updates on different reforms, which maybe not reaches as high numbers of retweets as the messages with populist controversial content do.

2. Literature review

2.1. Previous research: Idea analysis

The idea analysis emerged within political science as a field of study where the focus is to criticize political ideas and texts.[1] The school of idea analysis represents the scientific study of political texts and messages.[2] A political message or text has a broad meaning and is explained as everything from well-developed political ideologies and systematic outlooks on life, to simplified statements and ideas which are presented in the everyday political world. A political message regards arguments, opinions, programs, ideologies, doctrines, believes and such.[3]

The Swedish political scientist Herbert Tingsten coined some of the most important terms and brought life to the modern idea analysis. Tingsten's theories broke new ground and offered new methods for critical analysis. Although the critical idea analysis of Herbert Tingsten was broader developed in the 1970's by another Swedish political scientist, Evert Vedung. Within the school of idea analysis there are mainly two analysis perspectives.[4] The first one regards the contextual idea analysis, which shortly focuses on the context and the content within a given political text. A contextual idea analysis can be useful when studying longer political texts, where the focus lays on the content of the text itself. The second perspective is the *functional* idea analysis. Evert Vedung describes the functional idea analysis as an explanatory analysis, which often has a causal explanation perspective.[5] The functional idea analysis is thus a text analysis which has been used when studying political messages in order to understand the functions of the messages, and furthermore where the ideas within the message come from.

---

[1] Beckman 2005, p. 12
[2] Beckman 2005, p. 12
[3] Vedung 1977, p. 16
[4] Vedung 1977, p. 26
[5] Vedung 1977, p. 19

In the early days of the political idea analysis, turnouts were studied in relation to the voter's age, sex, profession and social status. No study focused on the voter's actual conception of the politics and the ideas behind them. According to Vedung, that was the start of the functional idea analysis, which filled the existing gap in political idea analysis.[6]

During the decades after the 1930's, functional idea analysis developed into a common text analysis within political science. One of the most famous studies is Seymour Martin Lipset's *Political Man: The Social Bases of Politics* (1960), which studies the correlations between social classes and political ideology belongings. Through studying the functions of the political ideas and where the political messages come from in relation to social classes, Lipset explores that the middle-class easier appeals to nazism and fascism, meanwhile the working-class appeals to communism.[7] The point with the functional idea analysis is thus to bring light to the ideas behind political ideas and messages. Through focusing on the factors that has lead up to the political message, the functional idea analysis has an explanatory purpose which aims at identifying the factors and causes that contributed to the emergence of the political message. Since the functional idea analysis wants to find out the function with the text, one must understand the context of the political message.[8]

The functional idea analysis is often used when studying classic political ideologies and their correlations to the historical contexts. This thesis wants to use the old methods of functional idea analysis and apply them on more modern political communication means which in this study is a selection of Trump's political messages on Twitter.

---

[6] ibid., p. 18
[7] ibid., p. 27
[8] ibid., p. 15

2.2.   Previous research: Political populism

Since the term populism emerged in the late 1800's, scholars have had problems defining the meaning of it. The word populism comes from the Latin word *populous* which means 'the people'. Some describes populism as an ideology, others define it as a social movement.[9] During the 1860's - 70's, the Russian movement *Narodnichestvo* took place, where Russian academics believed that the revolutionary forces were to be find among the ordinary peasants. The intellectuals' agenda was to educate the lower class in order to prepare them for revolution. A few decades later during the agrarian movement in the United States, which came to form the People's Party in the 1890's, the term populism was used for describing the events of the people's movement. Until 1950's, the term populism was mainly used for describing these two separate historical phenomenon and after the 1950's, populism as a term started growing after the when scholars became to discuss and study a wider meaning of the term.

The American sociologist Edward Shils argues that populism should be understood as a widespread phenomenon that "[…]exists wherever there is an ideology of popular resentment against the order imposed on society by a (…) ruling class which is believed to have a monopoly of power (…) and culture."[10] The British sociologist Peter Worsley claims that populism does not have to be a type of ideology, nor a social movement. Its meaning should be seen as an "[…]emphasis, a dimension of political culture in general, not simply a particular kind of overall ideological system[…]".[11] Along with Worsley, the swiss scholar Christa Deiwiks argues that it is difficult to draw a distinction between populism as an ideology and populism as a movement. Deiwiks claims that populism should be seen as both ideology and movement.[12] Where conflicts occur between the society and the external world (or the *people* versus the *other* as Deiwiks puts it), populism tend to emerge. Since populism became a field of study, the phenomenon has been closely connected to political communication studies.[13]

---

[9] Moffitt 2016, p. 12
[10] Shils 1956, p. 100
[11] Worsley 1969, p. 245
[12] Deiwiks 2009, p. 3
[13] ibid.

A common way of studying populism within political communication is through analysis of political messages. The textual content in political messages has been studied in correlations to populist theories in order to examine if the political messages contain populist rhetorics. These messages often regard party manifestos, press releases and speeches, in which the rhetorics are explored in relations to populist theories.[14] Studying populism as a discourse within political rhetorics has been done in many different ways. Through discourse and text analysis on both a qualitative and qualitative scale has been done on world leaders as long as populism has been a field of study within political science.

In the early 1980's, populist studies were made on President Ronald Reagan's rhetorics within speeches and public announcements. Reagan was explained as a universalist populist, who "[…]spoke for ordinary citizens against the Government[…]"[15] Studies on populist content within political messages has thus been made within through discourse and text analysis. This study wants to explore the content of a selection of Trump's tweets, similar to the text analysis that were made on President Reagan. Although I want to argue that the field of populist studies has a gap which should be explored. Press releases and speeches has lain as background for populist textual studies, although one cannot follow press releases in the same way a politician on Twitter can be followed, nor do they reach the amount of people as tweets do. With the new technology, new communication means make it possible to communicate a political message on a major scale, therefore it is relevant to study the message's content. Studies on political rhetorics and their relations to populism should therefore be explored not only within political speeches, party manifestos and press conferences, but also on Twitter since the potential publicity on such channels almost are infinite. Through Twitter, political messages can reach a larger audience than political speeches and press releases. The messages can be retweeted and shared many times around which also should be seen as a contributing factor to the spreading of populism. The aim with this study is to bring light on a gap in the exciting literature, namely political populism within political messages on Twitter.

---

[14] Gidron, Bonikowski 2013, p. 27
[15] Weiler, Barnett 2006, p. 235

3.   Theoretical framework

The theoretical framework that lays as background for this thesis is theories on political populism. One contributing factor to the uprise of populism can be found in the waves of globalization which "[…]challenge existing power balances (…) and labor models."[16] The development of technology and the birth of the internet changed the society and allows people to communicate and connect with almost everyone everywhere, something that often is described as the shrinking of the planet.[17]

3.1.   Defining populism

Populism is described as an intermediator between the people and decision makers, and is seen as a social and political phenomenon.[18] When anger and distrust toward the elites grow among the public, populism is a useful tool for politicians who seek to differentiate themselves from the mainstream politicians. As the Swedish political scientist Benjamin Moffitt puts it, populists are "[…]setting the people against the elite in the name of popular sovereignty and defending democracy."[19] Although, defining populism is a hard task which has led to many different views on the phenomenon.

The Dutch scholar Cas Mudde explains populism as "[…]an ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogeneous and antagonistic groups, 'the pure people' versus 'the corrupt elite', and which argues that politics should be an expression of the general will of the people."[20] Kurt Weyland defines populism as a political strategy where a characteristic and personalistic leader runs for political power on a differentiated level than mainstream actors, with

---

[16] ibid., p. 45
[17] Lawson 2016, p. 46
[18] Mazzoleni 2014, p. 45
[19] Moffitt 2016, p. 1
[20] Mudde 2004, p. 543

support from mainly unorganized voters and followers.[21] Mirjam Cranmer defines populism as a political communication style rather than an ideology. Cranmer defines two types of populism, thin and thick, within the populist field. The thin populism refers to politicians who address and appeal to the people by talking about citizens, the voters, the people and the public.[22] As for the thick populism, this refers to strategies that are characterized by exclusion rhetorics and anti-establishment. An anti-establishment approach can be understood as a rhetorical behavior that negatively talks about core functions in society such as the governing elite, the media, journalists and other authorities.[23] The thick populist separates the people and the rest of the functions of society and claims that the gap between the people and the decision makers, and also the multipliers, is too wide. As Cranmer puts is, thick populism often tend to "[…]expresses homogeneity by portraying elites or some specific segments of the population as a danger to 'the people' and emphasizing the unbridgeable gap between 'us' and 'them'."[24]

3.2.   Populism as communication

One crucial keystone to populism, and for making it possible, is communication.[25] The technological development has brought us brand-new digital communication platforms, which has opened up for a new field of populism. Online forums allow people to interact on a larger scale than ever before, which is made possible through our developed technology. Here, Twitter plays a big role as a common platform for politicians and is widely used by world leaders as a direct communication feed to the public. This fairly new method of direct communication between political leaders and the public is indeed a product of globalization which goes hand in hand with the revolutionary technological development. Since populism is dependent on communication, wider communication possibilities facilitates the increasing of populism.[26]

---

[21] Weyland 2001, p. 14
[22] Cranmer 2011, pp. 286-287
[23] ibid., p. 288
[24] ibid., p. 288
[25] Aalberg, de Vreese 2017, p. 3
[26] ibid., pp. 5-6

Furthermore, populism changes alongside with the changing world and is far from a static phenomenon. When globalization changes the world, populism spreads and changes too[27] and has experienced a large scale of conceptual travels.[28]

3.3.   Populism as political rhetoric

Even if there are many different takes on populism and what it actually should be described and understood as, scholars unite around the fact that populism's main cores are the people and political communication.[29] Within political communication, one of the crucial main pillars is the convincing process. This convincing process consists of a manipulation of the language based on the politician's own beliefs and agendas, and takes place every time during a convincing process. This is done in order to make rhetorical gains for the actor and to win votes.[30] The very function of political rhetoric is to package one's ideology and political intentions in a well-formulated message so that the audience is convinced that the delivered message is the actual truth. Heradstveit and Bjørgo describes political rhetorics as a bridge between the actor's political intentions and the people. Through well structured rhetorics, the convincing process is implemented smoother on the public. Thoughtful rhetorics appeal easier to the people, hence it generates larger achievements of legitimacy than political messages with unclear and inexplicit rhetorics.[31] Political communication professor Stephen Coleman defines populism as an 'ideological perversion of democracy' which is "[…]based upon a myth of the common-sense public taking on the corrupt elite."[32] As Coleman puts it, the rhetorical strategies of populism is to convince the people that everyone who makes decisions on high levels are working against society and the people for their own winning.

---

[27] ibid., p. 8
[28] Moffitt 2017, p. 25
[29] Mudde 2004, p. 544
[30] Heradstveit, Bjørgo 1996, p. 97
[31] ibid., pp. 97-98
[32] Coleman 2017, p. 84

The true populist according to Coleman skips well-formulated rhetorics and arguments in political debates and replace these with 'chantable slogans' and simple rhetorics with loud and clear messages in order to appeal to the common people. Populist rhetorics also consist of hidden messages that with other words bend the truth in favor for the populist. This often occur together with empty threats against the opposition and lose promises to the citizens.[33]

3.3.1 Populist rhetorical frames

According to the American scholar George Lakoff, rhetorical frames are 'mental structures' that helps us organizing our ways of thinking.[34] Within political populist rhetorics, there are a few frames to use in order to structure and analyze populist rhetorics. *The Bearers of Truth* is a frame which refers to the populist's relation to the mainstream politician. Within this rhetorical frame, the populist actor argues that the ordinary politician is a 'naive coward' who refuses to work hard enough for the people, even though the existing problems are obvious. The mainstream actor is lying on behalf of the citizens, and the populist actor is the only one who speaks and understands the truth.[35] Another frame is *Reinstating Common Sense,* which refers to the "[…]disconnected professional politicians[…]" who have forgotten the real issues that trouble the real people. The professional politicians are too disconnected from the real world and do not care about it either. Instead of solving the people's issues in society, the professional politicians only cares about bureaucracy and lacks the down-to-earth and get-the-job-done personalities that the populist actor have according to this rhetorical frame.[36] Finally, the *Order Versus Chaos* is a rhetorical frame which is referring to rhetorics where populists claim that the mainstream politicians policies are contributing factors to the nation's chaos. Factors that harm the social order are discarded by the mainstream actors who actually contribute to the social mess.

---

[33] ibid., p. 85

[34] Lakoff 2004, p. 17

[35] Counterpoint 2014, pp. 15-17

[36] ibid., pp. 19-20

Therefore, the mainstream politician who never does anything progressive is to be blamed both for creating the chaos and also for remaining it. Since the populist actor is the only one who dares to speak up, and also the only one who knows the *real* people, the populist actor is the only one who can fix it.[37]

Within the same field, there are plenty of different rhetorical tricks which allow the message to sound more important, more threatening or more hopeful than the content actually tell. These rhetorical strategies are called rhetorical fallacies which are used to appeal to people's feelings and believes in order for the actor to appear as the one who speaks the truth.[38] Appealing to emotions such as fear, desperation, utopian wishes, accomplishment, trust etc. can be a useful motivator to make people agree with, understand and accept the political message. The emotions which the rhetorics appeal to do not have to be based on evidence or existing facts - the different rhetorical fallacies are basically ways of tricking the audience to believe in a certain way, based on emotional reactions connected to the message. Appealing to other things than emotions, such as traditions or normalities, is also useful since traditions and norms are so deeply rooted within us. Therefore, claiming that something should be a certain way because that is how 'it should be' can be an effective strategy for the political populist messages.[39]

---

[37] ibid., p. 20
[38] McCandless 2012
[39] Bennet 2017

3.4. Populism and the media

Populism is strongly connected to the media and vice versa. Populist actors and parties tend to be more dependent on the news media compared to the mainstream parties and politicians.[40] This, because the populist parties and actors are generally newer than the already established mainstream actors which gives the populist incentives to appear more, especially in commercial news contexts. Furthermore, the commercial news channels and newspapers want of course to sell numbers and be attractive to the people. Within populist parties and regarding populist leaders, more scandals tend to happen around these compared to the mainstream actors. Here, the commercial news organs see their chances to capitalize on headlines caused by populist actors which quite logically generates more publicity to the populists.[41] This extra publicity in the commercial news forums along with a globalized world where Twitter and such are excellent communication platforms, populism tend to grow. In addition to that, populism itself is also important to the media, something that Mazzoleni calls overlapping concepts.[42] Of course, the mainstream media still plays a big role for news reporting and headline-setting, but the internet media is the strongest boosting tool for the spreading of populism.[43]

Globalization and the developed technology has led to what political communication scholars call the mediatization of politics.[44] Since the arrival of the radio and further on the television, politics have moved deeper into our homes and become more and more mediated.[45] The old and limited political arena came to grow with the groundbreaking development of technology, and reached its largest boom with the internet. Today, the internet functions as a political arena, hence politics is more mediated today than ever before. So is therefore populism.[46]

---

[40] Mazzoleni 2014, p. 48
[41] Aalberg, de Vreese 2017, pp. 3-4
[42] Mazzoleni 2014, p. 45
[43] ibid., p. 45
[44] Strömbäck, Esser 2014 p. 11
[45] Thompson 1995, p. 28
[46] Mazzoleni 2014, p. 45

3.5.   Criticism to populism theories

Populism theories have often been criticized for being too widely described. With many different definitions and takes on populism, defining the phenomenon can be a rather difficult task. One type of criticism is that the theories on populism tend to generalize the populist actors as a homogenous group. This can be problematic since there are major differences between different actors.[47] Around the world, different populist actors have different ideologies, which can be a crucial dividing line in the outcome of populist acts.[48] Even though different populist actors have different opinions and ideologies, the majority of the research on populism presents the populist actors as a similar group. Another critique is that academic studies on populism also tend to generalize 'the people' when talking about the 'populist actor versus the people'. The same way that the populist actors tend to be generalized into a homogenous group, 'the people' are exposed to that risk too.

Moffitt argues that the way of understanding populism remains an open question.[49] Different scholars express different takes on the phenomenon which in some senses can be rather muddy. That is, some scholars argue that populism absolutely is an ideology meanwhile others firmly claim that it should be interpreted as a political strategy. Even scholars who agree with each other have a hard time conceptualizing the phenomenon which can generate blurry definitions of populism.[50] Nevertheless, it is of importance to study populism in order to participate in the process toward a clearer definition of the phenomenon. Furthermore, the risks of generalization is to be found within many other academic fields and theories. As long as there are different approaches to a subject, one single and united definition of a phenomenon can be troublesome to achieve. It is of importance to be aware of the known criticism of the subject, yet the only way to clarify the phenomenon is to study the theories and contribute to a bigger understanding of populism.

---

[47] Cranmer 2011, p. 288

[48] Moffitt 2017, p. 26

[49] Moffitt 2017, pp. 25-26

[50] ibid., p. 27

4.   Methodology

The idea analysis can have many different paths and alignments and it is the study's given topic and research question that determines what the idea analysis' aim of interest is.[51] The method for this thesis is to make a functional idea analysis on a selection of Trump's tweets. The theories on the functional idea analysis are drawn from Evert Vedung's book *Det rationella politiska samtalet* and from Ludvig Beckman's *Grundbok i Idéanalys*. The functional idea analysis seek to understand the functions of political texts and messages and how they can be interpreted in their context. It is therefore important to explore what the context of the message is and how previous events have contributed to publication of the political message. Accordingly to the research question, this study is interested in analyzing the functions of the tweets in order to explore what the possible strategies are behind them. Given that this study only will be looking at a total of six tweets, a functional idea analysis is best suited for this case, compared to a contextual idea analysis which requires more text material and is generally made on larger quantitive studies.

The functional idea analysis has an explanatory purpose, and sees the idea within the message as a product of the author's objective and strategical consideration.[52] What this study wants to achieve through a functional idea analysis, is the possible functions behind the selected tweets. This, so the research question can be answered through the methods of the functional idea analysis. The functional idea analysis has to be combined with a chosen theory which is connected to what the study wants to explore.[53] In the case of this study, theories on populism constitutes the chosen theories.

---

[51] Beckman 2005, p. 11
[52] Vedung 1977, pp. 18-19
[53] Vedung 1977, p. 10

The goal with a functional idea analysis can either be to describe, understand, explain or take a stand to a given material[54], in this case a selection of Trump's tweets. The aim of this study is to explore how the selected tweets can be understood in relations to theories on populism. In the The political messages in the selected tweets will be analyzed and compared to the ideas drawn from the theoretical framework in order to answer the research question: *How can Donald Trump's Twitter rhetorics in the selected tweets be understood in relation to populist theories?*

4.1.   Criticism to the functional idea analysis

The functional idea analysis has been criticized for being vague and sometimes misleading in what the purpose of the analysis is. Scholars have criticized the functional idea analysis for being too free or too loosely explained since its guidelines often are drawn by the author. The design of the analysis depends on what the study wants to explore, which has been one of the argument against the functional idea analysis. Furthermore, since the material in a functional idea analysis consists of less text than in other text-based studies, the functional idea analysis have been criticized for being shallow. Vedung argues that the functional idea analysis should be seen as a explanatory tool when analyzing political texts of less textual content and the rest of the framework is created by the author in relation to what the study is looking at.[55] It is important to be aware of this criticism, nevertheless I would argue that a functional idea analysis together with a strong and carefully explained theoretical framework, can offer important findings when exploring the reasons of why a political actor act in a certain way, or why he or she published a certain message.

---

[54] Beckman 2005, p. 14
[55] Vedung 1977, pp. 20-22

4.2.   Demarcations

Due to the limited size of this study, only a small selection of Trump's large archive of tweets could be chosen and analyzed. The problem with only analyzing a small selection of the tweets is that the study cannot be generalizing. This, because a study with a small selection of material tend to lack representativeness.[56] Therefore, the findings in these tweets cannot describe a general pattern or a consistent rhetorical strategy. This study wants to explore a selection and based on the findings, the door can open to future research on larger scales. The tweet selection will be motivated further down in this text.

Furthermore, it is important to mention that President Trump has two Twitter accounts. The official POTUS account is run by Trump's Director of Social Media, Dan Scavino, meanwhile Trump's other and way more used account is called @realDonaldTrump.[57] The latter is run by Trump himself and is the account of focus for this study. Trump has run the account since 2009, but this study will only focus on tweets that were published after Trump took office in January 2017. It is also of importance to mention that Twitter has plenty of fake-users, so called bots, which take the shape of a regular Twitter-user. It is a hard and almost impossible task to get around these bots and identify the amount of these, but since it is a common problem online we cannot do much about it. Since bots and fake users exist all over Twitter on a consistent basis, it is not considered a problem for this study.

---

[56] Teorell, Svensson 2007, p. 69
[57] Kentish 2017

4.3. Case selection

During his first 100 days as the U.S. President, Donald J. Trump stressed the importance of strict changes within policy topics such as taxation, job creation, immigration, refugees, media relations and healthcare.[58] Among these policy topics, Trump's signature issues regard the building of the border wall and major changes within the healthcare system.[59] Furthermore, Trump's debate with the news media is an ongoing dispute in which the President often accuses the press for being bias and fake in their news reporting, and has repeatedly argued that the media is bad for the country and the people.

This study will be looking at tweets regarding healthcare, the U.S. border wall and the media. Within every topic, two tweets will be explored. These three topic areas are chosen because they are considered being some of Trump's main policy issues. It is interesting to study what the rhetorical communication means look like within a selection of tweets that regard three policy topics that are of importance to Trump. The selection is thus based on tweets where Trump discusses the three mentioned policy topics. Among this selection, the President's least and most retweeted posts within each topic will be examined in order to see if the content is more populistic in the messages with the highest amount of retweets and vice versa. Again, this study cannot offer a generalizing conclusion, we are instead looking and the given cases and through the results, future research can elaborate a more generalizing analysis through larger research means. The reason why this study is not covering more than six tweets is because of the depth that is required for each and every analyze. The range of this thesis would not fit more tweets since every tweet has to be carefully elaborated and analyzed. Accordingly to the scope of this thesis, the study lacks generalization potential. Although the findings on these specific cases can open up possibilities for future research.

---

[58] BBC News 2017
[59] ibid 2017

That is, if this study can examine that a selection of Trump's tweets are communicated through political populist rhetorics, future research with larger conditions could apply this kind of study on a larger selection of tweets in order to reach possibilities to generalize. The goal with every study should according to Teorell and Svensson be to participate with intersubjectivity to future research.[60] So is the goal with this study.

5.0   Material

The material which this thesis is based on is mainly the selected tweets presented below. The tweets are selected through the existing search engine *Trump Twitter Archive* which is a free online archive of every published tweet by Trump.[61] The web archive codes every single tweet and matches the changes in Trump's Twitter activity in real time. *Trump Twitter Archive* is a recognized data tool and is used for political analysis in Business Insider, Washington Post, The Independent, USA Today and among scholars within quantitative policy studies.[62] Apart from Vedung's functional idea analysis method, the main focus of this thesis is the theories on populism as presented in the theory section. In the following analysis section, a functional idea analysis will be applied onto the selected tweets in order to see if similarities can be found between the content of the selected tweets and what the theory section said about political populism.

---

[60] Teorell, Svensson 2007, p. 54
[61] Trump Twitter Archive 2017
[62] Kiersz 2017

5.1. Tweets on Healthcare

• *If @RepMarkMeadows, @Jim_Jordan and @Raul_Labrador would get on board we would have both great healthcare and massive tax cuts & reform*   (March 30 2017, 7634 retweets)

• *If a new HealthCare Bill is not approved quickly, BAILOUTS for Insurance Companies and BAILOUTS for Members of Congress will end very soon!*   (July 29 2017, 29 290 retweets)

5.2. Tweets on the U.S./ Mexican Border Wall

• *The Wall is a very important tool in stopping drugs from pouring into our country and poisoning our youth (and many others)! If (…) the wall is not built, which it will be, the drug situation will NEVER be fixed the way it should be! #BuildTheWall*

(April 24 2017, 7916 retweets)

• *Big day planned on NATIONAL SECURITY tomorrow. Among many other things, we will build the wall!*   (January 24 2017, 52 826 retweets)

5.3. Tweets on The Media

• *New polls out today are very good considering that much of the media is FAKE and almost always negative. Would still beat Hillary in… (…) ...popular vote. ABC News/ Washington Post Poll (wrong big on election) said almost all stand by their vote on me & 53% said strong leader.*

(April 23 2017, 11 566 retweets)

• *The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!*   (February 17 2017, 52 284 retweets)

6.   Analysis

6.1.   Healthcare, Tweet #1

If @RepMarkMeadows, @Jim_Jordan and @Raul_Labrador would get on board we would have both great healthcare and massive tax cuts & reform   (7634 retweets)

In the first tweet, Trump refers to three fellow Republican politicians; Mark Meadows, Jim Jordan and Raul Labrador. The message states that Meadows, Jordan and Labrador are guilty of the bad healthcare situation, high taxes and reforms. Prior to the tweet, Meadows, Jordan and Labrador were in opposition to the new *American Health Care Act* (AHCA) which were meant to repel and replace Affordable Care Act (ACA), often referred to as Obamacare.[63] Their opposition resulted in cancelling the scheduled voting of the AHCA, and the bill could therefore not be passed.

This political message regards a personal attack on high-end politicians and caucus chairmen in Congress. The causality and previous context that led up to this message is in this case President Trump's previous dissatisfaction with ACA and the process with repealing and replacing the bill. Taken from its context, the actual content is rather hard to understand. 'Get on board' suggests that Meadows, Jordan and Labrador are actively working against the President and refuse to get on board. What *on board* actually means is not clear, but it suggests that it leads to 'great healthcare and massive tax cut and reform' Here, Trump choses to leave some crucial information outside the tweet and accuses three personal actors for stopping the country from having a better healthcare- and tax situation.

---

[63] Bryan 2017

Language manipulation is a common technique among populist rhetorics, where messages are bent and changed in order to appear in favor for the author of the political message.[64] As discussed in the theoretical section, political populist rhetorics are often based on convincing the public that the elite is not good for the common people, what Deiwiks calls 'The people versus the other'.[65] Trump suggests that Meadows, Jordan and Labrador are responsible for a bad healthcare situation which hurts the common people. He uses the word 'massive' when describing the size of the tax cuts and suggests that 'massive (…) reform' also would have taken place only if Meadows, Jordan and Labrador supported Trump's bill. What Coleman says about the populist's convincing process is here interesting and relevant. Coleman argues that populist rhetorics are trying to convince 'the people' to believe that the state authorities and elites are working against the people. Without the elites, the people would be better off and get their will through. The political populist rhetorics "[…]embody public fantasies and echo to disappointment, rage and quick-fix logic of the audiences that cheer them on."[66] In this tweet, Trump echoes to disappointment and blames the non-situation on his three fellow Republicans. Even if Meadows, Jordan and Labrador would have approved the bill, the final decision does not depend on them, although the opposite is suggested in the tweet.

The tweet is appealing to disappointment for the current policy situation, where the blame is put on three high-position congressmen. The political message suggests that as long as these three congressmen 'gets on board' (and thus stop working against the President), the situation for the American people would be better, with massive tax cuts, reforms and foremost the well-needed healthcare reform which would lead to 'Great healthcare'. Exactly how it would be great and for whom is left uncommented. Trump puts himself in the center as the people's mediator by explaining that he can offer great healthcare

---

[64] Coleman 2017, p. 84
[65] Deiwik 2009, p. 3
[66] Coleman 2017, p. 85

The function of this tweet is to, through a rather populist rhetorical way, express that these named politicians hinders the people from the new healthcare deal. What is interesting is that the tweet mainly regards the passing of the healthcare proposal and the problem with the non-support from Meadows, Jordan and Labrador. Nevertheless, the tweet's main focus seems to be the missed opportunity to 'massive tax cuts and reforms' which also would have followed by the passing of the bill. The fact that Trump blames specific individuals can be seen as a way of appearing as the 'good one' in the eyes of people. By appealing to the people as if they have lost the opportunity, Trump positions himself closer to 'the people' and further away from the 'corrupt elite', i.e. the mentioned congressmen who works against him.

6.2. Healthcare, Tweet #2

If a new HealthCare Bill is not approved quickly, BAILOUTS for Insurance Companies and BAILOUTS for Members of Congress will end very soon!   (29 290 retweets)

This second tweet on healthcare is the one that got the most retweets within its policy category. Here, Trump continues the arguing regarding the passing of the new healthcare bill. The verbal expression is here more short and concise and signals for an urging solution. Trump suggests that bailouts are payed to insurance companies and to members of Congress, and that these bailouts will stop if the new healthcare plan (again, the AHCA) is not approved and passed in Congress.

In order to understand what the function of this tweet is, we have to give a short background of the context. Trump is here meeting the failed attempt of getting the AHCA bill passed, by threatening various actors to remove their financial aid if these actors do not approve the new healthcare bill 'quickly'. What the content actually refers to is the so called CSR, the *Cost Sharing Reductions Subsidy* which are financial subsidies that go out mainly to insurance companies.[67] These CSR subsidies are targeted to help and support low-income citizens, mainly ACA enrollees.[68] What Trump does in this tweet is to threaten the opposition by clarifying that he will end these subsidies 'very soon' if the new healthcare bill is not approved. Again, Trump is leaving out major details in this tweet. In order to understand the tweet's function, contextual research is necessary. President Trump chooses to re-label the CRS subsidy to 'Bailouts', which is an economic term that is used to describe how a bankrupt financial institution receives monetary aid from the government. If the insurance companies that provide ACA were on the edge of bankruptcy, and the government provided monetary aid in order to keep the insurance companies alive and away from the bankruptcy, that would be a perfect example of a bailout. Although here, that is not the case since the actual idea of the CRS is to provide insurance companies with subsidies so they can provide ACA to low-income citizens.

---

[67] Congressional Budget Office, 2017
[68] Kliff 2017

Under ACA, the insurers have to give reimbursements to ACA enrollees, and the CRS is the government's cover for these reimbursements which is not the same thing as bailouts.[69] What is labeled as a healthcare issue shifts the light from the actual issue to empty threats of punishment and monetary sanctions to insurers and members of Congress. Ironically, the so called bailouts that will 'end very soon' are not, as explained, bailouts but financial subsidies. If Trump were to remove the CRS, the result would possibly be higher insurance premiums from the insurers as a compensation for the missing CRS aid.[70]

It seems like the function of this tweet is to twist the truth in a way so the general people, i.e. the Twitter followers and the media consumers, only see half of the issue. Trump exchanges the crucial word *CRS* to *Bailouts,* which signals that the President's Office financially supports bankrupt insurance companies and economically failing Congress members. Trump claims that financial penalties are awaiting for everyone who does not approve of the proposed healthcare act. The tweet does not regard solutions on how the bill would be passed, nor does the President specify what the mentioned bailouts regard. The research tells us that the bailouts do not regard anything since they in this case simply don't exist. Although the meaning of *bailouts* is not lightyears away from the meaning of the *CRS* subsidy, but in this context the choice of word suggests something way different. The rhetorical technique of this tweet is to change the content into something else so the focus of the issue shifts. It can be interpreted as a rhetorical way of changing a word just so much so the reader might still think that the content of the message is true. This can be seen as a manipulation of the language, which is common within populist rhetorics.[71] The tweet solely consists of rhetorical threats, both to insurance companies and also members of Congress. Trump takes a clear stand against actors such as insurance companies and decision makers at Capitol Hill, and suggests monetary punishments on these actors if they do not approve of the healthcare bill.

---

[69] Managan 2017
[70] Kliff 2017
[71] Heradstveit, Bjørgo 1996, p. 97

6.3.   The Border Wall, Tweet #1

The Wall is a very important tool in stopping drugs from pouring into our country and poisoning our youth (and many others)! If (…) the wall is not built, which it will be, the drug situation will NEVER be fixed the way it should be! #BuildTheWall   (7916 retweets)

As stated, this tweet refers to the building of the United States/ Mexican border wall. This tweet consists of two posts, both published at the same time with almost the same amount of retweets (7916 and 8100) and should therefore be seen as one post.

The building of the wall has been one of Trump's most famous, loud and attentive policy issues. Therefore, explaining the context of this tweet is not as important as for the previous ones, given that the wall-discussion almost has become Trump's gimmick ever since his campaigning started. Although in a speech prior to this tweet, Trump expressed that the wall is necessary in order to "[…]prevent people being hit on the head with sacks of drugs."[72] Hence the issue had been a rather debated and sensitive one prior to the publishing of this tweet. In the tweet, Trump's rhetoric is clear and short. The message appeal to fear, which is a rhetorical strategy that can be used in order to make the content of the message extra important.[73] Few people want to live in fear, or realize that a decision (or in this case the lack of a decision) can cause even more fear. Therefore, appealing to fear is considered to be a rather powerful, rhetorical way to make people listen and buy the presented arguments.[74] Even though the tweet lacks evidence for the claimed situation, appealing to fear can be so powerful that the receiver of the message never even bother questioning the legitimacy of the argument. The function of this tweet seems therefore to be to appeal to fear by saying that the bad situation will get worse unless something is done fast.

---

[72] Baynes 2017
[73] Brinton 1988, p. 215
[74] ibid., p. 215

25

By claiming that 'the drug situation' never will be fixed 'the way it should be', Trump's message suggests that himself as the Nation's leader knows what way the drug situation should be fixed. Given that the tweet is about the building of the border wall, the receiver of the message can easily interpret that the border wall should be seen as the mentioned solution of the drug situation. Here, the 'drug situation' suggests that there is a specific ongoing situation in the United States, where drugs flow and constantly threaten the country. Trump does not mention what specific situation the tweet aims at, but the message signals that the situation is bad.

This is an example of the rhetorical frame *Order Versus Chaos* as discussed in the theoretical section. As Trump appeals to fear, the rhetorical frame is built on a dramatic description of a chaotic situation. By expressing his dissatisfaction regarding the fact that the wall yet is not built, Trump suggests that order has to be reinstated. When promising that the wall *will* be built, Trump refers to himself as the one who will fix the obvious problem. Finally, what Coleman says about replacing well-formulated rhetorics with 'chantable slogans' is applicable to the tweet's final touch, which is the chantable hashtag exhortation to build the wall.

6.4.   The Border Wall, Tweet #2

Big day planned on NATIONAL SECURITY tomorrow. Among many other things, we will build the wall!   (52 826 retweets)

This tweet consists of hints for an exciting future that holds plenty of solutions for the national security. Trump is appealing to excitement and uses positive and promising rhetorics. Given that this tweet was posted just days after his inauguration, Mr. Trump is cheering the future plans without really mentioning what is planned for the national security agenda. Since Trump's campaign started, one of his main issues has been the border wall. The context of this tweet is thus strongly connected to Trump's presidency and can be seen as a promising message to his supporters. The function of this tweet is therefore to signal that great things are ahead as a payoff for the ones who elected Trump, and can therefore be seen as an example of appealing to wishful thinking. Within this fallacy, the choice of rhetorics deliver the political message with a feeling of a future solution to an existing issue. For his supporters and for Trump himself, the desire of building the wall seems in this case bigger than the actual facts. Replacing concrete evidence for the truthfulness of the message with rhetorics built on hope and desire, people tend to evaluate and interpret the message differently based on the excitement and desire for the results.[75]

By stating that the wall will be built 'among many other things', the content is left very open and suggests that great plans are awaiting the nation. This tweet's function seems to be celebratory and wishful-thinking. Through simple words and without any specific direction of the agenda, Trump delivers a message regarding a future, safe America with a strong border control for increased security. The message suggests that the nation will be safe when the wall is built and that Trump will be leading the process of its construction. Hence Trump implies that he will assure safety and has a lot of hopeful plans for national security.

---

[75] Andolina 2002, p. 139

6.5.   The Media, Tweet #1

New polls out today are very good considering that much of the media is FAKE and almost always negative. Would still beat Hillary in… (…) …popular vote. ABC News/ Washington Post Poll (wrong big on election) said almost all stand by their vote on me & 53% said strong leader.

<div align="right">(11 566 retweets)</div>

This tweet consists of two separate posts that follows each other and had to be separated due to Twitter's character limit. The two tweets have almost the same amount of retweets (11556 and 11777) and since they belong together they should be considered as one tweet. I will therefore refer to the tweets as one tweet.

Here, Trump is appealing to anger and directs it toward the media in general, and furthermore directly towards ABC News and Washington Post. The anger that is presented is used to make people agree with Trump over the bad media situation. Even if the content does not offer evidential proof such as links to the polls or specified facts that support the argument, the anger toward the media is seen as a substitute for evidence based arguments. The statement that 'Much of the media is fake and almost always negative' is a vague definition of the media situation and suggests that the media should be seen as a lying and untrusted source of information which through all the lies and fake news is harmful to society.

Trump is also using the fallacy of appealing to accomplishment, which is a rhetorical fallacy that is used for protecting the content from criticism and shift the light from the actual facts in favor for great accomplishments made by the message's author. That is, instead of presenting the truth for making the argument valid, Trump is appealing to his own accomplishments in order to make the arguments sound reasonable.[76] Trump's message regards new polls that show his popularity and the message's main function seems to be to prove how successful and popular Trump is according to the people.

---

[76] Bennet 2017

At the same time, this happens on behalf of criticizing the media. Trump's strategies seem to be a mix of appealing to anger against the media, he appeals to accomplishment in order to lift himself and protect the arguments from criticism and he is also using rhetorics within the frame of Reinstating Common Sense. Trump claims that 'almost all stand by their vote on me' which strengthen his arguments that he is the ideal leader who knows what the people want. And what they want is apparently not Clinton. By arguing that he 'would still beat Hillary in popular vote', Trump refers to himself as a better option which also is backed up by the people through the mentioned polls. Although Trump did lose the popular vote against Clinton in the 2016 election.

The argument that 'almost all stand by their vote on me & 53% said strong leader' is also vague and unspecific since there is no evidence in the message of the presented facts. In fact, actual polls which Trump is referring to show that the President's approval ratings are the lowest rates since 1945.[77] Although the study shows that 96% of those who voted for Trump stand by their choice, and among these, 53% do believe that Trump is a strong leader. But all in all, the study shows that six in 10 'doubt his honesty and trustworthiness' and 58% of the population disapprove with Trump's presidency.[78] These numbers that are drawn from the mentioned poll suggests that the public's view on the President disagree with Trump's statement in this current tweet. Therefore, his choice of rhetorics in this post can be interpreted as cherrypicking tactics where the conclusion of the poll is left outside the tweet. Even though the strategy of leaving information outside for personal gains can be linked to populist rhetorical strategies, it is hardly unique to theories on populism.

---

[77] Langer 2017
[78] Savransky 2017

6.6.   The Media, Tweet #2

The FAKE NEWS media (failing @nytimes, @NBCNews, @ABC, @CBS, @CNN) is not my enemy, it is the enemy of the American People!

<div align="right">(52 284 retweets)</div>

To put this tweet in its context, Trump's relation to the media has been debated hundreds of times and has been one of the President's main attributes. The function of this tweet seems to be to warn the American people for the fake news media which is referred to as the people's enemy. This tweet could be seen as a political message that tries to separate the American people from the fake news media since they are the enemy of the people.

Trump is using the rhetorical frame of *The Bearers of Truth.* Since the President claims that five of the country's largest news organs are 'failing' and 'fake', Trump suggests that he is the actual truth which the people should rely upon instead of the mentioned news channels. The tweet claims that the powerful media actor is lying on behalf of the nation's people which makes them the people's enemy. Trump portrays himself as the mediator of truth and takes a stand for the people who will get fooled by the fake news. Furthermore, Trump claims that these media organs are not *his* enemies but the people's, which also can be seen as a populist strategy. As Coleman explained it, one of the main strategies within populist rhetorics is to convince the people that decision makers and multipliers are working against the good will of the people. On the other side stands the strong leader who cares about the people and protects them from the lying and powerful actors. What Cranmer says about thick populism and furthermore an anti-establishment approach is applicable to this case. The thick populism refers to exclusion rhetorics and a negative attitude toward crucial core actors in our society such as the governing elite and the news media. In this tweet, Trump slams the news media, both in general and also specifically by directing the message to the mentioned news organs and by calling them 'the enemy of the American people'.

'The (failing) fake news media' is a vague description of the actual problem that Trump is referring to. The message lacks any constructive argument that strengthen the President's message. Trump is appealing to trust, which is a rhetorical fallacy where the main argument is that someone or something is trustworthy or untrustworthy and based on the decision of the level of trust, any "[…]information from that source must be true or false, respectively."[79] Since Trump claims that the news media is fake and failing, everything that is reported from them must thus be false and untrustworthy and is therefore a threat to the American people.

---

[79] Bennet 2017

7. Discussion

In this concluding part, the findings in the analysis section will be discussed in relation to political populist theories. In order to navigate clearly through the material, the findings in each policy issue from the Twitter material are summarized and put in relation to what has been discussed on political populism in the theoretical section.
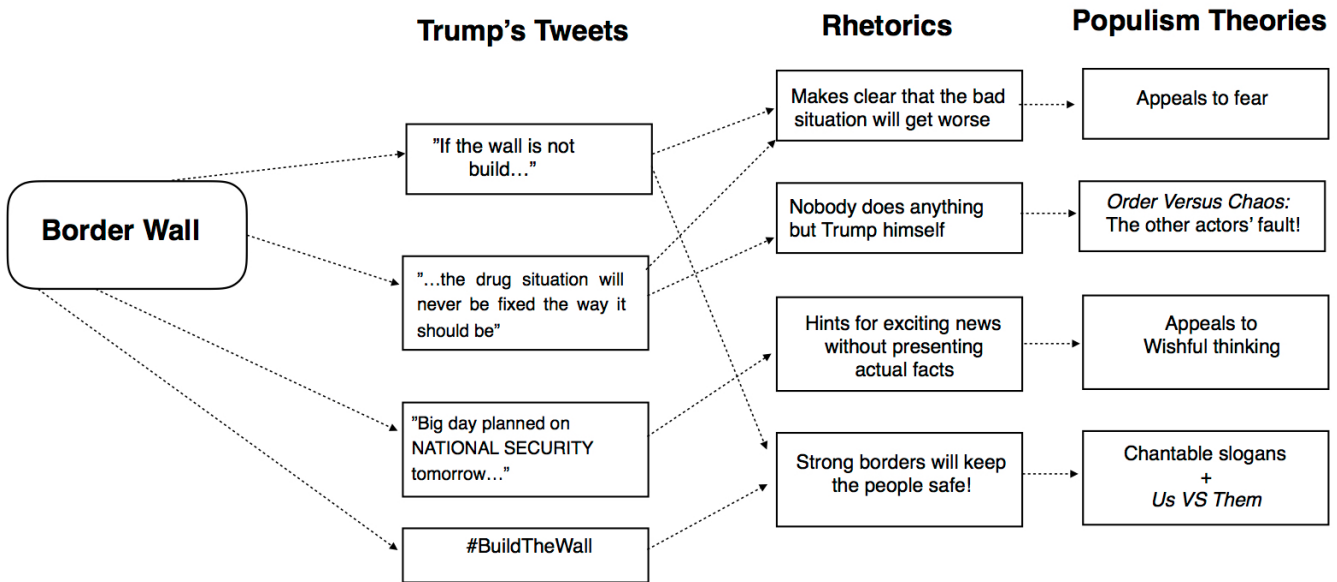
7.1.   Summarizing Healthcare
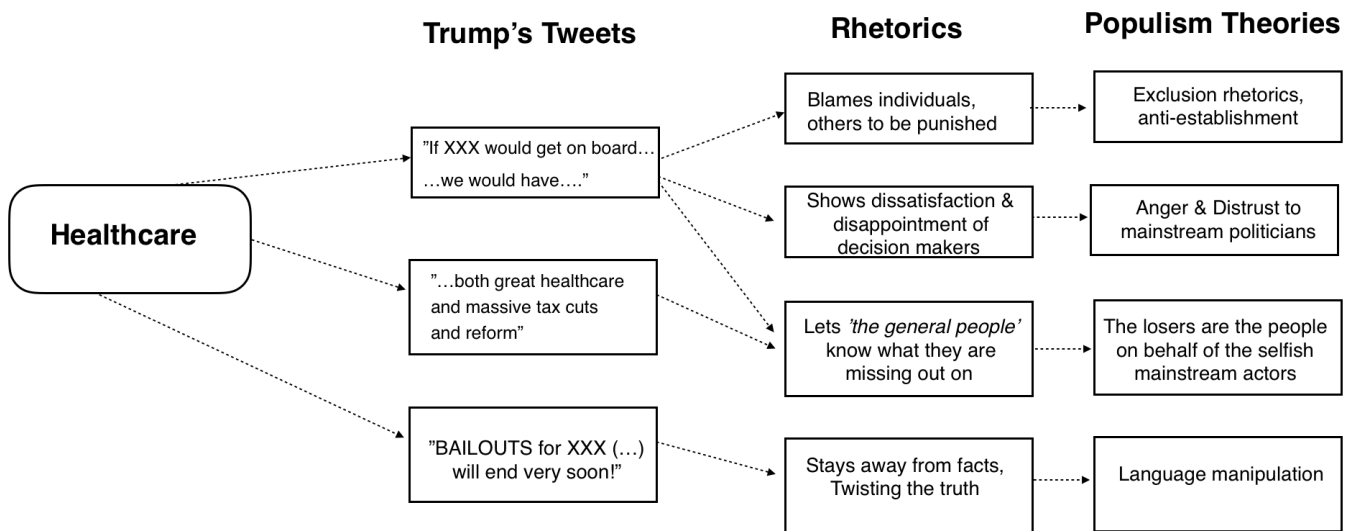
Within this first policy issue, Trump's use of rhetorics seems to blame other actors for the healthcare situation. In both tweets, the President's focus seems to be to smear and blame other establishment actors such as senior politicians, Congress members and insurance companies for their non-approval of the new healthcare bill. Furthermore, Trump directs threats to these actors by stating that their monetary subvention will 'end very soon' if they do not approve of the new healthcare bill. Trump is using exclusion rhetorics, expresses his anger toward mainstream political actors and threatens to punish politicians and insurance companies with cancelation of bailouts (that are not bailouts but government financial subsidies).

What Trump does is to cover facts with a populist rhetoric where the accusations of other actors take the light away from the issue. Trump takes a clear stand away from the mainstream actors and positions himself on the people's side by expressing his frustration, disappointment and dissatisfaction over the healthcare situation and blames it on others who work against him and hence against the American people.

7.2. Summarizing The Border Wall

Trump's Tweets

- Border Wall
- "If the wall is not build…"
- "…the drug situation will never be fixed the way it should be"
- "Big day planned on NATIONAL SECURITY tomorrow…"
- #BuildTheWall

Rhetorics

- Makes clear that the bad situation will get worse
- Nobody does anything but Trump himself
- Hints for exciting news without presenting actual facts
- Strong borders will keep the people safe!

Populism Theories

- Appeals to fear
- *Order Versus Chaos: The other actors' fault!*
- Appeals to Wishful thinking
- Chantable slogans + *Us VS Them*

Within the tweets on the Border wall, the rhetorics signal a mix of giving the American people a feeling of hope for the future of national security and at the same time frighten the citizens by letting them know that the drug situation never will be solved unless Trump does something about it. Trump is appealing both to fear and wishful thinking in order to appear as the people's voice. By stating that 'the drug situation' has to be fixed 'the way it should be', Trump suggests that he knows how to solve the problem, although without facts or details regarding the wall. Trump promises that he will build the wall which signals that he will bring back order from the chaos created by previous decision makers (who yet has not built the wall).

Through his rhetorics, the President claims that the solution of the drug situation solely depends on the building of the wall which is a populist approach to the problem: The lack of the wall harms the American social order and facilitates the smuggling of drugs from Mexico which is dangerous for the American people.

7.3. Summarizing The Media
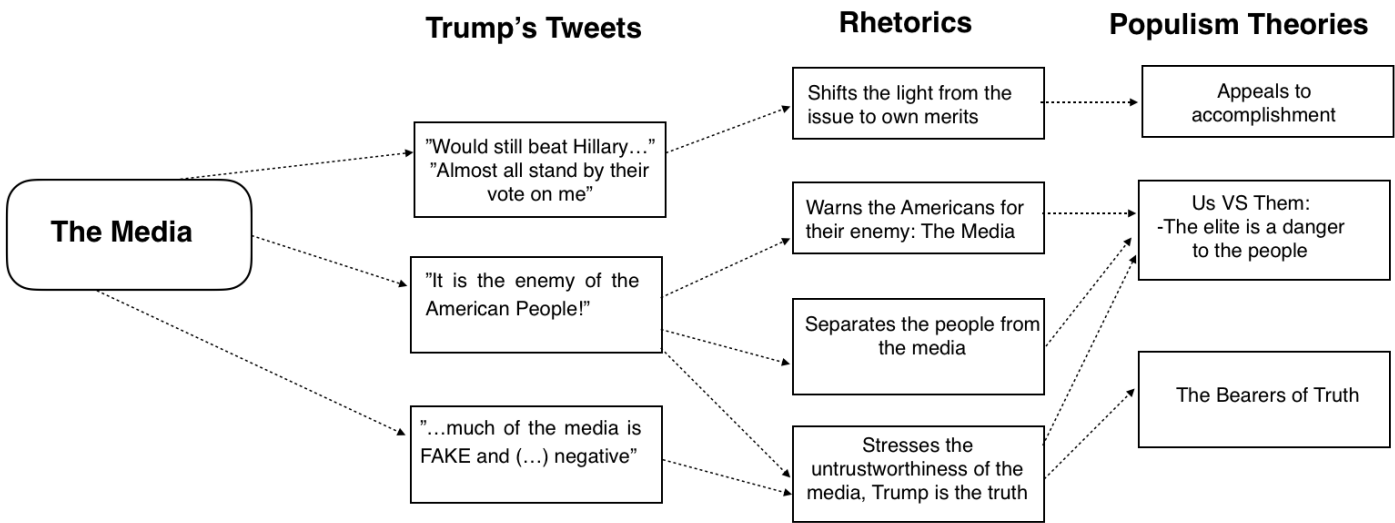
In the final tweets, Trump is very open about his distrust for the media and his thoughts on their credibility. He attacks the media both in general but also very specific. Generalization is a crucial pillar within populism, and in these tweets that is exactly what Trump is doing, yet he also blames certain given actors and shifts from attacking their trustworthiness to appealing to his own accomplishments. Trump brags about his popularity among the people and refers to the polls without staying to the facts.

The media organs are being smeared and are accused for being fake and failing. The messages suggest that the fake and corrupt elite media is bad for the people since they are working against Trump in order to cover the truth about his (actual) popularity. Since they are fake and failing, the are the people's enemy. By calling the media 'the enemy of the American people', Trump separates the people from crucial functions of the society which is a core strategy for populists, especially within thick populism[80] as discussed in the theoretical framework section.

---

[80] Cranmer 2011, p. 286

8.   Concluding remarks

In accordance with the research question; *Through a selection of The President's tweets: How can Donald Trump's Twitter rhetorics in the selected tweets be understood in relation to populist theories?*   - through a functional idea analysis on the selected tweets, we have found that Trump is communicating through populist rhetorics in order to angel issues toward his own advantage, not seldom on behalf of the truth. As mentioned, the functional idea analysis wants to explore the functions of the political message and where the ideas come from, that is, the context from which the message come up from. As seen in this selection of tweets, Trump is mainly criticizing other actors of the establishment and blames them for the regarding situation. At the same time, he takes a stand for the people who often are presented as the victims for the mainstream actors' lack of leadership and decision making. His rhetorical means within these six tweets are therefore to appear as the bridge in the gap between the victimized people and the evil elite that works against the people and thus the President. One major pillar within populist theories is as discussed the separation of the people and the elite which is based on the myth of evil and corrupt elite and the suffering people.[81]

Through a functional idea analysis on which theories on political populism have been applied, we can understand the bigger picture of the message through its context. According to the hypothesis presented in the introduction, the assumption was to find the most populistic message in the tweet that had the most retweets and vice versa. So was not the case. No matter the amount of retweets of the message, the main rhetorical style in these selected tweets seems to be to blame other actors for their non-actions that happen on behalf of the American people. Based on this assortment, it does not seem like Trump has different rhetorical techniques depending on the policy issue as assumed in the beginning. The rhetorical style is similar within each topic and focuses mainly on exclusion rhetorics and anti-establishment approaches which are crucial characteristics for political populism.

---

[81] Coleman 2017, p. 84

With over 40 million followers, Trump has a large power to communicate his populism which risk to take place on behalf of the presidency's reputation and trustworthiness. Surely, Twitter is a platform for thoughts and criticism, but when the author is the President of the United States it signals that he does not follow presidential ethical manners, nor will he try to. He has not abandoned his earlier Twitter style prior to his presidency which goes along with the President's tweet from July 2017, saying that *"My use of social media is not Presidential - it's MODERN DAY PRESIDENTIAL. Make America Great Again!"*[82]

Among these tweets, the President of the United States continually fights the establishment and crucial actors within society. By calling the free press 'the enemy of the American people', democratic values are being questioned. When empty treats of monetary sanctions are handed out without either correct facts or even the authority of doing so, the presidency can come out as questionable and again, democratic values are somewhat twisted. A President who actively uses populist rhetorics as communication style in his political messages on behalf of both the citizens and the elected mainstream actors, and on behalf of constitutional protected rights, could be a challenge to a democratic system.[83] When rights and authorities are smeared by the political leader who (direct and indirect) wants to separate the people from some crucial functions of the state, and furthermore expressed through accusatory rhetorics where the people are told not to trust and support some certain authorities and actors, populism as a political style can violate the democracy and harm the status quo as argued in the discussion section.

---

[82] Tweet @realRonaldTrump, July 1, 2017
[83] Reineman et al. 2017, p. 24

8.1. Final comment

Populist messages that are strategized through populist rhetorics and convincing methods with rhetorical fallacies, which are communicated to millions of people through Twitter, can through this point of view be seen as possible violation of some of the American political rights. This has been seen a few times during the year of 2017 when Trump has banned certain nationalities for entering the U.S., which was a heavily tweeted issue, or when President Trump through Twitter started the kneeling debate regarding players in the National Football League. The latter event grew to a big debate which has been seen upon as an event that separated people based on race and religion, in which the President encouraged the nation to boycott the opposition in the debate.[84]

As a reminding final remark it is important to stress that this is a small study on a very small selection of Trump's tweets, and should therefore not be seen as a generalizing study. The findings here answers the research question for the selected tweets only, and shall not be seen as a conclusion that tries to give an analysis on the rest of Trump's twitter communication. Although as mentioned, that is not the aim of this study. The aim has been to explore how these selected tweets can be understood in relation to populist theories. Through a functional idea analysis the messages have been analyzed in relation to their contexts, and through the analysis section we have found that the rhetorics in these six tweets have strong connections to populist theories and seem to follow the same communicative style. Nevertheless, hopefully this study can contribute to more knowledge on populist rhetorical means. Regarding future research, through a quantitive study in a larger extent, the same analysis can be made on a larger selection in order to achieve generalizing findings.

---

[84] James 2017

9.   Bibliography

Aalberg, Toril, de Vreese, Claes H. (2017). *Chapter 1: Comprehending populist political communication* in
Aalberg, Toril, Esser, Frank, Reinemann, Carsten, Strömbäck, Jesper & Vreese, Claes Holger de
(red.) (2017). *Populist political communication in Europe*. New York, NY: Routledge

Andolina, Michael. (2002). *Practical Guide to Critical Thinking,* Cengage Learning.

BBC News (2017). *First 100 days: Where President Trump stands on key issues*
Published: July 6, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018
http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/election-us-2016-37468751

Beckman, Ludvig (2005). *Grundbok i idéanalys: det kritiska studiet av politiska texter och idéer.*
Stockholm: Santérus,

Bennet, Robert (2017). *Appeal to Accomplishment, Appeal to Trust and Appeal to Fear* in
Logically Fallacious   Accessed: January 2, 2018
https://www.logicallyfallacious.com/tools/lp/Bo/LogicalFallacies/185/The-Fallacies-Appeal-To

Berger, Arielle (2016). *Data Scientist: There's an easy way to tell if one of Trump's tweets came from him or
his campaign*   Published: August 16, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018
http://www.businessinsider.com/realdonaldtrump-data-suggests-donald-trump-tweets-difference-android-
iphone-twitter-2016-8?r=US&IR=T&IR=T

Brinton, A. (1988). *Pathos and the "Appeal to Emotion": An Aristotelian Analysis.*
History of Philosophy Quarterly, 5(3), 215. https://www.jstor.org/stable/27743856?
seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Bryan, Bob (2017). *Trump directly attacks Freedom Caucus members on Twitter over healthcare battle*
Published: March 30, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018
http://nordic.businessinsider.com/trump-mark-meadows-jim-jordan-raul-labrador-twitter-2017-3

Coleman, Stephen (2017). *Can the internet strengthen democracy?*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press

Congressional Budget Office (2017). The Effects of Terminating Payments for Cost-Sharing Reductions
Published: August 15, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018 https://www.cbo.gov/publication/53009

CounterPoint (2014). *Responding to Populist Rhetoric*

       Accessed: January 2, 2018   http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/2.0/uk

Deiwik, Christa (2009). *Populism*   ETH Zurich | International Conflict Research

       Accessed: January 2, 2018, http://www.livingreviews.org/lrd-2009-3

Enli, Gunn Sara, Skogerbø, Eli (2013) *Personalized Campaigns in Party-centered Politics*, *Information,*

       Communication & Society, (16:5, 757-774) Published: April 2, 2013 Accessed: January 2, 2018

 https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2013.782330

Heradstveit, Daniel & Bjørgo, Tore (1996). *Politisk kommunikation: introduktion till semiotik och retorik.*

       Lund: Studentlitteratur

James, Samuel D (2017). *I don't agree with Kaepernick, but I'm deeply concerned over Trump's threats to*

       religious freedom   Published: September 26, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018

 https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/acts-of-faith/wp/2017/09/26/i-dont-agree-with-kaepernick-but-im-deeply-concerned-over-trumps-threats-to-religious-freedom/?utm_term=.b683f7e3d491

Kentish, Ben (2017). *The President's official tweets are now written by a man who regularly promotes fake*

       stories on Twitter   Published: January 22, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018

       http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/americas/donald-trump-twitter-potus-account-fake-news-dan-scavino-white-house-a7540266.html

Kiersz, Andy (2017). *13 charts reveal Donald Trump's Twitter habits — from his favorite topics to time of*

       day   Published: July 14, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018 http://nordic.businessinsider.com/president-trump-twitter-by-subject-2017-7?r=US&IR=T

Kliff, Sarah (2017). *Trump's Twitter threat to end Obamacare "bailouts," explained*

       Published: July 31, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018 https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2017/7/31/16068092/trump-tweets-obamacare-bailouts

Lakoff, George (2004). *Don't think of an elephant!: know your values and frame the debate : The essential*

guide for progressives.   White River Junction, Vt.: Chelsea Green Pub. Co.

Langer, Gary (2017). *President Trump at 100 days: No honeymoon but no regrets (POLL)*

       Published: April 23, 2017 Accessed: January 2, 2018 http://abcnews.go.com/Politics/president-trump-100-days-honeymoon-regrets-poll/story?id=46943338

Lawson, Gordon (2016). *Chapter 2: The Rise of Modern Globalization* in Baylis, John, Smith, Steve & Owens, Patricia (red.) (2016). *The globalization of world politics: an introduction to international relations*. 7., [rev.] uppl. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Managan, Dan (2017) *Trump is wrong — the government wasn't giving Obamacare insurers a 'bailout'* Published: October 10, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018   https://www.cnbc.com/ 2017/10/18/trump-is-wrong-obamacare-insurers-werent-getting-a-bailout.html

Mazzoleni, Gianpietro (2014). *Chapter 3: Mediatization and political populism* in Esser, Frank & Strömbäck, Jesper (red.), *Mediatization of politics: understanding the transformation of Western democracies,* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2014

McCandless, David (2012). Appeal to Emotion: *Rhetological Fallacies: Errors and Manipulation of Rhetoric and Logical Thinking.* Accessed: January 2, http://www.informationisbeautiful.net/ visualizations/rhetological-fallacies/

Moffitt, Benjamin (2016). *The global rise of populism: performance, political style, and representation* Stanford, California: Stanford University Press

Mudde, Cas (2004).   *The Populist Zeitgeist*   Accessed: January 2, 2018 Government and Opposition Ltd 2004, Published by Blackwell Publishing, http://politiki.bg/ downloads/261071628/popzeitgeist.pdf

Panizza, Francisco (red.) (2005). Populism and the mirror of democracy. London: Verso

Reinemann, Carsten, Aalberg, Toril, Esser, Frank, Strömbäck, Jesper, de Vreese, Claes H. (2014). Chapter 2: *Populist Political Communication in* Esser, Frank & Strömbäck, Jesper (red.), *Mediatization of politics: understanding the transformation of Western democracies,* Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2014

Savransky, Rebecca (2017). *Poll: Nearly all who supported Trump in election say it was right thing to do* Published: March 23, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018 http://thehill.com/homenews/ administration/poll-trump-voters-dont-regret-decision

Shils, Edward A. (1956). *The torment of secrecy: the background and consequences of American security policies.* Glencoe, Ill.: The Free press

Teorell, Jan & Svensson, Torsten (2007). *Att fråga och att svara: samhällsvetenskaplig metod.* 1. uppl. Stockholm: Liber

Thompson, John B. (1995). *The media and modernity: a social theory of the media.*
Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press

Trump, Donald J. (2017). Tweet from July 1, 2017   (Tweet @realRonaldTrump)
Accessed: January 2, 2018   https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/881281755017355264

Trump Twitter Archive (2017).   Accessed: January 2, 2017 http://www.trumptwitterarchive.com/archive

Vedung, Evert (1977). *Det rationella politiska samtalet: hur politiska budskap tolkas, ordnas och prövas.*
Stockholm: Aldus/Bonnier

Weiler, Michael & Pearce, W. Barnett (2006). (red.), *Reagan and Public Discourse in America,* 1. paperback
ed., The University of Alabama Press, Tuscaloosa, 2006

Weyland, Kurt (2001) *Clarifying a Contested Concept: Populism in the Study of Latin American Politics;*
Vol. 34, No. 1 (Oct., 2001), pp. 1-22: Comparative Politics, Ph.D. Programs in Political Science,
City University of New York: Accessed: January 2, 2018 https://www.jstor.org/stable/
422412?seq=1#page_scan_tab_contents

Worsley, Peter. (1969). *The Concept of Populism* in *Populism - Its Meanings and National Characteristic*s,
edited by G. Ionescu and E. Gellner. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson

Gidron, Noam, Bonikowski, Bart (2013). *Varieties of Populism: Literature Review and Research Agenda*
Weatherhead Center for International Affairs at Harvard University
Published: 2013   Accessed:January 22, 2018
https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/gidron_bonikowski_populismlitreview_2013.pdf

9.1 Links to the tweets:

Healthcare

1)   https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/847559239149158401

   Published: Mars 30, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018

2)   https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/891334415347060736

   Published: Mars 30, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018

The U.S./Mexican Border wall

1)   https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/856531163799859201

   Published: April 24, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018

2)   https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/824083821889015809

   Published: January 24, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018

The Media

1)   https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/856233279841849344

   Published: April 23, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018

2)   https://twitter.com/realdonaldtrump/status/832708293516632065

   Published: February 17, 2017   Accessed: January 2, 2018