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**Public Diplomacy in times of crisis: A closer look at
Sweden's governmental communication and mass media
frames during the coronavirus pandemic**

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Abstract

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Public diplomacy is an important concept in the literature of strategic communication. It is the one that allows governments around the world to promote a positive image about their country and increase their country's reputation. However, during times of crisis, especially a health crisis, public diplomacy of a country experiences implications created by the frames international media uses to depict the country. This study aims to understand how the Swedish Government frames their communication during the coronavirus (Covid-19) first two months of the crisis and how the United Kingdom media outlets then framed Sweden. The study adopts the theory of framing together with Entman's cascading model to research how each actor framed the first two months of the coronavirus pandemic. Swedish governmental press releases and UK news articles are analysed with the help of qualitative content analysis method. Results show that the Swedish government framed their communication in a way to show their measures and provide information and advice to their public. On the other hand, UK media framed Sweden as a country whose strategy was questioned, showing the conflict surrounding their response strategy. The discrepancy in the frames suggests different implications for the public diplomacy between both countries that are further discussed in the research.

Keywords: public diplomacy, framing theory, crisis communication, risk communication, health crisis, coronavirus pandemic, Sweden, UK, Cascading Model, Covid-19

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Without their support, I would not have gotten here. Thank you from deep down my heart!

1.Introduction

One of the most important social, political, economic and environmental forces that drives change more quickly than any other phenomenon is crises. They have the potential of doing great harm and spreading systematic disruption, but also creating constructive change, growth and renewal. Crises can also reshape institutions, create shifts in demographics and populations, while undermining economic stability and changing widely held beliefs (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Coombs (2011) defines crisis as *“the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders and can seriously impact an organisation’s performance and generate negative outcomes”* (p.2). Governments, as public organisations, can also experience crises, such as health disasters or terrorist attacks (Vettenranta, 2015), together with the people that will usually turn to them for leadership, protection, guidance and a return to stability (Liu et al., 2019).

Among the crises that have caused enormous negative impacts on health, economics and national and global security are disease outbreaks and pandemic related crises (Qiu et al., 2018). These can be described as transboundary crises that threaten the functioning of multiple, life-sustaining systems, functions or infrastructures and the causes of failure or courses of redress remain unclear (Boin, 2009). Such a health crisis knows no geographical or functional boundaries. It threatens multiple cities, countries and continents, as well as the society: health system, security or travel and tourism globally (Andrew et al., 2018). *“A transboundary crisis has no, or at least not one, Ground Zero”* (Boin, 2009, p. 368), meaning that there is no clear direction of where the crisis is headed towards, who owns it or how much time it is going to last. Therefore, it can impose great challenges to governments all around the world that want to prevent infectious diseases and preserve life (Ou et al, 2014; Qiu et al., 2018).

Challenges such as reputational damage, as publics start questioning the legitimacy of response agencies (Andrew et al., 2018), or, failing to meet the public's expectations and jeopardising its own credibility in the pandemic plan (Quigley et al., 2016). As such, the way in which the governments can contain and handle pandemic crises is through risk communication as shown by previous studies (see for example: Andrew et al., 2018; Boholm, 2019; Holmes et al., 2009; Ou et al., 2014; Parmet & Sinha, 2017; Petridou et al., 2019; Qiu et al., 2018). These studies

have analysed what factors help governments communicate better during times of pandemics, also seen as risk situations (Andrew et al., 2018; Boholm, 2019; Ou et al., 2014) and what type of strategies are best for governments to use when communicating risks to the society (Holmes et al., 2009; Qiu et al., 2018; Parmet & Sinha, 2017; Petridou et al., 2019). Therefore, risk communication is essential for saving lives and is crucial in managing disasters and crisis mitigation efforts (Glik, 2007).

Nevertheless, in times of crisis, news media plays a vital role in informing the public about crises, as that is the first-place people turn to for information (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014). During pandemics, media delivers important health and risk information about various diseases (Quigley et al., 2016; Pan & Meng, 2016; Rousseau et al., 2015), but also contributes to the public's opinion formation about the situation through different frames they expose (Perales-Garcia & Pont-Sorribes, 2018; Reissova et al., 2017; Sell et al., 2016). Since a health crisis is transboundary, I will argue that international news media in this sense has a critical role in the formation of international public opinion regarding this topic. That is, because a health crisis of these proportions will not only affect a small region of a country, but the whole world, making unfolding events in one country relevant to another.

As such, the way governments approach a crisis and how they communicate it can either promote a positive or negative reputation of their country internationally. That is because there might be a difference in how international news media depicts the country through its frames to their online audiences as shown by previous studies (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014; Perales-Garcia & Pont-Sorribes, 2018). This creates a problem for the country's public diplomacy as it can be influenced by what frames international media promotes about the country. Falkheimer and Heide (2018) describe the traditional standpoint of public diplomacy as being "*a strategic communication from nation-state to publics in other countries aiming to influence them and promoting national interests, especially regarding foreign policy.*" (p.14). However, the information international media sends out to international audiences about the country at hand, can have an influence on their opinions about that country. These will shift either to the positive or negative side, thus having a great effect on the country's public diplomacy. Previous research has demonstrated that public diplomacy can have an important role in contouring a country's image and legitimacy to international audiences (Lindholm & Olsson, 2011; Pamment et al., 2017). A failed public diplomacy might lead to a negative image internationally, thus affecting

the country by decreasing tourism, investments and expansion of international companies (Avraham, 2017).

1.1 Background: Coronavirus pandemic with a focus on Sweden

To analyse the problem at hand, this study will focus on the media coverage related to the coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic in Sweden. UNDP (2020) suggests that the coronavirus pandemic is the defining health crisis of our times. On December 31, 2019, WHO China Country Office was informed about cases of pneumonia of unknown causes detected among the people of Wuhan City, Hubei Province, China (WHO, 2020). In January 2020, researchers discovered that it was due to a new type of coronavirus that people started to get sick (WHO, 2020). The virus started to spread gradually, however, with a fast pace in Asia, where China was then the epicentre of the disease, having around 200 cases of Covid-19 (WHO, 2020).

On 31 of March 2020, the crisis was still ongoing and the number of people who got sick rose to 803.126 confirmed cases globally, where 39.032 people died (Worldometer, 2020) and where Europe became the epicentre of the disease (UNDP, 2020). Governments around the world started to take drastic measures to contain the spread of the pandemic, including testing and treating patients, limiting travel, imposing quarantines or lockdowns and cancelling large gatherings such as sporting events, schools, concerts (UNDP, 2020).

In Sweden, the first case of Covid-19 was confirmed on February 4th (Norrestad, 2020) of a woman in Jönköping, who recently travelled from Wuhan (SVT, 2020). Compared to other countries around Europe that appealed to drastic measures to contain the virus, Sweden's strategy was different. With 4435 cases of Covid-19 on March 31st, 2020, Sweden's latest pandemic containment measures were to forbid the visits to elderly homes and gatherings of more than 50 people (Krisinformation, 2020), whereas other countries such as Italy, Germany, Spain, Belgium or Denmark were urging their citizens in isolation (Tidey & Sandford, 2020). As this study is being written during the Covid-19 crisis, Sweden's strategy might shift, new measures might be taken. However, as my thesis focuses on the first two months of the crises, I will report on the background of the case only until April 31st, where the same measures were still ongoing in Sweden as well as in other countries around the world.

1.2 Purpose and Relevance

The purpose of this study is threefold. Firstly, I want to analyse how the government communicates during a health crisis through the frames they adopt and the way international media frames that country based on what was being communicated. I will focus on how the Swedish Government communicated during the first stage of the coronavirus pandemic, meaning the first two months (March and April 2020) and how the United Kingdom media has then framed Sweden based on their approach to the crisis. Secondly, I want to contribute to the existing literature on framing theory, by adding relevant findings of the way health crises are framed by both organizational communication and news media. Thirdly, looking at the bigger picture, I want to show how a discrepancy in the frames presented by both the Swedish government and UK media can lead to several implications for Sweden's public diplomacy. In this way, the study at hand will be guided by the following research questions:

1. *How did the Swedish government frame their communication during the coronavirus crisis?*
2. *How did the United Kingdom media frame Sweden during the coronavirus pandemic?*

To answer the above-mentioned research questions, I will make use of the framing theory alongside Entman's cascading model (2008) to explore how governments and the media communicate in times of crises using frames and why there is a discrepancy in the frames used by both parts. For this research, I will conduct a content analysis of the Swedish governmental English press releases and of the UK news media articles to explore the frames both parties used during the first months of the coronavirus pandemic.

The research seeks to contribute to the field of strategic communication in two ways. Firstly, there is little emphasis placed on government actors when looking at crisis communication research (Schwarz, Seeger & Auer, 2016). This is important to analyse as governments are perceived as public organizations, having the goal of preserving life through the prevention and curing of infectious diseases (Ou et al., 2014). Their goal is achieved through a well-established risk communication strategy that has the aim to contain the spread of the disease as much as possible (Qiu et al., 2018). Therefore, the government's goal is achieved through strategically communicating in times of pandemics to the public. This argument stands in line with the

definition of strategic communication provided by Hallahan et al. (2007): “*Strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication by an organization to fulfil its mission*”. Moreover, by conducting this research I will contribute to the literature in both framing and crisis communication through analysing how governments, in this case Sweden, communicate to their audience in times of a health crisis.

Secondly, framing theory is usually applied in mass media research, however with this study I want to explore whether and how it can apply to government strategic communication. This is even more important, because the information governments send out to their national publics can also be seen by international media, thus creating frames based on their understanding of the message. This creates a problem for the public democracy of the governments at hand, as it can be greatly influenced by what frames international media presents to foreign publics about that specific country during a crisis. Therefore, the role of strategic communication for governments that end up in a situation where their public diplomacy is challenged by the frames of international media is vital. As such, the study at hand will not only contribute to the literature of how the media frames crises, but also show what implications this might impose for a country’s public diplomacy during times of crisis.

To fulfil both the purpose and relevance of this study, I will analyse the way the Swedish government communicated nationally with their audiences through their English press releases that were accessible also to the UK media. To answer the second research question, I will then look at how the UK media framed Sweden during the times of this health crisis.

2. Literature Review

This chapter will provide the reader with a clear understanding and knowledge of the studies and literature that has been written so far regarding governmental risk communication and media framing during times of a health crisis. Moreover, I will conclude with studies showing the importance of public diplomacy for countries and the effect it can have on international audiences.

2.1 Government risk communication during pandemics

The government is a critical factor that plays a key role in the control of any epidemic crisis (Ou et al., 2014). This is, because people look to the government in hard times, such as during a health crisis, to provide them with information, guidance and stability (Liu et al., 2019). The way in which the government communicates during health crises is through a well-established risk communication plan, as this is central to epidemic and pandemic control (Glik, 2007; Qiu et al., 2018). Lundgren and McMakin (2004) define risk communication as “*the interactive process of exchange of information and opinions among individuals, groups and institutions concerning a risk or a potential risk to human health or the environment*”. Previous studies conducted about risk communication have explored different factors of success or strategies that could help governments handle a health crisis better. In the following paragraphs, I will explore the success factors and strategies that lead to an efficient risk communication.

The study conducted by Boholm (2019), after interviewing risk communication practitioners, shows six different factors that can help establish a good risk communication. The first factor is related to knowledge and understanding and it means that for a good communication between the government and public, there is a need for a clear transmission of information, as people might have a hard time understanding the risks, as well as a good knowledge of the government regarding the specific issue (Boholm, 2019). This is also related to the response strategies of organisations, which at first inform the public about what to do to protect themselves and provide them with psychological help in times of crisis (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013). Studies have

shown that governments, by learning from past experiences, should update their response strategies with new regulations that help people understand the information about health crises better. This in the end will allow both governments and the society to handle future or existing crises properly (Andrew et al., 2018; Ou et al., 2014).

The next factor is related to organisational planning and strategic decision making as a way towards better risk communication. Some of the problems that can arise because of that are a lack of holistic approach or no systematic work in relation to crisis (Boholm, 2019). A previous research showed how critical it is for governments to have a well-established communication strategy by comparing the 2003 SARS crisis and 2013 H7N9 avian influenza in China (Qiu et al., 2018). For example, during the SARS crisis, the Chinese government lacked experience and were not prepared for the advent of a risk or emergency in their society. As a result, confusion and delays regarding the virus' transmission and treatment were present in their communication (Qiu et al., 2018). In comparison to that, the Chinese government was more prepared to handle the H7N9 crisis, where information was better disclosed, thus leading to more transparency and trust by the public and international community (Qiu et al., 2018). Moreover, in a transboundary crisis such as a pandemic, there is a need for the government to be flexible when adopting a strategy and decision-making (Andrew et al., 2018). That is due to the fact that countries go through a period of uncertainty during times of a health crisis (J. Holmes et al., 2009) and there is a need to be open to take new and improvised decisions based on the given situation.

The third factor that leads to effective risk communication is collaboration and responsibility. What collaboration means are three things: collaboration between agencies, collaboration within the agency, and collaboration with the stakeholders (Boholm, 2019). In other words, in times of crisis, the government should be prepared to collaborate with the existing organisations in the country and publics, as well as have good internal communication within their agencies. For example, a recent study comparing risk communication strategies among eight EU member states, showed that Sweden, together with all other member states, has a decentralised approach to their pattern of crisis control (Petridou et al., 2019). This suggests that each region and their specific governmental agencies are in charge of the crisis communication based on the recommendations and strategy of the national government (Petridou et al., 2019). Moreover, Sweden's approach to risk communication is to disseminate information at the agency level and then let their citizens take control of their crisis management (Petridou et al., 2019).

Two other factors are message and availability of resources (Boholm, 2019). For this study, I will focus on the first factor, as the latter involves the hardships risk communication practitioners face that could eventually lead to a weaker risk communication. As this thesis wants to uncover how the Swedish government communicated during Covid-19 pandemic, I will focus on the message as being a critical factor in effective risk communication. When conducting risk communication, having a clear language, short and concise sentences and relevant information are critical for the public's understanding of the crisis situation and what is needed of them (Boholm, 2019; Ou et al., 2014). Moreover, public health messages must be based on sound scientific knowledge and implemented with respect for the rights to those affected (Parment & Sinha, 2017).

The final factor regarding effective risk communication is the media (Boholm, 2019). The research suggests that when the government succeeded in collaborating properly with the media, thus shaping their agenda, their risk communication will be also effective. That is because mass media is a crucial player in the construction of and communication about risks (Ma, 2005) and it can determine public's reaction to the health crisis (Glik, 2007). Mass media is the first place people will go to for more information and updates regarding crises in general (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014), but also health crises in particular (J. Holmes et al., 2009). In a study showing the perceptions of people regarding communicating in times of crisis, the role of the media was acknowledged by every participant and how it can be used to ensure effective communication (Holmes et al., 2009). This is because media is their primary source of information during crises (Austin et al., 2012).

However, a recent study shows that news media does not report the exact same information as the government does through their policies and press releases during a health crisis, such as Ebola (Sell et al., 2016). What the media does then, is to focus on more controversial topics, like quarantine, that was during the Ebola crisis in the United States not mentioned in any policy, but rather occasionally used by several states and politicians. As a result, publics were exposed to this type of potential public health response that was not mentioned in any policy. Nevertheless, the study also raises the question of whether the media made a confusion regarding the difference between isolation and quarantine during the Ebola crisis, promoting messages about quarantine thinking it is the same as isolation (Sell et al., 2016). Media is seen as an entity that has its own logic of action, which differs from that of a governmental agency

and therefore it can be difficult for the media and the government to be partners in risk communication situations (Boholm, 2019).

2.2 Role of media during crisis

News media plays an important role in giving publicity and meaning to a large number of health crises of global suffering, as people around the world can perceive these news through coverages and frames that lead them to form various interpretations (Dutton & Ashford, 1993). However, the information that news media reports through coverages and frames can be limited due to the scope of the news coverage or the framing of the topic (Kline, 2006). A study regarding news frames of HIV/AIDS across countries discovered six major dimensions for news framing analysis: health risk, medical/scientific issue, prevention/protection, economic consequences, societal problems and political/legal issues (Bardhan, 2001). The health-risk frame is seen as a crisis or threat that focuses on transmission and prevalence of the epidemic. The medical/scientific frame deals with new medical treatment or scientific research that could help handle the epidemic. The prevention/protection frame examines the news aimed at educating people about the pandemic. The economic consequence frame is related to news presenting the financial situation of the country, region or individual hit by the pandemic. The frame of societal problems is concerned with all the problems within the society, whether religious, cultural or socio-economic in regard to a pandemic crisis. Lastly, the political/legal frame emphasises epidemic-related stories with political or legal intervention or diplomatic concerns in a national or global context.

Based on that study, a more recent research analysed the news frames that mass media used during the three stages of a health crisis: pre-crisis, crisis and post-crisis (Pan & Meng, 2016). As I only focus on the first months of the Covid-19 crisis, I will only talk about the frames this research exposes during “pre-crisis” and “crisis” stages. The research showed that during the pre-crisis stage, frames such as health risk, political/legal issues and prevention/health education were used by the media. When looking at what frames the media used during the crisis, the research shows that the media focused on the negative consequences of societal problems and medical scientific issues (Pan & Meng, 2016). As a result of the negative consequences the news media portrayed about the health crisis, they indeed received more attention, but also promoted anxiety and concern among the public (Pan & Meng, 2016).

Another important role that mass media has during crisis communication is influence people's opinions, perceptions and behaviour about a health crisis through the coverage and frames they expose, as shown in recent studies (Boholm, 2019; Combs et al., 2010; Quigley et al., 2016; Perales-Garcia & Pont-Sorribes, 2018; Reissova et al., 2018; Rousseau et al., 2015). That is because media can both overstate and understate risk information, meaning that risk issues become amplified or attenuated as they are communicated in society. As such, the public is never presented with "pure" risk messages, but rather messages that are framed and reframed in public discourse, where multiple actors are involved (Boholm, 2019). In the case of risk situations such as a health crisis, a recent study regarding H1N1, shows that media can be highly volatile, thus framing the government's performance as negative (Quigley et al., 2016). This can lead to the public undermining their credibility in the governments' plan.

Furthermore, a different study shows how the media can have an influence over people's opinions and behaviours in regards to the H1N1 health crisis (Rousseau et al., 2015). Comparing Quebec to France, the study discovered that the Canadian media supported the government and health professionals regarding vaccination, thus making people believe in that too. On the other hand, news media in France was not in line with the government, thus establishing distrust among politicians and health authorities (Rousseau et al., 2015). Nevertheless, media's influence on public perceptions can be noticed in the studies conducted about the methanol affair (Reissova et al., 2018), that show the effect of media on public consumption, or how international media endorsed the will of Catalans to vote in the referendum regarding the Spanish-Catalan political crisis (Perales-Garcia & Pont-Sorribes, 2018).

All in all, the media's role in communicating health crises is essential. It is through the media, among other channels, that the government should communicate to the public during health emergencies (Qiu et al., 2018). Also, through the media the concerns or information needs of the public should be passed back to the government, thus establishing a two-way communication model (Qiu et al., 2018). Thus, a clear cooperation between the media and government would lead to better information of the public as well as an effective way to promote preventive behaviour during a pandemic (Kavanagh et al., 2011).

2.3 Public diplomacy during crisis

As noted from the previous chapter, public diplomacy, traditionally, means a communication from the government to foreign publics with the purpose to influence them and promote national interests (Falkheimer & Heide, 2018). Through public diplomacy, a country's policies, values and culture are communicated to the people of another nation, thus it implicitly recognises the primacy of relationships and notions of coexistence and mutual interdependence (Lee & Lin, 2017). Especially during a health crisis - which are also transboundary - all countries should work together to contain the spread of the pandemic. In this way, public diplomacy can be seen as a tool for an international actor - in our case the government - who holds the fate of earth in their hands as never before (Cull, 2019). However, recent studies show that public diplomacy still relies mostly on one-way model of communication (Cull, 2019; Lee & Lin, 2017). A congruence in concepts and themes of three different countries was discovered using framing theory to analyse governmental press releases. There was a difference in the conceptualisation of human and rights expressed by the foreign ministries of USA, Singapore and China which suggested that public diplomacy still experienced obstacles to dialogue and collaboration (Lee & Lin, 2017).

Other studies have shown the challenges public diplomacy poses on governments and nations alike. For example, governmental messages may be interpreted differently in other countries. Cincotta (2004) underlines how US's "Shared Values" campaign following the 9/11 attacks has received great hostility from several Arab governments, failing to foster a positive image of the US in Muslim countries. Moreover, in a society driven by globalisation, information can travel around the world instantly. That creates a challenge for nation's public diplomacy, as messages intended for national audiences can reach international audiences as well (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014). In a study conducted by Lindeholm and Olsson (2011) we can see this challenge. The researchers described how a depiction of the prophet Muhammad in form of cartoons has escalated to a national crisis because of international media. The international media was here a link between events happening in a country and their depiction to foreign audiences, concluding to an even larger escalation of the crisis they were already going through (Lindholm & Olsson, 2011).

Furthermore, recent literature has considered the government's attempts and successes to influence international media's framing of the crisis they were going through. An example of

this can be seen in a study comparing how the German and Hungarian government communicated with international media through their English press releases during the European migrant crisis of 2015, also known as mediated public diplomacy, and how in turn international media framed both countries (Jungblut, 2017). The research shows that even though Hungary offered more information subsidies (information in press releases), that did not lead international media to offer a clear framing of them in their news coverages. Compared to that, Germany offered less information subsidies, however international media depicted their frames clearer in their news coverages. This study suggests that one reason for this happening is because Germany's communication had an international approach, whereas Hungary's was more ethnocentric (Jungblut, 2017).

On the same side, a crisis can influence a country's national brand as well if public diplomacy strategies are not in line with the national branding strategies. Looking again at the refugee crisis of 2015, a research shows how the Swedish government struggled to maintain an alignment between the Swedish brand of "open, authentic, caring and innovative", and the country's migration policies (Pamment et al., 2017). The international media thus depicted them as a "nation with a big heart but on the verge of dissolution due to the bad results of an open policy". They struggled to keep both strategies on the same level, through the fact that they explained the reasons behind Swedish migration policy and emphasising that Sweden still accepted a large number of refugees. On the other side, Norway used their negative image portrayal of "rich and selfish" to create a campaign that would support their public diplomacy agenda (Pamment et al., 2017).

Moreover, recent studies show that during a crisis a country's reputation can be damaged, thus there is a critical need of the government to conduct a proper public diplomacy. For example, a study points out that Greece, a country going through a difficult economic crisis, should not wait passively for the help of other EU member states or the International Monetary Fund in the form of loans (Frangonikolopoulos, 2012). Rather, it should develop a balancing public diplomacy strategy that would allow it to be indispensable at a regional and international level and to permit it to continue its internal political and economic reforms and development. In another research, we find a strategy that can be used by countries in crisis to improve their image (Vaxevanidou, 2016). The study suggests that a crucial factor for an effective public diplomacy is the communication channel and appropriate tools choice during each of the three dimensions of public diplomacy: reactive, proactive and relationship building. As this research

only focuses on the first two months of the crisis, I will explore the reactive phase. During the reactive phase, an immediate time frame of response is required, where communicators manage the news. The goal is to respond to negative press coverage through direct interventions. As a method, the research suggests to use press releases, news stories or editorials, social media or contact with journalists. (Vaxevanidou, 2016).

3. Theory

This chapter will first look into the theory of framing, where I will offer the reader an introduction to what it consists of and its origins, the different types of frames already researched in recent studies and how the theory can affect the public in communication research. Nevertheless, even though I have already superficially described the topic in the literature review chapter, here I will go into depth about contouring the framing theory. Moreover, I will argue for its use in answering the research question concerning how the Swedish government communicated during the Covid-19 pandemic crisis. Thus, the framing theory will guide my analysis and will help me answer both study's research questions. Lastly, if we look at the bigger picture of how Sweden's public diplomacy can be affected due to the UK media's frames, I will describe Entman's cascading model and use his theory to understand why there can be a discrepancy between the Swedish governmental communication about the Covid-19 pandemic and the way UK media framed the country.

3.1 Origins and introduction to framing theory

I want to begin this part with a simple analogy about framing constructed by Tewksbury and Scheufele (2009) that could provide the reader with a clear understanding of the meaning of framing in the news. An artist knows that what frame they choose to place around their painting will affect how viewers interpret and react to the image itself. That is why, some artists will choose a frame carefully, as that will help their audiences see the painting in just the right way. That is also how journalists create - often subconsciously - their news articles: by choosing images or words that can have the power to influence how audiences perceive and interpret issues and policies.

Any communicative text, whether informative or persuasive, requires narrative structures to organise its discourse (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). As such, news messages, as textual and visual structures, are built around a central axis of thought, from a certain perspective and with an interpretative framework for the audiences. Ardevol-Abreu (2015) offers a definition of

framing established with the basis on the study of Etman (1993): *“From this approach, framing can be defined as a process in which some aspects of reality selected, and given greater emphasis or importance, so that the problem is defined, its causes are diagnosed, moral judgements are suggested and appropriate solutions and actions are proposed”* (p. 424). What this definition suggests is that communicative texts use framing to construct reality, where different aspects are given more importance and relevance than others, with the purpose to create a clear understanding of the problem, diagnose the causes and find proper solutions to it.

The origins of framing theory stem both in psychology, at a micro-level, and sociology, at a macro-level. However, as this study lies within strategic communication research, I will explore the latter aspect of the framing theory. Goffman (1974) describes frame analysis as an interpretation by individuals of new information using category systems, also known as primary frameworks. Thus, the relevance of primary frameworks to communication research consist in the fact that they are socially constructed and serve as important tools for information processing among citizens. Secondly, societal and media discourse often uses primary frameworks to influence audience interpretations (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). In other words, primary frameworks help people interpret and categorise the information they receive, while the media and other societal discourses within the society uses them to influence the people’s interpretations.

However, one volatile aspect of the framing theory lies in the fact that the paradigm is not united specifically for its application to one approach or theoretical model, but rather numerous (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). Therefore, D’Angelo (2002) describes that this is not a weakness of framing theory, but rather shows the phenomenon’s complexity. As such, Ardevol-Abreu (2015) argues that *“As organising principles that are socially shared and persistent, frames are part of the symbolic universe and allow us to meaningfully structure the social world”*. What this suggests is that the media is only a part of the creation and transmission of frames, but it is not the only one in this system.

Therefore, I will argue that, following the previously mentioned paragraphs about framing, governments’ communication in a crisis through their releases of discourses, such as press releases, targeting specific societal problems, like health crises, could and would make use of frames to influence the people’s perception of information in a way necessary to crisis

containment. I will thus use framing theory to explore how the Swedish government communicated during the first months of the Covid-19 crisis by making use of the success factors described by previous literature regarding risk communication. As the government uses both communicative text and speeches in their risk communication strategy, I will argue that different frames will be recurrent in their messages.

Studies using the framing theory in governmental crisis communication are few, where some have focused on mostly governmental agencies communication and less on government ministries per se (Liu & Kim, 2018), however a recent study has explored how key messages from the government targeting the public were framed in the media (Nicolini & Hansen, 2018). Governmental key messages can therefore be seen as frames for the audience to guide and help them to easily interpret the information they receive. This suggests that there is a beginning toward expanding the framing theory to not only include mass media framing but also governmental communication. Moreover, I will then explore how the international media framed Sweden to foreign audiences and if there are any links, or if previous Swedish governmental frames can be found in international news media articles, thus affecting Sweden's public diplomacy.

3.1.1 Typology of frames in communication

There are two types of frames relevant to this research: specific or generic (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). Specific frames can be only applied to distinct topics or events or a set of similar events, while generic frames can be applied to different events and sometimes even different physical, temporal or cultural spaces. What generic frames do is to thicken the theoretical body of framing, whereas specific frames result in the accurate examination of media treatment of a particular topic. For example, some general frames were developed by Neuman, Just and Crigler (1992) who identified them in both the media and public usage: human impact, powerlessness, economics, moral values and conflict. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) further developed these frames in their study and underlined frames such as: attribution of responsibility, conflict, human interest, morality and economic consequences. The attribution of responsibility frame presents an issue in a way that attributes responsibility for either causing or solving it to either the government or to an individual or group. The conflict frame means a conflict between individuals, groups, institutions or countries. The human interest frame emphasises an individual's story, or an emotional angle to an event, issue or problem. The

morality frame looks at an event or issue in the context of religiousness or moral prescriptions. Lastly, the economic consequences frame shows an event, problem or issue in terms of what economic consequences an issue or event will either have on individuals, groups, institutions, regions or countries (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Having gone through the general frames that exist in the theory of framing, I will go on to describe specific frames that arose when researching crisis communication.

The study conducted by Khakimova-Storie et al. (2014) depicts four different frame categories used by the media during a crisis and these are: organisational control frames, timing frames, public impact frames and sense-making frames. As these categories also link back and use some of the general frames mentioned in the previous paragraph, I will only describe those frames that recently arose specifically about crisis and media communication.

Firstly, organisational control frames describe crises as management issues through attribution of responsibility, leadership container frames and collaboration. The leadership frame shows the achievements of organisations during a crisis, such as leadership activities, reactions, and/or effectiveness. The container frame emphasises the crisis moment where no one appears to be in control. The collaboration frame depicts the communication and coordination between various government and non-governmental agencies before, during and/or after crises (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014).

Secondly, timing frames foreground stories that the media use to contour the primacy of crisis events through anniversary/memorial frame, seasonal frame and special event frame. The anniversary / memorial frame emphasizes the anniversary or memory of a crisis to examine current response/planning/recovery. The seasonal frame shows planning/response/recovery of a crisis in the event of a holiday or weather seasons. Lastly, the special event frame depicts planning/response or recovery in the context of special events that occur after a crisis, such as media tours (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014).

Thirdly, the public impact frame shows the consequences that a crisis has on individuals, publics and communities through the use of economic consequences, human interest and severity frames. The severity frame is thus used to describe potential or actual destruction caused by crises (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014). Lastly, the sense-making frames foreground how the public interpret crises through conflict, morality, war, crime and vengeance frames. As

the latter three focus mostly on terrorist crises (Storie et al., 2014), I will only focus on the first two, which are included in the general frames mentioned in the previous paragraphs. All in all, both the general and specific types of frames, as well as their strength, show how the information is both communicated to the general public, but also what influence it can have on the audience's interpretation of information.

3.1.2 Effects of frames on publics in communication research

The inception of framing theory started without much empirical support into how frames can influence publics. However, Goffman (1974), having even little empirical support predicted that through the selection and provision of salience, frames could help audiences locate, perceive, identify and label the flow of information surrounding them. It is through this process that frames determine the social environment, by influencing the thoughts, ideas, and attitudes of individuals and the public (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). That is also described as the “information effect”, which means that frames contribute to the process where people acquire beliefs and impressions of an issue and its context (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2009). Therefore, a framing effect occurs, whereby a phrase, image or statement suggests a particular meaning or interpretation of an issue.

Nevertheless, it was first the American political consultant Frank Luntz that used framing theory to design strategies that would enhance the persuasive powers of political communication (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). This leads us to the other effect of framing on the general public, coined as “persuasion effects” (Tewksbury and Scheufele, 2009). This effect of framing concerns how people respond or act according to their acceptance of persuasive messages. However, this effect is harder to measure as research conducted on this part has yielded often contradictory results. Yet, recent studies suggested that there is a difference between how people respond to framing based on their predispositions to be persuaded, thus leading to “strong” or “weak” effects (Ardevol-Abreu, 2015). All in all it is certain that framing has some sort of influence on how the people interpret or even respond to messages from the media or other political discourses. If we link back to our study at hand, we will discover then how Sweden's public diplomacy will be affected by how the UK media framed the Swedish government's response to the Covid-19 crisis.

3.2 Entman's cascading model

To fully understand the phenomenon of this research and how each element can influence each other through the linkages they have - meaning Swedish government crisis communication frames, UK media's framing of Sweden and Sweden's public diplomacy - I will make use of the cascading model developed by Entman (2008). The model explores a theorisation of mediated public diplomacy by making use of the US as a case study, however the model is generalisable to other countries as well. The term mediated public diplomacy refers to government successes to promote favourable frames of their country's policies in foreign news media. However, in this case, I will use Entman's cascading model to explore how frames 'travel' from one country to the other and what relationships there are between governments, media and the public. Having explained that, I will now go on to describe how the cascading model is constructed.

The cascading activation model that Entman (2008) created based on the US public diplomacy, shows how the diffusion of frames from the target country's president and administration can be influenced by mediated public diplomacy of another country. In other words, a country's frames can be either accepted and used by another country depending on the efficiency and success of the public diplomacy between the two countries. First, inside the target country the frames circulate from the ruling leaders to the opposition elites and then the target nation media, which in turn will end up as news frames for the public to interpret. However, with the public diplomacy dimension attached to the model we see that new elements such as 'private messages / pressure' towards the target nation's leaders, as well as 'dominant frames from both global and a country's media' can influence the diffusion of frames in the target nation. The model also shows that a country's public and media diplomacy will be the one to have an influence over the dominant news frames both in that country as well as globally. Therefore, a target nation's framing of a country can be both influenced by the country's success of mediated public diplomacy as well as the country's leaders' communication with the target nation's ones.

Moreover, a fundamental factor that can determine how accurate frames travel from a country to another is influenced by is cultural congruence. What this means is how much a country's framing of their policy is in line with another nation's political culture (Entman, 2008). In other words, a country's frames of their policy will be represented similarly by another nation's frames of them depending on how similar the political culture of both countries is. Entman

(2008) offers the example of how the US's foreign policy regarding the Iraq wars of 1990-91 and 2003-2008 created both an accepting and negative response towards their policy by the European countries. In the first war, the Bush administration framed Saddam Hussein as an aggressive, vicious dictator towards Kuwait, therefore entering the first war in Iraq. The Europeans then could resonate deeply with these frames as they already had experienced with fascist aggression. However, the second war that followed in Iraq, having no direct provocation towards the US led to a rejection of American policy by many European countries. As a result, public diplomacy of a country can be impacted by the political culture of another nation as well as the similarities of the frames they share.

4. Methodology

The research at hand will use a qualitative approach to study how the Swedish government communicated during the Covid-19 pandemic and then how the UK media framed Sweden. This chapter will start by introducing the reader to the epistemological standpoint of this study: social constructionism. I will continue with exploring the chosen method of research - qualitative content analysis - and what strategy I have used for collecting, sampling and analysing the necessary data. Moreover, reasons for my choice of the previously mentioned strategy will be provided with a discussion about each techniques' limitations. Lastly, I will discuss the reliability and validity of this study together with the ethical implication.

4.1 Framing as a social construction of reality

If we want to understand how framing works and its more specific manifestations, we should first look at how our social reality is constructed (Carter, 2013). Also known as social constructionism, a term referring to the fact that knowledge and truth are created and not discovered by the mind and where concepts correspond to something real in the world. In other words, reality is socially defined, but this reality refers to the subjective experiences of everyday life, looking at how the world is understood rather than the objective reality of the social world (Andrews, 2012). Moreover, social constructionists argue that the knowledge of our world and the common ways of understanding it is constructed between people through social processes (Burr, 2015).

As such, communication and language are important for the social organisation and the creation of our knowledge about the surrounding world (Berger and Luckmann, 2011). Furthermore, language is the most important sign system of human society and an understanding of it is essential for any understanding of the reality of everyday life. Even if language has its origins in face-to-face situations, nowadays it can be easily separated from it. That is not only due to the numerous channels of communication such as speaking on the telephone, via the radio or

by means or writing, but rather because of its capacity to communicate meanings that are not direct expressions of here and now (Berger & Luckmann, 2011). What this means is that humans can communicate through language about matters that are not happening right now or that they will never experience directly. As such, language could become the objective repository of numerous accumulations of meanings and experiences. Therefore, language programs the channels where externalisation produces an objective world. In other words, language orders the world into objects that are in turn seen as reality (Berger & Luckmann, 2011).

The way social constructionism is linked to framing can be seen in a study, among others, illustrating how television is used to shape viewers' perceptions of reality through the images and messages it produces (Carter, 2013). This can also be extended to other forms of news media outlets, where the audience relies on versions of reality built from personal experience, interaction with peers and interpreted selections from the mass media (Carter, 2013). Having the same line of thought, a study shows how mass media represents corruption through the use of frames, which in turn shows how the issue is socially constructed in specific contexts (Berti, 2019). In the same manner, I want to use the social constructionist approach as my epistemological standpoint to uncover the different ways in which the Covid-19 pandemic was communicated by the Swedish government through the frames they used, offering the Swedish society and foreign journalists an interpretation of the Covid-19 crisis in Sweden and how it can be contained. Moreover, through analysing what frames international media placed around Sweden's crisis communication strategy, I want to see what implications those frames impose on Sweden's public diplomacy.

4.2 Qualitative content analysis

The study at hand will use a qualitative research method to answer both research questions. The reason for which I chose to conduct a qualitative study is due to the fact that I want to contribute to the existing literature in framing theory and governmental crisis communication by offering a close-up view of the UK media and Swedish governmental frames surrounding the coronavirus pandemic in Sweden. A qualitative study, thus, adds not a generalizable result, but rather a situational example that could enhance the reader's experience and contribute at the same time to the pool of knowledge surrounding framing in both mass media and governmental communication (Stake, 2010). As the first research question addresses the issue of how the

Swedish government communicated during the Covid-19 pandemic, I will look at English governmental press releases that the Swedish government gave out during the Covid-19 crisis. In terms of selecting Sweden as a case for looking at government communication, I have made use of the fact that I am currently located in Sweden, knowing the language and it was convenient for me to find the necessary data for my study. Moreover, as we can see from the literature review chapter, Sweden was previously included in other public diplomacy research, where the results showed that it is important for the country to have an aligned public diplomacy strategy with its country branding strategy (Pamment et al., 2017). This shows that it matters for Sweden how other foreign audiences perceive the country, thus making Sweden a proper choice for my research regarding public diplomacy.

Moreover, to answer the second question, I will focus on news media articles published by the UK media outlets about Sweden during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic. The reason for the choice of my data collection will be further developed in the following sub-chapter (4.3). Thus, in order to answer both research questions, I will conduct a frame analysis of all the texts I will look at. In qualitative research, texts are highly relevant to understand how societies and individuals make sense of important and challenging issues (Barbour, 2008). In this case, I want to explore how the Swedish government and the UK media framed the coronavirus pandemic for their audience through the ‘texts’ each party sent out to the society. So, to conduct a proper frame analysis a qualitative content analysis will be used, which is also one of the ways to discover frames in texts (Kitzinger, 2007). This qualitative research method will allow me to provide an answer to the study’s research questions and therefore fulfil the purpose of this research.

4.2.1 Data collection and sampling

To answer both research questions, I will look at texts, in the form of, first, press releases written by the Swedish government in English, and second, news articles by the UK media. I have two reasons for which I chose to sample Swedish governmental press releases in the English language. First, it is through press releases that an organization, such as the government, provides the news media with information (Lee & Lin, 2015). Thus, I looked at press releases in the English language because the message is accessible to international audiences as well, including the media. Secondly, if we go back and remember Entman’s cascading model (2008) presented in chapter 3, these press releases show the Swedish communication strategy regarding

the Swedish government's public and media diplomacy. It is through press releases that an organization communicates to promote their goals and perspectives (Lee & Lin, 2015). In this case, the goals and perspectives of the Swedish governmental press releases were targeting the spread of the coronavirus pandemic in Sweden.

Additionally, I have several reasons for my choice of analysing UK media in this research. First, UK media is known all over the world and many people have access to the news articles. Also, the articles are written in English, a global language. Thus, UK media can affect Swedish public diplomacy through the frames they use to depict the country. Nevertheless, as Covid-19 pandemic is a transboundary crisis, events happening in one country can have an impact upon events in another (Andrew et al., 2018). So, the geographical location of the UK is not far from Sweden, meaning how the Swedish government handles the crisis might have an impact on the UK as well, as both are situated in Northern Europe. Thus, the UK is more interested in the events taking place in Sweden and will most likely have news articles about it. All in all, the choice of UK media is appropriate for the study at hand due to the above-mentioned reasons.

As this research only takes into account the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic, I will only look at the press releases published by the Swedish government and the UK media articles during the period of March to April 2020. Therefore, no sampling technique is necessary for this study, as I will take all available texts from both the Swedish government and UK news media outlets. One of the reasons for this is because the Covid-19 pandemic is currently ongoing as I am writing this study and the available data is not extensive enough to make use of a sampling technique. Secondly, looking at all available texts will offer me the proper sample to analyse and answer the study's both research questions. Moreover, I find it important to look at how the government and media communicated in the first months of the crisis, because that is a critical time when people are exposed to a new uncertain event and the way the crisis is communicated highly matters.

One of the limitations of this method consists of the fact that, as some items are not selected due to scope of this study (only two months), I cannot generalise the results to emphasize the whole coronavirus pandemic. That is also due to the fact that the crisis is still ongoing and probably more press releases and articles will be written about this topic. Thus, more frames can emerge from the future enlarged data set. Even though my results will not be generalizable and representative of the whole pandemic period (as it is still ongoing), they will be for the first

two months of the crisis, where I will sample all the existing press releases written in the English language by the Swedish government and all the news articles written by the UK media that are available to me through the website Nexis Uni (LexisNexis Academic).

Therefore, to answer the first research question, I firstly looked at texts in the form of Swedish governmental press releases in the English language, showing the communication of the Swedish government during the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic. The press releases allow me to analyse the Swedish government communication and response to the coronavirus pandemic crisis. Searching for all the available texts, I went on the Swedish governmental website ‘government.se’ to look for all the English press releases containing the tag “covid-19”. In total, I found and selected 23 press releases containing the term in focus ranging from 9th of March until 30th of April. In the table below we can see what Swedish ministry sent out press releases and how many there were.

Swedish Ministry	Number of Press releases
Foreign Affairs	2
Health and Social Affairs	2
Foreign Affairs, Health and Social Affairs	1
Finance	8
Finance, Infrastructure	1
Employment	1
Culture	1
Enterprise and Innovation, Finance, Foreign Affairs	1
Enterprise and Innovation, Finance	1
Justice	2
Enterprise and Innovation	2

Education and Research, Employment, Finance	1
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For the second research question I looked at every UK news article I could find with the help of the search engine “LexisNexis” provided by Lund University. Again, I chose to look at all articles I could find in the database stating the search terms ‘covid-19’ and ‘coronavirus’ for all fields, while the term ‘Sweden’ was chosen to be found in the headlines specifically. Moreover, I filtered my results based on the time range (the first months of the Covid-19 pandemic) and the location (UK). As a result, I ended up with a total number of 50 news articles written by UK news media outlets from 2nd of March until 30th of April 2020, having the word ‘Sweden’ in the article’s headline and the terms ‘covid-19’ or ‘coronavirus’ throughout the whole text. The number of selected and analysed articles can be seen in the table below. This offered me the necessary data to analyse in order to have a relevant answer for my second research question of how UK media framed Sweden during the Covid-19 pandemic.

Name of UK media outlet	Number of Articles
The Guardian	5
The (Daily) Telegraph	5
The Independent	6
Mail Online	5
Express UK	3
Daily Record	1
Reuters UK	18
The Sun	4
Daily Star	1
Mirror	1
The Conversation	1

4.2.2 Data analysis

The first step I took in data analysis of the sampled texts was to read them carefully and become familiar with the data set. After that, I summarized each text, allowing me to highlight important aspects and features. The goal in qualitative content analysis is to find description of patterns or regularities in the collected data. Drisko and Maschi (2015) offer a clear definition of qualitative content analysis suggested by Mayring, which states that “*qualitative content analysis is a set of techniques for the systematic analysis of texts of many kinds, addressing not only manifest content, but also themes and core ideas found in texts as primary content*” (p. 82). What qualitative content analysis does is to summarise meaning in primary and secondary data, where the themes that emerge are coded descriptively (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). It is not only a mere understanding of frequencies and means, but also an understanding of the latent content data. This means that the researcher looks for themes and ideas in texts that are later summarised in narratives. In other words, the focus of qualitative content analysis is to identify categories or themes found in texts that both summarise the content data and also highlight key content (Drisko & Maschi, 2015).

In the next step, I coded the frames that were used for each theme that emerged in the texts. Coding refers to attaching one or more keywords to a text segment in order to permit later identification of a statement (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). By using a deductive approach and the existing literature and theory surrounding framing, I firstly looked if already theorized frames were used in texts. However, new emerging frames were possible to surface after a careful reading of the data. Therefore, I chose to combine both the deductive approach to my data analysis with an inductive one. By mixing in an inductive approach, I organized the data set into categories reflecting the content’s meaning that are not part of the existing framing theory and literature (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). This will allow me to fully answer my research questions with substantial and complete results.

After having analysed the data and uncovered core themes and categories, I displayed them as headings in the ‘Analysis’ chapter. The reason for this is that I want to display how the collected data addressed the research questions, thus focusing on the relevant categories or themes (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). In this case, the emerging categories and themes will be depicted by the frames of the texts I coded. Each core theme or category will be then interpreted in a

summary manner by making use of quotations that describe the views of each of the texts, while showing what frames were used.

Moreover, as this study adopted a social constructionist perspective, I argue that not only are the texts that I will read and code constructed by either Swedish government officials or UK journalists, but also I will construct my own interpretation of the themes. I will construct them through my interaction (reading) with the data from all the sampled texts. This in turn will provide an answer to my research questions and thus expand the knowledge of the reader in regards to governmental crisis communication, framing and public diplomacy. However, this can be seen as a limitation of this research as I was the only person that coded the sample, thus offering the research only my personal interpretation. Yet, as I am neither Swedish nor from the UK, I will maintain an interpretation of my empirical material that is close to the way that the frames were firstly constructed. As a result, I will uncover frames that contribute to the socially constructed issue of crisis and about a country, Sweden, that can in turn influence the country's public diplomacy.

4.3 Validity and Reliability

I would also like to address the aspects of reliability and validity of this research to show that the results of this study are relevant to add in the current general literature of strategic communication. Beginning with reliability, this aspect shows the consistency and trustworthiness of the research findings. At the same time, it relates to whether the research findings are reproducible at other times by other researchers (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In this case, every sampled text of both the Swedish government and UK news media articles will be the same in one month as well as in one year, thus giving any researcher the chance to analyse the exact same information.

However, having a constructionist approach to this study, I will argue that each researcher will have the ability to provide a new interpretation of the data set depending on their perception of reality. That is not to say that the study is not reliable, but there is a possibility that different researchers provide different interpretations to the same data set. Yet, this is one of the characteristics of qualitative research, as it relies on the interpretation of the researcher (Stake, 2010). In my case, I am neither Swedish nor from the UK, thus my interpretation of the data set

is not influenced by my nationality. At the same time, I have a neutral standpoint when analysing how Sweden approached this crisis compared to other countries.

Moreover, as this study sampled only texts available to the public domain, accessible to anyone, I did not involve any human research participants. As a result, ethical implications for this study are minimal, due to a view that research addressing qualitative content analysis sees publicly available media as open for research use (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Both the Swedish press release and UK news media articles are openly available for anyone wanting to access them. Therefore, a consent for the use of the materials was not needed.

Lastly, the concept of validity refers to the correctness and strength of a statement. I also answer the question of “Are you measuring what you think you are measuring?” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 282). In this case, analysing press releases communicated by the Swedish government and news articles of the UK media answers both research questions. From both datasets, we can uncover the frames used by both the Swedish government and UK media in relation to the cover-19 pandemic. Thus, this method investigates what it is intended to investigate (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

5. Analysis

This chapter will present the reader with an analysis of the collected data - both Swedish governmental press releases and UK media news articles. I will begin by focusing on the first research question which inquired how the Swedish government communicated during the first months of the coronavirus pandemic through the frames they used. A thorough analysis of their press releases will follow, looking at emerging themes that can be looked at with the help of more than one frame. Secondly, I will go on to analysing the next part of my data, which consists of UK media news articles from the same time frame as the Swedish governmental press releases. Using the same tactic, I will depict each topic that surfaced through the different frames that can be used to interpret them. All the topics with their specific frames will then be analysed using the information from both the news articles together with the literature review and theory chapter.

5.1 Crisis frames in governmental communication

In the first part of the analysis I want to start by addressing the first research question that looked at how the Swedish government communicated during the first months (March - April) of the Covid-19 pandemic through the frames they used in their English press releases. After reading carefully all the texts and conducting the content analysis, I have uncovered four themes that the press releases focused on, where the frames suggested how those themes were to be perceived and interpreted. As I adopted a constructionist approach to this study, I will present and discuss each theme through the different frames it can contain. Other researchers also suggested the fact that a frame is not specifically linked to a particular topic, however a topic might be presented through several frames (Van Gorp, 2007). The themes that emerged from the Swedish press releases and that I will now explore are: government measures, government information, government collaboration and finally government advice.

5.1.1 Government measures

The most prominent theme that emerged from the Swedish government press releases is the ‘government measures’ topic shown through frames such as *attribution of responsibility (government)*, *leadership*, *morality* and *severity*. This theme shows the different governmental measures and strategies that were taken by the Swedish government regarding the Covid-19 crisis during the first months of the pandemic. It is also one of the success factors that previous studies depicted when communicating about risks with the society, showing how organisational planning and strategic decision making leads to a better risk communication (Boholm, 2019).

Attribution of Responsibility (Government)

The first frame that emerged is *attribution of responsibility (government)*. The attribution of responsibility shows an issue in a way that attributes responsibility for either causing or solving it to an individual or the government or group (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In this case, the responsibility for “solving” the Covid-19 pandemic was attributed to the government through the numerous measures they took and communicated about. For example, a press release by the Ministry of Finance (11 March, 2020) reports:

“The Government and relevant public authorities are monitoring the ongoing virus outbreak very closely and are ready to quickly take measures to strengthen the response to the outbreak as well as its consequences”

This shows how the government takes on full responsibility for helping to solve this crisis. In another press release by the Ministry of Culture (20 March, 2020) we can see this frame recurring:

“The Government will continue to engage in dialogue with relevant actors and to examine the support that may be needed as a result of the spread of the COVID-19 virus.”

The attribution of responsibility frame is created by how the Swedish government uses action verbs such as “monitoring” (Ministry of Finance, 11 March, 2020), “*will continue to engage*” (Ministry of Culture, 20 March, 2020), “*will provide*” (Ministry of Finance, 14 April, 2020) “*presented measures...to stop the spread of the virus*” (Ministry of Finance, 15 April, 2020) in their press releases taking responsibility for solving the crisis.

Leadership

Another frame that emerged from the text analysis consists this time of a frame specific to governmental crisis communication, called the *leadership* frame. The leadership frame shows the achievements of organisations during a crisis, such as leadership activities, reactions, and/or effectiveness (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014). In this case, I interpreted reactions as responses or governmental measures during a crisis. For example, the press release from the Ministry of Finance (11 March, 2020) shows what measures the government has and will take regarding Covid-19, especially seen throughout the texts' subheadings:

“Municipalities and regions will be compensated for extraordinary costs”,

“Relevant government agencies will be strengthened”,

“Financial support to individuals”,

“Measures ... to support companies affected financially”.

Moreover, this frame is also seen in the headlines of press releases such as *“Sickness benefit standard deduction temporarily discontinued”* (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 15 March, 2020), *“Medical certificate requirement... suspended”* (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 15 March, 2020), *“Crisis package”* (Ministry of Finance, 16 March, 2020) or *“SEK 1 billion to culture and sport”* (Ministry of Culture, 20 March, 2020). Additionally, a press release published by the Ministry of Employment (20 March, 2020) shows the response of the Swedish government to the current pandemic from phrases such as *“Sweden has taken forceful action ... to mitigate the impact”* or *“Social Funds programme to respond to the challenge facing the labour market”*. By using the leadership frame, the Swedish government can be interpreted by their audiences, whether national or international, as a leader that cares about its country, taking all the necessary measures to help contain the Covid-19 pandemic. This reaffirms the fact that during crises, people tend to look at the government for guidance, leadership and a return to stability (Liu et al., 2020) and that is what the Swedish government has done through their communication of measures against the new pandemic.

Morality

The next frame used to depict this topic is the *morality* frame. It was present only in the press releases from March, the first month of the Covid-19 pandemic. The morality frame describes an event or issue in the context of religiousness or moral prescriptions (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In our case, the morality frame shows the moral prescriptions of the Swedish government regarding the Covid-19 pandemic. For example, in a press release by the Ministry of Health and Social Affairs (15 March, 2020) we can read the quote:

“To reduce the risk of spreading infection, it is important that those who are sick do not go to work. In the current situation, it is reasonable for the central government to take financial responsibility for the first day of sickness to help individuals,”

This shows how the government acts according to moral obligations - ‘to help individuals’ - in times of a pandemic. Moreover, in the following days of March, press releases written by multiple Ministries show the moral prescriptions of the Swedish government with regard to Covid-19 pandemic: *“Government is prepared...to reduce the pressure on health and medical care services”* (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 15 March, 2020), *“to reduce the burden on health and medical care services”* (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 15 March, 2020), *“to protect essentially viable Swedish airlines”* (Ministry of Finance & Infrastructure, 18 March, 2020) and *“to alleviate the impact on the labour market”* (Ministry of Education and Research, Employment & Finance, 30 March, 2020). The communication by the Swedish government using the morality frame indicates that what governmental measures the Swedish government takes are based on their moral obligation towards the Swedish society - to help and lessen the burden of the new pandemic.

Severity

Lastly, the topic of governmental measures can be also interpreted with the lens of the severity frame. The severity frame is a crisis communication specific frame that describes the potential or actual destruction caused by a crisis (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014). The severity frame emerged in the second month (April) of the Covid-19 crisis, in two press releases given out by the Ministry of Finance on 14th and 15th of April. Both press releases contained phrases such as *“The ongoing pandemic is having a major impact on the Swedish economy”* (Ministry of Finance, 14 April, 2020) or *“The COVID-19 pandemic is a serious threat to people’s lives and health. Serious economic consequences will follow in its wake.”* (Ministry of Finance, 15 April,

2020) in their introduction showing from the start the actual and potential destruction caused by the covid-19 crisis.

Moreover, the latter press release, which also contained more information, showed other damages that the Covid-19 crisis created in Sweden, such as *“hitting the business sector very hard”*, through uncertainty and their employee wellbeing, unemployment, as *“many people are going to lose their jobs”*, the fact that *“domestic violence or honour-related violence and oppression”* can increase and that the *“public finances are expected to be considerably weakened during 2020 as a result of economic downturn and the measures taken so far by the Government to mitigate the effects of the outbreak”* (Ministry of Finance, 15 April, 2020). Having only two press releases that could be framed using the severity lens underlines the fact that the Swedish government communication was not inclined to portray the current pandemic from this standpoint, but rather presenting measures that would contain the crisis and assuring the audience of their leadership competence.

5.1.2 Government Information

The second theme that emerged is ‘government information’ depicted through the *economic consequence* frame. This result suggests that the Swedish government’s risk communication strategy towards their audiences was not only inclined to cover the measures they were taking to combat the Covid-19 crisis, but also to inform them about other aspects of the pandemic.

Economic Consequence

One such aspect that was used to describe this topic is the *economic consequence* frame. This frame shows the economic impact an issue, in this case crisis, has upon either individuals, groups, institutions, regions or countries (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). The economic consequence frame emerged from the first month of the pandemic, being noticed in the press release reported by the Ministry of Finance and Infrastructure (18 March, 2020):

“The ongoing spread of SARS-CoV-2 is hitting the transport industry hard, in particular the aviation industry. The demand for flights has essentially disappeared within a very short space of time. Many airlines are in an acute financial situation and are having difficulties securing loans on the capital market.”

After only two days another press release given by the Ministry of Culture (20 March, 2020) contained the phrase *“impact of the Covid-19 virus”* in its headline showing that the pandemic began to have an impact over the economy. Following press releases were framed in the same way with the recurring phrase *“impact of the virus”* (Ministry of Education and Research, Fiance & Employment, 30 March, 2020) or other phrases such as *“adversely affected by the coronavirus outbreak”* (Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, Finance & Foreign Affairs, 23 March, 2020) , *“individual employers affected by temporary and serious financial difficulties”* (Ministry of Enterprise and Innovation, 26 March, 2020), *“unemployment”* (Ministry of Finance, 15 April, 2020), *“extraordinary costs”* (Ministry of Finance, 2 April, 2020). This seemingly shows the economic impact a pandemic crisis exerts not only over a country, but also over individuals or other small to large organizations.

Nevertheless, the month of March has not seen a decline in the information the Swedish government provided about the economic consequences of the pandemic, as one of the press releases contained this frame in its headline *“Very serious situation for the global economy and the Swedish economy”* (Ministry of Finance, 31 March, 2020). The government informed the public about the economic consequences of the pandemic through the use of phrases such as *“the impact of COVID-19 on employment and welfare systems in EU Member States”* (Ministry of Employment, 20 March, 2020) or more specifically in the latter press release by the Ministry of Finance (31 March, 2020):

“The virus outbreak has had serious impact on economic growth both in Sweden and around the world”, “shock to supply and demand”, “level of uncertainty in the forecast is very high”, “the global economy, like the Swedish economy is expected to enter a recession”, “Swedish GDP ... to drop by 4 percent in 2020”.

This way of framing governmental information is for the audience to understand the economic impact a crisis such as the Covid-19 pandemic brings not only over a country such as Sweden, but globally, over the whole world.

5.1.3 Government collaboration

The third theme that emerged is collaboration shown through frames such as *collaboration* and *attribution of responsibility (organizations)*. This topic was very prominent in all press releases,

as they communicated specifically about the collaboration efforts between the Swedish government and other important actors.

Collaboration

One of the frames that can depict this topic entirely is the *collaboration frame*. This frame is a crisis communication specific frame showing the communication and coordination between various government and non-governmental agencies before, during and/or after crisis (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014). The collaboration that was mentioned in these press releases was of political nature, showing the partnership of both political parties inside of Sweden as well as between Sweden and other international actors when communicating about governmental measures and strategies regarding the Covid-19 crisis. Almost all press releases beginning from March 11 2020, started with the introduction or stated at the end of the press release that *“The proposal is based on an agreement between the Swedish Social Democratic Party, the Centre Party, the Liberal Party and the Green Party.”* (Ministry of Finance, 11 March, 2020). Moreover, the collaboration frame can also be seen from phrases such as *“Government and relevant public authorities”* (Ministry of Finance, 11 March, 2020), or *“The government...to reduce the pressure on health and medical care services”* (Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 15 March, 2020).

Yet, Covid-19 pandemic is a transboundary crisis, where collaboration is necessary not only inside a country but also on a global scale, showing how important this factor is for a successful risk communication (Boholm, 2019). The press release from the Ministry of Justice (27 March, 2020) restated this important aspect:

“The COVID-19 virus is a matter of international concern that requires cross-border cooperation and coordinated measures. Today’s decision is in line with the European Council’s and the European Commission’s call to EU Member States to introduce a temporary travel restriction on non-essential travel to the EU from third countries.”

Therefore, we can see that the collaboration frame is omnipresent in all Swedish government communication, referring to the importance of governmental coordination not only locally but also globally in times of a pandemic. As a result, we see the international cooperation between the Swedish government and other international actors from a press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry Health and Social Affairs (9 March, 2020): *“Government*

contributing SEK 40 million to WHO's emergency fund". Together with the quote from the same press release "*Health-related emergencies, such as the ongoing outbreak of COVID-19, must be handled jointly*", we see how the collaboration frame materialises in the texts.

Moreover, the Ministry of Finance (27 March, 2020) wrote in another press release about the importance of the collaboration between the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) and the Nordic-Baltic countries in the fight against coronavirus: "*Nordic-Baltic Ministers invite the Nordic Investment Bank, to take action*" (headline); "*The Governors urge the Bank to increase lending to the maximum level*". Thus, press releases show the importance of the cooperation between the Swedish government's different political parties, as well as other relevant Swedish institutions and other international actors such as the WHO or NIB to confront the new pandemic.

Attribution of responsibility (organizations)

The second frame that emerged from texts containing the 'collaboration' topic is *attribution of responsibility*. This time, the responsibility for solving the crisis was not only attributed to the Swedish government, like in the previous topic, however it included other international organisations such as the WHO or NIB. Quotes such as "*NIB to support sustainable business*", "*Bank seeks out businesses under strain and assist them in bridging the effects of the current crisis*", "*The Bank should support member states*" (Ministry of Finance, March 27, 2020) or "*Sweden is contributing to the global efforts to counter health threats*", "*The WHO must ensure preparedness across the world to reduce the risk of spreading the COVID-19 virus*" (Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, 9 March, 2020) show that not only is the Swedish government responsible for helping contain the crisis, but also through their collaboration, the WHO and NIB as well. As a result, the Swedish government's communication adopts one of the success factors of risk communication presented in the literature through their collaboration efforts and their assumption of responsibility to combat the Covid-19 crisis (Boholm, 2019).

5.1.4 Government advice

The last theme that surfaced after conducting a qualitative content analysis of the Swedish governmental press releases is ‘government advice’ depicted through the *advice* and *attribution of responsibility (individual)*.

Advice

One of the frames that had been used to describe this topic has not been introduced to the theory of framing yet, and it emerged after having an inductive approach to the analysing of the text. The *advice* frame suggests governmental or other relevant actors' information towards the public in the form of recommendations and advice to contain the spread of a crisis such as a pandemic. This frame was found in both press releases, thus having a high frequency and making it a strong frame for this topic. For example, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (14 March, 2020) published a press release where an advice was given to the public in order to avoid travelling abroad if possible:

“Who is planning to travel abroad should carefully consider the risks”, “Ministry of Foreign Affairs has formally advised against travel”, “the situation can change from one hour to the next”.

The second press release written by the same Ministry of Foreign Affairs (6 April, 2020) is a continuation of the first, where the travel advice is restated and updated:

“The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has extended the decision it took on 14 March 2020 to advise against non-essential travel to all countries so that it applies until 15 June 2020.”.

The advice theme and frame suggests that the Swedish government informed the public about their recommendations towards travelling in other countries during a pandemic. The information in both press releases was framed in such a manner that the audience would interpret it as to not travel abroad due to the risks imposed by the pandemic.

Attribution of Responsibility (Individual)

Moreover, the second frame that emerged is the attribution of responsibility frame regarding the individual. It was present only in the press release by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (14

March, 2020) and suggested that the responsibility for helping to solve or contain the crisis was not only attributed to the government or other important organisations, but also to the individual:

“Every traveller has the responsibility to...” “Anyone who belongs to a risk group should be particularly attentive”, “It is important that anyone planning to travel consults this information”.

Thus, the communication by the Swedish government in all their press releases contained the attribution of responsibility frame, whether to themselves, other organisations or individuals, showing that a health crisis is only possible to contain if everyone participates with their part, no matter how extensive it is.

5.2 Crisis Frames in the British Media

Having analysed how the Swedish government communicated to their English-speaking audience through the press releases they wrote and the frames they used, I will continue to see how the UK media portrayed Sweden in their media outlets by the frames they used to depict Sweden. After conducting a content analysis of the news articles written by different UK media outlets four different themes emerged: *Questioning the Swedish crisis strategy*, *Negative pandemic repercussions*, *Acknowledging the Swedish crisis strategy* and *Positive pandemic outcomes*. The news articles were divided between having a sceptical tone of voice towards the Swedish crisis strategy - especially in the first month of March and beginning of April -, while in the end of April, news articles were starting to acknowledge the fact that perhaps the strategy was not so reckless as it was seen before. Moreover, both the negative and few positive outcomes of the pandemic were explored by other news articles, such as how the society was drastically affected by the pandemic, but also how some companies made profit in these months. I will start by exploring each of these news article topics with the different frames that arose after analysing them.

5.2.1 Questioning the Swedish crisis strategy

The first theme that emerged in the British news articles consisted of questioning whether the Swedish crisis strategy was working or not through frames such as *conflict*, *sceptical leadership* and *attribution of responsibility*. All the articles having this topic contained a sceptical tone when reporting about how Sweden approached the crisis, comparing it to the UK, a country that has changed the strategy from being ‘soft’, to taking more stricter measures for containing the virus, such as putting people in quarantine.

Conflict

The *conflict* frame is a general theoretical frame that signifies a conflict between individuals, groups, institutions or countries (Semetko & Valkenburg). In this case, there was not a conflict per se, but rather a contradiction between two country’s strategies and between Swedish scientists and their country’s strategy. For example, headlines such as

“Swedish PM warned over ‘Russian roulette-style’ Covid-19 strategy; Health experts ‘deeply concerned’ about Sweden’s response” (Henley, 2020, March 23),

“Sweden snubs coronavirus lockdown with schools, restaurants still open; As coronavirus puts Europe under lockdown, Sweden stands apart with its ‘business as usual’ approach - but how long can it last?” (Habib, 2020)

or

“Graph shows Sweden's coronavirus death toll rapidly increasing compared to other countries; Prime minister opts against strict lockdown in contrast to neighbours” (Rathborn, 2020)

show from the very start that there is a conflict generated by Sweden’s ‘odd’ crisis strategy, not only among individuals inside of Sweden, but also among the two countries Sweden and the UK. However, this contradiction has even a much larger scale as Mail Online reports on 25 March: *“While most of Europe is firmly locked down,... Sweden is taking a softer line...”* (Butler, 2020). This means that as all countries have taken a similar approach to contain the cover-19 pandemic, Sweden has chosen a different path - a softer approach.

Nevertheless, most articles have reported the fact that more than 2000 doctors, scientists and professors have signed a petition to ask the Swedish government to take more measures, showing the conflict inside Sweden between the country's strategy and them:

"We're not testing enough, we're not tracking, we're not isolating enough - we have let the virus loose," said Prof Cecilia Söderberg-Nauclér, a virus immunology researcher at the Karolinska Institute. "They are leading us to catastrophe." (Robertson, 2020)

is a quote in the Guardian in their news article published on 30 March 2020. Moreover, in the same manner, another article written for the Guardian by Henley (2020, April 5) reports: *"The strategy has come under increasingly heavy fire from some of the country's health experts"*, showing the disagreement of some of Sweden's health experts regarding the country's approach to tackling the pandemic. This recurring frame shows how the UK media portrayed the Swedish strategy, having a questioning and sceptical tone of voice and always showing the contradiction that surrounded it.

Leadership

A second prominent frame arising from the articles questioning the Swedish strategy was the *leadership* frame. As we have seen from section 5.1, the leadership frame there is thus used to portray the response of the Swedish government to the Covid-19 pandemic. The leadership frame was used with a sceptical connotation by the UK media, as the news articles contained a lot of questioning and uncertainty surrounding the Swedish crisis strategy response. Therefore, I will argue to extend the leadership frame into *'sceptical leadership frame'* as to explicate the doubtful tonality used by the UK media. Therefore, the *sceptical leadership* frame in this case shows the achievements, responses and activities of an organization during a (health) crisis through a sceptical or questioning portrayal by the media. News articles that have shaped this topic using the sceptical leadership frame questioned the validity and success of the Swedish crisis strategy together with the Swedish government's approach and measures taken to contain the virus. Whereas countries around Europe and the UK - even Sweden's neighbours- have taken *"draconian measures"* (Lovett, 2020) to contain the virus, Sweden has had a *"relatively soft approach"* (Henley, 2020, April 5) when it came to their crisis management response:

"Unlike most EU countries, however - including its Nordic neighbours Denmark, Norway and Finland - it has not introduced stricter suppression and social distancing orders such as closing

bars, restaurants, non-essential shops and lower schools, nor has it placed citizens in near-total lockdown, as in Italy, Spain and France”. (Henley, 2020, March 23)

As all the countries around Europe had imposed lockdown, Sweden’s pubs and cafes “*remained full and packed with customers*” (Porter, 2020) and gatherings of up to 50 people were still allowed compared to Britain or Germany where only two people could meet up at the same time (Butler, 2020). A different usage of the leadership frame can be seen in this case, because the Swedish government has focused on taking mostly measures to save the economy, thus responding to the pandemic in that manner, whereas the UK media, depicted Sweden not through the economical aspect of their leadership response, but rather through questioning whether their approach and strategy was the right one.

Attribution of responsibility

Lastly, the third frame that arose the *attribution of responsibility*. This frame was mostly based on putting the responsibility on individual Swedes for helping to contain the pandemic. Compared to other countries that have taken stricter measures and were putting people under lockdowns, Sweden’s prime minister Stefan Löfven has asked the Swedish people to “*behave like adults*” and follow the government’s recommendations (Lovett, 2020). Sweden’s crisis strategy was thus questioned, because it has put the responsibility on its citizens for containing the virus as seen in some news articles, such as the Guardian or the Independent:

“The prime minister, Stefan Löfven, on Sunday night called on all Swedes to accept individual responsibility in stopping the rapid spread of the virus” (Henley, 2020, March 23);

“The government has tasked their population with judging social distancing for themselves” (Rathborn, 2020).

The UK media portrayed Sweden as a nation that trusts and relies on their citizens for helping to contain the virus by following their recommendations, however this approach was questioned by the media as we have seen from both the conflict and leadership frames. Compared to the Swedish government’s press releases that showed where their responsibility lied - helping the economy to function even in these times -, the UK media focused more on the other aspect of the Swedish strategy that was to require individual Swedes to take responsibility and follow the guidelines that would help contain the virus.

5.2.2 Negative pandemic repercussions

The second theme that emerged consisted of showing the negative repercussions of the pandemic through frames such as *severity* or *societal problems*.

Severity

The UK media used the *severity* frame to describe the negative consequences of the Covid-19 pandemic in Sweden through the use of headlines such as

“Heading towards disaster; Warning as Sweden snubs lockdown; Medics demand action; 563 more deaths in UK” in The Sun (Farrell, 2020) or

“Sweden records its deadliest week this century with 2505 fatalities as it continues to resist coronavirus lockdown” found in Mail Online (Howard, 2020).

The severity of the pandemic can also be seen through articles writing about the fact that the Swedish Public Health Agency has raised the risk level of contagion to *“very high”* (Pollard & Williams, 2020) in the beginning of the crisis - March -, whereas in the next month, April, the severity is emphasised through an article in the Guardian reporting that *“Sweden has passed the grim milestone of 1200 coronavirus deaths, far exceeding the tolls of its nearest neighbours”* (Henley, 2020, April 15). The UK media thus wants to depict through the use of the severity frame, how much the pandemic affected both countries and the negative repercussions that it brought with it, such as an increase in the number of deaths or total coronavirus cases.

Societal Problems

The *societal problems* frame is used to depict problems within the society, whether religious, cultural or socio-economic in regard to a pandemic crisis (Bardhan, 2001). News articles containing this frame show how the pandemic affected different parts of the society - mostly on the economic side - through the exemplification of the different companies that had to *“file for reorganisation”* as to avoid bankruptcy (Ringstrom, 2020, April 6), or companies that saw their *“profit fall as coronavirus impact spreads beyond Asia”* (Pollard & Hellstrom, 2020), but also the social side through articles, such as the one in the Guardian, reporting that *“healthy*

students who have been kept out of school by anxious parents have been threatened with referral to social services” (Henley, 2020, April 15).

By using the societal problems frame, the UK media provides their audiences with a possible interpretation of the negative consequences that the coronavirus brought. By looking at both the economy and the people that will become unemployed due to the restructuring of different companies, while providing an insight over other societal problems, such as parents that are frightened to let their children go to school, this frame constructs accurately what the negative repercussions of the pandemic are in Sweden.

5.2.3 Acknowledging the Swedish crisis strategy

The third theme that emerged the acknowledgment of the Swedish crisis strategy through frames such as *positive leadership, political/legal, medical*. Whereas in the first month of the crisis, March, and the beginning of April, most of the articles questioned the validity and reliability of the Swedish crisis strategy, as the rest of Europe and the world followed a different path, the end of April has brought a shift to the framing of the Swedish strategy. Articles have started slowly to ask again whether the Swedish strategy was right after all, as the rest of the countries were the ones who have chosen a wrong path.

Positive Leadership

This idea can be seen through the usage of the frame “positive leadership” that shows the achievements, responses and activities of an organisation during a health crisis through a positive and favourable portrayal by the media. Headlines of articles started to portray the Swedish crisis response in a good light:

“Why is Sweden still far BETTER in the coronavirus crisis than Britain - despite having NO lockdown? Case backs claim social distancing and hand washing was enough to flatten the curve” (Stickings, 2020) published in Mail Online or

“If Sweden succeeds, lockdowns will all have been for nothing” (Hannan, 2020) reported in The Telegraph.

By using the words “*better*” and “*no*” in capital letters, Mail Online emphasises the fact that even though the Swedish strategy response was “*softer*” than that of other countries, imposing no lockdowns, it was still ‘far better’ in the coronavirus crisis than UK - a country who chose stricter measures. Nevertheless, an article in the Independent shows the reason for why Sweden chose to have a softer strategy compared to other countries by reporting that “*the Scandinavian country introduced ‘trust-based’ measures*” that would mean offering people advice and recommendations rather than imposing lockdowns” (Osborne, 2020). What is more, the positive leadership frame is even further emphasised in an article written by the Telegraph that recognizes the fact that Sweden might have had a good strategy after all, being “*the control in an experiment*” of lockdowns and that if it succeeds, the “*lockdowns enthusiasts*” will “*never be able to claim that*” (Hannan, 2020). Thus, the UK media started to acknowledge the Swedish crisis strategy at the end of April, through the shift in the tone - from sceptical to positive - and through the positive leadership frames that they adopted in their articles.

Political/Legal

The political/ legal frame emphasises epidemic-related stories with political or legal intervention or diplomatic concerns in a national or global context (Bardhan, 2001). An article written by The Guardian in the first month of the crisis - March - shows how the pandemic in Sweden was strategically handled by the government through “*If War or Crisis Comes*” leaflets sent to Swedish households, preparing the citizens for a possible emergency (Braw, 2020). Starting with the headline:

“Swedes are expected to prepare for emergencies. Coronavirus shows why Britons should be too; When I suggested the UK adopt Swedish-style checklists, officials said they would cause panic” (Braw, 2020)

and continuing with the main idea of the article that “*Sweden, by contrast, has long had a policy of clearly telling its population about threats and preparedness*” (Braw, 2020) shows how the UK media acknowledges that the Swedish crisis strategy might work compared to how the UK handled the crisis.

Medical

The medical frame deals with new medical treatment or scientific research that could help handle the epidemic (Bardhan, 2001). As such, the main idea in the article written by Express

UK shows how the pandemic could be contained through the concept of “*herd immunity*”, where many people have had the virus and become immune to the disease (MacRae, 2020). The article goes on to cite “*Dr Anders Tegnell, the architect of Sweden's controversial strategy*” (MacRae, 2020), who states that if there are enough numbers of immune people around Stockholm, they will start to see an effect over the spread of the infection. As a result, by using both the legal/political frame and the medical frame to contour the topic of ‘acknowledging the Swedish crisis strategy’, the UK media offers the readers an interpretation of some relevant reasons that resulted in their shift of tonality from sceptical and questioning to being more open and positive towards the Swedish crisis strategy.

5.2.4 Positive aspects in times of a pandemic

The fourth and final theme that emerged consist of the positive aspects in times of a pandemic depicted through frames such as *economic consequence* and *human interest*. I left this theme for last as it was not included in many articles, however enough to provide the reader with a glimpse of light in these dark times.

Economic Consequence

The first frame that was used to depict this topic is the *economic consequence* frame. As we have seen from section 5.1.1, the economic consequence frame refers to the impact a crisis has on individuals or organizations. This frame was used here to depict positive economic outcomes of different firms or companies that were ‘thriving’ under a pandemic. From the headline “*Sweden’s Essity sees profit jump as pandemic drives hoarding*” (Ringstrom, 2020, April 14) found in one of the news articles written for Reuters UK, we can see how a Swedish company has increased its sales and profits due to the Covid-19 pandemic. If we go on to read the article, we discover that it is the hygiene sector that is thriving the most during this crisis, as people are more inclined to “*hoarding*” general and personal hygiene products (Ringstrom, 2020, April 14).

At the same time, in another article written for Reuters UK, the economic consequence frame was positively used to describe how demands for “*things related to the fact that people spend more time at home*” increased (Ringstrom, 2020, April 15). This demonstrates the fact that as some companies have seen a downfall during pandemic times, others have increased their demands in products and therefore profits, as people have changed their buying patterns -

showing that there can be positive economic aspects for some companies in times of health crisis.

Human Interest

The second and final frame is the *human interest* frame. The human interest frame emphasises an individual's story, or an emotional angle to an event issue or problem (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). In this case, UK media has highlighted the story of Princess Sofia who "*joined hospital staff as healthcare assistant*" in order "*to help them fight the pandemic*" (Mathers, 2020). The emotional angle of the human interest frame is also depicted in another headline written for the Mirror:

"Princess Sofia cuts down royal duties to take job in hospital fighting coronavirus; will be cleaning and helping with patient care at a hospital..." (Forsey, 2020).

By using the image of Princess Sofia, the UK media points out how Sweden has gathered all its forces to "*fight the Covid-19 pandemic*", showing that everyone has an important role to play in the containment efforts of the virus (Mathers, 2020).

Moreover, placing the Princess in the "*frontline*" (Mathers, 2020) together with other hospital staff, the UK media reminds us of the times of war, when having the king - now princess - near the troops was increasing soldiers' morale on the battlefield. Therefore, the role of the Princess is not merely to help out hospital staff in their daily duties, but also offering them morale while "*battling the infection*" (Mathers, 2020). All in all, UK media does not only portray the positive economic aspects during times of pandemic, but also favourable stories that show the implication of the royal Swedish family in helping the fight against the coronavirus pandemic.

6. Discussion

This chapter presents the reader with a discussion regarding the results of this study. Firstly I will discuss the topic of new emerging frames in the literature of framing health crises. Secondly I will look into the difference of frames between the Swedish government and the UK media, discussing possible reasons for this discrepancy. Lastly, I will consider what implications the difference in the frames between the two parties might impose on the Swedish public diplomacy.

6.1 New emerging frames

The results of the analysis chapter indicate the fact that new frames emerged in both the communication of the Swedish government, but also UK media news articles. Firstly, the Swedish government communicated the attribution of responsibility frame in three ways - to attribute responsibility to the government, individuals and organisations - for helping to contain the crisis. Each usage of the frame was different depending on the topic in discussion. In this way, when communicating about the governmental measures, the Swedish government attributed the responsibility to themselves for helping to contain the virus. When looking at the collaboration topic, the attribution of responsibility was also put on other international organisations to solve the crisis and when looking at the advice the government gave out to the public, the responsibility was on the individual, which is also one of the strategies to contain the spread of a crisis. This shows the fact that the Swedish government included factors of success in their risk communication strategy through the exemplification of their strategy by attributing responsibility to each actor in the society as well as the constant collaboration among them to contain the virus (Boholm, 2019).

Moreover, by offering recommendations to the public in their press releases, a new frame emerged out of the text analysis: advice frame. The advice frame reveals organisational or media communications about recommendations or other types of advice towards the population

to help contain the spread of a health pandemic / crisis. Since the literature on organisational framing is only beginning to develop, with studies exploring what frames were used in other health pandemics such as the H1N1, it is critical to provide the existing literature with an extension of the framing theory, as it will better allow future researchers and studies to identify how organisations narrate their viewpoints of critical issues such as crises (Liu & Kim, 2011). In future health pandemics or other crises, it will be interesting to see whether the government or other relevant authorities will have learned from the Covid-19 pandemic and will use the advice frame to communicate recommendations or other advices to the public to stop the spread of the pandemic or mitigate the risks of a crisis.

Lastly, the content analysis of the news articles written in the UK media showed two new frames materialising. Both frames have a link to the leadership frame, however due to the news articles tonality surrounding the leadership frame, I have noticed the surfacing of two different frames. The first one represents the sceptical and questioning tonality that the media exposes regarding the responses or actions of an organisation towards a health crisis or general crisis, naming it the sceptical leadership frame. This frame has cropped up after analysing UK news articles that were from their headlines questioning the Swedish crisis strategy and always wondering if Sweden has taken a proper path to contain the virus. Moreover, this frame was strengthened by the conflict frame, which mostly showed a disagreement between different parties that were handling the crisis - from local, within Sweden, to global, among countries. Whereas scientists in Sweden have condemned the government for not taking enough measures to contain the virus, headlines of UK news media articles were portraying Sweden as the “odd man” for not having a similar crisis strategy response as other countries (Butler, 2020).

Yet, in the second month of the pandemic, April, the UK media began to shift their tonality in regards to the Swedish strategy thus giving birth to the other frame: the positive leadership frame. The positive leadership frame emphasises a positive tonality of the media in regards to organisational responses or actions towards a health crisis or general crisis. The shift in tonality appeared as a result of noticing that Sweden, even without a lockdown, did not have a higher mortality rate than other European countries or as high as a study conducted by the Imperial College of London predicted (Hannan, 2020). Not only that, but UK media articles started to question the possibility of Sweden as being the “*control*” in an experiment of lockdowns (Hannan, 2020). As a result, both versions of the leadership frame are used by the media depending on the situation and success of a country’s strategy towards handling a crisis. If a

country is perceived as failing it will be described using the sceptical leadership frame, whereas if it is seen as a success and model for other countries to follow it will be depicted with the positive leadership frame.

6.2 Difference in the Swedish Government frames and UK media frames

The results of the analysis suggest that there is a clear difference in the way Swedish government used crisis frames to communicate to their audiences and the way UK media communicated about Sweden and its strategy. While Sweden has focused mostly on promoting frames such as attribution of responsibility, leadership, collaboration and economic consequence to their publics, the UK media has mostly focused on both skeptical and positive leadership, conflict and individual attribution of responsibility frames, and societal problems frame to depict Sweden and its strategy. The reason for the difference in the frames used by the Swedish government and UK media to communicate about the coronavirus pandemic can have two possible explanations:

1. The media focuses on controversial topics
2. A misunderstanding or miscommunication of the UK media and the Swedish government, due to a different political culture

As we have seen from previous literature, mass media enjoys focusing on controversial topics in order to gain more publicity (Sell et al., 2016). In this case, Sweden has adopted a different crisis strategy compared to other countries making it stand out from the crowd. The UK media thus promoted a conflict frame combined with a sceptical leadership frame to emphasise this aspect and offer their audiences a way to interpret Sweden as the “*odd man*” (Butler, 2020). Therefore, the Swedish crisis strategy was a controversial topic for the UK media as there was no sure answer of whether it is going to be successful or not, as only time could tell. As such, in the first month of the crisis, the media had a questioning tone when depicting the Swedish strategy, as every country around the world affected by this pandemic were taking different measures compared to them. Moreover, the study revealed by the Imperial College together with the critiques of the Swedish scientists towards the Swedish crisis strategy were reinforcing the media’s convictions that Sweden was the one who would fail. Yet, as time went on and the next month of the crisis came, the media was not seeing the predictions it had reported a month

before, but rather started asking if Sweden's strategy was the right one and the rest of the world was wrong all this time. As a result, the controversial topic that the media focused during these two months consisted of the Swedish strategy. The media did not report exactly what the Swedish government communicated through their English press releases, but rather used their own frames to portray the strategy as either unsuccessful or successful depending on how the containment of the crisis was perceived.

Secondly, the difference in frames could also stem from the fact that the UK media has misunderstood or misinterpreted the messages sent out by the Swedish government through their English press releases due to a different political culture in relation to the crisis, suggested by Entman's cascading model (2008). In other words, the UK's government conducted a different strategy than Sweden in regards to containing the spread of the pandemic, meaning that their policies were far from similar, where the UK adopted stricter measures, Sweden was using a 'softer' approach. Studies have shown that this misunderstanding or miscommunication of information can stem from the fact that governmental messages can be interpreted differently in other countries, or that information meant for national audiences reaches international audiences as well (Cincotta, 2004; Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014). Nevertheless, such a misunderstanding can also occur due to the different political attitudes or cultures in two countries. In this case, the Swedish government has communicated their crisis strategy through attribution of responsibility, leadership and collaboration frames, the UK media has focused on what the government did not communicate, which is about the critiques it faced from both national and international actors as well as more stricter measures like in other countries.

What the Swedish government could have done differently in this case was to clearly communicate their actions through their English press releases and offer reasons for why they chose this strategy compared to other countries. Moreover, they could have specifically addressed the issue of the critiques they faced from the Swedish scientists regarding the crisis strategy through a well-written press release, because a high number of articles in the UK media were reporting about this 'conflict'. As this information was missing in the Swedish government's English press releases and the media enjoys focusing on controversial topics, there was a difference in the frames used by the Swedish government and UK media. All in all, this shows how important it is to have a clear communication between any government and international media, otherwise challenges can arise for the public diplomacy of the country as we shall see in the next part.

6.3 Implications of the UK media frames on Swedish public diplomacy

The research shows that during times of crises - such as a health crisis-, public diplomacy of a country can experience different challenges. As governments are inclined to communicate nationally to contain the spread of a virus, their public diplomacy efforts would be put to halt. The discrepancy in the frames used by both the Swedish government and the UK media create an unnecessary conflict between people of the two countries. Especially during times of a global crisis, when people should be united to overcome the difficulties imposed by a pandemic, the media's representation of different frames could offer disagreements between people of two different nations, who will argue for maintaining their country's reputation.

Moreover, Entmans' cascading model (2008) that theorizes ingredients to a successful public diplomacy cannot be fully represented in the case of a crisis. Thus, the environment in which public diplomacy takes place vitally matters when trying to theorize this concept. Especially when a country's crisis strategy stands out from the crowd it is worthy to report about in the international media, as it is perceived as a controversial topic. As such, the way UK media depicted Sweden throughout the first two months of the pandemic is a way of influencing foreign publics about their perceptions of Sweden. Thus, even without a real public diplomacy issue in focus, the fact that UK media wrote about Sweden in their news articles, while using different frames to describe their topics, could have an implication for the Swedish public diplomacy and create an unnecessary societal conflict.

That is due to the fact that media is the first place people will turn to for more information and updates regarding a crisis and also it is a means of influencing people's opinions, perceptions and behaviours about it through the coverages and frames they expose (Khakimova-Storie et al., 2014, Quigley et al., 2016; Rousseau et al., 2015). As frames did not manage to 'travel' from Sweden to the UK without any difficulties, also because of two different political attitudes regarding the coronavirus pandemic, Swedish public diplomacy can experience several implications. From previous literature and the theory used in this research, I will argue that the implications on the Swedish public diplomacy of the UK media frames is twofold. On the one hand, Sweden's national brand can be influenced by how foreign audiences interpreted the UK news articles through their frames. On the other hand, UK media frames can have repercussions on Sweden's country reputation. Thus, consequences for both the national brand and country

reputation of Sweden can arise as a result of the UK media frames. That is because framing has both persuasive powers as well as influence over audiences' thoughts, ideas and attitudes (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009).

In our case, the way UK media framed a topic linked to Sweden and their strategy during the first months of the coronavirus pandemic offered audiences a specific viewpoint of the Scandinavian country, where the focus laid on presenting Sweden through the lenses of conflict, skeptical leadership and societal problems at first. However, during the second month of the crisis, UK media shifted their framing of Sweden to offer a more positive tonality to their audiences, thus using frames such as positive leadership and human interest. A recent study showed that Sweden cares about its national image (Pamment et al., 2017) and the fact that the UK media portrayed the country using different frames than the Swedish government suggests that Sweden's public diplomacy experiences challenges during times of health crisis. However, the country's image of "open, authentic, caring and innovative" (Pamment et al., 2017) was reintroduced through the UK media frames in second month of the crisis, when the media started to acknowledge the fact that Sweden could have been right all along and that other countries chose the wrong strategy to handle the crisis.

All in all, the research shows how during a health crisis the public diplomacy of a country can experience different implications caused by a discrepancy in the frames used by it and the media in another country. In our case, the discrepancy in the frames between the Swedish government and UK media resulted as a failure of their 'traveling' from one country to the other due to reasons such as a media focus on the controversial topics and a misunderstanding or miscommunication of the Swedish government information by and to the UK media. As the media is a volatile entity (Quigley et al., 2016), frames can shift from one month to the other imposing challenges on a country's public diplomacy. That is why it is critical for governments to monitor international media and see if any miscommunications arise between them and foreign journalists, offering clear communicative materials, and explicate internationally, in an understandable manner, their policies to contain the crisis. Even more in times of transboundary crises, when events in one country can have an impact on another.

7. Conclusion

The study at hand contained a threefold purpose. The first was to explore how the Swedish government framed the coronavirus crisis through their English press releases and then how the UK media framed Sweden based on their crisis response. The second was to contribute to the existing literature of framing health crises by both organisations and the media. Lastly, I wanted to see what implications a discrepancy in the frames communicated by both the government and the media impose on the country in focus. By using both a deductive and inductive approach combined with a social constructionist perspective, I have conducted a content analysis of the Swedish government English press releases and the news articles reported by the UK media in the first two months of the coronavirus pandemic: March and April, permitting me to answer the study's two research questions. At the same time, this allowed me to fulfil the first two purposes of this research.

The results showed that the Swedish government focused on frames such as attribution of responsibility (government, individual and organisation), leadership, collaboration, economic consequences and the new emerging frame of advice when communicating through their press releases revealing the fact that their crisis strategy was to inform the society about the economic consequences of the crisis and of the different measures they adopted to contain the spread of the virus. Moreover, through the emergence of the advice frame I have provided current literature in organizational framing with an additional frame that allows future studies to analyse organizational narrations of their viewpoints on health crises. When looking at the framing of the UK media, it focused on different frames in the first month, presenting Sweden and their strategy through conflict, sceptical leadership, attribution of responsibility (individual) and societal problems, thus creating a discrepancy in the frames used by them and the Swedish government. Yet, the media's volatility resulted in a shift of tonality in the second month of the crisis reinforcing the Swedish national image through frames such as positive leadership and human interest.

Moreover, looking at the bigger picture and to achieve the third purpose of this study, I have explored several implications to the public diplomacy of Sweden as a result of the difference in

frames. These implications were possible as audiences are influenced by the frames the media portrays, especially during times of crisis, when the media is the first source of information people turn to. As a result of the failure in the ‘traveling’ of the frames from Sweden to the UK, the foreign audiences would have created a different interpretation of the crisis situation in Sweden, thus creating consequences for both the country’s national image and reputation and in turn impose challenges for Sweden’s public diplomacy. Moreover, an unnecessary conflict between the people of the two societies would be created. To overcome these challenges and to be prepared for the volatile aspect of the media, the governments are advised to monitor the information sent out to the public by international media and resolve any miscommunications or misunderstandings that exist between them and the media.

7.1 Future research recommendations

This study focused on how the Swedish government framed their risk communication through the press releases they sent out and how the UK media then framed Sweden and their strategy in the news articles. The study contained a timespan of only two months, thus focusing on the inception of the pandemic, during the first months of the crisis. In future research, it will be interesting to extend the framing analysis to contain the whole crisis and see if there were other shifts in the tonality of the UK media or if the Swedish government communicated differently using other or more frames. Moreover, it will be interesting to research exactly what impacts these frames had on the public diplomacy of Sweden, if any. Lastly, future research could also work with Entman’s cascading model to develop a way of properly addressing discrepancies in existing frames between an organization, mostly the government, and the international media as this can create critical implications for a country’s public diplomacy.

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