**DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE**

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# TURNING TO POPULISM

A Qualitative Content Analysis If, When and How The Social Democrats and Moderate Party have adapted to populist communication.

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# Abstract

This thesis analyzes the possible development of the Social Democrats and Moderate Party and if these have adapted toward a more populist communication. This is achieved by taking the existing research on political competition, when and how parties adapt, and combine with the theoretical framework on populist communication by Jagers and Walgrave (2007). By comparing the two parties and using qualitative content analysis, the empirical material consists of speeches from Almedalen stretching from 2012 to 2021. The results show that while there were some populist tendencies. The Social Democrats hadn't adapted toward populist communication. This did both correspond with and against the previous research. In contrast, The Moderate Party had turned toward a more populist communication. It corresponded with the factors facilitating party change as suggested by the study, in 2016 after electoral loss and change of party leader. Furthermore, this thesis hasn't just showcased the development of the two biggest political parties in Sweden but also that the factors facilitating a shift in policies can explain a change in communication.

Keywords: The Social Democrats, Moderate Party, Populist Communication, Almedalen.

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# 1. Introduction

When Mudde (2004) "defined the undefinable" and provided a consensus in the debate of what populism is, he also deemed it contagious, and that Western Europe would witness a "populist zeitgeist." While researchers questioned this future vision (see Rooduijn, 2013; Rooduijn et al., 2014), we have seen an upswing in populist parties across Western Europe, gaining electoral success and policy influence. Even if their support and success have stagnated slightly, they still pose an electoral threat and have forced established parties to adjust their positions and adapt to a new contender (Rooduijn, 2014; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). This upsurge of populist parties has, in turn, caused the research to once again spurge. Still, it fails to recognize how established parties react and possibly adjust their communication toward populism.

This thesis combines two fields of scholars. Firstly, the research on party competition and when and how parties adjust their positions towards electoral challenges. The study suggests three distinct occasions when parties are more prone to change, after elections where the party has experienced a loss of voters, a change of party leader, and public opinion (Downs, 1957; Harmel and Janda, 1994; Adams and Topcu, 2009). Secondly, the research also recognizes how parties adapt and change differently. Right-wing parties were quicker and more rapid in their adaption of populist tendencies, while Social Democratic was more cautious, dependent on what the other established parties did (Harmel and Svåsand 1997; Bale et al., 2010). In addition, the research on populist communication is often characterized by defining the concept and its core. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) developed a theoretical concept that makes it possible to measure populist communication within political parties. The identified research gap is that research on when and how parties adapt has focused exclusively on policy and given the success of populist parties, are yet to combine these two scholars to see if the parties adapt their communication at the same time and pace as they would in terms of the policy.

The research on populist parties and their impact in Sweden have primarily focused on why populist parties have experienced low success rates (Rydgren, 2002, 2010). This thesis investigates the two biggest parties in Sweden, the Social Democrats (S) and the Moderate Party (M). Since the Swedish Democrats (SD)[1] entered parliament in 2010, both parties have

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[1] Important to note is that the shortening for SD stands for Social Democrats in English literature. Since, this thesis primary is directed to a Swedish audience, SD will be shortened for the Swedish Democrats.

experienced electoral loss and a change of party leader, which would indicate a shift in strategy. Thus, there is an overall need to investigate how parties have behaved and possibly adapted since the entry of the Swedish Democrats (Strömbäck and Dahlgren, 2016). With this in mind, this thesis aims to answer the following questions:

*Have the Social Democrats and the Moderate Party adapted toward a more populist communication? And if this is the case, when and how did the change occur?*

This thesis is highly relevant from an academic perspective regarding the development during past years. Populism has been described as a threat to liberal democracy. While populism and populist communication aren't considered an ideology or policy, communication is an essential tool for attracting voters and is regarded as the mode that connects politicians with their audience (Rooduijn, 2013). Therefore, this thesis's aim and theoretical relevance are not merely to look if S and M have developed more towards populist communication but also to combine the existing research on political competition and the adaptiveness of established parties with the research on populist communication. By doing so, I contribute to the understanding if the same factors and occasions that facilitate a party to adapt their policies could facilitate a change in communication. This will be achieved by implementing a comparative design, combined with qualitative content analysis, and looking at the speeches made by respective party leaders at Almedalen from 2012 to 2021.

## 1.1 Outline

The next chapter provides definitions of two reoccurring terms, populism and established parties. The third chapter outlines the contemporary research on how established parties adapt and the theoretical concept of populist communication. This is followed by the relevance to conducting in the case of Sweden and the identified research gap. The fourth chapter contains the method, design, material, and selected parties. The fifth chapter analyzes the empirical material, which will follow a chronological timeline from 2012 to 2021. The sixth chapter offers some conclusions, a discussion of the result, and suggestions for further research. Lastly, the references are addressed.

# 2. Definitions

This chapter presents the definitions of populism and established parties.

## 2.1 Populism

Populism is a contested subject within political science, and researchers have difficulties reaching a consensus (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017). Populism has been viewed as a political style, strategy, and ideology (Weyland, 1999; Taggart, 2000; Jungar, 2017). To reach some consensus regarding the concept of populism, Mudde (2004) took on the challenge of what he refers to as "defining the undefinable." He defined populism as:

> A thin ideology that considers society to be ultimately separated into two homogenous and antagonistic groups, "the pure people" versus "the corrupt elite," and which argues that politics should be an expression of volonté générale (general will) of the people (Mudde, 2004:543).

Jagers and Walgrave (2007) developed their concept of populist communication strategy, which will be addressed later. Through this definition, populism is viewed as a "thin-centered ideology" that separates society into two separate groups, the "true people" versus "the corrupt elite" (Mudde, 2004). In this thesis, I will use Muddes' definition, which will prove advantageous in numerous ways. First, it is the most well-agreed upon definition among researchers today. Secondly, it doesn't possess any political color. Therefore, it can be found on both the left and right sides of political parties, which will be an advantage when looking at the Social Democrats and Moderate Party. Lastly, it is considered "a minimal definition," appropriate for usage when conducting comparative research over time and, therefore, serves the purpose of this thesis well (Mudde, 2004; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017).

## 2.2 Established/Mainstream parties

The terms established or mainstream are frequently used in this thesis, so a definition would be in order. The definition originates from the one used by Akkerman et al. (2016), which considered two elements necessarily. First, it considers the center-left and center-right parties like Social Democrats, Liberals, and Conservatives, who focus on socio-economic issues rather than cultural. Secondly, established parties oppose and reject the agenda of anti-establishment and anti-democratic ideas, which are one of the two elements that populist parties are founded and thrive on (ibid).

# 3. Previous research and theoretical concepts

This section presents the previous research surrounding when and how established parties react and adapt to new competitors and populist parties, affecting the study period. The theoretical concepts of populist communication are addressed and with its framework. The relevance of conducting this research in the case of Sweden is addressed. Finally, the research gap and contribution of this thesis are highlighted.

## 3.1 When parties adapt

For someone outside politics or not studying it, the notion might be that political parties are actors stuck in their lane, repeating the same messages from their agenda, which is set in stone and shaped from their ideological core. The reality is the complete opposite. Political parties are mobile actors seeking to enhance further and influence their politics, gaining more votes and staying competitive. The research concerning political competition is well developed. Downs (1957) provided an early insight into this field, suggesting that political parties frequently adapt and change their positions concerning the electoral outcome.

The research agrees that the most defining moment a political party change or react are after an election (Downs, 1957; Adams and Topcu, 2009; Abou-Chadi, 2016; Abou-Chadi and Krause, 2018). An election provides a definite picture how the party performed and if they were on the right path. When a party loses votes or even governmental power, they experience external pressure, realizing that they have been in the wrong direction and, in response, turn to another strategy (Harmel and Janda, 1994; Rooduijn et al., 2014). This response is a way of staying competitive and avoiding losing even more ground (Meguid, 2005). Rooduijn (2013) showed that when established parties lose voters to a populist competitor, the established party is more prone to adapt to populism. Parties may believe that by implementing the same method of criticizing "the elite" and emphasizing the importance of bringing power back to the people, they would win back the voters (Rooduijn, 2013).

Elections provide an actual receipt of how the party has performed, and even if the research recognizes it as the primary facilitator, it does not always act alone. Demker (1997) looked at the French Gaullist party from 1947 to 1997 to identify an ideological shift.She identified that while electoral setbacks are necessary for ideological adaption, they are insufficient. The Gaullist party changed its ideology on four occasions. All came after electoral losses, two of

them were preceded by changes in the political system, and two were internal changes within the party structure. The latter is what Harmel and Janda (1993) recognized, where they found internal factors, such as pressure or voices raised for a leadership change, can facilitate a new strategy. This situation somewhat depends on the party currently performing poorly in the previous election. Someone must assess the poor electoral performance and improve the parties' chances in the next election. This aligns with Demker's (1997) conclusion that electoral loss combined with internal changes, such as party leader, will lead to parties adapting.

Finally, Adams et al. (2004) found that, in between elections, public opinion or opinion polls could be other factors facilitating party change. This provides the party with cues and hints on how they are performing in between elections (ibid). While they give the party an updated picture of the current state, they should be carefully viewed. Political parties are mobile actors, and so are citizens, changing their views on what issues are currently important (Van Der Velden et al., 2017).

## 3.2 How parties adapt

Populist parties separated themselves from established parties by being smaller in voter share initially. They compete on issues related to culture and immigration rather than traditional socio-economic issues (Mudde, 2004; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Akkerman et al., 2016). Still, they have gained momentum and growth across Western Europe rapidly and provide a new challenge for established parties to deal with. The electoral success of populist parties has given the established parties on the right a further incentive to shift their policies towards that of the populist party. Abou-Chadi (2016) suggests that the populist parties have had a profound impact on how established parties changed and reacted. Right-wing parties who experienced electoral loss were more prone to change rapidly (ibid). Harmel and Svåsand (1997) identified the same pattern when investigating how the two conservative parties in Norway and Denmark changed their ideological core and identity concerning losing voters to the progressive parties. They concluded that given the two conservative parties' popularity at that time, their rapid change seemed desperate and an attempt not to lose even more competitiveness. Harmel and Svåsand (1997) ended their article by stating that the two progress parties' impact might change the party system and competition in their respective countries for decades to come (ibid).

Previous paragraphs outlined how right-wing parties adapted, this is not to say that Social Democratic parties would do nothing. Established parties react by changing their positions or policies concerning populist parties, and this affects the whole political elite, as populists themselves would call it, not just the moderate-right (Abou Chadi and Krause 2018). Bale et al. (2010) looked at Social Democratic parties since the emergence of populist parties pose new and different challenges to the center-left. The author says that while populist parties compete on issues related to immigration and integration, which has traditionally been owned by the right and therefore increasing the salience. The real threat is that they steal voters belonging to the working class, usually found on the left on the political scale, and they can be a new coalition partner and facilitate center-right governments (ibid). The conclusion suggests that the response toward the populist right and questions surrounding immigration and integration is not uniform. As the authors call it, they mix and match strategies while still clinging to their original values.

Social Democratic parties are not simply affected by the emergence of populist parties at the same pace or rate. Instead, they look to what the center-left parties and what their main rival on the right does. Topcu and Adams (2009) suggested established parties react within their ideological family and their main competitors. So, unlike right-wing parties, Social Democratic parties analyze how and what the other center-left parties do before adjusting their positions. The differences between parties can also be seen in parties that hold governmental power and parties in opposition. Spanje (2010) assesses that parties in government have less incentive to adapt or change than the opposition. This relates to the electoral outcome, where Abou-Chadi (2016) continues the same path by saying that winners and losers of an election have different incentives to adapt. This does not mean that parties in government don't recognize the threat posed by the populist parties. As Spanje (2010) outlined, they are slower to adapt but not immune. Suppose a populist party continues to be successful on an anti-establishment and anti-immigration agenda. The parties, not just in opposition but also in government, will have further incentives to change their positions.

### 3.2.1 Summary of when and how parties adapt

To summarize this section. The research agrees that parties change when they experience external factors, loss of voters, or governmental power. When combined with internal pressure and change of party leaders, it will always lead to adapting its positions. Public opinion and opinion polls provide insight between elections but should be carefully viewed since viewers change their views depending on critical current issues. Left and Right-wing parties also behave differently. Right-wing parties adapted more rapidly and quicker, while the Social Democratic parties were more reluctant and affected what the other established parties and the parties to the left did. Parties in government didn't adapt at the same rate as parties in opposition, but if a populist party continues to succeed, all parties have incentives to adapt. This section has addressed when and how parties change policy and ideological positioning. While this thesis primarily focuses on their communication, this will impact the selected period of study, which will be addressed later.

## 3.3 Populist communication

The research on when and how parties adapt has focused exclusively on policy and ideology. Populism can't be considered either of those by itself. A "thin-center ideology" depends on other ideologies to flourish. In that sense, populism can be found on both left and right sides by any ideological group to mobilize support (Mudde, 2004; Baker, 2019). Populism has been challenging to define, and the branch of populist communication is not different. Communication is regarded as the strategy for attracting voters, and this can be shown in different ways (Rooduijn, 2013). Moffitt and Tormey (2014) identified differences in the harshness and tone between populist politicians and "ordinary politicians." There is also a geographical element where, particulate in South America, a charismatic leader is considered a defying characteristic of populist communication (Reinmann et al. 2016; Mudde and Katlwasser). These concepts could be considered a type of communication, depending on what you focus on as a researcher. They do not suit the aim of this thesis. As Rooduijin (2013) points out, they do not see populist communication as a characteristic of a specific message being sent but more as a characteristic of actors sending it. They would prefer if the aim were to distinguish how two populist politicians might differ in their communication.

This thesis will use the definition and concepts deriving from Jagers and Walgrave (2007). They developed their concepts from Mudde's (2004) definition, the people versus the elite. Regarding this, they identified that all forms of populism must be rooted in an appeal, in some way, to the people and saw populist communication as "a political communication style that refers to the people." This problem is that appealing to the people is a vague and blurred definition that deems every politician or party as populist. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) developed the term thin populism. As the name revel, it is a part of populism or a step toward populism, but the authors consider it empty, a necessary first step but not enough. So, if thin populism refers to the people, what refers to the elite? As a complement, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) developed thick populism and identified anti-establishment and exclusion as the central concepts. Anti-establishment is defined as deliberate attacks on the identified elite and exclusion, deeming some as "the others" and not part of "the people" (ibid). To use the author's words, "thick populism fills the empty shell of thin populism" (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007), and when combined, we can speak of complete populism and the distinction between the people versus the elite is achieved.

While there are other concepts of populist communication that, as a researcher, one must consider, this definition developed by Jagers and Walgraves (2007) provides us with a straightforward and easy-to-follow framework that allows us to identify the different parts of populist communication. The concepts and content of thin and thick populism will be further elaborated below, followed by a simplification of the theoretical framework (see figure I).

### 3.3.1 The People

The term "the people" considers one homogenous category of people who share the same interest and features (Mudde, 2004; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). When politicians refer to "the people," it is a strategy to show affection, "I speak for you," or "I know what you want." It is a way of showing closeness toward ordinary people (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). Referring to the people is a simplification of reality. The central message is that the corrupt elite has stolen the power, and must be transferred back to the people. Appealing to the public is the cornerstone of populism. It is the necessary first step, and without it, populism is non-existent. The term has raised some controversy, and some researchers have argued that the term is too vague and unspecific to be regarded as the core of populism. At the same time, other means that it is precisely this interpretation and vagueness that is its strength. It can

serve as a signifier and pinpoint the researcher towards what is essential and not in the material when looking for populism (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Reinman et al., 2016; Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017).

Jager and Walgrave (2007) refer to the people as a thin concept. This is because the idea of only referring to the people deems every party and politician as a populist since there isn't one political that hasn't, in some way, appealed to the people. Opposition parties do so more frequently since they criticize the government for its development (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Reinmann et al., 2016). Therefore, thin populism is necessary to identify thick populism, and it acts as a facilitator or preselector (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). By looking after thin populism in the selected empirical material, I will choose relevant paragraphs in each separate speech to further look for references and appeals to anti-establishment and exclusion. These two components will be further assessed in different sections below.

### 3.3.2 Anti-Establishment/ The Elite

Mudde and Kaltwssser (2017) conclude that unlike "the people," anti-establishment or elite has received little attention, and not many have theorized about its meanings and interpretations. The authors do not have a straightforward answer to why this is, but perhaps it is because, unlike the people, it is clearer what the establishment or elite is (ibid). So, who is considered the elite? Firstly, as the term elite or establishment might intend, the elite is defined on their basis of power. This does not just mean within politics but within the society. Depending on who you ask, the elite can be found within politics, media, state, music, and other cultural or societal institutions (Mudde, 2004; Müller, 2016). Even though anti-establishment cannot be exclusively reserved for populism alone, most radical political movements are driven by anti-elitism views and feelings. And if we circle back to Mudde (2004), who's the definition of populism originates from, he considered anti-elitism as a central aspect of populism.

Jagers and Walgrave (2007) identify three types of criticism of the establishment. Firstly, Anti-State focuses on the state's failure and its institutions for failing its citizens and guaranteeing the required services. Secondly, Anti-Politics, where hostility or antagonistic references are diverted not towards the content of the policies but attacks on politicians, parties, or entire democratic systems. Lastly, Anti-Media, where the complaint is shifted

towards journalists, newspapers, or TV stations for being politically biased or avoiding reporting on a specific issue. The critique differs and is formulated differently, deepening on to whom is it focused, and this will be specific more thoroughly in the analytical framework. The general definition is that the elite is blamed and accused of betraying the people and abusing their power and positions (Mudde, 2004; Wirth et al., 2016).

### 3.3.3 Exclusion/The Others

There have been some questions if exclusion should be an element of their own, integrated with the people, or not be present at all. While some don't see them as relevant to the core of populism but rather as an element included in the branches of right-wing populism (Rooduijn, 2013; Wirth et al., 2016). Reinmann et al. (2016) address that exclusion is not a separate element of populism but an integral part of the people. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) state that given this ambiguity surrounding the exclusion, some uncertainty exists over how it shall be measured. The term refers to "the dangerous others," those not part of "the people." They don't share the true values or characteristics of the people. It emphasizes a gap between the others and the people, and their values are considered wrong or irreconcilable with those of the people (Mudde, 2004; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007).

The other is blamed for the misfortune of the people. This could take an economic perspective (they take our jobs) or cultural (our values) but also be perceived as a threat to our security, which can also imply criminals whose values and actions go against the people (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Reinman et al. 2016). This latter is essential, and it is crucial to note that when discussing and searching after reference to the others or exclusion, not just to think that this refers to refugees or immigrants, which often is the case when talking about populism in Western Europe since this is more characterized by xenophobic values than anywhere else (Mudde and Kaltwasser, 2017; Jungar, 2017).

### 3.3.4 Thin and Thick populism

Before we sum up this chapter, the concepts of thin and thick will be addressed one last time to clarify this relationship. With Muddes's (2004) definition of populism, Jagers and Walgrave (2007) identified the three components above as the core of populist communication. Thin populism, which only refers to the people, is the requirement and a first step, but at the same time, a vague definition of who would classify every party or politician

as populist. It must be complemented by thick populism, which considers anti-establishment and exclusion as integral parts. The authors suggest that thick populism and criticism or exclusion aren't exclusive to populism and could be identified in other political discourses. Actively showing hostility and critiquing opponents, media, and political institutions are considered part of radical movements, such as populist parties (Mudde, 2004; Jagers and Walgrave, 2007). Both concepts can and will be identified separately and, by doing so, will showcase a possible development toward complete populism.

We see thin and thick populists on either side, showcasing them separately. We can also distinguish that when we combine thin and thick, we get complete populism. When a politician refers to the people and criticizes the establishment of the exclusion in the same context, it is considered complete populism, the people against the elite. The following figure is presented below to simplify this relationship or structure of the analytical framework (see figure I).

**Figure I: Displaying the conceptualization of the theoretical framework.**
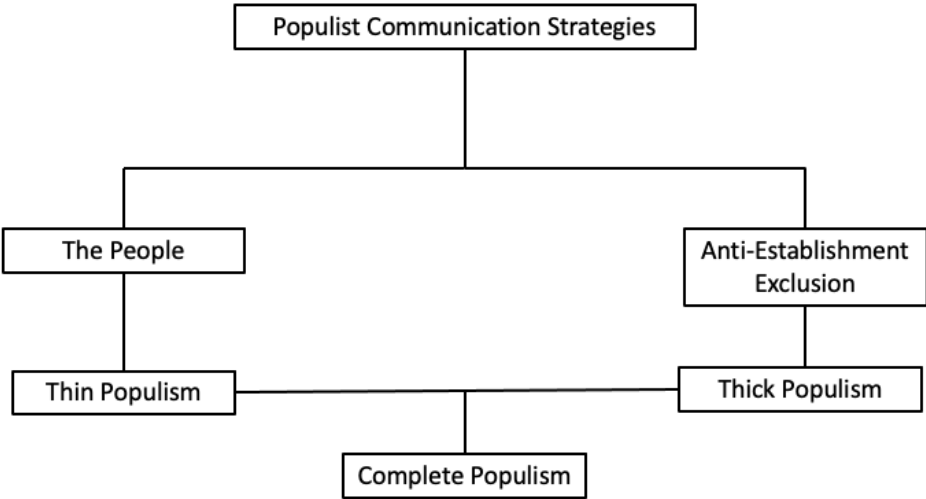


Source: Simplification of Jagers and Walgraves (2007) concept of populist communication strategies.

To summarize. Populist communication, as shown, is a complex subject to define. While some researchers consider a particular tone or harshness in the message sent or the

characteristic of a politician as core elements, others, such as Jagers and Walgrave (2007), consider the content of what is said. Their concept of populist communication, the people, anti-establishment, and exclusion. All politicians refer to the people somehow, and it is defined as thin populism, a necessary first step but not enough. It needs to be complemented with thick populism, which considers anti-establishment (anti-state, politics, and media) and exclusion. While thin and thick populism can be identified separately, and by doing so, are on the course toward populism. Complete populism is only achieved if we identify thin and thick in the same context, as Mudde (2004) stated, the people versus the elite. The methodological chapter addresses the analytic framework more thoroughly (see 4.3).

## 3.4 The case of Sweden

The previous sections have outlined the relevant research and theoretical concepts for this thesis on why and how political parties adapt and the core of populist communication. So, why is this research relevant to conduct in the case of Sweden, and by looking at the Social Democrats and Moderate Party. As noted in the introduction, research on populist parties and their impact has overall been neglected in Sweden. This is because Sweden has been described as negative case compared to the rest of Europe regarding the historical lack of success for populist parties. Only one populist party had been represented in the Swedish parliament before, New Democracy in the 1990s (Rydgren 2002, 2010; Strömbäck and Dahlgren, 2016).

When SD entered parliament and subsequently gained more support, the reaction from the established parties was to pose a unified strategy and distanced themselves from SD. This led to the creation of the December Treaty, an agreement between all the established parties (except the Left-Wing Party) to shut out SD from any influence (Bengtsson, 2016; Delby, 2018; Heinze, 2018). Considering that SD has attracted voters from M and S (Valmyndigheten, 2014, 2018), this action goes against M's case, at least what the previous research suggests they should have done, which is to move rapidly towards SD. S has managed to gain and keep governmental power, which could be considered winning the election, and therefore should have fewer incentives to adapt. As the previous section outlined, if a populist party continues to succeed, the established parties must act sooner or later. One example was following the 2015 refugee crisis, where M and S presented a more restrictive immigration policy (SVT Nyheter, 2015; Sveriges Radio, 2017).

The research following the 2014 election suggests that the two parties behaved differently than what the study suggested. We have witnessed statements that indicate a more populist communication. The Moderate leader Kristersson uttered, "Immigration has become a burden for Sweden." Compare this to the former M-leader and Prime minister Reinfeldt's quote, "Open your hearts" (SVT Nyheter, 2014; Sveriges Radio, 2021). Furthermore, former prime minister and S-leader Löfven said, "My Europe doesn't build walls" in 2015, to "Sweden can't take an unportioned responsibility in welcoming refugees" (Regeringskansliet, 2015; SVT Nyheter, 2018). These two examples suggest that it has been a transition in communication from inclusion to exclusion. Still, the question needs to be addressed and researched before we can jump to any conclusion.

This led us to why the Social Democrats and the Moderate party were selected and are relevant for this study. Firstly, as shown in the previous paragraphs, both parties have experienced the factors or events that should facilitate party policy change. Some tendencies toward more populist communication have been identified from both parties. Secondly, historically, they are the two biggest parties in Swedish politics. During the last decades, the two parties have been the leading figures and dominant in Swedish politics, competing for the prime minister post and passing the torch of governmental power between them (Möller, 2012). Even if today, the traditional blocs of Swedish politics have been erased and where we draw the line is somewhat blurrier, they give us a good representation of the two sides in Swedish politics.

Settling for two parties comes down to the scope of this thesis, and incusing more would make it challenging to finish within the end goal within the timeline. Including two parties does raise some questions regarding generalizability. The overall understanding of studies, including fewer cases, is that the ability to generalize outside the scope of the studies is impossible. This is simply not the case. As Kennedy (1979) argues, the number of units isn't relevant, but the kinds of units. One of the reasons for including the Moderate Party and Social Democrats was that these two are the two biggest parties historically, and we can theorize that these two affect how the other behaves. As Topcu and Adams (2009) suggested that parties adapt and react to each other within their ideological families. From an international perspective, other factors might interfere, such as the party system. In countries with a multi-party system, like our Nordic neighbors, we might experience similar results as more parties compete and influence each other. In a two-party system, like the USA or Great

Britain, the result might vary considering they only need to respond to each other and perhaps have less incentive to adapt.

This section argues why Sweden, the Social Democrats, and the Moderate Party are relevant cases for study in this thesis. We have witnesses' statements from both party leaders over the years, suggesting exclusion rather than inclusion. They have both experienced the factors facilitation party change as outlined by the previous research, and they are, historically, the two biggest parties. Lastly, the question of research on populist parties and their impact in Sweden has been neglected. Thus, Sweden is an interesting case for this research with S and M.

## 3.5 Research Gap and contribution of this thesis

The sections above have outlined the previous research, with the political competition of how and when parties adapt and the theoretical concepts of populist communication. Given the rise of populist parties and movements around the globe in recent years and Muddes' outlook that we would witness a populist zeitgeist, this is a highly relevant subject. Yet, to the extent of my knowledge, no research has combined these two fields of scholar. The research on political completion has solely focused on policy and ideological positioning. As shown above, there are indications from the statements that the two parties have adapted toward more populist communication. This is yet to be tested before any conclusion can be made. Therefore, it is essential to fill this gap in the literature from an academic perspective.

# 4. Method

This chapter presents the selected methodological approach for this thesis. The research design, analytical framework is followed by the empirical material. In conclusion, I discuss the chosen methodological approach's validity and reliability.

## 4.1 Research Design

To fulfill the aim and answer the posed research question, this study will take the shape of a comparative design. Comparing isn't something new in social research. It has been the backbone of social research (Boreus and Kohl, 2019). While being praised for its ability, some argued that the design forces the researcher to lose focus. Dyer and Wilkins (1991) are skeptical about the design and its ways of influencing the researcher. They suggest that the researcher loses track and is incentivized to look for how the cases differ and how they can be contrasted, not to the relevant context. Bryman (2008) is of the opposite view and implies that this what the key and what gives the comparative design its edge. By comparing two or more cases, the researcher is given the capability to distinguish similarities or differences, which often act as a catalyst for theoretical discussion and reflection about the contrasting features and provides a better understanding of a social phenomenon (Bryman, 2008).

This thesis will proceed using content analysis, further explained below. Other ways of conducting this thesis were considered, and the original idea was to conduct a text analysis. This method implies that the researcher, by extensive reading, can enhance and identify the very essence of an underlying meaning that wouldn't be apparent at first glance (Bryman, 2008; Esaiasson et al., 2017). This approach was rejected regarding the speeches not being in written format. Even if transcribe the speeches myself, where possible, it would be too time-consuming. A discourse analysis would be preferred if, as touched upon in the theoretical section, the aim was to analyze if and how politicians differ in their delivery of a political message, not in terms of content. This could have been a quantitative study where I measured the frequency of populist references, but I fear the relevance of when and how the parties possibly adapted would have been lost and will not analyze this further (Assarroudi et al., 2018; Boreus and Kohl, 2019).

## 4.2 Qualitative content analysis

As I have previously mentioned, the selected material for this thesis will be speeches made by the different party leaders at Almedalen. To identify if S and M have moved toward a more populist communication involves studying the content of those speeches. Therefore, qualitative content analysis is deployed. Qualitative content analysis was initially used to complement quantitative analyses, but it soon developed into an independent method (Neuendorf, 2002). This upswing in popularity is no coincidence, and Bryman (2008) suggests it is the most used approach in qualitative studies. As the name might entail, it is essential to study the material's content, summarize, compare, and grasp the overall direction and meaning of the content.

Bryman (2008) and Assarroudi et al. (2018) argue that the selected method allows the material to be stretched over time. And by using a content analysis combined with the analytical framework, I will be able to identify themes and references that are both obvious and "hidden." As both Esaiasson et al. (2017) and Borues and Kohl (2019) suggest, the method highlights the very essence and central message while sorting out what isn't relevant. It can identify both the apparent and direct reference to populist communication and, more importantly, the indirect.

Like all research techniques, qualitative content analysis does have its limitations. Boreus and Kohl (2019) point out that by using content analysis to study development over time, the researcher can only point out the spoken and exclude the non-spoken. That a politician doesn't talk about a particular matter doesn't mean that it isn't essential, only that it might be so evident that it doesn't need to be addressed. This aligns with the second limitation, which depends on the analytical framework (ibid). The researcher can only detect changes in the material through the framework (ibid). While specific studies have been able to include the non-spoken, this isn't an immediate problem since I aim to examine the essence of what is said and how these changes over time. The potential problem is that if the leader says something blurry or does not fit the framework's requirements and then proceeds to explain herself in an interview later, I will not have the possibility to include that. Another potential limitation of this method is the validity question and the fact that it requires some interpretation from the researcher. This will be further assessed later in this thesis.

When the advantages and limitations of the content analysis have been considered, the researcher has two ways of conducting the analysis. Inductive or deductive approach (Elo and Kyngäs, 2007; Esaiasson et al., 2017). Depending on which direction the researcher chooses lies in the previous knowledge of the study and the phenomenon being tested. Inductive emphasizes a more open and abstract coding process, and the concepts are decided while the material is analyzed. I will instead choose the second option, deductive. Opposite to the previous option, the existing theories, concepts, or hypotheses have been tested, and there is robust prior knowledge about the current research. The aim is to take the existing framework and try it in a new context and on new empirical material (Elo and Kyngäs, 2007; Bryman, 2008). This suits the aim of this thesis better since the previous knowledge and research on political competition and adaptiveness of political parties and the concepts of Jagers and Walgrave (2007) will be tried in a new context.

## 4.3 Analysis process and coding scheme

This thesis will use the deductive approach since the previous framework and concepts are well developed. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) initially developed the analytical framework or coding scheme, but some changes have occurred to suit the context of this thesis better. The core of the framework is still the same. The framework has been operationalized into four sections from the theory chapter to give the reader a simplified understanding of how the different sections are connected. The four sections are: (1) *Category* includes thin and thick populism. (2) *Components* are the main parts of each category**.** The people are represented in thin populism, while thick populism and anti-establishment are separated into three different elites (Anti-State, Anti-Politics, Anti-Media) and exclusion, which can also be seen as "the others." (3) *Definition* of a component refers to the people and the criticism of the establishments and is connected to a list of (4) *Search Words*.

When the framework had been constructed, relevant search words had to be identified. The research provided applicable terms for thin populism. Jagers and Walgrave (2007) provided "the people." and other frequently used terms (the) taxpayers, voters, and the public, to name a few. These are apparent markers, appealing and speaking to the people directly. There is also a need for indirect markers that are not obvious but allude to the people's will: public opinion, participation, and democracy (ibid). Identifying terms for thick populism proved more challenging since the research doesn't provide detailed information about relevant terms

and the criticism isn't always explicit (Jagers and Walgrave, 2007; Reinmann et al., 2016). This lack of insight from the research meant that I had to go through the material, back and forth on numerous occasions, to identify relevant terms connected to the definitions of the critique.

The initial idea was to select terms to whom the criticism was diverted, the parties and individual politicians. I ended up with numerous references and citations to parties and politicians that didn't relate to the analytical framework since politicians talk about opponents without criticizing them. A decision was then made to identify relevant terms to the definitions and the criticism, both those apparent and those "hidden," indirect references, where they might refer to their party and how they will "pursue a responsible policy" at the same time implying that the opposition is irresponsible. Bryman (2008) also suggests that having more search words or terms than necessary lower the possibility of having specific terms, which wouldn't make it possible to identify these hidden references.

When the analytical framework has been addressed, the research has two options for undertaking the coding procedure. Data-driven or manually (Bryman, 2008). Data-driven has the advantage of being timesaving and is done through a dedicated coding program. The material doesn't have to be read through or viewed numerous times to ensure truthfulness and correctness. The research must construct a schedule of word combinations and search words that the coding program will look for (Boreus and Kohl, 2019). While the included would work, the downside of the data-driven is that it can only find the provided terms and not the complete picture (Elo and Kyngäs, 2007; Bryman, 2008). As I use qualitative content analysis to address the "hidden" themes in the material, this wouldn't correspond with the selected method. Instead, I will opt for the second alternative, manual coding, which will benefit from analyzing a more significant and more complicated amount of material (Boreus and Kohl, 2019). Elo and Kyngäs (2007) address no right or wrong when picking either. Instead, the challenge is to identify what is relevant and what is not and, at the same time, ensuring trustworthiness.

To ensure trustworthiness, the analysis was conducted on three separate occasions (Bryman, 2008). Firstly, the material was listened to and watched to understand the content and subject raised. This was also the opportunity to take out relevant citations related to the framework, evaluate the pre-selected searcher words, and change and add new ones. The second stage is

where the primary analysis occurs. Relevant citations are identified and transferred to a separate document, where it is connected to the search words and definition. After each citation had been coded, it was given a letter and a number to clarify for me as a researcher what category they belong to, avoid careless mistakes, represent the framework in the analysis, and make it easier for the reader to follow along. So, for example, if politicians criticize a particular party or politician, this is anti-politics (AP), followed by a number displaying what type of critique is present. Third and lastly, the second stage is repeated to ensure the analysis and coding were done correctly.

Trustworthiness, in qualitative research, is a highly delicate subject since, in the end, it comes down to the researchers' interpretations, and as Bryman (2008) and Denscombe (2016) suggest, there is never any guarantee for complete objectivity. This will be addressed later in the section on validity and reliability (see 4.5). Some factors could put the analysis at risk, such as the human factor. Coding can be perceived as a monotonic process and sometimes even boring, and researchers who use manual coding experience a loss of motivation, leading to careless mistakes (Bryman, 2008). While there aren't any tips for retaining motivations, Bryman (2008) and Boreus and Kohl (2019) provide some tools for not putting the trustworthiness and consistency of the analysis at risk. As mentioned above, conducting the analysis in dedicated steps, and repeating the process is one method for identifying and avoiding mistakes. A coding blanket was also kept aside from the coding, which Bryman (2008) suggests will act as a notebook of potential problems and changes in the coding and analysis process. The analytical framework will also be represented in the analysis. After each speech is analyzed, the references identified toward the different components are showcased in a separate section. And later, a complete table of the identified references for each party shows the development over the years.

## Tabell I: Operationalization of populist communication.

| Category | Components | Definition | Search Words |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Thin Populism** | The People (TP) | Focus is on appealing to the people or their general will to mobilize voters or show affection (TP). <br><br>"I see you." <br><br>"I know what you need." <br><br>"I speak for you." | The People, Sweden, Citizens, Voters, Taxpayers, Participation, Democracy, Public opinion, We, You, Ours. |
| **Thick Populism** | Anti-State (AS) | Criticism toward the state or its institutions for failing its citizens. The criticism focuses on how the state's general service and function is malfunctioning (AS). | Aggravating, Failure, Misbelief, Malfunctioning, Irresponsible, |
| | Anti-Politics (AP) | Hostility or antagonistic references towards politicians, parties, or entire democratic systems. Including criticism and creating mistrust towards the elite (AP). | Corruption, Failure, Irresponsible, Ignorance, Unwillingness, Uninterested, Disappointment, Mistrust, Incompetence, Laziness, Falsehood, Unableness, Stupidity, Counterfeit, Cowardliness, Delusional, Lying, Dishonest. |
| | Anti-Media (AM) | Journalist, certain newspapers, or group of media (the media) is criticized for being too soft on politicians (AM1). <br><br>Political biased, fake news (AM2). <br><br>Doesn't give attention to the campaign for a particular party (AM3). | Fake News, Biased, Propaganda, Misleading, Disinformation, Passiveness, Favorize. |
| | Exclusion (EX) | Cultural: our values (EX1). <br><br>Economical: They take our jobs (EX2). <br><br>Security: They pose a threat or risk (EX3). | Refugees, Immigrants, Integration, Criminality, Culture, Us, Them. |
| **Thin Populism + Thick Populism** | Complete Populism (CP) | CP = TP + AS, AP, AM 1-3, or EX 1-3 | See above. |

Source: The author was designed and constructed, but concepts and definitions were received and gathered from Jagers and Walgrave (2007).

## 4.4 Material and sampling

The material had to be stretched over an extended period to answer the selected research question. The material for this thesis will be speeches made by the respective party leader at Almedalen from 2012 to 2021. Before addressing the material more thoroughly, some problems that force the study to take another direction need to be addressed. The original idea was to use transcribed speeches and to start in 2010. Accessibility was a problem, and the 2010 speech for the Moderate Party couldn't be found. Therefore, the period was readjusted. Transcript for the speeches could only be traced back to the last three years for the respective party. The decision turned to using the material in audio and video format. Another material that could have been used was political debates. While these would have served the same function, the party leaders tend to be interrupted and have a limited time scope. Party programs and other documents such as manifests can also be used. Still, these wouldn't suit the purpose of this thesis, and as Mudde (2004) suggests, populism rarely shines through in political programs due to being well refined and advanced.

The material was chosen with the question and aim in mind. Bryman (2008) refers to this as purposive sampling, which means that the material was best suited to answer the question and fit the study. Analyzing the speeches from Almedalen will provide another dimension because it is the largest political and democratic event in Sweden. Every party in the Swedish parliament has its day, and the leader conducts a speech for between 30 and 60 minutes (Almedalen, 2022). They can speak freely about their views, what they want to do, and where the party is headed, making their communication strategies clearer. One worry with the selected material was it wouldn't be representative or differ too much from the communication experienced in debates. While I am aware of this possibility, it is my opinion that Almedalen provides insight into the parties' standpoints on the current issues at the time, comprehended in one speech, rather than going through several different political debates. The period will stretch from 2012 to 2021, but not every speech is analyzed due to time constraints.

The speeches were selected based on their relevance to party change factors. In 2012, M was re-elected in the 2010 election, and S had since then changed party leader on two occasions. From 2014 to 2016, a change of power occurred, M changed party leader on two occasions, and SD became the third-largest party. In 2018, M continued to lose voters, and so did S but managed to stay in power. SD saw even further success, almost double the share of voters from the previous election. 2021 is included based on the latest speech due to 2020 being canceled due to the pandemic. Bryman (2008) suggest that when using political documents, like speeches, as empirical material, the researcher must be aware that the fabric has been produced by the party themselves to reflect their positions at that given to influence others and pose themselves in good light. Considering the parties' statements and views, I aim to analyze. This isn't a problem. As outlined in the section concerning the relevance of this research in the case of Sweden, the parties were selected concerning the factors facilitating party change, and so were the speeches. The speeches were collected from both SVT-Play and SR (Swedish Radio) and studied in audio and video format.

## 4.5 Validity and Reliability

The overall notion is that qualitative content analysis puts reliability before validity (Boreus and Kohl, 2019). When conducting content analysis, the researcher looks after simple definitions and patterns in the empirical material. The most common mistake concerning validity occurs when the analytical tool or framework is too complicated or not suited for the aim or scope of the research (ibid). Furthermore, the material can also influence the validity. I have previously argued why the material in question was chosen for reaching the desired outcome of this study, and in my opinion, the preferred material, together with the analytical framework, where the conception is pinpointed and numbered to determine the presence of the populist communication, that the validity of the research remains high.

On the other spectrum, reliability ensures the trustworthiness of the research. Mistakes that lower the reliability is often caused by careless mistakes in the analytics process (Bryman, 2008). Contributing factors can be unreadable notes or misunderstanding the material. Using an appropriate and analytical tool with correct and proper conceptualizations enhances the chances of reaching high reliability but is not enough (ibid). The analytics process needs to be carefully evaluated and rigorously conducted. Esaiasson et al. (2017) suggest that the latter can easily be solved if two researchers conduct the research by conducting a reliability test to

ensure the research's quality and trustworthiness. This implies that the two authors analyzed the material in two separate stages, and if the conclusions correspond, the reliability is high. This is, in my case, not possible since this thesis is conducted on my own. Instead, I followed the suggestions by Bryman (2008) to ensure reliability when writing alone. The material needs to be read through, or in my case, watched and listened to, before, during, and after each speech was analyzed to ensure that the interpretation was done correctly and avoid careless mistakes. As addressed in the previous section, the material was also studied and coded in three-separate stages to ensure that they were not evaluated differently.

Lastly, there is no guarantee that the results are entirely accurate since it depends on the researchers' interpretations. Bryman (2008) concludes that it is impossible to reach complete objectivity in social or political science research using qualitative methods. Instead, it is up to the researcher to convince the reader that they have acted in good faith and not let personal values, preferences, or previous experiences influence the analysis and, in later stages, the conclusion. And with regards to the outline of the last sections, it is my understanding that I have done the utmost to be as transparent and objective as possible when approaching the material.

# 5. Analysis

This section will analyze the empirical material. The chapter starts with 2012, and then follows a chronological timeline. The analysis will end with a summary of the findings. Certain words in the citation might have been altered to fit the context better. This was done carefully so that the original messages did not lose their core.

## 5.1 2012

### 5.1.1 The Social Democrats

S had, at this point, been in opposition for six years and, following the electoral loss in 2010, the changed party leader for the second time. Håkan Juholt, who replaced Mona Sahlin, had resigned, making this the first speech Stefan Löfven conducted. The subject raised was the financial crisis, unemployment, the business sector, and education.

Löfven starts by commenting on the mass-unemployment Europe faces following the financial crisis. He compares Europe to Sweden in the mid-90s when S took over after the Right-wing government. He states that compared to then, Sweden stands strong. Despite this, he comments on the mass unemployment and says that 400 000 wake up every morning without a job. Löfven then follows up by stating this:

> They haven't created a single new job. The government has stated since 2006 that everyone needs to work. They made one exemption, the ministers in the Swedish government (AP).

Looking at the citation above, we can distinguish the use of anti-politics. Löfven turns his criticism towards the government not being able to create new jobs as they promised in 2006, suggesting failure. He also shows hostility when he deems, they haven't put in the necessary effort, showing signs of unwillingness, as the analytical framework recognizes. Löfven continues by addressing the unemployment in Sweden but now turns to possible solutions. He states that the Moderate party has presented reforms he agrees and is needed but will be implemented two years later. Which Löfven sees as a tactic to benefit themselves:

> The Moderate Party doesn't recognize unemployment as a severe issue but as an election tactic (AP).

Löfven suggests that the Moderate party will push the question regarding a solution to the issue of unemployment ahead of the election in 2014 to say, "look at what we will do," as an attempt to maximize votes. As the framework recognizes, this is anti-politics, as he aims to create mistrust among voters that M doesn't recognize the issue of unemployment as a serious issue. Löfven then turns his attention toward the questions of education. He criticizes the content of the government's policies and, as discussed in the theoretical chapter, is not considered thick populism. Since criticism, the content of a political opponent is part of the everyday political discourse (Jager and Walgrave, 2007). Löfven then starts to discuss the business sector and the need for a more profound connection between the private sector and union members, something that the government hasn't found interesting:

> Friends, even though not all actors in society share the same interest, we often share the same goals. If we replace the lack of vision and interest, this government possesses. With will and collaboration, there are a few things we cannot achieve (CP).

Here, we get our first example of complete populism. Löfven discusses that despite our different interests, we share the same goals. He uses "friends" and "we," placing himself among the people, showing signs of thin populism. He then comments on the lack of interest shown by the government, emphasizing anti-politics concerning the government and their uninterest. Löfven then starts to discuss the business sector and solutions surrounding the policies of the Social Democrats, and therefore nothing that can be categorized as thin or thick populism. As showcased in the table below, Löfven uses references and shows signs of thin and thick populism. Complete populism can be distinguished on one occasion, when Löfven suggest that we, all of us, showing thin populism, combined with anti-politics, criticizing the government for their unwillingness. As showcased below, neither reference to anti-state, media, or exclusion could be distinguished.

**Tabell II: Reference toward the analytical framework by the Social Democrats in 2012.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2012 | Friends, We, Unite. | | Failure, Mistrust, Laziness, Uninterested, | | |

| | | Disappointment | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | |

## 5.1.2 The Moderate Party

The Moderate Party and Reinfeldt had been re-elected in the 2010 election, and we're now halfway through their second term in office. The subject and content of the speech resemble what Löfven talks about. The financial crisis, labor market, and education are topics raised. Reinfeldt focuses on the progress and the improvement made by his government since taking office. What can be immediately distinguished is the high presence of thin populism. This is particularly evident when he discusses the labor market. He describes how it used to look, and in many cases, still does:

> Most of you still go to work between eight and nine, quit by five, buy some food on the way home, spend time with your families […] We work, sleep, and wake up to a new day. Most of us (TP).

Here we see thin populism, which can be described by how Reinfeldt uses the words "us" and "we." Reinfeldt addresses those who work traditional hours as a majority of the people. The presence of thin populism becomes even more explicit and recognizable when he turns to those who don't:

> But when we sleep, some work. Restaurants, hotels, the police force, doctors and nurses, and social workers. Over one million Swedes work irregular hours, evening and night (TP).

Even in this quote, he does focus on the "we-part" and indicates the number of people working irregular hours. Reinfeldt mentioned booths sides of what he describes as the modern labor market and the need for everyone, "I see you." The way he describes the two sides of working people is an ongoing theme in this speech by Reinfeldt, and he continues to mention how he has traveled around Sweden, meeting those working these irregulated hours, and how these people make society function:

> […] We may have many heroes, but let me be clear, these are the true heroes of the Moderate Party (TP).

> The Moderate Party sees and acknowledges the hard work over one million swedes perform, night, weekends, and holidays (TP).

Again, thin populism, where he describes them as the true heroes of the Moderate Party. He and the Moderate Party recognize how this group of people might not earn the most money but still highlight their vital role in everyday life. As showcased in the analytical framework, the "I see you" reference becomes noticeable in this speech section. The question of the modern labor market, as Reinfeldt calls it, has a central role in his remarks. He then turns to the opposition for not recognizing the true heroes, as he calls it:

> Imagine we change all this. We ban activities and working hours that do not apply to traditional working hours. After five, we close the hospitals and health care, trains and buses stop. People are only allowed to work during the day and are transferred to an answering machine in the event of need. Firefighters would only put out fires during the daytime, and society as we know it would stop functioning (AP).

Reinfeldt tries to create mistrust toward the opposition, both in the ignorance of not seeing all the people. But also, when he indicates that the opponent doesn't recognize the work those people put in of their desire to shut down society after a specific time of the day. Further incentives for anti-politics. After this, he, again, turn toward the people and calls for the need of everyone:

> The Moderate Party is the modern labor party. We see the need for a modern market that needs everyone. […] We see those working in the police force, hospitals, and healthcare during the evening and night. We see them, and we recognize them for the critical work and that they are significant in a modern labor market […] We also see those working full time and those with part-time jobs. Those feeling secure, with education and experience and a strong position on the market, and those with less experience (TP).

Thin populism, again, where Reinfeldt focuses heavy on the "we", in an attempt to recognize all citizens. The speech overall focuses heavily on the policies implemented by the government during its time in office. We can distinguish thick populism on one occasion when Reinfeldt aims to create mistrust that the opposition doesn't consider a modern labor market important and an unableness to do so. As with Löfven, exclusion and anti-state are not detectable. The reason for anti-state not being present is because M, at this point, holds position in government. Criticizing the state would mean blaming themselves.

**Tabell III: Reference toward the analytical framework by the Moderate Party in 2012.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| 2012 | Us, we, Sweden, Citizens, Heroes, Everyone, | | Ignorance, Unableness | | |

## 5.2 2014

### 5.2.1 The Social Democrats

The Social Democrats had been in opposition for eight years, and this speech was conducted in the months leading up to the 2014 election. The topics raised by the S-leader were Labor-market and unemployment, climate, education, welfare, and Russian aggression toward Crimea.

Löfven's speech is focused on what he and the Social Democrats want to implement and their policies. Little attention is diverted toward the government or individual politicians, which can be distinguished as thick populism. Neither does he address the people in a way that could be considered thin populism. He instead uses the current situation with Russia's aggression toward the Crimea Peninsula and ISIS to emphasize more collaboration between the EU members. At one point, we can identify complete populism when Löfven describes the development during the past eight years:

> For eight years, we have had a government that has spent almost all their waking hours using Sweden's resources and lowering the taxes, privatizing, and locking people up in unemployment […] This is the antithesis of the solidarity that has made Sweden strong. They have divvied us into them and us, strong and weak, scapegoats and second interest (CP).

In the citation above, Löfven uses thin populism when he refers to "we" and "Sweden," placing himself among the people, suggesting that he, the same as the people, is a victim of the government's policies. He also refers to the government using resources, taxes, referring to the "taxpayers," another reference of thin populism. Löfven then uses anti-politics when accusing the government of dividing society, and aims, to once again, create mistrust for being irresponsible. In the next paragraph, he switches and uses thin populism and the importance of recognizing each other:

> We need to see each other as sisters and brothers, tear all over and subordination among men and women, because your gender, ethnicity, ability to function, and sexual orientation shall never determine your fate (TP).

Löfven here addresses that we need to acknowledge each other, and he places himself, again, among the people. He also emphasizes the need for everyone, showing thin populism. Löfven then discusses the issues of education and what has happened during the government's time in office, nothing that can be derived towards thick populism. Toward the end, Löfven discusses the importance of the welfare society and again calls out the lack of interest from the Moderate Party and shows hostility towards the party:

> There is increased support for welfare in society, which is not strange considering the development over these eight years. The saying goes, "you don't miss the cow until the Moderate Party has privatized it" (AP).

Löfven again uses anti-politics when he calls for increased support for the welfare state. He deems the Moderate Party need to privatize and, by a citation, aims to create mistrust toward their irresponsible policies. Löfven then ended his speech by declaring what way the Social Democratic Party would take after the election and the policies they would implement. Overall, the speech mainly focuses on his party rather than the opposition. As distinguished

below (table IV), references to thin populism and thick populism, anti-politics are present. The reference to complete populism can be shown when Löfven calls for the Moderate Party to divide the society. As with previous speech, anti-state and exclusion are not present.

**Tabell IV: Reference toward the analytical framework by the Social Democrats in 2014.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|----|----|----|----|
| **2014** | We, Sweden, Taxpayers, Friends, Everyone, | | Dividing, Irresponsible, Mistrust, Ignorance | | |

## 5.2.2 The Moderate Party

Reinfeldt and the moderate party have been in government for eight years. Leading up to the 2014 election, the former Prime Minister diverted his attention toward the economy, education, labor market, climate, and the situation with Russia and Crimea Peninsula. Reinfeldt starts off the speech by commenting on the three main questions he will talk about regarding the Moderate party and why he got into politics. He describes how he sees openness and freedom as the two cornerstones of democracy and proceeds to market-economy as the best option for the society:

> I believe the market economy can get people and companies to grow […] I believe in market-economy because the opposition and their alternatives, let's be honest, are worthless and don't work (AP).

We see thick populism with anti-politics present in the citation above he criticizes the opponent and deeming their idea as worthless isn't considered a criticism diverted toward the content of their policies but a way of showing hostility and creating mistrust. Reinfeldt continues this path by explaining the core of the Moderate Party and how people should be able to shape their future:

> Politics must be based on giving people the space to shape their future. The Moderate Party mistrusts those who say, "a society is only preferable if we have no demands, and

we are all the same." This creates a society without belief in human beings. We want to give the people the opportunity to grow […] The Moderate Party wants to provide the people with the opportunity to develop in a society where we all are needed (CP).

For the first time, in M:s case we see here an example of complete populism. Reinfeldt discusses how politics should be based on providing the people the opportunity to grow and that everyone's participation is essential. The Moderate party allows the people to do so while calling out the opposition for showing mistrust and not allowing them to develop independently. In this citation, Reinfeldt shows that he sees the need for people to grow, "I see you" or "I know what you want.", as explained in analytical table, as a form of thin populism. The speech then goes in the same direction as with Löfven. When Reinfeldt discusses the policies and changes, he and M and is an extension, the government wants to implement if they get renewed trust. Although they are few, we see examples of thick populism and complete populism present in the speech from Reinfeldt. Overall, the speech focuses more, as with Löfven, on himself and the party, their policies, and future ideas rather than on the political opponents.

**Tabell V: Reference toward the analytical framework by the Moderate Party in 2014.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|----|----|----|----|
| **2014** | The people, Everyone, Participation | | Mistrust, Worthless, Laziness, | | |

## 5.3 2016

### 5.3.1 The Social Democrats

In 2016, the tables had turned. Löfven and the Social Democrats won the election in 2014, and we're halfway through the first mandate period. Löfven turned to the EU and the other member states and emphasized the challenges and need for a higher degree of collaboration. The focus of the speech was the refugee crisis that took place the year before. Other subjects raised were Brexit, Education, and the investments governments would make.

Löfven starts with the challenges Sweden and the EU had in front of them, with the refugee crisis in the center, but also the climate and sustainability were diverted a large part of the focus. As mentioned, Löfven declared the need for more collaboration in the EU, but Sweden was about to take the presidency of the UN security council. Löfven discussed the need for Sweden in this institution and addressed those who question his and the government's ability to engage in both organizations simultaneously:

> Some will tell you that the government can't engage in the UN and EU simultaneously. There are also those who can't think and speak simultaneously (AP).

Löfven uses anti-politics when he comments and shows hostility to those who question the government engaging in two organizations simultaneously. Questioning the opponent's ability to think and speak simultaneously led us to incompetent, as shown in the analytical framework. Löfven continues to discuss the issue of the EU and why Brexit occurred. According to Löfven, the EU failed ordinary British citizens who didn't recognize the prosperity the institution had created. This segment in the speech shows a tendency towards thin populism, and it culminates when he demands an EU for the people:

> That's the EU Sweden will be a part of and help create. An EU for the people, by the people, and with the people (TP).

This section has a strong presence of thin populism. Thin populism is present when Löfven discusses EU and the need for it to be integrated into ordinary people's lives, for the people. Löfven outlines how the EU has failed to recognize the people and their daily needs, culminating in the citation above.EU continues to be at the center. Still, the attention now turns to the refugee crisis and the temporary legislation currently in place, which will get fewer refugees to Sweden. Even if this resembles exclusion, Löfven doesn't divide the people and the others. He doesn't suggest that they pose any threat in terms of security, economic or cultural. Instead, he explains Sweden's responsibility compared to other EU members. Löfven continues to discuss the segregation that has occurred in the suburbs, the legislation he and the Social Democrats have put forward, and that the Moderate leader has visited this area:

> And, let me tell you. It angers me when I see the Moderate Party leader from Djursholm travel to Husby for publicity (AP).

This citation is immediately followed up by commenting on SD:s party-leader Jimmy Åkesson:

> Jimmie Åkesson would rather hide behind a computer screen, leading his online army and spreading hatred towards immigrants, feminists, and journalists (AP).

Both citations are deliberate attacks, showing hostility to create mistrust. In the case of the Moderate Party, he suggests that the leader does not care for those living there, only traveling to one of the more segregated areas for publicity. In the subsequent citation, he blames Åkessong for hiding behind his computer, emphasizing cowardliness in not being able to address the real issues in society. Löfven then continues to talk about the labor market, creating new jobs, education, and the need for more teachers and more teaching. In this speech, we can distinguish the use of anti-politics as in previous years and the same with thin populism. Complete populism is not present for the first time. Anti-state, media, and exclusion continue to be non-present.

**Tabell VI: Reference toward the analytical framework by the Social Democrats in 2016.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|----|----|----|----|
| **2016** | Sweden, The People, United. | | Incompetence, Stupidity, Irresponsible, Mistrust, Cowardliness, Counterfeit. | | |

## 5.3.2 The Moderate Party

Since the 2014 election, the Moderate party lost governmental power. Former leader Reinfeldt resigned and was replaced by Anna Kindberg Batra in 2015, making this her second speech at Almedalen. The topics raised were immigration and integration following the refugee crisis, education, the question of NATO, and security policies.

She begins the speech by addressing the Swedish summer and the number of sexual offenses reported by the media and to the police at that time. Kindberg-Batra then proceeds to state that the current legislation doesn't hold up and is too weak and that M wants both harder legislation that includes different sexual offenses and harder on deporting non-Swedish citizens:

> […] Those sentenced, and not Swedish citizens will risk being deported (EX3).

Kindberg-Batra separates Swedish criminals from non-Swedish and that we need to deport those at a higher rate and pose a threat to our security. Here we see exclusion present for the first time when she uses the word deportation. This is not the only time exclusion can be distinguished in the speech from 2016. She then proceeds to address the EU and the situation with the refugee crisis:

> Sweden needs a refugee stop. You need to apply in the first EU country you arrive in. And if you are not allowed to stay in Sweden, you are not allowed to stay in Sweden (CP).

Kindberg-Batra shows signs of complete populism. When implying Sweden, all of us desire a complete refuge stop, "I see what you need," a sign of thin populism. She also emphasizes that refugees shall seek asylum in the first EU country they arrived in, rather than coming to Sweden, and the need for being harder on deportation, which is a way of separating "them and us." Kindberg-Batra then moves toward the issue of a NATO membership and how the prime minister is currently taking part in a security meeting with other world leaders:

> NATO, with other world leaders, is now in Warszawa. Sweden's Prime minister is also there, which is good. But a responsible prime minister wouldn't just go there for dinner. She would have the ability and will to take steps in the right direction toward a NATO membership. Sweden is worth defending. Our country, our values, our democracy, our openness (CP).

For the second time, Kindberg-Batra uses complete populism. She attacks Löfven for only traveling to Warszawa for dinner and an unwillingness to work. She then addresses that she would be capable of applying for membership and believes Sweden is worth defending. She

places herself among the people, which could also be considered a tactic to create misbelief, that Löfven considered the opposite. The pattern of attacking individual politicians reappears in the following paragraph when she discusses that we, the people, need to demand responsibility from our political leaders and attacks the, at that time, minister of education, Gustav Fridolin:

> Politicians need to take responsibility […] we need to make demands on political leaders, but populists will never live up to those demands. I am sure Gustav Fridolin knows what I am talking about (CP).

Again, Kindberg-Batra places herself among the people and emphasizes that we need to exert responsibility from politicians, showcasing thin populism. She then calls out Fridolin and shows hostility, calling him populist and unable to deliver on the demands, which indicates anti-politics. Kindberg-Batra then shifts her focus and circles back to the refugee crisis and how the Swedish authorities have handled the question of integration of unaccompanied refugee children. She highlights Gotland as a place of successful integration, where these kids have started school and made friends, only to be then transferred to a different municipality by the Swedish authorities:

> […] In accordance with the regulations as applied by the responsible Swedish government authorities (AS).

> We need to have a secure but reasonable system […] We cannot have a system and authorities that make the integration more difficult (AS).

For the first time, anti-state and as remembered from the analytical table, anti-state focuses on the state and its institutions for failing its citizens. Kindberg-Batra accuses the Swedish authorities of aggravating the integration and creating mistrust in the legislation. She then accelerates this rhetoric, including thin populism, and accuses the authorities of looking down on the citizens:

> There are those who see Sweden from above, through authorities and look down as people who try to fit in as best as possible or be left outside. They have one thing in common. They are not part of the Moderate Party (CP).

Kindberg Batra refers to Sweden, implying all of us, and places herself among the people and addresses them as one. Furthermore, we witness anti-state in how she accuses the authorities of exercising power and looking down on the people. Lastly, anti-politics, where she suggests those who have these views aren't moderates but the opposition. This is the first time we have a combination of thin, anti-politics, and anti-state in the speeches. She continues by stating that the moderate party put the people first, which further shows signs of thin populism, and how her politics would be able to tackle the question of immigration and integration. She states that Sweden needs stricter requirements for seeking asylum and that information needs to be handed out to those seeking asylum about Swedish values and how the Swedish society functions:

> We must ensure that information about Swedish values and how Sweden functions are given to everyone early in the asylum-seeking process. And those who don't take part in that, you cannot count on support and contribution. […] You must make an effort to learn Swedish […] If you don't want to make an effort for Sweden, don't count on Sweden to give back (CP).

To begin with, Kindberg-Batra refers to exclusion, in terms of culture as identified from the analytical framework. She emphasizes that refugees need to learn our values, and our culture to have a chance of getting support which is a way of separating people. She also uses thin populism, as she separates not only herself but Sweden from those seeking asylum. Don't count our support, us versus them. This section is then characterized by what the Moderate Party wants to implement to make the integration process simpler and more effective. She references the development in society that has occurred during the Social Democratic time in office. There are tendencies toward anti-state, and the section later culminates when she states that Löfven is clueless and doesn't provide a plan for the problems in our society:

> Sweden needs a plan, Sweden needs the Alliance […] Stefan Löfven lacks a plan, but he is still quite satisfied. Like Ferdinand the Bull, he sits and smells the flowers while others take care of him. He will do anything to avoid getting his hands dirty (CP).

As we have seen before, she addresses that the whole of Sweden requires a plan and that she and the Alliance are the solutions, thin populism. She then declares that despite the issues, Löfven is satisfied with the development, as the GDP and job creation are on the rise. This is

a way of showing hostility toward Löfven but also creating mistrust in his capacity to solve the problems and ignorance she has identified. Therefore, complete populism is present once again. She tends to discuss the solutions she and the Moderate Party want to implement due to her raised issues and is open to collaboration. Before she concludes the speech, we can identify complete populism once more:

> Sweden needs new leadership and a government that can build a stronger Sweden, and that might demand collaboration […] It's hard to take the discussion about cooperation seriously from a man who takes every opportunity to attack the parties he expects to want to work with him (CP).

Once again, Kindberg-Batra turned to the people and the Swedish citizens and urged their need for a new government. She points out the mistrust and irresponsible of the opposition in building a stronger Sweden. She also addresses that Löfven previously discussed collaboration between the two different blocks, at that time, in Swedish politics and that she is ready to do so. But only if he stops, what she calls, attacking them, in other words, thick populism. As we can see in the table below, we can distinguish a frequent use and reference towards, not just thin and anti-politics as in previous speeches, but also anti-state and exclusion. Complete populism is repetitive. She combines the mentioned attacks on politicians and parties with placing herself among the people, emphasizing the people's need, our need, the whole of Sweden, for new leadership.

**Tabell VII: Reference toward the analytical framework by the Moderate Party in 2014.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|----|----|----|----|
| 2016 | Sweden, Us, Ours, We | Aggravating, Misbelief, Challenging | Irresponsible, Unwillingness, Mistrust, Unableness, Ignorance, Failure, | | Deportation, Stricter Immigration, Our Values, Integration |

## 5.4 2018

### 5.4.1 The Social Democrats

This speech was conducted leading up to the 2018 election and the end of the first mandate period for Stefan Löfven and S. The attention raised during the speech was towards the issues and challenges both Sweden and Europe had to face in the coming years. The subject raised was threats and undemocratic forces that aim to harm the democracy and make society vulnerable, education, pensioner, healthcare, criminality, and segregation. Even if he commented on his government's accomplishments and changes, little attention was devoted to this if we compare it to previous years.

The speech is mainly characterized by thin populism. Löfven argues for a strong society that includes everyone and requires everyone. This is primarily oblivious when he declares himself as the prime minister for everyone:

> I have travelled to Visby, via Gällö, Bräcke, Hammarstrand, Mora, Borlänge, Avesta, Mariestad, Vara, Falköping, Vimmerby, Västervik. It wasn't the fastest route. My office may be in Stockholm, but I am the prime minister of Sweden (TP).

Löfven uses thin populism when he addresses that he is the prime minister for Sweden, even if he is located in Stockholm. In the citation above, he uses Sweden, suggesting that "I am here for you" and "I see all of you." Thin populism is present at the beginning of the speech but ebbs away. The same can be said about thick populism, which is only present at the end. Löfven begins to address the issue of unemployment of young people and how he and the government have, in his words, turned a corner, with the lowest unemployment rate among youths in 16 years. He continues by addressing the prosperity of the strong finances and how the Social Democrats make sure that everyone benefits from this, compared to the Moderate Party, who would lower the taxes and make the rich richer. Still, M can't admit that this is the case:

> However, they rarely talk about it. Is it too embarrassing? It's like reading Robin Hood backward, redistribution money from the poor to the rich (AP).

> We see the same problems and solutions, such as the need for stiff immigration policies […] But I don't want to keep on giving to those who already have it all. To those, I can

tell you this: You must take a step back – now it's the turn of ordinary people. […] That is the most significant difference in Swedish politics (CP).

In the citations, Löfven initially begins to criticize and show hostility toward the Moderate party and their desire only to please the wealthy citizens. He suggests that M fails to recognize their true policies, and aims to create mistrust, that the prioritization from M is irresponsible. In the following citation, he continues this argumentation, now suggesting that "We" see the same problems and solutions, such as the need for stricter immigration, implying that the issues correlate with the immigration and need to be reduced, suggesting that it should be reduced exclusion. The speech by Löfven focuses initially on thin populism and Sweden as a whole, but toward the end is characterized by anti-politics and later complete populism. For the first time, exclusion is present when Löfven calls for stricter immigration.

**Tabell VIII: Reference toward the analytical framework by the Social Democrats in 2018.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|----|----|----|-----|
| **2018** | Sweden, The People, We | | Mistrust, Failure, Irresponsible, | | Stricter Immigration |

### 5.4.2 The Moderate Party

The Moderate Party had been in opposition for four years, and, leading up to this speech, a new party leader also saw the place. Kindberg Batra resigned in 2017, and Ulf Kristersson was elected, making this his first speech at Almedalen. He addresses three main areas. Democracy and how it shall be protected, criminality, and lastly, who and how he wants to from his government. The speech starts by commenting on the threat politicians at the highest political office received and those working and engaging in youth associations across our country. Kristersson then addresses that we are entitled to have our different opinions, but political violence is never the answer. He then comments on the new law that has been proposed, which makes it illegal to engage and be apparat of terror organizations. Kristersson supports the proposition and states:

We need to protect our borders and our democracy. This is one of the fundamental assignments of the state (CP).

Kristersson, in the citation above, argues that we need to protect our borders, showing signs of thin populism. Then the following sentence calls for this as the number one priority of the state, which it has failed at, referring to anti-state. The citation above could be considered exclusion since Kristersson indicate that the threats come from outside, separating us from them. He does not make an explicit reference to the analytical framework. Exclusion becomes more apparent as he goes on to address the situation and development during the past years with S in government:

I will form a government that stands for a responsible migrations-policy […] A tight and civilized migration policy, and for that, we need to collaborate over the blocs. Everybody knows it. I want it. This begs the question, can Stefan Löfven do it (CP).

Kristersson calls for the need for a responsible immigration policy, suggesting that the government conducts an irresponsible approach, showing signs of anti-politics. He then addresses that everybody wants it, thin populism, before questioning Löfvens' ability to come through, unableness. Therefore, we can distinguish complete populism. Kristersson continues to discuss the migration:

Let's be honest. We have many issues related to immigration (CP).

He correlates the issues, as I said, with immigration but suggested while we, implying the whole of Sweden has problems and that those who immigrate to Sweden are the ones causing it—separating and distancing the Swedish citizens from those who immigrate. He then begins to outline his government plan and pushes the need for a new government, who he wants to rule, and the changes he wants to make. He then turns to S:

Sweden needs a new government that begins to work immediately […] We know that the Social Democrats want to rule, no matter the cost. But what do they want? Where are they heading? And with who do they want to implement their policies? Nobody knows because they are obsessed with talking about the Moderate Party (CP).

We know that Stefan Löfven wants to be Prime Minister, but that isn't policy. It isn't the solution to a single know problem in our society. On the other hand, we have presented our ideas, vision, and answers […]. It demands a new government. I want that. We can do it. Sweden needs it (CP).

In both citations above, Kristersson uses complete populism. In the first citation, Kristersson urges that Sweden needs, implying that "I see the need" for a new government. In the same citation, he calls for this government to begin work immediately, indicating laziness as seen in the framework. Later in the citation, he questions the Social Democrats for what they want, creating mistrust toward the party if they have a plan. In the second citation, we can again distinguish thin populism in the way Kristersson utters the need for Sweden to install a new government before he questions Löfvens ability and implies that he lacks a plan, as in the previous citation, and only wants to rule for the sake of ruling, implying mistrust and unableness.

**Tabell IX: Reference to the analytical framework by the Moderate Party in 2018.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **2018** | We, Us, Sweden, Citizens | Failure to Protect its citizens | Irresponsible, Unableness, Mistrust, Incompetence, Failure, Ignorance, Laziness | | Threat, Protect border, Protect democracy, Them, Stricter immigration, |

## 5.5. 2021

### 5.5.1 The Social Democrats

The speeches of 2021 were conducted during different circumstances than previously. Firstly, the speeches were done in the parliament building, considered the covid-19 pandemic put a stop to Almedalen. Secondly, during the government crisis, the opposition filed a motion of censure against Löfven and his government and was forced to step down. Lena Rådström Baastad, the secretary of the Social Democrats, spoke on behalf of Löfven's absence. He was later re-elected as prime minister on the same day by the parliament. The subject raised during

the speech was the motion of censure and the ongoing pandemic. But also healthcare, education, and criminality.

Rådstöm Baastad's speech starts by addressing the motion of censure. While she mentions that the opposing parties cause this, this is only briefly. She instead turns to the people who make Sweden function and go around despite the ongoing governmental crisis and pandemics. As with the speech by Löfven in 2018, this is a recurrent theme. She emphasizes that they want to put society before the individual. While she mentions and criticizes M briefly in the speech, this is nothing that can be categorized as thick populism. Instead, she focuses on what has and will happened under S position in government:

> We want to build Sweden stronger! We want to take Sweden forward together (TP).

Thin populism shines through. Rådström Baastad appeals to Sweden, that she and the Social Democrats want to build a stronger society for everyone. The sage of thin populism becomes more explicit as the speech goes on when she comments on the rise in criminality that has been seen during the last years:

> We have invested and diverted more resources to the police and judiciary than previous governments. Because we, the Social Democrats, know that you, the ordinary people, are most affected by the rampage and insecurity caused by the gangs (TP).

We see the usage of the term ordinary people, implying that we see you suffer because of these gangs and know what you need. This reappears paragraphs later when Rådström Baastad comments on why S should get renewed confidence from the citizens:

> We want to make a change and improve our society – for ordinary people, and therefore we are prepared to bear the responsibility and govern the country (TP).

Again, the phrase ordinary people, turning to most of Sweden's citizens, shows thin populism. Rådström Baastad then ends her speech by stating, once again, that the Social Democrats want to build a stronger society for everyone and continue the progress of Sweden. The speech from 2021 has a high presence of thin populism, where the terms "the people" and "Sweden" are frequently used. Any form of thick populism is non-existent, while she

mentions the opposition and the Moderate Party, but not in a way to portray them in a negative context or showcasing hostility.

**Tabell X: Reference toward the analytical framework by the Social Democrats in 2021.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|----|----|----|----|
| 2021 | The People, Sweden, We, You, Citizens. | | | | |

### 5.5.2 The Moderate Party

The Moderate Party continued to be in opposition. As with the speech from Rådström Baastad, this speech was conducted in a parliamentary building due to the pandemic. Still, in the aftermath of the governmental crisis, Stefan Löfven had been re-elected. The two main features are the governmental crisis and the Covid-19 pandemic. Other subjects are criminality, unemployment, and immigration. Kristersson starts by stressing the need that the government had to resign:

> Two weeks ago, the prime minister and government had to resign. The formation of that government was founded on incompatible promises to the Center-party and Left-wing Party, and it prohibited other parties from talking to each other (AP).

Early in his speech, anti-politics is present when Kristersson implies mistrust toward the system. He accuses the government and the Center and Left-wing parties of creating a situation that prohibited other parties from talking to one another. This is recognizable throughout the speech. Kristersson shows hostility toward the other parties, who supported the government, and accuses them of shutting out a part of the voters:

> A country can't be governed on the premise of parties not being allowed to talk to each other. If you exclude 20-25% of this country's voters from any influence, the result will be mistrust and polarization. When we need a solution, we have been given a standstill. When we need the ability to act, we have been given incapacitation (CP).

In the above citation, Kristersson turns to the people when he states that "A country can't be governed," implying Sweden, and all of us, suggesting thin populism. He also attacks the parties for dividing the different groups of voters, leading to mistrust. He calls for the incapacitation they have experienced, referring to the unableness and incompetence of the government. Showcasing complete populism, where Sweden and its citizens need a new government capable of acting. This citation is immediately followed up by clarifying his view of the two sides in Swedish politics and what they stand for:

> Swedish politics are now divided into irreconcilable standpoints. One is based on isolating parties, unsustainable agreements, and wasting their policies. And another that is based on honesty, problem-solving, and cooperation (AP).

Kristersson aims to create mistrust, calling out the opposition, deeming isolation, and shutting out certain parties. He also suggests that his party is based on problem solving and honesty, calling out the opposition's unableness and dishonesty. He goes on to describe the situation and what is needed and urges for a new government:

> Sweden can't wait. I am ready to form a new government. Willing to prioritize what is essential and put other issues on hold […] The decision by the Center-Party, to support Stefan Löfven once again is delusional […]. A Social Democratic-led government is incapable of breaking rough criminality and segregation (CP).

Kristersson calls for the need for a new government, suggesting that the whole of Sweden can't wait, showcasing thin populism. He then hostility the Center party to supporting the government again, creating mistrust and calling out the opposition delusional. He continues using anti-politics by calling out the government's incapability and uanableness. This is the last section where Kristersson in his speech addresses the government crisis, which has taken up most of the speech. Instead, the attention turns to the growing insecurity because of the increasing criminal organization. Kristersson talks about the number of shootings that have occurred across our country and later turns his attention to how these organizations must be dealt with:

> The Social Democrats state that they want harsher action and break the criminality. But they vote down every reform […] Who does the government care about – the victims or the criminals? (AP).

Kristersson shows signs of anti-politics where the government's desire to fight the growing criminality exists and questions which side the government is on. Kristersson continues this path and suggests that these members of originations need to be regarded as domestic terrorists. This is later put into context where he highlights immigration as a contribution to the problem:

> A high level of immigration and a useless integration are a dangerous combination. If we solve the issues facing society, we need to reduce immigration. The Social Democrats, Center party, and Left-wing party now want to increase immigration is nothing more than indiscriminate. A new right-wing government will tear up their new migration reform (CP).

Kristersson urges for decreased immigration, correlation high immigration, and, in his words, useless integration as a dangerous combination, correlating these to the problems in society. He states we need reduced immigration, emphasizing the whole of Sweden and that he sees the people's needs. He then calls out the governments and collaboration parties for wanting increased immigration, showing hostility, and in the end, complete populism. Kristersson then solely focus on his policies and what he and the Moderate Party want to implement. He ends his speech by stating:

> The Moderate Party is for everyone who wants change. The Moderate Party is for you who want society to function and be sustainable (TP).

Here suggest that M is a party for everyone, showing thin populism as an end to his speech. As in the case of 2018, the speech is characterized by complete populism, even if we can distinguish less than the previous speech. We continue to see frequent use of thick populism and anti-politics. Kristersson aims to create mistrust toward the government and the supporting parties for dividing the society and shutting out a part of the voters.

**Tabell XI: Reference toward the analytical framework by the Moderate Party in 2021.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|----|----|----|----|

| 2021 | Sweden, Voters, We, Everyone, You | | Mistrust, Failure, Incompetence, Unableness, Dividing, Indiscriminate | | Stricter immigration, Useless integration, |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|

## 5.6 Summary Analysis

### 5.6.1 The Social Democrats

Some anti-politics can be identified in 2012 when Löfven deems the government's failure and laziness in not creating new jobs as promised. Complete populism can be placed on one occasion when he emphasized "friends" and "we" to unite the people and suggested that government possesses an unwillingness that needs to be replaced. 2014 is similar to the previous speech, where Löfven again uses complete populism when calling out the government as irresponsible and dividing us and all of Sweden's citizens. In 2016, when the Social Democrats entered government, no complete populism could be identified, but more frequent use of anti-politics. Löfven calls out those who question the government's capability as incompetent, attacking individual politicians, calling for being irresponsible, creating mistrust, and acting "cowardly." In the same speech, we see more explicit reference to thin populism.

When Löfven called out the need for the EU to represent the ordinary people and be more integrated into people's lives, in 2018, before the election, Löfven called out the differences in Swedish politics, where he called the opposition for acting irresponsible, only caring about the rich to create mistrust. This later develops into complete populism when Löfven calls out that "now it's time for the ordinary people." In this citation, we also, for the first time, see reference to exclusion when Löfven suggests that "we" see the same issues and the need for stricter immigration policies, correlating the problems with immigration. In the last speech, 2021, they're in no present if thick populism of any kind. Instead, Rådström Baastad, speaking in Löfvens' absence, emphasizes the importance of everyone and that the Social Democrats have invested resources for the "ordinary people" and how they are prepared to govern and take responsibility for everyone, implying, once again, Sweden.

**Tabell XII: Complete table over the Social Democrats' development from 2012 – 2021.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|----|----|----|----|
| **2012** | Friends, we unite | | Failure, Mistrust, Uninterested, Disappointment, Laziness. | | |
| **2014** | We, Sweden, Taxpayers, Friends, Everyone, | | Dividing, Irresponsible, Ignorance, Mistrust | | |
| **2016** | Sweden, The People, United, | | Incompetence, Stupidity, Irresponsible, Mistrust, Counterfeit, Cowardliness, | | |
| **2018** | Sweden, The People, We | | Mistrust, Failure, Irresponsible, | | Stricter immigration, |
| **2021** | The people, Sweden, We, You, Citizens, | | | | |

### 5.6.2 The Moderate party

We distinguish an opposite development for the Moderate Party compared to the Social Democrats. In 2012, while being in government, the focus was more on thin populism. Reinfeldt emphasizes "Sweden, Us and We," While some anti-politics are present, thick populism is thick overall less detectable. This was the case until after the 2014 speech and election. In 2016 we can identify a turnaround from the Moderate Party and detect references across the analytical framework (except anti-media) where Kindberg Batra frequently uses complete populism, placing herself among the people while attacking the elite, calling out both the Social Democrats and individual politicians for creating mistrust, unwillingness, and ignorance to name a few. Exclusion is also present for the first time when she calls out the need for stricter immigration and being harder on deportation, at the same time suggesting this is what Sweden needs, further cementing the use of complete populism. References to anti-state also appear when Kindberg Batra accuses the Swedish authorities of deliberately aggravating the integration.

In 2018 the development and usage of complete populism continued when Kristersson combined thin and thick throughout the speech—attacking both politicians and parties for their ignorance, unableness, and mistrust. He also uses anti-state when suggesting that they have failed its citizens. Kristersson correlates issues in Sweden with immigration, calling out a threat from "the others" and a need for stricter immigration. Finally, in 2021, while complete populism is less than previously, it is still very present. He attacks the government for creating an unsustainable situation, creating mistrust, failing, and dividing us, and calling out the need for a new government, and this is what Sweden needs. References to anti-state have disappeared, while exclusion continues to be present where Kristersson calls for reduced immigration, calling out an increase as dangerous and indiscriminate.

**Tabell XIII: Complete table over the Moderate Party's development from 2012 – 2021.**

| Year | Thin | AS | AP | AM | EX |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| **2012** | Us, We, Sweden, Citizens, Heroes, Everyone, | | Ignorance, Unableness | | |
| **2014** | The people, Everyone, Participation | | Mistrust, Worthless, Laziness, | | |
| **2016** | Sweden, Us, Ours, We | Aggravating, Misbelief, Challenging | Irresponsible, Unwillingness, Mistrust, Unableness, Ignorance, Failure, | | Deporting, Stricter immigration, Our values, Integration |
| **2018** | We, Us, Sweden, Citizens | Failure to protect its citizens | Irresponsible, Unableness, Mistrust, Incompetence, Failure, Ignorance, Laziness. | | Threat, Protect border, Protect democracy, Them, Stricter immigration, |
| **2021** | Sweden, Voters, We, Everyone, You | | Mistrust, Failure, Incompetence, Unableness, Dividing, Indiscriminate. | | Reduce immigration, Useless integration, |

# 6. Discussion and Conclusion

In this section, I address the findings identified from the analysis. I start by discussing the results concerning the previous research. I then move on to the conclusions, limitations, and future research.

## 6.1 Discussion of the result

The research question of this thesis was constructed with three main words, if, when, and how. Beginning with if we can identify a change toward a more populist communication, we can identify that this has been the case for the Moderate Party and that the turnaround came in 2016. This aligns with when and how, as the previous research outlined for right-wing parties. The Moderate Party experienced electoral loss and change party leader on two occasions following the 2014 election, two primary factors identified by Demker (1997). This saw the party change drastically from one year to another, as the previous research suggested that they would do rapidly. Kindberg-Batra used complete populism on numerous occasions, placing herself among the people and attacking parties, politicians, political institutions, and authorities. The party also lost voters to SD, and as the research pointed out if a party loses voters to a populist party, they a more prone to adapt in their direction for fear of losing more competitiveness (Rooduijn, 2013; Valmyndigheten, 2014). It is possible that a change occurred in the 2015 speech by Kindberg-Batra. However, a change needs to be evaluated based on the previous election and can only be identified after some years.

When Kristersson took over, complete populism was present throughout his speech—further cementing that the change of party leader is a facilitator for the party moving in a new direction or accelerating the already taken path. This previous period had been characterized by decreasing numbers from opinion polls and lowered trust in Kindberg Batras' leadership, which also could be a contributing factor (Adams et al., 2004; Nilsson, 2017). In 2021, complete populism continued to be present, even less so than in previous years. He was calling out parties supporting the government. This development suggests that Spanje (2010) argues that when a populist party continues to be successful, as SD was in the 2018 election, opposition parties continue to adjust their positions further.

For the Social Democrats, we can determine that the party hasn't turned to a more populist communication but rather the opposite. In the early speeches, some tendencies to complete

populism can be identified. This could be a consequence that S changed party leader on two occasions following the 2010 election. When the party took government positing in 2014, anti-politics were still present, but complete populism was less so and disappeared entirely in 2021. The development of the Social Democrats can be described as going both inline and against the previous research. The party lost voters to SD in the 2014 and 2018 elections but managed to keep the governmental power, supporting Spanje (2010) that parties in government have fewer incentives to adapt. At the same time, it contradicts Spanjes' second argument that if a populist party continues to be successful, all parties sooner or later are forced to adapt. We see exclusion in 2018 when Löfven indicates the need for stricter immigration. Bale et al. (2010) suggest that Social Democratic parties miss and match policies but often adapt on issues concerning immigration and integration.

The differences in development and how the two parties have adapted could be explained by the notion that when right-wing parties lose voters to a populist party, they are more prone and rapid to adapt. Furthermore, oppositional parties have more incentives to adapt if populist parties continue to succeed, which was the case following the 2014 election. The main reason for this development could lie in respectively party families. Topcu and Adams (2009) suggested that established parties react within their ideological families. Considering that the Moderate Party and Swedish Democrats are closer to each other in policy could explain M:s development. In addition, the Social Democrats are more dependent on what the center-left parties do. Considering the development identified for S in the analysis, we can theorize that the other center-left parties didn't adapt toward more populist communication.

Lastly, I will address the limitations of the analytical framework in the next section. Still, as shown by the tables from each year, we can distinguish a change in the tone, a type of criticism diverted to each party. in the early speeches, the Moderate Party calls out the opposition for being ignorant and showing unableness. And in the latter years referring to incompetence and dividing society. The Social Democrats initially criticized the government for being lazy and uninterested, and in 2018, for failure and irresponsible. In both cases, blaming the elite for creating mistrust is present throughout the speech. The reference to exclusion remains mainly the same throughout the speech, where the need for stricter immigration is at the core. The same with thin populism, where the people and Sweden are two reoccurring features. As said, one of the limitations of the analytical framework is that it

doesn't separate one reference or search word as harsher than the other. This will be further assessed in the next chapter.

## 6.2 Conclusion, limitations, and future research

This thesis began by addressing that populist parties had gained momentum and an upswing across Western Europe. According to Mudde (2004), we would experience a populist zeitgeist in the coming years, where established parties became victims of, in his words, populist positing. This thesis aimed to combine the scholars of political competition and populist communication strategies to answer whether the Social Democrats and Moderate Party had turned toward a more populist communication and, if this was the case, when and how.

Through this thesis, I have contributed the following. Firstly, it has shown that the Social Democrats haven't adapted toward a more populist communication, while the Moderate Party has done so. Secondly, one of the main arguments for this thesis was that the research had focused exclusively on policy positions and had yet to acknowledge if the same factors explaining a shift in policy would do so in communication. The result showed that the Moderate Party had developed more populist communication and that they had done so according to how and when the research suggested they would. The Social Democrats didn't adapt, which corresponded with parties in government have less incentives to adapt. They showed some tendencies to move closer on issues of stricter immigration, as the research suggested, but this later ebbed away. Other factors could explain the development than poor electoral results and a change of party leader. The differences in party families might have played a significant part, and the Social Democrats were more dependent on how the center-left behaved.

As with all research, it comes with various limitations. To being with, and most notably, the choice of empirical material. Even if, as I argued in the method chapter, I believe that the speeches give an advantage in politicians not being interrupted. Still, they are written beforehand, and the politicians do not deviate from the script. Using debates or interviews might have provided another conclusion, given that a predetermined script does not as strongly guide them. In addition, ensuring trustworthiness and reliability in qualitative research is always difficult. It's about convincing the reader that you have acted in good faith as a researcher. Using a suitable analytical framework minimizes the risk of careless mistakes.

Still, since populism is a contested and debated subject, another framework might have defined different concepts as populistic. It might emphasize a particular harshness or tone in the messages being sent, distinguish between calling a politician corrupt or lazy, and label the other as more populistic, which would lead to another conclusion.

Furthermore, the research on when established parties react suggests that they do so more if a populist party has been successful than not. Even if the Moderates Party made a turnaround and changed their communication after the 2014 election, this correlated with SD becoming the third-largest party. I have, through this thesis, only how the previous research corresponds to S and M, not that the change occurred as a direct consequence of SD:s success.

Lastly, given these conclusions, how far could we generalize these results concerning the previous research. As argued in the chapter concerning the relevance of Sweden (see 3.4), only including two parties implicate the generalizability. Still, at the same time, it's not the number of units that is relevant, but what kinds. On a national level, I understand that we can expect similar results if this study was conducted using more cases, considering parties adapt within their party families. It would be interesting for future research to conduct this study on a local level regarding local parties are often more open to collaborating outside the traditional blocs (Möller, 2012). From an international perspective, Harmel and Svåsand (1997) conducted their research in Denmark and Norway, which could make us expect the same result in our neighboring countries. While the research on populism has called for a populist zeitgeist, I will be careful to suggest that the same result would be expected across all of Western Europe. Other factors could play a role, such as multi- or two-party systems, where a two-party system allows less competition and therefore parties might have less incentives to adapt. This would be an exciting take to compare Sweden and the result found in this thesis with other countries, considering we have previously been described as a negative case.

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