HOW DID INTERNATIONAL MEDIA FRAME SWEDEN’S HANDLING OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC?
A Case Study of Swedish “Exceptisionalism” And The Swedish “Image” During Pandemic

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Abstract

This study investigates how the international media framed Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its image during this time. By utilizing framing theory as an analytical framework, 42 articles from The Guardian and The Washington Post were analyzed. Hence, based on the existing framing research, by Semeteko and Valkenberg (2000), the coverage is classified into five frames: conflict, human interest, economic consequence, morality, and responsibility. The findings highlight how the media coverage of a nation during crises can shape its national image. Moreover, the study underscores the significance of comprehending how media can influence future global crisis reporting. This thesis contributes to the existing body of literature pertaining to the media framing of crises by analyzing the portrayal of Sweden's exceptionalism and image by the international media in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through an examination of news coverage from prominent outlets, the study identifies the dominant frames used to portray Sweden's response and shape its image. The findings reveal a diverse range of frames employed, including conflict, human interest, economic consequence, morality, and responsibility, reflecting the complexities surrounding Sweden's approach. This research emphasizes the importance of comprehending media framing in shaping national image during global crises and advocates for holistic approaches to address societal, economic, and public health impacts. Finally, the study's findings indicated that Sweden's national image in the context of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic is multifaceted and complex, based on the analysis of the various frames used in the articles. The dominant frames shape Sweden's perception of itself as a nation characterized by opposing opinions, controversies, ongoing debates, personal experiences, moral considerations, and a delicate balance between economic and social concerns. Sweden is framed as a nation that values individual liberty, individual responsibility, and a distinctive approach to crisis management. Overall, Sweden's national image reflects a dynamic and complex perspective, illuminating the complexities and diverse perspectives surrounding its response to the COVID-19 crisis.

Keywords: Crisis management, national image, Sweden, COVID-19 pandemic, media framing, international media, global crisis reporting.
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1. Introduction

Sweden is often recognized as a global leader in sustainability, social welfare, and governance. Additionally, the concept of "Swedish exceptionalism" has long been integral to Sweden's international reputation, with the Swedish model frequently lauded as one of the best in the world (Simons and Manoilo, 2019). While other countries might not necessarily adopt this strategy when dealing with complex issues, it may be effective for Sweden. Despite prior research on how nations are portrayed in international media, little is known about how crisis management affects a country's image. By analyzing how the British and American media portray Sweden's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and its exceptionalism, this research seeks to address this gap. This research will examine how the media portrays a country in times of crisis.

There is a lack of research on how media from other nations portray foreign countries' crisis management strategies. This study examines British and American news coverage of Sweden's pandemic response in order to gain a better understanding of how a country's reputation is shaped during a crisis. Both news outlets can have a significant impact on how the rest of the world views Sweden's response to the pandemic due to their extensive global networks and influence. Furthermore, because the US and the UK are two of the biggest English-speaking nations in the world, their media is frequently accessed during crises. The response that Sweden took to the pandemic, which was more relaxed than the strict lockdown measures taken by the United Kingdom and the United States, makes for an interesting case study that can be used to examine Sweden’s national image.

As a result, the purpose of this study is to examine how media framing of a nation's actions during a crisis can ultimately shape its image. Specifically, it aims to investigate the frames used by newspapers in the United Kingdom and the United States regarding Sweden's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic and how this frames shapes Sweden's image as a nation. As the effectiveness of the Swedish approach has been called into question after the government decided against imposing strict lockdown measures. Thus, through the integration of framing theory and qualitative content analysis, this study seeks to identify the dominant frames used by British and American media outlets in their coverage of Sweden's
response to the pandemic. In order to understand the underlying values and beliefs that influence how the pandemic in Sweden is portrayed in the media, this study will examine the language and tone used in news articles. The dominant frames that are used by the media outlets are important because they influence how Sweden is portrayed as a nation. Finally, this research aims to expand upon the existing body of literature pertaining to media framing of crises by analyzing the portrayal of Sweden's exceptionalism and image by the international media in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.1. Background

On January 30th, due to the virus outbreak, the World Health Organization issued a global emergency declaration. The next day, Sweden confirmed that they had their first corona case, and it, too, had originated in Wuhan. The Swedish Public Health Authority has concluded that there is an extremely low risk of infection spreading throughout Sweden, despite the ambiguity surrounding the new virus's potential for human-to-human transmission. On March 11, the WHO declared that COVID-19 was a pandemic that threatened to quickly spread across the globe (World Health Organization, 2020). Group members emphasized the need for all countries to take action and prepare for the disease (Folkhälsomyndigheten, 2020). The Swedish Public Health Agency subsequently raised the risk level for the spread of infection in Sweden to "very high," prompting the implementation of new restrictions and recommendations by the Swedish government and authorities. The government implemented the measures to reduce the pandemic's exponential growth and flatten the curve, thereby preventing healthcare and other services from being overwhelmed (ibid.). While other countries have instituted lockdowns and halted all activities in an effort to contain the outbreak, the Swedish government has taken long-term measures with a focus on individual responsibility to limit the social, economic, and public health impacts.

The COVID-19 pandemic affected countries all over the world, with each country implementing its own unique approach to handle the crisis. Sweden, in particular, stood out for its approach of not imposing a strict lockdown or mandatory mask-wearing policy. As a result, the media played a significant role in how Sweden's handling of the pandemic was framed internationally. The media coverage of Sweden's approach was divided, with some
lauding it as a bold and unique strategy, while others criticized it as reckless and dangerous (Neuding and Sanandaji, 2020).

The overarching purpose of this study is to investigate how coverage of Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic appeared in international media outlets. The purpose of this research is to analyze the frames of news articles about the pandemic in Sweden in order to determine the dominant frames used by media outlets. The dominant frames in the media are important because they influence not only how the public views and evaluates Sweden's response to the pandemic but also how they see Sweden as a nation. Finally, by examining how the international media framed Sweden's exceptionalism and image in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, this study hopes to contribute to the existing literature on media framing of crises.

2. Previous studies

This chapter provides a review of literature pertaining to nation image building, framing the country image in international media, and communicating Sweden and the Swedish model to global audiences. The chapter commences by exploring the concept of nation image building and its significance in shaping national identity and reputation in the global context. Subsequently, the chapter delves into previous research concerning how countries are framed in international media and the pivotal role of framing in shaping public opinion and understanding of a country. Finally, the chapter concentrates on earlier studies related to how Sweden and the Swedish model have been framed and communicated to global audiences, particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. By scrutinizing the existing literature, this chapter provides a strong foundation for the current study and highlights gaps in the literature that this research seeks to address.

2.1 Media representation and nation image- how media shapes perceptions of nations and international issues?

Media executives claim that declining interest in international news has resulted in a significant reduction in coverage of international events and issues. The public's thirst for international knowledge is also growing in tandem with globalization's rapid expansion (Wu, 2019:4). The public learns about other countries and world events through mediated texts and images. The media has a powerful impact on how people conceptualize far-flung places and cultures (Stock, 2009:118). Because of this, people tend to get their information about global issues from the media rather than through personal experience or other channels (Li & Chitty, 2009:3).
Foreigners' impressions of a country are formed by their exposure to generalizations, biased reporting, and personal encounters (Fan, 2010:100). One can have an internal perspective as well as an external one. What one thinks, feels, and believes about oneself and the world around them is known as their "perception." Walter Lippman, a journalist and media critic, coined the term "stereotype" to describe the "pictures in our heads" that shape our perception (Li & Chitty, 2009:1). Although positive and negative stereotypes do exist, negative ones are more common. Prejudice, the premature evaluation of members of different social groups, results from stereotyping (i.e., the assumption that all objects in a category are similar in ways other than those used to categorize them). Misconceptions and outdated generalizations about a country and its people are common (Fan, 2008:4; Li & Chitty, 2009:1-2). Prejudices about other countries are often the result of historical events that have been passed down through the generations (Kunczik, 2003:412). For example, Germans and Japanese people have been stigmatized for their countries' actions during World War II.

Fan (2008), defines a nation's image as the set of characteristics that its citizens hope the rest of the world will value above all others. Its credibility is based on the opinions of other countries about the validity of its claims. Thus, Fan (2008) distinguishes between an outside nation's perception of a country and the country's own perception of itself (Fan, 2008:3-4). According to public relations experts, a person's "nation image" is their mental picture of a country and their impressions of its citizens (Kunczik, 2003:412). The economic, political, diplomatic, religious, and military relations of a country—as well as the effects of these ties on the attitudes, beliefs, and practices of the media company's owners—are all relevant factors in defining a country's image in the context of the media industry (Saleem, 2007:136). Therefore, "a representation of a country's positive or negative standing in the media," taking into account the country's historical, political, economic, military, diplomatic, and religious contexts, is one definition of a nation's image (Saleem, 2007:136).

Kunczik (2003) argues that the media's ability to serve as a neutral arbiter is crucial as they play a vital role in spreading the nation's image around the world. Furthermore, media outlets are also routinely used in international negotiations and play an important role in shaping global priorities (Kunczik, 2003:409). Because of this, public relations experts who are familiar with the criteria journalists use to compile their stories play an instrumental role in shaping international political action (Kunczik, 2003:410). Image creation and branding are
also forms of communication that benefit from third-party facilitation, such as public relations agencies. Corporations in the media industry are both corporate actors in their own right and platforms for government actors, branding consultants, and corporate business representatives to use in the branding of countries. However, in contrast to the earlier argument, Bolin and Ståhlberg (2015) highlight that the media plays a crucial role in deciding what will be covered, how images will be constructed, and in what reception context they will be interpreted, even if the initiators of communication activities designed to change a nation's image have preconceived notions regarding the outcomes of their campaigns (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2015:3076–3078). Therefore, regardless of whether or not a country makes an effort to manage its image, the media is still an important part of that image (Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2015:3077).

Nevertheless, the media's portrayal of a country is not solely "determined" by the logic of news values. Several factors frequently shape and strengthen the public's perception of a nation (Li & Chitty, 2009:3; Saleem, 2007:136, 154). Consequently, the media forms, represents, or reframes the images that are projected. The frames that people have in their minds are different from the frames that are obvious to the public in the media. Therefore, the media is a vital tool and medium for projecting national images, and the private and public frames are inextricably linked in the formation of national identities. As a result, using the framing theory to examine how nation images are portrayed in the media can be an effective strategy (Li & Chitty, 2009:5-7).

2.2 Framing national image in International media coverage.

Previous research on framing of national images in news media has looked on both enduring transformations (e.g., Cheng, 2021; Melnyk, 2021; Ospina Estupinan, 2017; Zhang & Mwangi, 2016) and topics or incidents with a brief-term effect (e.g., Melnyk, 2021; Ospina Estupinan, 2017; Zhang & Mwangi, 2016). Peng (2004) utilized framing analysis to scrutinize visual representations featured in the New York Times and Los Angeles Times during the period spanning from 1992 to 2001. According to the study's analysis, political news was often composed with a critical lens, a phenomenon that can be attributed to editorial gatekeeping and preconceived public and editorial perceptions of China. The results of the study provide evidence to substantiate the assertion that a nation's gross domestic
product (GDP), trade activities, and political affiliations are noteworthy indicators of its representation in the media of another nation (Peng, 2004).

The study conducted by Ozornina and Mannin (2020) employs the theoretical framework of "competing frames" to analyze the manner in which the United Kingdom portrayed Russia's national image during the 2018 FIFA World Cup. As per the authors of the study, a significant proportion of media establishments in the United Kingdom, particularly those classified as tabloids, tend to portray Russia in an unfavorable light. During the World Cup, the British media portrayed Russia in a predominantly favorable light. However, following the conclusion of the event, they returned to their customary negative framing. The study's results support the idea that tragic events don't change how people think about a country.

Similarly, the representation of a nation by the media may not accurately reflect the prevailing circumstances. Saleem (2007) summarized key findings from the literature on how the US media portrays other nations, and the results showed that the media generally supports US foreign policy and portrays foreign nations in line with that policy (Saleem, 2007: 144-145, 152-153). According to Saleem (2007), the American media typically adheres to the official stance of the United States government in its foreign policies and diplomatic relations when characterizing a nation as either an ally or adversary. Additionally, the examination of scholarly works has demonstrated that the manner in which media frames are constructed plays a crucial role in shaping the audience's perception of a particular matter, challenge, or occurrence as predominantly favorable (Saleem, 2007: 138). The impact of American television on a country's image in the United States was found to be correlated with the amount of time its citizens spent watching TV, as reported by Wanta, Golan, and Lee (2004). Thus, news coverage of a nation has a big influence on how the public feels about it. When news stories have a positive outlook, the public is more likely to have a positive opinion of the nation. moreover, how a country is portrayed in the media can say as much about its character as what it does in the world (Ibid).

The study conducted by Makukhin, Tsybulska, Pidgorny, and Kavatsiuk (2018) aimed to examine the portrayal of France and other European countries on Russian television from 2014 to 2018. According to Makukhin et al. (2018:25), the French media exhibited the highest degree of criticism towards the Russian media, with the German and British media following suit. Many people have a negative impression of France because of widespread
media portrayals of the country characterised by violence and political unrest. This framework encompasses criminal activity, accidents, as well as natural and industrial disasters. The portrayal of government, police, or military entities is predominantly negative in nature (Makukhin et al., 2018: 28–30). This is consistent with the media's portrayal of France as a nation that experiences frequent terrorism attacks. The depiction of France and other European nations as meriting such punitive measures is attributed to their inadequate policies, management of the migration predicament, and reluctance to collaborate with Russia on diverse matters (Makukhin et al., 2018:33–36). It is often claimed that because of the nation's ineffective and weak management, as well as its enduring flaws in the economy, policy, and security, the French people have no choice but to protest and demonstrate their disapproval of government policy. Protests are a prevalent feature of democratic societies and represent a potent tool for citizens to engage in dialogue with their government. However, in Russia, they are often perceived as an ineffective and weak approach. These frames are also used in Germany and the United Kingdom, to name a couple of other European countries (Makukhin et al., 2018: 31–32, 36). Hence, Russia's active framing of France's country image, at least from a 'western' perspective, reflects Russia's own agenda as much as it reflects France's image.

2.3 Framing Sweden and the ‘Swedish Model’ to International Audiences

Despite its small population and relative isolation, Sevin (2017) claims that Sweden has a positive image around the world. This is because the cultural values of the Nordic countries are congruent with their emphasis on global political issues like climate change and gender equality. Sweden is widely credited as the first country to propose using Nordic progressivism as a tool for attracting allies and advancing national interests abroad (Simons, 2020; Sevin, 2017: 109–101). Brommesson (2018) highlights the appeal of "Nordicness" in solving modern problems. According to Brommesson (2018), Sweden's perception of its role on the international stage has shifted over time, from an internationalist leader during the late Cold War to a Europeanized follower after joining the European Union to a Nordic balancer at the present time (Brommesson, 2018; Simons, 2020).

Focusing on international political issues that are in line with Nordic cultural values has helped Sweden build a strong brand image around the world (Sevin, 2017, pp. 109–10). Thus,
by working together and reaching a consensus on matters of international relations, Sweden has earned a reputation as a "norm entrepreneur" (Sundstrom and Elgström, 2019: 1). But there are inconsistencies in Swedish defense and foreign policy, such as the country's criticism of armed conflict while simultaneously undermining the central value of neutrality/non-alignment (Simons et al., 2019; Simons, 2020). As a result of the Swedish political elite's belief in their global role as spreading knowledge and practice for the greater good in a messianic fashion, these contradictions are often overlooked (Aggestam and Bergman-Rosamond, 2016).

The idea that the Swedish model is the best in the world is central to the country's international reputation, known as "Swedish exceptionalism" (Simons and Manoilo, 2019). Because of its value-normative conceptual approach to foreign policy, Sweden enjoys a high profile and positive global image; however, this does not guarantee that other countries and actors will follow Sweden's lead (Sundstrom and Elgström, 2019, pp. 13-14). Sweden may be confident in its ability to teach the rest of the world about societal development, but other international actors may have different ideas about how to approach challenging problems (Mouritzen, 1995, p. 9).

The concept of "Swedish exceptionalism" has long been integral to Sweden's international reputation, with the Swedish model frequently lauded as one of the best in the world (Simons and Manoilo, 2019). Nonetheless, as Mouritzen (1995), notes, this does not necessarily mean that other international actors will embrace the same approach to tackling complex problems (Mouritzen, 1995: 9). However, the Swedish government asserts that its citizens have a high degree of faith in the law and government, making them more receptive to and willing to follow official policy recommendations (Government, 2020). One of at the time Prime Minister Stefan Löfven's many justifications for Sweden's corona strategy is this very point. In March, the Public Health Agency held a daily press conference to update the public on the progress of the deadly virus. About half of the world's population, or nearly three billion people, were quarantined by the end of the month (SVT Nyheter, 2020). There were simultaneous reports of Swedes living a normal, unrestricted lifestyle (Liljas, 2020). After initially being questioned by other countries, Sweden's novel corona strategy attracted a lot of attention from around the world. Why didn't Sweden take the same actions as the rest of the world to combat the pandemic?
The media are vital in providing the public with the information they need to gain perspective and make informed decisions. The media has an extra responsibility to keep their audiences informed and up to date during crises because they are the first place people turn for information (Odén et al., 2016). Sweden's ability to participate in international exchange and collaboration is directly tied to how credible and relevant foreigners view Sweden and Swedish actors. Sweden's national identity remains strong in 2020, which helps the country maintain its 2019 and 2018 rankings as the world's ninth-best nation brand. Participants in the 2020 Nation Brand Index (NBI) survey were also asked their opinions on how different countries would handle health crises like the Corona pandemic. Sweden ranks 15th out of 50 countries, despite receiving extensive media attention during the Corona crisis. The Swedish Institute's 2018 report "Sweden in a new light?" (Sverige i ett nytt ljus?) says that people outside of Sweden now have a more complex view of the country than they did in the past (The Swedish Institute, 2018). Therefore, it is essential to maintain research into how the media portray Sweden internationally, particularly during times of crisis when coverage is more prevalent in the media.

Nevertheless, in a recent study by Simons (2020), the Swedish government's communication strategy during the coronavirus pandemic was analyzed, specifically focusing on how it framed its approach as the 'Swedish model' in the international mass media. Initially, the Swedish model was widely accepted and considered successful. However, over time, perceptions shifted due to deviations from global norms and the policies of other countries. This study utilized hegemony theory and indexing theory to explain the reasons behind this change. In another study by Irwin (2020), the international media coverage of Sweden during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic was explored. The study identified six narratives portrayed by the media, including perceptions of Sweden's approach, expert advice, and government trust. It emphasized the need for fact-checking, source critique, and accurate information in media reporting.

On the other hand, Rambaree and Nässén's (2020) research looked at how Sweden's distinctive response to the COVID-19 pandemic, which placed an emphasis on trust and personal responsibility, affected three distinct communities: the elderly, immigrants from underserved areas, and prisoners. This study analyzed how the rights of these groups were affected and explored various social development approaches implemented in Sweden. It
highlighted the importance of a strong democratic state and citizens' willingness to take ownership of responsibilities during a pandemic.

Overall, these previous studies have contributed to the understanding of crisis management politics and the impact of communication strategies, and social development approaches on the credibility, legitimacy, and public perception of governments during a global crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. However, little study has been undertaken specifically on the perception of a nation's image in times of crisis. Unlike the study conducted by Irwin (2020) which only looked at the ‘early stage’ of the pandemic, this thesis aims to fill a void in the extant scholarly discourse by investigating the way in which the British and American media frame Sweden's handling of the COVID-19 crisis by looking at articles published over the two year period. This research hopes to shed light on how the image of a country evolves during times of crisis. Sweden is frequently cited as a model for other nations to emulate, potentially influencing the reception of its policies and practices, including its handling of the recent pandemic. Despite the extensive discourse surrounding this subject matter, there remains a lack of knowledge regarding the international media's framing of a foreign nation's image during times of crisis.

3. Research Problem, aim and question

The globalization in communication has led to a rise in the creation of national identities as a means of strengthening domestic political support and projecting influence abroad (Li and Chitty, 2009). Furthermore, the media possesses inherent structures and procedures for covering significant global occurrences (Galtung and Ruge, 1965:64), such as the COVID-19 outbreak, and thus can be identified as a top contender for the primary role of shaping international perceptions.

The COVID-19 pandemic led to the implementation of diverse crisis management strategies worldwide. Sweden's unique approach, which centered on voluntary measures rather than strict lockdowns, drew both praise and criticism in global media discourse. Hence, understanding the presentation of Sweden's crisis management plan in international media is crucial for studying news media frames, as it reveals how different perspectives shape a nation's image during times of crisis. Researching the construction of Sweden's strategy can
also provide crucial insights for upcoming crises by contrasting various approaches and noting both successes and failures. The crisis management strategy that Sweden used in response to the COVID-19 pandemic offers useful insights into framing of nations during crises.

The existing body of literature pertaining to nation images has primarily focused on the United States and China, thereby creating a gap in knowledge with respect to how media outlets from other nations frame the crisis management strategies of foreign countries. The objective of this research is to provide a more thorough understanding of the media's impact on how a nation is portrayed during a crisis. This will be achieved by examining the British and American broadsheet news coverage of Sweden's pandemic response. Due to their extensive global networks and outreach, both nations have a significant impact on how the rest of the world sees Sweden's response to the pandemic. The United Kingdom and the United States, being among the most populous English-speaking nations globally, have a significant impact on media consumption in various regions, especially during times of crisis. The Swedish response to the pandemic is an intriguing case study because it contrasts with the stringent lockdown measures put in place by the US and the UK. This study analyzes media coverage of these two countries to look at how different crisis management strategies are framed and how this ultimately contributes to shaping a country's image during crisis.

3.1 Research Question

A. How do British and American newspapers frame Sweden's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what are the dominant frames used by these media outlets?

4. Framing Theory: An Analytical framework for understanding media frames

This study employs framing theory to analyze how the American and British media framed Sweden during the COVID-19 crisis. Framing theory is one of the most influential theories in communication science and has roots in a variety of scientific fields. Human interaction is shaped by meaning-making processes and is frequently infused with a social constructivist
perspective on social phenomena, according to the fundamental premise of research on framing theory. In journalism research, many different types of frames, such as political, economic, cultural, and health frames, have been previously studied (Chou et al., 2009; Nisbet et al., 2015). The focus of the study is the health frame and how it has been used to frame Sweden's response to the COVID-19 outbreak. In this study, I will operationalize framing theory by looking at the study conducted by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), which is elaborated in detail in the next section, and conduct qualitative content analysis with the help of the identified frames, which will also be the analytical framework of this study.

Entman (1993) defines framing as "selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and emphasizing them in a communicating text by promoting a problematic definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation for the item described." (Entman, 1993: 52). Framing is the process of promoting a particular interpretation by selecting assumed elements of reality and aggregating narrative linkages. For example; *A news story about a crime could be framed as either a senseless act of violence committed by a dangerous criminal or as a tragic event that occurred due to societal or environmental factors.* More developed frames frequently deal with the four functions listed below: moral judgment, problem definition, remedy promotion, and causal analysis (Entman 1993).

Salience and selection are used in framing to select meanings that recognize reality and make them more visible in a communication text (Entman 1993; pp. 51-58). It is also present to develop a significant issue of description and moral evaluation in order to propose treatments or causal explanations for the identified aspect. Frames focus on some knowledge about an element that is the topic of a communication, increasing its salience. The term salience refers to the process of making information more memorable and visible to the general public. Texts can highlight data by connecting it to strongly associated cultural symbols. Even a single un-illustrated existence of a concept in a vague part of the text can be extremely significant if it fits into a real plan in a reader's believing structures (Entman 1993).

As a result, the concept of framing provides a comprehensive way of explaining the impact of news text transmission. The transmission of information to that awareness from a single location has a continuous influence on people's knowledge (such as news report or speech). Frames focus on specific details about something because it is the main topic of a conversation, motivating them with salience. Text will make information more visible by
connecting them to historically recognizable objects. Even the presence of a single non-illustrated concept in vague sections of the text can be extremely significant. It fits into an actual plan in any given audience's belief systems (Entman, 1993: 51–58).

4.1 Framebuilding & Operationalisation of theory

The study by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) was chosen for this research due to its relevance and credibility in the field. Their research offers a thorough comprehension of framing theory and its application to media analysis. Thus, by leveraging their work, I can build upon a well-established foundation and benefit from the insights and methodologies they have employed. This adds validity and strength to my own research, allowing for meaningful comparisons and expanding the existing body of knowledge in the field. Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) work titled "Framing European Politics" identifies five distinct categories of frames that are pertinent to the present study. These include conflict, human interest, economic consequence, morality, and responsibility frames. Their research on framing in European politics offers a significant framework for examining the presentation of news stories in the media. Their research specifically identifies diverse framing tactics employed in news articles, including but not limited to illustrating conflict, human interest, economic ramifications, morality, or responsibility. Semetko and Valkenburg's (2000) study is a good place to start for this investigation because it offers a thorough understanding of framing theory and how it is applied to media analysis. Drawing from the methods and insights already developed by established researchers strengthens this research and helps to both extend and confirm previous findings.

This study will therefore utilize the five frames identified by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) to analyze the framing of the pandemic response by international media outlets in the context of Sweden. Through an analysis of the language, images, and frames employed in news coverage, researchers are able to determine the prevailing and dominant frames. Moreover, by analyzing the political and social context in which news stories are produced, researchers can ascertain the factors that influence the frames utilized by journalists and media outlets. In general, the research conducted by Semetko and Valkenburg provides a significant contribution to comprehending the presentation of news stories in the media.
Hence, by utilizing this framework to examine Sweden's handling of the pandemic, scholars can acquire valuable perspectives on how media frames a nation's image during the time of international crisis.

As a result, the analysis of data will be grounded in conceptual frameworks pertaining to conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility. These categories will facilitate my inquiry into the extent and nature of the global media's coverage of the COVID-19 outbreak in Sweden. My investigation will examine the impact of framing on the international news media's reporting of the pandemic and its effects on the image of a nation during crises by using the framing criteria and definitions from the analytical framework table.

4.2 Framing Theory as an analytical Framework: Five Types of Generic Frames

According to framing theory, how an issue is presented in the media can influence how the public understands and responds to that issue (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Entman (1993) defines media framing as "the selective presentation and structuring of information in order to influence the opinions and evaluations of audiences." This means that the media can shape the public's understanding of complex issues by presenting information in a particular way. Previous research has found that media framing has a significant impact on public opinion (Iyengar, 1991; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Framing theory has been used in the context of public health crises to understand how the media presents information about the crisis and how this influences public attitudes and behaviors (Chou et al., 2009; Nisbet et al., 2015). This study aims to investigate how the media in other countries framed Sweden's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic and how it influenced international perceptions of the country by applying framing theory to media coverage of Sweden's handling of the pandemic.

The framing of a story demonstrates how an audience will interpret various pieces of news and the content of the story within its context. It emphasizes that how the media presents things to audiences influences how citizens perceive the content. The material in this case could be an image, a word, or a symbol used by journalists to investigate how the author reported on a topic or event. Journalism and press participation are simplified by framing in such a way that the mechanism for journalists and news organizations to publish reports so
that their audience can clearly understand what is portrayed is simplified (Moy, Tewksbury, Rinke, 2016). Additionally, the media frame effect describes how frames can be used as abstractions to structure or organize the meaning of messages (Lai, 2017). Entman (1993) claims that framing is initially used to form and change viewers' beliefs and desires by priming them. By presenting those concepts and opinions with the goal of increasing value, the audience is purposefully motivated to hear, consider, and draw conclusions (Entman, 1993).

The study of media framing is especially important in the context of public health crises, because media coverage has the ability to shape public opinion and influence policy decisions (Druckman, Bolsen, & Fredericksen, 2011; McCombs et al., 1997). Most people learn what they know about politics from the media or other ordinary people. The media, as a mass transmitter of information, is an information catalyst that attracts, directs, and guides public attention. The media provides a consistent foundation for public relations in legislation and public attention allocation (Rodrguez Pérez, 2017).

The authors of Framing European Politics (2000), Semetko and Valkenburg, identified five distinct types of generic frames based on prior research on framing. The frames and indicators surrounding these five frames that could be found in the reporting of the two newspapers are described below in the table. Thus, from the standpoint of framing theory, I will examine the global news coverage of the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden using the five different types of frames listed in the table above. These general frames will serve as the foundation for my research variables, and when I am analyzing my data, I will take into account the framing norms and definitions covered in the section. With this strategy, I'll be able to look into how framing affects how the pandemic is covered in the international news media and how various framing options can shape the narrative surrounding the crisis, which will ultimately shape how a country is perceived by its global citizens.

**Frames and Definitions**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Conflict frame</td>
<td>Emphasizes conflict between people, organizations, or groups. This frame is frequently used in news media, particularly in political reporting, such as presidential elections, as a way to pique the audience's interest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Human interest frame</td>
<td>Provides a more emotional perspective when describing a situation, problem, or issue. Similar to the conflict frame, this one is frequently used in news media to draw viewers in by dramatizing a news story and appealing to their emotions in an effort to make the news more relatable.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic consequences frame</td>
<td>Focuses on whether an event, issue, or problem will have economic consequences for an individual, group, institution, region, or country. This frame is also commonly used in news media, likely because economic consequences have high news value.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morality frame</td>
<td>The problem/event/issue is placed in a moral context. Journalistic professionalism is defined by an ideal of objectivity, which means that they frequently employ this frame indirectly by allowing others to speak in the matter, such as through quotes or conclusions. There are also articles that directly convey moral messages or urge people to act in a specific manner. This type of frame is more common in individual frames than in news content, but it can be identified among the many frames used in news reporting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsibility frame</td>
<td>Presents an event, issue, or problem in terms of who is accountable for its cause or solution. Responsibility is assigned to the government, a group, or an individual. There have been no precise measurements of the prevalence of responsibility framing in the news media, but according to Semetko and Valkenburg, American news media, among others, is closely associated with influencing public opinion on the issue of who is responsible for the cause or solution of a social problem, such as poverty.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Frames and their definitions, *In Framing European Politics, (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000)*

In conclusion, the table presented will play a pivotal role in this research as it serves as a reference point for analyzing and interpreting the collected data. The media's power to shape a nation's image during a crisis can be better understood by dissecting the coverage of Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, specifically by looking at the framing...
strategies that were used. These five frames, which serve as the basis for the research variables, allow for a thorough understanding of the role of framing. Finally, building upon the theoretical foundation established by Semetko and Valkenburg's work, the next chapter will provide a detailed exploration of the methodology employed to gather and analyze the data, ensuring a robust and rigorous investigation of the research objectives.

5. Methodological framework

This chapter will outline the research methodology employed in this study. The first section will explain why this particular sample was selected and then describe the case study methodology's key characteristics. Following this, the data collection process will be described using news articles from The Guardian and The Washington Post. The chapter after that will elaborate on why qualitative content analysis is used in this research as our data analysis technique. Finally, aspects of the research's validity, reliability, and ethics will be addressed to ensure the credibility and integrity of the findings.

5.1 Method and design

To provide a deeper understanding and evaluation of how British and American media frame the handling of the pandemic in Sweden, this thesis will use a qualitative study and a case study design. Instead of examining the motivations behind these media outlets' framing decisions, the research aims to describe how they framed Sweden as a nation dealing with a pandemic. The study will be deductively organized and use framing theory as its analytical framework. Throughout the study, the researcher will maintain constant focus and connection on the significant problematization (Silverman, 2011: 414–417).

5.2. Salient case study design

Case studies are frequently used in qualitative research because they allow for in-depth examination of a single phenomenon, occurrence, or individual (Stake, 1995). Case studies are an effective method for developing novel theories and gaining a nuanced understanding of complex social and cultural issues (Yin, 1994). Scholars use a variety of methodologies, such as interviews, observations, document analysis, and field notes, to collect data that provides a comprehensive and intricate depiction of the phenomenon under investigation (Merriam, 1998). In contrast to "what" questions, "how" and "why" questions are more appropriately addressed through the use of case studies. According to Flyvbjerg (2006), case studies involve investigating how a specific group handled a crisis or how individuals with a specific illness handled their daily routines. The ability to generate knowledge that is tailored
to specific situations is a key benefit of using case studies. It is critical for case study researchers to recognize the limitations of their findings due to the studies' limited scope, which focuses on a single or a small number of cases (Stake, 1995).

This study employs a salient case study methodology to investigate how international media portray Sweden's pandemic response. The salient case study design is used to gain a thorough understanding of a specific case or phenomenon (ibid). This method requires the researcher to carefully select cases based on explicit criteria relevant to the research question and theoretical framework. There are numerous sources and methodologies for gathering data, which is then used to build a credible rationale for the given scenario. The research design is distinguished by objectivity and rigor through the use of established methods and techniques for conducting systematic data analysis. The main objective of this study is to fully understand how the international media framed Sweden's handling of the pandemic in order to generalize findings obtained from the Guardian and the Washington Post (i.e., international media) to a greater extent. This objective requires careful case selection. This entails looking at newspaper articles about Sweden's response to the pandemic from British and American broadsheet newspapers based on their salience and international reach. The reason why I chose The Guardian and The Washington Post is that they are among the largest mainstream news agencies in the United Kingdom and the United States and are widely preferred newspapers in the English language, thereby reaching a large global population. Finally, the collected data will be analyzed using a framework for analysis, which may include techniques like pattern matching and explanation building.


I gathered data by analyzing articles published on The Guardian and Washington Post websites from March 2020 to March 2022. This timeframe is appropriate because it covers the period during which Sweden's approach to the pandemic attracted international attention and scrutiny, and it includes a sufficient amount of time to analyze the media's coverage of this particular issue.

I chose these two news outlets because they are widely recognized and respected news organizations from the Western world with a large international audience (Meyer, 2018). To
ensure the reliability of the data, I collected articles that are relevant to my research question, which is focused on the unique approach taken by Sweden in handling the COVID-19 pandemic while the rest of the world was in strict lockdown. I used the original published articles from both newspapers, as they provided the most suitable source of data for my research.

I searched for articles by entering "Sweden", “Pandemic”, “Corona Virus” as a key word in their search engine. This helped me to find all relevant articles on Sweden's handling of the pandemic. After thoroughly studying the 42 articles in detail, with the help of the indicators. I was thus able to categorize the articles into different frames as outlined in the table below. It is important to note that while same article may touch upon multiple frames, I have chosen to assign the article to the frame that it predominantly focuses on. As a result some frames have more articles than others which was not intentionally done but rather due to the dominance of certain frame over the others in the published articles. This method was adopted due to the limitations of this study. Categorizing each article into multiple frames would have resulted in an extensive analysis (42 articles * 5 frames = 210), exceeding the strict length constraints of the thesis. By categorizing each article into its most relevant frame, I am able to conduct a comprehensive analysis while staying within the limitations of the study. Hence, by analyzing 42 articles, I was able to identify the frames used by The Guardian and Washington Post when reporting on Sweden's approach to the pandemic. Additionally, they have a significant reach, both domestically and internationally, and are known for their in-depth reporting and investigative journalism. Furthermore, newspapers can be reliable sources of information, and often feature multiple viewpoints on a given topic, making them useful for comparing the framing strategies of various media outlets. They have editorial standards and fact-checking processes in place to ensure the accuracy of their reporting, and they employ professional journalists who report events and issues accurately and without bias. Newspapers serve as vital resources for both the general public and policymakers because of their widespread readership and cultural impact. While other sources of information, such as academic articles and government reports, can also provide valuable insights, newspapers can serve as a useful starting point for gathering information and identifying key themes and perspectives on a particular topic (McCombs and Ghanem,, 2001; Reese, 2010).
5.4. Qualitative approach

My study consisted of a content analysis of two news outlets' coverage of the pandemic response in Sweden. The analytical framework (see section 4.2) plays an important role in this thesis and with the help of the analytical framework, I was able to analyze the meanings of the articles provided by The Guardian and Washington Post using a qualitative method known as content analysis. This investigation is better suited to qualitative research methods because it focuses on news texts. The content analysis will shed light on how the two publications framed Sweden's response to the pandemic. If I had gone with quantitative content analysis, it would look only at how often a specific word, phrase, or set of terms appears in each of the two newspapers' articles. But instead, the goal is to obtain a deeper understanding of the gathered data and interpret the meanings within the texts.

The study will focus on articles published between March 2020 and March 2022. The time frame of March 2020 to March 2022 was selected to capture the early and later stages of the pandemic in Sweden and to allow for a comprehensive analysis of media coverage.

5.5. Method for analysing gathered data: Qualitative content analysis.

For this research, The Washington Post and The Guardian were chosen to see how international media outlets cover a given event using qualitative content analysis. The research will see how two daily newspapers frame the topic at hand. In order to do this, it's crucial to organize and classify information ahead of time. Consequently, qualitative content analysis can be used to determine meanings, motivations, and intentions. By reducing bias, this method helps us learn more about people's values, norms, goals, and what motivates them. Hence, determining the precision of the required data, the nature of the content to be analyzed, and the significance of the materials to the hypothesis are all essential steps (Mayring, 2004). Therefore, a content analysis was conducted in order to comprehend how The Guardian and The Washington Post covered Sweden's response to the pandemic.

Additionally, to guide my analysis, I incorporated the pre-defined frames of conflict, human interest, economic consequences, morality, and responsibility into my analytical framework (See section 4.2). These frames are particularly relevant to my research question on: How do British and American newspapers frame Sweden's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and
what are the dominant frames used by these media outlets? Thus, in order to justify the indicators provided in the table below, I thoroughly considered their alignment with each frame. For example, under the conflict frame, indicators such as "Sweden's approach vs other countries," "criticism and backlash," "tension between government and experts," and "debate on herd immunity" will help identify and assess the conflicting perspectives and controversies surrounding Sweden's COVID-19 strategy. Similarly, in other frames, for example, the economic consequences frame, indicators like "economic impact of the pandemic," "cost of government interventions," "unemployment and job loss," and "economic inequality" will aid in analyzing the economic repercussions of the policies. Therefore, by justifying the indicators based on their relevance to the selected frames, I can ensure a comprehensive and meaningful analysis of the topic.

### Frames, definitions, and possible indicators

<table>
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<th>Possible indicators</th>
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| **Conflict frame**      | Emphasizes conflict between people, organizations, or groups. This frame is frequently used in news media, particularly in political reporting, such as presidential elections, as a way to pique the audience's interest. | - Sweden's approach vs other countries  
- Criticism and backlash  
- Tension between government and experts  
- Debate on herd immunity |
| **Human interest frame**| Provides a more emotional perspective when describing a situation, problem, or issue. Similar to the conflict frame, this one is frequently used in news media to draw viewers in by dramatizing a news story and appealing to their emotions in an effort to make the news more relatable. | - Stories of individuals affected by COVID-19  
- Personal experiences of Swedes  
- Emotional toll of pandemic  
- Impact on mental health |
| **Economic consequences frame** | Focuses on whether an event, issue, or problem will have economic consequences for an individual, group, institution, region, or country. This frame is also commonly used in news | - Economic impact of pandemic  
- Cost of government interventions  
- Unemployment and job loss  
- Economic inequality |
media, likely because economic consequences have high news value.

**Morality frame**
The problem/event/issue is placed in a moral context. Journalistic professionalism is defined by an ideal of objectivity, which means that they frequently employ this frame indirectly by allowing others to speak in the matter, such as through quotes or conclusions. There are also articles that directly convey moral messages or urge people to act in a specific manner. This type of frame is more common in individual frames than in news content, but it can be identified among the many frames used in news reporting.

- Ethics of Sweden's approach
- Responsibility to protect public health
- Balancing economic and health concerns
- Duty to vulnerable populations

**Responsibility frame**
Provides an event, issue, or problem in terms of who is accountable for its cause or solution. Responsibility is assigned to the government, a group, or an individual. There have been no precise measurements of the prevalence of responsibility framing in the news media, but according to Semetko and Valkenburg, American news media, among others, is closely associated with influencing public opinion on the issue of who is responsible for the cause or solution of a social problem, such as poverty.

- Government's role in pandemic response
- Responsibility for high death toll
- Accountability for policy decisions
- Calls for resignation, change or questions the leadership

<table>
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</table>

Table 2: Frames and their possible Indicators, *In Framing European Politics, (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000)*

5.6. Validity, Reliability and Ethical Consideration

In order to establish that the study's findings are related to the larger body of media and communication studies literature, I'd also like to address questions about the study's reliability and validity. The aspect of reliability pertains to the consistency and credibility of the
research findings. Moreover, it pertains to the extent to which the outcomes of a research study can be replicated by other researchers on different occasions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). In this particular case, the sampled articles sourced from American and British news media are uniform, thereby enabling any researcher to examine identical information in the future. However, it is crucial to acknowledge that researchers may interpret the dataset differently depending on their individual perceptions of reality. This observation does not necessarily suggest that the study lacks reliability; however, it is likely that different researchers may interpret the identical dataset in varying ways. However, as noted by Stake (2010), this feature is inherent in qualitative research, as it relies on the researcher's interpretation. Since I am neither, British, or American, my interpretation of the dataset is not influenced by my nationality. In my capacity as a researcher, I adopt an impartial position when assessing Sweden's handling of the pandemic vis-à-vis other countries.

Additionally, "validity" refers to the accuracy and force of a statement. I also respond to the query, "Are you measuring what you think you're measuring?" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 282). In this instance, analyzing news articles from the US and UK media satisfies the research question. It is crucial to keep in mind that the choice of sources plays a significant role in determining their credibility (Silverman 2011; 414–417). Given that the two news outlets used in this study are reputable ones, analyzing both datasets from these reputable news sources enables us to determine the frames that were used by the international media in relation to Sweden's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, this method investigates what it was designed to investigate (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015).

Using a qualitative method allows for an in-depth examination of issues and concerns. The results of this study can be generalized to some extent and are transferable. Another perk is that I can quickly reevaluate my study's framework in light of any new insights or data that may come to light. The qualitative approach has merit in terms of internal validity because it allows me to focus in on a specific issue and conduct thorough analyses of that issue, which means I can keep digging into the problem rather than moving on to something else (Silverman, 2011, p. 414–417). Finally, when it comes to trustworthiness, picking the sources is essential.

Finally, to ensure transparency and accuracy, the sources of the news articles are cited, and a thorough explanation of the research methodology is given. As a researcher, I am aware that
relying on online news articles can lead to questions of accuracy and bias; however, I have done my best to minimize such concerns by using a wide variety of articles from a variety of sources and maintaining objectivity throughout my analysis. Both American and British news media publications are readily available to individuals who wish to peruse them. Moreover, the utilization of the materials did not necessitate obtaining consent.

Nevertheless, I recognize the importance of ethical considerations in research and emphasize that scientists should make every effort to ensure that their work does not harm or exploit any individuals or groups, even though this study did not necessitate obtaining consent from human participants. Since the study relied on freely available online newspaper articles, which are permitted in qualitative content analysis studies, any potential ethical issues are deemed to be minimal (Drisko & Maschi, 2015).

5.7. Limitations

The study exclusively examines articles sourced from The Guardian and The Washington Post, potentially limiting the inclusion of diverse perspectives. Furthermore, it only covers the period between March 2020 to March 2022, which may not be long enough to capture evolving views regarding Sweden's handling of the pandemic and its national image. Furthermore, the research is based on qualitative analysis and does not integrate quantitative methods. Since, the research solely examines 42 articles using predefined frames, it potentially lacks generalizability to a greater extent, which can be seen as another limitation. Additionally, the study doesn't directly examine public perception, which raises the possibility of bias in the researcher's analysis of the data. The research's predefined length was the greatest limitation due to lack of space, as i couldn't do a deeper analysis, thereby lacking a comprehensive analysis of contextual factors, including but not limited to political and cultural influences, among others. Finally, due to the limited timeframe of ten weeks for writing this master's thesis, it is possible that the research may not have comprehensively explored all aspects or achieved a broad scope.

6. Analysis

The table below presents a collection of 42 articles from the Guardian and Washington Post, published between March 2020 and March 2022, discussing Sweden's response to the
Covid-19 pandemic. These articles have been sorted into five different frames, including conflict, human interest, economic consequence, morality, and responsibility. The Conflict Frame comprises nine articles and discusses the tension and criticism surrounding Sweden's approach to the pandemic. The Human Interest Frame includes four articles that share personal stories of individual experiences and the emotional impact of the pandemic. The Economic Consequence Frame covers nine articles that discuss the economic impact of the pandemic and related government interventions. The morality frame, with five articles, focuses on the ethical considerations of Sweden's approach, while the responsibility frame, which contains the most articles (14 in total), highlights the government's role and accountability in the response.

In conclusion, this table provides a comprehensive overview of how international media portray the various perspectives and issues related to Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, as presented in 42 articles published by the Guardian and Washington Post between March 2020 to March 2022. This compilation can be used to frame a nation's image during a time of crisis, and to understand how media coverage shapes public opinion. Overall, this table offers a valuable resource for researchers, policymakers, and anyone interested in gaining a nuanced understanding of the pandemic and its impact on Sweden.

6.1 Research Question

1. How do British and American newspapers frame Sweden's handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, and what are the dominant frames used by these media outlets?
# Articles catagorised into frames

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frames</th>
<th>Data: Articles published in The Guardian &amp; Washington Post</th>
<th>Indicators used</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Morality Frame</td>
<td>Responsibility Frame</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. They are leading us to catastrophe: Sweden's coronavirus stoicism begins to jar. The Guardian, 30th March 2020 by Hanaly, J.</td>
<td>1. Swedish exceptionalism has been ended by coronavirus. The Guardian, 26th June 2020 by Hanaly, J.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Articles categorized into different frames based on the analytical framework
Framing theory suggests that the way information is presented can influence how it is perceived and interpreted by audiences. The conflict frame is one such framing technique that emphasizes tension, struggle, and disagreement between different actors and perspectives to create drama and add tension to the story. The conflict frame is used to highlight clashes of interests, values, and beliefs, as well as controversies and debates between individuals, groups, or institutions, which ultimately contribute to shaping news coverage of events (Entman, 1993).

The articles analysed in this frame emphasized tensions, disagreements, and controversies surrounding Sweden's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic. These tensions include conflicts between the Swedish authorities and the public, between Sweden and its neighboring countries, and among experts over the effectiveness of Sweden's light-touch strategy. The nine articles studied were related to Sweden's COVID-19 strategy and its impact, which are framed in terms of the conflict frame. The conflict frame is used to emphasize tension, struggle, and disagreement in shaping news coverage and public perceptions of events. It is a framing technique used to portray tension and struggle between different actors and
Among the articles, there is growing mistrust of the authorities and a demand for a review of Sweden's strategy before the next election. Additionally, the articles suggest that Sweden's approach has led to a higher death toll per capita than its Nordic neighbors but lower than some other countries that imposed lockdowns.

The conflict that emerges in the articles is the debate over the effectiveness of Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly its initial strategy of relying on mild restrictions and a hope for herd immunity. The articles present a range of opinions on this issue, with some experts criticizing Sweden's approach as a "dramatic failure" and a "flopped experiment," (Tharoor, 2020), while others defend it and argue that it may still be effective in the long run. Nevertheless, the conflict is not limited to Sweden's response alone, but also includes a debate between leading infectious disease specialists in different countries (Telford, 2020). The article "A tale of two epidemics: Scientists in Sweden and the UK fight over who took the right public health path" highlights the contentious debate between experts in Stockholm and London over the effectiveness of different approaches (Telford, 2020).

Moreover, the conflict frame also extends to the debate over herd immunity as a viable strategy, with some arguing for allowing the virus to spread to achieve herd immunity, while others reject this approach and advocate for comprehensive plans that prioritize public health and safety (Henely, 2020). Overall, the findings show that the articles highlight the tension and drama that arise from the conflict between different views on how to handle the COVID-19 pandemic. While some argue for a laissez-faire approach and herd immunity, others advocate for comprehensive plans that prioritize public health and safety (Berger and Farzan, 2020).

On the other hand, the articles highlights clashes of interests, values, and beliefs, as well as controversies and debates between individuals, groups, or institutions. For example one of the article discusses the controversy surrounding Sweden's chief epidemiologist Anders Tegnell and his approach to COVID-19, with conflicting views leading to debates and disagreements among experts and the public (Henely, 2020). Similarly another article highlights the tension...
and struggles faced by the Swedish healthcare system in coping with the surge in COVID-19 cases, resulting in the postponement of non-emergency operations and strain on healthcare staff. In line with this there is a reporting on the conflict between Sweden's light-touch, anti-lockdown approach to the COVID-19 pandemic and the surge in new infections and hospital admissions (Henely, 2020). It also emphasizes the decline in public confidence in the authorities and their approach to managing the pandemic.

Ultimately, the articles demonstrate how the conflict can create divisions and attitudes of "us versus them," potentially exacerbating conflicts or creating new ones. For example this is evident in an article that highlights the strained relationship between Norway and Sweden during the pandemic, as Norway closed its borders to Sweden due to its higher infection and death rates per capita, causing economic hardship and feelings of stigmatization among border communities (Skogeth, 2021). Which created a debate over the effectiveness of Sweden's coronavirus strategy, with some experts viewing Sweden's laissez-faire approach as a "dramatic failure," while others argue that it may still be effective in the long run (Tharoor, 2020).

Similarly, the language used in the articles, such as "skirmish," "contentious confrontations," and "scientists fight all the time," highlighted the conflict between different groups, perspectives, and approaches to dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic (Telford, 2020). The conflict frame is used to portray tension and struggle between different actors and perspectives, creating drama and adding tension to the story. This is consistent with framing theory, which suggests that the choice of language and metaphors used in news coverage can influence how audiences perceive and interpret the information presented (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).

The articles emphasize the need for finding solutions that prioritize public health and safety amidst competing interests and conflicting views. They provide a cautionary note about the potential consequences of using a conflict frame to frame the situation and highlight the importance of approaching complex issues with a focus on the greater good. The articles show how the portrayal of tension and struggle between different actors and perspectives can shape how people view the situation, which can have implications for news coverage and public perceptions of events (Entman, 1993; Nisbet & Huge, 2006). Overall, the articles shed light on the Sweden's COVID-19 strategy and its impact, demonstrating how the conflict
frame can shape news coverage and public perceptions of events.

To conclude the articles discussed in this text highlight the importance of framing in shaping news coverage of events related to the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden. Specifically, they demonstrate the use of the conflict frame to emphasize tension, struggle, and disagreement in the situation. This framing technique, while it can add drama and interest to a story, can also create divisions and attitudes of "us versus them" and exacerbate conflicts or create new ones. This cautionary note is in line with earlier academic literature on framing, which has emphasized that framing is not neutral and can have significant implications for how the public understands and responds to issues (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Furthermore, the articles underscore the importance of finding solutions that prioritize public health and safety amidst competing interests and conflicting views, rather than simply exacerbating tensions and divisions. This is in line with existing research that highlights the potential for framing to affect policy decisions and public opinion. Overall, the articles discussed in this text provide valuable insights into the role of framing in shaping news coverage and public perceptions of events related to the COVID-19 pandemic in Sweden, and underscore the importance of approaching complex issues with a focus on the greater good.

In conclusion, the analysis indicates that Sweden's national image is shaped by its approach to the COVID-19 pandemic. The dominant frames used in the articles highlight tensions, disagreements, controversies, and ongoing debates surrounding Sweden's strategy (Henely, 2020; Rawlinson, 2020; Skogseth, 2021; Telford, 2020; Tharoor, 2020 and Berger and farzan 2020) . The conflict frame emphasizes divisions and "us versus them" attitudes, while the controversy frame underscores differing opinions among experts and the public. These frames shape Sweden's national image as a country that is subject to scrutiny and critique regarding its handling of the pandemic. The portrayal of tensions and disagreements suggests a lack of consensus and a potentially divisive situation within the country. Additionally, comparisons with neighboring countries (Skogseth, 2021) highlight differences in infection rates and lockdown measures, which further contribute to the framing of Sweden's national image as a topic of debate and controversy. The articles also depict growing mistrust of the authorities and a demand for a review of the Swedish strategy, indicating a sense of dissatisfaction and questioning of the government's decisions. Overall, the dominant frames used in the articles present Sweden as a nation that is characterized by conflicting perspectives, controversies, and ongoing debates surrounding its response to the COVID-19
pandemic.

### 6.3 Human interest frame

The Human Interest focuses on stories that evoke emotion, empathy, and connection with the people involved. It seeks to capture the unique experiences, perspectives, and struggles of individuals or groups and make them relatable to a wider audience (Entman, 1993). Conducting an analysis using The human interest frame is a well-established journalistic technique that has been widely studied in academic literature. As highlighted by McManus (1994), the human interest frame aims to move beyond the facts of a story and to present a story that will evoke an emotional response from readers. Hence, the use of personal stories and anecdotes is an effective way to achieve this goal, as it allows readers to connect with the people involved in a story on a personal level. Furthermore, The analysis of the human interest frame reveals its significance in shaping perceptions of nations and international issues. As highlighted by Wu (2019) and Stock (2009), the media holds immense power in influencing how people conceptualize far-flung places and cultures. Moreover, Li & Chitty (2009) assert that individuals often rely on the media, rather than personal experience or alternative channels, for information about global issues.

Moreover, studies have shown that the human interest frame can have a significant impact on readers' attitudes and perceptions towards a topic. In their analysis of news coverage of the Gulf War, Dimitrova et, al. (2005), found that the use of the human interest frame increased readers' emotional engagement and resulted in more positive attitudes towards the war. Overall, the articles studied in this thesis provide an excellent example of how the human interest frame can be used effectively to connect with readers on an emotional level and provide a personal perspective on current events. The use of this technique can have a significant impact on readers' attitudes and perceptions towards a topic, highlighting its importance in modern journalism (Iyengar, 1991).
An example of this can be seen in the article published in the Guardian on the 1st May 2020 titled "We stick to the rules: why cinemas in Sweden have stayed open during the pandemic" (Krizanovich, 2020). The article highlights the decision of the Swedish cinema chain, Svenska Bio, to keep its cinemas open during the coronavirus pandemic, despite the high death toll. It portrays the human interest aspect of this story by detailing the measures implemented by the cinema chain to keep customers safe and entertained during these difficult times. It features quotes (see below) from the founder and managing director of Svenska Bio, Peter Fornstam, who discusses the decision to keep cinemas open and the importance of adhering to government guidelines (Krizanovich, 2020).

“Swedes … there used to be a joke that if every Swede were told to have a blue and a yellow sock, nobody would question the decision but they would question if the colour of the sock could cause cancer,” he says.

“The government said we should do this. So we’ll do this. We can stick to the rules. Also, there are physical and mental issues to deal with, so we try to keep everyone going.” (The Guardian 1st May, 2020)

The article also contrasts the approach taken by Sweden with that of other countries, highlighting the unique impact of Sweden's response on its local cinema industry. Overall, the article captures the human interest aspect of the story by focusing on the decision-making process of a cinema chain and its impact on the local community (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997). Thus, by reorting on Human Interest, journalists can bring a personal and emotional
dimension to their reporting, connecting their audience to the individuals and communities affected by the events they cover. Which is done in this article as it is appealing to readers on an emotional level by emphasizing the unique impact of Sweden's response on its local cinema industry.

Similarly, another article published on the Washington Post titled “Coronavirus? pandemic? For many in Sweden, life goes on as usual” discusses the different attitudes and perceptions towards the coronavirus pandemic in Sweden. The article features interviews with several Swedes, providing insight into how people in Sweden are coping with the pandemic and how they perceive the government's response (Constable, 2020). The article shows that while many Swedes are still going about their daily lives, some are worried and concerned, especially those from vulnerable groups and socioeconomically challenged neighborhoods. Here as a reader it is easier to connect with the personal experiences of those interviewed and empathize with their concerns (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007).

Additionally another article published on the Washington Post titled “Surreal images celebrate the sometimes-absurd nature of working from home” analysed for this research focused on the experiences of people working from home during the pandemic. Here the human interest frame us used by highlighting how the pandemic has forced people to adapt to a new reality and transform their homes into workspaces, resulting in quirky and surreal images (Dickerman, 2022). As most of the world was adapting to the new digital working lifestyle, this article appeals to readers on an emotional level by focusing on the personal experiences of individuals and creating a sense of connection with readers who may have had similar experiences during the pandemic (Reese, 2007). In line with this another article published on the Washington Post titled “Sweden’s coronavirus strategy is not what it seems” tells the story of Sweden's response to the coronavirus pandemic and its effects on people's lives by focusing on the human impact of the pandemic, particularly on the elderly population who have been disproportionately affected. The article also highlights the toll it has taken on the tourism and hospitality industries, which have been hit hard by the pandemic (Tharoor, 2020). This approach helps readers empathize with the personal experiences of those affected by the pandemic and understand the wider social and economic impact (Entman, 1993).

Overall, the articles had utilised the human interest frame in a variety of ways to connect with readers on an emotional level and provide a personal perspective on the events and
experiences discussed. By using this technique, the articles effectively engage readers and make them care about the subject matter being discussed, and connection with the people involved in the stories. Journalists frequently employ this strategy to engage readers and forge a connection between them and the subject matter. Nevertheless, findings show that the articles provided a personal perspective on the events and experiences discussed, highlighting the human impact of the coronavirus pandemic in Sweden.

In conclusion, the analysis reveals that the framing of Sweden's image during the pandemic is influenced by the dominant frames of Human Interest, Decision-Making, and Impact. The articles focus on personal experiences, decision-making processes, and the consequences of the pandemic on individuals and communities within Sweden. By highlighting personal stories and emotions, the human interest frame establishes an empathetic connection between readers and the affected individuals. The decision-making frame emphasizes Sweden's choice to keep cinemas open, showcasing efforts to ensure safety and compliance with government guidelines, which may present Sweden as resilient and independent. The impact frame explores the broader social and economic implications of the pandemic, particularly its effects on vulnerable groups and various sectors like tourism and the elderly. Collectively, these frames contribute to a nuanced and multifaceted portrayal of Sweden's response to the pandemic, allowing reader a comprehensive understanding of the country's image during this challenging time.

6.4 Economic Consequence frame

The framework of economic consequences offers a method for evaluating the influence of policies or occurrences on an economy through the scrutiny of their direct and indirect repercussions on diverse sectors and individuals (Entman, 1993). The COVID-19 pandemic has had extensive economic ramifications, as numerous countries have undergone a substantial reduction in economic activity as a result of measures such as lockdowns. The impact has been felt across different industries and households, particularly for those who have lost jobs or had their income reduced, i.e. framing the issue as a societal problem rather than just a health problem (Scheufele, 1999).
Several articles studied for this research focused on Sweden's reaction to the pandemic and the resultant economic aftermath. Sweden adopted a comparatively relaxed strategy by maintaining the operation of schools and numerous commercial establishments, and depending on voluntary measures such as social distancing. The articles examined the economic implications of this strategy, including its potential role in mitigating the immediate economic consequences of the pandemic. Moreover, the Swedish government implemented more stringent restrictions on public gatherings due to the recent increase in infections and fatalities. The findings showed that the main conflict that arises is primarily between the welfare of the general public and the financial repercussions of the pandemic in Sweden.

For example in an article published on the Guardian titled: “Sweden limits public gatherings to eight people amid Covid surge” discusses the impact of Sweden's light-touch approach to the coronavirus pandemic on its economy. According to the article, Sweden has maintained the operation of shops, bars, and restaurants while predominantly employing a strategy of requesting rather than mandating compliance with hygiene and social distancing guidelines among its populace (Henely, 2020). The decision of the government to refrain from implementing a stringent lockdown has garnered global recognition, with some proposing that this strategy may have aided in mitigating the pandemic's economic repercussions (Henely, 2020). Notwithstanding, the article underscores the recent upsurge in novel infections, hospitalizations, and diurnal mortalities in Sweden, thereby prompting the
government to enforce more stringent restrictions on communal assemblies. The article states that Sweden's economy will be severely impacted by the pandemic, with some predicting a 10% decline in 2020. The government has implemented several measures to provide support to businesses, including a temporary reduction in VAT rates. However, it is anticipated that the pandemic's effect on the economy will be substantial (Henely, 2020). The aforementioned article highlights that the recently imposed restriction on public gatherings is expected to have a significant economic impact (Scheufele, 1999), particularly on the events industry, thereby looking at the pandemic from the economic perspective ((Henely, 2020; Scheufele, 1999). The maximum number of attendees allowed for sporting and cultural events has been reduced from 300 to eight individuals. The pandemic has already dealt a severe blow to businesses in the events industry, and ultimately, this impact is expected to be substantial. The article provides an overview of the conflict that exists between the public health imperatives and the economic ramifications of the pandemic in Sweden. The government's approach of minimal intervention may have mitigated the pandemic's economic repercussions in the immediate period. However, the recent upsurge in infections and the imposition of fresh restrictions on public gatherings are anticipated to have a substantial long-term economic impact.

Similarly in a another article published on the Guardian titled, “Sweden records highest death tally in 150 years in first half of 2020”, highlights the economic consequences of Sweden's approach to the COVID-19 pandemic (Henely, 2020). In contrast to several European nations that implemented more stringent lockdown protocols to mitigate the transmission of the virus, Sweden pursued a strategy of voluntary measures, including social distancing, while maintaining the operation of schools and numerous commercial establishments. Despite the relatively stable state of the Swedish economy, the mortality rate in Sweden has surpassed that of its Nordic counterparts, who enforced more stringent lockdown protocols, resulting in the closure of businesses. The present article elucidates the disparity in the economies of Finland and Sweden, wherein Finland's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) experienced a contraction of 5%, while Sweden's GDP contracted by 8.6% during the second quarter, despite the latter's adoption of a less stringent approach (Henely, 2020).

Another article published on the Guardian, titled Sweden election: inequality, identity, Covid - left or right?, also subtly discusses the economic effects of Sweden's pandemic response
from the perspective of inequality (Glenza, 2022). The article posits that the pandemic has brought to light significant disparities in Sweden, where certain demographics have been disproportionately impacted by the virus and its associated financial ramifications. Tensta, a neighborhood in Stockholm with a significant refugee population, experienced a situation where a considerable number of its inhabitants were compelled to continue working outside their homes during the pandemic, owing to the nature of their employment. This stands in contrast to other Swedish individuals who were afforded the chance to engage in remote work and uphold measures of social distancing. Additionally, the article highlights the disappearance of essential services, such as banking institutions, dental clinics, and employment agencies, from the region. This has resulted in a significant number of individuals being jobless and has contributed to the emergence of "parallel communities" within Swedish society (Glenza, 2022). The economic ramifications of the pandemic response have resulted in significant inequalities, which may have noteworthy implications for Sweden's political landscape and future economic policies. The aforementioned articles have furnished valuable perspectives on the intricate correlation between a nation's management of the pandemic and its corresponding economic aftermath. The implementation of containment measures by governments can result in economic impacts that are both direct and indirect. In order to mitigate the long-term consequences of the pandemic, it is necessary to strike a balance between public health and economic interests. Furthermore, another key takeaway from the analysis of these articles was the interplay between public health and economic ramifications in Sweden, and the consequent effects on its economy and society (Reese, 2001), which was well reported.

In a similar vein, another article published on the Guardian titled “Sweden scraps almost all restrictions and testing despite pleas from scientists”, covered Sweden's recent decision to lift most COVID-19 restrictions and stop most testing, which could have negative economic effects like overburdening hospitals and calls for stricter regulations from the public. The relaxation of restrictions may prove advantageous for enterprises operating in the hospitality and entertainment industries, albeit at the expense of public health (Farrer and Bryant, 2022). On the other hand, one article published on the Washington post titled “Sweden’s coronavirus strategy is not what it seems” analyzes the economic impact of Sweden's approach to the pandemic on the country's tourism and hospitality industries. It also compares Sweden's economic situation to that of other Nordic countries that implemented stricter measures to control the spread of the virus. The article argues that while Sweden's looser
In an approach, a review of various articles revealed the intricate connection between a country's pandemic response and its economic repercussions. To be more specific, the implementation of containment measures by governments can result in economic effects that are both direct and indirect. It is crucial to find a balance between public health and financial interests to alleviate the long-term repercussions of the pandemic. When viewed through the lens of framing theory, which proposes that the presentation of information can affect how it is received and understood by audiences, this analysis makes more sense. The articles in this case frame the information on Sweden's pandemic response as a delicate balancing act between public health and economic interests. This framing can influence how readers understand the situation and what solutions they believe are necessary to address it (Entman, 1993). Further, the articles illuminate the pandemic's effect on inequality in Sweden (Gillerman, 2020), which has implications for economic policy moving forward. This is consistent with framing theory, which posits that framing can shape public perceptions of social issues and influence policy decisions (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). The results show how framing can be used to understand the pandemic's effects on a nation's economy and society as a whole. Through the examination of various frames employed in articles, a more profound comprehension of the media's depiction of the pandemic and its potential impact on public perception and policy-making can be attained.
In conclusion, the analysis highlights that Sweden's national image is shaped by its distinct approach to the COVID-19 pandemic. The nation is portrayed as prioritizing a delicate balance between public health and economic interests, relying on voluntary measures rather than strict lockdowns. This image emphasizes Sweden's values of individual freedom and personal responsibility. However, contrasting viewpoints exist regarding the effectiveness of this approach, influencing perceptions of the nation. The economic consequences of Sweden's strategy, including a contraction in GDP and sector-specific impacts, also contribute to the national image. Additionally, the issue of inequality within Swedish society, with certain demographics being disproportionately affected, further shapes perceptions. Overall, these frames frame Sweden as a pragmatic and innovative nation that seeks to strike a balance between public health and economic interests, but also raise concerns and debates about the effectiveness and consequences of its pandemic response.

6.5 Morality frame

The morality frame is a central concept in framing theory. Framing theory posits that the way an issue is framed or presented can influence how people perceive and evaluate it. In the case of the morality frame, the values, principles, and judgments that are invoked and applied in a given context can shape how people perceive and evaluate the moral dimensions of an issue (Entman, 1993).

Within the scope of this investigation, five articles were analysed inorder to investigate the morality frame in relation to Sweden's response to COVID-19. Findings showed that these articles brought up some very important moral questions, such as whether or not there should be a balance between public health and economic concerns, whether or not it is the responsibility of leaders to put the welfare of their constituents first, and how critical thinking and accountability are extremely important in times of crisis.
For example, findings from an article published on the Guardian with the title "They are leading us to catastrophe: Sweden's coronavirus stoicism begins to jar" highlighted the Swedish government's strategy of mitigating the effects of the virus, which allows for the virus to spread slowly without overwhelming the health system, while also allowing the economy to continue functioning normally (Hanaly, 2020). Thereby, framing the issue as a trade-off between public health and economic concerns, which is a classic example of gain-loss frame. This frame emphasizes the potential benefits and costs of different policy options and can influence how people evaluate them (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979). This strategy has been criticized by some people in the scientific and medical communities, who believe that the government ought to implement stricter containment measures in order to stop the virus from spreading further and further. The article draws attention to a petition that more than 2,000 academics, scientists, and medical professionals—including the chairman of the Nobel Foundation—signed and circulated online. The petition requests more stringent containment measures. The article presents a difficult ethical conundrum that necessitates striking a balance between the conflicting priorities of public health and economic considerations (Hanaly, 2020). The approach that has been taken by the government of Sweden reflects a different set of values than those that have been taken by other countries; this demonstrates how important it is to understand the context in which moral decisions are made.
Similarly, findings from another article titled "Sweden Covid-19 policy: model for the right, also a deadly folly" showed criticism of Sweden's response to the pandemic (Power, 2020). The author argues that the government's mitigation strategy of keeping shops, restaurants, gyms, schools, and workplaces open was a fatal mistake that led to a high death toll that could have been avoided with stronger measures. The article casts this matter in a moral light, drawing attention to the tragedy of people losing their lives needlessly and criticizing leaders who put their own political interests ahead of the public's health and safety (Power, 2020). Hence, framing the issue as a matter of life and death, which is a powerful emotional frame that can evoke strong reactions from audiences (De Vreese & Boomgaard, 2006). The article also discusses the significance of deference and trust in societal relations, arguing that placing an excessive amount of faith in authoritative figures and organizations can be risky. This too can be seen as a moral issue due to the fact that it raises questions about the responsibility of individuals and institutions to question authority and work toward the common good.

In a similar way, another article published on the Washington Post titled; “Is Sweden's lax approach to coronavirus backfiring?” also criticizes Sweden's laissez-faire approach to the pandemic, arguing that it failed to protect its citizens who were most susceptible to the disease (Neuding and Sanadaji, 2020). By focusing on the ethical case and presenting a moral argument that favors individual freedom and personal responsibility over collective responsibility and the protection of society's most vulnerable members may have had an impact on Sweden's response to the pandemic. As a result, they raise important questions about the balance between individual freedom and public health, the responsibilities of leaders to prioritize the well-being of their citizens, and the importance of critical thinking and accountability in times of crisis. Hence, framing the issue as a failure of leadership, which is a "blame" frame that can influence how people assign responsibility for problems (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). The findings also show the importance of understanding the context and the cultural values of a situation is when attempting to comprehend moral decisions. This is consistent with the concept of "cultural framing," which posits that cultural values, norms, and beliefs can influence how people perceive and evaluate issues (Lizardo & Strand, 2010). For instance, in one of the article, the distinct values of Sweden's mitigation strategy in comparison to those of other countries can be seen in the various approaches that are taken to strike a balance between the competing concerns of public health and the
Sweden's economic and cultural concerns are balanced in things considered complex in conjunction with the vaccine. In response to the framework, Sweden's strategy is directed toward the virus to spread in the hope of achieving herd immunity. However, at the same time the article contends that this method raises ethical concerns and that, rather than focusing on it, efforts should be directed toward other strategies, such as public health initiatives and vaccination drives (Tharoor and Farzan, 2020). Both of these articles place a significant emphasis on the ethical framework, which is understandable given its significance in debating the most suitable response to the pandemic.

Additionally, the topic of herd immunity is discussed from an ethical perspective in two other articles titled "Herd immunity to coronavirus is unethical and impractical, WHO warns" (Berger and Farzan, 2020) and "Sweden's coronavirus strategy is not what it seems" (Tharoor, 2020). The contention here is that it is unethical to pursue herd immunity as a strategy if it means putting vulnerable populations under unnecessary risk. On the other hand, one of the article discusses Sweden's strategy of allowing the virus to spread in the hope of achieving herd immunity. However, at the same time the article contends that this method raises ethical concerns and that, rather than focusing on it, efforts should be directed toward other strategies, such as public health initiatives and vaccination drives (Berger and Farzan, 2020; Tharoor, 2020). Both of these articles place a significant emphasis on the ethical framework, which is understandable given its significance in debating the most suitable response to the pandemic.

In addition, the importance of preventative measures such as widespread testing, social distancing, and the wearing of face masks is also emphasized in these articles. This is in conjunction with the global effort to develop a vaccine. These precautions are being considered as a means of preventing the further spread of the virus while simultaneously protecting susceptible populations. The articles, taken as a whole, serve to illustrate the complexities of the ethical considerations that are involved in the response to the pandemic. Even though herd immunity might appear to some as a workable strategy, it actually raises a number of significant ethical concerns that need to be resolved. One of the most important things to take away from these articles is the importance they place on taking a moral stance that places an individual's health and safety first.

In conclusion, the analyzed articles shape Sweden's national image by portraying the country as one that values a balanced approach, considering both public health and economic concerns in its response to COVID-19. Sweden is depicted as a nation that emphasizes individual freedom, trusts its citizens to act responsibly, and upholds high ethical standards and responsible leadership. The presence of debates and contrasting viewpoints highlights Sweden's openness to intellectual discourse and critical thinking. Overall, Sweden is
presented as a country that values balance, individual freedom, ethical integrity, and open dialogue when addressing the challenges of the pandemic.

### 6.6 Responsibility frame

The concept of responsibility is a critical component of contemporary society, influencing various domains, including political discourse, public health, organizational structures, and personal relationships. Scholars from a range of disciplines have explored the notion of the "responsibility frame," which refers to how individuals and groups attribute accountability for specific events, outcomes, or situations. This article provides an analysis of nine academic articles, examining different perspectives on the responsibility frame. By analyzing these articles, this study identifies common themes and divergent viewpoints, explores the implications of the responsibility frame in contemporary discourse, and discusses its limitations in addressing complex issues. The analysis delves into topics such as the impact of responsibility frames on individual behavior and decision-making, the role of guilt and shame in motivating action, the interplay between responsibility and power dynamics, and the challenges of utilizing the responsibility frame in addressing complex social problems.

One of the primary themes that emerges from the analysis is the tension between individual and collective responsibility. This theme is illustrated in the case of Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, where the government emphasized personal responsibility and individual choice over strict mandatory lockdowns. This approach aligns with the
responsibility frame, which emphasizes personal responsibility and individual choice, but has also faced criticism, highlighting the challenges of balancing individual freedom and public health.

For example, in these articles titled: “Sweden records its fewest daily Covid-19 cases since March” (Hanaly, 2020) and “Don't judge Sweden's light-touch Covid-19 policy yet, says minister” (Hanaly, 2020) both of there articles highlight the importance of the responsibility frame in understanding Sweden's approach to handling the COVID-19 pandemic and shed light on Sweden's approach to the pandemic and highlight the significance of the responsibility frame in understanding it. The articles contend that Sweden's strategy emphasizes personal responsibility, with the government relying on citizens to act responsibly and comply with physical distancing guidelines to control the virus's transmission. The success of this approach is attributed to the population taking responsibility for adhering to the recommendations and guidelines. As the articles illustrate, the Swedish strategy seeks to cultivate a sense of responsibility among the population towards protecting themselves and others (Hanaly, 2020). Johan Carlson, the director general of Sweden's public health agency, affirmed that "the purpose of our approach is for people themselves to understand the need to follow the recommendations and guidelines that exist" (Hanaly, 2020). Consequently, individuals are expected to take responsibility for following guidelines and recommendations to control the virus's spread.

Unlike other European Union countries, Sweden did not imposed strict mandatory lockdowns but has instead requested people to avoid non-essential travel, work from home, and stay at home if they are elderly or ill. This approach aligns with the responsibility frame, which emphasizes personal responsibility and individual choice. However, the articles also highlight the criticism that Sweden has faced for its approach and the consequences of its policy, such as the high number of deaths in care homes (Rawlinson, 2020). Such criticism indicates a tension between individual responsibility and collective responsibility, which is another significant aspect of the responsibility frame. In sum, the articles demonstrate the relevance of the responsibility frame in comprehending the communication strategies that governments employ in responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the trade-offs involved in balancing individual freedom and public health.
An article published in the Guardian titled; "Swedish PM says officials misjudged power of Covid resurgence", draws attention to the role that responsibility plays in public health crises (Hanaly, 2020). According to this article, the Swedish government and the governments that came before it bear the "ultimate responsibility" for the current situation (Hanaly, 2020). Therefore, the importance of identifying who is responsible for managing public health crises and holding them accountable, as well as the necessity of learning from mistakes in order to improve future responses to crises of a similar nature, cannot be overstated.

Another important theme that emerges is the role of power dynamics (Scheufele and Tewksbury's, 2007) in the responsibility frame. In an article published in the Guardian, titled “Swedish exceptionalism has been ended by coronavirus”, addresses the issue of accountability in the Swedish government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic (Hanaly, 2020). The article discusses how the Swedish government's strategy was based on a "herd immunity" approach, which resulted in Sweden having one of the highest per capita COVID-19 death rates in the world. Despite criticism from various sources, including epidemiologists and journalists, the Swedish government refused to change its strategy for several months.

The article argues that Sweden's national self-image of moral superiority, embodied in the Social Democratic prime minister, Stefan Löfven, contributed to the government's reluctance to change its strategy. The article suggests that this moral superiority made it difficult for the Swedish government to take responsibility for its flawed response to the pandemic (Hanaly, 2020). The responsibility frame is relevant because it highlights the need for the government to take responsibility for its actions and to be accountable to its citizens. In the case of Sweden, the government's reluctance to take responsibility for its response to the pandemic has resulted in a high death toll and criticism from both domestic and international sources. The responsibility frame emphasizes the importance of transparency, accountability, and taking responsibility for one's actions, especially in times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Nevertheless, findings suggests that the majority of articles seems to focus on mainly on these two dominant frames individual responsibility and responsibility of authotitys. The analysis also highlights the importance of adapting strategies to shifting conditions and learning from mistakes in managing public health crises. The articles emphasize the
responsibility of public health professionals and institutions in responding to the pandemic, as well as the responsibility of governments to hold them accountable. This shift in perspective indicates a willingness to take responsibility for one's previous stance and an openness to change one's mind based on new information.

In keeping with this, two articles published in the guardian titled as “Sweden wrong not to shut down, says former state epidemiologist”, (Rawlinson, 2020) and “Does Sweden have the answer to living with Covid-19?”, (Trägårdhet., al. 2020) have reported on the responsibility of public health professionals and institutions to adapt their strategies to shifting conditions. This highlights how Sweden's previous state epidemiologist, who was responsible for the response to previous pandemics, took responsibility for her earlier support of the country's lax coronavirus strategy and acknowledged that the authorities should have put in place stricter restrictions in the early stages of the pandemic. The previous state epidemiologist was responsible for the response to previous pandemics. This shift in perspective indicates a willingness to take responsibility for one's previous stance and an openness to change one's mind based on new information. The reporting also emphasizes the importance of taking responsibility for adapting strategies to new situations and not relying solely on previous experience. This is something that should be done in order to ensure success. On the other hand, the articles also discuss the responsibility of governments and public health experts in responding to the pandemic. This is particularly relevant in relation to Sweden's approach, which was characterized by an absence of stringent lockdowns and bans on social gatherings. The article raises questions about who is responsible for the management of the pandemic and how the outcomes can be affected by taking a variety of different approaches (Rawlinson, 2020; Trägårdhet., al. 2020).

One of the article from the Washington Post, for instance, titled "Scientist behind Sweden’s covid-19 strategy suggests it allowed too many deaths," discusses the responsibility of the Swedish authorities, including the state epidemiologist, in their handling of the coronavirus pandemic. It also acknowledges that an unacceptable number of people have died in Sweden as a result of the pandemic (Brinbaum, 2020). In the same vein, an additional article with the title “Architect of Sweden coronavirus strategy admits too many died” discusses Sweden's COVID-19 strategy as well as the admission made by the country's chief epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell, that the approach taken by the nation resulted in an excessive number of deaths (Gower, 2020). Tegnell's admission of fault and demand that improvements be made
can be interpreted as an attempt on his part to take responsibility for the results of the decisions he made. However, he also emphasizes that the fundamental strategy had worked well based on the knowledge that they had at the time, which may suggest that he is attempting to deflect some of the blame for what happened. This article demonstrates how communication regarding responsibility and blame can play a crucial role in shaping public opinion and fostering an understanding of the actions taken during the pandemic (Gower, 2020). These reports touch on issues of trust between citizens and the state, which is a key factor in the responsibility frame because it influences how individuals and institutions view their responsibilities towards each other. Trust is a key factor in the responsibility frame.

On the other hand, findings show that the focus of these reports is on the obligation of governments to support and protect their citizens throughout times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The article draws attention to the disparities between the social welfare systems in Sweden and the United Kingdom, and it makes the argument that the government in the United Kingdom has not done enough to assist those people who have lost their jobs or who are having trouble making ends meet as a direct result of the pandemic. According to the ideas presented in the article published in the Guardian titled “Welcome to libertarian Covid fantasy land – that's Sweden to you and me”, it is not the sole responsibility of the individual to help those who are struggling financially; rather, it is the responsibility of the government to offer assistance to people who are in this position (Cohen, 2020). This is a reflection of the responsibility frame, which focuses on the manner in which individuals and institutions ought to be held responsible for the actions that they take and the consequences of those actions.

While the reporting on the article published on the washington post titled “Sweden coronavirus response: Amid debate over the country’s measures, new cases are on the rise” also discusses the increasing number of COVID-19 cases in Sweden as well as the ongoing debate regarding the success or failure of Sweden's pandemic response strategy (Taylor, 2020). It also emphasizes how important it is to understand the role that the Swedish government played in implementing a response strategy that allowed schools and businesses to stay open during the pandemic (Taylor, 2020). On the other hand, another reporting focused on the shift in Sweden's pandemic response strategy from a largely voluntary approach to virus precautions to a government-imposed lockdown (Gustavsson, 2020). This
article highlights the importance of striking a balance between individual responsibility and government responsibility in preventing the virus from spreading.

Nevertheless the reportings have also discusses the controversy that surrounding Sweden's response to the pandemic. Sweden's response initially prioritized personal responsibility and individual freedom over mandatory lockdowns and restrictions, it is also argued that it is important to strike a balance between personal freedom and the responsibility of the government when it comes to the management of public health crises (Gustavsson, 2020). The responsibility perspective places an emphasis on the significance of transparency, accountability, taking responsibility for one's actions, and personal responsibility in relation to the prevention and control of the spread of the virus. In addition, the articles emphasize how important it is to have a firm grasp on the responsibility, particularly during times of crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. They shed light on the various methods through which individuals and organizations can take accountability for their actions and the subsequent consequences, as well as the requirement to adapt strategies to novel scenarios and support those who are in need of assistance. In the end, the articles provide valuable insights into the intricate dynamics that are involved in the management of a public health crisis. These insights include the various roles that different actors play as well as the importance of striking a balance between individual freedom and the responsibility of the government.

In conclusion, the dominant frames used to shape Sweden's national image in response to COVID-19 emphasize the importance of personal responsibility and the tension between individual freedom and collective well-being. Sweden is portrayed as a country that values individual freedom and trusts its citizens to make responsible choices. However, this approach has generated criticism and raised questions about finding the right balance between personal freedom and public health concerns. Sweden's national image reflects confidence in its unique crisis management approach but also reveals challenges and complexities in navigating the trade-offs between individual freedoms and collective responsibility. Overall, Sweden is depicted as a nation that prioritizes personal responsibility, individual freedom, and trust in its citizens, while acknowledging the ongoing debates and criticisms surrounding its strategy.
7. Conclusion

The study looked at how the British and American media framed Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. The study's overarching goal was to learn how a nation's crisis management strategy influences its image among the global public and how its handling of a pandemic might alter that reputation. This thesis provided a useful resource for understanding how international media framed Sweden's response to the Covid-19 pandemic through an analysis of 42 articles drawn from the Guardian and the Washington Post and published between March 2020 and March 2022. It was possible to gain a more nuanced understanding of the various perspectives and issues related to the pandemic by categorizing the articles into five frames: conflict, human interest, economic consequence, morality, and responsibility. These frames offered a valuable insights into how media coverage shapes public opinion and frames a nation's image during a crisis. I was able to determine the dominant themes and narratives in the media's coverage of Sweden's response to the pandemic by analyzing the articles' content and tone.

Based on an extensive analysis of various frames used in the articles, it is evident that Sweden's national image in the context of its response to the COVID-19 pandemic is multifaceted and complex. The dominant frames employed include conflict, controversy, human interest, decision-making, impact, economic consequence, morality, and responsibility frame, respectively. These frames collectively shape Sweden's national image as a nation characterized by conflicting perspectives, controversies, ongoing debates, personal experiences, ethical considerations, and a delicate balance between public health and economic interests. The analytical framework table presented in this thesis provided a helpful springboard for further investigation into the media's portrayal of Sweden's response to the Covid-19 pandemic. It was possible to gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of the issue at hand and how it had been framed in international media by analyzing the different frames presented in the analytical framework. In relation to various framing strategies employed by journalists, the analysis of the articles produced several significant findings.

The conflict frame was used to emphasize tension and disagreement, highlighting the potential consequences of using this frame and the need for finding solutions that prioritize public health and safety amidst competing interests and conflicting views. Additionally, the findings of the study aligned with existing literature on media representation, nation image,
and framing theory. Wu (2019) and Stock (2009) argue that a decline in interest in international news has led to reduced coverage of global events, consequently influencing people's perceptions of distant places and cultures. Li & Chitty (2009) further emphasize that individuals rely on the media for global information, thus impacting their perceptions. Furthermore, applying Entman's framing theory (1993) to the analysis reveals the utilization of the conflict frame in shaping the narrative surrounding Sweden's COVID-19 strategy. Which emphasizes tension, struggle, and disagreement, resulting in divisions and drama, as suggested by Li & Chitty (2009) and Fan (2010). Hence, the use of the conflict frame could contribute to the formation of negative stereotypes and prejudices based on historical events (Li & Chitty, 2009) and influence the impression of a country on foreigners (Fan, 2010).

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that the conflict frame was consistently employed to highlight tensions, disagreements, and controversies surrounding Sweden's COVID-19 strategy, which aligns with Bolin & Ståhlberg's claim (2015) that the media plays a significant role in determining what to cover, how to construct images, and how they are interpreted. Moreover, the dominant frames utilized in the articles emphasized conflicts and ongoing debates about Sweden's strategy, supporting Kunczik's assertion (2003) that the media plays a crucial role in shaping a nation's image and Saleem's claim (2007) that the media influences a country's image considering various factors such as economic, political, diplomatic, religious, and military aspects. The portrayal of tensions and disagreements in the articles reflected a lack of consensus within the country and contributes to shaping Sweden's national image as a topic of debate and controversy. Additionally, the analysis takes into account the influence of language and metaphors in framing the narrative, which is consistent with the findings of Gamson & Modigliani (1989). The use of terms like "skirmish," "contentious confrontations," and "scientists fight all the time" highlighting the conflict between different groups and perspectives, thus adding to the drama and tension. This language choice aligns with framing theory, suggesting that it can influence perceptions and interpretations of an event (Entman, 1993). Finally, the analysis effectively demonstrated how specific frames shape news coverage, highlights the influence of the media in shaping nation images and perceptions of international issues, and underscores the role of language in framing the narrative, as supported by previous studies (Wu, 2019; Stock, 2009; Li & Chitty, 2009; Fan, 2010; Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2015; Kunczik, 2003; Saleem, 2007; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989).
Similarly, the human interest frame was found to be a powerful journalistic technique that can evoke emotion and empathy, making a story relatable to a wider audience. The analysis mainly focused on the use of personal stories and interviews in the articles to evoke empathy and create a connection between readers and the individuals affected (Nelson, Oxley, & Clawson, 1997; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Reese, 2007; Entman, 1993). By emphasizing personal experiences, decision-making processes, and the consequences of the pandemic, these articles effectively engaged readers and framed Sweden's image during the crisis. Thus, the analysis established a link between the human interest frame and the prior literature by showing how the human interest frame in media coverage allowed for emotional engagement of readers and provided a personal perspective on the impact of Sweden's COVID-19 strategy (Nelson et al., 1997; Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007; Reese, 2007; Entman, 1993).

In the same vein, an analysis was conducted to explore the correlation between Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its economic consequences. The study drew insights from several scholarly articles. Li and Chitty (2009) highlighted the influential role of media in shaping public perceptions of global issues, including the prevalence of negative stereotypes based on historical events. Kunczik (2003) and Bolin & Sthlberg (2015) emphasized the media's centrality in constructing a nation's image and its involvement in international negotiations and global priorities. Saleem (2007) argued that the media significantly impacted a country's image by considering economic, political, diplomatic, religious, and military factors. Fan (2010) investigated how media can influence foreigners' perceptions of a country through generalizations, biased reporting, and personal interactions.

The analyzed articles provided insightful perspectives on Sweden's approach and its impact on the economy, public health, and societal inequality. They showcased contrasting strategies compared to other nations and the resulting economic repercussions, especially in industries such as events, tourism, and hospitality. Moreover, these articles shed light on the exacerbated disparities and inequalities in Swedish society during the pandemic. Consistent with prior research, these findings underscore the significant influence of media representation and framing on a nation's image, particularly in times of crisis and its economic aftermath. Furthermore, the analysis deepened understanding of how the media presented the information by utilizing framing theory.
The framing also illuminated the economic consequences and inequalities stemming from Sweden's strategy, thereby shaping the discourse surrounding this issue and potentially impacting future economic policies. This aspect presents an intriguing topic for future research. Overall, the analysis established a connection between existing literature and the examination of Sweden's pandemic response and economic consequences. It underscored the importance of striking a balance between public health and economic interests, as well as the profound impact of the pandemic on societal inequalities. Additionally, it highlighted how media framing and portrayal of Sweden's approach affected its image. Consistent with prior research (Entman, 1993; Wu, 2019; Stock, 2009; Li & Chitty, 2009; Fan, 2010; Kunczik, 2003; Saleem, 2007; Bolin & Stålberg, 2015), this study emphasized the significance of framing theory, challenging negative stereotypes, and promoting nuanced understanding and critical thinking when evaluating media coverage.

Similarly, the morality frame emerged as a central concept, raising important moral questions related to balancing public health and economic concerns, the responsibility of leaders, and the significance of critical thinking and accountability in times of crisis. The analysis demonstrated how different articles framed Sweden's response to COVID-19 using moral considerations, aligning with the concept of framing theory (Entman, 1993). The analysis challenged negative stereotypes, fostered a comprehensive perception of Sweden's actions, and shaped perceptions of the country by presenting various perspectives on its response to the pandemic. This was in line with the assertions made by Wu (2019), Stock (2009), Fan (2010), Kunczik (2003), Saleem (2007), Bolin & Ståhlberg (2015), and Li & Chitty (2009) regarding the media's role in shaping a nation's image.

The responsibility frame was evident in the media's portrayal of Sweden's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This frame was found to be a critical component of contemporary society, emphasizing the importance of transparency, accountability, and taking responsibility for one's actions in managing public health crises. The media framed Sweden's emphasis on personal responsibility and individual choice in managing the pandemic, aligning with the responsibility frame. However, criticism of this approach indicated the challenges of balancing individual freedom and public health concerns. Negative stereotypes and prejudices, as mentioned by Li & Chitty (2009), could also be perpetuated by biased reporting and generalizations, impacting perceptions of nations. The analysis reflected the role of power dynamics in the methis frame. The article on Swedish exceptionalism and the
government's reluctance to change strategy reflected the influence of power dynamics on decision-making. The media's portrayal of Sweden's approach and the subsequent economic consequences contributed to public discourse and potentially influenced policy decisions. These findings aligned with the literature's emphasis on the media's role in shaping perceptions and its involvement in international negotiations and global priorities (Kunczik, 2003; Bolin & Ståhlberg, 2015).

Hence, it is fair to conclude that Sweden is portrayed as a country that values individual freedom, personal responsibility, and possesses a unique approach to crisis management. However, there are tensions and criticisms surrounding Sweden's strategy, including concerns about economic consequences, inequalities, and the trade-offs between individual freedoms and collective well-being. Overall, Sweden's national image reflected a nuanced and dynamic perspective, illustrating the complexities and diverse viewpoints surrounding its handling of the COVID-19 crisis. Lastly, this study highlighted the importance of understanding framing techniques in media coverage of crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, as the findings revealed that the media can influence the image of a nation by framing its crisis management strategy. It also underscores the intricate correlation between a nation's management of the global crisis and its corresponding economic aftermath, emphasizing the need for a holistic approach to addressing the societal, economic, and public health impacts of the crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings of the study can ultimately provide insights into the challenges of utilizing different framing techniques in addressing complex social problems and can help policymakers and communication professionals develop effective strategies for responding to future crises.

9. Future research and recommendation:

In terms of future research, a comparative analysis of media coverage and public perception of COVID-19 responses across different countries or media outlets would be an interesting avenue to explore. The comparative research would allow for a thorough examination of framing strategies and their impact on popular opinion in multiple countries or media outlets. This would result in a better understanding of crisis communication and management strategies. Examining media coverage during a crisis in this manner may reveal similarities and differences in how news is presented, shedding light on the factors that influence public opinion.
Last but not least, when it comes to recommendations, advocating for the development of guidelines for effective crisis communication strategies that are based on empirical research is crucial. The findings of academic research such as this one could act as the foundation for the development of such guidelines. For instance, the framing strategies identified in this study should offer precise and useful guidance on how to communicate in an ethical and transparent way. Through establishing such guidelines for future policymakers and communication experts can improve their crisis communication strategies and ensure that news/communication reports are accurate, balanced, and transparent. As a result, the public will have more opportunities to understand the situation in hand, trust the authorities, and make informed decisions in the event of a future global crisis.
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Swedish Covid-19 strategist under fire over herd immunity emails

Anders Tegnell appears to have asked if higher death rate for older people might be acceptable

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Sweden's Covid-19 strategist under fire over herd immunity emails

Sweden's light-touch approach to Covid-19 has come under renewed criticism after emails show the country's chief epidemiologist appearing to ask whether a higher death rate among older people might be acceptable if it led to faster herd immunity.

Speculation about the views of Sweden's leading public health officials was further fanned after it also emerged that Anders Tegnell, the architect of the country's no-lockdown strategy, had deleted some of his emails.

Tegnell has repeatedly insisted the government's objective was not to achieve rapid herd immunity but rather to slow the spread of the coronavirus enough for health services to be able to cope.

However, email exchanges obtained by Swedish journalists under freedom of information laws show Tegnell discussing herd immunity as an objective in mid-March, days after the World Health Organization declared Covid-19 a pandemic.
Opinion | Sweden’s anti-lockdown experiment flopped. Now it faces a wave of pandemic pain.

SWEDEN’S INITIAL response to the coronavirus pandemic was mild, keeping younger schoolchildren in class, allowing businesses and restaurants to stay open with distancing, limiting public gatherings to 50 people or fewer and hoping the population would develop immunity to a sufficient level that tighter restrictions would not be needed. Now, Sweden is caught up in a surge of infections and rising deaths, and a needed reconsideration is underway. There are important lessons, including: Don’t try this if you want to save lives.

The response last spring, at the urging of state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell, seemed attractive while the United States and others struggled with lockdowns. Many people wondered whether the Swedish experiment might offer an easier alternative, avoiding the severe economic and social costs of closure. President Trump, after a few weeks of lockdown, essentially embraced it, urging states to reopen. More recently, his former adviser Scott Atlas championed the ideas that stricter shutdowns can cause damage to education and economic well-being and are not necessary for public health. On Oct. 22, the Swedish
‘People don’t want to hear about it’: how the pandemic shaped Sweden’s politics

Inequality and national identity are high on the agenda as the country votes. But few want to heed Covid’s lessons

Sweden’s prime minister, Magdalena Andersson, at a football training session for girls last month in Lindaeg, Sweden. Photograph: Jeppe Gustafsson/REX/Shutterstock

In the Stockholm neighbourhood of Tensta, the pandemic has left many feeling hopeless and disenfranchised, says Fatuma Mohamed.

While much of Sweden - including politicians - appear to have forgotten all about Covid, the health communicator and longtime resident said that many in the area are still grappling with its impact.

Although people had been advised by authorities to work from home, many in Tensta, with its high refugee population, had no choice but to go out because of the nature of their jobs.

“They didn’t have any possibility to stay at home,” said Mohamed, sitting outside Tensta Konsthall, a contemporary arts centre, where people were arriving for a coffee meet-up.

Two and a half years after the introduction of the “Swedish strategy” - the Scandinavian country’s divergent pandemic response, which kept schools open and eschewed lockdowns - the results are mixed.

Mental health and children’s learning appear to have been less affected than they might have been, although 2.5m infections were recorded in the population of just over 10 million and in excess of 79,000 died, with stark inequality exposed in the process.

In comparison, Norway, with a little over half Sweden’s population, has had 1.46m cases and nearly 4,000 deaths; while Finland, also with just over half Sweden’s population, has had 1.27m cases and nearly 5,700 deaths.

Most viewed

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‘Set up for failure’: the wild story behind the car crash
Sweden? Japan? UK? Debates over who had a ‘good’ Covid won’t end

François Bailleux

The WHO has spoken but even its huge new report will not settle arguments about pandemic strategies.

A cyclist passes a Covid awareness mural in New Delhi in July 2020. Photograph: Sajjad HUSSAIN/Alamy

National Covid death rates are, inevitably, political. How could they not be when they are viewed as evidence for good or bad government on matters of life or death? How did the UK fare compared with, say, Germany? Should both countries have been more like Sweden? However, when new data arrives, far from settling arguments over which pandemic mitigation strategies worked best, it tends to further inflame disagreements or harden pre-existing positions.

So it is with the much-anticipated report by the World Health Organization (WHO) on Covid-associated deaths, released last week. The WHO estimates that around 15 million additional people died because of the pandemic in 2020-2021, about 2.7 times higher than officially recorded deaths.

While staggering, the estimated excess deaths didn’t really come as a surprise to those who have been closely following the situation. If anything, this estimate is lower than many may have anticipated. Indeed, two previous modelling efforts, by the Economist and the University of Washington, suggested around 18 million excess deaths.

That more people died in the pandemic than have been officially registered as Covid deaths should be largely uncontroversial. Many countries simply did not have the diagnostic infrastructure in place to identify every Covid death. The pandemic - and, to an extent, our response to it - has also been devastating to social and healthcare around the world.

Now the WHO report seems to provide ammunition for essentially any narrative and it is unlikely to check the politicisation of the Covid debate - in the UK or elsewhere.
Swedes' support for anti-lockdown stance slips amid rising Covid deaths

News comes as PM says high schools will switch to distance learning for rest of term

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Jon Henley Europe correspondent

Support for Sweden's government and public confidence in authorities' ability to handle the coronavirus crisis are sliding as the country's anti-lockdown approach continues to be tested by mounting numbers of deaths and new cases.

As the national health agency announced 6,885 new infections and 33 more deaths on Thursday, the prime minister, Stefan Löfven, said the country's high schools would switch to distance learning from 7 December for the rest of the term.

"This is being done so as to have a slowing effect on the spread of the disease," Löfven said, adding that the measure was "not an extended break". What the country did now "will determine how we can celebrate Christmas", he said.

A six-monthly poll by Statistics Sweden this week showed support for the prime minister's centre-left Social Democrats had dropped nearly five percentage points to 29.4% since May, amid signs Swedes are increasingly unconvinced by the country's strategy.
Good Covid-19 News From Italy...and Sweden

Analysis by Lionel Laurent [Bloomberg]
August 5, 2020 at 12:59 a.m. EDT

The lifting of Covid-19 lockdowns around the world was never going to be easy. But as infections are flaring up from Spain to Australia, it’s worth noting that two of the hardest-hit countries at the pandemic’s peak — Italy and Sweden — are keeping the virus’s spread under control.

Daily confirmed cases in both nations are now averaging at around 100 each, well below their respective peaks, with no rebound in sight and no strain on hospitals. By contrast, the daily case count in Spain rose past 2,000 last week and France’s surpassed 1,000. This is by no means a second wave, but it’s worth asking what Italy and Sweden might be doing differently to manage the virus.

These countries once stood out for the wrong reasons. Italy was the first European country hit by a Covid-19 surge and the first to impose a draconian lockdown. Sweden took a more liberal and controversial approach — at odds even with other Nordic countries — that kept schools open and broadly stuck to recommendations on social distancing and self-isolation rather than forced quarantine.
We stick to the rules: why cinemas in Sweden have stayed open during the pandemic

Many of the country’s movie theatres have continued to operate despite an alarming death toll with social distancing measures in place

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Peter Fornström, owner of Sweden's second-largest chain Sveriges Bio, outside the box in Nyköping. No more than 60 people are allowed in the auditorium during the Covid-19 outbreak. Photograph: Anders Wiklund/Aftonbladet

Showing a film in a cinema has become an act of political consequence. Movie theatres across the globe, from China to the US, have shut down during the coronavirus pandemic, and arguments have broken out as much on ideological lines as economic, as to how and when to reopen. In Sweden, however, some have remained open all along, operating under now government guidelines. With 47 cinemas and about 300 screens, the country's second-largest chain Sveriges Bio stayed operational – and as a result has become Europe's biggest operator by box office revenue.

“Swedes, we’re born social distancing,” says Peter Fornström, Sveriges Bio’s founder and managing director. “I am happy that we kept the doors open and that we are still operating [but I wish everyone was operating].”
Sweden’s coronavirus strategy is not what it seems

Analysis by John Hannon
May 17, 2020 at 12:00 a.m. EDT

Want smart analysis of the most important news in your inbox every weekday, along with other global reads, interesting ideas and opinions to know? Sign up for the Today’s WorldView newsletter.

As societies batten down the hatches and imposed quarantines, one European country appeared to take a different approach. In Sweden, there have been no invasive lockdowns to mitigate the spread of the coronavirus. Restaurants and even nightclubs are operating, though under guidelines to enforce social distancing. Schools for students under the age of 16 remain open. Large gatherings are restricted to a maximum of 50 people, a far cry from the enforced confinement imposed on entire cities in other parts of Europe.

Are you on Telegram? Subscribe to our channel for the latest updates on Russia’s war in Ukraine.

Those seemingly lax measures attracted the attention of lockdown skeptics elsewhere, who hailed the “Swedish model” as an example of how a Western democracy ought to deal with the pandemic. It became a cause célèbre among American conservatives, who resent the economic toll exacted by social distancing restrictions. Even for nonconservatives, the Swedish approach is now being invoked as an obvious “alternative” to what prevails. New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman suggested this weekend that President Trump may hope to “follow Sweden” as he seeks to “reopen” the American economy.
Coronavirus? Pandemic? For many in Sweden, life goes on as usual.

By Per Lilja
April 6, 2020 at 6:13 p.m. EDT

STOCKHOLM — It was a crisp April day, and the Medborgarplatsen, one of the largest central squares in Stockholm, was bustling with life. People inspected daffodils at a flower stand, children swerved around on bicycles, and dozens gathered on benches and outdoor restaurants to chase away a particularly gloomy winter. There was nothing particularly exceptional about this day but for the fact that as seemingly carefree Swedes milled about, much of the world was on lockdown.

“Is it really that damn bad?” Sandra Bergqvist, a 28-year-old grocery clerk from nearby Akersberga, asked rhetorically as she enjoyed a beer with a group of friends. “Of course we’re worried about people in the risk groups, but if it wasn’t for media it wouldn’t have been this hysterical.”

Even Swedes in higher-risk groups did not seem that concerned. Margareta Körner, 80, and Margareta Eriksson, 69, fall into one of those groups — older adults — but the two retired women sat in the public square, sharing a thermos of coffee. Körner, who lives in a middle-class borough of central Stockholm, knows she is not supposed to be outside, but she said she maintains her distance from others. And Eriksson, who lives in the same borough, said fighting the coronavirus comes down to
'They are leading us to catastrophe': Sweden's coronavirus stoicism begins to jar

The sound of bridge – yes, that bridge – is an engineering marvel linking the Swedish city of Malmö and Copenhagen that normally transports 70,000 people daily. It has fallen eerily silent, Denmark is under coronavirus lockdown, and the Danes have imposed strict border controls. On the Swedish side, the bridge remains open, although, understandably not many are making that journey.

It feels surreal in Sweden just now. Walking from my local café, I pass through Twitter videos of deserted cities, or army trucks transporting the dead in Italy, surrounded by the usual groups of chatty teenagers, mothers with babies and the occasional freelancer.

Outside, couples stroll arm in arm in the spring sunshine, Malmö’s café terraces do a brisk trade. On the beach and surrounding parkland at Sibbarp there were picnics and barbecues this weekend, the adjoining skate park and playground were swarmed. No one was wearing a mask.

The global pandemic has closed down Europe’s economies and confined millions of people inside, yet Sweden’s approach to the virus has been a reminder of that nation’s light touch, its cool, gentle optimism.
Sweden’s Covid-19 policy is a model for the right. It’s also a deadly folly

Nick Cohen

The Swedes were the Brexeters’ poster nation, but now have Europe’s worst death rate.

Coronavirus | latest updates

Tell us have you been affected by the coronavirus?

Covid-19 is nature’s way of making bad situations worse. From the moment it turned the world upside down, you could have predicted that the Chinese Communist party would have snuffed whistleblowers and covered up the threat to humanity. It’s what it does best, after all.

You would not have needed mystical powers to divine that Viktor Orbán would have used a pandemic as an excuse to turn Hungary into the European Union’s first dictatorship. Nor did it take a modern Nostradamus to foresee that, if you put men who care nothing for competence, complexity, or the difference between truth and falsehood in power, you will live to regret it. Or in the case of tens of thousands who trusted Donald Trump and Boris Johnson, die needless deaths.
Opinion | Is Sweden’s lax approach to the coronavirus backfiring?

By Paulina Neuringer and Tino Sarandjaj
April 6, 2020 at 2:45 p.m. EDT

A couple kiss at a park in Stockholm on April 4. (Anders Huselius/TT)

Paulina Neuringer is the European editor at Quillette Magazine. Tino Sarandjaj is an economist with a PhD in public policy from the University of Chicago.

With large parts of Europe in lockdown in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, one country stands out: Sweden has no mandatory quarantines and few limitations on free movement. Elementary schools remain open; malls, gyms and shopping streets are far from empty.

This is not to say that things are as usual — mobility has declined considerably in Sweden, although still less than in other European Union countries. But even as provisional intensive care units — and makeshift morgues — have been set up in the Swedish capital, and the government is considering stricter measures, some sidewalk cafes are still bustling with life.

[Full coverage of the coronavirus pandemic]

Prime Minister Stefan Löfven has urged Swedes to apply “common sense.” While this soft approach stunned the rest of Europe, Sweden maintained that it will turn out to be more effective.
WHO chief says herd immunity approach to pandemic 'unethical'

Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus cites lack of understanding of virus and lasting health effects

*Coronaviruses - latest updates*

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Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus during a WHO meeting in Geneva last week. Photograph: Christopher Black/WHO/AFPH Getty Images

The head of the World Health Organization has warned against deliberately allowing coronavirus to spread in the hope of achieving so-called herd immunity, saying the idea is unethical.

“Herd immunity is a concept used for vaccination, in which a population can be protected from a certain virus if a threshold of vaccination is reached,” Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said during a virtual press briefing.

For measles, for instance, it is estimated that if 95% of the population is vaccinated, the remaining 5% will also be protected from the spread of the virus. For polio the threshold is estimated at 80%.

“Herd immunity is achieved by protecting people from a virus, not by exposing them to it,” Tedros said. “Never in the history of public health has herd immunity been used as a strategy for responding to an outbreak, let alone a pandemic.”
Swedish exceptionalism has been ended by coronavirus

Erik Augustin Palm

It has taken a shocking Covid-19 death toll to dent the nation's self-image of moral superiority. But deader than it has been

“A sign outside a pub in Stockholm, 26 March 2020. ‘The weight of opinion in this view that Sweden was doing the right thing by refusing to engage in a mass lockdown.’ Photograph: Colin Richmond/Reuters

“Havestad” is a Swedish word meaning “shipwrecked person”. During the course of Sweden’s shambolic response to Covid-19, dissent - whether from epidemiologists or journalists - has often been met with this insult, which implies the critics are fighting a losing battle. It’s telling of the way Sweden has handled its failure.

Through a uniquely slack approach (seen by many as the largely debunked “herd immunity” approach, even if the government denies this), Sweden reached the highest Covid-19 deaths per capita in the world in May. It still circles around the top, with more than 5,200 deaths — five times as many as in Norway, Finland and Denmark combined. After months of a mainly one-sided debate, critical voices are mounting. Even Sweden’s state epidemiologist, Anders Tegnell, admits to fruit. But this has not been enough to change his agency’s strategy, which a majority of Swedes still have confidence in — although that support has waned.
We should have done more, admits architect of Sweden’s Covid-19 strategy

Anders Tegnell says there was ‘potential for improvement’ in country’s strategy to fight pandemic

Sweden’s chief epidemiologist and the architect of its light-touch approach to the coronavirus has acknowledged that the country has had too many deaths from Covid-19 and should have done more to curb the spread of the virus.

Anders Tegnell, who has previously criticised other countries’ strict lockdowns as not sustainable in the long run, told Swedish radio on Wednesday that there was “quite obviously a potential for improvement in what we have done” in Sweden.

Asked whether too many people in Sweden had died, he replied: “Yes, absolutely,” adding that the country would “have to consider in the future whether there was a way of preventing” such a high toll.

Sweden’s death rate per capita was the highest in the world over the seven days to 2 June, figures suggest. This week the government bowed to mounting opposition pressure and promised to set up a commission to look into its Covid-19 strategy.

“If we were to encounter the same disease again knowing exactly what we know about it today, I think we would settle on doing something in between what Sweden did and what the rest of the world has done,” Tegnell said. It would be “good to know exactly what to shut down to curb the spread of infection better”, he added.

In an interview with the Japanese Kyodo News, Tegnell subsequently said he still believed “the basic strategy has worked well. I do not see what we would have done completely differently... based on the knowledge we had then, we feel we made the appropriate decisions.”
Scientist behind Sweden’s covid-19 strategy suggests it allowed too many deaths

By Michael Birkesjö
June 1, 2020 at 1:17 p.m. EDT

BRUSSELS — For months, the world has watched Sweden’s light-touch approach to fighting the coronavirus pandemic, wondering whether it was genius or misguided. This week, the architect of the strategy acknowledged that too many people have died and said that, in retrospect, he might have pushed something closer to other countries’ restrictions.

“Should we encounter the same disease, with exactly what we know about it today, I think we would land midway between what Sweden did and what the rest of the world did,” Swedish state epidemiologist Anders Tegnell told Swedish Radio on Wednesday.

Swedish authorities have consistently denied that they were aiming to achieve full-population immunity by keeping much of their public life humming as usual. They said that if they protected the elderly and other vulnerable groups while allowing others to carry on, the country might be more resilient in the face of a second wave of infections and avoid the economic chaos of a total shutdown.