

Political Fragmentation

A Case study of the political situation in Sweden through mainstream parties' political discourse and strategies concerning a growing far-right's presence

Author: Therese Gustafsson

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Supervisor: Simon Birnbaum



Abstract

This is a case study of the political situation in Sweden where a present and growing far-right has generated an outcome of political fragmentation. The process between this probable cause and outcome will be investigated to find the best possible explanation for how an isolated party could generate the outcome of political fragmentation despite their denied political participation with the other parties. The process will be analyzed through mainstream parties' political discourse about the far-right and how they give expression for their strategies to deal with their presence. This will be done through an abductive discourse-pathway analysis, wherein mainstream parties' dynamics towards the far-right and how it has changed over time will be analyzed.

The result from the analysis showed that there are three possible outcomes when dealing with the far-right: political fragmentation, political unity and political polarization. The conclusion is that political fragmentation occurs when mainstream parties are pulled in different directions regarding what strategies to use when they ought to deal with a growing far-right presence.

Keywords: Political fragmentation, far-right, mainstream parties, political discourse, expressions for strategies, abductive discourse-pathway analysis

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1. Introduction

Studies of the far-right have been of high interest among scholars as far-right parties have become a force to recognize in Europe as the fastest-growing party family. Therefore, extensive studies on the far-right has been made; What kind of political parties they are and what their politics and agendas are based on. How the rise of these parties and their electoral successes within liberal democracies can be explained. If and how they can change and be partners and considered legitimate political parties like the others or if they are ought to be concerned as political piranhas that need to be excluded and isolated. How other political parties ought to deal with their presence within national elected governments and how they affect other political parties ideological positionings, etc. What has come to be proven is that far-right parties are a force to recognize, but despite their significant growth are they yet not considered to be a mainstream party, that is to say a legitimate party like the others. In this essay I use the term mainstream parties in the definition of all political parties that has an electoral and objective self-claimed political legitimacy that is also accepted by others, and far-right parties do not account as a legitimate party because of their anti-elite and anti-immigrant attitude that breeds in a hostile xenophobia. The far-right has however become what Brown et al., (2021) calls a mainstay. What is also known is that the success of far-right parties in various countries has made it harder for political mainstream parties to separate themselves from the far-right issues. Therefore it starts to become more common for mainstream parties to build coalitions with the far-right. Coalitions between mainstream parties and far-right parties have occurred in countries such as Austria, Finland, Italy. Netherlands, Denmark and Norway (Golder, 2016). The coalition with mainstream parties is not the same as having governmental power, but to be part of a coalition is however one step closer to accessing it or at least have influential power over the parties that have executing power.

What I found missing in the scientific literature is studies about how mainstream parties' dynamics towards the far-right is constructed through political discourses and how their choice of strategies to deal with their presence are expressed for. What is also missing is an explanation for how political developments can be understood through this relation. I will make my research about this through the case of Sweden where a strategy to exclude and isolate these kinds of parties has, thus far, been successfully maintained.

1.1 Problem formulation

Sweden has been exceptional in the matter of dealing with the far-right as the mainstream parties after the far-right party's entrance in parliament and despite its rapid growth in party size, still been able to obtain an excluding strategy to keep the far-right party away from political power and direct influence over the politics. It is evident that even though the mainstream parties in Sweden has been able to deny the far-right party any direct political power and influence, that does not imply that far-right parties have no influence at all. The far-right has been able to influence mainstream parties by their mere presence in the political domain. Their presence has affected the behavior of mainstream parties and resulted in many interesting political developments, such as the December agreement in 2014, the forced resignation of the Moderate leader Anna Kinberg Batra in 2017, the January deal and the disunion of the Alliance in 2018. This shows that even though Sweden is perceived as a successful country when it comes to maintain the far-right excluded and isolated from political power and influence, it has also brought consequences to the political field and generated a fragmented political situation. The question is how we can make sense of all this? How can an isolated party influence other parties and leave an imprint that unfolds political events and generates a certain political outcome? Pieces of this puzzle will contribute to theory formations and developments in studies of the far-right in how their presence and growths affects and develops the political situation.

1.2 Purpose and Research Questions

In this study I seek to explore the phenomenon of how a far-right party can leave imprints and transform the political field despite their isolation. What we know from the political situation in Sweden is that there is a growing far-right and its possible correlation to the political outcome of political fragmentation. The question is how we can find the best explanation for this? By correlating a growing far-right with the outcome of a political fragmentation I can investigate the process in between, and possibly generate an answer to the enigma of how an isolate party can influence and generate a certain political outcome and thereby contribute to political theory formation.

This will be an abductive pathway-discourse study, where I will try to make sense of the political situation in Sweden by mapping out mainstream parties' political discourse about the far-right and how it has changed over time. This by relating the political discourse to a theory of a moral consensus and empirical observations from research evidence and various political events that are significant to mainstream parties' strategies to deal with their presence. The purpose of this is to find the best possible explanation for how a present and growing far-right has generated the outcome of political fragmentation. In order to find the best explanation I will investigate how mainstream parties 'constructs the far-right in political discourse and gives expression for their strategies to deal with their presence. I will also investigate how and if the political discourse and strategies has changed over time.

The following questions will guide this research:

1. How is the far-right fabricated in the political discourse performed by mainstream' parties?
2. How do mainstream parties' give expression for their strategies in how they ought to deal with the far-right's presence?
3. Have mainstream parties' political discourse about the far-right and their strategies changed over time and, if so, how?

2. The Swedish political situation

Since the far-right party, Sweden Democrats, made entrance in the Swedish parliament back in 2010 has the other parties moved forward by neglecting, excluding and isolating them. In the beginning it was easy for the other parties to dismiss and neglect the Sweden Democrats presence as they only had 5.7 percent of the votes (Valmyndigheten, 2010). The Alliance government consisting of Moderates, Center party, Christian Democrats and Liberals could after this election continue to rule the Swedish politics under the leadership of Fredrik Reinfeldt. After the election in 2014 it started to become more turbulent. Not only did Sweden Democrats gain more mandate by doubling their electoral support by getting 12,86 percent of the votes, this increase of electoral support also made them the third biggest party within the parliament. The Sweden Democrats thereby got the balance of power, as neither the Red-green nor the Alliance would be able to form government without their support. Fredrik Reinfeldt the political leader of the Moderates resigned

the same night as the election, and the result of the election showed that the Red-Green got more votes than the Alliance and a power shift was in place (Valmyndigheten, 2014). However, the governmental formation depended on how the political parties would relate to the Sweden democrats and their presence, as it would be possible for either the Alliance or the Red-Green to access the power if they sought support from the Sweden Democrats.

When Sweden Democrats decided to vote down the Red-green budget proposal by instead voting for the budget presented by the Alliance, it opened up for three possible choices for political outcome; 1. To announce new election, 2. Stay in minority government and rule on the budget from the Alliance, or governmental resignation and new rounds of governmental formation would take place, and the one to gather the most support from Riksdagen would form a new government (SVT, 2014) This was presented in the media as a governmental crisis and to maintain the Sweden Democrats excluded both from political power and influence the Alliance had to step back and tolerate the Social Democrats to form a minority government with the Environmental party. Thereby a fourth option came to existence when Social Democrats and the Alliance withheld negotiations behind closed doors that eventually generated the December agreement (SVT, 2014a).

The December agreement was settled between Social Democrats, Moderates, Environmental Party, Center Party, the People's Party (now Liberals), and the Christian democrats. The December agreement indicated that the Swedish democracy was transitioning as the traditional left-right conflict blurred due to this new cross-block settlement (Bjereld et.al, 2016). The agreement soon came to be criticized, foremost, by the Christian democrats and the Moderates who portrayed it as a democratic dilemma and as a serious betrayal against Sweden. They argued that the December agreement imposed more socialistic politics than necessary which they say do not reflect the demand of the people in accordance with the election result (Dagens Samhälle, 2015).

The December agreement was built on the motion that the candidate for the post of prime minister who gathers the greatest possible party constellation will be tolerated and passed through the Riksdag, as well as their budget too (Decemberöverenskommelsen, 2014). This was the only possible outcome as Stefan Löfven rather would resign than rule on the budget from opposite side and a new election would most likely not change the situation as it assumably would have generated the same result and the same political situation. To resign and do new rounds of governmental formation would not change the fact that they either have to make cross-block

collaborations to maintain the Sweden Democrats out from political power and influence or include them to win majority within the parliament. Thereof the December agreement was established, and the Red-Green government was accepted and tolerated to run Sweden for the four year mandate period.

The December agreement also evoked scholarly concerns about the weaknesses of the parliamentary and governmental formations in multipole party systems without a clear majority constellations. What governmental abilities and decision-making abilities there would be within the Riksdag without a majority constellation (Mattso, 2016). Leif Lewin, the political scientist and author of the Swedish book “Konsten att bilda regering när ingen får majoritet” (The art of forming government when no one gets majority), argued that the December agreement was the best option among the set of bad options in this new political situation of a growing far-right. For him the December agreement was nothing other than going back to a traditional parliamentarism of a cooperative democracy. He said that the spirit of cooperation and consensus wherein the opposition gets the possibility to be more than just an opposition, as they can be participant in and take responsibility for the formulation of the policies pursued, is nothing new to Sweden (Rättsfonden, 2015). While cross-block collaborations is not a new phenomenon to the Swedish political field when it comes to policy making, was the hasty decision to implement the December agreement and its content to be heavily criticized. Foremost by the Moderates and the Christian Democrats who argued that the agreement was, on one hand a democratic deficit and on the other hand a policy that restrained them from conducting bourgeois politics (Sveriges Radio, 2015). Christian Democrats made the decision to leave the December agreement in less than a year from it was initiated. This decision was made in the party’s Riksting where they made a vote in the matter (Dagens Nyheter, 2015). Even though the Christian Democrats decided to leave was the agreement maintained by the Red-Green Government together with the Moderates, Center Party and the Liberals, who together kept a majority within the Riksdag. However, Anna Kinberg Batra, who was the successor after Fredrik Reinfeldt as the Moderate leader, announced that their party would let Sweden Democrats out from isolation by inviting them to participate in political conversations. Due to this new course of direction, which was not shared by everyone, led Moderates into a crisis of internal conflicts and their party started to lose drastically in the opinion polls, and reached their lowest support since these measures was initiated in Sweden. Their support had fallen to be less than 20 percent. (Sveriges Radio, 2017).

This new approach towards the Sweden Democrats and the regression in the opinion polls led to lost confidence in Kinberg Batra. Some Moderate politicians left the party in protests against the new political direction which they could not support (ETC, 2017), and others started to demand the resignation and the replacement of Anna Kinberg Batra as party leader (Dagens Samhälle, 2017). Not only did it become a conflict of interest within the Moderates but also between the Alliance parties. While Christian Democrats welcomed the new direction the Liberals and the Center Party refused to pursue own politics depended on an active support from the Sweden Democrats (Sveriges Radio, 2017a).

In August 2017, one year before the next election, was a press conference held where Anna Kinberg Batra announced that she would resign as party leader. This because it no longer existed any condition for her to pursue Moderate politics due to the political situation and the internal conflict within the party (Göteborgs-Posten, 2017). Ulf Kristersson became the new Moderate leader and the path for Moderates was to run the coming election on the following premises: (1) to unite the party, (2) to keep the Alliance together and (3) to again exclude and not initiate any collaborations with the Sweden Democrats (SVT, 2017). After the election 2018 was Sweden thrown into another governmental crisis as the result showed that Sweden Democrats grown even bigger, and now had almost 18 percent of the votes and was thereby almost equally big as the Moderates who fell just below 20 percent (Valmyndigheten, 2018). It took 134 days before a new government could form and this was a historical and record long process even though the election result generated the same political situation as in the election of 2015, where the Red-Green was bigger than the Alliance but neither of them could form a majority government without the support from the Sweden Democrats. After extensive negotiation it was settled that a Red-Green government would continue to rule with the support and collaborations with the Center Party and the Liberals, which initiated the January Deal (Teorell, et al., 2020). The January deal was thereby the second policy implemented to deal with the presence of the growing far-right to maintain them excluded from political power and influence. For the Social Democrats this deal meant that they could stay in power but that their executive politics would have to perform more liberal policies (SVT, 2019).

This new collaboration between the Social Democrats, Environmental Party, Center Party and the Liberals (Januariavtalet, 2018) led to the split of Alliance and the distinct two block-based political

field transformed into a political fragmentation. The political field was now consisting in a Center Coalition with one excluded party from the left and one excluded from the right, and a moderate-conservative opposition. This because the Center party refuse to negotiate budget with the Left party as they, like the Sweden Democrats, are an outer edge party (SVT, 2021). Nevertheless, with the Moderates and the Christian Democrats on the opposition side would the progress of the Centre coalition be depended on the support of the Left Party. Thereof another governmental crisis surfaced when the Left party decided to file a motion of distrust against the social democratic prime minister, Stefan Löfven. The government and the January deal fell when the Riksdag voted for the dismissal of the prime minster and his cabinet with 181 votes against 109 (Sveriges Radio, 2021). In conjunction with the voting of distrust, the Liberals declared that they no longer would continue to support the January deal and was therefore going to vote for a governmental dismissal. The Liberals would now rather seek to form a bourgeois government (Dagens Industri, 2021).

This shows clearly that the dynamics between some of the mainstream parties and the far-right party is starting to change even in Sweden, but from this description of the political situation we do not find the answers to how the mainstream parties has fabricated the far-right nor how they give expression for their strategies of how to deal with the far-rights presence. It merely indicates that there is changes in progress, but thus far as we know, is the far-right party ‘Sweden Democrats’ remained excluded. This description of the political situation do however give an enriched context of how a growing far-right leads up to the outcome of a political fragmentation.

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3. Previous research

How the mainstream parties successfully have implemented and maintained the exclusion and isolation of the far-right party in Sweden, has been studied by Andreas Backlund (2020) in his doctoral dissertation: “Isolating the Radical Right: Coalition Formation and Policy”. In his studies he discusses and shows how mainstream parties on national and local level could form coalition governments and policies on the basis of election results. How political parties interacted in cross-block collaborations and negotiations to move forward in various constellations to maintain the Sweden democrats excluded and isolated from political power and influence.

There are three main strategies that mainstream parties can use to maintain the far-right excluded and isolated from political power and influence. The mainstream parties could choose to be 'dismissive' by remaining silent about the issue. They could choose to be 'adversarial' and distance themselves from nativist viewpoints or they could choose to be accommodative and adopt similar positions or policies as the far-right. This adaptive strategy could, nevertheless, lead to the consequence of radicalizing the mainstream parties and legitimizing the radical right (Muis and Immerzeel, 2017). In short, the dismissive strategy is to ignore their existence, the adversarial is to identify themselves as different from them, and the adaptive is to take away their core issue in order to make them less unique.

Fyrklund and Saveljeff (2019), analyze how the two main parties in Sweden, Social Democrats and Moderates, pursue own politics at the same time as dealing with the presence of the far right party 'Sweden Democrats', and how that has changed their own politics over time. In their study "the political elite's strategies against right populist parties", they discuss the dismissive, adversarial or adaptive as approaches and apply this with the PSO-theory¹, where through they investigate which strategies the Social Democrats and the Moderates has applied and if the strategies of their choosing could be explained by the PSO-theory. Their result showed that the PSO-theory could not explain the action of the two main parties, as both the Social Democrats and the Moderates acted in contrary to what the PSO-theory expected from them on the basis of their positional situation in relation to the far-right.

To begin with, could both the Social Democrats and the Moderates adapt a dismissive strategy against the Sweden democrats. This approach was used during the period of 2002-2006 when the Sweden Democrats still was too small in size to yet take place in parliament or any local offices. In the period 2006-2010, just before the Sweden Democrats made entrance in the parliament, had the Social Democrats and the Moderates already started to change their strategies from dismissive to adversarial and adaptive strategies. The Social Democrats applied a strong adversarial strategy, and the Moderates applied an adversarial strategy with a slight approach towards an adaptive strategy. This course of action was surprising as it did not match with what the PSO-theory predicts. Both the Social Democrats and the Moderates shared the perception that it was foremost

¹ PSO-theory is developed by the American political scientist, Bonnie Meguid. It stands for Position, salience and ownership (Fyrklund & Saveljeff,2019).

the Social Democrats that was threatened by Sweden Democrats at this time. According to the PSO-theory it is the most threatened party that would take the action of an adaptive strategy to challenge the far-right on their core issues, in order to win voters back. While the less threatened party would apply an adversarial strategy to strengthen its own position against the far-right (Kiiskinen & Saveljeff, 2010). This means, at this time, that the two main parties in Sweden was deviating from what was expected when it comes to deal with the presence of the far-right, as the strategies go in the opposite direction from what the PSO-theory expected.

From 2006 up to 2018, the Sweden democrats rapidly increased in party size, resulting in them becoming the third biggest party and also the balance of power. When Sweden Democrats became the balance of power after the election of 2018, it was made clear that they now where a threat for all parties to be agitated by. The Social Democrats and the Moderates dropped a significant number of voters that had turned to support and vote for the Sweden Democrats instead. The Social Democrats went from losing 27k voters in the election 2010 to the increasing number of 95k in the election of 2014 and the Moderates went from losing 18k voters to 163k in the same period (Fyrklund & Saveljeff, 2019). In order, to try to win back voters again the Social Democrats started to show tendency of an adaptive strategy in the matter of immigration and the Moderates started to move towards an even stronger adaptive strategy then before, wherein they started to become more similar to Sweden Democrats in policy issues. It has been theorized that mainstream parties become more radical as they have been adapting into radical policy stances to challenge and make the far-right party seem less attractive for voters (Wagner & Meyer, 2017). From Fyrklund and Saveljeff's research we see the tendency of mainstream parties moving towards becoming more radical as argued by Wagner and Mayer.

While the study of Backlund was about how mainstream parties could maintain the far-right excluded and isolated through governmental formations and policy collaboration, was Fyrklund and Saveljeff's study found on how the two main parties pursued and changed their own politics to cut off the far-right. Both studies explain and describe how political parties have acted through collaborations and strategies to deal with the far-right. They both do, however, leave out a discussion of why and how mainstream parties' relation to the far-right has affected and changed the dynamics within the political situation of having a growing far-right party present. To address this gap, I will investigate mainstream parties' relation to the far-right thoroughly through their

perceptions, intentions and values considering the far-right and their presence and discuss it in relation to the mainstream parties' main strategy of keeping them away from political power and influence, a strategy I define as based on a moral consensus. This to seek the answer for how a far-right party despite their isolation could help transform the entire political field.

4. Theory

4.1 Exclusion and Isolation of the far-right - A Moral Consensus

Chantal Mouffe argues that the presence of the far-right have made the politics enter a new phase where mainstream parties build politics on consensus around a centre, where morality becomes the pillar of political action. That is to say, that the politics increasingly becomes about terms of what is right and wrong instead of left and right based politics (Martin, 2013). When dealing with a far-right presence at governmental level there are two options of strategies, Cordon Sanitaire or Tainted coalitions. The former is to exclude and isolate the far-right party completely and the latter is to let them access political power and influence by including them in coalition formations (Riera & Pastor, 2021). It was mentioned earlier that mainstream parties risk becoming more radical as they adapt into far-right's issue to win back voters (Wagner & Meyer, 2017), an inclusion of the far-right would arguably generate the same outcome as the mainstream parties then to adapt to far-right's policy issues. When it comes to including the far-right it has been theorized that inclusion of far-right parties would possibly make them more moderate and less radical, but the empirical evidence for this has been weak (Van Spanje & Van Der Brug, 2007).

The Cordon Sanitaire of far-right parties are successful only if the exclusion and isolation of them, to keep them away from political power and influence, maintains no matter what their political positions are. The 'Median legislator theory', however argues that the party with the balance of power posits a significant role when it comes to coalition formations, as their central position means that other political parties are depending on their support to form a majority coalition. In theory this means that the median legislator should be included and invited to governmental collaborations (Bourne, 2018). The purpose of Cordon Sanitaire, beside preventing the far-right from accessing political power and influence, is to deny the far-right any legitimacy and visibility, but the implementation of this strategy is only a short-term solution as it comes with the risk of

shockingly increase the far-right parties electoral support in subsequent elections (Riera & Pastor, 2021). This is an effect that is detected in the case of Sweden as the mainstream parties successfully have been able to exclude and isolate the far-right party Sweden Democrats but in turn they gained very substantial electoral support. In the election 2010 Sweden Democrats made entrance in parliament with 5,7 percent of the votes, to gain the position as the median legislator in the subsequent elections, when they after the election 2014 doubled their support by getting 12,8 percent of the votes and increased even further to gain 17,5 percent of the votes in the election 2018 (Valmyndigheten, 2010, 2014, 2018). But through the December agreement and the January deal has the mainstream parties managed to form minority governments and coalitions through cross-block collaborations that maintains the Sweden Democrats excluded and isolated from political power and influence.

The consequence of implementing the Cordon sanitaire, a ban to include and collaborate with a legislative elected political party, is a political fragmentation. This is an empirical hypothesis I make, and I will assess this hypothesis throughout a pathway analysis of the political situation at the national level. The purpose of the pathway analysis is to navigate mainstream parties' political discourse about the far-right through various political events. The discourse analysis will prevent this hypothesis from being circulative evident as I then will explore the dynamics of the process to evaluate the hypothesis instead of testing it.

In other words, at one hand I will argue that the growing far-right party Sweden Democrats is the cause to the political fragmentation in Sweden, at the other I will argue that the strategy to exclude and isolate them is driving the process that leads up to the political fragmentation. This under the consideration that the moral consensus is based on the act of mainstream parties to rather engage in what is right and wrong than in left and right based politics, as argued by Chantal Mouffe.

5. Methodology

This will be a qualitative abductive discourse based study that will provide an in-depth analysis of the political situation in Sweden. This by the exploration of the process between a growing-far right's presence and the outcome of political fragmentation at the national level. The investigation will narrow down in a discourse analysis and the process will be understood through mainstream

parties' political discourse about the far right in how they perceive them and their presence, and how they give expression for how they ought to deal with it. This by analyzing their perception, intentions and values. I will also by the diagnostic pathway method analyze how the political discourse has changed over time, in order to find the best explanation for how a party despite their isolation have been able to influence and make imprints that transformed the political situation into a political fragmentation. The purpose is to contribute to further theory formation and developments by giving new insights to the phenomenon of a far-right and how they have affected the political situation through the strategies of mainstream parties.

In this methodology section I will present how I will proceed to explore and investigate this social phenomenon, and how I will construct my scientifically analysis.

5.1 Methods

I choose to make this a qualitative study as it will be based on “an informal analysis of non-comparable observations” (Gerring, 2017: 154), from the political situation in Sweden regarding how mainstream parties' has considered the far-right in their political discourse and strategies when dealing with their presence, and how that has affected the political field. The intention with the qualitative method is to break down the sum into parts and a context from where essential information is withdrawn to assess social and intersubjective meaning and meaning shaping processes (Esaiasson, et al., 2017), that can explain the specific phenomenon of interest and provide a knowledge that is transferable (Johannessen & Tufte, 2003). In other words, the qualitative research is about making conceptualizations about what something is and how it is similar or different to other things, to understand its context, its consequences and its significance to the outer world. The qualitative study could also be about understanding the operational process and how the process changes over time (Wertz, 2011). In this thesis, I conceptualize the far-right through mainstream parties' political discourse and its significance for the political situation in Sweden. I also look into the process of how a growing far-right leads to the outcome of political fragmentation by investigating how mainstream parties' gives expression for their strategies, and how it all together has changed over time. This in order to find the best possible explanation for

how an isolated party has been able to generate the outcome of political fragmentation despite their exclusion from political participation with the other parties.

The choice of an abductive approach rather than an inductive or deductive is because the analysis will be interchangeably data-driven and hypothesis-driven (Earl Rinehart, 2021). Instead of discussing logical necessary connections that follow in the deductive and the inductive approach, this study will make a discussion of reasonable and possible connections. The abductive approach also differ from the deduction and induction by a backward operationalization. That is to say, that the starting point is an observed conclusion (Bukve, 2019). Namely that a growing far-right's presence generates the outcome of political fragmentation at the national level in Sweden. This construction can only constitute a possible and reasonable connection as it cannot be declared a deterministic factor of causality. Meaning that there could be other reasons and factors that would generate the same outcome. To generate a possible and reasonable connection, the discussion will be consisting in a dynamic discussion between the theoretical framework, previous research, the collected data, and other empirical evidence that can be related to the political situation that is under investigation. The abductive approach thereby becomes the analytical structure, that will be performed as a conversation that goes back and forth between theoretical considerations and research evidence, (Earl Rinehart, 2021).

5.2 Analytical tools

I will use the diagnostic pathway to reconstruct how a growing-far right through mainstream parties' strategies to deal with their presence have generated the outcome of political fragmentation. The diagnostic pathway can be understood as a framework for wherein the political discourse takes place and will be traced.

The political discourse will be narrowed down and selected merely from events occurring at the national level between the time span of the election 2014 up to 2021. I exclude the election period before 2014 because the Sweden Democrats was, in their entrance to parliament, too small in party size to have any significant effect on the others, which make them easily excluded and isolated. The starting point of 2014 is chosen because it is after this election year it was known that the Sweden Democrats was increasing in party size and was a force to recognize, as they surpassed other parties in the parliament and became the balance of power. Their position as the balance of

power meant that neither the Red-Green nor the Alliance could form government without their support. The reason for choosing up to 2021 is because I also want to frame the time after the peak of the political fragmentation that occurred after the election 2018. This to capture how the mainstream parties' perception and intentions to the far-right has changed over time due to their continued party growth, and how that has affected and possibly change the political situation in Sweden. The reason for why I also analyze mainstream parties' values is because the theory say that mainstream parties rather engage in what is right and wrong rather than in left and right based politics. This is something I want to have under consideration when I perform the analysis. This means that the values become redundant and just adding information to the study, as the theory will not be tested but only used as a guideline for how the political discourse can possibly be understood. The values may be redundant to the analysis but still of value to understand more of the overall picture of the political situation in Sweden.

5.3 Material

Materials that will be analyzed in this study will be forums where in political parties publicly announce their perceptions, intentions and values. In this general sense the material can consist of any kinds of speeches, debates, chronicles or party programs. To fit this study it is of importance that there are talks or texts regarding mainstream parties' perceptions intention and values about the far-right and how they ought to deal with their presence. Therefore are party programs not an option for use as material. Chronicles I have decided to not look into as well, as it could reflect differences in opinion between party members within the same party. Which means that I would not access the general perception, intentions and values the specific party stands for. Due to this issue I have decided to narrow it down to merely look at the discourses of political party leaders, as they will represent the political parties as a whole and because their role is to be the primary voice for the party's entirety. This leaves, that possible materials for this study is speeches and debates performed by political party leaders.

5.4 Units to analyze

Earlier in this essay I defined the mainstream parties as all the political parties that has an electoral and objective self-claimed political legitimacy that is also accepted by others. That would be the

Social Democrats, Left Party, Environmental Party, Center Party, Liberals, Moderates and Christian democrats. That is, all the parties except Sweden Democrats. I will not analyze all the parties, as it risk making this study shallow by only touch the surface of the subject of how mainstream parties give expression for their perceptions, intentions and values considering the far-right's party presence, and how that has changed over time and affected the political situation. The decision to narrow down the parties is also based on which parties have been central components to maintain the exclusion and isolation of the far-right. The units to be analyzed will therefore consist of political parties from the centre right and the centre left. The centre right consist in Moderates, Center Party and Liberals and the centre left consist in Social Democrats and the Environmental Party. This on the basis of the December Agreement and the January Deal, that are two crucial political events when it comes to deal with the presence of the far-right and to maintain them isolated and excluded from political power and influence. This will be explained more thoroughly in the operationalization section wherein the analyzing methods will be explained and processed.

I further choose to exclude the Environmental Party from the analysis. The reason for this are two folded. Firstly, because they have been in a coalition with the Social Democrats in the past two mandate periods as an executive government and secondly because they are a significant small party that likely would share the same perception, intention and values as the Social Democrats regarding the matter of opinion about the far-right and how they ought to deal with them.

5.5 Limitation

The far-right party Sweden Democrats entered the Swedish parliament after the election 2010 and has been present in the governmental domain since then, at the national level. Nevertheless, as mentioned earlier was the Sweden Democrats too small of a party at this time to have any influence over the mainstream parties at all, as they could easily just neglect and ignore their existence. Therefore, I will only focus on the timespan between 2014 up to 2021 in this study, which is more than half a decade.

I also said earlier that the material could consist of speeches and debates. I have decided to limit the material to only regard speeches. I choose speeches over debates as the latter will be more complex to analyze as it will be a conversation that goes back and forth between different

politicians. Another reason why I choose speeches is because they will be more contextualized and more coherent than debates when it comes to political parties' visions, which will make it easier to identify their perception, intentions and values through them. The specific speeches I have chosen for this study is the summer speeches each political party leader holds every year at Almedalen in Visby, Gotland. Almedalen is a political event where politicians speak to the people about their future goals and agendas, in order to connect with people and win electoral support for coming elections. Because I have decided to analyze four units: Social Democrats (S), Moderates (M), Center Party (C) and Liberals (L), I need to limit the material to only consist in a few selected years as the speeches are about forty five minutes long. Due to their length and the fact that I could not access all the speeches in a transcribed form I will have to transcribe it myself, and further I will have to translate all the relevant information into English as all speeches are in Swedish.

For those reasons I have chosen to limit the empirical material to only regard three speeches each from the four parties from the following years: 2014, 2018 and 2021. In total it will be twelve speeches to analyze. The reason why I chose the year of 2014 and 2018 are two folded, first because it is election years and secondly because these two years have the evidence on how the mainstream parties ought to deal with the presence of a growing far-right in a later stage, that is the December agreement and the January deal. I also chose 2021 because the time span between 2014 and 2021 will catch how the discourse and strategies about the Sweden Democrats has changed over time.

5.6 Operationalization

5.6.1 Diagnostic Pathway method

The purpose of the diagnostic pathway is to reconstruct how a growing-far right through mainstream parties' strategies to deal with their presence have generated the outcome of political fragmentation. The diagnostic pathway can be understood as a framework for wherein the political discourse takes place and will be traced. In other words, I will structure a linkage between the identified outcome and the identified cause (Mahoney, 2015), in order to make a conclusion on how the process lapsed and generated the specific outcome (Bennet & Checkel, 2015). This by examining the intermediate steps that occurs between the probable cause and the specific outcome through evident based materials and reasoning (Mahoney, 2015).

In this study it will be about placing political events from different temporal positions, such as the December agreement and the January deal, and discuss how they have contributed to the outcome through the theory of a moral consensus, previous research and other empirical observations. What is known is that there is a strong connection between the outcome of political fragmentation and the cause of a growing far-right. In a visual analytical expression it would be presented as $X \rightarrow Y$, where X is the cause and Y the outcome. The December Agreement and the January Deal is the background factors (Z) that manifests in the moral consensus. That to say, that they are constant to the hypothesis that mainstream parties rather engage in what is right and wrong rather than in left and right based politics, and it may affect the cause of a growing far-right and/or the outcome of political fragmentation.

In the table below, I have constructed a model of the relevant factors that this pathway analysis will be built on:

Table 1. Construction of Relevant factors for the pathway analysis

Case	Mainstream parties' political discourse and strategies to deal with a growing far-right's presence (C)
Theory/Hypothes	Moral Consensus - mainstream parties rather engage in what is right and wrong rather than in left and right based politics (H)
Cause	Growing far-right (X)
Outcome	A fragmented political field (Y)
Manifestations of a moral Consensus	December agreement and January Deal (Z)

To summarize, the pathway in this study is theorized on the conceptualization that the cause (X) 'presence of a growing-right' is a necessary condition for the outcome (Y) 'political fragmentation'. Even if the study proclaim that the growing right is a cause to the political fragmentation it should not be understood as deterministic, merely probabilistic and only in relation to the specific structure of this study. This because there could also be other causes leading to the outcome of political fragmentation. However, the growing far-right is not of main concern in this study as it already is established as the cause. Mainstream parties' political discourse and

strategies of how they perceive and intend to deal with the far-right presence is the central issue that will be addressed here. The hypothesis, that mainstream parties rather engage in what is right and wrong than in left and right based politics, is just something that will be taken under consideration as a moral consensus that has generated a specific context for the mainstream parties to operate within. This means that I will not try to prove or disprove the hypothesis but use it as a basis for discussion.

Table 2 below shows the distinctive starting point for the pathway analysis:

Table 2. Pathway of the process tracing

Moral Consensus
Growing far-right → December agreement → January Deal → Political Fragmentation

5.6.2 Discourse analysis

The aim of the discourse analysis is to bring forth essential information for how mainstream parties' subject position the far-right, how they intend to deal with their presence and how they identify themselves in relation to the far-right. With subject positioning it means to investigate how the far-right is ascribed certain categorizations which describes in what qualities they have and what kind of actions they are said to be performing (Ahrne & Svensson, 2015). This also goes for how the mainstream parties identify themselves in relation to the far-right and how they ought to deal with them, where the descriptions and categorizations of the far-right and themselves form the perception of who they are and how that enable and limit their actions (Boréus & Göransson, 2018).

In this kind of sense the discourse becomes to be understood as argued by Foucault: as an instrument that on one hand transmits and produce power and on the other undermine and expose it. In other words, where there is power there also is an explicit or implicit resistance to the situation (Powers, 2007). This is of relevance for this study, as mainstream parties' political discourse and strategies signals how they transmit and produce power to maintain the far-right completely excluded and isolated from participating in governmental formation, coalitions and collaborations. A strategy that is arguably based on a moral consensus, and all moralities are products of power

(Pickett, 1997) as they are principles that distinguish between what is right and wrong. Power is thereby something that emerge from the discourse and accordingly to Foucault it is a productive and creative force wherein flexible relationship is created through interactions between subjects in virtually everything. Power is thereby linked and depended on knowledge. Power and knowledge should however not be interpreted as the same entity but as two separated entities that correlates and affect each other, in the way that, knowledge can enable power and power can transform knowledge. This regards three dimensions; (1) a game of truth, (2) relations of power and (3) forms of relation to oneself and to others (Stehr & Adolf, 2018). All of these three dimensions is represented in this thesis. ‘A game of truth’ will be identified by their perception of the far-right. ‘Relations of power’ will be identified by the mainstream parties’ intentions to deal with the presence of the far-right. Lastly, the ‘forms of relation to oneself and to others’ will be identified by how the mainstream parties’ give expression for themselves in relation the far-right, this by identify their own values and compare it with the perception they have on the far-right. That is to say, how they make themselves different from the far-right.

To get the discourse analysis going, I will begin with a contextual analysis to bring forth relevant information from the materials. I found inspiration for the contextual analysis from James Paul Gee (2014) who has constructed a book of tools of how to make discourse analysis. The tool he calls ‘Context is reflexive tool’ is of good use when there is specific context to consider. It is for this very reason as I choose this tool as I have a specific context within the political field I look into; the political domain of mainstream parties’ relation to the growing far-right and how it has changed over time within the field of where political power is executed at the national level.

To use this tool I will apply the following questions onto the material of speeches from Almedalen:

1. What are the political party leaders of the mainstream parties saying about the political situation and the growing far-right?
2. What are the political party leaders of mainstream parties saying when they identify themselves in relation to the far-right and how they ought to deal with their presence?
3. Is what the mainstream parties saying, more or less, replicating the political situation and their relation to the far-right, or is it in anyway transformed and changed over time?

When I retell what the various political leaders have said I will present it in a way of how they said it. This means that I also will look into how they perform the language within the discourse. That

to say, how the political party leaders use different kind of sentences to talk to the public about the far-right and their relationship with them. Sentences can be interrogative, imperative or declarative and they are used for a wide variety of purposes. But in general sense interrogative sentences are about asking questions, imperative sentences about giving commands or prompts and declarative sentences are about describing things (Feldman, 2014).

5.7 Validity and reliability

The validity of this study will depend on the interferences about X's relationship to Y. It however does not just stop there as it would only generate an easy-fitting validity (Gerring, 2017). So the validity is about how I can strengthen my conclusion of a growing far-right being the cause of a fragmented political field in Sweden through mainstream parties' application of a moral consensus strategy, through empirical evidence. The hypothesis is the interference I make between the cause of a growing far-right and the outcome of a fragmented political field, and this hypothesis needs to be assessed empirically in order to make it trustworthy. With assess I mean to evaluate it through empirical evidence and a discussion on reasonable arguments. The reason why the hypothesis is assessed rather than tested is because the hypothesis is developed from the same data which will be analyzed, and that would lead to circular evidence (Gerring, 2017). Therefore, instead of testing the hypothesis it is about assessing it to generate new insights that can contribute to further theory formations and developments. This is the aim of this thesis, and if the hypothesis can be assessed and lead to new insights then this study can be said to reach an external validity, as the generated knowledge could be generalized and applicable to similar cases. The issue is that the case of Sweden, and its success in maintaining the far-right excluded and isolated, is a unique case. Therefore, at this time being, the result can only be valid for the case of Sweden.

The hypothesis of 'a moral consensus that leads to a politics of right and wrong instead of right-left based politics' will be assessed by the application of the theoretical framework upon the material. The hypothesis is however not main focus of this thesis. It is the process between the cause of a present and growing far-right and the outcome of a fragmented political field that is of analytical interest. The process is analyzed through mainstream parties' political discourse and strategies that will reveal their perception, intention and values regarding a growing far-right's presence. In other words, it is the discourse analysis that navigates the process.

The discourse analysis is often criticized of being abstract and too relativistic due to the interpretation aspects that could leave imprints of the writer's own subjectivity, but as this method does not stand on its own but as a complementary to the pathway analysis that frames the context methodologically, a valid result will be achievable through reasonable arguments that coincide with the empirical evidence.

Reliability will be achieved through analytical transparency and that the methods are executed as presented. In the discourse analysis it will be about applying the Context is Reflexive tool to gather the relevant information needed for the analysis. When reconstructing the essential information I will do so by their use of language, which I analyze through the forms of sentence constructions. To be clearer, I will rephrase the information and present it in a way, so it becomes clear when imperative, interrogative and declarative sentences have been used, this by using words that indicate what kind of sentences that was used when the given information was expressed. For example, I will use expressions as he/she urged or made an imperative for a certain action or thing which then is imperative, and he/she asked, questioned which makes it interrogative. Declarative sentences is all the rest when they describe the situation or name calls the far-right that ascribes them certain qualities. I will in this use terms such as he/she say, highlight, compare and emphasize.

Thereafter I will line-up their perceptions, intentions and values in a clear construction. Finally, I will discuss all the essential information in relation to the theoretical framework, the previous research and other empirical observations.

6. Analysis

I will analyze the mainstream parties' speeches from Almedalen, 2014, 2018 and 2021. They will be analyzed chronologically and organized in the order of party size. That is to say, Social Democrats first then the Moderates, thereafter the Center Party and last and least the Liberals. The first part will consist in a contextual discourse analysis to access essential information for how mainstream parties perceive the far-right, how they intend to deal with their presence and how they value themselves in compare to them. This to find out how the mainstream parties' subject position the far-right and themselves in the political situation. This essential information will be presented

and discussed in relation to the theoretical framework of a moral consensus, the scientific literature and other relevant empirical observations. It will also be coded into a table where their perceptions, intentions and values can be easily overviewed. Thereafter, an evaluation will be made of how and if mainstream parties' perception and strategies against the far-right has changed over time.

In the last part of the analysis I will reconstruct an overview of the political situation by mapping out and discuss possible outcomes when dealing with a growing far-rights presence in various ways and discuss how an isolated party can influence and leave imprints on the political situation by their presence and growth within the political domain.

6.1 Mainstream parties' political discourse and strategies

6.1.2 Almedalen 2014

Stefan Löfven (S), speaks about fighting against oppression and fascism, and for solidarity. He argues that both the left and right side despite their differences stand united in the detestation against the ideas of racism and united in the conviction that all people share equal worth. Something he means that the Sweden Democrats do not stand for as he directly say: "We will never give power to the biggest damage makers of solidarity. Sweden Democrats is a racist party with roots from Nazism" (Löfven, 2014). Thereby, Stefan Löfven makes a clear and explicit expression for their perception of the Sweden Democrats: 'a racist party with roots in Nazism' and 'damage makers of solidarity'. There is also an implicit perception that they are fascists and oppressors. The Social Democrats intentions are to fight against the fascism and oppression, and by no circumstances they will never give any power to the Sweden Democrats. Further the Social Democrats was to fight for solidarity and equality which is values based on their own political identity. They also had the intention to unite the left and right in the fight against racism. He thereby emphasize that there is a moral conduct that goes beyond the right and left based politics. His ambition was achieved when the December agreement was initiated after the election. The December agreement unified the left and the right in the mission to maintain the Sweden Democrats excluded and isolated from having any political power and influence.

Instead of speaking about the Sweden Democrat or the far-right in a direct way is Fredrik Reinfeldt (M) turning to the audience to ask them about how they feel about people who are different and what kind of society they want to contribute. He ask:

- “What do we feel when a human is different?”
- “Do we feel that this person shall be as me and then all is well, or how exciting this person is not like me, it is a challenge, someone to learn to know?”
- “What kind of society do you want to contribute to: a society that breaks down the trust if you are not like me, because than you are them and then you are not us, or shall we be a society that says it is love, it is understanding and it is tolerance?”

(Reinfeldt, 2014)

By these questions it could be said that he describes the values they have, and this could be an implicit indication of what Sweden Democrats is not, and as it is an election year, he tries to influence people to vote for a party that does not resent differences in people and break down trust and divides them into us and them. He answer his own questions by emphasizing the answers within the questions. Rather than to contribute to a society of distrust and hostility against differences, the society should be including and based on love, understanding and tolerance. Thereafter he continue with the argument that contact between people is the most important, and he thereby encourage people to lend a hand and to see other people, in other words be kind, because that is what he sees to be the foundation for a peaceful development. He also make the imperative that ‘Everyone has a responsibility’, and that the responsibility is in the hand of the voters by making their choice to vote for a party that contribute to the society they want to be part of.

In this speech Reinfeldt only mention Sweden Democrats specifically in relation to Social Democrats and an ongoing competition between them regarding who can promise the biggest unfunded tax cuts. This can be perceived as the Moderates are both acknowledging and legitimizing the Sweden Democrats as a party like the rest. This could also be related to the previous research of Fyrklund and Saveljeff (2019) on how the Social Democrats to begin with was the party that lost most in relation to the far-rights presence, this in the form of voters’ support. Reasonably, it can be interpreted as an indication that Social Democrats lost voters to the Sweden Democrats because they compete in the same issue. Reinfeldt position himself and his party as

different from both Social Democrats and the Sweden Democrats, this by saying that the unfunded tax cut competition is something they will not participate in.

Annie Lööf (C) talks more about differences within the society where she highlight that the gap of inequality between bigger cities and small towns makes a difference between people and people, which she proclaim to breed xenophobia. She supports this claim by comparing the Stockholm suburb 'Täby' with the small town Kopparberg, where she relates the three time higher rate of unemployment, sick days and the three time less people to continue their studies after high school with the four time rate of voting for the far-right party Sweden Democrats. The only thing that can be accessed here is that Annie Lööf implies that Sweden Democrats is a xenophobic party that thrive on the inequalities within the society as it breeds xenophobia. She do not speak about how they ought to deal with their presence nor apply any direct own values, but by the comparison of big cities and small towns that has a gap filled with inequalities, one can make the assumption that their intentions are to close this gap and by doing so they will also prevent the Sweden Democrats from gaining more support. Thereby their own identified positioning is through equality.

Jan Björklund (L) talks about how they this year face a valuation election and he ask the audience: "Shall Sweden be a country for everyone or a country for elected few? Shall we accept that people are different, or shall we fight the differences? Shall we live in diversity or in plainness?" (Björklund, 2014) Thereafter he continues the speak to talk about the Sweden Democrats. This by talking about the opinions and values of their political leader, Jimmie Åkesson. How he is against immigrants and people seeking asylum in Sweden, as they only costs money. The Liberals on the other hand welcome and thanks the immigrants that contribute to the welfare of Sweden. "Liberals say yes to immigration, but no to racism" (Björklund, 2014). From here we understand that the Liberals subject position the Sweden Democrats as a uniform and racist party and themselves as an including, diverse and tolerant party as they accept people's differences and want to gather those whom the Sweden Democrats wants to split.

Jan Björklund continue by describing the Sweden Democrats, and the opinion and values of Jimmie Åkesson, as the complete opposites from their own as their intentions always contradicts, because Liberals break down the walls and open the doors the Sweden Democrats builds and closes. This by uniting people and say yes to immigration.

Table 3. Compilation of Mainstream parties' political discourse of the far-right in 2014

2014	Perception	Intention	Values
Social Democrats	A Racist Party A Party with Roots in Nazism Damage Makers of Solidarity Oppressors Fascists	Fight against oppression and fascism Fight for Solidarity Unify the left and right against racism Never give power to Sweden Democrats	Solidarity Equality
Moderates	A party that resent differences A party that divides, and breaks down trust A party competing with Social Democrats on tax cuts	To take responsibility and encourage a society with acceptance for differences.	Understanding Tolerance Kindness Openness
Center Party	A party that gain voters from differences that breeds xenophobia and inequality within the society	Prevent Sweden Democrats from gaining more electoral support by decreasing or close inequality gaps between bigger cities and small towns	Equality

Liberals	<p>An anti-immigrant Party.</p> <p>A uniform party</p> <p>A racist party</p> <p>A complete opposition</p> <p>A party that closes doors and builds walls.</p> <p>A party that wants to split people</p>	<p>Welcome and say yes to immigration</p> <p>Open doors and break down walls that Sweden Democrats closes and builds.</p> <p>To unite people</p>	<p>Tolerance</p> <p>Inclusion</p> <p>Diversity</p>

6.1.3 Almedalen 2018

Stefan Löfven (S) talks about a growing hate online and that extremism again try to mobilize. The growing hate comes from anonymous accounts but also from people with name and portraits, smiling into the camera. People who spits out the roughest and most humiliating they can come up with. These extremists comes from both the right and left, and he mention racists who attacks Muslim women, fundamentalists who attacks Christian refugees and Nazis who harass Jews. Even though Stefan Löfven does not explicit mention the Sweden Democrats it is implicit to the situation as he in the speech of 2014 set it straight that Sweden Democrats is a racist party with roots of Nazism. Nevertheless, in this speech he do not just speak about a far-right extremism but about a left one as well. Extremists who wins support on hateful online posts and conspiracy theories that spreads. He indicate implicitly that the far-left and the far-right, a.k.a. Sweden Democrats is an antidemocratic force that use the rights of the democracy to destroy it. Löfven urges that everyone must do their part now to strengthen the solidarity and to defend the democracy.

When he starts to speak explicitly about Sweden Democrats, he do so by calling them ‘hypocrites’ and ‘Swedish champions of problem formulations’ as they are a party that happily speaks about societal divisions. He also points out that they over and over again do everything they can to ignite the hatred online, this in order to create even bigger divisions. This at the same time as they try to be more moderate than the Moderate themselves by having a politics that would make it easier to fire people, lower the taxes so the one that earns the most earns thirteen times more than the ones who earns the least. This follows what Van Spanje & Van Der Brug (2007) found in their study when they tried to evaluate if political participation would make the far-right less radical and more moderate. Stefan Löfven, indicates that they try to be more moderate by adapting into a moderate politics, but highlight that they still remain to be radical, wherein they can create bigger gaps to talk about, so they have more injustices they can blame the minorities for. A better hotbed for them to ignite hatred. Stefan Löfven say, that it is just not hypocrisy but cynical as well (Löfven, 2018). Löfven thereby makes clear about the perception they have on the far-right party: An anti-democratic force that is hypocritical and cynical, and thrives on hatred and societal divisions, to make problem formulations and point out minorities as scapegoats.

In this speech he do however not make any explicit statements about what intentions they have and what own values they have in relation to the far-right more than that they will strengthen the solidarity and defend the democracy, which becomes very open and general concepts. When he express values’, he do so by making an imperative to the audience where he tells them to choose which side of history they want to stand. He urge them to make their decision, to take responsibility and choose to stand on the right side of history, which means that there is a right side and a wrong side. He Do not stretch out to define what he means by this, but he give the audience a mental picture of how they in the future can look back and say this to their grandchildren; “in a time of polarization and extremism, I stood up for solidarity and democracy to leave you a stronger society to you whom I love”. We did it together. We stayed together.” (Löfven, 2018) So here we have the intention of building a stronger society that keeps together in a united front against polarization and extremism. That he also mentioned polarization as wrong could be a reference to the Moderates closer positions to the Sweden Democrats as he said that the Sweden Democrats now are trying to be more moderate than the Moderates themselves. Thereby, he indicates that the only right is to vote for a party that would not contribute to a polarized effect.

Ulf Kristersson (M) speaks only about Sweden Democrats in relation to the issue of governmental formation and pragmatic politics. He point out first that the issue of governmental formation for him is rather simple, as a Moderate he will not participate to a continued ruling by Social Democrats after the next coming election, which is barely two months away from when this speech was held. His goal is to form a new Swedish government with the Alliance but realizes that it most probable would be as a minority government. A minority government that would neither rule nor make government negotiations with Sweden Democrats. He say that;” Even if no political party is flawless, and that it within all parties can happen things and that someone say something rubbish, there is no other party that say so many and often horrible things as the Sweden Democrats” (Kristersson, 2018).

He continue the speech by talking about how he can understand the reason why Sweden Democrats have grown in party size, as they for a while where the only party that discussed and engaged in migration issues. He however point out that even though the Sweden Democrats has highlighted migration issues, they are far from having answers to the questions as they want to break the international conventions by closing borders. He then proclaim that the Sweden Democrats underestimate the real problems in Sweden when they connect all the problems to migration. Problems that has existed in Sweden for a long time and need to be resolved regardless of migration. Kristersson highlights that, solving the integration issue is to resolve the migration issue. He thereafter urges that from now on it is of importance for Sweden to focus on integrating those people that has come to Sweden. In order to do so, he emphasizes that there is a need for a long-term and block-crossing collaborative agreement, in order to generate a civilized Swedish migration politics (Kristersson, 2018). This correlates to the previous research of how mainstream parties adapt to the political issue of the far-right in order to maintain them excluded from political power and influence, which is shown to be the intention as Kristersson argue for block-crossing collaborations in the matter. He also makes his case through other political challenges such as market competitions, globalization, digitalization and the climate threat, from where he argue that Sweden Democrats are not fit for government. This as a government has to be able to do multiple things at the same time, which Sweden Democrats cannot because they have limit themselves to the issue of migration, and because their politics is not coherent. He say that Sweden Democrats

is a contribution party that would like to pay people to not work, that they are against the collaboration Sweden has with NATO and that they acknowledge leaders that are questioning democratic foundation, and that they want to leave EU (Kristersson, 2018). By this it is clear that the intention is to maintain the Sweden Democrats isolated and excluded, and at the same time form a new government with the collaborate partners of the Alliance. The same concept as the December agreement would apply, but in reverse. That is to say, instead of them supporting Red-Green government the Red-Green are supposed to support an Alliance government and still maintain the Sweden Democrats away from political power through cross-block collaborations. That seems to be the only option for them to remain the moral consensus strategy intact.

Annie Lööf talks about how a cold wind is sweeping through Sweden, Europe and all over the western world. A wind that challenges the successful liberal values, a wind that questions and do not respect people's values, and a wind that changes the societal climate with an open and flourishing hatred. She gives different example of this. The first example was about the Swedish soccer player Jimmy Durmaz. He got an exceptionally high rate of hatred after missing a penalty shot at the world championship, a hate that barely knew any boundaries, she said (Lööf, 2018). The second example was about the Jewish community and how they constantly live in fear for attacks. She described how they put up bomb protection and bulletproof glass at Synagogues and have security guards and barbered wires around schools for safety. As an example she brought up a physical attack directed towards a group of Jewish youths who had a party, where Molotov cocktails (bottles with ignited flammable liquid) was thrown in through the windows in the resident where the party was held. She said that these two are different examples of how xenophobic forces are spreading worries, fear and doubts in the society (Lööf, 2018). Even though Annie Lööf never mention nor speak about the far-right and Sweden Democrats explicitly in relation to this hate and these events, there is an underlying presumption that Sweden Democrats is a part of it. Because when she turns to speak about the coming election, she say that the Center Party will never negotiate with parties that do not stand up for all peoples equal worth and rights. They will therefore never negotiate with the Sweden Democrats. She make the imperative that it is of importance to stand steady in the fight against xenophobia and dangerous nationalism and to stand up for compassion and humanism (Lööf, 2018). The perception of Sweden Democrats is thereby

utterly clear. They are a nationalistic and xenophobic party who challenges liberal values and are against all peoples equal worth and rights.

She say that this autumns election is an election of value, and that they stand before a cross-road to choose what kind of country Sweden ought to be (Lööf, 2018). The Center Party wants to form government with the Alliance but reminds the audience that it serious now and that passivity no longer can be an option. To prevent Sweden from belonging to the haters they need to take a stand, and she persuade that in a though political situation it is a need for responsible political leaders that takes responsibility for the election results, who can see the values in collaborations and compromises (Lööf, 2018). By this the Center party's intention is clear; if possible, they will form government with the Alliance but if that is not possible without the support or collaborations with the Sweden Democrats then their intention is to find other solutions through collaborations and compromises. However, what is not clear here is with whom these collaborations and compromises will be with.

When Jan Björklund (L) bring up the issue of governmental formation he begins to talk about how the latest days has not been the best for the Alliance, this as a discussion about how to relate to the Sweden Democrats has surfaced. He first make clear that the Liberals position is primary to work for an Alliance government with stronger Liberals, but they will not, under any circumstances, negotiate nor compromise with Sweden Democrats because of their ideological differences. When Björklund speaks about Sweden Democrats, he do so interchangeably between referring to the political party itself and their political party leader, Jimmy Åkesson. He say that the Sweden Democrats has appointed the Liberals as their nemesis. This as Åkesson had announced that his ideology of nationalism is the greatest opposition to liberalism (Björklund, 2018). Even though Björklund say that this is the words of Åkesson, it is clear that he share the same idea because he remain to have a comparative approach where he make contrasts between what the Liberals and the Sweden Democrats stand for, which is the complete opposite. He contrast how their thoughts about people are the opposites; as liberals they believe that where you are going is more important than where you come from; while nationalist believe it is more important where you come from than where you are going. He add that this is the reason why nationalists spend so much time to think about how to label humans to know what collective they belong to, in order to make decisions

about whom are Swedish and whom are not. Nationalists build walls while Liberals build bridges. The Liberals want to expand and elaborate the international cooperation at global and European level, while Sweden Democrats wants to end it as they publicly have demanded a ‘Swexit’ to make a secession from European Union. This lead from the Sweden Democrats is something that Björklund takes very seriously, as he evaluate EU as an important instance for peace and freedom. He urges Åkesson to go home to read history, which will show him that it is the liberal Europe that has created the most successful societies while the nationalistic Europe has led to history’s greatest catastrophes. Therethrough, he assign that the future is not built on narrow-minded nationalism but on liberal progressive optimism (Björklund, 2018).

Table 4. Compilation of Mainstream parties’ political discourse of the far-right in 2018

2018	Perception	Intention	Values
Social Democrats	<p>A Party that is champions in problem formulations</p> <p>An anti-democratic force that ignites hatred online and creates societal divisions</p> <p>A party that tries to be more moderate than the Moderates</p> <p>A party that blames minorities</p> <p>A party that is hypocritical and cynical</p>	<p>Strengthen the solidarity.</p> <p>Defend the democracy</p> <p>Build a stronger society</p>	<p>Societal solidarity</p> <p>Democracy protection</p> <p>Be on the right side of history</p>
Moderates	An extremely flawed party	Form a new Swedish government without ruling nor negotiate	Governmental formation and power

	<p>A party that won support by being the only party engaged in migration issue</p> <p>A party with lack of political coherencies and political solutions</p> <p>A party that seeks to break international conventions</p> <p>A party that connects all societal problems to migration</p> <p>A party that do not fit in governments</p>	<p>with Sweden Democrats</p> <p>To make integration of importance to resolve the migration issue</p> <p>Long-term cross-block collaborations to generate collaborative agreements on the issue of migration</p>	<p>Alliance</p> <p>Civilized migration</p>
Center Party	<p>A force that challenge liberal values</p> <p>A party that are against all peoples equal worth and rights</p> <p>A party with xenophobia and dangerous nationalism</p>	<p>Stand up against the hate</p> <p>To never negotiate with the Sweden Democrats</p> <p>To fight against xenophobia and dangerous nationalism</p> <p>To take responsibility for the election result through collaborations and compromises</p>	<p>Liberalism</p> <p>Compassion</p> <p>Humanism</p>
Liberals	<p>Liberal's greatest opposite</p> <p>A party with a narrow-minded nationalism that build walls</p>	<p>Primary work for an Alliance government with a stronger liberal position</p>	<p>Liberalism</p> <p>International cooperation</p> <p>Peace and Freedom</p>

	<p>A party against international cooperatives</p> <p>A party that labels and categorize people based on their origins</p>	<p>Not negotiate nor compromise with the Sweden Democrats</p> <p>Build the future with a liberal progressive optimism</p> <p>Build bridges</p>	<p>Pathway is more important than origins</p>
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6.1.4 Almedalen 2021

Lena Rådström Baastad (S), does not go into speak about neither the far-right nor the Sweden Democrats specifically. The only thing she brings up in the matter is how the political situation in Sweden, due to lack of disagreements, has led to the establishment of a right-conservative side. Not only just the formation of a conservative-right, but the most right-conservative side since the establishment of democracy in Sweden (Rådström Baastad, 2021). This is a result of the failure of political representatives to get along and collaborate in order to reach agreements. She declare that all of them share the same view of which societal problem there is and the need for solutions to resolve them. What prevents them from reaching agreements is their perceptions of how and in which ways. She remark that it is of importance to reconcile which parties that will make agreements to take the country forward (Rådström Baastad, 2021) . Even though she do not mention the Sweden Democrats it is implicit to the situation that they are the party they foremost mean, it could however also apply to the left party as they were left out from both December agreement and the January deal. Both outer edge parties had to be left out in order to enable those agreements, but it does not say anything about the possible collaborations and negotiations the Social Democrats could make with the left, especially as the January deal was depending on their support.

She continue to talk about how she can understand that there is many in the country now thinking that it is strange that their politicians, who are represented with the outer most responsibility, cannot get along and do what they are supposed to do. That they instead choose to throw the country out in a political mess and clutter. Even if she does not refer to any specific event here it is most likely to be about the Left Party’s motion of distrust against the prime minister, Stefan Löfven and the dismissal of his entire cabinet at the Riksdag. She continue the speech by saying

how some parties continuously argues about who are supposed to have the power rather than together deal with the issues. How the right-conservatives have blamed them for wanting power just for the sake of power. Her answer to this is that the Social Democrats do it to change and make improvements for regular people and that's the reason why they are prepared to rule the country. She also declare that they are in the need of the voters' support in every election to do so because without their support they cannot fulfill their goals. Their goals to build a more just, equal, stronger and solidarity Sweden, which she say would be much more achievable with them in power than with a right conservative government (Rådström Baastad, 2021).

The perception of the Sweden Democrats became vague in this speech and is only implicit applied as a party one do not collaborate nor negotiate with. The focus in this speech when it relates to the far-right became in a package of talking about right-conservatives rather than a far-right. This indicates and confirm that there is a tainted coalition going on where the strategy of Cordon Sanitaire is being replaced with a strategy of a far-right inclusion. There is only these two strategies two choose from as argued by Riera & Pastor (2021), and the political situation with a right-conservative block would prove that the perspective of a moral consensus has changed for parties on the right side of the political spectrum. Rådström Baastad make it clear that the intentions of the Social Democrats is to keep making collaborations with parties they see fit to bring Sweden forward. With bringing Sweden forward she mean to create a more just, equal, stronger and solidarity Sweden by making improvements for regular people. To be more just, equal, stronger and solidary is also how they valuate themselves as it is mentioned in relation to the right-conservatives in how they would be greater in achieving these goals. Nevertheless, to be able to achieve these goals it is clear that political power is needed and thereby their intention is to seek this power foremost by the support from voters.

Ulf Kristersson (M) speak about how his Sweden is an equal country with a progressive spirit and a unique trust. A country where it is more important where you are going than where you come from (Kristersson, 2021), which is the liberal perspective on humans as mentioned by the liberal party leader Jan Björklund years before. The difference is that Kristersson do not mention this in relation to the Sweden Democrats as Björklund did. Instead of continuing on this thread is

Kristersson turning to speak about the political situation and how the dismissal of the Red-Green government was an unavoidable event. This because of Social Democrats incompatible promises both to the Center Party and Left party, and the prohibition of preventing parties to speak with each other (Kristersson, 2021). This last sentence he does not specifically mention the exclusion of the far-right party Sweden Democrats and is thereby a general statement that refer to the exclusion of any of the outer edge parties. Even though his party was a part of this line of direction it is clear that it now is another direction in focus. It is evident when he continues the speak by saying; “a country cannot be ruled by ultimatums or who is allowed to talk to whom. The exclusion of the outer edge parties is at this time to exclude 25 to 30 percent of voters from having influence over the Swedish politics” (Kristersson, 2021), which Kristersson remark as generating mistrust and polarization.

That it generate mistrust can be associated with how the exclusion of outer edge parties has only made them stronger, which was a theoretical argued consequence that Riera & Pastor (2021) foresaw. The polarization he speaks about seem to be about how the Swedish politics has been separated into two incompatible perceptions. The first perception is about isolating parties, writing unstainable agreements and trade away own policies. The second about giving honest problem descriptions, factual policies and cooperation. He does however not mention this polarization in specific terms of a red-green center coalition against a right-conservative coalition, but it is nevertheless implicit to the situation as he criticize the Center party’s continued support of a Red-Green government, which he calls a political delusion that has caused action paralysis and political deadlocks in a time where political solutions and action power is needed (Kristersson, 2021). He makes it clear that he wants to take Sweden in a new direction. This by forming a government that can prioritize what is really important and let other things wait, but despite a majority support of a moderate and bourgeoisie politics within the parliament, a power shift is not possible due to the Center party’s decision to rather support a Red-Green government. He thereby turn to the audience and state that it is in their hands. If they want a new direction for Sweden and a governmental shift, then it is of importance to vote for a party that actually stands for it. A vote for the Center Party can no longer account for it as they, nowadays, are a vote for a social democratic government. A vote for the Moderates is however a guaranteed vote for a power shift, and he argue that “a successful government must be built on who you are not what you are opposed to”. With that said, Kristersson urge that Sweden is in need of a new government, a government that can talk to

everyone and compromise in questions where one share the same line of direction (Kristersson, 2021) With this last sentence it is evident that the isolation of the Sweden Democrats is broken and that a tainted coalition is possible, but he is very thorough with the limitation to say it only regards for issues where they have similar perceptions and line of directions. The main intention for the Moderates is however to make a power shift and form a new government. The values he foremost apply is to be true to oneself, but also to make progression and maintain equality and trust.

Annie Lööf (C) talks about how liberal values such as openness and tolerance in liberal democracies are threaten by enemies who advance and expand their positions in various places, such as in Hungary. She continue to talk about how Swedish democratic institutions also are vulnerable against these forces. She explain that, even though Sweden is considered to be a strong democracy with people prepared to fight for it every day, it is relatively easy to make changes in Swedish fundamental laws. She also mention that there is a lack of protection to safeguard the independence of courts and tribunals, and that Sweden still do not have a constitutional court. Therefore she urge the importance of speaking clearly about those forces that threatens the liberal values and she say:

“Sweden’s third biggest party, Sweden Democrats, is a such force. They themselves say, completely openly, that they are opponents of the Liberal model of society ” (Lööf, 2021).

She continues to talk about the Sweden Democrats and how they give themselves the right to decide who fits into Sweden and who does not. That they divide people into various groups and place them against each other, which generate mistrust and fear that feeds xenophobia, racism and intolerance. She also say that they are questioning the independence of public service and criticize the free research. She also mentioned how their secretary has condemned the Swedish Muslims by describing their religion, Islam, as despicable (Lööf, 2021). The perception they have on the Sweden Democrats thereby remain clear: They are a party that spread fear and mistrust. A party that divides people and breed xenophobia, racism and intolerance. They are an opposition and a threat against liberal and democratic values. Due to this perception of the Sweden Democrats she urge that there can be no cooperation nor compromission with such a party. The Center party will

neither cooperate nor support a government that gives Sweden Democrats vital influence over their politics, and she laments that all the other parties from the Alliance have abandoned this promise and now are prepared to both budget negotiate and rule together with the Sweden Democrats. Here the indication is that Moderates, Christian Democrats as well as the Liberals is open to break the isolation of Sweden Democrats.

“An equal, tolerant and including Sweden is a better Sweden” (Löf, 2021).

Therefore will the Center party continue to fight for a strong center collaboration as they believe that a center collaboration is the responsible choice, and the way to go to strengthen and protect the institutions that defend individual and human rights, free media, a law-abiding and open society. Löf criticizes both the Social Democrats and the Moderates for lacking this vision and blames them for leaving the political development in the hands of the outer edge parties. Not only is the Center party refusing to support a government that negotiates with the Sweden Democrats, but with the Left Party as well (Löf, 2021).

The Center party's intention are thereby also well expressed for: to protect the liberal society, work for collaborations and compromises in a center coalition, and refuse a government that does not apply to this vision. The refusal to support any government that collaborates and negotiates with an outer edge party positions the center party as the median legislator, where they access the power of balance. Their role thereby becomes significant to coalition formations as a government formation from either side would depend on their support. By working solely for a center coalition they can secure their own position to be invited and included in governmental collaborations as argued by Bourne (2018). The Center party thereby has an utter significance when it comes to coalition formation as their central position constitutes which side can get majority, and as they will not support any side that collaborates with an outer edge party deadlocks and action paralysis will continue to be a common issue, as argued by Kristersson. This unless collaborations and compromises occur in a center coalition where a responsible, liberal, equal, tolerant and including politics can be performed in standards of the Center party's vision.

“It is not possible to pretend that the edge parties do not exist. That would be to reject almost thirty percent of the voters that voted either on Sweden Democrats or the Left party” (Sabuni, 2021) This is the only time where Nyamko Sabuni (L) mention the Sweden Democrats explicitly. She brings up how the strategy of isolating these parties rather have strengthen them than weakened them, and she urge that all parties should correspond to the reality as it is. The consequence of the moral consensus strategy, Cordon Sanitaire, as argued by Riera and Pastor (2021) is factual evident. This new reality becomes a perception for how they will perceive possible coalition formation. From this new reality perspective, their perception of the Sweden Democrats is that it is a party that has grown stronger due to the isolation and a party that no longer can be neglected due to the size of their electoral support.

This new perspective was brought about in relation to the Left party’s realization of their threat to file the motion of distrust against the Swedish social democratic prime minister, Stefan Löfven. The Liberals decided then to vote for the dismissal of Stefan Löfven and his cabinet, and in relation to this they also left and cancelled the January deal. This as they no longer could continue the collaboration with the January parties and let Stefan Löfven continue to rule through the January deal. Their line of direction to move forward from there, is to work for a Liberal bourgeois government. This as they believe that a bourgeois government with a strong Liberal is what’s best for Sweden, which she defines as a governmental coalition of the former Alliance party. An Alliance wherein they “share ideological affiliation regarding individual freedom, market economy, the possibility for small business to grow to generate more jobs – the idea that the individual is greater than the state” (Sabuni 2021). No matter if this collaboration is possible or not before or after the election in 2022 will the Liberals stay to work for the belonging of a bourgeois government. Due to this new perspective are the Liberals prepared to talk with everyone in Riksdagen in their political work. Nevertheless, they will never let liberal ideas stand back and let xenophobic populism through. They will always take the fight for a society where everyone will have equal possibilities, rights and obligations (Sabuni, 2021).

It is clear that the Liberals do not seek to collaborate nor negotiate with the far-right as their intention is to form a bourgeoisie government with a strong Liberals through a collaboration with the former Alliance parties. It is also clear that the perception of the Sweden Democrats is that

they still generate populist and xenophobic ideas, and this has to be prevented. The only reason why they seem open-up for political conversation with the Sweden Democrats is in the purpose of gaining their passive support to form a liberal bourgeois government.

Table 5. Compilation of Mainstream parties' political discourse of the far-right in 2021

2021	Perception	Intention	Values
Social Democrats	A party that should be excluded and prevented from political power and influence	Seek power by the support from voters Represent regular people Make agreements with parties that can take the country forward	Equitability Equality Stronger Solidarity
Moderates	A party that should not be excluded due to their electoral support	To open up for talks with any peoples elected parties To take Swedish politics into a new direction To talk and compromise with anyone that share the same line and direction in specific issues To make a power shift by winning parliamentary majority	Equality Progression Trust Self-identity
Center Party	A party that spreads fear and mistrust	Protect the liberal society by remain the	Liberalism

	<p>A party that divides, and breeds xenophobia, racism and intolerance</p> <p>A party that is an opposition and a threat against liberal and democratic values</p>	<p>far-right excluded by continue to find collaborations and compromises with other parties in a center coalition</p> <p>Not support nor cooperate with a government that gives any political influence to the outer edge parties</p>	<p>Equality</p> <p>Tolerance</p> <p>Inclusion</p> <p>Responsibility</p>
Liberals	<p>A party that no longer can be neglected due to their electoral support</p> <p>A party that has grown stronger due to the isolation</p> <p>A populist and xenophobic party</p>	<p>To work for a bourgeois government and no longer support nor continue a center collaboration</p> <p>Seek collaboration with Alliance parties</p> <p>Talk to all parties within the Riksdag in their purse of bourgeois politics</p> <p>To continue to stand up against xenophobic populism</p>	<p>Reality</p> <p>Bourgeois</p> <p>Individualism</p> <p>Equality</p>

6.2 Mainstream parties’ political discourse and strategies and how it has changed over time

In the political discourse 2014 it is not clear that all four parties share the same line of direction when it comes to deal with the far-rights presence. The likely reason for this is that the speeches are held before the election and thereby it is not yet known that the far-right party has an increasingly support. While Moderates and the Center party have a modest approach almost

neglecting their existence, are Social Democrats and Liberal harsh in their perception about the far-right and how they will relate to them.

The Social Democrats makes it clear that they will exclude the Sweden Democrats from political power and do so by uniting the left and right, as they are a racist party with roots of Nazism, damage makers of solidarity, oppressors and fascists. The Liberals are not explicitly saying that they will exclude the Sweden Democrats but make clear that they will do everything in opposite from the Sweden Democrats, in other words, work against them. This as their perception of Sweden Democrats is as a complete opposition to liberalism. While Sweden Democrats are a racist party that stands for uniformity, anti-immigration and divisions are they a party that stands for tolerance, diversity and inclusion.

The Moderates gave the impression that the Sweden Democrats are a party like the others as Reinfeldt spoke about them in relation to the tax competition that goes on between them and the Social Democrats. He just later adds that they also are a party that breaks down trust. How they intend to deal with their precens is not clear as he only say that their intention is to take responsibility and encourage a society with acceptance for diffences, but what he means by it he do not really get into talk about. The Center Party is also very vague in their perception as she only speaks about the Sweden Democrats in relation to how they gain support from differences that generates inequalities and xenophobia. Their intention is to prevent Sweden Democrats by focus on solving the issues that leads people to vote for them. In the speech 2018, the Center party becomes much clearer about their perception of the Sweden Democrats. They call them out to be a force consisting in a dangerous nationalism and xenophobic attitude that challenge liberal values and all people's equal rights and values. For this very reason they will take responsibility by making collaborations and compromises that remain the Sweden Democrats excluded. They are very clear with the fact that they will never negotiate with the Sweden Democrats, because they valuate liberalism, compassion and humanism. Their perception and intentions regarding the far-right do not change nor become weakened, rather the opposite as their political discourse over the years become harsher. In the speech 2021, the Center party calls them out to not just be a liberal threat but a democratic one as well, as they spread fear and mistrust, and breeds xenophobia, racism and intolerance. Their intention is therefore to maintain the Sweden Democrats exclude by continue to find collaborations and compromises in a centre coalition. They also make very clear

that a centre collaboration is the only option as they don't intend to support nor cooperate with a government that let any of the outer edge parties to have political influence.

The Social Democrats like the Center party do not change the perception nor intentions when it comes to the far-right. The Social Democrats is however going from a harsh political discourse in the speech of 2014 and 2018 to almost neglecting the subject in 2021. They went from calling the far-right racists with Nazi roots, oppressors, damage makers, fascists in the 2014 speech. To call them an anti-democratic force, champions of problem formulations, hypocrites and cynics who tries to be more moderate than the Moderates, but still continue to blame minorities for everything, in the speech of 2018. To only give expression for their perception of Sweden Democrats as a party that should be prevented from political power and influence in the speech of 2021. Their following expression for their intentions also becomes vaguer than before. This as they only hint about making agreements with parties that can take the country forward, but do not give any clarity for which parties that would be. Nevertheless, it is explicit to the situation that they still will not let the Sweden Democrats out from isolation if they have the power to decide for it. Their main focus now therefore is to seek power through the support of voters, and to represent regular people through values of equitability, equality and solidarity.

Moderates and Liberals have had a significant change about the far-right when it comes to their intentions of how to deal with their presence. This leap becomes evident between the speeches of 2018 and 2021, wherein their perception of the far-right also became expressed more vaguely, especially by the Moderates. The Liberals did however to continue be clear about their perception of the Sweden Democrats as a populist and xenophobic party.

Moderates, as already mentioned, started with a laid back approach about the far-right as they barley even mentioned them. They only highlighted that their intentions are to encourage for a responsible society with an acceptance for differences, and that this is in the hands of the voters. Reinfeldt do, however, implicitly express that the Sweden Democrats is a party that breaks down trusts. An another remark he makes is that Sweden Democrats is having a tax cut competition with the Social Democrats, which then portrays the Sweden Democrats as any other party. This lay back approach change drastically in the speech of 2018 wherein their perception of the Sweden Democrats not only gets clearer but also harsher. Then the perception of the Sweden Democrats turns to be as an extremely flawed party that lacks political coherency and political solutions, a

party who is not fit for government as they pinpoint all societal problems to the issue of migration and because they seek to break international convention. The Moderates do however express an understanding for why Sweden Democrats have gained more electoral support, as they for some time was the only party engaged with migration issues. Due to these perceptions they also have clear intentions to remain the Sweden Democrats excluded and isolated. This by adapting to their core politics of migration issues to resolve the integration problem which they emphasize only can be done by long-term cross-block collaborations. In the 2021 speech it no longer clear how they actually perceive the Sweden Democrats as they only mention that they no longer should be excluded to their electoral support, and what we know from after the election of 2018 is that the Sweden Democrats was almost equally big in party size as the Moderates. The Moderates want to take Sweden into a new political direction by forming a Moderate led government and by talk and compromises with any peoples elected party that share the same line of direction in specific issues. They do however not say anything of how they actually will relate to the Sweden Democrats in governmental formation, coalitions and collaborations. They merely emphasize their own political agendas of being able to generate values of equality, trust and progress for Sweden, and that they will find ways for it by talking and compromise with any peoples elected party that see the same line of directions. This can be interpreted as they possibly can include the Sweden Democrats, but that it is not necessarily that they will. It is left like an open question.

The Liberals do however not leave it to be an open question for which parties they intend to collaborate and form government and coalitions with. Even if the Liberals have gone from having a harsh political discourse about the Sweden Democrats to a more moderate approach, their intentions to collaborate and negotiate with the Sweden Democrats remains the same. The only thing that has changed for the Liberals regarding the Sweden Democrats is that they now would accept to talk with them to access a passive support to enable an Alliance formed government, coalition and collaboration, in order to pursue bourgeois politics. This as they now acknowledge that the strategy to exclude and isolate them has just made them stronger and that the reality is that their electoral support now is too big to keep neglecting them.

The growing far-rights presence has over time changed how some of the mainstream parties relates to them in their perceptions and intentions, which has generated the outcome of political fragmentation. The best explanation to the political fragmentation is not based as much on the

perception they have of the Sweden Democrats as of their intentions to deal with their presence. Even though the political discourse about the far-right becomes more vaguely both by Moderates and Liberals in 2021, there is no explicit empirical evidence for any of them to have changed their perception of the far-right and what kind of party they believe they are. The Social Democrats also becomes vague about their perception and intentions, but still remain on the path of keeping them completely excluded from political power and influence if they possibly can. The Center party is the only party that remains clear about their perception and intentions even if they were vague about it in 2014, but to not give them much space and attention in the beginning could considerably to be equally clear about the Center Party's intention to not be involved nor interact with them.

6.3 How an isolated party can influence and leave imprints on the political situation

From mainstream parties' political discourse we find that the far-right is always more or less present as the parties give expression for their perception, intentions and values about them and themselves in relation to them. Through this we can see how a growing far-right has gained a lot of attention and space, even if it most of the time has been in the light of being something bad. This could be considered a partial failure in the Cordon Sanitaire strategy, as Riera & Pastor (2021) highlighted that this strategy was about more than just to prevent the far-right from assessing political power and influence, it was also about denying them any legitimacy and visibility. This means that the influence the far-right got and enabled them to leave imprints on the political situation was by their visibility. The Moderates and the Center Party had an almost dismissive approach in their speeches back in 2014 and the Social Democrats started to dismiss them first in the speech 2021. If all mainstream parties had a unified approach to deny the Sweden Democrats visibility too, it is possible that the political situation in Sweden would have turned out differently and left the Sweden Democrats without any influence to leave imprints on the political situation through their actions of working around them.

Their visibility in the political discourse shows that the theory of Chantal Mouffe (Martin, 2013), that the presence of the far-right have made the politics enter a new phase where mainstream parties build politics on consensus around a centre, where morality becomes the legitimacy for political action, is something that applies to how the political situation has been formed in Sweden. Through 2014 up to 2018 has politics been built on a centre coalition because it has been considered wrong

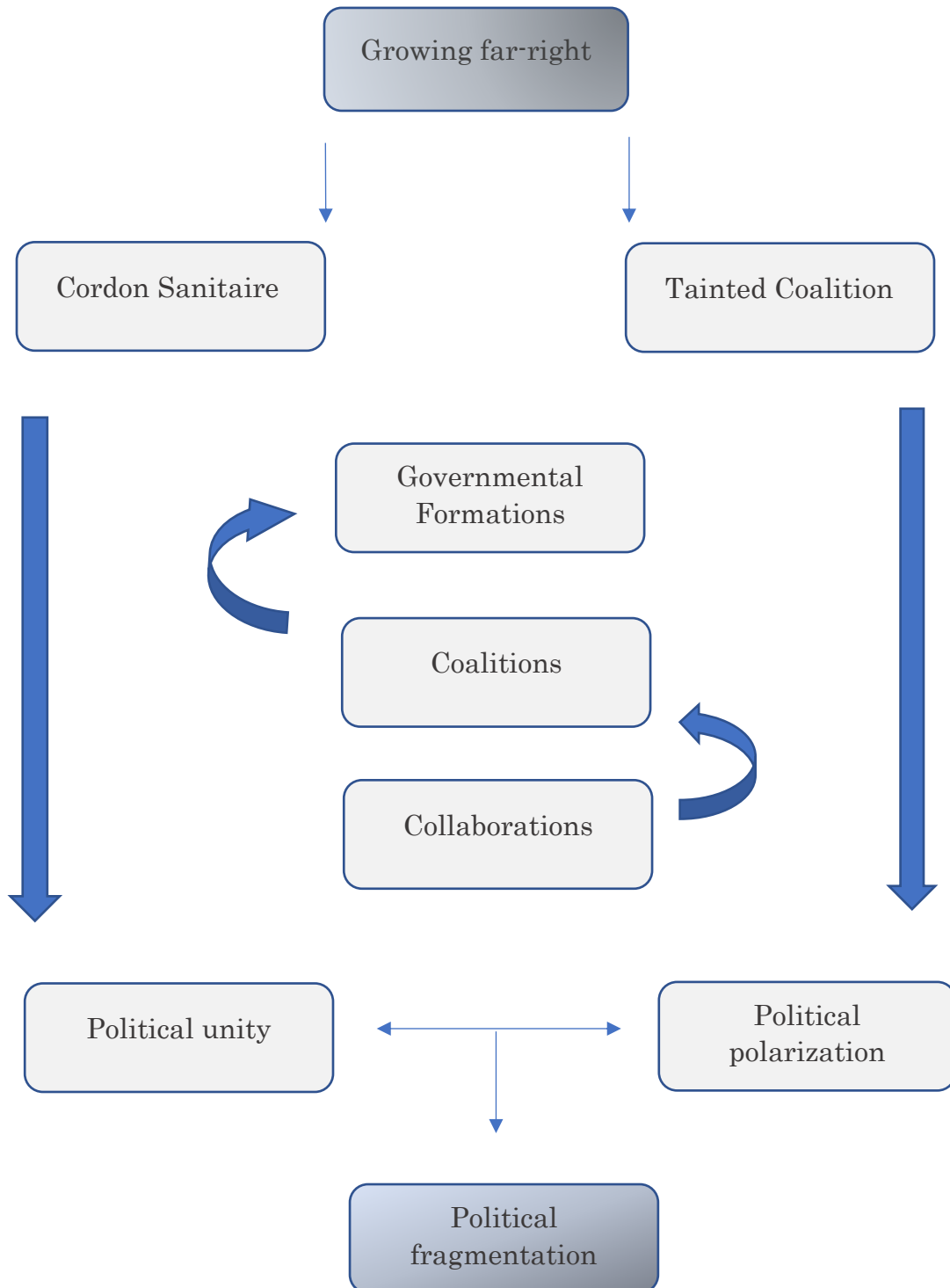
to include the Sweden Democrats, as they are perceived as threat against solidarity, liberalism and democracy. That morality becomes the legitimacy for political actions could be evident through the criticize that a centre coalition requires own politics to be negotiated and traded for. Arguably, not a sustainable way to conduct politics. This criticism however came from the opposition to the Red-Green government, and the question is if this criticism would remain if the opposition had the governmental power? Either way, this criticism was the turning point for the Moderates as they rather wanted to be true to themselves and their own political identity, and if that required changing strategy from a Cordon Sanitaire to a tainted coalition with the far-right, they would be willing to do so. This came after the 2018 election, when it became known that the Sweden Democrats had grown even bigger and was almost equally big as the Moderates in Party size. Before the election, the evidence points towards a centre coalition even for the Moderates as they would not form government nor negotiate with the Sweden Democrats. They also emphasized cross-block collaborations, but they only mentioned that in relation to the specific issue of migration. This shows that they have an adaptive strategy as they will not let the Sweden Democrats to participate in finding solutions for their core issue.

The Liberals also began to shift towards the same perspective as the Moderates regarding to be true to oneself and own political identity. This became evident after the Left party filed the motion of distrust against the prime-minister, wherein the Liberals voted for the dismissal of the Red-Green government and thereby left the January deal. The Liberals like the Moderates opened up for the possibility for a tainted coalition with the Sweden Democrats but to a lesser extent than the Moderates, as their willingness to do so only goes for a passive support from them while Moderates can collaborate with them in issues where they share the same points of view.

The far-right party's growth has thereby evidently changed some of the other parties' strategies on how they will deal with them. There are only two main strategies to deal with a present and growing far-right which is either to form tainted coalitions with them or isolate them. The model below will show how a growing far-right leaves and imprint on the political situation through mainstream parties' choices of strategies to deal with their presence, where a straight through Cordon Sanitaire strategy would lead to the outcome of political unity. A straight through strategy of tainted coalition, meaning that either side accept their presence and include them in political participation whether it is in the form of governmental formation, coalitions or collaborations, would lead to the

outcome of political polarization. The disunity to agree on a Cordon Sanitaire or a tainted coalitions where various parties goes in different directions, as in the case of the political situation in Sweden, leads to the outcome of political fragmentation.

Table 6. Model of possible political outcomes with a growing far-right



7. Final Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer how mainstream parties are fabricating the far-right in political discourse, how they give expression for their strategies of how to deal with the far-right's presence, and how this discourse has changed over time. This in order to find the best possible explanation for how an isolated party has been able to influence and leave imprints on the political situation to generate the specific outcome of political fragmentation. The short answer is that mainstream parties' perception, intentions and values about the far-right has shaped and formed the political field and generated a situation of a political fragmentation. It is through mainstream parties' political discourse and strategies that has let the growing far-right party, Sweden Democrats, to have influence over the political situation despite their isolation. This by making them visible and by constructing their own politics around them in order to maintain them isolated and excluded, wherein political deadlocks and political paralysis has become an issue as own politics are negotiated and traded for. This from a purpose of what is considered morally right to do.

The end result shows that there are three possible outcomes when dealing with the far-right: political fragmentation, political unity and political polarization. The conclusion is that political fragmentation occurs when mainstream parties are pulled in different directions regarding what strategies to use when they ought to deal with a growing far-right presence. From the case in Sweden we find that the process began in a political unity, but later shifted towards a political fragmentation, and is now pulling in the direction of political polarization at the same time as it pulls in the direction of finding a political unity in a centre. The former as the intentions of Moderates and Liberals regarding the far-right has changed, as a possible tainted coalition with the Sweden Democrats can be reality. Meaning that the far-right at least will be free from the isolation, and at best join a collaboration with the Moderates if and only if they share the same point of view. It pulls in the direction of a continued political unity as neither the Social Democrats nor the Center party will break the isolation and exclusion of the far-right party and thereby wants to see broad cross-block agreements. These two sides will generate the continuity of a political fragmentation as the Moderates will not support a Social Democratic government and from how the political situation looks now this means that there can be no majority for a centre coalition, especially now when Liberals share the same governmental perspective.

Political fragmentation might be the new norm in Sweden as Center Party now is the balance of power that refuses to support a government that let any of the outer edge parties to have political influence. Without the support from Center party will likely Social Democrats nor the Moderates be able to form a majority support in Riksdagen, and without a majority that pulls in a certain direction will prevent political polarization. Political unity to maintain the Sweden Democrats excluded and isolated can only occur if there is a power shift and if the Red-Green could accept, support and collaborate with a Moderate led government. This because neither the Moderates nor the Liberals will support a Red-Green government again. What is left and still remains is a political fragmentation. How and if the political situation in Sweden will change from political fragmentation to something else awaits to see after the election in September this year, 2022. In the end, the possibilities for mainstream parties to form government, coalitions and collaboration lies in the hands of the voters.

It might seem like this study comes off as self-evident and thereby be perceived as obvious and something that was already know, as it all ends up and comes back to the political fragmentation. This was however never the issue, and it is correct that this part is self-evident as this study based on the case that a growing far-right has generated an outcome of political fragmentation. What is new, is that I have brought attention to the process and clarified how this political fragmentation has occurred. This by making a discourse-pathway analysis where we find how mainstream parties' political discourse and strategies considered the growing far-rights presence have been expressed for. From this I was able to generate possible outcomes for various strategies and find the best explanation for the actual outcome of political fragmentation. This by analyzing how the political discourse and strategies by the mainstream parties had changed over time.

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