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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MEDIA AND THE VOLUME OF DEVELOPMENT AID

Empirical Evidence from Swedish Negative Media
Coverage on Development Aid during 2012 to 2019

Ismail Ben Farhat Bazine¹

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Abstract

Having independent institutions that make impartial decisions is a vital pillar of democratic societies. However, existing research claims that the media has an impact on the volumes of development aid. Although extensive research has been conducted on the relationship, there is a lack of studies that examine the topic out of a Swedish context. To examine the influence of negative media coverage on the development aid of Sweden is therefore relevant from a pro-democratic perspective as well as it enables an analytical generalization to other Western countries that are similar to Sweden. Consequently, this thesis examines how negative media coverage affects the volume, the partner and type of the Swedish development aid between 2012-2019. Thus, three separate regression analyzes were created to test whether negative media coverage affects the total and multilateral volume of development aid from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, to the recipient countries as well as whether Sida chooses to earmark its aid to the recipient countries after negative media coverage. The findings conclude that both the total and the multilateral development aid from Sida increases with negative media coverage. However, this thesis finds no empirical evidence that Sida is earmarking its aid after negative media coverage.

[Keywords: Development aid, Negative media coverage, Multilateral aid, Bilateral aid]

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1. Introduction

Freedom of the media has a special role and significance in democratic societies (Regeringen, 2018). The purpose of the Swedish development aid is to provide development assistance beyond the Swedish borders (Sida, 2019a). Since the media is regarded as a pillar of democracy, a thorough media coverage of the Swedish development aid can be considered to be of utmost importance. The media coverage of the Swedish development aid can thus be seen as essential for the Swedish taxpayers, especially as it informs them on whether their tax assets are well distributed or not.

The government of Sweden has a political goal to promote democratic values and opportunities for equal influence (Regeringen, 2018; Regeringen, 2019a). One can argue that the decision-making of the Swedish development aid should be impartial, unpolitical and acting according to the needs of the developing world. However, if media coverage affects the distribution and extent of the Swedish development aid, then one can also argue that the media has an unequal influence on the decision-making of the Swedish development aid. To examine the media's influence on the distribution of the development aid of Sweden is therefore relevant out of a non-scientific and pro-democratic perspective.

Scholars within the research field on the topic argue that media affects the distribution and the extent of the aid (Drury, Olson & Van Belle, 2005; Rioux & Van Belle, 2005; Joly, 2014). Thus, media can be described as having a knowledge-giving role to the society as well as it is described as a driving force that affects both the distribution and the extent of the development aid. However, there is a lack of studies that examine the topic out of a Swedish context.

With regard to the non-scientific and pro-democratic relevance of the thesis mentioned above as well as the scientific relevance, research gap and contribution of the essay discussed in the next sections below, this thesis will focus on whether Sida's development aid is affected by negative media exposure.

1.2 Development Aid of Sida

In this thesis, the Swedish development aid of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, will be used. Consequently, an account of important information concerning Sida is needed. Sida is a Swedish government agency that is responsible for the implementation of the Swedish development aid. However, Sida follows the directives of the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs. It is the Ministry for Foreign Affairs that sets the budget as well as the goals for the Swedish development aid that Sida later implements (OECD iLibrary, 2019). Nevertheless, Sida decides how to proceed in order to achieve the goals set by the Ministry for Foreign Affairs. Sida is thus also governed by strategies (Sida, 2019b).

Sida was governed by a total of 44 strategies in 2019. The strategies of Sida are divided into three categories: country-specific (27), regional (5) and thematic strategies (12). Strategy-driven operations refer to the operations that Sida carries out in order to achieve the goals set by the

Ministry for Foreign Affairs. The common aim of the 44 strategies is to achieve the overall goal within the 44 strategies Sida is governed by, namely to promote global development (Sida, 2019b).

In this thesis, both the overall aid and the multilateral aid of Sida will be addressed, as just over 40 per cent of the total Swedish development aid goes to multilateral organizations (Sida, 2019c). Multilateral development aid includes both core support for NGOs and multilateral organizations and earmarked support for specific initiatives through NGOs and multilateral organizations (EBA, 2015). Core support is support that goes to the budget of the NGO or the multilateral organization in its entirety, without being earmarked for a specific project. Organizations that receive core support have thus the mandate to decide how the funds are to be used themselves. Earmarked support is support that also goes to the budget of the receiving organizations but is intended for a specific project (Openaid, 2021). Bilateral development aid, on the other hand, refers to the support that goes directly from Sweden to the public institutions of another country (Sida, 2021a).

The Swedish bilateral aid and multilateral development aid are dissimilar in their effectiveness as well as they are characterized by different circumstances. Development aid that goes through multilateral organizations such as the UN is more effective than the Swedish bilateral aid. This is partly due to the fact that multilateral development aid entails less administrative costs (Sida, 2019c). Furthermore, multilateral organizations such as the UN are not subjected to Swedish law and are thereby not affected by the principle of the public access to official records (Regeringen, 2019b). The effectiveness of multilateral aid and its lack of transparency makes the multilateral aid particularly different compared to the bilateral aid (Sida, 2019c).

1.3 Disposition

After an introduction to the subject and to how Sida is managed, a review of previous research is conducted, describing the various viewpoints within the research field concerning media coverage and development aid. Then we will identify research gaps based on the existing research, and justify the importance of our study. Once we have done that, we will present our hypotheses that will guide the rest of the study. Variables to be used will consequently be explained and we will present a comprehensive review of how the study was conducted. Finally, we will present our results and our conclusions.

2. Theory and Previous Research

The theoretical framework of this thesis bases its foundation on the studies of Drury et al. (2005), Rioux and Van Belle (2005) and Joly (2014) and their work on the US, France and Belgium. Below follows an account of the studies' scientific relevance to this thesis.

The study of Drury et al. (2005) focuses on US humanitarian development aid during the period of 1964-1995. According to Drury et al. (2005), the more media attention a humanitarian crisis gets, the more likely it is that the crisis will receive US aid. Drury et al. (2005) also argue that the degree

of media exposure is in line with the amount of aid the crisis will receive. Thus, American aid is distributed in a more generous manner to humanitarian crises with a great amount of media coverage.

Drury et al. (2005) exemplifies their theory with the differences in the amount of US aid received in the humanitarian crisis of Ethiopia 1985 compared to the similar crisis in Botswana 1986. The drought in Ethiopia 1985 received major media attention unlike the drought in Botswana a year later. Hence, Ethiopia received \$ 31 per affected individual while Botswana only received \$ 3 per affected individual.

Rioux and Van Belle (2005) confirm, like Drury et al. (2005), the relationship between media coverage and the distribution and extent of the aid in their statistical study of *Le Monde's* influence on the French development aid. Rioux and Van Belle (2005) argue that the media exposure in *Le Monde* is significantly and positively correlated with the administration and distribution of the French development aid. However, Rioux and Van Belle (2005) also argue that the distribution of the French development aid is characterized by the country's relations with its former colonies, especially by those in Africa.

Similar to Rioux and Van Belle (2005), Joly (2014) claims in their study of Belgium that the French-speaking and former Belgian colonies, especially from Africa, receive the most Belgian development aid. Thus, unlike the study of Drury et al. (2005) on the United States, the distribution of the French and Belgian development aid is affected by the countries' postcolonial relations. Hence, like Drury et al. (2005) and Rioux and Van Belle (2005), Joly (2014) also argues that media exposure affects both the scope and distribution of the development aid.

Joly (2014) points out the generalizability of his study on Belgium and consequently argues that the results of the study can be applied to Western countries that have a limited international influence and a prominent development aid policy. Norway, Denmark, and Sweden are mentioned as examples of countries whose development aid policies and international influence are similar to those of Belgium and who thereby can be generalized by the results of the study.

2.1 Problem Definition, Research Gap and Research Contribution

As previously stated above, Drury et al. (2005), Rioux and Van Belle (2005) and Joly (2014) all claim that media coverage affects the distribution and the scope of the development aid. Despite that there is a consensus within the existing research field as well as Joly (2014) claims that Sweden falls within the framework of countries that can be applied by the results of his study, it is still of interest to examine the relationship from a Swedish perspective.

The scope of the Swedish development aid is eminent within the international development aid-community, as Sweden provides the most development aid per capita in the world. Internationally, Sweden is therefore described as a leading development aid actor (Sida, 2019a). Sweden is thus an internationally leading development aid actor with a limited international influence (Sida, 2019a;

Joly, 2014). One should thereby not assume that the motive behind Sweden's development aid policy is the same as the motives behind the development aid policies of the great powers mentioned in Drury et al. (2005) and Rioux and Van Belle (2005), namely the US and France. Nor should one ignore the fact that the development aid policies of Belgium and France are characterized by the countries' colonial heritage.

International development aid was not as comprehensive and institutionalized before the end of the Cold War as it is today (Carothers, 2015). The time period examined in the study of Drury et al. (2005) was thereby characterized by a relatively moderate international aid policy in comparison with the current scope. Hence, the generalizability of the study by Drury et al. (2005) can be called into question. It would be naive to assume that the relationship between media coverage and the extent and distribution of the American aid during 1964-1995 can be applied in a contemporary Swedish context. However, Drury et al. (2005) contribute empirical and historical relevance to this thesis. It is also of interest to this thesis to take into account the results of an existing study that examines the issue in a Western country with a prominent aid policy that is not characterized by post-colonial relations.

The generalizability of the studies by Rioux and Van Belle (2005) and Joly (2014) can also be called into question. The development aid policy of Belgium, like the one of France, is characterized by the country's colonial heritage. Joly (2014) mentions the Western countries of Norway, Denmark and Sweden and claims that the countries' similarities to Belgium enables a generalization of his study. However, Norway, Denmark and Sweden do not have prominent aid programs that are characterized by colonial heritage. Rioux and Van Belle and Joly's (2014) studies should thereby not be generalized and applied to the countries mentioned above. One should not rule out that the colonial heritage of Belgium and France affects the extent and distribution of the development aid of the countries. It would thereby be naive to claim that the media coverage of the Belgian, French, and Swedish development aid affects the aid flows volumes of the development aid in the same way.

The thesis is a theory-testing and to some extent theory-developing quantitative statistical study of comparative design (Esaiasson, Gilljam, Oscarsson, Towns & Wängnerud, 2017). The empirical operationalization of the thesis is mainly theory-testing as it tests the overall belief in the existing research field, namely that the media affects the distribution and scope of development aid (Drury et al., 2005; Rioux & Van Belle, 2005; Joly, 2014). The study is also theory-developing to the extent that the identified research gap can contribute to a development in the research field. The research gap of this thesis is hence justified by the incompleteness of the existing research field (Esaiasson et al., 2017). By examining the relationship between media and development aid from a Swedish perspective, the thesis can contribute to a more precise understanding of the relationship between media and the Swedish development aid. The motives behind the distribution of the development

aid in the countries mentioned in the existing research field are, as has been said, characterized by the countries' great influence within the international community and / or their colonial heritage.

By examining Sweden, alternative explanatory variables are excluded that may affect the media's role in the decision-making of distribution and extent of the development aid in the countries mentioned above. Furthermore, the idea is that this thesis will enable a possible analytical generalization to other Western countries which, like Sweden, have a limited international influence and a prominent development aid policy that is not characterized by postcolonial relations to the recipient country.

2.1.2 Delimitations, Research Aim and Research Question

The existing research usually chooses to limit itself to examining only one type of development aid. Rioux and Van Belle (2005) and Joly (2014), for example, examine the countries' official development assistance, while Drury et al. (2005) only examines humanitarian aid (OECD, 2020a). This thesis will however examine how negative media coverage affects Sida's overall aid flows volumes, the multilateral development aid and earmarked development aid. This thesis will also take into account the differences between the multilateral core support and earmarked support of Sida.

The time period that will be analyzed and evaluated in this thesis is between January 2012 and December 2019. The delimitation of the time period is justified by the fact that sufficient material was found during all the months of the selected time period and that a delimitation is necessary for the conduct of the study. To measure the media's impact on Sida's development aid, the news articles that will be used for the thesis will also be limited to those who report on the implementation of development aid of Sida to recipient countries. No further delimitation of the content of the news articles will be made, as I want to take into account the negative, neutral and the positive content of the news articles concerning Sida's development aid.

The research aim for this thesis is to examine negative media coverage of development aid and its impact on the distribution and extent of Sida's bilateral and multilateral development aid. This leads further to the three separate research questions of the thesis, namely;

1. "How has the aid flow volumes of Sida's total development aid been affected by negative media coverage between 2012–2019?"
2. "How has multilateral aid been affected by negative media coverage between 2012-2019?"
3. How has the proportion of Sida's project support been affected by negative media coverage between 2012-2019?

2.2 Hypotheses

The hypotheses of this thesis are based on the belief in the existing research field, on the governance within Sida, as well as, on the context which the multilateral aid is operating in.

H₁ - negative media coverage increases aid flows volumes

The first hypothesis, H₁, of the thesis is that corruption scandals that receive media attention will, similar to previous research (Drury et al., 2005; Rioux & Van Belle, 2005; Joly, 2014), increase Sida's development aid to the specific region and context. Contrary to the previous research, however, the author claims that negative content will result in Sida increasing its development aid. This may be perceived as contradictory to reason as one might reason that Sida will, as a response to negative press, limit its exposure to a corrupt context and further media harm by withdrawing from contexts prone to corruption.

The author, however, believes that the volume of the Swedish development aid will not decrease by the media coverage of corruption scandals as the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has already set the strategy amounts and the budget for Sida to use.

Moreover, the author argues that the volumes will increase as corruption scandals emphasize additional needs for aid to corruption prone environments: environments that tend to be the most impoverished. This is in line with Sida's goal - to reach the most vulnerable and poor.

H₂ - negative media coverage increases aid channeled via multilateral organizations

The second hypothesis, H₂, is based on the effectiveness and the reach of the multilateral development aid, as well as its lack of transparency. Due to both its efficiency and lack of transparency, multilateral aid will not withstand as much media criticism as bilateral development aid. By being efficient, there will be few reasons to change the policies of Sida's multilateral development aid. Thus, the media will have limited abilities to influence the distribution of the multilateral development aid because of its lack of incentives to criticize it. Furthermore, the lack of transparency in Sida's multilateral development aid has an obvious outcome; namely, that the media has limited insight in the activities of the multilateral development aid. This thus leads to bilateral aid being more exposed to media criticism, which in turn leads to bilateral aid being affected by media coverage to a greater extent than the multilateral development aid. In other words, the media's influence will affect the distribution of the bilateral development aid to a greater extent than the multilateral development aid. In addition, multilateral agencies have the resources and the setup to reach the most vulnerable groups in highly impoverished regions as well as regions affected by disaster and conflict.

H₃ - negative media coverage shifts the modality of development aid to project support

The third, and final hypothesis, H₃, tests if Sida changes the modality of development aid as a reaction to negative press. The previous two hypotheses, H₁ and H₂ tested the volume and partner of development aid, H₃ tests how the development aid is implemented. The hypothesis is based on the reasoning that Sida will utilize a modality, project support, to earmark its aid to a higher degree

after negative media coverage in order to decrease exposure and invoke a tighter control on its partners.

The reader might perceive H_3 as a contradiction to H_2 which suggests increased funds to multilateral organizations (which is mainly financed with core support and pool funding - non-earmarked aid), but the author views the hypotheses of increased earmarking of funds via project support as a complement to safeguard remaining funds that is not channeled via the multilateral organizations, but usually by less resource intense and established organizations.

3. Method

This thesis is a quantitative study that will be based on a statistical analysis, as the questions of the thesis intend to study the causal relationship between media coverage and the extent and distribution of Sida's development aid. Furthermore, the study will use a comparative method of statistical design as it is the appropriate method to use when providing information of a large number of analysis units that are collected in order to make an accurate comparison (Esaiasson et al., 2017).

The choice of method is justified by its suitability for this type of thesis. When dealing with a large number of analysis units, using a comparative method of statistical design enables a fair assessment. The method of analysis used to analyze the causal relationship between negative media coverage and development aid is a set of linear regression analysis in Stata (Stata, 2020). A linear regression analysis (OLS) is a commonly used method when it comes to evaluating statistical data as it is viewed as both flexible and powerful. If our regression analysis shows statistical significance, we can also claim the empirical evidence of our theory (Esaiasson et al., 2017).

3.1 Variables

The thesis intends to test H_1 , H_2 and H_3 . The dependent, independent and control variables must thereby be defined in order to enable the operationalization. Hence, below follows an account of the thesis' various variables.

3.1.1 Dependent Variables

The three hypotheses, H_1 , H_2 and H_3 , will create three separate regression analyzes. For each hypothesis, there will therefore be three different dependent variables. The data for the dependent variables was gathered from Sweden's yearly reporting to the OECD-DAC's creditor reporting system (CRS)(OECD, 2020b). A times-series data set was developed by compiling yearly flows on channel, modality, and recipient country from 2012 to 2019.

Three models, Model₁₋₃, have been developed for testing the corresponding three hypotheses, H_{1-3} , set forth in this thesis. The three models utilize three different corresponding dependent variables (Y_{1-3}). The lead for Y_{1-3} in Model₁₋₃ has been set at $t+2$ as it strikes a balance by limiting the loss in degrees of freedom as well as the includes enough time for the operational units at Sida to

implement any change in their portfolio as a result of the independent variable. An additional increase in the lead could capture any major shifts in strategy change (as the strategy period usually spans between 4-6 years) but be at the expense of substantial loss in degrees of freedom.

The dependent variable for M_1 , Y_1 , is total disbursed development aid in natural log by country and year, and is called “*f2.ln_disb_all_strat*”. Y_1 aims to describe the relationship of volume of funds and does not regard the who and how, *i.e.* partner organization and modality. M_2 's dependent variable, Y_2 , seeks to bridge the gap in “who” by representing the total disbursed funds channeled via multilateral organizations during a specific year and country in natural logarithm, and is called “*f2.ln_disb_land_multi*”. Lastly, M_3 's dependent variable, Y_3 , focuses on the “how”. Y_3 denominates the total amount of funds disbursed by project support, and is called “*f2.ln_disb_land_c01*”. With the 3 models, M_{1-3} , and corresponding 3 dependent variables, Y_{1-3} , this thesis seems to describe the independent variables' effect on both volume, partner, and modality.

3.1.2 Independent variables

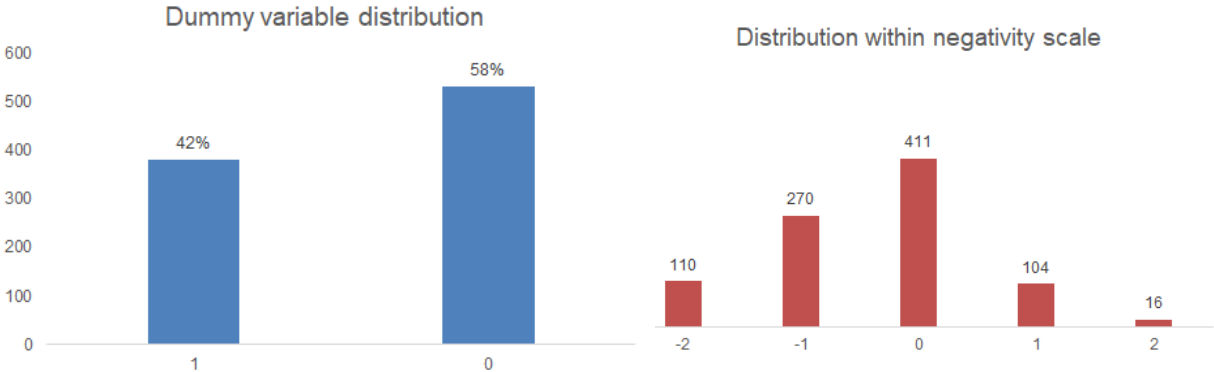
The independent variables of the thesis are negative media criticism of Sida's implementation during 2012-2019. Swedish news articles published from January 2012 to December 2019 on Sida's activities have consequently been scrapped with the Google search engine, and if needed, extracted from an internet-based archive, the Wayback Machine (Google, 2020; Wayback Machine, 2020). This resulted in my creation of a coding scheme, which in turn is motivated by the method's suitability for the thesis (Teorell & Svensson, 2007). 8536 observations, *i.e.*, news articles, were found, where a large proportion of the data was unusable for my research questions. This is despite the fact that all observations were news articles that I considered to be genuine and independent and where the degree of tendency was considered reliable. All news articles were also written and published in its contemporaries. The case was rather that many news articles dealt with Sida's administration and needed therefore to be removed as the focus of the thesis is on the implementation of Sida's development aid. The observations were hence evaluated by nominal scales and were either labeled as “administration” or “implementation”, depending on whether the content was directed at the administration of Sida or towards Sida's agreement partners or implementors.

When I distinguished the observations that dealt with Sida's administration from the implementation of Sida, I had to further improve the quality of the data based on the needs of the essay. This meant that an extensive downsizing of data was necessary once again, as I needed the news articles to concern Sida's implementation in other countries. I thus made an additional restriction in the data so I would be able to merge news articles that dealt with the recipient countries of Sida's implementation to the data of the countries in the dependent variable and the control variables. Once I had done that, I could start evaluating the content of the news articles. The observations were evaluated based on whether the news article was negative or not. At first, the news articles were consequently assigned -2, -1, 0, 1 or 2 depending on whether the content is

positive or negative towards the Swedish development aid and to what degree (Teorell & Svensson, 2007).

The validity problem in the independent variable of this thesis exists due to the distance between the theoretical definition and the operational indicator. By reducing the distance between the theoretical definition and the operational indicator, the validity problem will also be reduced. We achieve this by the ranking of the content in the selected articles. By evaluating the content by ordinal scales, namely the five levels of; very negative (-2), negative (-1), neither... nor (0), positive (1) and very positive (2), the distance between the theoretical definitions and the operational indicator decreases (Stathelp, 2020; Esaiasson et al., 2017).

At first, the intention was to take into account the number of criticisms to which Sida's development aid was exposed by the media. The idea was to later summarize a total criticism score to capture its scope, but in some instances the values equalized each other. That is, if a country had as many negative articles as positive during the same year, there was a risk that the values would summarize to zero. Instead, I decided to create a binary variable based on my already finished evaluation of the news articles. The news articles whose content is negative (the previous values of -2 and -1) are coded as '1', while the remaining articles are coded as '0' and thus function as a reference category. The use of binary variables is consequently motivated by its simplicity as they are relatively simple to create and apply. The validity problem is also of a milder degree since the theoretical definition is still relatively uncomplicated and close to the operational indicator due to the two ordinal scales (Teorell & Svensson, 2007; Stathelp, 2020; Esaiasson et al., 2017).



3.1.3. Control Variables

The thesis will include various control variables to control alternative explanatory factors. By working cumulatively, similar control variables used by Rioux and Van Belle (2005) will also be used in this thesis. The advantage of copying the operationalization of existing research is that the validity increases as well as it facilitates comparisons with existing studies. (Esaiasson et al., 2017) Nevertheless, Rioux and Van Belle (2005) also work cumulatively and justify their choice of control variables with its usage in the existing research field.

The similar control variables that Rioux and Van Belle (2005) use which also will be used in this thesis are; Balance of Trade, Democracy, GNP per capita and Population. Rioux and Van Belle (2005) justifies the choice of Balance of Trade with the argument that the control variable captures direct economic interests in the recipient country. In our case, the control variable captures whether Sweden has a potential agenda in its choice of recipient country. An agenda which is based on the recipient country having an extensive import of Swedish goods. For this control variable, we will collect statistics from Statistiska centralbyrån (SCB) that show the Swedish net trade in the recipient country in a transformed natural logarithm as we do not want the values to be skewed (Statistiska centralbyrån, 2021; Stathelp, 2021a).

Rioux and Van Belle (2005) uses the Democracy minus Autocracy measure from the Polity III data set to measure whether France sends more development aid to democratic countries. With the same reasoning, this thesis will use the “p_polity2” variable collected from the QoG database, which also uses the Democracy minus Autocracy measure, to estimate whether Sweden sends more development aid to democratic countries (Quality of Government Institute, 2020).

Rioux and Van Belle (2005) justifies the choice of the control variable GNP per capita by emphasizing its usage in the existing research field. The per capita gross national product of a recipient country is used to capture the humanitarian aspect of aid. With the same reasoning, GDP per capita of a recipient country will be used in this study. The variable of “wdi_gdpcapcon2010” from the QoG database will consequently be used (Quality of Government Institute, 2020). This variable will also be transformed into a natural logarithm. Furthermore, the control variable measuring Population in the recipient country is used and justified in Rioux and Van Belle (2005) to control for possible correlations between the levels of news media coverage and the size of the population in the recipient country. Rioux and Van Belle (2005) claims that if such correlation is significant enough, it could create a spurious correlation between development aid and coverage levels. With the same reasoning, we will use the “wdi_pop” collected from the QoG database, which measures the total population of the recipient country (Quality of Government Institute, 2020). This variable will also be transformed into a natural logarithm.

However, there are also control variables that I want to include in this thesis that Rioux and Van Belle (2005) do not take into account. Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) from Transparency International and the Human Development Index (HDI) from UNDP will consequently be used in the regression analyses as control variables (Transparency, 2021; UNDP, 2021). The CPI measures a country's perceived corruption on a scale of zero to 100, where zero is very corrupt and 100 is very non-corrupt (Transparency, 2021). HDI, on the other hand, measures a country's living conditions as well as economic and social development on a scale of zero to 1, where countries with a HDI rating above 0.800 is considered to have high human development, while countries with a HDI rating below 0.550 are considered to have low human development (NE, 2021). The relevance of the additional variables is justified by the apparent likelihood that countries with lower ratings of CPI

and HDI are more likely to receive more development aid. Adding variables that examine corruption, prosperity and human development in the analyzes is particularly interesting as corruption hits hardest on people living in poverty and oppression (Sida, 2021b). Below, the reader can see all the variables used in the study.

Variable & Model Overview

Variable / Model	Model I	Model II	Model III
Dependent Variable			
ln(disbursement)	✓		
ln(disbursement to multilateral organizations)		✓	
ln(disbursements to project supports)			✓
Independent Variable			
year	✓	✓	✓
neg_crit	✓	✓	✓
p_polity2	✓	✓	✓
ti_cpi	✓	✓	✓
undp_hdi	✓	✓	✓
ln_wdi_pop	✓	✓	✓
ln_gdp_per_capita	✓	✓	✓
ln_trade_balance	✓	✓	✓
constant	✓	✓	✓

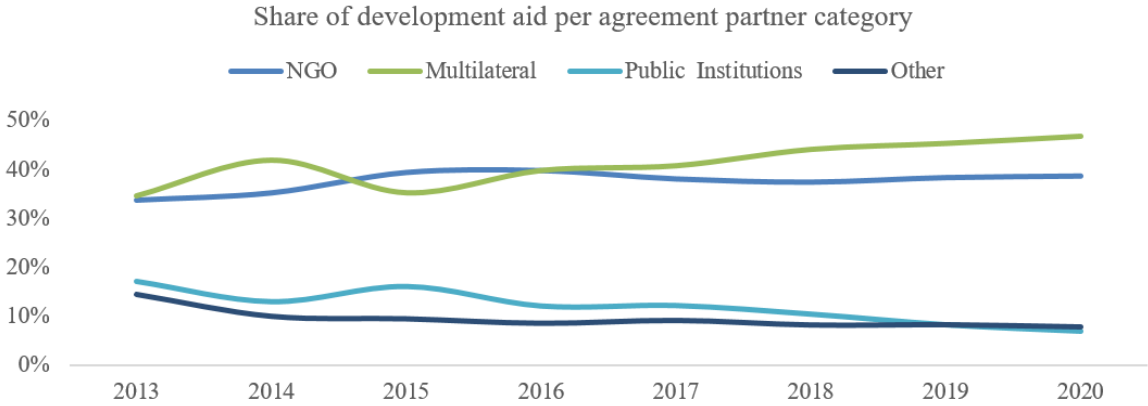
4. Descriptive Statistics

In this section, we will take a close look at the data that I have obtained and put together from OECD in my dependent variable as well as the data that I have obtained and created from various Swedish news articles in my independent variable.

4.1 Data from OECD

Sweden has been providing core support for multilateral organizations for a long time. However, Sida’s earmarked support for specific initiatives through multilateral organizations has increased in recent years (Browne, Connelly & Weiss, 2017). In the obtained data from the OECD we also see an overall increase in the support of multilateral aid as a whole.

4.1.1 Agreement Partner Category

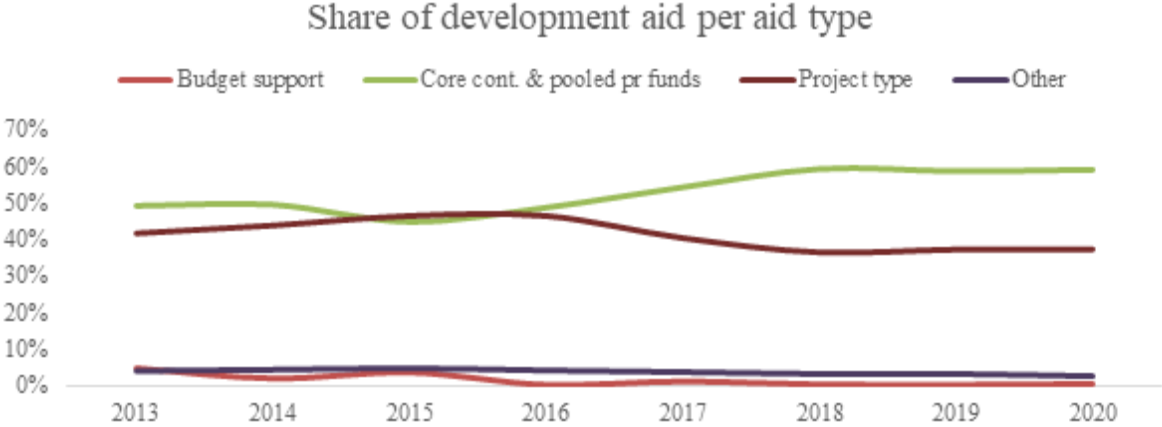


Agreement partner represents the legal entity which Sida has signed a grant agreement with. It's the entity responsible for the agreed upon activities even if there could be multiple different implementing partners. The plot above demonstrates the percentual expenditures channeled to Sida agreement partner groups.

The agreement partner categorization established by OECD-DAC has been clustered in four groups for an easier and straightforward overview: 1) Non-governmental organizations, such as donor and recipient based civil society organizations, as well as, international NGOs; 2) multilateral organizations such as the UN and regional development banks; 3) Public institutions in donor and recipient counters; and 4) the remaining categories such as private and academic institutions, grouped as Other.

The plot tells a story of an increasing percentual support to NGOs and Multilateral organizations to the contrary of the support to Public Institutions and the other agreement partner categories. The organizational composition of the Multilateral group is homogeneous with larger and robust institutions such as UN and the World Bank, while the NGO group is heterogeneous with large and well-established International NGOs, such as Save the Children and Oxfam, in combination with smaller and less established recipient country-based NGOs. These different sub-categories represent vastly different organizational capabilities and resources. While the International NGO sub-group and the Multilateral organization group is fundamentally different in its legal and governing setup, the two groups have common characteristics of being well established and well-funded. This thesis will utilize the total volume of development aid channeled via multilateral organization by Sida for the year between 2012-2019 (OECD, 2021).

4.1.2 Type of Aid



If the agreement partner describes the “who”, the type of aid describes the “how”. The type of aid category defines the modality used to finance development activities. It states in what way the funds reach the implementing partner. This paper will focus on the two most common modalities: Core and Pool funding as well as Project type support.

Project type support aims to describe funding allocated to a project with a set of inputs, activities, and outputs, agreed with the partner, to reach specific objectives/outcomes within a defined time frame, with a defined budget and for a defined geographical area. It’s the second most volumes type of aid and has been fairly stable around the 40% mark since its introduction to the CRS classification system. Project support is the most tailored support modality as it is designed to be earmarked and straightforward to control and monitor. This thesis will utilize the total volume of development aid classified as project support by Sida for the year between 2012-2019.

In Core contributions and pooled programs and funds, the donor relinquishes control of it funds to either a fund, program, or to the general budget of an organization. This type of support is targeted for INGOs, multilateral institutions, and Public Private Partnerships. This form of modality has increased consistently over the last 20 years, reaching its peak in 2018-2019 with approximately 60% of all disbursed funds from Sida. While this thesis does not directly utilize aid types connected to core and pool funding in its regression model - core, pool and programme support is the underlying modality of much of Sida’s support to multilateral organizations.

Budget supports consist of either non earmarked contributions to the recipient government’s national treasury or to a specific earmarked sector. The funds disbursed are managed in accordance with the recipient’s budgetary procedures. As seen in the plot below, budget support disbursement has been on a steady decline over the last decade. It reached its peak in 2007-2009 (not shown in the plot) at around 7-8% of total disbursed funds from Sida and has since then decreased to less than 1% and only taking the form of sector specific support.

There is a set of remaining classifications combined into an “Other” group in the plot above. It contains technical assistance, scholar and student costs as well as administrative costs. The Other group makes out less than 5 percent of all disbursement combined.

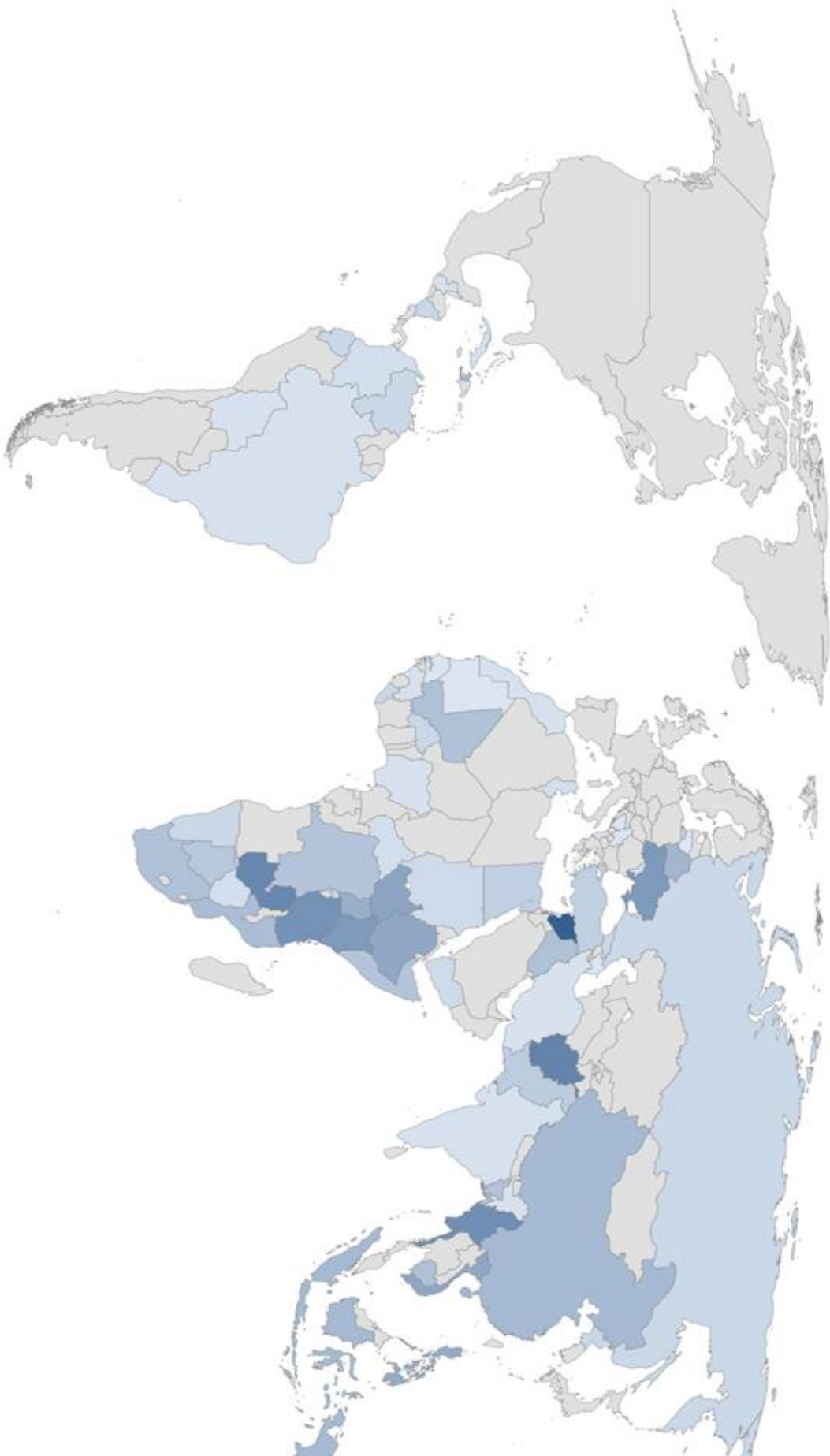
4.2 Data obtained from Swedish newspapers

In the obtained data, 911 observations (news articles) have been identified from 162 different Swedish news outlets after my delimitation of the data. Many observations were obtained from established Swedish newspapers, newsrooms and sites such as Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter, Expressen,, Svenska Dagbladet, SVT, SR and Sydsvenskan. The newspaper that provided the most observations is Svenska Dagbladet, which accounted for approximately 11 percent of all observations. Furthermore, MyNewsDesk accounts for approximately 7 percent of all observations, while Dagens Nyheter and Expressen for approximately 4 percent each and Aftonbladet, SVT and Sydsvenskan account for approximately 3 percent each. The remaining observations all come from newspapers that are also considered to be genuine and independent.

The observations concern Sida’s administration as well as Sida’s implementation through either multilateral aid or bilateral aid. Approximately 17 percent of all observations deal with the administration of Sida while 83 percent of the observations deal with the implementations of Sida’s aid. Of the observations reporting on Sida's implementation, 22 per cent concern Sida's implementation as a whole, while 40 percent specifically concern multilateral aid and 30 percent address the bilateral aid. Observations that cover Sida's implementation as a whole thus do not specifically concern multilateral or bilateral development aid, since the news articles write about Sida’s development aid in general.

Furthermore, 66 different countries are identified in the obtained observations. The countries that occur most often in the observations are Afghanistan, Myanmar, Palestine, South Sudan, Syria, Tanzania, Ukraine, and Zambia. The country that provided the most observations is Syria. Approximately 7 percent of all observations that concerned aid to specific countries were about Syria. Below, the reader can see how the observations are distributed across recipient countries.

Number of observations by country



5. Results

OLS Regression Overview

Variable / Model	Model I	Model II	Model III
<i>year</i>	** .137 (.069)	** .025 (.066)	*** -.077 (.026)
<i>neg_crit</i>	*** .101 (.028)	*** .068 (.019)	-.033 (.065)
<i>p_polity2</i>	-.001 (.021)	.033 (.021)	-.005 (.005)
<i>ti_cpi</i>	** -.043 (.010)	*** -.032 (.011)	*** .009 (.003)
<i>undp_hdi</i>	-1.875 (1.990)	-1.204 (1.996)	*** 1.738 (.507)
<i>ln_wdi_pop</i>	.237 (.107)	.155 (.134)	-.038 (.040)
<i>ln_gdp_per_capita</i>	-.271 (.255)	-.101 (.312)	** -.143 (.068)
<i>ln_trade_balance</i>	.254 (.166)	-.072 (.081)	-.018 (.030)
<i>constant</i>	** -260.1791 (138.225)	*** -38.594 (131.901)	*** 155.692 (52.115)
<i>Number of observations</i>	339	198	316
<i>R²</i>	.2905	.191	.135
<i>Prob > F</i>	.000	.000	.000

Standard errors in parenthesis. *, **, and *** corresponds to a significance level of, 90, 95 and 99 percent respectively.

The results of the first analysis that tests H_1 is presented in Model 1. They provide clear evidence that Sida's overall development aid responds to negative media coverage. In Model 1 the correlation between the dependent and logarithmic variable "*F2. In_disb_all_strat*" and the independent variables of "*neg_crit*" and "*year*" is statistically significant since the p-value is below 0.05 in both of the independent variables. Since the significance value is below .05, the result is statistically

significant at the 95% level and the relationship between the variables can also be concluded to exist in the real world. This is further strengthened by the relatively high t-values of “*neg_crit*” and “*year*”. The t-value of “*neg_crit*” is 3.63 while “*year*” has a t-value of 1.99, which means that it is unlikely that the strong correlations between the variables would occur if there was no truth in it in real life (Stathelp, 2021b).

Since the dependent variable is natural logarithmic, we multiply the value of the standardized coefficient by one hundred in the independent variables to get the expected percentage change in the dependent variable, if we increase the independent variables by one step each so to speak. Furthermore, the standardized coefficient of “*neg_crit*” is .101, meaning that for every year that negative articles are written about the recipient country, Sida's overall development aid to the recipient country increases by approximately 10 percent. By the same logic, Sida's financing to various recipient countries increases by approximately 14 percent for each year since the standardized coefficient of “*year*” is .137 (Stathelp, 2021c).

The control variables that measure democracy, GDP per capita, the Human Development Index and Sweden's net exports to the recipient country; namely “*p_polity2*”, “*ln_gdp_per_capita*”, “*undp_hdi*” and “*ln_trade_balance*” all have p-values above 0.05 and are therefore not statistically significant. That the control variable of “*ln_trade_balance*” is not statistically significant is expected, as it is unlikely that Sweden would choose a recipient country based on Sweden's economic interests in the country. This is particularly interesting as the previous research deals with countries such as Belgium, France and the United States, whose aid policies are characterized by postcolonial interests and / or economic interests to assert themselves in the international community (Drury, Olson & Van Belle, 2005; Rioux & Van Belle, 2005; Joly, 2014).

Nevertheless, “*ti_cpi*” and “*ln_wdi_pop*” that measure corruption and the total population in the recipient country both have p-values below .05 and are therefore statistically significant at the 95 % level. As with “*year*” and “*neg_crit*”, we must multiply the value specified by the standardized coefficient in “*ti_cpi*” by one hundred to get the expected percentage change in the dependent variable if we increase “*ti_cpi*” by one step. The standardized coefficient of the control variable “*ti_cpi*” is -.043. That is, each step upwards in the Corruption Perceptions Index is associated with a decrease in Sida's overall financing of development aid to recipient countries by approximately 4.30%. This was however expected, as corruption is correlated with poverty and oppression. It is thus no shock that the higher a country's rating on Corruption Perceptions Index, the more development aid the country will receive from Sida.

The control variables of “*ln_wdi_pop*” that measure the total population of the recipient country are logarithmic, which means that both the dependent variable and the control variable are logarithmic. As previously mentioned in the description of the variables, this means that the given value in the standardized coefficient of “*ln_wdi_pop*” is the percentage change of the dependent variable when “*ln_wdi_pop*” increases by one percent. In other words, an increase of the recipient

country's population by one percent is related to an increase in Sida's total development aid to the country by approximately .24 % in "*ln_wdi_pop*". This was not expected with reference to Rioux and Van Belle (2005) and their justification of the use of the population variable. However, I do not think the p-value is significant enough to be considered to create a spurious correlation between development aid and media coverage levels. One possible explanation for the statistical significance, however, is that Sida could be more willing to invest in countries with greater population growth in issues such as gender equality, as it is a prioritized issue by the Swedish government (Stathelp, 2021c; Sida, 2021c).

As pointed out, Model₁ presents clear evidence that Sida's overall development aid responds to negative media coverage and thus increases its flows volumes of development aid to the concerned recipient country. In other words, the Model₂ supports H₁. Above, we have just confirmed that both corruption and the total population in the recipient country also affects the flows volumes of Sida's development aid. This does not contradict H₁ but rather strengthens it. The results of the Corruption Perceptions Index are particularly strengthening for H₁ as the probability is high that high levels of corruption in a recipient country can result in negative media coverage. Furthermore, the results of Model₁ also support H₁ in the sense that corruption scandals do not result in Sida's aid being reduced as the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has already set the strategy amounts and the budget for Sida to use.

Model₂ presents the results of the analysis of H₂. They provide evidence that multilateral development aid also responds to negative media coverage. The independent variable of "*neg_crit*" is statistically significant at the 95% level since the p-value is below .05, which means that the relationship between the dependent and logarithmic variable of "*F2. ln_disb_land_multi*" and "*neg_crit*" could be concluded to exist in the real world. The standardized coefficient of "*neg_crit*" is .068, meaning that for every year that negative articles are written about the recipient country, Sida's funding to multilateral core support in the recipient country through multilateral organizations increases by approximately 6.8 percent. This result is in line with H₂, as negative media coverage has a bigger impact on the overall development aid at Sida presented in Model₁ compared to the aid that goes through multilateral organizations in Model₂. This strengthens the hypothesis of H₂, namely that the media have limited abilities to influence the distribution of the multilateral development aid because of its lack of incentives to criticize it. It is thus the lack of transparency in Sida's multilateral development aid that results in the media having limited insight in the activities of the multilateral development aid. The bilateral aid is therefore being more exposed to media criticism, which in turn leads to bilateral aid being affected by media coverage to a greater extent than the multilateral development aid.

However, unlike Model₁, only the independent variable of "*neg_crit*" and the control variable of "*ti_cpi*" are statistically significant in Model₂. The remaining variables are not statistically significant since they have p-values above .05. There are surprisingly few variables that are

statistically significant in Model₂. On the other hand, it is no major surprise that it is the variable of “*ti_cpi*” out of all control variables that shows statistical significance. This was thus expected, as in Model₁, since corruption is correlated with poverty and oppression. The standardized coefficient of the control variable “*ti_cpi*” is -.032. That is, each step upwards in the Corruption Perceptions Index is associated with a decrease in Sida’s financing of multilateral core support to the recipient countries by approximately 3.20%. It is thus no shock that the higher a country's rating on Corruption Perceptions Index, the more Sida financed multilateral aid the country will receive. Hence, the statistical significance in “*ti_cpi*” further strengthens our hypothesis in H₂. This is because multilateral organizations have the capacity and the setup to reach the most vulnerable groups in highly impoverished regions as well as regions affected by disaster and conflict. That countries with a high level of corruption receive more aid through multilateral organizations is therefore logical and in line with our hypothesis.

In Model₃, the results of the analysis of H₃ are presented. The independent variable of “*neg_crit*”, unlike in Model₁ and Model₂, is not statistically significant in Model₃. In other words, Model₃ does not provide empirical evidence that Sida utilizes a modality, project support, to earmark its aid to a higher degree after a corruption scandal in order to decrease exposure and invoke a tighter control on its partners. That is, the results of Model₃ do not support H₃ as negative media criticism does not increase Sida’s amount of aid being earmarked.

5.1 Limitations

As mentioned in the introduction, development aid that goes through multilateral organizations is more efficient than the Swedish bilateral aid. This is partly because multilateral development aid entails less administrative cost. Therefore, it would have been ideal to include the administrative costs of Sida as a control variable. However, it is too difficult to link administrative costs to the recipient countries. Furthermore, the study has also an obvious limitation, namely that we only consider the negative media coverage of the Swedish press. Thus, we do not consider whether Swedish development aid is affected by negative foreign media coverage.

6. Conclusion

With this thesis I shed light on the democratic principles of the Swedish government having a development aid agency that makes impartial and unpolitical decisions based on the needs of the developing world. However, as presented in Model₁ and Model₂, negative media coverage increases both Sida’s overall aid flow volumes as well as its multilateral aid, which means that media thus influences the decision-making of the Swedish development aid. Below follows a further account of the thesis' conclusions.

In Model₁ the first research question is answered, namely, *"how has the aid flow volumes of Sida's total development aid been affected by negative media coverage between 2012–2019?"*. The result of the regression analysis in Model₁ shows that negative media coverage on the implementation of Sida's development aid increases the overall aid flow volumes to the recipient countries. Consequently, the independent variable that measures media criticism is statistically significant and we thus find empirical evidence that strengthens our H₁. The explanation for the result in Model₁ we find within the governance which Sida is operating by, namely; that the Swedish Ministry for Foreign Affairs has already set the strategy amounts and the budget for Sida to use. There has therefore been no reduction in aid flow volumes. The increase in the overall development aid of Sida is however explained by the assumption in our H₁, namely that the volumes will increase as corruption scandals emphasize additional needs for aid to corruption prone and impoverished environments. As both high corruption and negative media coverage are positively correlated with increased aid volumes in Model₁, we assume that negative news articles about corruption increases Sida's funding in the recipient country. Sida's overall aid flow volumes have thus been affected to the extent that Sida responds to negative media coverage by increasing the volume of aid flows.

Furthermore, the results in Model₂ proves, similarly to Model₁, that multilateral development aid increases with negative media coverage. However, the impact of negative coverage in the media is not as strong in Model₂ as in Model₁. This is because the standardized coefficient for negative media criticism in Model₁ is higher. Thus, we find support for our H₂ in Model₂ as previously confirmed in the results, as it claims that the volumes of the multilateral aid increases but that it will not be affected as much by the media as the bilateral aid. The answer to the second research question; *"how has multilateral aid been affected by negative media coverage between 2012-2019?"*, is thus that Sida responds to negative media coverage by increasing its aid channeled via multilateral organizations, but not as much as the overall aid of Sida.

As in Model₁, both high levels of corruption and negative media coverage are positively correlated with an increase in multilateral aid. The explanation for the result in Model₂, however, differs from Model₁ and is due two reasons, namely, 1) multilateral organizations are not subjected to Swedish law and are thereby not affected by the principle of the public access to official records; 2) multilateral organizations is more effective and they have the resources and the setup to reach the most vulnerable groups in highly impoverished regions as well as regions affected by disaster and conflict. Thus, the media have more limited abilities to influence the volumes of the multilateral development aid because of its lack of incentives to criticize it as well as the lack of transparency in the multilateral organizations. However, due to both its efficiency and capacity, multilateral organizations will respond to negative media coverage as they have the setup to reach the most vulnerable groups. This is in line with the Corruption Perceptions Index being statistically significant in Model₂, as corruption hits hardest on people living in poverty and oppression and since multilateral organization has the ability to reach them. Multilateral aid has thus been affected by negative media coverage in the manner that it has increased as it has shed the light on

news-creating misconduct in the world which have affected the most vulnerable groups, groups which multilateral organizations have the ability to reach.

In Model₃, we deal with the third and final research question; *how has the proportion of Sida's project support been affected by negative media coverage between 2012-2019?* As confirmed in the results, we found no empirical evidence to support H₃. Thus, the results of Model₃ do not support H₃ as negative media criticism does not increase Sida's amount of aid being earmarked and the hypothesis of H₃ is rejected. As Model₃ lacks statistical significance, we cannot answer the third research question.

Furthermore, this thesis offers a deeper understanding of how negative media coverage affects the aid flows volumes of a country like Sweden. Unlike the existing research, the three hypotheses of the thesis offer a comprehensive explanation of how negative media coverage affects the volume, the partner and type of the development aid. As a Western democracy with an eminent development aid policy, the importance of this study lies within its generalizability to countries like Denmark and Norway - whose development aid policy is not characterized by the country's great influence within the international community and / or by the country's colonial heritage.

Finally, another area ripe for further study, as mentioned in the thesis' limitation section, is to probe more deeply into the relationship between Sida's administrations costs and volume of channeled via multilateral organizations. Sida's administration costs divided by country, modality and year would provide a valuable control variable to assess its influence on the channeling of funds to different agreement partners and modality structures.

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