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## Explaining Framing Variation in Populist Radical Right Party Discourse on Ukrainian Refugees

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### Explaining Framing Variation in Populist Radical Right Party Discourse on Ukrainian Refugees

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Prof. Dr. Berthold Rittberger  
2025

***To my parents***

*For everything I've ever mastered,  
it was only possible because of you.*

# Abstract

This thesis investigates how Populist Radical Right (PRR) parties framed the influx of Ukrainian refugees following Russia's full-scale invasion in early 2022 in the context of the European Parliament (EP). It examines how these parties adapted their migration discourse under the constraints of national and intergovernmental discursive opportunity structures (DOS) and maps variation in their respective framing strategies. Using a mixed-methods approach combining descriptive statistics with qualitative frame analysis, the study identifies three distinct strategic groups among PRR actors in the EP: solidarity strategists, grievance mobilizers, and institutional legalists. Findings show that PRR parties responded strategically to reputational and structural constraints within their respective DOS, displaying rhetorical flexibility and adaptation while maintaining core exclusionary narratives. This research contributes to the literature on PRR discourse by demonstrating how differentiated discursive environments condition the framing of solidarity and exclusion during times of migration crises and displays the limits and possibilities of discursive adaptability.

*Key words: Populist Radical Right; framing strategies; migration discourse; discursive opportunity structures; Ukrainian refugees; strategic framing; European Parliament; populist communication*



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## List of Abbreviations

AfD = Alternative für Deutschland  
AUR = Alliance for the Union of Romanians  
CARE = Contingency Action for Refugee Support Measures in Europe  
DF = Danish People's Party  
DQICA = Directed Qualitative Content Analysis  
DOS = Discursive Opportunity Structures  
ECR = European Conservatives and Reformists  
EKRE = Conservative People's Party of Estonia  
EL = Greek Solution  
EP = European Parliament  
EU = European Union  
FdI = Fratelli d'Italia / Brothers of Italy  
Fidesz = Fidesz  
FPÖ = Freedom Party of Austria  
FvD = Forum for Democracy  
GAL = Green-Alternative-Libertarian  
HS = Croatian Sovereignists  
JA21 = Right Answer 21  
Jobbik = Jobbik  
L'SNS = Kotlebists – People's Party Our Slovakia  
Lega = Lega  
LTS = Lithuanian Nationalist and Republican Union  
MAXQDA = Maximum Qualitative Data Analysis  
MEP = Member of European Parliament  
NI = Non-Inscrits  
PCA = Principle Component Analysis  
PiS = Prawo i Sprawiedliwość / Law and Justice  
PRR = Populist Radical Right  
PVV = Freedom Party  
Finns = Finns Party  
Reconquete = Reconquête!  
RN = Rassemblement National  
SD = Sweden Democrats  
SPD = Freedom and Direct Democracy  
TAN = Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist  
TPD = Temporary Protection Directive  
TB/LNNK = For Fatherland and Freedom/LNNK  
VB = Vlaams Belang  
VMRO = Bulgarian National Movement  
Vox = Vox

# 1. Introduction

When news of the Russian invasion of Ukraine broke in February 2022, the continent of Europe was confronted with its first full-scale war in decades. Beyond its immediate humanitarian and security consequences, the war marked a profound societal rupture, reshaping migration patterns and reviving discourses around European solidarity and burden-sharing in migration politics (Trauner & Wolff, 2024). At the same time, the crisis generated new empirical terrain for scientific inquiry, opening avenues for research that examine how crises and refugee movements are discussed, framed, and ultimately responded to.

Although migration has remained a salient and divisive issue in European politics since the 2015 so-called Schengen crisis, the Ukrainian refugee crisis reintroduced the topic under fundamentally altered conditions (Bahtić-Kunrath & Gebauer, 2023, pp. 34-35)<sup>1</sup>. The arrival of millions of Ukrainian refugees revived institutional and public attention to asylum law and border control. However, unlike in 2015, public discourse in 2022 was marked by a considerably more favourable tone, particularly toward the displaced populations themselves (Bahtić-Kunrath & Gebauer, 2023, p. 35). Scholars have noted that racialized perceptions of refugees played a critical role in shaping this differentiated treatment, especially when compared to refugees arriving from Syria, Afghanistan, or other regions in the Global South (Giancaspro & Lucenti, 2024, p. 4). This divergence manifested not only in public attitudes and media portrayals (see Bahtić-Kunrath & Gebauer, 2023; Kiyak, Coninck, et al., 2024; Kiyak, Mertens, et al., 2024; Wildemann et al., 2023) but also in formal political responses across EU institutions, leading to a more consensual and pragmatic governance mode than in 2015 (Trauner & Wolff, 2024, pp. 7-9).

This altered environment posed a unique challenge for populist radical right (PRR) parties. Long reliant on exclusive nationalism and anti-immigration rhetoric, these parties had capitalized on the fallout of the 2015 Schengen crisis (Börzel & Risse, 2018). However, the Ukrainian case disrupted this familiar storyline. Public solidarity with Ukrainian refugees (Geddes, 2023) clashed with PRR parties' longstanding nativist positions in migration issues. Many had additionally previously expressed ideological affinities or material ties to Russia and President Putin, ranging from rhetorical support for his authoritarian leadership style to documented financial cooperation (Klapisis, 2015; Ivaldi et al., 2023). These contradictions created a discursive dilemma, compelling PRR actors to navigate reputational risks, ideological commitments, and shifting normative expectations (Albertazzi et al., 2022).

This study conceptualizes the case of PRR discourse on Ukrainian refugees as an instance of strategic discursive adaptation within a shared institutional and ideological context. Despite operating in the same supranational arena, the European Parliament (EP), and thus confronting comparable structural conditions, PRR parties exhibited substantial variation in how they framed the Ukrainian refugee issue. To understand this puzzle, this thesis applies the analytical lens of frame alignment theory to account for the observed variation in framing. The central research question guiding this inquiry is: What framing strategies do populist radical right

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<sup>1</sup> In the context of this thesis, the term Schengen crisis is employed deliberately. Alternative designations such as refugee crisis or migration crisis are problematized for their tendency to discursively relocate the origin of crisis onto the displaced populations themselves, rather than the structural and institutional shortcomings of the European asylum regime. By contrast, referring to the events of 2015 as Schengen crisis foregrounds the governance failure at the heart of the crisis, rather than crisis induced mobility or migration per se. This terminological decision is intended to signal awareness of the discursive implications embedded in such labels and to invite the reader to engage critically with the language used to describe crises.

parties in the European Parliament adopt in parliamentary debates on migration following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, and how do these strategies differ across parties?

The societal and scholarly relevance of this study is twofold. Societally, it contributes to a deeper understanding of how political actors respond to exogenous humanitarian crises that disrupt established ideological narratives and dominant frames of migration issues. The Ukrainian case underscores how racialized perceptions, geopolitical alignments, and moral expectations shape both public discourse and political strategy (Bahtić-Kunrath & Gebauer, 2023). By examining how populist radical right parties navigated this unique discursive moment, the study sheds light on the broader dynamics of inclusion and exclusion in European asylum politics in an age of rising populist radical right popularity.

Scholarly, this thesis extends and strengthens the argument that populism is inherently chameleon-like, characterized by its strategic adaptability to changing political and normative environments (Mikucka-Wójtowicz, 2019). It demonstrates that PRR actors, often associated with rigid ideological positions on migration and transgressive communicative styles that reject elite discourse norms and challenge mainstream boundaries (Moffitt, 2016, pp. 55-57; Wodak, 2015, p. 1; Weyland, 2017, pp. 74-93; Casullo & Colalongo, 2022, p. 80), can nonetheless recalibrate their discourse in ways that maintain exclusionary stances while conforming to dominant societal and institutional expectations. In the context of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, these actors selectively toned down their rhetorical antagonism and styled their discourse to fit the solidaristic and humanitarian framing that prevailed at the EU level. The study thus shows how populist actors can repackaging exclusionary content within more institutionally acceptable forms, contributing to a more nuanced understanding of the mechanisms and limits of populist adaptability in times of crisis.

The thesis proceeds as follows: Chapter 2 outlines the geopolitical context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and maps the European Union's response, with particular attention to the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD). Chapter 3 focuses on the PRR party family, followed by an analysis of PRR party alignments toward Russia and Ukraine before and after the invasion. Chapter 4 conceptualizes the dependent variable by reviewing the role of migration in PRR discourse and introducing a baseline typology of migration-related frames. Chapter 5 develops the theoretical framework and formulates expectations for frame variation across parties. Chapter 6 outlines the research design and methodology, including case selection, the coding scheme, and analytic procedures. Chapter 7 presents the empirical findings, offering both a general overview and a frame-specific analysis across the selected PRR parties. Chapter 8 interprets these findings through the strategic mechanisms introduced earlier, identifying distinct framing strategies and patterns of discursive adaptation. The final two chapters summarize the study's main contributions and explore their implications for understanding populist discourse and institutional constraint in multilevel governance.

The results of this study demonstrate that PRR parties in the EP did not respond homogeneously to the Ukrainian refugee crisis but instead adopted distinct rhetorical strategies. These strategies are clustered into three mechanism-based groups: solidarity strategists, grievance mobilizers and institutional legalists. These groupings emerged from the intersection of frame use, rhetorical tone, and resulting framing mechanisms, and reflect different logics of strategic adaptation to the discursive constraints respective to each party. This variation illustrates different logics of strategic adaptation to the discursive constraints respective to each party.

## 2. The Russo-Ukrainian war and the activation of the Temporary Protection Directive

While the history of the Russo-Ukrainian conflict is long and will not be traced back in full, for the purposes of this thesis a short mapping must be provided for context. I will begin the mapping in 2014 with Russia's annexation of Crimea and the eruption of armed conflict in the eastern Donbas region. This initial phase involved Russian-backed separatists fighting Ukrainian forces in the self-declared republics of Donetsk and Luhansk. Over the following years, the war remained a low-intensity conflict with frequent smaller altercations, ceasefire violations, and diplomatic deadlock, all while Ukraine increasingly oriented itself toward the West, especially through intensified cooperation with the European Union. The legal and institutional basis for this relationship had already been laid with the Eastern Partnership in 2009 and was significantly deepened through the EU-Ukraine Association Agreement signed in 2014, which included the establishment of a deep and comprehensive Free Trade Area (European Union & Ukraine, 2014).

Tensions rose again in late 2021 when Russia began amassing more than 100.000 troops along Ukraine's borders, prompting international concern about a potential large-scale invasion. On February 24th, 2022, Russia launched the suspected full-scale military invasion of Ukraine from multiple directions, targeting major cities such as Kyiv and Kharkiv. This marked the beginning of a new and more intense phase of the Russo-Ukrainian War, which triggered an immediate and massive humanitarian crisis. Within days of the invasion thousands of people fled Ukraine. By early March 2022, more than half a million refugees had crossed into EU member states, prompting urgent discussions at the EU level about how to respond to this massive influx. On March 2nd, the European Commission proposed activating the Temporary Protection Directive (TPD), a legal instrument created in 2001 but never before implemented (European Commission, 2022). The directive was officially activated by the Council of the EU on March 4th, 2022. Its activation granted immediate and harmonized protection across EU member states to Ukrainians fleeing the war, including residency rights, access to education, housing, healthcare, and the labour market (Council of the European Union, 2022).

The TPD proved to be a pivotal element of the EU's humanitarian response to the crisis. By the end of 2022, 5.7 million Ukrainian refugees had fled to neighbouring and other countries, and an additional 5.9 million people were internally displaced within Ukraine (UNHCR, 2024b). Around 2.6 million Ukrainian refugees were hosted in proximate countries, while approximately 3 million were spread across other European nations and beyond (UNHCR, 2024a) with the largest numbers taken in by Poland, Germany, the Czech Republic, and Romania (Eurostat, 2025). In subsequent months and years, the EU extended the directive's applicability, most recently to March 2026 (Council of the European Union, 2024).

EU institutions began developing medium and long-term integration strategies for those displaced by the war, demonstrating a sustained and deepening commitment to supporting Ukrainian refugees within the framework of the TPD. This institutional engagement coincided with consistently high levels of public support for Ukrainian refugees during the initial years of the invasion (Geddes, 2023). This exceptional support included the establishment of the €17 billion Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE) initiative, which allowed member states to reallocate EU funds toward housing, education, and healthcare for displaced Ukrainians. Additionally, the EU provided technical support to help member states apply the

temporary protection directive and manage the arrival of refugees (Council of the European Union, 2025).

Having outlined the broader contours and consequences of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, including the EU's institutional response and public attitudes toward displaced Ukrainians, the analysis now shifts focus to the PRR party group. Understanding how this party family interprets and reacts to the war and refugee movements requires a closer look at its ideological foundations and historical positioning on related issues.

### 3. Courting Moscow: PRR Parties and the Russian Connection

#### 3.1 Defining Populism and the Populist Radical Right Party Family

To introduce the party family examined in this thesis, I draw on Cas Mudde's (2007) influential definition, which conceptualizes the populist radical right (PRR) as a distinct ideological formation combining nativism, authoritarianism, and populism. These elements interact in different ways across parties, but together they produce politics centred on exclusion, order, and the opposition between a 'pure' people and a corrupt elite. Despite variation in emphasis, PRR parties share a rejection of liberal pluralism and promote a vision of democracy that is majoritarian, homogeneous, and national (Mudde, 2007, pp. 20-26). It is well established within political science that especially the term populism remains both conceptually contested and subject to ongoing debate. Despite numerous scholarly attempts to define populism and uncover its essential characteristics, no single consensus has emerged (Mouffe, 2018, p. 12). Instead, the literature points to three distinct approaches that conceptualize populism in fundamentally different ways.

The first conceptual approach defines populism as a distinct ideology that divides society into two antagonistic and morally unified camps: the virtuous people and the corrupt elite. Central to this understanding are the principles of people-centrism and anti-elitism. This approach holds that legitimate politics must reflect the *volonté générale* (the general will of the people) expressed through an unmediated form of popular sovereignty (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). Populism in this case is best understood as a thin-centred ideology, one that lacks a fully developed worldview of its own and therefore relies on attachment to more comprehensive host ideologies such as nationalism or socialism (Mudde, 2007). This ideological flexibility allows populism to manifest across both the left and right ends of the political spectrum (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017). This study focuses specifically on radical right parties and sets aside left-wing variants of populism.

This study adopts the thin-centred ideology definition, that is, populism as

*“a thin-centred ideology that considers society to be ultimately divided into two homogeneous and antagonistic camps: ‘the pure people’ versus ‘the corrupt elite,’ arguing that politics should express the volonté générale (general will) of the people”* (Mudde & Kaltwasser, 2017, p. 6).

This definitional baseline enables the consistent identification of the party cases analysed in this study. It primarily serves the purpose of party classification and case selection and offers clear and transferable criteria that facilitate the consistent identification of populist parties across national contexts and aligns best with established datasets such as *The PopuList*. In doing so, this thesis adopts the ideational approach, which conceptualizes populism as a set of core beliefs, but also acknowledges that populism is a diverse and adaptable phenomenon that defies easy categorization (Albertazzi et al., 2022). Accordingly, other conceptual strands including discursive and stylistic perspectives will be introduced and considered where analytically relevant. This thesis recognizes that no single approach captures the full complexity of populist politics. Despite areas of convergence, the three approaches differ in how they conceptualize populism, what units of analysis they prioritize, and the methods they employ. Recognizing both the synergies and tensions between them opens avenues for cross-fertilization and richer comparative research (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, pp. 14-16; Kriesi, 2018, p. 21).



As mentioned, another influential approach understands populism as a discursive logic rather than a fixed ideology. In this view, populism constructs political meaning by drawing a symbolic boundary between “the people” and “the elite” (Mouffe, 2005, p. 3). This boundary is not rooted in a sociological reality but created through political articulation. Populist discourse links a range of diverse and otherwise unrelated social grievances by articulating them through a “chain of equivalence,” a rhetorical process that redefines different demands (such as opposition to immigration or political elites) as expressions of a common antagonism between „the people“ and „the elite“ (Mouffe, 2018, p. 33-34). The collective identity of “the people” emerges within this process of articulation. It is shaped by antagonism and grounded in the creation of a political frontier between “us” and “them,” which remains contingent and contestable. Populism thus operates through the deployment of empty signifiers, concepts like “justice” or “sovereignty”, that serve to unify heterogeneous demands without resolving their particularities (Laclau, 2005, pp. 69-72). In this sense, populism is less about substantive ideology and more about a logic of articulation that structures the political field around conflict, identification, and the struggle for hegemony. Accordingly, populist discourse is not anchored in official doctrines but identified through tone, metaphor, and recurring themes. Unlike ideological definitions that treat populism as categorical, discursive approaches view it as a gradational quality that varies depending on rhetorical usage (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, pp. 7-10).

A third strand of literature conceptualizes populism as a political style, focusing less on what populists believe and more on how they perform politics. This approach emphasizes elements such as crisis dramatization, anti-elitist provocation, and the projection of authenticity through affect and rhetorical simplicity (Moffitt, 2016, pp. 28-31; pp. 46-50). Rather than replacing the discursive logic approach, it complements it by embedding the construction of “the people” and “the elite” within the visual, emotional, and mediatized dynamics of contemporary political communication. Populism, in this sense, becomes a performative repertoire that constructs and amplifies crisis, maintains an antagonistic frontier, and draws legitimacy from stylistic visibility and emotional resonance (Moffitt, 2026, pp. 58-61). This emphasis on performance also intersects with strategic perspectives on populism, particularly those that define it as a political strategy centred on mass mobilization and plebiscitarian linkages. From this view, populism is not only a style but also a deliberate means of forging a direct connection between a leader and a largely unorganized base, without institutional mediation (Gidron & Bonikowski, 2013, pp. 10-14). Together, these approaches highlight how populism operates not just through what is said or believed, but through how political actors relate to audiences visually, emotionally, and strategically within specific media and institutional environments.

Drawing on these insights, the analysis of rhetorical and strategic variation across PRR actors is informed by complementary perspectives from the discursive and performative strands. In particular, the discursive logic of populism (Laclau, 2005; Mouffe, 2005) and its stylistic enactment through affect, crisis dramatization, and antagonism (Moffitt, 2016). The synthesis of these approaches allows for an integrated analysis that retains the empirical clarity of the ideational tradition while capturing the dynamic, rhetorical, and affective dimensions of populist practice.

Returning to the threefold definition of the PRR party family, the concepts of nativism and authoritarianism must be introduced alongside populism. The foundation for this conceptualization is provided by Cas Mudde’s (2007) maximal definition of the populist radical right, which conceptualizes the PRR as a coherent ideological formation (p. 22). Together, these elements structure how PRR parties interpret the world: nativism informs their exclusionary nationalism, authoritarianism shapes their preference for order and hierarchy, and populism

drives their antagonistic view of politics as a struggle between the pure people and a corrupt elite.

Nationalism, within this framework, is not understood as a vague cultural sentiment but as a political doctrine that seeks to align the territorial boundaries of the state with a culturally homogeneous national community. This objective involves two principal processes: internal homogenization, which aims to eliminate diversity within the state through mechanisms such as assimilation or exclusion, and external exclusiveness, which aspires to unite all members of the national group within the state's borders, often through expansionist claims (Mudde, 2007, pp. 16-17). However, because nationalism can take on multiple forms, including ethnic, cultural, and civic variants, it lacks the conceptual precision necessary to serve as the defining feature of the PRR party family. In order to overcome this limitation, Mudde introduces nativism as a more specific and analytically useful concept.

Nativism refers to the belief that states should be inhabited exclusively by members of the native group, and that all non-native individuals, practices, or ideas are inherently threatening to the integrity of the nation-state. It combines elements of nationalism and xenophobia while rejecting more inclusive or civic understandings of national identity. Importantly, it also accounts for context-specific forms of exclusion, including hostility toward indigenous minorities or perceived ideological outsiders (Mudde, 2007, pp. 18-19). As such, nativism offers a clear and consistent conceptual tool for identifying PRR actors, even in contexts where immigration is not a politically salient issue.

Closely connected to this exclusionary logic is authoritarianism, the third core component of the party family. Authoritarianism refers to a normative preference for a hierarchically ordered society rooted in authority, obedience, and discipline. It presumes that social cohesion depends on respecting established rules and leadership, and that deviations from prevailing norms should be met with harsh responses. Within the discourse of PRR parties, authoritarianism often manifests in demands for strict criminal justice policies, uncompromising immigration enforcement, and the defence of traditional moral values (Mudde, 2007, p. 22). Together with nativism, authoritarianism reinforces a worldview in which threats from both internal and external sources are addressed through control and exclusion rather than negotiation or deliberation.

These three components do not simply coexist but interact in a mutually reinforcing manner that produces a distinct ideological profile. Populism introduces a vertical logic grounded in anti-elitism and the sovereignty of the people, nativism provides a horizontal logic centred on national exclusiveness, and authoritarianism contributes a disciplinary logic concerned with order, obedience, and conformity. This threefold configuration serves as a robust analytical framework for identifying and comparing PRR actors across diverse national and political settings. While individual parties may differ in their relative emphasis or rhetorical style, it is this specific combination of populism, nativism, and authoritarianism that binds them together into a coherent party family. Therefore, and following Mudde's approach, this thesis adopts the term populist radical right to capture both the ideological substance and political distinctiveness of these actors.

## 3.2 PRR Party Relations to Russia

This chapter offers a brief overview of the known ties between selected parties and the Putin regime, laying the groundwork for understanding the broader dynamics of how the European PRR has engaged with, benefited from, or distanced itself from Russia pre- and post-invasion

in 2022. Although the relationship between the PRR and Russia is well-documented, it is important to recognize that its nature and intensity vary considerably across national contexts and individual parties. It cannot be uniformly applied to all PRR actors included in the dataset of this thesis.

Before the Russian invasion of Ukraine, the relationship between PRRPs and Russia was shaped by a combination of ideological affinity, strategic alignment, and in some instances, material cooperation (Ivaldi et al., 2023, pp. 18-19). This dynamic has often been described as a “marriage of convenience” (Makarychev & Terry, 2020, p. 24). Meaning that PRR parties have looked to Russia as both a symbolic and strategic partner in their opposition to liberal transnationalism, while the Kremlin has actively cultivated these connections to expand its influence within the EU and challenge the liberal international order. PRR actors across Europe have expressed open admiration for Vladimir Putin’s leadership style, authoritarian governance, and defence of conservative values such as Christianity, national sovereignty, and traditional family structures (Klapisis, 2015, p. 137). This admiration was rooted in shared opposition to liberal democracy, multiculturalism, Western/American influence, and ultimately the European Union (Ivaldi et al., 2023, p. 19). However, Moscow generally approached such connections with caution, viewing them as useful disruptors of EU unity rather than dependable political allies (Makarychev & Terry, 2020, pp. 23-37).

In several cases, ideological alignment between European PRRPs and the Kremlin was deepened through institutional cooperation and financial ties. France’s *Rassemblement National* and Italy’s *Lega*, for example, signed formal cooperation agreements with Russian actors and received funding from Kremlin-linked financial institutions (Ivaldi et al., 2023, pp. 19-21). Austria’s *FPÖ* also established formal ties with United Russia through a 2016 cooperation agreement and has consistently promoted pro-Kremlin foreign policy positions, including defending the annexation of Crimea, opposing EU sanctions on Russia, and calling for Austria to maintain neutrality in the Ukraine conflict. Party leaders have repeatedly praised Vladimir Putin’s leadership and framed Western policies, particularly those from Brussels and Washington, as provocations that harm Austrian interests (Heinisch & Hofmann, 2023, pp. 37-39). Several other PRR parties also collaborated with Russian media outlets such as *Russia Today* to amplify Eurosceptic narratives. In turn, the Kremlin benefited from their support, which contributed to the external legitimization of its regime (Carlotti, 2023, pp. 1453-1455).

During the 2010s, Viktor Orbán's *Fidesz* government cultivated ties with Russia through high-level diplomatic visits, long-term energy deals (including Russian gas and the Paks nuclear power plant expansion), and repeated political gestures of goodwill toward the Kremlin. Putin became a regular guest in Budapest, and Orbán emerged as his most reliable ally within the EU. This relationship provided Hungary with economic advantages and offered Orbán a model of centralized, authoritarian governance that could be symbolically echoed at home (Ádám, 2023, pp. 174-181). Northern European parties such as the *Sweden Democrats* and the *Danish People’s Party* remained comparatively reserved. While individual members occasionally expressed pro-Russian sentiments, party leaderships generally avoided formal alignment particularly as Russian foreign policy became more controversial within European public opinion (Meret, 2023, p. 111; Bolin, 2023, pp. 305-308). These cases highlight the diversity of PRR approaches to Russia, shaped by domestic political dynamics, electoral strategies, and evolving perceptions of Russia’s international legitimacy.

The described “marriage of convenience” between PRR parties in Europe and the Russian regime experienced a very sudden divorce following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. Longstanding admiration for Vladimir Putin and alignment with Kremlin geopolitical

narratives placed numerous PRR actors under intense political and reputational pressure, as the invasion reshaped both European security and migration debates within national and European institutions (Carlotti, 2023, p. 1455). This rupture forced PRR parties to adapt their messaging and recalibrate political agendas, raising important questions about their strategic responses to the crisis and their positioning within shifting national and EU-level contexts.

Several scholars have already mapped the diversity of PRR reactions to the war (for examples see Albertazzi et al., 2022, Albertazzi 2022, Carlotti, 2023; Ivaldi et al., 2023). Since comprehensive analyses are available, this section offers only a brief overview to illustrate the broader structural shifts in the relationship between PRR parties and Russia. Responses varied significantly not only across countries, but also within them, and even within individual parties suggesting a spectrum of strategic recalibrations rather than unified ideological reorientations (Ivaldi et al., 2023, pp. 348-355).

A substantial number of PRR parties condemned the invasion and distanced themselves from Putin. Marine Le Pen, for instance, accused Russia of breaking the equilibrium of peace in Europe, while Giorgia Meloni embraced a firmly pro-Ukrainian position and leveraged the crisis to enhance her credibility on the international stage. Similar shifts occurred among the Sweden Democrats, VOX in Spain, and Chega in Portugal, who signalled moderation on European integration while reaffirming their sovereigntist credentials (Ibid., p. 350). In contrast, other parties maintained or intensified their pro-Russian rhetoric, particularly in Eastern Europe. Fidesz in Hungary portrayed the conflict as a geopolitical clash in which small states had no strategic interest, placing blame on NATO and the EU while opposing sanctions. Austria's FPÖ echoed this stance, framing sanctions as economically self-defeating and redirecting blame toward Brussels (Ivaldi et al., 2023, pp. 349-352). Orbán's government, while formally condemning the invasion, remained closely aligned with Kremlin narratives and used the crisis to deepen Hungary's position as a defiant outlier within the EU (Ádám, 2023, pp. 174-181).

These divides were particularly visible in debates on sanctions and military aid. Meloni's FdI and the Finns Party supported robust action against Russia, while actors like the FPÖ, Czech SPD, and Fidesz framed sanctions as ineffective and economically harmful. Meanwhile, parties such as the AfD and Chega redirected attention to domestic economic grievances, blaming national governments and EU elites for inflation and rising energy prices (Ivaldi et al., 2023, pp. 353-354).

Overall, the war has prompted uneven but meaningful shifts in PRR discourse on Russia, foreign policy, and migration. While these parties have not fundamentally abandoned their ideological foundations, they have shown considerable capacity to adapt under pressure. Scholars describe this as a chameleon-like responsiveness to public sentiment (Albertazzi, 2022), reflecting a blend of strategic flexibility and selective repositioning. Rather than signalling a deep ideological transformation, this realignment underscores the PRR's ability to navigate volatile discursive environments and reframe crises to maintain political relevance.

## 4. Framing Migration - Conceptualizing the Dependent Variable

### 4.1 Populist Radical Right Discourse on Migration

The topic of migration lends itself exceptionally well to the triadic logic of PRR ideology explored in the chapters above: populism, nativism and authoritarianism (Mudde, 2007). In this configuration, migrants are cast as external intruders who not only endanger the cultural and economic well-being of the native population but are also perceived to have been brought in, protected, or prioritized by disloyal elites. Migration thus serves as a prism through which PRR parties can simultaneously activate populist anti-elitism and exclusionary nationalism. This enhances the emotional and political resonance of their narratives, allowing PRR actors to portray themselves as the sole defenders of the “real people” against both distant institutions and dangerous outsiders. It is precisely this discursive versatility that makes migration a uniquely effective vehicle for PRR mobilization and electoral success.

The salience of migration politics in PRR discourse is best understood through the lens of the transnational cleavage developed by Hooghe & Marks (2018), which the authors frame as a fundamental transformation in European politics, extending the historical cleavage theory identified by Lipset and Rokkan (1967). This newly proposed cleavage opposes integration, cosmopolitanism, and supranational governance to the advocacy of demarcation, national sovereignty, and cultural protectionism. It creates a distinction between Traditional-Authoritarian-Nationalist (TAN) and Green-Alternative-Libertarian (GAL) policy stances situating PRR parties at the TAN pole of this divide, mobilizing resistance against the perceived erosion of national identity and sovereignty caused by European integration, immigration, and globalization (Hooghe & Marks, 2018, pp. 123-125).

Migration towards Europe, in the context of this cleavage, is not merely a policy issue but a symbolic battleground through which actors defend a vision of the homogenous nation-state versus external intrusions and elite cosmopolitanism. The 2015 Schengen crisis exemplified how certain exogenous shocks like extreme masses of refugee influx can activate and polarize the transnational cleavage (Hooghe & Marks, 2018, pp. 116-118). This process is not solely the result of strategic messaging but also reflects deeper structural dynamics, particularly the tension between the EU’s ongoing jurisdictional integration and the continued prominence of nationally bounded identities. Hooghe & Marks (2009) refer to this tension as a “constraining dissensus” (p. 5), wherein intensified integration provokes backlash from voters who feel culturally and politically left behind. The politicization of migration, particularly during periods of crisis, has created political opportunities for right-wing populist actors to mobilize exclusive nationalist identities and narratives of cultural insecurity. These actors have positioned themselves as defenders of a nationalist vision of Europe in opposition to liberal and multicultural norms, using migration as a discursive arena to contest European integration and elite authority (Börzel & Risse, 2018, pp. 99-101).

PRR parties have responded to this crisis-induced opportunity window during the 2015 refugee influx by embedding migration exclusively from the Middle East and Africa into broader narratives of loss, betrayal, and cultural decline. Rather than treating migration as an isolated and exogenous issue, these parties have used it to articulate a wider critique of European liberal elites, supranational institutions, and multicultural norms. The Schengen crisis marked a distinct point in this strategy by enabling the transformation of elite-level policy debates into emotionally resonant mass-political conflicts (Hooghe & Marks, 2018, p. 113).

Through identity-based grievances, PRR actors portrayed refugees as threats to national populations and elites as complicit, mobilizing discontent particularly among citizens experiencing perceived social or cultural deprivation (Hameleers, 2019, p. 806; Kriesi et al., 2024, p. 271-278). This discursive logic has often been accompanied by a deliberately transgressive style of communication, in which PRR actors reject elite norms of political decorum, rely on emotional antagonism, and seek to disrupt the boundaries of mainstream discourse (see Moffitt, 2016, pp. 55-57; Wodak, 2015, p.1; Weyland, 2017, pp. 74-93; Casullo & Colalongo, 2022, p. 80). In this context, migration served not only as a policy concern but as a discursive tool for constructing symbolic boundaries between “us” and the threatening “them,” reinforcing national belonging and legitimizing exclusionary demands (Hameleers, 2019, p. 809).

In sum, migration politics is not simply one among many policy issues for PRR parties; it is a foundational terrain of meaning-making and boundary-setting. It enables the construction of clear-cut oppositions between in-groups and out-groups, aligns with the ideological core of the PRR project, and offers a politically productive frame through which to articulate wider critiques of liberal democracy, supranational governance, and elite complicity. Understanding the centrality of migration to PRR discourse requires close attention to the role of identity politics in shaping both public attitudes and institutional responses. It is precisely this interplay between ideational resonance, political and discursive opportunity, and argumentative construction that secures migration’s place at the heart of contemporary right-wing populism in Europe.

However, this well-established discursive logic was disrupted by the refugee movements triggered by Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. The unprecedented scale and speed of the EU’s response to the Ukrainian refugee influx, marked by the activation of the TPD and significant institutional and financial mobilization, stood in stark contrast to earlier responses to forced displacement such as the 2015 Schengen crisis (Giancaspro & Lucenti, 2024). This moment of apparent European solidarity also created new discursive opportunities and constraints for political actors, particularly for those whose platforms have long relied on restrictive immigration stances and nationalist rhetoric. Among these actors, populist radical right parties faced a complex political landscape. Not only did they have to confront a humanitarian emergency in which many refugees were perceived as culturally proximate to receiving societies (Giancaspro & Lucenti, 2024, p. 12), but they were also navigating a media environment that framed Ukrainian refugees in very positive terms (for examples see Bahtić-Kunrath & Gebauer, 2023; Geddes, 2023; Moise et al., 2024).

The refugee narrative of crisis in 2015 had drastically changed to one of European solidarity (Bahtić-Kunrath & Gebauer, 2023, p. 35). Unlike previous crises, where displaced populations were frequently portrayed through threat-based or security-oriented frames based on racist stereotypes (Giancaspro & Lucenti, 2024, p. 4), media coverage of Ukrainian refugees largely avoided depictions of security risk, criminality, or economic harm, and instead emphasized logistical aspects such as settlement and resettlement (Roman et al., 2020, pp. 7-9). This framing limited the rhetorical space for alarmist narratives and further complicated the strategic positioning of radical right parties vis-à-vis the EU’s expansive refugee protection measures. Underpinning this shift is a racialized hierarchy of refugee representation, in which white, Christian Ukrainians are positioned above refugees from other regions such as the Middle East or Africa (Giancaspro & Lucenti, 2024, p. 4). This hierarchy is reinforced not only by media framing but also by differentiated political responses, reflecting both cultural proximity and deeply embedded racist beliefs within European societies.

While PRR parties have long relied on securitizing and identity-based narratives to politicize migration from the Middle East and Africa, the Russian invasion of Ukraine disrupted these established patterns. The reception of Ukrainian refugees, framed largely through solidarity rather than threat, challenged the usability of prior discursive strategies. These baseline frames that are frequently used in migration discourses will be explored in the next chapter.

## 4.2 Frames in Migration Discourse - Towards a Baseline Typology

While the previous section demonstrated the general centrality of migration issues to PRR discourse, this chapter introduces framing as the analytical lens through which such discourse can be systematically examined. Framing, as a concept, has been widely used across disciplines such as communication studies, psychology, and political science. Despite its broad application, the term itself remains inconsistently defined and is often contested across these various academic fields (Entman, 1993, p. 51). Since both frames and the process of framing play a central role in shaping political discourse by influencing how issues are perceived, judged, and responded to this study begins by outlining a clear conceptual foundation. According to Entman (1993), to frame is

*“to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation” (p. 52).*

A further distinction can be made between two types of frames: frames in communication, which refer to the way an issue is emphasized within a message, and frames in thought, which describe the mental structures individuals use to make sense of said issue (Chong & Druckman, 2007, p. 104). This thesis concentrates on frames in communication, focusing specifically on how political actors highlight certain aspects of an issue in their public messaging. In addition to this first distinction, framing should not be understood solely as the selection of content. It is better described as an ongoing and active process of interpretation (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, pp. 97-99). Framing enables individuals to make sense of complex or ambiguous situations by highlighting certain elements, constructing narratives, and defining problems and solutions. This process is shaped by interaction, power relations, institutional contexts, and the identities of those involved. It is not merely a tool of persuasion but a mechanism that determines which interpretations gain visibility, whose voices are heard, and which responses appear legitimate (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, pp. 102-103). Framing is a process of selective emphasis that shapes how issues are understood and what solutions are seen as appropriate. It also helps individuals make sense of complex or ambiguous situations by identifying and simplifying problems, selecting key elements, and constructing meaningful narratives (Entman, 1993, pp. 52-53, pp. 102-103).

Political opinions are not fixed but constructed from the most accessible and salient considerations available to individuals (Chong & Druckmann, 2007, pp. 105-106). Framing effects occur when the same underlying information is presented in different ways and leads to significantly different evaluations by the public. These effects are shaped and constrained by influences such as mass media, political elites, and the broader social context, all of which determine which perspectives become dominant and successful in public debate (Chong & Druckmann, 2007, pp. 110-111). At the same time, public opinion is not simply manipulated through framing, but also shaped by a capacity for learning, resistance, and reinterpretation under certain conditions. In this way, framing is not only about communication but also about how individuals and societies come to understand and evaluate political issues based on the perspectives they are exposed to and the beliefs they hold (Chong & Druckmann, 2007, p.

104). While these dynamics suggest that some frames may generate stronger framing effects or achieve greater resonance than others, this study does not assess the reception or persuasive success of specific frames. Rather, it focuses solely on explaining the selection of frames, without evaluating their downstream impact on audiences or public opinion.

In the case of refugee/asylum policy, frames do not just define problems or recommend solutions; they fundamentally structure how political actors construct the relationship between the host society and those seeking refuge (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a, p. 3). The willingness to admit refugees is contingent upon how this relational distinction is articulated in public discourse. Frames therefore operate by linking distinct self-definitions of national identity (the “we”) to particular characterizations of refugees (“them”). These definitions are informed by historically and ideologically rooted “cultural repertoires” that vary across countries and party traditions (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a, pp.3-4). In this sense, framing refugee reception is not simply about issue interpretation but about the symbolic boundary work that determines inclusion and exclusion in the imagined national community.

The analysis of this thesis is based on the frame typology developed by Drewski and Gerhards (2024a), who argue that political discourse surrounding refugee admission revolves around two central questions: who “we” are and who “they” are. Given that premise, the authors identify six overarching frames in the literature that structure public debate on refugees and host societies: economic, cultural, moral, legal, security, and international. These frames are conceptually neutral but become politically meaningful through the way actors draw on ideologies, collective memories, and narratives to define both the in-group and the out-group (Drewski and Gerhards, 2024a, pp. 11-12). This typology was chosen for the present analysis because it is explicitly developed to examine political discourse, offers a generalisable structure, and captures the relational dimension of identity that is central to understanding how political actors construct refugee-related narratives in institutional contexts such as parliamentary debates. Other framing typologies offer useful insights, but most focus on media framing or civil society perspectives (see Bahtić-Kunrath & Gebauer, 2023; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Drewski & Gerhards, 2024b). These approaches are less suited for analysing structured, institutional political communication. In contrast, Drewski and Gerhards (2024a) provide a conceptually grounded typology centred on identity constructions and policy narratives, making it the most appropriate framework for this study.

Each frame that was deducted from the chosen typology was then coded and divided into subcodes that reflect specific aspects of the discourse at hand. An extensive outline of the Codebook can be found in later chapters and Appendix A. The following section shortly outlines each frame.

The international frame highlights how political parties define their country's and the EU's role in the global context, either as key players in refugee protection or as entities burdened by external pressures. This perspective considers the host nation's position in relation to the refugees' home countries and third-party states, as well as the obligations that arise from these connections (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a, p. 19). It can serve to support arguments for accepting refugees, emphasizing solidarity and shared responsibility, or to justify restrictive policies by prioritizing national sovereignty.

The security frame gained significant prominence during the 2015 Schengen crisis, when it shaped much of the refugee discourse across elite debates, mass media, and online platforms (Kovář, 2022, 2024) and was frequently discussed in relation to securitization theory (Wodak, 2015). Particularly PRR parties portrayed refugees as potential threats to public safety, linking



them to crime, disorder, and terrorism. This frame defines the host society as law-abiding and orderly, while framing refugees as a security risk to the host nation (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a, p. 19).

The legal frame emphasizes the legal dimensions of refugee protection, asylum rights, and national sovereignty in relation to migration policies. It reflects the tension between a state's right to control its borders and its obligations under international human rights and refugee law, particularly the principle of non-refoulement. Especially the extent to which adherence to international law is seen as part of a nation's identity influences the handling of refugee policies under this frame (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a, p. 18).

The cultural frame emphasizes national identity by outlining historical roots, ethnic composition, language, religion, traditions, and values of the host country. It influences whether refugees are perceived as culturally compatible or incompatible with the host society, which in turn affects arguments for either their acceptance or exclusion. A more exclusive view, based on ethnocultural nationalism, sees the nation as a homogeneous community, portraying refugees as outsiders who may disrupt this unity. In contrast, civic nationalism defines belonging through shared commitment to the state, allowing for a more inclusive perspective (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a, pp. 13-16).

The economic frame defines refugees in terms of their financial impact, either as an economic burden or as contributors to society, conversely as the impact that the admission of refugees will have on the socioeconomic status and development of the respective country (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a, pp. 12-14).

The moral frame presents refugees through an ethical and humanitarian lens, emphasizing moral responsibility and selective solidarity. It portrays them as vulnerable individuals in need of protection, appealing to compassion and empathy. This frame focusses on emotional and subjective responses to those seeking refuge (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a, p.17). Beyond its general ethical orientation, the moral frame is strongly shaped by emotionally charged language that seeks to evoke affective responses in the listener.

### 4.3 Extending the Coding Scheme - the Blame Frame

During the coding process, an additional category, the "blame frame," (see Table I) was additionally introduced to the typology to account for statements that did not fit into the original set of theoretically predefined frames. This adjustment followed the first round of coding, when it became clear that a substantial number of statements could not be adequately captured by the existing categories. Initially, many of these were placed under the international frame, which encompasses criticism of the EU's handling of refugee policy, burden-sharing, and international responsibilities. However, this frame proved too limited to reflect the nature of statements that went beyond general policy critique and instead directly or indirectly assigned responsibility to specific actors. These included accusations directed at the European Commission, individual member states, or other institutional actors, portraying them as the cause of the refugee situation, governance failures, or broader systemic breakdowns. To systematically capture this recurring pattern of explicit blame attribution, the "blame frame" was established as a distinct analytical category.

The blame frame differs from the international frame in its explicit focus on identifying and holding particular actors accountable for perceived failures or crises. Rather than broadly discussing the EU's role in refugee governance or emphasizing the socioeconomic pressures

refugees may pose to host countries, statements coded under the blame frame directly accuse institutions, governments, or political groups of causing or worsening the refugee situation.

The construction of “we” in the blame frame is notably fluid but inherently tied to populist discourse. The “we” is often cast as “the people” pitted against elites, bureaucrats, or distant institutions. Refugees themselves are not presented as primary antagonists, but as symptomatic of elite mismanagement, an unintended or even intended consequence of failed governance. This structure enables populist actors to displace hostility from vulnerable groups toward powerful decision-makers, maintaining populist anti-elitism while avoiding overt xenophobia. In doing so, the blame frame becomes a vehicle for the populist performance of crisis: it identifies a failure, personalizes responsibility, and reaffirms the populist actor as the bearer of simple solutions to a politically manufactured threat (Moffitt, 2015, pp. 198-208).

This can also be traced back to more general research on PRR discourse: when nativist discourse loses traction, PRR parties often recalibrate their messaging by shifting blame toward domestic and supranational elites. This shift is evident in findings that show rhetorical focus moving away from migrants and toward those accused of mismanaging crises or threatening civil liberties (Schwörer & Fernández-García, 2022, pp. 5-7). Rather than being a fallback strategy, elite-directed blame emerges as a core element of populist adaptability. As Simonsen (2024, pp. 2-3) shows, this form of blame attribution can take both direct and indirect forms, ranging from explicit accusations to more subtle insinuations.

Populist actors identify failures, rhetorically amplify them, and attribute responsibility to constructed, distant “elites”, thereby presenting themselves as the only legitimate representatives of the proximate “people” (Hinterleitner et al., 2024, pp. 6-7). In this context, the blame frame functions both as part of a discursive strategy and a performative act: it manufactures crisis and politicizes it through targeted attribution. Particularly when nativist appeals are constrained or electorally risky, blame serves to maintain the core populist antagonism between the people and the elite (Hinterleitner et al., 2024, p. 12). Rather than

<b><i>Frame</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<b><i>Economic</i></b>	Defines refugees in terms of financial impact—either as a burden on welfare and job markets or as contributors to economic growth and labor needs.
<b><i>Cultural</i></b>	Focuses on national identity and cultural compatibility. Frames refugees as either disrupting a homogeneous (ethnic) national culture or as assimilable under civic national values.
<b><i>Moral</i></b>	Uses ethical reasoning and emotional appeals to present refugees as vulnerable and deserving of compassion. Emphasizes humanitarian obligations and moral duty.
<b><i>Legal</i></b>	Centers on the tension between national sovereignty and (international) law. Focuses on legal obligations such as non-refoulement and asylum rights.
<b><i>Security</i></b>	Frames refugees as threats to public safety, social order, or national security, linked to crime, terrorism, or border control failures.
<b><i>International</i></b>	Positions refugee reception in a global context, referencing international solidarity, burden-sharing, or national sovereignty. May emphasize cooperation or external pressure.
<b><i>Blame (added)</i></b>	Attributes responsibility for refugee crises or policy failures to specific actors e.g., the EU, national governments, or elites. Central to populist crisis narratives that pit “the people” against “the elite.”

**Table I. Typology of Refugee-related Frames**

being merely compatible with populist rhetoric, the blame frame constitutes a central expression of it: enabling strategic flexibility while reinforcing its fundamental binary logic.

The proposed framing typology (see Table I) can be grouped into two overarching categories: procedural and objective frames including economic, legal, and international frames and more subjective and emotionally driven frames, such as the moral, cultural, security, and blame frames. While emotionally charged language can, at times, be found across all frame types depending on the speaker and context, the most emotionally provocative rhetoric, polarizing statements, and vivid imagery were predominantly concentrated in the second category. Especially in the case of moral and blame frames, the discourse is shaped by affective language designed to provoke reactions, assign responsibility, or appeal to shared values and fears. These subjective frames are thus more oriented toward symbolic and emotional persuasion, whereas the procedural frames are characterized by more technical, rule-based, or interest-driven reasoning. This distinction holds true for most cases in the corpus, though some variation exists across parties and speakers.

## 5. Theoretical Framework

### 5.1 Strategic Framing and Frame Alignment

This chapter theoretically engages with the central research observation that PRRPs in the EP adopted divergent frames in their discourse on Ukrainian refugees, despite belonging to the same ideological family, operating within a shared institutional context, and responding to a common external crisis. To explain this observation this thesis draws on the dynamic understanding of framing but anchors it more specifically in the conflict and power-oriented tradition of framing theory. From this perspective, framing determines what the political game is about and thereby influences the distribution of power (Daviter, 2007, p.656). Frames shape the formation of coalitions, affect access to policy venues, and can drive institutional change. Strategic reframing, has the potential to shift debates, enable major policy transformations by introducing new ways of seeing a problem or make unheard voices heard (Dodge & Metze, 2024, pp. 247-250). It is this strategic and competitive logic of framing, focused on how meaning shapes political outcomes, that provides the conceptual foundation for this analysis.

While many studies focus on the influence of media framing on public opinion (for examples see Bahtić-Kunrath & Gebauer, 2023; Dirikx & Gelders, 2010; Drewski & Gerhards, 2024; Heidenreich et al., 2019; Wildemann et al., 2023) or frames in social media discourse (for examples see Gruzd et al., 2024; Hameleers, 2019; Kiyak, Coninck, et al., 2024; Kiyak, Mertens, et al., 2024; Serafis et al., 2024) this study sheds light on the mechanisms of policy framing by political actors within the context of the European Parliament. Policy framing plays a crucial role in shaping how political issues are defined, contested, and managed within the European Union. Rather than being neutral facts, policy problems are constructed through competing interpretations that influence which actors gain influence, how coalitions are formed, and which policy venues are activated (Dodge & Metze, 2024, p. 247). The EU's fragmented institutional setup with its multiple decision-making arenas offers actors numerous opportunities to promote certain issue definitions and shift debates strategically. Framing processes do not merely initiate discussions but also shape how conflicts unfold, how institutional responsibilities are distributed, and how legitimacy is constructed. In the European Parliament, framing shapes coalition-building and opposition by redefining issues along symbolic or moral lines. These dynamics contribute to the broader politicization of EU policymaking, as reframing efforts serve to challenge dominant narratives, mobilize support, and redefine the terms of acceptable debate (Daviter, 2007, pp. 661-662).

As a result, this analysis assumes that political actors, particularly PRR parties, actively engage and structure their framing to advance power and political goals. This argumentation is in line with Snow and Benford (2000) that argue, framing is a strategic act of meaning-making, whereby actors select and organize ideas to resonate with target audiences, align with ideological narratives, and differentiate themselves from competitors. This process is not arbitrary but structured by the actors' ideological identity, communicative goals, and previous discursive trajectories (Benford & Snow, 2000, pp. 624-625).

However, framing is shaped and constrained by discursive opportunity structures: the cultural norms, institutional logics, and audience expectations that determine which frames are likely to resonate with their target audience and which are likely to provoke backlash (Benford & Snow, 2000, p. 628; Polletta & Ho, 2009, p. 23). These constraints are particularly salient in the European Parliament, where PRR parties operate within a transnational institutional arena and must tailor their messaging to both national and supranational audiences. This strategic dimension of framing is also deeply intertwined with reputational concerns. Actors do not

merely choose frames for cognitive or ideological consistency; they select them to manage legitimacy, avoid stigma, and signal alignment with broader institutional norms. Especially in high-stakes arenas like the European Parliament, where parties seek both national legitimacy and transnational relevance, framing becomes a key tool for navigating discursive constraints while preserving core ideological commitments (Oswald, 2019, p. 38). The effects of discursive opportunity structures on frame choice and resonance will be explored in greater depth later.

To understand how PRR parties recalibrate their discourse under shifting political conditions, or as will be further detailed in the next section: discursive opportunity structures, it is useful to apply the concept of frame alignment processes (Benford & Snow, 2000; Snow et al., 1986). Originally formulated in the context of social movements, these mechanisms provide a powerful lens through which to analyse how political actors adapt their messaging to ideological, institutional, and audience-specific constraints. Rather than treating frames as fixed reflections of belief systems, the frame alignment perspective emphasizes framing as a strategic, dynamic, and interactional process (Snow & Benford, 2000, pp. 624-625).

*Frame alignment* refers to the ways in which actors seek to bring their interpretive frameworks into alignment with those of their target audiences, while preserving core political goals. The authors identify four primary mechanisms: *bridging*, *amplification*, *extension*, and *transformation* (Snow & Benford, 2000, p. 624), each of which offers insight into the rhetorical strategies employed by PRR parties in the European Parliament.

These mechanisms, summarized in in Table II, are best understood as ideal-type lenses that structure interpretive analysis. Each one reveals how PRR actors strategically adjust their rhetorical strategies to balance ideological consistency with contextual responsiveness.

<b><i>Mechanism</i></b>	<b><i>What it is</i></b>	<b><i>Why it matters for PRR frame choice</i></b>
<b><i>Frame Amplification</i></b>	Intensifying or reasserting core values	Enables PRR parties to draw from core ideological values to enhance certain aspects of an issue
<b><i>Frame Bridging</i></b>	Connecting new issues to existing, ideologically aligned discourses (retrospective)	Enables PRR parties to draw on familiar narratives when addressing refugee issues
<b><i>Frame Extension</i></b>	Broadening the scope of a frame to link it with new issues (extensive)	Allows refugee discourse to be linked with adjacent topics like health, security, or foreign policy
<b><i>Frame Transformation</i></b>	Redefining the meaning of an issue in new terms	Helps explain shifts in framing strategies to adapt to new political realities

**Table II. Frame Alignment Mechanisms**

Frame bridging refers to the practice of connecting a current issue with earlier topics or themes that a party has already emphasized in the past. Instead of coming up with new arguments, parties reuse familiar messages and ideas to explain new situations (Snow et al., 1986, pp. 467-469). For example, they may draw on past criticisms of the European Union's border or asylum policies and apply them to the Ukrainian refugee context. Frame amplification is about making certain values or emotions stand out more clearly. Political actors highlight what they already believe in and try to make it resonate more strongly with the public (Snow et al., 1986, pp. 469-472). This can involve focusing on shared cultural identity, religion, or moral duty. In refugee discourse, this often means emphasizing compassion and solidarity with

specific groups like women and children or a focus on security issues when debating about immigrant groups from for example the Middle East. Frame extension allows political actors to broaden the topic and connect it to other issues that people care about. This helps them gain wider support or shift the conversation (Snow et al., 1986, pp. 472-473). For instance, they may link refugee movements to discussions about national security, health issues like the Covid-19 crisis, or the economy, issues that are often already on the political agenda and highly salient. Frame transformation happens when actors change the way an issue is talked about entirely. Instead of sticking with older, possibly controversial messages, they adapt their language and ideas to make them more acceptable in a new political environment (Snow et al., 1986, pp.473-476). In the case of PRR parties, this might mean avoiding openly xenophobic language and instead framing their concerns in terms of legality, fairness, or humanitarian responsibility.

Taken together, these four frame alignment mechanisms (see Table II) offer a nuanced and theory-driven vocabulary to interpret how PRR parties adapted their refugee discourse in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. They highlight that while frame content varies, the strategic logic of alignment remains consistent: to legitimize claims, mobilize support, and negotiate constraints while maintaining ideological coherence.

## 5.2 Discursive Opportunity Structures and Reputational Constraints

While this study adopts a strategic framing lens to analyse how PRR parties select and adapt their frames, it also recognizes that such strategies are embedded within influencing environments that shape and change the way parties frame issues. The literature calls these discursive environments *discursive opportunity structures*. While strategic framing approaches emphasize the agency of political actors in shaping meaning, it is essential to recognize that framing does not occur in a vacuum. This introduces a conceptual tension between framing as a strategic act of meaning-making (Benford & Snow, 2000; Daviter, 2007) and framing choices that are shaped and constrained by the broader discursive environment, which influences not only what can be said, but also how it can be presented credibly within specific institutional, cultural, or political settings (Koopmans & Statham, 1999, pp. 227–229). Rather than resolving this tension in favour of one approach, this study adopts a synthetic framework that integrates both perspectives.

The concept of discursive opportunity structures captures the dynamic of constrained framing choice by referring to the symbolic and cultural conditions that determine which frames are perceived as visible, legitimate, and resonant. Unlike purely institutional models of political opportunity, which emphasize access to power and alignments of elites, discursive opportunity structures highlight the fit between a frame's content and the dominant cultural narratives of a society. They help explain why some frames gain traction while others fail, even in contexts with similar formal structures. The idea of discursive opportunity structures extends beyond access to visibility or media presence, to include resonance with public norms and cultural codes. Therefore, strategic frame choice must be understood as a process of negotiating resonance within a given political culture, where symbolic legitimacy can be as important as institutional access (Koopmans & Statham, 1999).

Traditional political opportunity models<sup>2</sup> tend to overlook how opportunity structures may differentially enable or constrain movements based on their discourse. Discursive opportunity structures address this shortcoming by examining the cultural sensibility of frames, meaning what ideas are considered reasonable, what claims are deemed legitimate, and how reality is

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<sup>2</sup> See Kriesi, 2007; Kriesi et al., 1995

socially constructed in a particular polity at a given time. This perspective acknowledges the growing convergence between institutional and symbolic dimensions of mobilization, where framing success depends on alignment with the prevailing definitions of national identity, historical memory, and public norms (Koopmans & Muis, 2009, p. 647). Discursive opportunity structures thus operate at the intersection of institutional access and meaning making, offering a conceptual bridge between political opportunity theory and framing theory. They are especially relevant in multilevel governance contexts like the EU, where institutional venues vary not only in their procedural logic but also in their cultural receptiveness to particular claims (Daviter, 2007, pp.655-657).

While political actors may have clear strategic preferences, the effectiveness of their framing ultimately depends on whether it aligns with the discursive boundaries of the context in which they operate (Koopmans & Muis, 2009, p. 647). In the European Parliament, these constraints are especially pronounced. PRR parties must not only address their domestic constituencies but also navigate a supranational arena governed by its own norms of legitimacy, reputational standards, and communicative expectations. The European Union's multilevel governance further fragments the discursive landscape. Each institutional venue, such as the Commission, the Council, and the Parliament, presents different incentives and barriers that require actors to recalibrate their strategies depending on the forum and audience (Daviter, 2007, p. 660-661). For PRR parties, this creates a complex rhetorical terrain. Messages that resonate within national debates, may encounter resistance in the European Parliament. Importantly, discourse is not just a medium of communication but a political site in itself. Through practices such as categorization, storytelling, and the framing of policy roles, actors engage in the construction of meaning that is shaped by power and positionality (Van Hulst & Yanow, 2016, p. 97-101). For PRR actors, this means crafting narratives that reinforce their ideological identity and appeal to domestic audiences while avoiding reputational risks within a supranational context that sanctions overt exclusionary or discriminatory rhetoric.

This leads to an important observation: PRR actors operate under asymmetric discursive constraints. While they all belong to the same party family, the costs and incentives of particular frames vary significantly depending on their national context, their previous record in refugee discourse, and their aspirations at the EU level. Parties embedded in politically polarized or heavily mediatized national environments face stronger reputational constraints against overt cultural or xenophobic framings than parties operating in more controlled or state-aligned discursive settings. Likewise, parties that were strongly associated with exclusionary or securitized discourse during the 2015 refugee crisis may now find it risky to reuse such frames. To avoid public backlash or inconsistency, they may opt for frame transformation or adopt legally or morally coded alternatives. Finally, parties that aspire to influence EU-level decision-making or seek recognition from mainstream actors may avoid inflammatory rhetoric in favour of institutional blame or procedural appeals. In contrast, parties that operate as ideological outsiders may find discursive marginalization less costly and therefore employ more polarizing rhetoric.

These patterns demonstrate that frame choice is not solely a reflection of ideology or mere coincidence. It is a response to what can be said without incurring reputational damage, what will be heard as credible, and what aligns with a party's strategic goals in multilevel arenas (Koopmans & Statham, 1999, pp. 227-229; Daviter, 2007, pp. 655-657). Variation in PRR refugee framing thus reflects not only ideological divergence but the strategic negotiation of discursive constraints. Framing becomes a site where parties simultaneously manage coherence, public legitimacy, and institutional positioning.

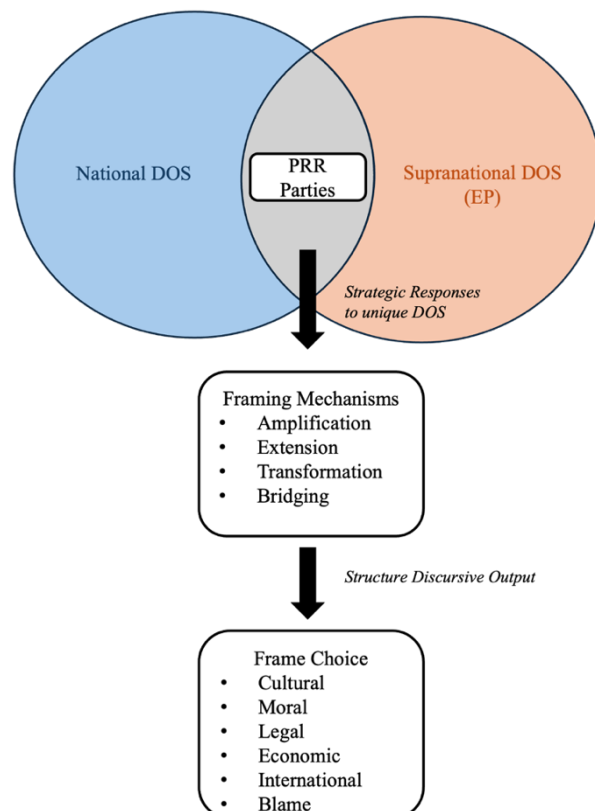
### 5.3 Expectations for Frame Variation - Mapping the Independent Variable

This thesis argues that variation in how PRR parties frame refugee issues is systematically shaped by the way they navigate discursive opportunity structures across national and supranational arenas. In the context of the EP, where political actors operate at the intersection of these overlapping fields, members of Parliament face distinct constraints, which shape what can be said and how it can be said. Rather than treating PRR actors as ideologically fixed or wholly audience-driven, this study conceptualizes them as strategic agents who adapt their rhetoric in response to perceived communicative limits and opportunities.

To explain how this adaptation unfolds, the thesis introduced four framing mechanisms: amplification, bridging, transformation, and extension. These mechanisms function as discursive strategies that mediate between structural constraints and rhetorical output. In the analytical framework, these mechanisms constitute the independent variable. The dependent variable is frame choice, operationalized as the types and frequencies of frames employed by parties in EP debates. This thesis first analyses refugee-related discourse in the EP and maps the frame usage across party actors. It then proceeds to interpret these frames retrospectively as strategic choices, aiming to identify which framing mechanisms were used by which actors. Frame variation is therefore theorized as the result of strategic decisions within a given discursive opportunity structure. This logic is visualized in Figure I and situates the analysis between *inferred framing strategy* and *empirically observed frame use*. It models how parties, situated between national and supranational constraints, draw on specific framing strategies to shape their parliamentary discourse.

To operationalize these theoretical expectations, the following section outlines how each framing mechanism is most likely to shape rhetorical output through the activation of specific frame types. These associations are not assumed a priori but are grounded in both prior research on PRR discourse and the patterns observed in the empirical material of this study. Each mechanism channels distinct strategic logics: some geared toward emotional intensification, others toward institutional alignment or issue expansion. Accordingly, they interact with different sets of frames in patterned ways.

It has to be noted that in this thesis the terms frame mechanisms and framing strategies are used interchangeably. Both refer to the discursive processes through which actors construct meaning, organize interpretation, and mobilize support around political issues. Additionally, it has to be noted that the proposed mechanisms are ideal-type lenses that structure the analysis of this thesis. The



**Figure I. Framing Dynamics of PRR Parties within Discursive Opportunity Structures**



categories are not mutually exclusive and overlap between them is both possible and expected. Individual frames can be activated by more than one mechanism, depending on the rhetorical function they serve in a given context.

Frame amplification, is hypothesized to intensify the core antagonisms of PRR discourse that have been outlined in the chapters above. Through deliberate escalation and emotional dramatization, the mechanism reinforces stark symbolic division pitting „the pure people“ against „the corrupt elite“ and national identity against perceived outsiders. Importantly, amplification does not merely elevate emotional resonance; it systematizes ideology. When mobilized within PRR discourse, it becomes a tool for reinforcing the movement's core ideological pillars: nativism, authoritarianism, and populism (Mudde, 2007), into an emotionally compelling and rhetorically cohesive narrative. By embedding these ideological pillars within frames such as cultural, security, and blame, amplification lends urgency, moral clarity, and affective intensity to otherwise complex political positions. It converts abstract ideological commitments into tangible, emotive crises that demand action. In this way, amplification functions not only to escalate rhetorical conflict but also to operationalize ideology in a politically expedient form.

Within the cultural frame, amplification allows PRR actors to portray refugees not as vulnerable individuals but as culturally incompatible outsiders who pose existential threats to national cohesion, values, and identity. These narratives often invoke imagery of Islamization, demographic 'replacement', or cultural decay, tapping into deep-seated anxieties about the erosion of a homogenous national culture. In the security frame, amplification constructs refugees as latent threats: criminals, terrorists, or carriers of disorder. Isolated incidents are generalized into systemic breakdowns, and speculative risks are presented as imminent certainties. The European Union is depicted as either incapable of protection or complicit in the erosion of internal security, thereby fuelling fear and legitimizing authoritarian responses. Under the blame frame, amplification redirects public outrage toward institutional actors deemed responsible for the presence of huge refugee inflows. The EU, national governments, and NGOs are accused of betraying „the people“ by prioritizing outsiders, eroding borders, and undermining sovereignty. These messages are typically charged with moral absolutism and accusatory maximalism, positioning PRR parties as the sole defenders of national interest against a treacherous elite.

In sum, frame amplification represents populist radical right discourse in its most emotionally charged and ideologically concentrated form. It is typically employed in discursive environments with few constraints, where invoking identity threats or moral panic offers political gains. However, in the context of the 2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis, amplification is expected to appear less frequently in the data. Unlike previous episodes such as the 2015 Schengen crisis, public support for Ukrainian refugees was markedly high at this time. Openly opposing this sentiment would have entailed significant reputational risks for PRR parties, potentially undermining their credibility and political legitimacy. As a result, overtly exclusionary or emotionally provocative rhetoric was likely avoided or strategically downplayed. Under such discursive conditions, amplification is assumed to have been a less viable and less commonly chosen framing mechanism.

Frame bridging can be understood as a mechanism of discursive adaptation through which PRR actors connect new developments to long-standing, well established narratives. Bridging emphasizes continuity. It enables actors to recontextualize emergent events within familiar scripts of threat, injustice, or betrayal, without altering the structure of their discursive repertoire. The goal within this strategy is not to expand but to reaffirm what is happening now

proves what was already said before. Bridging functions by linking current issues to previously emphasized discourses, allowing actors to reuse ideologically compatible frames to interpret new developments.

This mechanism is most closely associated with blame and legal frames. In the blame frame, bridging reactivates narratives of institutional failure and elite betrayal. PRR actors interpret the governance of Ukrainian refugee reception not as a distinct crisis, exogenous to the EU, but as part of a broader pattern of systemic dysfunction. The EU's and other member states handling of the crisis is portrayed as yet another failure in a long series, reminiscent of the 2015 refugee response, where national sovereignty was undermined, borders (especially in Eastern and Southern Europe) were left unguarded, and local citizens were deprioritized. Such framing suggests that the same actors and institutions continue to act against the will and interest of „the people“. In the legal and international frames, bridging is expected to serve as a mechanism through which PRR actors reinterpret current refugee-related developments as consistent with prior narratives of institutional bias, legal inconsistency, and geopolitical neglect. Rather than constructing new arguments, parties are likely to draw on earlier controversies such as the Dublin Regulation, failed relocation efforts, or perceived East-West inequalities, to frame the present as a continuation of past injustices. This includes the potential to highlight patterns in which certain states were legally obligated but politically unsupported, reinforcing a narrative of selective solidarity within the EU. In this way, bridging enables PRR actors to embed current refugee responses into broader storylines of transnational failure and regional imbalance. Such a continuity-driven approach may be particularly salient in contexts where actors seek to legitimize criticism of the EU by invoking established grievances rather than engaging in overt opposition to refugee protection itself.

In sum, bridging enables PRR parties to reinforce their ideological coherence by recycling existing narratives in response to new developments. It legitimizes their current stance by linking it to a familiar interpretive repertoire, telling audiences that the present merely confirms the past. In empirical material, bridging is likely to appear in storylines that portray the refugee response not as a novel challenge, but as part of a recurring pattern of elite failure and legal hypocrisy.

Frame extension is a strategy through which PRR actors expand the relevance of existing frames by integrating refugee-related discourse into broader narratives of systemic crisis. Unlike bridging, which connects new issues to past discourses to preserve ideological continuity, extension starts from a dominant and unrelated concern already present in the political arena such as inflation, institutional decline, or geopolitical instability and stretches the scope of that concern to include refugee movements. The logic is not retrospective, but associative. Extension allows PRR actors to align migration discourse with issues already salient to the public but at first sight unrelated to the issue of migration, thereby increasing their audience. This mechanism is most visible in economic, international, and partially security frames, where its broadening logic enables PRR parties to link migration to widely shared material or structural anxieties. In these cases, refugee movements are not portrayed as isolated or exceptional, but as reinforcing signals of larger systemic breakdowns.

In the economic frame, extension integrates refugee-related discourse into longstanding concerns about national resource strain, inflation, housing shortages, and public expenditure. Rather than emphasizing cultural incompatibility or identity threat, PRR actors present refugees as a fiscal burden that aggravates preexisting structural problems. Migration becomes a contributing factor in narratives of economic decline, overburdened welfare systems, and increasing inequality. This strategy is particularly resonant in contexts where public discontent

with living costs is high, and where migration can be framed as an impact on already fragile infrastructures. Within the international frame, extension casts migration as a consequence of geopolitical instability and foreign policy failure. Here, PRR parties embed refugee flows into critiques of NATO interventions or EU foreign policy. In some cases, they suggest that refugee movements are being weaponized by hostile regimes or opportunistic actors as a means of destabilizing Europe. In this way, migration is portrayed not merely as humanitarian fallout, but as a structural symptom of elite recklessness on the world stage. Although the security frame is more commonly associated with amplification, it can also serve extension. When PRR actors emphasize state incapacity, porous borders, or institutional breakdown, not to provoke panic but to highlight systemic dysfunction, migration is folded into a wider discourse of national vulnerability and governance failure. The focus shifts from the character of the refugee to the incapacity of the state.

In sum, frame extension functions by embedding refugee-related discourse into larger narratives of crisis. It enhances message resonance by tying migration to preexisting public anxieties, allowing PRR actors to mobilize support without invoking overtly cultural or racialized claims. In the context of the 2022 Ukrainian refugee crisis, extension is likely to be a prominent mechanism, as it enables actors to frame migration as part of broader economic, institutional, and geopolitical decline without appearing directly hostile toward Ukrainian refugees. Extension thus serves as a strategic tool for translating ideological commitments into broadly palatable crisis narratives.

Frame transformation is a mechanism of discursive reframing through which exclusionary preferences are presented in a new manner that aligns with prevailing norms and moral expectations. Rather than abandoning restrictive positions, actors rearticulate them in ways that appear rule-based, ethically grounded, and socially responsible. As such, transformation functions as a mode of discursive sanitization. It is particularly prominent in legal and moral frames and often emerges in contexts where reputational costs are high or where explicit nativism would jeopardize legitimacy.

The legal frame is foundational to transformation. In this context, parties justify exclusion not by invoking cultural threat or civilizational incompatibility, but by appealing to the principles of legality and procedural fairness. They stress adherence to asylum protocols, emphasize the need to verify claims rigorously, and defend the integrity of the legal system. These appeals position the actor not as discriminatory but as a responsible guardian of law and order. In the moral frame, transformation draws on the language of fairness, proportionality, and ethical obligation. Parties may assert that while humanitarian protection is important, national resources are limited and should first serve the interests of citizens. Support for refugees is thus portrayed as morally justifiable only when it is selective, sustainable, and does not compromise the well-being of the native population. In this way, exclusion is framed not as prejudice, but as ethical prioritization.

Transformation enables actors to recalibrate their discourse in settings where overtly exclusionary rhetoric would be politically damaging. This includes institutional arenas like the European Parliament or national contexts where public sentiment is broadly supportive of refugee protection. Crucially, transformation allows parties to maintain core ideological commitments while adapting their language to more restrictive discursive environments. It is likely to appear where actors voice nominal support for asylum norms or humanitarian principles, but simultaneously advocate for strict controls, eligibility limits, or differentiated treatment. It reflects not a shift in underlying beliefs, but a strategic adjustment in rhetorical presentation designed to maximize legitimacy while minimizing reputational risk. In the

context of the Ukrainian refugee crisis, frame transformation is expected to be particularly prominent. This is due to the overlapping discursive opportunity structures that constrain radical messaging namely, the strong public sympathy for Ukrainian refugees, the normative weight of wartime solidarity, and the reputational costs associated with openly exclusionary claims. These dynamics make discursive navigation more complex, increasing the appeal of transformation as a strategy that permits exclusion without appearing morally transgressive.

Taken together, these four framing mechanisms/strategies (see Table III) offer a theory-driven lens for analysing how PRR parties selectively construct refugee narratives under varying discursive conditions. By identifying the linkages between specific mechanisms and frame types, this framework enables a structured interpretation of rhetorical variation across actors. Rather than treating framing as a fixed ideological imprint, it captures the adaptive strategies parties use to manage legitimacy, maintain coherence, and navigate constraints in a multilevel institutional setting. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach used to investigate these patterns empirically, detailing how the concepts developed here are operationalized through frame coding, data selection, and comparative analysis.

<i><b>Mechanism</b></i>	<i><b>Associated Frames</b></i>	<i><b>Strategic Rationale</b></i>
<i><b>Amplification</b></i>	Cultural, Security, Blame	PRR parties intensify core ideological conflicts by heightening emotional salience and symbolic antagonism.
<i><b>Bridging</b></i>	Blame, Legal, International	PRR parties draw on existing narratives to frame new developments as proof of ongoing failure and betrayal.
<i><b>Extension</b></i>	Economic, Security (partially)	PRR parties broaden issue resonance by embedding refugee discourse into widely salient crisis themes.
<i><b>Transformation</b></i>	Legal, Moral	PRR parties recast exclusionary preferences in norm-conforming terms to avoid reputational costs.

**Table III. Connecting Frame Alignment Mechanisms with predicted associated Frames**

## 6. Methodology

### 6.1 Analytic Strategy and Case Selection

The first part of the analysis uses Directed Qualitative Content Analysis (DQ1CA) to investigate how selected populist radical right (PRR) parties frame Ukrainian refugees in EP parliamentary debates. This method links theory-driven coding with systematic qualitative analysis, enabling a structured mapping of deductively derived frame categories onto empirical data (for examples see Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Dirikx & Gelders, 2010; Mackieson et al., 2019). The coding process begins with predefined categories grounded in established theories of populist and refugee discourse, such as blame, moral, cultural, and security frames. These are iteratively refined to capture both expected and unanticipated patterns in the data.

This approach follows the logic of a directed content analysis, in which existing theory provides a conceptual framework to define initial codes and relationships (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, pp. 1281-1283). While the deductive coding scheme ensures theoretical alignment, it remains flexible enough to incorporate new categories if relevant data do not fit existing frames. This balance allows the analysis to both validate and expand on prior theory while remaining attentive to potentially novel patterns in PRR discourse. The risk of confirmation bias, an inherent challenge in theory-driven analysis, was mitigated through an iterative and reflexive coding process guided by principles from applied thematic analysis. Coding categories were continuously refined in response to evolving interpretations, enabling the emergence of new insights and improved conceptual clarity (Mackieson et al., 2019). This process was complemented by ongoing reflection on analytical choices and researcher positionality to enhance transparency and validity. Frame categories were derived from refugee framing typologies developed by Drewski and Gerhards (2024a), ensuring theoretical consistency across cases.

This approach supports a systematic comparison of framing strategies and rhetorical shifts across parties. Through qualitative coding and selective quantification, the analysis identifies discursive patterns, co-occurrences, and broader trends, laying the foundation for the in-depth comparative insights presented in the following sections. Through qualitative coding, the analysis uncovers both explicit and latent patterns in party rhetoric. These findings are then organized and quantified to enable comparative insights across parties and groups. The chapter proceeds with an in-depth exploration of framing patterns, language use, and frame co-occurrence. This integrated approach supports the identification of broader trends and strengthens the explanatory depth and methodological validity of the thesis.

Parliamentary debates constitute a highly valuable source of data for qualitative research, particularly in studies focused on political discourse. As official government records, they offer a high degree of credibility and are widely regarded as trustworthy reflections of institutional communication. Unlike informal or unstructured data sources, these records undergo a rigorous editorial process to ensure clarity and accuracy, eliminating redundancies and correcting factual or grammatical errors without altering the substantive meaning of the contributions. Their public accessibility further enhances their value, as they can be used without the need for ethical approval or special permissions, an advantage that facilitates timely and comprehensive data collection. Crucially, parliamentary debates capture how elected representatives frame and negotiate key policy issues in real time, offering rich insights into the rhetorical strategies and ideological positions of political actors (Mackieson et al., 2019, pp. 970-971). This makes them particularly well-suited for framing analysis in the context of contemporary policymaking.

The analysis focused on the period from 24 February to 24 June 2022, capturing both the immediate aftermath of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the peak of refugee arrivals (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2023; UNHCR 2024a, 2024b). This time frame was chosen to minimize temporal variation in discourse while encompassing key developments in protection-seeking behaviour. During this period, although over two-thirds of those fleeing Ukraine registered for temporary protection, only 2% applied for asylum. Nevertheless, asylum applications from Ukrainians surged, particularly in March 2022 with 13,800 applications, a fivefold increase from February, itself following another fivefold rise from January. By April, applications had dropped to around 1,900 and later averaged 1,100 per month, reflecting a stabilization of the situation (European Union Agency for Asylum, 2023; European Union Agency for Asylum, (n.d.); UNHCR 2024a, 2024b).

The data extraction and manual coding process involved identifying and extracting all statements made by PRR parties, as classified by the *PopuList 3.0* (The PopuList, 2023), within the selected parliamentary transcripts (European Parliament, 2022a-x). A first round of manual coding was then conducted in MAXQDA based on the predefined codebook to categorize statements according to the established framing typology. This was followed by a second round of manual coding to refine categorizations and codes, ensuring consistency and accuracy in the classification of framing strategies. Anchor words and definitions were assigned to each frame to maintain coding consistency throughout the analysis. The data collection and preprocessing phase involved manually retrieving all EP parliamentary debate transcripts from the European Parliament Official Website that contained the keywords *Ukraine*, *Ukrainians*, *refugee*, *fleeing*, and *war*. A total of 24 debate transcripts were initially collected. These were then filtered to identify those containing explicit references to Ukrainian refugees, resulting in a final sample of 15 explicitly relevant transcripts. To ensure linguistic and content accuracy, all transcripts were translated from the original languages into English using two independent AI translation tools, ChatGPT 4.0 and DeepL, with cross-checking to maintain consistency.

To ensure the reliability of the coding process, an intra-coder reliability check was conducted by recoding a subset of the data after a break and comparing the results to assess consistency and further develop the codebook. Afterwards, two additional coders were trained and each independently coded a sample of the data. An inter-coder reliability test was then conducted and demonstrated a satisfactory level of agreement, confirming the robustness of the coding scheme. These results suggest that the codebook was applied largely consistently, though some discrepancies required further discussion and were resolved through a reconciliation process to ensure greater internal validity. Following these checks, the structured dataset was compiled, with all coded statements and their assigned frames organized into an Excel database. This dataset was then used for systematic analysis in R, allowing for statistical analysis of the identified framing patterns.

In addition to framing codes, statements were categorized by party affiliation, assigning each speaker to their respective party and categorizing these parties by party group affiliation, linking parties to broader European Parliament groups such as the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR), Identity and Democracy (ID), and Non-Inscrits (NI). These codes allow for comparative analysis of framing strategies across parties and party families.

Among the parties belonging to the Identity and Democracy (ID) group, the following were included: Freiheitliche Partei Österreichs (Freedom Party of Austria, FPÖ, Austria), Vlaams Belang (Flemish Interest, VB, Belgium), Dansk Folkeparti (Danish People's Party, DF, Denmark), Rassemblement National (National Rally, RN, France), Alternative für Deutschland (Alternative for Germany, AfD, Germany), Lega (League, Lega, Italy), Partij voor de Vrijheid

(Freedom Party, PVV, Netherlands), Forum voor Democratie (Forum for Democracy, FvD, Netherlands), Svoboda a přímá demokracie (Freedom and Direct Democracy, SPD, Czech Republic), and Eesti Konservatiivne Rahvaerakond (Conservative People's Party of Estonia, EKRE, Estonia).

From the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) group, the dataset includes Perussuomalaiset (Finns Party, PS, Finland), Reconquête! (Reconquest, Reconquete, France), Elliniki Lysi (Greek Solution, EL, Greece), Fratelli d'Italia (Brothers of Italy, FdI, Italy), Juiste Antwoord 21 (Right Answer 21, JA21, Netherlands), Vox (Vox, Vox, Spain), Sverigedemokraterna (Sweden Democrats, SD, Sweden), Върхшна македонска револуционна организација – Българско национално движение (Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization – Bulgarian National Movement, VMRO, Bulgaria), Hrvatski Suverenisti (Croatian Sovereignists, HS, Croatia), Tautos prisikėlimo partija (Lithuanian Nationalist and Republican Union, LTS, Lithuania), and Prawo i Sprawiedliwość (Law and Justice, PiS, Poland).

From the Non-Inscrits (NI), the dataset includes Fidesz – Magyar Polgári Szövetség (Fidesz - Hungarian Civic Alliance, Fidesz, Hungary), Alianța pentru Unirea Românilor (Alliance for the Union of Romanians, AUR, Romania), and Ľudová strana Naše Slovensko (Kotlebists – People's Party Our Slovakia, L'SNS, Slovakia). It is important to note that some changes have occurred in party group affiliations since 2022. As a result, the categorizations applied during the respective transcripts from that time do not necessarily reflect the current political landscape. Some parties have shifted their European Parliament group membership, meaning that comparisons using these earlier classifications may not fully capture the present dynamics within party families.

## 6.2 Coding Scheme

Building on the frame typology introduced in the previous chapter, the identified frames now serve as the main analytical categories for the coding process. Each frame is further differentiated into subcodes that capture specific rhetorical patterns and thematic emphases. A full overview of the coding scheme, including definitions, subcodes, and coding rules, is provided in Appendix A & B. The following section briefly outlines each frame, along with representative linguistic indicators and examples from the dataset.

Based on the analysed statements coded under the international frame, several recurring words and phrases can be identified as strong linguistic indicators. These terms frequently appear in discussions that position the EU, member states, and external actors within broader geopolitical narratives concerning refugee protection. Subcodes include *member state support*, which highlights specific nations' efforts in hosting refugees; *human rights leadership*, used to frame the EU as a global or local defender of refugee rights; *historical debt/reciprocity*, which justifies asylum policies and handling of certain groups of refugees based on past ties to their respective home countries or the host member state; *strategic alliances*, which link refugee policies to diplomatic relations and foreign policy decisions; *foreign policy tool*, which frames refugee admissions as potential to critique, shame or influence other states; and *EU burden-sharing*, which calls for equitable refugee distribution.

One common set of indicator words relates to subcode EU burden-sharing, often emphasizing collective responsibility among EU member states. Terms such as *solidarity*, *support*, *commitment*, and *burden-sharing* appear frequently in statements that call for a coordinated European response: "*This is the hour of humanity and solidarity in Europe.*"

(European Parliament, 2022a, Jörg Meuthen, AfD, Pos. 225; own translation). Another group of indicator words revolves around geopolitical positioning and international obligations. References to *the international community*, *humanitarian corridors*, *diplomacy*, *NATO allies*, and *EU leadership* signal an attempt to frame refugee protection within broader foreign policy concerns: *"Ukraine's response has perhaps been unexpected for many, and it requires us—alongside our NATO allies and the international community—to step up our commitment to defending the values of freedom and democracy."* (European Parliament, 2022a, Raffaele Fitto, FdI, Pos. 41; own translation). A distinct cluster of words highlights member-state contributions and responsibilities, often reinforcing positive portrayals of specific countries. Phrases like *Poland is leading by example*, *Hungary has done immense work*, and *Ukraine's neighbouring countries have shown exemplary solidarity* appear in statements that emphasize national-level responses. The international frame also frequently incorporates moral and humanitarian language in connection with global responsibilities. References to *human rights leadership*, *protecting the vulnerable*, and *ensuring peace and security* signal an effort to frame refugee reception as a duty derived from ethical and historical commitments. Finally, the international frame is sometimes marked by criticism of the EU's handling of the crisis. Terms such as *failed response* and *politics of appearances*, and *Brussels' mismanagement* indicate when MEPs frame the EU as failing in its leadership role.

The security frame captures how actors link refugee movements to risks concerning public order, national safety, and territorial control. Subcodes include *political instability*, which suggests that refugee crises fuel nationalist movements or civil unrest; *health and pandemic fears*, which associate refugees with the spread of disease; *border security* subcodes highlight deficiencies in external controls, the strategic use of refugees as leverage at borders, and the strain on border personnel due to overwhelming demands.; *crime and social disorder*, which connects refugees to rising criminal activity; and *terrorism risk*, which portrays migration as a potential avenue for extremist infiltration mostly linked to fears about Islamist terror attacks. Linguistic markers include references to *"hybrid warfare"*, *"borders"*, *„criminals“* or *"protecting national sovereignty"*. An example of this frame is the quote: *„We must avoid the creation of refugee camps and ghettos, which would lead to a Palestinian-like refugee situation. We should learn from the experiences of Turkey and Lebanon.“* (European Parliament, 2022d, Witold Jan Waszczykowski, PiS, Pos. 41-42; own translation).

The legal frame emphasizes the legal dimensions of refugee protection, asylum rights, and national sovereignty in relation to migration policies. Subcodes include *non-refoulement*, which emphasizes obligations to prevent the return of refugees to unsafe regions; *EU legal framework*, which refers to conflicts between national and EU asylum policies; *illegal migration vs. genuine refugees*, which legally differentiates between asylum seekers and economic migrants; *sovereign right to control borders*, which asserts that states have no legal duty to accept all asylum seekers; *international law compliance*, which frames refugee reception as a legal obligation; and *legal criticism*, which critiques EU asylum policies as flawed or ineffective. Key phrases include *"binding legal commitments"*, *"economic refugees"*, *„Asylum policy“* and *"real refugees"*. A representative quote is:

*"They clearly illustrate the difference between genuine refugees and the many illegal migrants that Europe—and particularly Italy—have received and continue to receive. We see scenes of women and children bidding farewell to the fathers who remain behind to defend their homeland and freedom, images that are very different from the selfies taken on overcrowded boats by countless economic migrants who are not fleeing war and whom the left wants in Europe to fuel the so-called refugee business."* (European Parliament 2022d, Silvia Sardone, Lega, Pos. 221; own translation).



The moral frame presents refugees through an ethical and humanitarian lens, emphasizing moral responsibility and selective solidarity. Subcodes of this frame include *refugees as victims*, which portrays them as helpless individuals in need of protection; *selective moral obligation*, which prioritizes national citizens or specific refugee groups over others; *deservingness*, which distinguishes between “genuine” and “undeserving” refugees based on vulnerability; *religious solidarity*, which frames refugee protection in terms of faith-based moral duty; and *humanitarian responsibility*, which calls for ethical action in response to crisis situations. Indicators of this frame include words such as “*human dignity*”, „*humanitarian crisis*“ “*moral duty*”, “*innocent women and children*”, and “*suffering*”. An example quote is:

*“The severe humanitarian crisis affecting Europe in recent weeks is shocking. Putin's war has forced millions of Ukrainian women and children to flee their homeland under the sound of air-raid sirens and bombs. The heartbreaking images from the Polish border must make us reflect and act immediately. Those fleeing a real war must be helped immediately and without hesitation.”* (European Parliament, 2022j, Alessandro Panza, Lega, Pos. 12; own translation).

The cultural frame emphasizes national identity by outlining historical roots, ethnic composition, language, religion, traditions, and values of the host country. Subcodes that emphasize compatibility include *shared cultural or religious values*, *historical/colonial ties*, *refugees as contributors to culture*, *successful integration cases*, and *national identity as inclusive*. Subcodes under incompatibility include *threat to national identity*, *religious/civilizational clash*, *integrational challenges*, *cultural erosion/dilution*, and *limits of multiculturalism*. Inclusive framing emphasizes unity and shared identity through terms like “*shared heritage*,” “*fundamental values*,” “*Europeans*,” “*neighbours*,” “*cultural diversity*,” and “*common traditions*.” Exclusive framing, in contrast, highlights division and perceived threats using words like “*cultural preservation*,” “*population replacement*,” “*national identity*,” “*ethnic heritage*,” and “*foreign influence*.” An example of cultural compatibility is “*But in this case, Ukraine is our region*” (European Parliament, 2022d, Tom Vandendriessche, Vlaams, Pos. 115-116; own translation), which presents Ukrainians as culturally and geographically close to the host society.

The economic frame defines refugees in terms of their financial impact, either as an economic burden or as contributors to society, conversely as the impact that the admission of refugees will have on the socioeconomic status and development of the respective country (Drewksi & Gerhards, 2024, pp. 12-14). Subcodes include the *strain on public services*, which argues that migration overwhelms healthcare and other sectors as education, or housing; *economic contribution*, which frames refugees as beneficial to labour markets; *job competition*, which suggests they displace local workers; and *economic burden*, which portrays refugees as dependent on state resources. Linguistic markers include “*taxpayer money*”, “*labour shortages*”, “*increasing welfare costs*”, and “*economic sustainability*” „*money*“, „*burden*“ or „*cost*“. A quote illustrating this frame is “*The Polish government alone has spent 8 billion zlotys from its own budget to support these refugees—that is 2 billion euros. My question is this: when will financial aid from the European Union reach the countries that are already bearing the costs?*” (European Parliament 2022k, Bodgan Rzońca, PiS, Pos. 80-82; own translation), which emphasizes the financial strain of refugee reception.

The blame frame includes several subcategories, such as blaming the European Commission for enforcing unwanted migration policies or withholding monetary aid, blaming other EU member states for refusing to share responsibility, and blaming Russia or other external actors

for weaponizing migration. Additional subcodes capture accusations against NGOs or activists for encouraging irregular migration, against previous governments for policy mismanagement, and against elites for promoting migration agendas perceived as undermining national sovereignty. Unlike the international frame, which often uses diplomatic language and discussions of obligations, statements in the blame frame tend to be more confrontational and accusatory. Key phrase examples include “*failed*”, “*the Commission*”, “*Brussels*”, “*the EU*”, “*the left*”, “*mismanagement*”, and “*ideological agenda*”. An example is:

*“The left has loudly demanded that countries like Hungary and Poland be ‘financially starved,’ and yesterday, Brussels complied, launching this so-called ‘starvation procedure.’ But democracy applies to Brussels too. It is unacceptable that, instead of respecting the will of the Hungarian people, Brussels caters to the defeated Hungarian left. Instead of waging a political war against Hungary, Brussels should return to common sense and engage in rational dialogue.”* (European Parliament, 2022k, Tamás Deutsch, Fidesz, Pos. 27; own translation).

## 7. Empirical Findings

### 7.1 General Descriptive Findings

The initial dataset consisted of statements by MEPs from thirteen PRR parties active in the EP during the period of analysis: AfD (Germany), DF (Denmark), EKRE (Estonia), FdI (Italy), Fidesz (Hungary), Finns Party (Finland), LNNK (Latvia), Lega (Italy), PiS (Poland), RN (France), SD (Sweden), VMRO (Bulgaria), Vlaams Belang (Belgium), and VOX (Spain). Other PRR parties identified in the PopuList 3.0 were excluded from the analysis either because they did not address the issue of Ukrainian refugees in any parliamentary speech, or because their contributions to relevant debates made no explicit or implicit reference to Ukrainian refugees.

An initial analysis of PRR party engagement in EP debates on Ukrainian refugees reveals notable differences in participation levels. Some parties were significantly more active in framing the issue than others. PiS led the discourse with 125 statements, followed by Fidesz with 53, Lega with 31, and AfD with 29 statements (see Table IV). One statement was counted each time a speaker completed a distinct line of argument or made a clearly self-contained point on the issue.

PiS also stands out for high volume engagement, with 16 different speakers contributing to the debate, indicating broad party-wide involvement. By contrast, DF and EKRE were represented by only a single speaker each. AfD, Fidesz, and Vlaams Belang recorded relatively high numbers of statements concentrated among a small number of speakers, suggesting a more centralized communication approach. Several other PRR parties, including the Finns Party, EKRE and SD, showed minimal engagement, contributing only a few statements each (see Table IV).

Regional differences can also be derived from framing engagement. Eastern European parties such as PiS, Fidesz, VMRO, and LNNK are among the most engaged parties. Western European parties, including AfD, RN, Vlaams, Lega, and VOX, also participate actively. Nordic-Baltic PRR parties, for example DF, the Finns Party, SD, and EKRE, show low levels of engagement, with only a few statements addressing the Ukrainian refugee crisis at all. A potential regional explanation for framing differences will be explored later.

To maintain statistical validity in further analysis, the Finns Party, LNNK, SD, DF, and EKRE were excluded from the continued analysis. These parties were removed due to their contributions being attributed to only a single speaker, making it difficult to generalize party-level framing strategies. Additionally,

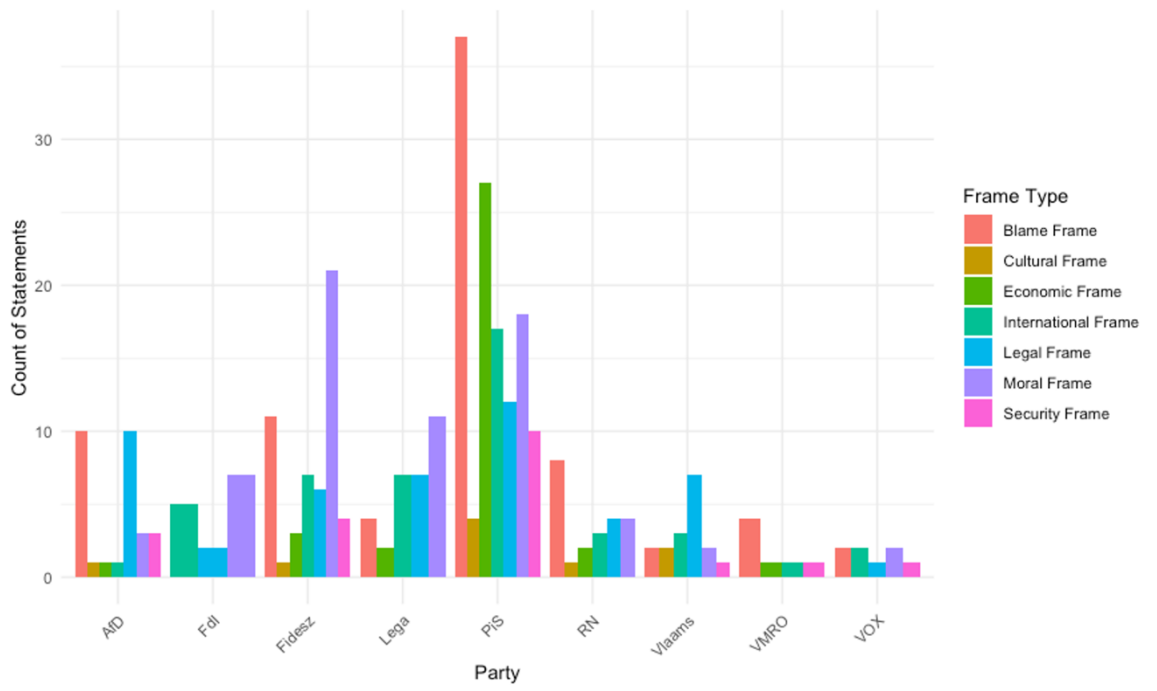
PARTY	SPEAKERS	STATEMENTS
<b>AFD</b>	5	29
<b>DF</b>	1	3
<b>EKRE</b>	1	1
<b>FDI</b>	3	14
<b>FIDESZ</b>	6	53
<b>FINNS</b>	1	1
<b>LNNK</b>	1	6
<b>LEGA</b>	5	31
<b>PIS</b>	16	125
<b>RN</b>	5	22
<b>SD</b>	1	2
<b>VMRO</b>	2	7
<b>VLAAMS</b>	2	17
<b>VOX</b>	2	8
<b>TOTAL</b>	51	319

**Table IV. EU PRR Party Engagement in Ukrainian Refugee Discourse**

some of these parties contributed fewer than five statements, which would not have allowed for meaningful statistical comparisons. Including these cases could have skewed the data and led to misleading conclusions. To ensure a robust analysis, only parties with more than two speakers and at least five statements were retained. This filtering process was necessary to prevent data sparsity issues and to enable a more reliable comparison of framing strategies across parties.

The analysis of frame emergence across all parties, both in normalized proportions and absolute numbers, reveals a clear pattern in the overall party discourse on Ukrainian refugees. Blame and moral frames are generally the most frequently employed across all statements and parties, suggesting a highly emotionally charged agenda across all PRRP’s (see Figure II & Figure III). These two frames stand out for their use of subjective and emotionally resonant language that aims to trigger strong reactions among audiences.

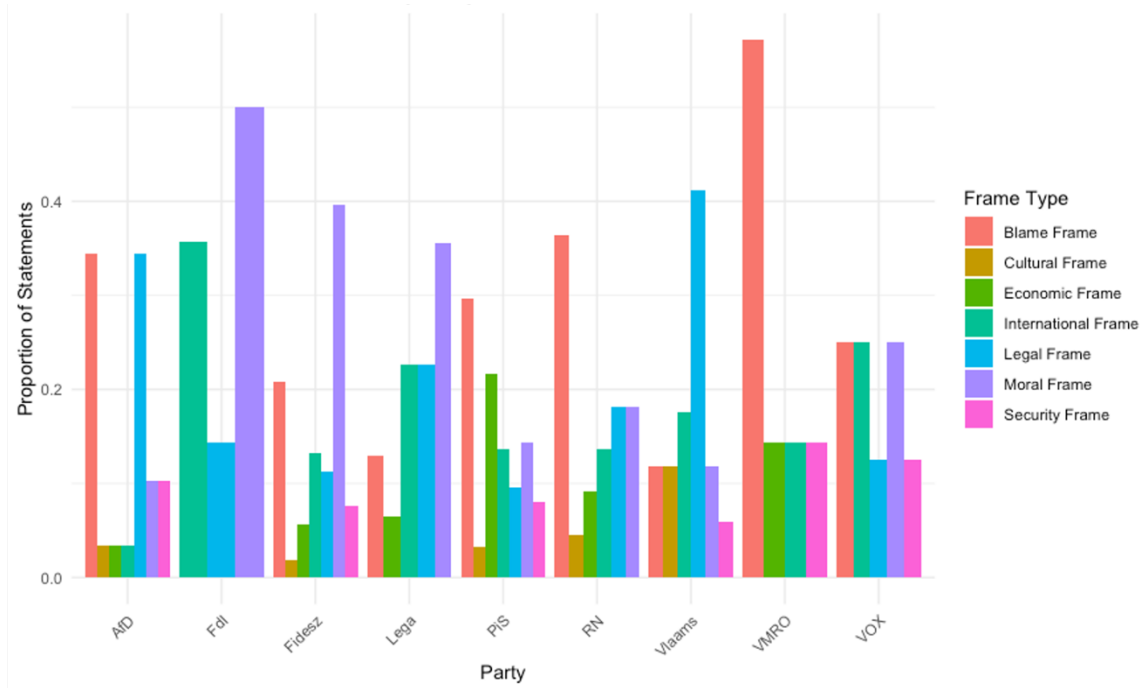
The absolute count of statements shows that blame and moral frames dominate the general discourse, registering the highest frequencies across the dataset and standing out as the most widely used framing strategies (see Figure II). However, when normalized to account for differences in the number of statements per party, this pattern shifts slightly: while blame and moral frames still constitute the largest share, their dominance becomes more nuanced, reflecting variation in how intensively each party emphasizes these frames relative to their total discourse (see Figure III). VMRO, the AfD and RN stand out as the most distinctive users of the blame frame while the discourse of Lega, Fidesz and FdI is visibly dominated by the Moral Frame.



**Figure II. Absolute Frame Type Usage by Party**

The normalization highlights strategic differences in frame prioritization, suggesting that while some parties saturate their discourse with blame , others rely more evenly on multiple frame combinations (for example PiS) to construct their discourse. The use of economic, international, and legal frames generally appears to be more moderate than the use of blame and moral frames, with these frames consistently occupying a middle range in both proportional and absolute terms (see Figure III). Security and cultural frames are the least utilized across all

parties, with their frequency remaining low in absolute and normalized numbers (see Figure II & Figure III). The distribution of frames reflects a discourse primarily shaped by blame attribution and moral appeals, with economic, legal, and international considerations playing a secondary role, while security and cultural concerns remain marginal.



**Figure III. Normalized Frame Type Usage by Party**

## 7.2 Statistical Overview

To evaluate whether PRR parties differ systematically in their framing strategies, a series of inferential statistical tests was conducted, based on the theoretical assumption that framing serves as a strategic rather than random instrument of political communication. This expectation is formalized in the following hypotheses:

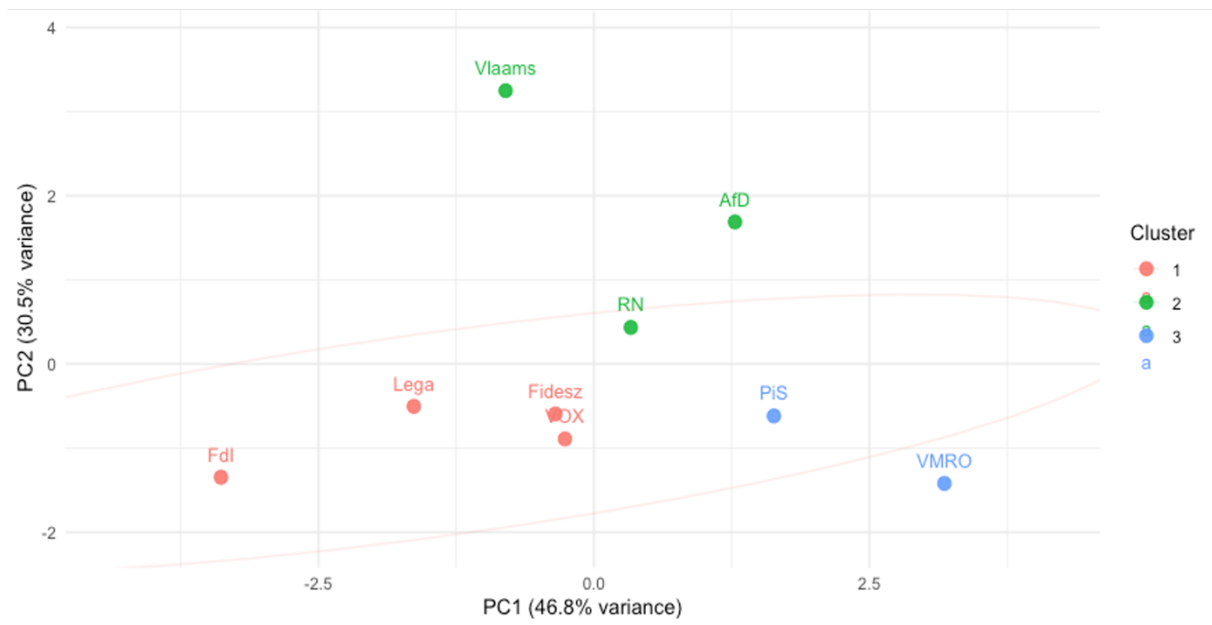
*H<sub>0</sub>: There are no significant differences in frame usage across all analysed PRR parties in the dataset.*

*H<sub>1</sub>: At least one PRR party in the dataset significantly differs in its use of one or more frames, indicating systematic variation in framing strategies.*

To test these hypotheses, a Chi-squared test of independence was applied to both the full and filtered datasets. The results revealed a highly significant association between party affiliation and frame usage (full dataset:  $\chi^2(91) = 176.27, p < 0.001$ ; filtered dataset:  $\chi^2(48) = 95.24, p = 0.0003$ , based on Monte Carlo simulation). These results provide strong empirical support for the claim that PRR parties do not employ frames uniformly but instead adopt distinct, party-specific framing strategies. Full test statistics are detailed in Appendix C.

The PCA biplot (Figure IV) visualizes meaningful variation in how PRR parties frame Ukrainian refugees, offering initial empirical support for the assumption that their discourse is strategically differentiated and grouped. The first two principal components account for 77,3 percent of the total variance in frame usage (PC1: 46,8 percent, PC2: 30,5 percent), revealing a clear distribution of parties into three coherent clusters. This configuration, validated by an

elbow test, provides the basis for the typology developed in subsequent chapters. Each cluster corresponds to a distinct framing logic that points toward differentiated strategic positioning.



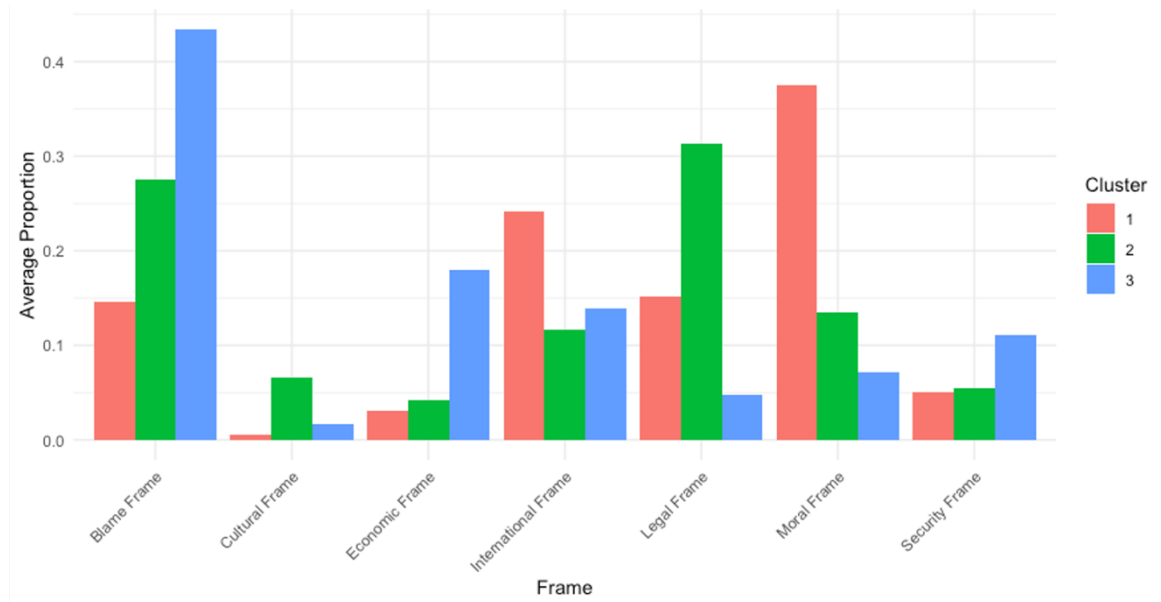
**Figure IV. PCA Biplot**

The PCA reveals two underlying dimensions that structure variation in PRR discourse on Ukrainian refugees. The first principal component (PC1) captures a spectrum between emotionally charged framing and procedurally oriented framing. Parties like PiS, FdI, and VMRO cluster on the emotional end, frequently employing moral appeals and grievance rhetoric, while AfD, RN, and Fidesz score lower, relying more on legal, economic, and institutional arguments. The second component (PC2) contrasts discourses centered on national sovereignty and EU critique with those incorporating humanitarian or internationalist solidarity. AfD, RN, and Fidesz are positioned toward the sovereignty-critical pole, emphasizing legal control and delegitimizing the EU, whereas Lega, FdI, and partially PiS lean toward a narrative of selective European solidarity. These two dimensions jointly reveal how PRR parties recalibrate their discursive strategies, some opting for rule-based exclusion, others for moral alignment.

To assess the robustness of the identified party clusters, hierarchical clustering was additionally conducted (see Appendix C). The resulting dendrogram confirmed the tripartite structure observed in the PCA-based clustering, with only one deviation: Rassemblement National (RN) was grouped with grievance mobilizers rather than legal-moral strategists. The observed discrepancy in RN's cluster affiliation across methods motivated the inclusion of an interpretive qualitative analysis, allowing for a more nuanced understanding of RN as a discursively flexible actor whose framing strategy cannot be fully captured by quantitative grouping alone.

Cluster 1 (red, Figure V), consisting of Lega, Fratelli d'Italia, VOX, and Fidesz, is dominated by the Moral Frame. These parties rely heavily on humanitarian and ethical appeals, emphasizing compassion for Ukrainian refugees and the need for solidarity. The International Frame also plays a meaningful role, suggesting an orientation toward European cooperation and geopolitical responsibility. Blame and legal aspects are present but secondary (Figure IV.II). This cluster represents a broadly humanitarian discourse, combining moral solidarity with support for interstate coordination.

Cluster 2 (green, Figure V), including AfD, Vlaams Belang, and Rassemblement National, emphasizes the Legal Frame most strongly, followed by usage of the Blame and Moral Frames. This pattern reflects a rule-based, institutional discourse, where parties justify their stance with reference to asylum law, border sovereignty, and legal constraints (Figure IV.II). These parties also selectively invoke blame, particularly directed at EU actors, positioning themselves as defenders of national control within a flawed EU framework.

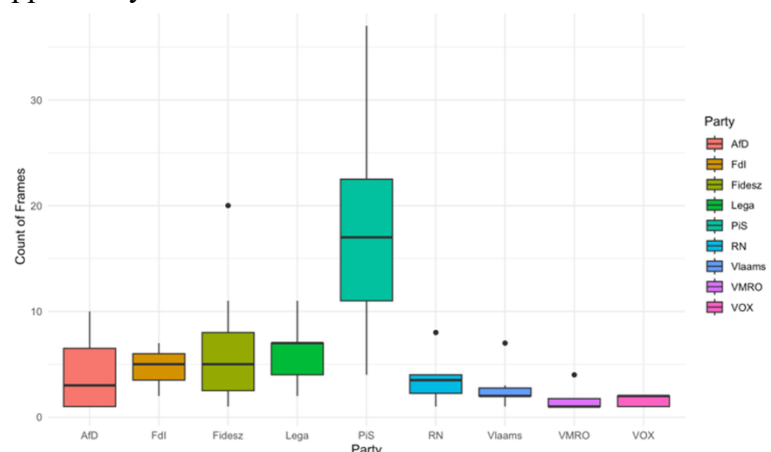


**Figure V. Average Frame Usage per Cluster**

Cluster 3 (blue, Figure V), composed of PiS and VMRO, is heavily dominated by the Blame Frame, with the highest proportional use among all clusters. These parties also employ moderate amounts of International and Economic Frames, reflecting a discourse of geopolitical grievance. The Moral Frame is much less prominent, and Legal reasoning is minimal (Figure V).

Rather than simply mapping ideological affinity, the PCA reveals structured variation in how PRR actors deploy frame combinations to position themselves within contested debates on refugee reception. These patterns form the empirical foundation for the identification of three frame-user types in Chapter 8. The statistical grouping observed in the PCA is thus not only descriptive but conceptually meaningful, illustrating how strategic variation in populist discourse is shaped by both discursive opportunity and constraint.

The boxplot visualization provides an overview of the distribution of statements across PRR parties, highlighting variations in engagement that were already mentioned above. The spread of data varies significantly between parties, with some exhibiting a wider range of statement counts as stated above. Lega stands out with a notably higher median and a broader distribution, suggesting that speakers within this party contribute a more diverse number of statements



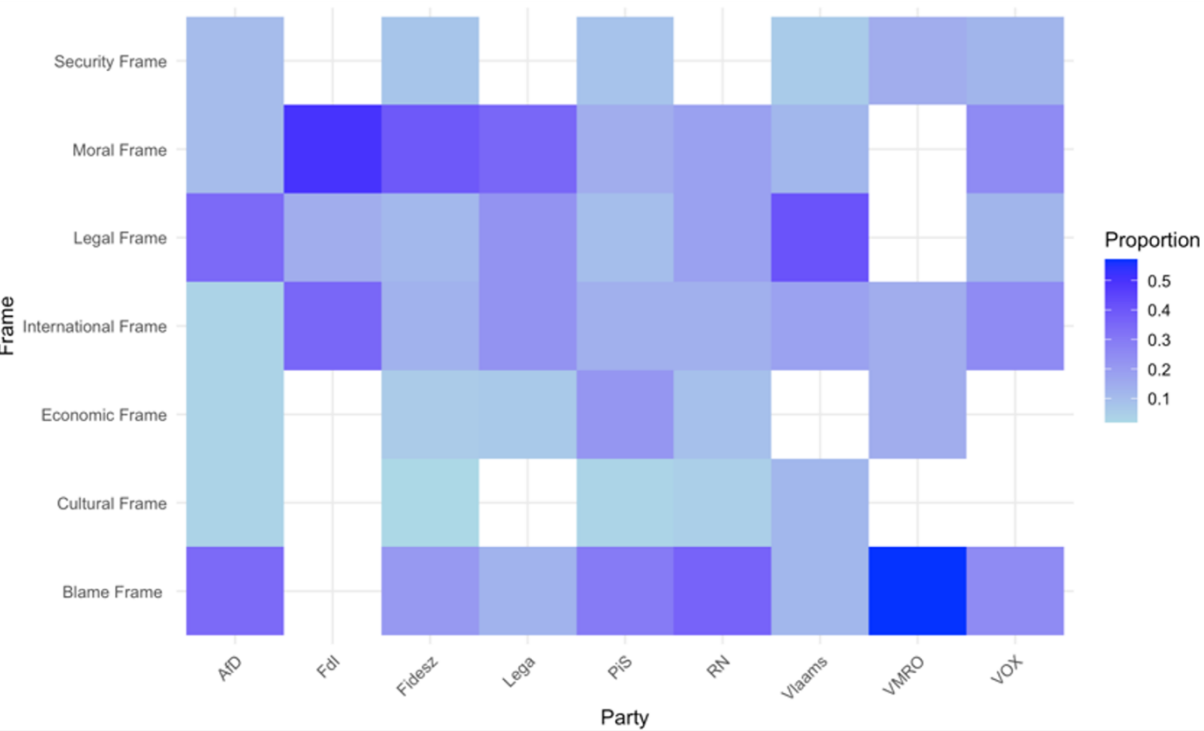
**Figure VI. Boxplot**

compared to other parties. PiS, AfD, and Fidesz display relatively consistent distributions, while Vlaams, VMRO, and VOX show lower overall variability, indicating a more uniform level of engagement among their representatives (see Figure VI).

While the statistical analysis offers valuable insights into patterns of frame variation and group differentiation, it is not without limitations. The Principal Component Analysis, though effective in visualizing multidimensional variance, necessarily reduces rhetorical complexity. It cannot capture the tone, context, or narrative logic with which frames are articulated, nor the strategic layering of multiple frames within a single intervention. Similarly, the Kruskal-Wallis and Dunn’s tests are constrained by small group sizes and conservative correction methods, which may obscure subtle but meaningful variation. The assumption of independence is also difficult to uphold in a setting where party discourse is shaped by shared institutional dynamics and national contexts. Furthermore, the boxplot distribution reveals unequal levels of engagement across parties, with some contributing disproportionately to the dataset, raising questions about representativeness in statistical comparison. These methodological constraints underscore the need to complement statistical patterns with close qualitative interpretation.

### 7.3 Frame-specific Findings

Building on the statistical analysis of frame distribution across parties, this section turns to a qualitative examination of the patterns that emerge within each frame and party (see Figure VI). While the previous analysis quantified the frequency and cross-party variation of frames such as blame, legal, moral, international, security, economic, and cultural, this chapter seeks to unpack the discursive logic behind their deployment and dives deeper into the subcode analysis of each frame. It explores how these (sub-)frames are used, to whom they are directed, and what rhetorical functions they serve within the broader narratives constructed by PRR actors.



**Figure VII. Heatmap Frame Distribution across Parties**

To this end, the analysis focuses on two dimensions: (1) the strategic use of specific frames and across parties, including similarities and divergences in emphasis, and (2) the subframes,



language, and targets embedded within these frames, which reveal deeper ideological alignments and political intentions. During the qualitative analysis, it became clear that many statements made by MEPs combined multiple framing elements. As a result, individual quotes were often coded under more than one frame, reflecting the interconnected nature of rhetorical strategies. This overlap is not coincidental but indicative of strategic framing linkages. Ultimately, rather than treating frames as static categories, this approach highlights the selectivity, layering, and adaptiveness of PRR discourse.

### 7.3.1. Blame Frame: Institutional Critique and Discursive Realignment

The inductively derived blame frame emerged as a central rhetorical strategy among nearly all parties in the dataset, with the notable exception of Fratelli d'Italia. While its use was widespread, considerable variation is observed in terms of target selection, intensity of blame, and the layering of accusations. Subcode analysis reveals that the most frequent targets were the European Commission, other EU institutions, and the European Union more generally, followed by Western European member states (see Appendix C). Most parties employed hybrid blame strategies, combining targets such as the European Commission with other member states or NGOs. Russia appeared only marginally as a blame target, and then primarily in the discourse of VMRO, Fidesz, and PiS. When Russia was blamed, it typically occurred paired with moral frames emphasizing humanitarian concerns in response to the consequences of Russian aggression.

The content of blame varied by attributed actor. EU institutions were most often accused of mismanaging the refugee influxes (in both 2015 and 2022), promoting ideologically biased policies, and imposing unfair obligations on member states. The European Commission in particular, was portrayed as advancing migration through ineffective or misguided asylum policies and as enforcing top-down measures that disregarded national capacities and democratic processes. It was described as the principal force behind forced relocation schemes and as promoting liberal multicultural values that conflict with national sovereignty. Western European member states were criticized for moral inconsistency. They were depicted as endorsing open-border policies while failing to assume a fair share of refugee responsibility, leaving the burden to fall disproportionately on poorer Eastern states. NGOs, when mentioned, were accused of facilitating irregular migration or undermining national control as unelected humanitarian actors. Although some statements identified Russia as the cause of the 2022 refugee influx, these accusations were typically secondary to intra-European critiques.

A clear regional pattern emerged in analysis. Eastern European PRR parties, such as PiS and Fidesz, focused their blame predominantly on EU institutions while also directing accusations toward Western European member states. For example, PiS used the blame frame to highlight Western hypocrisy and Eastern overburdening. Patryk Jaki stated:

*"I see that the left follows a very simple logic: open the borders and let everyone in, but not into every European country. No, instead, they push them into poorer Eastern European states, while closing off their own wealthier countries"* (European Parliament, 2022l, PiS, ECR; own translation).

This statement combines criticism of Western countries and left-leaning political actors. It suggests that while these actors are accused of publicly supporting open-border policies, they divert the burden of refugee reception to Eastern European countries such as Poland. This reveals not only perceived structural inequality but also an ideological divide between regions. The dual subcoding here: blaming the EU and other member states, produces a narrative of

Eastern overextension and Western moral posturing. It strategically repositions Eastern Europe from former target of criticism to current victim of hypocrisy.

Fidesz similarly framed Hungary as a victim of EU pressure and Western ideological aggression. The party blamed the European Commission, Western states, and left-wing political forces. Tamás Deutsch stated:

*"Dear colleagues, we Hungarians may not accept it, but we have certainly grown accustomed to Brussels' ongoing political and ideological attempts to harm Hungary. This has been the left's political strategy for years, and Brussels bureaucrats have joined their campaign"* (European Parliament, 2022k, Fidesz, NI; own translation).

This quote portrays the European Union not as a neutral administrator but as a political actor aligned with liberal opponents of Hungary's national government. In another speech, Deutsch added: *"The left has loudly demanded that countries like Hungary and Poland be 'financially starved,' and yesterday, Brussels complied, launching this so-called 'starvation procedure'"* (European Parliament, 2022k, Fidesz, NI; own translation). Here, financial sanctions are reframed as ideological punishment. The metaphor of starvation evokes injustice and frames Hungary as unfairly targeted despite its contributions, particularly in managing the refugee response. These statements discredit the legitimacy of EU sanctions by portraying them as politically motivated rather than procedurally neutral. Fidesz thus reinforces a broader narrative of national victimhood and resistance to Western European elites.

Western PRR parties, in contrast, directed their criticism primarily toward EU institutions while defending Eastern states. The AfD offers a clear example of this pattern. In one statement, MEP Nicolaus Fest asserted: *"Poland and Hungary do not want them. Most other European nations do not want them either. The only ones who seem to want them are you and the European Commission"* (European Parliament, 2022d, AfD; own translation). This comment frames the European Commission as acting unilaterally, promoting refugee relocation against the will of most member states. In a subsequent statement, Fest continued:

*"These migrants have already overwhelmed reception capacities in many countries, including Germany. Berlin, my hometown, is now struggling to find space for Ukrainian refugees because the system is already full, thanks to your failed, irrational, and delusional migration policies"* (European Parliament, 2022d, AfD; own translation).

Fest uses emotionally charged language to blame the Commission for systemic collapse. These statements reinforce the AfD's broader narrative of institutional failure and excessive centralization in EU migration governance.

Jean-Paul Garraud of Rassemblement National also deployed the blame frame to defend Eastern European states. He stated:

*"The Commission is withholding European funds destined for these countries—7 billion euros for Hungary and 39.4 billion for Poland. How is it possible that, at the same time, countries that are exemplary in their solidarity towards millions of refugees are sanctioned by our European institutions?"* (European Parliament, 2022m, RN, ID; own translation)

This quote illustrates an effort to realign the moral narrative of solidarity. Formerly criticized Eastern states are repositioned as models of humanitarian action. Western PRR parties thus

construct ideological solidarity with Eastern governments while reinforcing criticism of supranational overreach.

VMRO represents a prominent yet ideologically distinct user of the blame frame. VMRO blames both Russia and the EU for their responsibility in the ongoing conflict and the resulting refugee crisis, reflecting a dual-track blame strategy. One statement accuses “*this chamber's hypocrisy*” (European Parliament, 2022d, Angel Dzhambazki, ECR; own translation) for failing to provide real support to Ukraine, while simultaneously identifying the refugee influx as a result of Russian aggression. This dual attribution allows VMRO to position itself as a morally righteous but geopolitically burdened actor. An Eastern European party that frames itself as both a defender of European values and a victim of great-power mismanagement. These examples underline how the blame frame serves not just to externalize responsibility, but to deepen ideological boundaries between national actors and supranational institutions.

By contrast, Fratelli d'Italia stand out as the only party that avoided the blame frame in its discourse, indicating a strategic choice to steer clear of institutional confrontation in their refugee discourse.

Together, these examples show that while the blame frame is shared across parties, its execution is far from monolithic. Eastern PRR parties blend structural grievance with geopolitical critique, while Western parties lean more heavily towards ideological antagonism. Hybrid subcodes demonstrate rhetorical flexibility and allow parties to construct a narrative of systemic failure that transcends single actors. The blame frame thus emerges as a powerful discursive tool for uniting in-group actors while delegitimizing the authority of supranational institutions like the EU.

### 7.3.2. Legal Frame: Legitimation Through Procedural Differentiation

The legal frame appears in the discourse of nearly all examined PRR parties and serves as a central mechanism for selective inclusion. At the heart of this frame lies the distinction between “genuine refugees” and “illegal migrants”, which allows parties to construct Ukrainians as deserving of protection while delegitimizing asylum claims from non-European, often racialized, groups. By appealing to procedural and legalistic criteria such as the presence of documents, compliance with asylum rules, and routes taken this frame enables actors to avoid overtly cultural arguments while maintaining exclusionary logics. It hides moral hierarchies behind legal rationality and presents restrictive asylum policies as fair, objective, and rules based. While most PRR parties refer to the legal frame at some point, its prominence varies significantly. The AfD, Vlaams Belang, and Lega rely heavily on the legal frame and use it as a dominant tool to structure their refugee discourse (see Figure VII). In contrast, parties such as PiS, VOX, VMRO, RN, Fidesz, and FdI use the legal frame less frequently. For these actors, legal justifications tend to play a supplementary role to other frames, such as moral or blame-oriented narratives (see Figure VII).

The AfD makes the legal frame a central axis of its discourse. The party frequently distinguishes between “genuine refugees” and “illegal migrants.” MEP Guido Reil offers a clear example:

*“Five million people have already fled, and many more will come. If we really want to help these genuine refugees, we must finally make a decision: Do we help real refugees or fortune-seekers? Do we help young men from the Middle East and Africa, who arrive without papers, completely illegally, with no valid reason for fleeing—who leave behind*

*their families, their children, their parents in their homeland, traveling through several safe countries before exploiting our hospitality? I want to make room and allocate resources for genuine refugees. I want to help genuine refugees. I want to help women and children.”* (European Parliament, 2022m; own translation)

This statement reflects the subcode “illegal migrants versus genuine refugees.” Reil invokes legal criteria such as documentation, reasons for flight, and the route taken to distinguish between those deemed legally deserving of asylum and those framed as opportunists. The emphasis on legal definitions and procedural compliance illustrates an attempt to justify exclusion through rule-based logic rather than cultural belonging. Although emotionally charged, the argument is structured around legal distinctions that present the party’s restrictive stance as both legitimate and necessary. By emphasizing that support should be reserved for women and children, Reil reinforces the claim to support those deserving if help while discrediting others.

Lega follows a similar strategy. In one statement, MEP Annalisa Tardino declares:

*“For years, we have repeatedly emphasized that these are the people we should welcome with open doors, providing clear, determined, and effective regulations—while at the same time firmly shutting the door on traffickers and criminals.”* (European Parliament, 2022d, Lega, ID; own translation)

The reference to “clear, determined, and effective regulations” emphasizes procedural control and the rule of law. Tardino advocates selective inclusion based on legal status while portraying those who arrive outside the system as threats linked to criminal activity. In doing so, she introduces a secondary frame based on security, reinforcing the need for strict enforcement alongside legal differentiation. The combined use of the legal and security frames supports the portrayal of Ukrainian refugees as both lawful and non-threatening, in contrast to other migrants characterized as illegal and dangerous.

Vlaams Belang also draws heavily on legal arguments, often in combination with international and cultural frames. The party emphasizes national sovereignty and civilizational identity, while anchoring its restrictive asylum stance in legal definitions. It consistently distinguishes between “genuine” war refugees and “economic migrants” from the Middle East and Africa. The legal frame is used to argue that asylum should be conditional and geographically limited, often under the principle of regional protection. This supports a broader call to reduce refugee inflows into Western Europe and reinforces a legalistic narrative of legitimate versus illegitimate claims to asylum.

Fratelli d’Italia, Fidesz, and Rassemblement National use the legal frame less systematically. Fratelli d’Italia invokes legality to defend Ukrainian refugees while advocating for the repatriation of those who entered illegally. Vincenzo Sofo emphasizes that the asylum system should respond to “real humanitarian crises” and suggests that the current situation reveals “who a true refugee is” (European Parliament, 2022d, FdI, NI; own translation)

Fidesz also makes occasional use of legal framing. Balázs Hidvéghi affirms Hungary’s support for “those in genuine need” while rejecting “illegal economic migration and border violations” (European Parliament, 2022d, FdI, NI; own translation). However, in the case of Fidesz, legal references tend to be subordinate to stronger moral and blame frames. The legal argument exists but does not dominate the party’s discursive strategy.

Taken together, the legal frame is widely but unevenly used across European PRR parties. Its most consistent and explicit applications are found in the discourse of the AfD, Lega, and Vlaams Belang. In these cases, legal distinctions serve as a primary tool for structuring exclusion and creating hierarchies of deservingness. While often presented in neutral, rules-based language, the legal frame frequently conceals political and symbolic boundaries, reinforcing a deeply selective model of protection. This model draws on procedural legitimacy while implicitly encoding ideological and civilizational preferences. The legal frame thus becomes a mechanism for legitimizing exclusion through the appearance of objectivity.

### 7.3.3. Moral Frame: Selective Humanitarianism and Emotional Resonance

The moral frame appears across many PRR party discourses and centres on emotional appeals to protect vulnerable groups, particularly Ukrainian women and children. It constructs a specific image of the "ideal refugee": passive, familial, female, and culturally proximate. The framing emphasizes trauma, displacement, and innocence, aligning refugee legitimacy with moral sentiment and affective obligation. However, it is never extended to non-European migrants (especially male adults), reinforcing a racialized and gendered hierarchy of deservingness. While almost all parties referenced this frame to some extent, their rhetorical intensity and strategic use vary. Some parties place the moral frame at the centre of their discourse, while others deploy it sparingly and always in combination with more dominant legal or security frames.

FdI, Lega, and Fidesz, make the most sustained use of the moral frame, strategically emphasizing emotional narratives around Ukrainian women and children to legitimize selective solidarity. For FdI, this frame forms a cornerstone of its refugee discourse. Chiara Gemma highlights the urgency of protection, stating:

*"Since the start of the war, in less than a month, one in two Ukrainian children has been displaced. The European Union is now, and perhaps for months to come, their only home - the place where these children can live in safety, away from bombs."* (European Parliament, 2022j, FdI, NI; own translation).

Her statement draws on collective moral responsibility and invokes the EU as a sanctuary space rooted in humanitarian principles. The focus on children's displacement and the use of emotionally charged language such as "safety" and "bombs" serves to humanize the crisis and demand empathetic action.

Fidesz similarly relies on this frame to present Hungary as morally engaged, despite its restrictive stance on non-European migration. Tamás Deutsch emphasizes Hungary's ethical commitment: *"Madam President, the war raging in Ukraine is causing horrific human tragedies. We Hungarians want the bloodshed to end immediately, and we are doing everything in our power to help those fleeing the war."* (European Parliament, 2022k, Fidesz, NI; own translation). His language evokes emotional urgency and compassion, aligning Hungary with humanitarian values while implicitly contrasting its treatment of Ukrainian refugees with its prior migration policies. By framing Hungary's actions as motivated by empathy, Deutsch counters external criticism and positions his country as morally responsible.

PiS draws on the moral frame but integrates it with security and geopolitical reasoning. The party highlights Poland's humanitarian response while defending its past securitized border actions. Joachim Stanislaw Brudziński argues: *"This is hybrid warfare. Had Poland's Border Guard allowed this first stage of war, which Putin is now continuing in Ukraine, to succeed,*

*we would not be welcoming real war refugees today.*” (European Parliament, 2022p, PiS, ECR; own translation). This framing constructs a causal link between earlier border fortifications and the current ability to offer aid. The moral frame thus legitimizes past restrictive policies by reframing them as conditions for present compassion. The focus remains on Ukrainian refugees as morally worthy beneficiaries, reinforcing both Poland’s humanitarian role and its sovereignty.

By contrast, AfD and RN deploy the moral frame more selectively and primarily to support or soften claims made through other frames. When used, it serves to justify legal or securitized distinctions between groups of migrants rather than to build a central narrative of compassion. Guido Reil, for instance, acknowledges the vulnerability of Ukrainians while redirecting fear and suspicion onto others: *“But unfortunately, we must also protect them from young men from Africa and the Middle East who have mixed in with them and are once again using this terrible crisis to enter Europe illegally.”* (European Parliament, 2022m, AfD, ID; own translation). This statement reinforces a binary distinction between deserving and undeserving refugees. The moral appeal is reserved for Ukrainians, while others are cast as opportunists and threats. Security is invoked, but it does not define AfD’s framing in this context. Rather, the quote illustrates how moral language can coexist with exclusionary narratives.

In summary, while the moral frame is widely used, it serves different functions across parties. For FdI, Lega, Fidesz, and VOX, it forms a central rhetorical pillar used to construct deservingness and to express national and European solidarity. For parties like AfD and RN, it is strategically instrumental used primarily to reinforce distinctions made in legal or security frames. Across all cases, the moral frame remains exclusively applied to (female) Ukrainian refugees, reinforcing gendered, racialized hierarchies that determine who is worthy of protection.

#### 7.3.4. International Frame: Recasting the Moral Geography of Europe

A notable trend within the international frame is the discursive reversal of Eastern Europe’s position within the broader European refugee narrative. Whereas countries such as Poland and Hungary were heavily criticized during the 2015 refugee crisis for their restrictive migration policies, they are now reimagined particularly by Western PRRP actors as models of humanitarian commitment. This shift is especially pronounced in the discourse of FdI, Lega, VOX, and Rassemblement National, where the international frame is mobilized to outline Eastern European states as exemplars of solidarity and national initiative. Subcodes within this frame underscore not only intra-European solidarity but also articulate sharp criticism of centralized EU governance. In these cases, the international frame functions as more than just a geographical reassignment of moral legitimacy, it becomes a vehicle for articulating an alternative vision of European cooperation rooted in sovereignty, Christian values, and intergovernmental voluntarism. In this sense, it acts as a subtle challenge to supranationalism by presenting national action as both more effective and more morally grounded.

In addition, the international frame intersects meaningfully with both the moral and blame frames. While some parties use the frame to evoke the EU’s normative identity as a humanitarian actor and promoter of human rights, these references often appear alongside highly emotional appeals focused on the suffering of Ukrainian women and children. At the same time, the international frame frequently complements the blame frame, as seen in discursive efforts to highlight and legitimize the actions of Poland and Hungary in responding to the Ukrainian refugee crisis. This intersectionality suggests a triangular relationship between the international, moral, and blame frames each reinforcing the others by combining narratives

of humanitarian urgency, national virtue, and institutional failure. The international frame, therefore, operates on both a symbolic and strategic level: it validates certain national responses while problematizing centralized EU leadership.

Given the geopolitical nature of the Russian invasion and its implications for European foreign and defence policy, it is unsurprising that the international frame appears across the discourse of all parties in the dataset. However, its deployment is most pronounced in the discourse of Fratelli d'Italia. FdI employs the frame to highlight themes of solidarity, national responsibility, and value-based leadership within the EU. For instance, MEP Raffaele Fitto explicitly acknowledges the humanitarian role of Eastern European countries, stating:

*“At the same time, I want to highlight the commendable efforts of our Eastern European neighbours, who are managing this humanitarian crisis with great dedication. Ukraine’s response has perhaps been unexpected for many, and it requires us - alongside our NATO allies and the international community - to step up our commitment to defending the values of freedom and democracy.”* (European Parliament, 2022a, FdI, NI; own translation).

Fitto’s statement simultaneously repositions Poland and Hungary as reliable humanitarian partners, aligns their efforts with NATO and broader Western commitments, and implicitly critiques the European Commission’s top-down migration governance. By emphasizing value-driven, sovereign engagement, FdI projects a vision of Europe not anchored in supranational coordination but in intergovernmental cooperation among autonomous, morally grounded nation-states.

In other parties’ discourse, the international frame plays a supporting yet consistent role, particularly in highlighting Eastern Europe’s rapid response to the crisis. Poland and Hungary are repeatedly praised for their proactive engagement and willingness to host large numbers of refugees. While the moral frame is more central in these instances, the international frame bolsters these narratives by situating them within broader critiques of EU governance. Lega, for instance, employs the blame frame to underscore institutional shortcomings, simultaneously using the international frame to advocate for enhanced national control over asylum management.

In summary, the international frame serves as a versatile rhetorical tool that enables PRR actors to reconfigure narratives of legitimacy, solidarity, and governance within the EU. By elevating the role of Eastern European states and critiquing supranational authority, the frame allows parties to promote a vision of Europe based on sovereign cooperation and shared civilizational values. Its frequent intersection with the moral and blame frames further enhances its strategic utility, enabling parties to legitimize selective humanitarianism while discrediting centralized EU responses. The frame thus functions both as a moral realignment and a political critique, reinforcing the centrality of national agency in refugee governance.

### 7.3.5. Economic Frame: Burden Narratives and Compensation Demands

The economic frame appeared most prominently in the discourse of PiS, where it was used to quantify national contributions and emphasize the financial imbalances in EU support mechanisms. Subcode analysis indicates that the core arguments embedded in this frame revolve around the high costs of refugee reception, the strain on national budgets, and the call for fairer burden-sharing. While some other parties referred to these themes occasionally, the economic frame was largely marginal in their discourse. Notably, parties such as FdI, Vlaams

Belang, and VOX made no significant use of this frame, likely due to its potential to conflict with humanitarian narratives or its limited strategic utility in their national contexts.

Western European PRRPs generally refrained from adopting the economic frame, possibly because emphasizing fiscal strain might undermine their broader moral or legal appeals. In contrast, Eastern European PRR parties, particularly PiS and VMRO, strategically employed economic arguments to position themselves as both morally engaged and materially unsupported within the European refugee response. For PiS, the frame plays a central role in portraying Poland as a country overburdened by refugee-related expenses and unfairly left to shoulder the costs alone. Polish MEPs consistently underscore national financial efforts as a form of both moral leadership and evidence of structural injustice within the EU. In this context, Bogdan Rzońca's statement is illustrative:

*“The Polish government alone has spent 8 billion zlotys from its own budget to support these refugees—that is 2 billion euros. My question is this: when will financial aid from the European Union reach the countries that are already bearing the costs?”* (European Parliament, 2022k, PiS, ECR; own translation).

The quote performs several rhetorical functions simultaneously: it quantifies national sacrifice, exposes perceived failures in EU solidarity, and expresses moral indignation using a pointed rhetorical question. Poland is thus framed not only as a generous contributor but also as a neglected frontline actor in urgent need of compensation and recognition.

VMRO similarly invokes the economic frame to contrast effective local action with what it portrays as the inefficiency of EU bureaucracies. One statement emphasizes that “the Bulgarian society, the people in Romania, the people in Moldova” (European Parliament, 2022d, Angel Dzhambazki, ECR; own translation) are already providing the necessary help, while the EU remains caught in rhetorical deliberation. This framing creates a dichotomy between an active, burden-bearing East and a passive, symbolic West, reinforcing a broader narrative of institutional detachment and regional imbalance in responsibility-sharing.

The economic frame was selectively employed by Eastern PRR parties to underline fiscal strain and institutional neglect, while Western parties largely avoided the frame. It served as a means of framing Eastern actors as materially overburdened yet morally committed, highlighting asymmetries in EU solidarity and responsibility distribution.

### 7.3.6. Security Frame: Racialized Threat Construction

The security frame was employed very selectively across the dataset, but where it appeared, it served to reinforce exclusionary distinctions between refugee groups and to legitimize securitized migration governance. It was most prominently invoked by parties such as AfD, PiS, Vlaams Belang, and VMRO, typically in the context of contrasting Ukrainian refugees with migrants from Africa or the Middle East. These contrasts often relied on implicit or explicit racialized logics, framing Ukrainian refugees as part of the European cultural and civilizational space, while representing non-European migrants especially men from Muslim-majority countries as potential security threats.

Subcodes within the security frame include references to criminal infiltration, demographic threat, and hybrid warfare. While this frame was not dominant in the refugee discourse of most parties, it played a supporting role in reaffirming the perceived legitimacy of national border



control, the need for securitized responses, and the moral differentiation between refugee groups.

The rhetoric used within this frame frequently supported the legal distinction between “real” and “economic” refugees but did so in ways that leaned into xenophobic and racialized narratives. For example, AfD MEP Guido Reil stated: *“In Düsseldorf, an 18-year-old Ukrainian woman was raped by a Tunisian and a Nigerian. She then fled from Germany to Poland because she no longer felt safe in Germany. This is a scandal!”* (European Parliament, 2022m, AfD, ID; own translation). This statement not only implies a failure of Germany’s refugee policy but also reinforces a hierarchy between refugees by suggesting that even Ukrainian women, portrayed here as emblematic of European identity, are endangered by the presence of African and Middle Eastern men. The emphasis on rape draws on affective fear and constructs foreign male refugees as threats to European women’s safety.

PiS also utilizes the security frame, albeit often intertwined with geopolitical concerns. Witold Jan Waszczykowski warned: *“We must avoid the creation of refugee camps and ghettos, which would lead to a Palestinian-like refugee situation. We should learn from the experiences of Turkey and Lebanon.”* (European Parliament 2022d, PiS, ECR; own translation). His statement draws a historical parallel between failed refugee integration and long-term geopolitical instability, positioning strict border management and refugee dispersal as necessary strategies to avoid entrenched conflict.

Moreover, in the discourse of some Eastern European parties, especially PiS and VMRO, the refugee influx was explicitly linked to hybrid warfare, a term that invokes coordinated external destabilization. These narratives did not exclusively target Ukrainian refugees but highlighted the vulnerability of national borders to manipulation. PiS MEP Beata Kempa asserts: *“You disregard the security of Poland’s borders. You disregard the security of the EU’s borders. You disregard the safety of our Border Guard officers, who are constantly under brutal attack.”* (European Parliament, 2022p, PiS, ECR; own translation). Here, the refugee influx is framed not just as a humanitarian emergency but as part of a broader geopolitical strategy, one that threatens national sovereignty and internal stability. The portrayal of border guards under attack invokes a language of defence and siege, situating the border as a militarized frontline.

Though marginal compared to other frames, the security frame was tactically deployed by AfD, PiS, Vlaams Belang, VMRO, and VOX to differentiate between “safe” and “threatening” refugee groups, often through gendered and racialized imaginaries. It reinforced calls for border fortification and linked migration to criminality, violence, and hybrid warfare. This frame ultimately served to legitimize restrictive asylum policies and national security measures by aligning refugee management with broader narratives of threat containment.

### 7.3.7. Cultural Frame: Subtle Civilizational Markers

The cultural frame also appeared only marginally in the overall dataset, used most clearly by Vlaams Belang, RN, AfD and, to a lesser extent, Fidesz and PiS. All other parties did not use the cultural frame at all. Where present, this frame emphasized civilizational affinity with Ukrainian refugees, portraying them as culturally compatible with European norms, values, and traditions. Subcodes within this frame referred to shared Christian heritage, regional belonging, and the perceived threat of Western decline. These references often served to construct Ukrainians as part of a broader European cultural family implicitly, or sometimes explicitly, in contrast to non-European, racialized others. However, the relative scarcity of the cultural frame across most parties suggests a strategic rhetorical shift. Many PRR actors appear to increasingly

favour the legal frame as a more politically acceptable and seemingly objective vehicle for expressing exclusionary preferences. Cultural arguments, by contrast, are often reserved for subtle deployment or secondary reinforcement of other frames.

This strategy is particularly evident in the discourse of Vlaams Belang, where cultural framing appears in nuanced references to historical and regional connectedness. Ukrainian refugees are described as culturally proximate and civilizationaly familiar: “(...) in this case, Ukraine is our region!” (European Parliament, 2022d, Tom Vandendriessche, ID; own translation) implying that Ukrainians belong in the EU in ways that other refugee groups, particularly from the Middle East or Africa, do not. This rhetorical move supports the party’s broader argument for restrictive migration policies and a preference for intra-European refugee movements. Cultural proximity, in this framing, legitimizes selective solidarity while reinforcing calls for a closed-door approach to non-European migration. In the case of VOX, the cultural frame is intertwined with traditionalist and religious references, particularly in critiques of EU social policy and moral decline. Although not central to the party’s refugee discourse, these cultural references provide ideological depth to their broader anti-globalist and anti-liberal narrative, occasionally surfacing in juxtaposition to humanitarian appeals for Ukrainian refugees. Fidesz also makes occasional use of the cultural frame, particularly when aligning Hungary with the Christian roots of European civilization. However, this framing is generally embedded within broader narratives of sovereignty, national identity, and moral duty, rather than as a standalone justification for refugee selectivity.

While only marginally used, the cultural frame served as a subtle yet powerful tool to establish civilizational hierarchies and justify selective refugee support. Most clearly articulated by Vlaams Belang, it emphasized cultural proximity to Ukrainians while sidelining or excluding others. However, its limited deployment compared to the legal frame reflects a strategic shift among PRR parties: legality now functions as the primary legitimizing discourse, with cultural arguments layered in selectively to reinforce existing distinctions without overtly invoking race or religion.

## 8. Analysing Strategic Adaptation

Having outlined the types of frames employed by PRR parties in European Parliament debates on migration, this chapter now turns to an analysis of the observed rhetorical patterns, strategic groupings, and commonalities across parties. By linking empirical frame usage to the theoretical framework of framing mechanisms, this section aims to uncover which parties diverge in their rhetorical strategies and which align in their discursive choices.

Rather than imposing predefined categories, I approached the data inductively. Through both statistical clustering and thematic coding, patterns of frame co-occurrence and rhetorical tone emerged. These patterns, reinforced by Principal Component Analysis and visualized in a frame heatmap, revealed coherent discursive clusters. I then interpreted these clusters through the lens of framing mechanisms, drawing on linguistic markers, contextual references, and emotional cues to infer strategic intent. This convergence of quantitative structure and qualitative nuance enabled the classification of three distinct frame-strategy types based on shared tendencies in emphasis, tone, and frame composition.

On a technical level, mechanisms such as amplification, bridging, transformation and extension were inferred from combinations of linguistic markers, references to prior events, and affective intensity. Amplification manifested through heightened rhetoric and intensified identity claims, reaffirming the ideological foundations of the populist radical right party family. This strategy involved the reactivation of established narratives such as invoking fears about a threatened nation state, often linked to immigration, or expressions of Euroscepticism. Bridging was evidenced by continuity markers linking present debates to past crises. Transformation was reflected in the strategic use of moderate, rule-based language that presented exclusionary preferences as compatible with democratic norms. Older ideological narratives were expressed in ways that appeared more neutral but continued to support the core positions of the party family. For instance, cultural arguments were reformulated as legal claims, contributing to the normalization of racial hierarchies through legal discourse. Extension emerged when migration was embedded into broader systemic concerns, such as inflation, geopolitical instability, or institutional overload. These mechanisms, once identified, were mapped back onto the PCA clusters (Figure IV), reinforcing the validity of the groupings.

The first identified group consists of what may be described as solidarity strategists (see Figure X). This includes Lega, Fratelli d'Italia, Fidesz, and VOX. These parties predominantly rely on bridging and transformation mechanisms to articulate their refugee discourse, consistently deploying moral and international frames to cast their support for Ukrainian refugees as an expression of ethical obligation, compassion, and European solidarity.

The strong emphasis on Ukrainian women and children served to construct an image of innocent and deserving refugees, implicitly contrasted with the predominantly male and culturally distant refugees from Syria. Importantly, Syrians are rarely mentioned directly; rather, this contrast emerges through a discursive construction of two distinct categories of refugees that are never presented within the same frame. Moral appeals are used exclusively in reference to Ukrainian refugees, while such framing is absent when it comes to other refugee populations. The highly emotional language and frequent appeals to European values thus underscore a selective form of compassion. This compassion is extended specifically and exclusively to Ukrainian refugees. This discursive boundary reinforces a moral hierarchy between refugee groups, legitimizing solidarity for some while implicitly excluding others.

Simultaneously, the group employed bridging to maintain ideological continuity. The frequent use of international frames helped them link the Ukrainian refugee situation to long-standing concerns about EU overreach, NATO's strategic missteps, and broader geopolitical instability. This framing allowed them to shift responsibility for both the security and humanitarian dimensions of the crisis onto liberal elites and supranational institutions. The invasion of Ukraine, resulting energy insecurity, and the refugee influx were all presented as consequences of earlier failures by EU and NATO leadership. Rather than abandoning their critical stance, these parties adapted it to the new context by framing the situation as a continuation of elite mismanagement. In doing so, they preserved ideological coherence while responding to a transformed political and discursive environment.

As a result, this group sustains emotional resonance and moral legitimacy without relying on overtly exclusionary language. Their discourse constructs a moral imperative through emotionally charged appeals, references to European solidarity, and portrayals of vulnerable Ukrainian civilians. While proximity and deservingness are not explicitly invoked, they are implicitly embedded in the way the crisis is narrated. The emotional amplification of the Ukrainian situation foregrounds their suffering and frames support as necessary and self-evident, creating an exclusive structure of compassion that implicitly excludes other refugee groups. Security and cultural arguments are largely absent. Instead, these parties emphasize solidarity over threat, aligning with the dominant affective tone of the European Parliament during this period. This profile confirms their strategy of norm-conforming adaptation, using transformation to align with humanitarian expectations and bridging to preserve continuity with pre-existing critiques of EU migration and security policy.

In contrast to adaptation of the solidarity strategists, the second group, consisting of PiS and VMRO, adopt a more confrontational style (see Table V). These actors can be described as grievance mobilizers. They rely on amplification, extension, and partially bridging to frame migration as part of a broader narrative of national victimhood, regional overextension, and elite failure. Their discourse is dominated by blame, economic, and more moderately international and security frames, articulated in antagonistic and affectively intense language. Amplification appears most clearly in references to hybrid warfare, border crises, and the symbolic undermining of national sovereignty. These actors do not primarily frame refugees as recipients of support but as threats, burdens, or consequences of geopolitical dysfunction.

This use of amplification intensifies symbolic conflict and heightens emotional salience. It is particularly potent in national contexts with fewer reputational constraints or where parties operate as discursive outsiders. Amplification allows these actors to construct sharp identity boundaries, framing refugees as not only a financial or logistical burden but a threat to national cohesion and security. In addition, grievance mobilizers use extension to connect refugee reception to wider systemic concerns such as fiscal strain, institutional overload, or international instability. For example, PiS emphasizes national expenditure and perceived lack of EU compensation, while VMRO links refugee-related challenges to declining regional capacity and geopolitical pressure. These narratives amplify the perception of systemic injustice and help create a sense of structural siege. The PCA plot confirms this rhetorical pattern, with PiS and VMRO clustering around extended crisis frames rather than isolated humanitarian claims.

The heatmap (Figure IV) shows this group's discourse to be dominated by the blame frame, particularly in the case of VMRO, and closely accompanied by economic and security frames. The moral and legal frames are weakly represented, indicating that humanitarian and procedural concerns are not central to their messaging. This profile reflects a strategy of emotional escalation and structural critique rather than normative alignment, with the emphasis placed on

mobilizing grievance rather than justifying selectivity. Notably, PiS also emerged as the most vocal actor on the Ukrainian refugee issue, displaying both the highest number of speaking interventions and an early discursive engagement with the topic. This high level of anticipatory activity suggests that PiS not only mobilized strong affective and structural frames but also sought to shape the initial narrative environment of the debate, reinforcing its role as a leading grievance mobilizer within the European Parliament.

The third group consists of AfD, RN and Vlaams Belang and can be described as institutional legalists (see Table V). These parties primarily rely on bridging and transformation mechanisms, occasionally supplemented by amplification. Their discourse focuses on legal order, institutional failure, and national competence. Unlike grievance mobilizers, their rhetoric is more controlled and procedural. They use bridging to reactivate earlier discourses from 2015 and earlier, portraying the European Commission as ineffective, ideologically rigid, and detached from national realities. Blame is directed primarily at EU institutions, but it is articulated in legalist rather than emotional terms.

Transformation is central to this strategy, though framed through the lens of institutional coherence rather than moral obligation. Legal distinctions between “real” and “illegal” migrants are used to justify national sovereignty and procedural rigor. AfD, in particular, combines legal claims with occasional references to security and cultural frames, often through emotionally charged anecdotes. However, these moments of amplification serve more to underscore perceived institutional breakdowns than to provoke outrage. Vlaams Belang presents a more muted yet equally structured legal discourse, emphasizing civilizational proximity and geographical limitations to asylum.

This group’s rhetorical posture differs from that of the legal-moral strategists less in tone than in purpose. While both appeal to legality and fairness, institutional legalists do so not to legitimize humanitarian inclusion but to reinforce national authority and discredit supranational governance. Their moderate use of moral and international frames suggests awareness of parliamentary norms, while the presence of security and cultural frames, particularly in AfD, adds a secondary layer of intensity. The overall profile is one of institutional opposition through procedurally acceptable language, aimed at restoring national competence over migration governance.

Taken together, these three groups reflect the principal logics by which PRR parties adapt their refugee discourse in the European Parliament. These groupings capture the interaction between frame types, rhetorical functions, and institutional constraints (see Table V). Each represents a distinct strategy for reconciling exclusionary preferences with the reputational demands of parliamentary discourse. Whether through legal proceduralism, emotional escalation, or extended system critique, PRR actors tailor their framing strategies to remain ideologically consistent while securing discursive legitimacy within an institutionalized and norm-sensitive environment.

These findings suggest that PRR actors in the European Parliament do not rely on transgression as a default mode of communication. Instead, their discursive strategies reflect a pragmatic balancing of ideological objectives with institutional constraints. Transgression functions as one possible mechanism within a broader repertoire of rhetorical adaptation. Rather than being defined by a politics of rupture, PRR discourse in the EP reveals a politics of constraint navigation. Populist style in this context is not discarded but recalibrated to suit the demands of parliamentary discourse, allowing parties to maintain ideological coherence while ensuring rhetorical viability.

Strategic Group	Members	Signature Frames	Mechanisms Inferred	Mechanism Explanation
Solidarity Strategists	Lega, FdI, Fidesz, VOX	High <b>moral</b> and <b>international</b> , moderate <b>blame</b> and <b>legal</b>	Transformation and Bridging	<p><b>Transformation:</b> Uses emotional/moral language to portray Ukrainian refugees as innocent, European, and deserving, highlighting women and children. This transforms exclusionary preferences into norm-conforming compassion by selectively applying solidarity and omitting other refugee groups.</p> <p><b>Bridging:</b> Connects the Ukraine crisis to existing grievances about EU mismanagement, NATO, or elite overreach, preserving ideological continuity while adapting discourse to the new context.</p>
Grievance Mobilizers	PiS, VMRO	High <b>blame</b> , moderate <b>international</b> , <b>economic</b> and <b>security</b>	Amplification and Bridging	<p><b>Amplification:</b> Uses emotionally intense language to dramatize systemic grievances (e.g., hybrid warfare, western betrayal, border crises).</p> <p><b>Bridging:</b> Links current refugee reception to prior perceived injustices (e.g., previous crises or threats to sovereignty), reinforcing long-standing victimhood narratives.</p>
Institutional Legalists	AfD, Vlaams, RN	High <b>legal</b> , moderate <b>blame</b> and <b>moral</b>	Bridging and Transformation	<p><b>Bridging:</b> Reactivates 2015-era discourses by linking the Ukraine crisis to long-standing critiques of EU institutional failure and overreach in migration politics.</p> <p><b>Transformation:</b> Reframes exclusionary preferences as procedural fairness through legal distinctions (e.g. “real” vs. “illegal” migrants), promoting national sovereignty under the guise of rule-based order. This presents opposition to supranational governance in moderate, institutional language rather than emotional terms.</p>

**Table V. PRR Party Strategic Groupings**

## 9. Discussion

This chapter situates the findings of the frame analysis within broader debates on the nature of PRR discourse, particularly in institutional settings like the EP. A dominant strand in the literature has characterized populism as fundamentally transgressive. According to this view, populist communication is marked by norm violations, antagonistic rhetoric, and theatrical provocation. As Moffitt (2016) describes it populist performance is a “general disregard for ‘appropriate’ ways of acting on the political stage” (p. 55), where “bad manners” become a strategy to signal authenticity and closeness to “the people” (p. 57). Similarly, Ostiguy & Roberts (2016) contend that populism and its politics are “always on ‘the low’” (p. 26), drawing legitimacy from affective identification and stylistic rupture (Ostiguy, 2017). This refers to a distinct mode of political appeal rooted in informality, emotional expressiveness, and identification with culturally 'common' people contrasted with the polished, procedural, and institutional style associated with 'high' politics and the elite. Wodak (2015) likewise associates populism with the transgression of discursive taboos, arguing that right-wing populist actors deliberately violate established norms to provoke scandals, attract media attention, and set the political agenda. This transgression is not incidental but forms part of a broader "politics of denial" and "calculated ambivalence," where provocation, denial, and victimhood are strategically combined to dominate public discourse and legitimize exclusionary narratives (Wodak, 2015, p. 5).

However, a growing body of scholarship has challenged the assumption that norm-breaking is intrinsic to populist discourse. Aiolfi, (2022, p. 6) introduces a more flexible understanding of transgression, arguing that norm violations can be symbolic, rhetorical, or institutional and do not necessarily involve vulgarity or extremity. Moffitt himself concedes that not all populist actors perform “the low,” highlighting figures such as Geert Wilders or Ross Perot, who maintained restrained styles while still communicating populist difference (Moffitt, 2016, p. 59). This insight is supported by Ekström et al. (2018), who stress the context-dependence of populist style, emphasizing how political actors adjust their repertoire of rhetorical resources depending on institutional, media, and situational constraints.

This thesis contributes to these evolving debates by demonstrating that PRR actors in the European Parliament frequently engage in rhetorically moderated and procedurally aligned discourse. Rather than openly rejecting institutional norms, many of these actors recalibrate their rhetoric to conform to the reputational and procedural expectations of the parliamentary setting. The findings show that PRRPs differentiate themselves not by opposing refugee reception outright, but by framing their positions through legal, institutional, moral, or blame-based lenses. This indicates a baseline of discursive convergence across parties, mirroring broader parliamentary norms and expectations.

The analysis thus proceeds from the assumption that populist discourse is not inherently disruptive, but selectively adaptive. Frame usage among PRR parties is marked by rhetorical strategies that preserve ideological distinction while avoiding reputational risk. These strategies reflect context-specific calibrations, highlighting that PRR communication is shaped not only by ideological commitments but by structural incentives and constraints. The case of the EP, as a formal and reputationally sensitive arena, illustrates this adaptive logic particularly well. Rather than deploying overtly nativist or inflammatory rhetoric, PRR actors modulate their style to remain institutionally legitimate while subtly reinforcing exclusionary agendas without being on the “low”.

While the supranational institutional environment of the European Parliament provides a shared communicative context for all actors analysed, substantial variation in rhetorical strategy remains. Given that all parties operate under the same procedural rules and reputational constraints, these differences in frame usage cannot be attributed to the supranational setting alone. Instead, the observed variation points to the relevance of national-level discursive opportunity structures (DOS) in shaping how PRR actors craft and calibrate their rhetorical strategies, even in a transnational forum.

The findings suggest that while PRR actors share a general ideological orientation as per definition, their communicative behaviour is potentially filtered through domestic political pressures, reputational concerns, and issue salience at home. Frame selection and therefore the resulting adaptation strategies are thus not only a function of ideological positioning, but also of the strategic imperatives arising from national political contexts. To illustrate how these domestic factors may influence supranational discourse, three prominent parties, each representing a distinct cluster from the PCA, serve as illustrative cases: Rassemblement National (RN), PiS, and Fidesz. While these are not intended as exhaustive explanations, they provide plausible, context-sensitive interpretations of why particular framing strategies emerged in each case during the timeframe of February to August 2022.

In the case of Rassemblement National (RN), the party's reliance on moral and blame frames may be interpreted as a response to heightened reputational sensitivity during the French presidential election campaign in spring 2022. At that time, RN was subject to renewed public scrutiny over its historical connections to Vladimir Putin, particularly in light of a Russian bank loan used to finance Le Pen's previous campaign, a controversy brought to the fore during the final televised debate with Emmanuel Macron (Ivaldi et al., 2023, p. 5). Concurrently, RN promoted hardline proposals to reform French immigration policy, while simultaneously attempting to moderate its public image. This dual imperative likely incentivized a discursive strategy that foregrounded national solidarity and humanitarian concern for Ukrainian refugees, while redirecting critique toward national and European elites. The party's selective use of moral appeals and elite-blaming narratives thus reflects a rhetorical recalibration aimed at balancing ideological coherence with reputational risk management.

Law and Justice (PiS) similarly navigated a complex national context. As the governing party of a frontline state, PiS initially received international praise for its open reception of Ukrainian refugees. However, as the number of arrivals increased, public discourse in Poland began to reflect growing concerns about social strain, unequal treatment between different refugee groups, and perceived abuse of public welfare systems (Ivaldi et al., 2023, p. 18). These concerns coincided with increasing pressure from the far-right Confederation party, which adopted a more openly exclusionary and nationalist stance. In this context, PiS appeared to adopt a selective blame-oriented framing strategy, emphasizing governance failures and inadequate EU burden-sharing while avoiding overt nativist or moralizing language. This rhetorical shift can be understood as a strategy of damage containment, allowing PiS to reassert its nationalist credentials without alienating the broader electorate or undermining its initial humanitarian posture.

As already mentioned above, Fidesz and consequently Victor Orbán remained an outlier in the handling of the Russian invasion of Ukraine compared to other parties in the EU. Orbán aligned himself most closely with the Kremlin, even after news of the massive humanitarian consequences and war crimes committed by Russian soldiers broke. This exceptional stance can be interpreted as a reflection of Hungary's distinct discursive opportunity structure, shaped by a set of domestic political and media conditions. One ad hoc explanation lies in electoral



strategy: by condemning the war but avoiding direct criticism of Russia, Fidesz was able to maintain Orbán's image as a pragmatic statesman during the 2022 election campaign without alienating his pro-Russian voter base (Ádám, 2023, pp. 176-177). A second factor concerns Fidesz's consistent anti-EU and anti-sanction narrative, which redirected blame away from Russia and toward Brussels, reinforcing a familiar line of Eurosceptic critique (Ádám, 2023, p.178). Third, Hungary's energy dependence on Russia was used to justify ongoing cooperation, aligning with the government's long-standing "Eastern Opening" strategy that favors ties with authoritarian regimes (Ádám, 2023, p. 179).

Fidesz's presence in the EP solidarity strategist group thus reflects a case of discursive duality: adapting to European-level expectations while sustaining a domestically exceptional stance. This illustrates how populist parties can perform norm-conforming roles in supranational settings even when pursuing contradictory national strategies, underscoring the flexibility and context-sensitivity of populist communication.

Taken together, these examples highlight how national discursive environments mediate or contrast the rhetorical strategies of PRR actors in transnational arenas. While their formal context remains constant, their communicative behaviour is not. These findings reinforce the broader argument that populist discourse is not inherently transgressive or uniform, but context-sensitive, institutionally responsive, and shaped by the constraints and incentives embedded in both domestic and supranational opportunity structures.

## 10. Conclusion

This thesis has examined how PRR parties in the EP strategically framed Ukrainian refugees in the discursively constrained context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine in 2022. Drawing on a mixed-methods analysis of parliamentary debates, the study identified substantial variation in rhetorical patterns across the analysed parties (see Chapter 7). The observed frame variation reveals structured and strategic adaptation to distinct discursive opportunity structures (DOS). While all PRR actors retained exclusionary preferences, their modes of articulation differed in line with institutional positioning, reputational sensitivity, and framing constraints unique to the Ukrainian refugee crisis.

The analysis identified three distinct strategic groupings among PRR parties. Solidarity strategists, such as Lega, Fratelli d'Italia, Fidesz, and VOX, grounded their discourse in international and moral frames to present norm-conforming support for Ukrainian refugees. Grievance mobilizers, notably PiS and VMRO, constructed emotionally charged narratives of regional injustice and institutional neglect through the use of blame, security, and economic frames. Institutional legalists, including AfD, RN, and Vlaams Belang, emphasized legal critique and institutional blame, often linking present issues to past governance failures.

These findings resonate with recent scholarship (Albertazzi et al., 2022; Albertazzi 2022; Ivaldi et al., 2023), which documents how PRR parties across Europe recalibrated their stances on both asylum and foreign policy in response to Russia's war. Many actors previously aligned with pro-Russian positions or opposed to refugee reception reframed their narratives post-invasion. Parties such as Lega and Vlaams Belang began expressing support for Ukrainian refugees while emphasizing the distinction between 'real' and 'fake' refugees. Ukrainian displacement was framed as legitimate due to cultural proximity and perceived Europeanness, in contrast to refugees from the Middle East or Africa. This selective solidarity allowed PRR parties to retain their exclusionary core while temporarily adjusting their rhetorical posture to align with shifting public sentiment and reputational pressures.

A central finding of this thesis is that despite operating within the same institutional context, the European Parliament, PRR parties adopted markedly different discursive strategies. This suggests that while the supranational environment was constant, variation in national-level discursive opportunity structures likely accounts for the observed rhetorical divergence. In other words, the shared intergovernmental setting alone cannot explain the strategic groupings identified in this thesis; instead, the national DOS, shaped by domestic media, public opinion, party competition, and elite alliances, appear to play a crucial role in enabling or constraining certain discursive strategies.

However, this remains a theoretical assumption. The national-level DOS of each party was not empirically analysed in this study. Although ad hoc explanations were offered in the discussion chapters for specific party behaviours, the causal relationship between national DOS and discursive strategy could not be systematically tested. A comprehensive mapping of national DOS might not be feasible without simplifying assumptions, yet tools such as network analysis or content analysis of national media and party platforms could help operationalize these environments in future research. Such work could more directly assess whether and how national discursive constraints influence rhetorical choice.

Another limitation of this study concerns its exclusive focus on parliamentary speech and the interpretive approach employed in identifying framing mechanisms. Since mechanisms were not systematically coded but inferred through close reading of rhetorical structures and

contextual cues, the analysis carries an inevitable degree of subjectivity. This interpretive mode, while theoretically informed, limits replicability and leaves room for alternative interpretations. Moreover, the findings may not be generalizable across communicative contexts, particularly in more volatile arenas such as social media or national-level campaigning, where rhetorical styles and framing dynamics often diverge significantly from parliamentary discourse.

A key methodological limitation concerns the use of AI-based machine translation for parliamentary transcripts not available in English. While necessary for including a broader range of material, automated translation tools risk losing rhetorical nuance, altering word choice, and obscuring culturally embedded meanings, factors that are particularly relevant in frame analysis. Despite efforts to cross-check and interpret statements contextually, such limitations cannot be fully mitigated by a single researcher and must be acknowledged as a potential source of interpretive distortion.

Nevertheless, the strength of this thesis lies in its theoretically grounded and empirically attentive account of how PRR actors navigate discursive constraints. By tracing variation in rhetorical strategies across ideologically aligned actors operating within a shared institutional setting, the analysis advances our understanding of PRR adaptability. Ultimately, this study underscores that PRR discourse on refugee reception is not monolithic, but strategically adaptable. While exclusionary preferences remain largely consistent, the form in which they are articulated, through legalistic framing, blame attribution, or moralized appeals, varies according to contextual pressures. These findings contribute to a growing literature on the conditional flexibility of PRR communication and highlight the discursive boundaries of solidarity in contemporary European migration politics.

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# 11. Appendix

## Appendix A: Codebook for Framing Refugees in EP Debates

### 1. Blame Frame

#### Definition:

The **Blame Frame** is used when MEPs and parties assign responsibility for the challenges of refugee admissions, the reasons for large refugee inflows or the failure of the asylum system to a specific political actor. This can include:

#### Subcodes:

- **Blaming the European Commission** (e.g., for forcing policies on member states, failing to act).
- **Blaming Other EU Member States** (e.g., for refusing burden-sharing, violating EU solidarity, having economic ties to Russia).
- **Blaming Russia or External Actors** (e.g., for weaponizing migration, causing displacement, harming Ukrainian Nationals).
- **Blaming NGOs or Activists** (e.g., for encouraging illegal migration, border crossing).
- **Blaming Prior Governments** (e.g., for mishandling past migration policies).
- **Blaming the “Elites”** (e.g. for mishandling the refugee situation, woke policies etc.)
- **Blaming the refugees** (for economic grievances, crime, lost jobs etc.)

### 2. International Frame

#### Definition:

The **International Frame** refers to how the host nation is positioned internationally, both regarding the refugees’ countries of origin and third countries, and the obligations derived from these relations (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024). It can be used to justify refugee admission (solidarity, burden-sharing) or rejection (national sovereignty).

#### Subcodes:

**EU Criticism** (Criticizing the EU's response to migration crises).

- **Member State Support** (Support for specific member states’ policies/actions/response to the crisis).
- **Human Rights Leadership** (The EU as a global defender of refugee rights/The EU as diplomatic savior of Ukrainians).
- **Historical Debt/Reciprocity** (Moral obligation due to past historical ties).
- **Strategic Alliances** (Refugee policies as part of diplomatic relations, e.g., Turkey-EU deals).
- **Foreign Policy Tool** (Using refugee admissions to criticize another country).
- **EU Burden-Sharing** (Calls for equitable refugee distribution among member states).

### 3. Security Frame

**Definition:**

The **Security Frame** emphasizes crime, terrorism, border control, and threats to public order. It is often used to justify restrictive refugee policies by linking migration to national security risks (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024).

**Subcodes:**

- **Political Instability** (Refugee crises fueling right-wing or nationalist movements).
- **Health and Pandemic Fears** (Refugees as potential disease carriers, e.g., COVID-19).
- **Border Security** (Weak external borders, failure of FRONTEX).
- **Crime and Social Disorder** (Refugees linked to rising crime rates).
- **Terrorism Risk** (Fears of extremist infiltration through refugee flows).

### 4. Legal Frame

**Definition:**

The **Legal Frame** focuses on laws, asylum procedures, and international treaties (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024). It can be used to justify refugee admission (commitment to international law) or rejection (national sovereignty, migration control).

**Subcodes:**

- **Non-Refoulement** (Prohibiting the return of refugees to unsafe countries).
- **EU Legal Framework** (Conflicts between national and EU asylum policies, references to the framework itself).
- **Illegal Migration vs. Genuine Refugees** (Distinguishing between asylum seekers and economic migrants).
- **Sovereign Right to Control Borders** (No legal duty to accept all asylum seekers, legal right to protect the nation).
- **International Law Compliance** (Hosting refugees as a legal obligation under treaties).
- **Legal Criticism** (EU asylum laws are flawed)

### 5. Moral Frame

**Definition:**

The **Moral Frame** is based on humanitarian arguments, ethical responsibility, and solidarity (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024). It highlights moral obligations toward refugees, often invoking religious or historical duty.

**Subcodes:**

- **Refugees as Victims** (Framing refugees as helpless individuals needing protection).
- **Selective Moral Obligation** ("We should help our own first" – national solidarity).
- **Deservingness** (Women, children, war victims framed as "genuine" refugees).
- **Religious Solidarity** (Faith-based moral arguments for/against refugee admission).
- **Humanitarian Responsibility** (Helping refugees as an ethical duty).

## 6. Cultural Frame

### Definition:

The **Cultural Frame** revolves around national identity and whether refugees are seen as culturally compatible or incompatible (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024).

### Subcodes:

- **Cultural Compatibility (Inclusionary)**
- **Shared Cultural or Religious Values** (E.g., “Ukrainian refugees share our Christian heritage”).
- **Historical/Colonial Ties** (E.g., “We have a responsibility to former colonies”).
- **Refugees as Contributors to Culture** (E.g., “Migrants enrich society with diversity”).
- **Successful Integration Cases** (E.g., “Many refugees assimilate and contribute to society”).
- **National Identity as Inclusive** (E.g., “Our country is built on diversity”).
- **Cultural Incompatibility (Exclusionary)**
- **Threat to National Identity** (E.g., “Refugees undermine our heritage”).
- **Religious/Civilizational Clash** (E.g., “Islam is incompatible with European values”).
- **Integrational Challenges** (E.g., “Refugees don’t adapt to our norms and language”).
- **Cultural Erosion/Dilution** (E.g., “Mass migration weakens national traditions”).
- **Limits of Multiculturalism** (E.g., “Too much diversity leads to fragmentation”).

## 7. Economic Frame

### Definition:

The **Economic Frame** defines refugees based on their financial impact—either as an economic burden (welfare dependency) or as contributors (labour market, entrepreneurship) (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024).

### Subcodes:

- **Strain on Public Services** (Healthcare, education, housing overwhelmed).
- **Economic Contribution** (Refugees benefiting the economy through labour shortages, taxes).
- **Job Competition** (Refugees competing with locals for employment).
- **Economic Burden** (Refugees as a financial strain, increasing welfare costs)

## 8. Party Affiliation

### Definition:

To track **which political parties** are making specific framing arguments, each speaker is coded by their party affiliation.

### Subcodes:

- **AfD** (Alternative for Germany)
- **RN** (Rassemblement National)
- **Lega** (Lega Nord)
- **PiS** (Law and Justice, Poland)

- **Fidesz** (Hungary)
- **VOX** (Spain)
- **FPÖ** (Freedom Party of Austria)
- **EKRE** (Conservative People's Party of Estonia)
- **JA21** (Netherlands)
- **VMRO** (Bulgaria)

## 9. Party Groups

### Definition:

To track **which political groups** are making specific framing arguments, each speaker is coded by their party group affiliation.

### Subcodes:

- **ECR** (European Conservatives and Reformists)
- **ID** (Identity and Democracy)
- **NI** (Non-Inscrits/Independents)

## Appendix B: Example of Code Application

Appendix B presents selected examples of how specific codes were applied to statements made by Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) in plenary debates related to the war in Ukraine. Each excerpt includes the document title, speaker information, and the applied code(s) with corresponding segments. The full coding is available as a reproducible MAXQDA document and corresponding Excel Table upon request.

### 1. Example Frame: Moral Frame – Refugees as Victims, Deservingness, Humanitarian Responsibility

**Document:** EU Protection of Children and Young People Fleeing the War Against Ukraine (Debate)

**Date:** 05.04.2022

**Speaker:** Simona Baldassarre (ID, Lega)

4 **Simona Baldassarre (ID, Lega)**

5 Mr. President, honorable colleagues, every minute in Ukraine, a child becomes a refugee: this is the alarm raised by UNICEF just a few days ago.  
How many of them, in just over a month, have seen their lives turned upside down, forced to grow up quickly due to the horrors of war, locked underground with the roar of bombs, which is taking away their dreams and hopes?  
Half of those who have left the country are minors—about 2 million children traveling in search of a better future. Taking care of them must be a priority for the European Union: in this exodus, many risk falling into the human trafficking market. For this reason, we must ensure, upon their arrival, a system of identification and registration of children, especially those who arrive unaccompanied by their parents, verifying who they are traveling with.  
We need to identify their specific needs and, if necessary, place them in specialized communities.  
Then there are disabled and orphaned children who are still in the midst of the conflict; there are many newborns from surrogacy, kept in the bunkers of clinics, waiting, like packages, for their buyers to come and pick them up. A tragedy within a tragedy. For all these little ones, humanitarian corridors are needed to ensure they reach the European Union safely.

**Line 1-5:** *"Mr. President, honorable colleagues, every minute in Ukraine, a child becomes a refugee... traveling in search of a better future."*

#### Assigned Codes:

- **Moral Frame:** Subframes: Refugees as Victims, Deservingness, Humanitarian Responsibility

#### Justification:

The speaker emphasizes the suffering of Ukrainian children, describing them as “minors in search of a better future”. Emotional and symbolic language such as “locked underground with the roar of bombs,” “taking away their dreams and hopes,” and the reference to UNICEF underlines their vulnerability and innocence. The frame appeals to compassion and moral obligation, centring on children's inherent *deservingness* of protection and the *humanitarian responsibility* to act.

#### Why other codes do not apply:

- No legal categories or procedural obligations are mentioned.
- There is no economic consideration, nor blame attribution.
- The speaker does not invoke legal, economic, or geopolitical considerations, but rather appeals to humanitarian concern and vulnerability. The emphasis on youth as innocent subjects in need of protection reflects a normatively charged depiction of deserving refugees.

**Line 5-8:** *"Taking care of them must be a priority for the European Union... verifying who they are traveling with."*

**Assigned Codes:**

- **International Frame:** *Subframes:* Human Rights Leadership

**Justification:**

This section shifts slightly from moral outrage to institutional solutions and functional measures: registration, identification, and prevention of trafficking. It frames the EU as a responsible actor with a duty to ensure orderly and safe entry. The emphasis is on humanitarian protection for children, especially those unaccompanied.

**Why a new code (vs. continued moral frame):**

While still drawing on moral legitimacy, the frame becomes more procedural and administrative and more focused on protection through humanitarian mechanisms (e.g., identification systems). The tone shifts from emotional to institutional.

**Why other codes do not apply:**

- Not legalistic per se: there's no reference to asylum law or EU directives.
- There's no economic burden argument or cultural essentialism.
- Blame is absent; it is about forward-looking responsibility.

**Line 9:** *"We need to identify their specific needs and, if necessary, place them in specialized communities."*

**Assigned Codes:**

- **Moral Frame:** *Subframe:* Humanitarian Responsibility

**Justification:**

Here, the language is technocratic but still firmly embedded in humanitarian logic: assessing needs, placing children in appropriate care. This is not about moral outrage or EU bureaucracy it's a functional articulation of child protection under humanitarian norms.

**Line 10-12:** *"There are disabled and orphaned children... to ensure they reach the European Union safely."*

**Assigned Codes:**

**Moral Frame:** *Subframes:* Refugees as Victims, Deservingness, Humanitarian Responsibility

**Justification:**

This portion brings back strong emotional appeals ("packages waiting for buyers," "tragedy within a tragedy") and again portrays children as helpless, highly deserving, and in immediate need. The call for "humanitarian corridors" blends both the *moral imperative* and the *humanitarian mechanism*.

**Why combined coding:**

It re-introduces the affective victimhood and deservingness logic (moral frame) while also proposing specific instruments of protection (international frame).



## 2. Example Frame: Blame Frame – Blaming the EU, Blaming the Commission

**Document:** EU Protection of Children and Young People Fleeing the War Against Ukraine (Debate)

**Date:** 05.04.2022

**Speaker:** Jean-Paul Garraud (ID, RN)

	14	<b>Jean-Paul Garraud (ID, RN)</b>
..Humanitarian ..Refugees a:	15	Mr. President, the conflict in Ukraine brings its share of horrors that are shaking the entire world. The scenes of devastation and desolation are multiplying, and the number of victims keeps increasing. The population is severely affected, mainly women and children fleeing the war, abandoning their devastated homes, and separating from husbands and fathers who stay behind to defend their country with arms. It is unbearable to witness such scenes. Such tragedies on the European continent are intolerable!
..Member State	16	Faced with these atrocities, European solidarity has manifested itself, often spontaneously, with great humanity. Our peoples have truly mobilized. We must recognize and encourage all initiatives, at all levels, that provide aid to these unfortunate people. Among the remarkable countries are Poland, which has taken in 2.5 million refugees, as well as Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Romania. These are examples of the best that a true Europe of nations can offer.]
..Blaming the ..Blaming the ..ID ..RN	17	These countries must be helped, yet they are not. In fact, quite the opposite is happening. It is already astonishing to note that, despite this surge of solidarity, no European aid has reached them. But what is even worse: in another matter, the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Commission have imposed sanctions on Hungary and Poland, accusing them of violating the rule of law—a concept that, in my opinion, is highly questionable. Certainly, it is not the same subject, but it is shocking to see that despite their immense solidarity, Poland and Hungary are not supported by the European Commission.
..Blaming the E	18	The Commission is withholding European funds destined for these countries—€7 billion for Hungary and €39.4 billion for Poland. How is it possible that, at the same time, countries that are exemplary in their solidarity towards millions of refugees are sanctioned by our European institutions? Not only should these countries not be sanctioned, but they should be assisted and commended.
..Blaming oth ..Blaming the	19	The Commission found the means, with varying speed, to overcome the health crisis, to finance weapons for Ukraine, and to sanction Russia. It could and should also take measures to help Poland and Hungary, starting by lifting the sanctions and allowing them access to European funds. Unless, of course, these political regimes are not convenient for the Commission? And we are particularly outraged that the left and liberals of this European Parliament are pressuring the Commission not to release these €39.4 billion for Poland. The Socialists and Democrats, Renew, the Greens, and the left-wing groups in this chamber dared to send a letter to the Commission on March 24 urging it not to unblock these funds. I find this truly disgraceful.
Economic Fram ..Humanitarian	20	Quickly: let the European Commission release these recovery plan funds and grant additional aid. Protect these millions of refugees. Protect this highly vulnerable population that is at risk from all dangers.

### Example Segment:

*“These countries must be helped, yet they are not. In fact, quite the opposite is happening. It is already astonishing to note that, despite this surge of solidarity, no European aid has reached them.*

*But what is even worse: in another matter, the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Commission have imposed sanctions on Hungary and Poland, accusing them of violating the rule of law—a concept that, in my opinion, is highly questionable.*

*Certainly, it is not the same subject, but it is shocking to see that despite their immense solidarity, Poland and Hungary are not supported by the European Commission.”*

### Frame Example Assignment Justification:

The speaker explicitly attributes failure and hypocrisy to **EU institutions**, notably the **European Commission** and **Court of Justice**, thus justifying the assignment of the **Blame Frame**, specifically the subcode **Blaming the European Commission**. Indicators include “no European aid,” and “imposed sanctions,” and “not supported by the European Commission.” The speaker contrasts national solidarity with institutional inaction, thereby constructing an adversarial narrative that assigns moral and political culpability.

### 3. Example Frame: Legal Frame – Illegal Migration vs. Genuine Refugees

**Document:** The Deterioration of the Situation of Refugees as a Consequence of the Russian Aggression Against Ukraine (Debate)

**Date:** 08.03.2022

**Speaker:** Annalisa Tardino (ID, Lega)

	7	<b>Annalisa Tardino, on behalf of the ID Group (Lega)</b>
	8	Madam President, esteemed colleagues,
..Refugees as ..Deservingne ..Humanitarian Resp	9	The press, media, and television are filled with images that none of us ever wanted to see—an entire family lying lifeless, covered in rags, on a sidewalk near Kyiv; train stations overrun with desperate people; children and mothers fleeing; families torn apart.
..Human Rights L ..Human Rights ..Humanitarian I	10	A sad and unacceptable return to the past.
..Human Rights L ..Humanitarian I	11	Helping is a duty, and all of Europe is doing its part.
..Human Rights L ..Humanitarian I	12	The activation of the <b>Temporary Protection Mechanism</b> , although legally questionable in some respects, is <b>allowing us to welcome and assist real refugees</b> —women and children fleeing war, while their fathers, sons, and husbands courageously stay behind to defend their country.
..Illegal Migration ..ID ..Lega ..Illegal Migration vs ..Member State ..Blaming the EU	13	For years, we have repeatedly emphasized that these are the people we should welcome with open doors, providing clear, determined, and effective regulations—while at the same time firmly shutting the door on traffickers and criminals.
..Illegal Migration vs ..Member State ..Blaming the EU	14	Now, more than ever, we must show zero tolerance for human traffickers so that resources are directed to those truly in need and to frontline states such as Italy, which has been dealing with migration for decades, and now Poland and Hungary.
..Illegal Migration vs ..Member State ..Blaming the EU	15	<b>Poland and Hungary</b> , carrying out an enormous humanitarian mission, have been unfairly insulted in this chamber.
..Illegal Migration vs ..Member State ..Blaming the EU	16	Their recovery and resilience plans must be unlocked.
..Illegal Migration vs ..Member State ..Blaming the EU	17	Europe is expected to offer support for hosting refugees, not impose ideological blackmail.
..Illegal Migration vs ..Member State ..Blaming the EU	18	The events of recent days once again prove how little has been done in Brussels.
..Illegal Migration vs ..Member State ..Blaming the EU	19	The grandly presented asylum and immigration reform has proven neither current nor effective, as it has now been circumvented in favor of temporary protection, a mechanism that this same reform was supposed to abolish.
..Illegal Migration vs ..Member State ..Blaming the EU	20	It is time to finally make bold decisions.
..Illegal Migration vs ..Member State ..Blaming the EU	21	I conclude by expressing my deep appreciation to all those who are working tirelessly to help those in need, to promote peace, and to oppose war through diplomacy—not weapons.

#### Example Segment:

*“For years, we have repeatedly emphasized that these are the people we should welcome with open doors, providing clear, determined, and effective regulations—while at the same time firmly shutting the door on traffickers and criminals.”*

#### Frame Example Assignment Justification:

This excerpt draws a sharp contrast between “deserving” refugees and “traffickers and criminals,” consistent with the **Illegal Migration vs. Genuine Refugees** subcode under the **Legal Frame**. The phrase “*effective regulations*” suggests a legal-procedural framework, while “*welcome with open doors*” emphasizes a selective form of hospitality. The justification for exclusion is grounded in legal status, not culture or economy, making the legal frame the most appropriate assignment.

## 4. Example Frame: Economic Frame – Economic Burden

**Document:** The Deterioration of the Situation of Refugees as a Consequence of the Russian Aggression Against Ukraine (Debate)

**Date:** 08.03.2022

**Speaker:** Witold Jan Waszczykowski (PiS, ECR)

	23	<b>Witold Jan Waszczykowski, on behalf of the ECR Group (PiS)</b>
	24	Madam President,
	25	Ukraine is fighting for its freedom.
	26	Ukraine is fighting for the security of Europe, a security that we have spent the last 30 years building.
	27	It is, therefore, our responsibility to protect this security.
..Blaming other M	28	Some EU countries bear greater responsibility for Putin's aggressive military stance.
	29	Thus, we expect greater contributions from those nations.
	30	There are many tools available to halt Russian aggression:
	31	• Sanctions,
	32	• Military support for Ukraine,
	33	• Strengthening security on the EU's eastern front.
..ECR ..PiS ..Humanitarian Re	34	Not all of these can be implemented immediately, but right now, the most urgent issue is humanitarian aid.
	35	Delivering assistance into Ukraine is extremely difficult, but we must spare no effort.
	36	Meanwhile, millions of refugees have arrived in our countries.
..Economic Burde	37	Poland alone—as Commissioner Johansson rightly mentioned—has received 1.2 million refugees, in addition to the one million migrants already living there.
	38	For such a massive number of people, we need comprehensive plans and funding.
	39	Not just symbolic visits and bureaucrats, but real financial support for governments.
..Economic Burde	40	It is the states, after all, that provide jobs, education, and healthcare for these people.
..Terrorism Risk ..Crime and Soc	41	We must avoid the creation of refugee camps and ghettos, which would lead to a Palestinian-like refugee situation.
	42	We should learn from the experiences of Turkey and Lebanon.

### Example Segment:

*“Meanwhile, millions of refugees have arrived in our countries. Poland alone—as Commissioner Johansson rightly mentioned—has received 1.2 million refugees, in addition to the one million migrants already living there. For such a massive number of people, we need comprehensive plans and funding. Not just symbolic visits and bureaucrats, but real financial support for governments.”*

### Frame Example Assignment Justification:

The speech emphasizes the **material cost** of refugee admission, using quantitative references (“1.2 million refugees,” “real financial support”) and evaluative language that frames refugee flows as a strain on resources. These features match the subcode **Economic Burden** under the **Economic Frame**. The argument is policy-oriented but anchored in the financial implications of refugee reception rather than normative, legal, or security-based claims.

## 5. Example Frame: Security Frame – Crime and Social Disorder

**Document:** The Impact of the War Against Ukraine on Women (Debate)

**Date:** 05.05.2022

**Speaker:** Margarita de la Pisa Carrión (VOX, ECR)

The screenshot shows a transcript of a debate by Margarita de la Pisa Carrión on behalf of the ECR Group (VOX). The transcript is numbered 36 to 44. A vertical timeline on the left side of the transcript is color-coded to represent different frames. The frames and their corresponding line numbers are:   
- ..Blaming the EU (blue) at line 38.   
- ..Deservingness (purple) at line 39.   
- ..Refugees as Victim (purple) at line 39.   
- ..VOX (green) at line 40.   
- ..ECR (green) at line 40.   
- ..Crime and Social Disorder (red) at line 40.   
- ..Religious Solidarity (blue) at line 42.   
- ..Member State Supr (blue) at line 42.   
- ..Legal Criticism (yellow) at line 43.   
The transcript text is as follows:   
36 **Margarita de la Pisa Carrión, on behalf of the ECR Group (VOX)**   
37 Mr. President, Commissioner, colleagues,   
38 It is **sad** that, in the face of a tragedy of such magnitude, in the face of an **unjustifiable military invasion**, some take the opportunity to **sow division**.   
39 It is **heartbreaking** to see families torn apart—mothers with their children who **do not know** if they will ever see their husbands again. Ukrainians are **giving their lives** for their **loved ones**, for their **homeland**.   
40 Humanity has once again shown a **cruelty** we thought we had left behind. Evil is evident these days, manifesting in **degrading violence**, the use of **rape as a weapon of war**, **human trafficking networks** **profiting from the crisis**, and **crimes against humanity** that must be prosecuted.   
41 **No crime should go unpunished.**   
42 At the same time, we must **unanimously applaud** the **hospitality** of neighboring countries such as **Poland and Hungary**, whose **Christian values** have led them to **open their homes without hesitation**. These countries **deserve international recognition** for their **humanitarian work**, **not the unfair criticism** being expressed in recent days. Such **criticisms are petty**.   
43 Some are **only interested** in imposing a **culture that devalues life**, treating it as a **commodity**, as seen in the **promotion of abortion and surrogacy**. Who is not **deeply disturbed** by the **abandonment and danger** faced by **pregnant women and newborns** caught in a **legal and ethical limbo**? Life is not an object of whim or desire.   
44

### Example Segment:

*“Humanity has once again shown a cruelty we thought we had left behind. Evil is evident these days, manifesting in degrading violence, the use of rape as a weapon of war, human trafficking networks profiting from the crisis, and crimes against humanity that must be prosecuted.”*

### Example Frame Assignment Justification:

The statement emphasizes **criminal activity and moral deviance** associated with the war context, specifically “*rape as a weapon of war*,” “*human trafficking*,” and “*crimes against humanity*.” While these phenomena are not attributed directly to refugees, the mention of trafficking networks “profiting from the crisis” introduces an indirect association with refugee-related vulnerabilities. Thus, the segment fits the **Crime and Social Disorder** subcode of the **Security Frame**, although this is a borderline case that also includes moral undertones. Frame assignment rests on the dominant emphasis on prosecutable crimes.

## 6. Example Frame: International Frame – Member State Support

**Document:** EU Protection of Children and Young People Fleeing the War Against Ukraine (Debate)

**Date:** 05.04.2022

**Speaker:** Jean-Paul Garraud (ID, RN)

	14	<b>Jean-Paul Garraud (ID, RN)</b>
..Humanitarian ..Refugees a:	15	Mr. President, the conflict in Ukraine brings its share of horrors that are shaking the entire world. The scenes of devastation and desolation are multiplying, and the number of victims keeps increasing. The population is severely affected, mainly women and children fleeing the war, abandoning their devastated homes, and separating from husbands and fathers who stay behind to defend their country with arms. It is unbearable to witness such scenes. Such tragedies on the European continent are intolerable!
..Member State	16	Faced with these atrocities, European solidarity has manifested itself, often spontaneously, with great humanity. Our peoples have truly mobilized. We must recognize and encourage all initiatives, at all levels, that provide aid to these unfortunate people. Among the remarkable countries are Poland, which has taken in 2.5 million refugees, as well as Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Romania. These are examples of the best that a true Europe of nations can offer.
..Blaming the ..Blaming the ..ID ..RN	17	These countries must be helped, yet they are not. In fact, quite the opposite is happening. It is already astonishing to note that, despite this surge of solidarity, no European aid has reached them. But what is even worse: in another matter, the Court of Justice of the European Union and the European Commission have imposed sanctions on Hungary and Poland, accusing them of violating the rule of law—a concept that, in my opinion, is highly questionable. Certainly, it is not the same subject, but it is shocking to see that despite their immense solidarity, Poland and Hungary are not supported by the European Commission.
..Blaming the E	18	The Commission is withholding European funds destined for these countries—€7 billion for Hungary and €39.4 billion for Poland. How is it possible that, at the same time, countries that are exemplary in their solidarity towards millions of refugees are sanctioned by our European institutions? Not only should these countries not be sanctioned, but they should be assisted and commended.
..Blaming oth ..Blaming the	19	The Commission found the means, with varying speed, to overcome the health crisis, to finance weapons for Ukraine, and to sanction Russia. It could and should also take measures to help Poland and Hungary, starting by lifting the sanctions and allowing them access to European funds. Unless, of course, these political regimes are not convenient for the Commission? And we are particularly outraged that the left and liberals of this European Parliament are pressuring the Commission not to release these €39.4 billion for Poland. The Socialists and Democrats, Renew, the Greens, and the left-wing groups in this chamber dared to send a letter to the Commission on March 24 urging it not to unblock these funds. I find this truly disgraceful.
Economic Fram ..Humanitarian	20	Quickly: let the European Commission release these recovery plan funds and grant additional aid. Protect these millions of refugees. Protect this highly vulnerable population that is at risk from all dangers.

### Example Segment:

*“Faced with these atrocities, European solidarity has manifested itself, often spontaneously, with great humanity. Our peoples have truly mobilized.*

*We must recognize and encourage all initiatives, at all levels, that provide aid to these unfortunate people. Among the remarkable countries are Poland, which has taken in 2.5 million refugees, as well as Hungary, the Czech Republic, and Romania.*

*These are examples of the best that a true Europe of nations can offer.”*

### Frame Example Assignment Justification:

This statement foregrounds **interstate solidarity**, praising national-level responses (e.g., “Poland,” “Hungary”) while positioning them as exemplars of a “true” Europe. The framing draws attention to **member states** rather than EU institutions, which aligns with the subcode **Member State Support** under the **International Frame**. The use of collective terms such as “our peoples” and “true Europe of nations” reflects a particular geopolitical identity that emphasizes national agency.

## 7. Example Frame: Cultural Frame – Cultural Compatibility

**Document:** EU Protection of children and young people fleeing the war against Ukraine (debate)

**Date:** 05.04.2022

**Speaker:** Roberts Zīle (ECR, LNNK)

	22	<b>Roberts Zīle (ECR, LNNK)</b>
	23	Mr. President, esteemed Commissioners,
..Humai ..Refug	24	The best way to protect Ukrainian children and young people would be to adopt very strict sanctions this week in the European Council regarding energy resources and to stop feeding Russia's war machine. It is clear that we hope for this result, but many young people have already arrived in European Union countries—some in greater numbers than others. These challenges have already been mentioned, including criminal threats or health issues, which both the Commissioner and colleagues have discussed.
..Integrat ..LNNK ..ECR	25	I would like to focus on integration. This is a very sensitive issue regarding the integration of Ukrainian youth and children in the countries where they have arrived. Why? Because it is extremely important to maintain their education and cultural environment within the Ukrainian community. And this is not easy—it is of great significance.
..Cultural	26	There are also EU countries, including my own—Latvia—where state schools still offer Russian-language education. If Ukrainian children were sent to these schools, I believe that would be a very bad outcome. The narrative coming from these schools—both from official curricula and from peer interactions—is extremely dangerous for this generation of Ukrainian youth arriving in these countries.
..Integr ..Strain ..Integr	27	Therefore, it is essential to provide them with access to education in the state language systems while preserving their own identity. This requires support from city mayors, who can flexibly allocate funds—including European funds, not just national budgets—to create better opportunities for such educational programs. Ukrainian-language educational materials are already available online from publishers like <i>Ranok</i> , which can be used in all institutions teaching Ukrainian youth. Preserving their education is crucial because, in my opinion, most of these young people will return to Ukraine after the war, enriched by their experiences in the EU and its education systems.
	28	Thank you.

### Example Segment:

*“There are also EU countries, including my own—Latvia—where state schools still offer Russian-language education.*

*If Ukrainian children were sent to these schools, I believe that would be a very bad outcome.*

*The narrative coming from these schools—both from official curricula and from peer interactions—is extremely dangerous for this generation of Ukrainian youth arriving in these countries.”*

### Example Frame Assignment Justification:

The speaker presents **Russian-language schools** as ideologically incompatible with Ukrainian identity, characterizing them as “*dangerous*” for Ukrainian children. This reflects a concern with **integration and civilizational identity**, corresponding to the subcodes **Integrational Challenges** and **Religious/Civilizational Clash** under the **Cultural Incompatibility** domain of the **Cultural Frame**. The argument is not about legal access or economic capacity, but about preserving cultural distinctiveness and avoiding ideological contamination.



## Appendix C: R Markdown File of Statistical Tests

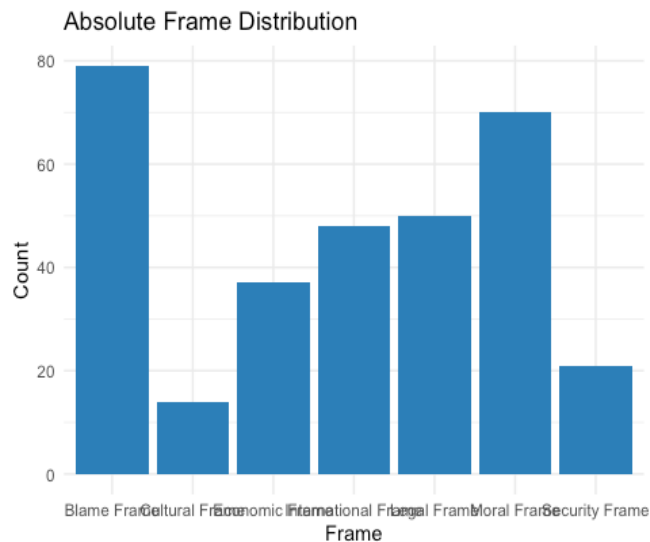
```
---
title: "Frame Analysis - R Script"
author: "Leonie Zander"
output: html_document
---

```{r setup, include=FALSE}
# Load required packages
library(readxl)    # for reading Excel files
library(dplyr)     # for data manipulation
library(ggplot2)   # for visualizations
library(stringr)   # for string operations
library(tidyr)     # for data reshaping
library(scales)    # for axis formatting
library(FSA)       # statistical summaries
library(cluster)   # clustering algorithms
library(factoextra) # PCA visualization
library(FactoMineR) # multivariate analysis
library(geoforce)  # geospatial utilities
library(plotly)    # interactive visualizations
library(here)      # robust relative paths
```

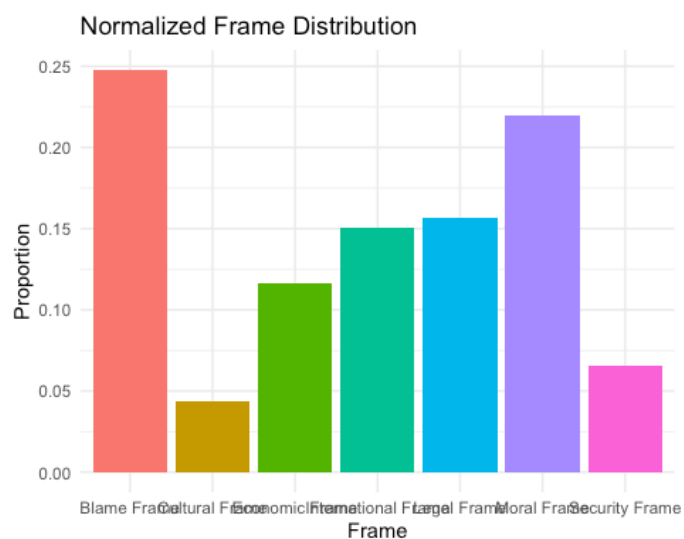
file_path <- "/Users/leoniezander/Desktop/Masterarbeit/Frame Analysis/Analysis Coding Statements.xlsx"

coding_data <- read_excel(file_path) %>%
  select(-Notes) %>%
  mutate(Frame = str_to_title(Frame),
         Frame = case_when(
           Frame %in% c("Security Frame", "security frame", "SECURITY FRAME") ~ "Security Frame",
           Frame %in% c("Cultural Frame", "Culture Frame") ~ "Cultural Frame",
           Frame %in% c("Moral Frame", "Morality Frame") ~ "Moral Frame",
           Frame %in% c("Legal Frame", "Law Frame") ~ "Legal Frame",
           TRUE ~ Frame
         ),
         Frame = if_else(is.na(Frame) & `Statement ID` == 168, "Moral Frame", Frame))

ggplot(coding_data, aes(x = Frame)) +
  geom_bar(fill = "#2c7fb8") +
  labs(title = "Absolute Frame Distribution", x = "Frame", y = "Count") +
  theme_minimal()
```



```
coding_data %>%
  count(Frame) %>%
  mutate(freq = n / sum(n)) %>%
  ggplot(aes(x = Frame, y = freq, fill = Frame)) +
  geom_bar(stat = "identity") +
  labs(title = "Normalized Frame Distribution", y = "Proportion") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(legend.position = "none")
```



```
chi_result_full <- chisq.test(table(coding_data$Party, coding_data$Frame))

## Warning in chisq.test(table(coding_data$Party, coding_data$Frame)): Chi-squared
## approximation may be incorrect

chi_result_full

##
## Pearson's Chi-squared test
##
## data: table(coding_data$Party, coding_data$Frame)
## X-squared = 176.26, df = 78, p-value = 1.446e-09
```

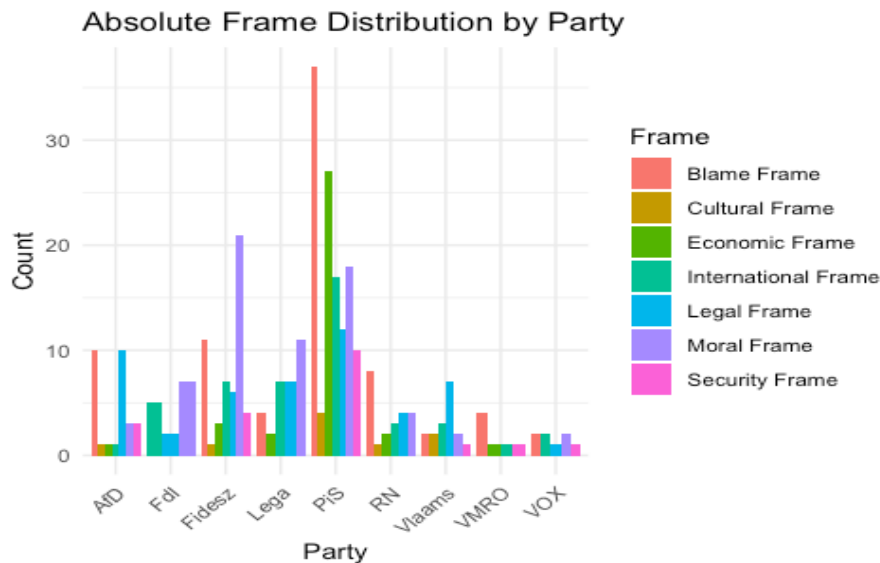


```

filtered_data <- coding_data %>%
  filter(!Party %in% c("EKRE", "DF", "Finns", "LNNK", "SD"))

filtered_data %>%
  count(Party, Frame) %>%
  ggplot(aes(x = Party, y = n, fill = Frame)) +
  geom_bar(stat = "identity", position = "dodge") +
  labs(title = "Absolute Frame Distribution by Party", x = "Party", y = "Count") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1))

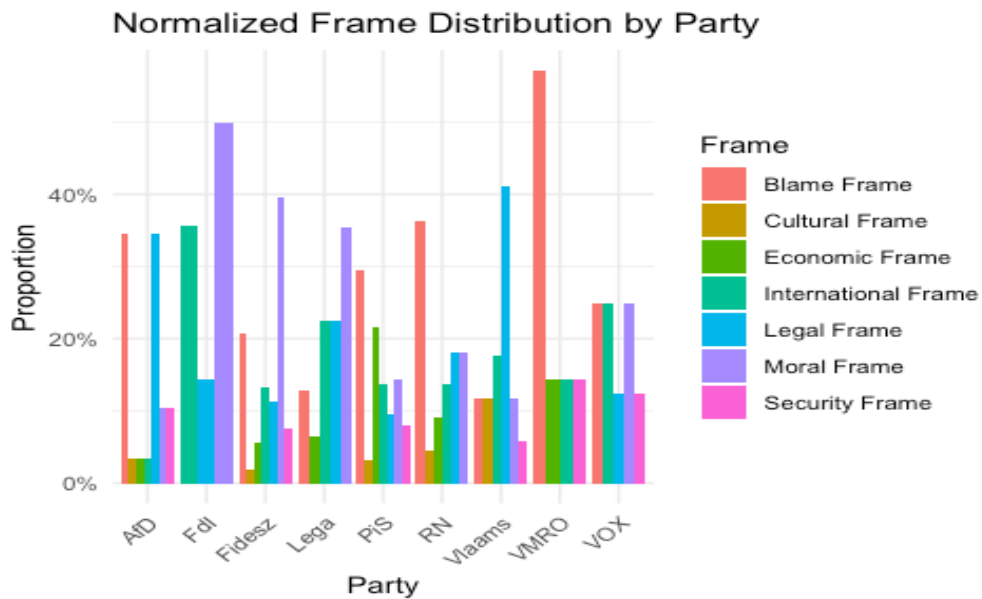
```



```

filtered_data %>%
  count(Party, Frame) %>%
  group_by(Party) %>%
  mutate(share = n / sum(n)) %>%
  ggplot(aes(x = Party, y = share, fill = Frame)) +
  geom_bar(stat = "identity", position = "dodge") +
  labs(title = "Normalized Frame Distribution by Party", x = "Party", y = "Proportion") +
  scale_y_continuous(labels = percent_format()) +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1))

```

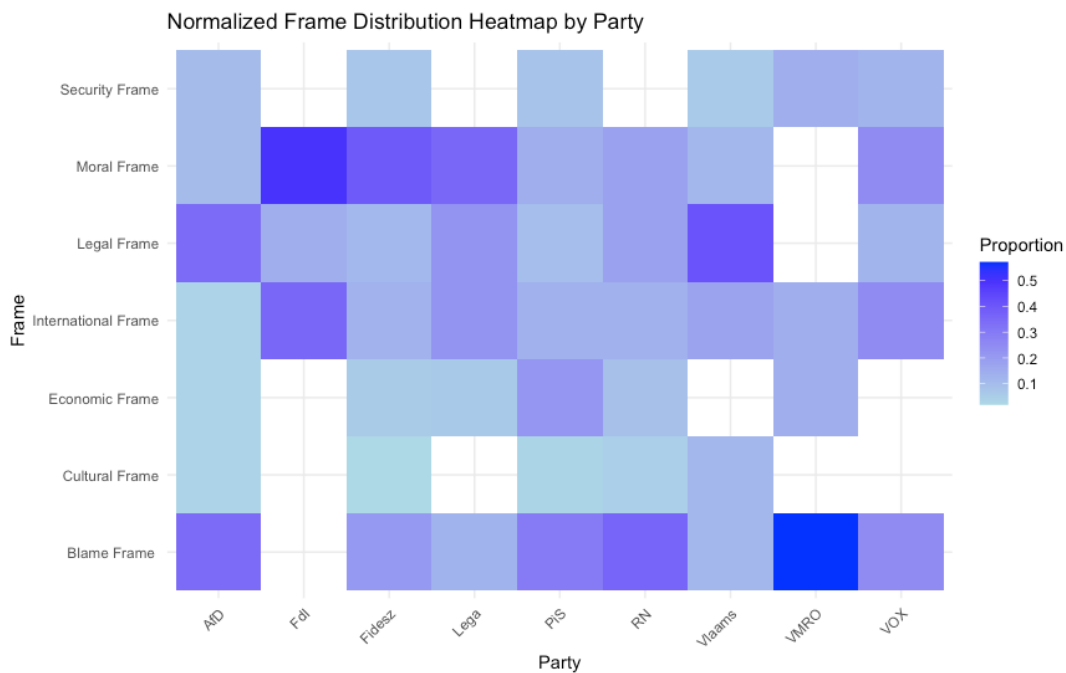


```

frame_heatmap_df <- filtered_data %>%
  count(Party, Frame) %>%
  group_by(Party) %>%
  mutate(Proportion = n / sum(n)) %>%
  ungroup()

ggplot(frame_heatmap_df, aes(x = Party, y = Frame, fill = Proportion)) +
  geom_tile(color = "white") +
  scale_fill_gradient(low = "#cceece6", high = "#045a8d") +
  labs(title = "Normalized Frame Distribution Heatmap by Party",
       x = "Party", y = "Frame", fill = "Proportion") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1))

```



```

chi_mc_result <- chisq.test(table(filtered_data$Party, filtered_data$Frame),
                             simulate.p.value = TRUE, B = 10000)
chi_mc_result

##
## Pearson's Chi-squared test with simulated p-value (based on 10000
## replicates)
##
## data: table(filtered_data$Party, filtered_data$Frame)
## X-squared = 95.241, df = NA, p-value = 0.0005999

frame_totals_party <- as.data.frame(table(filtered_data$Party, filtered_data$Frame))
colnames(frame_totals_party) <- c("Party", "Frame", "Freq")

kruskal.test(Freq ~ Party, data = frame_totals_party)

##
## Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test
##
## data: Freq by Party
## Kruskal-Wallis chi-squared = 26.812, df = 8, p-value = 0.0007618

dunnTest(Freq ~ Party, data = frame_totals_party, method = "bonferroni")

## Dunn (1964) Kruskal-Wallis multiple comparison

## p-values adjusted with the Bonferroni method.

##      Comparison      Z    P.unadj    P.adj
## 1    AfD - FdI 1.26587211 2.055589e-01 1.000000000
## 2    AfD - Fidesz -1.05979991 2.892356e-01 1.000000000
## 3    FdI - Fidesz -2.32567202 2.003605e-02 0.721297951
## 4    AfD - Lega -0.02943889 9.765146e-01 1.000000000
## 5    FdI - Lega -1.29531100 1.952130e-01 1.000000000
## 6    Fidesz - Lega 1.03036102 3.028406e-01 1.000000000
## 7    AfD - PiS -2.36247063 1.815358e-02 0.653528875
## 8    FdI - PiS -3.62834274 2.852464e-04 0.010268871
## 9    Fidesz - PiS -1.30267072 1.926872e-01 1.000000000
## 10   Lega - PiS -2.33303174 1.964648e-02 0.707273258
## 11   AfD - RN 0.16191387 8.713737e-01 1.000000000
## 12   FdI - RN -1.10395824 2.696113e-01 1.000000000
## 13   Fidesz - RN 1.22171378 2.218159e-01 1.000000000
## 14   Lega - RN 0.19135276 8.482492e-01 1.000000000
## 15   PiS - RN 2.52438450 1.159011e-02 0.417243897
## 16   AfD - Vlaams 0.57405828 5.659284e-01 1.000000000
## 17   FdI - Vlaams -0.69181383 4.890543e-01 1.000000000
## 18   Fidesz - Vlaams 1.63385819 1.022886e-01 1.000000000
## 19   Lega - Vlaams 0.60349717 5.461780e-01 1.000000000
## 20   PiS - Vlaams 2.93652891 3.319079e-03 0.119486836
## 21   RN - Vlaams 0.41214441 6.802336e-01 1.000000000
## 22   AfD - VMRO 1.72953457 8.371346e-02 1.000000000
## 23   FdI - VMRO 0.46366246 6.428896e-01 1.000000000
## 24   Fidesz - VMRO 2.78933448 5.281649e-03 0.190139350

```

```
## 25 Lega - VMRO 1.75897346 7.858202e-02 1.000000000
## 26 PiS - VMRO 4.09200520 4.276591e-05 0.001539573
## 27 RN - VMRO 1.56762070 1.169697e-01 1.000000000
## 28 Vlaams - VMRO 1.15547629 2.478954e-01 1.000000000
## 29 AfD - VOX 1.44250543 1.491598e-01 1.000000000
## 30 FdI - VOX 0.17663332 8.597964e-01 1.000000000
## 31 Fidesz - VOX 2.50230534 1.233875e-02 0.444194849
## 32 Lega - VOX 1.47194432 1.410359e-01 1.000000000
## 33 PiS - VOX 3.80497606 1.418179e-04 0.005105445
## 34 RN - VOX 1.28059156 2.003372e-01 1.000000000
## 35 Vlaams - VOX 0.86844715 3.851496e-01 1.000000000
## 36 VMRO - VOX -0.28702914 7.740900e-01 1.000000000
```

```
kruskal.test(Proportion ~ Party, data = frame_heatmap_df)
```

```
##
```

```
## Kruskal-Wallis rank sum test
```

```
##
```

```
## data: Proportion by Party
```

```
##Kruskal-Wallis chi-squared = 8.9633, df = 8, p-value = 0.3454
```

```
dunnTest(Proportion ~ Party, data = frame_heatmap_df, method = "bonferroni")
```

```
##
```

```
## Dunn (1964) Kruskal-Wallis multiple comparison
```

```
##p-values adjusted with the Bonferroni method.
```

```
Comparison      Z  P.unadj  P.adj
```

```
##1  AfD - FdI -2.2381769 0.02520952 0.9075427
##2  AfD - Fidesz -0.2201504 0.82575402 1.0000000
##3  FdI - Fidesz 2.0676492 0.03867302 1.0000000
##4  AfD - Lega -1.3598896 0.17386488 1.0000000
##5  FdI - Lega 1.0245411 0.30557977 1.0000000
##6  Fidesz - Lega -1.1589207 0.24648853 1.0000000
##7  AfD - PiS -0.5503760 0.58206151 1.0000000
##8  FdI - PiS 1.8118575 0.07000821 1.0000000
##9  Fidesz - PiS -0.3302256 0.74122950 1.0000000
##10 Lega - PiS 0.8574673 0.39118667 1.0000000
##11 AfD - RN -0.9459361 0.34418118 1.0000000
##12 FdI - RN 1.4399785 0.14987348 1.0000000
##13 Fidesz - RN -0.7344224 0.46269131 1.0000000
##14 Lega - RN 0.4458895 0.65567704 1.0000000
##15 PiS - RN -0.4171519 0.67656727 1.0000000
##16 AfD - Vlaams -0.6786063 0.49738733 1.0000000
##17 FdI - Vlaams 1.6503124 0.09887905 1.0000000
##18 Fidesz - Vlaams -0.4670927 0.64043358 1.0000000
##19 Lega - Vlaams 0.6915067 0.48924719 1.0000000
##20 PiS - Vlaams -0.1498222 0.88090491 1.0000000
##21 RN - Vlaams 0.2576054 0.79671145 1.0000000
##22 AfD - VMRO -1.6564575 0.09762920 1.0000000
##23 FdI - VMRO 0.6628357 0.50743580 1.0000000
##24 Fidesz - VMRO -1.4687126 0.14191075 1.0000000
##25 Lega - VMRO -0.3607075 0.71831815 1.0000000
```

```
##26 PiS - VMRO -1.1870953 0.23519003 1.0000000
##27 RN - VMRO -0.7931396 0.42769646 1.0000000
##28 Vlaams - VMRO -1.0235489 0.30604838 1.0000000
##29 AfD - VOX -1.5943533 0.11085693 1.0000000
##30 FdI - VOX 0.8365519 0.40284449 1.0000000
##31 Fidesz - VOX -1.3933844 0.16350359 1.0000000
##32 Lega - VOX -0.2170712 0.82815284 1.0000000
##33 PiS - VOX -1.0919310 0.27486342 1.0000000
##34 RN - VOX -0.6726130 0.50119350 1.0000000
##35 Vlaams - VOX -0.9182302 0.35849838 1.0000000
##36 VMRO - VOX 0.1560507 0.87599302 1.0000000
```

Warning message:

Party was coerced to a factor.

```
frame_matrix <- table(filtered_data$Party, filtered_data$Frame) %>%
  as.data.frame.matrix() %>%
  filter(rowSums(.) > 0)
```

```
scaled_matrix <- scale(frame_matrix)
n_obs <- nrow(scaled_matrix)
max_k <- max(2, n_obs - 1)
```

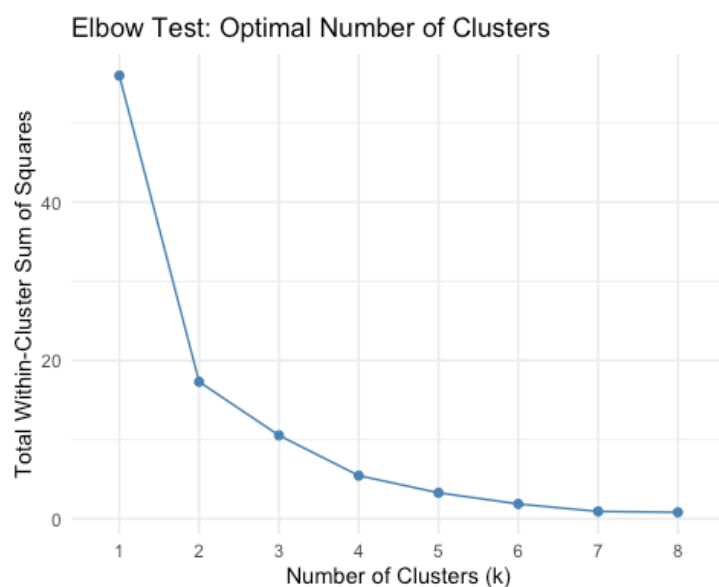
```
fviz_nbclust(scaled_matrix, kmeans, method = "wss", k.max = max_k) +
  labs(title = "Elbow Test: Optimal Number of Clusters",
       x = "Number of Clusters (k)",
       y = "Total Within-Cluster Sum of Squares") +
  theme_minimal()
```

```
## Registered S3 methods overwritten by 'car':
```

```
## method from
```

```
## hist.boot FSA
```

```
## confint.boot FSA
```



```
frame_matrix <- table(filtered_data$Party, filtered_data$Frame) %>%
  as.data.frame.matrix()
```

```

frame_matrix <- frame_matrix[rowSums(frame_matrix) > 0, ]
frame_matrix_norm <- frame_matrix / rowSums(frame_matrix)
scaled_matrix <- scale(frame_matrix_norm)

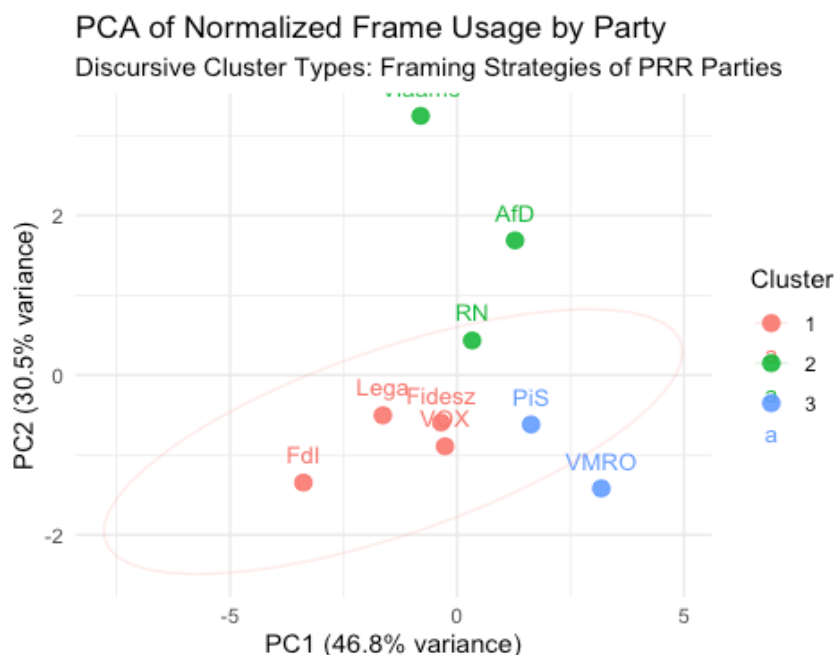
set.seed(123)
km_res <- kmeans(scaled_matrix, centers = 3, nstart = 25)

pca <- PCA(frame_matrix_norm, scale.unit = TRUE, graph = FALSE)
pc1_var <- round(pca$eig[1, 2], 1)
pc2_var <- round(pca$eig[2, 2], 1)

pca_df <- data.frame(pca$ind$score,
                    Party = rownames(frame_matrix_norm),
                    Cluster = factor(km_res$cluster))

ggplot(pca_df, aes(x = Dim.1, y = Dim.2, color = Cluster, label = Party)) +
  geom_point(size = 3, alpha = 0.9) +
  geom_text(vjust = -1.2, size = 3.5) +
  stat_ellipse(data = subset(pca_df, Cluster %in% names(which(table(pca_df$Cluster) > 2)))
),
  aes(group = Cluster),
  level = 0.95, type = "norm", alpha = 0.15) +
labs(
  title = "PCA of Normalized Frame Usage by Party",
  subtitle = "Discursive Cluster Types: Framing Strategies of PRR Parties",
  x = paste0("PC1 (", pc1_var, "% variance)"),
  y = paste0("PC2 (", pc2_var, "% variance)"),
  color = "Cluster"
) +
theme_minimal()

```



```

frame_matrix_norm_with_cluster <- frame_matrix_norm %>%
  as.data.frame() %>%

```

```

mutate(Party = rownames(.),
       Cluster = factor(km_res$cluster))

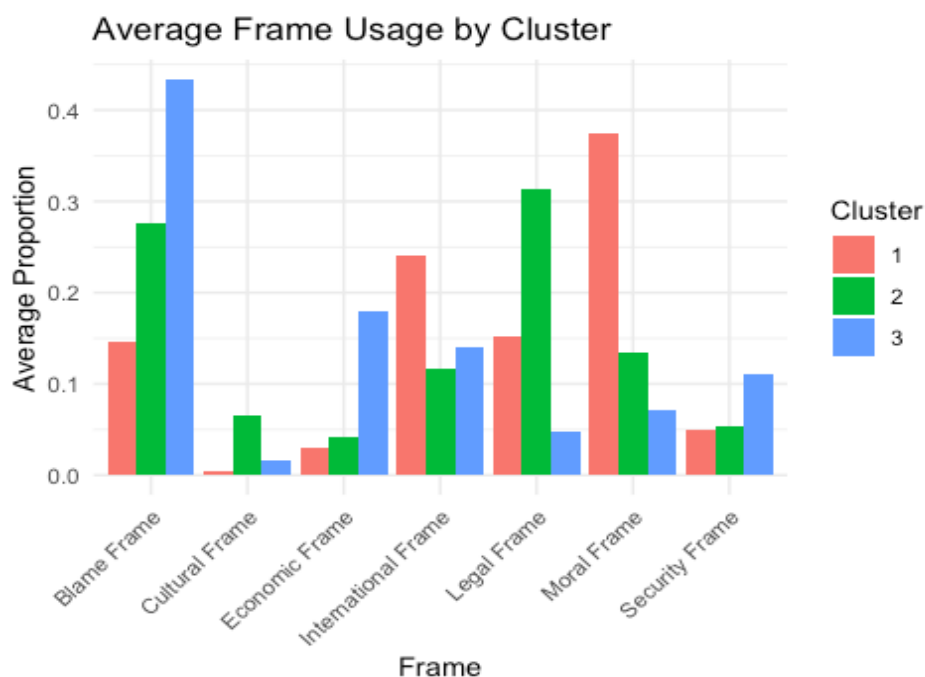
long_frame_data <- frame_matrix_norm_with_cluster %>%
  pivot_longer(cols = -c(Party, Cluster),
               names_to = "Frame",
               values_to = "Proportion")

cluster_frame_summary <- long_frame_data %>%
  group_by(Cluster, Frame) %>%
  summarize(Average_Proportion = mean(Proportion), .groups = "drop")

p <- ggplot(cluster_frame_summary, aes(x = Frame, y = Average_Proportion, fill = Cluster))
+
  geom_bar(stat = "identity", position = "dodge") +
  labs(title = "Average Frame Usage by Cluster",
       x = "Frame", y = "Average Proportion") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1))

print(p)

```



```

coding_data <- read_excel(file_path) %>%
  select(-Notes) %>%
  mutate(Frame = stringr::str_to_title(Frame),
         Frame = case_when(
           Frame %in% c("Security Frame", "security frame", "SECURITY FRAME") ~
"Security Frame",

```

```

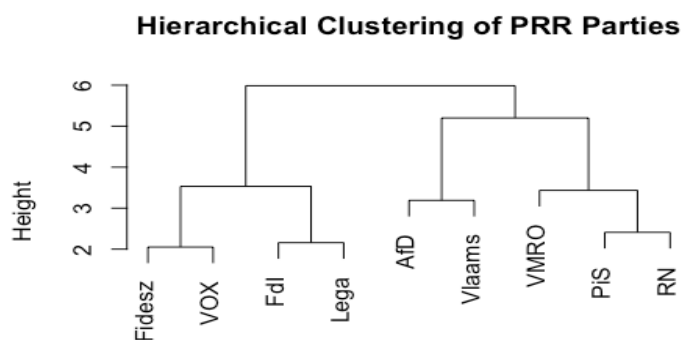
Frame %in% c("Cultural Frame", "Culture Frame") ~ "Cultural Frame",
Frame %in% c("Moral Frame", "Morality Frame") ~ "Moral Frame",
Frame %in% c("Legal Frame", "Law Frame") ~ "Legal Frame",
TRUE ~ Frame
),
Frame = if_else(is.na(Frame) & `Statement ID` == 168, "Moral Frame", Frame)) %>%
filter(!Party %in% c("EKRE", "DF", "Finns", "LNNK", "SD"))

frame_matrix <- table(coding_data$Party, coding_data$Frame) %>%
as.data.frame.matrix()
frame_matrix <- frame_matrix[rowSums(frame_matrix) > 0, ]
frame_matrix_norm <- frame_matrix / rowSums(frame_matrix)
scaled_matrix <- scale(frame_matrix_norm)

d <- dist(scaled_matrix)
hc <- hclust(d, method = "ward.D2")

plot(hc, main = "Hierarchical Clustering of PRR Parties", xlab = "", sub = "", ylab = "Height"
)

```



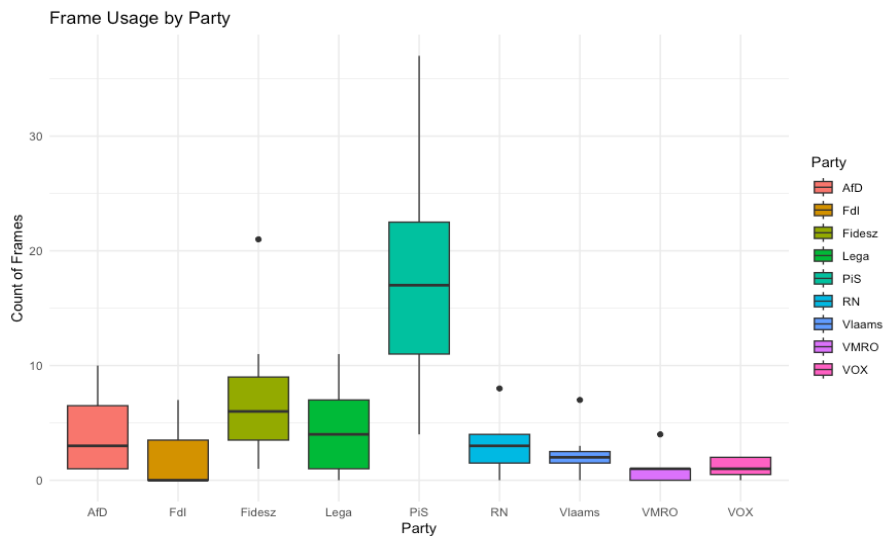
```

frame_totals <- as.data.frame(table(filtered_data$Party, filtered_data$Frame))
colnames(frame_totals) <- c("Party", "Frame", "Freq")

ggplot(frame_totals, aes(x = Party, y = Freq, fill = Party)) +
  geom_boxplot() +
  labs(title = "Frame Usage by Party",
       x = "Party", y = "Count of Frames") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1)) +
  scale_fill_brewer(palette = "Paired")

```

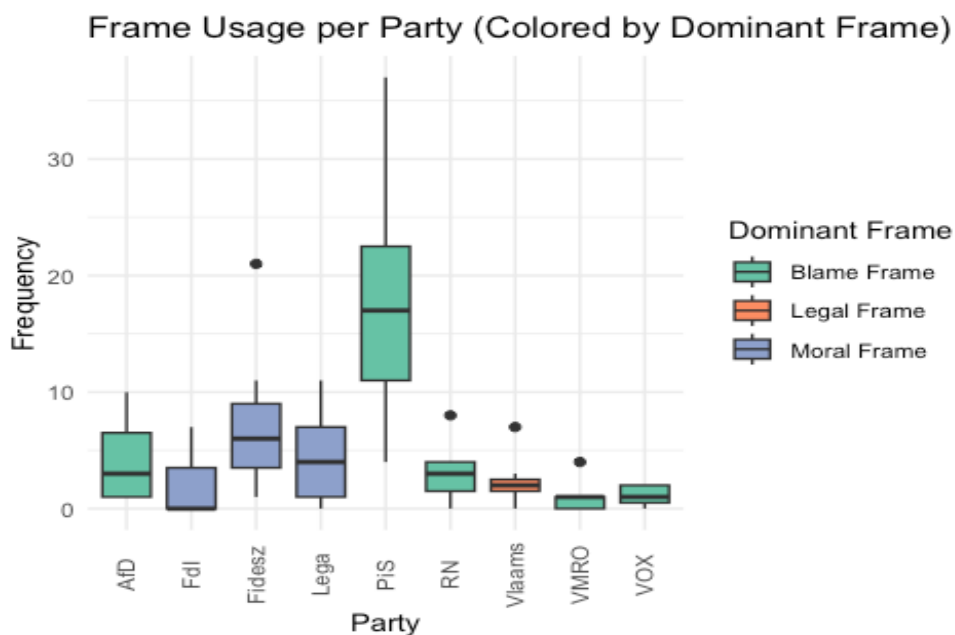




```
dominant_frames <- frame_totals %>%
  group_by(Party) %>%
  slice_max(Freq, with_ties = FALSE) %>%
  ungroup() %>%
  select(Party, DominantFrame = Frame)
```

```
frame_totals_colored <- left_join(frame_totals, dominant_frames, by = "Party")
```

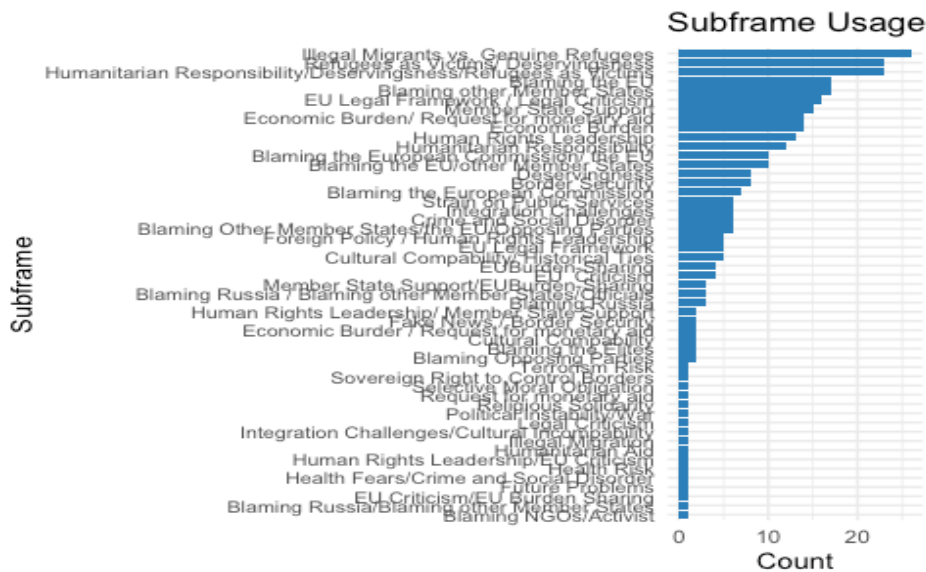
```
ggplot(frame_totals_colored, aes(x = Party, y = Freq, fill = DominantFrame)) +
  geom_boxplot() +
  labs(title = "Frame Usage per Party (Colored by Dominant Frame)",
       x = "Party", y = "Frequency", fill = "Dominant Frame") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 90, vjust = 0.5)) +
  scale_fill_brewer(palette = "Set2")
```



```
subframe_counts <- coding_data %>%
  filter(!is.na(SubCodes)) %>%
```

```
count(SubCodes) %>%
arrange(desc(n))
```

```
ggplot(subframe_counts, aes(x = reorder(SubCodes, n), y = n)) +
  geom_bar(stat = "identity", fill = "#2c7fb8") +
  coord_flip() +
  labs(title = "Subframe Usage Frequency",
       x = "Subframe",
       y = "Count") +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.y = element_text(size = 8))
```



```
unique_frames <- unique(filtered_data$Frame)
```

```
for (frame_name in unique_frames) {
  data_subset <- filtered_data %>%
    filter(Frame == frame_name, !is.na(SubCodes)) %>%
    count(Party, SubCodes) %>%
    arrange(SubCodes, desc(n))
}
```

```
p <- ggplot(data_subset, aes(x = SubCodes, y = n, fill = Party)) +
  geom_bar(stat = "identity", position = "dodge") +
  labs(
    title = paste(frame_name, ": Subframe Usage by Party (Filtered)",
    x = "Subframe",
    y = "Number of Statements",
    fill = "Party"
  ) +
  theme_minimal() +
  theme(axis.text.x = element_text(angle = 45, hjust = 1))
```

```
print(p)
}
```

