# Newspaper Narratives of Migration During National Elections in Denmark, Spain, and the Netherlands

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**Abstract**

This study examines how migration is portrayed in national newspapers in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain during each country's most recent election. Drawing on Policy Narrative Framing and broader framing theories, we conducted a qualitative content analysis of 300 articles, 100 per country, selected through stratified purposive sampling from two national outlets in each country, representing both left- and right-leaning perspectives.

Our findings show that, regardless of editorial stance, mainstream media attribute limited agency to migrants, portraying them predominantly as either victims or depersonalised threats. At the same time, political and institutional actors drive the narrative. This marginalization of migrant voices reduces complex human experiences to policy abstractions and narrows public debate to questions of control or charity, rather than representing migrants as individuals with agency and the capacity to influence the political debate.

We also observe that right-leaning outlets primarily emphasize securitization and cultural identity frames, whereas left-leaning outlets tend to foreground humanitarian and policy critique frames.

**Keywords**

Migration media narratives, Narrative Policy Framework, framing theory, comparative study, qualitative content analysis, Denmark, Spain, the Netherlands, political communication, elections.

**Acknowledgements and Collaboration**

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This dissertation was conducted in collaboration with OXFAM Intermón, the Spanish affiliate of the international NGO OXFAM, which focuses on combating inequality and promoting social justice. The study explores how migration is represented in newspaper narratives during national election periods in Denmark, Spain, and the Netherlands. OXFAM Intermón's interest in media discourse surrounding migration provided valuable context for the project. However, the research design, analysis, and conclusions are the sole responsibility of the authors.

We would also like to thank OXFAM Intermón for their collaboration in this dissertation. Their engagement and interest in the topic of media narratives on migration enriched the project and offered meaningful insights.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

## *1.1. Topic, Relevance, and Academic Importance*

Migration has become one of the defining political issues of our time. In Europe, debates about migration and asylum are deeply embedded in national political discourses (Hutter & Kriesi 2021). Across EU member states, political and media actors both on the right and the left have increasingly adopted migration-related narratives to mobilise electoral support and frame national identity. These narratives frequently gain traction during national election periods, when public attention intensifies and party competition fuels a discursive environment in which migration becomes a potent symbol of broader ideological and policy conflicts (Hutter & Kriesi 2021, 342). Whether cast as a threat, a humanitarian crisis, a cultural conflict or as a matter of economic necessity, migration is not only a policy issue; it is a narrative battleground.

Then newspapers play a central role in shaping this battleground and contribute to the broader process of meaning-making. Decisions about focus and voice do more than inform; they frame and narrate migration in ways that can reinforce or contest dominant ideologies (Wodak 2015). In doing so, newspapers influence which migration issues are deemed newsworthy, how these issues are told and can even influence voting behaviour through their migration coverage; as Eberl et al. (2018) show that increased media attention to immigration is associated with greater support for anti-immigration parties, as these are perceived to be most competent on the issue.

While media research has long explored the framing of migration, many studies remain limited in their analytical scope. Framing Theory, rooted in cognitive and sociological traditions, has been widely used to examine how media coverage emphasises certain aspects of an issue, thus influencing public understanding (Entman 1993). However, framing alone often fails to capture the narrative strategies of media texts. To address this limitation, the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), which conceptualises policy-making as a process of storytelling, can help bridge this gap. The NPF breaks down policy narratives into distinct elements: characters (heroes, villains,

victims), plots, settings, and morals, thereby offering a more detailed account of how policy meaning is produced (Jones & McBeth 2010; Shanahan et al.; 2011, Shanahan et al. 2013).

This thesis positions itself at the intersection of these two approaches. It builds on the work of Crow and Lawlor (2016), who undertook one of the few studies to systematically integrate Framing Theory and the NPF. Their research highlights the added value of combining framing's thematic categorisation with narrative analysis, particularly in studies of political communication. Yet, to date, no similar integration has been applied to the study of migration coverage during election campaigns, despite the high political salience of the issue and the narrative complexity of electoral media discourse.

The academic contribution of this study is therefore twofold. First, as previously stated, it advances the integration of framing and narrative analysis within communication research, offering an analytical toolkit to examine how the news media constructs policy meaning. Second, it fills an empirical gap in the literature by applying this combined approach to migration coverage during national elections in three European democracies: Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain. In doing so, it provides new insights into how newspapers help shape public debate on migration at moments of heightened political consequence.

Beyond its academic value, the study also holds important societal relevance. Migration remains one of the most divisive and high-stakes issues in contemporary European politics (Hutter & Kriesi 2021). Throughout Europe, the topic of migration has also been a key vehicle for the rise of radical right-wing populism (EriŞ & Öner 2021). Moreover, the analysis across Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain is particularly relevant: these countries represent different political trajectories. Denmark's election reflected a heightened political debate about restrictive migration measures (Parline 2022), the Netherlands witnessed a historic electoral breakthrough for the far-right PVV (NOS 2023), and Spain's vote resulted in a more centrist and fragmented configuration (Encina 2023). Particularly in the Netherlands migration was central to public debate and political rhetoric. During the Danish and Spanish elections, migration also remained a relevant political topic, although it played a more secondary role. By examining how national newspapers on either side of the political spectrum constructed this issue during an election

campaign, the research sheds light on how political meaning is constructed through the media across various political environments. This is especially relevant in a time of democratic uncertainty, where news media often provide a one-sided negative portrayal of immigration that amplifies polarisation (Esses et al. 2013).

### *1.2. State of the Question*

To help understand how migration narratives are shaped in the news media, broader historical and political contexts are essential. Migration in Europe has never existed in isolation, but rather within long histories of colonialism, post-war labour migration, and the shifting dynamics of European integration. Countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain all have colonial pasts that continuously shape the composition of their migrant populations, politics of belonging, and symbolic significations of migration (Jensen 2019; Martín-Pérez & Moreno-Fuentes 2012; Van Amersfoort & Van Niekerk 2006). This colonial context does not only shape public perception, but also provides available narratives for media and political interests to draw upon (De La Rosa 2016; Dekker & Scholten 217; McManus & Falkenbach 2022). Moreover, while their specific trajectories differ, Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain each represent general European tendencies towards a stricter migration policy (De La Rosa 2016).

As member states of the EU, all three countries operate within the same legal frameworks of the Pact on Migration and Asylum (European Commission 2024). However, national implementation of migration policy differs considerably. Denmark, for instance, has opt-outs on EU justice and home affairs policies (The Danish Parliament 2025), whereas Spain and the Netherlands are more intensively integrated within EU migration and asylum governance. These divergences result in distinctive national plans of migration and asylum, shaping the political salience and media attention of migration in each case.

### *1.3. Purpose and Research Questions*

The purpose of this research is to explore how migration is constructed and narrated through national newspaper reporting during the most recent national elections of Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain. Rather than assuming that the media merely reflect or shape public opinion, this thesis approaches newspapers as storytelling platforms that shape reality, as these tell stories both through framing and narrative elements that assign roles and responsibility and imply normative conclusions.

This approach is especially relevant during electoral periods, as they are moments of intensified political discourse, where various actors express competing visions of national security and belonging (Dickson & Scheve 2005). Media can function as intermediaries of these accounts, and the way migration is defined by the media can have a significant impact on the development of the democratic debate. Understanding how these narratives are structured is therefore crucial to an evaluation of the role of media in democratic governance.

The empirical approach in this research is qualitative and comparative. It analyses 300 articles, 100 from each country, drawn from two differing ideological orientation newspapers per country. The time period is limited to four weeks before and two weeks after the most recent national election, including pre-election campaign coverage as well as post-election analysis. Analysis is based on Qualitative Content Analysis (QCA), informed by both Framing Theory and the Narrative Policy Framework. The objective is not to merely detect prevalent frames (e.g., security, humanitarianism, cultural identity), but to analyse how these frames interact with broader policy narrative elements, such as characters, causal mechanisms, and moral evaluations.

The research is guided by the following three questions:

1. **How is migration framed in national newspaper coverage during the recent national elections in Spain, the Netherlands, and Denmark?**
2. **What narrative elements do newspaper frames resort to when representing migration during national elections, as defined by the Narrative Policy Framework?**

3. **How do these narratives vary across national contexts and newspapers' ideological orientations?**

By addressing these questions, the study aims to produce empirical and theoretical contributions to the understanding of how news media frame and shape migration narratives. Empirically, it provides new data on how migration is discursively constructed in diverse national and ideological contexts. Theoretically, it contributes to the creation of an integrated model that brings together Framing Theory and the NPF in media studies. This has broader consequences for how complex policy issues like migration are framed in European countries, and the ways communication reproduces or challenges dominant power relations.

### *1.4. Structure of the Thesis*

This thesis consists of five main sections. Each section contributes to a general understanding of how national newspaper coverage framed and narrated migration during the most recent general elections in Denmark, the Netherlands and Spain.

**State of the question** provides the historical and policy context necessary to understand how migration discourses have evolved in each of the three countries. It covers their colonial legacies, a brief overview of their migration histories, and current national policy approaches. Although all three operate under the EU's migration governance framework, the chapter critically reflects on how their divergent political cultures and institutional arrangements influence public debate and media representation.

**This literature review** critically engages with relevant theoretical and empirical literature. It introduces and evaluates Framing Theory and the NPF, explaining their potential and limitations. It reviews prior research on media and migration discourses across the three case countries, identifying both recurring trends and underexplored areas. This chapter provides the justification for a combined theoretical approach to address the gap in comparative, election-period media analysis of migration.

**The research design** lays out the methodological foundation of the study. It explains the choice for a qualitative, comparative design using stratified purposive sampling of 300 newspaper articles. The chapter reflects critically on the integration of frame and narrative analysis and details the coding and data analysis procedures. It also includes a transparent discussion of ethical considerations, research limitations and the use of AI tools.

Within the section of **results**, the findings of the content analysis are presented. It offers a systematic examination of how migration was framed and narrated in each country's media coverage during their most recent elections. It captures recurring frames, characters, causal mechanisms, and policy conclusions, and shows how these elements vary by national context and political orientation of the media outlet. The cross-case comparison critically assesses the degree to which the findings differed or aligned across the three countries.

**The conclusion** synthesises the main findings, directly answering the research questions. It reflects on how the media constructs policy meaning around migration and what this implies for the political status of migrants in the democratic process. The chapter assesses the normative role of media during elections and outlines the implications for both communication and policy process research. It concludes with recommendations for future research on migration narratives, as well as recommendations for a fairer and more accurate representation of migrants in the media.

## 2. STATE OF THE QUESTION

To understand how migration is portrayed in the media, it is important to consider the broader national contexts in which these portrayals take shape. This section begins by briefly outlining the migration histories of Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain. These histories provide crucial context for interpreting how migration is framed in the present. The discussion then turns to a comparison of key migration policies, noting both commonalities arising from EU membership and notable national differences. Finally, relevant migration statistics for each country are

presented. Combined, these elements offer an essential background for analysing how political and historical contexts influence the media's role in shaping migration discourses.

### *2.1. Colonial Past*

To make sense of migration in the countries studied, and more broadly in Europe, we must reckon with the continent's dark history of colonialism. All three countries in our sample have vast colonial histories and still maintain complex and varied ties with their former colonies. For example, Spain's migrant population is largely from its former colonies in Central and South America, and Morocco (Boades-Fuster 2024, 22). The Netherlands' colonial history has led to an increase in migrants from former colonies such as Indonesia and Suriname (Schrover 2014, 202-203). In the case of Denmark, despite its colonial past, the country has fewer descendants from formerly enslaved nations in Africa and the Caribbean (DR 2025). However, Denmark's colonial history in Greenland has significantly influenced migration from Greenland to Denmark, both historically and today (Danmarkshistorien 2025).

### *2.2. The Beginning of "Labour Migration"* [1]

In the Netherlands immigration increased during the 1960s and 1970s, due to their labour shortage in certain industry areas. These immigrants were primarily from Turkey and Morocco. Temporary workers began settling and bringing their families, forming permanent migrant populations in the 1980s and 1990s. This shift led to extensive public and political debates about integration and multiculturalism (Schrover 2014, 216). Denmark experienced a similar development, with "gæstearbejdere" (guest workers) arriving mainly from Turkey, Yugoslavia, and Pakistan, during the same period (Rytter 2019, 683). In the case of Denmark, this also led to a similar shift towards extensive public and political debates about integration and cultural diversity (Rytter 2019, 683).

[1] The term "labour migrants" is frequently used in both Denmark and the Netherlands to refer to migrants who have historically been recruited to address labour shortages in low- and medium-skilled sectors—a trend that continues today, particularly with migrants from Eastern European countries.

From the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s, Spain transitioned from being a country of emigration to a major destination for migrants (Boades-Fuster 2024, 6). Most migrants at that time arrived from former colonies in Central and South America and Morocco, as well as Romania, and were recruited for booming sectors of the economy (Ibid). This shift sparked relatively little debate and backlash compared to other European countries. However, this has changed in recent years, with anti-immigration discourse gaining traction and shifting public attitudes (Estrada-Vilaseñor et al. 2025).

### *2.3. Migration Policy*

Driven by the sustained economic growth from the 1980s to the early 2000s and the active recruitment of foreign workers, all three countries began to reform their migration policies. The next sections will focus on the diverging approaches they have taken within the framework of EU migration policies, as well as some of the major migration policy changes these countries have undergone.

#### 2.3.1. Diverging EU Migration Policies

Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain are all EU member states and engage with the Common European Asylum System (European Parliament 2024), although Denmark applies its rules selectively through intergovernmental agreements due to its opt-out status. All three countries participate in Frontex and its border operations, sharing responsibility for managing the EU's externalised borders (Frontex 2024).

While Spain and the Netherlands are full participants in the Schengen Area, Denmark takes part with certain opt-outs (European Commission 2025). For instance, unlike Spain and the Netherlands, Denmark does not participate in the EU Blue Card scheme, which allows highly qualified non-EU workers to live and work in most EU countries under a common set of rules. This opt-out reflects Denmark's more independent approach to EU migration policy, where Denmark applies its rules selectively through intergovernmental agreements (European Commission 2025).

### 2.3.2. Migration Policy in Denmark

In the 1980s, Denmark was known for its progressive immigration policies, including eased asylum requirements and expanded family reunification rights (ODI 2022). However, by the 1990s, restrictive legislation and anti-immigrant rhetoric began to gain traction (ODI 2022). A decisive shift occurred in 2015, as political attention shifted from integration efforts to detention and return strategies (Tan 2020, 1; Gammeltoft-Hansen and Ford 2021). Between 2015 and 2018, Danish immigration laws were amended more than seventy times, largely in response to far-right political pressure (Tan 2020, 1). During this period, Denmark introduced strict measures including the seizure of asylum seekers' assets, extended waiting times for family reunification, public anti-refugee campaigns, and political calls to limit or revise international conventions (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Ford 2021, 4–6). Detention conditions became increasingly stricter, and benefits for refugees were reduced (Ibid).

After 2018, Danish immigration policy remained restrictive, even under the Social Democratic government elected in 2019. That year, the so-called "paradigm shift" in asylum policy redefined protection as a temporary measure, prioritising repatriation over long-term integration (Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2019; Rytter et al. 2023, 9). In recent years, Denmark has also advanced efforts to externalise asylum procedures through bilateral agreements, most notably its exploration of an arrangement with Rwanda (Rytter et al. 2023, 13). Moreover, the externalisation plans align with Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen's January 2021 statement, in which she announced that the Social Democratic government's objective was to achieve "zero asylum seekers" in the future (Rytter et al. 2023, 14). Since 2016, Denmark has consistently received one of the lowest numbers of asylum seekers in the EU relative to its population, reflecting both the restrictive policies and the stated political ambition to reduce asylum migration (Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2019; Rytter et al. 2023, 14).

This is possible, as Denmark is not covered by the European Union's asylum rules, as it has a legal opt-out. This means that Denmark does not have voting rights when the EU discusses asylum policy. Suppose Denmark wishes to influence or obtain voting rights in a specific

asylum-related discussion. In that case, it must formally request this, and the request must be approved by the other EU member states (Folketinget 2019). Currently, Denmark only participates in the Dublin Regulation, which states that asylum seekers must apply for asylum in the first EU country where they are registered and fingerprints are taken. If they apply for asylum later in another EU country, they can be sent back to the first one (Ibid).

Although Denmark is not part of the EU's common asylum policy, it still adheres to the UN's conventions on refugee rights (Ibid), and continues to align with broader European trends in migration governance, particularly through its emphasis on deterrence, externalisation, and bilateral agreements (Gammeltoft-Hansen and Ford 2021; Tan 2020).

When it comes to the practical functioning of the Danish asylum system, anyone who believes they meet the conditions for asylum can apply upon entering Denmark. The Danish authorities assess each case, and asylum seekers stay at a center during the process. Since 2015, Denmark has allowed people from particularly dangerous situations, without being personally persecuted, to apply for temporary asylum. This status does not grant the same rights as full refugee status, such as family reunification (Folketinget 2024). Those finally denied asylum must leave the country. If they do not do so voluntarily, the Danish authorities will deport them (Ibid).

Scholars have argued that these policy shifts reflect a broader transformation in migration governance. Integration policies have become increasingly conditional, punitive, and bureaucratised, often generating long-term insecurity for migrants and refugees (Rytter et al. 2023, 14). At the same time, civil society organisations and legal experts have raised concerns about the erosion of human rights standards and Denmark's commitments under international law (Ibid, 13–15). These developments paved the way for the 2024 legislative amendments, which combined selective easing of immigration for skilled workers with continued tightening of asylum-related policies (Ministry of Immigration and Integration 2024, 26–28). The reforms aimed to balance labour market demands with concerns on national security, easing work and residence requirements for researchers, students, and healthcare professionals while reinforcing stricter asylum controls (Ibid, 26–27).

Overall, these legislative changes reflect a dual strategy: facilitating targeted immigration to support Denmark's workforce and public services, while reinforcing restrictions in areas linked to rights and integration, which is justified through national security concerns.

### 2.3.3. Migration Policy in the Netherlands

The Netherlands formally describes itself as "committed to an equal, humane, and effective asylum and migration policy" (Ministerie van Sociale Zaken en Werkgelegenheid & Ministerie van Asiel en Migratie 2024). It demonstrates this commitment in its formal adherence to European Union frameworks, most prominently the Common European Asylum System (CEAS) and the aforementioned EU Migration and Asylum Pact, which were adopted in April 2024 (Council of the European Union 2025). However, in practice, Dutch migration policy is not primarily driven by EU legislation (Dörrenbächer 2017). The so-called "street-level bureaucrats" — Dutch civil servants and frontline workers responsible for implementing migration policy — rarely consult EU regulations. Instead, they rely on hierarchical national instructions. These instructions are embedded in national political preferences, suggesting that while EU law is binding, its everyday application is filtered through domestic political and administrative logics (Ibid).

Another telling attribute of this nationalisation of policy is the general stance on migration, which was an important point of contention during the 2023 federal elections. The desire to 'opt out' of parts of the EU Migration and Asylum Pact was expressed a lot by the PVV, which illustrates the growing resistance to perceived European encroachment on migration sovereignty. However, according to the Advisory Council on Migration, a formal opt-out would require treaty changes, as EU asylum law is part of the shared competences of the European Union (Klaassen & Kok 2024). A possible exception must be unanimously agreed upon by all EU member states and would be legally complex and politically controversial. Thus, a unilateral Dutch opt-out from EU asylum law is currently considered highly improbable within existing legal structures.

Despite these (proposed) deterrence-oriented reforms, research by the Verwey-Jonker Institute (2023) shows that national asylum policy has a limited impact on asylum migrants' destination

choices. The Netherlands, with its stable institutions and relatively humane infrastructure, remains an attractive destination regardless of policy adjustments.

The arrival of Ukrainian refugees in 2022 highlighted differences in the reception and treatment of refugees in the Netherlands (Doomernik & Van Heelsum 2024). Ukrainians are covered by the EU Temporary Protection Directive, which allows them to bypass the normal asylum process. As of now, this protection has been extended to March 2026 (Council of the European Union 2024). Ukrainians were granted immediate access to housing, work, education, and municipal assistance services. They were integrated with national coordination and large-scale volunteer efforts. Refugees from other countries, like Syria and Afghanistan, face longer asylum procedures, less secure housing solutions, and more scattered integration support (Ibid).

The Dutch asylum system aims for efficiency but often sacrifices fairness and dignity in the process (Hertoghs 2023). Asylum claims are processed quickly, sometimes too quickly, which can compromise thoroughness. While reception centers provide basic needs, overcrowding and limited privacy remain issues. Special protections exist on paper for vulnerable groups, but are uneven in practice. Successful asylum seekers face rapid municipal placement, which doesn't always account for the challenges of integration. For those rejected, the system emphasises swift return, with pressure to leave voluntarily and risks of detention (Ibid). Overall, the system reflects a tension between international obligations and domestic pressures, frequently prioritising control and cost over the complex realities of asylum seekers' experiences.

#### 2.3.4. Migration Policy in Spain

Spain's migration policy is widely described by scholars as primarily shaped by external pressures such as national economic cycles and European Union directives (Osos et al. 2021). Reflecting this pattern, Spain introduced its first immigration law, the *Ley de Extranjería*, in 1985, driven by the requirement to align with European standards ahead of joining the European Economic Community (Rojano et al. 2019, 165).

Between 2000 and 2007, Spain's migration policy emphasised the recruitment of workers for booming sectors of the economy (Carrasco Carpio 2014). However, from the 2008 financial crisis on, policy became increasingly defensive, with stricter border controls and more limited access to welfare services for migrants, which mirrored broader austerity measures.

In 2022, reforms to the *Ley de Extranjería* [Real Decreto 629/2022] attempted to ease some of these restrictive policies (Cana et al. 2024, 22). However, some challenges persisted. The "arraigo" system—regularisation through proof of integration, residency, or training—has become the main route to legalisation, but it remains focused on meeting the needs of the Spanish labour market rather than ensuring that migrants' basic rights are guaranteed, leading many into periods of systematic administrative irregularity (Cana et al. 2024, 19).

In early 2024, reforms to the *Ley de Extranjería* were made in line with the new European Pact on Migration and Asylum. This underlies Spain's bilateral agreements with third countries, particularly Morocco, to externalise border enforcement, which has led to increased detentions, "hot returns," and fast-track deportations under legally ambiguous conditions (Zanghì et al. 2023, 17–19). Scholars note that these proposals continue to privilege deterrence at the expense of fundamental rights (Ibid).

On 20th May 2025, a new *Ley de Extranjería* reform came into effect. Under this reform, the period that an undocumented migrant must spend in Spain before being allowed to access the "arraigo" path to regularisation has been reduced from 3 to 2 years, but this still means that for 2 years many undocumented migrants are forced to work in the underground economy, ensuring a supply of low-wage labour for essential sectors like agriculture, construction and care work (FISI 2023, 4; Oso et al. 2021, 6–8). Scholars argue that irregularity is a strategic form of governance, designed to keep wages down in these key sectors. By the end of 2019, the estimated number of undocumented immigrants in Spain stood at approximately 500,000, with more recent figures suggesting that this number is increasing (Moraga 2021, 66).

The proposed law for the extraordinary regularisation of undocumented migrants already residing in Spain—stemming from the migrant-led Popular Legislative Initiative "Regularización Ya!"—

aims to end this “irregularity by design” that facilitates the exploitation of migrants, and is now being negotiated and is awaiting approval. Furthermore, by the summer of 2026, the Government is expected to finalise the Intercultural Inclusion and Coexistence Plan, which will serve as a central instrument for migration policy (Revista Seguridad Social 2025).

On the other hand, the increasing restriction of legal routes into Spain in line with EU directives has forced many into dangerous journeys trying to reach it. In 2023 alone, more than 6,618 people died or went missing at sea while attempting to reach Spain via the Atlantic and Central Mediterranean, which now rank among the deadliest migration corridors in the world (Caminando Fronteras 2023). In 2023, arrivals to the Canary Islands through the Atlantic route increased by 155% (Universidad Pontificia Comillas 2024, 239). Spain’s policy of securitisation underlied institutional responses that largely failed to account for the vulnerabilities of those arriving through these routes, particularly unaccompanied children, of whom there are increasingly more arrivals (Cana et al. 2024). In 2021, there were 7,881 documented unaccompanied children in Spain, while in 2024, there were 17,452 ( Observatorio Permanente de la Inmigración 2025).

In regard to Spain’s asylum system, it is coordinated by the Office of Asylum and Refuge (OAR), and it recognises both refugee status and subsidiary protection, offering safeguards to those fleeing persecution or serious harm. However, rights organisations have flagged several shortcomings. Asylum seekers often face long delays, a lack of information, and inadequate reception conditions, especially at borders and in detention centres. Furthermore, restrictive interpretations of access to protection, such as limited entry through Spanish enclaves like Ceuta and Melilla, raise serious concerns about non-refoulement obligations under international law (Accem 2025). Moreover, the EU Dublin Regulation places the burden of asylum processing on first-entry countries, like Spain and Italy. As a result, in 2023, Spain became the third-largest recipient of asylum applications in the EU, yet it remained last in terms of the rate of refugee protection recognition. As such, it struggles to guarantee the rights of asylum seekers, partly due to a severe administrative backlog (Cana et al. 2024, 3).

Overall, Spain's migration policy continues to balance between reactive control and gradual reform. While recent efforts have aimed at easing legalisation, structural governance issues and EU-level securitisation pressures continue to limit the rights and protections available to migrants, particularly asylum seekers and undocumented migrants.

### *2.4. Comparative Migration Data*

The tables below feature the three countries' combined migration data from 2021, 2022, and 2023. These years have been chosen as they are representative of the time federal elections took place in each of the countries. The table compares how many immigrants and asylum seekers each country has gained in these selected years, as well as the most frequent countries of origin. It distinguishes between immigrants and asylum seekers as they go through different (legal) processes, and as such are categorised differently by the countries in their migration data.

**Total number of new immigrants**

| | ***2021*** | ***2022*** | ***2023*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *The Netherlands*[2] | 252.528 | 403.180 | 335.668 |
| *Denmark*[3] | 74,768 | 126,869 | 96,954 |
| *Spain*[4] | 191.094 | 727.005 | 642.296 |

[2] CBS. 2024. "Hoeveel Immigranten Komen Naar Nederland?" https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/dossier/dossier-asiel-migratie-en-integratie/hoeveel-immigranten-komen-naar-nederland

[3] Ministry of Immigration and Integration. 2024. "*International Migration – Denmark: Report to OECD, Status for August 2024*."

[4] INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística). 2021, 2022, 2023. Estadística de Migraciones. Accessed June 8, 2025. https://www.ine.es/

**Total number of immigrants from the top 3 non-European countries by origin and year**

| | ***2021*** | ***2022*** | ***2023*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *The Netherlands*[5] | Turkey: 6.446<br>Dutch Caribbean: 3710<br>Morocco: 2257 | Turkey: 12.040<br>Dutch Caribbean: 3529<br>Morocco: 3095 | Turkey: 11.069<br>Dutch Caribbean: 2744<br>Suriname: 2742 |
| *Denmark*[6] | Syria 35.659<br>Turkey: 33.219<br>Iraq: 21.894 | Syria: 35.325<br>Turkey: 33.487<br>Iraq: 21.966 | Ukraine: 38.757<br>Syria: 34.928<br>Turkey: 34.145 |
| *Spain*[7] | Colombia: 171.241<br>Morocco: 113.725<br>Ukraine: 91.621 | Colombia: 152.634<br>Ukraine: 85.978<br>Venezuela: 72.086 | Colombia: 170.722<br>Morocco: 123.468<br>Venezuela: 88.361 |

**Asylum seeker applications**

| | ***2021*** | ***2022*** | ***2023*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *The Netherlands*[8] | 33.940 | 45.345 | 50.100 |
| *Denmark*[9] | 2.099 | 4.597 | 2.479 |
| *Spain*[10] | 65.482 | 119.240 | 163.642 |

**Granted Asylum**

| | ***2021*** | ***2022*** | ***2023*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| *The Netherlands*[11] | 24.705 | 29.635 | 27.140 |
| *Denmark*[12] | 1.362 | 1.403 | 1.343 |
| *Spain*[13] | 5.365 | 6.828 | 7.330 |

[5] CBS. 2024. "Bevolking - Integratie En Samenleven 2024." Bevolking - Integratie En Samenleven 2024 | CBS. November 22, 2024.
[6] Danmarks Statistik, "*Indvandrere i Danmark",* 2021, 2022, 2023
[7] INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística). 2021, 2022, 2023. Estadística de Migraciones. Accessed June 8, 2025. https://www.ine.es/
[8]CBS. 2025. "Asielverzoeken En Nareizigers; Nationaliteit, Geslacht En Leeftijd." May 23, 2025. https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/cijfers/detail/83102NED.
[9] Integrationsbarometer. *2023 "International Migration Denmark 2023*."
[10] Oficina de Asilo y Refugio, Informe de Actividad 2021, 2022, 2023
[11] CBS. 2025. "Asielverzoeken En Nareizigers; Nationaliteit, Geslacht En Leeftijd." May 23, 2025. https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/cijfers/detail/83102NED.
[12] Ministry of Immigration and Integration. 2024. "*International Migration – Denmark: Report to OECD, Status for August 2024*."
[13] Oficina de Asilo y Refugio, Informe de Actividad 2021, 2022, 2023

**Undocumented third-country nationals found to be "illegally present"***

| | *2021* | *2022* | *2023* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *The Netherlands* | 5.010 | 5.475 | 6.520 |
| *Denmark* | 425 | 510 | 1.100 |
| *Spain* | 30.615 | 68.100 | 90.860 |

**These are the Official numbers and wording from Eurostat.eu. Unofficial numbers were not found for the case of Denmark or the Netherlands, but as for Spain, according to FUNCAS, there were 686.000 undocumented immigrants in Spain in 2022.*

**Top countries of origin Immigrants**

| | *2021* | *2022* | *2023* |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***The Netherlands***[14] | Poland | Ukraine | Ukraine |
| | Germany | Poland | Poland |
| | Turkey | Turkey | Turkey |
| ***Denmark***[15] | Poland | Poland | Poland |
| | Syria | Syria | Ukraine |
| | Turkey | Romania | Romania |
| ***Spain***[16] | Italy | Colombia | Colombia |
| | Colombia | Morocco | Venezuela |
| | Venezuela | Italy | Morocco |

[14] CBS. 2024. "Hoeveel Immigranten Komen Naar Nederland?" https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/dossier/dossier-asiel-migratie-en-integratie/hoeveel-immigranten-komen-naar-nederland

[15] Danmarks Statistik, "*Indvandrere i Danmark",* 2021, 2022, 2023

[16] INE (Instituto Nacional de Estadística). 2021, 2022, 2023. Estadística de Migraciones. Accessed June 8, 2025. https://www.ine.es/

| **Top countries of origin Asylum Seekers** | ***2021*** | ***2022*** | ***2023*** |
|---|---|---|---|
| ***The Netherlands***[17] | Syria | Syria | Syria |
| | Afghanistan | Turkey | Turkey |
| | Turkey | Afghanistan | Yemen |
| ***Denmark***[18] | Afghanistan | Ukraine | Syria |
| | Eritrea | Syria | Afghanistan |
| | Syria | Afghanistan | Eritrea |
| ***Spain***[19] | Venezuela | Venezuela | Venezuela |
| | Colombia | Colombia | Colombia |
| | Morocco | Perú | Perú |

# 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

## *3.1. Theoretical Background*

This section introduces the key frameworks that inform this study's theoretical foundation. It begins by outlining different standpoints on how and when the political debate may be shaped by media coverage, and vice versa. Moreover, it provides a brief overview of Framing Theory and the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF), two models that shed light on how media actors contribute to public and political discourse, and ultimately to policy outcomes. Finally, it explores relevant theoretical contributions on the ideological, political, and media dynamics that underpin contemporary anti-immigration discourse and populist narratives in Europe.

[17] CBS. 2025. "Asielverzoeken En Nareizigers; Nationaliteit, Geslacht En Leeftijd." May 23, 2025. https://www.cbs.nl/nl-nl/cijfers/detail/83102NED.
[18] Ministry of Immigration and Integration. 2024. "*International Migration – Denmark: Report to OECD, Status for August 2024*."
[19] Oficina de Asilo y Refugio, Informe de Actividad 2021, 2022, 2023

### 3.1.1. The (Conditional) Power of Media in the Political Landscape

Over the past decades, scholars have developed increasingly nuanced models to explain the relationship between the media and politics. In this context, Piers Robinson (2000) proposes the Policy-Media Interaction Model, which posits that media influence is strongest when government policy is uncertain, as is the case during electoral periods. In cases where policy is already settled or media coverage aligns with elite consensus, the media are less likely to alter decision-making. Building on this foundation, Emiliano Grossman (2022) contends that the media can define the scope of political contestation. However, commercial and ideological logics mediate their ability to influence the policy process.

Crow and Lawlor (2016), on the other hand, argue that media influence operates not only through agenda-setting and issue salience but also through policy-relevant storytelling. In line with Grossman, they put forth that the media shape the boundaries of legitimate political debate and coalition formation, and they add that they do so by combining framing and narrative strategies. However, they caution that media influence is non-linear and often contingent on timing and the political context, which would be in line with Robinson's Policy-Media Interaction Model.

Despite these different approaches, overall scholars agree that the media do not control policy outcomes, but they limit the scope of the political debate and are able to tip the balance when elite consensus falters. In contexts such as national elections, when political positions are fluid and public attention is heightened, the media's scope of influence is especially pronounced.

### 3.1.2. Framing Theory

The concept of framing was first introduced by anthropologist Gregory Bateson, who referred to *psychological frames* as "the spatial and temporal boundaries that shape a set of interactive messages" (Bateson 1972, 197). Building on this idea, Goffman (1974) described frames as the mental structures people use to interpret and make sense of what goes on around them. The critical approach to framing elaborates on this conceptualisation by adding power to the analysis.

It highlights how ideological biases and institutional constraints determine which interpretations dominate and which remain marginalised. In this sense, framing in the media must be understood as a "force in the forming and delimiting of public assumptions, attitudes, and moods of ideology, in short" (Gitlin 1980, 9).

Robert M. Entman (1993) systematically integrated elements of these framing theories into a comprehensive model, arguing that frames can be seen as a link between individual cognition and broader cultural and political patterns (Gamson et al. 1992, 384). According to Entman (1993, 52–53), framing involves highlighting certain aspects of perceived reality and omitting others within a communication, thereby promoting a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and recommended treatment. This mechanism of selective emphasis underpins the political significance of framing: competing media and political actors vie to impose dominant frames, thereby shaping public discourse and influencing democratic processes (Entman 1993, 55).

### 3.1.3. Narrative Policy Framework

Frames and narratives are related but distinct constructs, each contributing differently to meaning-making in the media. While frames "form the central organising idea" of a communication, narrative fills in these frames with emotional appeals, causal sequences and moral implications (Crow and Lawlor 2016, 474). The NPF, as first outlined by Jones and McBeth in 2010, posits that stories are fundamental to justifying and building consensus for particular policies (Jones et al. 2014a, 1–3), and the media plays an important role in relaying and contributing to these stories. Moreover, it asserts that storytelling is composed of structural elements and content, which are shaped by belief systems and deployed strategically by policy and media actors seeking to shape the political landscape (Jones et al. 2014a, 1–3; Shanahan et al. 2018, 332–35).

In contrast to post-positivist approaches, the NPF defines policy narratives in terms of generalisable form and content elements that can be empirically tested (Shanahan et al. 2018,

333–36). While it accepts that key policy concepts—such as security, equality, or citizenship—are socially constructed and therefore open to different interpretations, it also maintains that these are shaped and constrained by underlying belief systems, which give them enough stability to be studied systematically. In this way, the NPF combines a constructivist ontology with an epistemology rooted in scientific inquiry (Radaelli et al. 2012; Shanahan et al. 2018, 334). However, the framework also allows for qualitative research methods, especially for examining the rhetorical techniques employed by media and political actors (Shanahan et al. 2018, 345).

In regards to narrative form, the NPF identifies the following components: (1) the setting, which contextualises the issue, (2) the characters, who drive the narrative by embodying conflict or resolution, (3) the plot, which structures causal relationships and attributes blame, and (4) the moral of the story, which conveys the implicit or explicit policy solution (Shanahan et al. 2018, 336–38). Moreover, policy narratives are described as any communication that includes a public policy referent and at least one character—who is typically categorised as either a hero (the one who solves the policy issue), a villain (the one who causes the policy issue), or a victim (the one who is harmed by the policy issue). As for the public policy referent, it can take various forms, including a proposed solution, a characterisation of a policy-relevant problem, or a discussion of policy-relevant evidence (McBeth et al. 2014, 229).

### 3.1.4. Media, Populism, and the Politics of Recognition

Understanding how migration is framed and narrated in the media requires close attention to the underlying ideological and political landscapes. A central concern in this regard is the rise of populist rhetoric, which has succeeded in bringing anti-immigration narratives to the centre of public discourse by capitalising on fear and identity conflict (Wodak 2015).

In *Politics of Fear* (2015), Wodak argues that in the era of what she terms "media democracy," outrageous and emotionally charged content, such as xenophobic messages, garners disproportionate attention (Wodak 2015, 12–14). This dynamic allows populist actors to set the public agenda, and over time it has led to shifting voting patterns. According to Gennaioli and Tabellini (2023), voters in Western democracies, particularly from lower socioeconomic groups,

increasingly prioritise cultural and identity issues over traditional economic cleavages, marking a transition from the "politics of redistribution" to the "politics of recognition". In this context, mainstream parties and media often imitate or accommodate the language of the radical right to avoid alienating key audiences and constituencies, leading to a discursive convergence that normalises exclusionary policies (Han 2015).

Building on this concept of the "politics of recognition", Charles Taylor (1995) describes them as mechanisms to shape who belongs and who does not within the democratic sphere. He argues that misrecognition—when individuals or groups are consistently portrayed in demeaning or stereotypical ways—can cause real psychological and social harm, leading to internalised oppression and reduced political agency. In this sense, media portrayals of migrants do more than reflect public sentiment; they actively influence their social and political status (Taylor 1995, 25–29).

### 3.1.5. Dual Theoretical Lense: Framing and Narrative Policy Framework

The present study adopts a dual theoretical lens, drawing from both Framing Theory and the NPF, to analyse newspaper coverage of migration. By combining these theories, we can examine not only *what* is being emphasised about migration in the media (through frames) but also *how* migration stories are told (through narratives). This integrated approach is designed to provide a richer understanding of media discourse on migration than either framework could offer alone, and it follows calls in recent scholarship to better integrate framing and narrative analysis to understand how media actors influence public perception of policy issues (Crow and Lawlor 2016, 483).

We apply Entman's definition of framing as emphasising specific elements of reality in a communication in order to advance a certain understanding of the issue (Entman 1993) —for instance, presenting migration as a crisis or as an economic opportunity—, and combine it with the NPF to analyse how narrative structure determines how that particular angle is delivered through characters and plots that engage the audience and suggest particular political

interventions (Crow and Lawlor 2016, 477). By investigating the potential interplays between specific frames and narratives —for example, do articles that employ a "securitisation" frame tend to feature more villain-victim narratives (with migrants cast as villains or victims)? — the study will provide insight into how these components work together to structure public understanding of migration, build consensus for particular migration policies, and ultimately influence the social and political status of migrants.

### *3.2. Empirical Research on Media Coverage of Migration*

This section provides an overview of previous empirical studies on how newspaper media has portrayed migration in the countries of our sample. We have identified a few common trends, as well as features specific to each country. While all three countries share patterns of migration being constructed through securitising and problematising frames, each context reveals distinct discursive strategies, ideological tensions, and effects on public sentiment and political behaviour specific to local contexts.

#### 3.2.1. Migration Coverage in Denmark

Denmark frames migration less through metaphor and more through the disciplinary language of "integration." Yet, Rytter (2019) shows how this seemingly neutral term actually embeds especially Muslim migrants in exclusionary social imaginaries and that even scholarly discussions often reproduce these very framings. In the Danish media, the term integration has been set "loose on the streets," deployed as a signifier that problematises Muslim migrants by boxing them into three inescapable imaginaries (Rytter 2019, 2). First, a welfare‑reciprocity model that casts newcomers as potential freeloaders even as they're asked to "give before they can enjoy" (Rytter 2019, 9); second, a host–guest paradigm, where immigrants must conform to unspoken cultural norms only to find new "invisible fences" (Rytter 2019, 10); and third, a more native narrative that portrays Danes as an indigenous people whose ties and kinship newcomers can never legitimately claim (Rytter 2019, 11-12). Media narratives reproduce these frames, casting

migrants as permanent outsiders despite superficial calls for inclusion. While the Danish media system displays greater ideological diversity than the Spanish context (Bailey-Morley and Kumar 2022), fear-based narratives remain prevalent, particularly in relation to Muslim communities. Integration becomes a gatekeeping tool, masking exclusion behind moral discourses about supposed integration.

### 3.2.2. Migration Coverage in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, media coverage of migration has evolved from initial multicultural tolerance to more assimilationist and securitised framings. Bos et al. (2016, 98) identify three dominant frames: the emancipation frame, focussed on liberation from oppressive cultural practices, the multicultural frame, recognises cultural plurality, and the victimisation frame, which positions particularly Muslim women as both victims and barriers to integration. Over time, media discourse has shifted away from multiculturalism toward more rigid assimilation expectations, with Islam increasingly framed as incompatible with Dutch values (Bos et al. 2016, 99). This framing reinforces the narrative of migrants—especially Muslim ones—as cultural threats. Importantly, research indicates that these frames significantly shape public attitudes, leading to negative portrayals correlating with support for populist, anti-immigration parties (Bos et al. 2016, 106). At the same time, studies by Dekker and Scholten (2017) demonstrate the power of human-interest stories in counteracting this negativity—suggesting that while volume of coverage may be less impactful, framing is pivotal in shaping perceptions.

### 3.2.3. Migration Coverage in Spain

In Spain, migrants are frequently depicted in news media through metaphors that strip them of individuality, of natural disasters (“floods”, “deluge”) or military invasions (“troops”, “invaders”), which presents them as external threats requiring containment. This is particularly the case when describing Ceuta and Melilla border crossings and arrivals through the Mediterranean (Montagut and Moragas-Fernández 2020, 74-79). Along similar lines,

Gómez-Estern et al. (2013) show that the majority of coverage in regional newspapers linked migrants—particularly Muslim and undocumented migrants——with crime. Moreover, Cheng et al (2010, 206) find there are "two discursive tendencies in the Spanish media coverage, that is, threat to law and order versus economic contribution". The economic framing portrays migrants as either an asset or a burden to the economy according to their contribution to the labour market. Even when it highlights their positive impact on the economy, this frames their presence primarily in terms of utility, reinforcing a conditional logic of inclusion based on perceived usefulness. Finally, humanising narratives do emerge, but they often take the form of depoliticised portrayals of migrants as passive victims, and frequently exclude their own voices (Moore et al. 2020; Amores et al. 2019). This binary of criminality or victimised passivity contributes to a reactive and decontextualised public understanding of migration, with little attention paid to its structural causes or the individual and political agency of migrants.

### 3.3 Comparison of Migration Coverage

Across these three contexts, framing emerges as the key mechanism by which migration is socially constructed in the media. In all cases, emotional and symbolic narratives—whether of threat, victimhood, or resilience—have more influence than factual reporting alone. Spain and Denmark share tendencies to present migrants as either threats or passive recipients of humanitarianism, though Denmark's focus on integration introduces a unique moralistic discourse. The Netherlands, meanwhile, illustrates how frames can shift over time—from multicultural tolerance to securitised assimilation—both reflect and reinforce broader political transformations. Despite variations, commonality persists: migrant perspectives are frequently marginalised, and media framings function not only to inform but to shape public imaginaries, policy preferences, and political alignments.

# 4. RESEARCH DESIGN

As outlined in the introduction, this study aims to investigate how migration is framed and narrated in national newspaper coverage during recent national elections in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain. By combining Framing Theory with the NPF, this research aims to identify the dominant frames used to represent migration, analyse how these frames interact with narrative structures, and compare patterns across ideological and national contexts.

As stated in the introduction, these are the research questions:

1. How is migration framed in national newspaper coverage during the most recent national elections in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain?
2. What narrative elements—as defined by the Narrative Policy Framework—do newspapers use to represent migration during this period (e.g., characters, causal mechanisms, moral conclusions)?
3. How do these frames and narratives vary across national contexts and the ideological orientations of the selected newspapers?

## *4.1. Type of Research*

This study employs a qualitative, comparative case study approach. The choice of a qualitative research design is driven by the research questions, which seek an in-depth understanding of meaning-making processes (framing and narrative) rather than measuring variables or causal effects of media discourse. Moreover, the NPF itself, while originally developed within a positivist paradigm (Jones and McBeth 2010), can be applied qualitatively to unpack the richness of policy stories (Gray and Jones 2016, as cited in Shanahan et al. 2018) without reducing them solely to counts of narrative elements.

The study is also comparative by design. Each country's media discourse is treated as a case, and the analysis produces rich descriptions of each case before comparing them. This comparative

element increases the study's analytical leverage. By looking at multiple contexts, the research can distinguish which frames or narratives are context-specific and which might be more widespread across Europe.

Methodologically, the study draws on qualitative content analysis techniques. Content analysis here means systematically reading texts (newspaper articles) and coding them for categories of interest (frames, narrative elements). Unlike purely inductive grounded theory, this research is theory-informed: framing and the NPF literature provide a priori categories (deductive codes). However, the study remained open to inductive coding for frames and narrative elements, identifying and then coding for new categories which emerged from the sample articles.

This study adopts the *meso level* of analysis within the NPF, which conceptualises policy narratives as strategic tools used by organised groups, such as coalitions, political parties, or media actors, to influence public opinion and policy-making. The NPF distinguishes three levels of analysis: the *micro level*, which examines individual cognitive responses to narratives; the *meso level,* where narratives are constructed and contested in a dynamic policy arena (*agora narrans*); and the *macro level*, which considers the influence of broader cultural and institutional forces on narrative form and content (Shanahan et al. 2013; Shanahan et al. 2018, 334–35). At the *meso level*, narratives are not merely reflections of belief systems but are deployed strategically to mobilise support and reframe policy debates.

### *4.2. Sampling Method*

This research employed stratified purposive sampling to capture a broad spectrum of migration narratives during the election period in each of the three countries studied. The sampling was conducted in two stages: first, by selecting the news sources (newspapers), and second, by selecting relevant articles from those sources.

For each country, Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain, two major national daily newspapers were chosen to reflect different political leanings: one left-leaning and one right-leaning. The

selection criteria included: high circulation, national reach and availability of archived articles for the relevant time frame.

The universe of this study consists of all articles about migration published by the selected newspapers during the four weeks before and two weeks after each country's most recent federal election.

As this research employs a qualitative content analysis, the goal was not to achieve a statistically significant sample but to ensure rich and diverse coverage. Therefore, we purposefully selected articles that were particularly informative and varied in their treatment of migration. This included not only more original news reporting but also opinion pieces, features, and interviews with politicians, thereby reflecting a range from more ideologically charged narratives to more neutral or objective reporting.

Articles were retrieved from the online media archives LexisNexis and PressReader, which aggregate print, online, broadcast, and social media content. For the Danish case, we supplemented this with licensed access to each newspaper's own digital archive, as the media databases available did not contain the full set of articles required.

#### 4.2.1. Newspapers in Denmark: *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten*

In Denmark, trust in news media remains relatively high. Denmark ranks 4th out of 46 markets, sharing the spot with the Netherlands, with 57 percent trust in the news media (Reuters 2023, 70).

*Politiken*, founded in Copenhagen in 1884, quickly gained a reputation for challenging social privilege, nationalism, and militarism. It became Denmark's first true omnibus newspaper, influenced by its early alignment with *Radikale Venstre* (The Danish Social Liberal Party), a left-wing party shaping its readership and editorial tone (Lex 2024). The newspaper declared its independence in 1970, severing ties with The Danish Social Liberal Party (Lex 2024). As of 2022/2023, *Politiken* reaches about 492,000 readers (JP/Politikens Hus 2025), with a focus on critical journalism and storytelling across culture, debate, and society (Jensen 2019). *Politiken* is

seen as left-leaning and critical of right-wing governments (Hjarvard 2007). *Politiken*'s brand trust score is by 2023 69 percent (Reuters 2023, 70).

*Jyllands-Posten*, founded in 1871 by six young men from Jutland, aimed to offer an alternative representation of the region (Krarup and Henriksen 2024). From the start, it championed free enterprise and opposed socialism, trade unions, Copenhagen-centric attitudes, and public spending (Ibid). Initially close to the Conservative People's Party, *Jyllands-Posten* declared itself independent in 1938 (Ibid), maintaining a conservative stance and occasionally setting a controversial agenda against the Social Democrats. As of 2022/2023, it reaches around 340,000 readers (JP/Politikens Hus 2025). Jyllandsposten's brand trust score was 70 percent by 2023 (Reuters 2023, 70).

In 2003, *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* were reorganised into a joint-stock company and are now co-owned, though they retain editorial independence (Lex 2024). Both newspapers offer print and digital versions and have expanded their reach across multiple media platforms, including podcasts (Jyllands-Posten; Politiken). *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* are two of Denmark's most influential national newspapers due to their extensive reach and their significant roles in shaping public discourse throughout Danish media's history.

#### 4.2.2. Newspapers in the Netherlands: *NRC* and *De Telegraaf*

*NRC* and *De Telegraaf* are two of the most prominent newspapers in the Netherlands, representing opposing ends of the editorial and journalistic spectrum. Both are among the most influential national dailies and offer insight into the country's historically "pillarised" media system—verzuiling—in which newspapers historically aligned with distinct religious, political, or ideological communities (Brants and van Praag 2015). Trust in Dutch news media remains relatively high, with 57 percent of respondents expressing trust in news overall, ranking the Netherlands fourth among 46 countries surveyed by the Reuters Institute (Reuters 2023).

*NRC* was established in its current form in 1970 through the merger of two liberal-leaning newspapers, *Algemeen Handelsblad* and *Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant.* It is widely regarded as a high-quality broadsheet with a center-left editorial stance, known for its strong emphasis on international affairs and investigative journalism (Bakker and Scholten 2023). The newspaper maintains a transparent journalistic code of conduct and publicly shares its editorial values and institutional history on its website (NRC 2024). According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023, *NRC* enjoys a relatively high level of public trust, with 67 percent of respondents indicating trust, 23 percent remaining neutral, and only 10 percent expressing distrust—one of the most favorable trust distributions among Dutch newspapers (Reuters 2023).

*De Telegraaf,* founded in 1893, is the most widely read newspaper in the Netherlands. Its early editions were marked by a sensationalist style that has persisted throughout its history. The paper faced a publishing ban after World War II due to its wartime collaboration with Nazi-aligned forces and the Dutch National Socialist Movement (NSB), although this ban was lifted in 1949 (van Vree 1994). In the post-war period, *De Telegraaf* rebuilt its audience by aligning with conservative populist themes and engaging in overt political campaigning (Brants and van Praag 2015). Today, it is characterised by its populist tone, bold headlines, and a tabloid-like approach similar to the UK's *The Sun* or Germany's *Bild*. It is owned by Mediahuis, a Belgian-based media conglomerate that also controls several other national and regional newspapers in the Netherlands (Mediahuis 2025). According to the Reuters Institute, 59 percent of Dutch respondents trust *De Telegraaf*, 23 percent neither trust nor distrust it, while 18 percent do not trust it, making it the least trusted major Dutch newspaper in the survey (Reuters 2023).

The selection of *NRC* and *De Telegraaf* offers a useful contrast for examining media narratives in the Netherlands. While *NRC* reflects a tradition of liberal, high-brow journalism, *De Telegraaf* represents a mass-oriented, populist voice. Together, they provide a comprehensive view of the ideological and stylistic diversity within the Dutch media landscape.

### 4.2.3. Newspapers in Spain: *El País* and *El Mundo*

*El País* and *El Mundo* are two of Spain's most influential national newspapers, often regarded as newspapers of record due to their extensive reach and their significant roles in shaping public discourse. Both newspapers are recognised for their high levels of trust among readers. According to the Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2023, *El País* and *El Mundo* rank as the two top national newspapers in terms of trustworthiness, reflecting their reputations for reliable journalism (Reuters 2023).

*El País* was founded in 1976 during Spain's transition to democracy, and positioned itself as a progressive voice advocating for democratic reforms and civil liberties. It is owned by PRISA, a prominent Spanish media conglomerate, and has maintained a center-left editorial stance, aligning with social democratic principles and often supporting the Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE) (Cózar 2022). As of December 2023, *El País* reported nearly 392,000 digital subscribers, making it the digital newspaper with the highest number of digital subscribers in Spain (PRISA 2024). In terms of monthly unique users, *El País* recorded approximately 16.5 million in May 2023, placing it third among Spanish digital newspapers (GFK 2023).

*El Mundo*, established in 1989, is known for its investigative journalism and center-right editorial line, frequently supporting conservative perspectives, particularly those of the People's Party (PP) (García Pinilla 2011). Owned by Unidad Editorial, a subsidiary of Italy's RCS MediaGroup, *El Mundo* reported over 15.7 million monthly unique users in May 2023, ranking fourth among Spanish digital newspapers (GFK 2023). It had approximately 123,000 digital subscribers as of 2023, positioning it as the second digital newspaper in Spain after *El País* with the highest number of subscribers (Reuters 2023). It is considered the most widely read national newspaper in Spain with a center-right orientation.

The selection of these outlets capture key ideological and discursive currents within the Spanish press, offering insight into how migration is framed across different segments of the media landscape.

### 4.2.4. Sampling of Articles

After selecting the newspapers, the next step was to gather all relevant articles that dealt with migration during the defined election campaign period. The approach was to perform a comprehensive search of each newspaper's content over the period, using keywords related to migration. Search terms included "immigra" (to capture "immigration" or "immigrant"), "migrant", "refugee", as well as "asylum seeker", "foreigner" or "extranjero" in Spanish, and country-specific words such as udlænding in Danish. The searches were conducted via online newspaper databases to ensure we retrieved all articles that mention these terms in the relevant timeframe.

Inclusion criteria for the articles were established to focus the sampling:

**Policy narratives:** In order for articles to count as a policy narrative, they had to contain at least one character (e.g. the government, migration, the economy, etc.) and a policy issue referent (in this case, migration).

**In-depth discussion:** Moreover, articles had to substantively discuss migration or immigrants. This means a passing reference to "immigration" in an article primarily about something else might be excluded, whereas any article specifically about immigration policy, undocumented migrants, border control, campaign statements on migration, etc., would be included.

**All types of articles**, including news reports, interviews and opinion pieces (editorials, op-eds) were included, as all can contain frames and narratives.

**Timeframe of publishing**: Articles had to be published in the period ranging from 4 weeks before the country's last national election date until 2 weeks after.

**The first 50 articles per newspaper** which met this criteria were collected for analysis.

### *4.3. Data Collection Methods*

With the sample of newspapers and articles defined, data collection involved retrieving the full texts of all selected articles, organising them, and preparing them for analysis. This process was systematic and consistent across the three countries to ensure reliability.

For each chosen newspaper, the primary method of collection was through digital archives or databases LexisNexis and PressReader. The search strategy (as described in Sampling) was applied in these databases, limiting by date range and source. Each article collected was documented with metadata: the date of publication, the newspaper name, the type of article (news, opinion, etc.), and the headline. This metadata was important later for analysis to contextualise quotes.

### *4.4. Data Analysis Techniques*

The overall approach can be described as a qualitative content analysis with coding guided by framing and narrative concepts. The researchers engaged with the data through multiple readings and coding passes, constantly reflecting on how the emerging patterns relate to the research questions.

Before coding the articles, an initial codebook was established (attached as appendix). As part of the codebook development, an initial exploratory analysis was conducted to identify the four dominant frames that would serve as the basis for categorising the framing of the articles. This inductive step was informed by existing literature on dominant migration frames in the studied countries, and informed by Entman's (1993) definition of framing as problem definition, as well as the analysis of the cross-country sample. Moreover, drawing from the NPF, the coding frame included narrative elements: characters, causal mechanisms and policy conclusions.

After coding all articles in a single country, the researchers synthesised the findings for that case. This involved writing an outline that answered the research questions for that country: listing the

main frames and narrative elements found, with illustrative examples and quotes, and describing the prevailing narrative arcs. Then the results were compared across countries.

### *4.5. Ethical Considerations*

This study has focused on publicly available articles, only. As no private data or human participants were involved, no procedures related to informed consent and anonymity were applicable. Articles were selected based on how centrally they addressed migration, excluding others with less mentions of the topic. While this process has relied on the researchers' judgment, we were careful to avoid selecting in ways that could misrepresent the overall discourse or confirm our expectations. We were consistently aware of our positionality and the potential for bias, especially because each of us analysed media from our own country and in our native language. While this gave us cultural insight, it also made it harder to fully detect and challenge one another's assumptions across cases. For example, what one of us might read as a neutral policy term might be charged or ideological in another context. To address this, we were transparent about our analytical decisions and highly prioritized this during feedback sessions. We used a shared coding framework grounded in Framing Theory and the NPF that helped us identify key frames and narrative elements in each country's media in a less biased way.

We have been careful not to reinforce harmful or exclusionary framings of migrants found in the articles. For example, *De Telegraaf* and *Jyllands-Posten* sometimes described migrants using stigmatising or criminalising language. Rather than repeating this uncritically, we have tried to objectively analyse how such framings function in the broader narrative. Similarly, we avoided sensationalising suffering, such as deaths at sea or deportation stories, by situating these within policy debates rather than treating them as isolated, emotional incidents. We have intended to highlight the lack of migrant voices without making assumptions about what those voices might have said. Furthermore, we have been careful to avoid contributing to reproduce dominant narratives, which can sometimes happen in academic work.

Moreover, we have interpreted media content in the light of each country's national and historical context. Rather than judging the newspapers or policies as isolated elements, we focused on understanding how migration was framed within each political and journalistic environment. In the process, we have stayed aware of how the broader impact of media narratives might influence public attitudes or shape policy decisions.

We have followed UPF's requirements regarding research ethics, citation, and responsible authorship. All sources were cited properly, and copyright rules were respected when quoting or referencing newspaper content.

Throughout the study AI tools were used to help both process data, brainstorm, organise/structure, correct grammar and clarify texts and summarise information. Every analysis, interpretation, and conclusion were made by us as researchers, and any use of AI is documented in line with UPF's ethical standards. See appendix 4 for the list of all the prompts that were used.

### *4.6. Research Limitations*

This study focuses solely on newspaper articles, which means other media formats are not examined. Thus, the findings reflect mainstream print media discourse, and particularly the two newspapers analysed per country, and cannot be assumed to represent all media narratives in the three countries. This was a deliberate choice to keep the project manageable, but it limits the comprehensiveness of the media landscape covered.

On the other hand, comparing media across countries is inherently challenging. We attempted to mitigate this by using broad theoretical categories that are not language-specific. However, certain framings could be very country-specific. Comparing them requires interpretation that could introduce some subjectivity. Moreover, issue frames around migration could be unusually heightened or toned down due to idiosyncratic events of that campaign. This limits the ability to attribute differences solely to national culture when timing could also play a role. Moreover, the study is essentially a snapshot of each country at one time. It doesn't account for how framing

might change over time (except within the short campaign window). If one of these countries had a major shift in media discourse (say between an earlier election and the one studied), we wouldn't capture that trajectory. A longitudinal design would strengthen conclusions about narratives (like whether a certain narrative is emerging or declining), but that was outside our scope.

Additionally, qualitative content analysis often uses smaller samples than quantitative studies. While 100 articles per country is substantial for in-depth reading, it is still a small sample relative to all election news output. There is a risk that some frames or narratives present in the broader discourse did not appear in our particular sample. We mitigated this by trying to include all relevant articles from chosen papers, but those papers themselves might not cover everything. Also, only two newspapers per country were analysed; this does not represent the full spectrum of media opinion.

As a qualitative study, the researcher's interpretation is a key instrument of analysis. Despite efforts at reflexivity and even some peer debriefing, the fact remains that coding frames and narratives involves subjective judgment. We tried to use clear indicators in the codebook to ground such judgments, but inter-coder reliability was not formally tested with multiple coders in this study. The reliability of frame identification could be questioned, so the findings should be seen as one well-informed interpretation, not an objective truth. That said, aligning coding with established definitions from Entman (1993) and the NPF literature provides some methodological rigor and consistency with scholarly understandings of frames, which helps alleviate subjectivity concerns. Furthermore, qualitative case studies do not aim for statistical generalisability, but it's worth noting that our findings are not automatically applicable to other countries or cases beyond our sample. Even within Europe, another country (say, Italy or Germany) might have different media framing of migration.

Finally, the study identifies how media frame migration, but it does not measure the effect of these frames on audiences or policies. The limitation here is that we cannot say anything

definitive about public opinion or election outcomes based on the content analysis alone. To keep within scope, the study did not include audience research (such as focus groups or surveys on how people perceived the media narratives). We rely on theory to suggest that frames matter for public opinion (Entman 1993) and the NPF suggests narratives can shape policy realities (Shanahan et al. 2013), but connecting those dots in our cases is beyond what the data directly show.

These limitations don't undermine the core value of the research, but they do frame how the results should be interpreted. In this sense, they help delineate the contribution of the thesis, providing a focused insight that complements, rather than replaces, other approaches in understanding the relationship between the media, migration and policy.

# 5. RESULTS

Using a qualitative codebook informed by the NPF and Entman's Framing Theory, the analysis focuses on identifying and analysing frames and the following narrative elements: characters, causal mechanisms, and policy conclusions. These were systematically coded based on a structured codebook, which can be found in appendix 3. The coding process involved examining entire articles—including headlines and images—to identify the narrative structure underlying the reporting.

For each article, coders identified characters and categorised them into heroes, villains, and victims, as described in the theoretical framework section. In terms of causal mechanisms, causes were initially classified as either intentional (strategic or deliberate), mechanical (bureaucratic or systemic), inadvertent (unexpected or collateral) or accidental (natural causes), and examined in-depth in the qualitative analysis. Finally, migration policy conclusions were identified and categorised as more or less restrictive in the first instance, and then further fleshed out in the qualitative analysis.

A framing analysis was also conducted to identify dominant problem definitions. Articles were classified according to the presence of frames whenever it was relevant, based on both the language used and the underlying logic of problem definition; for instance, whether migration was presented as a threat, a moral crisis, a workforce solution, or a challenge to cultural unity. Emergent frames were noted and identified in the analysis.

**Cross-country framing analysis**

As part of the framing analysis, dominant problem definitions were identified inductively across the sample. While the analysis was open to emergent and case-specific frames in each national context, a preliminary cross-country review was necessary to enable meaningful comparison. Through this process, four primary frames emerged across the three countries: the *humanitarian frame*, emphasising suffering, dignity, and moral obligation; the *securitisation frame*, centered on border control, threats, and illegality; the *economic frame*, which highlighted labour needs or the cost of migration; and the *cultural identity frame*, which focused on national values, integration, and cohesion. These frames were added as categories in the codebook to allow for cross-country comparison. Additionally, country-specific frames that did not fit within these categories were also identified and noted in the analysis.

## *5.1 Case Study: Denmark*

### 5.1.1. Context

The most recent general election in Denmark took place on 1st November 2022. The election was called after *Radikale Venstre* (The Danish Social Liberal Party), a key parliamentary support party for the Social Democratic government, withdrew its support because of the Mink Scandal[20]. This political rupture led to an early election. The main parties in the election were *Socialdemokratiet* (the centre-left Social Democrats), The Danish Social Liberal Party, *Venstre* (The

[20]*The mink scandal in Denmark was a political crisis in 2020, when the government ordered all mink killed because of COVID-19 concerns, without having the legal right to do so.*

Liberal-Conservative), *De Konservative* (The Conservative Party), *Enhedslisten* (The Red–Green Alliance), *Moderaterne* (the New Centrist Moderates), and the right-wing parties, including *Nye Borgerlige* (The New Right) and *Dansk Folkeparti* (The Danish People's Party).

During the campaign, migration was not as dominant an issue as in earlier Danish elections[21]. Still, it remained a contentious and underlying theme. Some parties, such as The New Right and The Danish People's Party, used strongly critical rhetoric targeting migrants and cultural integration throughout certain media news outlets, for example, reviving the debate over headscarves in the public sector and proposing tighter asylum restrictions[22]. The New Right also suggested[23] that "criminal foreigners" were deported "good" and self-sufficient ones were being let in, reinforcing cultural and economic boundary lines.

One of the most debated policies was the so-called Rwanda plan, proposed by the Social Democratic government, which aimed to outsource asylum processing to a third country outside Europe. The plan was initially supported by The Liberal-Conservative and backed rhetorically by parties like New Right, but heavily criticised by The Danish Social Liberal Party and The Red-Green Alliance for violating human rights and undermining Denmark's international reputation[24]. At the same time, strict asylum rules also came under public scrutiny through individual stories as: Ayat Khorizat's[25], a top student who was denied permanent residency because she graduated 40 days before turning 18, breaking the rule of continuous education until that age. As well as stories[26] with several migrants with jobs in healthcare being deported due to *"crazy rules"* within the asylum policy despite Denmark's labor shortages.

In the broader European context, the war in Ukraine had reshaped migration debates, with the EU under pressure to find a coordinated response. A new Migration and Asylum Pact under

[21] "Svenskerne undrer sig: Hvad blev der af udlændingene i den danske valgkamp?" (06/11/2022, Politiken)
[22] "Hvis tørklæder er det største problem, så har man for lidt at gå op i" (09/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten): "Iranernes frihedskamp er også vores kamp for frihed" (12/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[23] "Pernille Vermund: Politikerne skal bestemme mindre" (17/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[24] "EL om regeringens Rwanda-plan: Det kan ikke lade sig gøre" (31/10/2022, Politiken)
[25] "Ayat blev student for tidligt" (17/10/2022, Politiken)
[26] "18-årige Rawan vil være sygeplejerske. Nu skal hun sendes på udrejsecenter" (12/11/2022, Politiken); "Chunaram blev dansk statsborger, det ramte hans kone" (17/10/2022, Politiken)

negotiation, focused on externalised border controls and burden-sharing. Denmark, however, remained outside many shared asylum mechanisms and pursued a distinctly hardline course, both politically and symbolically, as seen in its minimal resettlement pledges, just 200 quota refugees in 2022 compared to several thousand in for example Sweden and Norway[27].

In 2022, only around 3,850 asylum seekers had arrived in Denmark by October, with over half being Ukrainian refugees. While this meant, that the direct political pressure was lower than in previous years, the low numbers also reinforced narratives of success having a restrictive approach to migration, especially in the right-wing press[28].

Given these dynamics, the 2022 election in Denmark became a referendum of sorts on how far the country would continue down its path of restrictive, prevention-based migration policy. While the election ultimately led to a centrist coalition of Social Democrats, The Liberal-Conservative, and The New Central Moderates the post-election media debate showed that migration remained a symbolic battleground, linked to not just border control but to identity[29], democracy[30], and Denmark's role in the EU and the world[31].

Given that the general election took place on 1st November, and this study analyses articles published between 4 weeks prior the election and 2 weeks after, the sample for the Danish case includes articles published from the 4th of October until the 15th of November 2022.

### 5.1.2. Findings

The analysis revealed an interplay of frames in Danish newspaper coverage of migration during the 2022 election period. Although securitisation and cultural identity frames emerged most

[27] "Flere kvoteflygtninge er retfærdig flygtningepolitik" (14/11/2022, Politiken)
[28] "Svenskerne undrer sig: Hvad blev der af udlændingene i den danske valgkamp?" (06/11/2022, Politiken)
[29] "Jeg er 75 procent enig med Brian Bruun fra DF. Et parti som mener, at mennesker som mig truer danskheden" (13/10/2022, Politiken); "Hendes intense kamp mod Folketingets flertal tog fart, da veninden var ved at blive udvist" (8/10/2022, Politiken)
[30] "Hendes intense kamp mod Folketingets flertal tog fart, da veninden var ved at blive udvist" (8/10/2022, Politiken)
[31] "Regeringen fik i interne dokumenter besked om kritisable forhold i Rwanda" (31/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)

prominently, they were frequently intertwined with secondary economic and humanitarian frames, as well as an overarching policy-critique frame. In other words, few articles relied on a single narrative; instead, most combined elements of threat-based discourse with either economic arguments or occasional cultural identity frames with references to moral evaluation or human suffering. Equally important, a large number of pieces from both newspapers explicitly presented a political critique frame, criticising Denmark's tough asylum policy, arguing, for instance, that it punished good law-abiding citizens. Such articles were coded under "other frames" and then noted for their critical stance. Ultimately, migration coverage in both *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* exhibits a complex, often conflicting combination of narratives that blend critique of policy failures with the very rhetoric they seek to challenge.

### 5.1.3. Framing Migration in the Danish Election Debate

In *Politiken*, the highest co‑occurrence was between Policy Critique and Cultural Identity, which appeared together in 19 of 50 articles (38%). Revealing how Danish political discourse constructs ethnic and religious minorities, especially Danish Muslims, as outsiders. For example, one article[32] focuses on 18-year-old Rawan Ahmad Kharat's battle for citizenship. Although she has attended both primary school and high school in Denmark, the Refugee Appeals Board concluded, "she has not achieved a particularly strong attachment to Denmark". Here, the piece exposes a bureaucratic standard that reduces years of Danish schooling and friendships to a deficit, underscoring how "tilknytning" (attachment) becomes a coded measure of who counts as "truly Danish."

Similarly, in Ikran Abdiaziz Mohamed's election-day commentary, she illustrates political homelessness among Muslim Danes:

> In my family, we have a tradition of voting the same way. After long conversations … we vote for the (red) party that will do the most for our basic rights. But not this year. We, like me, are frustrated with Danish politicians and legislation aimed at Muslims

[32] "18-årige Rawan vil være sygeplejerske. Nu skal hun sendes på udrejsecenter" (12/11/2022, Politiken)

> and ethnic minorities … She [Mette Frederiksen, the Danish prime minister] does not represent people like us.[33]

Here, legislation aimed at Muslims and ethnic minorities directly names a cultural-identity bias embedded in lawmaking. The declarative statement "She does not represent people like us" crystallises a sense of exclusion: political leaders' invocation of "folkeparti" (people's party) rings hollow when policies systematically marginalise visible minorities. Other articles, such as Hamid Davúdi's opinion piece[34], further intertwine Cultural Identity with Policy Critique, challenging the exclusion of long-term residents from voting. Davúdi calls this "a restriction of a basic democratic right", framing the disenfranchisement of non-citizen residents as an overtly oppressive act, rather than a neutral administrative choice. By explicitly naming "more than ten percent of adults" as excluded, he highlights how citizenship rules codify cultural exclusion, undermining Denmark's democratic legitimacy.

Across these articles, Politiken employs the Cultural Identity frame to highlight how the words in policies determine who belongs in Denmark. At the same time, the Policy Critique frame emerges whenever those cultural rules are found to be unfair or fabricated, prompting readers to recognise that debates about asylum, integration and voting rights ultimately boil down to who is considered Danish.

The frame that appeared most in *the Politiken*-selected articles was the humanitarian frame. Present in roughly 74 percent, *Politiken* is foregrounding refugees' immediate suffering before any policy discussion. For example, an article about the 100 Haitian migrants abandoned on Mona Isla opens by describing

> Over 100 migrants, including three pregnant women, … sitting on the uninhabited island with no food, water, or shelter for the night.[35]

[33] "Hun siger, at »Socialdemokratiet er et folkeparti«. Jeg håber, vi også tæller med" (03/11/2022, Politiken)
[34] "Jeg kunne bruge min erfaring ved valget" (09/10/2022, Politiken)
[35] "100 migranter fundet efterladt på ubeboet caribisk ø" (19/10/2022, Politiken)

By focusing on their hunger, fear and exposure, the article compels readers to see these individuals first as vulnerable human beings in urgent need of help. Likewise, in another opinion piece[36], the author recounts how children on Nauru "completely stop talking or moving" and that "no one knows when they can leave the island", underscoring the psychological toll of indefinite detention. In both cases, humanitarian storytelling anchors the coverage, detailing fear, trauma, and deprivation before any critique of asylum policy itself.

Overall, *Politiken*'s migration discourse skewed toward moral outrage at policy flaws and efforts to elevate the voices of non-citizen migrants and politically homeless ethnic minorities. Opinion pieces and feature-style articles populated the sample, giving migrants a voice to testify about the bureaucratic injustice they experience in Denmark.

In *Jyllands-Posten*, securitisation shaped migration coverage, appearing in 86 percent of the 50 articles. This narrative is frequently intertwined with both economic and cultural identity concerns creating a layered portrayal of migration as a multifaceted threat.

One clear example comes from an opinion piece from a Danish People's Party politician, which warns:

> We cannot bear a new refugee crisis, an asylum stop is necessary because Denmark cannot carry a wave of migrants from the Middle East and North Africa.[37]

By declaring that Denmark is "at the limit of our capacity" and must "close every unguarded border crossing," the politician frames migration as an immediate security crisis and insists on more restrictive action.

Similarly, another article[38] reports rising migrant flows through the Balkans, with Austria's interior minister warning that "everything humanly possible must be done" to avoid a repeat of the 2015 crisis. While the article focuses on Austria and broader EU efforts to tighten external borders and harmonise visa rules, the emphasis on capacity limits and urgent action reinforces a

[36] "Rwanda-modellen ødelægger sårbare mennesker" (07/100/2022, Politiken)
[37] "Lurer en ny asylkrise i horisonten?" (31/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[38] "Migranter i titusindvis rejser igen over Balkan med kurs mod EU" (23/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)

securitised narrative, one that frames migration as a risk to national stability and necessitates preventive, coordinated responses across Europe.

Sometimes economic frames amplify these stances, for example, in this one article[39] with an interview from the party leader from the Danish People's Party, as he argues that "Muslim mass immigration" has been a "catastrophe" for Denmark, not only culturally and socially, but "not least economically." He suggests cutting a billion kroner from welfare spending tied to immigration, positioning Muslim migrants as a direct drain on public resources and reinforcing the economic threat narrative central to his party's platform.

Through opinion pieces published during the election period, *Jyllands-Posten* constructs migration as a cultural threat to Danish identity and cohesion. One contributor from the Conservative Party argues that non-Western immigrants must be "force-fed Danish culture"[40] to prevent the formation of parallel societies and preserve a unified national community. Another opinion piece[41] warns that Muslim immigration leads to cultural segregation, portraying the headscarf as a symbol of Islamisation and failed integration. These articles reinforce a cultural identity frame, presenting migration not just as a policy issue, but as a challenge to the very fabric of Danish society.

Ultimately, while *Jyllands-Posten* often frames migration as a security, economic, and cultural challenge, it also regularly questions policy failures and highlights the human impact of overly rigid rules[42], demonstrating a more nuanced and critical perspective using a critique policy frame as *Politiken.*

[39] "Morten Messerschmidt: Danskerne skal sættes først" (21/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[40] "Fremtiden er konservativ" (14/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[41] "Tørklædedebatten er stadig styret af frygt" (16/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[42] "Sofie Carsten Nielsen: Modtagecentre i Afrika er en god idé - hvis EU laver dem" (17/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)

**Table 1: Frames presence**

| Frame | Overall | Politiken | Jyllands-Posten |
|---|---|---|---|
| Securitisation | 26% | 2% | 50% |
| Cultural identity | 37% | 38% | 36% |
| Economic | 12% | 14% | 10% |
| Humanitarian | 50% | 74% | 26% |
| Other | 77% | 66% | 88% |

**The table shows the share of Danish articles from each newspaper (out of 50) in which each main frame appears.*

#### 5.1.3.1 Emergent Political Critique Frame

Both *Jyllands-Posten* and *Politiken* ran pieces highlighting how Denmark's rigid rules can punish perfectly law-abiding residents. In *Jyllands-Posten*, a story[43] about Rachida el Makrini, a Danish-born home care assistant who wears a headscarf, shows how political calls to let elderly clients refuse helpers on religious grounds risk sidelining skilled, long-time professionals purely because of their faith. Meanwhile, *Politiken* profiled "Anna," a Russian graduate who secured a job and apartment but was still ordered to leave the country within two weeks; her only apparent "offense" was that her proposed salary fell just short of an arbitrary threshold, forcing her to navigate the very asylum system she hoped to avoid[44]. Both articles use individual cases to ridicule a policy framework that, despite applicants' clear ties to Denmark, treats them as if they were unwanted.

[43] "To gange på 16 år har hun oplevet, at hendes tørklæde var et problem" (13/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[44] "Russiske Anna har af myndighederne fået to uger til at forlade Danmark" (07/11/2022, Politiken)

**Table 2: The three most dominant frames under the category "Other"**

| Frame | Politiken | Jyllands-Posten |
|---|---|---|
| Political Critique Frame | 36% | 68% |
| Moral Evaluation Frame | 24% | 9% |
| Legal Justice Frame | 0% | 20% |

**The table shows the top three most dominant frames under the category "other frames" in the Danish articles from each newspaper (out of 50).*

### 5.1.4. Narrative Elements

Beyond framing, the NPF draws attention to characters, causal mechanisms, and solutions. We examine how each Danish newspaper populated these narrative elements.

#### 5.1.4.1. Characters

Across all 100 articles, at least one of three character types (victims, villains, or heroes), was present.

In *Politiken*, migrants were mostly cast as victims, portraying migrants, asylum seekers, and refugees as harmed by policy. One feature[45] reported, "Even though we have done everything we were asked to, we are hit by something meaningless and unjust."

However, the *Politiken* also portrayed migrants as protagonists, giving a voice to these. In few cases the newspaper published exceptional "success stories," presenting migrants as hero, for example, Benjamin Schenkel[46], a Yale-educated polyglot who was first denied permanent residency because his humanitarian association's website was only in English, but whose permit was granted after media attention and legal advocacy overturned the decision. Politicians and policies were frequently cast as villains (38 percent) for making laws that they themselves later

[45] "Chunaram blev dansk statsborger, det ramte hans kone" (17/10/2022, Politiken)
[46] "BENJAMIN GJORDE ALT DET RIGTIGE" (17/10/2022, Politiken)

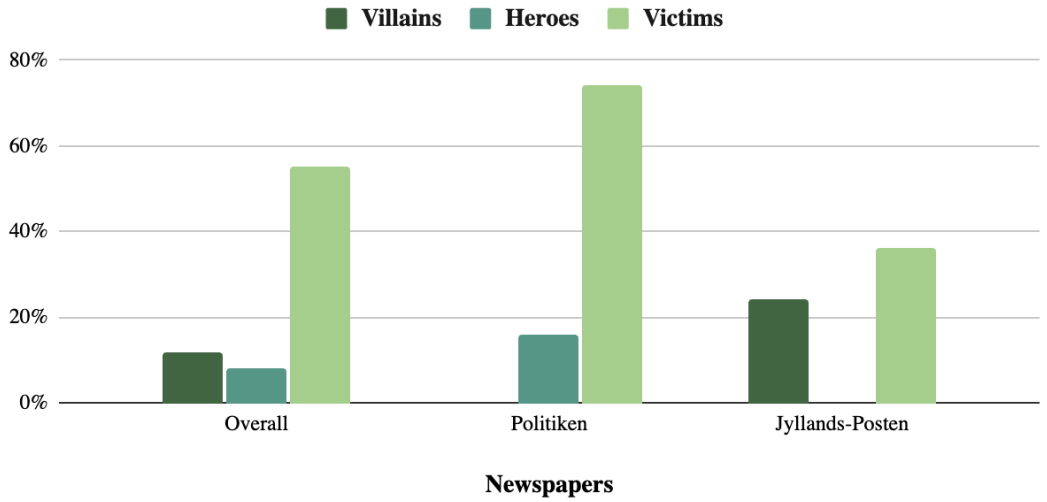
acknowledged as overly strict or producing unjust outcomes, with several parties describing Denmark's immigration rules as having become "skøre" (absurd) and leading to unintended harm for well-integrated individuals[47]. NGOs, human rights and defenders were cast as heroes in 80 percent of *Politiken*'s coverage, rescuing families from bureaucratic cruelty or pressing for EU solidarity[48].

In *Jyllands-Posten*, the character distribution shifted markedly. Even though migrants in most articles were portrayed as victims, they also appeared as villains in 22 percent of articles, typically framed as an expensive cost to Danish society through immigration policy. Native taxpayers and citizens also surfaced as victims, presented as suffering from an economic burden because of migrant inflows. Heroes were almost always state actors: border police was praised for "taking decisive action against smugglers[49]," and right-wing ministers lauded for "standing firm on border protection"[50], and local authorities enforcing the "asylum stop." Lawmakers pushing tougher deportation procedures also appear as defenders of taxpayers and order. NGOs or humanitarians were rarely featured as heroes.

In sum, *Politiken* portrayed migrants and ethnic minorities mainly as victims of unjust policy, whereas *Jyllands-Posten* more often cast migrants as the problem or burden facing Denmark, elevating state actors, civilians, and Danish democratic values as protagonists in need of protection.

[47] "Flere partier vil lempe lidt på 'skør' udlændingelov" (17/10/2022, Politiken)
[48] "Her er fem bud på en asylløsning, der er bedre end Rwanda-lejren" (04/10/2022, Politiken)
[49] "Migranter i titusindvis rejser igen over Balkan med kurs mod EU" (23/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[50] "Læserne spørger: Hvorfor gælder en ren straffeattest ikke for politikere – og hvad mener Støjberg om EU?" (10/10/2022, Jylannds-Posten)

**Figure 1: Characterisation of Migrants in Denmark**




**The figure above shows the percentage of articles in which Migrants* ***(Migration/Migrants, Refugees, or Asylum seekers)*** *appear as Villains, Heroes, or Victims. Percentages are out of 100 total Denmark-coded articles ("Overall") and out of 50 per newspaper.*

#### 5.1.4.2. Causal Mechanisms

Most migration stories in *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* show that strict rules come from deliberate decisions and result in unnecessary bureaucracy. In *Politiken*, an article notes that to get permanent residency, one must stay in school without a break until turning eighteen, but a student who graduated at seventeen and only turned eighteen forty days later lost her permit. In *Jyllands-Posten*, politicians put in an "asylum stop" on purpose to scare off newcomers, but that simply led to long lines and delays at reception centers[51]. Both papers agree that these problems stem from lawmakers' rules. *Politiken* says those overlaps show the law is unfair and needs fixing, while *Jyllands-Posten* points to politicians' own moves, like using asylum as a voting tool[52]. In short, *Politiken* highlights how harsh rules and unintended outcomes harm people, while *Jyllands-Posten* stresses that lawmakers' choices caused the failures.

[51] "Sofie Carsten Nielsen: Modtagecentre i Afrika er en god idé - hvis EU laver dem" (17/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[52] "Løkkes skamløse opportunisme" (13/10/2022, Jyllans-Posten)

**Table 3: Causal Mechanism**

| Causal Mechanism | Overall | Politiken | Jyllands-Posten |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mechanical Cause: Bureaucracy, system, rule/law | 68% | 82% | 54% |
| Intentional Cause: Strategic or political decision | 59% | 58% | 60% |
| Inadvertent Cause | 9% | 14% | 4% |

**This table shows the percentage breakdown of causal mechanisms identified in the Denmark-coded articles. Please note, the Accidental Cause was not found present.*

#### 5.1.4.3. Moral-Policy Solutions

Across the 100 articles, *Politiken* consistently advocated less restrictive solutions, calling for humanitarian relief, expanded family reunification, stronger integration support and shared European responsibility. Nearly every piece demanded that Denmark process asylum seekers domestically rather than send them to detention or processing centers outside its territory, protect religious freedom (e.g., rights to wear the hijab), extend voting rights to long-term non-citizen residents, and grant citizenship to Denmark-born children[53]. Tougher measures were rarely endorsed; when mentioned, they were often presented as regrettable side effects rather than objectives.

*Jyllands-Posten* presented a mix of more restrictive and less restrictive options. About half its articles supported stricter border controls, faster deportations, "asylum stops," offshore processing, and bans on religious symbols[54]. Meanwhile, a sizable minority proposed less restrictive or moderate reforms: human-rights–based fixes from The Danish Social Liberal Party

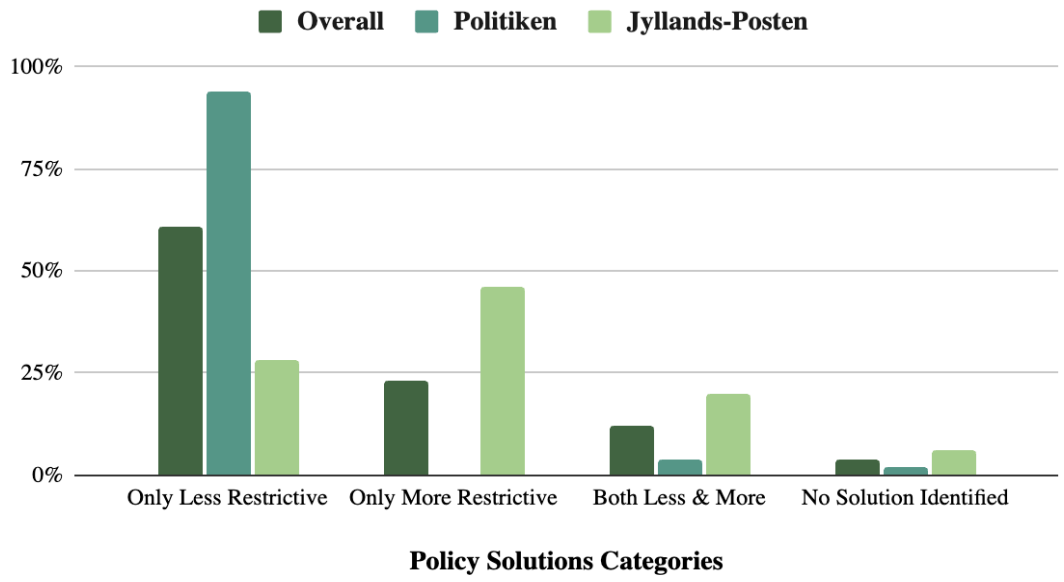
[53] "Vi er trådt ind i demokratiets tusmørketid" (09/10/2022, Politiken); "Jeg er 75 procent enig med Brian Bruun fra DF. Et parti som mener, at mennesker som mig truer danskheden" (13/10/2022, Politiken); "Hendes intense kamp mod Folketingets flertal tog fart, da veninden var ved at blive udvist" (8/10/2022, Politiken); "Er du født i Danmark, så er du dansk" (07/11/2022)

[54] "Ultimative krav kan true regeringsdannelse" (09/10/2022, Jylllands-Posten); "Morten Messerschmidt: Danskerne skal sættes først" (21/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten); Vælgerne vil smide dem ud, men Macron vil give arbejdstilladelse til illegale indvandrere (05/11/2022, Jyllands-Posten); "Lurer en ny asylkrise i horisonten?" (31/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)

to restore asylum credibility[55], EU "burden-sharing" instead of solo detentions[56], and more inclusive citizenship criteria with transparent deportation processes[57].

In short, *Politiken*'s moral-policy discourse is almost entirely less restrictive, treating hardline measures as collateral damage, whereas *Jyllands-Posten* balances more restrictive proposals (border walls, fast-track expulsions, offshore centers) with occasional less restrictive calls for humane treatment, EU cooperation and targeted migration policy reforms. Both papers agree that the asylum framework must change, but *Politiken* pushes for openness and human-rights protections, while *Jyllands-Posten* uses policy critique to justify- or at least moderate- tougher controls.

**Figure 2: Migration Policies Advocated in Denmark**




**The figure above shows the percentage breakdown of the **Moral policy solution** identified within Denmark-coded articles divided into the two newspapers as well as showing an overall percentage breakdown.*

[55] "Ultimative krav kan true regeringsdannelse" (09/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[56] "De Radikales nye leder siger både ja og nej til Rwanda-ultimatum" (04/11/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[57] "De fik angiveligt tæsk, blev tortureret og forsvandt i dybe skove" (13/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten); "Mit første valg: Med Inger, ikke med Mustafa (09/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)

### 5.1.5. Comparing Ideological Narratives Across Newspapers

*Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* demonstrate contrasting migration narratives that reflect their ideological orientations. *Politiken*, as a center-left paper, consistently frames asylum and integration policies as moral and policy failures. Its reporting emphasises how arbitrary rules, like strict education or income thresholds, exclude well-integrated individuals, portraying migrants and ethnic minorities as victims of systemic injustice. Cultural identity frames expose how notions of "attachment to Denmark" become gatekeepers, while humanitarian stories highlight personal suffering (for instance, children on Nauru ceasing to speak or move under indefinite detention) to demand reform. Security or economic language appears to critique the idea of migrants as threats. Overall, *Politiken* calls for less restrictive policies, processing asylum seekers domestically, expanding family reunification, protecting religious freedom, granting voting rights to long-term residents, and offering citizenship to Denmark-born children.

By contrast, *Jyllands-Posten*, as a center-right outlet, consistently depicts migration as an urgent threat to the economy and culture. Its articles frequently warn of an "asylum wave" and urge immediate border controls to prevent a repeat of the 2015 crisis. Economic narratives warn that migrants strain reception centers and "shake" the welfare state, while cultural identity pieces warn of "parallel societies" undermining "Danish values" unless newcomers fully assimilate. When humanitarian suffering is shown, families in overcrowded shelters or children separated from parents, the narrative quickly shifts to blame the asylum system's mismanagement rather than call for unqualified compassion. At the same time, *Jyllands-Posten* critiques the government's strict measures, highlighting how the "asylum stop" clogged reception centers and exposing the Rwanda plan as jeopardising rights without solving root problems, yet uses these critiques to argue for even tougher, more targeted controls.

### 5.1.6. Frames and Narrative Roles

In *Politiken*, policy critique and cultural identity frames almost always coincide with migrants portrayed as victims, while NGOs and progressive politicians emerge as heroes. Success stories

underscore *Politiken*'s belief in integration and inclusion. In *Jyllands-Posten*, securitisation and economic frames correlate with migrants cast as problems or burdens; state actors, border guards, right-wing ministers, and civilians defending Danish values, are often portrayed as heroes. Migrants occasionally appear as villains accused of "asylum fraud," and native Danes feature as victims suffering under rising welfare costs.

### 5.1.7. Ideological Coherence

*Politiken* maintains a coherent moral-policy narrative: articles routinely expose policy flaws (including the Rwanda plan), emphasise humanitarian crises, and call for institutional responsibility, urging Denmark to adopt more humane, less restrictive reforms. In contrast, *Jyllands-Posten* builds its narrative on a consistent structure of economic alarm, and cultural defense. Even when acknowledging policy failures, it uses them to reinforce the need for vigilance and stricter enforcement, arguing that only tougher measures can safeguard national interests.

While both newspapers cover the same election and country, they tell very different migration stories. Their framings, characterisations, and policy recommendations mirror their broader ideological identities. *Politiken* advocated empathy and reform, and *Jyllands-Posten* mostly insisted on vigilance and containment, which suggests that media coverage not only reflects political debates but actively shapes public understanding.

### 5.1.8. Narrative Arc Over Time

Across the four‑month window surrounding Denmark's November 1, 2022, election, both *Politiken* and *Jyllands-Posten* maintained consistent coverage of migration while subtly shifting emphasis as the vote approached and then passed.

*Politiken* focused on policy critique and cultural identity issues. For example, an article discussed how legislation allowing the state to revoke citizenship without due process affected a former IS member, noting concerns that similar rules could impact Danish‑born children or long‑term

residents[58]. In parallel, an early-October report[59] in that same former IS case illustrated how security considerations took precedence over individual rights.

On election day, both newspapers highlighted migration's impact on voter behavior. *Politiken* published an opinion piece by Somali-Danish voter Ikran Abdiaziz Mohamed, who wrote that debates over religious symbols left her feeling politically homeless and uncertain about casting her vote[60]. Meanwhile, *Jyllands-Posten* reported data[61] indicating that turnout in migrant-heavy neighborhoods declined compared to 2019, suggesting that heated asylum rhetoric may have influenced participation rates.

In the aftermath, *Politiken* continued to cover migration within coalition negotiations and representation debates. For instance, it featured an opinion piece[62] suggesting that the new Danish Parliament was "the whitest in years" and warning that this underrepresentation could perpetuate systemic exclusion. The paper also ran critiques of proposed offshore asylum processing, questioning its alignment with Danish humanitarian values. *Jyllands-Posten* maintained its focus on border security and welfare pressures, especially with articles[63] focusing on the migration flow in other parts of Europe.

In summary, during the pre-election period, *Politiken* emphasised policy flaws and cultural-identity concerns, while *Jyllands-Posten* stressed securitisation and economic risks. On election day, both papers highlighted how migration debates affected voter turnout and sentiment. After the vote, *Politiken* shifted attention to coalition dynamics and diversity in parliament, whereas *Jyllands-Posten* continued to press on security and welfare issues, tempered by recognition of policy shortcomings.

[58] "EL kan leve med Rwanda-aftale" (15/10/2022, Politiken)
[59] "IS-kvinde fik frataget sit danske pas – nu har Højesteret talt" (06/10/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[60] "Hun siger, at »Socialdemokratiet er et folkeparti«. Jeg håber, vi også tæller med" (03/11/2022, Politiken)
[61] "Stemmeprocenten faldt markant i ghettoområder" (04/11/2022, Jyllands-Posten)
[62] "Velkommen til det hvideste folketing længe" (12/11/2022, Politiken)
[63] "Storbritannien sender betjente til Frankrig for at stoppe asylsøgere" (15/11/2022, Jyllands-Posten); "Migranter udløser dyb krise mellem Frankrig og Italien" (12/11/2022, Jyllands-Posten)

### 5.1.9. Conclusion

In sum, the Danish case shows how *Politiken* (center-left) and *Jyllands-Posten* (center-right) navigated the same election terrain with contrasting yet overlapping narratives. *Politiken* framed migration as a moral and systemic injustice. Its human-focused stories call for less restrictive policies: processing asylum seekers at home, expanding family reunification, protecting hijab rights, extending voting rights, and granting citizenship to Denmark-born children. In contrast, *Jyllands-Posten* cast migration as a security, economic, and cultural threat, warning of an "asylum wave", portraying migrants as straining welfare services, and cautioning against "parallel societies" unless newcomers fully assimilate. Even though both newspapers used a policy critique frame to expose the possible injustice of the Rwanda Plan as a "ridiculously strict" asylum policy, Jyllands-Posten in some cases also justified tougher controls. Over time, *Politiken* shifted from policy critique to election-day moral questions and post-election diversity concerns, maintaining a call for inclusion, while *Jyllands-Posten* sustained its focus on vigilance and containment, briefly acknowledging policy flaws but ultimately reinforcing stricter enforcement.

Together, these frames and narratives give insight into how the Danish media coverage shaped public understanding of migration, identity and belonging, and Denmark's role in Europe during the 2022 federal election.

## *5.2.Case study: The Netherlands*

### 5.2.1. Context

The 22 November 2023 Dutch general election came after Mark Rutte's fourth cabinet fell due to disputes about asylum policy. Migration therefore featured as a key campaign issue. The public discussion revolved around the proposed breakdown of asylum reception, increasing arrivals from so-called "safe countries", and growing pressure on housing and public services.

The salience of migration was particularly strong among right-leaning voters. According to the Ipsos election study (Ipsos 2023), migration and asylum ranked among the top three issues for the

electorate, and was by far the most important concern for PVV and VVD voters. PVV voters in particular mobilised late and decisively, many citing migration as a key reason for switching to the party during the campaign's final week. Their choice was motivated by dissatisfaction with the government's failure to control migration, but also by cultural issues like integration, and social norms and values.

Right-wing parties such as PVV, VVD, and BBB responded to these sentiments by emphasising national sovereignty and promised to "protect" the Dutch national identity. They campaigned for stricter asylum policies and vowed to regain control from the EU over the national migration policy. In contrast, left-leaning parties such as GroenLinks-PvdA and D66 focused more on legal rights and structural solutions for both asylum and labour migration. However, the Ipsos study suggests that migration remained a less central issue for their electorate, compared to concerns about climate and healthcare.

The debate around migration was a central feature in the reporting surrounding the election. This case study contains two ideologically different newspapers—*De Telegraaf* (right-populist) and *NRC* (centrist-liberal)—and examines their reporting on migration in news articles between 26 October and 6 December 2023, the four weeks leading up to and two weeks following the Tweede Kamer[64] election on November 22nd the same year.

### 5.2.2. Findings

The analysis revealed that frames in Dutch newspaper coverage of migration during the 2023 election period were often not used in isolation. While securitisation and cultural identity frames dominated the discourse—particularly in *De Telegraaf*—they were frequently intertwined with economic and humanitarian narratives. In *NRC*, humanitarian and economic frames appeared more prominently, though not without tension. Few articles in either newspaper relied on a single frame; most blended securitisation with economic concerns or juxtaposed humanitarian appeals with institutional critiques.

[64] House of representatives

In *De Telegraaf,* migration narratives focused on threats and cultural decline, positioning native citizens as both victims and defenders of national integrity. By contrast, *NRC* focused on critiquing migration policies and acknowledging the political exploitation of anti-immigration sentiment. Additionally, both newspapers exhibited strong narrative coherence aligned with their ideological profiles—populist alarmism in *De Telegraaf,* institutional critique and humanitarian concern in *NRC.* Ultimately, Dutch migration coverage during the election reflected a polarised political landscape as well as a highly mediated contest over who defines the moral and political boundaries around the migration debate.

### 5.2.3. Framing Migration in the Dutch Election Debate

Migration coverage in the two newspapers was dominated by four major frames: securitisation, humanitarianism, cultural identity, and economy. Their usage and tone varied significantly across outlets.

**Table 4: Frames Presence**

| Frame | Overall | NRC | Telegraaf |
|---|---|---|---|
| Securitisation | 63% | 40% | 86% |
| Cultural identity | 51% | 60% | 42% |
| Economic | 54% | 54% | 54% |
| Humanitarian | 55% | 68% | 42% |
| Other | 23% | 28% | 18% |

**The table shows the share of Dutch articles from each newspaper (out of 50) in which each main frame appears.*

In *De Telegraaf*, the securitisation frame was most dominant. Migrants—particularly asylum seekers from so-called "safe countries"—were often portrayed as a security threat or a source of nuisance. Common keywords include "overlast" (nuisance), "veiligelanders" (people coming from safe countries), and "criminaliteit" (criminality). Articles emphasised theft, violence, and pressure on law enforcement, frequently linking asylum centres to unsafe conditions. For

example, in one article[65], native citizens are described as having to 'take matters into their own hands' to stop migrants suspected of criminal behavior, reinforcing the idea of migrant-driven insecurity.

Cultural identity framing also played a significant role. Migrants were described as unwilling to integrate or respect Dutch standards and values. This was sometimes combined with an anti-elite sentiment, portraying progressive politics as naive or complicit in societal decline.

The humanitarian frame appeared occasionally in *De Telegraaf*, though often critically. When migrants were depicted as sleeping outside or suffering from inadequate shelter, the framing quickly shifted to blame the asylum system or the government for mismanagement, rather than emphasising the migrants' vulnerability[66].

In contrast, *NRC* displayed a more diverse use of frames, often combining humanitarian and economic perspectives. The humanitarian frame appeared more regularly in *NRC* than in *De Telegraaf,* especially in coverage related to asylum seekers and refugees. It focused on individual vulnerability, migrants' rights, and the consequences of systemic shortcomings. For example, one article[67] describes how asylum seekers needed to sleep outside due to a lack of shelter, with emphasis placed on the human consequences of a failing asylum system. This framing foregrounds vulnerability and urges political accountability, rather than demonising migrants themselves. However, even in *NRC*, the humanitarian frame was not always foregrounded. In several articles, especially those discussing policy or institutional responses, human suffering was mentioned only briefly or sidelined altogether. This suggests that while *NRC*, which is regarded as a high quality outlet, offered more empathetic portrayals than its populist counterpart, it still failed to consistently center the humanitarian dimension—raising questions about how

[65] "Politie grijpt in bij burgerarresten Ter Apel: derde incident waarbij mogelijk sprake is van mishandeling" (10/11/2023,Telegraaf)

[66] "Rem op arbeidsmigranten? Politiek wil minder, bedrijfsleven meer" (4/11/2023,Telegraaf)

[67] "Arbeidsmigranten huisvesten stuit bijna overal in Nederland op weerstand. Omwonenden willen geen 'Polenhotel' in de buurt" (4/12/23, NRC)

prominently migrant voices and lived experiences are represented, even in more progressive media.

Cultural identity framing was also present in *NRC*, but predominantly in a critical or reflective manner. Articles often highlighted how cultural anxieties were exploited for political gain, particularly by right-wing actors. Rather than reinforcing these concerns, *NRC* typically challenged the assumptions behind them. One column[68], for instance, critiqued the polarising strategies of Geert Wilders not by dismissing cultural concerns outright, but by arguing that what the Netherlands needs is a shared, inclusive culture that connects rather than divides. The piece emphasised the risks of weaponising identity in political discourse and called for a vision of Dutchness that fosters cohesion and solidarity instead of fear and exclusion.

The economic frame appeared in both newspapers but with differing emphasis. *De Telegraaf* often presented migrants as burdens on public resources—linked to housing shortages or strained welfare systems. Phrases like "gratis hotelkamers" (free hotel rooms) and "belastingbetaler draait op voor kosten" (taxpayer is responsible for costs) illustrate this. *NRC*, by contrast, often highlighted labour migration as a pragmatic or necessary response to demographic challenges. Articles discussed worker shortages and the potential role of migrants in addressing them.

Overall, *De Telegraaf* emphasised migration as a source of threat, cultural tension, and systemic failure. *NRC* acknowledged challenges but framed them in more complex and often more humane terms, emphasising legal obligations to certain policies, economic pragmatism, and societal debate. While both outlets referenced similar events—such as policy changes or local incidents—their framing diverged sharply in tone, emphasis, and implied solutions.

[68] "Het belang van een verbindende cultuur"(26/11/23, NRC)

### 5.2.4. Narrative Elements

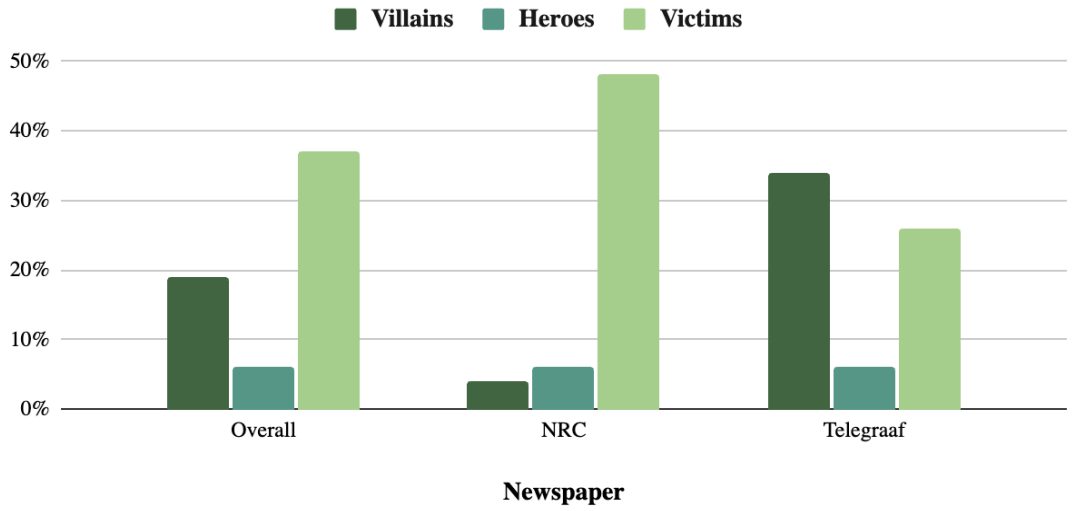
In both *De Telegraaf* and *NRC*, migration was not only framed but narrated through a structured set of roles, causes, and solutions. These narrative elements reinforced each outlet's ideological stance, creating clear contrasts in how the issue was constructed and understood.

#### 5.2.4.1. Characters

In *De Telegraaf*, asylum seekers, particularly those from so-called "safe countries", were frequently cast as villains. They were often linked to theft, sexual intimidation, and aggressive behavior in and around asylum centers[69]. Even when humanitarian concerns appear—such as references to unsafe sleeping conditions—these are often overridden by allegations of nuisance or criminality, reinforcing suspicion. In a particularly striking example regarding the coverage of Israel's bombing of a Palestinian refugee camp, the narrative shifts focus away from the civilian toll and instead highlights how Palestinian refugees receive more financial aid than any other group of refugees, and how some of these charity-funded schools allegedly promote radicalism and antisemitism[70]. In this sense these initial victims become villainised.

[69] "Een AZC in je achtertuin: 'Er is terecht kritiek, burgers voelen zich buitenspel gezet" (5/12/2023, Telegraaf)
[70] "Vluchtelingenkampen in de Gazastrook werden sloppenwijken voor armste Palestijnen" (2/11/2023, Telegraaf)

**Figure 3: Characterisation of Migrants in The Netherlands**




******The figure above shows the percentage of articles in which* ***Migrants (Migration/Migrants, Refugees, or Asylum seekers)*** *appear as Villains, Heroes, or Victims. Percentages are out of 100 total The Netherland-coded articles ("Overall") and out of 50 per newspaper.*

The native Dutch population often features as the main victim group, portrayed as suffering from fear, loss of safety, and political neglect. Headlines emphasise "overlast" (nuisance), "geen inspraak" (no say), and "toenemende criminaliteit" (increasing criminality), portraying citizens as helpless in the face of elite decisions. At times, the native population is cast as heroic, actively resisting unwanted migration-related developments or stepping in where authorities are perceived to fall short[71]. These portrayals often overlap with the depiction of voters as rational and courageous actors—individuals who defend local values and demand stricter migration policies through both civic action and their electoral choices. This framing reinforces the idea of the Dutch citizen not only as a victim, but also as a key agent of democratic correction.

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[71] "Een AZC in je achtertuin: 'Er is terecht kritiek, burgers voelen zich buitenspel gezet'" (5/12/2023, Telegraaf)

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Political parties and individual politicians are also essential narrative agents in *De Telegraaf*. The PVV and BBB are frequently depicted as aligned with ordinary people, offering 'realistic' responses to migration problems. One article[73] explicitly connects the PVV's rise to backlash against "woke" politics, presenting Wilders as a credible force. By contrast, leftist and green parties (GroenLinks-PvdA, D66) are portrayed as naive, detached, or elitist, especially in articles[74] critiquing their support for lenient asylum policies. The VVD is framed ambiguously—sometimes complicit due to its governance record, other times redeemable through promises of stricter policy.

In *NRC*, refugees and asylum seekers are more frequently cast as victims, especially in cases involving poor conditions, delayed procedures, or social exclusion. Labour migrants are shown as vulnerable to exploitation, particularly in temporary housing and employment contexts. However, *NRC* also problematises the media's tendency to portray migrants solely as victims, suggesting the need for more nuanced representation.

Political parties in *NRC* are depicted with more analytical distance. Populist figures like Wilders are seen as opportunistic or polarising, while progressive parties receive mixed treatment—sometimes criticised for passivity, other times portrayed as morally motivated but politically ineffective.

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[72] "Een AZC in je achtertuin: 'Er is terecht kritiek, burgers voelen zich buitenspel gezet'" (5/12/2023, Telegraaf)

[73] "Woke zaaien, Wilders oogsten: veel mensen stemden rechtser dan ze zouden willen" (1/12/2023,Telegraaf)

[74] "Nieuwe handreiking Wilders: 'Islam geen prioriteit'" (15/11/2023,Telegraaf)

#### 5.2.4.2. Causal Mechanisms

*Causal responsibility* is framed very differently across outlets. *De Telegraaf* frequently employs intentional causal narratives, blaming political actors directly for the situation. Asylum policy is framed as too lax, enforcement too soft, and EU rules as binding the hands of national leaders. Migrants are occasionally blamed too, for misusing legal loopholes or showing 'ungratefulness' to their reception in The Netherlands. Mechanical causal explanations also appear occasionally in *De Telegraaf* reporting. These typically highlight a mismatch between policy ambition and enforcement capacity—for example, asylum centers being placed in locations without adequate safety infrastructure, or local authorities being ill-equipped to respond to rising incidents. Inadvertent causes are rarer and often reframed: instead of attributing problems to neutral failures, the newspaper tends to assign responsibility to political actors who failed to anticipate consequences, suggesting a blurry line between accident and negligence.

**Table 5: Causal Mechanisms**

| Causal Mechanism | Overall | NRC | Telegraaf |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mechanical Cause: Bureaucracy, system, rule/law | 50% | 56% | 44% |
| Intentional Cause: Strategic or political decision | 74% | 76% | 72% |
| Accidental Cause | 3% | 4% | 2% |
| Inadvertent Cause | 42% | 42% | 42% |

***This table shows the percentage breakdown of causal mechanisms identified in the Netherlands-coded articles.*

In *NRC*, causal narratives are often explained through mechanical dysfunction or inadvertent consequences. Structural problems—like administrative delays, insufficient capacity in services and housing, or inadequate coordination between national and local authorities—are said to be the source of social tensions. One opinion piece[75] explains that bureaucratic bottlenecks in the asylum procedure lead to lengthy waiting periods and suspended integration, which contribute to popular

[75] "Lesgeven is democratie doorgeven"(4/12/2023, NRC)

anger and political backlash. Several reports also describe housing shortages and the strain on municipalities not as deliberate political choices, but as unintended outcomes of broader governance failures and demographic shifts. These narratives emphasise that even when harm occurs, it is often the result of systemic inertia rather than strategic design.

However, *NRC* does also attribute intentional causes to right-wing and populist parties, especially in how they consciously exploit public fears to drive polarisation. Rather than framing migration solely as a policy challenge, several articles highlight how political actors deliberately shape emotional responses to migration. One opinion piece[76], for example, describes how Geert Wilders effectively uses "ordinary people's language" to activate fear and resentment among voters—intentionally framing migrants as a threat in order to mobilise support. This type of intentional causation contrasts with more structural or inadvertent narratives and emphasises the role of political agency in shaping public discourse.

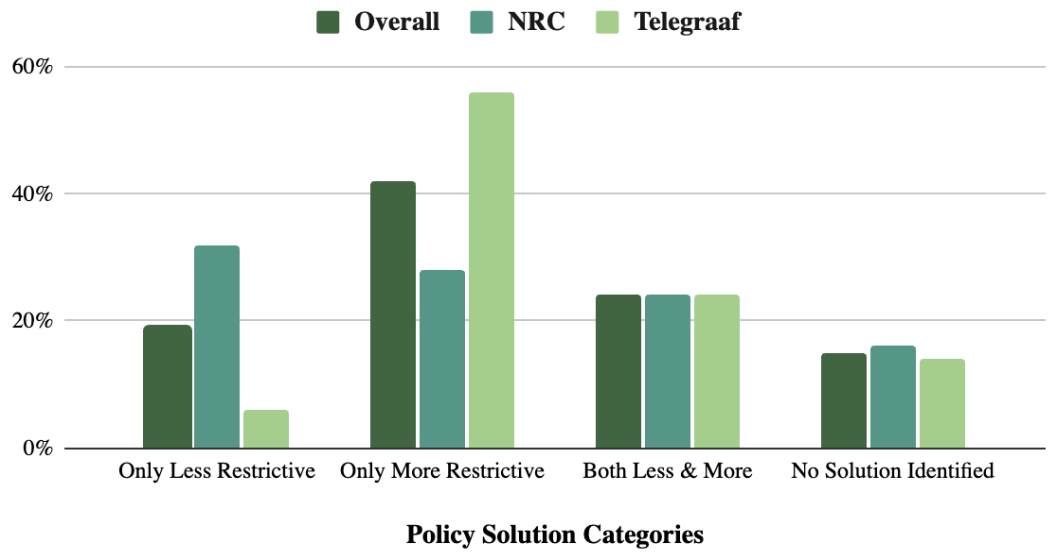
Accidental causes are virtually absent in both newspapers. Migration-related challenges are consistently portrayed as the product of identifiable actors, structural decisions, or policy choices, rather than as mere chance. This reinforces the framing of migration as a politically complex issue—one that has been mishandled rather than simply occurring.

#### 5.2.4.3. Moral-Policy Solutions

*De Telegraaf* consistently promotes more restrictive migration solutions. Policy recommendations include closing borders, fast-tracking deportations, and introducing an "asylum cap". In one article, readers are presented with a literal step-by-step plan for Wilders to halt asylum admissions, showing direct media endorsement of such measures[77]. More symbolic moral conclusions also appear—such as the idea that "the people" must reclaim sovereignty from failing elites.

[76] "Wilders spreekt gewone mensentaal"(1/12/2023, NRC)
[77] "Dit kan Nederland wél doen om migratie te beteugelen: 'Het is tijd voor tegengas'' (25/11/2023, Telegraaf)

**Figure 4: Migration Policies Advocated in The Netherlands**




**The figure above shows the percentage breakdown of the **Moral policy solution** identified within the Netherlands-coded articles divided into the two newspapers as well as showing an overall percentage breakdown.*

*NRC*, on the other hand, explores a wider range of policy responses. While it does report on more restrictive solutions like border enforcement and deportation, these are often problematised or critically examined. Alternatives such as equitable distribution across municipalities, better housing for status holders, and more robust labour protections are discussed. In several articles, there is also attention to faster and fairer asylum procedures, investment in integration policies, and efforts to depoliticise migration by involving civil society and local governments. The newspaper also features voices advocating for more EU solidarity, shared responsibility, and stronger legal safeguards for vulnerable groups. So, even when restrictive policies are discussed, they are situated within broader concerns about human rights and the rule of law. In moral terms, *NRC* leans toward a less-restrictive migration policy and promotes inclusion, fairness, and pragmatism.

### 5.2.5. Comparing Ideological Narratives Across Newspapers

De Telegraaf and *NRC*'s framing and narrative differences are reflective of their ideological beliefs. Right-populist newspaper *De Telegraaf* consistently framed immigration as a threat—social, cultural, and economic. Its reporting is characterised by securitisation and cultural identity frames where migrants—and especially asylum seekers coming from "safe countries"—are villainised as the perpetrators of crime and public unrest and accused of causing societal decline. In this narrative framework, Dutch citizens are both the victims and heroes: they suffer the consequences of elite decisions, yet also stand up against those decisions at the ballot box or through civil resistance.

*NRC*, in contrast, approaches migration with their centrist-liberal lens. It employs more humanitarian and economic frames, depicting migrants as victims of structural dysfunction or policy neglect. Articles are more nuanced, often combining critical examinations of migration policy with a sense of sympathy for the people involved. Labour migrants, for example, are depicted as being valuable to the economy but vulnerable to exploitation. While *NRC* is not afraid to speak out against problems involving immigration, it also refrains from simplistic explanations or scapegoating narratives.

Correlations between frames and narrative roles are strong within each outlet. In *De Telegraaf,* securitisation and cultural identity frames almost always correlate with migrants being portrayed as villains and with the promotion of more restrictive migration policies. Articles often emphasise migrant misconduct or misuse of asylum systems, which is followed by calls for stronger borders or caps on asylum applications. In contrast, *NRC*'s humanitarian frames consistently cast migrants as victims and are accompanied by discussions of less-restrictive policies such as fairer distribution, faster processing, and stronger integration.

### 5.2.6. Ideological Coherence

The ideological coherence in each outlet is also notable. De Telegraaf builds its narrative on a tight structure of threat perception, political betrayal, and populist heroism. NRC's coherence is instead found in its analytic tone: articles routinely problematise populist rhetoric, dissect policy outcomes, and foreground institutional responsibility.

While both newspapers report on the same election and the same country, they tell very different stories. Their framings, moral conclusions, and policy recommendations mirror their broader ideological identities, reinforcing the idea that media coverage is not just a reflection of politics—but an active participant in it.

### 5.2.7. Narrative Arc Over Time

Across the selected time frame—spanning four weeks before and two weeks after the election—no dramatic narrative shift occurred in either newspaper, but subtle changes in tone and emphasis are visible.

In *De Telegraaf,* the weeks leading up to the election show a build-up in urgency and alarmism. Coverage grows sharper in tone, with more frequent references to "unrest", "dangerous situations", and "unacceptable conditions" in and around asylum centers. The sense of crisis peaks just before election day, and post-election articles express a tone of vindication, portraying the PVV's rise as a logical reaction to public dissatisfaction.

NRC, by contrast, maintains a relatively consistent tone throughout the period, though the focus slightly shifts. Before the election, articles emphasise systemic issues—such as housing shortages and reception failures—while afterwards, the discussion moves toward political interpretation. There is more attention to coalition-building and the implications of the far-right's electoral gains, including reflections on how progressive parties can better respond to public concerns without compromising humanitarian principles. Even in these reflective pieces, however, the newspaper

avoids reactionary framing, instead emphasising long-term structural challenges and ethical governance.

Overall, while *De Telegraaf* intensifies its oppositional tone as elections approach, *NRC* uses the post-election moment to assess broader democratic implications. This contrast illustrates not only different narratives, but different temporal rhythms in how political developments are covered.

### 5.2.8. Conclusion

This case study shows that Dutch media coverage of migration during the 2023 national elections was deeply shaped by the ideological orientations of the newspapers. *De Telegraaf* used securitisation and cultural identity frames to depict migrants as threats and justify restrictive policies. Its narratives centered on native citizens as both victims and defenders of national integrity. *NRC*, in contrast, employed humanitarian and economic frames, portraying migrants as structurally disadvantaged and advocating for more inclusive, rights-based responses.

These findings echo the literature on media framing and the Narrative Policy Framework. As Entman (1993) and Shanahan et al. (2011) suggest, the media do not merely report facts—they assign blame, define problems, and suggest solutions. The Dutch case supports this: *De Telegraaf* and *NRC* did not just cover migration—they shaped how it was understood.

Notably, the study also shows that narratives were stable across the election period. While the tone sharpened in *De Telegraaf* and became more reflective in *NRC*, the core narrative patterns held. This suggests that media framing is not just reactive to political events, but rooted in deeper editorial and ideological commitments—making its influence on public opinion and democratic debate all the more significant.

## *5.3. Case Study: Spain*

### 5.3.1. Context

The most recent general election in Spain took place on 23rd July 2023. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez called it in short notice after his party's poor showing in May's local elections. The main parties in the elections were Sanchez's PSOE (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party), the new left-wing Sumar, the right-leaning People's Party (PP) and the surging far-right Vox.

During the campaign, Vox adopted hardline anti-immigrant rhetoric, framing irregular migration as an "invasion" threatening Spain's security and cultural cohesion. The party's discourse cast migrants (especially those of Muslim origin) as a danger, putting forth controversial proposals like militarising border control and a naval blockade in the Mediterranean (Martín 2023).

The PP took a more moderate tone on immigration than Vox, but still tacked rightward under pressure from Vox's rise. PP's leader Feijóo spoke of "orderly" migration and respect for the law, echoing some of Vox's themes on controlling borders and expelling undocumented migrants. Sánchez's PSOE, on the other hand, did not emphasise immigration in their messaging, focusing more on economic achievements and warning of the far right. Sumar's Yolanda Díaz was more vocal on migrant rights (Martín 2023).

In the broader European context, in July 2023 the EU was finalising a new Pact on Migration and Asylum, which aimed to distribute asylum seekers more evenly within member states and tighten externalised border enforcement (Barigazzi and Wheaton 2023). The Spanish government, firmly pro-EU, championed this new pact. Spain was also set to hold the rotating EU Council presidency from July to December 2023, meaning the new Spanish government would have significant influence on finalising the new pact.

At the time, Spain had largely avoided the intense anti-migrant backlashes seen elsewhere in Europe (Ramírez 2023). Still, by 2023 an undercurrent of anxiety existed about irregular arrivals. In June 2022, the Melilla tragedy occurred, in which around 1,300 to 2000 migrants and asylum seekers attempted to cross the fortified fences into the Spanish enclave. In the resulting clash with border

forces, 37 people died and 76 disappeared (Human Rights Watch 2022). Moreover, boat arrivals to the Canary Islands remained high in early 2023, although not record high yet, and many lost their lives trying to reach Spain through this Atlantic route (El País 2023).

Given the heightened anxieties around migration which these events contributed to, aided by Vox, the Spanish elections could be regarded as a referendum on whether Spain would follow the path of some neighbors in giving power to a hard-right, anti-immigrant force. The result, a stalemate resolved in favor of a centre-left coalition, meant that, at least for now, Spain has maintained a centrist course on migration rhetoric and policy.

Given the general election took place on the 23rd July, and this study analyses articles published between 4 weeks before the election and 2 weeks after, the sample for the Spanish case took into account articles published from the 25th of June until the 6th of August.

### 5.3.2. Findings

The four main frames which were identified in a preliminary reading of the articles across the three countries - the humanitarian frame, the securitisation frame, the economic frame, and the cultural identity frame - were often layered within the same article in the sample. This produced hybrid and sometimes contradictory narratives in which, for example, migrants could be cast as both victims (of human traffickers, human rights abuses or social exclusion) and threats to law and order and social cohesion. The most common frame combinations were cultural identity and securitisation (15 percent of sample) and humanitarian frame and securitisation (14 percent of sample).

**Table 6: Frame Presence**

| Frame | Overall | El Mundo | El País |
|---|---|---|---|
| Securitisation | 70% | 64% | 76% |
| Cultural identity | 43% | 48% | 43% |
| Economic | 38% | 38% | 38% |
| Humanitarian | 40% | 34% | 46% |
| Other (Institutional frame) | 19% | 14% | 24% |

**The table shows the share of Spanish articles from each newspaper (out of 50) in which each main frame appears.*

The securitisation frame was the most prevalent, appearing (while not necessarily dominating) in 70 percent of articles overall. Its presence was slightly more marked in *El País* (76 percent) compared to *El Mundo* (64 percent), suggesting a strong securitisation discourse across the political spectrum. The cultural identity frame was present in 43 percent of articles overall, but slightly more frequent in *El Mundo* (48 percent), and particularly its opinion pieces, than in *El País* (43 percent). The humanitarian frame, while still prominent, appeared in 40 percent of the sample. It was more frequently used by *El País* (46 percent) than by *El Mundo* (34 percent), aligning with its centre-left editorial stance. The economic frame was observed in 38 percent of the articles, with identical representation across both newspapers, suggesting it was a consistently secondary framing device.

Finally, an emergent governance or institutional frame was present in 19 percent of the articles overall. *El País* showed a stronger tendency to governance-oriented framings (24 percent) compared to *El Mundo* (14 percent), indicating greater engagement with institutional and policy critique perspectives.

### 5.3.3. Hybrid frames: Securitised Humanitarianism and Identitarian Economics

The humanitarian frame portrayed migrants as a suffering group deserving protection, emphasising their vulnerability and the moral obligations of states and society. This frame frequently appeared in stories recounting Mediterranean shipwrecks, deaths at borders, and the failures of asylum systems. For example, one piece by *El País* reported:

> The shipwreck in the Mediterranean has left at least 70 dead, including women and children who were fleeing war and poverty.[78]

This language emphasises migrants' trauma, and links it to societal issues which are outwith their control, such as war and poverty. Articles within this group framed migration as a humanitarian crisis caused by institutional and structural injustices, particular laws or policies, or even deliberate inaction by coastal guards or governments. However, many articles using this frame did not rely on first person narratives to humanise migrants and contextualise their losses, and often offered a

[78] "La tragedia de Lilia, la bebé argelina que el mar arrojó a una playa" (19/07/23, El Mundo)

depersonalised portrayal of migrants as a mass of passive victims in need of rescue. In fact, humanitarian frames were often combined with securitisation frames, particularly in articles about irregular border crossings, boat arrivals and migrant deaths at sea. Some articles criticised control or surveillance but still portrayed migration in the context of detentions, "mass" irregular arrivals and deportations, or conveyed conflicting messages. For example, an article by *El País* read:

> Irregular inflows, fueled by the pandemic, droughts, crises, and wars in several African countries, have reached record levels and have put the system to the test.[79]

While providing a humanitarian contextualisation of the reasons behind "irregular entries" (draughts, crises and wars), this article nevertheless focuses on border crossings and highlights they are reaching new peaks and overwhelming the system, which is characteristic of a securitisation frame.

The articles with a securitisation frame, which was the most prominent by far, positioned migration as a matter of national or European security, often linked to social disorder, crime or political destabilisation. It featured strongly in articles referencing Vox's rhetoric or far-right movements, where migrants were constructed as threats to national identity or social cohesion. These stances were often criticised by the authors of the articles, who frequently classified these comments as populist or as stirring hate to gain voter support, across both newspapers. Nevertheless, the coverage of these stances was very salient overall, with 18 percent of articles mentioning Vox. Even when framed critically, the repeated mention of these positions contributed to their dissemination. For example, an article by *El País*, covering and criticising the rise of the far-right in Poland, read:

> During the 2015 campaign, when Europe was mired in a refugee crisis, mainly from the Syrian war, Kaczynski championed his rejection of the EU's proposed quotas and claimed that migrants bring "all kinds of parasites" and "diseases long since eradicated in Europe.[80]

[79] "De la regularizaciones de Sumar a las medidas imposibles de Vox" (12/07/23, El País)
[80] El Gobierno polaco planea convocar un referéndum antiinmigración (29/06/23, El País)

Frequently reproducing this kind of deeply xenophobic messaging may contribute to its normalisation, bringing them into the repertoire of available political opinions one may hold about migrants.
The securitisation frame, on the other hand, was particularly prevalent in *El Mundo*'s opinion pieces, some of which were particularly polarising, with one of them reading:

> ...in Badalona, in France, or in Germany, where the media covered up systematic rape on New Year's Eve to avoid "Islamophobia." But it's this multiculturalism that has failed throughout Europe. Not the State, but its disappearance in that neo-feudalism called multiculturalism, which is criminal and barbaric.[81]

This opinion piece discussed the protests in Paris that resulted from the muder of a young boy of migrant origin by the police. Linking migrants to sexual violence and criminality (rape and "hampa y barbarie") in this article, casts them as highly dangerous security threats even in the context of their victimisation at the hands of the police. Moreover, as illustrated by this example, the securitisation frame was frequently combined with the cultural identity frame, linking threats to law and order with lack of integration on the part of migrants, rejection of "European values", or more specifically, with migrants from Muslim-majority countries. For example, an interview with Manuel Valls, published in *El Mundo,* explicitly attributed the riots to the fact that protester migrants had not integrated into French society, and referred to citizens of migrant origin in contrast to "nuestros compatriotas", that is, the "true" French citizens:

> They are doing everything they can to minimise or deny the idea that the riots are linked to the lack of integration of French people of immigrant origin or foreigners from Africa and the Maghreb. They will not convince our compatriots.[82]

[81] La desinformación mediática sobre Francia (07/07/23, El Mundo)
[82] Por fin decir la verdad (10/07/23, El Mundo)

The economic frame, on the other hand, was also present, although frequently in a secondary way. It tended to highlight the demographic and labor-market dimensions of migration, portraying it as a potential solution to Spain's aging workforce, labor shortages, and declining birth rates. Overall, it was more frequent that migrants would be framed as economic contributors, rather than burdens. However, this utilitarian framing hides a punitive logic by which "less useful" migrants may be justifiably discarded or kept from entering Spain. Moreover, under this frame, migrants are reduced to tools or assets to prop up the economic system and rejuvenate an aging population. For example, an article in *El País* read:

> To halt and reverse this demographic decline and, therefore, avoid the potential impact on the productive structure, immigration and birth rates are key," they note from Funcas.[83]

The economic frame was also sometimes combined with the securitisation frame, with allusions to economic aid provided by the EU to third countries in exchange of externalised border enforcement, or discussions of how "massive arrivals" of migrants may overwhelm the social and economic system, as is the case in this excerpt from the article "The rental market faces the migration challenge", in *El País*:

> Spain's inaccessible rental market faces a major challenge: the arrival of hundreds of thousands of immigrants in the coming years, who will avoid the demographic winter and will need a home, primarily a rental.[84]

This conveys that, on the one hand, migrants are necessary for the economy in the context of Spain's demographic decline, but on the other,"the arrival of hundreds of thousands of migrants in the coming years" will overwhelm the housing market. Speaking of massive arrivals in this way is alarmist, and would fit into a securitisation frame. This sense of insecurity is further underlined by the direct linking

[83] "La edad media de los trabajadores españoles ha crecido cuatro años este siglo" (11/07/23, El País)
[84] "El mercado del alquiler se enfrenta al reto migratorio" (09/07/23)

of migration with a threat to the housing market, which contradicts the message that migrants will help the economy, by "avoiding the demographic winter".

### 5.3.4. The Institutional or Governance Frame

One frame that emerged beyond the preliminary four was the institutional or governance frame, which casts migration primarily as a matter of institutional coordination and bureaucracy. 19 percent of articles were categorised as having a dominant institutional or governance frame. This frame emphasises the technical dysfunction of policies, the fragmentation of EU asylum mechanisms, or the electoral instrumentalisation of migration issues. Rather than focusing on migrants as people or even as symbols, this frame regards them as "quotas" to be distributed or levers in the political race, and centers on the "effectiveness" of how migration is governed.

For example, in an article by *El Mundo*[85], the migration debate is presented not only as a humanitarian or security issue but explicitly as a political strategy problem: Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte's asylum proposals distinguish between "permanently threatened" refugees and those fleeing "temporary" conflict, with a strong focus "reducing the influx". The article emphasises how these measures risk triggering coalition collapse and early elections; migration becomes a lever in domestic political survival rather than a matter of social or ethical concern.

Similarly, in another *El Mundo* article[86], the migration debate revolves around the EU Asylum and Migration Pact, foregrounding the importance of "distribution", and "crisis response" across member states. Here, migration is framed as an issue of institutional capacity: the approval of fiscal rules, funding agreements, and collective decision-making are emphasised over potential human rights abuses or security threats.

[85] "Cae el gobierno de Países Bajos por diferencias sobre el control de asilo" (08/07/23, El Mundo)
[86] "Las prioridades de la presidencia española" (03/07/23, El Mundo)

Finally, other articles[87], particularly in *El País,* we see how governance failures to distribute asylum seekers "fairly" among states become central to critiques from human rights groups and NGOs. Migration is framed here as a depersonalised crisis of quotas and institutional design, where the real problem lies within bureaucratic inefficiency and the inability of governments to manage the logistics attached to humanitarian and legal obligations.

### 5.3.5. Narrative elements

As well as the framing analysis, the Narrative Policy Framework provides a methodological basis to analyse the narrative elements found in policy stories, including characters, causal mechanisms, and moral and policy solutions. We examine how each Spanish newspaper constructed their stories through these elements.

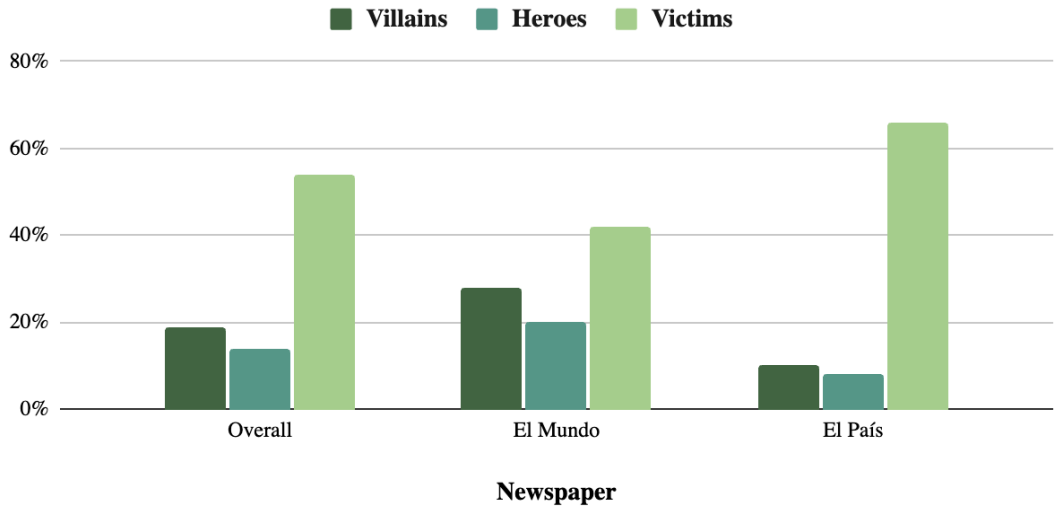
#### 5.3.5.1. Characters

**Migrant as mass victims and politicians as morally ambiguous heroes**

Across the sample, and slightly more frequently in *El País,* migrants are consistently cast in the role of the vulnerable victims; this is the case in 54 percent of the articles analysed. For instance, in an article Basir, a Sudanese migrant says, "I live in fear, afraid of being arrested and expelled."[88] His narrative, along with others across the articles, reveals migrants as victims of either faceless policies, racialised violence, or institutional neglect. Economic migrants, by contrast, are sometimes framed less as victims and more as demographic or labour market tools, as outlined above, reflecting a technocratic discourse.

[87] "Aumenta la llegada de migrantes a Canarias en las últimas semanas" (03/07/23, El País)
[88] "¿Qué precio tiene la diputada 172? Aeropuertos, migración, precios…" (02/08/23, El Mundo)

**Figure 5: Characterisation of Migrants in Spain**




**The figure above shows the percentage of articles in which **Migrants (Migration/Migrants, Refugees, or Asylum seeker)** appear as Villains, Heroes, or Victims. Percentages are out of 100 total Spain-coded articles ("Overall") and out of 50 per newspaper.*

While occasionally, particularly in some *El Mundo* articles (20 percent), migrants, and particularly refugees and asylum seekers, were presented as resilient heroes who faced a very harsh context with strength and perseverance, it was far more frequent for politicians to be cast as heroes (43 percent). Overall, the heroic role of politicians generated a deep contrast between proactive political or institutional actors and vulnerable, suffering migrants. For instance, far-right politicians frequently appear as either protective guardians or opportunistic threat amplifiers, which nevertheless are portrayed as firm and decisive. In an article[89] Vox leader Santiago Abascal is cast as a sentinel defending Almería against insecurity supposedly caused by "open borders" and "mass immigration" positioning both himself and his party as the defenders of the Spanish native population. Meanwhile, moderate or progressive politicians (especially in *El País*) tend to be portrayed as responsible stewards, seeking pragmatic, sometimes imperfect solutions to complex challenges, as an article in which PSOE's Escrivá is described as planning refugee accommodation to "strengthen a reception system… always under tension."[90]

[89] "Abascal se ve decisivo pero marca perfil para remontar" (07/07/23, El Mundo)
[90] "La derecha frena tres centros de acogida para refugiados" (04/08/23, El País)

Another recurrent pattern emerged in the treatment of sub-Saharan migrants in Tunisia, which several articles discussed across both newspapers. On the one hand, EU actors are portrayed as pragmatically negotiating with Tunisia to reduce irregular crossings in order to combat human traffickers, who are cast as the primary villains. On the other hand, the Tunisian government itself is reported as deploying explicitly racist and xenophobic rhetoric and committing human rights abuses. This dual characterisation (migrants as simultaneously "saved" from human traffickers by the EU, while the EU funds the very regimes violating their rights) reveals a deep moral ambiguity in the narrative of Europe's externalisation of border control.

Human traffickers, on the other hand, are cast uniformly as the main villains across the sample, profiting from migrant desperation and operating in ruthless, shadowy networks. In an article by *El Mundo*[91], they are described in clear moralistic terms, exposing their deceit and exploitation which led to the tragic death of a baby girl, Lilia, whose body appeared on Tarragona beach. This clear moral, sensationalist framing is rarely nuanced or contested across the two newspapers, suggesting a shared journalistic consensus on traffickers' culpability. Casting human traffickers as unambiguous villains allows for the justification of heightening border control, which was often portrayed as an imperfect but effective way to crack down on human trafficking.

NGOs and rescue services, by contrast, emerge as ethical voices, calling out injustice and humanising migrants. In an article in *El Mundo*, Cruz Roja staff are portrayed actively rescuing and assisting migrants: "We have assisted about 60 people, all men… five have been transferred to health centers,"[92] while organisations like Caminando Fronteras provide real-time updates about the dead and missing.

Differences across migrant groups is especially pronounced when comparing asylum seekers, refugees, and undocumented migrants. Asylum seekers and refugees are more often framed through the lens of international law, rights, and humanitarian obligation. In an article in *El País*, NGOs and ACNUR warn that deporting asylum seekers to Rwanda poses a "real risk of persecution or inhuman

[91] "La tragedia de Lilia, la bebé argelina que el mar arrojó a una playa" (19/07/23, El Mundo)
[92] "Aumenta la llegada de migrantes a Canarias en las últimas semanas" (03/07/23, El Mundo)

treatment"[93]. Undocumented migrants, on the other hand, tend to be portrayed as victims of restrictive border regimes and criminal trafficking networks when discussed in an international context. For instance, one article describes how irregular migrants in Libya are "expelled to inhospitable desert border zones… with temperatures above 40°C," where they are exposed to "physical assaults, harassment, and theft."[94] Several others report tragic losses of life at sea. However, in the domestic context, undocumented migrants are occasionally criminalised or framed as a social burden. Articles covering the Vox, for instance, document its framing of undocumented migrants as part of an "anti-European mob" that leads to crime and the deterioration of public services.

On the other hand, a notable tension emerged in how integration and social cohesion are narrated. Both *El País* and *El Mundo* cover how Berlin authorities respond to public violence by tightening identification and policing, indirectly implying a link to migration. Yet, both newspapers cautiously avoid directly blaming migrants, instead signaling a latent association attributed to political rhetoric, which in fact these articles may inadvertently contribute to by reinforcing this association. Conversely, in an opinion piece in *El País*[95], third- and fourth-generation immigrant youth in France are portrayed as villains, in the sense that they are threats to law and order, but their anger is framed as a response to structural abandonment, not cultural or personal failure. In fact, across the articles analysed integration failures were often framed either as political and institutional collapse (the system as villain), which was a more frequent frame in *El País*, or as cultural defiance (the migrant, or "multiculturalism", as villain), which was more frequent in *El Mundo*. Both framings, however, link anger, violence or criminality to migrants' lack of integration.

#### 5.3.5.2. Causal Mechanisms

**Bureaucracy and the Deliberate Disavowal of responsibility**

Across the sample, the issues affecting migrants were consistently attributed not to migrants themselves but to political strategy, structural and institutional racism, and international dynamics.

[93] "Londres pagará 200.000 euros por cada deportación a Ruanda" (30/06/23, El País)
[94] "Un señor de la guerra de Libia, tras la tragedia de náufragos en el mar Jónico" (21/07/23, El País)
[95] "Desprecio social y revueltas rabiosas" (09/07/23, El País)

Migrants were predominantly positioned as subjects who experience the consequences of actions taken by others, rather than as agents causing or resolving the issues discussed.

In the European context, migration governance is repeatedly presented as the product of deliberate strategic and political choices. El País portrays the EU-Tunisia deal not merely as a policy response but as a calculated geopolitical move aimed at externalising border control: "The EU offered the country [...] aid to stem the flood of *pateras*."[96] However, often the consequences for migrants themselves (the racialised violence, hot expulsions, and human rights abuses reported on the ground) are framed as unintended or collateral damage of the EU policies, even though they are foreseeable outcomes of these externalisation agreements. Similarly, the Spanish bilateral agreement with Morocco[97] or Spain's economic reliance on migration to address labor shortages are framed as rational policy responses, which nevertheless sometimes lead to human rights violations or increased social tensions. This duality of purposeful policy action paired with disavowed responsibility constitutes a notable tension running through much of the reporting.

Similarly, several articles highlight systemic or bureaucratic failures that result in harm without clear intent, particularly in discussions of Spanish national migration policy. For example, the failures in coordination between Spain and Morocco over rescue operations are not framed as malicious but as instances of administrative dysfunction that led to tragedy[98]. By contrast, NGOs, rescue services, and humanitarian actors are often depicted as the principal agents of resolution, intervening to mitigate the damage caused by others, but often unable to solve the issue, constrained by the larger political and institutional failures that surround them.

[96] "La UE y Túnez firman un principio de acuerdo para frenar la migración irregular" (17/07/23, El País)
[97] "Marruecos, el siguiente beneficiario" (22/07/23, El País)
[98] "Cara y cruz de la valla: "si no me dan asilo, volveré a intentarlo" (24/06/23, El País)

**Table 7: Causal Mechanism**

| Causal Mechanism | Overall | El Mundo | El País |
|---|---|---|---|
| Mechanical Cause: Bureaucracy, system, rule/law | 62% | 54% | 68% |
| Intentional Cause: Strategic or political decision | 88% | 84% | 92% |
| Inadvertent Cause | 43% | 54% | 30% |

**This table shows the percentage breakdown of causal mechanisms identified in the Netherlands-coded articles. The Accidental Cause was not found present.*

**The missing agency of migrants**

One of the most consistent patterns across both newspapers is the portrayal of migrants as predominantly passive figures. Migrants are often described as victims of policy, exploitation, deceit from human traffickers, violence, or indifference; they are rarely depicted as strategic actors shaping their own destinies or exerting meaningful influence on migration or political dynamics. Even when cast as threats, they tend to be portrayed as masses out of control, rather than deliberate or strategic individuals with malicious intent, or political actors with a will of their own.

There are rare exceptions to this pattern. Individual success stories, such as that of basketball player Sediq Garuba in El Mundo, present migrants as determined and ambitious: "At 19, he has already achieved victories that have increased comparisons with the Junior Gold Medalists."[99] However, these narratives are exceptional and individualised, standing apart from the usual depictions of migrant groups and masses, as opposed to individuals.

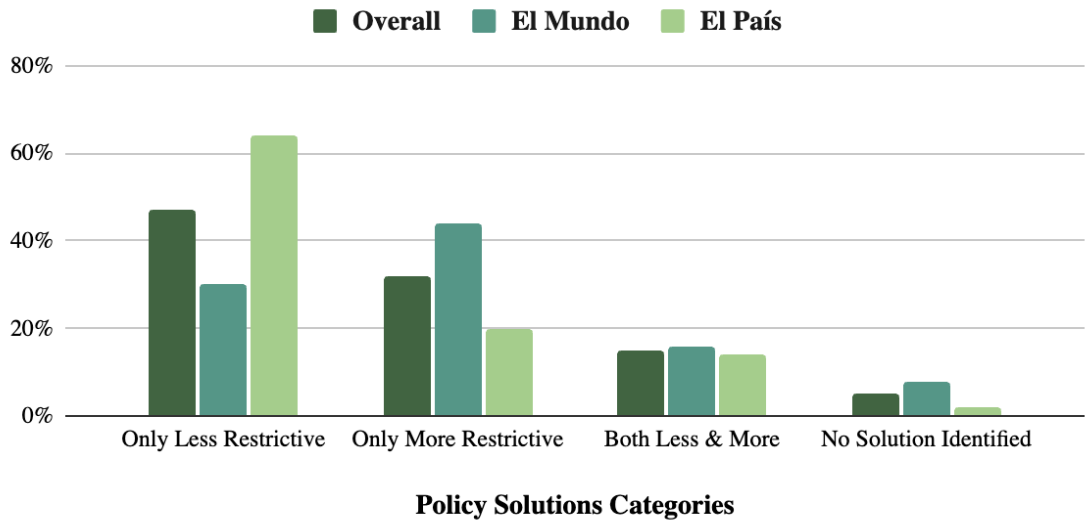
This consistent framing raises important questions about how media representations may obscure or flatten migrant agency. While migrants are frequently positioned at the center of political narratives, their own status as political actors is denied, and their capacity for collective action, resistance or simply for having an individual will of their own, remains largely invisibilized.

[99] "No seremos Gasol y Navarro" Garuba, héroe de la sub'19." (05/07/23, El Mundo)

#### 5.3.5.3. Moral and Policy Solutions

The analysis reveals a complex and often contradictory discursive landscape surrounding migration policy in the Spanish press. "Only Less Restrictive" solutions appear in nearly half (47 percent) of all articles, yet "Only More Restrictive" solutions are also prominent (32 percent), indicating a split narrative between humanitarianism and securitisation. Notably, 64 percent of *El País* articles feature only less restrictive migration policies, compared to just 30 percent in El Mundo.

**Figure 6: Migration Policies Advocated**




**The figure above shows the percentage breakdown of the **Moral policy solution** identified within the Spain-coded articles divided into the two newspapers as well as showing an overall percentage breakdown.*

*El Mundo* leans heavily on humanitarian response as a policy solution (11 articles), but also gives substantial space to support for stronger border control (9 articles) and assimilationist policies (8 articles). This indicates a dual framing, where humanitarian concern coexists with calls for control and cultural conformity. *El País*, by contrast, does not feature assimilationist proposals and instead distributes its focus among stronger border control policies (10 articles), humanitarian response (7 articles), and immigration as economic strategy (10 articles), which reflects a more fragmented approach.

Despite these differences, the qualitative data suggest an underlying convergence around securitised and economically selective migration policies. Conservative and right-wing voices, notably Vox, are frequently discussed in relation to immigration, and are described as repeatedly pushing for legal, controlled, and assimilated immigration, warning against "the mass immigration policy that leads to crime" and denouncing "the failure of multiculturalism"[100]. These hard-line policy proposals are sharply countered in parts of the sample by critiques focusing on the human cost of deterrence policies, reporting on "more than 30.000 people dead at sea"[101] and calling securitised policies and state practices such as the UK's Rwanda deportation plan "cruel and unusual"[102].

Economic policy arguments also run through the coverage, often advocating "smart immigration" to rejuvenate the labor market. The PSOE's position, for instance, is relayed as emphasising "incorporation of foreigners into the labor market"[103] and simplifying residency and work procedures, while the PP proposes a "migration model that rewards talent, abilities and languages"[104]. Both *El País* and *El Mundo* have articles supporting these policies as sensible stances on migration, often contrasting them with hardline anti-immigration discourse. These economic policies function as the pragmatic counterpart of securitisation measures, offering an economic rationale to justify restricting immigration, through the selective admission of only "highly skilled" migrants, effectively barring those framed as security risks or economic liabilities.

Regarding identity and integration, several articles report approvingly on the removal of administrative and linguistic barriers to integration and naturalisation, particularly for Ukrainian refugees[105]. These stances tend to focus on inclusion, and are challenged by assimilationist approaches, particularly in *El Mundo* opinion pieces and interviews, and whenever the far-right is covered. The assimilationist narrative frequently positions multiculturalism as a failed or dangerous project, with several *El Mundo* editorials calling for reaffirming "the European values of coexistence

[100] "Vox utiliza los disturbios de Francia para cargar contra la inmigración" (03/07/23, El Mundo)
[101] "Una política migratoria al filo de la legalidad internacional" (23/07/23, El País)
[102] "Cicloturismo y críquet para 'amenizar' la barcaza de los inmigrantes" (24/07/23, El Mundo)
[103] "Plazos máximos por ley para la lista de espera sanitaria y mas ayudas para los parados" (08/07/23, El País)
[104] "De la regularizaciones de Sumar a las medidas imposibles de Vox" (12/07/23, El País)
[105] "Ucranianos en Alemania: «Echo de menos mi casa, pero me quedaré» (01/08/23, El Mundo)

and respect"[106] or warning that "the failure of integration of a significant proportion of immigrants [...] and their descendants" could lead to radicalisation[107].

Overall the findings indicate that the articles in the sample tend to provide justification for a humanitarian response to migration, which is framed as a crisis, often alongside a securitised or restrictive approach to migration as an imperfect but rational solution to deal with said "migration crisis".

### 5.3.6. Comparing Ideological Narratives Across Newspapers

*El Mundo*'s opinion pieces veer strongly toward securitisation and cultural identity frames, especially when compared to *El País.* In these pieces, migration is frequently constructed as a political pressure point, a challenge to public order or a trigger for cultural anxieties, which is evident in editorials like "France is a bonfire"[108] or "France, between Eurabia and Robespierre"[109], where unrest linked to migrant-origin youth is interpreted as a cultural crisis threatening national identity. Even when some articles acknowledge the systemic marginalisation of migrants, they often warn against overreliance on progressive solutions, positioning surveillance and national cohesion as the preferred policies in regards to migration.

*El País* also tends to represent migration through a securitisation frame, although articles often incorporate criticism of securitised approaches, overall conveying a more ambivalent stance on migration. Economic and institutional frames are also more prominent in *El País*. For example, several articles highlight Spain's role in advancing European migration agreements, framing the issue as one of shared European responsibility. While *El País* tends to resort to a dehumanising administrative language, speaking of migration through political and technical debates on quotas or international partnerships, it also tends to contrast these frames with human rights appeals, which offer a counterpoint to these stances.

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[106] "Francia constata el fracaso de sus políticas de integración" (05/07/23, El Mundo)
[107] "El estallido de violencia en Francia expone un problema sin resolver" (03/07/23, El Mundo)
[108] "Francia es una hoguera" (06/07/23, El Mundo)
[109] "Francia, entre Eurabia y Robespierre" (05/07/23, El Mundo)

Despite their ideological differences, both treat the EU as an indispensable (if imperfect) actor in "managing" migration. The sample reveals a shared narrative: Europe must grapple with "demographic pressures" and border management through supranational policies. Both papers cast countries like Hungary and Poland as obstructive villains resisting the new EU migration and asylum pact, suggesting a broader editorial alignment in the support of the pact and broader EU-level migration policy, even if they diverge on the moral evaluation of specific stances on migration.

Additionally, while *El País* represents migrants more often as victims than *El Mundo*, migrants generally appear across both newspapers as symbolic figures (of the failure of multiculturalism, of Europe's ethical failures, or of the rise of populist rhetoric) rather than as active narrators of their own stories.

### 5.3.7. Frames and Narrative Elements

Humanitarian frames aligned with the portrayal of migrants as victims (25 percent of articles present this alignment). The villains in these stories are typically abstract, such as bureaucratic indifference, policy neglect, or the dangers of migration routes, rather than identifiable political actors. In contrast, securitisation and cultural identity frames are consistently linked to the portrayal of migrants as threats (39 percent of articles presented this combination). These frames dominate especially in coverage that amplifies far-right or populist discourses, and tend to align with justifications for stronger border control, surveillance or legal restrictions, as well as assimilationist policies.

Restrictive policy solutions appear alongside securitisation frames in 34 percent of the articles. For example, in the discussion of Vox's proposals or the Tunisian government harsh crackdown on migrants[110], the framing links border securitisation directly to the defence of national sovereignty and public safety. By contrast, economic frames tend to correlate with portrayals of migrants as contributors to demographic and labour market sustainability (27 percent of articles present this combination). Migrants in institutional or governance frames, on the other hand, appear largely as symbols or abstract figures, represented as numbers, quotas or policy categories.

[110] "El polémico 'arreglo' con Túnez" (30/06/23, El Mundo)

### 5.3.8. Narrative Arc Over Time

Before the elections, migration was largely framed as a humanitarian and moral issue, with coverage focusing on migrant deaths at sea and the failures of international coordination on rescue. Migration also appeared in discussions of electoral programs of candidates, often as one among many other electoral promises. Overall, the tone was reflective and critical, frequently underscoring the inadequacy of existing political and institutional responses.

After the elections, the narrative shifted noticeably. Migration was increasingly depicted as a domestic governance issue and in the context of foreign policy. Media accounts emphasised bilateral pacts with countries like Tunisia and Morocco, urban strain caused by immigration, and bureaucratic as well as human-rights aspects of the asylum system in different European countries. While migrants were still present in the discourse, their visibility was filtered through the lens of institutions, and framed not by their experiences but by their impact on political and social stability.

This shift may reflect a transition in political priorities: before elections, migration serves as a site of ethical debate and political contestation; after elections, it becomes an object of regulation and surveillance. As such, overall the framing moves from a more emotional framing of crisis and call-to-action, to one of order and management.

### 5.3.9. Conclusion

This case study shows that migration coverage in Spain during the 2023 general election was dominated by hybrid frames, particularly by humanitarian and securitisation narratives which often coexisted, sometimes even within the same article. Relatedly, while migrants were frequently portrayed as vulnerable victims deserving empathy, they were also depicted as threats to social order, national identity, or institutional stability. This blending created complex and sometimes contradictory messages.

Migrants appeared mostly as passive victims, while politicians, particularly those in power or seeking it, were often cast as either guardians or strategic villains. Media coverage rarely granted migrants

meaningful agency; they were talked about, but seldom heard from. The root causes of migration were typically explained through political decisions, bureaucratic dysfunction, or international agreements, not through migrants' own actions or intentions.

Overall, *El País* leaned slightly more toward securitisation, but showed more criticism of hardline policies and more frequent use of humanitarian and governance perspectives. *El Mundo,* although also using securitisation frames, combined it more frequently with cultural identity frames, and focused more on amplifying far-right themes and favouring restrictive policies. Despite these ideological divergences, both outlets largely framed migrants as problems to be managed rather than as political subjects in their own right, treated the EU as a key actor in "managing migration" and endorsed (albeit to different degrees) the logic of border externalisation and selective migration intake.

### *5.5. Comparative Cross-Country Analysis*

#### 5.5.1. Introduction

This chapter presents a comparative analysis of how migration was framed and narratively constructed in newspaper coverage during the most recent national elections in Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain. Drawing on previous country-specific analyses, it explores similarities and differences across both national contexts and ideological orientations of the selected newspapers.

Like the individual case studies, the comparative analysis is structured around the three central research questions concerning dominant frames and narrative elements on migration across newspapers of different ideological orientations. In addition, it reflects on how media representations related to the political context and electoral timelines in each country.

By systematically comparing framing logics and narrative strategies, this chapter sheds light on broader patterns in how migration becomes politically and morally constructed during periods of heightened political debate.

### 5.5.2. Comparing Frames Across Countries and Ideologies

Across the three countries, all four core frames were consistently identified. While these frames occurred in all contexts, their relative dominance, tone, and ideological associations differed markedly between countries and newspapers.

#### 5.5.2.1. Dominant Frames in Each Country and Newspaper

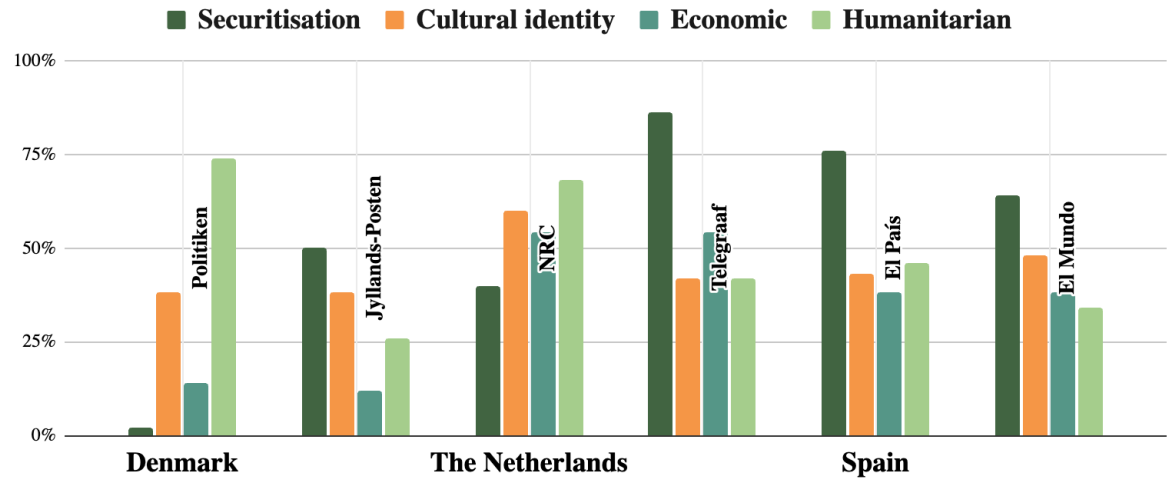
In Denmark, *Jyllands-Posten* frequently applied the securitisation frame to their migration coverage. They also combined the security warnings with both economic and cultural identity concerns to create portrayal of migration as a multifaceted threat. The cultural identity frame appeared with almost equal frequency in both newspapers, however used very differently. Where *Politiken* mostly used the frame to advocate for migrants and ethnic minorities cultural identity ties to Denmark, despite their origin or religion, Jyllands-Posten used the frame to portray migrants, especially those iriginning from a non-western culture, as a threat to Danish values and culture. *Politiken* made significantly more use of the humanitarian frame than Jyllands-Posten, but the frame appeared in a good amount of articles from both newspapers. Interestingly, Danish newspapers also frequently employed a distinct policy critique frame in addition to the four core frames. In both newspapers, this frame was used to question the government's Rwanda plan. Moreso, *Politiken* often applied this to expose how Denmark's rigid migration rules can unjustly penalise well-integrated residents, portraying the system as arbitrary and exclusionary.

In general, the Dutch newspapers applied the four main frames in their articles more than the other countries. Here, *De Telegraaf* focused strongly on the securitisation frame. Migrants, particularly "veiligelanders" (asylum seekers from so-called "safe countries"), were associated with disorder and moral decline. This was often reinforced by cultural identity narratives depicting migrants as unwilling and unable to integrate properly. Humanitarian concerns appeared only marginally and were typically reframed as governance failures. Economic framing cast migrants as burdens on public resources. *NRC*, in contrast, adopted a more balanced framing, frequently combining humanitarian and economic perspectives. Migrants were more often portrayed as vulnerable individuals affected by

systemic shortcomings, with the economic frame highlighting their potential contributions to addressing demographic and labour market needs. While *NRC* also engaged with cultural identity debates, it did so critically, challenging exclusionary rhetoric.

In Spain, both *El País* and *El Mundo* employed securitisation frames most frequently, though in distinct ways. *El País* often combined humanitarian and securitisation frames, highlighting the suffering of migrants while simultaneously portraying "massive influxes" as overwhelming institutional capacity and straining public services. In contrast, *El Mundo*, especially in its opinion pieces, merged securitisation with cultural identity discourses, constructing migration as a moral and cultural threat to European values and social cohesion. In both newspapers, an institutional or governance frame also emerged, depicting migration as a challenge of EU-level coordination, bureaucratic dysfunction, and political instrumentalisation.

**Figure 7: Compared Appearance of the Four Main Frames**




**The figure above represents the percentage of the four main frames found present in each article. Percentages are out of 100 total coded articles and out of 50 per newspaper.*

#### 5.5.2.2. Ideological Patterns in Framing

Across the three countries, ideological patterns in migration framing were most clearly pronounced in Denmark and the Netherlands, where left- and right-leaning newspapers offered sharply contrasting narratives aligned with their broader political orientations; in Spain, ideological distinctions were less notable, with left-leaning coverage adopting a more mixed and pragmatic stance.

In Denmark, *Politiken's* use of frames aligns closely with the paper's progressive orientation. It often featured cultural identity and policy critique frames to expose how Danish political discourse and legislation marginalised ethnic and religious minorities. Humanitarian frames foregrounded the immediate suffering of migrants. In contrast, *Jyllands-Posten* employed a dominant securitisation frame, frequently layered with economic and cultural identity concerns, to depict migration as a multifaceted threat to national stability, economic welfare, and cultural cohesion. While *Jyllands-Posten* also incorporated occasional policy critique, this served mainly to call for more effective and restrictive migration control—reinforcing its centre-right stance.

In the Netherlands, *NRC* showed high coherence with its progressive stance by foregrounding humanitarian concerns and economic integration narratives, while downplaying securitisation and cultural identity frames. *De Telegraaf*, by contrast, displayed a framing profile highly consistent with its ideological position: migration was strongly securitised and linked to cultural threat narratives, with limited space for humanitarian perspectives.

In Spain, *El País*, despite its left-leaning orientation, used securitisation frames slightly more frequently than *El Mundo*, often depicting migrants as victims of structural injustice while simultaneously representing them as a burden or a threat to an overwhelmed economic or bureaucratic system. This ambivalent discourse aligned with a technocratic stance rather than a fully rights-based position. *El Mundo*, in line with its right-leaning orientation, foregrounded securitisation frames as well, and used cultural identity frames slightly more frequently, particularly in opinion pieces that constructed migration as a cultural threat to European values.

#### 5.5.2.3. The Combination and Absence of Frames

A notable difference lies in how often frames were combined. In Spain, articles in both newspapers often blended humanitarian, economic and securitisation logic—portraying migrants as vulnerable but still stressing their potential strain on institutions, the economy or public services.

In the Netherlands, *De Telegraaf* kept frames largely isolated and ideologically aligned: humanitarian perspectives were rare and often instrumentalised to attack policy failure. *NRC*, meanwhile, occasionally layered economic and humanitarian narratives, but avoided overt securitisation.

In the Danish case, some meaningful combinations occurred. Overall, Danish newspapers demonstrated limited but ideologically coherent frame combinations, with *Politiken* emphasising an unjust exclusion of ethnic minorities through legal structures. However, *Jyllands-Posten* did feature layering multiple threat-based frames.

Silences were also telling. Cultural identity framing was absent or subdued in *El País* and *NRC*. Economic framing was not very present in neither of the Danish newspapers. In *Jyllands-Posten* and *De Telegraaf*, the economic frame was also mainly absent, except when discussing welfare costs or housing.

### 5.5.3. Comparing Narrative Elements

#### 5.5.3.1. Characters

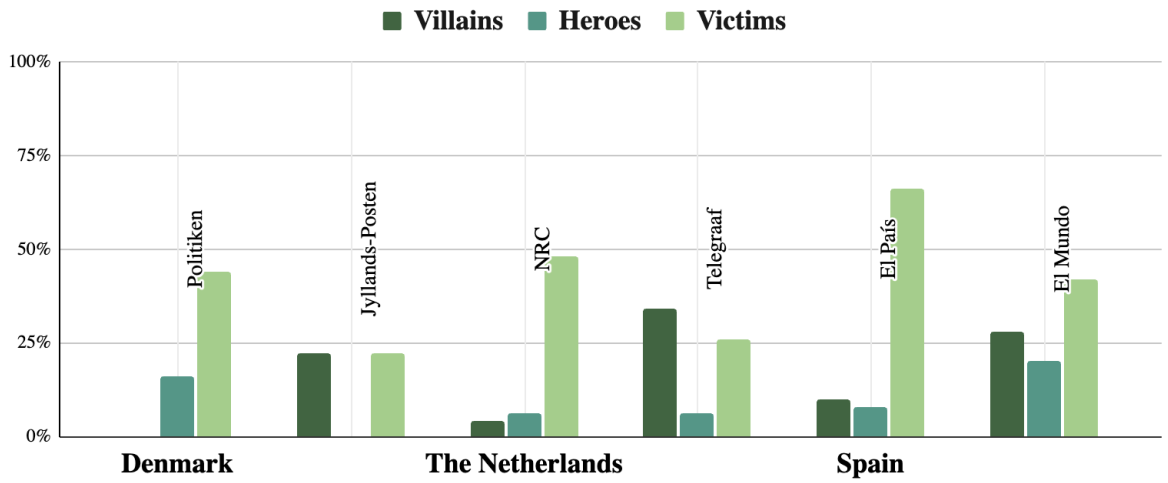
Across all three countries, migrants were most frequently portrayed as **victims**. This portrayal varied in nuance—ranging from passive, dehumanised recipients of tragedy to individuals momentarily humanised through personal storytelling. *El País* and *NRC* were most consistent in portraying migrants as structurally vulnerable, often highlighting institutional failures.

In contrast, *Jyllands-Posten* and *De Telegraaf* more frequently cast migrants as villains and threats—to order, security, or cultural cohesion. In the Dutch case, "veiligelanders" were presented as deviant or fraudulent actors..

Heroic depictions of migrants were rare but did surface in right-wing newspaper *El Mundo*, which portrayed basketball player Sediq Garuba as an example for a success story—though such examples were framed as exceptions, not representations of broader migrant communities.

A clear distinction emerged between types of migrants. Asylum seekers and child migrants were most likely to be framed as victims, particularly in Spanish and Dutch reporting. Labour migrants were more often positioned as demographic or economic tools. However, undocumented migrants were often villainised in the reporting. Especially right-wing outlets often linked them to crime, deception and social disorder.

**Figure 8: Compared Characterisation of Migrants**




**The figure above shows the percentage of articles in which **Migrants (Migration/Migrants, Refugees, or Asylum seekers)** appear as Villains, Heroes, or Victims. Percentages are out of 100 total coded articles and out of 50 per newspaper.*

#### 5.5.3.2. Causal Mechanisms

Across all three countries, narrative causality was most frequently framed in **intentional** or **mechanical** terms. Migrants themselves were rarely portrayed as agents who deliberately caused migration-related issues. Instead, blame was typically assigned to political actors, criminal networks, or institutional systems, depending on the ideological stance of the outlet.

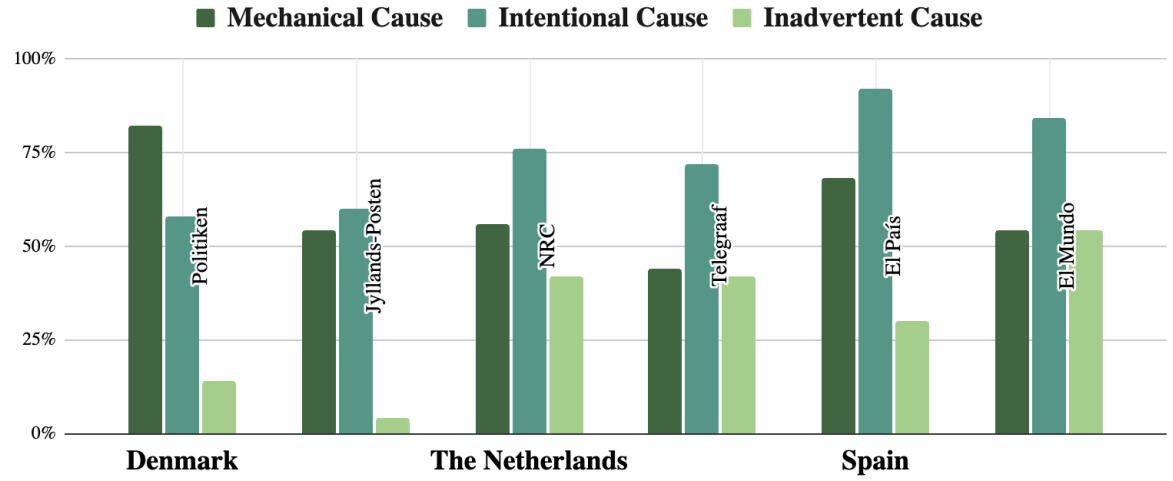
**Mechanical causality** was most prominent in left-leaning coverage. In *Politiken*, strict Danish residency rules were shown to backfire through administrative inflexibility. These examples framed harm as the unintended outcome of rigid legal design. Similarly, *NRC* attributed migration-related strain to systemic dysfunctions, such as housing shortages and asylum backlogs, and framed these as institutional failures rather than individual fault. *El País* also stressed how bureaucratic mismanagement—like rescue coordination breakdowns or asylum processing failures—produced harm without clear malicious intent. In contrast, right-wing outlets primarily applied mechanical causes to underscore governance weakness, as seen in *Jyllands-Posten*, which noted reception center failures but saw them as reasons for even stricter policies.

**Intentional causality** was most apparent in all newspapers, except for Politiken. *De Telegraaf* and *Jyllands-Posten* frequently framed migration-related problems as the result of conscious political choices—either lenient asylum policies enabling abuse or calculated deterrence measures. It portrayed politicians as using asylum policy to signal toughness or mobilise voters, and migrants as exploiting loopholes, thereby justifying tighter control. *De Telegraaf* similarly blamed both asylum seekers and progressive politicians for manipulating the system. In *El Mundo*, migration was often presented as a threat intentionally enabled by ideological opponents, while politicians like Santiago Abascal were framed as reacting defensively. Among progressive outlets, *El País* portrayed EU externalisation deals as intentional, strategic moves to limit irregular migration, though it often distanced EU leaders from the consequences. *Politiken* and *NRC* applied the intentional causal mechanism,particularly to critique politicians who instrumentalised migration for electoral gain.

**Inadvertent causality** was most common in Spanish and Dutch left-leaning coverage, but also surfaced in different forms in right-leaning outlets. *El País* and *El Mundo* regularly framed policy harms—such as human rights violations linked to EU externalisation or coordination failures in rescue operations—as unintended or collateral outcomes of strategic decisions. *NRC* similarly portrayed administrative delays, housing shortages, and strained services as inadvertent results of governance failures and systemic inertia, rather than deliberate choices. In Denmark, both newspapers highlighted very few unintended effects of restrictive asylum measures, though typically within a broader narrative attributing ultimate responsibility to political actors. In *De Telegraaf*, inadvertent mechanisms appeared but were often reframed to stress poor political judgement or negligence, keeping blame visible.

**Accidental causality** was effectively absent in all cases. The consistent implication was that migration-related problems are socially and politically constructed, arising from identifiable actors, policies, and institutional choices—not from random or unforeseeable events.

**Figure 9: Compared Applied Causal Mechanisms**




**The figure above shows the percentage of articles in which **Causal mechanisms (Mechanical cause, Intentional cause or Inadvertent cause)** are applied. Percentages are out of 100 total coded articles and out of 50 per newspaper.*

#### 5.5.3.3. Moral-Policy Solutions

Right-wing newspapers consistently promoted more-restrictive policy solutions, while left-wing outlets favoured less-restrictive approaches. However, even progressive newspapers reported cautiously about less restrictive migration policy solutions and occasionally echoed control-oriented narratives when discussing EU cooperation or institutional challenges.

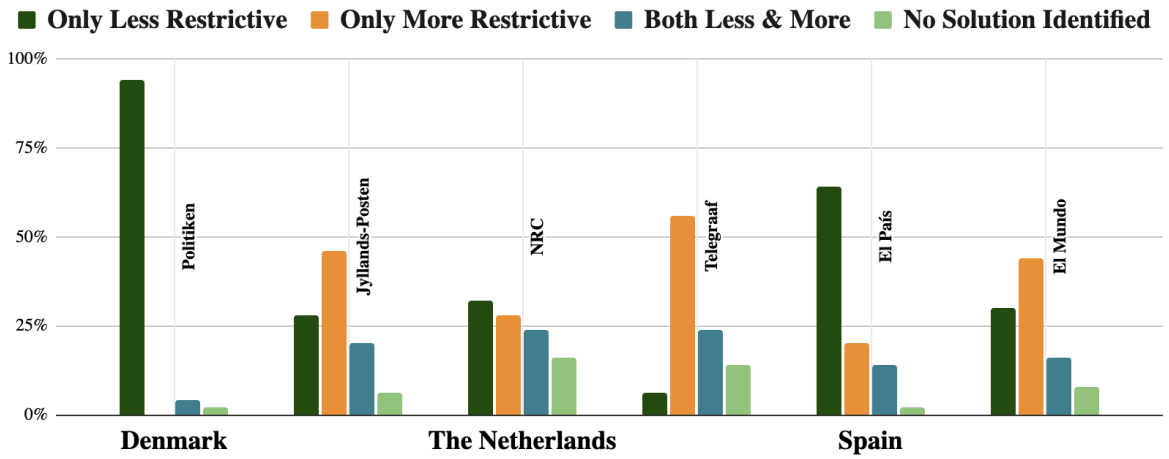
Overall, all three left-leaning newspapers provided space for less-restrictive discourse. However, only *NRC* and *Politiken* maintained consistent normative opposition to restrictive migration governance, whereas *El País* balanced moral critique with concessions to stricter policy. *Politiken* strongly promoted less-restrictive solutions, advocating for domestic asylum processing, family reunification, religious freedom, and more inclusive citizenship. Its coverage often centred on the human costs of Danish migration law, though its proposals remained more normative than technical. *NRC* advanced a structurally grounded argument, calling for fair asylum procedures, improved housing, and municipal burden-sharing. While *NRC* did feature more restrictive solutions too, these were often critically examined and dismissed.

*El País*, while initially standing out for its humanitarian framing and emphasis on migrant rights, ultimately presented a more ambivalent picture. Although it featured critical voices opposing externalisation and securitisation, it also endorsed economically selective migration and reported approvingly on EU-Tunisia border agreements and deterrence policies.

Across all three countries, more-restrictive policy solutions dominated right-wing coverage. *Jyllands-Posten* endorsed firm control policies, such as fast deportations and conditional welfare access mainly through opinion pieces, positioning these as pragmatic necessities. *De Telegraaf* explicitly backed hardline proposals like asylum caps and framed them as acts of national self-defence. *El Mundo* frequently supported deterrence-based measures, with opinion pieces praising border enforcement and condemning multiculturalism. While humanitarian responses were acknowledged, they tended to be counterbalanced by calls for a more restrictive policy. Overall,

right-leaning outlets presented more-restrictive policy as rational, necessary, and aligned with public sentiment.

**Figure 10: Compared Policy Solutions**




**The figure above shows the percentage of articles in which **Policy solutions (Only Less Restrictive, Only More Restrictive, Both Less & More or No solution identified)** are featured. Percentages are out of 100 total coded articles and out of 50 per newspaper*

### 5.5.4. Patterns Across Ideologies and Countries

Across the three countries, reporting about migration tends to articulate the ideological positions of the newspapers, though with varying degrees of coherence and complexity. The Danish newspapers showed a strong ideological divergence from each other. *Politiken* constructs a consistent moral-policy narrative, exposing flaws in Denmark's asylum and integration policies with the paper urging systemic change to address injustices faced by migrants. In contrast, *Jyllands-Posten* builds its narrative around threat perception, economic alarm, and cultural defense. Although pointing out shortcomings of government policy at times, these criticisms themselves contributed to the calls for more targeted enforcement and not liberalisation.

In the Netherlands, *De Telegraaf* and *NRC* similarly articulated diverging migration stories. *De Telegraaf* constructed a highly coherent populist narrative centred on threat perception: migrants—especially asylum seekers from 'safe countries'—were villainised, Dutch citizens were cast as both victims of elite betrayal and heroes reclaiming agency through civic action and electoral resistance.

*NRC* took a more analytical, centrist-liberal approach. Its reporting put humanitarian interests and structural malfunction in the foreground, presenting migrants as victims of bureaucratic incompetence and inequitable labour exploitation, and questioning both populist polemic and policy incompetence. This approach reflected a clear commitment to nuance and institutional accountability, offering a counterweight to the polarised narratives of its right-leaning counterpart.

Spanish coverage presented a more ambivalent picture. *El Mundo* leaned heavily on securitisation and cultural identity frames, positioning migration as a moral and cultural crisis that threatened public order and national cohesion. While it acknowledged systemic marginalisation, the dominant narrative favoured surveillance and national uniformity over progressive solutions. *El País*, despite its centre-left orientation, also employed securitisation frames—often critiquing them, but simultaneously adopting dehumanising administrative language when discussing migration governance. Economic and institutional frames featured more prominently in *El País*, with migration frequently portrayed as a matter of European shared responsibility and policy coordination. Both Spanish newspapers, despite their ideological differences, displayed notable narrative convergence in their endorsement of EU-level migration management and their treatment of migrants as symbolic figures within broader political debates.

Overall, in Denmark and the Netherlands, the ideological alignment between outlet orientation and migration narrative was strong and consistent, whereas Spanish coverage revealed greater internal tensions—most notably in *El País*'s balancing act between securitisation and humanitarian appeals. Across all three countries, migrants rarely appear as active political agents. Even in humanitarian

narratives, their voices remain marginal, serving symbolic rather than participatory roles in national debates.

### 5.5.5. Interaction Between Frames and Narrative Elements

A clear pattern emerges linking specific frame types with narrative roles, causal mechanisms, and policy conclusions. Securitisation and cultural identity frames are the most consistently associated with migrants portrayed as villains, particularly in the right-leaning outlets. In these narratives, migrants are depicted as burdens on the welfare state, sources of unrest, or violators of cultural norms. Additionally, the intentional causal mechanisms often attribute migration-related problems to "asylum fraud," weak borders, or failed multicultural policies, with more restrictive policy conclusions focused on stricter border control, deterrence, and assimilation requirements.

In left-leaning newspapers, less restrictive migration policy is often advocated with migrants being portrayed as victims. However, no clear pattern including a specific frame or causal mechanism appeared. *Politiken, NRC* and *El País*, in general, presented a more nuanced framing narrative than their right-wing counterparts and often combined multiple frames and causal mechanisms to underline the complexity of the migration debate.

### 5.5.6. Political Resonance over Time and Cross-country Conclusion

Denmark showed a relatively stable narrative structure across time, though meaningful shifts in emphasis were evident. In *Jyllands-Posten*, migration was consistently securitised both before and after the vote, but post-election editorials acknowledged implementation challenges such as reception-centre backlogs, suggesting that the "asylum stop" lacked full administrative feasibility. This recalibration retained the securitarian core while introducing a more pragmatic tone. *Politiken*, on the other hand, emphasised legal and cultural identity critiques in the pre-election period, and after the vote expanded its focus to issues of political representation within the new parliament. These developments signal a shift from campaign-mode polarisation to a broader governance-oriented discourse. Although Denmark's centrist coalition outcome does not show a clear link to the tone of the

news media, it is notable that the press largely remained within predictable ideological lanes and refrained from radical narrative shifts.

In the Netherlands, *De Telegraaf* displayed the clearest intensification over time. Pre-election articles escalated in alarmist language, culminating in depictions of ‘chaos’ and ‘danger’ at asylum centres. Post-election, the narrative assumed a vindicated tone, framing the PVV's electoral success as confirmation of its prior warnings. *NRC*, by contrast, maintained a steady tone throughout, with a modest shift from structural analysis before the election to political interpretation afterwards. While *De Telegraaf* used electoral outcomes to confirm its pre-existing message, *NRC* used the same event to examine the broader implications of the rise of the far-right for democratic values and ethical governance. In this case, the PVV's strong electoral surge appears more aligned with the reporting of *De Telegraa*f.

Spain demonstrated the clearest thematic reorientation. In the weeks before the election, migration coverage in both *El País* and *El Mundo* was more focused on humanitarian tragedy, institutional failure, and ethical debate. After the vote, the tone pivoted toward institutional and governance frames, with migration increasingly framed as a matter of foreign policy, third-country bilateral agreements, domestic governance challenges, and urban pressures. Migrants appeared less as individuals and more as filtered through institutional lenses—not entirely absent, but increasingly depicted as policy subjects rather than narrators of their own experiences. This shift marked a move from emotionally resonant stories toward regulatory and administrative issues, visible in articles about border pacts, asylum bureaucracy, and the human rights implications of enforcement practices. While the political outcome—a fragmented result and renewed PSOE-led government—does not clearly align with these shifts, it mirrors the newspapers’ post-election focus on coalition-building and institutional realism.

Overall, narrative sharpness intensified closest to election day—especially in right-wing papers like *De Telegraaf* and *Jyllands-Posten*—but often mellowed or diversified afterwards. Progressive papers like *Politiken* and *El País* shifted from normative critique toward institutional reflection, though

without abandoning their core concerns. While no direct causal patterns can be drawn, narrative shifts generally reflected the rhythms of political transitions: from electoral contestation and its more emotional or polarising tone, to the more abstract and utilitarian framing of governance recalibration.

#### 5.5.7. Comparative Analysis: Conclusion

From this sample, Denmark and the Netherlands showed the clearest ideological differences among newspapers. Left-wing newspapers focused primarily on systemic critique concerns for migrants, and right-wing newspapers emphasised securitisation and cultural threat. Spanish newspapers showed greater convergence with the use of securitisation and hybrid frames, which did vary in tone and emphasis across the two outlets. Overall, the right-wing news media tended to frame migration as a threat and promoted restrictive policies, whereas left-wing papers were inclined to suggest inclusive reform.

Across all three countries, however, the marginalisation of migrants' voices was consistent. Regardless of ideological leaning or national setting, migrants were featured as victims, depersonalised threats, or policy objects—but very seldom as active agents driving the narrative.

# 6. CONCLUSION

## *6.1. Summary*

Throughout this research we have used four dominant frames to analyse the coverage of migration in our selected newspaper sample. These four frames, securitisation, cultural identity, economic and humanitarian, were all present in some capacity, although we have identified some trends. Right-leaning newspapers tend to frame migration around securitisation, talking about closing borders and withholding entry to asylum seekers, or even outsourcing asylum centers to other countries, for example. This fear around migrants was further emphasised through the cultural identity frame; migrants were framed as a threat to national cultural values. The left-leaning newspapers on the other hand applied humanitarian frames to add more nuance to the debates around securitisation, giving

more space to critiques of the political and bureaucratic systems that uphold these hostile policies towards migrants.

To explain narrative causality around migration, all newspapers tended to rely on either intentional or mechanical terms. Migrants were primarily portrayed as passive figures in their own stories, while agency was attributed to political actors, criminal networks, or institutional systems. Instead of migrants, these other actors were therefore cast as the protagonists or antagonists. Furthermore, when discussing policy, right-leaning newspapers argued more in favor of more-resistive policy solutions than left-leaning newspapers. Although, in the case of Denmark, the right-leaning newspaper at times approvingly reported on a less restrictive approach, questioning the plan about outsourcing reception and asylum centers to locations outside the EU, such as Rwanda. Left-leaning newspapers at times approvingly reported on, and cautiously approached, more restrictive policy solutions as well, although this was often narrated through a call for more European-wide collaboration.

Some noticeable ideological differences emerged between the sets of left-leaning newspapers and right-leaning newspapers. The right-leaning newspapers tend to use the lens of securitisation to frame migration as a safety issue being inadequately addressed by the current governments. Left-leaning newspapers, on the other hand, portrayed migration through a more fragmented lens, combining narratives framed mainly through economical, cultural identity, and humanitarian frames to add more nuance to migration. Yet, we have identified some inconsistencies amongst the left-leaning newspapers as well. Although *NRC* advocated for a less restrictive reform of policy, they seldom depicted migrants as active participants in their own stories and largely reduced them to bureaucratic classifications. *Polititken* did feature pieces where migrants had the opportunity to write themselves, but these pieces never gave voice to migrants that were undocumented. *El País* on the other hand used securitisation frames even more frequently than centre-right *El Mundo* and often represented migrants as victims, yet paired this with calls for deterrence—revealing a conflict between emotional engagement and ideological stance. Interestingly, left-leaning publications often failed to establish a strong narrative connection between their criticism of restrictive migration policies and a portrayal of migrant agency or the presentation of systemic alternatives.

### *6.2. Interpretation and Implications*

While right-leaning newspapers are often associated with anti-immigration narratives, the analysis reveals a more complex reality. Across all outlets examined—except *Telegraaf*—the dominant characterisation of migrants was as victims, suggesting that humanitarian framings remain prevalent regardless of political orientation. Only *Telegraaf* diverged from this pattern, emphasising the "villain" narrative more strongly than any other outlet. This suggests that while right-leaning news media do engage with populist and problem-focused rhetoric, they also reflect broader discursive norms that acknowledge migrant vulnerability. Notably, the "hero" frame remains consistently marginal across all newspapers, indicating that positive agency is rarely attributed to migrants in mainstream media narratives. Furthermore, across all outlets, migration is consistently portrayed as a problem in need of a solution—typically through either a humanitarian response or more restrictive migration policies. Left-leaning newspapers are generally more critical of calls for restrictive immigration policies and tend to focus on contextualising the issue beyond polarised narratives. However, this does not always translate into humanising portrayals of migrants. The left-leaning coverage often presents contradictory messages, combining elements of humanitarian concern with a utilitarian or institutional frame. Except in *Politiken*, migrants are frequently discussed through a depersonalised administrative tone, which rationalises selective immigration intake as a pragmatic, policy-driven necessity. Rather than challenging the foundation of hardline anti-immigration rhetoric, this framing can act as its technocratic counterpart, portraying migrants less as human beings with rights and stories, and more as administrative categories that need to be managed within the logic of the state. Thus, across the ideological spectrum, the voices of migrants themselves are missing significantly. As such, we can conclude that the voices of migrants should matter a lot more in the stories of migration. Their voices matter because these stories are about them, ultimately. When migrants are framed primarily as villains, victims, or statistics, they are stripped of agency and reduced to objects of policy, charity or fear rather than political subjects with their own voices and experiences. Restoring their agency in the narrative, by giving them faces, names and acknowledging their capacity to influence the political debate, can counteract the depersonalised framings that dominate media discourse.

### *6.3. Limitations*

In addition to the methodological and scope-related constraints already discussed in the methodology section, this study has certain conceptual limitations tied to the political context in which it was conducted. By focusing exclusively on media coverage during national election campaigns, the analysis may overrepresent narratives shaped by political agendas and party competition, while underrepresenting everyday or migrant-led discourses that emerge outside of electoral cycles. This focus could reinforce the framing of migration as primarily a policy issue, rather than a lived reality with diverse social dimensions.

Moreover, the study did not include the perspectives of migrants themselves. Their absence in our methodological approach means that we could not assess how migrant voices are actively trying to challenge media narratives, or how they are impacted by them. Future research could benefit from incorporating interviews, migrant-produced media, or participatory analysis to better understand how migrants engage with the media as political actors.

Finally, while cross-country comparisons offer valuable insight, they are inevitably shaped by cultural and linguistic differences. Some nuances in tone, irony, or institutional references may not be fully captured in the translation of article excerpts or in the comparative analysis, potentially influencing interpretation.

### *6.4. Recommendations*

As mentioned previously, our research design has been quite limited in its scope. For further research we would thus recommend a larger sample, including more newspapers as well, to better map out the ideological diversity in each country. This would allow for a more comprehensive understanding of how migration is framed across different political and media landscapes. Moreover, each of the countries included is a EU member state, the inclusion of non members could be interesting to see the diversity of framing within the EU, as well as comparisons with countries outside of the EU.

Furthermore, future studies should not only examine how migrants are characterised (as victims, villains, or otherwise), but also explore the extent to which they are portrayed—or excluded—as political actors. Migration is consistently discussed within a political debate framework, yet migrants themselves are rarely depicted as agents capable of shaping or responding to policy. This omission reinforces a narrative of passivity and dependency that ultimately contributes to their portrayal as burdens to be distributed, or problems to solve through either control and surveillance, or humanitarian response.

Therefore, we also recommend that future research engage more directly with the normative question of how migration should be framed. Beyond mapping dominant narratives, it is essential to consider alternative framings that restore migrant agency and acknowledge their political and social roles. This could include analysing media that feature migrant-led initiatives, self-representation, or migrant-led advocacy efforts, and exploring how such portrayals might shift public discourse and policy debates.

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# 8. Appendix

## Appendix 1: Executive Summary

Newspaper Narratives of Migration During National Elections in Denmark, Spain, and the Netherlands

*By Annika Loop, Irene Tortajada, Leviathan Boham and Line Andersen.*

Migration has dominated newspaper headlines across Europe and the world. In collaboration with Oxfam Intermon, this thesis has aimed to uncover the patterns of frames and narratives regarding migration coverage. The research design has been comparative, looking at the three national contexts of Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain during the weeks before and after their most recent federal elections. Migration has emerged as a prominent issue in each of these countries, taking distinct forms while also revealing notable similarities. Looking at both a right-leaning and left-leaning newspaper from each country, we have used framing theory and Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) to identify the common trends of frames and narrative present in these newspapers. We compared how each national context framed migration, which narrative elements were resorted to and how these narratives vary across national contexts and ideological orientation of the newspapers.

| | **Right-leaning newspaper** | **Left-leaning newspaper** |
|---|---|---|
| **Denmark** | *Jyllands-Posten* | *Politiken* |
| **The Netherlands** | *De Telegraaf* | *NRC* |
| **Spain** | *El Mundo* | *El País* |

Research questions

1. **How is migration framed in national newspaper coverage during the recent national elections in Spain, the Netherlands, and Denmark?**
2. **What narrative elements do newspaper frames resort to when representing migration during national elections, as defined by the Narrative Policy Framework?**
3. **How do these narratives vary across national contexts and newspapers' ideological orientations?**

**Framework and Methodology**

NPF (Narrative Policy Framework) has been a helpful framework to tackle these research questions. NPF uses an in-depth understanding of meaning-making processes, looking at framing as well as narrative devices, rather than measuring variables or causal effects of media discourse. Using a pre-determined codebook, we analysed 100 articles per country, equally divided between the right-leaning and the left-leaning newspapers.

**Results**

This research examined how migration is framed in selected newspapers using four dominant frames, which emerged from a preliminary review of the cross-country sample: securitisation, cultural identity, economic, and humanitarian. In Denmark and the Netherlands, progressive newspapers like *Politiken* and *NRC* emphasised humanitarian concerns and policy critiques, while conservative papers such as *Jyllands-Posten* and *De Telegraaf* foregrounded securitisation and cultural identity frames. In Spain, ideological distinctions were more ambivalent, with *El País* combining humanitarian and securitisation frames in a pragmatic tone, while *El Mundo* reinforced securitisation and cultural identity narratives.

In the context of elections, newspapers explained migration using either intentional or mechanical causality, often sidelining migrants as passive figures. Causality and decision-making were focused on political actors, criminal networks, or institutions. While right-leaning newspapers supported more restrictive policies, left-leaning ones were generally more ambivalent, occasionally supporting deterrent policies under the guise of European cooperation.

Ideological divides were sharpest in Denmark and the Netherlands, where left-leaning outlets consistently opposed restrictive migration governance. Overall, right-leaning newspapers adhered to anti-immigration narratives, while left-leaning outlets offered a more fragmented portrayal, attempting to balance critique with compassion. Nevertheless, across all countries and outlets, migrants were largely framed as victims and objects of policy rather than active political subjects. Even newspapers like *Politiken* and *NRC* rarely depicted migrants as active agents, often reducing them to administrative categories. *El País* offered a more emotionally engaged approach, though it too revealed tensions between empathy or justice and deterrence.

Overall, both sides of the ideological spectrum failed to meaningfully include migrant voices. Right-leaning newspapers tended to dehumanize migrants through fear-based rhetoric, while left-leaning ones tended to abstract them into policy categories or represented them as passive victims. This absence of migrant agency highlights a critical gap: migrants are consistently spoken about, but they rarely drive the narrative, and they are rarely heard. Addressing this is essential for creating more representative, and less stigmatising, narratives around migration.

**Recommendations**

Based on our findings, this research argues for a greater amplification of migrants' voices in the media. Across the newspaper coverage we analysed, migrants were frequently represented through the lens of policy, security, or abstract statistics, rather than as individuals with social and political agency, contextualised by lived experiences. We must continue to challenge media practices and critically examine how ideological orientations and media conventions shape the framing and narratives of migration. Media outlets do not merely report on migration—they actively produce and reproduce narratives that shape public understanding, often reinforcing harmful stereotypes and supporting political agendas. During election periods, this becomes especially significant, as media narratives can directly influence public opinion and voter behaviour. Further research on the impact of media narratives of migration is essential in pushing for more responsible and inclusive journalism. Furthermore, we strongly recommend the continued production of comparative studies that highlight national and ideological variations in migration reporting to foster a fairer and more representative media landscape. Finally, we recommend the development of programs that promote migrants as media ambassadors and political actors, ensuring they are both regularly featured and accurately represented as key contributors to the political debate.

*Appendix 2: Report of the Work Process*

**Challenge #2: Narratives of Migration: A comparative study of European media**

MA in International Studies in Media, Power and Difference

Academic Year 2024–2025

Group members: Annika Loop, Irene Tortajada, Levi Boham & Line Hougaard

Partner organisation: Oxfam Intermón

Partner contact:  María José Gascón

Supervisor: Carles Roca Cuberes

## 1. Introduction

This *Report of the Work Process* documents the collaboration, decisions, and workflow of the student team conducting the project *Narratives of Migration: A Comparative Study of European Media*, carried out in the context of Challenge #2 of the MA in International Studies in Media, Power and Difference. The project was conducted by Annika Loop, Irene Tortajada, Levi Boham and Line Andersen in partnership with Oxfam Intermón and forms part of the broader thesis research on how migration is framed and narrated in national newspapers surrounding electoral periods. The team also worked in close coordination with the academic supervisor, Dr. Carles Roca Cuberes (hereafter Carles), who provided methodological and conceptual guidance throughout the process. This report has been prepared by Levi, in consultation with fellow team members, to provide a transparent account of the work process.

The report is structured as follows. Chapter 2 describes the team's contact with Oxfam Intermón and summarises the guidance received from the partner. Chapter 3 details the key information and resources provided by Oxfam. Chapter 4 outlines the main decisions taken during the project regarding case selection, analytical approach, and workflow. Chapter 5 reflects on the internal collaboration within the student group and with the thesis supervisor. Chapter 6 presents the division of roles and tasks among the team members. Finally, Chapter 7 offers concluding reflections on the work process.

## 2. Contact with Oxfam Intermón

The team engaged in a series of structured interactions with Oxfam Intermón throughout the project. This was coordinated via online meetings with the Lead of the Zero Inequality Program at Oxfam Intermón, María José Gascón (hereafter María José), and in the presence of the academic supervisor Carles. These meetings served as key moments for refining the research scope, receiving feedback, and ensuring alignment between the partner's expectations and the academic objectives of the project.

The initial kick-off meeting with Oxfam Intermón was held online on 4 April 2025. It was attended by all group members, María José, and Carles. Prior to this meeting, the team had conducted several internal discussions and preliminary consultations with Carles, during which an initial research proposal had been developed. During the first meeting with Oxfam, this proposal was presented and discussed in detail. The meeting also served as an opportunity for mutual introductions and for clarifying the project's scope. The selection of Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain as the three case countries was discussed, with the rationale that each team member would contribute in-depth knowledge of their respective country. Although no definitive research proposal was approved during this meeting, María José provided valuable feedback, which was subsequently integrated into a revised project design in consultation with Carles.

A second meeting took place on 7 May 2025, by which time the team had incorporated feedback into a refined research framework and prepared for the data collection phase. During this meeting, the team and María José reviewed progress up to the point of data analysis. Additional clarifications and comments from María José on the revised proposal were discussed, and final adjustments were made before commencing coding and analysis the following day.

A third and final meeting with Oxfam Intermón was planned on 20 June 2025 to evaluate the writing process and prepare for the thesis defense on 3 July 2025.

These structured interactions with Oxfam Intermón contributed significantly to the project's iterative refinement and provided valuable practitioner-oriented perspectives on the study of migration narratives in European media.

**3. Information provided by Oxfam Intermón**

Prior to the start of the project, the team received a single document from Oxfam Intermón containing a project description, which included a curated list of relevant sources on media narratives and migration. This material served as a useful foundation for shaping the initial research design. From the beginning, the team was granted considerable autonomy to further develop the project framework and contribute original ideas and perspectives. This flexible approach encouraged a collaborative and creative engagement with the research topic.

Throughout the project, María José offered consistent and constructive feedback on the documents shared by the team, both during meetings and via email correspondence. She also suggested additional resources on specific occasions, helping to refine the project's analytical focus. One particularly valuable observation she shared was the importance of considering how undocumented migrants are often excluded from official migration statistics—an insight that informed the team's critical approach to interpreting available data.

Overall, while the team enjoyed a high degree of independence in conducting the research, Oxfam Intermón's input—particularly through María José's targeted feedback and resource suggestions—provided important guidance and helped ensure that the project remained aligned with the partner's broader concerns and objectives.

**4. Decisions taken during the project**

The selection of Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain as the three case countries was an early strategic decision, made in consultation with both Oxfam Intermón and the academic supervisor Carles. While this choice was practically informed by the linguistic and contextual expertise of the

group members, it also provided a conceptually valuable comparative design. The three countries represent divergent political trajectories and media landscapes within Europe, enabling a nuanced exploration of how migration narratives vary across distinct national contexts.

The temporal scope of the study was carefully defined to capture the heightened salience of migration during electoral campaigns. The team selected a period of four weeks preceding and two weeks following each country's most recent national election. This decision ensured that the analysis would encompass both pre-election campaign discourse and immediate post-election reflections, thus capturing the full narrative arc surrounding migration at key moments of political contestation.

The theoretical framework of the project was primarily based on three core articles: Entman's (1993) seminal work on Framing Theory; Shanahan et al.'s (2011) elaboration of the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF); and Crow and Lawlor's (2016) integrated approach to framing and narratives in media and policy studies. Together, these texts provided a robust analytical lens for examining both the thematic and structural dimensions of media narratives on migration. The integration of these approaches was further refined through ongoing discussions with Carles and feedback from María José.

The methodological approach evolved iteratively during the project. A variety of research methods, like a quantitative content analysis and a discourse analysis, were considered. However, following the second meeting with Oxfam the team collectively decided—taking into account both the partner's input and the practical constraints imposed by the thesis deadline—that a Qualitative content analysis (QCA) would be the most appropriate method. This decision allowed for a deeper engagement with the discursive nuances of media texts and aligned well with the Narrative Policy Framework's focus on narrative structures and meaning-making processes.

Given the qualitative nature of the analysis and the limited timeframe of the project, the team opted to analyse a corpus of 100 articles—50 from each of the two selected national newspapers per country. This sample size balanced analytical depth with feasibility and ensured that the project could be completed to a high standard within the available timeframe. The selected newspapers were chosen to

represent ideologically distinct perspectives within each national media landscape, thereby facilitating a systematic comparison of left-leaning and right-leaning narratives on migration.

Throughout the project, all key design and methodological decisions were made collaboratively within the group and in close consultation with Carles. The team placed strong emphasis on aligning the research with Oxfam's broader interests, while also ensuring methodological rigor and feasibility given the thesis submission deadline.

**5. Collaboration within the group**

The team maintained a structured and collaborative workflow throughout the project. A fixed weekly group meeting was held every Thursday, usually online, to discuss progress and coordinate planning across the different case studies. In addition to these regular sessions, the team organised several in-person working meetings; some of these included all group members, while others involved smaller sub-groups of two or three students, depending on availability and specific tasks.

Additional meetings were scheduled as needed to address particular questions or prepare for key milestones, such as meetings with Carles and Oxfam Intermón. These preparatory and follow-up discussions helped ensure that the team maintained a consistent analytical approach and responded effectively to external feedback.

The collaboration with Carles was highly constructive. The team held several ad-hoc online meetings with him, arranged at the team's request, and Carles remained consistently accessible and responsive via email. While he provided the team with considerable autonomy in shaping the project, he was closely engaged from the outset and offered timely and valuable guidance throughout the process. His input was particularly helpful in refining the analytical framework and navigating methodological decisions.

Overall, the collaboration within the group and with Carles was a positive experience. The team benefited from a collegial working atmosphere, open communication, and a shared commitment to

write the thesis. Minor challenges in aligning schedules and combining collective efforts in one product were effectively managed through flexibility and mutual support.

**6. Roles and tasks of students**

Collaboration within the team was highly structured and transparent, supported by clear task planning and shared documentation. At the outset, Annika was appointed as the main spokesperson for external communication. In the process, Irene subsequently assumed a significant role in managing communications with both Carles and Oxfam Intermón. Levi and Line also contributed to external communications as needed, maintaining occasional email contact with both parties.

Early in the process, Irene created a detailed planning template, which was then collaboratively completed by all group members. Annika and Line set up a structured Google Drive environment with clearly organised shared folders, providing a central workspace for document drafting and version control. In addition, Irene developed a spreadsheet-based work plan and task division template, which served as the operational basis for the project. A link to this work plan is included here:

Thesis Workplan

Based on the documented division of tasks, the following roles and responsibilities were assumed by each team member:

**Annika:** First, Annika structured and organised the Google Drive workspace. She then authored the migration data table and comparative text and drafted the conclusion, list of references, and executive summary. In addition, Annika co-authored the Netherlands case study and the literature review on media coverage of migration in the Netherlands.

**Irene:** Authored the Spanish migration context and policy section, and the literature review on migration coverage for Spain, the theoretical framework and the Spanish case study sections. Irene also drafted the research design section in collaboration with Line, and drafted the weekly work-plan for the thesis.

**Levi:** Drafted the introduction and structure of the thesis, co-authored the case study section for the Netherlands, and wrote the comparative analysis. Levi also prepared this *Work Process Report*.

**Line:** Authored the migration data and policy section for Denmark, prepared the media coverage literature review for Denmark and case study sections for Denmark. Line also collaborated on the research design with Irene.

Responsibility for peer feedback on individual sections was likewise distributed across the group. A detailed mapping of feedback responsibilities is provided in the appended work plan.

## 7. Conclusion

Overall, the team experienced the work process for this project as highly positive and enriching. The collaboration with both Oxfam Intermón and Carles provided valuable guidance while allowing the group a great degree of autonomy to shape the project according to their own interests and analytical insights. The combination of this freedom with well-timed, constructive input from both the partner and the academic supervisor created a productive and intellectually stimulating working environment.

The team particularly appreciated the openness and flexibility of Oxfam and Carles throughout the process. María José consistently provided thoughtful feedback that helped sharpen the project's focus, while Carles was readily available for consultation and supported the team with clear methodological and conceptual advice. Both contributed to maintaining the project's academic rigor while keeping it relevant to the partner's interests.

Naturally, the process was not without its challenges. Coordinating meetings and collaborative writing sessions proved occasionally difficult, as the group members had varying schedules and were not always based in the same location. Additionally, working as a team of four—each bringing slightly different working styles and frames of reference—required ongoing communication and mutual adjustment to ensure coherence in the final product. Nonetheless, the team managed these challenges effectively through regular meetings, structured planning, and open dialogue.

In sum, the project was characterised by strong internal collaboration, constructive partnerships with both Oxfam and Carles, and a shared commitment to producing a high-quality comparative study. The experience not only deepened the team's understanding of migration narratives in European media but also provided valuable lessons in collaborative research practice.

*Appendix 3: Codebook*

**Qualitative Codebook for Migration Narratives in European Newspapers**

This codebook provides structured but flexible guidelines for conducting qualitative content analysis of migration narratives in European newspapers. The analysis draws on the Narrative Policy Framework (NPF) and Entman's (1993) Framing Theory, with an emphasis on interpretation, meaning-making, and transparency of coding decisions. It is designed for implementation in Excel and should guide coders through each narrative element with clear, interpretive instructions suitable for qualitative research.

**General Coding Guidelines**

Code by unit of analysis (entire articles, including pictures). Each row in Excel represents one article.

Capture both manifest content (explicitly stated) and latent meanings (underlying assumptions or metaphors).

For each narrative element, describe its content and provide textual evidence (quotes or paraphrases).

Multiple codes or interpretations can coexist within a single article.

Use a dedicated column for notes, justification, and reflections on ambiguity or context.

Do not leave cells blank. If a narrative element is not applicable, write 'Not present' or 'Not identifiable', and explain briefly if necessary.

Characters, frames, or causal mechanisms may appear in different forms or with conflicting portrayals—note such complexity.

Avoid binary or numeric codes. Focus on rich, descriptive coding using concise text or keywords plus qualitative justification.

**Sheet 1: Policy Narrative Metadata**

Each row corresponds to one full article. This sheet captures contextual information and general impressions.

Column A: Country

Column B: Unique ID for the article.

Column C: Title of Article

Column D: Date of publication.

Column E: Coder initials.

Column F: Article type (opinion piece, news article; editorial; interview; other).

Column G: Picture(s) present (yes/no) **if yes, brief description*

**Sheet 2: Narrative Elements – Characters**

Identify the key characters in the narrative, and describe how they are portrayed. Use descriptive phrases (e.g., 'heroic savior,' 'passive victim') and provide short supporting quotes or paraphrases. Include multiple perspectives if the same character is portrayed in contradictory ways.

Character roles:

- **Hero** – Who is shown to take purposeful action? Describe their goals, values, and moral standing.
- **Villain** – Who is presented as causing harm or obstructing change? What language is used?
- **Victim** – Who is suffering or at risk? How is their vulnerability framed?

Characters identified in the preliminary analysis:

- Migration/Migrants
- Political party/Politician
- National Government
- Law enforcement
- NGO/Rescue services
- Border control
- The economy
- Policy/Laws
- The EU
- Migration
- Citizens with migration background
- Asylum Seekers
- Refugees
- Undocumented Migrants
- Native Population
- National Government
- Opposition to the sitting national government
- Political party
- Minister
- Individual politician
- Voters
- The EU
- NGOs
- Rescue Services

- Essential workers
- Local law enforcement
- Border Control
- Human Traffickers
- The Economy
- The Media
- The policy/Laws
- Other - define character if applicable

**Sheet 3: Narrative Elements – Moral or Policy Solutions**

Describe the moral or policy solutions implied or advocated in the article. Instead of marking presence/absence, explain how the solution is framed and justified. Use short text labels (e.g., 'support for deportation framed as a safety measure') and include direct quotes if available.

Broad categories:

- Less Restrictive: Shared European responsibility, Humanitarian response, Anti-xenophobia messaging, Support for normalisation, etc.
- More Restrictive: Integration as assimilation, Stronger border control, Surveillance, Limiting regularisation/naturalisation, Deportation/return, etc.

**Sheet 4: Narrative Strategies – Causal Mechanisms**

Explain how causes of migration-related problems or developments are described. Use qualitative text to summarize each causal logic and include quotes or paraphrases. You may identify more than one causal type per article.

- Mechanical Cause – Unintended outcomes of bureaucracies or systems.
- Intentional Cause – Strategic or purposeful actions by individuals/groups.
- Accidental Cause – Random events, nature, or bad luck.
- Inadvertent Cause – Well-intentioned actions with negative side effects.

| Causal Type | Definition | Example in Migration Narrative |
|---|---|---|
| **Column B** Mechanical Cause | Unplanned result from a system, rule, or process that works without thinking or intention. | "The asylum system is overwhelmed because of bureaucratic delays and inefficiencies." (Nobody wanted this to happen — it's a system failure.) |
| **Column C** Intentional Cause | Someone or a group causes something on purpose. | "Politicians use anti-immigration rhetoric to gain votes." (Deliberate action by actors.) |
| **Column D** Accidental Cause | No one caused it — it's just bad luck or nature. | "An earthquake led to increased migration from region X." (A random or natural cause.) |
| **Column E** Inadvertent Cause | Someone acted with good intentions, but it caused unintended harm. | "The EU's rescue missions unintentionally encouraged human trafficking." (A policy had unexpected negative effects.) |

**Sheet 5: Frames**

Identify and describe the media frames used in the article and provide a short description of how each frame is constructed. Include quotes, paraphrased examples, and notes about emphasis, tone, or contradictions. Include multiple codings if the multiple frames are detected within one article.

Example frames:

- Securitization Frame – Language about threats, illegality, border protection.
- Cultural Identity Frame – Language about national values, religion, tradition, integration, cohesion.
- Economic Frame – Language about cost, benefit, or economic contribution.
- Humanitarian Frame – Language about suffering, rights, moral duty.
- Other - Explain the emergent frame identified

***Appendix 4: List of AI prompts***

**Structure**

- ChatGPT Response to "Can you make the following paragraph more clear and structured?" – *April 24, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "Can you take my notes and provide an organized list of findings?" – *May 18, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "Can you analyse this piece of text and provide feedback? also provide some specific suggestions for improvements" – *May 7, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "Can you compare these two texts and highlight the inconsistencies" – *May 15, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "Can you follow the structure of the case study analysis and align it with the Spanish text my colleague has written?" – *May 31, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "What do you think of my Danish findings? Do they follow the Spanish structure?" – *April 11, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "What do you think about these three paragraphs about migration policy for Denmark, Spain, and The Netherlands? Do they look at the same major things, or are some more profound than others? If so, how can I improve the three paragraphs even further?" – *May 11, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "This is our "current state of the question for our thesis. What do you think about it? Any suggestions for improvements of the structure or order of information given?" – *April 27, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "What do you think about this research design paragraph? Can you give me suggestions for improving the structure?" – *April 31, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "Can you help me organize my Danish Analysis Section so it follows the structure of this Spanish analysis paragraph my colleague wrote?" – *May 28, 2025*

**Theory and Empirical Research**

- ChatGPT Response to "Can you summarize this article and present the most important findings?" – *May 10, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "Can you help me find peer-reviewed articles on media framing of migration in Europe?" – *April 1, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you list recent studies that apply the Narrative Policy Framework to migration issues?” – *April 1, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you break down what each of these studies focus on, and explain to me their findings??” – *April 1, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Are there any QCA-based studies that use framing theory to analyze migration?” – *April 2, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you provide me with a list of peer reviewed articles that deal with methodological approach (QCA)?” – *April 5, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “What empirical research exists on how Danish newspapers cover migration?” – *April 6, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Are there any case studies of Spanish media coverage of refugees or undocumented migrants?” – *April 6, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Are there empirical studies using framing theory to analyze Dutch media coverage of migration?” – *April 6, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you provide empirical studies comparing how migration is portrayed in the media of Denmark, the Netherlands, and Spain?” – *April 7, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you make a brief summary of how the Dutch asylum system works in English based on this webpage? https://www.rijksoverheid.nl/onderwerpen/asielbeleid.” – *April 10, 2025*

**Before, during, and after the analysis**

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you explain to me how the causal mechanisms differ from each other, so I have a clear definition of each, for when I analyse articles?” – *May 14, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you help me define this article piece? Is it news, opinion, or a feature?” – *May 25, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you analyse these pieces of text and provide me with a shared summary that highlights the similarities and differences?” – *April 20, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you give me a breakdown of the articles (attached) focusing on the Rwanda asylum plan?” – *April 3, 2025*

**Data Processing Help**

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you give me the percentage breakdown of the four main frames + others detected in the codebook (attached) divided by 1) Newspapers and 2) Countries.” – *May 27, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you give me the percentage breakdown of the characterisation of migrants (migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers), detected in the codebook (attached) divided by 1) Newspapers and 2) Countries.” – *May 24, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you give me the percentage breakdown of the causal mechanisms detected in the codebook (attached) divided by 1) Newspapers and 2) Countries. Please account for both only less restrictive, only more restrictive, both less and more restrictive, and no policy solution detected.” – *May 24, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you give me the percentage breakdown of the moral policy solution detected in the codebook (attached) divided by 1) Newspapers and 2) Countries. Please account for both only less restrictive, only more restrictive, both less and more restrictive, and no policy solution detected.” – *May 23, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “I want to present the data from this table (below). Can you help me determine the best chart to use?” – *June 4, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you help me shorten the explanation of this Chart I made?” – *May 6, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you make a nice table of the character categories from the Netherlands? divided by the ones that start with NLNRC and NLTEL.” – *May 21, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Wait more so the percentages of the most used characters in the dropdown menus. Can you now separate NLNRC and NLTEL?" – *May 21, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “Hey, how are you? I have some numbers that are now divided per month. Could you add up all the numbers together from the same year?" – *May 20, 2025*

**Research Design**

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you help explain to me the difference between sample and universe when talking about a research study?” – *June 1, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “I’m making a qualitative content analysis focusing on migration in the countries of Spain, Denmark, and the Netherlands. How many articles and newspapers would you say I should have in my sample? And what else would be a good idea to take into account?” – *April 5, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “What kind of things are a good idea to take into account when writing an ethical considerations paragraph?” – *May 25, 2025*

- ChatGPT Response to “What are the strengths and limitations of QCA for analyzing news articles?” – *May 16, 2025*

**Formatting, Citing, Translation, and Grammar Help**

- ChatGPT Response to “Can you re-write this in correct English grammar, and just one paragraph?” – *June 2, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Can you make this list alphabetical?” – *May 14, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Can you make this list alphabetical?” – *June 3, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Cite this Chicago style” – *April 8, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Translate this quote into English, and cite it using MLA/Chicago style.” – *May 3, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Hiya can you cite this link in the newest Chicago manual style?” – *April 12, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Can you format these quotes using MLA / Chicago style?” – *April 19, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Can you translate these quotes from these Danish articles and provide the English translation alongside?” – *May 9, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Can you help me cite the articles I analyzed, using the Chicago Style Guide?” – *May 12, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Can you help me shorten and correct the grammar in this text?” – *May 15, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to “Hi Chat gpt, i have quite the request for you. The list and the end of this request needs to be ordered in Chicago manual style, newest edition. And if a doi is present in my list please include it, but don't generate new ones for the sources that don't have a doi in my list. Also please make sure the list is alphabetical. Some sources are not complete, so leave those to me but do please them in their correct alphabetical position. Got it?” – *June 1, 2025*
- ChatGPT Response to "I'm creating a list of the prompts I've given Chat GPT to acknowledge my use of it. This is all the prompts that me and the rest of the group have. Can you organize them without changing them at all, into categories, making it one structured and nicely organized list?" – *June 15, 2025*