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Refugee media framing: Navigating the Victim/ Threat Dichotomy in the good, the bad, and the ugly sides of British media

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**Refugee media framing:
Navigating the Victim/ Threat Dichotomy in the
good, the bad, and the ugly sides of British media**

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Abstract

This thesis examines the divergent framing of refugees in news media, where refugee groups often fall into either a victim or threat category as a result of ‘othering’. Through a qualitative framing analysis of 188 BBC news articles on Syrian and Ukrainian refugee groups, results show Ukrainians consistently framed as victims, fostering European solidarity based on perceived cultural and geographical affinity, categorising them as the ‘in-group’. In contrast, Syrians experience ‘othering’, positioning them as an ‘out-group’ emphasising their threat to receiving countries. Syrian refugees lack a comparable victimisation narrative due to perceived differences, linked to the group’s different cultural identities and origins. This research sheds light on the dynamics of othering and the dichotomy of victim or threat framing in media framing of refugees.

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Introduction

Liberal democracies are generally characterised by a media landscape that aims to be impartial and fair. Therefore, this approach should be extended to reporting on refugee¹ groups (Gunther, 1992). However, contrary to this expectation, evidence reveals a consistent divergence in how various news outlets frame refugee groups. Despite the media's crucial role in shaping perceptions of refugees (Wright, 2002, p. 53), it consistently exhibits the capacity to present contrasting narratives. While compassionate and victimised portrayals exist, recent trends in Western media increasingly depict refugees negatively, emphasising perceived threats to host societies (Esses et al., 2013). This paradox raises the question as to why Western media, despite its commitment to fairness, tends to frame refugee narratives differently, prompting an exploration into whether othering theory may offer insights into this phenomenon.

This thesis claims that refugees originating from regions perceived as part of the Western “in-group”, such as Europe, garner broader sympathy and support in contrast to those originating from “out-group” regions such as the Middle East or other areas (Kotilainen & Pellander, 2022; Staszak, 2009) who are often seen as threats. Such in-group and out-group relations are often rooted within the theory of ‘othering’; through which, individuals and groups in society are categorised into two hierarchical groups: ‘them’ (the out-group) and ‘us’ (the in-group). This unequal power distribution is displayed clearly between refugees and host country citizens (Staszak, 2009), which ultimately manifests within host country news media (Sipahioğlu, 2023, p. 192). Refugee crises have the strong potential to understand identity as tied to political belonging, in large part due to the way the media sustains these ‘us and them’ divisions (Himmel & Baptista, 2020). Therefore my research goal is to dive deeper into the roots of these divisions; aiming to uncover why they manifest in media frames and how the process of othering refugees persists.

¹ This thesis will use the definition by the UNHCR of refugees whereby, “A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence. A refugee has a well-founded fear of persecution of reasons of race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership in a particular social group” (UNHCR, 2023a).

An illustrative example of this, and the disparities of liberal democracies' treatment of refugees in the media, lies in the comparison of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees. While both groups share the same fundamental status as individuals fleeing conflict and seeking safety, their portrayal in Western media reveals striking differences. Therefore, this thesis will explore the reasons as to why such divergent narratives exist and what the implications of this ensues. Through conducting a framing analysis of Western news articles, and gaging an understanding of 'othering' theory, I present the following research question;

Why is there a divergent portrayal of different refugee groups as either victims or threats in news media coverage?

Amid the rapid escalation of Russia's invasion of Ukraine in 2022, extensive news media coverage on both traditional and social platforms across Europe diligently covered the unfolding developments. This has been marked by sentiments of disgust and disapproval regarding the 'unfair' treatment of displaced Ukrainians (De Coninck, 2023). Illustratively, the Bulgarian Prime Minister Kiril Petkov claimed in regards to Ukrainian refugees that, "there is no refugee wave here...there are people with an uncertain past that we are used to and do not know what to do" (Sipahioğlu, 2023, p. 195). Moreover, a commentator from Kyiv, during a live broadcast of the BBC, said: "I see blue-eyed Europeans and blonde-haired children being killed by Putin's missiles every day. These are prosperous middle-class people, not refugees trying to flee areas of the Middle East"². It is clear that in this context, European (namely Ukrainian) refugees are being positioned as 'people like us', whereas Middle Eastern refugees are the expected demographic of refugees. In fact, Kelly Cobiella, a reporter for US television channel NBC reported: "To put it bluntly, these are not refugees from Syria [...] These are refugees from neighbouring Ukraine [...] These are Christians and whites [...] They are very similar to people living in Poland"³. Evidently, the classification of Syrian and Ukrainian refugees is prominently influenced by considerations of race and the concept of 'Europeanness' (Sipahioğlu, 2023, p. 196). Thus, Syrians - not only a different ethnicity than European populations, but predominantly Muslim - are subjected to prejudice and explicit negativity (Wilmott, 2017, p. 67).

² BBC News 01-03-2022: Interview with former deputy prosecutor general of Ukraine.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pU-8gKaUO_Y

³ NBC News Reporter Kelly Cobiella, reporting live. Clip found via Twitter.
https://twitter.com/emad_badi/status/1497998023477051393?lang=en

This persistent disparity in the treatment of Middle Eastern refugees as compared to European refugees presents a perplexing puzzle within the study of refugee treatment. It is at odds with the principles of equality and compassion upheld by the liberal democracies that sustain this differential treatment.

This thesis commences with a comprehensive literature review addressing relevant research, I will subsequently refine the theoretical framework. Following sections will delineate a qualitative framing analysis, grounded in the literature and theory, leading to the presentation of my analytical findings. In conclusion, the research question will be addressed and recommendations for future research.

Literature Review

Recent scholarship on media representation of refugees focuses on their portrayals within the past 30 years, where there is a consensus that media portrayals of refugees are often negative and discriminatory (Cooper et al., 2017; Grimm & Andsager, 2011; Haynes et al., 2016). More specifically, refugees are seen as inherently different to non-displaced citizens. However, this was not always the case. The 1960s gave rise to depictions that frequently portrayed refugees as European, proactive agents or even as heroes. However, a significant shift occurred in popular perceptions as the geographical origins of refugees changed. By the mid-1960s, refugees were no longer seen as white, European individuals promoting affirmative political messages. They were increasingly viewed as impoverished inhabitants of the Global South (Kotilainen & Pellander, 2022), who were becoming alienated in society.

Thus, it becomes evident that over time an ingrained perception has taken root: refugees in the modern era predominantly originate from developing regions and often comprise people of colour. This has led to a change of image of the ‘refugee’ to a first and foremost negative image that contrasts the “Western self” (Kamenova, 2014; Maneri, 2021, p. 6). In fact, while an extensive array of literature has noted how *culture* is employed as a means to establish new delineations, traditional *racial* boundaries are overlooked (Maneri, 2021). This observed “racial state” is one that emphasises European nations’ otherness regarding refugee regulation (Hirsch, 2019). Thus, hostility towards refugees goes beyond a focus on “new arrivals”, and instead concerns the rights of “minorities” in general. This perpetuates an idea that refugees are simply ‘others’, which worsens their existing vulnerability due to their race and minority status (Hirsch, 2019).

As a result, the media's framing of refugees and its effect on anti-immigrant sentiment have important implications for refugee admission and immigration policy (Liu, 2022). Numerous studies have explored this link between media framing and public attitudes towards refugees. For instance, Lawson-Te Aho et al. (2013) found that media framing significantly influenced public opinion, in which positive framing ensures positive outcomes, such as support for refugee resettlement programs. Whereas negative framing has the adverse effect, such as policies that prioritise border control and national security over humanitarian considerations (Hollifield, 2008). Though discussion on both the negative and positive arguments about refugees was once reserved as a characteristic of far-right politics, it is now seeping into a wider scope of non-political discourse (Baker, 2020) - even within liberal democracies.

Literature regarding media framing of refugees discusses how they are depicted as a threat to various aspects of European life, including borders, security, people, social order, and identity (Pruitt, 2019). The pervasive use of terms like 'crisis' and 'border' dominates discussions; characterising the mass movement of refugees as a European challenge (Pruitt, 2019, p. 385). Water-based disaster metaphors, whereby refugees 'flood' Europe's 'porous' borders, further reinforces the frame that refugee movements pose a danger and burden to European countries. Additionally, frames portray refugees as criminals and security threats, often linking them to terrorism (Hickerson & Dunsmore, 2016, p. 425). Refugees depicted as a security threat can result in a negatively perceived narrative. Van Gorp and colleagues (2009) found that news stories framing refugees as intruders were interpreted less positively compared to other framing conditions. Though this literature highlights an alarming concern for the general treatment of refugees, this scope of literature fails to acknowledge that this is not true for *all* groups of refugees.

For example, drawing from a case study on the depiction of Islam and Muslims in the West, (Hopkins, 2009) illustrates how stigmatising specific religious groups of refugees and migrants, gives rise to heightened insecurity that leads to a general association of these groups with terrorism. The media's language choices reflect negative portrayals of Islam, reinforcing stereotypes and perpetuating xenophobic political discourse (Hopkins, 2009, p. 39). Sulaiman-Hill et al., (2011) have similarly studied how Western discourse likens Muslims to a "new ideological virus", contributing to xenophobic attitudes around immigration (p. 347). These portrayals, laden with themes of violence, extremism, and political instability, construct Muslims and Islam as the 'other' (Hopkins, 2009, p. 40).

However this literature undervalues the image of other religious groups of refugees, by focusing on Muslims, which could work to challenge how media about refugees often ignores the differences *between* different refugee groups. While literature highlights the differential treatment of refugees, it does not explain *why* this is.

Nevertheless, literature also presents an alternative: an empathetic and more positive approach to refugee portrayal. Whereby there is the infrequent employment of the “archetypical role of the innocent victim” frame (Van Gorp, 2005, p. 489). According to scholars such as Esses et al. (2013), Greussing & Boomgaarden (2017), and Ramasubramanian & Miles (2018), this perspective depicts refugees as seeking assistance in democratic nations due to persecution in their home country or circumstances beyond their control. For example, a study by Zhang (2005) examining the United States’ media coverage of immigration during 2004, unveiled that the *LA Times* primarily emphasised minority empowerment and defended immigrants’ entitlement to engage in the realm of national politics. Moreover, Rimpiläinen (2020), who studied refugee representation in Donbas and Crimea in Ukrainian and Russian media, found that the number of negative articles in both newspapers was relatively low, and positive or neutral articles dominated. Whilst these examples refute the existence of only negative framing of refugees, this treatment only extends to refugees originating from *within* Europe’s borders. However, there are instances when refugees are also described as “vulnerable black and brown bodies, often devoid of clothing and on the brink of starvation” (Kotilainen & Pellander, 2022, p. 283) - an attempted distinction. Such contributions demonstrate how the media *can* present a humanitarian and more victim-like framing of refugees. Still, while intentions may be innocent, portraying refugees as helpless and vulnerable may cause further dehumanisation of refugees, perpetuating a power dynamic defined by pity (Kotilainen & Pellander, 2022, p. 283). As a result, there is sustained construction of a homogeneous majority in-group, opposing the homogeneous out-group (Rizvi, 2011).

While this perception partially reflects the demographic realities of modern refugee flows, it is an oversimplified narrative that leads to harmful generalisations and stereotypes in Western societies; which proves that literature is disreputable by grouping all refugees together. This sustains the puzzle at hand; if all refugees are a collective out-group, then why are there divisions and distinctions within this group in western discourse?

This dilemma is often tied to the concept of ‘othering’, in which scholars have discussed how refugee groups fall victim to the process of alienation, inherent in “othering behaviours” (Mensing, 2016). As articulated by Rahman (2014), the ‘other’ has now become the focus of “fear, concern and suspicion” (p. 1). This phenomenon is evident in news discourse, where the perceived threat presented by refugees is magnified in order to underscore the necessity for government and/or community intervention. Here, othering accentuates ‘us’ versus ‘them’ dynamics, which mainstream media reinforces and bolsters the resurgence of national identities⁴. This is thought to safeguard the moral and civilised ‘us’ from the dangerous ‘them’ (Haw, 2023). Regarding refugees, the construction of ‘the refugee’ across discourse derives from a relationship between the self-image of developed countries as charitable or saviours, and the refugee as the vulnerable or burdensome ‘other’ (Olsen et al., 2016). This is most apparent when we consider the way in which they are spoken about; they are not spoken of as men, women and children, but as a different entity entirely (for example, they are “refugee men and women”). This continued distinction separates them from nation populations, suggesting that their collective existence within our boundaries is not one in which they belong to (Olsen et al., 2016, p. 61). They are confined to the ‘other’ in order to distinguish them from majority groups in society and in host countries. However, assigning refugees to a collective group status is dangerous, as it homogenises their identity and discredits the diversity within displaced populations.

However, individuals such as Dauvergne (2005) have argued that creating the stark distinction between refugees and citizens is essential as refugees “must be not like us in order to need our protection” (p. 126). Despite this argument, this is not always the case as society often becomes desensitised to experiences of refugees, leading to a normalisation of their suffering. The innate quality of empathy tends to wane when we lack a personal connection or stake in a given situation, or when belonging to a different social or cultural group (Cikara et al., 2011), or even physically and geographically distant. This phenomenon is particularly striking in developed, Western societies where there is a growing insensitivity to the struggles of those displaced and affected by conflict, particularly in non-developing areas (Dodds, 2022). Over time, these (non-developed or non-Western) societies appear to resign to accepting their misfortune as an unfortunate destiny. Nonetheless, despite refugees being a group that typically evokes sympathy, there are still notable distinctions regarding feelings towards different *groups* of refugees.

⁴ The concept of national identities can influence the perception of refugees, by leading to the formation of “us and them” divisions. Differences in culture, economic concerns, security anxieties, and political rhetoric can contribute to the construction of a host nation's identity as distinct from that of refugees, fostering exclusionary attitudes and hindering social integration (Noronha, 2004).

To illustrate, refugees originating from regions considered an “in-group” to the West, such as Europe, often receive more widespread sympathy and support compared to those from the Middle East or other regions (Kotilainen & Pellander, 2022; Sipahioğlu, 2023). This discrepancy poses a puzzling question because, in essence, both groups are composed of individuals fleeing conflict or persecution, and their refugee status should logically elicit a similar, if not the same, level of empathy and assistance. Examples include white Europeans portrayed as “legitimate political refugees who had no need to prove their suffering”, in direct contrast with Somali asylum seekers who, in the 1990s, did not appear to be “starving enough” (Kotilainen & Pellander, 2022, p. 288). Moreover, it seems that compassion for refugees originating from the Middle East or Africa only occurs when inscribed with suffering from harsh physical conditions or starvation.

This further reinforces the conundrum at hand; despite the prevalent tendency to categorise refugees as ‘other’ in society, there is evidence to suggest that even within the general refugee categorisation, there exists a striking contrast in the treatment individuals receive based on their country of origin. A closer examination of the experiences documented across literature reveals how the nuances of their origins and differences in characteristics significantly impact their reception and integration in host countries (Himmel & Baptista, 2020). Understanding these distinctions is vital for developing more equitable and compassionate responses to the refugee movements.

Overall, existing studies have demonstrated that media representations of refugees are often oversimplified and stereotypical. The choice of frames, such as the ‘victim’ or ‘threat’ frame, can influence public empathy or fear towards refugees (Entman, 2012). Concurrently, the literature addressing refugees as threats is more prevalent in political and policy-oriented discussions, but is seeping into wider discourse. Exploring how and why framing *differs* based on the origins of refugee groups is an essential yet overlooked area in political science. This research gap represents an opportunity to enrich the quality and depth of existing literature in the field.

Theoretical Framework

This theoretical framework is based on the theory of othering, which stipulates that the media possesses the capability to categorise individuals and groups as the ‘other’, using various

framing methods. Below I will define what ‘othering’ entails, as well as elaborate on the concept of framing, and elucidate what these specific categories are.

Othering theory

Othering has been around for centuries, with this concept often coinciding with the idea of identity formation, especially amongst minorities, which provides a valuable framework for understanding the dynamics of identity construction and social categorization. This thesis will use the definition by Lister (2004), in which othering is **“a process of differentiation and demarcation [...] which is drawn between ‘us’ and ‘them’ - between the more and less powerful - and through which social distance is established and maintained”** (Jensen, 2011; Lister, 2004). This particular definition is selected for its emphasis on the uneven power dynamic (resulting from othering); a focal point frequently underscored in refugee literature.

The implicit use of ‘othering’ techniques, separates groups of refugees from the rest of society. It is essential to this concept that “one’s own identity is secured by distancing and stigmatising another” (Grove & Zwi, 2006). Therefore, we witness a dominant group (the “in-group”), constructing one or more “out-groups” (Jensen, 2011; Staszak, 2009). This is done by disparaging a difference, albeit real or imagined, which negates their identity. As a result, it creates hierarchical structures through an ‘us’ and ‘them’ division. Whereby, the ‘them’ group often compromises a perception as inferior and less important, thus marginalisation and discrimination is more likely to occur (Joffe, 2011). In fact, persistent use of dichotomous ‘us and them’ labels serves only the interest of those in the ‘us’ group as it entrenches the vulnerability amongst the ‘them’ group. This not only perpetuates harmful divisions in society but also hinders cooperation and empathy amongst different groups (Staszak, 2009). When the in-group is perceived as ‘us’, it brings a sense of superiority. These divisions can arise from a range of factors including differences in nationality, ethnicity, culture or religion - nowadays, it is also applied to political affiliations. Evidently, asymmetry in power relations is also central to this concept; in which the dominant group in society is the one in position to impose a higher value of their identity and devalue the identity of others. As Staszak (2009) explains, “dominant out-groups are others precisely because they are subject to the categories and practices of the dominant in-group and because they are unable to prescribe their own norms” (p.2). Therefore, marginalised groups in society do not have the “power” to establish their own standards or rules, so largely remain

within their categorisation as the ‘other’. As these divisions become ingrained in societal and political discourse, these distinctions become arbitrary and refugees remain inferior to host society, which is translated in the way they are reported.

The framework of this thesis is rooted in the observation that despite the existence of news articles that ‘others’ refugees by delineating them as distinct entities within society, it is often done so through two discernible categories. By which, characterises refugees within the binary of victims or threats, a paradigm that contributes to this process of othering.

Framing

Framing refers to a **“schemata of interpretation”** (Goffman, 1974; Liu, 2023, p. 8). Specifically, framing ensues **“an emphasis on certain aspects of an issue by media outlets, shaping the way audiences interpret and understand the news”** (Carter, 2013). Goffman's (1974) work laid the foundation for framing theory, emphasising how media constructs a frame around an event or issue, influencing public perception. Entman (1993) argues that media framing contributes to the construction of ‘others’ by highlighting differences between social groups. In the context of refugees, framing can lead to the portrayal of certain groups as more deserving or threatening, reinforcing societal divisions and stereotypes. This deliberate framing strategy accentuates the differences between the host population and refugees while reinforcing pre-existing stereotypes and biases (Teo, 2000). Analysing framing techniques for refugee groups discerns the presence or absence of 'othering'. Focusing on two specific frames, the victim and threat frames, refines this examination.

The frames: the victim/threat dichotomy

Whilst refugees are tied to a multitude of frames, this thesis will refine its analysis on what Kotilainen & Pellander (2022) have labelled, the **“victim-threat dichotomy”** (p. 280). Here, refugees can be framed as the “archetypal role of innocent victims” or in complete contrast, as “threatening outsiders” (Kotilainen & Pellander, 2022; Van Gorp, 2005). Media coverage of large-scale arrivals of refugees in the past decade, especially during the 2015 refugee influx, oscillated between this victimisation and threat characterisation of those crossing European borders. Kotilainen & Pellander (2022) found that refugees headed for Europe become a threat unless they meet certain conditions in order to qualify as a victim (p. 286). This thesis will use the threat/ victim dichotomy to explore this further, aiming to investigate what the conditions are for both victims and threats. First, I will outline both categories.

The **victimisation** of refugees entails framing them as **individuals or groups who have suffered as a result of circumstances beyond their control, such as war or fear of persecution. This framing will emphasise their vulnerability and need of protection** (Akgul et al., 2021; Jupp, 2003). The portrayal of victimhood is a recurring stereotype associated with refugees, perpetuated across various national contexts to depict displaced individuals of diverse ethnicities and national origins (Pandir, 2020). Personal narratives, ethnographic studies, and humanitarian discourses often emphasise this vulnerability and suffering of refugees, evoking empathy and underscoring the moral imperative for assistance (Boltanski, 1999; Malkki, 1996). The victimisation narrative is often discerned through poignant accounts of refugees' experiences, highlighting the traumas of conflict, persecution, and displacement. Therefore, themes such as innocence, family and children, loss and trauma and their suffering (mentally and physically) will be present for this frame. Describing the background, motivations, and living conditions of refugees in motion connects the victim frame to the human-interest frame (KhosraviNik, 2009). This linkage is evident as the victimisation frame often employs an emotional approach to personalise and dramatise the refugee narrative, as noted by Steimel (2010).

In contrast, framing refugees as **threats** entails **individuals or groups that present potential risks or challenges to the host country**. Existing literature has shown that this frame is employed through hard news topics that focus on economic, cultural or security concerns that correlate with the influx of refugees (Blumell et al., 2020, p. 163). Here, refugees are framed as economic burdens, security risks, or even cultural challenges to the receiving community (Haddad, 2008; Salehyan, 2008). Indicators of the threat narrative can be identified through language that depicts refugees as a drain on resources, potential sources of social instability, as competitors for jobs and public services or even terrorism (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017; Innes, 2010). Focusing on the sensational aspects of their journeys or highlighting negative incidents can contribute to a distorted view of refugee populations (Cottle, 2011).

Thus, media framing plays a role in the process of othering by shaping the way people perceive and understand social groups. By selectively highlighting aspects of stories and using language that reinforce stereotypes, the media fosters an 'us versus them' mentality towards refugees.

Referred to herein as the victim/threat dichotomy, this study seeks to systematically analyse when and how each framing is employed within news articles regarding different

refugee groups. By leveraging a framing analysis, this thesis will uncover the underlying mechanisms that shape the narratives surrounding these two distinct groups. The victim or threat categorisations within the existing literature form the backdrop against which the framing analysis will be conducted. By acknowledging the interplay between victimisation and threat frames, this theoretical framework will discern patterns, identify contextual factors influencing these framings, and unveil the implicit indicators that contribute to the portrayal of refugees in these divergent lights.

Research Design

Methodology

This thesis will employ a news media framing analysis as a method for investigating the research question. Media framing analysis centres on examining how the media portrays a particular subject by highlighting specific issues while potentially sidelining others (Provalis Research, n.d.). The media serves as a portal to the global landscape, offering individuals insights into their own society and others, shedding light on institutions, leadership dynamics, lifestyles, and the diverse perspectives of nations and peoples worldwide. The primary goal of news is to inform us about what is desired, necessary, and crucial for our awareness (Harcup, 2023). However, akin to any framework shaping our understanding of the world, it may not always align with the objective truth. Thus, this thesis will use a framing analysis to investigate whether this is the case for different refugee groups, and which frame applies to which refugee group. I aim to determine if narratives align with established stereotypes or show variations.

This will be done by establishing two coding frames: victim and threat. Upon the selection of the data, each source will be analysed line by line - including the headline and sub-heading of each article. Either frame will be applied (when present) to sentences and phrases of a minimum three words, to ensure the whole context is understood. Therefore, singular word analysis is omitted from analysis because it will not encapsulate the whole framing or its strategic use within the text. Furthermore, to avoid an oversimplified assignment of frames, an additional coding stage will be applied. This will discern and sort the data into refined sub-themes that are largely based on recurring themes in existing refugee literature - examples of which can be found in Table 1 and detailed explanations of which can be found

in the appendix. This additional layer of coding, based on recurring themes in refugee literature outlined in the theoretical framework, will capture variations within the victim and threat framing strategies in order to understand *why* news media reports refugees in such a way. Furthermore, quotations were not confined to individual sub-codes; instances were frequent where quotes intersected across two or more categories.

Table 1: Defining the coding frames, based on theoretical framework

Frame	Definition	Further expansion on frame; i.e. themes	Examples
Victim	Refugees as individuals/ groups who have suffered, as a result of circumstances that are not in their control; such as, war or fear of persecution. This framing emphasises their vulnerability and need for protection.	Innocence Unfairness/ Undeserving Family/ Children (European) Solidarity Loss and Trauma Death and Injury Water; Boats and drowning Altruism; Humanitarian aid and assistance Magnitude of suffering	<i>“Opening our homes and our hearts”</i> <i>“The European Union must do more to support...”</i> <i>“Impressive wave of goodwill from volunteers”</i> <i>“They are most deserving of billions in aid and donations”</i> <i>“Body of the three-year-old boy washed ashore”</i> <i>“Butchered his own people”</i>
Threat	Refugees as individuals/ groups who present potential risks or challenges to the host country. This framing often focuses on economic, cultural or safety concerns that are often correlated with an influx of refugees.	Security; Terrorism and Crime Pressure and Challenges Overpopulation/ Magnitude Financial/ economic constraints Burden-sharing Culture/ Religious Concerns Illegality Public Health Concerns	<i>“Germany has been overwhelmed with the number of people fleeing...”</i> <i>“An unfair burden on the European Union”</i> <i>“Detain and remove those coming in illegally”</i> <i>“Muslim extremists”</i> <i>“Cost to the taxpayer of taking in Syrian children ranges from £10,720...”²</i>

Case selection

The UK and BBC

The United Kingdom serves as an exemplary case for testing the hypothesis surrounding divergent narratives regarding different refugee groups. The selection is grounded in the UK's cultural diversity, historical role in international affairs, and the distinct media landscape. The publication language being English also makes it an accessible case to use. Despite exiting the EU, the UK's significant role in European politics shapes its response to refugee crises, impacting media coverage. Thus, public discourse on immigration and multiculturalism in the UK further reflects societal attitudes that media narratives can reinforce or challenge.

Moreover, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) emerges as a key media source for this analysis due to its perceived impartiality and widespread (free) accessibility (Bélair-Gagnon, 2013; Lin, 2012). The BBC, as a public service broadcaster, is generally regarded as a reliable and impartial news outlet in the UK (Lewis & Cushion, 2019). Its commitment to representing diverse perspectives and maintaining editorial independence positions it as an influential platform for shaping public discourse. Furthermore, its reputation as a credible and trusted news broadcaster means that its audience is not limited to the British public, but also worldwide, which is valuable when considering its effects on public perception (Nielsen et al., 2023).

Syrian and Ukrainian refugees

The comparison of two refugee groups will be used to investigate media framing: Syrian and Ukrainian.

The Syrian refugee influx can be attributed to the protracted and devastating conflict that began in 2011. The eruption of the Syrian Civil War, characterised by widespread violence, displacement, and human rights violations, forced millions of Syrians to flee their homes in search of safety. The year 2015 will forever be remembered for the "crisis" that put EU members under severe pressure regarding their national capacities to process, accommodate and care for asylum seekers (ICMPD, 2015; Peters et al., 2023). This increased flow of refugees brought the topic of immigration to the forefront of media and public discourse.

Moreover, on February 24, 2022, the Russian army invaded Ukraine. This invasion was widely condemned by the vast majority of the international community, for not only breaking international law but also for violating Ukrainian sovereignty

(Zawadzka-Paluckta, 2023, p. 96). Within just 12 days of Russia's invasion of Ukraine more than two million people fled the country, with the UNHCR, predicting millions more to come in the weeks that followed. This instigated one of the largest refugee migrations within the European continent since the Second World War. The UNHCR has forecasted that the cumulative count of individuals displaced as a result reached 8 million (Sales, 2023; UNHCR, 2023b).

The choice of Syrian and Ukrainian refugee groups for this study is deliberate, aiming to assess the influence of the "othering" phenomenon on media narratives. Syrians, originating from the Middle East, are likely to be perceived as culturally distinct from the UK, potentially reinforcing the "us vs. them" paradigm. On the other hand, Ukrainians, being European and geographically closer, might be more readily perceived as part of the collective 'us'. This comparative approach allows for an exploration of whether perceived cultural proximity to the host country affects the framing of refugee groups and contributes to varying public attitudes and policy responses.

Data and time frame

This thesis employs a methodologically strategic sampling approach, focusing on all articles published by the BBC during the peak influx of refugees, per group, in Europe and the UK. For the 2015 Syrian refugee group, data is collected from all BBC articles published regarding this refugee group within the month of September 2015; the period when Syrian refugee arrivals in Europe reached its zenith. Similarly, for the ongoing 2022 Ukrainian refugee movement, the month of the peak influx of Ukrainian refugees following the Russian invasion in February, was March 2022. Therefore all articles published by the BBC in March 2022 regarding this group, are analysed.

Upon the establishment of this sample, a meticulous reassessment of the articles was undertaken to ensure not only their relevance to each respective country, but also their thematic relevance to the subject of refugees. This resulted in 85 articles in September 2015 regarding Syrian refugees and 103 articles published in March 2022 regarding Ukrainian refugees. All 188 articles were analysed for this study.

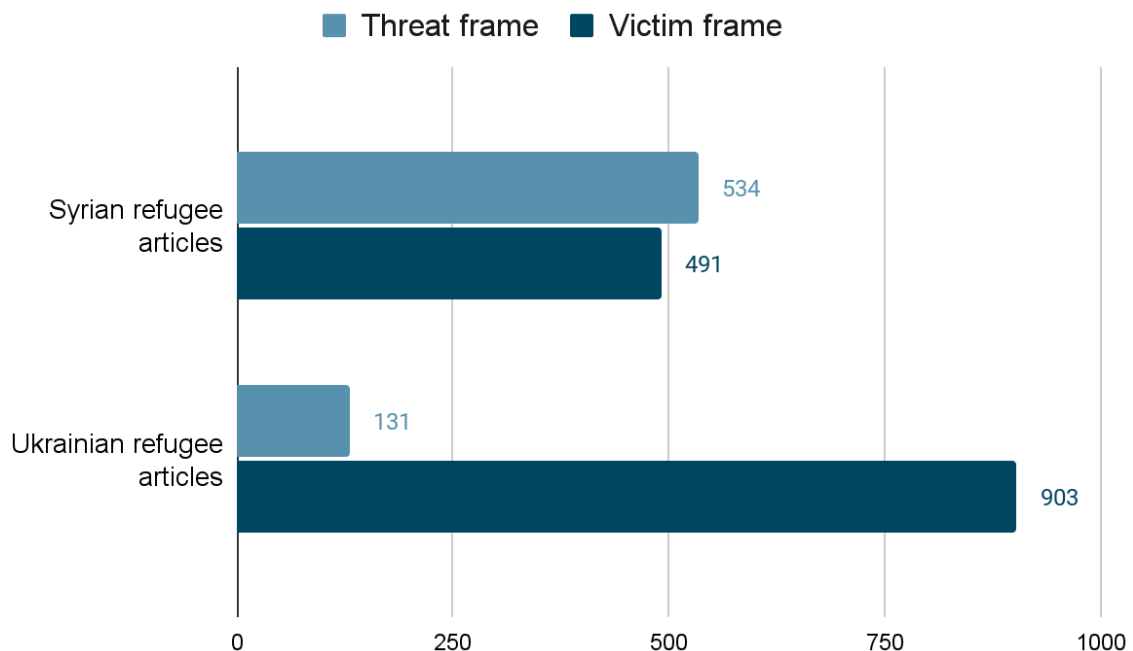
Discussion of Results

Examining all 188 BBC articles emphasised the importance of framing and its consequential impact on the perception of the subject. The results of this framing analysis, within specified time frames, are presented in Table 3 and Graph 1, revealing a total of 2059 instances of using either the victim or threat frame. The following section will begin to discuss these results, in order to move closer towards answering the research question.

Table 3: Overview of results, per frame and crisis in total percentages of all the data

	<i>Threat frame</i>	<i>Victim frame</i>
<i>Syrian refugee case</i>	<i>52.1%</i>	<i>47.9%</i>
<i>Ukrainian refugee case</i>	<i>12.7%</i>	<i>87.3%</i>
<i>Across both cases</i>	<i>32.3%</i>	<i>67.7%</i>

Graph 1: Total number of quotations, per frame and refugee crisis



Overall, the victim frame constituted the majority, comprising 67.7% of the total instances, across all articles. However, a noteworthy discrepancy emerged when scrutinising the

distribution within each refugee group. Specifically, 64.8% of the victim framing instances pertained to Ukrainian refugees, while only 35.2% applied to Syrians. This uneven distribution challenges the notion of a prevailing victim frame when considering both refugee groups collectively. Contrastingly, the threat frame, accounting for 32.3% of the overall instances, demonstrated a distinctive pattern. Remarkably, 80.3% of the threat framing was applied to Syrian refugees, emphasising a predominant portrayal of Syrians as threats compared to Ukrainians. Table 3 (as visualised in Graph 1), however, offers an alternative perspective, by exploring the percentage of each frame for each group. This demonstrates that the use of victim and threat frame was more balanced for the Syrian articles (with the threat frame still prevailing), but for Ukrainian articles the victim frame clearly dominated, at almost 90.0% of the total data collected for this group.

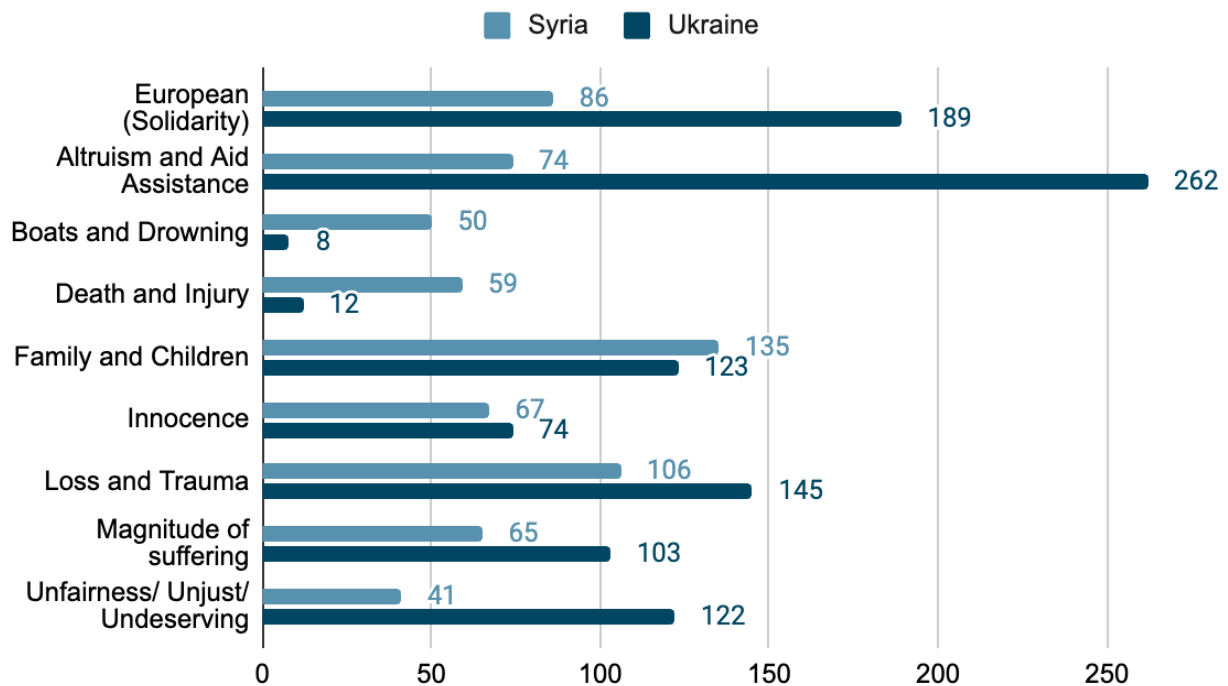
Generally, for Ukrainians, there is sympathy and active involvement in the conflict. Articles are replete with expressions such as “this could have been us” or “we like to think that if this happened to us someone would do the same”. In contrast, the Syrian refugee influx, represents a divergence from (European) democratic norms and was strongly condemned by the UN and EU. The Syrian civil war, characterised by “a government harming its own citizens” (ICMPD, 2015), deviates from expectations aligned with European principles and values⁵. Consequently, Syrians are relegated to the status of an ‘out-group’, denoted as ‘them’, given the incongruence between the nature of the conflict and European democratic ideals. The portrayal of Syrians as others is underscored by the perception that such internal conflict, antithetical to European principles, would not transpire within the confines of Europe. Perhaps even that this is ‘someone else’s fight’, which was often a frame presented in articles that urged Syria’s neighbours to step up in aid of Europe.

To delve further into these instances and framing patterns, a detailed examination of the sub-codes becomes imperative.

⁵ Evidently, the Syrian civil war has represented a major policy issue for the EU and “on [a] political level, this strategy [on Syria] certifies the EU’s **opposition to any form of normalisation with the Syrian regime** and firmness in upholding the sanctions system”. Derived from UN [Security Council Resolution 2254 \(2015\)](#)

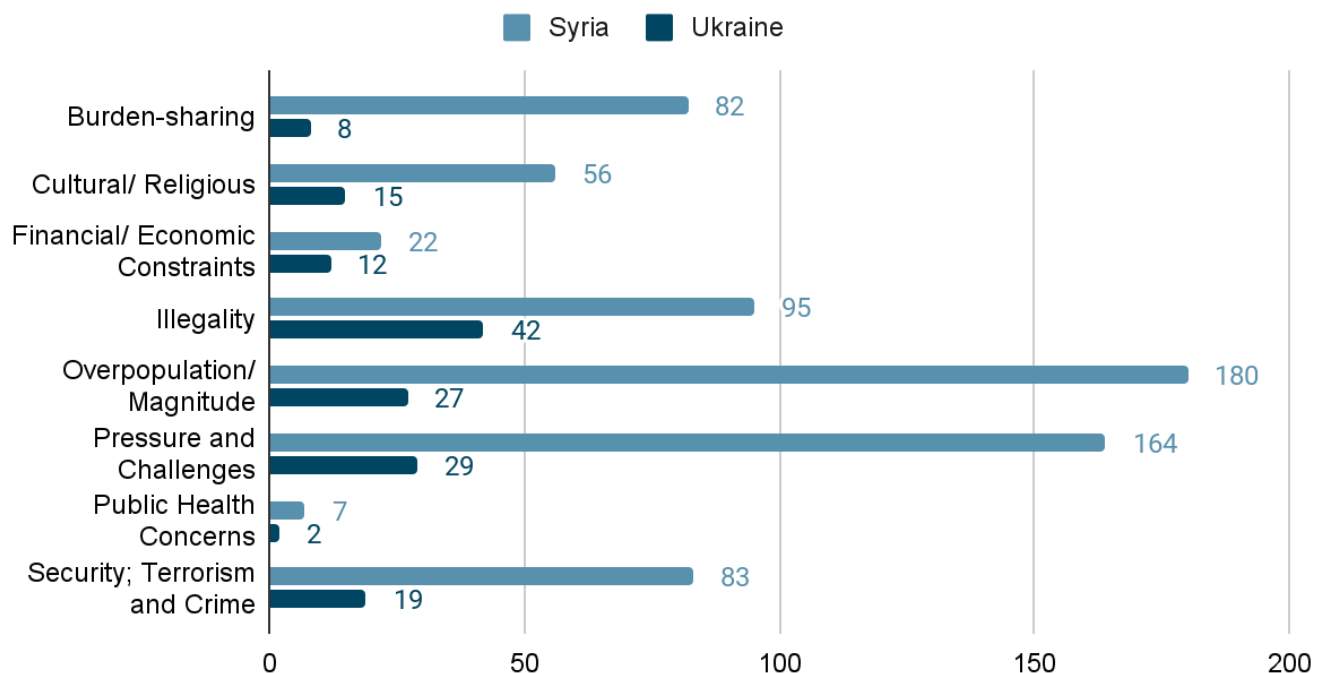
Graph 2a: Graph to show number of quotations, per sub-code for victim framing

Sub-codes for victim framing



Graph 2b: Graph to show number of quotations, per sub-code for threat framing

Sub-codes for threat framing



Sub-codes, as indicators of the ways refugees are framed within each category (as depicted in Graph 2a and 2b), offer crucial insights into the nuanced narratives observed. Table 5 depicts which sub-code was the most popular within each frame, for each refugee group. Thus, the following section will begin by dissecting this table in order to explore *why* either frame was applied by the BBC. In doing so, additional patterns in the data, including analysis of other sub-codes, will be presented and discussed.

Table 5: Most frequently applied sub-codes, in percentages, per frame and refugee case

	Threat frame	Victim frame
Syrian refugee group	33.7% ³ (Overpopulation/ Magnitude)	27.5% (Family and Children)
Ukrainian refugee group	22.1% (Illegality)	29.0% (Aid assistance and Altruism)

The results shown in Table 5 indicate that the BBC predominantly employed threat framing in articles about Syrian refugees, with **‘Overpopulation and Magnitude’** being this group’s most frequent sub-code at 33.7% of total threat framing. For Ukrainians, the sub-code was only present for 2.6% of its frames. This choice reflects the perception of Syrian refugees as a threat due to their sheer numbers, utilising framing techniques that highlight a formidable burden for host countries. Examples include article headlines like “Germany readies for 40,000 arrivals” or “massive influx of refugees heading for Europe,” emphasising large numbers as significant challenges to governmental resources. By highlighting the enormity of the situation, the BBC cultivates a frame that positions Syrian refugees not as individuals in need but as a collective force that strains the capacities of host nations; fostering a sense of threat. Existing literature has discussed how journalism employs media “sensationalism”, “driven by hyperbole”, in which the large-scale of refugee movements becomes the focal point of refugee stories, coinciding with a negative framing (Greenslade, 2015). Therefore, these results of the Syrian group agree with existing findings, but why this framing technique is at large for the Syrian articles, and not Ukrainian, Syrian is puzzling when considering that Ukrainian refugees also arrived in millions to the receiving countries (UNHCR, 2023b).

This puzzle is similar to that of the one derived from the sub-code **‘Magnitude of Suffering’** within the victim frame: present for 38.7% of Syrian articles and 61.3% for Ukrainian articles. This sub-code victimises refugees by emphasising the masses of people suffering, focusing on the humanitarian aspect rather than their potential threat or strain to receiving countries. Both refugee groups inevitably suffer as a result of their forced displacement but astonishingly, the total use of this sub-code for Ukrainian articles was double that for Syrians. Here, Ukrainian refugees are framed as experiencing an unfortunate circumstance characterised by millions of victims forced to leave their home country, with ensuing large-scale suffering depicted through numerical representations. Illustrative instances, within either context, include references to “hundreds of people crammed in a basement” or “waited three long days on the Polish border”, or “dozens found dead on a beach after attempting to reach European shores in a boat”. This was most conspicuous for Ukrainian refugees, in which this frame underscores the scale of suffering attributable to Russia’s actions.

The employment of both **‘Magnitude of Suffering’** and **‘Overpopulation/ Magnitude’**, points to an understanding of the border context, the *causal factors* of each influx. This causative connection is accentuated by framing Ukrainians as innocent victims, undeserving of their need to flee due to Russia’s responsibility for the war. Russia’s actions prompted a response from the EU and the UK, owing to Ukraine’s endeavours to strengthen ties with NATO⁶ and the EU, suggesting that this causative factor creates a personal stake for European hosts. Examples include sentiments such as “this is not right”, “Ukrainian civilians did nothing wrong but have to leave their lives behind” or “because Russia did this”. Yet, this is conflicting considering that Syrians, similarly not responsible for their conflict, did not receive the same victim framing in articles. Their influx, originating in 2011 due to an uprising against the Syrian government led by President Bashar al-Assad, had limited BBC coverage during the specified timeframe. This prompts consideration that the nature of the Syrian war may not be as pressing for Europe and the UK. Thus, questions arise as to which refugee group faced unfairness and whether each case was just or not.

The presence of the sub-code **‘Unjust/ Unfairness’** can prompt readers to interpret either influx as being ‘right’ or ‘wrong’, determining if their treatment is fair or not. 74.8% of this sub-code was present within the Ukrainian context, inferring that their experience is underserved and wrong. However, for Syrians, this frame is not as salient. Whilst there were

⁶ “NATO Allies agreed at the 2008 Bucharest Summit that Ukraine will become a member of NATO” and as a result, “NATO is helping Ukraine defend itself against Russia’s aggression by coordinating Ukraine’s requests for assistance and supporting Allies [UK and EU] in the delivery of humanitarian and non-lethal aid” ([NATO, 2023](#)).

examples of unjust causes of the Syrian refugee influx, “Assad butchered his own people”, these quotes were often overshadowed by placing emphasis on their decision to “journey across the Mediterranean towards Europe” rather than seeking refuge in their Middle Eastern counterparts. Van Gorp (2005) found that refugees are victimised when emphasis is placed on their displacement (as a result of fear of persecution), which equates to an urge to protect them. Whilst this finding is consistent with Ukrainians, it is not as prevalent for Syrians.

The framing of this refugee group does not criticise *fleeing* their country but rather their ‘choice’ to head for European borders. Consequently, the EU and UK place a greater focus on the burden of Syrian refugees, reflected in 91.1% of quotations of the **‘Burden-sharing’** sub-code being within the Syrian context. Portraying refugees as a burden, especially for the UK and EU, often intertwines economic, cultural, and security concerns, fueling the perception of them as a potential threat (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017). This framing is consistent with existing findings that emphasise challenges refugees bring, such as the strain on resources, cultural differences, and potential security risks, impose considerable pressure on host countries (Innes, 2010). Existing literature does not acknowledge that this emphasis, however, is present for some refugee groups and absent for others.

This aligns strongly with the sub-code **‘Pressure/Challenges’** (present 79.6% for Syrian articles and 20.4% for Ukrainian articles), that underscores the challenges a crisis brings when it is perceived as outside their responsibility or sphere of action. For example, statements within Syrian articles like, “Europe has struggled to cope with some 150,000 migrants”, not only illustrates how numbers can portray substantial difficulties, but emphasises that ‘Europe’ is distinct to these ‘migrants’. The large numbers of refugees are sensationalised to create a sense of urgency or crisis for readers and easily garners their attention (Greenslade, 2015). As existing studies have found, framing refugees primarily as sheer numbers, exacerbates existing fears or biases within a society which emphasises the threat of refugees as a burden or risk to national security (Hickerson & Dunsmore, 2016). Despite signalling a considerable number of individuals experiencing hardship, this framing redirects attention towards the formidable challenges confronting the countries receiving them. This also supports a narrative whereby refugees are ‘intruding’ borders amid concerns for national economic and security threats (Van Gorp, 2005). However, literature often overlooks the *variations* of this framing across different refugee groups; as evidenced by this sub-code prevailing for Syrians.

Notwithstanding the overall higher use of the threat frame in Syrian articles, the analysis reveals a nuanced picture with just a 4.2 % difference between the deployment of the threat and victim frames. Notably, the victim frame was most prevalent for Syrians within the sub-code of **'Family and Children'**. The BBC strategically portrayed Syrian refugees, particularly emphasising children and women, a demographic that often garners more public support. Research suggests that focusing on children and women in humanitarian appeals tends to evoke greater empathy and charitable responses from the audience. Quotes detailing the number of children seeking refuge or families torn apart during the journey were recurrent in the articles; examples include "the dangers children and families are taking in search of a better life" and "influx of young grateful families from Syria". Comparatively, Ukrainian articles shared similar themes but highlighted the draft of men over 18 into the war. The emphasis on Syrian men's sacrifices, often dying in front of their families, contributes to a greater surge of support for this group, momentarily transcending the contested discourse on immigration and refugees. Thus, this framing technique, honing in on society's most vulnerable demographic, momentarily allows readers to humanise refugees as innocent children and mothers, potentially shaping public sentiment amidst the contentious immigration discourse in the UK.

Contrarily, Ukrainian refugees already garner more sympathy, and thus 'in-group' readers (those identifying with Ukrainians) have more urgency to take *action*. This is made evident by the sub-code **'Altruism and Aid assistance'** - the most used victim frame for Ukrainian refugees at 29.0%. Through this framing approach, the BBC portrays this refugee group as highly vulnerable and desperately needing assistance. By highlighting the human tragedy, the media aims to shape public opinion towards a narrative that urges host countries to extend help and support. In general, this framing often encourages viewers to see refugees not as a burden but as individuals facing dire circumstances, fostering a sense of moral obligation for host countries to provide assistance and refuge. Here, the BBC's concerted effort to urge aid and assistance for Ukrainian refugees, coupled with stories highlighting the UK's altruistic responses without expecting anything in return, serves to underscore the Ukrainian refugee group as ultimate victims of a crisis beyond their control. By emphasising the compassionate actions of host nations and communities, the media reinforces a narrative that positions Ukrainians as innocent recipients of support rather than as potential threats.

Consequently, a salient sub-code emerges in the Ukrainian context: **'(European) solidarity'**, present for 68.7% within a Ukrainian context but only 32.3% for Syria. This sub-code,

similar to **Altruism/Aid Assistance**, distinguishes itself by highlighting that solidarity with a refugee group doesn't always lead to tangible action; instead, it emphasises the shared (cultural) identity between refugees and host society. In the Ukrainian context, there was a clear manifestation of robust European solidarity from both the British government and the general population toward Ukrainians: “they are like us [...] we cannot stand for this” and “helping our European brothers and sisters”, which categorise Ukrainians as the ‘in-group’ (Staszak, 2009).

Numerous articles depict British families hosting Ukrainian refugees and engaging in anti-invasion protests, exemplified by “many volunteers willingly open their homes to Ukrainians”. This solidarity, rooted in a shared European identity, aligns with literature highlighting cultural distinctions among refugees (Maneri, 2021). In contrast, solidarity for Syrian refugees, lacking emphasis on shared identity or culture, predominantly originates from a minority in the public, distinct from government officials, seen in calls such as “please let’s use our collective voices to make change and demand that our world leaders take action now”.

Interestingly, the threat sub-code **‘Culture/ Religion’** (present 2.7% for Syrians and 0.7% for Ukrainians), was not as strongly present overall with only 3.4% examples total. Whilst this was more present for Syrians, these results limit the extent to which we can suggest that this was an *explicit* framing technique used to ‘other’ this refugee group.

This portrayal taps into a shared sense of empathy and a recognition that, under different circumstances, the roles could have been reversed; themes present within the **‘Unfairness/ Undeserving’** and **‘Innocence’** sub-code, each predominantly higher percentages for Ukrainian articles than Syria⁷. Quoting interviewees expressing sentiments like “this could have been us” or “we have to help” illustrates a collective understanding that such crises are unpredictable, and in the face of adversity, there is a hope for reciprocal compassion. This aligns with the previously mentioned cause of the Ukraine war: Russia, which could have targeted the UK or another European country. As a result, it not only emphasises the vulnerability of Ukrainian refugees but also appeals to a universal human connection, fostering a narrative of shared responsibility and empathy. This aligns with Cikara et al., (2011), who observed that our empathy tends to be stronger when we have a personal

⁷ The ‘Innocence’ subcode was present for 47.5% for Syrians and 52.5% for Ukrainians, a notably balanced distribution. The ‘Undeserving/ Undeserving’ sub-code was present for 25.2% for Syrians, but 74.8%, which is significantly higher for one refugee group over the other.

connection or vested interest in a situation. While Syrian articles did demonstrate empathy, it didn't evoke a strong urge for action.

Nonetheless, there was still (minimal) evidence to suggest that threat framing was present for the Ukrainian group, most present with the **'Illegality'** sub-code at 22.1% (in contrast to 26.8% for Syrian content). This sub-code revealed concerns about illegal immigration infiltrating European and UK borders, under the guise of Ukrainians seeking refuge. The BBC reported incidents like the "illegal transfer of hundreds of Ukrainian children" and the UK's practice of "detaining and swiftly removing adults regardless of their asylum claim". This application of the threat frame sheds light on a less emphasised aspect of the Ukrainian refugee influx: while EU host countries and the UK, expressed a willingness to aid fleeing Ukrainians, there are still legal constraints with issues like documentation and asylum rights impacting the reception of refugees. This nuance is often overshadowed in media narratives of European refugee groups, but in this study was the biggest threat sub-code for them.

* * *

Throughout the analysis of sub-codes, a discernible pattern emerges which portrays Ukrainians as victims, specifically due to Russia's actions. The contrast between the empathy extended towards Ukrainians and the seemingly muted response to the plight of Syrian refugees is striking. While both groups are victims of conflicts not of their making, there appears to be a desensitisation to events in the Middle East within the Western world. As a result, Ukrainians are explicitly framed as an 'in-group', whilst Syrians are cast as the 'out-group'. When conflicts occur in Europe, closer in proximity and involving people with whom Western populations identify more readily, there is heightened sensitivity and awareness of the grim reality. This strongly aligns with existing findings whereby lapses in empathy are more common when the 'distressed individual' is socially distant, belonging to a different social or cultural group (Cikara et al., 2011). Consequently, those affected by war in Europe are viewed as humans in need of help, potentially relating to readers of the news articles themselves. However, Syrians are perceived as outsiders, and receive less sympathetic framing. Despite the acknowledgement of their innocence by the BBC, the framing shifts away from a narrative of victimhood and emphasises their threat. This shift may be facilitated by existing biases or agendas, making it easier to cast Syrians in a less favourable light, reinforcing refugee stereotypes as threats rather than fostering a frame centred on their humanity and need for assistance.

Conclusion

This thesis sought to answer why there were divergent media frames regarding two distinct groups of refugees. While the media in western liberal democracies imply commitment to impartiality in reporting, this research reveals stark differences in the portrayal of Ukrainians and Syrians refugees. The prevalence of threat framing for Syrian refugees, particularly focusing on overpopulation challenges, constructs a narrative of collective burden, positioning Syrians as a perceived societal threat. Conversely, the victim framing for Ukrainian refugees, emphasising the magnitude of their suffering and invoking international support, strategically places them as ultimate victims deserving of assistance. Why is this?

Understanding ‘othering’ clarifies how Syrian refugees are often portrayed as a threat, reinforcing a sense of ‘them’ distinct from the ‘in-group’ Ukrainians positioned as victims. Media framing reinforces this otherness, fostering a belief that hosting Syrian refugees is not a receiving country's responsibility. Such divisive framing amplifies societal fears, hindering empathy and support, thereby impacting immigration policy. Comparing Syrians to host country populations reveals a consistency with existing literature that suggests that such divisions can arise from factors including differences in nationality, ethnicity, culture or religion, (Kotilainen & Pellander, 2022; Staszak, 2009). As a result, this dynamic differs when considering Ukrainian refugees, despite comparable numbers entering host countries, as they are framed as ‘one of us’ and labelled European ‘brothers and sisters’, leading to a more sympathetic reception. This again aligns with existing research that presented a striking difference in the treatment of refugees based on their country of origin (Kotilainen & Pellander, 2022; Sipahioğlu, 2023).

Furthermore, the Syrian refugee influx, arising from internal conflict, challenges “European democratic norms”, contributing to the ‘othering’ phenomenon. In contrast, the Ukrainian influx, spurred by external aggression, aligns with European democratic values in a bid to protect one another from a common enemy, reinforces Ukrainians as an in-group, deserving of support.

In the absence of familiarity with a given topic, readers may readily accept information at face value and choose to see one group as a threat and the other as a victim. This is more likely to happen when their source is derived from a reputed source such as the BBC, which has a commitment to impartial and truthful news delivery - devoid of a discernible political

agenda. Thus, this research underscores the critical need to approach information with discernment, emphasising the detrimental consequences of perpetuating stereotypes through othering. By recognising the potential harm that such framing can inflict, particularly when it permeates policy formulation and governmental choices, it becomes evident that divergent portrayals of refugees in the media should not translate into divergent treatment.

Limitations

Some limitations to this research must be considered. Firstly, it focuses solely on British media and one publication source. Given the aim to present a comprehensive perspective of both print and online UK publications, and due to language barriers, it was deemed fitting to concentrate on a specific geographic region. Additionally, the UK's EU membership during the Syrian influx, as opposed to its absence during the Ukrainian influx, may impact the results. If the UK had remained in the EU, the outcomes might have differed. Future research should consider a broader array of national and international sources, including one maintaining EU membership throughout the specified time frames.

Next, my personal bias as a researcher. While content from the BBC is generally presented factually and impartially, my familiarity with refugee discrimination and awareness of global disparities could influence my interpretation. Addressing this challenge required conscious effort to maintain objectivity. Recognising positionality is vital when addressing prejudice and discrimination (from a Western institution), as it may be perceived as insensitive or inappropriate by certain readers.

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Appendix

Table to show definitions of sub-codes within each frame

	Frame	Definition
Victim	Innocence	Moral purity, lack of wrongdoing portrayed by the victims
	Unfairness/ undeserving	Emphasising the perceived injustice and lack of deserving harm
	Family/ children	Highlights the impact on family units and/or children and their vulnerability
	(European) Solidarity	Focuses on unity of collective identity shared with refugees; specificity of European added to show the support of EU actors and European citizens as well
	Loss and Trauma	Centres on themes of loss (not necessarily pertaining to death) and psychological distress of refugees
	Death and Injury	Addressing the casualties and physical harm inflicted upon refugees
	Water; boats and drowning	Focuses on the perilous journey made involving water, often on boats, that coincides a loss of life specifically by drowning

Threat	Security; Terrorism and Crime	Refugees as a threat to society and national security; concerns related terrorism and crime
	Pressure and Challenges	Strain and difficulties caused by refugees, causing pressure on resources and services; especially for government bodies
	Overpopulation/ Magnitude	Stresses concerns about the sheer number of refugees arriving, leading to overpopulation of host countries and overwhelming societal capacity
	Financial/ Economic Constraints	Monetary cost of hosting refugees for nations and government officials
	Burden-sharing	The notion that responsibility over refugees is (reluctantly) shared across host countries which is often an unfair burden for them
	Cultural/ Religious Concerns	Emphasis on the perceived cultural or religious differences of refugees and how this has societal implications
	Illegality of refugees	Centres on the legal status of refugees and how they violate immigration laws/ regulations
	Public Health Concerns	Refugees as potential vectors for disease of health risks