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FortressEurope integrating through division: an actantial narrative analysis

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ABSTRACT

We examine how the EU integration is narrated in news about asylum seekers. While extant research has examined representations of refugees in media, little attention has been paid to how the EU integration is imagined in such representations. Narration is of key importance to the ongoing EU integration and its contestation. The area of migration and asylum-seeking, in particular, generates tense conflicts between integration measures and individual member states over authority and power. As the EU attempted to coordinate a response to asylum seeking in 2015, ‘media became the locus for institutional and intergovernmental clashes’ (Maricut-Akbik, 2020, p.1). We demonstrate the differences and entanglements between ideological ideas in the representation of governments’ and the EU’s debate about the refugee distribution schema by newspapers in Germany, Italy, Poland and the UK, each differently positioned in respect to the EU and the asylum seekers. Further, we demonstrate the utility of Greimas’ (1983) actantial schema to explicating ideological motivators in news narratives shaped by different state interests. We compare and tease out finer ideational points in representation of relations between governments and the EU as well as among the governments themselves and the ideological views informing these representations.

KEYWORDS

narration; EU integration;
Greimas actantial analysis;
newspapers

As the EU attempted to coordinate a response to asylum seeking in 2015 (Hooghe and Marks 2019), ‘media became the locus for institutional and intergovernmental clashes’ (Maricut-Akbik 2020, 1). The EU states’ conflicting positions and mutual recriminations narrated in the news created a confusing and contradictory picture about what EU integration means and what ideological standpoints drive it. Greimas’ actantial analysis offers a useful tool to parse out what ideals informed governments’ actions in newspaper narratives. Media narratives, among those by institutions and individuals, are of key importance to the ongoing EU integration and its contestation (Bărgăoanu, Buturoiu, and Loredana 2017; Bouza Garcia 2017; de Wilde and Trenz 2012; Lueg and Carlson 2020). Narratives express and constitute ideologies which then shape perceptions, production of meanings, the conduct of life and social structures (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). Media narratives of governments’ positions and actions regarding the 2015 proposed EU refugee quotas offer an opportunity to examine what and how ideals of EU integration were advanced. To this end, we turn to Greimas (1983) actantial schema that affords ideals a major role as actants that motivate subjects, thus bringing them to the analytical forefront as acting entities. Far from being passive, ideals are agentic,

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and in the role of Greimas' 'Senders', they act by propelling Subjects and thus move the narrative forward. What ideals are cast as Senders is key to understanding how newspapers present governments' actions and authority vis-a-vis the EU. The actantial analysis is an apt tool for parsing out ideologies in narrative strands and comparing them across different narratives as well as identifying relations among all the actants resulting in a multidimensional picture.

The EU area of migration and asylum-seeking, in particular, generates terse conflicts between integration measures and individual member states over authority and power. The development of the EU's common framework for migration and asylum, beginning with the Maastricht agreement, has been marred by low levels of cooperation (Scipioni 2018). The ideals of solidarity, responsibility and humanitarianism underpinning the documents have not been formally defined (Küçük 2018). Correspondingly, the intensified refuge seeking in 2015 revealed low levels of integration in the supranational migration framework leaving the EU 'failing forward' (Lavenex 2018; Scipioni 2018). The common migration and asylum framework has also been politicized by a cleavage between opposing tendencies towards EU integration vs demarcation of state authority (Hooghe and Marks 2019). The latter is a dominant frame in the media representations captured by discursive inter-governmentalism hypotheses that posit that media reinforce the national doctrine and the conception of the EU as an intergovernmental body (de Wilde 2019). Extant research examining representations of asylum seekers (e.g. Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017; O'Regan & Riordan, 2018; Vollmer 2017; Serafis et al. 2021) demonstrated the prevalence of national frames but did not address the representation of integration principles.

Prior research examined intra-EU migration news for how it was expressed and shaped by competing conceptions of state and EU authority and integration (e.g. Balch and Balabanova 2017; Drzewiecka, Hoops, and Thomas 2014). How such conceptions might differ in news narratives about migration from outside of the EU and what this might tell us about the continuing 'failing forward' has received less attention. Addressing the 2015 migration in search of asylum from outside the EU, a few analyses showed circulation of negative meanings of Europe and the EU in the news (Lucchesi, 2020; Oprea and Buturoiu 2017). Extending this line of inquiry, we connect research strands on narration and media representation of EU integration in migration news. We first discuss ideals and principles that prior research identified in narratives about integration in EU documents as well as in media narratives about migration. We then examine which of these ideals, what other ones and how were represented in the news narratives on EU's debates about the refugee distribution schema in 2015 in Germany, Italy, Poland and the UK, each differently positioned with respect to the EU and the asylum seekers' issue. We demonstrate the differences, entanglements, and fragmentation of ideological principles of solidarity, responsibility, post-humanitarianism, and sovereignty through the novel application of Greimas (1983) actantial schema to news narratives. We compare and tease out finer ideational points in the representation of relations not only between governments and the EU but also among the governments themselves, the ideological views informing these representations and their implications for how the EU integration is imagined. Further, we demonstrate the utility of the actantial schema in explicating ideological motivators in news narratives shaped by different state interests.

Narrative approaches to EU integration

Narratives are important to EU integration as they create meanings, link events, connect individuals and institutions and construct a sense of Europe as an entity and the EU as a project with a purpose (Bângăoanu, Buturoiu, and Loredana 2017). Narratives are spun by different stakeholders including the EU institutions, member state governments, media, and groups of individuals as they align with or contest each other (Cloet, 2017; Bângăoanu, Buturoiu, and Loredana 2017; Lucchesi, 2020). Media constitute a crucial public sphere where the EU as a polity can be legitimated and delegitimated and where politicians can reach audiences to convince them in favor or against integration (de Wilde 2019; de Wilde and Trenz 2012). Media narratives of the 2015 asylum seeking were revealing not only

of the attitudes towards the asylum seekers but also of the relations among EU institutions and with the nation member governments (Maricut-Akbik 2020). This latter aspect received little attention even though it should come into crisper focus in a disagreement about what was commonly described as another ‘European crisis’, especially as many contended that the problem was the governments’ conflictual reactions to the arrival of asylum seekers rather than issues of capacity or management (Bărgăoanu, Buturoiu, and Loredana 2017). The media narratives were at first glance confusing and contradictory as to the meanings and ideas of integration raising questions about what ideals were at play.

Greimas’ semiotic analysis of narrative ‘actants’ (Greimas and Porter 1977; Greimas 1983; Pozzato 2020) has been least used but offers a potent tool for explicating ideological motivators for narrated actions. Greimas originally developed the actantial analytical schema based on Propp’s analysis of Russian tales and Souriau’s analysis of theater and then applied it to communication contexts (Greimas 1983). Actantial analysis posits, in a counterintuitive fashion, that actants are not limited to human actors and any ‘thing’ in a narrative – humans, forces, institutions, principles and relations among them – can act, e.g. principles exert influence and propel human actions. While actantial analysis begins with identifying structural relations among actants by explicating their movement, it proceeds along deeply interpretive analytical paths illuminating deeper articulations of values and meanings obscured on the narrative surface. The focus on actants in discourse identifies relational dynamics and ideologies in news narratives and how they differ. This moves the analysis beyond narrative form towards identifying ideologies (Sender) that animate actions of Subject, define Object and Receiver, and identify Allies and Antagonists. The actants operate on three axes. The primary axis of desire defines the Subject or hero of the narrative who moves towards its desired Object. On the axis of communication, the Sender, i.e. ideological values, propels the Subject to get and deliver the Object to the Receiver imparting the Sender’s values (Duvall 1982). Finally, the Subject is confronted by Antagonists, who deter the Subject from its Object, and Allies, who assist the subject in achieving its Object on the axis of conflict.

Greimas’ actantial schema is particularly useful as its approach to agentivity, distinct from other discursive approaches, not only focuses on a micro-linguistic level to show how agentivity is portrayed (see van Leeuwen, 1995; De Cock and Michaud Maturana 2018), but it also guides analytical focus to how the *story* of the ‘crisis’ is narrated by the newspapers, connecting agentivity with ideological principles that justify it. In the schema, ideologies, principles, ideas, and so on, act as Senders moving the Subject to perform particular actions. The schema facilitates exposing such underlying principles that motivate the Subject to pursue its desired Object, as well as legitimate discursive choices, e.g. in media narratives. This identification of legitimation strategies goes beyond classical studies in journalism and media studies to expose the often conflicting complexities of the narrative world (van Leeuwen, 2007). This structural approach allows us to move directly to the deep structures of a given narrative to uncover underlying ideological structures that inform, facilitate, and constrain processes of European integration in media narratives of asylum seeking. The resulting analysis is multidimensional, presenting relations among acting entities, Sender (ideals of integration), Subject (the governments), Objects, Enemies and Friends, than other forms of media analysis. Further, its structural elements are particularly well suited to comparing narratives in different newspapers. We demonstrate the utility of Greimas’ theory to narrative studies of media representations where it has rarely been used (e.g. Hartz & Steger, 2010).

Ideals in discourses on the EU

To understand what ideals, or Senders in Greimas’ terms, have already been identified at play in discourses on the EU, we turned to research on the EU migration frameworks and media analyses of media migration coverage. Solidarity-responsibility and integration-demarcation have been most prominent in political analyses. The latter is a dominant frame in the media representations of migration expressed through a national vs. European frame.

The ideals of solidarity and responsibility feature prominently in the Common European Asylum System (CEAS), with responsibility being central in the Dublin Regulation which defines first entry member states as responsible for processing asylum applications. The combination of solidarity and responsibility aims for a 'human, fair and efficient asylum system' (Takle 2017, 7), thus also including some humanitarian notions, and is seen as a prerequisite of a borderless Europe. Solidarity, as a relationship of mutual benefit between EU member-states, is also embedded in the EU's founding doctrines as well as its legislation (Morano-Foadi, 2017). However, solidarity is not formally defined and its meaning changes in different contexts, with self-interest and reciprocity being the strongest drivers of EU integration in migration management in the absence of moral principles (Küçük 2018).

The integration-demarcation cleavage between orientations towards transnational integration vs. national identity and state interests is a major organizing principle in narratives about the 'migration crisis' (Hooghe and Marks 2019). Analyses showed its expression through ideals of 'solidarity', 'humanitarianism' and 'Europe' on the integration side, and 'communitarianism' on the demarcation side (e.g. Maricut-Akbik 2020). The link between solidarity and humanitarianism received much attention, but most analyses focused on how these ideals were differently articulated by NGOs or society actors as opposed to the EU and state institutions (e.g. Brändle, Eisele, and Trenz 2019). Nativistic demands won when the EU struck a deal with Turkey to keep asylum seekers away from Europe (Saatçioğlu 2020) demonstrating 'defensive integration' (Kriesi et al. 2021). This raises questions about the underpinnings of humanitarian ideals circulating at the time and their relations to other EU principles.

While the major theoretical approaches to European integration – neofunctionalism, liberal intergovernmentalism and postfunctionalism – offered different explanations for the 'migration crisis', none could fully account for it (Hooghe and Marks 2019). Postfunctionalism posits that media perform a polarizing function by fueling nationalism. From the intergovernmentalism perspective, media engage in *discursive intergovernmentalism* that privileges top government players and the national interests and priorities in their coverage (de Wilde 2019). Indeed, while there were some differences among national media, national and negative frames dominated the news coverage of asylum seekers (Eberl et al. 2018; Heidenreich et al. 2019; Valente et al. 2021). The coverage differed somewhat among the national media spheres depending on proximity to the Balkan route or impending national elections, but there was little difference between liberal and conservatives papers (Berry, Garcia-Blanco, and Moore 2016; Heidenreich et al. 2019; Valente et al. 2021). Initially, German media propagated the so-called *Willkommenskultur* (Vollmer and Karakayali 2017) and Italian news media humanized asylum seekers by emphasizing the en route difficulties and dangers of human trafficking (Brändle, Eisele, and Trenz 2019). Later, German and Italian news produced increasingly negative representations and, like the UK and Polish news, represented asylum seekers as threats and religious Others, and dehumanized them as 'floods' and 'flows' (Bruno 2016; Krzyżanowski 2020; Piel 2020; Pruitt 2019; Vollmer and Karakayali 2017). Comparative analyses found that news media produced contradictory discourses of humanitarian securitization vacillating between seeing them as victims or threats, and tending towards the latter as the time went on (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski 2017; Vollmer 2017).

To sum up, the political science analyses of EU institutional discourses and media analyses of asylum seekers' representations identified the following ideological principles driving those discourses: humanitarianism underpinned by different meanings and values, solidarity and responsibility as a complementary pair and integration/European-demarcation/national as a binary. We then looked if and how these ideals acted as Senders in the media narration of the government actions, and if any other ideals drove the different positions and actions.

Methods

Actantial narrative theory (Greimas 1983) and its structural mapping of relations among discursive actants allowed us to compare news narratives of the debate over the refugee distribution quotas

both structurally (actants) and then interpretively by burrowing under narrative surface. Our analysis entailed identifying actants in two politically contrasting newspapers in Germany (*Die Welt* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung*), Italy (*Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*), Poland (*Gazeta Wyborcza* and *Rzeczpospolita*), and the United Kingdom (*The Guardian* and *The Times*). These states were differently impacted by asylum seeking and had different relations with the EU. Germany registered over one million asylum seekers. Italy was one of the first entry countries responsible for processing the asylum applications under the Dublin Agreement. Poland, the biggest beneficiary of EU development funds, opposed the EU refugee distribution schema. The UK was pre-Brexit, had an opt-out from EU migration schemes and was negotiating with the EU for more concessions.

We selected articles published between 1 April 2015 and 1 March 2016, the height of the so-called 'migration crisis' when the EU struggled to get its member states to agree to its distribution schema and the density of the news on the topic was high. The articles were harvested through Factiva with search terms: 'refugee*' 'migrant*' 'immigrant*' and 'EU', 'European Union' or 'European Commission'. We selected only news articles, excluding editorials and op-eds. We analyzed 98 articles from *Die Welt* and 131 from *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 162 from *Corriere della Sera*, 135 from *La Repubblica*, 85 from *Gazeta Wyborcza* and 105 from *Rzeczpospolita*, 124 from *The Guardian* and 192 from *The Times*.

We began with the analysis of *The Guardian* and *The Times* articles to establish a joint analytical approach based on Greimas' actantial schema. We used a combined inductive-deductive approach by first coding inductively to identify the Senders (ideals) for the governments as Subjects and then we examined the codes against the ideals identified by prior research laid out above. This allowed us to see what ideals were at play in each newspaper without imposing a predetermined coding schema. Next, we identified the remaining actants and relations among them to arrive at the whole actantial schema. We then analyzed how each actant was represented, focusing on implications for visions of EU integration in light of the refugee 'crisis'. Then, each author analyzed the papers published in the language in which they were most fluent. We then collaborated to develop a shared comparative analysis.

EU integration in news narratives about the 'migration crisis'

We identified three dominant Senders for the governments as the Subject: Solidarity/Responsibility, Post-humanitarianism, and Nationalism. We found that some Senders (ideals) were present in all newspapers, although in different forms, and some Senders were present only in some. For example, the two UK newspapers did not represent their government as acting on the principles of Solidarity towards the EU, a foreshadowing of Brexit, although, ironically, they did criticize other EU countries for their lack of solidarity towards each other as a symptom of a weak Union. Solidarity was present in only one Polish newspaper, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which leans towards the liberal left. We illuminate the different versions of the Senders, connections and power relations among them and other actants to explicate the ideological underpinnings of each Subject's desire, conflict, and communication.

EU solidarity/responsibility

The ideals of Solidarity and Responsibility featured prominently in the German and Italian newspapers and less so in the Polish *Wyborcza*. However, these ideals were characterized differently by the papers.

Germany

Solidarity & Responsibility were fused as a prominent Sender in *Die Welt* and *Süddeutsche Zeitung* for Germany as Subject cast as a moral leader of Europe during the 'crisis'. The papers reported government calls on other states to meet their EU Responsibilities and act with Solidarity to help the German government achieve its Object: distribution of asylum seekers. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*

reported: ‘Chancellor Angela Merkel supported Juncker’s proposal for distribution quotas in the Bundestag. ‘All in all, we need a binding agreement on a binding distribution of refugees according to fair criteria between all member states’ (Broessler and Gammelin 2015). While showing Germany supporting the EU, ‘a binding agreement’ signals a lack of trust in states to act in solidarity and with responsibility. Takle (2017) posits that appeals to solidarity have a forward-looking offensive character that challenges the current order in situations where there is little or no trust, sharing of responsibilities, or equality. On the axis of an offensive against Opponents, France was defined as a cooperating Friend along with the EU institutions, e.g. when the paper reported Holland stating that ‘Responsibility for the refugees ‘cannot be taken over by a single country’ (Gammelin, Fried, and Kahlweit 2015). The Allies were few. Even after the diminished redistribution quotas were approved, the axis of conflict persisted as reported by *Süddeutsche Zeitung*: *In these circumstances, the question of burden sharing between countries of transit and countries of destination is politically explosive. The discussion over the past few weeks gives an idea of the thin ice on which European proposals for solutions are standing. If the contravention between net payers and recipients in the EU, between North and South, between creditors and debtors should solidify again in the context of the refugee crisis, then there is a risk that the burden-sharing will fail* (Bastian 2016). In a ‘politically explosive’ situation, Antagonists were defined as the recipients and debtors who abrogated their obligations to their creditors. The expectation of Solidarity for EU funds, to which Germany is the largest payer, goes beyond a notion of reciprocity – mutual solidarity, as it sets up a financial basis for its delivery. Solidarity thus ceases to be an ideal and becomes a *deliverable* exacted under duress in exchange for a united EU.

Italy’s and Greece’s position as actants was ambiguous as the two states were blamed for passing their responsibility onto their neighbors even as their predicament was recognized. *Die Welt* reported: *There are doubts that the Member States can deal with the problem with the current rules. The Dublin III agreement actually provides that the refugees are accommodated in the EU state in which they first set foot on European soil. But that would currently overwhelm Italy and Greece. Italy in particular is therefore often accused of letting refugees pass unregistered to other European countries* (Tauber 2015). The recognition of the dysfunction of the EU policies and its impact on Italy and Greece was quickly negated as the accusation was not challenged. The first entry states were reproached, along with others, for their failure of Solidarity and Responsibility. The two ideals were fused animating the blame narrative against first entry states and those refusing to agree on quotas.

The papers cast the German government, acting on these fused ideals, as a ‘moral leader’ who adheres to EU rules and ‘is ready to “bear its share”’ (Tauber 2015) and putting Europe above individual national needs. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* applauded German leadership in Europe: ‘Germany is, once again, a role model. But this time it is not, as usual, conservative and liberal voices who marvel at the neighbor’s economic power and demand more reforms from the left-wing government according to the “modèle allemand”. This time the fronts are reversed: First and foremost, the French left praises Angela Merkel as the “compass” and “moral leader” of Europe’ (Zaschke et al. 2015). Praise from ‘the French left’, an Ally but also usually a competitor, legitimated Germany as the moral compass promoting Solidarity and Responsibility when other member states were failing these principles and encouraging an integrated European approach. Germany was cast on higher moral ground as not just an economic leader but as a moral leader of Europe.

Italy

In opposition to the accusations from Germany, the Italian newspapers asked other EU states to show Solidarity through aid and the redistribution of refugees, the Object of the Italian government. *La Repubblica* drew a parallel between requests for help by France and the UK with the ‘front opened at Calais’ and unanswered requests by Italy (‘Migranti, adesso l’appello’ 2015). Later, it reminded readers that already in 2014, ‘..3279 migrants lost their lives. The majority dies in the Strait of Sicily’ and that the International Organization for Migration ‘acknowledged the exceptional efforts of

Mediterranean naval forces ('Immigrazione' 2015). The parallel between the requests made by France and the UK and the situation in Italy is constructed as a reminder that Italy should be a receiver of Solidarity. At the end of August, Repubblica supported ideas of a European common policy on the migration crisis, but noted that *'...this path remains an uphill climb, given the reluctance of many governments, especially from Northern Europe, to start a truly common policy'* ('Emergenza migranti' 2015). Notably, in both papers, Northern European countries and Eastern countries that resisted accepting refugee quotas were constructed as Enemies. This was the case when Sweden and Denmark announced their suspension of the Schengen agreement in early January 2016; East European governments were labeled 'riotous' ('Bruxelles, incubo' 2016). The EU itself and countries such as Germany, the UK and France had an ambiguous role: they were Enemies for not understanding the problems of the first-entry states or not acting in Solidarity as reported by a *Corriere* article headlined *'Refugees, States slip off – The EU stops at 32 thousands'* (Basso 2015). As Allies, they showed a new awareness about the migration situation.

Emphasizing the relational nature of Solidarity, *Corriere* depicted the government requesting Solidarity through the distribution of refugees as reciprocity for its Responsibility in controlling migrants entering through the Mediterranean. It quoted the Italian interior minister, who reminded readers that Europe was asking Italy to be responsible without acting in Solidarity: *'The entire accord is based on solidarity and responsibility. Creating a "hotspot" is a responsibility, dividing up the migrants is solidarity'* (Sarzanini 2015). This linking of Responsibility and Solidarity allowed casting the Italian government as acting with Responsibility and member states as failing to act with Solidarity in return. As Italian government officials stated in the paper, solidarity *'cannot be one directional, it's two way'* (Galluzzo 2016). The narrative linked Solidarity and Responsibility to legitimate the Subject, in contrast to the narratives in the German newspapers which fused Solidarity and Responsibility.

This linking animated a narrative of the EU waking up to Italy's plight and the new European reality. Repeated words, such as 'riconoscere', 'ora' and 'finalmente' (acknowledge, now, finally), highlighted the temporal dynamics distinguishing Italy from other states. *Corriere* quoted PM Matteo Renzi: *'Something is changing in Europe, something that only we were saying, now many people are saying'* (Salvini 2015). Other sentences point at a new European awareness: *'Europe is discovering to be at the forefront of a global emergency'* (Battistini and Natale 2015); or *'Finally, in Europe it seems to me that rationality and concreteness prevail'* in the words of minister Alfano (Sarzanini 2015) or a sarcastic headline: *'Good morning, Europe'* (Battistini 2015). In this story, member states did not act in Solidarity because they ignored the larger global situation while Italy had been bearing its brunt and understood its impact on Europe. The Italian government then asked Europe to repair this situation; this means not only recognizing the migration crisis that is involving other EU countries but also acknowledging the fact that Italy has been dealing and is still dealing with this crisis. This bolstered the presentation of the government as a moral leader aware of the situation from the beginning and acting Responsibly. The EU and specific states (Northern Europe, France and the UK) are described as having a debt of Solidarity in relation to Italy.

Poland

Wyborcza, but not *Rzeczpospolita*, urged the government to show Solidarity with the EU by agreeing to its distribution schema to secure EU's support for Poland's other objectives thus defining Solidarity as instrumental reciprocal support for national interests. It argued that a favorable image of Poland and good relations in the EU should be the government's Object. As Polish elections approached and the right wing was garnering support, the Polish prime minister dislocated the meanings of Solidarity by pronouncing its Solidarity with the EU, refugees and Polish citizens each setting a goal conflicting with others. The paper argued that helping countries in the South are *'smart'* when *'we want the EU ready to help countries in our region of Europe'* (Bielecki 2015b). The government's refusals to accept the quotas was then presented as hurting Poland as illustrated by a rare reference to Solidarity with refugees in a headline: *'Poland is in a pillory for the lack of solidarity with the refugees'* (Czarnecki 2015). When the last Western state opposing quotas, Spain, conceded, the paper commented that

'this increases the risk of isolation of the countries which are against the quotas, Poland, Slovakia, Czech Republic and other countries of our region. The issue is not only the deteriorating reputation but also a possibility of losing when the EU ministers vote on the quotas' (Bielecki 2015c). The paper favored good relations with the EU, particularly Western countries, although it did not criticize the position of the Visegrad countries. It approved Poland's final vote for the much diminished quota, once again forwarding an instrumental notion of Solidarity: *'Voting yes, Poland not only stood on the side of supporting the refugees but also rescuing its image and correct relations with the West'* (Bielecki 2015d).

Post-humanitarianism

The German and Italian papers also cast versions of Humanitarianism as Sender. They were connected to Solidarity but in different ways.

Germany

The papers presented calls for limiting the numbers of asylum seekers as a condition for the ability to aid some and for Solidarity among the EU states. This logic represents Post-humanitarianism that blurs the boundary between 'public logic of economic utilitarianism' and 'private logic of sentimental obligation towards vulnerable others' thus interweaving humane intent and self-serving interests (Chouliaraki 2013, 5). Here, offering aid to asylum seekers was contingent on limiting their numbers. *Die Welt* reported: *'The will to help those in need of protection could mean that politicians must develop and implement limitation strategies, said Gauck at the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos. A limitation could be necessary "morally and politically" to maintain the ability of a state to act and to secure support for the reception of refugees'* (Duendar 2015). Limiting aid to 'those in need' was moralized by 'the ability of a state to act', but there were no explanations of what the 'ability' was. The calls to limit the numbers of asylum seekers apriori were obscured by distinctions between 'deserving' refugees from Syria and those deemed undeserving (Holzberg, Kolbe, and Zaborowski 2018). The label 'illegal immigrants' figured powerfully in papering over anti-humanitarian pronouncements, evident when *Die Welt* complained: *'Illegal immigrants are not being repatriated in sufficient numbers'* (Tauber 2015). The emptiness of 'ability' was obscured by claims linking refugees, terror, illegal immigrants and Solidarity among EU states. *Süddeutsche Zeitung* noted that *'Merkel first wants a clear signal to condemn the terror. In addition, however, one needs a clear signal that the other G-20 countries are ready to participate in a fair distribution of the refugees. Merkel wants, she has stated several times, to get the current uncontrolled and illegal immigration to be replaced by legal immigration quotas for the European Union'* (Gammelin 2015). References to terror and illegal immigration cast doubt on the legitimacy of asylum requests and preempted challenges to claims of moral leadership by the Subject devising limitation strategies. Along these logics, military operations were presented as humanitarian: *'In the fight against smugglers, the EU states are also considering using military means to curb the influx of refugees across the Mediterranean. [...] "The point is to stop human trafficking in people smugglers, brutal people smugglers", stressed Merkel'* (Broessler 2015). This demonstrates the 'instrumentalization of humanitarianism' that shapes 'philanthropic obligation' in the interest of the state (Chouliaraki 2013, 6) that simultaneously disassociated Solidarity from its humanitarian meaning, i.e. solidarity with asylum seekers. As the self-interests of Germany and the EU conflict with those of other states, moralization of apriori denying consideration of asylum requests highlighted a post-humanitarian logic where maintaining EU integration through Solidarity has priority over humanitarian aid.

Italy

The papers presented the Italian government as humanitarian by having provided aid long before 2015 and thus acting on European values. But humanitarianism was articulated post-humanitarianism (Chouliaraki 2013) whereby Italian interests and self-presentation as well as concern for Europe were animated by aid to refugees. This put the Subject on a higher moral ground

from which it reminded and reproached other member states for not acting according to 'European values' or 'European spirit'. *Repubblica* praised Angela Merkel for her initial decision to open the German borders to refugees and reminisced that this action offered *'the image of a Europe that is faithful to its founding ideals'*. Then, it condemned the negative reaction of the German people to her openness, and the subsequent (partial) closures ('La ferita di Colonia', 2016). The appeals to European values were constant, at the beginning of 2016, *Repubblica* quoted PM Matteo Renzi connecting border closing and European identity: *'According to Renzi, who closes its boundaries "betrays the identity of Europe"'* (D'argenio 2016). Imploring other states to preserve the humanitarian values by keeping the borders open and sharing the 'burden' of refugees was in the interest of the Italian state: *'Ultimately, the same rhetorical question can be asked by the indebted South to the rich North: these desperate people want to go where welfare [benessere] is, why shouldn't we divide the burden?'* (Battistini 2015). Here, the logic of creditors and debtors in the German papers was flipped to present other member states failing refugees and Italy by not acting with Solidarity.

The papers cast the Eastern and Northern European countries as Antagonists failing European value by being 'nationalist and xenophobic' according to *Corriere* (Lévy 2015). After the much diminished quotas were approved by the majority, *Repubblica* warned about consequences of anti-humanitarianism for Europe: *'From Warsaw to Budapest, from Prague to Bratislava xenophobic tones and choices accompany authoritarian thrusts and turns. Priority to governments, less and less room for parliaments, a paralysed justice and purged media. Their "yes only to the Europe of homelands" is a challenge that may become a menacing threat to the very future of European democracy'* (Tarquini 2016). Humanitarianism is thus an instrument of maintaining Europe's position. In this, Northern countries were Opponents when journalist Antonio Polito lamented: *'Let's hope that Europe is not like a mother, who is mourned when she's not there any more'* (Polito 2016). The primary worry was about Italy: *'...if up there they build an anti-immigrant dam, Italy gets pushed into a funnel which you can enter but cannot leave'* (Polito 2016). Being an Enemy of European values and being an Enemy of Italy, in this sense, is the same, because both are consequences of anti-humanitarian and anti-European values.

Nationalism

The Polish, British, and Italian newspapers cast different versions of Nationalism as a Sender. The Polish newspapers presented the government's actions as motivated by Sovereignty. The British newspapers featured a Defensive Sovereignty, whereas the Italian newspapers promoted Communitarianism as an ideal for the Italian government.

Poland

Sovereignty emerged in narrations of the Polish government's refusal of the EU refugee sharing scheme on the grounds of national authority over the state's borders and protecting national interests. However, the papers also legitimated the EU as an arena for negotiating national, rather than transnational, interests, thus melding Sovereignty with a transnational form of EU membership. While early on in April, *Rzeczpospolita* pronounced in a headline: *'For Schengen, it is worth sacrificing sovereignty'* (Dla Schengen 2015), the narrative quickly turned to approving the government's opposition to the mandatory quotas and creation of a permanent mechanism because *'until now, EU countries made sovereign decisions regarding migration'* (Nowacka-Isaksson 2015), while *Wyborcza* presented it as *'a plan for a revolution in the European asylum law' against which 'Poles are defending themselves'* (Bielecki 2015a). The papers presented the refugee quota as contrary to the EU-established practice and state sovereignty. Both papers legitimized the government's opposition by referring to regional support of Visegrad countries: *'the idea of the mandatory quotas was met with anger, particularly in our part of Europe, where it was read as a first step towards a permanent procedure of sharing immigrants without upper limits'* (Bielecki 2015c). Casting Poland in a group of Allies of 'our part of Europe' opposing quotas fortified its stance. Further, 'our part of Europe' claimed Europe for

Poland against the historical Western othering of Central and Eastern Europe in a defensive move against accusations of their humanitarian failure. The paper spun a narrative of this region of Europe united by common interests.

Sovereignty arguments insisting on voluntary admission of refugees obscured xenophobic reasoning in *Rzeczpospolita* that was revealed briefly in its explanation that '*Poland is against [quotas] because it has neither experience nor willingness to accept refugees*' and '*Opponents of the quotas are also other countries in our region that do not have experience in accepting immigrants of other races or religions*' (tysiecy 2015). Later, the paper noted that the delay in reaching the agreement on the quotas in the EU was to Poland's advantage as '*It is likely that the enthusiasm for accepting unlimited numbers of refugees will significantly weaken*' (Naplyw 2015). This demonstrated a desire to stay more or less in step with the EU as the paper bet on communitarianism winning in other member states. When the Polish government left its Visegrad Allies and voted for the diminished EU refugee redistribution schema, *Rzeczpospolita* justified it by explaining that Polish demands were desired also by the majority of the EU countries and were satisfied in the end (Polska już nie 2015). This move preserved the narrative of the Polish government being righteous from the beginning and sharing interests with other EU states rather than being isolated and bending to the will of the EU.

While *Wyborcza* cast the EU as an Ally whose cooperation Poland would need, *Rzeczpospolita* featured the EU as an Enemy. The tension between opposing the EU on quotas but desiring its arena for negotiating state interests was contained as the primary wrath was directed at Germany, presented as a dominant force that 'demands', 'teaches', 'blackmails' others (Berlin 2015; Braun and Gammelin 2015) and threatens the EU unity (Imigranci 2015). Germany was described as aligned with the EU but sometimes dominating it and violating its agreements and interests regarding immigration. The paper's attacks on Germany further revealed its xenophobia as it pronounced in its headlines: '*Germany, the most Muslim country in the Union*' (Niemcy 2015), '*could not cope with the flow of refugees*' [directed at 'yes we can'] (Berlin 2015). Articles predicted that Angela Merkel would lose her authority owing to her 'invitation to the refugees', e.g. a headline informed that '*Immigrants undercut Berlin's domination in Europe*' (Imigranci 2015). An article headlined, '*Dark clouds over Angela Merkel*', reported growing opposition to asylum seekers in the government and society (Czarne 2015) and another alarming headline announced: '*A noose for Angela Merkel*' (2015).

The UK

Unlike the Polish papers that ultimately affirmed the EU as an arena for negotiating state interests, *The Times* and *the Guardian* narrated the UK government's opposition to the quotas within the larger story of the government wrestling for more concessions and sovereignty from the EU as its Enemy. The papers cast the EU as the Enemy through striking war metaphors. *The Times* offered: '*Plans by Brussels to force Britain to take in tens of thousands of refugees plucked from the Mediterranean have saddled David Cameron with the first battle of his new leadership*' (Waterfield 2015a). Other articles referred to '*a row with Brussels*', '*fight*', '*nuclear option*' (Waterfield 2015b), '*outrage*' and '*a furious war of words*', and May's statements eliciting '*fury*' from Timmermans (Waterfield 2015c). Similarly, but in softer terms, *the Guardian* reported the government's 'refusal' or 'resistance' (Travis and Mason 2015) as well as 'not budging' from (Travis 2015a) or 'hardening' its opposition to EU initiatives regarding the admission of refugees (Travis 2015b). The paper reported that 'Britain and most countries of eastern Europe fiercely resisting' these initiatives thus briefly aligning Britain and Eastern Europe (Traynor 2015) but otherwise in *the Guardian* and *the Times*, the UK was friendless in its 'battle' with the EU. Both papers legitimated Cameron's attempts at weakening the ties to the EU on the basis of an anti-migration platform that conflated intra-EU migration with asylum seeking from outside of the EU. A *Times* headline announced '*Refugee crisis shows folly of open borders, says Cameron*' and followed with a revealingly worded lead: '*David Cameron will today try to exploit Europe's migration crisis to argue that the EU needs to curb free movement across borders, Philip Hammond, the foreign secretary, said last night*' (Waterfield 2015d).

Italy

Corriere featured Communitarianism as a desired – but not yet realized – Sender, which the government should adopt. While not prominent, Communitarianism was present in critiques of the government's management of the crisis; the Pope was also criticized for not protecting Italian citizens while Italy was burdened by refugees. To express this criticism, *Corriere* used quotes of exasperated citizens, implying that Communitarianism was the people's desired Sender: *'To a country that has a billion people, I can't tell them all to come here, because they invade me' or 'I would like to have the same rights that foreigners have. Now I am going to Lampedusa, throw myself in the sea and scream "Finland, Finland" "They manage to keep the prices down because they work illegally. We can't do it and we must close" Here are the voices of the periphery' ("Migranti e crisi" 2015)*. Communitarianism legitimated citizens' fear fomented by their not being prioritized: *'Fear is maybe not the most noble of attitudes but it's not a fault. It should not be nourished and used, as the Lega does. But it should also not be negated and removed, as the left and part of the catholic world does. Fear is won by removing its causes. Today, many Italians are afraid of migrations not because they are hostile towards migrants as persons but because they see the emergence being poorly handled and they do not see an end'* (Cazzullo 2015). These quotes closely interrelate the refugee crisis with discourses of security that presuppose that the intake of refugees violates the natural order within the country – here, about who should be helped first.

Discussion

This study addresses a lacuna in knowledge of how EU integration is represented in media narratives on migration from outside the EU. We identified Solidarity & Responsibility, Posthumanitarianism, and Nationalism as the main Senders propelling governments to act as Subjects. We show the ideals were fragmented, foreclosing EU integration discussions and policy concerns and reproducing discursive intergovernmentalism (de Wilde 2019). Our analysis of ideological principles at play in newspapers was powered by Greimas' narrative schema that views ideological principles as agentic and connects them with other actants in their specific trajectories. This allowed us to examine these principles – in subtle and not so subtle variations – in relationship to other acting entities in narrations resulting in a multidimensional picture.

Policy research showed that the main principles informing the common migration and asylum framework were left largely undefined and ambiguous in policy documents (Küçük 2018). In the absence of normative definitions, we show that the newspapers filled in meanings that served the interests of the governments in relations to each other and the EU. Greimas' actantial schema allowed us to tease out finer distinctions and contradictions in the mobilization of ideological motivators in news. *Solidarity* was a prominent Sender in German and Italian newspapers and somewhat less so in the Polish *Wyborcza* and was not present in British newspapers. When present, *Solidarity* was instrumentalized and objectified, but the papers gave it different meanings. The German newspapers fused *Solidarity* and *Responsibility* to cast their government as a moral leader and other states, including first entry states, as failing those ideals. They also defined *Solidarity* as a 'good' that states were obligated to deliver in return for the EU funds. The Italian papers argued that the government acted *Responsibly* and desired *Solidarity* from other states, thus linking the two transactionally. Both desired the same Object: distribution of the refugees and EU integration in the form of a common solution. However, in the German papers, Italy was mostly failing its *Responsibility*, even as its predicament was recognized, while Italian papers condemned a lack of recognition of Italy fulfilling its responsibility and the anti-humanitarian turn in Germany. The Polish *Wyborcza* defined *Solidarity* as an instrumental show of support for the EU in light of the Polish government's future need for political support. These definitions of *Solidarity* were compatible with Post-Humanitarianism animating desires for greater, even if ambiguously defined, *Solidarity* among the EU states by reducing the numbers of asylum seekers and thus disassociating *Solidarity* from aid to refugees. Further, while both the UK and the Polish newspapers cast *Sovereignty* as a Sender, the Polish newspapers legitimated the EU as an arena for negotiating international concerns and Poland staying in step with the EU, in contrast to the UK newspapers.

Our findings extend prior studies that showed that media representations failed to articulate a European vision for addressing refugee seeking. Our study shows that this lack of vision corresponds to newspapers fragmenting the EU principles by articulating them in the interests of their states, not the EU interests as a whole, thus reproducing discursive intergovernmentalism that strengthens the intergovernmental logics of the EU (de Wilde 2019). While at first glance, appeals to Solidarity and Responsibility as well as Humanitarianism were visible, we showed that these principles were given different definitions by the newspapers thus fragmenting their meanings. The papers conveyed their governments' calls on other governments to act with Responsibility and/or Solidarity without calling attention to the lack of agreement of what these principles mean. This foreclosed European-scale discussions of how they should be applied in this particular case. These findings also provide insight into the policy research that shows that the EU has been 'failing forward' its integration in the area of migration and asylum (Lavenex 2018; Scipioni 2018) and opted to integrate defensively in response to the refugee seeking in 2015 (Kriesi et al. 2021). Our study demonstrates that the newspapers did not call out EU policy failures, foreclosing considerations of policy changes, and thus did not offer a space for grappling with policies 'failing forward' or discussing other ideas but 'defensive integration'.

All papers presented their governments as moral leaders, although based on different ideals, thus further asserting national interests and imaginary against the transnational imaginary of the 'EU migration crisis'. This extends the discursive intergovernmentalism thesis (de Wilde 2019) as we highlight moralizing of governments' immoral decisions that strengthens the national doctrine. The German papers cast the German government as a moral leader upholding Solidarity and acting humanely in self-interest. The Italian papers cast the Italian government as the EU moral leader acting Responsibly and humanely and thus representing European values. The Polish government was cast as an EU leader acting in the interests of 'our part of Europe'. *Rzeczpospolita* moralized the government as having foresights regarding growing hostility against refugees in Europe. The two Polish papers legitimated the PM's actions in different ways that fit that ideological orientation. Overall, all analyzed papers cast different states as Antagonists who created impediments on their axis towards the Objects desired by their governments as Subjects, sometimes engaging in mutual recriminations

At first glance our analysis might point to 'dis-integration' through redefining ideals and affirming state authority over EU authority. However, with the exception of the UK papers, all papers affirmed the EU as an arena for making decisions as they appealed to or aligned with the EU. Even the Polish *Rzeczpospolita*, which primarily cast national Sovereignty as a Sender and spun discourse most critical of the EU, nevertheless affirmed staying in step with the EU defined as an intergovernmental, rather than transnational, arena. This calls for more research on how media rearticulate ideological principles in news on migration from outside of the EU in times which are not defined as a 'crisis' and what this means for the conception of the EU integration and authority as well as its 'failing forward' in the policy area. In particular, comparative analyses across national media that flesh out differences in such rearticulations could provide a deeper understanding of fragmentations and frictions in the conceptions of integration as well as relations among states in media narration.

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