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Frames and arguments on the admission of refugees: an empirically grounded typology

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Abstract

Systematic cross-national analyses of political debates on the admission of refugees and asylum seekers require a theoretically coherent and empirically comprehensive typology of frames and arguments used. The paper proposes such a typology of frames and arguments used by governments, opposition parties and social movements in public debates on the admission of refugees. We argue that the collective identity and characteristics of the receiving country on the one hand and refugees' characteristics on the other constitute the key dimensions to which frames in political discourse about the admission of refugees refer. We distinguish between six different frames – economic, cultural, moral, legal, security-related and international – of how the "we" and the "others" can be interpreted. Furthermore, we specify typical arguments associated with the respective frames for or against the admission of refugees. Given that the typology was developed based on a discourse analysis of a very diverse set of countries, including some of the so-called "Global South", we claim that it can be used to analyze political debates on the admission of refugees in other countries as well and can thus contribute to an accumulation of knowledge.

Keywords Refugees · Framing · Typology · Collective identity · Othering

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Introduction

The number of refugees worldwide has steadily increased over the last decades. By the end of 2023, there were approximately 50 million refugees and asylum seekers fleeing their countries and seeking protection abroad (UNHCR, 2024). This rise has put pressure on potential host countries to open their borders and grant protection. They have reacted in very different ways: Some, like Uganda, Turkey or Germany, have pursued rather open refugee admission and asylum policies. Others, like Singapore, decline to admit any refugees and asylum seekers at all. Yet others have distinguished between refugees of different origins, such as Poland, which has welcomed refugees from neighboring Ukraine while rejecting Syrian refugees. At the same time, political conflicts over the admission of refugees and asylum seekers have also arisen within countries, revealing marked partisan divides (de Wilde et al., 2019; Hooghe & Marks, 2018; Hutter & Kriesi, 2022; Kriesi et al., 2012, 2024).

There are different approaches to understanding cross-national and inter-party differences in the willingness to admit refugees and asylum seekers (see, for example, recent contributions by Abdelaaty, 2021; Blair et al., 2022). One possibility – standing in a more interpretive Weberian tradition, which emphasizes the importance of meaning-making and ideas – is to analyze the "frames" through which the issue is viewed and the arguments mobilized in public debates for or against admissions. Accordingly, studies analyzing the framing of the refugee issue in public debates and by political elites have proliferated over the past years.[1] Based on different data sources and employing a variety of quantitative and qualitative methods, these studies have provided a wealth of information on how refugees are framed by different actors and in different contexts. However, a precondition for understanding how framing shapes refugee and asylum policies is to conduct systematic cross-national analyses that reveal similarities and differences between countries. To be able to do this, we require a theoretically coherent and empirically comprehensive typology of frames and arguments used in public debates about refugee admissions.[2] In particular, this typology should also be suitable for comparative analyses of political discourse beyond countries in Western Europe and North America, which have been the focus of most existing studies so far, but do not actually receive the largest share of the world's refugees and asylum seekers (UNHCR, 2024).

The aim of this paper is to propose just such a typology of frames and arguments on the admission of refugees and asylum seekers used in political discourse across the world. Some of the frames and arguments we include in this typology have already been noted by previous studies. Our main contribution is to provide what we believe to be an empirically comprehensive typology anchored in a coherent theoretical framework. It is constructed as follows. Drawing on insights from different theoretical traditions, we argue that the admission of refugees typically "triggers" the

[1] We counted the number of scientific articles published between 1981 and 2023 in the Clarivate Web of Science Core Collection containing the keywords "refugees" and "frames" or "discourse" in their title. The number of papers rises sharply between 2015 and 2020 and falls slightly between 2020 and 2024.

[2] On the construction and utility of typologies, see Kuckartz (2014: 103–121). For an influential example of a typology, see Wimmer (2008).

question of who "we", the receiving nation, are and who "they", the refugees, are. Accordingly, we posit that "defining the 'we'" and "defining the refugees" are the key dimensions of all frames in political discourse about the admission of refugees. The readiness to receive refugees then depends on how "us" and "them" are framed. Building on a comparative discourse analysis of political debates about the admission of refugees in six countries across the world (Chile, Germany, Poland, Singapore, Turkey and Uganda; Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a) we reconstruct six core frames: Both the characteristics and the identity of the host country as well as the characteristics of the refugees can be defined in economic, cultural, moral, legal, security-related and international terms. The specific content of these frames is drawn from "cultural repertories" (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000) embedded in a country's political culture and partisan ideologies, such as a neo-Ottoman ideology in the case of Turkey, the "sanctity" of the Basic Law in Germany or a narrative of national victimhood in Poland. Finally, we specify typical arguments associated with the respective frames for or against the admission of refugees. They are structured by linking specific definitions of "us" to specific definitions of the refugees, following the pattern: "Because we are x and they are y, we have to do z". Given that our typology is informed by the previous literature and was developed based on a very diverse set of countries from different regions across the world, we argue that it can generalized to other countries as well and can thus serve as a heuristic for further cross-national comparisons.

The next section summarizes the previous literature on the framing of refugees and points out the main shortcomings. We then proceed with a description of our methodological approach to studying the framing of refugees in public discourse in six countries across the world. The Sect. "Defining "us" and "them" as key dimensions of framing" explains why defining "us" and "them" constitute the core framing dimensions. Then we present our typology of frames and the associated arguments for or against the admission of refugees. Although our typology – as typologies in general – is descriptive in nature, we argue that it can be used to develop "explanations" about differences in refugee policies between and within countries. We conclude by illustrating this heuristic potential of our typology with some examples.

State of the art and limitations of the previous literature

The concept of "framing" has been developed in many different research fields, such as social movement studies, communication studies and social psychology (for many others, see Tversky & Kahnemann, 1981; Goffman, 1986; Snow & Benford, 1988; Gamson, 1992; Entman, 1993; Gerhards, 1995; Scheufele, 1999; Snow, 2013). We are not able to review the different conceptualizations in detail here. Suffice it to say that "frames" are elements of human cognition as well as of communicating texts and speeches. They can be understood as schemata of interpretation through which individual and collective actors view the world and information is transmitted. Much like a picture frame, frames select a part of reality, highlight what is important about an issue in contrast to what can be ignored, and place the issue within a specific context of meaning.

Here, we are interested in frames employed in politics and policymaking, where they are used by political elites to interpret specific issues, legitimize their policies and to mobilize political support for them (e.g., Gamson, 1992; Díez Medrano, 2003; Ferree et al., 2002; Kriesi et al., 2012). It should be noted in this context that we distinguish between "frames" and "arguments" (as do other studies, e.g. Ferree et al., 2002): While frames provide an interpretation of an issue, they are not necessarily "directed" towards a specific policy conclusion. For instance, refugees can be framed in economic terms as a burden or as an opportunity, which entails different conclusions about whether they should be admitted. In other words, one frame can come with different arguments (e.g., "refugees should be rejected/admitted, because they are a burden/a benefit for our economy"). Our typology will reflect this distinction and specify the main arguments related to the different frames.

Studying the framing of a particular issue in public discourse, such as the admission of refugees, as well as the arguments for or against a policy, is relevant because it reveals something about the ideas that shape policymaking. As Helbling (2014) has argued based on Sniderman and Theriault (2004), frames are not merely devices to "sell" a particular policy. Even though frames can be adjusted strategically and do not "cause" policies, they cannot be chosen at random and must be consistent with a political actor's more general ideological commitment and the political culture of a country. Thus, studying the frames that are mobilized in support of a policy helps to understand why different states as well as different political actors within countries differ in terms of the policies they prefer.[3]

Given the increasing salience of migration and asylum policy in many countries in recent years, we are evidently not the first who have analyzed the way refugees are framed in public discourse. However, we still lack a typology that covers and exhausts the many different frames and arguments utilized in public debates about the admission of refugees as a precondition for comparative analyses, particularly also beyond Western Europe and North America. In what follows, we briefly sketch the main existing contributions and point out where, in our view, previous approaches fall short. It should be noted that our proposed typology does not "reinvent the wheel", as many frames have already been identified by some study or another before. However, we do claim that our typology is the first that brings together these frames under a unified theoretical framework.

(1) First, there is a large literature that has studied the framing of migration more generally, without focusing specifically on the admission of refugees and asylum seekers (e.g., Helbling, 2014; Haynes et al., 2016; Roggeband & Vliegenthart, 2007; Balabanova & Balch, 2010; for an overview, see Eberl et al., 2018). International law and political philosophy single out "refugees" as special types of international migrants (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024b). While states, at least on paper, have full sovereignty to regulate admission when it comes to "voluntary migrants", i.e., people moving for better opportunities or other personal reasons, they are required by

[3] How an issue is framed by political elites also influences public attitudes towards it, as several studies have shown with regard to attitudes towards migrants and refugees (recently, for instance, Schmidt-Catran & Czymara, 2023). Public attitudes, in turn, serve as "soft feasibility constraints" for asylum and refugee policymaking, as Ruhs (2022) has argued, and can thus shape the direction of policies as well.

international human rights and refugee law to consider asylum claims by "forced migrants" and not to return them at the border ("non-refoulement"), as they are people seeking protection from persecution and war. Therefore, the question of admitting refugees may evoke specific kinds of frames that are not included in typologies on the framing of migrants. [4]

Take, for instance, the most comprehensive existing typology of migration-related frames used in Western European political discourse developed by Helbling (2014). Helbling distinguishes between seven different frames (nationalistic, multicultural, moral-universal, economic, labor and social security, security and pragmatic), based on three types of arguments derived from Habermas' discourse theory (identity-related, moral-universal and utilitarian arguments). While many of these frames are applicable to refugees as well, the typology is not exhaustive when it comes to frames specific to the admission of refugees. Most importantly, it does not cover what we term the "international" frame and the associated arguments. For example, we know from other research that the admission of refugees can also be related to considerations of foreign policy, as admitting refugees implies stigmatizing the refugee- sending country as breaching fundamental human rights (Abdelaaty, 2021; Blair et al., 2022; Moorthy & Brathwaite, 2019). Our typology takes into account these considerations related to admitting refugees and asylum seekers more specifically.

(2) There are some quantitative studies that focus more explicitly on the framing of refugees and asylum seekers (e.g., van Gorp, 2005; Berry et al., 2015; Chouliaraki et al., 2017; Greussing & Boomgaarden, 2017; Kovář, 2020; Troszyński & El-Ghamari, 2022). These studies have offered systematic conceptualizations of refugee-related frames that are used for comparative analyses, for example, between left- and right-wing media outlets, different countries or to trace developments over time. However, the frames proposed are often rather generic and not exhaustive of the more specific ways the refugee issue can be framed, as quantitative studies need to gloss over differences for the sake measuring distributions. For instance, in their analysis of the representation of the 2015 refugee crisis in the European press, Chouliaraki et al. (2017) merely distinguish between four frames: economic, geopolitical (which relates refugees to terrorism), cultural and moral. Other studies distinguish broadly between "victim" and "threat" frames of refugees and asylum seekers (van Gorp, 2005). Compared to these studies, our typology offers a more fine-grained classification of the frames and arguments used in public debates.

(3) There are also a great number of qualitative studies that provide a lot of in-depth insight into the discourse and framing of the refugee and asylum issue in different countries and contexts. We build on these studies that refer to our countries of analysis (e.g., on Germany: Vollmer & Karakayali, 2018; Lemay, 2024; Holzberg et al., 2018; Hertner, 2022; on Poland: Krzyżanowski, 2018, 2020; Krotofil & Motak, 2018; Jaskułowski, 2019; Cap, 2018; on Turkey: Gulmez, 2019; Polat, 2018; Morgül, 2022; Yanaşmayan et al., 2019; on Uganda: Hargrave et al., 2020). As these investigations typically aim for a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) of political discourse, they are more attuned to the nuances of case-specific framings than

[4] Note that, given the legal obligation to admit refugees, the distinction between "voluntary" and "forced" migrants can itself become a question of framing.

quantitative studies. For instance, the many qualitative studies of Turkish political discourse have shown the nuances in the AKP government's framing of Syrian refugees both as "guests" (a term implying generosity but no legal commitment to host refugees) and as "brothers and sisters" that share a common civilizational past (the Ottoman Empire) and religious identity (Islam) with Turks (Gulmez, 2019; Polat, 2018; Morgül, 2022; Yanaşmayan et al., 2019). However, most available studies are not comparative, analyzing the discourse in only one country and, quite often, of only one political actor. Thus, these studies do not attempt to offer a systematic typology of frames applicable to other cases and contexts for comparative analyses.[5] Our typology builds on a qualitative analysis, but in contrast to most previous studies in this field, it is comparative in nature and aims to discover the range of possible frames and arguments across different country cases.

(4) A more general limitation of the previously mentioned literature is that most studies focus on public discourse in Europe and North America. This probably has to do with the fact that migration and refugee research is dominated by research institutions located in Western Europe and North America (Piccoli et al., 2023). However, most refugees worldwide are hosted in countries of the so-called "Global South" (UNHCR, 2024), which lie close to the origin of the largest displacement crises (such as Syria, Sudan and South Sudan, Venezuela, Myanmar etc.), while countries of the "Global North" are mostly shielded from these refugee movements for a variety of reasons, including the principles of international refugee law themselves (FitzGerald, 2019). Nevertheless, the political discourse on refugees in the Global South countries remains less analyzed, which can lead to overlooking certain frames and thus to biases in existing framing typologies. For instance, the previous literature has often tended to associate frames highlighting cultural identity with restrictive policy positions, which is often the case in Western Europe or North America. We will show how they can also be associated with permissive policies, like in Uganda for example, where cultural closeness across national borders perceived as artificial constructs of colonialism is emphasized to evoke solidarity with refugees.

(5) Finally, the previous literature on the framing of refugees has not taken into account explanatory studies that have attempted to explain how countries respond to refugee admissions (e.g., Jacobsen, 1996; Abdelaaty, 2021; Blair et al., 2022; Boucher & Gest, 2018; Helbling & Kalkum, 2018). The latter have identified a number of country-level variables and formulated hypotheses on how these may shape whether countries accept or reject refugees, including ethnic and cultural similarity between refugees and the host population (Abdelaaty, 2021), foreign policy relations between the sending and the receiving state (Abdelaaty, 2021; Moorthy & Brathwaite, 2019), obligations imposed by international and domestic law (Soysal, 1994; Joppke, 1998, 1999), levels of socioeconomic development (e.g., Geddes, 2003; Hollifield, 2004,

[5] Furthermore, many qualitative analyses are inspired by the tradition of "critical discourse analysis" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001). The stated aim of "critical discourse analysis" is "demystifying the—manifest or latent—persuasive or 'manipulative' character of discursive practices" (Reisigl & Wodak, 2001: 88). The consequence of this more normative perspective is that it mostly focuses on the frames that exclude or denigrate migrants and refugees, often mobilized by political actors on the radical right. These studies are less interested in positive or empowering frames, which, however, are present in political discourse as well and therefore must be included in a framing typology.

Tsourapas, 2019; Adamson & Tsourapas, 2020) or the strength of welfare state institutions (Boräng, 2015).

We argue that it is important to integrate both strands of the literature to gain a better understanding of the drivers of refugee policies. On the one hand, the variables identified by the explanatory studies can help identify the frames that guide policymakers. On the other hand, however, the explanatory variables are only effective in so far as they are made salient and interpreted in a specific way by political actors. We derive this perspective from the famous "Thomas theorem" that reads, "If men define situations as real, they are real in their consequences" (Thomas & Thomas, 1928: 572). Take Abdelaaty's (2021) claim that ethnic similarity between the refugees and the host society leads to more open admission policies. But what constitutes ethnic and cultural similarity essentially depends on how political actors define the host community and the refugees. For instance, while the Turkish President Erdoğan defines Syrian refugees as members of the same civilization and religion as Turks, the oppositional CHP defines them as "Arabs" and draws a cultural boundary between them and Turks. This goes for the other variables identified in the literature as well. Thus, our typology of frames takes into account the variables identified by the explanatory literature.

Methodological approach

To ground our framing typology empirically, we draw on a discourse analysis of political debates on the admission of refugees in six countries across the world, the results of which are published in detail in a monograph (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a). While our paper is based on the book's rich material, we go beyond this by proposing a typology of frames and typical arguments that cuts across the case studies.

The six countries of analysis (Chile, Germany, Poland, Singapore, Turkey and Uganda) were selected following an exploratory logic. On the one hand, all countries in our analysis have in common that they faced significant pressure to admit refugees and asylum seekers from the largest current refugee movements worldwide, even though the degree to which they were affected varied. On the other hand, the cases vary along a number of dimensions to maximize variance between them. Most importantly, the countries are located in different world regions and confronted with refugees from different origins. They also differ in a variety of factors that have been mentioned in the literature to influence a country's refugee policy, such as their political regime, their level of socioeconomic development and the cultural proximity of the host society majority and the refugees. Even though it is clear that an analysis of six countries cannot be representative of all countries of the world, the fact that our cases vary along these dimensions allows us to claim with some confidence that our study covers a significant variety of public debates and frames on the admission of refugees.

We first selected three countries all confronted with the same group of people, namely Syrian refugees fleeing the civil war in their country that broke out in 2011. We selected two countries that have pursued an open refugee policy and taken in most Syrian refugees: Turkey, a neighboring country of Syria, and Germany, the

main reception country in the EU. With Poland, we included a Central and Eastern European member state of the EU that vehemently opposed the admission of Syrian refugees through the relocation mechanism proposed by the European Commission to distribute refugees among EU member states, but which, at the same time, signaled readiness to admit Ukrainians fleeing the conflict with Russia.[6]

In a second step, we extended the number of cases to non-European countries (Uganda, Chile and Singapore) to explore whether the results found on the basis of the analyses of the first three countries are generalizable for understanding how refugees are framed beyond Europe. Even though non-European countries host most refugees in the world, these hosting countries are rarely included in comparative discourse and framing analyses. Uganda hosts one of the largest numbers of refugees in the world and pursues an acknowledged open-door policy, especially with regard to refugees originating in South Sudan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Chile hosts a large number of displaced persons from Venezuela who have escaped socioeconomic and political instability under the Socialist regime of Nicolás Maduro but has pursued an ambivalent admission policy. Finally, Singapore is located in a region that has witnessed the exodus of the Rohingya fleeing religious persecution in Myanmar. Although Singapore is a member of ASEAN and is among the most developed states in the region, it has staunchly refused to take in any refugees.

Within each country, we focused on the analysis of parliamentary debates and other political speeches by policymakers. While many framing analyses focus on frames in the mass media, the analysis of political speeches has the following advantages for the development of a typology of frames: First, parliaments are arenas of public communication. Compared to other arenas of the public sphere like mass or social media, in parliamentary debates speakers have the opportunity to develop frames and arguments on an issue at some length and in more detail. This provides richer material than focusing on other arenas. At the same time, the frames and arguments developed in the parliamentary arena are often at the source of public discourse, being picked up and disseminated by the media and other arenas. Second, as parliaments are typically composed of deputies from different political parties, parliamentary debates cover speakers from different ideological backgrounds. Depending on the degree of democratization of a country, parliaments are more or less representative of the main ideological currents within a society. Finally, cross-national comparisons require easily accessible data, and most parliaments publish their proceedings online.

With the help of search engines, we selected all parliamentary debates and speeches that took place in the context of a critical discourse moment (these are moments when, due to a certain event, an issue becomes an important topic of public debate) between 2009 and 2021. We concentrated on plenary debates and excluded debates in committees. We ensured that the statements of all major parties represented in parliament were considered for the discourse analysis. We began with the analysis of the speech by the first speaker (usually the party member with the highest standing

[6] It should be noted that our analysis was conducted prior to the recent mass displacement of Ukrainians following the Russian invasion in 2022.

within the parliamentary group) and continued to analyze speeches by other party members until we reached the point of "theoretical saturation".[7]

We conducted a qualitative content analysis of each speech (Kuckartz, 2014). In the first step, we developed a system of categories of interpretation that helped us sort and systematize the raw data. The categories of interpretation ("thematical categories", following Kuckartz, 2014: 71–72) were developed in an iterative process, and include the core categories "defining the 'we'", "defining the 'others'", and "arguments for/against admission". Next, using this category system, each speech was interpreted by three members of the research group (to ensure a certain degree of inter-subjectivity), and the interpretation was written down in the form of a "thematic case summary" along the categories of analysis (Kuckartz, 2014: 81–83). Third, for our key categories of analysis, we systematically aggregated the interpretations across all speeches into the most important subcategories (see also Kuckartz, 2014: 75–79). These subcategories constitute what we call "frames". For example, the "we" could be framed in economic terms with reference to such parameters as economic development or in cultural terms with reference to the ethnic composition of the nation. Again, specifying the main frames occurred both inductively, through a process of constant comparison and systematization of the text material, as well as deductively, by linking our interpretations to the previous literature. Finally, for each frame, we identified the main arguments for or against the admission of refugees.

Section "A typology of frames and arguments on the admission of refugees" describes the main frames and associated arguments we derived through this procedure. We substantiate them with quotes from the material of our book (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a). Where necessary, they have been translated to English. Table A1 in the appendix lists details about all the statements we quote from in this paper.

In addition, we conducted interviews with policymakers and experts in the different countries to gain background information and to establish the "communicative validity"[8] of our interpretations of national discourse as well as our understanding of the frames used. Given that our study was realized during the Covid-19 pandemic, we conducted most of the interviews via videoconference since in-person interviews were limited due to travel restrictions. Overall, we conducted 18 interviews. As the interviews were only used to validate our interpretations of the country-specific discourse, we will not report from the interviews specifically.

Defining "us" and "them" as key dimensions of framing

Typologies must build on a coherent theoretical framework. Our typology of frames builds on the argument that the question of admitting refugees essentially "triggers" the question of who "we" are (i.e., the receiving society) and who "they" are (i.e., the

[7] Overall, the following number of speeches were selected for interpretation: Chile: 30; Germany: 19 (plus 7 party manifestos); Poland: 27; Turkey: 17 (plus 8 party manifestos); Singapore: 7 speeches and 13 parliamentary Q & A sessions; Uganda: 3 speeches given outside of parliament and 34 parliamentary debates, in which various MPs commented on admitting refugees, with rather brief statements.

[8] Similar to Mayring's (2014: 111) suggestion that interpretations in qualitative research should be discussed with the research subjects and/or experts.

refugees). Admitting refugees implies opening the legal and symbolic boundaries of the "imagined community" (Anderson, 2016) of the nation and sharing resources—at least temporarily—with others who claim to need protection. From the perspective of the receiving society, this raises the question of who "we" are and to what extent "we" have the obligation, capacity and interest to help. It also raises the question of who the refugees are and whether they fit "us" and are worthy of "our" help. Accordingly, we argue that defining "us" and "them" are the key dimensions to which all frames used in political discourse about the admission of refugees refer. We acknowledge that the question of who "we" are and who "they" are can also be triggered by migration more generally, and not only by refugee migration. The difference lies in the frames that are relevant for defining "us" and "them" in each case, as we have argued above.

The argument that the question of admitting refugees triggers the question of who "we" are and who "they" are is supported by different theoretical paradigms. Most importantly, social identity theory argues that social interactions with the members of an out-group set in motion a process increasing the salience of collective identity categories, even if the in-group and the out-group only differ by minimal and arbitrary characteristics (Tajfel et al., 1971). This cognitive process is due to individuals' tendency to strive for a "positive distinctiveness" in terms of their social identity. As refugees did typically not belong to the receiving society in the past, one can assume that they will be perceived as out-groups.

Indeed, research about public attitudes on migrants and refugees consistently shows that these are primarily shaped by "sociotropic" concerns about their impact on the in-group. As Hainmüller and Hopkins (2014) have shown in their comprehensive literature review, conceptions of nationhood (i.e., imagining the nation as culturally homogenous or heterogeneous) and perceptions of the state of the national economy (i.e., positive or negative), rather than economic self-interest, structure attitudes towards immigration. Relatedly, attitudes towards migrants and refugees are also influenced by how their characteristics are perceived, such as their cultural or religious background, "deservingness", skills and gender (Bansak et al., 2016; Hager & Veit, 2019).

From another theoretical angle, cultural and postcolonial studies have also studied how encounters with other cultures lead to mutually reinforcing processes of collective identity making and "othering". For example, Said (1978), in his influential study on "Orientalism", shows how the "West" has discursively constructed the "Orient" as its "other", thereby affirming its own self-image as a superior civilization. Similarly, Hall (1992) argues that the identity of the "West" emerged when European powers came into contact with other cultures in the course of colonization. It is premised on what Hall calls the hierarchical idea of "the West and the rest".

The theory of "othering" has also been applied to studying immigration discourse. For instance, Triandafyllidou (2001) argues that processes of immigration often set off a discursive process in the receiving country of redefining national identity in such a way as to exclude the immigrant "other" from the national community. We tie our research to this general theoretical perspective but take a more neutral stance. While theorists of the process of "othering" assume that intergroup contact mostly leads to a devaluation and exclusion of the other, we show that refugees as "others"

are sometimes also portrayed in a positive light depending on the specific frames of interpretation.[9]

Finally, historical sociologists and historians have argued that societies' engagement with the "other", and immigrants in particular, is even constitutive for nation-building processes (Torpey, 1998). In Rogers Brubaker's (1992) seminal study on the immigration and citizenship policies of Germany and France, he argues that these policies are shaped by different conceptions of nationhood (particularly ethnic and civic nationalism) formed from these countries' historical experiences with ethnic minorities and immigrants.

A typology of frames and arguments on the admission of refugees

Building on these theoretical insights, we argue that the frames used in political discourse about the admission of refugees are essentially related to the question of who "we" are on the one hand, and who "they" are on the other. However, we go beyond this observation by further specifying, based on the previous literature and on our own empirical analyses, the different ways the "we" and the "refugees" can be defined in public discourse. In particular, we identify six frames, which we will describe in more detail in this section: An economic, cultural, moral, legal, security and international frame. We argue that, depending on these different ways the "we" and the "refugees" are framed, the symbolic boundaries of the in-group are opened up or closed down to the refugees as "others".

The six different frames are, prima facie, neutral and not content-specific. Thus, political actors can fill the framing of the host society and the refugees with various content, leading to different conclusions. For example, the host nation can be framed in cultural terms as culturally homogenous and unable to admit culturally alien foreigners or as multicultural and open towards refugees from different backgrounds. Likewise, the refugees can be framed as culturally alien or culturally close, each of which suggests different policy conclusions. At the same time, defining the "we" and the "others" are not independent acts but related to each other, as a certain definition of the "we" structures the way the "refugees" are perceived. For instance, if political actors emphasize the ethnic homogeneity of the host nation, then it is likely that refugees are going to be evaluated in these terms as well, that is, as ethnically close or distant.

The specific content of politicians' frames is not plucked out of thin air. They are embedded in the political culture of a country and the ideological orientation of their respective party. In filling each frame with meaning, politicians draw on different "*cultural repertories*" (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000). There are several kin concepts used in the literature, such as "cultural themes" (Gamson, 1992; Díez Medrano, 2003) or "cultural tool kits" (Swidler, 1986), which have a similar meaning. They refer to the shared cultural elements like ideologies, narratives, collective memories and symbols that form the repertoire used by a social group to make sense of the

[9] Studying the discourse of Turkish President Erdoğan, Morgül (2022) comes to a similar conclusion: a certain conception of national identity may also lead to an inclusion of the "other" in the in-group.

world and determine avenues of action. As we will illustrate below, these repertoires include, for example, a neo-Ottoman ideology in Turkey, the collective memory of exile and asylum in Chile, or the sanctity of the Basic Law in Germany. These cultural repertoires that actors draw upon to fill the frames with content relate primarily to the definition of the collective identity; however, because framing the "we" informs framing refugees, the cultural repertoires also indirectly influence the characterization of the refugees.

Depending on the way the respective frames are specified, *arguments* for or against the admission of refugees can be developed. Speakers construct their arguments by linking specific definitions of "us" to specific definitions of the refugees, following the pattern: "Because we are x and they are y, we have to do z". For instance: "Because we are a culturally homogenous nation and the refugees are culturally distant, we should exclude them". Given that each of the six frames can be specified in different ways, there may also be different arguments associated with each frame. Table 1 summarizes the six different frames, the corresponding definitions of "us" and "them", and the associated arguments for or against the admission of refugees we have distilled from our empirical material. As mentioned above, the following presentation of the different frames and arguments draws on empirical material that we have used in our monograph (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024a).[10]

Economic framing

The first frame that is relevant for debates about the admission of refugees is the economic frame. The importance of an economic framing has been highlighted by many previous framing studies as well, and explanatory studies have noted the impact of socioeconomic development on the admission of refugees. Accordingly, this frame refers to the question of how refugees will impact on the national economy. It is based on defining the host nation in terms of economic performance and strength on the one hand, and the refugees in terms of their skills and resources on the other. As with most of the other frames, an economic framing can be used to justify both the acceptance and rejection of refugees.

Singapore is an exemplary case in which politicians mobilize an economic framing to argue against the admission of refugees with reference to *economic burden*. It is based on an economic definition of the "we" that draws on a distinctive national narrative. Both the government and the opposition parties portray Singapore as an economically very successful country that has risen from an underdeveloped nation into one of the most prosperous countries in the world in a rather short period of time. The economic success of the country is interpreted as having been achieved against all odds, only based on the ambition and skills of its population:

[10] It must be noted that our typology of frames and arguments does not explicitly consider what might be termed "second-order" arguments about the admission of refugees. Politicians might argue against the admission of refugees because this would be unpopular with voters. We call this a "second-order" argument, because it is based on a "first-order" assumption about why the policy is unpopular. And this is where our frames and arguments come in again, as this unpopularity might depend on cultural, economic etc. frames.

Table 1 A typology of frames and arguments on the admission of refugees

	Economic	Cultural	Moral	Legal	Security	International
Definition of "us"	Economic performance as an identity marker (e.g., level of economic development, labor market performance and capacity of welfare state)	"Invented" history of the nation, its ethnic composition and cultural characteristics	Values that define the nation (e.g., humanitarian principles, religious values, historical obligations)	Laws and norms that bind the nation (e.g., international law)	Degree of public safety	Relationship with other countries, i.e., the refugee-sending country or third countries
Definition of "them"	Skills and resources of refugees	Ethnic and cultural characteristics of refugees	Refugees' neediness and deservingness (e.g., motivation of flight or vulnerability of the group)	Rights and obligations of asylum seekers (e.g., distinction between refugees and migrants)	Refugees as a security risk (e.g., in terms of criminality, terrorism, health threats)	Refugees as political allies or enemies
Arguments for admission	Economic utility	Cultural closeness	Humanitarianism (universal)	Commitment to human rights and refugee law		International rivalry
		Multiculturalism				Burden-sharing
						International recognition
						Reciprocity
						Reparative obligation
Arguments against admission	Economic burden	Cultural incompatibility	Primacy of national solidarity (communitarian)	No legal obligation	Security threat to the nation	Primacy of national sovereignty
		Limits of cultural diversity				

> Singaporeans cannot afford to be just here for the ride, passengers. We are not an oil state where citizens can live on the oil wealth and non-citizens do the work. For Singapore to thrive, we Singaporeans must always stay lean and hungry. (Lee Hsien Loong, PAP, February 8, 2013)

Accordingly, all immigrants attempting to come to Singapore are interpreted primarily through an economic lens. They are considered and evaluated from the standpoint of how much human capital and wealth they bring and to what extent their wealth and human capital might contribute to Singapore's prosperity. Refugees are interpreted within this cost–benefit equation as people unlikely to bring any benefit to Singapore. Even though Singapore has one of the most developed economies of the world, and welcomes many migrants that can spur economic growth, refugees are perceived as an economic burden.

An economic framing also played a role in the German debate on the admission of Syrian refugees, but it was used for arguing in the opposite direction, as refugees were seen as bringing *economic advantages.* The grand coalition between the conservative CDU/CSU and the social democratic party SPD, in government during the 2015/16 refugee movement, defined Germany as a strong economy that has the capacity to admit refugees. Again, this self-definition in economic terms as a strong economy is an important cultural repertoire in Germany, to which Chancellor Angela Merkel referred in her famous summer press conference of 2015 when she stated that "we can do it":

> Our economy is strong, our labor market is robust, even receptible. Let's think about the area of skilled workers. When so many people take on so much to fulfill their dream of living in Germany, that really doesn't give us the worst credentials. (Angela Merkel, CDU, August 31, 2015)

Accordingly, the government highlighted the refugees' human capital and the necessity to top up labor market shortages resulting from Germany's demographic decline. Thus, the specific framing of the German economy combined with an emphasis on the economic benefits of refugees provided the argument for an open refugee policy.

Cultural framing

The second frame we identified is the cultural frame. The cultural framing is based on a definition of the "we" that refers to the (real or imagined) history of the host nation and its ethnic composition and cultural characteristics. There are many ways to imagine the culture of a nation: as a population sharing a common ethnic descent, language, religion, cultural traditions, way of life, or certain values. Typically, scholars distinguish between more exclusive, ethnocultural forms of nationalism, which define the nation as a community of descent with a shared history, culture and language, and more inclusive, civic forms of nationalism based on a shared allegiance to the state that can include groups of different ethnic origins (Brubaker, 1992). Accordingly, within the cultural frame, politicians can define the refugees as either culturally

distant to evoke an image of cultural incompatibility, or as culturally close, to generate feelings of solidarity based on cultural similarities.

The explanatory literature on refugee admissions has posited that the degree of cultural closeness and ethnic kinship between the host population and the refugees may affect the likelihood of receiving asylum. For example, Abdelaaty (2021) and Blair et al. (2022) have shown that if refugees are of the same ethnic background as the majority population of a country, the likelihood of admission is higher. We take this argument on board in our definition of the cultural frame, but note that cultural or ethnic similarity is not something that is objectively given. It depends very much on how "we" and the "others" are defined, as the following examples illustrate.

Several arguments are associated with the cultural frame. The most prominent one highlights *cultural incompatibility*. This argument arises when national identity is framed as ethnically and/or culturally homogenous and refugees as different and alien. We find this argument, for example, in the Polish discourse. The "Law and Justice" party, governing between 2015 and 2023, draws on a long-standing narrative that defines Poland as a Christian Catholic nation (a narrative that is closely connected to the making of the Polish nation state, as Catholicism distinguished Poland from Protestant Prussia to the West and Orthodox Russia to the East):

> The Polish nation - regardless of whether someone likes it or not - is evidently a nation very strongly associated with Christianity, with Catholicism. And we, as Poles, will emphasize it, not because someone likes it or not, but because it results from our internal sensitivity. (Jan Żaryn, PiS, October 19, 2016)

Consequently, refugees from the Middle East are marked as "Muslims", in order to suggest that they do not match with Poland's identity and should be rejected.

A further cultural argument for rejecting refugees is more subtle and emphasizes the *limits of cultural diversity*. This is an argument seldom reported in previous studies, which tend to associate multiculturalism with openness towards refugees. We only encountered it in Singapore, which proudly defines itself as a multicultural and multiracial nation, having one of the highest migrant shares in the world, but which nevertheless refuses to admit refugees. They are rejected, among other reasons, because they are perceived as a threat to the carefully managed multi-ethnic cohesion in Singapore by bringing too much diversity:

> So we need both that vibrancy and openness, but also the sense of identity and the sense of belonging among citizens that we are Singaporeans together. That is a very difficult combination to create– to be cohesive without being close, to identify with one another and not be xenophobic; to be open and yet not be diluted and dissolve. (Lee Hsien Loong, PAP, February 8, 2013)

However, there are also two arguments within the cultural frame supporting permissive refugee policies. The first one emphasizes *cultural closeness*. Political actors can expand the symbolic boundary of the "we", so that the refugees are included in the in-group by virtue of their ethnic or cultural closeness to the host society. This framing is prominently utilized by the Turkish government under President Erdoğan vis-

à-vis Syrian refugees, who draws on the collective memory of the former Ottoman Empire. The government's reference point of an imagined community goes beyond the modern Turkish nation-state by referring to the former territorial boundaries of the Ottoman Empire and by defining Turkey as a Muslim country:

> What is essential to us is our historical past with these brothers, our cultural closeness, our partnership of civilization, and the human values we share. The places we call "Syria and Iraq" today were, for us, geographies that were not different from Mardin, Diyarbakir, Gaziantep, and Hatay. To see those who live in Syria and Iraq as different from our own citizens embarrasses us in the eyes of our history, our ancestors, and especially our martyrs. (Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, AKP, October 1, 2015)

Based on this cultural identity construction, refugees are welcomed because they are defined as having the same religion (Muslims) and a common history with Turkey (as Syria was formerly a part of the Ottoman Empire).[11]

A final argument within the cultural frame supporting the admission of refugees builds on defining national identity as a *multicultural* society, which blurs the cultural boundaries of the "we". This framing then results in an argument for a more open border policy welcoming refugees regardless of their backgrounds. We frequently encounter this argument in former settler colonies, which define themselves as having emerged through immigration, such as in Chile in the (early) discourse on Venezuelan refugees. Interestingly, the emphasis on multiculturalism was used by a conservative government:

> Chile has been, is, and will continue to be an open and welcoming country towards immigration. In fact, one of the main assets of our country is its diversity, contributed by our original peoples and by those who —throughout our history– have come to Chile in search of a better life: the Spanish, European, Palestinian migrations and that of many of our brother countries in Latin America. And therefore, this is how our wonderful nation was formed, with all those who assumed it as a second Homeland. Our country belongs to all of us. We have to take care of it together and we have to dream it and build it together. (Sebastián Piñera, RN, April 9, 2018)

It is interesting to note that, as the example from Singapore reported above shows, the self-definition as multicultural society does not necessarily lead to a more open policy towards refugees. Ultimately, this depends on the specific narratives surrounding multiculturalism in different contexts. While in Singapore, a multicultural society is interpreted as a rather precarious achievement, with much effort being invested into combatting possible ethnic and religious tensions, multiculturalism is associated with nation building in the Chilean discourse.

[11] A similar cultural framing of national identity, which includes refugees in a "pan-African" in-group that reaches beyond the artificial national borders imposed by colonialism, can be found in Uganda.

Moral framing

While economic and cultural frames are relevant for debates about the admission of migrants in general as well, the moral frame is more specific to debates about the admission of refugees. Refugees are persons in need, fleeing war and persecution, who seek help by asking for admission in a state. This can raise fundamental moral questions about what is owed to strangers in need, touching upon the core values that define the host community.

In the field of social justice research, scholars have coined the term "moral repertoires" to describe collectively shared ideas about the just distribution of resources and burdens in society or who should get what and why (Heuer et al., 2020). Politicians often link the question of admitting or rejecting refugees to the moral repertories that are regarded as constitutive for a society, such as Christian charity or Islamic hospitality. We suggest to distinguish between arguments that mobilize universal moral obligations, such as humanitarianism, and communitarian notions, such as the primacy of solidarity with the in-group.

The German discourse was a case in point for a *humanitarian* argumentation. In the discourse on Syrian refugees, the main political parties from the left to the center-right did not define Germany as a closed community, which is only committed to the well-being of its own members. Rather, it was described as being committed to the values of humanitarianism and international solidarity and thus ready to extend a helping hand to foreigners who are in need. One can understand this self-definition as a reaction to German history and the stereotypical image of Germany as a self-interested and ruthless state. German civil society in particular was seen as the carrier of this humanitarianism, having self-organized in an exemplary manner to welcome and help the refugees coming to Germany: "Thanks to these helpers, Germany is showing the whole world its best side during these days" (Thomas Oppermann, SPD, September 9, 2015).

Within the moral frame, refugees are evaluated in terms of whether they "deserve" help. Refugees claim special rights of access to another country because of facing serious harm and human rights violations in their countries of origin. Thus, the decision to grant asylum rests on the evaluation of whether migrants "deserve" to be seen as refugees and to receive special attention. Presumably, the more severe the reason to migrate and the more vulnerable the group of refugees, the more they earn the sympathies of the hosts. For example, politicians may emphasize the atrocities of war, humanitarian disasters or draw on the image of "women and children" to portray refugees as a vulnerable group in particular need of protection. This humanitarian framing of refugees appeared in almost all our cases, quite vividly in the German debate on the admission of Syrians:

> So much for the numbers [of refugees applying for asylum]. But behind them are life fates. We all follow the tragedies that take place, whether they are photos of dead children who have perished in a horrific way or whether they are the horrific suffering and death of the people in the truck. They are exemplary of many, many fates. (Angela Merkel, CDU, September 9, 2015)

In contrast, we also identified one moral argument against the admission of refugees, which draws on a communitarian notion of solidarity. It presupposes that there is a tradeoff between caring for the in-group and supporting out-group members, and highlights the primacy of the former, in this case the *primacy of national solidarity*: States have to take care of the well-being of their citizens first, before caring for foreigners. This frame appears in the political discourse in Poland. For instance, the Polish Law and Justice party draws on a Christian moral repertoire to suggest that the principle of Christian charity obliges us to care for our family members first, then the members of our nation and only then for non-nationals: "There is such a principle and it's ordo caritatis, the order of loving. Based on that principle, the loved ones go first, family, then the nation, then others" (Jarosław Kaczyński, PiS, Sejm, September 16, 2015). This example illustrates the importance of framing, as the principle of Christian charity could also be mobilized to justify welcoming refugees.

Legal framing

The fourth frame we identified is a legal framing. According to international law, sovereign states are entitled to decide whether to admit or reject "voluntary" migrants. However, they are bound by international human rights and refugee law not to reject persons fleeing from war and persecution (non-refoulement) and not to discriminate between them based on arbitrary criteria. We argue that the decisive factor for the acceptance of refugees is the extent to which a commitment to international law is interpreted as part of country's national identity or not.

This was the case in Germany, for example, where an open admissions policy was legitimized by a *commitment to human rights and refugee law*. The government and opposition parties frequently emphasized Germany's commitment to universal rights by virtue of its Constitution and the collective memory of its totalitarian past. Consequently, refugees were interpreted as persons having a right to be treated with dignity and to apply for asylum (even though asylum cannot be granted in every case). By referring to international law, this frame stretches the boundaries of the "we" based on human rights:

> The fundamental right to asylum for politically persecuted persons applies. We can be proud of the humanity of our Basic Law. It is particularly evident in this article. We also grant protection to all those who flee from wars and come to us. They, too, are entitled to this protection. (Angela Merkel, CDU, August 31, 2015)

However, the rejection of refugees can be justified from a legal perspective as well, by suggesting that there is *no legal obligation* to admit them, because they are not in fact refugees, but irregular migrants. Placing asylum seekers into another legal category, namely that of "migrants", implies that the receiving state can circumvent international legal obligations such as the principle of non-refoulement. For instance, Singapore does not treat refugees as "refugees", but as "illegal migrants", as becomes evident in the answer of the Minister of Foreign Affairs given to the following question on the treatment of Rohingya: "So if they are caught trying to seek refuge in Sin-

gapore, will they be treated as all other illegal immigrants, which means that they will be brought to court and face caning?" The Minister does not directly answer the question and only states: "We will deal with them humanely" (Balaji Sadasivan, March 24, 2009). But he makes clear that refugees who approach the Singaporean border by boat are turned back: "We should also alleviate their plight where possible, including for naval vessels which encounter Rohingyas at sea to render appropriate assistance, such as by providing food, water and fuel" (Balaji Sadasivan, PAP, March 24, 2009).

Security framing

The fifth frame we encountered is the security frame. This frame is also emphasized by "securitization theory" (Huysmans, 2006; Boswell, 2007). Securitization theory argues that perceived threats to public security—in terms of crime or terrorism—can lead to more restrictive migration and asylum policies. This frame typically implies defining "us" as law-abiding citizens and as an orderly society, while the refugees (and migrants) are discursively linked to crime, social disorder and terrorism. Securitization theory suggests that occurrences like the 9/11 terrorist attacks serve as windows of opportunity to introduce more restrictive asylum policy measures. Against the background of the worldwide border closures during the Covid-19 pandemic, we also include the portrayal of refugees as a health threat within the security frame.

Within this frame, we found only one argument, namely against the admission of refugees, based on the fear that they pose a *security threat* to the nation. This is a frame often evoked by conservative and right-wing parties across the world, building on a narrative of law and order. For example, in Chile, President Piñera distinguished between welcome and unwelcome migrants based on security concerns:

> This means that Chile has a policy of open doors and arms to welcome those migrants who come to our country to start a new and better life, to respect our laws– starting with the Migration Law– to integrate into our society, and to contribute to the development of Chile. However, those who try to enter our country to cause us harm, such as criminal gangs, organized crime, drug traffickers, or human trafficking, will find a closed-door policy. (Sebastián Piñera, RN, April 9, 2018)

However, the argument can also be found among social democratic parties like the Kemalist opposition party in Turkey. The CHP did not only interpret Syrian refugees as an economic burden but also as a security risk by portraying them as potential terrorists.

International framing

The sixth and final frame is the international frame. It refers to how the host nation is positioned internationally, both with regard to the refugees' countries of origin, as well as to third countries, and the obligations towards refugees that derive from these international relations.

Within this frame, *international rivalry* is the main argument for admitting refugees. The decision to grant asylum to refugees can be interpreted as a repudiation of the political regime of the country they are fleeing from, based on the acknowledgment that people have a legitimate reason to flee, namely that their fundamental rights are being seriously violated (Abdelaaty, 2021; Moorthy & Brathwaite, 2019). Correspondingly, asylum policy can be used as a political tool to "shame" opponent regimes. For example, during the Cold War, the West's open policy towards political refugees from the Eastern bloc was partly motivated by the desire to showcase the superiority of the "free world" (Hathaway, 1990). Indeed, Abdelaaty (2021) and Blair and colleagues (2022) have shown that countries are systematically more open to refugees fleeing from countries with a hostile regime than countries with an allied regime. Correspondingly, refugees can be framed as allies in the fight against a common enemy or as the enemies themselves.

One example from our study that illustrates that this argument is indeed mobilized in public discourse comes from Chile, where the right-wing Piñera government opposed the Socialist regime in Venezuela and emphasized its solidarity with refugees fleeing Maduro's authoritarian government, based on a framing of Chile's identity as a free and democratic country:

> On the one hand, we have the drama that the Venezuelan people are facing and that practically leads its inhabitants to flee from hunger, misery, and the risk to their lives into which the illegal and immoral government of Nicolás Maduro has plunged them and, on the other, there are the conditions of development, stability and, consequently, of hope that our nation offers. (José Miguel Durana, UDI, August 13, 2018)

Another argument supporting the admission of refugees by referring to an international frame is *international burden sharing*. It is based on emphasizing the obligations deriving from a country's membership in an international organization. This is an argument frequently invoked by the former liberal opposition in Poland, which positioned itself against the right-wing government, arguing that Poland should participate in the relocation of refugees within the EU by virtue of Poland's membership in the EU community of solidarity. This argument draws on the narrative of Poland's "return to Europe" with the help from the EU:

> The essence of the European Union, thanks to which Europe has been able to think about development and economic growth for decades and slowly forget about past wars between its members, is that better-off countries help those in need. We all know how many areas in Poland benefited from this aid; only the blind would not notice it. At the moment, for example, Greece needs help. How can we expect financial solidarity and no cuts to resources for cohesion funds if we do not try to show our willingness for solidarity with the countries that need this help in solving the refugee problem? (Tomasz Głogowski, PO, October 20, 2016)

Another international argument supporting the admission of refugees highlights the *obligation of reciprocity*. This argument is made in societies that have an own recent history of displacement, such as Chile, Uganda or Poland. From this perspective, the admission of refugees appears as a debt of gratitude for the help received by other countries in the past. For instance, the following speaker from Chile implicitly draws on her personal history of exile in Mexico following the military coup in Chile:

> I think that we Chileans have also seen how we have been received, along with a very significant number of people—even greater than those we have received in Chile—in different epochs, at different times, and under different circumstances. For those of us who have experienced the fact of having to live abroad, wow, how is it appreciated when the doors are opened, when one receives equal treatment, when rights are respected, when conditions are created. (Isabel Allende, PS, August 13, 2019)

Another international argument that supports the admission of refugees emphasizes *reparative obligation*. It refers to a country's obligation to admit refugees because it is (at least in part) responsible for their displacement. This is an argument we only encountered among the left-wing opposition parties in Germany, which highlighted Germany's moral responsibility to receive refugees because of supporting a capitalist world economy and exporting arms to conflict regions:

> The refugees are the ambassadors of the wars and misery of this world. Germany and Europe must address the causes, the core of the problem, which lies in the war and the destruction in Syria, Iraq, and the entire region. But that also means an end to arms deliveries to crisis regions, an end to military logic in crisis regions, and thinking about a different world economic order. (Dietmar Bartsch, The Left, March 16, 2016)

International recognition is a final argument within the international frame that can support the admission of refugees. For instance, the Ugandan government frequently highlights that Uganda receives international acclaim for its open refugee policy. Arguably, one can interpret this as an argument that seeks to distract from the authoritarian character of Yoweri Museveni's regime in Uganda:

> Uganda is celebrated in the continent for its effectiveness and good policies in ensuring that it hosts the different asylum seekers and refugees in the continent. During the just concluded sitting of the Pan African Parliament, in Midrand, South Africa this year, the Pan African Parliament, in its resolutions, overwhelmingly recognized Uganda for its treatment and hospitality to refugees, to the host communities of the refugees in Uganda and the wonderful policies in place enabling everyone to feel comfortable in Uganda. (Jacquiline Amongin, NRM, May 23, 2019)

In contrast, there is one argument against the admission of refugees within the international frame as well. Political actors can emphasize the *primacy of national sov-*

ereignty and reject outside interference by other countries or international law. This argument can be based on an anti-colonial repertoire, such as in Singapore, where the international refugee regime is interpreted as an imposition by Western colonial powers that limits national self-determination. The former Polish right-wing government also highlighted national self-determination against a perceived interventionism by Western European powers and Germany in particular. It did so by referring to Polish history, which is interpreted as a history of oppression by neighboring powers:

> Additionally, the German state and its representatives want to teach us solidarity. They constantly tell us about solidarity. In that case, I would like to ask, where were these countries? Where was the West when Prime Minister Putin harassed us, the Republic of Poland? After all, you know the answer to this question. The West then signed Nord Stream II four days ago. Not to mention the kind of Western solidarity with us we know from history. Well, High Sejm, not to look far, [let me remind you of] the September Campaign [of 1939], the Warsaw Uprising, Yalta. We remember all of this, High Sejm. And the fact that the West wants to teach us solidarity now is peak insolence. (Patryk Jaki, Sejm, United Poland, September 16, 2015)

Conclusion

Over the past decades, the admission of refugees and asylum seekers has become one of the most salient and controversially discussed issues in many countries around the globe. Understanding countries' refugee and asylum policies and the political conflicts surrounding this issue requires analyzing the frames used in public discourse. This article proposes a typology of frames used by governments, opposition parties and social movements in public debates on the admission of refugees. We argue that the collective identity and characteristics of the receiving country on the one hand and refugees' characteristics on the other constitute the key dimensions to which frames in political discourse about the admission of refugees refer. We distinguish between six different frames– economic, cultural, moral, legal, security-related and international– of how the "we" and the "others" can be interpreted. Furthermore, we specify typical arguments associated with the respective frames for or against the admission of refugees. Given that the typology was developed based on a discourse analysis of a diverse set of countries, we claim that it can be used to analyze political discourse on the admission of refugees in other countries as well and can thus contribute to an accumulation of knowledge.

We would like to illustrate the benefit of our typology for explaining country differences in refugee policies with a few examples from our empirical material.

(1) Germany and Turkey have received the largest number of Syrian refugees worldwide and have pursued relatively welcoming policies towards them. However, the two policies are based on a very different framing. Previous typologies would not have allowed to disentangle the fundamentally different frames and arguments supporting the respective policies. The German governments' position (under the

leadership of Angela Merkel in the years 2015 to 2016) was primarily based on a moral framing, highlighting Germany's humanitarian obligation, and a legal framing, emphasizing the commitment to international human rights and the German Basic Law. The position of the Turkish AKP government under Erdoğan, in turn, was based on a cultural framing of Syrian refugees as sharing a common civilization and religion, and an international framing of positioning Turkey as a regional power in the Middle East in opposition to the "hypocritical" West.

(2) The typology allows us to see important analogies across cases that would not have been evident. For example, both Turkey and Uganda have pursued rather open refugee policies, even though they are governed by authoritarian leaders that otherwise do not show much respect for international law and human rights. Indeed, their refugee and asylum policies seem less motivated by the adherence to international human rights and refugee law (as is the case in Germany, for example), but by an argument of cultural closeness (of Syrians as sharing a common civilizational past and religion as Turks in the case of Turkey, and as African "brothers and sisters" in the case of Uganda) and international standing (in both cases, the refugee policy is used to offset international criticism of their respective authoritarian regime and as a bargaining chip with the "West").

(3) The proposed typology also helps identifying framing "packages". The frames and associated arguments we identified are typically not mutually exclusive, but can be combined in public discourse. For instance, portraying refugees as a security threat to the nation and highlighting their cultural incompatibility with the host society often appear together. Prominent framing packages in public discourse can be based on political ideologies like "cosmopolitanism", arguing for open borders, humanitarianism, multiculturalism and respect for international law on the one hand, and "communitarianism", calling for closed borders, solidarity with the in-group, cultural homogeneity and protecting national sovereignty on the other (Drewski & Gerhards, 2024c; de Wilde et al., 2019). However, our typology allows us to see that these ideologies do not exhaust the range of possible combinations of how the refugee issue is framed. The discourse of the Turkish AKP government, for example, bases an open refugee policy on a rather communitarian ideology of cultural closeness between the refugees and the host society, while at the same time rejecting the obligations deriving from international law.

We should note that our typology cannot explain why certain frames are used in which countries. However, we would like to conclude by briefly addressing the question of why certain frames dominate in some countries. As we have argued above, the use of particular frames is enabled and constrained by the specific "cultural repertories" available in a specific country. These repertoires consist of collectively shared cultural elements like narratives, historical memories, and ideologies that have been constructed by various actors (politicians, intellectuals, academics etc.) over time and are institutionalized in the respective country (Lamont & Thévenot, 2000; see also Gamson, 1992; Díez Medrano, 2003). In our book, we have shown in more detail how the frames political actors use in public debates about the admission of refugees are shaped by such cultural repertories, such as the memory of the Ottoman Empire in Turkey, the tradition of Christianity in Poland, the ideology of pan-Africanism in Uganda or the memory of the Pinochet dictatorship in Chile (Drewski & Gerhards,

2024a). Borrowing Max Weber's (1988) famous switchmen metaphor, we demonstrate that cultural repertories determine the tracks along which the framing of the issue and the policymaking process is directed.[12] They enable and constrain policy choices by circumscribing what is thinkable and perceived as legitimate within a particular polity or political group. An open question for future research is to find out the relative importance of the different frames and the cultural repertoires to which they refer.

Appendix

Table A1 Overview of quoted statements

Country	Date	Forum	Topic	Speaker	Party
Chile	April 9, 2018	Public speech	Announcement of migration reform bill (8970-06)	Piñera, Sebastián (President)	National Renewal (RN)
	August 13, 2019	Senate	Migration reform bill (8970-06)	Allende, Isabel	Socialist Party (PS)
				Durana, José Miguel	Independent Democratic Union (UDI)
Germany	August 31, 2015	Summer Press Conference	Current Topics of Domestic and Foreign Affairs	Merkel, Angela (Chancellor)	Christian Democratic Union (CDU)
	September 9, 2015	Bundestag	General Budget Debate	Merkel, Angela (Chancellor)	Christian Democratic Union (CDU)
				Oppermann, Thomas	Social Democratic Party (SPD)
	March 16, 2016	Bundestag	Government Declaration on the European Council	Bartsch, Dietmar	The Left
Poland	September 16, 2015	Sejm	Information of the Prime Minister on the refugee crisis in Europe and its ramifications for Poland	Jaki, Patryk	United Poland
				Kaczyński, Jarosław	Law and Justice (PiS)
	October 19, 2016	Senate	Report of the European Union Affairs Committee on the EU relocation mechanism	Żaryn, Jan	Law and Justice (PiS)
	October 20, 2016	Sejm	Report of the European Union Affairs Committee on the EU relocation mechanism	Głogowski, Tomasz	PO

[12] "However, very frequently, the 'world images' created by 'ideas' have, like switchmen, determined the tracks along which action has been pushed by the dynamic of interest." (Weber, 1988: 252; own translation).

Table A1 Overview of quoted statements

Country	Date	Forum	Topic	Speaker	Party
Singapore	March 24, 2009	Parliament	Q&A session on the admission of Rohingya refugees	Balaji Sadasivan (Senior Minister of State, Ministry of Foreign Affairs)	People's Action Party (PAP)
	February 8, 2013	Parliament	Debate on the Population White Paper	Lee Hsien Loong (Prime Minister)	People's Action Party (PAP)
	January 27, 2016	Parliament	Q&A session on Singapore's stance on Syrian refugees	Vivian Balakrishnan (Minister for Foreign Affairs)	PAP
Turkey	October 1, 2015	Grand National Assembly	Opening day of new legislative Period	Recep Tayyip Erdoğan (President)	Justice and Development Party (AKP)
Uganda	May 23, 2019	Parliament	Statement from the Pan-African Parliament, Africa Day	Jacquiline Amongin	National Resistance Movement (NRM)

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Competing interests There are no competing interests to declare.

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