PAN-EUROPEAN NEWS MEDIA REPORTING ON EU ENLARGEMENT WITH UKRAINE

A FRAME ANALYSIS COMPARING NEWS ARTICLES BY POLITICO EUROPE, EURACTIV, EURONEWS AND EUOBSERVER IN 2022-2023

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Abstract

One of the core goals of the European Union is to expand its influence on a growing number of countries. News frames related to EU enlargement have been researched extensively within national media, especially regarding the enlargement with Turkey. Contrary to existing research, this thesis focuses on pan-European media, which are increasingly valuable sources of information, and on EU enlargement with Ukraine as a candidate Member State. This thesis aims to reveal how pan-European news media frame the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine, and what differences there are between the researched pan-European news media; Politico, Euractiv, Euronews and EUobserver. Concretely, this thesis researches the prevalence of five previously identified news frames by De Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko (2011): the *security benefits, economic benefits, security threat, economic threat, and cultural threat frame*. We conducted a quantitative frame analysis on 122 news articles (2022-2023). The results were contextualized with some qualitative findings. The analysis illustrates that pan-European news media dominantly used the security benefits frame. In contrast, the cultural threat frame and economic benefits frame were not used. Moreover, this research established that the usage of frames differs over time. The security threat frame was almost exclusively used in June 2022, when Ukraine was granted the EU candidate status, whilst the security benefits frame and economic threat frame were each present throughout the time. While the use of news frames is relatively similar in pan-European news media, Politico and EUobserver used the security threat frame, whilst Euractiv and Euronews did not.

Abstract (Dutch)

Een van de kerndoelen van de Europese Unie is om haar invloed uit te breiden naar een groeiend aantal landen. Nieuwsframes betreffende de uitbreiding van de EU zijn uitgebreid onderzocht binnen nationale media, en vooral met betrekking tot de uitbreiding met Turkije. In tegenstelling tot bestaand onderzoek, richt deze thesis zich op pan-Europese media en op de EU-uitbreiding met Oekraïne als kandidaat-lidstaat. Deze thesis toont aan hoe pan-Europese nieuwsmedia de uitbreiding van de EU met Oekraïne framen, en welke verschillen er zijn tussen de onderzochte pan-Europese nieuwsmedia: Politico, Euractiv, Euronews and EUobserver. Concreet onderzoekt deze thesis de aanwezigheid van vijf eerder geïdentificeerde nieuwsframes door De Vreese, Boomgaarden en Semetko (2011): *security benefits, economic benefits, security threat, economic threat,* en *cultural threat frame*. 122 nieuwsartikelen (2022-2023) werden geanalyseerd met een kwantitatieve inhoudsanalyse, en de resultaten werden gestaafd met een aantal kwalitatieve bevindingen. De thesis concludeert dat pan-Europese nieuwsmedia het meest gebruikmaakten van de *security benefits frame*. De *cultural threat frame* en *economic benefits frame* werden niet gebruikt door de media. Bovendien toont dit onderzoek aan dat het gebruik van frames verandert doorheen de tijd. Zo werd de *security threat* frame enkel gebruikt rond Juni 2022, wanneer Oekraïne officieel kandidaat-lidstaat werd, terwijl de twee andere frames doorheen de tijd relatief stabiel aanwezig waren. Hoewel het gebruik van frames gelijkend is tussen de pan-Europese media, hebben Politico en Euobserver de *security threat frame* wel gebruikt, en Euractiv en Euronews niet.

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1. Introduction

"To report the news is to frame" (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005, viii)

Media, politics, and society have a complex interactive relationship which has been a point of interest for scholars for decades (Axford & Huggins, 2001; Oates, 2008). Media have a key position in democracy and play a significant role in the public sphere (Habermas, 1992; Habermas, 2006; Schulz, 1997). Further, media can set the agenda and can have an impact on people's perceptions of certain issues (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Alarcón, 2010; De Vreese, Boomgaarden, & Semetko, 2011). News is not simply a reflection of reality, but rather a construction of it, in which choices are always made, explicitly and implicitly (Kitzinger, 2007). How news is framed plays a role in the shaping of public opinion and citizen attitudes on societal issues and respective solutions, and can thus influence the public and political agendas significantly (De Vreese, 2007a; De Vreese et al., 2011). However, we cannot view this relationship as a one-way street. The way media frame a certain issue is also shaped by the societal and political environment (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005; De Vreese et al., 2011). Nevertheless, more than ever, media are becoming political actors, playing an increasingly significant role in influencing the public and politics.

The European Union (EU) has been struggling with a democratic deficit as fewer European citizens actively participate in European politics and public debate, and as the gap between the EU and its citizens widens (Baisnée, 2007). The EU as a supranational organization, its policies, its activities, and its future all depend on the involvement and interest of the European citizens, in which media can play a role (Corbu, Ștefăniță, Oprea, & Udrea, 2015). "Media are the primary source for citizens to connect with the European Union, to become interested and active." (Kitzinger, 2007, p.134) One of the key objectives of the EU is to widen its influence over a growing number of countries. News frames regarding the enlargement of the EU can have a significant influence on people's perceptions of the enlargement of the EU and of the EU as an organization (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Higgins Joyce, 2011; Corbu et al., 2015). News frames related to EU enlargement have been researched extensively within national media, especially regarding the enlargement with Turkey (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; De Vreese et al.,

2011). Contrary to existing research, this thesis focuses on EU enlargement with Ukraine as a candidate Member State, a country which applied for EU membership in the middle of a war. As the EU itself states, the enlargement process differs from country to country, which is why research is necessary on this rather atypical candidate Member State (European Commission, "Steps towards joining"). Further, researching such frames can help us in understanding political, societal, and economic concerns, as well as the dominant way of thinking in our society about EU enlargement with Ukraine as a candidate Member State (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005).

Further, this thesis researches pan-European news media. Pan-European news media function independently from the EU Member States and transcend national borders. In general, the functions and effects of transnational and pan-European media were researched before (Chalaby, 2002; Eriksen, 2005; Varga, 2011; Heinderyckx, 2015). These studies illustrated that despite several challenges and significant limitations, transnational media still have great potential in influencing public opinion and in contributing to the creation of a European public sphere, even though the existence of such a sphere is often debated (Eriksen, 2005; Baisnée, 2007; Heinderyckx, 2015). With the growing use and acceptance of transnational media as valuable sources of information, these media gradually gain the ability to influence people's perceptions of certain issues, events, and communities, and therefore, also of the EU (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009; Higgins Joyce, 2011). Importantly, the audience of such media is not extremely large, however, it is an audience which can influence European politics and can make a difference, as it includes policy- and decision-makers (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). It is therefore of high societal relevance and importance to study and research these frames within the articles of upcoming and growing pan-European media. Further, it is important to note that transnational media use various and diverse approaches in covering EU affairs, and in how they frame these events (Firmstone, 2008). Therefore, the differences and similarities between such news media should also be researched.

As Brüggemann and Schulz-Forberg (2009) state, there is a considerable lack of research on current discourses or frames on the EU in transnational media. Taking into account the theoretical framework, background, and current relevance, the main research questions of this thesis are:

    (1) How do pan-European news media frame news on the enlargement of the European Union with Ukraine?

        a. Does the framing of the enlargement of the European Union with Ukraine change over time?

    (2) What are the main differences and similarities between Politico Europe, Euractiv, Euronews and EUobserver in how they frame EU enlargement with Ukraine?

The first part of this thesis consists of a literature review, where the theoretical framework is defined. Transnational and pan-European media are defined, as is the European public sphere, including their respective challenges, limitations, and opportunities. Further, the concepts of agenda-setting, news framing and public opinion are explained. This, in order to give a necessary overview of the used concepts, and of the current academic debate. Subsequently, a relevant part of prior research on pan-European media and frames of EU enlargement is discussed to contextualise the subject. Next, this thesis discusses the research method, analytical framework, and subjects of the conducted research. The deductive frame analysis, which is based on the study by De Vreese et al. (2011), aims to answer the research questions of the thesis quantitatively, illustrating the findings with concrete examples of the researched articles. Lastly, a conclusion will analytically summarize the findings, and shortcomings of the research and discuss possibilities for further research.

2. Literature review

2.1 Theoretical framework

2.1.1 Transnational media

The EU is home to numerous news media which each impact the EU's identity (Kaiser, 2021). Particularly newspapers are influential and important sources of information for EU affairs (Alarcón, 2010). Next to traditional, national news media, transnational news media function as sources of information for EU affairs as well. Transnational media specifically address audiences beyond and across national borders (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). Even though their audiences are relatively small compared to traditional national media, transnational media have a growing, significant, and influential audience (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). Brüggemann and Schulz-Forberg (2009) developed a theoretical framework which categorizes four types of transnational media, of which one is particularly relevant to this thesis, namely the pan-regional media. Pan-regional media function as news outlets directed towards a specific region of the world, in this case, Europe or the European Union (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). Pan-regional media can be distinguished from other types of transnational media by their scope and intention. These news outlets target an audience beyond national borders and nationalities and their intrinsic focus is the EU.

Transnational media such as Politico, Euractiv, Euronews and EUobserver are thus pan-regional media, or more specifically pan-European news media, as they report on EU institutional, political, and financial affairs and target an audience beyond the national borders. Whilst these media might also reach a global audience exceeding the EU borders due to the EU's global role, these news media can still be considered pan-European because of their intrinsic European perspective and subjects (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). Pan-European media primarily reach an audience consisting of highly educated people, EU staff members and people with a specific interest in EU affairs, business, and financial news (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2006; Varga, 2011; Heinderyckx, 2015). Predominantly reporting on issues related to the EU, they serve as important journalistic resources for information (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). Pan-European media are further characterized by journalists who are specialized in EU affairs

(Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2006). These media are mostly considered quality news media and their headquarters are often based in Brussels, the capital of the EU (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2006). However, there are few news media which can be considered pan-European, exceeding national boundaries, and attracting audiences across Europe (Varga, 2011).

2.1.2 European public sphere

Public sphere

One of the most used conceptualizations of the public sphere is introduced by Jürgen Habermas (1961; 1992). In general, the public sphere can be defined as a realm of rational debates, and a network of various interconnected public arenas or forums of communication where meaning is given to societal and public issues (Habermas, 1992; Habermas, 2006; Bärenreuter, Brüll, Mokre, & Wahl-Jorgensen, 2009). The needs of society and of the state are articulated in the public sphere. It is often described as the intermediate system or arena between society and politics or the state (Habermas, 2006; Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). A public sphere is "the place where civil society is linked to the power structure of the state" (Eriksen, 2005, p.342). According to De Vreese (2007b), a public sphere would be a space for all opinions, social groups, and debate, where citizens are confronted with other opinions and where policymakers can internalize these various opinions. In the public sphere, participation would be encouraged, and power holders would be held accountable (De Vreese, 2007b). Furthermore, Habermas (2006) argued that the public sphere serves as the foundation of liberal democracies.

The public sphere can differ significantly in size and structure. It can range from conversations on the street to communication from the media on matters of public interest (Habermas, 2006; Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). Ideally, media form one of the essential agents in the system of the modern public sphere, as they would provide the public with the necessary information to form grounded, rational opinions on matters of public interest (Habermas, 1992; Habermas, 2006; Schulz, 1997). This, in such a way that societal problems, needs and solutions are articulated through deliberation. In other words, media facilitate the realm between state and society. Therefore, news media play a significant role in sustaining, shaping, and structuring the public spheres (Heinderyckx,

2015). This comes with a certain power position, more specifically, a power to influence or even manipulate the public and serve their own interests (Schulz, 1997).

Eriksen (2007) emphasized that a public sphere is dynamic, and not confined to the national borders. Therefore, the question arises whether a European public sphere exists in which pan-European media form the essential agents in the realm between the public and the European Union.

European public sphere

The European public sphere is a public sphere which goes beyond national borders and is based on the idea of cosmopolitan identities and transnational public deliberation (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2006; Bärenreuter et al., 2009). A normative understanding of the concept would consider the European public sphere as a means to increase the legitimacy and democratization of the EU as a supranational organization, and as a means to reach the ultimate goal of a political union (Bärenreuter et al., 2009; Heinderyckx, 2015). It can be seen as a "vehicle for democracy and common action beyond the nation state" (Eriksen, 2005, p.342).

Importantly, the EU as a supranational organization complements the Member States as an extra layer of coordination and cooperation. Similarly, the European public sphere does not replace the existing national or regional public spheres, but rather complements them or even competes with them (Heinderyckx, 2015). Heinderyckx (2015) stated that each of the public spheres will compete for the citizen's attention, however, the national public sphere often remains dominant. Nevertheless, De Vreese (2007b) argued that the European public sphere, as it emerges and evolves today, is not structurally and exclusively supranational, but also part of the national public sphere.

Since the 1990s and in a context of debate around the EU's democratic deficit, there has been an increasing interest to research the European public sphere, as well as an increasing debate on whether the European public sphere exists or not (Eriksen, 2005; Baisnée, 2007; De Vreese, 2007b; Bärenreuter et al., 2009; Heinderyckx, 2015). The debate around the existence of a European public sphere is relevant as the sphere can

"contribute towards the legitimacy of the polity and the understanding of EU politics" (De Vreese, 2007b, p.8).

Challenges and potential of the European public sphere

As mentioned before, media function as crucial agents in the creation and sustaining of a modern public sphere (Schulz, 1997). Research on the European public sphere has mostly focused on the Europeanization of traditional, national media (Trenz, 2004; Machill, Beiler, & Fischer, 2006; Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). This is because, in comparison to national media, transnational or pan-European media are rather rare and they do not reach the broader public (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009; Varga, 2011). When the national media report on EU affairs, which is not often, they have the tendency to apply practices of domestication or nationalization (Meyer, 1999; Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2006; Bärenreuter et al., 2009; Heinderyckx, 2015). In other words, national perspectives dominate when national media report on EU affairs, to bring the European news closer to the audience.

In contrast to national media, pan-European media continuously attempt to break this national discourse and mostly employ the cosmopolitan discourse, by focusing on the interdependent world of international politics (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2006). Firmstone (2008) argued that the emergence of successful pan-European media is a means or even a precondition to create a European public sphere. This, due to their ability to create a collective identity and to connect citizens across Europe, facilitating the intermediate realm of interaction between society and the EU as a supranational organization (Firmstone, 2008). Therefore, in order to contribute to the European public sphere, European media need to connect European citizens across borders, creating a common public debate (Eriksen, 2005). However, in addition to the fact that national media mostly nationalize news on EU affairs, pan-European media are often criticized for being too focused on an elite audience, together not facilitating a European public sphere (Kunelius & Sparks, 2001; Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2006; De Vreese, 2007b). De Vreese (2007b) emphasized that a European public sphere, which would go beyond national borders "primarily involves specific, elitist segments of society and can hardly be said to be a public sphere but rather an 'elitist' notion of a European public space." (De Vreese, 2007b,

p.11). The absence of a singular pan-European public sphere is often linked to the fact that attempts to create pan-European media have failed, and several pan-European media, such as Euronews are heavily subsidized to this day (De Vreese, 2003; De Vreese, 2007b). Further, Varga (2011) argued that the existence of a European public sphere also depends on the citizens' interest in the EU, its institutions, policies, and politics, which is according to the author lacking.

Whilst media play an important role in facilitating an intermediate realm between European citizens and European politics, there are many challenges and limitations which lead several scholars to debate the existence of a European public sphere. Nevertheless, as the pan-European media's audience is growing and significant, and the media are increasingly accepted as valuable sources of information, pan-European media can still play a role in connecting the EU and its citizens (Higgins Joyce, 2011).

Democratic and communication deficit

Eriksen (2005) says that the lack or absence of a European public sphere hampers democracy at the European level today, and according to Baisnée (2007), it fuels the democratic deficit. The democratic deficit refers to a gap between the EU institutions and the European citizens. The democratic deficit suggests that decision-making within the EU is not sufficiently transparent, accountable, or participatory (Jensen, 2009). In academic literature, the democratic deficit refers to the issue that the EU's institutional design and structure are not democratic, and that the EU is not democratic enough (Azman, 2011). This is partly because there is no intermediate realm between the EU and its citizens, and fewer citizens actively participate in European politics and public debate (Baisnée, 2007).

Meyer (1999) argued that the debate about the democracy deficit lacks attention towards the role of the communication deficit within the EU, in which media play a significant role. This communication deficit refers to the phenomenon in which European citizens lose touch with the European Union, its structure and governance (Heinderyckx, 2015). The communication and information flow between the EU and journalists can namely be characterized by complex, voluminous, and scattered information, all leading to limited

visibility of the EU in national media (Martins, Lecheler, & De Vreese, 2012; Touri & Rogers, 2013). This leads to limited knowledge of EU citizens on EU affairs. The coverage of the multilevel governance structure of the EU lacks several criteria of newsworthiness of political news reporting, including personalization and relevance (Meyer, 1999; Varga, 2011). As a result, such a communication deficit contributes to the democratic deficit, through which European citizens become even more distanced from the EU. Over the years, the role and influence of the EU deepened and widened across more competencies, however, European citizens remained uninformed (Meyer, 1999; Varga, 2011).

Varga (2011) emphasized that these deficits need to be resolved for the success of the European integration project. Further, Varga (2011) pointed out that the communication deficit needs to be overcome before a European public sphere can emerge, and that pan-European media can play an important role in this because of their intrinsic European focus. By offering an arena for information exchange on EU affairs and by developing a feeling of European identity, pan-European media might help in resolving the communication challenges.

2.1.3 News framing

"Any representation of reality involves framing" according to Kitzinger (2007, p.134). Goffman (1974) first conceptualized the term *frame* in a way that is still relevant today. The author referred to frames as systems of classification through which we can make sense of diverse phenomena throughout our daily lives (Goffman, 1974). Other authors built on that theory and later refined this conceptualization. Entman (1993) emphasized that frames define problems and propose solutions, suggesting a diagnosis-prognosis model. Frames highlight specific events, and specific parts of the story and hide others (Entman, 1993). From the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of framing and the study of frames started to gain popularity within the field of communication sciences (Deprez, Raeymaeckers, & Van Leuven, 2011; Deprez & Van Leuven, 2020).

Schuck and De Vreese (2006) noted that frames refer to the fact that media can portray the same issue in different manners by emphasizing certain parts more than others. News

media and articles will always tell a certain part of the story, selecting relevant facts and situating the facts within a certain context or background, because of the need to structure and organize the issues which the media present to their audience (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; Kitzinger, 2007). Reporting the news is a practice full of choices. Journalists select certain news items, and certain subjects, as well as who to interview, what questions to ask, and so on, to make sense of a certain event, item, or issue (Kitzinger, 2007). According to Linstrom and Marais (2012), journalists are "sense makers" (Linstrom & Marais, 2012, p.33). Causes and solutions for the issues are suggested in an implicit or explicit manner, leading to a certain news frame, rather than a holistic view (Kitzinger, 2007). Further, Callaghan and Schnell (2005) argued that media also frame in ways which reflect dominant paradigms. Media frames and the study thereof can thus help us interpret political, societal, and economic concerns and the dominant way of thinking in our society (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005).

In addition, the way issues are framed can be influenced by the journalist's judgements, opinions, and an evaluation of their audience (Alarcón, 2010). News media can for instance frame the EU as a pool of self-serving politicians and strategic corruption which can fuel Euroscepticism and public cynicism (De Vreese, 2007a). In contrast, as pan-European media mostly target higher educated Europeans or staff members of EU institutions, it is less likely that the issues will be framed in a Eurosceptic manner (De Vreese, 2007a). As several authors suggested, the act of framing is related to a significant power position and ability to influence public opinion and the political agenda (Entman, 1993; De Vreese et al., 2011), which is why the framing of pan-European news media is relevant to research.

2.1.4 Public opinion and agenda-setting theory

The agenda-setting theory states that media can influence people in their perceptions of a certain issue by covering it more (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The theory argues that by covering an issue more, for instance, enlargement or simply the EU, the audience will perceive the issue as more important (McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Corbu et al., 2015). Choosing, displaying, and covering news contributes to the shaping of political reality (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). In other words, media can set the agenda as they cover certain

news issues more extensively than others, determining for the reader what is of importance (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Issues which are covered extensively in media, and are therefore high on the media agenda, are more likely to end up higher on the public agenda and consequently also on the political agenda (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006). Therefore, next to the content and the news frame itself, extensive news coverage on the EU and its enlargement can also influence people's perceptions of the importance or significance of the EU and EU enlargement (Corbu et al., 2015).

In addition to first-level agenda setting, which is described above, second-level agenda setting or attribute agenda setting also matters (Coleman, McCombs, Shaw, & Weaver, 2008). The latter refers to the fact that the way in which media report on an issue or event also has a certain impact on public opinion. When an issue is systematically reported on with a negative tone or when the focus is on certain characteristics, public opinion will also rather attribute negativity and those specific characteristics to that issue (Coleman et al., 2008). Therefore, one should not solely consider the amount of reporting on a certain issue, but also how an issue is reported on, which again leans towards the study of frames. Coleman et al. (2008) concluded that framing is typically considered a specific type of second-level agenda setting, as it is a dominant perspective on a certain issue or object, and thus a special case of attributes. Alarcón (2010) concluded that how the EU is reported on can influence audiences in how they understand and perceive the EU and its actions. News framing can shape public opinion in both positive and negative ways (De Vreese, 2007a; De Vreese et al., 2011). Media can, for instance, both fuel and reduce Euroscepticism, depending on the content and news frames present (De Vreese, 2007a). Further, public opinion can be shaped by the individual characteristics of the audience, such as educational level and political sophistication (De Vreese, 2007a).

Therefore, as there is a growing acceptance of transnational and pan-European media as valuable sources of information, they are gaining the power to possibly shape people's perceptions of certain issues, events, and communities (Higgins Joyce, 2011). The audience of such media is rather small, however, growing and influential (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009; Higgins Joyce, 2011). How these pan-European news media frame EU news can influence public opinion and, therefore, can play a vital role in the EU's legitimacy and future (Entman, 1993; De Vreese et al., 2011). Next, pan-European media

will be discussed, to gain a holistic insight into the functioning, opportunities, and limitations of such media.

2.2 Pan-European media

2.2.1 History of transnational and pan-European media

Transnational communication is not a new phenomenon in Europe (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). A European publication network was established in the 18th century, resulting in the circulation and distribution of international newspapers across the continent. In the 19th and 20th centuries, information was increasingly exchanged in Europe through various networks and across national borders. The media would play an important role in the efforts to build a unified EU and to further facilitate the European integration project (Heinderyckx, 2015). However, it was only in the 1980s that transnational media truly made a breakthrough (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). This breakthrough was made possible by several developments. Transnational TV programming developed more quickly after the introduction of private TV stations. Furthermore, especially in light of the creation of a common European media market, the political will of the EU and its Member States opened the door for a European market for transnational media (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). The EU and its media market would benefit from the competitive European players, which would ideally start competing on a global level.

In brief, the economic market, political support, and technological innovations functioned to the advantage of the pan-European news media, their increasing audience and growing success (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). However, the majority of Europeans still mainly learned about EU affairs through national media in the second half of the 20th century, and still do today (Heinderyckx, 2015). Whilst it became technically possible for pan-European media to be launched and spread, and whilst this was also facilitated by the EU, reality showed many challenges and limitations for pan-European media, which are still relevant today.

2.2.2 Challenges and limitations

There are few news media which can truly be considered pan-European, exceeding national boundaries, and attracting audiences across Europe (Varga, 2011). Pan-European media face great challenges, hindering the success of these media, which need to be discussed prior to research to gain a full understanding of their functioning, scope, and impact.

The EU is a multilevel governance system with 27 national governments representing Europeans, who in turn speak 24 official languages. Not only do culture and language hinder pan-European media from being widely successful, but the heterogeneous media usage across Europe is also often ignored by pan-European media (Heinderyckx, 2015). There is great variation between different countries in the audience's use and trust in different kinds of media (Heinderyckx, 2015). Pan-European news media tend to overlook such differences and are often unable to bridge them (Heinderyckx, 2015). However, Firmstone (2008) argued that written news media have been more successful in being transnational, in overcoming the language, cultural and national borders, than transnational broadcast media.

Moreover, even though some pan-European media target the general European audience, the audiences actually reached are rather specific, not general (Varga, 2011; Heinderyckx, 2015). Political elites, EU professionals and staff are the actual main audience of the smaller scaled news media (Heinderyckx, 2015). Cheneval and Schimmelfennig (2013) also emphasised that "Europe-wide transnational media are rare and elitist" (Cheneval & Schimmelfennig, 2013, p.4). Pan-European media fail to reach a significant part of the whole European population, also ruling out the possibility to create an inclusive European public sphere (De Vreese, 2007b; Heinderyckx, 2015). Similarly, Corbu et al. (2015) concluded that European citizens' interest in EU affairs mostly relies on the extent to which it is covered by national media and on personal relevance to the discussed topic, illustrating that pan-European media do not function as the go-to media for EU affairs. Nevertheless, because the audience of pan-European media mainly consists of political leaders, policy- and decision-makers, the media are highly relevant to research (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009).

Furthermore, a lot of the pan-European news media are dependent upon government subsidies (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). The start of several pan-European news media is often supported by subsidies from national or EU authorities, and some of these pan-European media are still being supported beyond their launch (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). To encourage the persistence and growth of a European public sphere and space of communication and to bridge the previously mentioned communication gap, the European Commission continues to provide millions of euros in subsidies to pan-European media outlets like Euronews (Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009). However, this dependency on the EU and the fact that several pan-European news media need to be heavily subsidized reveals that these news media lack a successful model within the media market.

Next, we will look at the specific case of EU enlargement. EU enlargement is a crucial part of the European integration project and one of the core goals of the EU, and the framing thereof will further be researched in this thesis.

2.3 Enlargement of the EU

Following the European integration project, the EU deepens its influence on a growing number of countries, which all require the same core European values and contribute to the EU as a supranational organization. Along with broadening its competencies, the EU is committed to enlarge and widen its influence over a growing number of countries (Zielonka, 2000). Starting with only six Member States, the EU counts 27 Member States today. One Member State, the United Kingdom, has left the EU. There are currently seven candidate Member States wishing to join the EU. These candidate Member States must comply with the Copenhagen criteria. The Copenhagen criteria are criteria on the country's market economy, democracy, and obliging the country to implement existing EU regulations and directives (Hillion, 2014; European Union, "Joining the EU"). Moreover, the criteria demand the country to not go against the functioning and development of the EU. All current EU Member States must also give their approval for the membership of the country. On top of that, the candidate Member States go through an official process of preparation in which the European Commission leads negotiations (European Commission, "Steps towards joining"). This process ranges in duration, but in

general takes just over a decade. Turkey, for instance, is a candidate Member State since 1987, whilst Croatia had been a candidate Member State from 2003 on and was accepted as an official Member State of the EU in 2013.

Enlargement of the EU at the beginning of the 21st century has led to more awareness of the EU, its initiatives, and its influence over Europeans (Alarcón, 2010). Enlargement can be considered an encouragement to advance fundamental thinking and to question the EU's current institutionalized structures (Zielonka, 2000). However, enlargement can also be seen as a risk to the European integration project, as several scholars and the public expressed concerns over more division, concessions from the existing Member States and recession of the European integration project (Bieler, 2006; Kaiser & Elvert, 2004). Further, numerous other concerns, including political, cultural, and fiscal ones have been raised during the period in which Eastern enlargement took place (Kaiser & Elvert, 2004). In general, enlargement of the EU, especially towards the East of Europe, has always been a topic for debate, in the public and academic field, and media (Baldwin, 1995; Fuchs & Klingemann, 2002; Kaiser & Elvert, 2004).

The reason why this thesis focuses on the case of enlargement of the EU is manifold. First, De Vreese et al. (2011) pointed out that the enlargement of the EU is a topic that touches on the political, economic, and social or cultural aspects. This, instead of only focusing on only one dimension such as the framing of EU fiscal policy. The interdimensional character of the subject is interesting as the public support for European integration does not rest on one dimension either. Second, the issue is of great relevance and importance due to its possible impact on the future of the EU, of the involved countries, and therefore also of the geopolitical sphere. Third, it is a universal topic, meaning that throughout the history of the EU, the subject of EU enlargement has been discussed and reported about. This, leading to an interesting body of research and theories on which can be built. Further, the enlargement of the EU is part of the organization's core values, as the supranational organization always attempts to expand and widen its influence. Lastly, public support for the EU and the European integration project is typically articulated through the support for specific policies, further integration, or enlargement of the EU (De Vreese, 2007a). Therefore, the framing of the enlargement of the EU is important to research as it can have an impact on public opinion, and more specifically, on public

support for the EU (De Vreese, 2007a). As pan-European media are media actors which have an impactful audience, their coverage and framing of EU enlargement matters.

2.3.1 Framing EU enlargement

Previous research on the framing of EU enlargement mostly focuses on the traditional, national news media and on the Turkish membership of the EU. For instance, De Vreese et al. (2011) researched news media on the Turkish EU membership within Dutch news broadcasters and newspapers. In their study, following an analysis of relevant news content, they recognized five issue-specific frames in news on EU enlargement with Turkey: the security benefits frame, economic benefits frame, security threat frame, economic threat frame, and cultural threat frame. These frames are further explained and applied to this research in part 3.3. De Vreese et al. (2011) concluded that negative frames were more prominent than positive frames, with the cultural threat frame being the most used one, as it appeared in more than 20% of the news stories on EU enlargement and the Turkish membership (De Vreese et al., 2011). Therefore, more than 20% of the articles emphasized that the Turkish membership of the EU would be a threat to European norms, values and culture. The security benefits frame appeared in 12% of the researched news stories, being the most prominently found frame seeing opportunities of the situation, emphasizing that having Turkey in the EU would be beneficial for the security of the union and its citizens (De Vreese et al., 2011). Similarly, researching European national news media, audiovisual and print, Norris (2000) concluded that the coverage of the news on the EU, its enlargement and development is mostly negative in tone.

A content analysis of German regional and national news media researched whether EU enlargement with Turkey as a candidate Member State was framed as an 'opportunity' or a 'risk' (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006). The opportunity frame presumes that the Turkish membership of the EU would be an opportunity for Europe and would lead to a pleasant outcome, with the expectation that it would bring future advantages (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006). It, for instance, would emphasize that it would lead to the spread of democracy, economic growth, and European values. In contrast, a risk frame raises concerns about the negative consequences of EU enlargement with Turkey, such as the high costs, instability and increase in crime (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006). Therefore, Schuck and De

Vreese (2006) used similar frames as De Vreese et al. (2011), however, in the research by De Vreese et al., (2011), the risk and opportunity frames are further split up according to economic, cultural and security benefits or threats. Schuck and De Vreese (2006) concluded that the German news media both alternately framed EU enlargement with Turkey as an 'opportunity' and as a 'risk' for Europe. The scholars found that EU enlargement was portrayed as controversial but balanced in the frames of 'opportunity' and 'risk', as they were each equally present (Schuck & De Vreese, 2006). Therefore, Schuck and De Vreese (2006) found that the news on EU enlargement was not necessarily more negative in tone as Norris (2000) earlier suggested.

Whilst there are some similar frameworks in the academic literature, there are various conclusions about which frames are most dominant in European news media. Therefore, we can confirm that frames in news media differ contextually, over time, geographically, and between different news media. Contextual factors influence the news frames, as they are also shaped by the political, social, and economic environment (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005; De Vreese et al., 2011). This is why the context of the news must always be considered. Therefore, in a changing context, in which a country currently at war applied for EU membership, new research is necessary on the reporting of EU enlargement.

2.3.2 The effects of framing EU enlargement

Research has shown that circulating stories, images, and discourses on EU affairs affect how people think about the EU and its policies (Alarcón, 2010). News frames regarding EU enlargement specifically can have a significant influence on people's perceptions and opinions of the EU as an organization, as enlargement is one of the EU's core goals to widen and expand its influence (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Corbu et al., 2015). Importantly, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005; 2006) concluded that opinions on matters concerning the EU are volatile and easily influenced by new information. Researching the effects of news framing on public support for the enlargement of the EU with Serbia, Lecheler and De Vreese (2010) found that the exposure to news frames on the subject has a considerable influence on the general understanding and support of the Serbian candidacy. This effect or influence is further shaped by the political knowledge of

the audience; the less knowledge the individual has, the more subject the individual is to framing effects (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2010).

The effect of the news frames on public opinion also depends on the consistency of the tone of the news reporting on the enlargement of the EU (De Vreese et al., 2011). De Vreese et al. (2011) built their argument by following the logic of Zaller (1992) who researched the origins and tendencies of mass opinion. When there is a consistent negative tone in the news, and when articles continuously frame EU enlargement as an event of risks and losses, there will be less support for the enlargement of the EU (De Vreese et al., 2011). In contrast, when the news on the enlargement of the EU is consistently framed positively, focusing on the gains and benefits of enlargement, one can expect more support from the public. A consistent emphasis on either positive or negative aspects of an issue is called a 'one-sided information flow' (Zaller, 1992; De Vreese et al., 2011). However, when both positive and negative frames are present, they rule one another out, and the effect on public opinion is rather minimal (De Vreese et al., 2011). When the news is rather inconsistent and there are both positive and negative directional biases, we can talk about a two-sided information flow (Zaller, 1992; De Vreese et al., 2011).

Additionally, researching media frames by national news media about EU enlargement, De Vreese et al. (2011) and De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003) found that negative media frames have a greater impact and stronger effect on public opinion than positive frames. In the study of De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2003), it was noticeable that individuals who were presented with news that was framed negatively, exhibited reduced levels of both overall support for the European Union and support for its enlargement. They also tended to focus more on the negative aspects rather than the benefits of the enlargement, in contrast to those who were presented with news that was framed in a positive manner (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003). Further, Zaller (1992) stated that the effect on public opinion depends on the stability of the frame throughout time. The less stable and consistent a frame is throughout time, the less effect it will have on the readers.

Whilst these studies are mostly conducted on national news media, the increasing acceptance of pan-European news media leads us to believe that these effects can also

apply to pan-European news media. However, not all pan-European news media are the same, which is touched upon in the next part.

2.3.3 Differences between pan-European news media

Koenig, Mihelj, Downey and Gencel Bek (2006) researched the differences between national news media in how they report on the Turkish membership of the EU, and what frames are used. The authors concluded that there are significant differences between the national newspapers of different countries in the intensity of the coverage and the usage of the frames (Koenig et al., 2006). Further, research by De Vreese et al. (2011) showed that there are significant differences between Dutch news media in how they frame the enlargement of the EU. As previous research confirmed that there are significant differences between countries and between national news media in how they frame EU enlargement, it would also be interesting to research the differences between pan-European news media.

Firmstone (2008) recognized that transnational media are not entirely homogenous, and that differences exist between the different news media in how they report on European affairs. This is partially because every news medium tries to target a slightly different audience (Firmstone, 2008). Some focus more on those who influence EU decision making, some target a rather business-oriented audience. Further, transnational news media attempt to occupy a certain place within the market and all try to differentiate themselves by focusing on certain sectors and EU affairs more than others (Firmstone, 2008). Firmstone (2008) adds that different frameworks, approaches, and perspectives are thus applied by different transnational media in reporting on EU affairs. This, also due to the differences in journalistic cultures and style within the news media, also in an attempt to differentiate itself from other news media covering the EU and thus to create a competitive advantage (Firmstone, 2008). Therefore, one can wonder whether different pan-European media also apply different frames when reporting on the same issue, that of the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine as a candidate Member State.

2.3.4 The case of Ukraine

On 28 February 2022, shortly after Ukraine had been invaded by Russia, Ukraine applied for EU membership. On 23 June 2022, only a couple of months later, the European Council officially granted the candidate status to Ukraine. This was an important first step towards the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine, and that first step came at a high pace. Never before had the EU granted the candidate status so quickly to a country (Anghel & Džankić, 2023). Together with Ukraine, Moldova was also granted the status of EU candidate country. According to Anghel and Džankić (2023), the decision of making Ukraine a candidate Member State would not have happened if there would not have been a security threat due to the war. Anghel and Džankić (2023) emphasized that the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine as a candidate Member State is a mechanism to build security in a new geopolitical world, without guaranteeing that Ukraine would eventually enter the union as a Member State. The membership of the EU is used to build peace and bring stability in wartime (Anghel & Džankić, 2023). However, the scholars stated that both sides of the negotiation table want different things out of these accession talks, and those desires might not be reconcilable: the EU wants security, and Ukraine wants to become a member of the EU (Anghel & Džankić, 2023).

Before the war, Ukraine had very little chance to be granted EU candidate status (Sapir, 2022). Further, Ukraine and the EU even faced quite some criticism of their growing political and economic relations. In 2015, for instance, a Dutch referendum was organized against the candidate membership of Ukraine, which was not even on the table yet at the time. The referendum was organized as a reaction to an EU-Ukraine Association Agreement.

Surveys by Eurobarometer reflect a changing narrative. Before Russia invaded Ukraine, only a minority of Europeans supported further enlargement. In 2017, 40% were in favour of further enlargement of the EU, and 49% were against (European Commission, 2017). In 2018, 44% of the respondents were in favour of further enlargement of the EU, and 46% were against (European Commission, 2018). It was often the sole policy which was supported by a minority of Europeans according to the report. This changed, however, after the invasion of Ukraine by Russia. Given the Russian invasion of Ukraine, 58% of the citizens agree that the European Union should speed up its efforts to let new

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countries such as Ukraine join the EU, 16% 'fully agree' with this (European Commission, 2022a). 36% disagree and 12% 'totally disagree'. Further, in the standard Eurobarometer survey of the summer of 2022, 57% of the respondents were for further enlargement of the EU, whilst 33% were against it (European Commission, 2022b). This changing narrative among EU citizens illustrates that novel research on the framing of the enlargement with Ukraine is relevant and necessary. Moreover, the reports show that support for speeding up the enlargement process varies across different Member States, which is why a transnational perspective is eligible.

As previously illustrated, frames are the result of various components, among other things the contextual factors and dominant paradigms (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; Kitzinger, 2007). News articles are cultural products which reflect the hegemonic discourses. As the EU has a different kind of relationship with Ukraine now, where Ukraine needs help and support to form a fort against Russia, the discourse and narrative may have changed. Therefore, the focus of this thesis is on the framing of the Ukrainian membership of the EU after the invasion.

2.4 Conclusion

News media are important sources of information for EU affairs (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Kitzinger, 2007; Kaiser, 2021). How the EU and EU affairs are reported on in news media can influence audiences in how they understand and perceive the EU and its actions (Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006; Alarcón, 2010; Corbu et al. 2015). News media will always tell a certain part of the story, selecting relevant facts and situating the facts within a certain context or background (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; Kitzinger, 2007).

Next to traditional news media, there is a growing acceptance of pan-European media as valuable sources of information (Higgins Joyce, 2011). Pan-European media target readers across national borders, focusing on a European audience and EU affairs. Whilst their audience remains small, and whilst the media face several challenges which hinder their success, their audience mostly exists of higher educated elites, political leaders, and policymakers, making the pan-European media's audience compact but impactful (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2006). Therefore, pan-European media's news framing should be

researched, because of their increasing role in politics and society. Importantly, pan-European media should not be considered a homogeneous group, as previous research showed that there are significant differences between pan-European news media and how they report on EU affairs (Koenig et al., 2006; Firmstone, 2008). By each attempting to create a competitive advantage, transnational media, and thus also pan-European media, attempt to differentiate in style, and approaches and by applying different frameworks (Firmstone, 2008).

Furthermore, the literature review highlighted that pan-European news media have the potential to create a collective identity and public debate among EU citizens which transcends national borders, which could eventually contribute to a European public sphere (Eriksen, 2005; Firmstone, 2008). The existence of a European public sphere is however often debated today (Eriksen, 2005; Baisnée, 2007; Firmstone, 2008; Heinderyckx, 2015). According to several scholars, the existence of successful wide-ranging pan-European media is a precondition to the existence of a European public sphere (Eriksen, 2005; Firmstone, 2008).

The EU is committed to enlarge its influence over a growing number of countries. Given that one of the EU's main objectives is to broaden and increase its influence, media coverage of EU expansion can have a substantial impact on how the public views the organization (Corbu et al., 2015). Whilst previous research has predominantly focused on the framing of enlargement by traditional national news media, studying pan-European news media is crucial given their influential audience and growing importance (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; De Vreese et al., 2011; Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009; Higgins Joyce, 2011). Further, most frame analyses looked at the enlargement of the EU with Turkey, a candidate-Member State since the 70s (Koenig et al., 2006; De Vreese et al., 2011). The studies researching the framing of the enlargement with Turkey, analysing traditional news media, mainly found that both positive and negative frames could be recognized with regard to security, the economy and culture. There were, however, various conclusions as to which frame was most dominant in the news. This thesis will go in a different direction and researches the enlargement of the EU with a country currently at war, Ukraine.

On 23 June 2022, the European Council officially granted the candidate status to Ukraine. In a context of conflict and war in which Ukraine is attacked by Russia, the media, political and public agenda might be different than they were roughly ten years ago, when Ukraine was everything but welcomed into the Union. Contextual factors influence the use of news frames, as they are also shaped by the political, social, and economic environment (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005; De Vreese et al., 2011). Surveys by Eurobarometer show how public opinion has evolved throughout time and today, more than 50% of the Europeans are in favour of Ukrainian membership (European Commission, 2022b). Keeping in mind the interactive relationship between media, politics, and public opinion, it is relevant to research the current framing of articles on the Ukrainian membership of the EU. Further, media frames and the study thereof can help us interpret political, societal, and economic concerns and the dominant way of thinking in our society, and it can thus help us interpret the EU candidacy of Ukraine, and the dominant paradigms around it (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005).

Following the literature review, several hypotheses are formulated to guide further analysis:

(1) The pan-European news media's coverage of EU enlargement with Ukraine includes the security benefits, security threat, economic benefits, economic threat, and cultural threat frame, as identified by De Vreese et al. (2011).

(2) As contextual factors influence the use of news frames, and as they are also shaped by the political, social, and economic environment, the framing of the Ukrainian membership of the EU is different from the framing of the Turkish membership.

(3) The security benefits frame is most likely to dominate in the articles about the EU enlargement with Ukraine, as public opinion towards enlargement has been rather positive after the invasion, as illustrated by Eurobarometer statistics, and as the invasion of Ukraine is one of the driving forces behind the enlargement.

(4) The framing of the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine changes over time as different steps in the accession process are taken, leading to new contexts and the use of different frames.

(5) The framing of EU enlargement with Ukraine varies significantly between different pan-European news media due to their distinct approaches and perspectives.

By investigating these hypotheses, this research aims to shed light on the framing of EU enlargement with Ukraine, through a quantitative frame analysis.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research method

From the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s, the concept of framing and the study of frames gained popularity within the field of communication sciences (Deprez et al., 2011; Linstrom & Marais, 2012; Deprez & Van Leuven, 2020). "Frames are organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world." (Reese, 2001) A frame analysis allows media content such as news articles to be researched scientifically and systematically, through which a broader frame and message can be identified (Deprez et al., 2011).

Frames can be recognized in an inductive or deductive manner. In this thesis, a deductive method will be applied. Therefore, this research will study news frames through an analytical framework, based on previously recognized frames in national news on the Turkish membership of the EU by De Vreese et al. (2011). These frames are adjusted to suit the research on the Ukrainian membership of the EU. In other words, this thesis seeks to recognize previously defined frames about EU enlargement, within a new context, in articles by several pan-European news media. The articles are first and foremost coded and analysed through SPSS, the statistical programme for social sciences, of which the output can be found in Appendix A. However, quantitative frame analysis is often criticized for not being able to holistically measure the contents of a text (Linstrom & Marais, 2012). Therefore, the quantitative findings are explained and contextualised by quotes and qualitative findings. This, to combine statistical facts with context and depth, as Yarnell (1985) suggested.

A frame analysis shows that, whilst journalists follow the rules of objectivity, they still report and frame events, issues, and phenomena (Entman, 1993). Illustrating that an event such as the Ukrainian membership of the EU is framed in a certain way sheds light on the fact that "to report the news is to frame" (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005, viii). Further, this study is relevant as news frames of EU enlargement can have a significant influence on people's perceptions and opinions of the EU as an organization, as enlargement is one of the EU's core goals to widen and expand its influence (Corbu et al., 2015). Moreover, researching the frames in the news also tells us something about the dominant way of

thinking in society. Media frames and the study thereof can help us interpret political, societal, and economic concerns and the dominant way of thinking in our society (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005). Furthermore, researching deductively can give interesting results which can be compared to results from other research using similar frames. Researching deductively also means that research is done in a consistent, systematic manner.

However, this research method also brings limitations to this research. By researching the presence of existing frames, other frames might be overlooked. The research starts with a narrowed perspective when researching existing frames. It is inflexible, especially compared to an inductive approach, to identify new, emerging frames (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). Moreover, the researcher has to interpret the results which means that there will always be a certain bias in place. To minimise this bias and maximise the reliability, a subsample of 40 articles is coded twice, with a certain timespan between the two coding periods. Furthermore, with a frame analysis, one risks oversimplifying the complex, nuanced frames. Therefore, it is important to carefully interpret and contextualise the results with qualitative findings, as will be done in this research.

3.2 Subjects

The frame analysis is executed on a sample of news articles by Politico Europe, Euractiv, Euronews and EUobserver. These subjects are well-established within the media market and embody the characteristics of a pan-European news medium. Politico, Euractiv, Euronews and EUobserver have a clear European focus and readership, compared to The Financial Times for instance.

Politico, Euractiv and Euronews' articles are available online without a paywall. In contrast, to read articles by EUobserver, the reader needs a subscription. Politico Europe has 3 million monthly unique visitors (Politico, 2022). Euractiv has a readership of over two million readers per month (Euractiv, "About Euractiv"). Euronews would have a total of 39.3 million monthly visits to its website (Euronews, "About us"). EUobserver would have 60.000 daily readers (EUobserver, "About us"). Whilst the readership of the pan-European news media remains relatively small, as mentioned before, their readers do exist out of influential opinion leaders and decision-makers.

Further, the pan-European news media are interesting to compare, as their organizational structure and business models differ. As mentioned before, as pan-European news media try to create a competitive advantage and have different organizational structures, they tend to differentiate in style, and approaches and apply different frameworks. Therefore, the core organizational structures of the media will be discussed first, before delving into the contents of their articles. An overview of the subjects can be found in Table 1.

3.2.1 Politico Europe

Politico Europe is a news organization launched in Europe in 2015. Before that, Politico made its debut in the United States in 2007. Politico focuses on politics and policy, with a clear focus on the European Union (Politico, "About Us"). Politico Europe has its main office in Brussels, and additional offices in London, Berlin, and Paris (Politico, "About Us"). The news media organization has over 300 employees across these different offices. Politico reaches 3 million readers per month and emphasizes that its content is "the go to source for EU affairs" (Politico, "Politico Press"). On its website, Politico claims to "connect and empower professionals through nonpartisan journalism and actionable intelligence about European politics and policy" (Politico, "About Us").

As mentioned before, Politico offers news without a paywall. Politico Pro, on the other hand, is a subscription-based service for professionals with daily and weekly newsletters, a weekly printed newspaper, and live events (Politico, "About Us"). Politico also generates parts of its revenue from advertising. Politico does this by providing brands "the solutions to create, convene, and connect with power players" (Politico, 2022). This is called Politico Media Solutions, and it aims to help businesses communicate with the policymakers and the influential audience that Politico has through branded content (Politico, 2022). Politico ensures that sponsored content or content presented by advertisers is produced with full editorial independence (Politico, "Politico Press").

3.2.2 Euractiv

Euractiv is a media network founded in 1999 which is devoted to produce free localized European policy news in different languages (Euractiv, "About Euractiv"). The news

medium reaches over two million readers every month. It provides news in 13 languages, and with that, Euractiv reaches 80 percent of its readers in their first language. Its output is the result of a combination of offices present in more than a dozen European capitals. The offices are established in 17 countries in Europe, with Brussels functioning as the headquarters (Euractiv, "About Euractiv").

Euractiv is dedicated to report from the 'Brussels perspective' on EU news. Its website says that Euractiv is pro-European, constructive, pan-European, multilingual, transparent, impartial, and independent from sponsors (Euractiv, "About Euractiv"). The pan-European medium claims to have an innovative business model, in which Euractiv mostly receives revenue from corporates, associations and NGOs. Only a small part of the revenue comes from advertising. Interestingly, the Commission funds several projects of Euractiv, which corresponds with several requirements set by the European Commission. These include for instance "The CAP in Transition", where the goal is to raise awareness on the EU Common Agricultural Policy; DEMOTEC, where the aim is to promote citizen participation in decision-making (Euractiv, "Editorial Standards & Policies"). Importantly, Europe's MediaLab (Fondation Euractiv), was established by the media company in 2003. It is a *Think-and-Do-Tank* dedicated to foster the health and future of the media sector in Europe (Euractiv, "About Euractiv"). Further, Euractiv joined the Trust Project in 2023, a global network of news media and organizations which adhere to several standards of trustworthiness and transparency (Euractiv, "Editorial Standards & Policies").

3.2.3 Euronews

Euronews is a media company consisting of an international news channel and an online news platform aiming to bring the European perspective forward. Euronews was launched in 1993, in France (Euronews, "About us"). Since the beginning, its European identity is Euronews' trademark. Whilst Euronews' primary medium is video, Euronews also offers articles on euronews.com. Euronews would have a total of 39.3 million monthly visits to its website. The medium reports in 17 different languages.

Euronews emphasizes that all views matter and that its main mission is to "provide unfiltered, unbiased, fact-based journalism" and "actively resist the temptation to bait

clicks or views through bias, outrage, or sensationalism" (Euronews, "About us"). Euronews' headquarters is in Lyon, France and there are additional offices in Brussels, Athens, and Budapest, supported by correspondents and reporters in several European capital cities.

Euronews provides its readers with articles without a paywall. The media company creates revenue through advertising. Since its launch, Euronews is also subsidized by the European Commission and yearly receives about €16 million worth of funds. These funds are linked to specific contracts which, for instance, require Euronews to provide the European Commission with information on their programming priorities, metrics, and editorial oversights (Euronews, "Editorial Charter"). As with Euractiv, there would be no direct funding obligations in place.

Importantly, as of 2021, 88% of the shares of Euronews are in the hands of Aplac Capital, a Portuguese investor company. Euronews has been under scrutiny due to the close family ties of the CEO to Viktor Orbán (Stolton & Bayer, 2021). However, Euronews guarantees full editorial independence, and the European Commission closely monitored the transition in ownership to ensure that the conditions of their Framework Partnership Agreement were not breached.

3.2.4 EUobserver

EUobserver is another pan-European news medium which is based in Brussels and mainly targets the Brussels bubble. "European journalism is essential in making European democracy actually function," their website says (EUobserver, "About us"). Its website says that EUobserver is one of the most influential news platforms for the institutions of the European Union. With a daily circulation of 60.000, EUobserver aims to "support European democracy by reflecting the voice of people and by giving people the information they need to hold the EU establishment to account" (EUobserver, "About us").

The news medium is financed through memberships and group subscriptions (40%), advertising (30%) and support from several foundations and corporations (30%). EUobserver explicitly mentions that it is not funded by the EU institutions and is therefore

"the only independent news media covering EU affairs in Brussels and beyond" (EUobserver, "About us"). Further, EUobserver is supported by several foundations, such as the Tides Foundation and the Schöpflin Stiftung. These foundations mostly aim to support the free circulation of ideas and democracy. EUobserver pledges to "never take any financial support from the tobacco industry, the defence industry, nor from any entity, private or public, that does not respect the full independence of our journalism".

Table 1: Overview of the researched pan-European news media

	Founded	*Reach*	*Locations*	*Features*	*Revenues*
Politico Europe	2015	3 million readers per month	Brussels (HQ), Paris, London, Berlin	Independent, impartial Newsletters, print, podcasts, and online text Part of the broader Politico medium (US, France, UK)	Politico Pro Politico media solutions (advertising)
Euractiv	1999	+2 million readers per month	Brussels (HQ) and partner offices in 17 European countries	Pro-European, constructive, multilingual, transparent, independent, impartial In 13 different languages Online text	European Commission Advertising Corporates Associations and NGOs Public projects
Euronews	1993	39.3 million monthly visitors	Lyon (HQ), Brussels, Athens, Budapest	Unfiltered, unbiased, fact-based journalism, European perspective In 17 different languages Part of international news channel Online: video and text	European Commission Advertising
EUobserver	2000	60.000 daily	Brussels	Not-for-profit, independent Online text	Membership Group subscriptions Advertising Foundations and corporations

3.2.5 Data collection and methods

This research considers articles on the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine as a candidate member state. The articles must cover news on the accession talks, the candidacy, or related political events to the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine. The articles were collected through the Google Search function using specific keywords such as "Ukraine membership bid" or "Ukraine enlargement", in combination with the website of the news media (e.g. politico.eu "Ukraine" "Enlargement"). Through Google Search, a specific period could be delineated. Further, articles were found on the websites of the news media, under specific categories, as Euractiv has a specific category called "Enlargement".

As mentioned before, Euractiv and Euronews both produce articles in more than a dozen languages, however, only the English articles will be consulted. Further, various styles of articles are considered as long as the text is not too limited, prohibiting the assessment of frames. News flashes are thus not considered. Only editorial pieces are researched, which represent the editorship of the pan-European news media. Opinion pieces are therefore left out of the sample. Further, the selected articles primarily focus on the Ukrainian enlargement of the EU, not the enlargement of other countries. If the enlargement of other countries than Ukraine is briefly mentioned in certain parts of the article, those parts are ignored for this research. All the used articles are accessible on the website of Politico, Euractiv, Euronews and EUobserver, and can be found in the SPSS file (see Appendix B).

The frame analysis was conducted for news articles published between 1 February 2022 and 1 May 2023. This research considers articles starting from the rising tensions on the Ukrainian border with Russia and the eventual Russian invasion of Ukraine. The news articles were selected by census sampling, meaning that all the articles which fit the above-mentioned requirements were analysed. This resulted in a sample of $n = 122$ articles; 34 articles by Politico, 48 by Euractiv, 26 by Euronews, and 14 by EUobserver (see Table 2).

Table 2: Sample

News medium	**Euractiv**	**Politico**	**Euronews**	**EUobserver**	**Total**
Articles	48	34	26	14	122

3.3 Analytical Framework

This thesis researches issue-specific news frames on the future EU enlargement with Ukraine within pan-European media. Issue-specific frames are frames which are directly related to a certain topic or event, and in this case to the enlargement of the EU (De Vreese et al. 2011). For this, this thesis builds on a set of previously identified frames by De Vreese et al. (2011). In the first part of their study, De Vreese et al. (2011) examined the national news media's framing of the EU enlargement debate with Turkey as a potential member state. They identified five issue-specific frames, both positive and negative, to the news framing of EU enlargement with Turkey: the security benefits frame, economic benefits frame, security threat frame, economic threat frame, and cultural threat frame. As explained in the literature review, the research by De Vreese et al. (2011) continued to investigate the influence of such frames on public opinion. In this thesis, we will further build on the framework of the first part of their research by assessing the presence of the five frames within the previously mentioned news media. This, because the frames are clearly defined in their research, the subject is similar, and because their exploratory research is replicable.

To measure the extent to which these five frames are present within news articles, we developed four to five questions per frame to which the coder has to answer yes (=1) or no (=0). These questions are called framing measures and are meant to measure one of the five frames (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000; De Vreese et al., 2011). The framing measures were inspired by the research by De Vreese et al. (2011) and modified to fit the case of Ukraine. Each frame has four to five questions in order to assess the articles in a balanced way, so that one frame is not more likely to be found than another. To measure each frame, we consider a minimum of two framing measures or questions. Our method of measuring the existence of frames is rather exploratory and there is a chance that some of the questions might not cluster adequately, and thus have to be excluded from further analysis. One question is too arbitrary and cannot encompass a frame. Two questions per frame is a minimum, however, three is ideal to make sure that the frames are not too superficially or narrowly measured. When one or more questions of a frame were answered with "yes", the frame was considered present in the study of De Vreese et al. (2011). We apply the same standards in this study, to allow for comparable results. The coding book and framing measures can be found in Appendix A. There are questions such

as "Does the story mention that the EU would be a stronger global power with Ukraine?" (security benefits), "Does the story mention that EU enlargement will have positive effects on the economic prospects of the European Union?" (economic benefits), "Does the story mention that having Ukraine in the EU is a threat for security (because of the war with Russia)?" (security threat), "Does the story mention the impact of Ukrainian EU enlargement or immigration from Ukrainian on the European welfare system?" (economic threat), "Does the story offer a negative picture, a negative evaluation of differences in culture, norms, and values between Europe and Ukraine?" (cultural threat). The advantage of a binary coding strategy is that the intercoder reliability is typically relatively high (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). However, a binary coding strategy is more likely to measure more measurement error.

Before assessing the presence of the frames, it is crucial to first identify, define, and operationalize the frames and their respective reasoning devices (Deprez et al., 2011). A frame recognition matrix (see Appendix C) is therefore used to conceptualize these frames by the reasoning devices and the specific framing measures. Further, the frames are separately explained in the next part.

3.3.1 (Geopolitical) security benefits frame

The geopolitical security benefits frame is a frame which focuses on the benefits EU enlargement can bring to the EU's security, mostly on a geopolitical level. This frame presumes that the membership of Ukraine of the European Union will be an important contribution to the internal and external security of the Union. Eventually, it could possibly bridge differences between Russia and Europe. Ukraine will have to adjust itself to the principles and norms that were set by the present members of the EU, and eventually, it will be better and safer to have Ukraine as an EU member. It could, for instance, lead to the democratization of the post-Soviet region.

3.3.2 Economic benefits frame

The economic benefits frame presumes that Ukrainian membership of the EU would bring economic benefits to the EU and the European citizens. Future immigration of skilled workforce of the country would be needed in the EU, and there would be financial gains in the future because of it.

3.3.3 Security threat frame

The security threat frame rests on the assumption that Ukraine as a member of the EU would pose a threat to the security situation of the EU. It could, for instance, burn bridges between Europe and Russia. Further, the EU is automatically physically closer to Russia than it was before, as it would share larger borders. This is a threat to the security of the EU and its citizens.

3.3.4 Economic threat frame

The economic threat frame presumes that the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine would pose a threat to the economic prospects of the EU and of European citizens. There would be negative effects of the enlargement on the EU job market and the European welfare system. There would be many costs involved in the enlargement, as Ukraine needs to be completely built up again after a war. Further, as Ukraine is one of the poorer countries of the continent, many of the EU funds would go to the country, leading to fewer funds for the existing Member States.

3.3.5 Cultural threat frame

The cultural threat frame suggests that the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine would challenge and threaten European values, norms, and democracy. The frame consists of a negative evaluation of the cultural differences between the EU and Ukraine. It emphasizes the differences between Ukrainian and European norms, values, and differences in the way of life, and sees these differences as irreconcilable.

4. Results

This part will discuss the results of the frame analysis. First, it is important to assess the reliability and validity of the dataset. Then, a principal component analysis with Varimax rotation and a cluster analysis are executed on the framing measures to research whether they reflect underlying dimensions. Next, several graphs illustrate how pan-European news media frame the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine. These are each contextualized with quotes from the researched articles. Last, several statistical tests are executed to reveal the differences or similarities between the news media. The output of all the tests can be found in Appendix A.

4.1 Reliability

Matthes and Kohring (2008) emphasized in their work that a frame analysis is often questioned for its reliability, partially because a frame is a relatively abstract given, which is hard to define and code. This makes it hard to guarantee the neutrality of the research. Therefore, establishing the research's reliability is the first step before the rest of the frame analysis. The intercoder reliability was conducted on a subsample of 40 randomly selected articles (see Appendix D). Each medium was represented in the subsample. The intercoder reliability for the 21 questions was proved with a Cohen's Kappa constant. For 11 out of the 21 questions, the Cohen's Kappa constant could not be calculated because these questions were answered with 'no' (=0) for all articles. Thus, the results for these questions were constants. However, as the questions were each answered the same way in both samples, we can assume the results are reliable. For the remaining 10 questions the intercoder reliability amounted between 93,1% and 100% (see Appendix A), which means we can assume that the results are reliable.

4.2 Distinctive frames

First, it is important to confirm the distinctiveness of the frames and the accuracy of the framing measures, before moving on to the rest of the data analysis. Following the research method of Schuck and De Vreese (2006) and Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), to verify the distinctiveness of the frames with the composed questions, a principal component factor analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was conducted on the questions. It is, however, important to interpret these results very cautiously, as PCA in the first place

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assumes that variables are normally distributed, which is not the case in this research or in the research by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and Schuck and De Vreese (2006), because we work with binary variables.

PCA can help researchers identify patterns and relationships in datasets. It is an analysis which groups variables according to 'principal components' or dimensions. In the context of a frame analysis, the factor analysis can help identify and cluster the 'principal', most important and salient frames, or 'underlying dimensions' (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Therefore, the PCA was executed to test whether the framing measures, or questions (see Appendix A) of the same frame are clustered together, and whether a certain pattern or theme could be identified in the dataset. In this study, it is thus ideal that the variables, or questions in this case, are grouped according to the frames. The questions which did not belong in the dataset and were not attributed to any of the frames needed to be excluded from the dataset. This, to make sure that the questions were all loaded on distinct frames, and to exclude questions which hold little information but still weigh in on the dataset. The PCA with Varimax rotation was thus also executed to reduce the variables to a smaller set of variables which still contain most of the information of the larger set.

The factor analysis could only be conducted on those questions which were answered with 'yes' at least once, as a factor analysis cannot be conducted on variables with only constants. Therefore, the analysis could not be conducted on the questions of the cultural threat frame, as it was not present in any of the articles in the sample. In addition, the questions of the economic benefits frame were also excluded from the PCA, because three out of four of the framing measures were never answered with 'yes', and one framing measure is not enough to identify a frame. Further, the first question of the security threat frame also had to be excluded from the analysis, because the variable only had constants and the framing measure was thus only answered with 'no'.

After this, the first PCA was executed. Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant, which means that there were enough correlations in the sample to identify the principal components. Only the questions which had factor loadings higher than 0.4 were included in the scale, as it is a commonly used threshold (Ferguson & Cox, 1993; Tucker & MacCallum, 1997; Chan & Idris, 2017). These factor loadings are the numbers in bold in

Table 3. Of the remaining four frames, 3 questions had to eventually be excluded from the analysis as the variables were not loaded on any of the three frames: "Does the story mention the term "bridge between Europe and Russia" or "bridge between democracy and communism" or similar metaphors related to Ukrainian EU enlargement?", "Does the story mention the concern that Ukraine shares borders with Russia, and that after Ukrainian EU enlargement that the EU would share (larger) borders with such countries?" and "Is there a reference to economic consequences of Ukraine (a country currently at war) entering the EU? Is there a mention of the costs/degree of the expense involved?". The variables were not loaded on any of the three components and thus did not belong to their respective frame. This was also observable in the dataset: the specific questions were only answered with 'yes' once. When these questions were used in the PCA, these questions were not attributed to any of the three frames or components, as this one 'yes' in a dataset of 122 articles does not say much. Therefore, these items differed conceptually and empirically from the other items that loaded on the same factors. The questions were thus extracted from the sample, as these variables can be considered outliers. Just like the framing measures which were never answered with 'yes', these framing measures do not adequately belong to one of the frames and will therefore not be used.

The principal component factor analysis with Varimax rotation confirms that 8 remaining questions can be distinguished according to three consistent and recognizable frames. The questions were ordered according to the security threat frame, the security benefits frame, and the economic threat frame. The eigenvalues for the components are 2.03 (economic threat frame), 1.54 (security benefits frame) and 1.43 (security threat frame). The eigenvalues are greater than one, which means that the components are significantly distinguishable.

Table 3: Varimax-Rotated Factor Solution for the framing measures.

	Component 1 (security benefits frame)	Component 2 (security threat frame)	Component 3 (economic threat frame)
Security benefits frame Does the story mention that Ukrainian EU enlargement will have positive effects on the post-Soviet region?	**.684**	-.140	-.131
Does the story mention the term "bridge between Europe and Russia" or "bridge between democracy and communism" or similar metaphors related to Ukrainian EU enlargement?	.013[a]	-.006	-.027
Does the story mention that Ukrainian EU enlargement will go against the Soviet or Russian sphere of influence, or that Ukraine (in the EU) could form a buffer against Russia or similar metaphors?	**.738**	-.031	.162
Does the story mention that the EU would be a stronger global/geopolitical power with Ukraine?	**.674**	.199	.083
Security threat frame Does the story mention that having Ukraine in the EU is a threat for security, as it can for instance lead to escalation with Russia?	.124	**.855**	.021
Does the story mention the concern that Ukraine shares borders with Russia, and that after Ukrainian EU enlargement that the EU would share (larger) borders with such countries?	-.021	-.025[a]	-.032
Does the story mention that Ukrainian membership of the EU would have negative effects on the relationship with Russia? Does the story imply that having Ukraine in the EU could "burn bridges" between Russia and the EU or similar metaphors?	-.120	**.792**	-.052
Economic threat frame Does the story mention that Ukrainian immigration/Ukrainian EU enlargement poses a threat to the economic prospects of the European Union?	-.035	.114	**.595**
Does the story mention effects of Ukrainian EU enlargement on the EU job market? Does the story mention a "flood of workers" or similar metaphors?	.005	-.036	**.805**
Does the story mention the impact of Ukrainian EU enlargement or immigration from Ukraine on the European welfare system? It could for instance lead to less funds for other countries, impacting their welfare system.	.038	-.019	**.856**
Is there a reference to economic consequences of Ukraine (a country currently at war) entering the EU? Is there a mention of the costs/degree of expense involved?	-.001	-.003	-.014[a]

a: these factor loadings can be considered outliers, as the framing measures do not belong to any of the three components. This is most likely because these questions were only answered "yes" once.

In addition, a hierarchical cluster analysis with the "nearest neighbour method" was executed with Jaccard as the binary measure, to confirm that the 8 remaining framing measures cluster according to several dimensions. This analysis groups variables according to clusters and aims to recognize patterns or structures in data. It is specifically for datasets with binary variables and is thus suited to use in this research. The variables which were excluded from the PCA also had to be excluded to be able to execute the cluster analysis. With the 8 remaining questions, the dendrogram (Figure 1) confirms the three separate clusters around the questions which each belong to the economic threat frame, the security threat frame, and the security benefits frame.

Figure 1: A dendrogram illustrating the three distinctive frames: the economic threat frame, the security threat frame, and the security benefits frame.
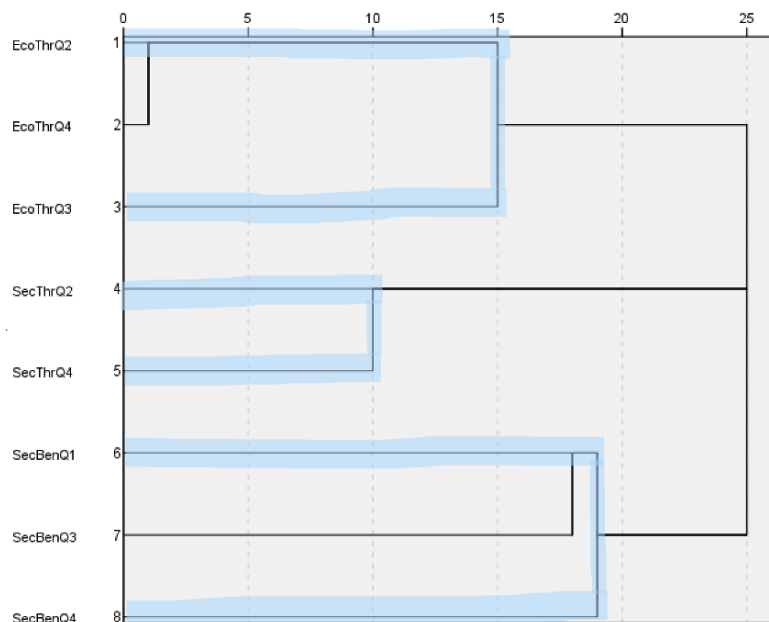
4.3 The framing of EU enlargement in pan-European news media

4.3.1 Absence of the economic benefits and cultural threat frame

The cultural threat frame and economic benefits frame were both insufficiently present in the dataset. The cultural threat frame was completely absent, and only one framing measure of the economic benefits frame was answered with 'yes' in one article out of a sample of 122 articles. In contrast, the research by De Vreese et al. (2011) found that the cultural threat frame was the most used in national media. This difference can be

explained by the context differences between the research by De Vreese et al. (2011), on which this research is based, and this research. As clarified before, De Vreese et al. (2011) researched the framing of the enlargement of Turkey. Whilst geographically relatively close to Ukraine, Turkey is a different case in which different arguments are raised as to why the country should or should not join the EU. For starters, in Turkey, the Islam is the most practised religion, whilst in Ukraine there are mostly Christians. In the research on the Turkish membership of the EU, the cultural threat frame is mostly based on the idea that the Western, Christian culture would be undermined by the growth of Muslim populations (De Vreese et al., 2011). This religious difference is less significant in the discussion about the Ukrainian membership, as Christianity is the most popular religion in the country. The framing measures were adapted to fit this research. However, Ukraine mostly identified itself as inherently European and articles emphasized that Russia is the *"anti-European force"* (Politico, 2 February 2023). In the narrative of a war, in which Russia illegally attacked Ukraine, articles often emphasized that Ukraine is *"one of us"*, rather than focusing on the cultural differences between the union and the country (Politico, 28 February 2022; Euronews, 19 May 2022).

Further, the economic benefits frame was also mostly absent in the sample. This was also the least present frame in the research by De Vreese et al. (2011), however, the frame was still used in 4% of the articles in their research. Whilst there are several economic benefits linked to the enlargement of the EU, the economic benefits were barely mentioned when discussing the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine. This is potentially because Ukraine's economy is shattered by the war. And whilst Ukraine is not the wealthiest country in the European continent, the fact that Ukraine also has to deal with a war, which is expensive, does not help their economic situation, and as a result does not benefit this argument.

4.3.2 Presence of security benefits, security threat and economic threat frames

As mentioned before, the presence or absence of a frame was measured by a yes (1) or no (0) answer to the framing measures or questions, which were each related to their respective frames. De Vreese et al. (2011) considered a frame present when one of the framing measures was answered with yes. Therefore, a new variable was computed for each of the three frames: if (question 1 + question 2 + question 3) ≥ 1, then $x = 1$. This

resulted in three new variables, one for each frame, which each demonstrate the presence or absence of the frame. If $x = 1$, then that specific frame was considered present in that article. If $x = 0$, the frame was not present.

Figure 2 illustrates the presence of the three issue-specific frames in the news articles by pan-European news media on the Ukrainian membership of the EU. It is noticeable that the security benefits frame was the most dominant in all the pan-European news media reporting on the Ukrainian membership of the EU, appearing in just under 25% of all stories. The economic threat frame appeared in 8% of the news stories, and the security threat frame in a little more than 3% of the articles. These findings illustrate that the security benefits frame is, compared to the other investigated frames, relatively dominant in the researched news stories, with nearly one fourth of the stories being framed according to security benefits.

Figure 2: News framing of the Ukrainian membership of the EU

Percentage and absolute number of stories about Ukraine and the EU containing frame (total n=122).
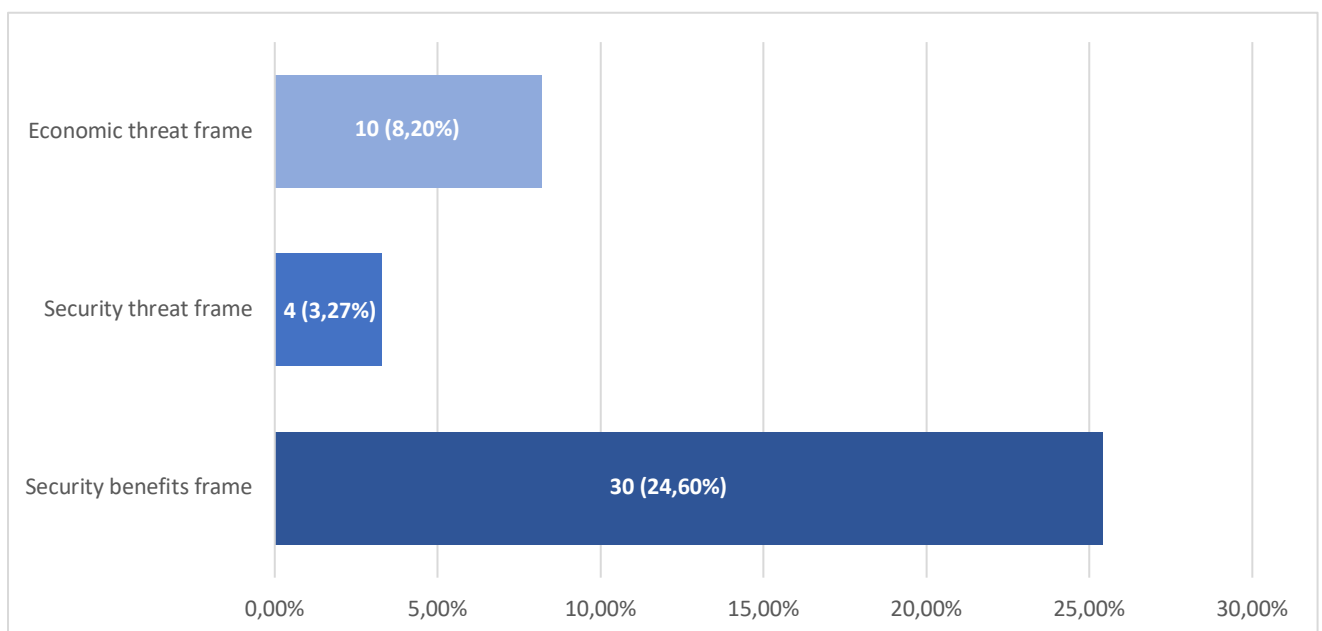
The framing measure of the security threat frame which was most answered with 'yes' is "Does the story mention that Ukrainian EU enlargement will go against the Soviet or Russian sphere of influence, or that Ukraine (in the EU) could form a buffer against Russia or similar metaphors?". This question was answered 'yes' to 27 times. In total, the security

benefits frame was used 30 times, illustrating that this idea that the Ukrainian membership of the EU would go against the Soviet or Russian sphere of influence, was an important narrative in the overall sample. For the security threat frame and the economic threat frame, the 'yes' answers were more or less equally spread across the framing measures.

This graph illustrates that there are differences in the usage of the frames within national media reporting on the Turkish membership of the EU vis-à-vis pan-European media reporting on the Ukrainian membership (De Vreese et al., 2011). As mentioned in the literature study, the way media frame a certain issue is shaped by the societal and political environment, and thus the context (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005; De Vreese et al., 2011). Whilst Turkey has been a candidate since 1987, Ukraine has been a candidate Member State since June 2022. As illustrated before, not only the time frame is different. The two countries have great political, social, and contextual differences. Ukraine is a country which has been illegally attacked by Russia, a geopolitically large and powerful country. Ukraine is seeking help and support from the West, of which the EU membership is a part. As illustrated before, Anghel and Džankić (2023) emphasized that the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine as a candidate Member State is a mechanism to build security in a new geopolitical world. The membership of the EU is used here to build peace and bring stability across the EU borders in wartime (Anghel & Džankić, 2023). Further, Ukraine and Turkey follow different paths towards EU membership, and therefore are also differently framed by the media. Whilst the coverage of Turkey's membership in national news media is steered to be more negative or on the 'threat' side, the coverage of the Ukrainian membership is dominantly framed in terms of benefits due to that specific war context.

4.3.3 Time-sensitive frames

As the articles are written to report on certain events in Ukraine's path towards the EU membership, in some months more articles were written than in others (Figure 3). Figure 4 illustrates the news framing of the Ukrainian membership of the EU throughout time, per month. The graph contains three additional variables which capture the proportion of news articles containing a specific frame per month. In other words, for each month,

the count of articles containing, for instance, the security benefits frame was divided by the total number of articles in that month. As a result, each frame was assigned a value between 0 and 1 for every month, indicating the extent to which the specific frame is present in the sample for that particular month. First, we will look at the use of the frames over time from a broader perspective, then we will look at the peaks and troughs of each frame in detail.

Figure 4 shows that in 2022, the security benefits frame was more or less dominant. Therefore, in this period, we can speak of a one-sided information flow, as there is overall more emphasis on the positive aspects of the EU enlargement with Ukraine, emphasizing that it would benefit the security situation of the Union (Zaller, 1992; De Vreese et al., 2011). However, it is not a strict one-sided information flow, as the economic threat frame occasionally resurfaces and challenges this dominance of the security benefits frame. Both Figure 3 and Figure 4 illustrate that between August 2022 and December 2022, almost no articles were found on the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine as there were no relevant updates to be given on the subject, which is why the lines are all at zero during these months. One year after the invasion of Ukraine, however, we can see that both the security benefits frame and the economic threat frame were equally present. In the literature review, it was established that when both positive and negative frames are present, they rule one another out, and the effect on public opinion of the EU enlargement is rather minimal (de Vreese et al., 2011). When the news is rather inconsistent and there are both positive and negative directional biases, we can talk about a two-sided information flow (Zaller, 1992; De Vreese et al., 2011).

Additionally, it is important to note that negative media frames have a greater impact and stronger effect on public opinion than positive frames, which is why we can assume that the economic threat and security threat frame carry more weight than the security benefits frame (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; De Vreese et al., 2011). Further, Zaller (1992) stated that the effect on public opinion depends on the stability of the frame throughout time. This is not the case for the security threat frame. However, apart from the drop between September 2022 and December 2022, in which there was no reporting on the subject, the security benefits frame and the economic threat frame are both

relatively stable throughout the months. Nevertheless, the graph illustrates that there are certain peaks and troughs, which will be explained in detail per frame in the next part.

Figure 3: Number of articles on EU enlargement with Ukraine per month (total n=122)
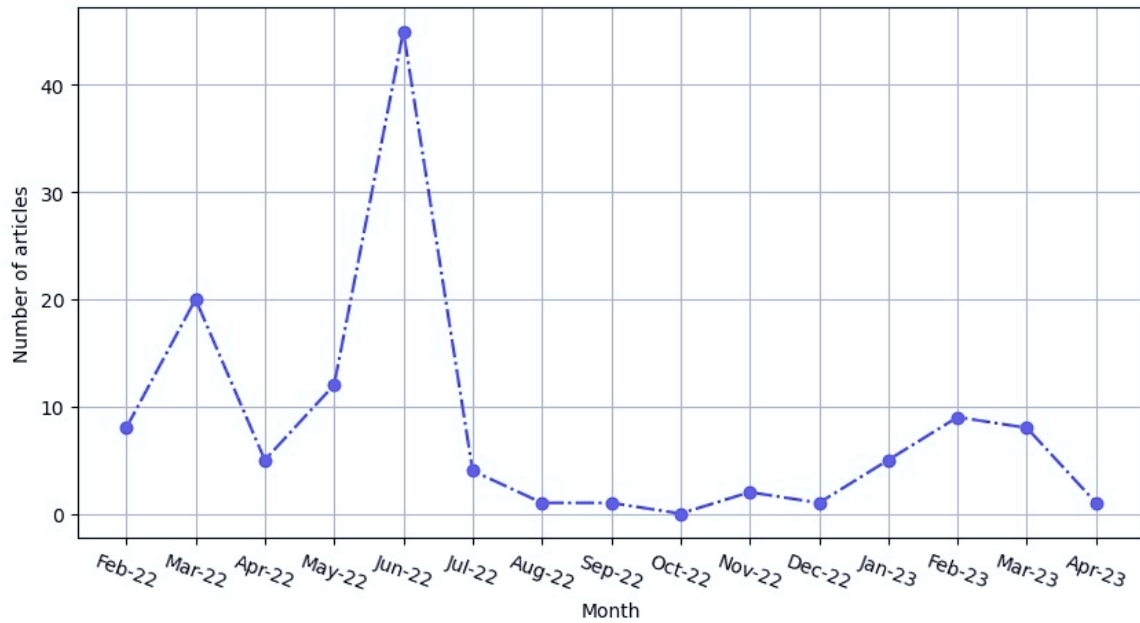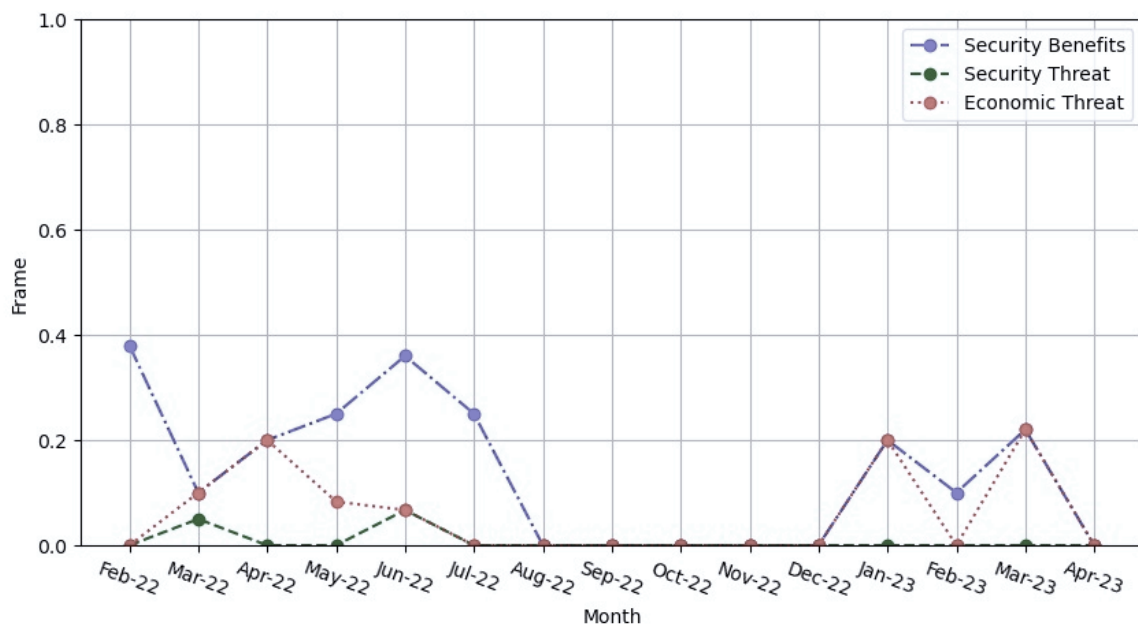

Figure 4: News framing of the Ukrainian membership of the EU per month

Fraction of news articles containing frame per month (total n=122)

The security benefits frame was, in general, more present than the other frames. The frame had two clear peaks: in February 2022 and in June 2022. In February 2022, Russia had officially illegally attacked Ukraine and a couple of days later Ukraine officially made a bid to join the European Union. In February, in three out of eight articles about the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine, the solution to the threat coming from Russia was framed to be the Ukrainian membership of the EU. In these articles, it is mentioned that it would be beneficial for the EU to expand, as it would otherwise have consequences, and not only for Ukraine. The narrative is brought forward that having Ukraine as a member of the EU would benefit the union, as it would go against the Russian sphere of influence. Euractiv published an article on the day of the invasion voicing this concern:

> *"If the EU doesn't expand, someone else will, emphasised Jansa and Morawiecki, in an obvious allusion to Russia's expansive policy." (Euractiv, 24 February 2022)*

In June, we can observe another peak of the security benefits frame. In that month, a lot of articles were written about the enlargement of the EU, as the European Commission formally accepted Ukraine's bid to join the EU and Ukraine was officially made a candidate Member State (see Figure 3). Out of 45 researched articles in June, 16 articles used the security benefits frame. Another article by Euractiv illustrates how the membership of Ukraine to the EU is also in the EU's best security interest:

> *"The EU's goal is to "avoid any Russian victory", he said, adding: "Our support is legitimate. If Europe said, 'Go ahead, Mr Putin's Russia can do what it wants,' it would be dangerous for our security."" (Euractiv, 23 May 2022)*

Further, in an article by Euronews, Ukraine's path towards the EU was also for instance described as *"a response to Russia's attempt to reinstate its sphere of influence"* (Euronews, 29 June 2022). Zelenskyy was quoted in the article, and he calls it *"the biggest step towards strengthening Europe that could be taken right now, in our time and in such difficult conditions, when the Russian war is testing our ability to preserve freedom and unity"* (Euronews, 29 June 2022).

In January, March and February of 2023, there was another increase in the proportion of articles using the security benefits frame. This is by great possibility because of the one-year anniversary of the war at the end of February. Further, in the spring of 2023, a progress assessment would be published in which the EU evaluates the progress Ukraine has made with their legislative and constitutive changes to join the EU. The articles during that period of time were mostly articles re-evaluating the candidate membership of Ukraine and had titles such as *"What would actually happen if Ukraine joined the EU?"* and *"Ukraine confident of positive EU progress assessment in spring"*. In that period of three months, 14% of the articles, in absolute terms 4 out of 28 articles, were framed according to the security benefits frame.

Security threat frame

The security threat frame was, as mentioned before, only limitedly present in the articles on the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine. Concretely, the security threat frame was used four times. Interestingly, this was the case once in March and three times in June. We can explain the concentration of these frames in June by the fact that Ukraine's bid to join the union was then taken seriously, and Ukraine was from then on officially a candidate Member State. Whilst in February, the idea of Ukraine joining the EU was rather far away and not concrete yet, in June a first big step was taken towards the actual joining of Ukraine. This first big step came at a high pace, as the EU had never before granted a country the candidate status so quickly after the official request to join (Anghel & Džankić, 2023). As a result, some concerns were raised on how Russia would react to that. An article by Politico illustrates this:

> *"The designation of candidate status for Ukraine, a country actively at war, occupied in many areas by Russian forces, and at grave risk of losing wide swaths of territory, represented a remarkable risk for the EU"* (Politico, 24 June 2022).

Figure 4 shows that after this, no more concerns were raised in the articles of the sample on how Ukraine's membership to the EU would be a threat to the security of the Union and its citizens. This, possibly because the biggest potential threat to the security of the union, specifically the actual accession of Ukraine, is likely distant in the future due to the time required for candidate countries to prepare for accession, usually taking at least 10 years.

Figure 4 further illustrates that the economic threat frame was most used between February 2022 and June 2022, between the invasion of Ukraine, its bid to join the EU and the reception of the EU candidate status. In several articles, Ukraine's economic weakness was addressed, implying that it would be a threat to the European economy and would take large amounts of the EU budget, especially because its economy is now war-shattered as well. An article by Politico illustrates this frame:

> *"Ukraine's economic weakness would also position it to receive a relatively large portion of EU budget money" (Politico, 15 June 2022).*

The concerns around the economic consequences of the Ukrainian membership resurfaced, just like the security benefits frame, one year after Russia invaded Ukraine. As the war continues, Ukraine's economy keeps on suffering. Euronews published an article emphasizing that *"money also matters. Even before the war ground its economy to dust, Ukraine was one of the poorest countries in Europe"* (Euronews, 21 March 2023). Furthermore, it is noticeable in the articles that concerns had risen around the EU's earlier decision to abolish the quota on Ukrainian grain (Politico, 31 January 2023; Euractiv, 22 March 2023; Politico, 19 April 2023). This decision was made to help Ukraine export its grain to Europe and to the rest of the world, in response to the ongoing war. However, as Ukraine's grain is cheaper than the grain of its neighbouring countries, and as there were logistic shortcomings to export the grain outside Ukraine's neighbouring countries, these countries had to lower their prices significantly to compete with Ukraine's cheap grain (Fortuna, 2023; Zamfir, 2023). More and more protests occurred in the EU neighbouring countries of Ukraine, such as Poland and Romania, to protest against this initiative (Zamfir, 2023). Ukraine is a large agricultural country, and as it already had repercussions for farmers in the EU, some feared the economic consequences once Ukraine would be a full member of the EU. In another article, Politico addressed the agricultural concerns:

> *"Ukraine's status as a major agricultural producer is a key concern for several EU countries when it comes to Ukraine's long-term bid to join the union, given the implications this would have for the Common Agricultural Policy, which comprises a huge chunk of the EU budget" (Politico, 19 April 2023).*

Whilst there was, in general, more reporting around the three peaks, it is still noticeable how the security threat frame was used at the beginning of the time frame, and that the security benefits and economic threat frame are throughout the time present. The fact that these frames are sensitive to time, and thus context, once again confirms the fact that frames are shaped by the political, social, and economic environment, and that the contextual factors are crucial in the usage of frames (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005; De Vreese et al., 2011).

4.3.4 Strength of the frames

Importantly, not every frame was as strongly used in the articles. There were articles in which the frame was very strongly used, in which there was a continuous emphasis on the different devices of one frame. In contrast, articles also used frames to a lesser extent, for instance using only one element of the frame. We assume that a frame was strongly present when more than one framing measure was answered with 'yes', meaning that the article embodied different aspects of the frame.

If the security benefits frame was strongly present, that would mean that the article presumed that the Ukrainian membership of the EU would be an important contribution to the internal and external security of the union, with a specific focus on the geopolitical security benefits. Such articles mentioned, for instance, that membership can lead to more democratization of the region, as well as make the EU a stronger geopolitical power. Out of 30 articles containing the security benefits frame, 9 articles strongly embodied the frame, as more than one framing measure was answered positively. An ideal example of this can be found in an article by Politico:

> *"Other countries, including Germany, Italy and Central European members, have argued that enlargement is a geopolitical imperative. They note that it encourages would-be members in the EU's neighbourhood to become more democratic. Excluding these countries from membership, they say, risks expanding the influence of rival powers such as Russia."*
> *(Politico, 18 June 2022)*

If the security threat frame was strongly present, the article suggests that having Ukraine as a member of the EU would pose a threat to the security situation in the EU, as it can

lead to further escalation and would harm the relationship between Russia and the EU. This was the case in one article, by Politico:

> *"Dutch diplomats did not deny their country's stance but insisted that Germany and other countries shared their position as well as the Netherlands' view that any reference to Article 49 and formal membership for Ukraine would further provoke Russian President Vladimir Putin. [...] "The West IS behaving like a bandit." He said that NATO, the EU, and U.S. should stop escalating the fight with Russia and "accept neutrality" for Ukraine. [...] And Putin has stated repeatedly that his invasion was based heavily on Ukraine's westward trajectory." (Politico, 10 March 2022)*

If there was a high presence of the economic threat frame, the article focused on the negative effects of the enlargement on the EU job market and European welfare system, as Ukraine is a poor country and would take a lot of the EU funds away from other countries. This was the case in 3 out of 10 articles using the economic threat frame, and can be illustrated by an article by Euronews:

> *"Money also matters. Even before the war ground its economy to dust, Ukraine was one of the poorest countries in Europe. It had a GDP per capita of $4,800 (€4451) in 2021 – more than ten times less than advanced European economies such as the UK, France, and Germany. According to Jolyon Howorth, a professor of European politics, integrating such a battered and bruised country would cost a "horrendous amount". It could invariably strain EU finances, possibly diverting funds away from poorer member states, such as Poland, Greece, Hungary and Romania, all net beneficiaries in 2022. [...] Any mass influx of Ukrainian workers runs the risk of creating a possible political backlash in existing member states – irrespective of their economic contribution." (Euronews, 21 March 2023)*

4.3.5 Overlapping frames

It is important to note that frames are not mutually exclusive. Different frames can be found in the same article, therefore offering different perspectives and approaches to the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine. This is noticeable in the researched sample. Whilst some frames were relatively more present than others, it is sometimes the case that more than one frame was present in one article.

In none of the articles all three frames were present. Table 4 illustrates how many articles contained two frames and shows which frames are combined in those articles. The

economic threat frame and the security benefits frame were most used together in the articles. Half of the time the economic threat frame was used in an article, it was combined with the security benefits frame. This was, for instance, the case in an article by Politico, in which is said that not having Ukraine in the EU would *"also further inflame Russian President Vladimir Putin's fantasies about reclaiming a sphere of influence resembling that of the Soviet Union and its superpower status during the Cold War"* and on the other hand the concern that *"Ukraine's economic weakness would also position it to receive a relatively large portion of EU budget money"* (Politico, 15 June 2022). It is, therefore, remarkable that when the economic threat frame is used, it is also fairly often used together with the security benefits frame, giving a rather balanced view of the situation in those articles. In these articles, the EU membership of Ukraine is framed as a must for security, however, it is also emphasized that this would bring along economic repercussions.

Table 4: Crosstabulation of the number of articles containing two frames

Frames	Security benefits	Security threat	Economic threat
Security benefits	30	1	5
Security threat	1	4	1
Economic threat	5	1	10

The security threat and economic threat frames were combined in one article, discussing among other things how the EU would be absorbing *"one of the largest, poorest, and most brutally contested territories in Europe"* (EUobserver, 17 June 2022). This article emphasizes the negative aspects of the Ukrainian membership of the EU, across the security and economic dimensions. Further, the security benefits and security threat frames were also combined in one article. Politico published an article saying that giving the candidate status to *"Ukraine, a country actively at war, occupied in many areas by Russian forces, and at grave risk of losing wide swaths of territory, represented a remarkable risk for the EU — itself a self-proclaimed peace project — and also a sharp rebuttal to the Kremlin's effort to recreate the Soviet sphere of influence"*, combining both frames in one sentence, balancing both positive and negative arguments across the security dimension (Politico, 24 June 2022).

4.3.6 Importance of symbolism

In the articles, there was a lot of emphasis on the symbolism of Ukraine's candidate status. Instead of arguing for or against the membership of Ukraine in the EU with economic- or politics-based arguments, it was often mentioned what the symbolic importance is of this first step. Therefore, as it was quite prominent, it is important to mention this as well for contextual purposes, and possibly as an explanation as to why there are many articles not discussing the benefits or threats of Ukraine entering the EU. Euronews published an article in which none of the five frames were recognized, however, it does discuss the importance of symbolism in the accession of Ukraine to the EU:

> *""This will only be the beginning of a long process because any accession to the European Union is a very long process and Ukraine, unfortunately with this war, with the restrictions, and the situation in the Donbas and Crimea [membership is unlikely]," Guetta said. But we have to deliver this political and symbolic signal to the Ukrainian people because symbolism is very, very important in politics."(Euronews, 1 March 2022)*

Rather than purely looking at the benefits or threat the Ukrainian membership would be for the EU and its citizens, various articles illustrated that this first step, which was taken in June 2022, is in the first place framed as a move of solidarity:

> *"But EU leaders have moved with record speed, at least in the initial stages of Ukraine's bid for membership — partly as an effort to show solidarity in the face of Russia's brutal war." (Politico, 1 July 2022)*

4.4 Differences between pan-European news media

Figure 5 illustrates the number of times a frame was used in an article by each of the pan-European news media. The graph additionally shows in how much percent of the news stories the frames were present. It is important to note, again, that the number of researched articles differs from news medium to news medium. EUobserver only had 14 news stories which could be researched, whilst Euractiv had 48 articles in total. Therefore, these results and this graph should be interpreted with care.

Figure 5 illustrates how the use of frames is similar in all pan-European news media. The security benefits frame, for instance, was used by all of the news media to a similar extent. EUobserver used the security benefits frame five times, which accounts for 33,3% of their

news stories. Euronews used it 8 times, good for 30,8% of their stories. Politico used the frame 8 times, which accounts for 22,8% of their news articles. Euractiv used it 9 times, and with a sample of 48 articles, that accounts for 18,8% of their articles. In all pan-European news media, the security benefits frame was the most dominant.

The economic threat frame was also more or less equally present in all the pan-European news media. EUobserver had one story containing the economic threat frame. Euronews had four stories using the frame, which is 15.6% of their articles. Politico used the frame in three articles, which is 8.6% of their stories. Euractiv used the frame twice, which is 4.2% of their news stories.

In contrast, the security threat frame was completely absent in the news landscape of Euronews and Euractiv. The security threat frame was present in two news stories of EUobserver (13,3%) and Politico (5,7%), the two pan-European news media which are not supported or funded by the European Commission. The fact that Euractiv and Euronews did not use the security threat frame is especially remarkable. Whilst each of the pan-European media claim to be independent of outside influences, Euractiv and Euronews specifically claim to bring the European or Brussels perspective forward. The Brussels perspective, that of the European Commission, is that the enlargement of the EU is one of their core principles, and that the EU needs to widen its influence. Further, especially in the current geopolitical sphere, the EU sees the enlargement of the EU as an opportunity to guarantee its own security, not as a threat (Anghel & Džankić, 2023).

Figure 5: news frames used by pan-European media.

Number of stories containing frame per news medium ($n_{EUobserver}$= 14, $n_{Euronews}$= 26, $n_{Politico}$= 34, $n_{Euractiv}$= 48), with the respective percentages of the news medium containing frame
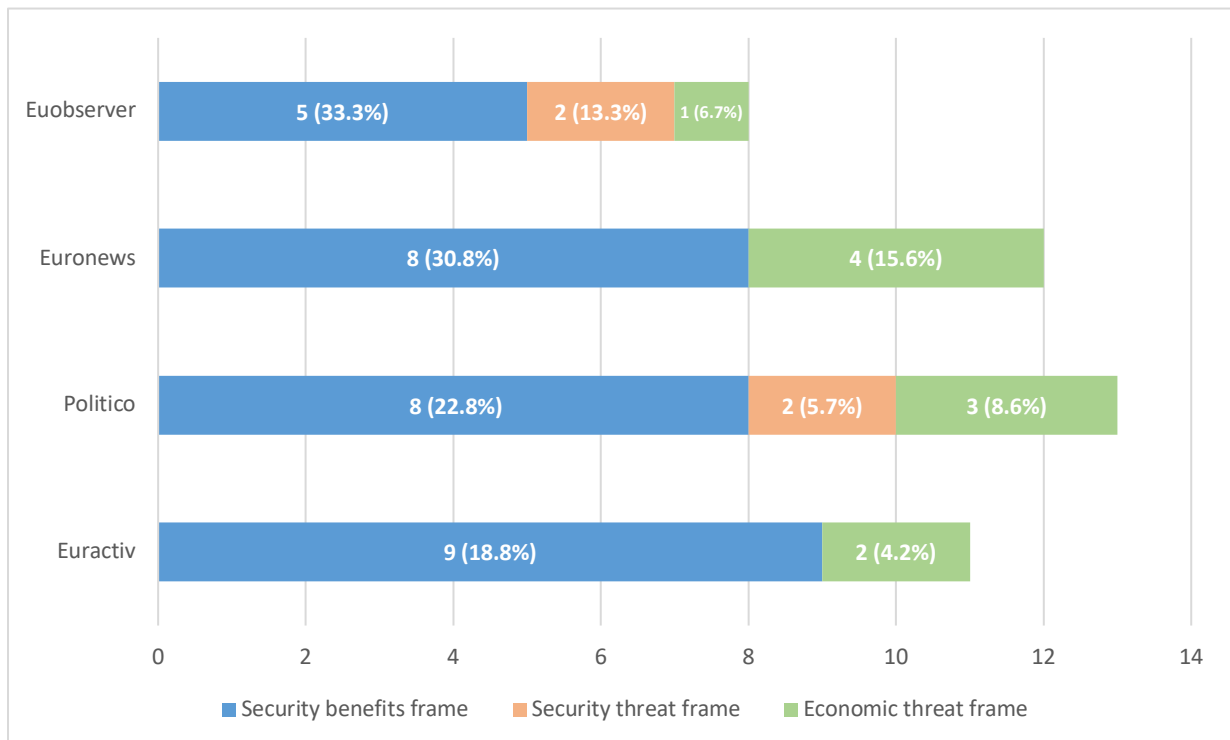
To answer the second research question, a chi-square test of independence was performed, to evaluate the relationship between two categorical variables: the pan-European news media and each of the frames (see Appendix A).

The chi-square test illustrated that the relationship between the news media and the security benefits frame was not significant (X^2 (3, N = 122) = 2.37, $p > .05$). The conditions to conduct a chi-square test of independence were met, as the minimum expected count was 3.44 and 12.5% of the cells have an expected count of less than five.

The relationship between the news media and the security threat frame or the economic threat frame could not be interpreted with a chi-square test, as the conditions were not met: the minimum expected count was less than 1 and more than 20% of the cells had an expected count of less than five. This, because of the fact that these frames were less present in the sample than the security benefits frame. When these instances are then further split up among pan-European media, the cells are too small to interpret.

Therefore, a Fisher's exact test was executed to analyse the association between the four pan-European news media and each of the frames separately (see Appendix A). It is typically used with smaller sample sizes and when the conditions of the chi-square test are not met, as in this case. The Fisher's exact test illustrated that there is no significant association between the pan-European media and the economic threat frame (p = [.358]) (see Appendix A). Therefore, there is no significant difference between the media in their usage of the economic threat frame. However, the Fisher's exact test indicated that there is a significant association between the pan-European media and the security threat frame (p = [.025]). In other words, the test provides evidence of the fact that the pan-European media and the security threat frame are related in some way. The Cramer's V coefficient was consequently calculated to measure the strength of the association between the pan-European news media and the security threat frame (see Appendix A). The coefficient typically varies between 0 and 1. A Cramer's V with a value close to 0 means that there is no association, a value around .1 means that there is a weak association, .3 a moderate association and .5 a strong association. In this case, the Cramer's V was .265, suggesting a rather moderate association between the two variables.

Therefore, the analysis showed a moderate significant difference in how pan-European media used the security threat frame. Figure 5 illustrates that the frame was used twice by each Politico and EUobserver. The frame was not used by Euractiv or Euronews, which are unlike Politico and EUobserver the two pan-European news media which are heavily subsidized by the European Commission. One could therefore say that the security threat frame is not used by those pan-European media whose existence partially depends on the EU, the institution which is pro a Ukrainian membership of the EU and would not portray the enlargement of the EU as a threat to their own security, particularly given the current geopolitical environment (Anghel & Džankić, 2023). However, all of the pan-European news media assert their independence from outside influences. Nevertheless, Euractiv and Euronews particularly emphasize that they present the perspective from Brussels or Europe. However, when looking at these results from a broader perspective, the security threat frame was in total only present in 4 out of 122 news stories, which is 3.2% of the total sample. This demonstrates that the frame is not dominantly present in any of the pan-European news media, and that the results should be interpreted with caution.

5. Conclusion

The European public sphere is based on the idea of cosmopolitan identities and transnational public deliberation, and goes beyond national borders (Heikkilä & Kunelius, 2006; Bärenreuter et al., 2009). Normatively, it can be considered a means to increase the legitimacy and democratization of the EU (Eriksen, 2005; Bärenreuter et al., 2009). News media have always had a significant role in sustaining, shaping, and structuring the public spheres (Heinderyckx, 2015). However, the existence of a European public sphere is often contested, which is possibly linked to the absence of successful pan-European media, targeting European citizens across national borders and reporting on EU issues (De Vreese, 2003; Eriksen, 2005; Baisnée, 2007; De Vreese, 2007b; Heinderyckx, 2015). Pan-European news media have the potential to create a collective identity and public debate among EU citizens, possibly contributing to a European public sphere (Eriksen, 2005; Baisnée, 2007; Firmstone, 2008; Heinderyckx, 2015).

Whilst pan-European media face various challenges limiting their wide-ranging success, the study of the framing by these media is of importance for various reasons. First, their audience is rather small, but consists of opinion leaders, policy -and decision-makers and therefore, impactful people. Furthermore, with the growing use and acceptance of transnational media as valuable sources of information, these media gradually gain the ability to influence people's perceptions of certain issues, events, and communities, and therefore, also of the EU (Higgins Joyce, 2011). Previous research on pan-European media focused on their history, strength, and ability to contribute to the public sphere. However, there has not been much research about how pan-European media frame the news about EU affairs, specifically EU enlargement. News frames of EU enlargement can have a significant influence on people's perceptions and opinions of the EU as an organization, as enlargement is one of the EU's core goals to widen and expand its influence (Corbu et al., 2015). Further, researching such frames can thus help us interpret political, societal, and economic concerns and the dominant way of thinking in our society about EU enlargement (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005).

Previous research on news framing on EU enlargement mostly focused on the Turkish membership of the EU, and often researched the rather traditional, national news media. As frames are bound to context, the social, political, and economic environment, it is interesting and crucial to research how pan-European media frame news on the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine, which applied for EU membership shortly after it was illegally invaded by Russia and has been a candidate Member State since June 2022. Based on a comprehensive literature review and a gap in the academic literature, this thesis sought to answer two main research questions:

(1) How do pan-European news media frame news on the enlargement of the European Union with Ukraine?

    a. Does the framing of the enlargement of the European Union with Ukraine change over time?

(2) What are the main differences and similarities between Politico Europe, Euractiv, Euronews and EUobserver in how they frame EU enlargement with Ukraine?

To answer these research questions, we analysed the prevalence of five previously identified news frames by De Vreese, Boomgaarden, and Semetko (2011), who researched the framing of the Turkish membership of the EU in national media. Concretely, we researched the presence of the security benefits frame, economic benefits frame, security threat frame, economic threat frame, and cultural threat frame. 122 news articles were gathered through census sampling and were consequently analysed quantitatively. Additionally, the quantitative findings were explained and contextualised by quotes and qualitative findings. The articles are specifically news stories by four pan-European media news media: Politico, Euractiv, Euronews and EUobserver. These pan-European media each have a relatively large reach and are well-established within the media market.

This study illustrates that not all frames were present in the articles covering the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine. In contrast to the research by De Vreese et al. (2011) which studied the Turkish EU membership, the cultural threat and economic benefits frame were not present in the researched sample. The cultural threat frame was completely absent, most likely because there are fewer religious differences between Western Europe and Ukraine, compared to the religious differences between Turkey and Europe. Further, Ukraine mostly identified itself as inherently European, and they were

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called "one of us" several times in the researched articles (Politico, 28 February 2022; Euronews, 19 May 2022). Ukraine's culture, norms and values were framed as European, and they contrast themselves with an "anti-European force" (Politico, 2 February 2023). The economic benefits frame was also not significantly present. Ukraine's economy is shattered by the war. And whilst Ukraine is not the wealthiest country in the European continent, the fact that the country also has to deal with an expensive war does not help the economic benefits argument.

The results illustrate that pan-European media report on Ukraine's membership of the EU with a dominant emphasis on the security benefits. Ukraine applied for membership less than a week after it was illegally attacked by Russia, a geopolitically large and powerful country. Ukraine is seeking help and support from the West, and EU membership, or at least the EU candidacy of Ukraine, is part of the solution according to this frame. The way pan-European media frame EU enlargement also supports the statements by Anghel and Džankić (2023) to a certain extent, who stated that the EU enlargement process with Ukraine is currently used as a stability and security mechanism, rather than a process which would eventually absorb the country into the union. In contrast, the security threat frame was only used four times in the sample, of which three times in June, when Ukraine was officially granted the EU candidate status. This was the first concrete step towards the EU membership of Ukraine. When Ukraine's membership to the EU suddenly became more realistic than was generally assumed before, concerns were raised about the EU's security in a limited number of articles. Further, the analysis shows that the economic threat was also present in the researched articles, to a lesser extent however than the security benefits frame. In those articles, it was argued that the EU membership of Ukraine would be disadvantageous to the EU, because it is a poor, agricultural country, currently having a war-shattered economy and suffering huge economic losses. In conclusion, the framing of the Ukrainian membership of the EU is different from the framing of the Turkish membership in many aspects. The study by De Vreese et al. (2011) found that all frames were used by the traditional news media and the cultural threat frame was the most dominant frame in the articles they researched, which is not the case in this study. We can thus confirm that contextual factors influence the use of news frames, and that they are shaped by the political, social, and economic environment. As the enlargement

process differs from country to country, the framing thereof in pan-European media does as well.

Moreover, the results illustrate that frames are not mutually exclusive, and multiple frames can be present in one article. There was no article in the sample combining all three of the remaining frames. Out of all possible combinations, the articles combined the economic threat frame and the security benefits frame the most. Half of the time the economic threat frame was used in an article, it was combined with the security benefits frame. Such articles provided a rather balanced view on the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine, with both positive and negative arguments across the security and economic dimensions. Nevertheless, in general, the articles mostly embodied only one frame. Further, the extent to which the frame was embodied, and therefore the strength of the frame, also differed from article to article. The security benefits frame was most strongly present in the sample, as several articles embodied different aspects of the frame.

Further, this study demonstrates that there were more articles published around certain events, such as in June 2022, when the EU officially granted the candidate status to Ukraine. It is noticeable how the security threat frame was mostly used in June 2022, and that the security benefits and economic threat frame were present throughout the time, with some clear peaks around crucial events. The fact that these frames are sensitive to time, and thus context, once again confirms the fact that frames are shaped by the political, social, and economic environment, and that the contextual factors are crucial in the research of frames (Callaghan & Schnell, 2005; De Vreese et al., 2005; De Vreese et al., 2011). Zaller (1992) stated that the effect on public opinion depends on the stability of the frame throughout time. The less stable and consistent a frame is throughout time, the less effect it will have on the audience. In contrast to the security threat frame, the use of the security benefits frame and the economic threat frame is relatively stable throughout the months, indicating that their effect on public opinion would be larger.

Moreover, as the security benefits frame was overall dominant in 2022, we can to a certain extent speak of a one-sided information flow (Zaller, 1992; De Vreese et al., 2011). In 2022, there was more emphasis on the positive aspects of the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine, as it would benefit the security situation of the Union. This means that one can

expect more support from the public as there is a clear emphasis on the positive aspects of the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine (Zaller, 1992). However, it is not a strict one-sided information flow, as the economic threat frame also slightly challenged this dominance of the security benefits frame. One year after the invasion of Ukraine, we can see that both the security benefits frame and the economic threat frame were equally present. In the literature review, it was established that when both positive and negative frames are present, they rule one another out, and the effect on public opinion of EU enlargement is rather minimal (de Vreese et al., 2011). We can speak of a two-sided information flow when the news is quite contradictory and there are both positive and negative directional biases, as is the case in this time period (Zaller, 1992; De Vreese et al., 2011). Furthermore, negative media frames have a greater impact and stronger effect on public opinion than positive frames, which leads us to believe that the impact of the "threat" frame weighs more on public opinion in that period (De Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2003; De Vreese et al., 2011).

To answer the second main research question of this thesis, several tests were executed to test the association between the pan-European news media and the use of frames. The analysis shows that the use of frames was relatively consistent across the researched pan-European news media. The research illustrates that the media had a similar approach in how they framed the Ukrainian membership of the EU. Nevertheless, the analysis found a moderate significant difference between the pan-European media in the use of the security threat frame. This frame was used four times in total, and only by Politico and EUobserver. As there were only four articles containing the frame, the results should be interpreted with some care. Nevertheless, it is remarkable that the two pan-European news media which did not use the security threat frame once are heavily subsidized by the European Commission to this day and emphasize that they report from the "Brussels perspective". From a Brussels perspective, EU enlargement can be seen as a means to increase security and stability in the region (Anghel & Džankić, 2023). A Brussels perspective would therefore not describe EU enlargement as a threat to the security of the union.

Next to these frames, the analysis illustrates that there is often an emphasis on the symbolism of the candidacy of Ukraine. The articles demonstrated that this first step

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towards EU membership for Ukraine is in the first place framed as a move of unity and symbolism, rather than focusing solely on the benefits or threat that the Ukrainian membership could be for the EU and its citizens.

5.1 Strengths, limitations, and suggestions for future research

In general, this research contributed to the academic literature and research on pan-European news media, by bringing new perspectives and further consistently applying previously defined frames. Previous literature on pan-European media mainly consisted of the debate whether a European public sphere exists or not, and to what extent these pan-European media could contribute to the creation of a public sphere (Eriksen, 2005; Baisnée, 2007; Brüggemann & Schulz-Forberg, 2009; Higgins Joyce, 2011; Heinderyckx, 2015). Furthermore, there is literature discussing the transnational and pan-European media's growth, limits and advantages (Chalaby, 2002; Firmstone, 2008; Varga, 2011). However, no other research compared these four pan-European media, which are each established in the pan-European media market, reporting on EU affairs, regarding the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine. This, even though the framing of such events can possibly impact people's perceptions of the EU and its enlargement (Corbu et al., 2015). Furthermore, the framing of the EU and EU enlargement was researched before, however, the framing of the enlargement of the EU was only researched within traditional, national media (Norris, 2000; Schuck & De Vreese, 2006; Lecheler & De Vreese, 2010; De Vreese et al. 2011). This, disregarding the upcoming pan-European media, which have an influential impactful audience, existing of policymakers and opinion leaders. Further, as Ukraine has only been a candidate Member State since June 2022, there is little to no research on its future membership of the EU, let alone a frame analysis researching how it is framed in pan-European news media. Nevertheless, that also makes this research highly relevant, as it applies previously identified concepts and frameworks to new, never before researched contexts. Therefore, this research is novel in many aspects, contributing to the academic literature on pan-European media, frame analysis, and EU enlargement.

The 122 articles of the study were selected through census sampling, including all articles of the relevant research period and about EU enlargement with Ukraine. It is important

to emphasize that the sample of this research was rather limited. As Ukraine is only at the start of its accession process, the sample of articles cannot be as big as with a candidate Member State like Turkey, which has been a candidate for much longer. Therefore, this research should be replicated or extended in the future, when Ukraine has taken additional steps in its road towards its membership of the EU. However, as this research is based on census sampling, it does give a holistic view of the frames used in the reporting by pan-European media.

Further, in this thesis, the intercoder reliability was obtained by the researcher coding a subsample twice, with a certain timespan in between the two coding periods. Whilst the timespan between the coding of the subsample and the coding of the experimental subsample was large enough, it is still the same researcher doing the coding. Thus, there is a certain bias in place, as every person is by default biased in some way, no matter how objective the methods are. Therefore, for future research, different researchers should also code the variables, to obtain an even more reliable result.

By working deductively, this thesis was able to replicate earlier research, add new insights, and to a certain extent compare the cases of Turkey and Ukraine. It also allowed for a consistent manner of research. However, working deductively also brings limitations to this research. By researching the presence of existing frames, other frames might be overlooked. The research starts with a narrowed perspective when researching existing frames. It is inflexible, especially compared to an inductive approach, to identify new, emerging frames (Matthes & Kohring, 2008). This, especially because the frames coined by De Vreese et al. (2011) were created in a certain time and space, in a certain context and specifically about the Turkish enlargement of the EU. In this case, we researched the Ukrainian enlargement of the EU, a different country, in a completely different context: one of war and one of a changing geopolitical narrative. On the one hand is this an opportunity, as it allows for interesting, comparable results. On the other hand, the frames might not be perfectly suitable to fit Ukraine's case. As a result, two frames could not be used for further analyses, because of their absence, and many of the framing measures were limitedly found. Because of that, several tests, such as the "Cronbach's alpha", could not be conducted because many of the questions were answered with 'no'. There was too little variance and many constants, which made the dataset inconvenient to analyze. This

is also partly the result of the fact that this study worked with yes or no questions, and thus binary variables. Whilst this increases the intercoder reliability and ensures efficiency, it also led to several limits in the analysis of the data.

Furthermore, several questions did not cluster appropriately to their designated frames or were never answered with 'yes'. This demonstrated that those questions did not give any additional information on the frame, or that the questions were irrelevant in this specific case of the Ukrainian membership of the EU. Whilst this is an interesting conclusion as well, knowing that these framing measures did not cluster adequately and were thus irrelevant, it illustrates that our approach to measuring the existence of these frames is rather exploratory. For future research, it would therefore be interesting to inductively look for frames in news stories about the enlargement of the EU with Ukraine, as this research illustrated that it is framed differently than the enlargement with Turkey. There are different nuances and arguments raised in both cases. For instance, in articles about Ukraine's bid to join the EU, there is often an emphasis on the symbolism of the candidacy of Ukraine. This symbolism should be further researched inductively, in such a way that further substantiated conclusions can be formed about how these media report. Ukraine is a candidate Member State like no previous country, which is why more research is necessary.

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