



Media Framing of Refugees

Juxtaposing Ukrainian and African Refugees in the Wake of Russia-Ukraine Conflict¹

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Abstract:

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched a full-scale invasion of Ukraine. The resulting conflict has led to approximately 14,059 civilian casualties of which roughly 5,767 people have died and a further 8,292 got injured as of October 2022. Seven million people are internally displaced. Europe, as of October 2022, was faced with the largest and fastest refugee movement since the end of the Second World War. Five million Ukrainians have been forced to seek asylum in the neighbouring states, the majority of whom have fled to Poland. In this context, this study focuses on media framing of Ukraine and African refugees destined for Europe in international media: Al Jazeera English, ABC News, CBS News, France 24, TRT World, BBC News, Sky News, CNN, and DW. The media were selected because of their wide coverage, reach, as well as time dedicated to reporting on the issues of immigrants and refugees. The authors took a constructivist approach in which Framing and Agenda Setting theories provided a framework for identifying and explicating frames. Two dominant frames emerged in the analysis of 23 video clips that covered Ukrainian and African refugees: the human-interest and the security frames. The human-interest frame is commonly used in news and it essentially serves the purpose of portraying the emotional angle to the presentation of an issue. The Ukrainian refugee crisis contrasted with the African refugee crisis through the human-interest frame, the former was portrayed as victims of the barbaric acts by Russia led by a merciless tyrant with imperialist and expansionist objectives. The second frame – the Security Frame – applied mostly to African refugees fleeing to Europe. The selected media outlets covered African refugees fleeing to Europe especially through Spain, Turkey, Greece, Hungary, and Italy through the security lens compared to the Ukrainian refugees.

Keywords:

Media frames; Africans; refugees; human-interest; security frame; Ukraine.

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Introduction

On February 24, 2022, Russia launched an invasion of Ukraine, marking the start of one of the major wars in Europe since World War Two. As of September 2022, there were an estimated 7,283,716 Ukrainian refugees recorded across Europe (UNHCR Operational Data Portal, 2022). Ukraine's neighbouring states justifiably received the majority of these individuals. An estimated 1,194,642 million refugees and 1,412,425 million refugees were in Poland and Russia respectively, which are hosting the largest number of asylum seekers in the region. Other hosting states include Moldova (82,700), Romania (83,321), Slovakia (79,770), Hungary (25,800), and Belarus (9,820) (BBC News, 2022). The handling of refugees from Ukraine continues to shed light on the issue of Europe's migration policy, as the inequalities between the treatment of refugees resulting from the Ukraine-Russia crisis juxtaposed with the treatment of refugees from Syria and Africa, especially North Africa. Glaring differences in the reception of Ukrainian nationals fleeing Ukraine in comparison to foreign nationals fleeing Ukraine also emerged during this period.

According to Stanford's Immigration Policy Lab scholar, David Laitin, the rate at which Ukrainian refugees were fleeing Ukraine to the rest of Europe, was five times faster than the flow of refugees from Syria or North Africa. Despite this expedited rate, it was never expected that Ukrainian refugees would have to endure the same systemic failures in the European migration policy as their counterparts from Syria or North Africa, as witnessed in the 2014/2015 Refugee Crisis (De Witte, 2022). This is because, as the Ukraine-Russia crisis started, the European Union (EU) implemented the Temporary Protection Directive, which offered an expedited stay, residence, and work status for any Ukrainian citizens and eligible Ukrainian residents leaving Ukrainian (Fragomen, 2022). In contrast, the 2014/2015 refugees were afforded no such rights. For instance, they were not permitted to work until after their asylum applications were approved. This proved frustrating to the refugees as an increased application waiting time made it less likely for a person to secure a job (De Witte, 2022).

Secondly, when there was an influx of refugees from Syria and Africa into Europe during the 2014/2015 humanitarian crisis, the majority of them poured into Greece. Under the EU's Dublin Convention, it was expected that the first state to register an asylum seeker would both administer the application and provide housing (De Witte, 2022). Greece was largely unequipped to do so, thus, leading to a disorganized and desperate re-migration throughout Europe, with refugees under continued fear of being repatriated. Germany ended up taking responsibility for a significant number of refugees. Ukraine's neighbouring states on the other hand have taken initial responsibility for the Ukrainian refugees and working assiduously to register the incoming flow of people (Fragomen, 2022). Housing and ready entry into the European Labour Market are not the only benefits that have been afforded to the Ukrainian Refugees, the medical needs of these persons have also been addressed (NPR, 2022).

While the EU's Temporary Protection Directive is meant to ensure that asylum seekers have an easier time as they exit Ukraine, this treatment has not been universal. Before the directive



was agreed upon at the end of February 2022, reports of discrimination were documented as thousands of persons made their way out of Ukraine. Human Rights Watch highlighted that foreigners crossing borders out of Ukraine reported delays as they attempted to flee the war (Human Rights Watch, 2022). Many of those interviewed were foreign students, and a pattern of blocking or delaying foreigners from boarding trains and buses was noted, as well as the prioritization of Ukrainian women or children over foreign nationals. The treatment of African students and African long-term residents in Ukraine as they attempted to cross borders to safety drew international attention and resulted in a statement from the African Union (AU) (African Union, 2022). The statement outlined “that all people have the right to cross international borders during the conflict, and as such, should enjoy the same rights to cross to safety from the conflict in Ukraine, notwithstanding their nationality or racial identity” after which the AU concluded that it went against International Law to signal out any individuals.

Media Coverage of the Russia-Ukraine Crisis and Ukrainian Refugees in Europe

Media coverage of the Russia-Ukraine conflict has followed patterns and treatment similar to those of other major crises including the 2014 Ukraine crisis when Russia formally annexed Crimea. Major news outlets around the world have “embedded journalists in Ukraine to cover bombings and violence in hard-hit towns and cities across broadcast, digital, and print media” (Eddy & Fletcher, 2022, para. 1). Reporters, politicians, civilians, human rights organizations, and UN agencies also took to social networks such as Twitter, Facebook, TikTok, and Telegram to document the shocks of the war in real-time. The humanitarian crisis that unfolded in Ukraine, along with the scale of the Western response to Russia’s invasion, has had far-reaching political and economic effects.

However, unlike some of the media coverage of other crises (except the 2014 annexation of Crimea by Russia), media organizations, especially the Western media, were criticized by experts, analysts, and reporters alike as prejudiced, duplicitous, promoting their propaganda, and providing double standards compared to the coverage of invasions and wars in the Middle East and Africa. The use of phrases describing Ukrainians such as ‘middle class European’, ‘they are not like Iraq’, ‘Christian’, ‘blonde’, ‘civilized’, and ‘blue eyed’ had the implications that other conflicts in the post-World War Two were inconsequential and insignificant collocated with Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. *Al Jazeera* was forced to apologize for comments that Peter Dobbie, their journalist made on air when he described Ukrainians fleeing their country as ‘prosperous, middle-class people,’ ‘obviously’ not refugees fleeing the Middle East or North Africa: ‘They look like any European family that you'd live next door to’ (Pavlik, 2022). In yet another illustration of racism, Daniel Hannan, a journalist with *The Telegraph* (United Kingdom) was shocked to ‘discover’ that Ukrainian refugees resembled him using phrases like ‘seem so like us’ and ‘that is what makes it so shocking and that ‘Ukraine is a European country’ and ‘its people watch Netflix and have Instagram accounts, vote in free elections and read

uncensored newspapers. War is no longer something visited upon impoverished and remote populations' (Pavlik, 2022).

Research Questions

Media framing of conflicts especially major wars and attendant implications including the refugee crisis has a direct implication on how the general public, especially those entangled in the conflict, perceive the causes, consequences and importance of those conflicts. Media framing of such issues is manifested in the amount of media coverage dedicated to them and the phrases and words used to “describe the actors and events in that conflict. The type of framing employed determines whether the public will empathize with one of the sides involved or feel detached from events taking place far from them” (Evans, 2010, p.209). Indeed, audio-visuals shape people’s perceptions of the world and have the capacity to become political forces themselves. If news media are able to guide and shape public opinion through the framing present in news content, it is important to study the way stories about immigrants and refugees are presented to the public. In view of this conceptualization, media framing of refugees is critical in determining the political, social, and cultural perceptions of various ‘types’ of refugees regardless of circumstances. This study, therefore, sought to respond to the following two questions:

Research Question 1: What are the dominant media frames in the coverage of Ukrainian refugees following the Russia-Ukraine conflict in some of the world's leading television stations?

Research Question 2: How does the media coverage of Ukrainian refugees compare with African refugees seeking asylum in Europe in these media outlets?

Method

The broad objective of this study was to compare the dominant media frames in the media coverage of refugees as a result of the Russia-Ukraine crisis and those from Africa seeking asylum in Europe. Qualitative Content Analysis of news clips from select international media stations that have been covering the refugee crisis was conducted. Qualitative Content analysis is one of the most commonly used research methodologies in media and communication research. Wimmer and Dominick (2011) summarize the use of content analysis as a systematic, objective, quantitative overview of a body of news media content. A content analysis must systematically collect a sample of content for analysis from a larger population of content. All content in the sample selected must have an equal chance of being evaluated. According to Wimmer and Dominick (2011), the sampling process and analysis must be objective and free of the researcher’s personal biases. Therefore, in order to sufficiently respond to the research questions, a qualitative content analysis of news clips or



videos from Al Jazeera English, ABC News, CBS News, France 24, TRT World, BBC News, Sky News, CNN, and DW News was conducted.

Sample

23 news clips from the aforementioned leading television stations in the world were retrieved from online archives and analysed (media archives and YouTube). Some of the keywords and phrases used to mine these videos include European migrant crisis, 'Ukrainian refugees'; 'media coverage of Ukrainian refugees'; 'media coverage of African refugees'; 'African students leaving Ukraine'; 'Syrian refugees in Europe'; 'African refugees in Europe'; 'Refugees in the world'; 'how is Europe dealing with refugees?'; 'refugees in Europe'; 'African refugees in Morocco and Spain'; 'Ukrainian refugees in span, refugee crisis.' The researchers also visited the websites of these stations and obtained some of the videos.

The selection of these news videos was partly informed by their wide coverage, reach, as well as the time dedicated to reporting on the issues of refugees. The selection was also informed by the language of transmission (that is English), and the availability of these clips via online sources including the host stations' archives. It is also worth noting that all the identified television stations covered the Ukraine-Russia conflict and the ensuing refugee crisis and the African refugee crisis substantively. While other television stations not included in this analysis covered the above-mentioned topics of concern, their coverage was either not consistent or omitted one part of the analysis (either Ukrainian refugees or African refugees).

The time period of news clips or videos covering the Ukrainian refugee crisis was between February 2022, when the conflict began precipitating a refugee crisis and August 2022, at the time of this analysis. The news clips or videos covering the African refugee crisis stretch back five years – that is, 2018 - in order to obtain a sufficient number for comparison. Of note, there was a negligible number of new sources from these organizations covering African refugees between February 2022 and August 2022 thus making it difficult to make comparisons. Researchers are cognisant of various media biases in reporting certain news items including the refugee crisis across the world and the analysis was conducted with this and many other factors in consideration. The selection of the video data meets Lincoln and Guba (1985) proposed four criteria for evaluating interpretive research work: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Coding Procedure

This study used inductive analysis where the researchers reviewed the 23 videos after which codes emerged vis a vis the dominant narratives in the treatment of refugees in the two scenarios Ukraine refugees and African refugees seeking asylum in Europe. The inductive analysis process uses inductive reasoning, by which themes and categories emerge from the data through the researcher's careful examination and constant comparison (Patton, 2002). This approach enabled the researchers to make meaning from the video data and develop appropriate themes and findings for analysis.

Results

Presentation of Ukrainian Refugees in Broadcast Media

More than half of the videos in this study utilized words and phrases indicative of a human-interest frame. For instance, a number of media houses were quoted describing the fleeing Ukrainians as *people like us, educated, intelligent, and culturally close*. One of the presenters in Al Jazeera argued: *"...we are playing the latest pictures of people who are trying to get to trains out of Ukraine...what is compelling is just looking at them, the way they are dressed, these are prosperous middleclass people. These are not obvious refugees trying to get away from areas in the Middle East in a big state of war or North Africa. They look like any European family that you would live next door to."*

The portrayal of Ukrainian refugees as inimitably different from any other, particularly from Africa and the Middle East, is an effort to implicitly infer that they are unique. Another journalist from CBC News said: *"Now with the Russians marching in, it has changed the calculus entirely. Tens of thousands of people are trying to flee the city; there will be many more. People are hiding out in bomb shelters. But this isn't a place, with all due respect, like Iraq or Afghanistan that has seen conflict raging for decades. These are relatively civilized, relatively European – I have to choose those words carefully too – city where you would not expect that, or hope that is going to happen. So, it is partly human nature, but they are not in denial."* The portrayal of Ukraine as a western country that has been pierced by the barbaric assault of the Russians has been a running thread in the media's framing of the war.

In a news clip by France 24, Ukrainian refugees are shown arriving in Paris and being welcomed by Red Cross where a reception area has been specially opened for these Ukrainian refugees. A government official says, *"At this stage, we can deal with refugees arriving from Ukraine. We will welcome them with dignity and ensure that all families have somewhere to stay."* In Lisbon, Portugal, Angelo Neto, Head of the Ukraine Refugees Association added that *"...as an association, we are going to the system at all levels: psychological, educational, food and medical support so that they can start to integrate into the society here in Portugal."* The clip also shows a minor who has already been integrated into an elementary school and appears to be comfortable while another one shows refugees disembarking from a plane with their luggage and being received by humanitarian organizations and law enforcement agencies.

In a BBC News clip in the formative days of the war, a commentator says that he is furious that European people with blue eyes and blond hair are being killed every day. Here is an excerpt: *"It is really emotional maybe because I see European people with blue eyes and blond hair and children being killed every day with Putin's missiles..."* In yet another clip by BBC, a child, about 10 years is shown crying while trying to hide behind a canvas in cold weather. It also shows a group of Ukrainian refugees on the Polish border lining up for either registration or relief food. A reporter says that she cannot film inside the building because she respects the privacy of the 'exhausted' Ukrainian refugees: *"We have been here and, in many places,*



and the dynamics are continuously changing. And there are people milling around and a lot of people arrived by buses. They have just come from the border and they have been led to a warehouse...and we are not filming inside because we respect the people privacy. They are exhausted and tired...but inside there are rows and rows and rows of canvas where people can sleep.”

In an ABC newscast, an anchor says that *“more than half of the 660,000 people fleeing Ukraine are children. It is a very tough reality at the Ukraine border...you know you have mentioned a number of times that story has impacted you not as a journalist but as a dad. Am curious, you have been there for a while now and you are interacting with these families, with these kids and you think of your own kids. Have you heard talked with your kids about this?”* The journalist says that he is empathetic with the situation. He further states that Polish citizens are open to Ukrainians because they are human and should be embraced given the tragic circumstances back at home. A journalist in the same news clip further says, *“Each refugee is unique. They all have their own experiences and some have nothing when they come to this country while others have family and friends. We spoke to one woman...she is here with her two kids. Her husband is in Ukraine to fight. Think about this, a week and a half weeks ago, she had a normal wonderful life but tonight, their life is in shambles.”* This same group of refugees were also pictured in warm clothing singing their national anthem while displaying their country’s colours. One of the Ukrainians interviewed is also shown crying interspersed with past pictures of their families happily married. In essence, the media station was trying to bring to the fore the human aspect of the crisis. The mayor of the unidentified town encourages the refugees: *“This is your second home. Treat us as your friends”* He further assured them that it is a safe place.

Depiction of African (including the Middle East) Refugees in Europe

On the other hand, in the analysis of media framing of African refugees fleeing to Europe, most news clips showed these refugees through a ‘security frame’. In an *Al Jazeera* interview, Marcin Przydacz, Polish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, noted that Poland was refusing to admit refugees from the Middle East, Asia, and Africa fronting varied reasons in sharp contrast with the ‘warm embrace’ of Ukrainian refugees. The video shows refugees from North Africa and the Middle East fleeing conflict and other life-threatening circumstances being met with teargas, restrained with barbed wire, and forced to spend outside in extreme weather conditions. The video shows scores of refugees trying to breach a barricade with hundreds of police officers on standby to whip them back to the border. The Polish Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs contends that his country is trying to protect the European border and that those who want to enter should legally do it by obtaining a valid visa. He further argues that most of the refugees are actually invited by Belarusian president Lukashenko to be smuggled to the European Union to carry out Lukashenko’s political activities. In the same news clip, the news anchor poses a question about a Congolese family who was turned away from the Polish border even after pleading with the immigration officers to grant it asylum. In response, Mr.

Przydacz argues that if they allow them to get into Poland, it will be encouraging others to cross the border illegally and that they are regular migrants.

In yet another *Al Jazeera* news clip, there is a sharp departure in the usage of terminologies such as refugees, despite a clear indication that those fleeing from their countries have virtually the same reasons as Ukrainians – that is conflict or political persecution. In this clip, various military equipment can be seen on the coast of Spain ready to send back refugees trying to cross over to the country from Morocco. A journalist narrates the happenstances: *“A show of force with beach still littered with rubbish after 8,000 migrants arrived here this week. Mos swim from neighbouring Morocco. They record influx following days of detention and diplomacy between Spain and Morocco. On the Moroccan side of the border, security forces attempted to push back migrants on Wednesday.”* Sirens from ambulances and police vehicles can be heard with some of the refugees attempting to cross over to Spain. Throughout this news clip, there is a heavy presence of military forces. Africans can also be seen swimming dangerously across the sea and the journalist is reporting that some have died in this attempt.

On *ABC Newsline*, refugees from Africa, India, and the Middle East fleeing from Ukraine can be seen begging security and immigration officers from Poland to let them into the train saying: *“We don’t have arms. We are students. This is unfair. This is unfair”* Another black student says: *“When we reached the border just to get the exit stamp, we waited for many hours, while Ukrainians had the right to use buses we had to walk, we were really shocked...we didn’t come to Ukraine as asylum seekers, we came as foreign students. We paid money. We paid a lot of money.”* It is also worth noting that the video recording shown on *ABC Newsline* is an amateur video taken by a phone, most likely from one of the African students trapped in Ukraine. Again, juxtaposed with the high-quality professional videos featuring Ukrainian refugees in Poland and other countries, there is a significant difference in terms of framing.

On *TRT World*, a journalist features the plight of African and Middle Eastern refugees in Spain particularly from Afghanistan, Mali, Sudan, and Somalia. They show the palpable difference in the reception and treatment of Ukrainian refugees in Europe and the situation in Spain where 80,000 people have been waiting for a response on their refugee status for years. The video shows some of the refugees in a crowded makeshift camp near the sea in total disregard of hygiene and civility. This is contrasted with the situation in Ukraine where more than 17,000 Ukrainians have been given international protection. Jaume Dura from Spanish Commission for Refugee Aid had this to say: *“It is a completely different circumstance, because of the political will to articulate an EU directive which has not been done in other cases like the war and exodus of Syria, for example.”* The journalist continues to narrate that migrants and activists hope that the Ukrainian crisis will show European countries that things can be done differently and quickly. And that Ukrainians shouldn’t be an exception but the start of how Europe treats its refugees.

An *AL Jazeera Exclusive* also covers refugees fleeing Africa and the Middle East. It shows refugees hiding in cargo trucks and behind the wheels of big trucks with the intention of



crossing over to Europe. Once arrested, they are immediately handcuffed and bundled into a police truck for onward processing. The depiction of helpless refugees being violent arrested and mistreated by law enforcement agents is a sharp divergence in the treatment of Ukrainian refugees.

Discussion

This segment responds to the research questions: *What are the dominant media frames in the coverage of Ukrainian refugees following the Russia-Ukraine conflict in some of the world's leading television stations? How does the media coverage of Ukrainian refugees compare with African refugees seeking asylum in Europe in these stations?* In media framing studies, Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) advance five news frames: attribution of responsibility, conflict, economics, human interest, and morality. A *conflict frame* reveals the “conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interests” (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). A *responsibility frame* infers culpability for the matters' cause or solution, which often falls within the purview of governments, individuals, or communities (Semetko and Valkenburg, 2000, p. 96; Zhou, 2008). An *economic frame* places emphasis on the economic impact of the phenomenon on an individual, society, or nation (Luther & Zhou, 2005; Valkenburg et al., 1999). A *human-interest frame* focuses on narratives that evoke emotions in order to create an emotional reaction (Cho & Gower, 2006). A *morality frame* places a phenomenon within the context of ethical or social norms (Zhou, 2008). *Security frames*, which are not part of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000)'s dichotomy of frames, are used to describe refugees as potential threats to other countries and thus the justification (Esses et al., 2013).

In view of these frames and the analysis of the video data, three dominant frames emerge: *Human-Interest* and *Security Frames* emerge. Media often uses human-interest frames to attract and retain audience attention. These frames are also dominant in times of crisis, often with the intention of eliciting a public response (Cho & Gower, 2006). Cho and Gower (2006) explored the implications of a human-interest frame by exposing participants to news coverage of a crisis in either a human-interest frame or a non-human-interest frame. Results indicated participants exposed to human-interest frames were more likely to have an emotional response to the crisis and their emotional response was a “significant predictor of blame and responsibility in a transgression crisis” (p. 420).

Dissecting media coverage of the Ukrainian refugee crisis contrasted with the African refugee crisis through a human-interest frame, the former was portrayed as victims of the barbaric acts by Russia led by a merciless tyrant with imperialist and expansionist objectives. Virtually every media station made reference to the origin of the refugee crisis pointing at Russia as the source of the humanitarian crisis. Similarly, in line with the human-interest frame indicators, most of the media outlets mostly reported empathetically of the crisis utilizing words and phrases such as ‘*innocent children*’, ‘*family*’, ‘*helpless victims of war*’ among others.

The framing of the refugees was meant to invoke sympathy for victims of a manmade crisis by constructing around the depiction of suffering and misery that Ukrainian refugees were facing. This was done by demonstrating that the conflict has not only deprived Ukrainians of their survival right but have also caused extremely heavy civilian casualties and damage to property. One of the presenters in Al Jazeera aptly brings this to the fore “...we are playing the latest pictures of people who are trying to get to trains out of Ukraine...what is compelling is just looking at them, the way they are dressed, these are prosperous middle-class people. These are not obvious refugees trying to get away from areas in the Middle East in a big state of war or North Africa. They look like any European family that you would live next door to.” Deliberate or not, consciously or otherwise, the depiction of Ukrainian refugees in such light invoked emotions across the world in direct contrast with African refugees.

The news clips focusing on Ukrainian refugees were also inundated with images of destroyed buildings, military artillery, fleeing refugees, and the forlorn faces of the victims. Expectedly, the media portrayed the invasion as a terrible event which has caused a massive human tragedy with both immediate global consequences as well as unpredictable and potentially disastrous long-term implications. While the gravity of the conflict cannot be understated, the reporting, when contrasted with the coverage of the African or Middle Eastern refugees, does not draw similar imageries and metaphors from the media.

This finding mirrors other studies on the same subject. In a study on framing of refugees in German newspapers in which the researcher sought to establish the differences in the framing of the 2022 Ukrainian refugee movements in contrast to the Syrian refugee movements in 2015 in German popular media, Jäger (2022) found out that the human-interest frame was dominant across the selected papers: “...every newspaper used a positively connotated - “positive” and “willingness to help” - humanitarian frame at least six times” (p. 19). Liu (2019) used mixed methods following the framework of generic frames, diagnostic and prognostic frames to compare the news coverage of the Ukraine crisis in Russia and the UK from 30 November 2013 to 26 February 2014. Liu (2019) found that *The Guardian* applied more human interest and morality frames compared with the Russian media.

Media reporting indicates that the Ukraine-Russia conflict is the worst in years also flies in the face of peace and conflict experts and serves the purpose of heightening the importance of the conflict while minimising probably more severe ones. The use of the phrase ‘Europe’s first major land war in decades,’ often shows a sense of shock that something like this could happen in Europe, while implicitly signifying that conflicts usually happen in other countries ‘of a different sort.’ It is worth noting that there are other large and deadly conflicts, such as the civil war in Ethiopia which has been going on since late 2020 and has involved numerous atrocities, war crimes, famine, and displacement—all while garnering far less consistent media attention.

The second dominant frame that emerged from the analysis of the video data is the *Security Frame*. Videos from the selected media stations covering African refugees fleeing to Europe,



especially through Spain, Turkey, Greece, Hungary, and Italy revealed a starkly different picture when collocated with Ukrainian refugees. These videos depict African refugees from a security perspective where instead of being received with dignity and perhaps processed before determining their status, they are, from the outset, subjected to extreme ill-treatment by security agencies in the destination countries. The heavy presence of security forces along the coastline of Spain for example and related installations portray refugees as security threats and their deterrence is of priority for those countries.

In a *CNN* news clip, still images are shown of refugees – who are ostensibly referred to as ‘migrants’ – exhausted and sleeping in the streets of Budapest, Hungary. It is worth noting that in a different video showing Ukrainian refugees in Poland, a journalist restrains from showing inside the building where refugees were resting because she respects the privacy of the ‘exhausted’ Ukrainian refugees: *“We have been here and, in many places, and the dynamics are continuously changing. And there are people milling around and a lot of people arrived by buses. They have just come from the border and they have been led to a warehouse...and we are not filming inside because we respect the people privacy. They are exhausted and tired...but inside there are rows and rows and rows of canvas where people can sleep.”* It is inappropriate and inhumane to take pictures or film Ukrainian refugees resting following long trips in buses or trains but appropriate to film African refugees being beaten and harassed by security forces and being forced into overcrowded trucks and into unhygienic camps.

A *France24* news clip shows two asylum seekers from the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sierra Leone narrating the life-threatening and dreadful journey to Turkey and then Samos, Greece and how they have stayed in the camp for a long time waiting for feedback on their asylum status. Samos camp is a large-scale, isolated camp in Samos, Greece. The journalist describes the camp: *“Safe but also isolated from the rest of the world. The ultramodern centre is located in a deserted area northwest of Samos. Endless barbed wires, secured gates, x-ray scanners, the 360 refugees here are divided by origin and colour-coded by containers. They are not allowed to go out after 8:00pm. Greek authorities are aware that these restrictions are strict.”* The head of the Samos centre who is also featured in the news clip says: *“Security is essential for our residents because they claim to have left their country for security reasons. Greece is on the border between Europe and Asia and East in general. Their role is to protect European borders.”* The journalist further says that the centre cost 43 million Euros funded entirely by the European Union (EU). It has a unique monitoring system with cameras linked directly to the centre. They also show other security items such as an ultramodern drone fitted with a camera with a sound system that provides the agencies with footage. They also show augmented reality 3D glasses that are used to enhance security in and around the camp. The vivid description and depiction of the camp and security features put in place to ensure the refugees are contained within the prison-like camp are given priority over the lives of refugees.

A *DW News* video reveals the security frame in its coverage of Melilla massacre where African refugees were killed trying to cross to Spain. *DW News* shows footage of a stampede at Melilla where 23 African migrants were killed by Moroccan and Spanish forces while attempting to cross from Morocco into the Spanish enclave of Melilla. The footage shows the two countries' border forces beating migrants who had been forced onto the ground. It is worth noting that international law provides for the right to move and seek asylum and states have a legal obligation to uphold that right. This trend reflects study findings on the securitization of refugees, especially those from Africa and the Middle East. Securitisation entails "repositioning of areas of regular politics into the realm of security by increasingly using narratives of threat and danger aimed at justifying the adoption of extraordinary measures. The last decade has seen a significant expansion of these narratives, backed by normalisation of measures, operations, laws and policies that were once regarded as extreme. Many continue to regard them as extreme, making the nexus between security and migrants/refugees highly contentious" (Mixed Migration Centre, 2019, para. 2). The current scale of the securitisation of mobility and displacement, particularly of vulnerable people in mixed flows or in refugee situations, is widespread and increasing (Mixed Migration Centre, 2019).

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study examined the media coverage of Ukrainian refugees fleeing to Europe juxtaposed with the treatment of Africa refugees (in some instances, those from the Middle East) seeking asylum in Europe. It sought to answer two interlinked questions: *What are the dominant media frames in the coverage of Ukrainian refugees following the Russia-Ukraine conflict in some of the world leading television stations? How does the media coverage of Ukrainian refugees compare with Africa refugees seeking asylum in Europe in these stations?* In the wall-to-wall coverage of the Russia-Ukraine crisis, a certain pattern emerged that positioned Ukrainian refugees as different from other victims of conflict, especially Africans fleeing conflict and political persecution back at home. The way media talks about conflicts have the potential to impact those who are already most directly affected by war, refugees. Western media reacted emotionally and with empathy to the plight of citizens of Ukraine, and identified with Ukrainian defenders.

Two dominant frames emerged in the analysis of 23 video clips that covered Ukrainian and African refugees: the human-interest frame and the security frame. The *human-interest frame* is commonly used in news and it essentially serves the purpose of portraying the emotional angle to the presentation of an issue. The Ukrainian refugee crisis contrasted with the African refugee crisis through the human-interest frame, the former was portrayed as victims of the barbaric acts by Russia led by a merciless tyrant with imperialist and expansionist objectives. Similarly, in line with the human-interest frame indicators, most of the media outlets mostly reported empathetically of the crisis utilizing words and phrases such as '*innocent children*'.



'family', 'helpless victims of war' among others. The framing of the refugees was meant to invoke sympathy for victims of a manmade crisis by constructing around the depiction of suffering and misery that Ukrainian refugees were facing. This was done by demonstrating that the conflict has not only deprived Ukrainians of their survival right but have also caused extremely heavy civilian casualties and damage to property.

The second frame – *the Security Frame* – applied mostly to African refugees fleeing to Europe. The selected media outlets covered African refugees fleeing to Europe especially through Spain, Turkey, Greece, Hungary, and Italy through the security lens compared to the Ukrainian refugees. The media depict African refugees from a security viewpoint where instead of being received with dignity and perhaps processed before determining their status, they are, from the outset, subjected to extreme ill-treatment by security agencies in the destination countries. The heavy presence of security forces along the coastline of Spain for example and related installations portray refugees as security threats and their deterrence is of priority for those countries. These findings lend themselves to an even bigger picture in the management of refugees in Europe where the securitization of refugees and migrants has increasingly gained traction.

Limitations and Future Research

The study findings relied on a relatively small sample of videos obtained manually through predetermined words and phrases. The inaccessibility of videos and institutional restrictions to their video data forced the researchers to rely on publicly available videos thus leaving out otherwise rich data. Consequently, future research should move beyond what is readily available on YouTube and individual media outlets' websites to purchase the necessary licences that could guarantee access to a larger corpus of news clips for a more detailed analysis. Additionally, researchers should move beyond broadcast media and examine media framing of the refugee and migrant crisis in Africa and Europe in print media outlets to collocate with findings on broadcast media.

Conflict of Interest

The authors hereby declare that no competing financial interest exists for this manuscript.

Notes on Contributors

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