Introduction

The most salient event early in the refugee crisis was perhaps the drowning of a young Syrian Kurdish boy at the coast of Turkey, three-year-old Alan Kurdi. It received wide media coverage for multiple days, placing the humanitarian aspect of the refugee crisis under the spotlight. Worries about the sustainability of the refugee flow subsided for a while, given the shock caused by the viral circulation of photos portraying this meaningless loss of life of one so young. It is hard to alter the perception that the refugee crisis is a humanitarian crisis at its core. It is driven by one of the most historically common human impulses, the urge to migrate in order to escape danger or depravity – and it can be stopped only by paying a steep price in terms of human life, as is evident on the seafloor of the Mediterranean. We instinctively classify the influx of 2015–16 as a refugee crisis due to all its political consequences, but in reality, the number of refugees was low compared to other major migratory incidents, like those after World War II. A question that has remained somewhat in the background up to now, therefore, is why was this even a crisis? Why was there such a zeal to implement ever-stricter border controls and asylum regulations when most of the people were indeed coming from a torn and depraved place?

One partial answer to this is that this is a result of politicians following public opinion, which is generally hostile to immigration across the EU. But this only begs the question of where this hostility comes from and who capitalizes on it. Arguably, anxieties about cultural mismatches and resource depletion do exist among the public, irrespective of what politicians say. However, this chapter claims that partially, the hostility is still greatly amplified by concerted efforts by political actors, focusing here specifically on the right wing of the political spectrum to present or *frame* the refugee crisis – and migration in general – as something different and bigger than a simple humanitarian issue. Mainly, this works by tapping into a primordial fear of outsiders and foreigners, but it must

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also address and annul the humanitarian aspect of the refugee crisis in order to allow the audience to overcome – or at least sidestep – the repulsion caused by images such as the lifeless body of an infant laying on the Turkish shore.

This chapter, then, slightly deviates from policy and issue-based politics and looks at arguments and frames surrounding the refugee crisis by right-wing actors. Regarding the defenders of the refugees and immigrants, the line of reasoning is relatively straightforward, attuned to what has been already mentioned. People are drowning in the sea as they seek a brighter future, and our advanced economies and societies can and should afford them an opportunity to pursue that. For the pro-migration side, first and foremost comes our humanitarian and moral duty to other persons, then our legal duty as inscribed in the Geneva treaties and UN participation. For the defenders of anti-immigration policies though, the ideational battle cannot be positive or straightforward to that extent. To defend their anti-immigration position, they can resort to identitarian ideals, stressing the cultural – among others – differences of newcomers; however, those must be weighed against humanitarian concerns. It is difficult to argue in favor of an abstract community cohesion when viral images of dead bodies washing ashore are everywhere in the media. To come to terms with this challenge, anti-immigration actors, predominantly on the right, are complementing their rhetoric with frames that correspond to Hirschman's (1991) rhetoric of reaction: that the aid provided to refugees is bringing about perverse results, resulting in more human tragedy than they avert and concurrently placing our societies in grave jeopardy due to the social changes brought about by the refugee inflow.

As noted, we focus specifically on the themes and frames utilized by right and radical right actors to portray the refugee crisis because, as we shall see in Chapter 14, they were the main mobilizers and beneficiaries of the refugee crisis. We account for the most common frames utilized by these actors and make only passing reference to those invoked by others, such as civil society and other parties, which are generally more predictable. For this purpose, we briefly present the frames we coded in our PPA analysis but also perform and mostly rely on a separate speech analysis, described in Chapter 3, that attempts to record – more precisely and extensively – the frames used by right-wing actors specifically.

The chapter is structured as follows. First, we briefly review the literature on framing and situate our concepts and methods within this literature. Afterward, we look at the distribution of actors and frames/themes, aiming to see who uses which frames and themes. Moving forward, we rely primarily on speech analysis (see Chapter 3), which focuses on

several key right and radical right actors who were the protagonists of our refugee crisis episodes. Finally, we discuss the commonalities and differences with respect to the themes among different right-wing parties and conclude the chapter by pondering what type of convergences and divergences in the right's rhetoric we witnessed during the refugee crisis.

Theoretical Framework

Frames have become a staple of political and communication sciences. They are analyzed because of their potential to persuade recipients of a frame to "see" a situation in a specific way (Gamson and Modigliani 1987; Nelson 2011). In this study, the frames we are interested in are "whole-story" frames (Gray 2003) that characterize an entire situation, in this case the refugee crisis, in different ways and aim to steer the audience toward a specific way of making sense of the crisis (Brewer and Gross 2005). While originally, after the first migrant deaths, the refugee crisis had a distinct humanitarian hue, it was gradually embedded in different frames, mainly, but not exclusively, by right-wing actors who attempted to present the whole situation as something entirely different, guiding the audience to see it through the lens of threat and lurking danger.

Most of the work done on the framing of the refugee crisis has focused on an analysis of media or social media content (Georgiou and Zaborowski 2017; Greussing and Boomgaarden 2017; Pérez 2017), mainly zooming in on whether the media presented the refugee crisis as a "security" or an "economic" issue (Kovář 2020). We consider this to be our starting point, but because our analysis focuses on political actors and analyzes their speeches directly, we expand on the list of possible ways of framing the situation, as politicians tend to utilize a wider variety of frames to characterize the refugee crisis. Some of them often treat it in a completely dispassionate way, relegating it to a mere technical issue of hotspot functionality, while other utilize more apocalyptic overtones, presenting it as a lethal threat to the existence and continuity of European civilization. In the next section, we present our list of frames in more detail.

Apart from "whole-story" frames, which aim to characterize the crisis in its entirety, we also engage in thematic analysis (Braun and Clarke 2006; Lorimer 2021). In a more detailed way, we engage with the speeches of right-wing politicians and attempt to code constant tropes, arguments, and themes that they utilized in their speeches to characterize more specific aspects of the refugee crisis and to justify their use of the overarching frames. For example, talking about refugees as potential

criminals or terrorists is often used to justify the framing of the refugee crisis as a security issue or even, depending on the context, as a geopolitical threat, as was the case when the Greek prime minister claimed that the influx of migrants from Turkey was an attempt to destabilize the country.

We thus approach the issue methodologically from these two sides, in order to address two main questions. First, we ask whether the right used a common template, or simply a common discursive agenda, to frame and talk about the refugee crisis, and if so, what the common discursive elements were. The refugee crisis presented both a threat and an opportunity for the right-wing party families. It was an opportunity because public opinion seemed massively hostile to the influx of immigrants and thus, the adoption of a stricter anti-immigration rhetoric could have gathered votes. It was also a threat, however, because there were impediments to such an outcome. First, many of the parties on the right were in government at the time and therefore had to balance their anti-immigration stances with government responsibilities. As the signatories of international treaties on asylum seeking and participants in the European Union that imposes certain minimal standards in the reception of asylum seekers, right-wing parties in government were often constrained with regard to what they could credibly promise in terms of antimigration policies. Concurrently, many of them faced competition on the issue from radical right antagonists, who could seize the opportunity to bolster their anti-immigration rhetoric and consequently their vote share at the expense of their mainstream rivals. Additionally, many of the radical right parties are associated in the minds of the voters with antimigration stances (see Chapter 14), own the issue, and are in a much better position to benefit from it.

Therefore, right-wing parties were faced with a dilemma concerning the rhetoric they adopted on the issue. Would an antimigration stance help them in political competition, aligning themselves with the public's preferences, or would it drive more voters into the hands of the radical right? And if they adopted such a stance, should they use arguments similar to those of the radical right, or should they try to differentiate their discourse to appear more like responsible and credible governing parties? Overall, we want to study whether a common discursive strategy about immigration issues emerged among the center and radical right or whether, instead, there were multiple strategies depending on the position of a party in government or on other factors.

Furthermore, a second motivation of this study is to focus on the radical right instead to examine whether there was indeed a sort of transnational radical right discourse, as argued by Lorimer (2021) and

McDonnell and Werner (2020), favoring tighter European integration on a civilizational basis and advocating a "fortress Europe." These scholars have argued that radical parties in recent years have abandoned their dominant nationalistic-sovereigntist discourse (Hooghe, Marks, and Wilson 2002; Kitschelt and McGann 1997; Kriesi 2016) in favor of one that is more ambivalent about Europe. Whereas before they would seek the dissolution of the European Union, they were now more tempted to maintain the edifice but remold it in the image of their own ideals. PiS, Fratelli d'Italia, and Fidesz, for example, have often lamented the cowardice of the European Union in proudly and unabashedly protecting what they regard as "European civilization," which is purportedly under threat from the hordes of migrants and the dilution of European moral values and traditions. Ideally, these parties would seek the transformation of the European migration policy away from ideas of fair redistribution of refugees toward a system focused on providing impenetrable border protection and slim chances of any migrant receiving asylum. It is therefore an open question as to how some of these parties have argued in the refugee crisis: Have they assumed a discourse that stresses the policy failures of the EU as is, or have they insisted on charting a different, sovereigntist course altogether? We shall try to probe this question, too.

Presentation of Frames and Themes

As noted, we separate our analysis into frames and themes. Whereas our frames are overarching characterizations of the refugee crisis, inducing people to understand it as a specific kind of issue or crisis, themes are specific arguments that attempt to draw the audience's attention to a narrow aspect of the crisis and persuade it to either prioritize certain of its elements or associate it primarily with this narrower aspect.

In other words, our frames are generally more abstract, attempting to classify the refugee crisis as a specific type of crisis. We deploy eleven different frames, contrary to other relevant studies that focus mostly on security or economic frames (Kovář 2020), as we find that for the array of policy actors that we cover, a wider variety of frames is used. The eleven frames are presented in Table 9.1 and range from frames typically invoked to argue against immigration to frames more closely associated with humanitarian organizations. In between, we find some frames that are used equally for framing the refugees in a negative or positive light, and frames that attempt to evade the issue and present it as a more neutral, "technical" one.

The first frames in Table 9.1, which as we shall see are the most common among right-wing parties, are typically used to frame the refugee

Table 9.1 *Frames and frame classification in our analysis*

Frames
Security
Identity
Sovereignty
Efficiency
Cost–benefit
Legalistic
Democratic
Sustainability
Geopolitical
Humanitarian
Solidaristic

crisis as a negative phenomenon that one must defend themselves against. Security frames commonly invoke the dangers of terrorism or crime from incoming refugees, while identity frames claim that the identity of refugees is incompatible with European identities. Sovereignty arguments are more ambiguous, as they can have multiple uses. While they are sometimes used for expressing opposition against efforts to create a common European approach to deal with the refugee crisis, as is very often the case with Fidesz, they are also used to justify claims that the country's closing of borders is its sovereign right, as was mostly the case with the Greek New Democracy.

Moving down the list in Table 9.1, we encounter frames that tend to be neutral toward immigration and sidestep arguments on principles, preoccupying themselves only with the technical aspects of the refugee crisis. Arguments about the efficiency of policies dealing with the refugee crisis are some such frames, often arguing for the return of policies like Hotspots and Port Closures. Additionally, cost–benefit frames also approach the crisis from a "utilitarian," dispassionate standpoint, while legalistic frames tend to narrow it down to a strict examination of the legal standing and rights of immigrants, the legality of their entry into a country, or the legal obligations of the country vis-à-vis the international community.

Much like legalistic frames, democratic arguments can cut both ways on the pro-/anti-immigration spectrum. They may be used either to argue that minority and refugee rights are a cornerstone of democracy or to make claims that elites are thwarting the democratic will of the people who are generally hostile toward migration. Similarly, sustainability frames are made either to argue in favor of immigration due to

Table 9.2 *List of themes in speech analysis*

Themes
Border protection/stricter asylum
Economic pressure
Populism/democracy
European themes
Policy efficiency
Perversity
Jeopardy
Conspiracy/invasion/Islamophobic

the spillover economic and manpower benefits it provides to an aging Western population or to articulate opposition to immigration, as when stressing the unsustainable implications of large immigration waves for the welfare systems and societies of Europe. Geopolitical frames are generally rarer and attempt to situate the refugee crisis within a wider context of geopolitical turbulence, subsuming it under the wider turmoil in the Middle East and Africa, or as in the Greek case, specifically, embedding it into the wider antagonism in the Aegean Sea.[1]

Finally, at the bottom of Table 9.1, there are two frames that are typically used in pro-immigration discourse – humanitarian and solidaristic frames. Solidaristic frames are generally coded when actors, at least implicitly, accept the inevitability of immigration and call for other actors to share the burden caused by it and/or show some solidarity with the refugees. While such frames are generally rather rare in our speech analysis database, they are often invoked in the first version by right-wing politicians in frontline states. Humanitarian frames are eventually self-explanatory, stressing the humanitarian aspect of the refugee crisis and focusing on the problems of the immigrants themselves, but they are seldom used by the actors that are prevalent in our speech analysis and are usually invoked by NGOs and other civil society organizations.

Moving on to the themes – the coding here has been more inductive. While first coming up with a list of often-repeated tropes and arguments, we condensed this list of sixty or more arguments, which try to prioritize a specific aspect of the refugee crisis, into eight overarching categories, which are shown in Table 9.2.

Some of the themes have a very direct correspondence with the frames we analyzed above. Thus, we typically assign a democracy frame when

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[1] More recently, similar frames have been used to characterize the latest influx of refugees entering eastern Europe from Belarus and Russia.

also assigning a populism/democracy theme. The same applies to themes regarding policy efficiency/policy failure. When politicians, for instance, claim that the wave of immigration is imposed by unelected European elites upon an unwilling European public, they try to situate the refugee crisis within a wider frame of democracy. However, some of the arguments made in favor and – mostly – against immigration do not neatly correspond to an overarching frame but either can be subsumed under several of the frames we previously listed or may even not correspond to any of them. When we present the themes in more detail below, we also provide their correspondence with our existing frames.

Overall, our list of themes contains what we considered to be the broadest categories of arguments/tropes associated with the refugee crisis. Border protection themes are usually attributed to sentences where politicians ask for practical measures to bolster border security or make asylum procedures tougher. Economic pressure refers to a host of themes referring to the economic harm caused by migrants, either due to benefit recipience or because of increasing job competition. We have already referred to the populism theme, whereas the European theme mostly comprises discourses within which a politician attempts to blame Europe or the failure of European cooperation for the refugee crisis. Policy failure and efficiency themes refer to more "technical" expressions, such as the need to accelerate the building of hotspots or more abstract calls for better policy.

The three themes that are at the bottom of our list correspond mostly to types of arguments first identified by Hirschman (1991). The first – and most common – type of argument is that of perversity or counterintuitiveness. Generally, it points to efforts to help refugees that produce a result opposite that of their stated goal, or it stresses the hypocrisy of those wanting to help refugees. Some of the arguments included in this category, for example, claim that drownings are actually caused by rescue missions like Mare Nostrum that act as a "pull factor." Some other arguments of this type claim that progressives hypocritically defend migrants who are much more conservative than the conservatives they oppose at home or that the wrong type of migrants are helped, that the hypocritical policy caters to those who can make the journey while ignoring the most vulnerable people stuck in the conflict zones where refugees originate from. Jeopardy, by contrast, is more straightforward; it involves arguments that refugees pose an active threat to the local populace as potential terrorists, criminals, or – more recently – as carriers of diseases and Covid-19.

Finally, the more far-fetched arguments that border on conspiracy theories or explicitly target Muslim migrants and bemoan "multiculturalism"

are included in the last theme category. As we shall see, the "invasion" theme, by far the most common in this category, arguing that the local population will eventually be displaced by the incoming migrants, is almost exclusively invoked by radical right parties and Fidesz.

Frames in PPA and Speech Analysis

In Table 9.3, we present the distribution of frames in our speech analysis and PPA, according to the categories used in each type of analysis. As noted, PPA is missing three of the categories we used in the speech analysis. One could argue that the legalistic and cost–benefit categories are incorporated in the efficiency frame, which would leave the sustainability frame as the one lacking a true counterpart in our PPA analysis.

The results indicate the major divergences and similarities between media discourse of political actors more generally and the discourse of the right-wing side of the spectrum in particular. The speech analysis, as expected, displays a higher frequency of security and identitarian frames than the general PPA analysis and somewhat higher counts of sovereignty claims, whereas humanitarian frames are much less numerous. This is unsurprising, as right and radical right parties tend to prioritize security and identitarian frames and arguments rather than humanitarian frames, which are mainly deployed by NGOs and civil society. Unexpectedly, however, democratic frames, typically deployed to argue that immigrants are not wanted by a majority of the population or that

Table 9.3 *Frame distributions in speech analysis and PPA: percentages*

Frame	Speech analysis	PPA
Security	22.4	15.1
Efficiency	21.1	19.9
Identity	9.9	4.7
Sovereignty	8.6	5.3
Solidaristic	7.7	14.2
Legalistic	7.4	—
Democratic	6.2	13.6
Geopolitical	4.9	3.3
Cost–benefit	4.1	—
Humanitarian	4.0	18.7
Sustainability	3.8	—
Totals	660	5,071
	(100.0%)	(100.0%)

elites impose immigration on a hostile electorate, are actually more rarely used by right-wing actors than by all the actors taken together in the PPA analysis. Other than that, the distribution over the rest of the frames appears relatively similar across the two datasets and, in an analysis not shown here, is very similar in terms of distribution, when the PPA database is reduced to the same type of actors.

We now focus on the data for the right-wing actors and break down the frames and themes by the types of actors. We start with the frames and compare mainstream right parties to the radical right. The UK conservatives, ÖVP, New Democracy and more arguably, Fidesz are classified as mainstream right parties, whereas UKIP, AfD, FPÖ, Elliniki Lysi, Lega, and Fratelli d'Italia are classified as radical right parties. In general, with the exception of the Lega, the party-family distinction also correlates with participation in government. There is only one exception where center right parties studied here have not been in government – namely, New Democracy's early speeches. In other words, for the most part, the differences between party families are also differences between governmental and nongovernmental parties. In any case, in Figure 9.1, we see the difference in the usage of frames between mainstream right and radical right parties.[2]

Figure 9.1 shows a relative convergence in the types of frames used by the two party families, with two major exceptions. On the one hand, solidaristic framing is more typically deployed by mainstream right actors. As we shall see shortly, this is entirely due to a single party, as it is predominantly New Democracy that utilizes this frame (51 percent of the sentences of this frame are attributed to the Greek mainstream right; the Lega uses it, too, but to a lesser extent – hence the party family difference). The same is true regarding sustainability, a frame almost solely utilized by New Democracy to stress the unsustainability of Greece receiving so many refugees. Sovereignty is also more often deployed by mainstream right actors, a product of mainly three parties, namely the UK conservatives and Fidesz in Hungary, another expected result given their centrifugal or anti-European tendencies. The other mainstream party utilizing it on the fringes is New Democracy, but rather in sentences meant to stress that protecting the Greek borders is an act of sovereignty, rather than as juxtaposed to supranational authority. What is surprising, however, is the degree to which radical right parties shy away from the frame. The AfD accounts for almost all sovereignty-focused frames among this party

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[2] This is simply the difference of the percentages of a particular frame in a party family's discourse over the total number of frames: Diff = $\Delta_j \dfrac{\sum_{i,j} \text{frame}}{\sum_i \text{frame}}$, where i is party family and j is frame type.
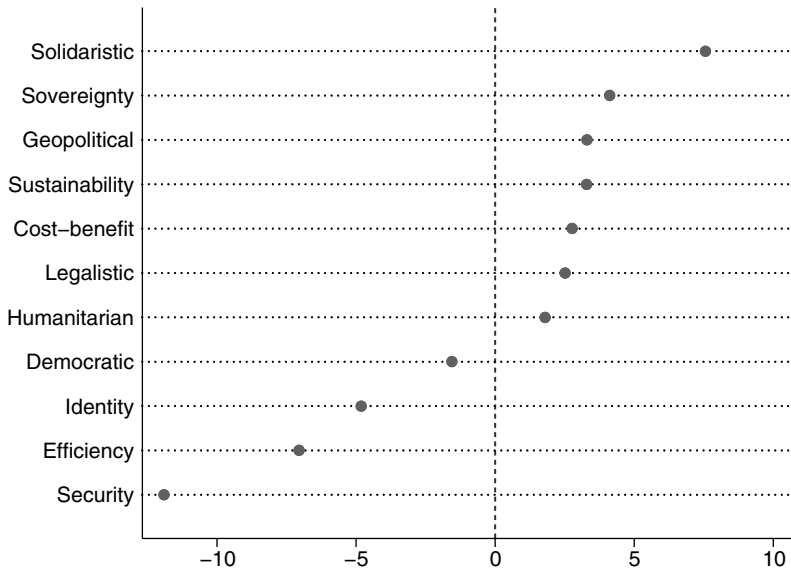
Figure 9.1 Differences in percentage use of frames between mainstream right and radical right actors
Note: The further right a dot is found, the more common is the usage of a frame by mainstream right parties compared to radical right ones and vice versa.

family. The Mediterranean radical right (ELLY, Lega, and FdI) almost never uses it, while it comprises only 6 percent of the frames utilized by the FPÖ.

On the other side of Figure 9.1, we can see that efficiency, identitarian, and especially security frames are much more common among the parties of the radical right. Identitarian frames are mostly avoided by all mainstream right parties, except for the family's arguably most fringe component – Fidesz. Instead, they form the backbone of the Greek radical right's repertoire, with its leader continuously stressing the incompatibility between Greek-European culture and the culture of Muslim immigrants. The FdI and – to a degree – UKIP and the Lega also utilize this frame, albeit much less frequently.

The security frame is the most common one and, concurrently, the one dominated by radical right actors. The champion is FPÖ, which comprises 30 percent of all security frames, copiously trying to present the refugee crisis as a security crisis. The Lega, Fidesz, and Elliniki Lisi all contribute almost equally to this framing, another sign that Fidesz is closer, in terms of rhetoric, to the radical right than to the mainstream
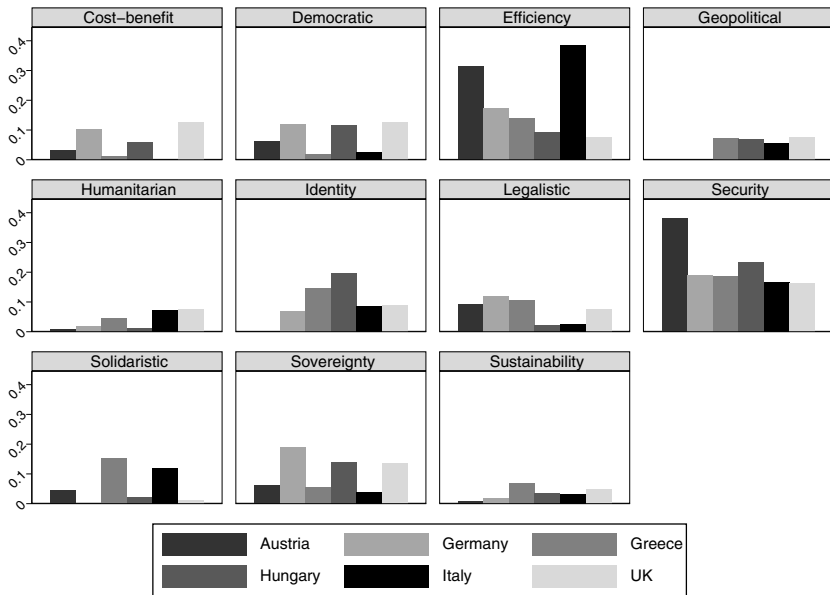
Figure 9.2 Frame type shares by country: percentages

right families. Nevertheless, unlike identitarian frames, mainstream right parties do deploy security frames, just not at the same frequency as the radical right.

Figure 9.2 presents the types of frames per country. This figure corroborates what has already been discussed, namely, that solidaristic frames are mostly used in the European south, dominating the discussion in Greece and partially in Italy, whereas they are nonexistent everywhere else. Also, despite the proliferation of security frames in both countries, they are the only countries (perhaps due to their frontline status making them confront the issue more directly) in which humanitarian frames appear at all, even by right-wing actors, compared to all the rest of the countries, except for the UK.

As we shall also see in Chapter 14, security frames in Austria dominated the political scene, with the mainstream and radical right competing to present immigrants as a menace. It is most peculiar that in Austria, the whole discussion is framed in terms of security, with identitarian frames barely making an appearance, compared to a much more "cultural" approach in Greece and Hungary and, to a lesser extent, the rest of the countries, where identitarian frames are more common. Finally, as we discussed previously, it is apparent here as well that sovereignty

frames are much more common in Germany, Hungary, and the UK, something that was to be expected, given the much more Eurosceptic profile of the parties involved.

Themes in Speech Analysis

Moving on to the second aspect of our coding, we trace the themes utilized in and by those different types of party families and countries. We start by showing the distribution of themes in Table 9.4. As can be seen, the most common themes are those that have to do with calls for European cooperation, or the ones decrying European failure. Perversity themes, involving claims that the handling of the refugee crisis is either hypo-critical in some way or leads to perverse results, constitute the second most common category, followed by border protection, which includes abstract claims to ramp up border protection and more "technical" dis-cussions on related issues. Following those are more abstract arguments on the efficiency of policies and more security-related themes dealing with jeopardy and conspiracy theories. Perhaps somewhat surprisingly, there is relatively little economic or populist/democratic argumentation, with our sample of parties rarely stressing such themes, compared to the more acute security threats caused by the refugee crisis.

Repeating the exercise performed for frames, Figure 9.3 shows the difference of theme usage between party families. The only rhetorical devices that are more commonly used by mainstream rather than radical right parties are European-centered themes, which argue that the refugee crisis is either a product of European coordination failure or, contrarily, needs to be addressed via more European coordination. Almost all the rest of the themes, surprisingly, are hovering close to zero, even the con-spiracy themes, as both radical and mainstream right parties seem to

Table 9.4 *Distribution of themes in our database: percentages*

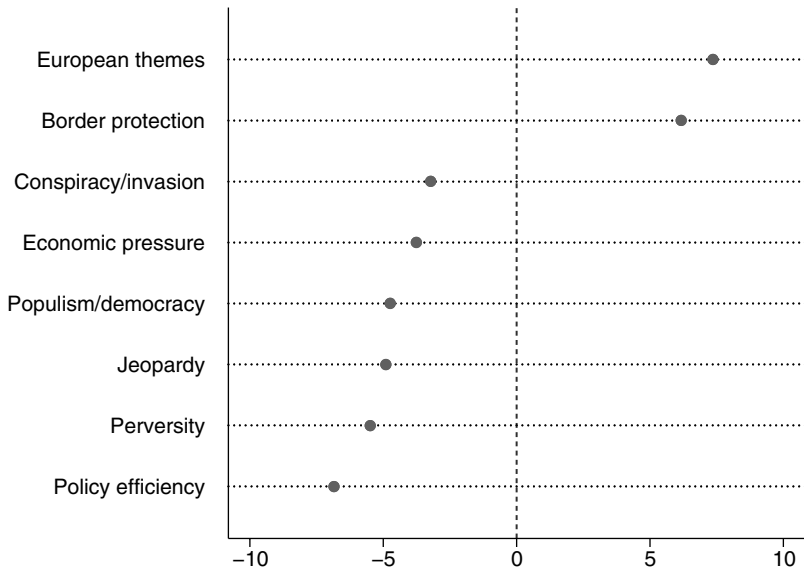| Themes	Frequency (%)
European themes	19.6
Perversity	14.9
Border protection/stricter asylum	12.4
Policy failure/efficiency	10.3
Conspiracy/invasion/anti-Islam	10.0
Jeopardy	9.6
Economic pressure	7.1
Populism/democracy	5.9
Total	100.0%

Figure 9.3 Differences in percentage usage of themes between mainstream right and radical right actors

deploy them equally. On the other side of the spectrum, one finds only policy-efficiency themes – that is, claims that the policy is inefficient, too slow to be implemented, or not working – which are used more frequently by the radical right, possibly due to those parties being in opposition. The same partially applies to populist themes, which are also slightly more frequently used by radical right parties, as they are easier to use when in opposition, a position from which arguments about policy elites ignoring the people sound more plausible.

In Figure 9.4, we present themes per country. First, it shows that concerns about policy efficiency dominate in Austria and Germany, whereas these themes are mostly absent in the other countries, with the exception of Greece. On the other hand, economic pressure themes are much more frequent in the southern European countries, which had an ailing economy, and the UK, where the Brexit discussion focused heavily on the burden of immigration.

Even though solidaristic frames were mostly present in Greece, as we previously saw, the rhetoric centered on Europe was not the most dominant among the Greek right. Instead, Hungary and Italy show a much higher prevalence of European themes. This is not only because themes related to Europe do not only concern calls to present the issue as a
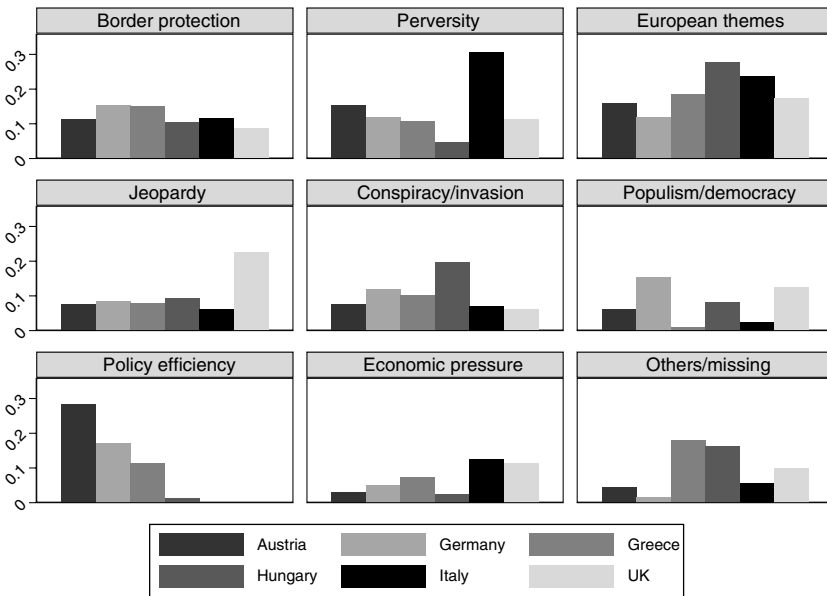
Figure 9.4 Theme type shares by country: percentages

problem requiring more European cooperation but because they also try to blame the refugee crisis on Europe's decadence; weakness; and the "buonisti," as Salvini used to call all those do-gooders in Europe who wanted to help refugees. The most common theme in this category by far is what we label as "impotent/weak Europe," which refers to politicians – almost exclusively from the UK, Hungary, Italy, and Austria – who decry Europe's catering to the so-called illegal migrants. In other cases, much less common and exclusively found in Greece, the refugee crisis was framed as a problem caused by the Visegrad countries, particularly Hungary, which blocked common European solutions for partisan and domestic reasons.

Perversity is another rhetorical trope that is particularly widespread in Italy, where Salvini repeated, ad nauseum, that efforts to help migrants were mismanaged, as they caused more drownings, and that the left was hypocritically helping conservative migrants who threatened European progressive values. Salvini also constantly suggested that the refugee crisis was in fact a fabricated crisis, cynically exploited by a cottage industry of NGOs, civil servants, and politicians – primarily from the left. A subtheme within this general category that is not, however, exclusive to the Lega but is actually widespread among all right-wing parties is that migrants are

not actual refugees and that framing the crisis as a "refugee crisis" rather than an illegal immigration crisis motivated by economic reasons was fundamentally misguiding and led to perverse conclusions, as economic migrants placed a burden on society and made almost everyone worse off. This rhetoric was very common in Italy, Greece, the UK, Austria, and Hungary. Among our country sample, it is only really absent in Germany, where the focus was much more on the policy of the chancellor rather than on the refugees themselves. Indeed, Germany is where the populist theme is more prevalent, along with the UK, with the AfD scorching Merkel again and again regarding a policy that they considered to be unpopular and imposed from above on German citizens, who disagreed with it.

What is also striking is the presence of the jeopardy theme in all countries, including the rhetoric according to which migrants represented a terrorist or criminal threat and a danger to public health. While this is not the most dominant theme, it is common in all countries and used almost equally everywhere and by all parties. It is perhaps the common thread that links together the parties of both families and all countries, presenting the refugees and migrants as a potential threat.

Finally, we should note that the more conspiratorial discourses, which discuss the refugee crisis in terms of the loss of Christian Europe or of population and cultural displacement, are also common throughout Europe. As we saw, they are not necessarily the product of radical right parties, as these themes are sometimes invoked by the ÖVP, New Democracy, and the Conservatives – albeit in less apocalyptic forms – and are actually quite dominant in Fidesz' s discourse, too, coming only second to themes about Europe's impotence.

The Refugee Crisis as Seen by the Right: Convergences and Divergences

So far, we have described the frames and rhetorical themes used by parties of the mainstream and radical right, but now we want to delve a bit deeper into the questions that fueled this descriptive exercise. Specifically, we wish to examine whether there was a common discursive agenda between the two party families – and all parties in general – and whether there has been some movement toward a unified vision of Europe and a transnational rhetoric, as some other scholars have argued (Lorimer 2021; McDonnell and Werner 2020).

For this purpose, we resort to the use of multidimensional scaling (MDS) to portray the proximity and distances of parties and frames/themes. We base our MDS figures on the distributions of frames and themes for each party and try to see how close the parties' distributions

are to each other. Whereas MDS attempts to create a rough image of the relative distance of the objects it incorporates, it should be noted that the image produced cannot compress all the available information into the two-dimensional space of a typical figure; hence, some of the distances may not be represented precisely. Given that the process has to place the nodes based on a large number of distance pairs in a two-dimensional space, it cannot accurately reflect all distances, and we "correct" for this by returning directly to the distributions of frames for each party in Table 9.5. Nevertheless, it produces a rough, but helpful, summary image of the relationships present between parties and frames, both to each other and between themselves. Figure 9.5 presents the MDS graph for the parties, showing the proximity of their frame distributions.

Figure 9.5 essentially reveals two clusters of parties. One is the "southern" cluster, containing the Greek and Italian parties, as well as the Austrian center right. The other one includes the radical right parties of northwestern Europe with the addition of Fidesz, which appears closer to them than to its own family. There is a particularly tight proximity between UKIP, Fidesz, and the AfD, while the extremity of ELLI places it further away but still closer to the radical right than to the "southern" cluster. The FPÖ is situated between the two clusters, but equally distant from the center of both. Finally, the UK Conservatives are in a league of their own, distant to all other parties studied here, as Brexit generated a quite different context that gave rise different frames than those used by the other parties.

We can take a closer look at the reasons for this configuration by complementing the MDS with the figures for the distribution of frames for each party. Table 9.5 shows the distribution of frames and number of frames for each party. It demonstrates the centrality of security frames as a common element in right-wing discourse and the fragmentary nature of the other frames, which are shared only by certain parties at a time.

Overall, if there is a common thread running across all parties, a core of right-wing rhetoric, it is the common usage of the security frame among all parties in our study, albeit to different degrees. Only the Conservatives, the party that we showed as more distant from the rest, minimized the use of this frame. Otherwise, we clearly see the patterns that led to the clustering in the table; the parties of the radical right, plus Fidesz, tend to deploy the security frame in conjunction with *some*, but not all, of the other radical right frames, namely populism, identity, and sovereignty frames. Which of these other frames are stressed by the radical right parties depends on the local context, but it is clear that they use a combination of them more than the center right parties do, as is evidenced in the subtotals for this first dimension in Table 9.5.

Table 9.5 *Frequencies of frames per party: percentages*

|	ELLI	UKIP	Fidesz	AfD	FPÖ	Cons.	New Dem.	Lega	FdI	ÖVP	Total
Security	**34.6**	**25.6**	**23.3**	**19.0**	**43.9**	5.4	11.9	19.2	9.1	21.2	22.4
Democracy	1.9	**16.3**	**11.6**	**12.1**	8.2	8.1	1.6	3.2	0.0	0.0	6.2
Identity	**46.2**	**14.0**	**19.8**	6.9	0.0	2.7	1.6	4.3	21.2	0.0	9.9
Sovereignty	1.9	7.0	**14.0**	**19.0**	6.1	**21.6**	7.1	4.3	3.0	6.0	8.6
Subtotal dimension 1	*84.6*	*62.9*	*68.7*	*57.0*	*58.2*	*37.8*	*22.2*	*31.0*	*33.3*	*27.2*	*47.1*
Efficiency	3.9	**14.0**	**9.3**	**17.2**	**24.5**	0.0	**18.3**	**36.2**	**45.5**	**51.5**	21.1
Solidarity	1.9	0.0	2.3	0.0	1.0	2.7	**20.6**	**14.9**	3.0	**15.2**	7.7
Legality	1.9	2.3	2.3	12.1	12.2	**13.5**	14.3	3.2	0.0	0.0	7.4
Geopolitical	1.9	11.6	7.0	0.0	0.0	2.7	9.6	5.3	6.1	0.0	4.9
Cost–benefit	1.9	0.0	5.8	10.3	4.1	**27.0**	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	4.1
Humanity	0.0	4.7	1.2	1.7	0.0	10.8	6.4	6.4	9.1	3.0	3.9
Sustainability	3.9	4.7	3.5	1.7	0.0	5.4	7.9	3.2	3.0	3.0	3.8
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	52	43	86	58	98	37	126	94	33	33	660
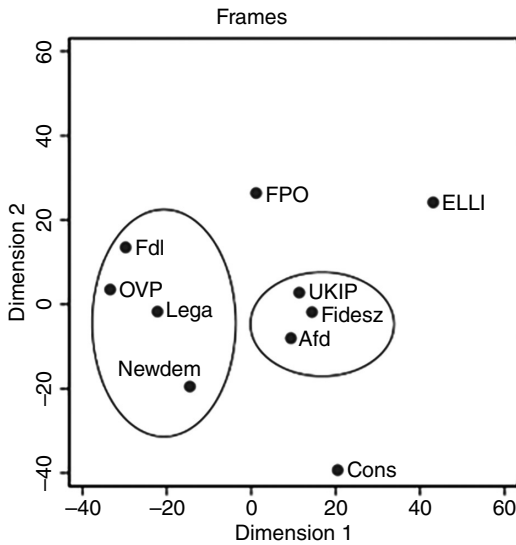
Figure 9.5 MDS configuration of parties' relative proximity based on their use of frames

Fidesz uses all four elements almost equally, but the other radical right parties tend to stress some of them disproportionately. UKIP places emphasis on populist and identity frames, whereas the AfD replaces identity with sovereignty frames, juxtaposing itself to the Europe-friendly policies of the CDU. Meanwhile, the other parties of the radical right are more distinct, with FPÖ focusing *exclusively* on security concerns, trying to outbid Kurz's encroaching on their rhetoric, whereas ELLI, apart from security, prioritizes only identity frames, frequently bemoaning the arrival of Muslim immigrants in Greece.

Looking at the parties of the "southern" cluster in Table 9.5, FdI appears closest to the other radical right parties, as it was also often complaining about the immigrants' identity, origins, and religious leanings. But much like the other parties in this cluster, it is distinct from its other European peers due to its focus on policy efficiency, as it had to respond to the actual arrival of migrants on Italian shores. Policy efficiency frames, discussing migration in technical-efficiency terms, are the one element that separates this "southern" cluster from the other parties here.

The other characteristic element of this cluster is the frequent invocation of solidarity frames by New Democracy, the Lega, and the ÖVP – albeit in different modes. The first two appeal for solidarity and for the
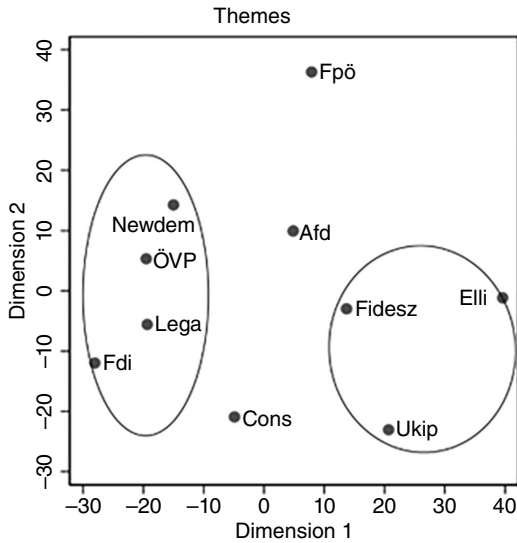
Figure 9.6 MDS configuration of parties' relative proximity based on their use of themes

sharing of the burden of immigration among all member states, something no other party is doing among the ones we study. The Austrian government party, in contrast, refers to solidarity mostly to delineate the terms for providing it: which objectives, with regard to hotspots, border controls, and so on should be reached before the Greeks and Italians can enjoy the goodwill of their peers. The common thread running through the frames used by these parties is the concept of *responsibility*: They were all in government at the time and thus responsible for domestic policy and coresponsible for European policy. Hence their treatment of the issue from a more technical viewpoint and in terms of European policy – and hence the talk of solidarity and the conditions for providing it. In contrast to the parties in the radical right cluster, they had to devise and discuss policies at both the national and the supranational level rather than deal with the refugee crisis as a more abstract threat.

We repeat the previous exercise for the themes and present the results in Figure 9.6. We can see the same clusters of parties emerge for the themes, albeit at greater distances than for the frames. We again complement the MDS figure with the distributions of themes across parties in Table 9.6, and we can clearly see that the rhetoric with regard to themes is even more fragmentary and particularistic than the use of frames, even if we can see similar clusters emerging.

Table 9.6 *Frequencies of themes per party: percentages*

Party	UKIP	ELLI	AfD	Fidesz	FdI	Lega	ÖVP	ND	Cons.	FPÖ	Total
Conspiracy	12.2	*31.3*	12.3	**23.6**	9.4	6.8	11.1	3.1	0.0	7.1	11.2
Jeopardy	**31.7**	*18.8*	8.8	11.1	6.3	6.8	3.7	5.1	16.1	9.2	10.6
Pop/dem	**19.5**	4.2	**15.8**	9.7	3.1	2.3	0.0	0.0	6.5	8.2	6.6
Subtotal	*63.4*	*54.3*	*36.9*	*44.4*	*18.8*	*15.9*	*14.8*	*8.2*	*22.6*	*24.5*	*45.0*
Perversity	12.2	4.2	12.3	5.6	**40.6**	**29.6**	**29.6**	**17.4**	12.9	12.2	16.6
European	19.5	4.2	12.3	**33.3**	15.6	28.4	22.2	**31.6**	19.4	15.3	21.8
Border	2.4	8.3	15.8	12.5	9.4	13.6	25.9	**23.5**	19.4	8.2	13.9
Subtotal	*34.1*	*16.7*	*40.4*	*51.4*	*65.6*	*71.6*	*77.7*	*76.3*	*51.7*	*35.7*	*52.3*
Policy	0.0	8.3	17.5	1.4	0.0	0.0	3.7	16.3	0.0	**36.7**	11.5
Econ	2.4	20.8	5.3	2.8	15.6	12.5	3.7	3.1	**25.8**	3.1	7.8
Subtotal	*2.4*	*29.1*	*22.8*	*4.2*	*15.6*	*12.5*	*7.4*	*19.4*	*25.8*	*39.8*	*19.3*
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
n	41	48	57	72	32	88	27	98	31	98	592

Table 9.6 demonstrates that the radical right plus Fidesz cluster mainly utilizes the first three themes, namely jeopardy (UKIP, ELLI), conspiracy (ELLI, Fidesz), and populism (AfD), with each party again utilizing a particularistic mix. For ELLI and Fidesz, the refugee crisis is often treated as a civilizational crisis, with overtones of demographic replacement and "Muslim invasions" invoked to justify their rejection of refugees. For the AfD, while those elements are present, too, it is far more important to highlight the distance between the popular distaste for immigration and the chancellery's policies. The AfD tends to add some more themes of European failure and sovereigntist frames, as we have seen previously; hence, it slightly diverges from the cluster's core and scores comparatively high in the second dimension. Meanwhile, UKIP and ELLI constantly remind the public that refugees represent a potential security risk in myriad ways: They can bring terror, crime, or disease and threaten our societies.

For the Italian, Greek, and Austrian parties, the same is not true. While those themes are somewhat utilized, they focus much more on perversity, particularly the Italian parties, and on European themes. The first comprise a set of themes that function as a counterintuitive rhetoric. Rather than accept that their policies cause an increase in human lives lost, these parties try to turn the issue on its head: It is actually the left, whose open border policies in the past invited those people in, that is responsible for the drownings. It is the NGOs acting as a pull factor, it is the humanitarian organizations providing them aid that cause the most suffering, and so on. This can be summarized simply as a doctrine of "strictness as humanitarianism" in contrast with the deadly consequences of leniency toward the refugees. Salvini uses this theme predominantly, and so does the FdI's Meloni, while Mitsotakis and Kurz often deploy it, too, aiming to shield themselves from humanitarian critiques.

What they do share in common with the radical right cluster is their frequent use of European themes. But unlike the sovereigntist tones of the AfD and the apocalyptic appeals of Fidesz harping on about "European weakness and decay," these parties drift toward themes that either plead for more solidarity from Europe or encourage further cooperation within it. As such, they occupy a distinct position compared to the radical right and Fidesz.

It is also noteworthy that the Conservatives tend to veer off to a corner in both figures. As both tables show, they produce a relatively unique rhetoric, underscoring again the British distance from European politics. Preoccupied with Brexit and the quest for sovereignty, they have tended to deploy sovereignty frames and talk about migration in economic terms, grouping the refugee crisis with the wider issue of intra-European

migration that was a more salient concern for them than refugees arriving from Syria to Greek and Italian shores. The focus on economic themes is something they do have in common with three of the four southern European parties, the radical right ones, which also stressed the economic pressure from refugees on their already economically squeezed social systems.[3]

Overall, though, we should not entirely focus on differences but also remark that the themes of perversity, jeopardy, Europe as well as more vague calls for tighter border protection are staples in all kinds of right-wing rhetoric and comprise a part of *all* parties' speech. While the degree to which they resort to those tropes differs, it should be remembered that they all do resort to them and mostly alternate in representing the refugee crisis through one of these lenses.

Discussion and Conclusions

In this chapter, we tried to examine right-wing discourse on the immigration crisis, attempting to trace both how right-wing actors responded to an issue that had such a strong humanitarian overtone as well as what the elements were that allowed them to be the main beneficiaries of this crisis (see Chapter 14). We also wondered whether there was a convergence of rhetoric, culminating in a transnational radical right discourse, that shifted away from nationalism and sovereignty toward a defense of common European cultural heritage against the "migrant invaders."

While the data used in this chapter are not sufficient to provide a definitive response, they can lead to some preliminary conclusions. First, we saw that the *common* way the right-wing parties tried to shift attention away from the humanitarian initial response to the refugee crisis was by primarily framing it as a "security" type of issue, either stressing abstractly that border protection needed to be tightened to boost security or presenting specific types of threats, like terrorism or crime, which would manifest due to the arrival of migrants and refugees. Concurrently, if there were any elements of a common discourse, these were centered around qualms about the efficiency of current border and asylum policies, which were typically deemed too liberal, and disdain for the "do-gooders" of NGOs and left parties, who sabotaged efforts to

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[3] Finally, on a technical note, the FPÖ has an unusually high number of policy themes, which is a byproduct of the speeches selected for them, revolving around specific policy proposals. Therefore, we have been reluctant to place them firmly in one or the other group in either analysis and have mostly disregarded the party, as problematic speech selection might have diluted our results.

tighten security and inadvertently helped the smugglers and traffickers. In short, the frame of security and the themes of perversity, jeopardy, and calls to tighten border and asylum policies were dominant across the right-wing spectrum.

Beyond this common core, though, the parties did not speak with a united voice. We did, indeed, trace elements of a "civilizational" discourse, especially in Fidesz's, ELLI's and FdI's speeches, stressing the need to protect European civilization from the invaders. But the mainstream right parties and the rest of the radical right did not particularly adopt this kind of civilization clash theme. Instead, some of the parties we examined continued to bang on the sovereignty drum, while others focused almost exclusively on security/jeopardy issues.

The overall attitude toward Europe was – to say the very least – divided. We noted a strong contingent that had outright Eurosceptic tendencies, such as the cases of UKIP, AfD, and the Conservatives, stressing the need for more sovereignty. Fidesz and the FdI were somewhere in the middle, criticizing European "weakness" when dealing with the refugee threat, sometimes urging the need for separate national-level action, sometimes urging a change in European practices themselves. Finally, other parties, especially the ones that were eventually tasked with governing during the refugee crisis or its aftermath, such as the Lega, the ÖVP, and New Democracy, concurrently leaned toward a tighter integration of asylum and migration policies at the European level and toward a much stricter regime.

Some scholars have mentioned the "ambivalence" of radical right parties toward the EU (Lorimer 2021). In our limited data, at least, this ambivalence manifested mostly at the aggregate level, that is, with some parties opting for closer and stricter integration and others remaining attached to sovereigntist claims. Yet some, like Fidesz, showcased this theorized ambivalence more clearly, concurrently bemoaning the EU's policies and urging a different type of union rather than abandoning it altogether, even if they are located far removed from the solidaristic solutions proposed by the southern European parties.

We can summarize and synthesize the preceding discussion by concluding that, for all parties, there is a common corpus of security frame discourse and then each party, on the margin, adds rhetoric and frames *strategically*, based on *contextual* factors. These factors are mainly three. First, the country's position or type, which spurred the creation of a joint security–solidarity discourse, for example, a frame mainly proposed by the Lega and New Democracy. Operating in frontline states, these parties aimed for a tighter integration of EU policies and redistribution of refugees, which would alleviate the more urgent problems of their country.

Secondarily, the party constellation and positioning of the other parties also had an impact on the type of framing and rhetoric. The AfD, for example, utilized populist themes more often than other radical right parties did, insisting on juxtaposing Merkel's welcoming attitude to the average German's – supposed – hostility toward migrants. In Italy and Greece, this manifested with a sort of division of labor, with the governing parties focusing more on solidarity frames, European and policy-related themes, whereas the radical right parties in opposition tried to carve out a niche based more on cultural-identity concerns and conspiratorial claims, such as the threat of a "migrant invasion."

Finally, the third factor is the timing of the refugee crisis in relation to the already existing political competition, providing incentives for the use of context-specific frames and themes. Thus, southern European parties deploy economic pressure/resource competition themes much more frequently than others, arguably driven by the dire economic straits their electorate found itself in on the eve of the refugee crisis. In Germany, the AfD emerged as the radical right pole of the party system at a time of increased Euroscepticism at the fringes of the political system, which is reflected by its much more frequent usage of sovereignty frames compared to other similar parties. The UK conservatives and UKIP, meanwhile, were already doing their utmost to please the "sovereignty base" of their parties by stressing the issue endlessly, a precursor to the Brexit activity that followed. Overall, the other crises that had preceded or followed the refugee crisis also played a role in the framing and representations associated with the refugee crisis.

To conclude, while there were some seeds of transnational discourse, mainly fixated on security and threat themes, in reality, the right-wing parties do not deploy a common rhetorical and framing template but share a *common pool* from which they borrow a wide array of frames and arguments liberally, depending on their country's context, the political competition there, and the issues that were dominant when the crisis was introduced in their respective countries. The result is the existence of a right-wing discourse that is not entirely unified but is, rather, a sort of kaleidoscope through which different patterns and permutations of arguments and frames present themselves as each party sees fit, depending on its strategic calculus and the country's status quo.