Dutch newspapers and the debate of relations with Ukraine

The role of Frames and Perspectives in Dutch newspapers around the perception and public opinion towards Ukraine in the Netherlands

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Abstract

This thesis examined the role of framing and perspectives around public debates and opinions. The case analysed is the relations between the European Union (EU) and Ukraine from a Dutch perspective over two time frames. The first analysed event was between 2016-2017 regarding ratifying the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine, after a referendum was held in the Netherlands in 2016. The second analysed event was in 2022, about providing Ukraine the status of candidate EU member after Russia invaded Ukraine. The Netherlands was selected as a case, since they were the only EU member that did not ratify the agreement in 2014 but delayed it until 2017. In contrast, the Netherlands agreed with candidate membership in 2022 within four months. This study, thus, looked into Dutch newspapers to investigate the role of frames and perspectives of this change of Dutch perception towards Ukraine. The quantitative results of this study showed that, during both events, the same frames and perspectives were dominant. Since this study conducted a mixed-method approach, the frames and perspectives were also qualitatively investigated. These results showed that the meaning of those frames and perspectives changed: the narrative concerning to Ukraine shifted from a trade partner 'far away' with little connection to the EU during the Association Agreement, towards a 'family member' of the EU that fought for liberal democracies after the Russian invasion. Although the dominant frames and perspective suggested attributions of responsibilities for solutions lied by levels of government since the frames and perspectives trigger little social mobilisation.

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1 Introduction

On the 24th of February 2022, Putin started full-scale land, sea, and air invasion of Ukraine, targeting military assets and cities across the country. As a result of this invasion, the United States and the European Union (EU) reacted to and condemned the Russian actions (CNBC staff, 2022). Multiple sanctions were included against Russia, while simultaneously Ukraine applied on the 28th of February 2022 for EU membership (European Council, 2022). After only four months of negotiating within the EU and between EU member states, Ukraine was provided the status of candidate membership of the EU in June 2022 (NOS, 2022). Although the latest Russian invasions and attacks on Ukrainian territory attracted a lot of media- and political attention, the two states were already in conflict since 2014. This conflict started because of the annexation of the Crimea region by Russia in February of that year (Masters, 2022). Back then, as a response to this conflict, the EU created an Association Agreement (AA) with Ukraine to intensify political and economic ties, which started in June 2014 and was just fully ratified in September 2017. This delay of three years before fully ratifying the Agreement in 2017 was to blame on only one EU member state: the Netherlands. The situation thus differed, in 2022 the Netherlands did not delay the intensifying relation with Ukraine, while during the run towards the ratification it did. For this reason, a change of attitude towards Ukraine within a few years, this thesis will study Dutch perceptions and debates as a case towards Ukraine over two events.

The reason for this three-year delay was a consultative referendum, held in 2016. During this referendum, Dutch people could vote if they were *for* or *against* the approval of the law of the Association Agreement between the EU and Ukraine (NOS, 2016). Eventually, the Dutch people voted 61% against the Agreement's ratification (Kiesraad, 2016). As a result, the Dutch government had to reconsider and negotiate the Agreement on a European level. Ultimately, Dutch Prime Minister Rutte had negotiated six subjects in the credentials among EU members. The first and main subject was that the AA would not be a step towards EU membership. Controversially, the Netherlands ended in a unique situation over the years. First Dutch government delayed an Agreement for three years, to emphasize that the AA was not a step towards (potential) EU membership. While they agreed to potential EU membership for Ukraine within four months after the Russian invasion in 2022. Thus, apparently, there was a change of view and perception towards Ukraine since the time-frames and urgency differed, and the Dutch government changed its attitude within six years between 2016 and 2022. Gamson & Modigliani (1989) suggest that if major event(s) happen, that can potentially change social attitudes. This thesis will investigate the Netherlands as a case where a major event possibly changed attitude(s) of the public towards Ukraine over the years.

Although there are arguably different ways to study this change in perception and attitude, this thesis will dive into the role of domestic media during this international issue. It aims to construe the Netherlands's change of view(s) and perception(s) towards the relationship between the EU and Ukraine. The role of media has long been a topic of interest for academic researchers and society in the context of international conflicts or wars (for example: Saleem & Hanan, 2014; Gilboa, 2009; Shinar, 2003). Mass media play a significant role during conflicts besides governments, international organisations, and NGOs (Joseph, 2014). Given the power of media to broaden information, shape perceptions, and set the agenda, framing and perspectives in media are essential in influencing the public debate(s) or opinion(s). Especially news frames and perspectives determine what is selected, excluded, and highlighted in media coverage. As Tuchman (1978) stated: the media get "The power to shape news consumers' opinions on the topics about which they are ignorant" (p. 2).

During complex international relations, such as the one between the Netherlands, the EU and Ukraine, the media function as a mediator of information between the public and governments (Joseph, 2014):

> ''*The mass media are of particular importance in the context of international conflict, having the potential to play a decisive role in the promotion of peace and resolution of conflicts or in fostering tension and conflict, and acting as destructive agents in the process of conflict resolution.''* (p.226).

Consequently, media assist or accelerate political change, which results in differences of opinion(s) and debate(s) around specific conflicts or wars. During conflicts and wars, media grants the position of a tool that political actors and stakeholders employ to develop, refine and promote their agendas and strategies (Gilboa et al., 2016). To communicate – often - complex issues or stories to readers in a salient way, journalists use *news frames*. News frames are explained as "interpretive packages" consisting of a "central organizing idea" (Entman, 1993; Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). The use of news frames makes certain aspects more suitable in the readers' minds; frames affect *how* people think about specific issues (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Identifying media frames is, therefore, essential to understanding the media and how public opinion is shaped (Joseph, 2014).

In the existing literature, research has been done on how the majority of people rely on EU enlargement topics in national news media because there is often a lack of first-hand experience with these kind of international issues (Norris, 2006). Thus, mass media influence the capability of determining different levels of scepticism or support for EU enlargement or cooperation (Wöhlert, 2013). Zooming in on the topic of news frames around the Ukrainian conflict, Ojala & Pantti (2017) examined the role news media played in the conflict by examining how the visual and textual practices of news framing help constitute geopolitical rationality and legitimise foreign policy. Their analysis indicated that by promoting particular news frames the newspapers contributed to the legitimation of European Union policies, which are premised upon supporting the Ukrainian government in its military campaign in eastern Ukraine and placing responsibility for the conflict onto Russia.

In the case of the Ukrainian conflict with Russia since 2014, mainstream media coverage during wars relate strongly to the political-historical context of each country. Framing of the conflict is, therefore, closely related to the political situation in each country: the main perspective, how conflict is described, and what discourse is used to label the conflict and actors (Nygren et al., 2014). Yet, no scientific research has been done on frames and perspectives in Dutch newspaper coverage of EU and Ukraine relations. Especially the impact of these frames and perspectives in Dutch newspapers of two events in different time frames. This way, this thesis can compare the same concepts in different time frames, and analyse trends around them.

1.1 Research Objective

This research aims to examine the dominance of frames and occurrences of perspectives in Dutch newspapers and describe the public debate(s) around the topic of EU-Ukraine relations. It aims to determine the development of perception by using frames towards Ukraine as a (potential) EU partner during the newspaper coverage over time and how it affected the debate(s). The views and perceptions can be understood by investigating which media frames and perspectives are used to cover news about EU-Ukraine relations in Dutch newspapers. Based on Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), the most commonly used media frames and perspectives in newspapers can contribute to a

better understanding of these topics occurring in public debate(s). This thesis therefore asks the following question:

''Which frame(s) and perspective(s) is (are) dominant during the coverage of two events of intensifying relationships between the European Union and Ukraine between 2016 and 2022? ''

These frames and perspectives will be examined in five different Dutch newspapers. These newspapers are the most selling national daily quality papers: het *Algemeen Dagblad*, de *Telegraaf*, de *Volkskrant*, *NRC* & *Trouw* (Dagbladen in 2020, 2021).

The main research question and various sub-questions are answered based on a mixed-method approach: a quantitative content analysis and a qualitative framing analysis are used. The research questions are partially quantitative and deductively answered, based on five generic frames designed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) and Iyengar's (1990) perspectives, respectively. Considering that this research compares variables, the two events of intensifying diplomatic relations, and five different newspapers, it is valuable to separate the main question into several sub-questions.

Sub-questions

The sub-questions are based on and used upon the theoretical framework of the Thesis. The sub-questions are formulated to define concepts that will be measured during the analysis and to understand the variables. The first sub-question is divided into two parts. The question is the same, but each event is formulated into the question. This way, each event can be analysed separately to compare the two time-frames eventually.

- *(1) During reporting about the EU-Ukrainian Association Agreement post-referendum (2016) until the signing of the Agreement (2017), which frame(s) appear(ed) to be dominant in the selected newspapers?*
- *(2) During reporting about the EU candidate membership after the Russian invasion until the provision of candidate membership, which frame(s) appear(ed) to be dominant in the selected newspapers?*

These sub-questions will highlight which of the five frames(s) appear(s) to be the most dominant during the coverage of each event. The five frames that Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) investigated were conflict, human interest, responsibility, economic consequence, and morality.

- *Which perspectives come forward most strongly within the frames during the two events in the analysed newspapers?*

With the second sub-question, two generic frames are discerned by Iyengar (1990): the thematic and episodic frame. This Thesis will use these frames of Iyengar as perspectives. Bacon (2011) complements these perspectives with his argument that news articles always offer a positive, negative or neutral perspective. As for the frames, the same counts for the perspectives: eventually, the two time frames will be compared.

The third sub-question in this thesis will help to grasp the structure during the analysis. With the help of the outcomes of the more theoretical-based first two sub-questions, this question examines the

interpretation of the outcomes related to the connection between newspaper coverage, the public debate(s), and (geo)political decisions.

- *In what way(s) did the situation and public debate(s) of the Association Agreement and EU-candidate membership in the media coverage develop over time?*

With this sub-question, it is possible to analyse the development(s) of Ukraine's position in the relationship with the EU over time and between the two events. The way of news coverage can be compassionate with the given context and geopolitical position.

The structure of this Thesis to eventually answer and theoretically back these sub-questions and the main research question, will be as followed. The second chapter provides some background information about the context of the subject of Dutch and EU relationships with Ukraine. Followed by a theoretical framework in chapter three, to provide an explanation and understanding for theoretical concepts that are related to the research and topic of this research. The fourth chapter will elaborate on the literature around the methodology of doing this research, how data is received and how the newspaper articles are examined. Eventually succeeded by a chapter that presents and analyses the results found during the research, to eventually end with the last chapter that concludes and discusses the results of this research.

1.2 Societal relevance

This research is societally relevant because of the media's role in describing and explaining complicated and ongoing issues on all kinds of geographical scales. Daily news media, and thus newspapers, are an essential part of the provision of information for people. From local issues to global scales, newspaper media translate complex issues towards a broad audience. Debates and opinions about certain subjects could be liable for the amounts of any content.

Understanding the role of media on topics such as international relations, in specific EU enlargement or relations, has sparked debates around Europe. When direct experiences are rare or completely lacking, mass media are regarded as powerful mechanisms that impact these subjective images (e.g. Zaller & Feldman 1992). Norris (2000) adds to this that people often depend on mass media for supranational issues. Thus, media influence perspectives and perceptions of political communities of or within the EU. Domestic media especially play an essential role in these perspectives and perceptions because of a lack of supranational media on a European scale. Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier (2005) stated that EU citizens know very little about the conditions of how EU member states support or oppose enlargement to a particular applicant state. Arguably, because these complex issues are 'far away' from the daily lives of many EU citizens: the consequences, benefits, or downsides will therefore not be understandable or noticeable for many. The role of media is, therefore, substantially to the formation and changes of media topics and public debates. Especially in international issues, as Page & Shapiro (1992) argue that media are more likely to shape our perceptions of international and foreign policy issues than of domestic politics with which citizens often have direct experience(s). News media are by many citizens perceived as their primary and preferred source of information on – complex - international issues (de Vreese & Boomgaarden, 2006).

This thesis aims to get a grip on, and understand the effects of frames and perspectives on the public debate(s) and the content of Dutch newspapers around relations between the EU and Ukraine. The

frames and perspectives that come forward will therefore be analysed to describe and highlight the effects of occurrences of frames and perspectives for the audience. As Schimmelfennig & Sedelmeier (2005) argued, Ukraine might be a country for the Dutch audiences that is perceived as 'far away'. On international issues such as this relationship with Ukraine, this thesis aims to describe how the frames and perspectives in the articles affect the perception of Dutch readers towards Ukraine. Understanding and explaining the role of frames and perspectives in newspaper media might result in understanding and explaining how it possibly influences or shifts public debates and opinions on this international issue over time. This is essential, since the assumption is that public opinion can also influence policy decisions; for instance, by putting pressure on stakeholders. Stakeholders (politicians, political parties, governments, civil societies, and interest groups) are actors that receive attention in the media and often aim to have citizens on their side. These stakeholders are therefore able to influence politics (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006). Thus, the public opinion, narratives or debates of newspaper media are possibly important to impact stakeholders to influence Dutch politics and policies towards Ukraine directly in national politics, or indirectly via the EU.

1.3 Academical relevance

So far, only little is known about how news frames can affect sense making of EU enlargement issues (de Vreese, 2002; Maier & Rittberger, 2008; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2010). This study, therefore, explores framing theory as a potent tool to investigate how citizens understand and interpret the issue of intensifying Ukrainian relations in Dutch newspaper media in two different time frames. Eventually, this research aims to compare two events of intensifying moments of frames and perspectives in newspaper coverage. It investigates how frames and perspectives have an impact on public debates, opinions and political decisions. For example, Azrout et al. (2012) described how media coverage of an issue indeed affects support for EU enlargement. They found that the information environment had more effect than individual exposure on support for the EU. They argued that media do not necessarily create attitudes but rather strengthen or influence existing attitudes and opinions. According to Norris (2000), the majority of people rely on EU enlargement topics in national news media because there is a lack of first-hand experience. Thus, domestic news media influence the capability of determining different levels of scepticism or support for EU enlargement or cooperation (Wöhlert, 2013). The Netherlands is thus a case in this study of an EU member where the five generic frames and multiple perspectives are researched in Dutch newspapers around the perception of Ukraine, and how it developed over time after a change in the geopolitical situation of Ukraine.

Nygren et al. (2014) stated that mainstream media coverage during the war relates strongly to the political-historical context of each country. Thus, the political situation and history of the Netherlands, arguably have to do with the way newspaper media cover the conflict between Russia and Ukraine or the relation between the EU and Ukraine. Still no academical research investigated the role(s) and relation(s) of frames and perspectives in Dutch newspapers that discuss and explain how these frames and perspectives impact perceptions and debates of the audience towards Ukraine.

De Vreese (2005) and Scheufele (1999) addressed the factors that determined how media frames are shaped (how internal and external factors impact frames), and the effect media frames can have on their audience. News frames are seen as important tools in constructing the meaning of an issue, in ensuring its understanding, and therefore they affect public debates and decisions (Nelson & Kinder,

1996). This is explained based on 'frame-building' and 'frame-setting' (Scheufele, 1999). Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) have, therefore, designed a method for analysing five generic news frames in the media, applicable to all discussed issues in the news. Other scholars have based their research on this specific method (see: Dirix & Gelders, 2010; Valenzuela et al., 2017). Iyengar's (1990) research on thematic and episodic frames is likewise a commonly used method for studying media content.

Conclusively, this thesis contributes to the academic world in multiple ways. Firstly, it adds to the role of Dutch media coverage of EU international issues, specifically, to explain the role of frames and perspectives in Dutch daily newspapers on international relations. Besides that, this research examines the interaction between frames, based on Semetko & Valkenburg's method (2000), and (Dutch) public debates and opinions. Furthermore, academic research has yet to be done on discourse in (Dutch) media coverage of this case of intensifying relations between Ukraine and the EU from a Dutch point of view. This thesis compares and discusses the role and impact of frames and perspectives in Dutch newspaper coverage of this relationship over two events of official intensified relation. As a result, the effect of (Dutch) newspaper coverage on the perceptions and debates of the audience towards relations with Ukraine can be described over time.

2. Context

In order to understand the concept(s) of framing and perspectives and their influence on media coverage, it is of interest to provide some history and (background) information on EU-Ukraine relations and Dutch perceptions around these topics. Therefore, this chapter explains how public debate(s) and opinions of these processes over time developed. Eventually, this context chapter gives an overview of how the EU and the Netherlands act and interacts with their citizens during such geopolitical events.

2.1 EU-Ukraine relations

Europe's approach to Ukraine has long been flawed. After the collapse of the Soviet Union in the '90s, Ukraine has long been perceived as a successor Soviet state. Although the EU recognized the 'European Choice' of the government and considered Ukraine's geographical location, it did not consider the country a potential EU member during the 2000s. The EU made no coherent medium- to long-term strategy towards Ukraine and even made insults towards Kyiv multiple times (Kuzio, 2003). The European Security Strategy in 2003 called for a 'ring of well-governed countries'. The strategy's framing was informed by a vision of a gradually expanding European 'transformative power'. This strategy eventually informed the European Neighbourhood Policy, and together with the Eastern Partnership, this policy in 2004 was designed to deepen relations with neighbours on the eastern edge (MacFarlane & Menon, 2014). However, the issue of further enlargement was avoided. Instead, the EU offered 'association': closer political ties, deep and comprehensive free trade, and the possibility of visa liberalisation. The partnership framework was established as a response to the Russian invasion of Georgia, according to MacFarlane & Menon (2014). By this, Ukraine was mingled between the EU's geopolitical statements and Russia, which both recognized Ukraine in their neighbourhood frameworks. A certain EU-Ukraine-Russia triangle started (Samokhalov, 2015).

Eventually, Ukraine and the EU developed and signed (not ratified) the AA in 2014. This Agreement intensified economic and political relations between the two parties. It has been perceived as a gesture of support for Ukraine´s conflict with Russia following the annexation of Crimea. That exact annexation turned the tide within Ukraine. The former president of Ukraine in 2013, Yanukovych, decided not to sign the AA with the EU on the first hand. However, after both the Maidan protests and the annexation, the new president Poroshenko made a speech affirming Ukraine's attachment to European political values, underlining "its sovereign choice in favour of future membership in the EU" (Euractive, 2014). Although the AA was not perceived as an intermediate stage towards membership, the crisis with Russia and its shock effects on European international relations produced a greater strategic awareness by the EU of the importance of Ukraine (Pridham, 2014). Besides that, the AA offered legislative and institutional tools to support resilience in EU-Ukraine relations (Petrov & Holovko-Havrysheva, 2021). Also, this event led to a stronger different geopolitical path within Ukrainian societies. Samokhalov (2015) argues that from the perspective of societal practices, Ukraine gradually moved to the European development path and not the Russian one. Because of this path, social equality, liberal democracy, and a safe environment would become easier to obtain and become more realistic. In 2017 almost 60% of Ukrainian citizens supported the road towards the EU. It was most likely to preserve national statehood and oppose aggressive Russian influence (Yakymenko & Pashkov, 2017).

A significant turn took place in 2022. Russia invaded certain parts of Ukraine and started a full-scale invasion. Akhvlediani (2022) argues that the EU needs to emphasize its neighbourhood and security

policies because of Russia's hostile attitude. The enlargement policy framework also delivers a strong political message to Russia that the EU is committed to restoring peace on the European continent. European values and democratic processes would be promoted while the foreign and security policies could be revised simultaneously. Firstly, Lippert (2022) adds that the EU needs to show its power as a geopolitical actor to the outside world by collectively projecting power. Secondly, Lippert pleas for development and arrangement policies with neighbouring countries below the membership standard(s). It would improve the ability to act in different situations and assert its values or interests. This prevents emergency admissions or regular accessions that would be very unlikely for candidates in the (nearby) future, as for Ukraine in 2022.

2.2 Public opinion around EU enlargement and integration

During the decade of the most extensive enlargement, in the 2000s, there was a consensus that most EU citizens favoured the processes. On the other hand, the public felt it was not informed sufficiently, and some fears of the impacts of enlargement arose (European Commission, 2003). The data from 2008 tell us what and how opinions have changed in the aftermath. Most EU citizens felt that the enlargement strengthened and weakened the EU (European Commission, 2008). Among the 27 members in 2008, the following results came forward: 48% thought that, all things considered, enlargement strengthened the EU, while 36% thought it had weakened the EU. An eye-catching difference: the accessed countries had been more positive than the original (EU15) member states. A survey from 2009 provided more detailed information on perceptions of the enlargement processes. Here the majority thought that the enlargement contributed to the free movement of people, provided business opportunities, and improved living standards (European Commission, 2009). The differences occurred between Eastern and Western countries in how citizens perceived the combined personal effects affected the EU as a whole. Also shared by many EU citizens, the thought of how the EU grew on the world stage and the enlargement benefitted the weight of spreading democratic values (European Commission, 2009).

That same survey again emphasized a difference between old and new member states. 69% of the older member states' citizens (EU15) agreed that the EU had become more challenging to govern versus 51% in newer member states (CEE). While 57% stated that cultural diversity increased versus 42% of new members, 52% of old members felt that insecurity had increased versus 44% of new members (European Commission, 2009). Toshkov et al. (2014) claim that after the first years of enlargement, EU citizens have a slightly positive assessment of the impact of Eastern enlargement. Nevertheless, it is a weak positive overall assessment, while the satisfaction in old member states is low, and these findings are all based on complex issues like security, economy, and social standards.

Given the results of the ´Eurobarometer´ of the European Commission (2019), for the first time since the survey of 2009, the results of EU enlargement were more positive. 46% of the Europeans voted for ‘further enlargement of the EU to include other countries in future years’. Furthermore, fewer respondents responded against it, with 42%. As for the standard foreign and security policy, 74% of the respondents were for increasing this policy (European Commission, 2019). The latest ‘ Eurobarometer’ - and the first after the Russian invasion of Ukraine - of the European Commission (2022) showed the following results: 57% of the respondents favour including new members within the EU in future years, which is an increase of 11% compared to the latest 'Eurobarometer' in 2019. Only 33% of the respondents were against the statement of further enlargement. Especially the countries of Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, and Malta had high percentages of votes for enlargement. In

contrast, Austria and France had the lowest percentages for enlargement. The support for a more assertive foreign and security policy increased slightly, compared to 2019, to 77%. The highest support came from Lithuania, Belgium, and Luxembourg. The highest increase compared to the former survey was in Sweden, Finland, and Poland (European Commission, 2022).

These results from the 'Eurobarometer' could be explained by looking at geographical locations. The highest percentages of both enlargements and foreign and security policies are in regions of the EU that lay nearby Ukraine and, thus, Russia. The public in these countries could be worried about Russia taking the current invasion further or want to make sure there already is a more assertive policy in the case of invasions in the future. Besides that, there could be more compassion for Ukraine because of the geographical and historical context. Therefore, it seems that context mattered in these surveys. Astrov et al. (2022) explain that a Russian invasion indeed shall have more impact on some countries than others. These are both about security and costs. Some countries are or were dependent on Russia and would suffer economically from the invasion. The security threat also contributes to an increasing tendency towards the EU as a geopolitical actor. This thesis will not go deeper into this issue, but other researchers could contribute to these types of debates.

2.3 Dutch perspective on EU enlargement

In the Netherlands, during a measure of EU views in January/February 2022, there was little support for EU enlargement. 34% of the Dutch citizens supported further EU enlargement, whereas 58% were against this (European Commission, 2022). Over the years, support for EU enlargement has generally decreased in the Netherlands. In 2001 the general support was at 58% for enlargement, had decreased to 31% in 2011, and fluctuated between 30-35% ever since (Den Ridder & Djundeva, 2022). Thereby, the Netherlands belongs to the group of EU members detached for enlargement together with Austria, France, Finland, Germany, and Luxembourg (European Commission, 2022).

Proponents in the Netherlands for EU enlargement motivate their choice based on the need for peace and stability. They reason that enlargement benefits peace and stability for both the Netherlands and the joined country/countries (Djundeva et al., 2021). Besides that, these people think that if these candidate countries fulfill agreements and criteria, they should get the chance to join the EU (Dimitrova & Kortenska, 2017). The proponents do not think that the EU is unstained but that this organisation is the best option for international relations on a global political level. Enlargement helps reinforce and improve the EU´s global position in their opinion (Dimitrova & Kortenska, 2017).

The opponents have three main motives for opposing EU enlargement, according to Dekker & Den Ridder (2019). The first motive is about the organization's functioning: enlargement will pressure the governmental and economic stability of the EU. A second motive should emphasize the characterization of the candidate members. Democratization, stability, peace, and values of these countries need to be as close as possible to the current members of the EU. Cultural differences are an essential support factor for enlargement (see also Lippert, 2021 and Taydas & Kentmen-cin, 2017). If differences are too significant, support for enlargement decreases. A third motive of opponents is the fear that enlargement will decline the benefits for the Netherlands itself. People are concerned that wealthier countries like the Netherlands have to wind up with unstable economies or mismanagement elsewhere.

Since the Russian invasion of Ukrainian territory, Den Ridder & Djundeva (2022) found some results. The respondents understood Ukraine's application for EU membership. However, this was long-term since many saw Ukraine as an unstable democracy where corruption and intolerance for minorities are still part of everyday life. On top of that, many respondents fear that the EU application will fuel anger by the Kremlin. This way, the EU could drag itself into a geopolitical conflict with Russia. Nevertheless, the Eurobarmeter of summer 2022 (European Commission, 2022), included some interesting results. The support for further enlargement had increased to 58% in the Netherlands. With that, it was the highest risen percentage of support of all European countries, with a rise of support of 24%. This means that there is a majority of support for EU enlargement for the first time since 2001. The invasion of Russia in Ukrainian territory has thus turned the tide.

3. Theoretical Framework

A theoretical explanation for changes in public opinion, referred to in the last chapter, may be affected by frames and perspectives in news media. Specifically, newspaper media. As Lecheler & de Vreese (2012) stated, news media are essential in shaping public opinion. Framing is a frequently used concept of how media content affects its consumers (Borah, 2011). Especially in complex international issues of the EU, domestic media play a vital role in the perceptions and perspectives of its consumers since there is a lack of supranational media (Norris, 2000). This lack of information in media around international relations could affect the support for EU agreements or enlargement. Thus, (domestic) media shape the perceptions and perspectives of its consumers on international issues (Page & Shapiro, 1992). The coming chapter aims to give a deeper understanding of what frames are, how they are built-up in media, explaining these framing processes, and the role(s) of perspectives, and what effects these tools may have on outcomes of news media.

3.1 Framing

Since this research aims to find dominant frames in Dutch newspaper articles, and the way they impact the perceptions and discourse towards Ukraine, this section explains what frames are and what effect they have in media. Multiple authors have explained 'Frames' or 'framing´ differently. Framing in social sciences stems from the work of Goffman (1974). He described frames as messages that are formed and affect the response(s) of the people who receive them. Reese (2001) describes frames as: *"organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world"* (p. 11). Entman (1993) adds to that, that they *"shape(s) an individual's understanding and opinion concerning an issue by stressing specific elements or features of the broader controversy in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and treatment recommendation"* (p. 52). 'Communicators' use frames or framing to influence how individuals or social groups think about, evaluate, and act on a topic in line with the contextual information encoded in the frame of reference (D'angelo, 2012). 'Communicators' in this context can refer to individuals, ´´conceived as people unaffiliated with one another, or to groups of people located within a formal organization'' (D'angelo, 2012, p.1). It has to be noted that communicators or communication is in no single case a product of objective/neutral bias. Every message or statement has an underlying bias or frame since every communicator has his own 'coloured lenses´. Based on personal norms and values, and the way every individual has their perspective on every issue based on their environment (Jenkins, 2003).

Frames provide references for the public about what is important. News media have great power because of this since news media publish news on a daily basis (Carter, 2013). In basic terms, this proposition is that public issues and opinions are related to the amount of media coverage of that issue by the news media (Holz & Wright, 1979). News media framing is thus the concept where framing during news media is researched. News media framing consists of two levels: agenda-setting at first and framing at the second. According to Jasperson et al. (1998), "the traditional agenda-setting concept attempts to explain only why one issue becomes more important than another issue in the public's mind; it does not explicitly focus on the nuances of coverage within an issue" (p.206). Whereas framing, on the other hand, "provides a means of describing the power of communication to direct individual cognitions towards a prescribed interpretation of a situation or object" (Jasperson et al., 1998, p.206). With agenda-setting, there exists a correlation between the emphasis that media applies on specific issues and the interests that the public detaches on these issues (McCombs &

Shaw, 1972). While framing takes place within that coverage and is, therefore, the second level. Framing refers to how an issue is characterized or described, whereby it influences the consumers in how they understand and perceive the issue (Scheufele & Tewskbury, 2007).

A media frame is defined as a pattern of news coverage that structures and organizes the meaning of a topic over time (Reese, 2001). News media framing is often linked with newspaper media because news stories are the primary texts in which media framing occurs—and where most audiences encounter media frames (D'Angelo, 2012). Because journalists make news, framing researchers tend to see news organizations as the final arbiters of the frames that reach the public.

Besides media framing – frames in communication – another concept exists, that emphasizes the frames in thought: audience framing. Audience frames exist in the minds of news consumers. They could be described as 'packages of knowledge' that help organize experiences and help process consumers' information (Chong & Druckman, 2007; Scheufele, 1999). These audience frames 'exist in the minds of message recipients,' and Boudet et al. (2014) call it, therefore, "top-of-mind associations". Because the frames influence the opinions and perceptions of specific issues, it also affects how the audience(s) reflects on political news (Scheufele, 1999).

In political media coverage, a specific type of media framing is often present: conflict frame(s). Conflict frames are news frames that "emphasize the conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p.95). A conflict can consist of disagreement, tension between different sides, incompatibility between viewpoints, and politicians attacking each other in the media (Putnam & Shoemaker, 2007). However, conflict is not necessarily negative here; according to Sartori (1987), conflict is an integral part of political processes and crucial for democracies' function. De Vreese et al. (2001) showed that conflict frames are some of the most common frames during political communication. This is throughout different media systems, countries, and news formats (Lenguar et al., 2011). In political communication, conflict frames can negatively affect policies (Vliegenthart et al., 2008) or positively impact turnouts (De Vreese & Tobiasen, 2007). This way, conflict frames expose consumers to what is at stake and why political decision-making is critical (Schuck et al., 2014). This research studies the role of frames and perspectives on perceptions and debates towards the political issue of EU and Ukraine relations. Therefore, conflict frames are expectedly to come forward during the Dutch media coverage of this topic.

3.1.1 Frame-building

To eventually detect news- or audience framing in (Dutch) news media coverage, it needs to be understood how frames get formed or shaped within media and which factors affect frames. Frame-building is the process that deals with the creation and social negotiation of frames in news media. It is where the interaction between journalists and the structures that shape them takes place (de Vreese, 2005). Former studies in this area are often based on sociological foundations of framing research (e.g., Gamson & Modigliani, 1987, 1989). Here it is assumed that these frames provide a starting point for debates among citizens, virtually a 'frame contest'. This contest exists of structures that affect the frames, which can be divided into internal and external factors (structures) (Pan & Kosicki, 2010). Internal factors emphasize the production environment: journalists' values and norms, prejudice, and ideology, or routines of journalists. External factors are about the environment of the media: organizational pressures and constraints, external pressures from interest groups, and other

policymakers (Shoemaker & Reese, 1996). Frame-building is thus a continuous interaction process between journalists, the general discourse, and social movements, reflected in the content of newspapers (De Vreese, 2005). It suggests that internal and external forces impact media how to think or write about an issue, story, or topic (Colistra, 2012).

Internal factors

Shoemaker & Reese (1991) elaborate on elements on the individualistic level that influence framing. These are personal values, beliefs, and routines that affect news frames. Journalists' social norms, values and beliefs play a role in news coverage. Religious, cultural, and political backgrounds and beliefs influence a journalist's views (de Vreese, 2005). These backgrounds may affect the way journalists report certain issues. Jenkins (2003) referred to this as the 'coloured lenses'. The second is the routine level wherein journalists work. Specific patterns, rules, procedures, and practices are embedded in journalists' work methods (Shoemaker & Reese, 2013), which may explain journalistic intervention in conflict framing. These include, for example, the news value of the topic, sources, directions of senior staff, expectations of audiences, and constraints in terms of time and money (Vossen et al., 2018). Besides that, covering news is about how they function and how it is related to the organisation they work for (de Vreese, 2005). Since reporting news is business for journalists, it arguably affects how they write about specific issues (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991).

External factors

The second potential influence on frame-building comes from elites, including interest groups, government bureaucracies, and other political or corporate actors (Scheufele, 1999). These groups routinely engage in frame-building efforts (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987; Nisbet & Huge, 2006). Shoemaker & Reese (1991) explain that many newspaper companies apply top-down structure(s). This way ones at stake determine budgets and political and ideological preferences and concede to the pressure of particular interest groups (stakeholders). On the other hand, other researchers have shown that rhetoric put forth by interest groups strongly influences framing (Andsager, 2000) or policy players/makers (Nisbet et al., 2003). This tends to be the strongest during issues where journalists and stakeholders have a standard view on narratives of which they can construct issue frames (e.g., Nisbet et al., 2003).

The role of politicians or political actors also affects frame-building. Powerful institutional actors – parliamentary or government actors – are not only covered more in the news than less resourceful actors but also got their frames in media more often involved (Herman & Chomsky, 1988; Tuchman, 1978). Journalists will likely make a more significant effort to involve powerful actors in conflicts, taking a more active stance. Political power might thus be an important external factor that determines the influence of journalists compared with political elites in bringing conflict into the news (Bartholomé et al., 2015). Wighers et al. (2018) are in line with this; they state that those with a substantial stake in a specific issue primarily represent the crucial sides of the debates. As a result, journalists consider their influence as more newsworthy. Hänggli (2012) adds that, based on a neutral-informational journalistic norm, journalists tend to cover messages of actors who are actively involved and, therefore, more influenced by the issue than others. Actors with high stakes in political debates are often politicians themselves or (government) officials. Gerth & Siegert (2012) showed that these (powerful) actors thus had privileged media access: they are considered more authoritative, have access to critical resources, and maintain (in)formal contacts with journalists. In

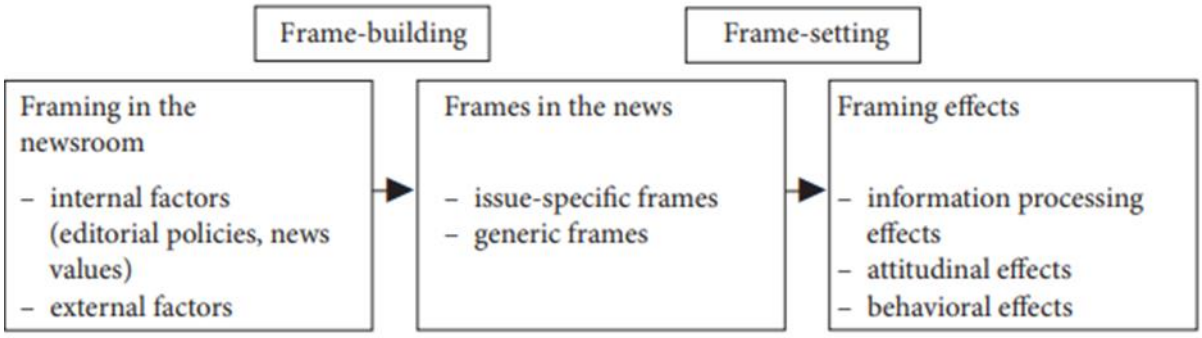
contrast, noninstitutional actors had less influence or were less heard due to the lack of resources, privileges, and capital. Journalists and news media consider these actors less authoritative, objective, or relevant (Beckers & van Aelst, 2019; Wouters, 2015).

3.1.2 Frame-setting

The first two sections described and explained what frames are, what frames do and how they are built. This section embroiders on this theoretical knowledge by how frames could affect and influence the interpretation of the news. Most theories of frame effects try to predict and explain how individuals (audience) can be influenced by messages. Most of the theories of frame effects run on this level. Frame-setting can best be considered an applicability effect (Tewskbury & Scheufele, 2017). Entman (1993) described frame-setting as: "framing is selecting some aspects of a perceived reality and making them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, or treatment recommendation for the item described" (p. 52). Frame-setting implies that journalists mostly frame their coverage in line with their interpretations of the issue.

Moreover, according to Scheufele (1999), it interacts with the knowledge of the individual (audience) that is already present. However, since the individual (audience) is to a certain extent dependent on the media, the media play a role in creating an 'image' of specific issues (de Vreese, 2005). This is what Blumler & Gurevitch (1995) describe as ''discretionary power'' (p.87): journalists do not only influence the media agenda. They do not just write about given topics. Often, they also define what is at issue. Figure 3.1 illustrates the processes of the bespoken concepts around media framing, and how they work in theory or practice.

Figure 3.1:
An integrated process model of framing



Note: adapted from *News framing: Theory and typology,* by de Vreese (2005), p.52. © 2005 John Benjamins Publishing Company

In the case of EU enlargement and integration, audiences mainly depend on the news media. As Norris (2000) argued, supranational issues are issues that the audience has no 'direct' experience with and are thus mainly informed by their domestic media. Mass media here have the power to shape consumers' opinions on topics they are otherwise ignorant of (Tuchman, 1978). Furthermore, as explained, during political issues, powerful political actors also try to influence frames and 'control' public opinion (Gerth & Siegert, 2012; Lecheler & de Vreese, 2012). However, public opinion also has the 'power' to influence the media frames. Thus, frames are processes that are due to constant interaction between actors and stakeholders (Zhou & Moy, 2007).

These first three sections provide an understanding for the reader and researcher of the concepts that are used during this study. Because to eventually detect and examine frames, it needs to (theoretically) be clear what frames are, how they are built, and how they are set up. This way, the theoretical explanation, and embedding provide a framework to work with frames in media for the researcher.

3.2 Media framing and the public debates

The coming section elaborates on the effects and influences media framing has on their audience(s), and thus on the public debates and opinions. This way, it provides a theoretical background on how to relate and link outcomes of this study of frames and perspectives, and their impact, on the perception and debates of the Dutch audience(s) towards Ukraine.

In academic literature, there are different models to show how frames operate and affect the opinion of the audience. Iyengar (1991) assumed that opinions are not affected by changing the content of an individual's idea but by making the existing ideas more accessible so that any consideration is more likely to change the opinion. Some scholars suggested that framing effects are mainly constructed by belief importance. This means that framing affects an individual by transforming the perception of the importance of (some) aspects of specific issues (Nelson et al., 1997). This perspective suggests that trade-offs are made between different beliefs or considerations when opinions are expressed (de Vreese et al., 2011). Frames here highlight some views and ignoring them drifts away other beliefs as less important (Price & Tewksbury, 1997). The other concept, as stated by de Vreese (2010), argues that the effects of frames also affect belief importance. Slothuus (2008) argues that frames can offer new considerations to the individual. It thus affects belief content. It is thought that some views have never been presented to some individuals, which could be the reason why some may never have made connections or opinions on specific topics. So as Vreese et al. (2011) noted: ''not only the importance of existing beliefs is altered but also the beliefs themselves are changed—so the two perspectives are rather complementary than mutually exclusive'' (p.182). A certain ´persuasive effect´ started, influencing opinions and even convictions might be added (Lecheler & De Vreese, 2012). Thus, framing can operate in multiple ways, including the indirect route of belief importance and the direct route of belief content.

While the media may shape public risk perceptions, they also articulate public opinion and play an essential role in policymaking (Nelkin, 1987). During public debates, support can be gained on the societal level by shaping social-level processes such as political socialization, decision-making, and collective actions (de Vreese, 2005). In that regard, media may influence power distribution by determining who gets what, when, and how (Entman, 2007).

Multiple research has been done on account of attributions on the responsibilities of audiences because of media frames (Hannah & Cafferty, 2006; Iyengar, 1990, 1991). Iyengar (1991) distinguished two dimensions of responsibilities: causality and treatment. Causal responsibility looks at, explains, and understands past events. It is about who or what caused it. Treatment responsibility, on the other hand, looks particularly to the future for problem-solving solutions. Here it is more about who or what got the power to solve specific issues. Research around these responsibilities found that these could act as policy metaphors that can assist both elite's and the general public's reasoning about complex social problems (Kim et al., 2010; Schlesinger & Lau, 2000). Often, media frames try to hold someone or something accountable for issues or complex problems.

Responsibility of the audience(s) could thus attend to actors who could solve or cause it (Iyengar & Simon, 1993).

3.2.1 Generic frames in media

Now that some theories around the link and relations between media frames and public debates are explained, this section will discuss the prevalent frames in the selected news media articles. Besides that, the effect(s) or influence these frames have on the perception of the audience(s) and how these frames relate to debates will be discussed. Two types of frames exist in academic literature: issue-specific and generic frames. The term issue-specific frames tell a lot about the capacity of the concept here: ''communicators apparently devise unique ways to contextualize a topic, such as an event, person, issue, campaign, trend, or some other object.'' (Brüggeman & D'Angelo, 2018, p.92). These frames thus cover a specific topic that is solely applicable to the subject of a specific topic or case. They are allowed for great specificity and detail (Scheufele, 1999). On the other hand, generic frames offer a systematic platform for comparison across issues, frames, and topics (de Vreese et al., 2001). Brüggeman & D'Angelo (2018) describe them as ''the contextualizing discourse that a communicator uses in a particular instance has obvious or arguable relevance to a bigger set of topics within which the unique topic is located and with which it shares domain-specific characteristics.'' (p.92). The media and the audience use generic frames to give meaning and understand the issue or topic (de Vreese, 2005).

Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) compiled a well-known typology of news frames. They distinguish between the frames: human interest, conflict, attribution of responsibility, morality, and economic consequences. The following sections will explain and describe these frames and the multiple views that fit in these frames. The five frames that will be examined in this study, are theoretically backed and explained. This way, this framework provides a deeper understanding of what each frame includes, what it provokes and how it can be detected.

Human interest frame

The human interest frame is a journalistic resource to define a complex issue with a specific situation or exemplar to make it more accessible to the audience (Zillmann & Brosius, 2000). Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) described it as this frame that ''brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue, or problem" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). Neuman et al. (1992) put it as "describing individuals and groups who are likely to be affected by an issue" (p. 69). Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) constructed five characterizations and aspects of this frame: Human examples, adjectives or personal vignettes that generate empathy, consideration of how individuals are affected, personal or private information, and visual information that generates empathy.

The human interest frame is often used to get the attention of the audience or to make sure to keep the attention of the audience (Kim & Wanta, 2018). Because the human interest frame often personalizes, dramatizes, and emotionalizes the news, Reinemann et al. (2012) argued that this frame has declined the quality of news. Here it contests the systematic approach of journalism: where news includes multi-perspectival debates, representing a wide range of actors, opinions, and information (Benson, 2009; 2013). It should focus on the broader consequences for communities and societies (Dirikx & Gelders, 2010). Meanwhile, human interest framing often occurs in commercial media, which is prevalent in countries where media is liberalised and in the hands of private owners (Hallin & Mancini, 2004).

Conflict frame

The conflict frame "emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). The conflict frame is most common during political or public affairs coverage (Bartholomé et al., 2015). In conflict frames, often critique or attacks towards political actors is expressed. This also applies to the visibility of diverging political views in the media. It tends to increase an event's seriousness and news value (Burscher et al., 2014). The conflict frame is often used in political debates because it has been found to be a mobilizing force (Schuck et al., 2016). When conflicts are covered in news stories, they tend to be associated negatively, and former research found that this type of coverage is more likely to be selected and affected than neutral or positive coverage (Zillmann et al., 2004). The other negative influence of conflict frames provokes decreasing public approval towards politicians after conflict exposure (Forgette & Morris, 2006). Alternatively, simplified debates and discussions can lead to cynicism and mistrust of political actors (Neuman et al., 1992).

Kim & Wanta (2018) explain that conflict frames often steer less than other frames in how to feel or think about a specific debate or issue. Journalists often aim to provide a balanced reflection of the debate. Such a frame is thus not likely to be biased during debates or issues. The popularity of conflict frames may stem from the statement of Schudson (2001) that Western journalists greatly value objective reporting or to gain interest from the audience. This frame draws the attention of proponents and opponents to a conflict during a debate or issue (Semetko & de Vreese, 2000).

Responsibility frame

This frame is defined as "a way of attributing responsibility for [a] cause or solution to either government or to an individual or group" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 96). Attributing responsibility has been a core concept in understanding policy-making processes, human interactions, and evaluating other people (Weiner, 1995). When media use the frame of responsibility, it leads to the determination of the audience for causes of and solutions to social problems (Iyengar, 1991). Weiner (1995) discussed two views on the responsibility of problems: the first view argues that a problem is caused primarily by the deficiencies of individuals, often those affected by the problem. The second view argues that the problem results primarily from flaws in social conditions, such as unethical business practices, unsafe environments, and unequal distribution of economic resources. Moreover, as explained before, Iyengar (1991) distinguished two dimensions of responsibilities: causal responsibility refers to the origin of a problem, ''treatment responsibility focuses on who or what has the power to alleviate ... the problem'' (p. 8).

When the frames of responsibilities are framed towards an institutional organisation, such as the government, it is more likely that citizens feel that the solution or influence is outside their reach, which reduces mobilization. However, social mobilization is more likely to occur when the roles are reversed since citizens feel more responsible (Iyengar & Simon, 1993). Nevertheless, news media are criticised for reducing critical social issues to individual-level matters, while societal-level responsibilities are ignored mainly (Wallack et al., 1993).

Morality frame

This frame puts the event, problem, or issue in the context of morals, social prescriptions, and religious tenets (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Neuman et al. (1992) found that if journalists used the morality frame, it was frequently by indirect quotations or inference rather than directly because of the journalistic norm of objectivity. Therefore, it is one of the least common generic frames in news media since it is likely to clash with journalists' objectivity (Valenzuela et al., 2017). Although Burscher et al. (2014) found that morality was one of the most infrequent frames in Dutch newspapers between 1995 and 2011, this particular frame is still relevant. Valenzuela et al. (2017) explain that it is likely that emotions will be activated by the audience when the morality frame is used. Stories could end up viral because of their emotional arousal. Thus, morality produces emotions that can mobilize people. However, since morality frames are often related to religion or morality, it is not expected to be dominant during the coverage of this research.

Economic consequences frame

The economic consequences frame "reports an event, problem, or issue in terms of the consequences it will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 96). This frame emphasizes the way certain debates or issues economically affect citizens. An economic issue often directly affects the audience. Media use this frame, therefore, to get the attention or make an issue relevant - in an economical way - for their audience (Kim & Wanta, 2018).

Neuman et al. (1992, p.63) add that the economic consequence frame is more complex and cognitively demanding than the human interest or conflict frames, for example. This is partly because it often uses technical language or vernacular. Wasike (2013) found that this frame is the second least used frame because journalists and news media prefer using entertainment content over complex economic content. On top of that, unless there is an economic downturn, stories with many economic languages, vernacular, and statistics tend to employ less emotionally arousing language (Bachmann, 2005). In former studies, researchers found that statistical information is less engaging and attractive than other types of statements (Zillmann & Brosius, 2000).

Findings from earlier research (e.g., de Vreese et al., 2001; Gamson, 1992), give the expectation that the conflict and consequences frames are likely to be the most common. Several other studies found that the responsibility frame also occurred frequently (Kline et al., 2006; Luther & Zhou, 2005). These three frames appeared more in "quality" newspaper articles dealing with several (complex) topics than the human interest and morality frames. The morality frame seems to be the least frequent (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000). Camaj (2010) found during his research on the Kosovan conflict that Western media, despite their different national origins, all consistently emphasized the 'conflict' frame when reporting on the Kosovo status issue. The 'human interest' and 'economic consequences' frames were hardly present in the news stories, whereas the 'morality' frame was completely absent. Moreover, when observing the framing of the same event over time, it was noticed that the 'conflict' frame was employed more intensively towards negotiations as they reached a heated point. Thus, given the political topic of conflict of this thesis combined with findings from former research, the conflict frame is expected to be quite dominant. Followed by the responsibility frame.

3.3 Perspectives in media

Not only (generic) frames in news media are examined during this research, but also perspectives in newspaper articles will be detected. Iyengar (1991) put forth a framing approach where he distinguished two frames in news items: episodic and thematic. This research will consider these frames as perspectives, and this section will explain and elaborate on what episodic and thematic perspectives are and what effects they have. On that account, it provides meaning and understanding when a perspective occurs.

Episodic perspective

According to Iyengar (1991), the episodic frame is a perspective that the media frequently uses where a topic is presented in a specific event or in a personal case. It often displaces attention away from the larger social conditions and, with that, lets the audience focus more on the individuals' responsibilities. It gives a face to a particular issue and often invokes compassion (Iyengar, 1990). Episodic perspective is more emotionally and personally employed on particular issues, and such coverage thus leads to individualistic attributions (Gross, 2008). This frame is event-oriented, focusing on a single incident, a specific example, or an event (Van Gorp, 2007). Journalists might use the episodic perspective because they seem compelling and are likely to draw the audience's attention to the story. In other words, episodic perspectives are thought to be more emotionally engaging. It allows audiences to identify with an issue and make it more understandable to a broad public (Gross, 2008).

''Episodic framing also encourages a "morselized" understanding of political problems by presenting recurring problems as discrete instances'' (Iyengar, 1991, p.136). As a result, audiences exposed to a lot of episodic perspectives fail to see connections between problems such as poverty, racial discrimination, and crime when presented as discrete and unconnected (Gross, 2008). In the case of EU enlargement processes, journalists may use interviews or conversations with Ukrainian people who are affected by the Russian invasion. For example, there could be a frame on the proponent side of why potential EU membership will improve many lives or how Russian influence in Ukraine causes downgrades. Episodic perspectives are, thus, likely more in line with the human interest frame when the journalist's approach is emphasized the human face above general or abstract approaches (de Vreese, 2014).

Thematic perspective

The thematic frame as a perspective is predominantly informative and focused on trends and facts or reflects a public policy (Iyengar, 1991). Here, issues are set in general or abstract contexts and focus on broader results or conditions (van Gorp, 2007). This way, it presents collective, abstract, and general evidence (Iyengar, 1991). News stories with thematic perspectives are often reasoned with statistics and figures (Iyengar, 1990). thematic framing is thus more persuasive in a broader political, historical, or economic context than episodic framing (Gross, 2008).

3.3.1 Effects of episodic and thematic perspectives in media

Now that, on a theoretical basis, is backed what episodic and thematic perspectives are, and how these could be understood, this section discusses the effects of these perspectives in media. In previous content analyses, episodic and thematic frames showed that they are crucial types of political news reporting (Iyengar, 1991), and effect studies have shown that these frames influence

citizens' attributions of responsibility, their policy views, and the intensity of their emotional reactions (Iyengar, 1991; Gross, 2008, p. 169). For example, Gross (2008) examined columns on participants where one column had episodic frames and the other thematic. Results showed that participants who read one of the episodic opinion columns had more affection and emotional reactions to the column than participants in the thematic condition. Gross' results supported that the effect of frames on citizens' attitudes also may work through an effective indirect track in addition to the cognitive track (pp. 181–182).

Gross explained that he also expected that episodic engaged more emotional responses than the thematic frame. Gross argues that the strength of episodic framing lies in the audience's attraction towards more emotional frames. In contrast, thematic frames merely show statistical or abstract information, which triggers fewer emotions. It is less likely that people already have a particular conviction or preference in politics, for example, a political party or public policy (Aaroe, 2011). This may result because thematic frames present politics or policy problems as impersonal figures and do not bring forward cases of individuals or 'lots' to which they can attach emotional responses to (Aaroe, 2011). Thematic frames are thus relatively less successful in arousing emotions and, with that, the impact of emotional support in policy direction directed by the frame (Gross, 2008).

Bouke et al. (2015) and Aaroe (2011) also found controversial results. Their results found that news stories with episodic frames were more likely to cause support for policies of governments when they benefited the exemplified persons in the stories than the thematic ones. Consequently, episodic frames should be expected to gain more influence by the public than thematic frames when emotions intensify (Aaroe, 2011).

Also, the impact of episodic and thematic frames on the attributions of responsibilities has been studied. Iyengar & Simon (1993) found that lots of exposure to episodic frames in the news led to individuals, audiences, or specific groups holding themselves responsible. Many of the audience(s) do not think in broader contexts of geographics, politics, historical or social environment, which results in responsibility towards the individuals or audiences (Iyengar, 1996). Major (2011) contributes to this by that thematic perspectives lead to increasing societal attributions of responsibilities. Episodic, on the contrary, led to more emotions which results in decreasing societal attributions.

Given the context and complexity of this international topic, expectations have formed that the thematic perspective will be more dominant than the episodic perspective. Communication research suggests that episodic frames cause people to experience a greater emotional reaction than thematic frames because it focuses on a particular individual's personal story (Ciuk & Rottman, 2020). Thematic perspectives, on the other hand, focus more widely on social trends, functions, or statistics. It discusses debates and issues on a broader scale (Ciuk & Rottman, 2020). Political and economic topics on an international level and scale between multiple actors probably include less episodic perspectives that affect individuals, but more thematic perspectives that describe and explain relations and debates.

3.4 Positive, neutral or negative tone(s) in news media

Bacon (2011) stated in his study that news articles always have a positive, neutral, or negative tone. De Vreese & Boomgaarden (2003) add that during political issues or debates, there is mostly either a negative or positive undertone present which is referred to as 'valence framing'. News articles with a negative or positive tone affect the 'attribution of responsibility' (Levin, 2001). Ettema & Glasser

(1998) described the role of media as a 'watchdog function' for democracies. This is because accountability issues are highly relevant to political scandals, the quality of election coverage, crisis communication, and blame avoidance in rhetorical criticism and in framing analysis (Tumber & Waisbord, 2004; Djerff-Pierre et al., 2014).

The tone in media coverage, which is defined as the 'positive or negative valence', is considered a vital aspect of news because it provides an evaluative component of messages and information (Sheafer, 2007). Especially the 'negative valence' has a more profound impact on attitudes than positive information. This is called the asymmetry bias theory (Ju, 2008; Soroka, 2006; Soroka & McAdams, 2015). This theory explains where individuals react more strongly to negative events than positive changes of equal magnitude (Owen & Casey, 2012). It has been shown that negative information is more salient and more memorable (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). On top of that, con arguments are more persuasive than pro arguments (Cobb & Kuklinski, 1997). However, if too much negativity or scepticism occurs around a topic, it might lead to cynicism and demotivation of citizens (Bizer & Petty, 2005).

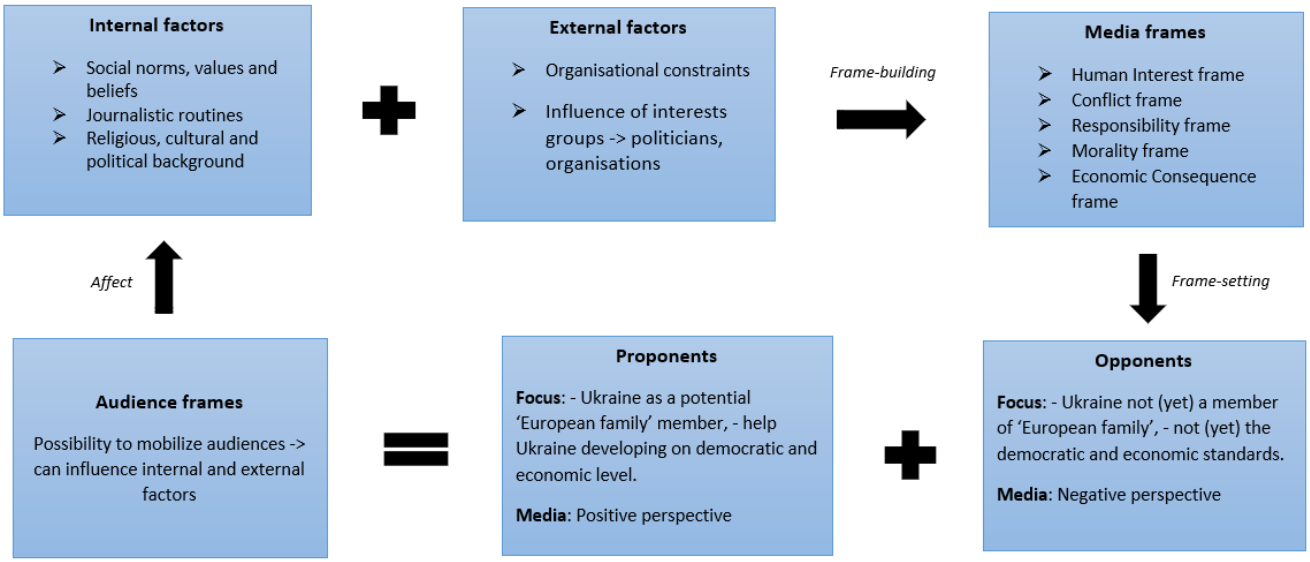
Journalists, and thus their articles and coverage, could also aim to be neutral. Neutral journalists and neutral news articles attempt to avoid stories with unverifiable information and try to 'bring' information quickly to the public (Johnstone et al., 1976). Neutral articles mainly serve to inform and have the intention to be unbiased; it aims to be 'balanced' (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006). It covers all or both sides of the story and does not emphasize one of those sides more than the other(s).

The last sections explained and elaborated on what perspectives are, what they do, and what effect(s) they may have. It is of interest for this study which perspective(s) newspaper articles have, since they set the (under)tone of the story, and thus may affect the discourse or perception. The news articles could be positive, neutral (informative), or negative towards the EU and Ukraine relations. These perspectives combined with the bespoken media frames, provides an indication of the 'image' audiences receive from newspaper media towards relations between the Netherlands, the EU and Ukraine.

3.5 Conceptual model

In summary of the former sections and as a way of explaining what these academic and theoretical insights mean for this particular research, the following has to be kept in mind. Media framing is an interactive process where various factors affect how media frames are shaped. The internal factors (social norms, values and beliefs of journalists; journalistic routines; religious, cultural and political background of journalists) and external factors (organizational constraints; pressure from interest groups) shape the portrayed frames of an issue in the media. De Vreese (2005) called the process of influencing by internal and external factors towards media frame-building.

Figure 3.2:
Conceptual model: summary of media framing process



Note: illustration of a cycle of the process how frames in media form. **Source**: Author

The media frames (and perspectives within these frames) influence the audience frames; this is referred to as frame-setting (Shoemaker & Reese, 1991). If the audience mobilizes, it can, in turn, influence the internal and external factors again (De Vreese, 2005). In this research, the audience frames are the readers of newspapers, representing Dutch citizens. Among Dutch citizens, there are proponents as well as opponents of Dutch and EU relations with Ukraine. These opponents and proponents, among others, form the public opinion and debates. This research examines the media frames and perspectives regarding nuclear weapons. Thus, to put it short, this Thesis focuses on media framing and perspectives on Dutch and EU relations with Ukraine, and how this affects the public debates.

4. Methodology

This chapter aims to explain how a textual analysis can best answer the main research question and its sub-questions. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to provide an answer on the importance of framing the debate of intensifying EU and Ukraine relations. The quantitative method measures the occurrences of frames in the selected data, to compare the two events and point out the dominance of frames during intensifying relations between the EU and Ukraine. The qualitative method, on the other hand, provides an insight into what the frame(s) contain and describe the impact of the frame for the audience. The news articles of the five largest daily Dutch newspapers were analysed. The following sections will introduce both the quantitative and qualitative methods used, advantages, limitations, implementations, and operationalisation.

4.1 Textual analysis

As mentioned, this research aims to answer the main research question: ‘’*Which frame(s) and perspective(s) is (are) dominant during the coverage of two events of intensifying relationships between the European Union and Ukraine between 2016 and 2022?* ’’. It is, therefore, essential to examine which images and ways of thinking about EU-Ukraine relations are frequent and how this may affect public opinion. The selected articles are mainly reflected in the written text. The written text of an article is the core of a larger unit of the public discourse, called a ‘package’. This ‘package’ contains language and the (policy) positions. Five devices are included to signify the use of frames: metaphors, exemplars, catchphrases, depictions, and visual images (Gamson & Modigliani, 1989). A mixed method approach is used to investigate the packages that signify frames: (1) a quantitative deductive method and (2) a qualitative inductive method. The first method is to quantitatively analyse the newspaper articles' content, where known theories or phenomena are explored and tested to determine if that theory is valid in the given content. The second method is to analyse the framing within the written texts; it is a systematic procedure for analysing qualitative data that is guided by specific evaluation objectives.

‘’Textual analysis is a method of the study utilized by researchers to examine messages as they appear through a variety of mediums.’’ (Smith, 2017, p.1). The texts that serve as data are used to assess the meanings, values, and messages being sent through them. This transdisciplinary method is often used in social sciences such as sociology, psychology, political science, health, history, and media studies. It is thus about understanding communication tool(s) (Bergström & Boréus, 2017). The textual analysis also has multiple different variations in the mentioned disciplines. Examples are content analysis, semiotics, interactional analysis, and rhetorical criticism. The content analysis is the method that suits this research best and is, besides that, the most common by framing scholars (Matthes & Köhring, 2008). Content analysis can vary given its quantitative or qualitative approach but broadly deals with assessing material in a given text (Smith, 2017). Hence, combined approaches are useful to understand how (in which way(s)) a topic is covered in the selected data, not only how often a topic is primed. This way, the researcher can analyse the topic over time (Boréus & Bergström, 2017). Because of this combination of methodological approaches, the occurrences of frames and perspectives could be shown over time, and the meaning and impact of the frames and perspectives within the written texts can be interpreted. Eventually, the events could both be compared and provide a comprehensive overview of how frames impact the Dutch newspaper media coverage of this subject.

4.1.1 Quantitative content analysis

Although defined in numerous ways, content analysis is a research method that generally involves a "systematic and replicable" analysis of messages (Riffe et al., 1998, p. 20). Content analysis was traditionally utilized in the communication field and originated with studies of newspaper content (Krippendorff, 2004). This method, therefore, grew in popularity for studying messages in mass media and other sources (Krippendorff, 2004). Under the framing theory, researchers can conduct content analysis by measuring clusters of messages, also known as frames, to see how these are then incorporated into their audiences' schemata (Entman, 1993). Content analysis is thus essential to finding patterns in written texts.

The first approach to investigate Dutch newspaper articles was quantitatively analysing the content. Since there is little to no previous research on this particular topic, there were no issue-specific frames to investigate. Therefore, the generic frames of Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) were used to analyse the content initially of the selected newspapers. Quantitative binary coding was used, where questions were asked (see table 2) towards the articles that could answer 'yes' or 'no'. The same applied to analysing the perspectives. The thematic or episodic perspectives were analysed by coding them with the following values: (1) if the perspective was present, or (0) if it was not in a particular article. Just as for the tones of articles: the attached value of (1) if the tone was positive, neutral, or negative; the none present tones were attached the value of (0). The operationalization section elaborates on using this binary coding.

Quantitative content analysis (QCA) has been defined by Berelson (1952) as "a research technique for the systematic, objective, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication" (p. 18). This method aimed to detect what frames and perspectives newspapers publish and the quantity of these frames and perspectives. This way, the dominance of the generic frames and perspectives for all the analysed articles and each event could be exposed. As a result, it could be analysed how the dominance of frames and perspectives affects the perception and debates of the audience(s) on this subject. The QCA is an often-used method for generic frames. According to Vliegenthart (2012), the generic frames are applicable to multiple studies and topics, making the topic more abstract since they work from theory towards data. The QCA is a deductive strategy employed in cases where a researcher uses pre-existing theoretical and empirical knowledge based on which the deductive framing categories are devised. Using pre-existing established frames based on theory makes it more 'fair' to work with and comparable to other studies (Touri & Koteyko, 2015). It helped reduce this research from being selective and personally biased. The theoretical basis provided a framework to work with and clarified what to investigate in the written texts.

4.1.2 Qualitative framing analysis

This research not only investigated how often and what frames occured in Dutch newspapers. It also examined how frames occurred and described and presented the debate(s) around EU-Ukraine relations. Framing analysis is a form of content analysis where analysts identify the "central organising idea" for news content which supplies the context and the content of the issue through selection, emphasis, and exclusion (Entman, 2004, p. 6). This method, thus, analysed the texts of the selected news articles in an inductive way. Therefore, frames could be determined and analysed in an issue-specific form. It is more detailed and specific than quantitative analysis since this method starts from data analysis towards theory.

The qualitative framing analysis method used in this research is based on the theories and research of van Gorp (2007) and Gagestein (2015). Van Gorp (2007) argued that frames consist of two concepts: framing devices and reasoning devices. The framing devices are elements in visible or written texts. Examples are choice of words, metaphors, characteristic events, visuals, images, and maps. These examples are connected with an underlying structure throughout the text (van Gorp, 2007). Gagestein (2015) elaborated on five aspects based on van Gorp's work which forms the devices: events, causation, context, judgment, and solutions. Since these five aspects are not directly visible in texts, an inductive qualitative analysis examines the frame (devices). This is based on the approach of 'open' and 'axial' coding. Open coding happens by 'breaking open' a text and determining for each unit to which frame it belongs (Khandkar, 2009). With axial coding, the open coding is read over and grouped into categories. This way, reasoning devices could be mapped. As a result, the framing and reasoning devices established a frame that presented the central idea around a topic or issue (Vossen et al., 2016).

To sum it up shortly, both approaches of analysing determined which image of the EU-Ukraine predominated in Dutch-quality newspapers. Following Van Gorp (2007), it is essential to incorporate a mixture of quantitative and qualitative methods in a framing analysis. It exists of compromising two variations of broad analysis. First, a quantitative macroanalysis of a – carefully and purposefully – selected data set is used and followed up by a microanalysis of selected data, which illustrated and pointed out broader framing processes identified during the macroanalysis. Consequently, the content and impact of frames and perspectives could be described. Only knowing the occurrences of frames and perspectives did not satisfy the understanding of how frames and perspectives impact the perceptions and discourse of this geopolitical subject. The mixed methodological approach thus saturated the dominance of frames and perspectives while simultaneously understood the effect(s) of the same frames and perspectives.

4.2 Data Selection

The research data consisted of the circulation's five largest national quality newspapers from the Netherlands. Newspaper articles are chosen because they are able to communicate better about complex situations than radio or television (Linstrom & Marais, 2012). Newspapers, in general, provide more elaborated and detailed information than other media outlets (Dirikx & Gelders, 2010). Besides that, Dutch citizens are most likely to gain interest and knowledge about international conflict of the EU through domestic media since there is a lack of satisfying supranational media (Norris, 2000). The five largest Dutch newspapers, circulation-wise, are chosen because they reached the majority of newspaper readers. According to the latest statistics: het Algemeen Dagblad, de Telegraaf, de Volkskrant, het NRC & Trouw (Dagbladen in 2020, 2021). Although this research thus only examines articles of the five largest national quality circulation newspapers, they still reached 23,4% of the Dutch population, which is a fair representation (Dagbladen in 2020, 2021).

The time frames of the two events where the data was selected were as follows: the first event around the Association Agreement is from the 4th of April 2016 till the first week of September 2017. This time frame starts when the referendum occurred and ends the week after the Association Agreement was ratified. The reason for this timeframe is to investigate the articles that were written towards an officially signed intensifying relationship after an event that could change the discourse of that time instead of the run towards a voting event. The second event's time frame started on the 21st of February 2022 and ended on the 3rd of July. This time frame was selected from the week that

Russia started the invasion of Ukrainian territory till the week after Ukraine was granted potential EU membership. Same as for the first event, also here, the timeframe started after an event (the Russian invasion) that could change the discourse or perception of that time. Conclusively, during both events only articles were coded and analysed after an event – the referendum or Russian invasion – that could change discourse until an official signing of intensifying relations. This way, the perception and discourse towards Ukraine during both runs till official intensifying relations could be compared. All news items within these time frames, predominantly around the Association Agreement and EU-Ukraine relations during the violent conflict, were selected. Articles mainly based on domestic issues or did not include relations with Ukraine were not coded and analysed. The following procedure obtained the articles, via NexisUni:

- (1) the selected time frames of one of the two events were filled in (04/04/2016 - 10/09/2017 ; 21/02/2022 – 03/07/2022);
- (2) the search terms for both events were: 'EU Ukraine';
- (3) selection of the news source, one of the five newspapers at the time
- (4) time frame selection from 'oldest to newest' was selected
- (5) 'quick' scan if the main topic of the article was about EU-Ukraine (international) relation.

If an article fulfilled these five steps, it was selected. Finally, two frame matrices were used to analyse these selected articles based on the former literature. Table 1 shows the gathered newspaper articles, including totals for each event and the total for each newspaper, including both events.

Table 1: total amount(s) of the gathered newspaper articles

Newspaper(s)	**Association Agreement**	**Potential EU-Membership**	**Total** (per newspaper
Algemeen Dagblad	11	15	**26**
Telegraaf	13	14	**27**
Volkskrant	19	15	**34**
NRC	12	18	**30**
Trouw	17	17	**34**
Total (per event)	**72**	**79**	*151*

Note: quantitative articles per newspaper, by event. Source: Author

As shown in table 1, a total of 151 newspaper articles are coded and analysed. In academic literature, discussions have risen about saturation during qualitative research. Most qualitative researchers who aim for theoretical saturation do not rely on probability. Rather, the sampling procedure is purposive Coyne (1997). The researcher thus decided which cases to include in the sample based on prior information like theory or insights gained. However, a minimum amount of data is needed. During this thesis, it is decided to select every newspaper article that fulfilled every step of the five steps, while simultaneously being related to Dutch or EU relations with Ukraine on an international level. Some scholars give tentative indications of sample sizes that often lie at least around 20 or 30 (Mason, 2010). As shown in table 1, every newspaper has a total of articles between 25 and 35 spread over the two events. Although the theoretical mechanism on which these estimates are based

is unknown (Rijnsoever, 2017). Most research argues that determining whether theoretical saturation has been reached remains at the discretion of the researcher, who uses her or his own judgment and experience (Suddaby, 2006). Patton (1990) even states that "there are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry" (p. 184). As such, the guidelines for judging the sample size are often implicit. Conclusively, there is no theoretical basis for the saturation of the amount of articles. Therefore, during this research is chosen to select and code every article that fulfilled the five steps as mentioned above, and that was related to Dutch or EU relations with Ukraine.

4.2.1 Frame matrices

As mentioned in the theoretical framework, Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) introduced five generic frames in media items. These five generic frames could be found in these media items by asking multiple questions related to the theories of that specific frame. Semetko & Valkenburg formulated multiple questions for each frame (2000, p.100). This research asked or faced two questions for each frame towards each article. These two questions are selected based on the bespoke literature and relevance around each frame of this issue and can be found in table 2. The selected questions can all be answered with 'yes' or 'no'. If both questions could be answered with 'yes', the particular frame was labelled as 'present' in that article. It was then coded with (1) in a scheme, if both or one of the two questions could not be answered 'yes', the frame was coded with (0). Some articles had two – or even more – frames that appeared in one article.

Table 2: Questions faced for the QCA

Conflict frame *Does the story reflect disagreement between parties/individuals/groups/countries?* *Does one party/individual/group/country reproach another?*
Human Interest frame *Does the story provide a human example or 'human face' on the issue?* *Does the story emphasize how individuals and groups are affected by the issue/problem?*
Responsibility frame *Does the story suggest that some level of government has the ability to alleviate the problem?* *Does the story suggest solution(so) to the problem/issue?*
Economic Consequences frame *Is there a mention of financial losses or gains now or in the future?* *Is there a reference to the economic consequences of pursuing or not pursuing a course of action?*
Morality frame *Does the story contain any moral message?* *Does the story offer specific social prescriptions about how to behave?*

Source: Adapted and adjusted from ´´Framing European politics: A Content Analysis of Press and Television News.´´ by Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, Journal of Communication, 50(2), p.100

Eventually, after analysing all the articles, the number of frames that appeared was counted. The same counted for – possible – combined frames in the same article. On behalf of the perspectives and (under)tones in the articles, figure 2 provides an oversight of which questions were asked or faced to each article to determine what could be labelled as 'present'. Also, these were counted and on top of that, related to the five generic frames. This way, the perspective(s) and tone(s) could be

linked to each 'present' frame. For example, when the results showed that frame X is often in perspective Y, with tone A, B or C. It has to be noted that each article can solely be labelled from the thematic or the episodic perspective. A combination was excluded. The same applied to the tone in each article; it could exclusively be answered 'yes' by one of the three given options. To put it short, if one of the questions could be answered with 'yes', it was coded with a (1), so the other(s) were instantly coded with a (0). This way, the absolute numbers and relative percentages could be counted afterward.

Table 3: Questions asked to determine the perspective and tone (based on Iyengar (1990) and Bacon (2011))

Question for each news article	**Perspective of the news article**
Is the content of the article persuasive on a broader political, historical or economical context?	**Thematic perspective**
Is the content of the article where a topic is presented in a specific event or in a personal case?	**Episodic perspective**
Is the content of the article positive towards EU and Ukraine relations?	**Positive**
Is the content of the article neutral/informative about EU-Ukraine relations?	**Neutral**
Is the content of the article negative towards EU-Ukraine relations?	**Negative**

Note: Scheme of questions towards each perspective. Source: Author

These first two figures were matrices that are applicable in a deductive way for the quantitative approach of this research. The following figure is a matrix for the inductive and, thus, qualitative way of analysing the articles. It provides an issue-specific understanding of the five generic and possibly new frames. Figure 3.3 is the basis of the coding. For each news article, the matrix was filled in. Firstly, the news articles were analysed for reasoning devices. As Gagestein (2015) stated: the issue, cause, solution, judgement, and context were first noted, followed by the notation of framing devices. The inductive and qualitative coding of figure 3 was analysed in the program Atlas.ti

Figure 3.3: frame-elements for issue-specific analysis (based on Gagestein, 2015))

Elements	**Frame**
Reasoning device(s)	- Event/Happening (who or what is the issue, problem or situation?) - Cause (what is the motivation or occasion?) - Context of the event - Moral & emotional judgement - Solution (what should someone think, find or do?)
Framing device(s)	- Characteristic text elements (choice of words, arguments or motives etc.) - Characteristic images (or figures)

Source: Author

4.3 Limitations of the methods

There were some limitations to both deductive and inductive methods of research. For the deductive quantitative content analysis, Matthes & Köhring (2008) stated that a critical limitation of this approach ''is the crucial prerequisite that the frames are known beforehand and that they suit the topic currently under investigation. In other words, this approach demands a clear idea of the frames likely to be encountered.'' (p.262). Thus, deductive studies are already dependent on existing and established frames based on literature. Quantitative methods are, therefore, often characterized as inflexible and fixed (Healy & Perry, 2000). Paley (2008) contributes to that: "doing quantitative research entails a commitment to a particular ontology and, specifically, to a belief in a single, objective reality that can be described by universal laws" (p. 649). Supporters of statistical ways of researching believe that multiple truths may exist.

Furthermore, although the researcher aims to research the truth, there are measured and considered with some degree of error (Davey et al., 2010). Since this research was based on existing theoretical frames and perspectives, this research could be perceived as inflexible and fixed. Because of that, there was less room for personal interpretations outside of these frames and perspectives. Almost all findings during this research stayed within the given frames and perspectives, which did result in findings that did not went much beyond the pre-known frames and perspectives or created new ones.

Where Healy & Perry (2000) argued that quantitative methods are characterized as inflexible and fixed, are inductive qualitative methods perceived as flexible and multifaceted. Here, a distinction from objective turns towards subjective ways of researching. Therefore, qualitative researchers are often perceived as embracers of personal viewpoints and even biases to describe and interpret the (subjective) phenomena they study (Miller, 2008). Although a qualitative inductive framing analysis is needed to provide meaning to and specify the five generic frames, subjective inductive research has its limitations. Matthes & Köhring (2008) shared concerns that inductive research methods are often poorly described and lack consistency. Likewise, this research is done individually, possibly resulting in inconsistent and unclear descriptions. Therefore, results are based on personal viewpoints and interpretations, especially since qualitative coding is sensitive to such inconsistency.

Consequently, research happened in what Tankard (2001) described as a 'methodological black box'. It is difficult to moderate what an individual researching is thinking and seeing, especially since every researcher has their own 'coloured lenses' because of their context (Jenkins, 2003). Thus, more difficult to reproduce, generalize and compare to other studies (Boréus & Bergström, 2017). Although this research is based on theoretical frameworks, one researcher completed the research. There was, thus, no second opinion or interpretation. This did not strengthen the results since every researcher has their perception and social context: every researcher has their own 'glasses' on, which results in different perceptions, interpretations, and opinions. Especially the qualitative method makes any research, therefore, not 'watertight'.

Another limitation of this research was that it only investigates newspaper articles, and thus no online- or social media. Online news content as online news websites and social media, is increasing in popularity. Broersma & Graham (2012) found that social media had become an established source for (political) news among major news media in the Netherlands. Thus, although these five largest

newspapers represent a small quarter of the Dutch population, they do not represent most of the Dutch population. On top of that, it does not examine TV or radio either.

Given that these newspaper articles were Dutch, only people who can read in Dutch can check and compare the results of this Thesis. As a consequence, some results or quotes from the selected data are therefore translated and are thus not directly quoted. There could have been, therefore, some slight mistakes in the direct translations that may not cover the journalists' intention(s), direct message(s), or discourse.

Lastly, the platform of NexisUni that provided all newspaper articles, as described in the section of 'data selection', did not include any images, graphs, tables, or figures. Therefore, the 'characteristic images' framing device could not be examined. Consequently, the impact and effect of visuals in written texts could not be included in the analysis.

5. Results

This chapter discusses the results of examining the frames and perspectives in the selected data of the five Dutch newspapers. Based on both the theoretical and interpretative sub-questions - which will be addressed in this chapter – eventually, the main research question, *''Which frame(s) and perspectives are (most) dominant during the Dutch newspaper coverage of intensifying relationships between the European Union and Ukraine in 2016 and 2022?''* is answered. Firstly, the frames of Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) will be discussed. Starting with the comprehensive statistics of both events combined, providing an overview of occurrences of frames around this topic in general. After that, both events will be discussed separately. This way, any differences or similarities between these events over time could be analysed, given the changed context of EU and Ukraine relations. Secondly, the perspectives of Iyengar (1990) and Bacon (2011) will be discussed. Here the thematic and episodic perspectives are presented, combined with the (under)tone of the newspaper articles. As for the frames section, first, a comprehensive overview of all analysed data will be provided, followed by an analysis of the separate events.

A total of 151 Dutch newspaper articles were analysed throughout both events. Newspaper articles were only selected and, thus, analysed if the topic was predominantly about the relationship between the EU (or the Netherlands as a member) and Ukraine. During the event of the Association Agreement, a total of 72 articles were coded; during the potential EU-Membership debate, the number of articles coded was 79. Hence, there was no huge gap between these amounts, which enhanced the outcomes' reliability. Since the proportion of the number of articles was comparable. Unfortunately, NexisUni did not include the images of the newspapers in their texts. Therefore the framing device of images could not be included during the analysis. The analysis exists thus only of analysis of a written text.

5.1 Frames

This section discusses the first theoretical sub-question, ''*During the reporting of the intensifying relationship between the European Union and Ukraine, which frames(s) as discussed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) appear to be most dominant in the selected newspapers?*''. To provide an answer to this sub-question, a binary coding system was applied. This meant that if an article could be answered 'yes' to both questions of one of the five frames (figure 4.1); it was coded with a 1. When it could not be answered 'yes' to both questions, it was coded with a 0. This way, the totals could be added up. Table 4 provides an overview of the comprehensive totals of all analysed articles.

Table 4*: Total occurrences of frames in Dutch newspapers*

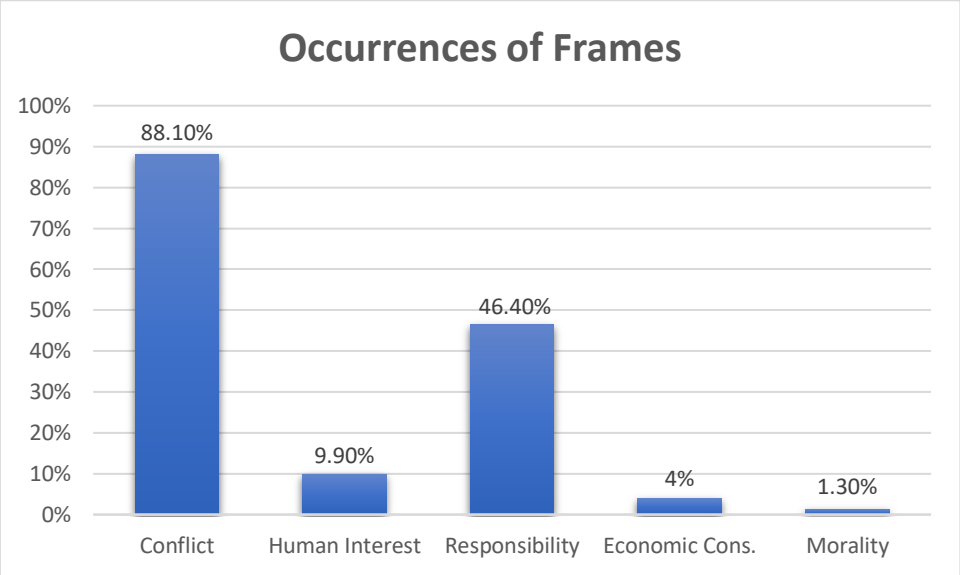
Event	Conflict	Human Interest	Responsibility	Economic conseq.	Morality
AA	62	8	32	1	0
EU-Member	71	6	38	5	2
Total (151)	133	14	70	6	2
	88,10%	9,30%	46,40%	4%	1,30%

Source: Author

Table 4 shows that a total of 225 frames occurred in the 151 newspaper articles. Thus, in some articles, more than one frame occurred. As noticeable from the figure, this appeared most often between the conflict and responsibility frames. Besides this result, figure 5.1 shows a visual chart of

the most dominant frames during the Dutch coverage. The conflict frame was noticeably the most dominant frame in Dutch newspaper coverage, appearing in 88,1% of the articles. They were followed by the responsibility frame that appeared in 46,4%. Evidently, many articles included topics that reflected disagreements between (political) stakeholders that reproached one another or suggested the article some responsibility towards a level of government and some solution towards the issue.

Figure 5.1: Chart of most appeared frames of Semetko & Valkenburg (2000)



Note: chart of occurrences of frames. Source: author

The other three frames appeared a lot less in the articles. The human interest frame just appeared in 9,3% of all articles and was thus the third dominant frame. So roughly one in ten articles included a human example of an issue and emphasized how people were affected by it. The economic consequences frame and morality frame occurred respectively only in 4% and 1,3% (a combined total of 8 articles out of 151). Fewer articles included financial/economic consequences of pursuing certain actions or contained any moral messages. The following sections elaborate on both events in frames separately statistically wise and describe how the frames emerge.

So, as figure 5.1 visually demonstrates, the first sub-question: ‘’*During the reporting of the intensifying relationship between the European Union and Ukraine, which frames(s) as discussed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) appear to be most dominant in the selected newspapers?*’’ could be answered: the most dominant frame during the coverage of both events is the conflict frame. The frame occurred in 133 articles, out of the 151 analysed articles. The second most dominant frame, that occurred in 70 articles, was the Responsibility frame.

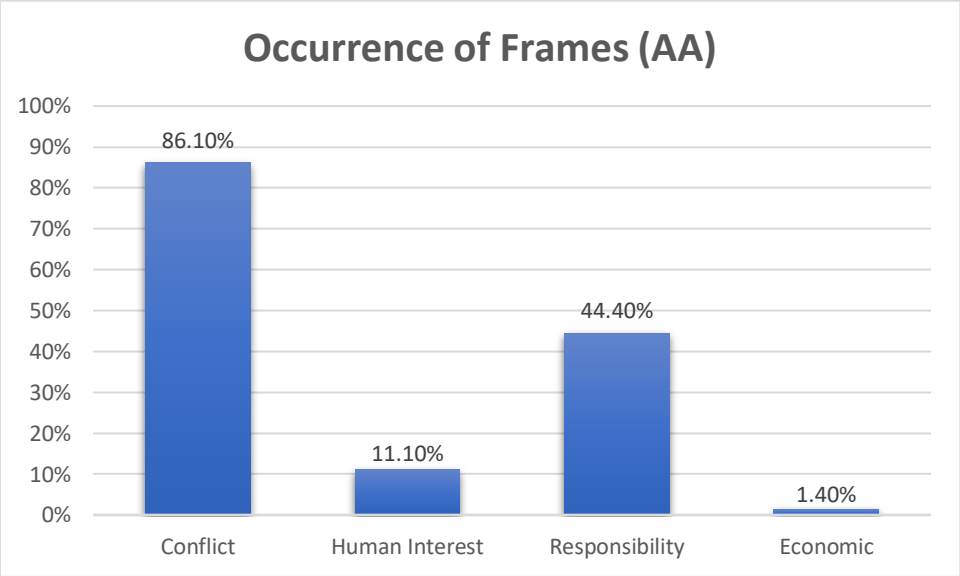
5.1.1 Frames during the AA-event

The first event that will be discussed is the Association Agreement after the referendum in April 2016 till the ratification of the Agreement in September 2017. The sub-question that is aimed to answer here is *‘’During reporting about the EU-Ukrainian Association Agreement post-referendum (2016) till the signing of the Agreement (2017), which frame(s) as discussed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) appear to be most dominant in the selected newspapers?’’*.

Around this event, 72 articles were relevant in the five selected newspapers. Most of these articles appeared in the Volkskrant (19), the least in Algemeen Dagblad (11). Thus, no newspapers had more than double of articles or other excessive amounts. Besides that, it has to be noted that the articles in newspapers were not included if they had no relevance to relations between the EU or The Netherlands and Ukraine. Articles that were completely focused on Dutch domestic issues were removed.

Figure 5.2 shows the relative percentages of frames that occurred in the analysed data of this event. Only four of the five frames appeared; the morality frame was not present in any of the articles. The economic consequence was the least prevalent frame, with only one occurrence and thus 1,4%. The human interest frame was present in eight articles and thus in 11,1% of the total. This frame appeared in three out of the five newspapers; it did not appear in the Volkskrant and Telegraaf. The second most dominant frame during the AA coverage was the responsibility frame, which occurred in 32 out of the 72 articles (44,4%). This means that the conflict frame was the most dominant frame during this event. 62 out of the 72 (86,1%) articles included disagreement between (political) stakeholders where they reproached one another.

Figure 5.2: Chart of occurrences of frames of Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) during the AA



Note: chart of occurrences of frames. Source: author

Figure 5.2 visually provides an answer to the first part of the first sub-question: *''During reporting about the EU-Ukrainian Association Agreement post-referendum (2016) till the signing of the Agreement (2017), which frame(s) as discussed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) appear to be most dominant in the selected newspapers?''.* Here, the conflict frame was the most dominant frame, occurring in 86,10% of the analysed articles. The second most dominant frame was the responsibility frame, that was present in 44,4% of the articles.

5.1.2 Description Conflict frame

As mentioned, the conflict frame during this event occurred in 86,1% of the articles. This means that many of the articles contained frames that pointed out disagreements, thus conflicts, between stakeholders in this debate. It also has to do with these stakeholders reproaching/criticizing each

other or another. The frame 'conflict' here was, therefore, mostly about conflictual views, standpoints, or arguments in (Dutch) political debates. Thus, it was mainly a conflict of interests, with each stakeholder having their arguments and opposing views of other arguments. Many articles, as a result, included both or multiple sides and stakeholders. This way, it balanced the content of the articles and provided the readers rarely one side of the debate.

Figure 5.3: Conflict frame – qualitative analysis

Elements – Conflict frame (AA)	
Reasoning devices	*Content in text*
Event	Dutch opposition vs. proposition towards AA
Cause	Dutch referendum about AA
Context	Debates of EU intensifying relations with non-EU
Judgement	Complicated geopolitical discussion within EU
Solution	Some adjustments in AA to satisfy Dutch voters
Framing devices	
Arguments Descriptions Word choice	- Justice for Dutch voters, vs; - AA is just a trade-agreement Phrases of stakeholders in this debate Pessimistic to Ukraine, critical to Dutch government
Images	X

Figure 5.3 show the results of the qualitative analysis of the conflict frame. The framing devices here are elements in the text that are expressly present in the text of an article. These are the arguments given (by phrase, for example), descriptions of situations, and type of words chosen by the writer. Reasoning devices, on the other hand, contained the moral of the story or debate. These were not directly present in the written text but are more focused on the event(s) of the article(s) (Gagestein, 2015).

During the conflict frame, the events were mainly written about the conflict of Dutch stakeholders around the Association Agreement. Opposition and proposition of the AA arguments were phrased often to provide the reader with direct arguments and positions. Mostly Dutch politicians and political parties appeared in the articles. Although they differed in position and arguments, many stakeholders had in common that they criticized the cabinet and Prime Minister (PM) of that time. It was namely the case that the Dutch people voted in a referendum against an ongoing AA. Therefore politicians and political parties emphasized that the will of the voters counted: the opposition wanted to get rid of the AA, and the proposition wanted only an adjustment in the AA because of the referendum. The Dutch PM got therefore involved in a complicated geopolitical situation: the Netherlands was the only EU country that did not ratify the AA; thus, on behalf of only the Dutch voters, the Dutch PM had to lobby for an adjustment. The following phrase summarizes it quickly:

''Rutte made yesterday clear that he is in an impossible situation. Captains of the opposition want him to withdraw his signature from the agreement, while other European countries continue to cooperate with Ukraine [….]. However, you can't force other countries with only a Dutch referendum to take away the whole agreement.'' ('Gesteggel over Oekraïne verdrag', Trouw, 30 june 2016).

There was thus conflict on two fronts, one on a domestic level between opposition and proposition and one on a European level where the Dutch PM had to lobby against rest of the countries on his own.

The main perspectives during this frame towards relation with Ukraine, had to do with where Ukraine belonged to. Main opposition stakeholders often argued that Ukraine did not belong to the EU, had no perspective (yet) to it, and further cooperation eventually could provoke Russian threat:

''For them the agreement with Kyiv is an example of the democratic shortage in the EU, the enlarge their entitlements unasked. A part of the opposition Dutch wants us the get out of the EU. The agreement isn't only bad for NL and the EU, but also for Ukraine itself; it thrives a wig between Russia and European supporters in the country'' ('Wel of geen nauwere band met Oekraïne', Telegraaf, 5 april 2016).

The (Dutch) proposition of the AA argued that it should stimulate trade and, as a consequence, both economies. On top of that, it would help develop Ukraine as a state and a country. Especially reforms of their economy and the rule of law and tackling corruption. It would thereby create geopolitical stability at the borders of the EU. However, some proponents also argued that Ukraine would not be able to join the EU soon since they still had a lot to develop politically and economically wise, and thus did not belong to the 'European family' yet.

All in all, there were multiple reasons for newspapers to write articles framing a conflict: to (1) inform readers how the government handled the political outcomes of the referendum, (2) to provide multiple views (national and international) upon this debate, (3) explain the geopolitical complication of the results in the EU and (4) explain choices that politicians or (powerful) individuals made.

5.1.3 Description Responsibility frame

The second most dominant frame during the coverage of the AA event was the responsibility frame. 44,4% of the articles contained content that suggested that some level of governance had the instruments to approach a problem or suggested some solution to a problem. Thus, journalists framed institutions, level(s) of government, or persons in charge to be responsible for tackling or dissolving specific issues. The Dutch cabinet represented in this frame a majority of the electoral votes, which meant they were responsible for politics, policies, and other political decisions. The elected opposition, on the other hand, supervised the politicians in charge. Hence, the Dutch newspaper media framed the responsibility of handling the AA between the Netherlands, the EU, and Ukraine towards one of the highest government(s) levels.

Figure 5.4: Responsibility frame – qualitative analysis

Elements – Responsibility frame (AA)	
Reasoning devices	*Content in text*
Event	Dutch government dealing with the referendum result
Cause	Dutch voters voted against the AA
Context	Intensifying relation between EU-Ukraine with AA
Judgement	Governmental responsibility to facilitate satisfaction
Solution	Dutch PM lobbying for adjustments in AA
Framing devices	

Arguments Descriptions Word choice	- Listen to Dutch voters - Facilitate sustainable relation Facilitate referendum -> consequences Critical towards Dutch politicians and parties
Images	X

Figure 5.4 shows the qualitative analysis of the responsibility frame during the coverage around the AA. This frame focused mainly on emphasizing the individuals and level(s) of the government in charge who could facilitate policy or political change. After the consultative referendum in the Netherlands, the Dutch government was in doubt about how to deal with satisfying the result of a democratic process while simultaneously lobbying solely for adjustments within a supranational organisation. Journalists framed in the coverage that voters ultimately chose the elected representatives to fulfill tasks that voters could not do themselves.

The national clash of the responsibility frame was summarized shortly in the NRC: *''However the decision is not decisive – it is 'only' a consultative referendum – Prime Minister Rutte did good by taking the decision seriously. It means that the cabinet in the meantime the law of approval which leads to ratification of the agreement between the Union and Ukraine emulates. Thereafter, the question arises how to fulfil the desires of the opponents''*. (Tegenstem plaatst Nederland buiten de Europese orde, NRC, 7 April 2016).

The other part of the responsibility frame took place on an international level. Here the Dutch PM had to negotiate with his domestic people, that voted against continuing the AA. At the same time, on an international level, he could not stop it as being the only stakeholder to negotiate it. Besides that, the rest of the EU wanted to continue intensifying cooperation with Ukraine. So if the Netherlands wanted to withdraw, the AA would continue on the same page except for the Netherlands involved.

''The cabinet faces a tough task to translate the result. Withdraws Mark Rutte his former placed signature uncritically? In no time a new association agreement will be formed with the other 27 EU members, warn some 'big fish' anonymously. A matter of 'copy-paste', with the only difference that the Netherlands doesn't benefit from it and the rest does.'' (Rutte heeft nu wat uit te leggen, Algemeen Dagblad, 7 April 2016).

So the Dutch cabinet was responsible for multiple occasions:

1. Justice and satisfaction for (a part of) the Dutch voters;
2. Preventing the international image- and economic damage of the Netherlands within the EU by withdrawing out of the Agreement;
3. Sustainable ongoing cooperation with Ukraine while simultaneously excluding the option of potential EU-membership.

5.1.4 Description Human Interest frame

The human interest frame occurred in only 11,1% of the articles. Here the content of the articles included a ´human face´ or human example of an issue or emphasized how people were affected by that issue. This frame put the effect(s) on the people or individuals in the middle. Thus, instead of the conflict or responsibility frame focusing on governmental levels during this event, this frame focused

more on people and individuals. The Volkskrant and Telegraaf were the two newspapers that did not include human interest frame(s).

Figure 5.5: Human Interest frame – qualitative analysis

Elements – Human interest frame (AA)	
Reasoning devices	*Content in text*
Event	Debates of Ukrainian citizens' geopolitical future
Cause	Putin's aggressive appearances during conflicts
Context	Putin bombing citizens in Syria & russification Crimea
Judgement	Ukrainian citizens 'deserve' European prospects
Solution	Intensifying relations EU and Ukraine to condemn Kremlin
Framing devices	
Arguments Descriptions Word choice	- Putin's support for Assad - Support Ukraine after Maidan-revolution How conflictual geopolitics affect citizens Negative discourse towards Russia
Images	X

Figure 5.5 shows the framing devices mainly focused on international conflict of geopolitics. Journalists described the indirect effects of Putin's politics in the articles and did that with negative discourse towards him. The positive discourse in some articles was towards the Ukrainian people who demonstrated during the Maidan revolution in 2014.

As well as for the framing devices, the reasoning devices were also focused on international conflict. European leaders stated that providing consensus towards Putin was both admitting to his support to Assad and a 'smack in the face' towards the Ukrainian citizens who demonstrated for a European future on Maidan square. The first human interest was Syria's civil war, where Assad was fighting his own citizens. Therefore, according to European leaders, Putin supported Assad and was an accessory to the bombings, destructions, and victims. The suffering of the Syrian people - because of Assad's and Putin's acts - are therefore described and emphasized.

''The dissension of Europe to the outside world will be that clear, that Europe won't be able to halt Putin in Syria. ''At this moment, citizens in Aleppo are bombed by vacuum bombs that sucks oxygen out of people's lungs. That's what worries me. The Netherlands is part of an international community that fights these types of war and aggression in this world''. (Wanhopig beroep Rutte op oppositie, Trouw, 29 October 2016).

The other human interest frame was about the Maidan revolution of 2014. Here the newspaper media described how some Ukrainian people were demonstrating for EU prospects. At the same time, protesting that goal, several deaths occurred. The frames appeared in a way that some Ukrainian people had died for the occasion of welfare and democracy.

''Even the biggest sceptic can't be unaffected by a walk over the Maidan. The deaths are even honored with monuments that are visible everywhere. Guides tell what happened and what people

were fighting for: hope for welfare and democracy''. (Verdrag met EU biedt jongeren Oekraïne hoop op betere toekomst, Trouw, 1 April 2016).

The reason why journalists framed human interests during this event was because of how the international geopolitical conflict had an effect, affected people, and may resulted in victims. (1) Putin's politics led to victims, even in other countries, (2) One should not forget that demonstrating and hoping for European prospects can lead to revolutions and even deaths.

5.1.5 Description Economic consequences

The economic consequences frame occurred only in one article during this event. Thus, one article focused on economic gains and losses or consequences resulting from a course of action.

Figure 5.6: Economic consequences frame – qualitative analysis

Elements – Economic consequences frame (AA)	
Reasoning devices	*Content in text*
Event	(Economical) implementation of the AA
Cause	Gradual integration of Ukraine in EU's internal market
Context	Arguments of opposition and proposition
Judgement	Adjustments of Ukraine's internal economy
Solution	Gradual cooperation
Framing devices	
Arguments Descriptions Word choice	Doubtfulness political and economic circumstances Geopolitical reasoning Negative associations with Ukraine's market/economy
Images	X

Given that figure 5.6 is based on one article, this frame cannot be discussed with a trend like the former frames. These devices all occurred in the same article. This article focused on the economic consequences of the eventual implementation of the AA. It first discussed how the EU and Ukraine would integrate financially and economically since Ukraine would receive market and economic reforms subsidies. It followed with an explanation of how Ukraine should have treated the Agreement to transform its economy in the years after. This frame focused thus mainly on the economic consequences and reforms for Ukraine's internal market and economy. Eventually, this agreement targeted the ongoing integration of Ukraine's market into the EU. Therefore, this article described today's Ukrainian market and economy negatively.

Journalists framed economic consequences thus (1) to inform readers how and why European subsidies should result in domestic reforms of the partner, (2) to describe the current situation of the partner's economy/market and what that partner had to adjust to progress economic integration.

5.1.6 Dominances and trends of frames during the AA-event

The first part of this chapter discussed the occurrence and description of the frames elaborated by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000). During the coverage around the process of ratification of the AA, only four out of the five frames did occur, with the Morality frame being absent and the economic

consequence frame occurring only once. The most dominant frame was the conflict frame, being present in 86,1% of the 72 articles. Followed by the responsibility frame that occurred in 44,4%. The Human Interest frame, as the third most dominant, was present in eight articles.

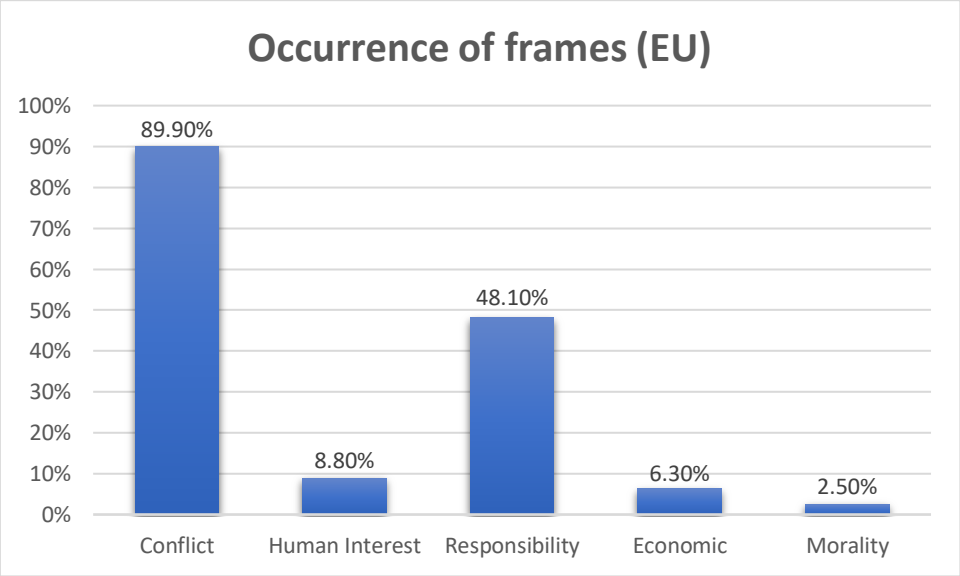
The two most dominant frames, conflict and responsibility, both emphasized the role of levels of government. The conflict frame focused on the Dutch national cabinet and government to satisfy domestic voters and Dutch international relations. Here, finding a compromise for stakeholders with conflictual interests occurred mainly during framing. The responsibility frame, on the other hand, focused more on putting down the responsibility for compromises and solutions on the politicians and governments in charge. The model of indirect democracy was underlined in this frame since citizens voted for representatives who dealt with complex (geo)political issues for them.

5.1.7 Frames during the potential EU-membership

The second event discussed in this chapter is the event after the Russian invasion of Ukraine until awarding of Ukraine with potential EU membership. This section aims to answer the sub-question: *''During reporting about the Ukrainian EU candidate-membership after the Russian invading till the affirmation of candidate membership in 2022, which frame(s) as discussed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) appear to be most dominant in the selected newspapers''*.

During the period between February 2022 and June 2022, a total of 79 articles were relevant in the five selected newspapers. Same as for the first event, around the AA, only articles that were mainly about relations between the EU or the Netherlands and Ukraine were coded. The Telegraaf had the least relevant articles (14), while NRC had the most (18). Hence, no vast differences between the number of articles in the newspapers were found.

Figure 5.7: Chart of occurrences of frames during EU-membership



Note: chart of occurrences of frames. Source: author

The relative percentages of frames in the 79 articles that were coded are visually shown in figure 5.7. Firstly, all five frames appeared during this coverage. Demonstrably, the conflict frame rises above the other rods and is thus the most dominant frame. By occurring in 89,9% (71) of the articles, much content reflected disagreements, conflicts, and reproaches between different stakeholders. The

second most dominant frame was the responsibility frame. Almost half of the articles, 48,1%, included topics of suggested governmental responsibility or suggested solutions to issues. The third and fourth frames in dominance are the human interest and economic consequences frames. Appearing in only 8,8% (7) of the articles, a few articles provided attention to human examples of problems and affections of those problems on people. The economic consequences appeared in 6,3% of the articles, meaning that few articles mentioned financial losses or gains and consequences of specific political actions. The least dominant frame was the Morality frame, which was only present in two articles.

To answer the second part of the first sub-question: *''During reporting about the Ukrainian EU candidate-membership after the Russian invading till the affirmation of candidate membership in 2022, which frame(s) as discussed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) appear to be most dominant in the selected newspapers''*, the most dominant frame during this event was the conflict frame. Present in 89.9% of the analysed articles, it occurred the most of the five frames. The responsibility frame was the second most dominant frame, occurring in 48,1% of the analysed articles.

5.1.8 Description Conflict frame EU-membership

The conflict frame occurred 71 times during the coverage of this event. That means that it did not appear in only eight articles. 89,9% of the articles contained frames that pointed out disagreements, thus, conflicts between stakeholders in this debate or one stakeholder reproaching another. Ukraine and Russia are in a violent conflict, while the EU had a conflictual standpoint opposed to Russia. As a result, these three actors in this conflict reproached one another. It was here, thus, a conflict of violence but also of interests. Ukraine wanted sovereignty as a state and the decision for its future in its own hands; Russia wanted parts of Ukraine to become Russian territory and Ukraine not to be part of the EU. In contrast, the EU wants stability on the continent's edge and Ukraine to reform its state and economy.

Figure 5.8: Conflict frame – qualitative analysis

Elements – Conflict frame (EU)	
Reasoning devices	*Content in text*
Event	'Western' perspective to treat Ukraine
Cause	Ukraine's (slow) development towards liberal democracy
Context	Ukraine's low governmental rankings of corruption and rule of law
Judgement	The 'West' need to take action to help Ukraine
Solution	Provide geopolitical prospect and supply in war
Framing devices	
Arguments Descriptions Word choice	- The 'West' can't let Ukraine down - Ukraine is making the fight for democracies Russia as a non-democratic aggressive influence Optimistic towards Ukraine, negatively towards Russia
Images	X

Figure 5.8 shows the qualitative analysis of the conflict frame of the coverage during this event. The main events during the coverage were, on the one hand, reports about the situation in Ukraine, how Russia invaded them, and de consequences or results of the conflict. On the other hand, many articles included coverage of discussions among EU countries and within the Netherlands on how to help and involve Ukraine. Sanctions against Russia and supplies to Ukraine were amongst the most common short-term solutions. For the longer term, the discussion arose on how to deal with Ukraine: provide them perspective in the EU, thereby making them an ally, or the perception that Ukraine as a state and economy was ready for the EU. Ukraine was therefore framed two-sided: on the one hand, the nation that fought Russia and thus for democracies against autocracies. On the other hand, it was a corrupted state with an underdeveloped economy and market. The considerations of the EU to involve Ukraine or not in the organisation felt thus as emotional, based on values and ideas, versus rational, governmental, and economical.

EU countries were unanimously in accord with supporting Ukraine and condemning Russian actions. As a result, the views and discourse towards Ukraine were positive, while the ones of Russia were negative. Ukraine was perceived as a country that fought for liberal and democratic values and ideas: an ally of the EU.

''Rutte praised the Ukrainian army and the Ukrainian nation for their determination and 'the willingness to protect freedom and democracy'. He called the conflict between Russia and Ukraine 'David versus Goliath'. "'The military power of Russia is enormous, that's why I admire the spirit of the Ukrainian army and the courage of the people more and more''.'' (Rutte steunt Oekraïne, zwijgt over EU, Algemeen Dagblad, 13 May 2022).

The Russian invasion also led to an unexpected turn of unity within the EU, which was described beforehand as fragile and divided. This violent conflict thus brought the EU together:

''At first sight Putin succeeds in one week what he actually fights: a far going form of European unity, vigour and further integration that is turning against his Russia. The last weekend of February 2022 has the potential to go down in history as a turning point, a 'Zeitenwende', wherein European countries again determine position''. (Europese eensgezindheid van nu is hoopgevend, NRC, 1 March 2022).

Reasons why journalists would frame conflicts in their coverage of this event were (1) to report about violent conflict on the European continent, (2) to show that democracies could be under attack by aggressors, (3) to provide readers that the EU could unite and perceive Ukraine as an ally and (4) to report internal disagreement how to deal with such a war and the suffering state.

5.1.9 Description Responsibility frame EU-membership

Almost one in two (48,1%) articles during the coverage of this event included the frame of responsibility. It thus suggested that level(s) of governance could alleviate problems or suggest solutions towards solutions. Thus, journalists frame institutions, level(s) of government, or persons in charge to be responsible for tackling or dissolving certain issues. Given the topic of this event and based on the content, it is mainly pointed towards the EU as a supranational organisation to take responsibility and the most powerful countries within it. Because Russia invaded Ukraine, a trade partner of the EU, the EU had to take action to condemn Russia's actions and provide Ukraine support. The EU had to take responsibility for making geopolitical statements and perspectives for

Ukraine. Moreover, as a global power based on values and ideas, the world expected the EU to step up.

On the Dutch national level, the Prime-Minister Mark Rutte and Minister of Foreign Affairs Wopke Hoekstra were the main actors in the spotlights. They were the representatives and thus responsible for discussing and determining how the Netherlands would participate in this conflict. The Dutch parliament had the opportunity to steer them in a way to represent the Netherlands.

Figure 5.9: Responsibility frame – qualitative analysis

Elements – Responsibility frame (EU)	
Reasoning devices	*Content in text*
Event	Ukraine´s European perspective since war
Cause	Russia´s aggression awaits European reaction
Context	Inconsistency EU how to approach enlargement
Judgement	Expecting EU to provide a geopolitical answer
Solution	Governments to provide affected countries EU prospect
Framing devices	
Arguments Descriptions Word choice	- Moral support - EU geopolitical influence Holding those with power responsible Considerate discourse about enlargement
Images	X

As figure 5.9 shows the qualitative analysis of the responsibility frame. The main discussions of responsibility during coverage of this topic were about providing perspective for Ukraine towards the EU and how to deal with enlargement politics. The perspective for Ukraine was mainly about support in two ways: materially and morally. Materially wise, the EU took for the first time in history the responsibility to supply a nation with artillery and funds. Morally, Ukraine asked for support in a way that they had perspective in the future towards the EU:

''Zelensky had one clear question for Brussel: if Europe would say yes to a European future of his country as his people want. A European foresight is essential for the morale of his fighters. ''Without Ukraine will be lonely'', said Zelensky. ''Prove to us that we are as you, and that light will win over darkness, and life of death''.'' (EU-lid worden gaat zomaar niet, ook niet voor Oekraïne, Trouw, 2 March 2022).

The other discussion that arose in the frame of responsibility was the enlargement politics of the EU. Some countries have been in the waiting rooms for years, and now all of a sudden, Ukraine could be a potential member. If the EU would provide Ukraine the candidate membership, the critical note sounded unfair to other appliances.

''Besides Ukraine and Moldova, applied Georgia also for membership. Some countries find it difficult to split these three countries all of a sudden. What signal gives the EU to Putin if they let a country down even longer? Besides that, the waiting room for the EU is quite full with Balkan countries, some are waiting more than ten years for some progression in the accession round. The tempo of

enlargement issues until now, motivates them to even knock harder on the door''. (Hartenwens Kiev stuk dichterbij, NRC, 17 June 2022).

The frame of responsibility was mainly focused on (1) the EU as an actor to take responsibility for condemning Russia and supporting Ukraine, (2) Ukraine encouraging other actors to take action, (3) the Dutch national debate on how to represent themselves during the conflict and (4) the EU's responsibility to deal with enlargement politics.

5.1.10 Description Human Interest frame EU-Membership

In 8,8% (7) of the articles, the human interest frame appeared. Articles here provided a human 'face' or example in the story and affected groups or individuals by the problems. Only two newspapers included the human interest frame during the coverage of this event: the Telegraaf (2) and Algemeen Dagblad (5). Since this topic was about the situation in Ukraine after the Russian invasion, this frame was mainly about two topics: the destruction of the Ukrainian environment by Russian bombings and the victimization of Ukrainian citizens because of the war.

Figure 5.10: Human Interest frame – qualitative analysis

Elements – Human Interest frame (EU)	
Reasoning devices	*Content in text*
Event	Ukrainian victims and destruction
Cause	Russia's violent aggression and bombing
Context	Russia's invasion to annex parts of Ukraine
Judgement	Inhumane conditions of war crimes
Solution	Condemning Russia's actions and justice
Framing devices	
Arguments	- Unfair actions of Russia - Characterization this as war crimes
Descriptions	Environmental destruction and unworthy scenes
Word choice	War terms and negative associations Russia
Images	X

Figure 5.10 shows the content in the articles by the different devices. Within these articles, mainly descriptions of the effects of Russian bombings in cities attracted attention. Besides that, the direct victims of war crimes were described:

''At the front the Russian attackers didn't make much progress. It stayed with bombings and distance shootings. It was deadly though: at least ten people lost their lives by a Russian bombing on a fabric northern of Donetsk.'' (Johnson tegen Oekraïne: Dit is uw 'finest hour', Algemeen Dagblad, 4 May 2022).

The second topic during this frame was mainly about the consequences of Russian war crimes in Ukraine, the Ukrainian refugees. These articles often included descriptions or stories about the refugees that fled Ukraine towards Europe. Refugees here were seen as victims of Russia's actions which needed help in the short term. The discourse around them was positive because journalists described the situations of why and how Ukrainian people fled:

''On social media videos were shared where images were shown how citizens were fleeing while missiles were everywhere. Ukrainian forces stated that Russian troops did not only use stun-grenades, but were shooting with sharp. Stun-grenades cause a huge crack and flash that make people blind and deaf for a while.'' (Half miljard extra voor militaire steun Oekraïne, Algemeen Dagblad, 22 March 2022).

The human interest frame was mainly written to attract the readers' attention regarding the destruction of the Russian invasion. War crimes and the consequences of these crimes were described to let readers sympathise and understand the situation in Ukraine while simultaneously condemning Russia and perceiving them as aggressors. The effects and affection on Ukrainian people should be compassionate Dutch readers.

5.1.11 Description Economic Consequences frame EU-Membership

In five (6,3%) of the 79 articles during this event's coverage, the economic situation's consequences were bespoken. It was about financial gains or losses and a reference of consequences by a course of action. The 'trend' that will be discussed consists of de Volkskrant (4) and Telegraaf (1), the rest of the newspapers did not include the economic consequences frame.

Figure 5.11: Economic consequences frame – qualitative analysis

Elements – Economical consequences frame (EU)	
Reasoning devices	*Content in text*
Event	Investment reconstruction Ukraine & independency Russian fuels
Cause	Condemnation towards Russia
Context	Russia large supplier of fuels in Europe
Judgement	'Absorbing' Ukraine into EU
Solution	Creating independency of Russia
Framing devices	
Arguments Descriptions Word choice	- Financing Russian war - Ukrainian reconstruction towards the West Focus redevelopment energy supplies Activating towards change
Images	X

Figure 5.11 shows the qualitative analysis of the frame out of the two newspapers. The main topics within this frame were the reconstruction of Ukraine and creating independency of Russian fuels and energy. The first topic of the reconstruction was about the investments and funds to rebuild Ukraine if the war (ever) ended. The EU and some countries would invest in Ukraine, which would cost a lot, with the idea of 'absorbing' Ukraine in Europe. Because all countries unanimously condemned Russia and supported Ukraine, there was no debate to help but merely on the costs and the way of:

''The leaders promised financial support of billions for the 'reconstruction of a democratic Ukraine as soon as Russian invasion is stopped', according to the declaration of Versailles. In the last weeks, the Union freed up 1,2 billion euros for Kyiv. The declaration furtherly mentioned that 'all war refugees' from Ukraine would receive residence permits.'' (Extra EU-hulp voor Oekraïne, geen 'sneltrein' naar lidmaatschap in het vooruitzicht, Volkskrant, 11 March 2022).

The other main topic was about creating the fuel and energy independence of Russia. This would mean a change of economies within the EU, for some countries, more than others. It is the case that if European countries still import Russian fuels and energy, they indirectly financed the war. To prevent this, independence needs to be created:

''A second potential split was argued by Rutte and his colleagues: the European independency of oil, gas and coals from Russia. Everyone wants to get rid of that, de facto is the EU financing with its import the invasion in Ukraine. According to the European Commission, the EU could go without it in 2027: by buying gas elsewhere and investing massively in home-produced sustainable energy and energy savings''. ('Bittere nasmaak' bij EU-compromis over lidmaatschap voor Oekraïne, Volkskrant, 12 March 2022).

During the coverage of this event, the topics of economic consequences were mainly focused on the EU countries. (1) subsidies and funds of the EU towards Ukraine for reconstruction and thereby 'absorbing' Ukraine towards the EU, (2) investments and policies to create independency from Russia within the EU, with some discussion between countries since some need more change than others.

5.1.12 Description Morality frame

The morality frame was the least dominant frame since it occurred only twice out of the 79 articles. The description is therefore based only on two articles. This means that - unlike the other frames – there is no trend within this frame. These two articles contained thus any form of moral message and some kind of prescription about how to behave. Figure 5.12 show the reasoning and framing devices of this specific frame.

Figure 5.12: Morality frame – qualitative analysis

Elements – Morality frame (EU)	
Reasoning devices	*Content in text*
Event	The debate of supporting Ukraine politically
Cause	Literal and figurative fight for liberal democracies
Context	Ukraine as a political and geographical 'buffer state'
Judgement	Provide perspective for Ukraine
Solution	Symbolistic politics from the EU
Framing devices	
Arguments Descriptions Word choice	- Justifying the support to the public - Role of the war Ukraine's fight is symbolistic for the 'Western world' Consequences of Putin's aggression
Images	X

In these articles, the journalists wrote a story where a shout for help was for and from Ukraine. Ukraine was suffering from the attacks of Putin's Russia and is, therefore, now literally a buffer state for the EU. After all that Ukraine went through, the EU was still undecisive about how to help. The shout and request from Ukraine and its people are thus towards the 'West' for help and perspective. The message reads thus as the following:

''Everything less that candidate-membership for Ukraine will be celebrated as a victory by Putin […] she repeated the urgent question for heavy artillery. According to Kyiv these are needed not to fall into a stalemate and hundreds of Ukrainian soldiers on a daily basis pass away. 'We are able to win,' she said, 'but only if we receive support. We see this as a common responsibility. For you it's a monetary question, we pay with our lives'.'' (Terwijl Poetin zwakte ruikt, staat het Westen (weer) voor grote besluiten, Volkskrant, 15 June 2022).

And:

''Symbolistic politics is cheaply and functions as plaster on the wound, but that's not relevant here. The EU, including the Netherlands, supports Ukraine in several ways, but the candidate-membership doesn't rise up. But symbols aren't without meaning, that's what Ukraine is trying to convince: we also need moral support, we want to know that we belong to Europe, please understand the importance of that kind of message.'' (Gevraagd: meer symboolpolitiek, Trouw, 15 June 2022).

Put shortly, sympathisers of Ukraine and Ukrainian stakeholders asked the EU countries for support in two ways: morally and in artillery. The EU, a supranational organisation based on norms and values, was asked to act morally and support. The EU was asked to 'behave' like a decisive global power in these two articles.

5.1.13 Dominance and trends of frames during the EU-membership event

In this second part of the analysis chapter, frames elaborated by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) were analysed around coverage of the relationship between the EU and Ukraine in 2022. During this event's coverage, all five frames did appear in the articles, where two of these frames were way more dominant than the other three. At first, the conflict frame was the most dominant. In 89,9% (71) of the articles, disagreements or reproaches between political stakeholders appeared. The conflict frame was followed up by the responsibility frame, which appeared in 48,1% (38) of the articles. Meaning that some level of government was framed to take responsibility for political issues. The last three frames appeared significantly less than the two most dominant. The human interest was the third most dominant frame, appearing in 8,8% (7) of the articles. The economic consequences were right behind the human interest frame, appearing in 6,3% (5) of the articles. The least dominant frame was the morality frame, appearing in only two articles (2,5%). Not many stories included prescriptions on how to behave or contained moral messages.

Given that the conflict and responsibility frames were the most dominant frames, the most dominant topics during the coverage were mainly about the EU and its countries to take a standpoint around this conflict between Russia and Ukraine. The articles with conflict frames appearing in it reported the essential stakeholders that discussed how to deal with Ukraine because of the Russian invasion. The discourse was positive towards Ukraine, they were perceived as an ally of Western democracies, but disagreement arose regarding the position of Ukraine shortly with the EU. The responsibility frame emphasized that Ukrainian and European stakeholders alleviated the EU and its European leaders needed to step up for Ukraine to take action and provide them help and perspective. The conflict frame thus described the geopolitical situation between important actors; the responsibility frame thereby emphasized the responsibilities of these actors to approach the geopolitical situation.

5.2 Perspectives

This section discusses the perspectives elaborated by Iyengar (1990) and Bacon (2011). Eventually, it aims to answer the sub-question: ‘’*Which perspectives of Iyengar (1990) and Bacon (2011) come forward most strongly within the frames during these two events in the selected newspapers?*’’. To provide an answer to this sub-question, a binary coding system was applied. This means that when an article could be answered ‘yes’ to a question in figure 2, it was coded with (1). When it could not be answered ‘yes’ to a specific question, it was coded with a (0). In figure 2, the question could only be answered ‘yes’ to one of the thematic or episodic perspectives, not both. The same accounts here for the three (under)tones, positive, neutral, or negative: only one of the three perspectives could be attached to each news article. Table 5 shows the comprehensive occurrences of perspectives during all of the coverage of relations between the EU and Ukraine.

Table 5: Total occurrences of perspectives in Dutch newspapers

Event	Thematic	Epidosic	Positive	Neutral (info.)	Negative
AA	65	7	19	40	13
EU-Member	70	9	25	47	7
Totals (151)	135	16	44	87	20
	89,40%	10,60%	29,10%	57,60%	13,20%

Source: Author

Demonstrably, the thematic perspective came forward more strongly than the episodic perspective. 89,4% (135) of the articles were written in a more broadly political, historical, or economic context, while 10,6% (16) were written in a specific event or personal case. Most articles are thus primarily informative and based on general trends and factors (Iyengar & Simon, 1993). It provides or describes, for example, more general discussions, situations, and relations of (political) actors and stakeholders related to the debate on EU and Ukraine relations. The episodic perspectives included mostly interviews with different kinds of persons that commented on (political) discussions.

The (under)tone of the articles was mostly neutral and thus informative. 57,6% of the articles contained neutral information. Neutral information does not mean that no arguments or different views upon debates were included in the same article, but it included both or multiple sides of the debate. As a result, the article was not biased or written with a specific tone, allowing readers to pick or agree with a side themselves. The positive tone was the second strongest perspective, appearing in 29,1% of the articles. These articles were thus positively written about the situation or relation between the Netherlands and the EU towards Ukraine. The least occurring perspective of tone was the negative perspective. Only 13,2% of the articles were written negatively towards the relation or situation between the Netherlands or the EU and Ukraine.

Thus, to answer the second sub-question: ‘’*Which perspectives of Iyengar (1990) and Bacon (2011) come forward most strongly within the frames during these two events in the selected newspapers?*’’, the Thematic perspective came forward most strongly (89,4%), while the most strong (under)tone was the neutral perspective (57,6%).

5.2.1 Perspectives within the frames

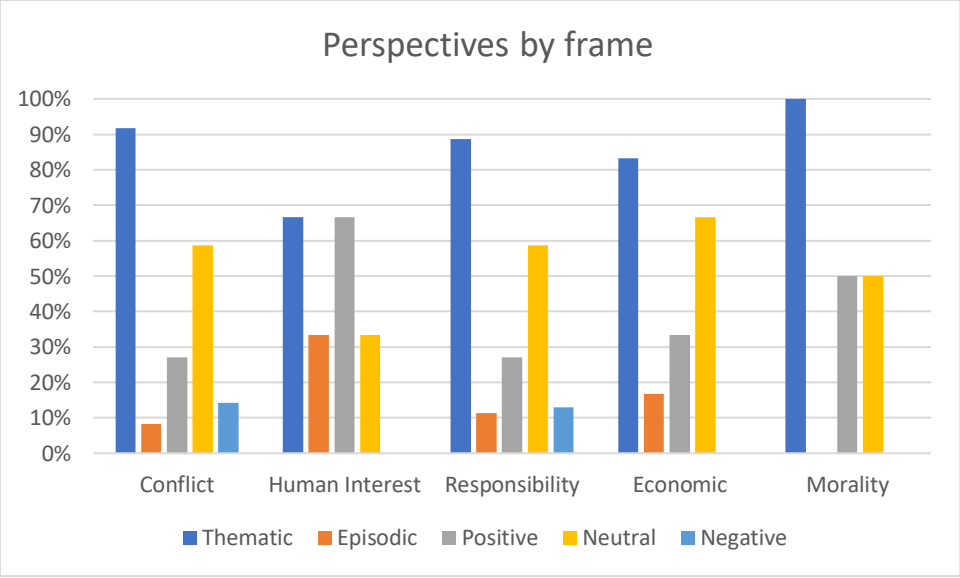
This section and Figure 5.13 present the distribution of perspectives per frame. Thus, figure 5.13 here visually demonstrates how each frame is linked with each perspective. This part discusses the

comprehensive overview of all articles on both events combined. As mentioned before, the thematic perspective is the most occurring perspective among the two but the dominance differs between frames.

As visible, the human interest frame pointed out to be the frame where the episodic perspective was relatively close to the thematic perspective, with one in three articles presented from an episodic perspective. The frame where a human face or example was affected by an issue was relatively often presented from a specific event or personal case. As for the occurrence of the (under)tone during the human interest frame, it was the only predominantly positive frame. Because many articles were presented from a personal case (often Ukrainians), the overall attitude of the article was positive towards an improving relationship between Ukraine and the EU or Netherlands.

The same accounts for the conflict frame; here, the thematic perspective occurred in 91,7% of the articles and only 8,2% from an episodic perspective. One could have expected that stories that reflect disagreements and reproaches between (political) actors are written from a broader context of historical, political, or economic perspective. It also applies to the appearances of the (under)tones in this frame. During this frame, both views or arguments of actors and stakeholders were often presented in the same article. It declares how 58,6% of the articles are mainly informative since readers are served two or multiple insights and are therefore not steered in one direction of a debate.

Figure 5.13: Distribution of perspectives per frame



Note: Attached perspectives per frame. Source: author

The responsibility frame had the same kind of characteristics as the conflict frame, predominantly presented from a thematic perspective (88,6%), and eight (11,4%) articles were presented from an episodic perspective. Articles that were written from some level of government were framed to have the ability to take responsibility and suggest a solution to an issue and appear to be presented in a broader (political, historical, or economic) context. The (under)tone of this frame was predominantly neutral/informative. In many articles (58,6%) with this frame, the aim was to inform readers that multiple views or sides were reflected. As a result, was such an article not steering the reader

positively or negatively towards a discussion. 27,1% of the articles were the (under)tone positively oriented towards the relationship between Ukraine and the EU or Netherlands. Both the conflict and responsibility frames were the only frames that contained negative perspectives, respectively 14,3% and 12,9%. These articles contained negative perceptions towards an ongoing and improving relationship between Ukraine and the EU or Netherlands. This was the result of including many stakeholders or actors and their standpoints or views within debates, which often occurred in both frames.

The economic consequence frame was also predominantly written from a broader context of history, politics, or economics, with 83,3% of the articles being thematic. This stems from most articles being written from a perspective that described or analysed the consequences of the economy for Ukraine or the EU as a whole. The intensifying relation between the actors and the associated terms that came with that had main effect on countries or societies as a whole. The broader context came, therefore, forward here. Nevertheless, 16,7% of this frame presented from a personal case or specific event. Personal interviews discussed the consequences of intensifying Ukraine's relations with the EU or vice versa, among others, the economic consequences. As for the conflict and responsibility frame, the economic consequences frame included multiple views and sides during the coverage. As a result, the (under)tone of the articles was mainly informative (66,7%) since there was little bias towards the proposition or opposition of intensifying relations within these articles. The articles with positive tones towards cooperation (33,3%) between the EU and Ukraine went mainly about the benefits on the economic scale if the EU and Ukraine cooperated more intensely. This counts for broader contexts (thematic) and personal cases (episodic).

Lastly, since the morality frame occurred only twice during the coverage of EU membership, there is thus no actual 'trend' to discuss. The two articles were only written from a thematic perspective; hence no personal case of a specific event occurred. One article was written with a positive tone towards ongoing cooperation between Ukraine and the EU, and the other with a neutral tone.

5.2.2 Comparison of perspectives within the frames between the events

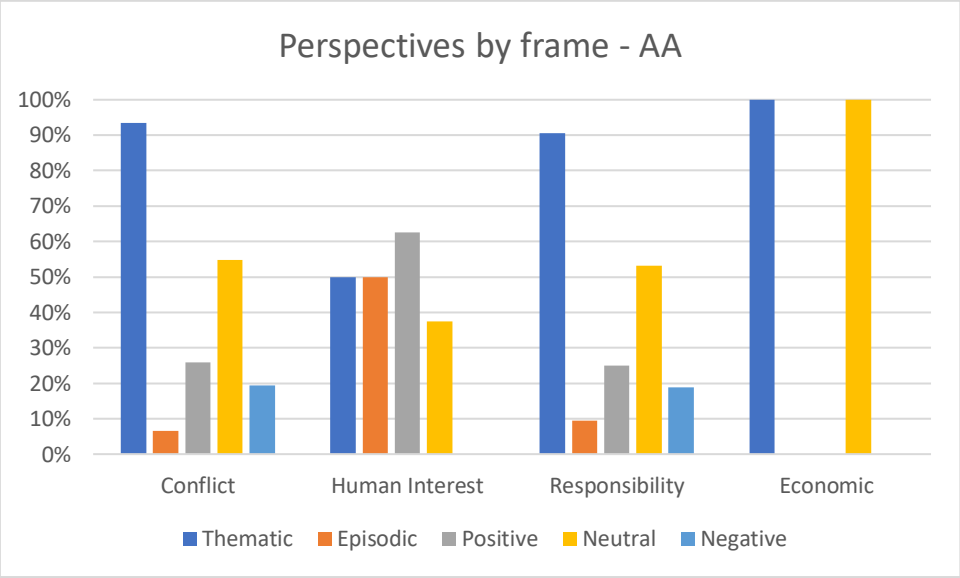
As for the analysis of the occurrences of frames, also here, the two events are analysed separately. This way, the events could be compared to each other, and it is visually or quantitatively demonstratable to notice differences or similarities in the coverage over time.

Starting with the most dominant frames, the conflict and responsibility frames. Figures 5.14 and 5.15 do not show relative or absolute huge differences between the two events of the two frames. The thematic perspective and neutral/informative tones came forward most strongly during both events within both frames. These frames thus seemed to be put favorably in broader contexts with informative stories and arguments of multiple sides. The frames' were thus predominantly similar in perspectives between the two events. The most noticeable difference was the negative (under)tones of the articles. Both frames had relatively and absolutely more negative articles during the event of the AA. The conflict frame decreased from 19,4% negatively written articles to 9,9% during the event of EU membership. For the responsibility frame, the percentages decreased from 18,8% of negatively written articles during the AA, while only 7,9% of the articles were negative during EU membership.

Although the Human Interest and economic consequences frames were less dominant than the Conflict and Responsibility, they showed differences in perspectives or tones between the two events. To start with the Human Interest frame; differs came forward in thematic and episodic

perspectives. During the event of the AA, the ratio was 50% on 50%. Four articles were written in a broader political, historical or economic context, and four were written in a personal case or specific event. The articles that were written in an episodic perspective during this event were mainly personal stories/interviews that reflected the Association Agreement. During the event for the run of EU membership, the ratio was 85,7% thematic and 14,3% episodic perspectives within this frame. Most stories during this coverage when the Human Interest frame appeared were about Russian aggression upon Ukrainian cities and citizens, thus in a broader context and not in a personal case. On the contrary, the articles' perspectives and tones were not that different. In both cases, most articles were positively written, with slightly less informative articles.

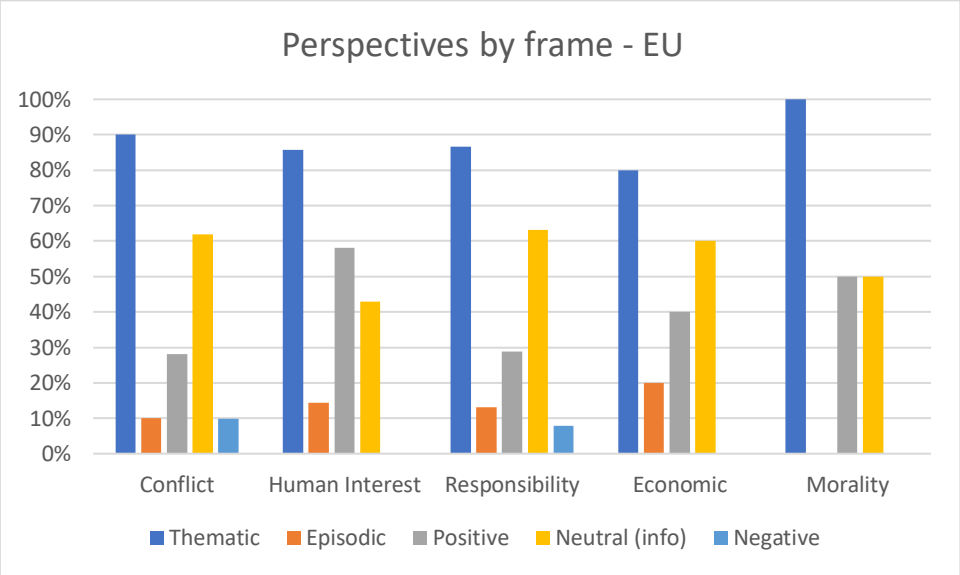
Figure 5.14: Distribution of perspectives per frame - AA



Note: Attached perspectives per frame – AA. Source: author

The other frame that demonstrated differences between the events is the economic consequences frame. Although it is hard to discuss this as a 'trend', the AA only included one article during the coverage since the event. Because of that, that frame's statistics are 100% thematic and 100% informative. The event of the run towards EU membership included five articles with this frame. Here the thematic perspective appeared four times, and only one was written from an episodic perspective. The predominant tone was informative (4), with two articles being positive towards the intensifying relation.

Figure 5.15: Distribution of perspectives per frame - EU



Note: Attached perspectives per frame – EU. Source: author

5.3 Development of views and topics

This section will discuss the interpretative sub-questions and, thereby, a certain 'trend' over time and between the two events. The sub-question that will be answered is: *"In what way(s) did the situation and public debate(s) of the Association Agreement and EU-candidate membership in the media coverage develop over time?".*

The first development between the two events that stood out was the transition from a predominant national debate during the coverage of the AA towards a turn to a predominant international debate during the coverage of EU membership. The Association Agreement event was mainly about discussing how the Dutch government would deal with and 'justify' the result of the referendum around that Agreement. The main topic was on a national level since the discussion arose between the Dutch cabinet, the opposition, and the public. Some political parties and (their) politicians plead for the removal of the AA: indeed, the result of the referendum and, thus, the Dutch voters was 'no'. Which - in a liberal democracy - means that the majority of the votes should be leading. The Dutch cabinet and proposition parties instead discussed adjustments within the AA so that the Agreement could continue but with some adjustments to meet the voters' desires. On the other hand, the less prevalent topic was the negotiations of PM Mark Rutte within the EU. He was the only PM in the EU that had to negotiate for adjustments to meet the desires of his domestic voters. All the other countries had already ratified the AA, so there was little will to meet Rutte's demands. Hence, there was a sure The Hague versus Brussels clash present in the coverage of this event, where the main topic was the national debate.

During the coverage after the Russian invasion in 2022, the main topic of coverage was focused on international debates. Here, an immediate understanding between EU countries started of support towards Ukraine and condemnation towards Russia. The main topics became discussions among EU countries, and their leaders erupted on how to deal with Ukraine. Deals were made to supply Ukraine with artillery, it was negotiated how to sanction Russia, and last but not least, the discussion emerged on how to provide Ukraine with a European perspective. The less predominant topics were

the exact same debates, but then on a national scale. International issues over toned national issues during this coverage, while national issues over toned the international ones during the first event.

The second development between the two events was mainly about the perception of European countries and the EU as an organisation towards Ukraine. For example, as Figures 5.15 and 5.16 visually showed, were there more (relatively and absolutely) negatively written articles about the relationship between Ukraine and the EU during the first event than during the second. This is in line with the overall discourse between the two events. During coverage of the AA, Ukraine was merely seen as a country on the European continent that did not fulfil the requirements to be part of the EU or was seen as an ally. On top of that, some arguments were made that intensifying relations between the EU and Ukraine should not be made, to prevent provocation of Russia:

''If we vote for the AA, we support an agreement that leads to even further distance between the closely related nations of Russia and Ukraine.'' (Referendum: keus tussen twee kwaden, Trouw, 2 April 2016).

Descriptions and examples were made during the coverage that did perceive Ukraine as not EU-worthy (yet). Here it is suggested that Ukrainian people are possibly more related to Russia than Europe. Also, the Ukrainian government was perceived and accused of not being ready for the EU and being corrupted, which the following phrase summarizes: *''With 34,1 percent corruption in Ukraine is by far the most named motive among the no-voters. [….] with the frequency of 16,6 percent, it is by no-voters mentioned as a motive to vote against: the fear of Ukraine becoming a member of the EU.''* (Nee-stem ging over corruptie Oekraïne, NRC, 19 november).

During the coverage in 2022, this perception towards Ukraine turned after the Russian invasion. European leaders and EU politicians directly framed Russia and Putin as the aggressor, condemning the actions. Ukraine and Zelensky, on the other hand, were perceived as victims and brave. They were fighting for democracies on the European continent and needed help in that fight. Chairman of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, stated after the Russian invasion in Ukraine that: *''They belong in due course to us, and we want them belonging''* (Von der Leyen sprak voor haar beurt; Open uitnodiging aan Oekraïne ongelukkig getimed, Telegraaf, 1 March 2022). After this statement, NRC doubted how far the positivity should go: *''The European self-assertion is so huge that the question arises if the boundary between 'support for Ukraine' and 'fighting with Ukraine' isn't fading away''*. (Europa, kampioen soft power, wordt nu ook een hard power, NRC, 1 March 2022). It has to be mentioned that after these first days of 'excitement' for Ukraine, multiple articles were committed to more modest discussions about the perspective of Ukraine. Some countries held back in the opportunistic phase that the EU went through and were critically arguing that Ukraine was not ready yet and that they wouldn't get an accelerated process.

To sum up this turn of European perception towards Ukraine up, and nuance it, a journalist of Algemeen Dagblad stated:

''The invasion of Russia in Ukraine has changed the view and perceptions of many. Suddenly Ukraine gets perspective for EU membership and is portrayed as the fighter for democratic values. […] The Russian president Putin is the corrupt aggressor and Ukrainian Zelensky is the underdog who is defending the country with his own life.''. (Internationaal verband moet wel intact blijven, 5 April 2022).

The crisis because of the Russian invasion had changed the stakes between the EU, Ukraine, and Russia. Thus in Europe's eyes, Ukraine turned from an unrealistic potential member to an ally that deserved the EU perspective because of a common enemy.

The third and last development was the change and degree of support for Ukraine from the EU and the Netherlands. During the run towards ratification of the AA there was little political and moral support in the Netherlands for Ukraine. Opposition politicians and parties were determined to convince PM Mark Rutte not to sign the Agreement, whereas more moderated parties and politicians were detached from the AA because of the referendum. The same counts for financial support to realise reforms in Ukraine. Financial support was cautiously debated in the Netherlands and the EU on how or if subsidies and funds should be spent or raised. Little attention was spent on the articles for economic and financial support in funds or subsidies.

The opposite was the case during the coverage after the Russian invasion. The EU and its countries immediately sent them moral support by condemning Russian actions and characterizing Russia as the aggressor. For example, Mark Rutte and France's PM Macron stated that Ukraine was part of ''the European family''. Likewise, in support of supplies, the EU quickly sent Ukraine weapons, vehicles, and ammunition. It was a unique occasion:

''Out of the EU messages come forward about military help of 450 million euro's. It is for the very first time that the EU will commonly organize the purchase and sending weapons for a country in war''. (Bewondering uit zich in steun en wapens; Westerse maatregelen worden in rap tempo uitgebreid, NRC, 1 March 2022).

Not only military-wise, the EU and its countries were willing to provide support for Ukraine, but also financially. European leaders and EU politicians not only discussed the rise of funds and subsidies as a result of the war but also promised help for reconstructing Ukraine when/if the war ended. This also meant politically wise since European leaders and the EU were willing to help Ukraine develop itself to a full 'Western' democracy.

''The Netherlands will undoubtedly support Ukraine in its resistance against the Russian invasion and eventually at the reconstruction of the country. That's what PM Rutte said yesterday morning in his virtual speech to the Ukrainian Parliament. ''We will stay on your side, every inch, until peace, freedom, and democracy in Ukraine is rebuilt, and justice has been done. There is no other way imaginable.'' (Bevrijdingsdag voelde vorige week heel anders, vertelt Rutte het Oekraïense parlement, Trouw, 13 May 2022).

The public debates and situations in Dutch newspaper coverage around the Ukraine and EU relations made some changes and developments between the two events. Hence, the third sub-question: *''In what way(s) did the situation and public debate(s) of the Association Agreement and EU-candidate membership in the media coverage develop over time?''* could be answered in three steps.

Firstly, the debate(s) during the first event were national issues, the main topic, and international issues, the second main topic. During the second event, the dominance of these topics reversed. International issues were here the main topic, with national issues coming second. Secondly, the perception and discourse from the 'West' towards Ukraine switched up to a certain height. Where Ukraine was perceived as a country that didn't meet European standards and EU requirements, after

the Russian invasion, Ukraine was perceived as an ally as a democracy with the potential to become an EU member. Third and lastly, the degree of support towards Ukraine increased. During the run towards ratification of the AA, the Netherlands, and the EU were detached in support of Ukraine to help them towards the EU. Morally and financially wise. After the Russian invasion in 2022, the degree and willingness of support increased towards Ukraine. Morally wise, European leaders stated that Ukraine belongs to the 'European family'. Military-wise, they supplied Ukraine in multiple ways, and financially wise the EU is willing to increase funds and subsidies to reconstruct Ukraine eventually.

6. Conclusion and Discussion

This final chapter elaborates on the results and findings of this study. The first section answers the four sub-questions. After that, the main research question will be answered based on three sub-questions. The second section discusses the results and findings of this research. Firstly, the results and findings are interpreted during the discussion. Secondly, the limitations and recommendations of this research will be discussed.

6.1 Discussions

This section of the chapter discusses the interpretations of the results found during this research, and the contributions and consequences of these findings.

Interpretation

To start with interpreting the results, some patterns and relationships among the data stuck out. Both the most dominant frames, the conflict and responsibility frames, were predominantly written from a thematic perspective. Articles from a thematic perspective mean that both these frames were written from a broader political, historical, or economic context. Most articles written from this perspective, including one of these frames, explained or described complex national or international issues. Eventually, multiple sides or actors could be involved in these debates and issues. Thus, there was a relationship of frames that included multiple views or actors, significantly more written from a thematic perspective. Only 11 articles out of the 133 conflict frames were episodically written. These numbers were 8 out of the 70 articles for the responsibility frame.

On the other hand, the human interest frame was above average, written from an episodic perspective. One in three articles with a human Interest frame was written from a human face or emotional, which fits into the episodic perspective that often draws attention away from larger social contexts and focuses more on individuals' perspectives. The newspaper articles contained, therefore, relations between frames and perspectives that were associated with each other. Frames and perspectives focused on broader social contexts or complex issues often occurred together. In comparison, a frame and perspective that focused more on the individual level and drew away from larger social contexts occurred together often. Dutch newspaper articles often focused on one effect: to provide the reader with a story of broader and larger social contexts that provided general information from different sides or to zoom in on the individual level to arouse emotions or compassion. Consequently, frames and perspectives with different focuses were rarely combined during this study.

The same pattern about the (under)tones in the newspaper articles stuck out. Articles with frames that included complex issues in a broader thematic perspective, such as the conflict, responsibility, and economic consequences frames, were mainly written from a neutral perspective. This (under)tone often showed multiple sides to a debate or issue, whereby not a clear side in the debate or issue is present. On the other hand, the episodic perspective was mainly written in a positive tone. The human Interest frame, for example, often included one story or personal case, whereby that individual's perspective was dominant in that article. During the EU-Ukraine relations debates, it thus mainly was positively written about relations with Ukraine.

Based on Camaj's results (2010) and personal expectations, it was among the expectations that the conflict frame would be the most dominant, followed by the responsibility frame. Camaj's research

topic was the most related study compared to this thesis. He also investigated the five generic frames in Western media around a non-EU country in conflict. The results of Camaj's were in line with the findings of De Vreese et al. (2001) and Semetko & Valkenburg (2000); they showed in their research that the conflict frame was a prevalent frame around topics with broader complex contexts. Besides, this topic of relations with Ukraine was assumed to have proponents, opponents, and other political actors debating this issue; the conflict frame was expected to be prevalent since conflict frames "emphasizes the conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 95). One should have therefore expected this frame to be prevalent during the first event, since it describes a conflict of Dutch interests on a national and international scale.

In contrast, the second event describes a conflict of debates on how to treat and approach Ukraine after the Russian invasion. The same applies to the responsibility frame. This frame was defined as "a way of attributing responsibility for [a] cause or solution to either government or to an individual or group" (Semetko & Valkenburg, 2000, p. 96). Kline et al. (2006), Luther & Zhou (2005), and Camaj (2010) showed that this frame also often occurred during complex (political) debates in quality newspapers. This frame was expected to be prevalent since governments and politicians are responsible for finding solutions and facilitating policies during national and international political relations. The conflict and responsibility frames were the most frequent frames in line with Benson's theory on journalism: news often includes multi-perspectival debates, representing a wide range of actors, opinions, and information (2009; 2013).

In contrast to de Vreese et al. (2001) and Gamson (1992), who found that the economic consequences frame quite often occurred during their research around a social or political topic, the economic consequences frame did not often occur during this research. It was merely expected to occur during the first event of the Association Agreement since that agreement was mainly about political and economic cooperation between the EU and Ukraine. However, only some articles focused on economic benefits, development, or disadvantages among the actors because of this agreement. This could be explained by Neuman's et al. (1992) statement that this frame is more complex and cognitively demanding than the conflict frame, for example, which may be a result of technical language or vernacular in this particular frame. An explanation may be found in Wasike's (2013) argument; he argued that the economic consequence frame is one of the least used frames because journalists and news media prefer entertaining content over complex economic content. Dutch newspapers therefore seemed to prefer using conflictual content over economic issues, to keep articles attractive and understandable for their audience. The same accounts for morality frames; according to Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), the morality frame is the least common frame among the five frames. This could be explained because when journalists use the morality frame, they use it by indirect quotations or inference rather than directly because of the journalistic norm of objectivity. According to Valenzuela (2017), it is, therefore, one of the least common generic frames in news media since it is likely to clash with journalists' objectivity. Burscher et al. (2014) already found that the morality frame was the least frequent in Dutch newspapers between 1995 and 2011. The results of this study agree with these expectations since the morality frame was the least frequent frame, only occurring in two articles. Dutch journalists around this topic, thus, avoided clashes with objectivity and providing moral messaged by rarely using the morality frame around the topic of Ukrainian relations.

The two perspectives that came forward the most strongly were the thematic perspective of Iyengar (1991) and the neutral perspective of Bacon (2011). These dominant perspectives were among the expectations. The thematic perspective is predominantly informative, focused on trends and facts, or reflects a public policy (Iyengar, 1991). Here, issues are set in general or abstract contexts and focus on broader results or conditions (van Gorp, 2007). Therefore, the topic of this research on complex relations with Ukraine is more commonly written from a thematic perspective since episodic perspectives displace attention away from the larger social conditions and, with that, lets the audience focus more on the individuals' responsibilities. The thematic perspective associates better with the topic of this research than the episodic perspective. The dominant neutral perspective of Bacon (2011) is in line with Benson's theory that news often includes multi-perspectival debates, representing various actors, opinions, and information (2009; 2013). The neutral perspective includes multiple sides or views of different actors in a debate. Besides that, journalists and thus their articles and coverage aim to be 'Neutral'. Journalists and news articles attempt to avoid stories with unverifiable information and try to 'bring' information quickly to the public (Johnstone et al., 1976). Neutral articles mainly serve to inform and have the intention to be unbiased; it aims to be 'balanced' (Schuck & de Vreese, 2006). Positive and negative perspectives seem to be more biased, which results in journalists mostly aiming for a neutral perspective to provide the most 'balanced' news.

Two results of this research were partially unexpected. First, as mentioned before, the economic consequences frame only occurred in six articles during both events combined. It only occurred once during the run towards the ratification of the Association Agreement after the referendum. Given that the agreement's intention was an intensifying political and economic cooperation between the EU and Ukraine, it was expected to occur in more than one article. This frame emphasizes the way certain debates or issues economically affect citizens. An economic issue often directly affects the audience. Media use this frame, therefore, to get the attention or make an issue relevant - in an economical way - for their audience (Kim & Wanta, 2018). De Vreese et al. (2001) gave the expectation that this frame, in combination with the content of the agreement, would occur more often. The agreement's ratification would impact both the Ukrainian economy and the EU's economy.

On the other hand, it has to be noted that the Economic Consequences frame wasn't expected to be one of the most dominant frames and, according to Wasike (2013), was one of the least common frames because of economic complexity and vernacular. Dutch journalists possibly considered the economic consequences frame too complicated for their audience; they rather provided them with stories that included conflict or responsibility to keep their readers' attention. The economic relevance and consequence of the intensifying relations during both events was not important enough to include in more articles. Dutch newspaper audiences were thus not often exposed to complex economic situations between the actors involved.

The second more striking result was the negative perspective during the event of the AA. Only 13 articles were written from a negative perspective, meaning more articles were written from a positive perspective. Given the situation that the Dutch referendum voted 61% against the ratification, the perspective towards Ukraine was expected to be more negative beforehand. Especially since the asymmetry bias theory explains that individuals react more strongly to negative events than positive changes (Owen & Casey, 2012). That former research has shown that negative

information is more salient and more memorable (Johnson-Cartee & Copeland, 1991). Negative news or perspectives should affect the audiences more than positive ones, which should also account for Dutch newspapers. Negative news or perspectives could, therefore, in theory, sell more than positive news or perspectives. Also, it was outside the expectations that the negative perspective would occur more often than the neutral perspective. This contradictive finding could be explained on behalf of two interpretations. First, many articles included broad and describing content to provide a 'picture' of how Dutch politicians struggled. On that account, multiple sides of the debate and arguments were involved, which led to a more neutral perspective. Second, the referendum as a tool was doubted after the result, since it was only consultative. Politicians and experts were given attention and explained the downsides of not ratifying the agreement. This resulted in 'balanced,' or neutral debates since multiple sides of debates and discussions were included, which made discourse towards Ukraine on behalf of the referendum result not predominantly negative in articles.

Implications

By looking at the impact or influence of the media frames, the two most dominant frames seem to have had the most impact or influence on the public debates around relations with Ukraine. The conflict and responsibility frames were the most dominant during both events. Starting with the most dominant frame, the conflict frame addresses conflicts between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of gaining interest from the audience. It confirmed de Vreese et al. (2001) findings that it is almost always the most dominant frame during political communication. During the first event, Ukraine was perceived as a country 'far away' that would not benefit the Netherlands or the EU. The conflict frame here was in line with Vliegenthart's et al. (2008) argument: it negatively affected policies for EU-Ukraine relations. The main focus was on how the Dutch government should negotiate the Dutch voters' will within the EU so that Ukraine would not get the perspective of potential EU membership. The Responsibility frame during this event attributed the responsibility for a solution to the Dutch government. The news coverage framed that the solution or influence was outside Dutch citizens' reach, which reduced mobilization, as Iyengar & Simon (1993) described. In public opinion polls during this time frame between 2016-2017, support for EU enlargement was between 30-35%. This amount has fluctuated between these percentages since 2011 (Den Ridder & Djundeva, 2022). Since news media can influence the capability of determining different levels of scepticism or support for EU enlargement or cooperation, according to Wöhlert (2013), both dominant frames in the news coverage arguably contributed to this support. However, this research cannot completely back this claim.

These same two most dominant frames were also dominant during the coverage of Ukraine after the Russian invasion in 2022. Russia was now the common enemy, which deserved sanctions. On the other hand, Ukraine was simultaneously positioned as the invasion victim. It was framed as a conflict between an aggressive autocracy and an innocent liberal democracy. According to Schuck et al. (2016), the conflict frame is often used during political debates because it has been found to be a mobilizing force. Thus, the conflict frame was mainly used to 'mobilize' perceptions where Ukraine was a member of the 'European family', which deserved perspective towards the EU in the (nearby) future.

In contrast, Russia was framed as the aggressor and offender. The Responsibility frame, like the first event, positioned governments as the responsible ones to approach or solve political issues. The

Dutch and international governments were the framed actors with the ability or power to tackle the problems of Russian aggression and the Ukrainian perspective. This was in line with Iyengar's findings (1996), who stated that this frame could lead to the public focusing on social and political responsibility for solving the problem; it is the politicians' and governments' jobs to choose the right policy. As a (possible) result of this frame, it could lead to less involved citizens.

As Wöhlert (2013) stated, news media can influence levels of scepticism or support of EU enlargement or cooperation; the Eurobarometer of summer 2022 (European Commission, 2022) found some affirmative results: the public opinion of Dutch citizens found for the first time in over 20 years a majority in support of EU enlargement. Since the Russian invasion in February 2022 till the end of July 2022, a rise of 24% in support of EU enlargement transpired in the Netherlands. This result could be construed with Azrout et al.'s (2012) statement that media coverage strengthens and influences opinions and attitudes on EU enlargement processes. On top of that, Norris (2000) argued that most citizens rely on domestic news media on supranational issues, such as EU topics, since there is a lack of supranational news media. Unfortunately, this shift of support for EU enlargement cannot completely be explained by the impact of Dutch newspaper media. Although it arguably affected public opinion, it is not definite and measurable to say to what extent this impact was.

Thus as far as the impact of the generic frames of Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) and the perspectives of Iyengar (1990) & Bacon (2011) reach, the audience(s) of the five selected Dutch newspapers are exposed to a change of perception and representation towards Ukraine. The relations between the Netherlands and the EU towards Ukraine were, over time, written as more friendly, connected, and sustainable. The results of this research confirmed, firstly, the dominant roles of the conflict and responsibility frame during complex (political) topics in quality newspapers. Secondly, it agreed with theories that journalists often write complex topics from a 'balanced' perspective, including multiple sides in a debate, with the neutral perspective coming most strongly forward. Besides that, this research showed that mixed deductive and inductive methods amplify each other. Finding the type of frames in a deductive way showed which frame(s) were most dominant, but the inductive method to make it issue-specific contributed to the results in what way the frames influenced articles. During both events, the conflict and responsibility frames were the most dominant, but the manner of perception towards Ukraine shifted. Determining the occurring frames showed the type of stories of articles and from which angle journalists wrote about this topic, but the inductive coding described the discourse of the coverage about this topic in the longer run. The type of frame thus tells the comprehensive content of articles, while the inductive coding tells from which angle or perception that frame is written towards any topic.

The thematic perspective was expected beforehand to be more dominant than the episodic perspective. However, thematic perspectives show abstract information, triggering fewer emotions than episodic ones. The thematic perspective is, therefore, less persuasive and has less effect on the individual (Gross, 2008). The combination of conflict and responsibility frames predominantly being written from a thematic perspective can, as a result, lead to passive audiences that do not feel associated enough to affect or solve this international issue. In contrast, levels of government may be perceived as the only actor(s) to approach this international issue.

Besides that, it is essential to mention this research's scientific and societal implications. This research is scientifically important since it is the first and only research on EU and Ukraine relations

over time in Dutch newspapers. It uniquely discusses both EU and Ukraine relations events in 2016 after a national referendum and in 2022 after the Russian invasion. This way, the two events could be discussed separately and comparably. The research is all based on the five respected generic frames of Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), and the perspectives of Iyengar (1990) and Bacon (2011) and had, before doing this research, not been linked to this international topic. As indicated, this research is relevant for governments, politicians, and institutions regarding their stance on political issues. News media have the power to set an agenda and shape perceptions and broaden information for wide audiences (Joseph, 2014). As Tuchman (1978) stated, news media shape the opinions of audiences of topics that many are often ignorant about. Thus, political actors partially rely on news media how larger social groups gain information about certain topics and how these groups receive this information. Newspaper media can impact the political stances of larger social groups, which may be relevant for governments, politicians and institutions. For journalists, this thesis provides insight to indicate and consider what effects and impact their frames and perspectives in newspaper articles contribute to public debates and political stances. In this case of EU and Ukrainian relations over the years.

Societally wise, this research addresses for the audience(s) of Dutch newspapers what impact and effect frames and perspectives have on perceptions, discourse, and debates. This thesis provided more insight into how media frames and perspectives in Dutch newspaper articles affect and impact audiences' perceptions of international relations with Ukraine over different time frames. This study, thus, elaborated and explained how frames and perspectives in Dutch newspapers impacted the debates and perceptions of the audiences towards relations with Ukraine. The results showed that conflict and responsibility frames were the most dominant during both events. The same applied for the thematic and neutral perspectives. But the coding of the newspaper articles served as a complement of the discourse of these frames and perspectives. The conflict frame shifted from a conflict of interests from the Dutch national debate on how to handle Ukraine as only a trade partner to an international debate on how to include Ukraine in the best way to the EU. Although Kim & Wanta (2018) perceived the conflict frame as one of the least steering frames out of the five generic frames, the results in change of discourse resulted from inductive qualitative coding that complemented the deductive quantitative findings of this thesis. For wider audiences, it was arguably important to not only determine the type of frame to point out what type of content or stories is provided to the reader but also to describe the discourse to explain what the messages meant and what kind of information readers gained.

On the other hand, the responsibility frame did not change in perceiving who was responsible for approaching this international conflict. The Dutch government stayed the most responsible actor in this frame, only the tone shifted over time, same as for the conflict frame, positively towards relations with Ukraine. Jointly with the dominance of the thematic perspective, these findings suggest that they do not mobilise citizens to approach such international political issues. Less emotional attachment rise with the thematic perspective and focus more on broader debates (Ciuk & Rottman, 2020). While the responsibility frame during this research was mostly framed towards the Dutch government, it is likely that Dutch citizens did not feel that the solution was in their reach, which reduced mobilisation (Iyengar & Simon, 1993). Altogether, the dominant frames and perspectives in the selected newspapers arguably affected the perception and opinion of their audience towards Ukraine since many articles included broad and ‘balanced’ debates. But the findings of this research, based on earlier research, did not suggest social mobilisation of audiences.

Public opinion for EU enlargement shifted positively towards Ukraine. However, Dutch citizens had little emotional attachment and did not feel solutions in their reach. Based on the findings of this study, It was not likely that the Dutch audiences would have taken action to provide a solution for this international issue. Meanwhile, the frames, perspectives and discourse led to a change of perception and opinion towards relations with Ukraine.

Limitations

In this study, a mixed-method analysis was conducted. In doing so, the articles were first analysed by asking questions to the text to determine the five generic frames formulated by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000). In addition, based on a framing matrix formulated by Gagenstein (2015), each frame was provided with a qualitative interpretation. Based on the quantitative analysis conducted in this study, more than one frame per news item may emerge. The conflict frame and responsibility frame emerged most strongly. However, frames could thus also overlap. The study's results might have been different if only one (dominant) frame per news item had been included in the analysis; in that case, some frames would possibly be more dominant or less dominant. However, it is assumed on existing literature that both frames would still emerge as the most dominant given the topic of this thesis (Camaj, 2010; Luther & Zhou, 2005; Kline et al., 2006).

In addition, only the dominant perspective (as formulated by Iyengar and Bacon) per news item was coded. Thus, looking back, this study may have benefitted if only the most dominant (generic) frame per article had been included in the analysis. However, this research still reached distinct results, in which the conflict and responsibility frame, combined with a thematic perspective and a neutral undertone, emerged most strongly. This way, it added, contributed, and confirmed to results of existing literature of news framing and perspective research around political or international related issues in news media (Camaj, 2010; Luther & Zhou, 2005; de Vreese et al., 2001; Wöhlert, 2013; Ojala & pantie, 2017). Besides that, this study contributed to existing literature on how perceptions and discourse may shift over time after a major event changes a geopolitical situation. Distinctions could be made between the two dominant frames based on the qualitative analysis, which showed the different focus and perspectives of the two frames on international relations between the Netherlands, the EU, and Ukraine.

Another limitation of the method used during this research based on Semetko & Valkenburg - is that it analyses for generic frames; therefore, an open and inductive analysis was needed to make it issue-specific. Because this study is partly inductive and was only conducted by one researcher, the results may be less objective and, therefore, more challenging to reproduce. Although the framing matrix of Gagenstein (2015) offers more structure (trying to increase reliability and decrease subjectivity), a deductive issue-specific analysis would increase the reliability of this study. However, the choice of the mixed-method analysis used in this study was made deliberately because media framing studies focusing on (the Dutch) perceptions of EU-Ukraine relations had yet to be studied in this way. This limitation also accounts for the selection of newspaper articles. After fulfilling the five steps explained in the methodology, only a ´quick´ scan of the one researcher took place to check if the article was relevant. After that, the same researcher coded the same articles and could decide during that process if the article still was relevant. Objectivity would also increase here if a second opinion was consulted.

The last limitation is related to the dataset too. This study only included Dutch newspaper media of the five most-selling Dutch daily newspapers. Therefore, other Dutch newspapers were not included, and the complete picture of Dutch frames and perspectives could not be fulfilled. Besides, only selecting newspaper articles simultaneously excluded online news media, radio, or television. Online content, in particular, is an increasingly important source of information for Dutch citizens. Online content includes not only social media but also online news websites. In particular young people gather their news (and often opinion) from such online sources. Despite online sources having less elaborated and detailed articles in general, the frequency of articles could be higher (Dirikx & Gelder, 2010). As well as covering a broader audience. Nevertheless, this study focused on qualitative, elaborate, and detailed newspaper articles since the topic of EU and Ukraine relations was complex and consistently covered over the years.

Recommendations

Since this study only included Dutch newspapers, further research could focus on and analyse the effects of frames and perspectives on EU-Ukraine relations in online news content or television. Since Semetko & Valkenburg, Iyengar, and Bacon provide structures and methods to work with, other types of news media could be investigated, considering that the results of this study only account for five Dutch newspapers. This way, more population will be covered and included, providing a more solid and elaborate image and perception of media framing in general on such topics since online news content and television also provides news daily. Formulated conclusions could then be more concrete between relations of public debates, frames, and perspectives.

Finally, content analyses, like this study, are suitable for a wider range of media reach and foreign cases. Follow-up research could thus focus on other countries, as long as the researcher's skills reach to investigate and analyse the given language. Each European Union member-state could then be analysed on these topics. Since this study focused on frames and perspectives in Dutch newspapers, findings in other cases could be compared or analysed to compare to the Dutch case and audience. During this research, the conflict and responsibility frame were the most dominant, which, therefore, also contributed the most to the public debate(s) and perception(s) within reach of the newspapers´ audience.

Further research could determine how conflict and responsibility frames in other cases contributed to debates, perceptions, and opinions or even zoom in on the impact of these two frames on audiences. Same for the thematic perspective; this perspective impacts audiences or how this specific perspective relates to certain frames. On the contrary, further research would be welcomed to determine why journalists do not include morality or economic consequences frames or episodic perspectives that often around, for example, geopolitical topics.

This topic could be relevant in the future, in cases in foreign countries and over time. This study ended while the violent conflict between Russia and Ukraine had not ended. In the (near) future, Dutch perceptions and images towards the EU or Ukraine may switch in the Netherlands. Future research should add, again, to the existing literature on what role and impact frames and perspectives have on debates, perceptions and opinions of the public after a possible shift in geopolitical situations. Combined with more public opinion polls, research over time could contribute to an even completer conclusion and comparison of this topic of relations with Ukraine.

Lastly, studies like this thesis focus on concepts that describe, explain and understand the roles and impacts of news media for wider audiences. While studies like this one try to get a grip on understanding theoretical concepts for conceivers of news media, the conceivers of these media are not involved. Therefore, extra studies are welcomed to involve the readers of, for example, newspaper media. This way, readers could be involved in what impact frames and perspectives have on their perceptions and opinions of specific topics. The influence of news media on their audiences would then be more complete.

6.2 Research questions and conclusion

This section concludes and answers the research question(s) and main findings of this thesis. During this research, two main events were selected that involved intensifying relations between the European Union and Ukraine from a Dutch perspective. The main research question that followed was: *'Which frame(s) and perspective(s) is (are) most dominant during the coverage of two events of intensifying relationships between the European Union and Ukraine between 2016 and 2022? ''*.

The first event was during the ratification of the Association Agreement between 2016 and 2017. The second event was after the Russian invasion on Ukrainian territory in 2022, after which Ukraine applied for EU-membership and eventually after several months was granted the status of candidate membership. Five qualitative Dutch daily newspapers were analysed to detect news frames and perspectives: de *Volkskrant*, het *Algemeen Dagblad*, *NRC*, *Trouw* and de *Telegraaf*.

Based on Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), five generic frames were explained and investigated. Not only news frames were investigated, also the perspectives of Iyengar (1990) and Bacon (2011) were investigated to determine which perspectives came forward most strongly. After analysing and coding a total of 151 newspaper articles, the following results were found: the conflict frame was the most dominant frame, followed by the responsibility frame. This accounted for both events. The perspectives that came forward most strongly were the thematic and neutral perspectives. Same as for the frames, these perspectives were during both events the most dominant. These results were found with a deductive quantitative method. Since this study included a mixed method approach, also an qualitative inductive method was conducted to code the articles. Through this method, the perception and debates towards relations with Ukraine could be analysed. This Dutch perception and discourse towards Ukraine developed from a country and partner 'far away' during the first event, towards a member of the 'European family' that fought for liberal democracies during the second event.

Before answering the main research question, some sub-questions were set-up to build up towards a comprehensive answer of the main research question:

(1) During reporting about the EU-Ukrainian Association Agreement post-referendum (2016) until the signing of the Agreement (2017), which frame(s) as discussed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000) appe*ar(ed) to be most dominant in the selected newspapers?*

The most dominant frame during this event, out of the 72 analysed articles, is the Conflict frame. This frame occurred in 62 articles (86,1%). This means that Dutch newspapers-articles predominantly contain frames that point out disagreements, thus conflicts, between stakeholders during the debate(s). The second most dominant frame is the Responsibility frame. This frame occurred in 32 articles (44,4%), and contained content suggesting that some level of governance had the instruments to approach a problem or suggested some solution to a problem.

(2) During reporting about the EU candidate membership after the Russian invasion until the provision of candidate membership, which frame(s), as discussed by Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), appear(ed) to be most dominant in the selected newspapers?

The most dominant frame during this event, out of the 79 analysed articles, is the Conflict frame. This frame occurred in 71 articles (89,1%). This means that reporting about this event in Dutch newspapers-articles predominantly contain frames that point out disagreements, thus conflicts, between stakeholders during the debate(s). The second most dominant frame is the Responsibility frame. This frame occurred in 38 articles (48,1%), and thus almost half of the articles suggested that some level of governance was attributed responsibility or had instruments for a cause or solution for an issue.

(3) Which perspectives of Iyengar (1990) and Bacon (2011) come forward most strongly within the frames during the two events in the analysed newspapers?

The perspective of Iyengar (1990) that came most strongly forward is the thematic perspective. Out of the 151 total analysed articles, 135 of the articles contained the thematic perspective (89,4%). This accounts for both events; during the event of the AA the perspective occurred in 65 articles out of 72, and during the event of the EU-Membership it occurred in 70 articles out of 79. Thus, most articles in Dutch newspapers were written in a more broadly political, historical, or economic context rather than in a specific event or personal case.

The perspective of Bacon (2011) that came forward most strongly was the neutral perspective. Out of the 151 analysed articles, 87 articles (57,6%) were written from a neutral perspective and thus contained neutral information. The neutral perspective was most dominant during both events. During the event of the AA ratification, 40 articles out of the 72 were predominantly neutral, while during the EU-Membership 47 articles out of the 79 were predominantly neutral. Neutral information does not mean that no arguments or different views upon debates were included in the same article, but it included both or multiple sides of the debate.

(4) *In what way(s) did the situation and public debate(s) of the Association Agreement and EU-candidate membership in the media coverage develop over time?*

The situation(s) and public debate(s) in the media coverage, between the two events, developed in three ways over time: the first development was about the focus on national and international issues. During the event of the AA ratification were national (political) issues the main focus, and international issues the second focus. While during the road to EU-Membership international issues were the main focus and national issues were the second main focus. The second development was about a switch of the perception and discourse from 'Western' countries towards Ukraine. During the first event, Ukraine was perceived as a country that did not meet European standards and EU requirements. After the Russian invasion, Ukraine was perceived as an ally and a democracy with the potential to become an EU member. The third and last development between the two events was about the degree of support for Ukraine. During the first event, the EU and its members wanted to support Ukraine only on basis of an agreement to help Ukraine develop towards a liberal democracy. While during the second event after the Russian invasion, the support increased in numbers and

ideology: morally, financially, and militarily wise 'Western' EU countries were willing to stand by Ukraine.

Based on the three sub-questions, the main research question of this study can now be answered: ''*Which frame(s) and perspective(s) is (are) most dominant during the coverage of two events of intensifying relationships between the European Union and Ukraine between 2016 and 2022?* ''

When reporting about intensifying relationships between the European Union and Ukraine, between 2016 and 2022, the conflict and responsibility frames are the most dominant frames during both events. Looking at the entire study, most articles in the Dutch newspaper media coverage are written from the thematic perspective of Iyengar (1990) and the neutral perspective of Bacon (2011). Thus, the newspaper articles of both events had the same dominant frames, and perspectives.

These results did not imply that the perception and discourse towards Ukraine did not change or develop over time. During the first event, the conflict and responsibility frames focused mainly on the Dutch national debate to ensure the Dutch government negotiated to not let the agreement be an instrument for Ukraine to become a future EU-member. While during the second event, the conflict and responsibility frames foremost focused on debates on how to involve Ukraine with the EU, since the Russian invasion, in a strict way. When Ukraine first was perceived and debated as a country that did not belong to the EU in the near future, in 2022 the EU was keen to involve Ukraine soon with the EU in a certain way.

A mixed methodological approach obtained the results of the dominance of frames, perspectives, and their role and impact on perceptions and debates. First, a deductive quantitative content analysis was conducted to detect the generic frames and perspectives within the articles. Content analysis allows researchers to find patterns in written texts effectively. This method aimed to detect what frames and perspectives newspapers publish and the quantity of these frames and perspectives. On the other hand, an inductive qualitative framing analysis was conducted. This method examined how frames occurred, was described, and presented during news media coverage. Frames could thus be analysed as issue-specific. Although multiple other researchers as Semetko & Valkenburg (2000), Iyengar (1990), Bacon (2011), and Gagestein (2015), provided structures and concepts to work with, this research was conducted by one researcher. Especially the issue-specific qualitative framing analysis thus may produce less objective results and is more difficult to reproduce. The same accounts for the selection of data: via NexisUni, the five selected newspapers were searched for the terms ''EU Ukraine''. After these search selections, the newspaper articles were scanned by the researcher. This means that only one observer scanned the articles for relevance to relations with Ukraine. In both cases, the observations, findings, and selections were made individually and would be more reliable and less subjective if more researchers had observed or participated.

This study focused on the dominance of frames and the impact or role they had on perceptions and debates in Dutch newspapers around relations with Ukraine. Since this research is the first framing study on the EU and Ukraine relations in Dutch newspaper media, new research is welcomed to complement and add to the current findings. On top of that, extra research to provide insight into overlapping frames in news media could be of importance. Considering this study allowed every article to contain more than one frame due to the binary coding of table 2. Outcomes of dominances of frames could have differed if only one frame per article was allowed. Future research could thus

focus on allowing only the most dominant frame per article or analyse frames that often overlap. Finally, this research could be extended by including different types of news media. Since online media content and television provide news daily with wide audiences, the statements and findings of frames and perspectives can be more complete around the Dutch public perceptions and debates. These selected newspapers reached almost one in four Dutch citizens.

Overall, the obtained results contributed to showing and explaining what frames and perspectives were dominant. The results tell how readers of the selected newspapers are served information on complex international topics and from which angle this information is served. This study confirmed existing literature that political communication is often framed with conflictual debates or attributions of responsibility while written from a broader political, historical, or economic perspective. The neutral perspective confirmed that journalists aim to provide readers with ´balanced´ and objective news to their audience. Meanwhile, these dominant frames and perspectives that focus on broader, complex, and ´balanced´ stories often stand for little emotional attachments that do not mobilize for solutions in reach. Based on existing literature, the findings of this study suggest that it is not likely that Dutch citizens would take action to provide a solution for intensifying relations with Ukraine themselves. Thus, the investigated frames, perspectives, and discourse during this research functioned for changes of perception, debates, and opinion towards international relations with Ukraine, where levels of government were attributed the role to represent Dutch interests.

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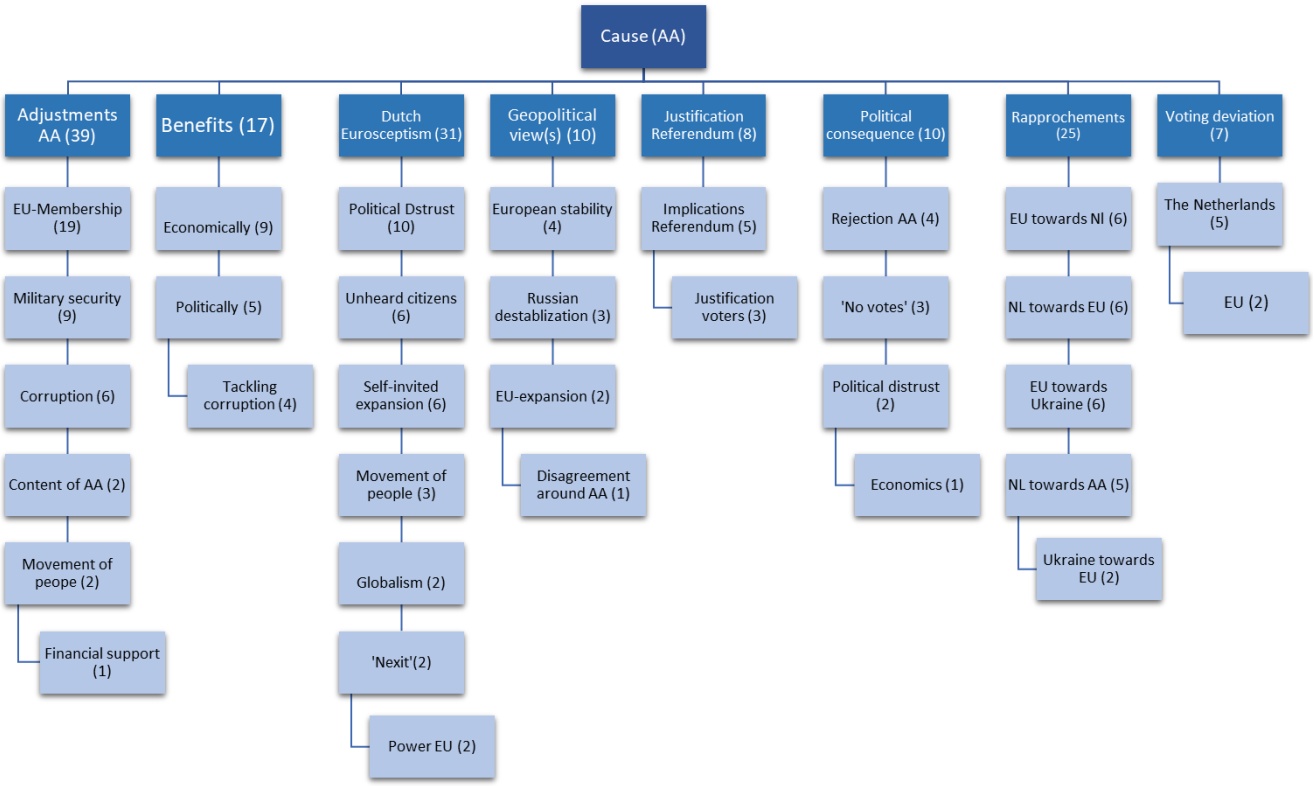
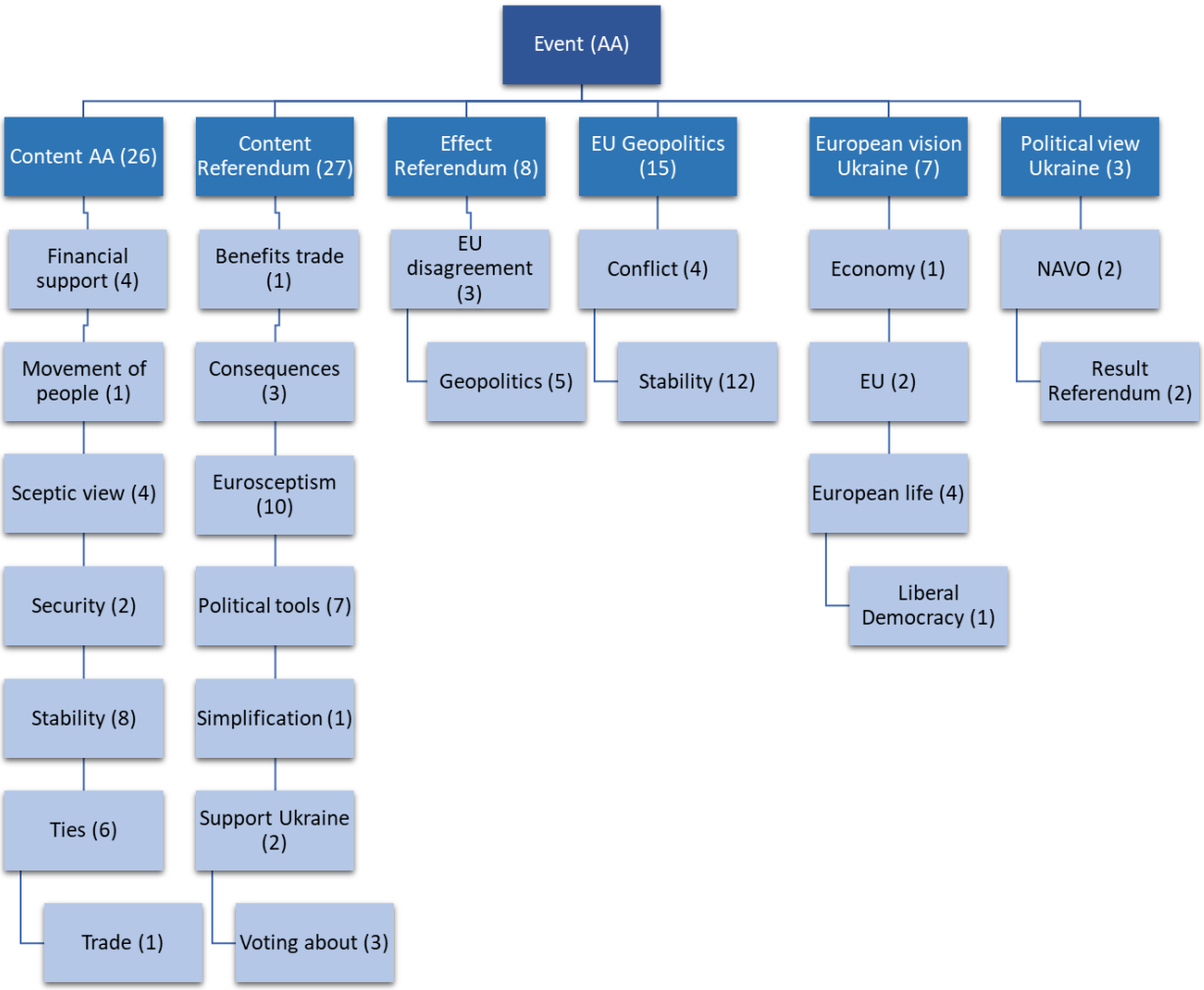
Appendix 1

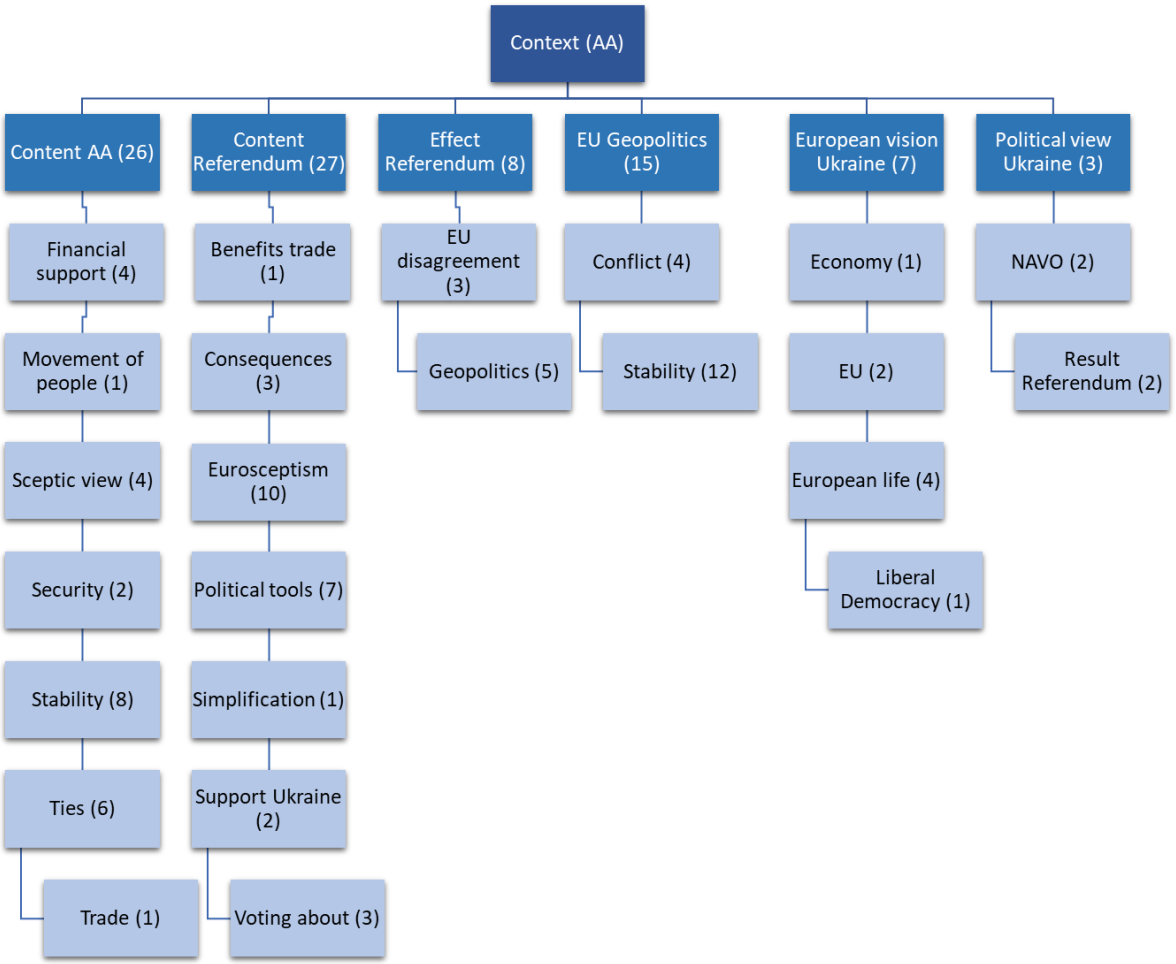
Code tree 1: Cause, reasoning device (AA)



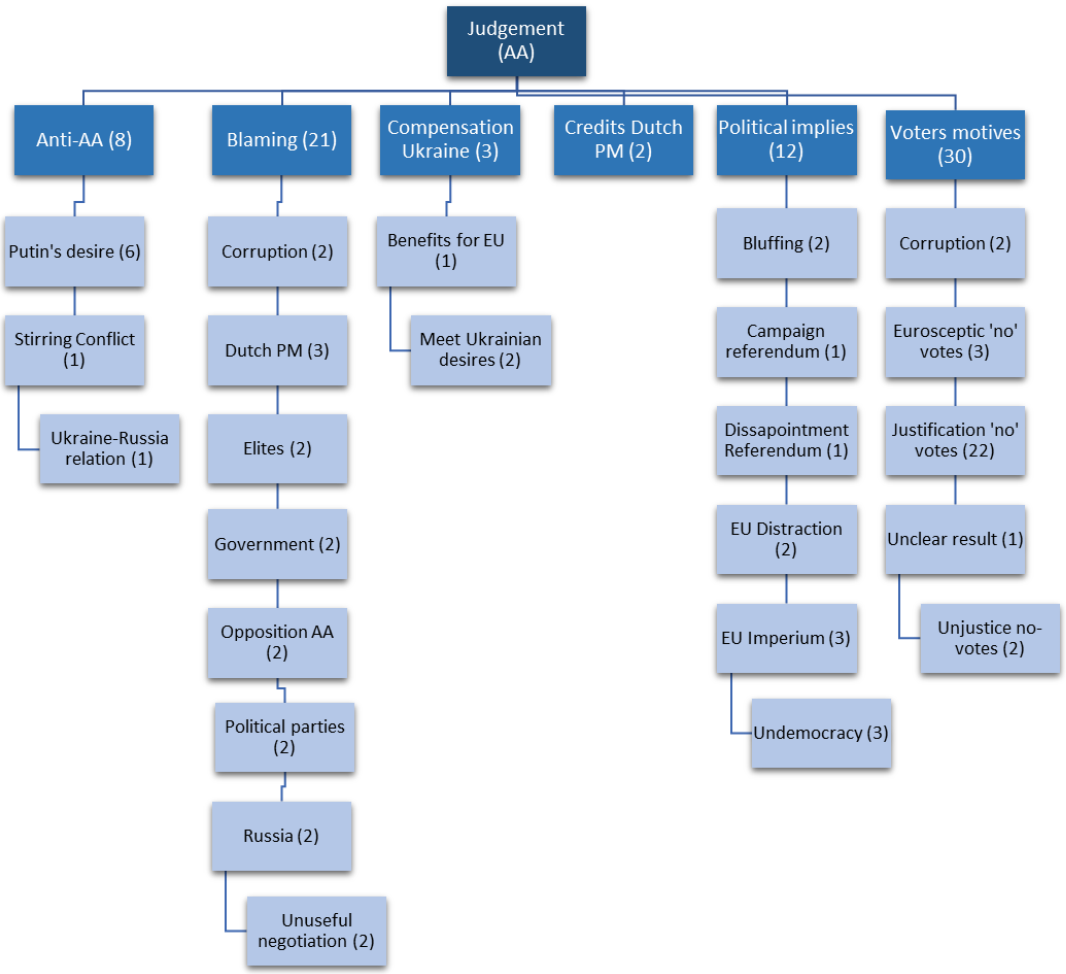
Code tree 2: Context, reasoning device (AA)



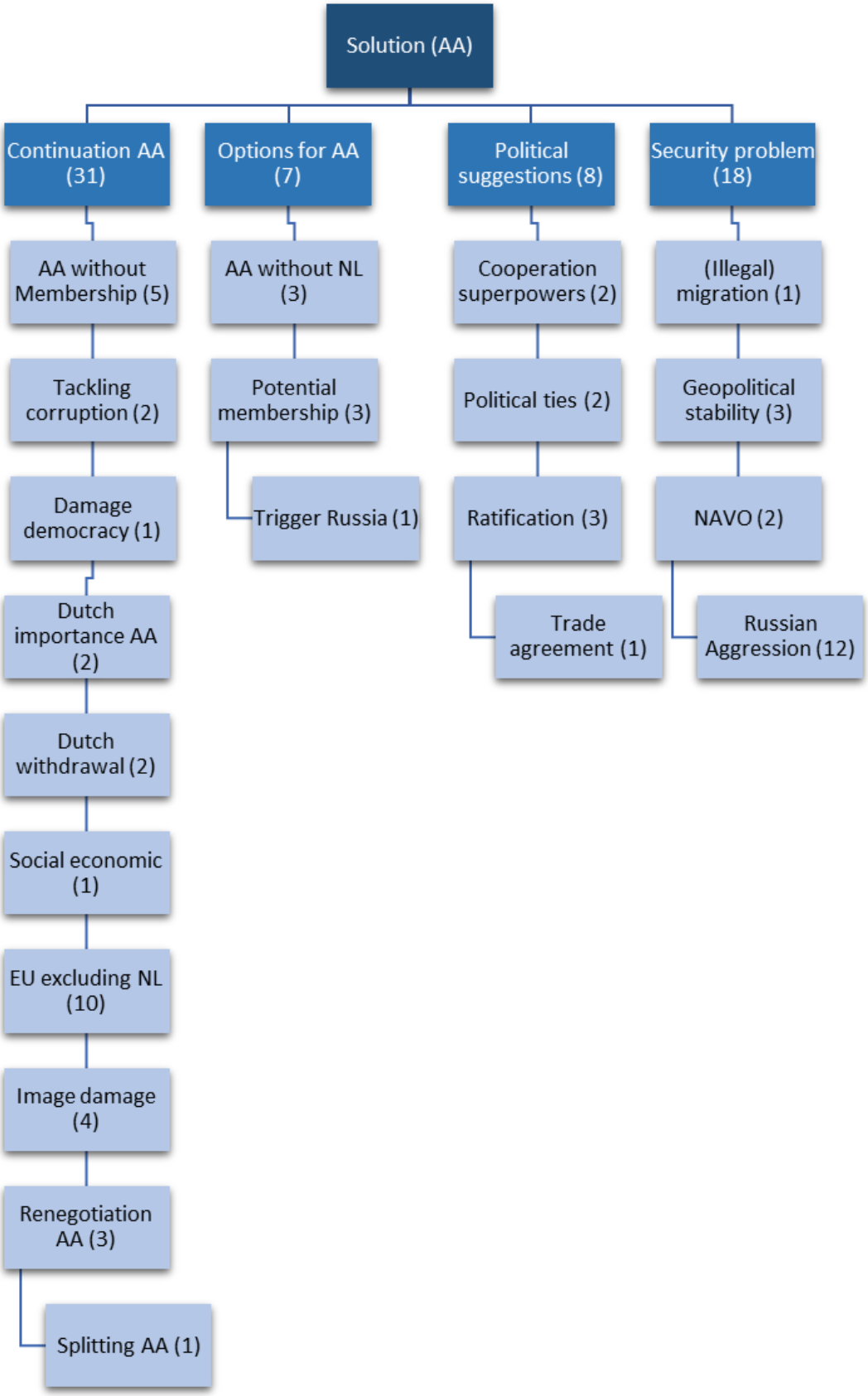
Code tree 3: Context, reasoning device (AA)



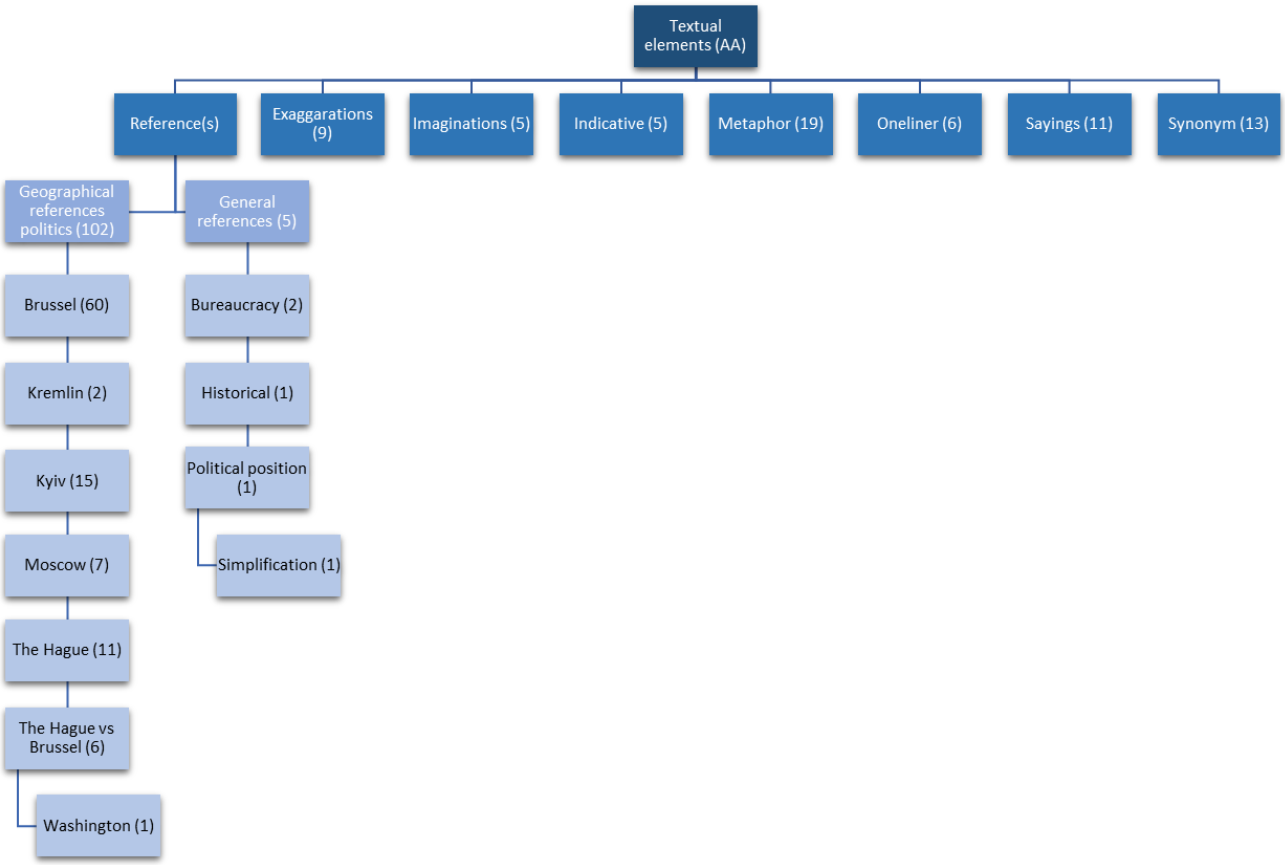
Code tree 4: Judgement, reasoning device (AA)



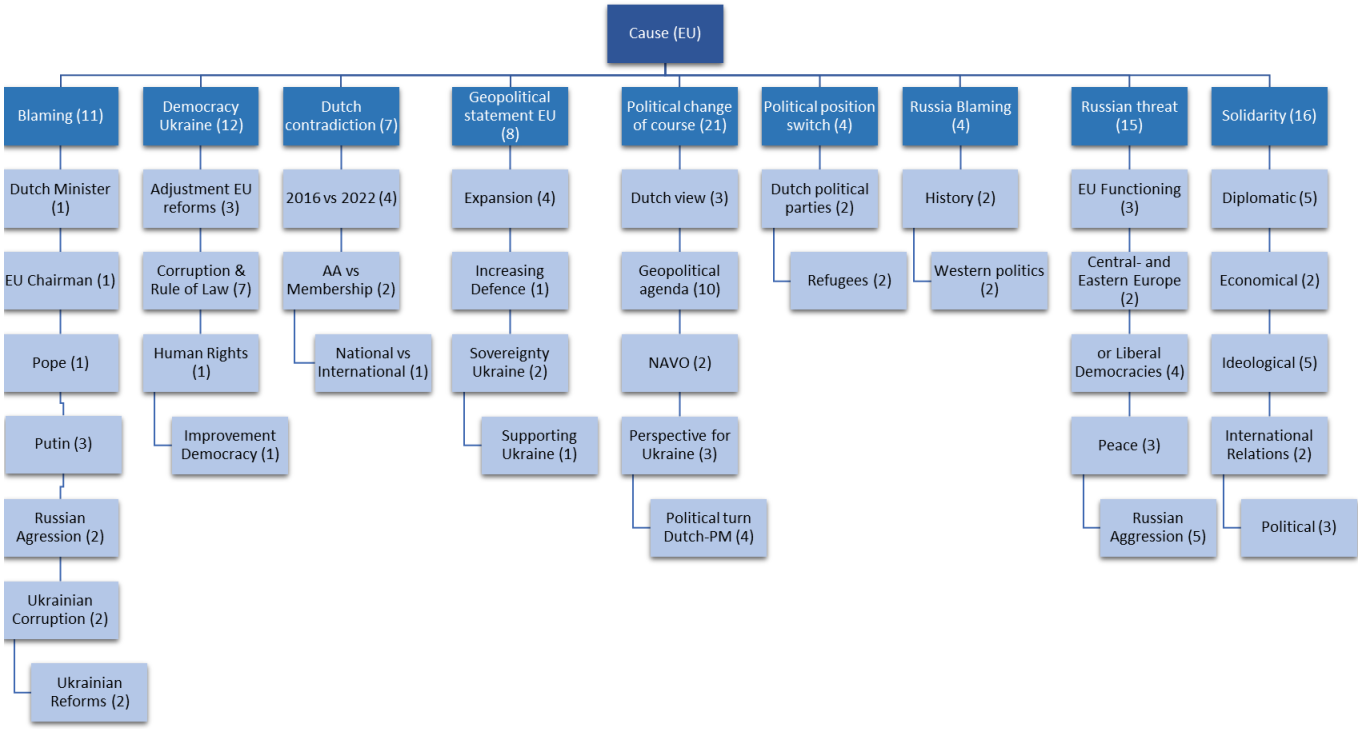
Code tree 5: Solution, reasoning device (AA)



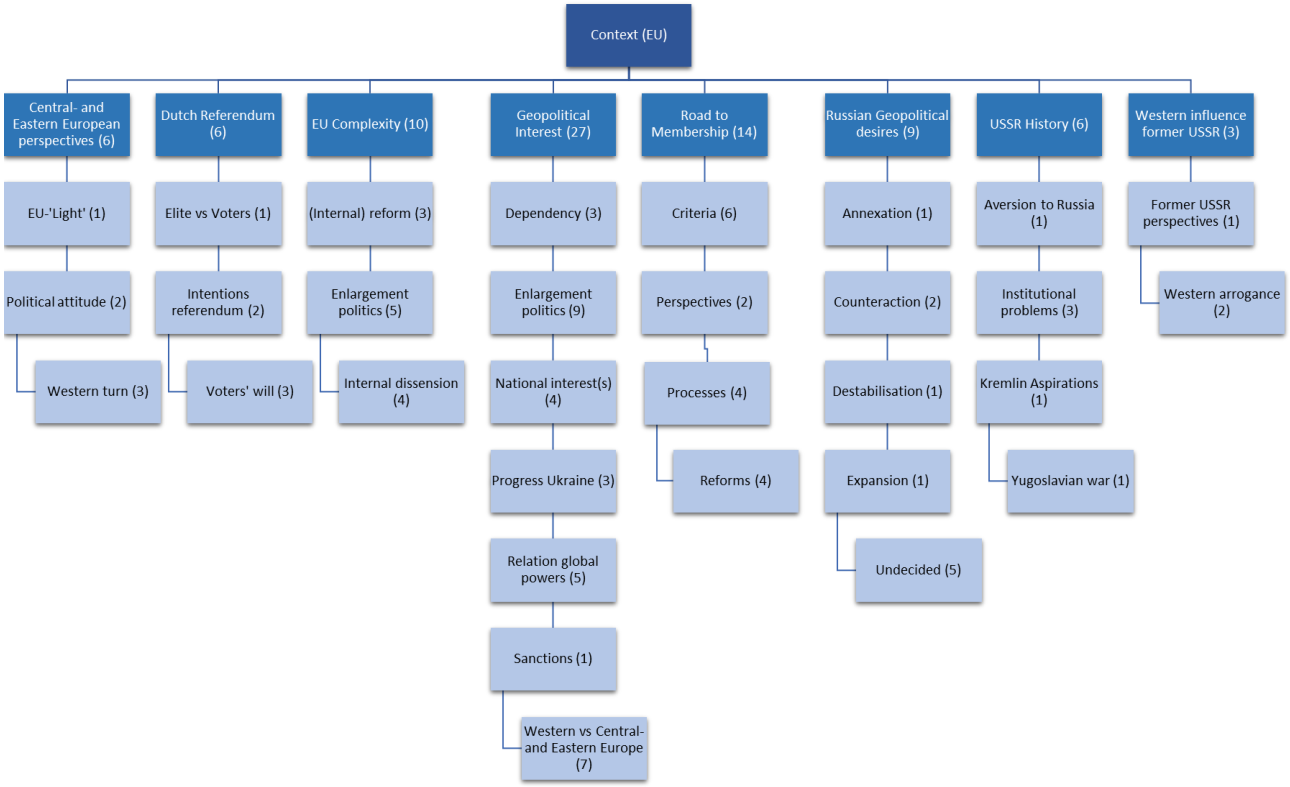
Code tree 6: Textual elements, framing device (AA)



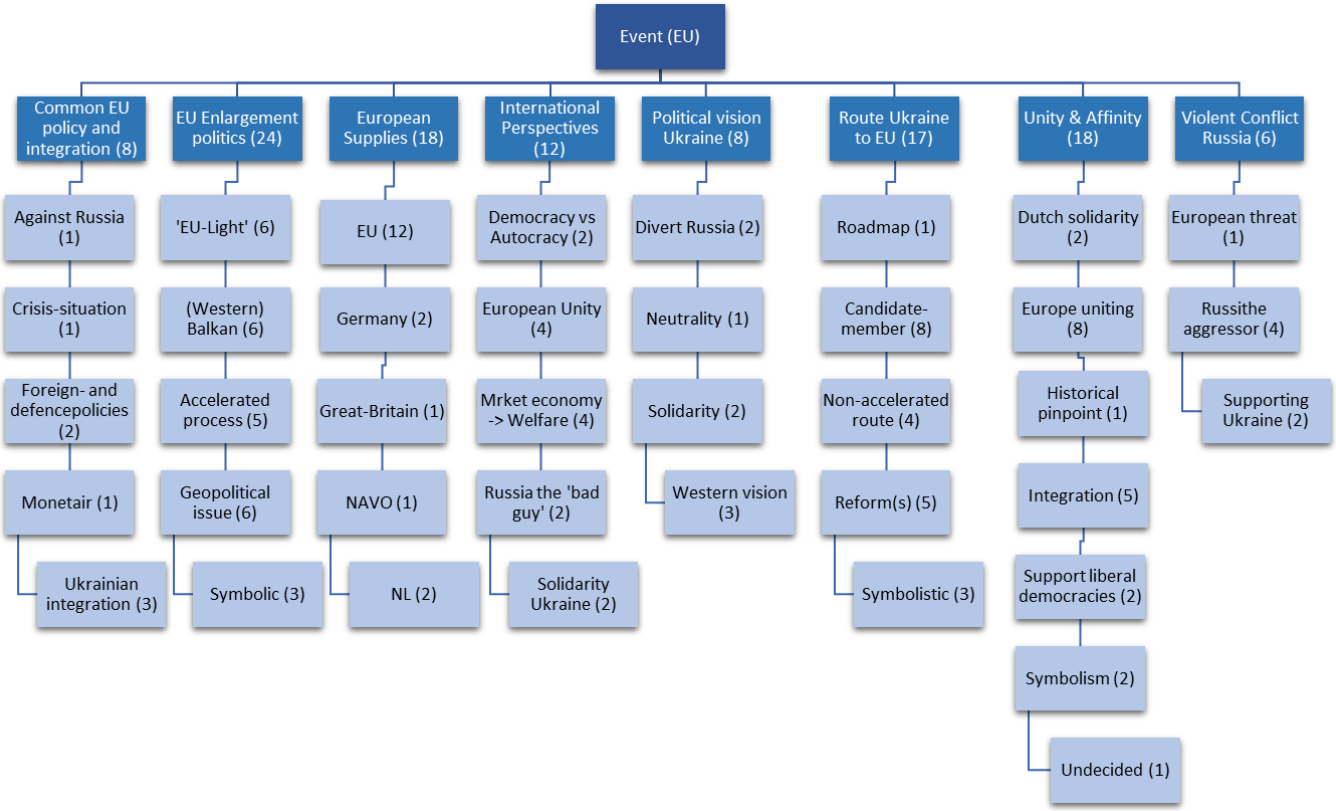
Code tree 7: Cause, reasoning device (EU)



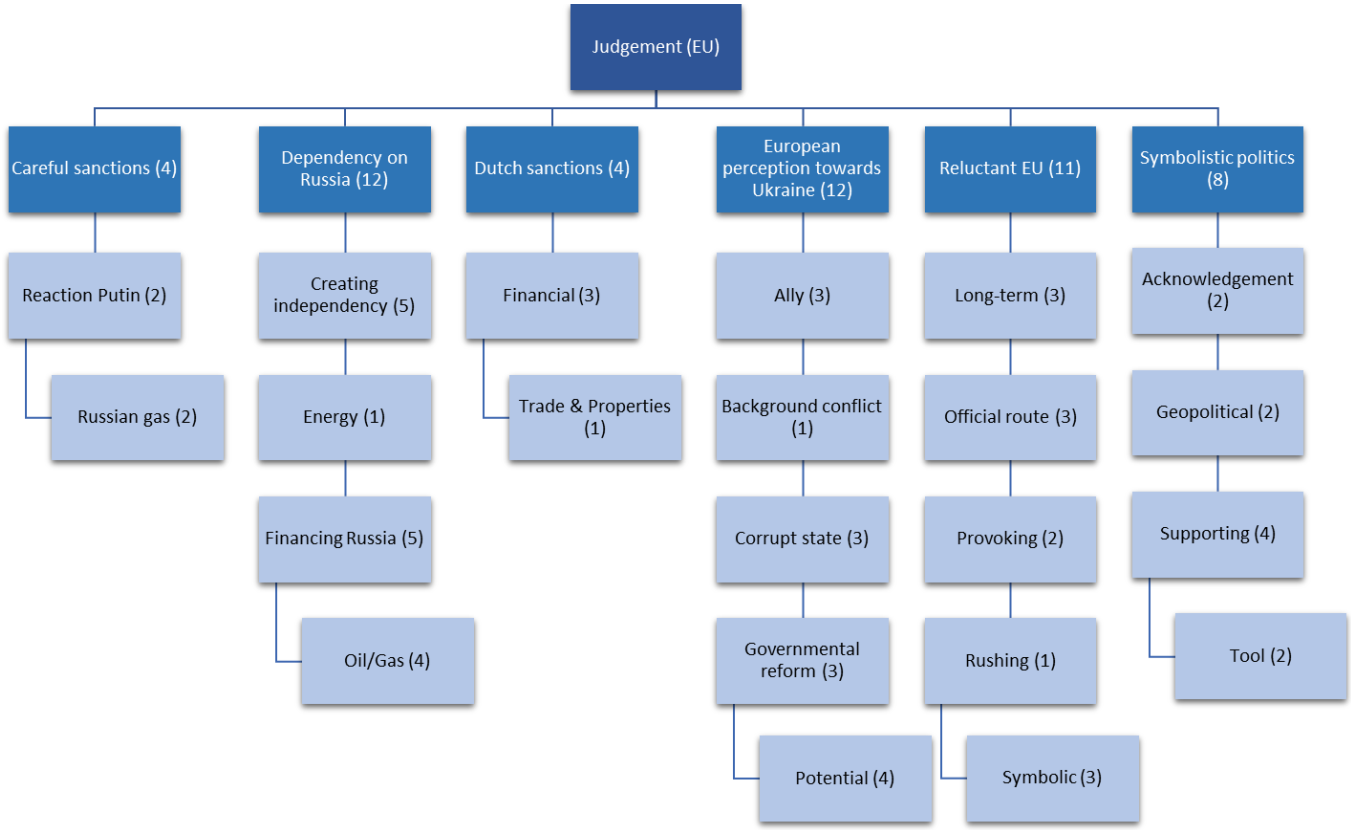
Code tree 8: Context, reasoning device (EU)



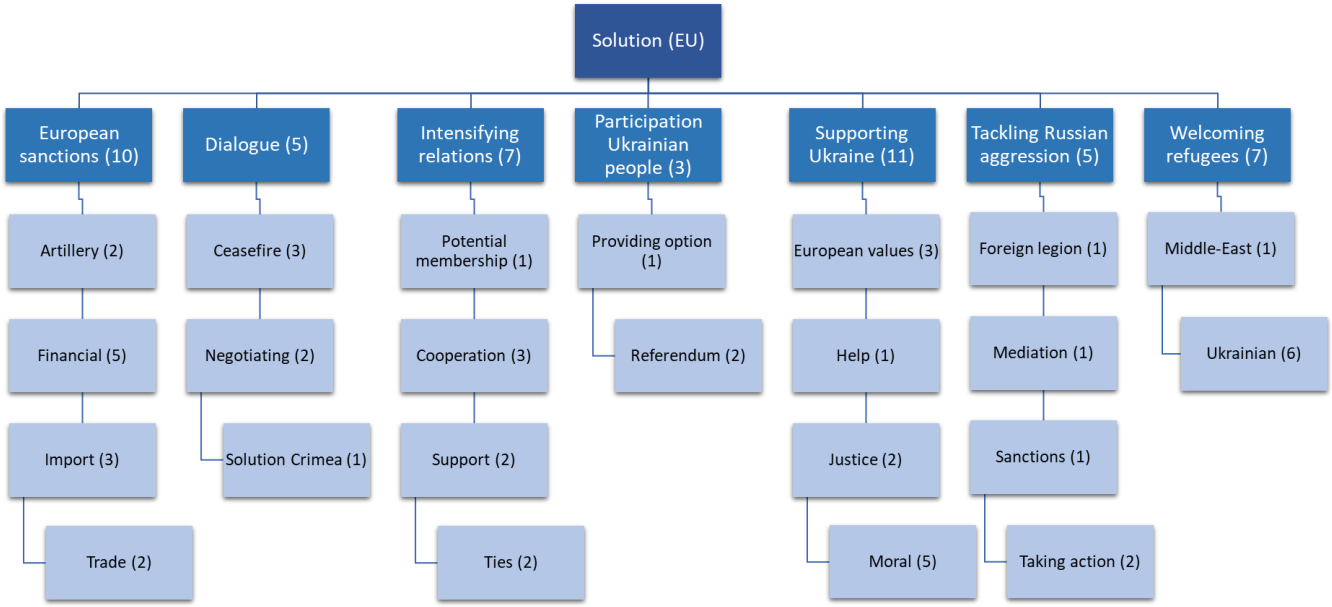
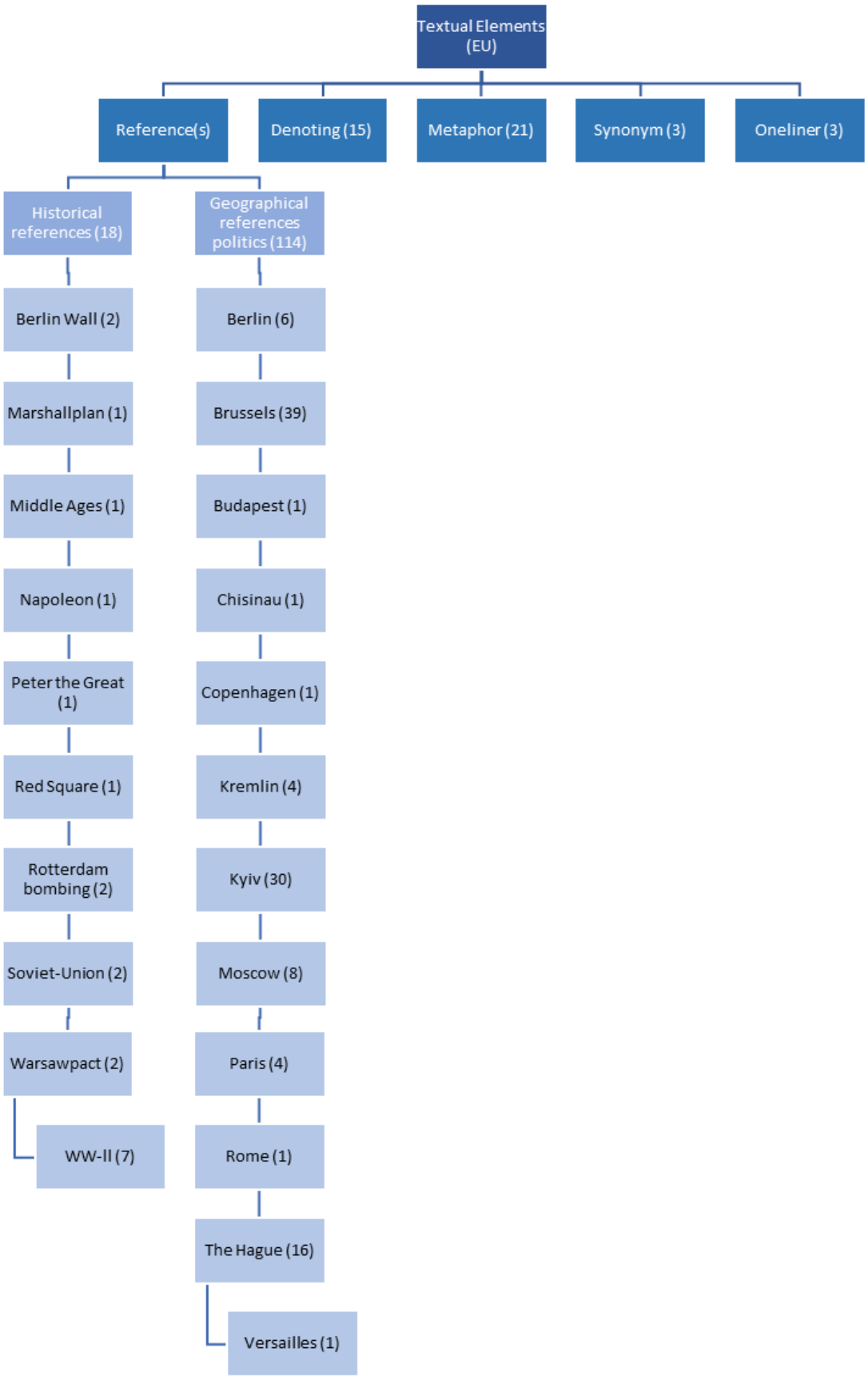
Code tree 9: Events, reasoning device (EU)



Code tree 10: Judgement, reasoning device (EU)



Code tree 11: Solution, reasoning device (EU)



Code tree 12: Textual elements, framing device (EU)