



Coverage of Refugee Discourse in Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet in 2023

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Abstract

The aim of this paper is to analyse the portrayal of refugee-related concerns in the two Swedish Newspapers with distinct political affiliations; Svenska Dagbladet (SvD) and Aftonbladet through the year 2023. For this thesis, fourteen articles, related to refugee discourse, seven from each newspaper were collected. The study was done by conducting a discourse analysis of the selected articles by referring to the Five News Frames from previous research by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000). Furthermore, both Framing Theory and Agenda Setting Theory were included in the discussion of the findings by highlighting their importance in the portrayal of refugee related themes and by emphasizing on the Five News Frames. Aftonbladet, categorised as a left-leaning newspaper employed the Morality and Human Interest frames which align with the previous research about the portrayal of refugees on the leftleaning media. Contradictory to the previous literature on left and right-leaning media the tendency to depict refugees negatively was not evident in the articles from Svenska Dagbladet. Nonetheless, a notable difference was the prioritization of issues. For instance, while Aftonbladet consistently referred to the responsibility of various actors, articles found on SvD focused on the responses by the authorities. This study has contributed to the IMER field by offering a nuanced approach of the impact of the political biases on the media coverage of refugee related discussions on Swedish newspapers.

Keywords: *Svenska Dagbladet, Aftonbladet, refugees, left-leaning media, right-leaning media*

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1. Introduction

Media coverage is crucial and significantly impacts attitudes among the public by influencing the perception, raising awareness and spreading information when addressing urgent world issues such as the refugee crisis (Liao, 2023). According to several studies, the discourse surrounding refugees has always been debated in the media, for instance through the negative representation as can be seen in the studies of Blumell et. al., (2019) and Georgiou and Zaborowski (2017). Georgiou and Zaborowski (2017) emphasise media trends and note how the media coverage promoting negative attitudes towards refugees was primarily noticed in the right-leaning press in Europe (Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017, p.3). Hence, the aim of this study is to investigate how the political affiliations of the major Swedish newspapers – Svenska Dagbladet and Aftonbladet impact the portrayal surrounding refugee discourse. In 2015, Europe experienced what is called a “Refugee Crisis” or “Migration Crisis” when millions of refugees crossed the borders. Sweden in the 2000s experienced mass immigration with the highest level ever in 2016, afterwards according to the data from SCB (Statistiska Centralbyrån, T: Statistics Sweden), immigration has been lower mostly because of the decrease in asylum immigration (Statistikmyndigheten SCB, 2024). In the public, this has sparked debates surrounding integration, refugees, migration policies and other related concerns.

In addition, during this period the ruling party in the Swedish Parliament were the Social Democrats which reflected a welcoming approach towards newcomers. Sweden has always been considered a safe space for newcomers, for instance, a research showed that Sweden has taken the most refugees per capita (Tomson, 2020). In addition, in 2015 Sweden received record-high applications for asylum, around 160 000 applications (SCB, n.d.). On the contrary, in recent years there was a shift in the governance with Moderates winning the election in 2022 with Ulf Kristersson becoming the prime minister of Sweden (Regeringskansliet, 2022). Moderates are known for supporting a tougher stance on migration overall, for instance they acknowledge that they believe that immigration to Sweden needs to decrease and the tightening requirements for citizenship (Moderaterna, n.d.). In 2022 in the aftermath of the war in Ukraine, millions of refugees have fled the country seeking protection. Nowadays, according to the data from the UNHCR, there are more than 6 million Ukrainian refugees worldwide (UNHCR, 2022). The war in Ukraine is considered to have caused the largest refugee crisis in Europe since the Second World War (Rescue, n.d.).

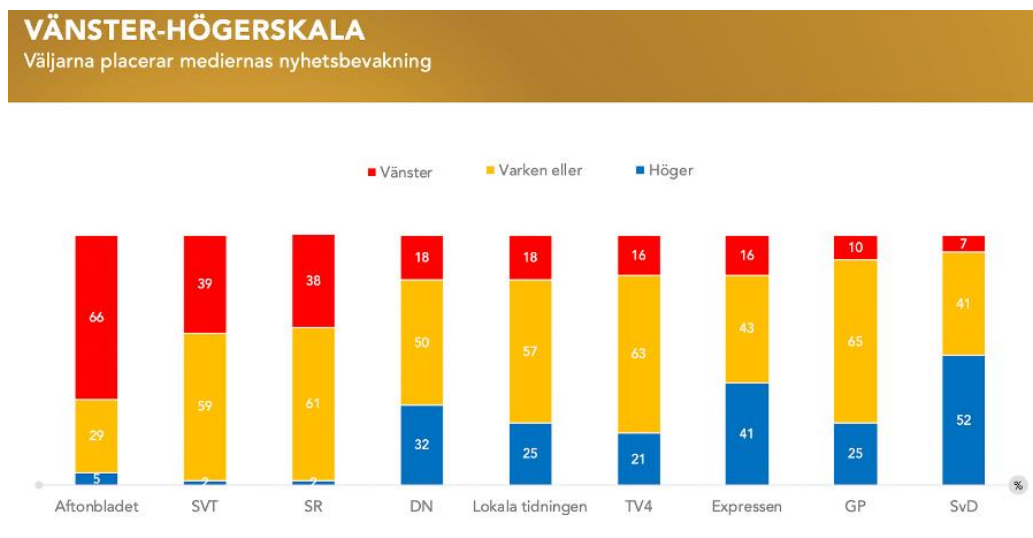
Nonetheless, while this thesis will not group or divide refugees, both the 2015 Migration Crisis and the Ukraine Refugee Crisis are important to take into account. The 2015 Migration Crisis has sparked attention worldwide and the understanding of the enduring impact the crisis led to is crucial when analysing media coverage of refugee discourse. On the other hand, the Ukraine Refugee Crisis is a very recent event and therefore the selected articles for this study may discuss issues concerning specifically the Ukrainian refugees. However, it is important to note that this thesis will focus solely on the refugee portrayal during the year 2023, since several years have already passed, the study provides an opportunity to assess the discourse on a longer-term scale. In addition, the year 2023 is notable because this research will focus on contemporary discourse. Consequently ensuring the relevance of the current socio-political climate. It will further provide valuable insight which may apply to the ongoing discussions regarding refugee discourse. In addition, the year 2023 allows for examining how the discourse surrounding refugees has evolved both under new leadership as well as in the aftermath of the 2015 Crisis. Nonetheless, this is a single case study focusing on the portrayal of refugees in Swedish Newspapers in 2023. The refugee discourse in 2023 is linked to the crisis of 2015 and 2022 as well as the shifts in the political leadership and the immigration policy approaches. As well as analyzing how the presentation of the discourse surrounding refugees differs between the two chosen newspapers, the study offers valuable insight into the impact of ideology.

Regarding the chosen newspapers, it is important to note that both Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet are owned by the same Norwegian media company Schibsted established in the year 1839. Starting in 1996 the company acquired 49.9% of Aftonbladet, and in 1998, 73.6% of the share in Svenska Dagbladet (Schibsted, n.d.). Established in 1830, nowadays Aftonbladet is considered to be the primary news source in Sweden with around 3.5 million readers daily (Aftonbladet, n.d.). SvD was established in 1884 and in the inter-war years when socialist and fascist movements gained ground, the concern about the newspaper's independence was raised. Consequently, in the 1940s was established as "*independent of individual financial interests, to prevent changes in ownership and to preserve its independent character*" (Stiftelsen Svenska Dagbladet, n.d.). The primary difference between the two news outlets is that while Aftonbladet is an evening-night newspaper, Svenska Dagbladet is a daily-morning newspaper. According to the information from the Swedish-language encyclopedia Nationalencyklopedin (NE), *dagstidningar* (daily newspapers) are different from other forms of newspapers by offering broader content and are more frequent

in their publication (NE, 2023). Following the definition from the same encyclopedia, *kvällstidningar* (evening newspapers) focuses on more sensational news (NE, 2023). Evening-night newspapers are printed to be published in the evening, on the contrary, the morning-daily newspapers are printed late in the evening and are published early in the morning. As stated, *SvD* is categorized as a morning newspaper and *Aftonbladet* as a daily newspaper, therefore these distinctions may influence their respective focus. For instance, morning papers tend to offer more detailed content. On the other hand daily papers often cover breaking news as well as human-interest stories which further aligns with the left-leaning perspective. Thus, these differences as well as the newspapers political stance influence how they report the refugee discourse. This is important because evening newspapers often cover more recent events, on the contrary, the morning papers might offer a more deeper analysis of the news. In turn, this affects what news they prioritise and comparing the differences will help one to gain a more comprehensive view of the articles covering refugee portrayal. Consequently, the two chosen newspapers reflect different political stances and ideological leanings. The editorial office of *Aftonbladet* describes it as an “independent social democratic”, nonetheless stating that the newsroom has no political affiliation (*Aftonbladet*: n.d.). On the other hand, the editorial office of *Svenska Dagbladet* describes the newspaper as politically independent. However, stating that it is unbound moderate and edited based on unified liberalism and conservatism (*Svenska Dagbladet*:n.d.). Overall, the newspaper is traditionally associated with the Moderate Party, while *Aftonbladet* is considered to be left-leaning (Mitchell et al.:2018).

Furthermore, following the contextual background, in March 2021 the 25th edition of the *Förtroendebarmeter* was released. This edition revealed the political left-right scale including the major Swedish Newspapers. This survey showed that while the media reporting is perceived as neutral, both *Aftonbladet* and *Svenska Dagbladet* stand out. It showed that the respondents perceived *Aftonbladet* as more left-leaning than neutral, as well as *Svenska Dagbladet* as more right-wing than neutral. On the left-right scale, 66% perceived *Aftonbladet* as left-wing compared to 29% perceiving it as neutral and only 5% as right-wing. On the other hand, *Svenska Dagbladet* was perceived as left-wing by only 7%, as neutral by 41% and as right-wing by 52% (see the image below) (Linnea Kihlström, 2021). Additionally, there have been similar surveys throughout the years, the latest conducted in 2024. Nonetheless, only the survey from 2021 includes the left-right scale including all popular Swedish newspapers.

Image 1: (Mediaakademin, 2021)



Contribution

This thesis contributes to the IMER field by highlighting the impact of political biases on media coverage of refugees in Sweden. More specifically, it provides an analysis of how specific political biases within the two Swedish newspapers shape the discourse surrounding refugees. Since both newspapers reflect different political stances, by examining the coverage in the articles, this study will investigate how these biases influence the tone and framing of the refugee discourse. The specific focus of this research allows a detailed exploration of the interconnection between media and refugee discourse in Sweden. The sample of this study is 14 articles gathered from two major Swedish news outlets with different ideological leanings: Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet. Overall, comparing media coverage from the chosen period is important due to the different political agendas of the chosen newspapers. As well as insight into the role of this agenda in shaping media discourse surrounding immigration. Consequently, understanding these biases is crucial when shaping public discourse and policymaking. Additionally, the chosen year will provide an in-depth exploration of the refugee portrayal in Swedish Newspapers.

This will be done by focusing on the contemporary timeframe and analysing the most recent discourse. By focusing on the recent discourse, the study will lead to a comprehensive understanding of this issue. Hence, the following research question will guide this study: *How do Swedish Newspapers, Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet discuss refugee discourse in 2023?*

2. Previous Research and Literature Review

The main theme of the following literature review is the correlation between the political affiliation of the newspapers and the representation of migration-related issues. The review aims to explore the political factors influencing media attitudes. The studies collected in this review include aspects such as media attitudes towards refugees, the framing of refugee discourse in various contexts as well and the impact of political biases on the coverage. Furthermore, this review will cover several topics, for instance, it will include international contexts such as the 2015 Migration Crisis and the 2022 Ukrainian Refugee Crisis, as well as comparative studies between different groups by Georgiou and Zaborowski (2017). This review will further highlight several concepts which often intersect within the refugee discourse such as race and ethnicity.

Although this thesis will not categorise the refugees based on their race and ethnicity, understanding these dynamics is crucial when analyzing media portrayal. As the following studies will show, the concepts of race and ethnicity may be exploited by the far-right resulting in negative media portrayals reinforcing stereotypes. By taking into account these concepts, one can gain a deeper understanding of the contrast between right and left media portrayal of refugees. Furthermore, this literature review will include such key concepts as “*political affiliation*” and “*RASIM*”. Political affiliation refers to a state of belonging to a specific political party (Law Insider, n.d.). The term RASIM will appear later in this review during the description of the study by Valente et al. (2021). Moreover, while this review references the term “RASIM” it is important to clarify that it is not the search term for this thesis but instead is a conceptual term introduced by the authors of the study by Valente et al., (2021) discussed in the literature review. Each letter in the term “RASIM” stands for refugees, asylum seekers, immigrants and migrants (Valente et al., 2021). In addition, all search terms that were used during the selection of the articles for this thesis are mentioned in the table in the Appendix. Furthermore, it is crucial to mention that this thesis does not categorize refugees based on their ethnicity or race, however understanding these dynamics is important when analyzing the portrayal of refugee discourse in the chosen newspapers. The studies discussed in this literature review show that these concepts - race and ethnicity are often exploited by the far-right politicians and therefore result in negative media portrayals. Consequently, by acknowledging this concepts, one gains a deeper understanding of the contrast in the coverage between right and left-leaning media.

When conducting the analysis of the articles from Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet, this research will integrate the 5 News Frames, introduced by H. Semetko and P. M. Valkenburg (2000). In their research, the authors explored 5 news frames; responsibility, economic consequences, morality, conflict and human interest. While the study did not specifically focus on the political affiliation of newspapers, for this thesis, this method will be useful when connecting to the two theories presented above. The authors of this study claim that previous studies over the course of 25 years have explored these framing effects in media. These frames are considered tools which are used by the media to interpret the information and as well are shaping public perceptions (Semeteko & Valkenburg, 2000, pp.93-94). The characterization that the scholars give these frames is that they are focusing on the specific key issues and lead to the audience focusing on specific information (Semeteko & Valkenburg, 2000, p.94). All of the following frames focus on different lenses of the presentation of the issues by emphasizing the different aspects.

The Conflict Frame; within this frame news articles usually focus on disputes, which can be between the different groups, institutions or individuals. Semetko and Valkenburg argue that this frame is very common in news reporting and therefore receives criticism for simplifying the complexity of political discourse (Semeteko & Valkenburg, 2000, p.95). *The Human Interest Frame* focuses on an emotional angle of the presentation and is often used to capture the audience attention. Through this frame, media can focus on personalized stories by emotionalizing their stories (Semeteko & Valkenburg, 2000, pp.95-96). *The Economic Consequences Frame* focuses on the reporting of events revolving around the economic impact, which can for instance be on different groups, institutions, and individuals as well as on regions and whole countries (Semeteko & Valkenburg, 2000, p.96). *The Morality Frame* focuses on the issue by emphasizing on the moral values or putting an event in a religious context. However, due to the expectation of being objective, journalists often refer to this frame indirectly, for instance through quotes. The stories focusing on this frame may contain various moral messages. Nonetheless, the authors refer to the work of Neuman et al. who found that this frame seems to be more common in the mind of the audience due to their perceptions rather than in the actual content of the news (Semeteko & Valkenburg, 2000, p.96). The last frame is the *Responsibility Frame* which focuses on the attribution of responsibility for the presented issues or for the solution of the issues to groups, individuals, governments or institutions.

Following this information, several studies have analysed the media coverage of refugee discourse on the international level. Predominantly, these studies have been following mainly two topics. The first one was following the aftermath of the 2015 Migration Crisis, which sparked a lot of attention worldwide. The second prevailing theme is the 2022 Ukrainian Refugee Crisis. In the year 2017, two years after the 2015 Migration Crisis the Council of Europe published a report which discussed the media coverage of the refugee crisis (Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017). Starting with the *Responsibility Frame* which focuses on assigning blame. The found literature suggests that there is a tendency within the right-leaning media to depict refugees as threatening. The significant results of Georgiou and Zaborowski (2017) showed that the press attitudes shifted from sympathy to suspicion and depicted the arriving refugees as dangerous. Moreover, the authors noted how the right-leaning media promoted negative attitudes and even hate speech towards refugees (Georgiou and Zaborowski, 2017, p.3). Regarding the Ukrainian refugees, several comparative studies show the difference in the treatment of refugees from Ukraine and other refugees, for instance from Syria. One of these studies is from 2023 and analyses the perception of immigrants in Swedish media. The results showed that the negative attitudes were primarily noticed towards Muslim refugees and immigrants. Moreover, the authors claim that the conflict in Ukraine is further framed as the issue of whiteness and is used by the extreme far-right (Palmgren, Åkerlund and Viklund, 2023). The provided characteristics of race and ethnicity serve as pertinent factors which help one understand how refugees were depicted in the right-wing media. This information is crucial since it highlights the reinforcement of bias and stereotypes in the refugee discourse.

Another author noted a negative view towards immigrants on the right-leaning press in the UK which often portrays them as outsiders. The study in 2019 by Blumell et al. examined news media in the UK and noted that the right-leaning press proposed a negative approach towards newcomers. The focus of the paper surrounds the political affiliation and the political biases of the newspapers, there are notable studies which reflect on this issue. For instance, these newspapers often presented the foreign nationals negatively, depicting them as outsiders or being involved in asocial activities. On the other hand, the left-wing newspapers had a more positive language surrounding the discourse. The authors further argue that one of the aspects affecting the negative representation and anti-refugee messages is the number of conservative politicians featured in the right-leaning press (Blumell, et al., 2019, p.8).

Additionally, the authors argue how the anti-foreign rhetoric was predominantly high during Brexit in 2016 (Blumell, et.al., 2019, p.9). This can be connected to the portrayal of refugees in the Swedish newspapers in 2023, where the political stances and major events such as the 2015 Refugee Crisis may similarly shape the media portrayal of refugees.

The studies such as the one of Valente et al. (2021) further demonstrate how the media often depicts refugees as burdens and threats to society. The scientific paper by Valente et al. published in 2021 analyses media representation patterns with a focus on migrants. It is important to note that in the case of this study, the term “*migrants*” was defined by the term RASIM, encompassing various categories including refugees, asylum seekers and immigrants. The authors of this study have analysed the correlation between migrant representation and the political affiliation of the media in four countries; the UK, Italy, France and Greece. This was done by analysing the key events and how they were covered in liberal and conservative newspapers. The authors supported the analysis and the findings by referring to several previous studies which proposed that media coverage of migrants falls into two categories. The first frame portrays migrants as negative by depicting them as a threat and a burden to society. On the other hand, the second frame portrays them as innocent victims who require protection (Valente et al., 2021, pp. 412-413). However, the authors note that different portrayals depend on the media outlet and the sociopolitical context (Valente et al., 2021, p.413). Similarly, Elisa Rustenbach (2010) analysed the anti-immigrant views in different countries focusing on eight factors among which was political affiliation (Rustenbach, 2010, p.53). This was done through analysing the data from various surveys. According to the study, this factor was a strong predictor of anti-immigrant views both on the national and individual level (Rustenbach, 2010, p.66). Consequently, the results depicted that the right-leaning affiliation was associated with the opposition to migrants, which would also be seen in the promotion of stricter policies by the right-wing political parties. Moreover, individuals who associate with right-wing politics often depict migrants by referring to negative stereotypes arguing for instance that migrants are an economic threat (Rustenbach, 2010, p.68). Therefore, this paper highlights how the right-leaning media tends to associate migrants with negative stereotypes which include for instance economic threats.

The frames of morality, conflict and human interest were foremost noticeable in the paper by McCann et. al., (2023). His paper suggests that throughout the data gathered from 2015, the refugees were presented negatively across both left- and right-leaning media. Namely,

refugees were presented as violent as well as clashes between refugee groups and the police (McCann et. al., 2023, p.7). Furthermore, this research showed that the refugees represented in the right-leaning media were portrayed as potentially exploiting the system, with several reports of people smugglers which raised questions about the legitimacy of asylum claims. On the contrary, left-leaning media depicted refugees as confronting social inequalities by referencing the encounter of prejudice in their experiences (McCann et. al., 2023, p.9). By emphasizing the different depictions of refugees in the media heightens concern about the credibility of the refugee narratives. Another research analysing the portrayal of refugees in media was conducted in 2013 by William L. Allen and Scott Blinder. The study focused on the coverage of migrants in British newspapers from 2010 to 2012, distinguishing between the far-right and left media. The results of the study showed that the left-leaning media focused on policy proposals for skilled non-European workers as well as discussed the family members of the migrants. The far-right media instead emphasised the security concerns and used terms such as “illegal”, “terrorist” etc. Overall, there was a notable difference in language and the portrayal of newcomers (Allen and Blinder, 2013, pp.17-18). Both studies touch upon the three frames – McCann (2023) highlights the evident concern about the credibility of the refugee narratives in the right-leaning media, while Allen and Blinder (2013) following both the frame of morality and conflict argue how the right press emphasises security concerns when discussing refugee-related issues. Furthermore, when focusing on the human interest frame, the study by McCann (2023) shows that by focusing on the negative aspects, one may overlook the personal experiences of refugees.

Another notable paper is from 2018 and is a comparative study between the USA, Sweden, China and India focusing on how digital media has contributed to the change in politics by Ralph Shroeder (2018). While not necessarily focusing on any of the Five Frames, this study is relevant to this thesis. The author noted how Sweden is a newspaper-centric society (Shroeder, 2018, p.34) as well as how there is a notable but gradual rise of right-wing populism both in the USA and Sweden which is a crucial factor in reshaping politics (Shroeder, 2018, p.42). However, this research aligns with the previously mentioned comparative study by Rustenbach (2010). Both authors Rustenbach (2010) and Shroeder (2018) examine political affiliation and how it shapes attitudes towards migrants. While Rustenbach (2010) highlight the significant opposition notable in the right-leaning spectrum, Shroeder focuses on the rise of right-wing populism and its effect on politics and media. For this thesis, understanding that Sweden is a newspaper-centric society is relevant since it

offers valuable insight into the country's primary forms of media consumption. This context is further crucial for understanding the influence of Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet. Moreover, the author's observation about the rise of right-wing populism highlights the importance of politics. Given that this thesis aims to explore how the political affiliations of the major Swedish newspaper impact the portrayal surrounding refugee discourse, understanding these political developments is important.

Overall, this review has reflected and incorporated various information related to the media coverage of refugee discourse. The provided literature has mentioned broader themes and indicated differences between left-wing media and right-wing media. Nevertheless, the previous research covers mostly the international context, resulting in a notable gap in this field. Secondly, while there is a focus on Sweden, e.g. Ralph Shroeder (2018), the previous studies do not focus specifically on the refugee portrayal in both right-leaning and left-leaning newspapers. In addition, while race and ethnicity are not central to this analysis, it is important to acknowledge this concept because far-right groups often use them to frame refugees as a threat. Following the mentioned studies one can see that this pattern is seen across Europe, especially with the rise of the far-right which has further fueled the anti-refugee sentiments. Therefore this thesis references broader European events such as Brexit to further contextualise the political environment. By further connecting this research to the larger trends this thesis aims to provide a deeper understanding of how the broader political and societal factors may influence the media portrayals of refugees. Furthermore, by following the previously conducted research, to fill the gap and by analyzing the articles from contrasting ideological perspectives explicitly with a focus on Swedish newspapers this thesis will investigate the impact of political agendas on the refugee portrayal in Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet. In this thesis, while the collected articles have not frequently referenced the 2015 Refugee Crisis and the 2022 Ukrainian Refugee Crisis directly, it is clear that these crises have had a lasting impact on both Swedish policies and public discourse. This paper considers how the refugee discourse in the Swedish newspapers in 2023 is influenced by the aftermath of these earlier events. Moreover, this approach places the refugee discourse within a broader historical context. Hence, this thesis aims to further contribute to the knowledge of media representation of refugees in the IMER field and the already existing discourse surrounding the topic.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper will investigate how refugees are portrayed in the two Swedish newspapers through the lens of Framing Theory and Agenda Setting Theory. Framing Theory was introduced by Erving Goffman, who argued that these frames are fundamental for cultural belief systems and are shaping the interpretation of reality (Volkmer, 2009, pp.2-4). In mass media, this theory emerged in the 1970s, leading to a shift from a simplified view of media impact, and instead focusing on the particular type of media influence. The media plays an important role in shaping what issues the public focuses on as well as how these issues are perceived (Volkmer, 2009, p.2). This was further emphasised by Benjamin Cohen, who argued that while the media does not control our thoughts however, it does have a strong impact on what and how we perceive it (Volkmer, 2009, p.2). Overall this theory suggests that the perspective from which the story is told can contribute to shaping how people perceive the discussed issues. In this context of newspapers, this implies that while they do not necessarily control what people think, they instead passively disclose information to the public by choosing which aspects of the story to highlight. This is where the Five News Frames that are included in this analysis play a role, by helping to identify the frames that were noticeable in the chosen articles.

By connecting the Framing Theory (1970) to the literature review above, one can observe a trend of right-leaning newspapers framing refugee discourse and highlighting concerns while left-leaning newspapers instead emphasise different narratives promoting solidarity. This further aligns with the fundamental principles of the theory which argues that media shapes how the audience perceives the information. Hence, in the case of this study, which focuses on the portrayal of refugees in the two Swedish newspapers, this theory becomes crucial in understanding the role of media in shaping public perception. For instance, following the previously conducted research, the portrayal of refugees in the newspapers which are right-leaning highlights concerns about refugees. This later results in negative public opinions. On the other hand, the left-leaning media instead emphasises the refugee narratives which include solidarity and overall may lead to a more positive perception. In addition, due to the different political stances of the chosen newspapers, this theory highlights how each perspective may contribute to shaping a different public opinion.

Agenda-setting theory was first introduced by Maxwell McCombs and Donald Lewis Shaw in 1968. This theory originated from their study of the presidential election also known as the “Chapel Hill Study” in 1968. Their method was to examine and compare the issues that were emphasized by the media (the media agenda) and the issues that the voters of the election considered important (the voters' agenda). The results of this study revealed a strong correlation between what the local news portrayed as being the most important election topic, and what the local residents considered to be important. Hence, the study revealed that media has an impact on public perception by emphasising specific themes (McCombs and Shaw, 1977). The reason why this study is important is because after revealing this correlation, it suggested that the agenda-setting of the media is a powerful tool in shaping public opinion by drawing attention to specific themes. In summary, this theory argues that media has the ability to influence what people think about it. Entman (1989) supports this theory and argues that there is a significant association between the political messages of the newspapers and the political sentiments of their readers. According to the author, this theory is a fundamental assumption when discussing media influence (Entman, 1989, p.347). Further connecting this theory to the literature review, several scholars, e.g. Valente et al. emphasise how right-leaning newspapers often prioritise news where refugees are depicted as threats to society. Consequently, this theory is prominent when identifying what issues are prioritised in the media coverage of refugees. Furthermore, the political leanings of the selected newspapers may reflect different aspects of these issues based on the ideological stance. Hence, Agenda-setting theory will contribute to identifying how these political orientations influence the framing of the refugee coverage.

Following the mentioned gap in the previous research of the field, by applying the Framing Theory (1970) and the Agenda Setting Theory (1968) This research, this thesis aims to address this gap by further analyzing the framing strategies followed by the two chosen Swedish newspapers - Svenska Dagbladet and Aftonbladet, both with the different political affiliation. With support from the previously conducted studies, these theories offer valuable insight into the chosen topic. Incorporating the Five Frames according to the research of Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) offers a more thorough analysis of the articles following the presented theories. Overall, both theories highlight the crucial impact of media on belief and interpretation, thus understanding the framing of refugee discourse in SvD and Aftonbladet is important.

4. Methodology and Method

To begin with, at first the decision was between a Discourse Analysis and a Text Analysis. However, to effectively address the research question this study will follow an approach involving a Discourse Analysis. Identifying and analyzing different frames in the chosen articles is a characteristic of discourse analysis since it examines the meaning and focuses on the framing of different themes. Despite the chosen articles covering different issues they all relate to the refugee discourse. As an example, while some of the articles discuss refugee related policy, while others cover refugee-related events. Discourse analysis is widely chosen approach in the study field since it offers opportunity to examine any sources (Moses & Knutsen, 2012: 218). Overall, this approach provides an opportunity to analyse how each of the newspapers shape the broader conversation related to the refugee discourse.

This approach is convenient for analysing the portrayal of refugees in the selected articles. Furthermore, this approach will provide further nuance in identifying themes which reflect the ideological stances of Svenska Dagbladet and Aftonbladet. Consequently, conducting this analysis will provide a deeper understanding of how political bias may influence the portrayal of refugees in the Swedish media. According to constructivists, various factors influence social reality, and therefore they follow methods incorporating a wide range of sources. Hence, the suggested data collection aligns with the constructivist approach because it acknowledges the importance of diverse data within the complex nature of social reality (Moses and Knutsen, 2012, p.10).

The chosen material for this study is 14 articles from two major Swedish newspapers published in the year 2023. The two chosen newspapers follow different ideological stances, and therefore 7 articles will be chosen from Svenska Dagbladet and 7 from Aftonbladet. Consequently, due to the reflection of different political stances, this will lead to an opportunity to examine how the different political bias shape their respective coverage of the discourse surrounding refugees.

Strengths and Limitations

By using the selected method it will allow a thorough analysis of the selected articles by identifying themes and patterns. This will lead to a deeper understanding of the refugee portrayal in the chosen newspapers. Secondly, by extracting the information from the selected

articles, personal bias will be avoided, leading to an objective study. Lastly, conducting a comparative analysis between Svenska Dagbladet and Aftonbladet will further enhance the dominant narratives and may uncover the potential biases of the portrayal of refugee discourse.

The primary strength of this approach is that it will allow for nuanced analysis of the chosen articles. Furthermore, as mentioned this approach aligns well with the constructivist approach. By focusing on the 14 articles this study ensures a comprehensive analysis. Nonetheless, since the study focuses explicitly on a text-based analysis there are several limitations arising from the chosen method. For instance, the selected amount of articles might not fully capture the full range of the refugee discourse in the selected newspapers. Secondly, since this analysis focuses solely on the text rather than the images or videos, which sometimes are included in the articles online will be excluded from this study. This is a notable limitation, because this data may provide additional context to the text of the article which would be considered crucial. Limiting the scope of the written articles may narrow down the comprehension of the study. Another limitation may be the risk of irrelevant findings and uncovering themes which are not necessarily related to the research question (Adu, 2022, pp.16-17). For example, this is relevant to the literature review of this paper since several authors group together migration-related topics or focus on the portrayal of refugees by including the term “refugees” together with the “immigrants” or “asylum seekers”. Another limitation of this method is the potential to misinterpret the phrases because of the complexity of the language since there may be various meanings to some expressions (Adu, 2022, p.8). Moreover, while this thesis analyses explicitly news articles, future research may benefit by further including different genres. For example, opinion editorials might emphasize personal opinions more strongly and influence public perception in a rather different way. Recognizing these various genres is important since then one may get a broader understanding of how the various types of articles contribute to public opinion. However, this thesis focuses specifically on the news articles in order to maintain consistency in the conducted analysis.

Material

In this paper, the focus is on analysing articles specifically tagged as “*nyheter*” (news) selected all based on the objective reporting on the topics related to refugees. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the potential impact the different media genres have. For

instance, such genres as debate articles and editorials are likely to present a more subjective perspective in comparison with news articles. The two chosen newspapers reflect different political stances and ideological leanings. For instance, Aftonbladet follows a left-leaning while Svenska Dagbladet reflects a centre-right stance. The sample of this study was 14 articles gathered from two major Swedish news outlets with different ideological leanings: Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet. Out of these, 7 articles were taken from Svenska Dagbladet and 7 were found on Aftonbladet. The articles were found on the official websites of the mentioned newspapers, which are <https://www.aftonbladet.se/> and <https://www.svd.se/>. The articles were chosen from the year 2023 to collect the latest media coverage, however one of the articles publication date was January 2024. The decision was to include this article since it offered latest coverage but still was close to the selected year. The chosen articles primarily focused on public debates, policies, integration concerns and impacts. This search was done by searching keywords and the desired time period. In addition, when finding relevant articles, certain keywords were used such as: “*flyktingar*” (refugees), “*flyktingkris*” (refugee crisis), “*asylrätt*” (right for asylum) and others. The selected terms are highly relevant for this study due to directly referring to the subject matter of the study. The term “*flyktingar*” (refugees) provided this research all the articles covering refugee discourse. Other provided terms such as “*flyktingkris*” (refugee crisis) have further added to the analysis by addressing the refugee crisis. Additionally, the articles found with this search term may include a discussion on the crisis, as well as coverage of political debates surrounding the management of the refugee flows. Overall, the selected search terms are likely to capture the diverse topics and perspectives which are relevant to this study. Moreover, due to knowing the Swedish language, I had an opportunity to thoroughly analyse the content by applying the suggested keywords when selecting the articles. The Swedish proficiency has enabled me to conduct a thorough analysis of the content in the news articles and overall enhanced the validity of this research. Therefore, all excerpts from the articles that are mentioned in the Analysis section were translated to English by me. In summary, the samples represented various views on refugee discourse from the chosen time period. The selection of the articles from two different newspapers reflecting different political stances has led to diverse viewpoints for this study.

Articles

Firstly, when finding the 7 articles from SvD, it was done by using the key search “*flyktingspolitik*” (refugee policy) (<https://www.svd.se/tagg/flyktingpolitik>). On this website, there are over 50 articles related to refugee policy, containing themes such as Afghanistan after the war and The Migrant Crisis at the EU border. For Aftonbladet, 7 articles will be found by the same key search “*flyktingspolitik*” (refugee policy) (<https://www.aftonbladet.se/tagg/flyktingpolitik>). The keywords along with the titles of the article and link are mentioned in the Appendix, which includes two tables, each for one newspaper. While the website does not specify how many articles there are, it contains 50 pages with various themes related to refugee policy. These themes include all news articles, debate articles and reports about integration, migration and refugee policy. For the purpose of this thesis, the focus was on refugee-related themes. Secondly, the selection of relevant articles followed the exclusion of opinion and debate articles focusing only on factual reporting rather than being subjective. Consequently, all 14 articles that were analysed in this thesis were tagged with “*nyheter*” (news) on both newspaper websites. Lastly, the word count of all 14 articles remained similar, with slight exceptions, focusing firsthand on the medium-length articles. Nonetheless, the presented themes in the chosen articles varied focusing on different topics surrounding refugee discourse.

Selection Process

As previously mentioned the material selection for this thesis involved a focused approach by targeting the articles specifically tagged as “news”. This was chosen to ensure that the analysis is based solely on factual reporting. The selection process was the following:

- Firstly the articles were chosen based on their relevance to the refugee discourse, published within a set date range.
- All chosen articles were tagged as “*nyheter*” (news) to maintain consistency in the analysis.

While the number of 14 articles appears limited it also reflects the availability of the relevant articles within the chosen scope. Nevertheless, the depth of the analysis provided by focusing on these articles through the Five Frames. Furthermore, the number of selected articles is justifiable because they offer a clear view, and consistency and represent the available material.

Inductive Research

Additionally, this study has followed an inductive approach, meaning that the findings of this study were related to the presented theories in the discussion. This approach is considered to be material driven, which in this case are the selected articles from the newspapers which were analysed on the refugee topic portrayal. Furthermore, literature review is a prominent aspect of qualitative research, the review was presented earlier. The Discussion part after analyzing the articles will link together the previous findings, theories and analysis (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, p.60). Furthermore, the analysis of qualitative research is inductive, since I as a researcher have identified the patterns and themes within the articles (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, p.39). Overall, this study has observed the themes surrounding refugee discourse in Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet and afterwards presents an explanation which will guide an understanding of how political leanings influence media coverage.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the reliability and validity of this research, it is crucial to acknowledge the limitations. To begin with, it is important to note that only two newspapers were chosen based on their ideological leanings. Hence, this study excludes other media outlets that may contribute to Sweden's refugee discourse. Secondly, regarding the geographical focus this study analyses the media portrayal of refugees in Sweden, Therefore, it excludes the comparison with media coverage of refugees in other regions. Furthermore, this study follows a restriction in the time period, since the chosen year is 2023. This was done in order to collect the most recent discourse surrounding refugees. Ensuring validity and reliability is a crucial part of the research in order to produce credible findings. In this particular study, both internal and external validity are acknowledged, as well as reliability. First of all, the internal validity focuses on the study's relationship with the used variables. Therefore, the selected method and articles will ensure that the study will remain focused on the topic of refugees in the two Swedish newspapers. The application of keywords will further contribute to that and finding relevant sources and articles. Following the external validity, by applying the chosen method, this research has secured the internal validity by ensuring a thorough analysis of the selected articles. While the study has a specific focus, the external validity provides a possible generalizability of the findings in real-world contexts. Furthermore, by following the established method, it has guaranteed that the results are valid. This means that it may enable the reader to compare the results to similar contexts (Moses and Knutsen, 2012, p.60). In order for this research to be reliable and accurate, I ensure that the chosen method was

properly followed. For instance, following the guidelines in Creswell and Creswell (2023), there is a requirement not to change the definition of codes when conducting a qualitative method. Meaning that the method is thoroughly followed in order to minimize the potential bias. Hence, the chosen keywords for this research were all followed for the selection of all 14 articles (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, pp. 243-244). Furthermore, following the established method has guaranteed that the results at the end of this study are valid.

Ethical Concerns

When conducting this research and analyzing the chosen articles, a set of ethical considerations will be followed (Creswell & Creswell, 2023, pp.124-126). These include avoiding bias in the selection of articles, as well as respect for the diversity of views since the chosen newspapers present different political leanings. In addition, I acknowledge that immigration and the discourse surrounding refugees is a sensitive topic. Furthermore, the findings and interpretations will be presented thoroughly considering the potential impact on both individuals and communities affected. Overall, the study aims to contribute to the understanding of media portrayal of refugees in Sweden by respecting all involved perspectives.

5. Analysis

In this chapter, the results will be presented featuring the articles from *Aftonbladet* and *Svenska Dagbladet*. Throughout this analysis, after reading thoroughly all the articles, the aim was to identify the Five Frames and then in the Discussion section discuss the results and the similarities and differences between the newspapers. This section will begin with analysing the seven articles from *Aftonbladet* and the same thing will be done after with the articles from *Svenska Dagbladet*. However, each article will not be discussed individually but instead, the focus will be on the common five frames. It is important to note that while the search was made to select articles strictly related to refugees exclusively, some of the articles surround broader refugee discourse.

The Responsibility Frame in Aftonbladet

The first frame which was identified was the *Responsibility Frame*, this frame was central in all articles found on *Aftonbladet*. All of the articles discuss the responsibility of various actors in both shaping and handling the policies, these are government agencies, political

parties, and international actors. As an example, the first article discusses the division between the two Swedish political parties Sverige Demokraterna (SD) and the Moderate Party regarding the EU's future refugee policy. Translation of excerpt from the article published on 2023-04-18: The EU's future refugee policy has created a deep rift between the Sweden Democrats and the Moderates (*"EU:s framtida flyktingpolitik har skapat en djup spricka mellan Sverigedemokraterna och Moderaterna"* (Svensson, Laneby & Forseberg, 2023)). Similarly, in Article 3 there is a minor discussion about Greek authorities and the responsibility for handling the tragedy in the Mediterranean Sea. Translation of excerpt from Article 3 published on 2023-06-16: The twelve people floated around for just over a hour before they were picked up by the Turkish coast guards, who took them to a refugee camp in Turkey (*"De tolv personerna flöt omkring i drygt en timme innan de hämtades av den turkiska kustbevakningen som förde dem till ett flyktingläger i Turkiet."* (Bohman, 2023)). Another example can be taken from Article 2 which as well focuses on the tragedy in the Mediterranean. In this case, the attribution of responsibility lies on the Turkish government which has taken the survivors to the refugee camp. Translation of excerpt from Article 2 published on 2023-06-16: The Greek authorities have now arrested nine suspected people smugglers who are accused of mass murder. They are believed to have been in command of the overcrowded fishing boat that sank off the Greek coast on Wednesday in one of the worst disasters in the Mediterranean in recent years (*"Grekiska myndigheter har nu gripit nio misstänkta människosmugglare som anklagas för massmord. De tros ha styrt den överfulla fiskebåt som sjönk utanför den grekiska kusten i onsdags i en av de värsta katastroferna i Medelhavet på senare år"* (Dawod and Bohman, 2023)).

The Morality Frame in Aftonbladet

The second frame was the *Moral Frame* which is also very consistent in these articles. All of the seven articles highlight the ethical implications, especially concerning human lives. Article 5 discusses the Swedish immigration policies and the challenges arising, further focusing on the experiences of individuals living in the so-called limbo because of unresolved asylum cases. Translation of excerpt from Article 5 published on 2023-04-27: He has sold mayflowers for millions, but for to Aftonbladet Murhaf age 12 told that his biggest wish is a Swedish social security number (*"Han har sålt majblommor för miljoner, men för Aftonbladet berättade Murhaf, 12, om sin största dröm: ett svenskt personnummer"* (Lindberg and Kazmierska, 2023)). The Article mentions the experience of 12-year-old

Murhaf who is dreaming about the Swedish security number. The same article further presents other experiences that are alike Murhafs, stating that those people live in the unknown and do not possess legal documents. Another excerpt from the same article: In a series of articles, Aftonbaldet has told about people who, like Murhaf live in uncertainty - the so-called limbo cases. A growing group of people who can not be deported. Many lack passports and ID documents and come from countries without any agreements with Sweden (*“I en serie artiklar har Aftonbladet berättat om människor som likt Murhaf lever i ovisshet – de så kallade limbofallen. En växande grupp människor som inte kan utvisas. Många saknar pass och id-handlingar och kommer från länder utan avtal med Sverige”* (Lindberg and Kazmierska, 2023)).

The Human Interest Frame in Aftonbladet

Some of the frames intertwine together, for instance, in the previous section on morality there is a clear human interest due to referring to the experiences of people affected. There are also some clear refugee experiences mentioned taking into account different perspectives, including survivors of tragedies, refugees and those who were affected by the governmental policies. Article 6 mentions the experience of a political refugee from Somalia who states that *“here they are killing us slowly”*. Translation of excerpt from Article 6 published on 2023-09-26: One I spoke to was a political refugee. he said that in Somalia, death had been quick by a gunshot. But here they are killing is slowly (*“En jag talade med var politisk flykting. Han sa att i Somalia hade döden varit snabb genom ett pistolskott. Men här dödar de oss långsamt”* (Alexander Bönke, 2023)). The fifth Article highlights broader experiences of the people living in the unknown. Translation of excerpt from Article 5 published on 2023-04-27: We tell the minister about the 19-year-old Murad from Morocco. He has done everything to return, but his homecountry refuses to recognise him. Now he lives without rights in Sweden (*“Vi berättar för ministern om 19-årige Murad från Marocko. Han har gjort allt för att återvända, men hemlandet vägrar att erkänna honom. Nu lever han utan rättigheter i Sverige”* (Lindberg and Kazmierska, 2023)).

The Conflict Frame in Aftonbladet

Conflict is another prevalent frame in Aftonbaldet’s articles. Some articles with a clear focus on the attribution of responsibility further cover the conflict frame. For example, they discuss political divisions within Sweden regarding the policies, debates and protests. Article 1

discusses the division between the SD and the Moderate Party regarding the EU's future refugee policy, which can also be identified in the conflict frame – *“has created a deep rift between”*. Translation of excerpt from Article 1 published on 2023-04-18: The Social Democrats believe that Ulf Kristensson is dividing the country because he suggests that immigrants are not as prepared to defend Sweden as people who were born in Sweden (*“Socialdemokraterna anser att Ulf Kristersson splittrar landet eftersom han antyder att invandrare inte är lika beredda att försvara Sverige som människor som fötts i Sverige”*) (Svensson, Laneby & Forseberg, 2023)). Similar issue is briefly mentioned in Article 7 where it states how the Social Democrats believe that Ulf Kristensson divides the country. A few other prominent themes in these articles are protests and debates surrounding the discussed issues, which fall under the conflict frame. For instance, Article 2 mentions how thousands of people gathered in Athens and Thessaloniki to protest against the restrictive migration politics. Translation of excerpt from Article 2 published on 2023-06-16: During Thursday evening, thousands of people gathered in Athens and Thessaloniki to protest against the EU's restrictive migration policy. The demonstrators, who demand that the migration policy should be eased, held banners that read *“Crocodile tears! No to the EU's migration pact”* (*“Under torsdagskvällen samlades tusentals människor i Aten och Thessaloniki för att protestera mot EU:s restriktiva migrationspolitik. Demonstranterna, som kräver att migrationspolitiken lättas, höll i banderoller där det stod ”Krokodiltårar! Nej till EU:s migrationspakt”*) (Dawod and Bohman, 2023)). Article 2 mentions the protests as well writing how a small group threw the petrol bombs at the police, who responded with tear gas. Translation of excerpt from Article 2 published on 2023-06-16: But the demonstrators are also protesting against the EU's increasingly restrictive migration policy. The majority of the protests were peaceful, but a smaller group reportedly threw petrol bombs at the police, who in turn responded with tear gas, according to The Guardian (*“Men demonstranterna protesterar också mot EU:s allt mer restriktiva migrationspolitik. Majoriteten av protesterna gick fredligt till, men en mindre grupp ska ha kastat bensinbomber mot polisen, som i sin tur svarade med tårgas, enligt The Guardian”*) (Dawod and Bohman, 2023)).

The Economic Consequences Frame in Aftonbladet

The frame of *Economic Consequences* is not very prominent in every article, however, there are some discussions surrounding the frame. As an example, some articles illustrate the economic implications of the policies such as financial burdens, unemployment and others.

Article 4 discusses the “*kom inte hit*” (do not come here) campaign which is aimed at the asylum seekers. The article also addresses the statements of the Minister of Migration – Maria Malmer Stenergard regarding the employment status of the foreign-born population in Sweden. This Article further refers to another article from the German newspaper Welt, which writes about the statement of the minister, namely that “*more than half of the foreign-born in Sweden can not support themselves*”. Translation of excerpt from Article 4 published on 2023-05-02: In an article of the respected German newspaper Welt, the Minister of Migration states that more than half of the foreign-born in Sweden can not support themselves, however this figure is questioned by experts (“*I en artikel i ansedda tyska tidningen Welt uppger migrationsministern att mer än hälften av de utrikesfödda i Sverige inte kan försörja sig, men siffran ifrågasätts av experter*” (Kazmierska, 2023)).

Continuing on the articles found on Svenska Dagbladet, while some of the frames were more prominent than others, these articles provided insight into concerns regarding refugee integration, personal stories and debates regarding strict migration policies.

The Responsibility Frame in SvD

Beginning with the first frame, all articles on Svenska Dagbladet also identified the *Responsibility Frame*. However, some prominent examples were found in the third, fourth and fifth articles of this newspaper. Translation of excerpt from Article 3 published on 2023-04-28: This has manifested itself, among other things, in the fact that the government has sharply cut back on the reception of the so-called quota refugees - refugees who, according to the UNHCR, are particularly vulnerable and in need of protection (“*Det har bland annat tagit sig uttryck i att regeringen kraftigt skurit ned på mottagandet av så kallade kvotflyktingar – flyktingar som enligt UNHCR är särskilt utsatta och i behov av skydd*” (Sunden, 2023)). The third article illustrates the concern of UNHCR commissioner Filippo Grandi about the measures aimed to limit immigration which includes reduced family reunification. He further mentions how the stance of the governments affects the refugee intake by further referring to the decision to reduce quota refugees. Translation of excerpt from Article 4 published on 2023-12-20 : “A historic success”, says EU Home Affairs Commissioner Ylva Johansson since the EU countries and the EU Parliament agreed on a common asylum and migration pact” (“*En historisk framgång*”, säger EU:s inrikeskommissionär Ylva Johansson sedan EU-länderna och EU-parlamentet enats om en

gemensam asyl- och migrationspakt” (Bejers, Nummelin & Svahn, 2023)). Another example: from the fourth article: The relief in Brussels is great. The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, calls the settlement “long awaited” and states in a statement that migration is a challenge that requires “European solutions” (*“Lättnaden i Bryssel är stor. EU-kommissionens ordförande Ursula von der Leyen kallar uppgörelsen ”efterlängtd” och konstaterar i ett uttalande att migration är en utmaning som tarvar ”europeiska lösningar”* (Bejers, Nummelin & Svahn, 2023)). In the fourth article, the discussion surrounds the success of the migration pact and refers to EU officials such as Ursula von der Leyen and Ylva Johansson by crediting them for their success. She does it by referring to the agreed pact as “A historic success”.

Translation of excerpt from Article 5 published on 2023-07-03: A record number have had their refugee status revoked this year, after the Swedish Migration Agency got a task by the government to prioritize those type of cases. One of them is Paul Ssebagala, but in his case the court gave the Migration Agency a rebound. (*”Rekordmånga har fått sin status som flykting återkallad i år, efter att Migrationsverket fått i uppgift av regeringen att prioritera den typen av ärenden. En av dem är Paul Ssebagala, men i hans fall gav domstolen Migrationsverket bakläxa”* (Lindholm & Olsson, 2023)). The fifth Article discusses Migrationverket (Swedish Migration Agency) and its responsibility for reviewing the refugee status, highlighting the clear responsibility of the Swedish government who gave this task to the Migration Agency.

The Morality Frame in SvD

The *Morality Frame* was more emphasised than the human interest frame. For instance, it was found in Article 6 focuses on the new migration policy implemented by the EU which aims to keep asylum seekers away according to Bernd Parusel. Translation of excerpt from Article 6 published on 2023-12-20: The system has a humanitarian price. This would mean that the asylum seekers are kept locked up at the border in order for the asylum process to go faster. I would say that the focus has not been to enable people to come to the EU, but rather to try to keep them out, says Parusel. (*“Systemet har ett humanitärt pris. Det kommer innebära att asylsökande hålls inlåsta vid gränsen för att asylprocessen ska gå snabbare. Jag skulle säga att fokus har inte varit att möjliggöra för människor att komma till EU, utan snarare att försöka hålla folk borta, säger Parusel”* (Persson, 2023)). Another excerpt from

the same article: With the new migration policy, the EU wants to strengthen the external border controls and earlier in the process distinguish between people with protection reasons and those will probably not be allowed to stay within EU. The new migration policy aims, among other things, to be a deterrent for asylum seekers, according to Bernd Parusel, an expert on the EU's migration policy at the research institute Sieps. (*“Med den nya migrationspolitiken vill EU stärka de yttre gränskontrollerna och tidigare i processen skilja på personer med skyddsskäl och sådana som troligtvis inte kommer att få stanna inom EU. Den nya migrationspolitiken går bland annat ut på att vara avskräckande för asylsökande, enligt Bernd Parusel, expert på EU:s migrationspolitik vid forskningsinstitutet Sieps”* (Persson, 2023)). The article furthermore touches upon the criticism from Amnesty International and Oxfam who argue that this new policy is impractical. The two excerpts above clearly highlight the moral frame of the presented issue, specifically emphasizing how this new system has a humanitarian price.

On the other hand, the first article touches upon morality in a slightly different way. The article focuses on the proposal of Swedish Democrats to establish asylum centres, in order to keep track of asylum seekers and prevent them from getting involved in any illegal activities. Translation of excerpt from Article 1 published on 2023-06-21: I think there will be a big difference: Now we will have control over where the people are during the entire asylum process, and we also reduce the risk that the people deviate and become a part of a growing shadow society, says Migration Minister - Maria Malmer Stenergard (M). (*“Jag bedömer att det kommer att bli en stor skillnad. Nu kommer vi att ha kontroll över var människor befinner sig under hela asylprocessen, och vi minskar också risken att människor avviker och blir en del av ett växande skuggsamhälle, säger migrationsminister Maria Malmer Stenergard (M).”* (Haglund & Magnå, 2023)). This article mentions the opinion of Maria Malmer Stenergard, the minister of migration and member of the Moderate Party, on the issue. The politician states that there will be more control over the asylum processes to avoid any risks of a growing shadow society. It further refers to the words of Ludvig Aspling from the Swedish Democrat Party on the importance of holding asylum seekers accountable if the rules of the centres are not followed

The Human Interest Frame in SvD

The frame of *Human Interest* could not be identified in all seven articles, however, a notable example of this frame was identified in Article 5. Translation of excerpt from Article 5 published on 2023-07-03: He fled Uganda in 2012, was wrongfully deported back in 2014, made his way back to Sweden and finally received a refugee status in 2017 - because he risked persecution due to his sexual orientation. (*“Han flydde från Uganda 2012, blev felaktigt utvisad tillbaka dit 2014, tog sig till Sverige igen och fick till slut status som flykting 2017 – eftersom han riskerade förföljelse på grund av sin sexuella läggning”* (Lindholm & Olsson, 2023)). Another example: Even though Paul Ssebagala was ultimately right, the process has involved unnecessary suffering, says Silas Aliko. It has led to a person living for several years in an uncertainty about what will happen to his future, when it is quite obvious that he has not provided incorrect information. Then it has had the side effect that his children have remained in Uganda unnecessarily for almost five years. (*“Även om Paul Ssebagala i slutändan fick rätt så har processen inneburit onödigt lidande, säger Silas Aliko. – Det har lett till att en person har levt i flera år med en osäkerhet om vad som ska hända med hans framtid, när det är helt uppenbart att han inte har lämnat oriktiga uppgifter. Sedan har det fått som sidoeffekt att hans barn har varit kvar i Uganda i nästan fem år i onödan.”*). While the primary focus of this article is on the legal as well as the procedural aspects of determining the validity of asylum claims, it further presents the story of Paul Ssebagala who was wrongly deported back to Uganda in 2014. His story is a clear example of the struggle which many refugees face and emphasises the vulnerability before the legal system resulting in uncertainties and anxiety for the future.

The Conflict Frame in SvD

The *Conflict Frame* was very prominent in the fifth article highlighting the reassessment of refugee statuses and how there are potential challenges faced by individuals like Paul Ssebagala. Silas Aliko, an attorney who helped the victim of deportation suggested that there is a dispute between the Swedish Migration Agency and their demands of proof from the asylum seekers, and those individuals who are vulnerable. Translation of excerpt from Article 5 published on 2023-07-03: According to the lawyer, more and more clients - both Silas Aliko's own and those of other colleagues have been informed that their refugee status is to be revoked in the past six months. - My experience is that the Swedish Migration Agency imposes a burden of explanation on people, for example LGBTQ people must explain how

they have had children, even though it is the Swedish Migration Agency that has this burden of proof. They act almost as if the people have to prove their disposition again. (*“Enligt advokaten har allt fler klienter – både Silas Alikis egna och andra kollegors – fått besked om att deras status som flykting ska återkallas det senaste halvåret. – Min upplevelse är att Migrationsverket ålägger personer en förklaringsbördan, att exempelvis hbtq-personer ska förklara hur de har fått barn, trots att det egentligen är Migrationsverket som har bevisbördan. De beter sig nästan som att personerna ska bevisa sin läggning igen”*) (Lindholm & Olsson, 2023)). Similarly, the conflict frame was notable in Article 7 through the disagreement between Gary Lineker, a sports broadcaster and the BBC. The conflict surrounded the issue raised when Lineker made a Tweet criticizing the strict refugee policy. The article mentions how BBC decided to suspend Lineker while waiting for an investigation regarding the tweet. Translation of excerpt from Article 7 published on 2023-03-11: BBC management then decided to suspend Lineker pending an investigation to determine whether his activity on social media is a breach of company's guidelines. (*“BBC-ledningen bestämde då att stänga av Lineker i väntan på en utredning som ska fastställa om hans aktivitet på sociala medier är ett brott mot företagets riktlinjer”*) (Majlard, 2023)).

The Economic Consequences Frame in SvD

The frame of *Economic Consequences* was the last one analysed in the seven articles. It was identified in the second article found in this newspaper. Translation of excerpt from Article 2 published on 2023-04-29: We can not know how many will want to study, but there is a risk that the money will not be enough for everyone. It is also an investment only for this year, and it only applied to the SFI, says Roy Melcher. (*“Vi kan ju inte veta hur många som kommer att vilja studera, men det finns en risk att pengarna inte räcker till alla. Det är också en satsning bara för det här året ut och det gäller bara SFI, säger Roy Melcher”*) (Lindholm, 2023)). Article 2 addresses the responsibility of municipalities by discussing the plan to offer SFI (Swedish for Immigrants) to the Ukrainian refugees. The article further touches upon the economic consequences of this plan, reflecting upon the concerns raised about whether there will be enough money.

6. Discussion

Firstly, all seven articles from Aftonbladet share common themes and subjects. For instance two of the chosen articles mention the tragedy in the Mediterranean. Other common themes

are present such as assimilation and integration, and the challenges faced including language and adaptation to the culture. Moreover, there are a few discussions of governmental responses which are aimed at the migration and asylum challenges. These discussions further follow political discourse and public opinion regarding the discourse. However, the analysis of the articles revealed that both newspapers while offering a comprehensive overview of refugee discourse followed rather distinct approaches in their coverage. Aftonbladet focuses more on the *Frame of Human Interest* and the *Frame of Morality* by including the individual experiences of the refugees such as the one from the fifth article and the story of the 12-year-old Murhalf.

On the contrary, Svenska Dagbladet follows a more balanced approach and covers a wider range of themes, appearing to be more political. Judging by the selected articles from both newspapers, Aftonbladet emphasizes the individual stories of asylum seekers and refugees. At the same time, Svenska Dagbladet still addresses humanitarian factors such as the experience of Paul Ssebagala with Migrationsverket (Migration Office), after he was wrongly deported back to Uganda in 2014. As discovered in the research by Valente et al., left-leaning newspapers often portray migrants as innocent victims, while the right-leaning media portrays them as potentially threatening. This was further noticed in the study by Alen and Blinder (2013) who discovered how the right-leaning press used such terms as “*illegal*” or “*terrorist*” when referring to the refugees. However, this tendency was not noticeable in the case of this study and the articles on SvD tended to provide more perspectives from various angles.

All five frames, except the *Economic Consequences Frame* were prominent when analyzing the articles of the two newspapers. The mentioned frame was mostly notable in the second article from Svenska Dagbladet regarding the Ukrainian refugees and the decision of the Swedish Municipalities regarding the SFI. In previous research, however, scholars such as Rustenbach (2010) argue that right-wing politics often depict migrants as an economic threat. This was not noticeable in this case, since the article did not assign the blame for the refugees, but instead emphasised the necessity of the plan and the concerns about money. Hence, addressing the responsibility of the municipalities rather than blaming the refugees for exploiting the system as McCan et al., (2023) have noted in their research. Nevertheless, since this thesis does not distinguish between the different groups of refugees, it is unclear whether their background plays a role in this. Referring to the previous study by Palgrem,

Åkerlund and Viklund (2023) showed the negative attitudes in the right-leaning press towards Muslim refugees and immigrants in contrast to the Ukrainian refugees.

The Responsibility Frame was central across all articles, whether it was assigning responsibility to political figures as in the example of the fourth article from Svenska Dagbladet or the Greek authorities as can be seen in the third article from Aftonbladet. *The Morality Frame* in Aftonbladet was emphasized consistently, however, in the articles from SvD, while not appearing on the same level it was still present. By examining the previous research, the belief that refugees were presented negatively in the right-leaning media was disproved. As McCan et. al., (2023) argued in their study with data gathered from 2015, both left and right-leaning media represented refugees negatively. However, following this analysis, one can conclude that both newspapers have offered insight into the experiences of refugees revolving around urgent calls for change. The noticeable difference between the two newspapers was that Svenska Dagbladet emphasized referring to the governmental officials or institutions such as the Migration Office, the Swedish Prime Minister Ulf Kristensson or the UNHCR. *The Conflict Frame* is prominent in the previous research on the topic by highlighting how in comparison with the left-leaning media, the right-wing or right-leaning media depicts refugees as the centre of that frame and represents them as those who exploit the system. In the case of the selected articles from SvD, this was not prominent since as shown in the example of articles 5 and 7, the frame was notable in a dispute between an individual and the institution.

From the theoretical perspective, the Framing theory example was noticeable in both newspapers. Aftonbladet emphasized individual stories such as the one of a 12-year-old child dreaming of a Swedish security number which moreover aligns with the frame of *Human Interest* and *Morality*. On the other hand, Svenska Dagbladet focuses more on the policies and government officials by including statements from the Prime Minister and other agencies such as Amnesty International. Thus, as noticed in the previous research Aftonbladet which is a left-leaning newspaper focuses more on awakening empathy by presenting refugees as people with hopes. Svenska Dagbladet while including the experiences of asylum seekers, focused more on the *Responsibility Frame* by emphasizing the actions and statements of the authorities. By analyzing the articles from the Agenda Setting Theory, as in the coverage of the Mediterranean incident in Aftonbladet, one may conclude that by highlighting these experiences the focus lies on encouragement for support of the victims. SvD instead

prioritised topics related to policies and governmental responses, thus shaping an agenda focused more on policy-making when addressing refugee discourse. Another noticeable difference was the prioritization of issues, while Aftonbladet consistently referred to the responsibility of various actors, articles found on SvD discussed the responses by the authorities.

Limitations & Future Research

One prominent limitation of this study is the limited scope since the articles were exclusively published in 2023 and were found under the tag “*flyktingspolitik*”. Therefore, a suggestion for future research would be to include a broader scope. For example, it would enhance the study by examining the difference in the portrayal of refugee discourse over the years. Starting with the Migration Crisis of 2015 and examining whether there is a correlation. It can further be interesting to examine the refugee-related coverage among different types of media outlets, such as newspapers, news reports etc. The second limitation of this paper was the limited number of selected articles; however, this was not possible to avoid since the attention of this research was on the news (*Nyheter*) under the tag “*flyktingspolitik*”, thus removing any editorials or other forms of coverage. Therefore, in future research, it will be engaging to include various types of coverage in order to get a broader scope of the articles. Another crucial limitation was the lack of topics solely related to the refugees since many articles, which was also noticeable in the previous research, combined refugees with for instance asylum seekers or immigrants. The last suggestion for future research would be to follow a quantitative analysis and focus primarily on the keywords used in the articles.

7. Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has provided a thorough analysis of the 14 articles from Svenska Dagbladet and Aftonbladet and how they cover refugee discourse. Going back to the research question: *How do Swedish Newspapers, Aftonbladet and Svenska Dagbladet discuss refugee discourse in 2023?*, this research has revealed their distinct approaches following the use of the Five Frames. For instance, Aftonbladet which is categorised as the left-leaning newspaper tends to employ the Human Interest and Morality Frames by emphasising the individual refugee stories and their experiences. This approach has aligned with the previous research about the left-leaning media and their portrayal of refugees. On the contrary, Svenska Dagbladet has a more policy-oriented approach with the significant use of the Responsibility

Frame by focusing on the actions of the government and governmental agencies as well as on the responses. Nonetheless, this study has shown that despite the suggested differences from the previous research, following the chosen theories, both newspapers have contributed to a valuable analysis of refugee discourse. Contrary to the typical belief of the negative representation in the right-leaning and centre-right media, Svenska Dagbladet's coverage does not depict refugees necessarily as an economic threat or suggest that they exploit the system. The articles in this newspaper instead provide a nuanced view, covering all five themes. Therefore, despite the differences both newspapers have successfully covered all Five Frames. Overall, this thesis has contributed to the field by highlighting the role of the media, however, future research would be needed to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the framing trends in newspapers with distinct political leaning.

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9. Appendix

Table 1: Articles from Aftonbladet

Articles	Title of the Article	Date Published	Keywords in the Articles
Article 1	SD och M i bråk om migration - försöker stoppa förslag	2023-04-18 on: https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/gERbPq/sd-och-m-i-brak-om-migration-forsoker-stoppa-forslag	“flyktingspolitik” (refugee policy)
Article 2	Protester mot EU:s flyktingspolitik efter ny båttragedi	2023-06-16 on: https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/RGQPra/protester-mot-eu-s-flyktingpolitik-efter-ny-battragedi	“flyktingspolitik” (refugee policy)
Article 3	500 saknas efter båt Katastrof på Medelhavet	2023-06-16 on: https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/O80wLO/flyktingbat-sjonk-utanfor-grekland-nu-misstanks-manniskosmugglare-for-massmord	“flyktingar” (refugees)
Article 4	Kritiserad mening om invandrare i regeringens kampanj	2023-05-02 on: https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/7646mv/scb-kritiserar-mening-i-regeringens-kampanj-fallgropar	“flyktingar” (refugees) and “asylsökande” (asylum seekers)
Article 5	Ministern om “limbofallen”: “Kan utvisas”	2023-04-27 on: https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/RGIORx/migrationsminister-stenergard-om-att-utvisa-fler-papperslosa	“asylsökande” (asylum seekers)

Article 6	De kritiserade danska centren som inspirerat regeringen: "Som zombier i en spökstad"	2023-09-26 on: https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/rljGo8/atervandandecenter-i-sverige-inspirerade-av-kritiserade-danska-center	"flykting" (refugee)
Article 7	Ulf Kristersson: Det är för lätt att bli svensk medborgare	2024-01-13 on: https://www.aftonbladet.se/nyheter/a/GMdWqJ/kristersson-finns-invandrare-som-inte-vill-forsvara-sverige	"flyktingpolitik" (refugee policy)

Table 2: Articles from Svenska Dagbladet

Articles	Title of the Article	Date Published	Keywords in the Articles
Article 1	<i>Obligatoriska asylcenter ska utredas</i>	2023-06-21 on https://www.svd.se/a/jlxL4n/asylboende-for-alla-ska-motverka-skuggsamhalle	"asylsökande" (asylum seeker)
Article 2	<i>Kommunerna: Risk att pengarna inte räcker</i>	2023-04-29 on https://www.svd.se/a/bga6lv/risk-att-pengarna-inte-racker-till-sfi-till-ukrainska-flyktingar	"flykting" (refugee)
Article 3	<i>FN-chef oroas över stram svensk flyktingpolitik</i>	2023-04-28 on https://www.svd.se/a/0QXxqg/unchr-chefen-oroad-over-stram-svensk-flyktingpolitik	"flyktingpolitik" (refugee policy)
Article 4	<i>Ny migrationspakt i EU: "Historisk framgång"</i>	2023-12-20 on https://www.svd.se/a/abVyWd/historisk-migrationspakt-i-eu	"asylpolitik" (asylum policy) & "asylrätt" (right of asylum)
Article 5	<i>Migrationsverket gjort fel: "Jag riskerar mitt liv"</i>	2023-07-03 on https://www.svd.se/a/GMX7gm/rekordmanga-far-aterkallad-flyktingstatus	"asyl" (asylum) & "flykting" (refugee)

Article 6	<i>Expert: Fokuset är “att hålla folk borta”</i>	2023-12-20 on https://www.svd.se/a/mQpWl/Expert-asylpaktens-fokus-att-halla-folk-borta	“asyl” (asylum)
Article 7	<i>BBC-kris efter Linekers tweet</i>	2023-03-11 on https://www.svd.se/a/RG4oV8/gary-lineker-stangs-av-fran-bbc-efter-tweet-om-flyktingar	“flyktingspolitik” (refugee policy)