Artigo Original

Who is a refugee? The motive of double standard in French and Dutch-speaking media during the war in Ukraine

Quem é refugiado? O motivo do duplo padrão nos meios de comunicação de língua Francesa e Holandesa durante a guerra na Ucrânia

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Abstract: The invasion of Ukraine and the displacement of the population that followed triggered an unprecedented reaction of solidarity from European governments. Contrary to previous discussions about refugees, a large consensus emerged concerning the EU's duty towards displaced Ukrainians. According to many observers, this solidarity contrasted with the handling of the 2015 crisis caused by the Syrian war. In European media outlets, many voices denounced the double standard in the treatment of the two groups involved, while others justified the difference between European and non-European refugees. Comparisons between the current war and the migratory exodus of 2015 structured the social conversation in the first weeks after the invasion. This article aims at studying the discursive moment of the war in Ukraine with a focus on the debate which compared the reception of Ukrainians in the present day and of other refugees in 2015. The goal is twofold: first, to objectify the initial intuition that Ukrainians were unanimously considered as deserving refugees; second, to examine the explicit and implicit arguments that underlaid this dominant framing. To achieve this goal, a large corpus of media discourse covering two languages (French and Dutch) and three European neighbouring countries (Belgium, France and the Netherlands) was collected and analysed through Corpus Linguistics.

Keywords: Ukraine, Media Discourse, "Double Standard", Refugee, Discourse Analysis, France, Belgium, The Netherlands, Corpus Linguistics

Resumo: A invasão da Ucrânia desencadeou uma reação de solidariedade sem precedentes por parte dos governos europeus. Este artigo almeja estudar o momento discursivo da guerra na Ucrânia, com foco no debate que comparou a recepção de ucranianos nos dias atuais com a de outros refugiados em 2015. O objetivo é duplo: primeiramente, confirmar a intuição inicial de que os ucranianos foram unanimemente considerados refugiados merecedores; em segundo lugar, examinar os argumentos que fundamentaram esse enquadramento. Para atingir esse objetivo, um amplo corpus de discursos midiáticos, abrangendo três países europeus vizinhos (Bélgica, França e Países Baixos), foi recolhido e analisado através da Linguística de Corpus.

Introduction

The invasion of Ukraine and the displacement of the population that followed triggered an unprecedented reaction of solidarity from European governments. Contrary to previous discussions about refugees, a large consensus emerged concerning the EU's duty towards displaced Ukrainians[I]. For the first time, the Council of the European Union unanimously decided to apply a 2001 directive that grants "temporary protection" to refugees fleeing the war in Ukraine[II]. This, in turn, sparked a heated debate about the exceptionality of the measures. According to many observers, this solidarity contrasted with the handling of the 2015 crisis caused by the Syrian war. Whether it was regular people commenting on online forums, politicians from all the political spectrum, high-ranking civil servants, journalists, academics or the civil society at large, discussions about this difference took place. At some point, the 2015 migration episode became the benchmark for assessing the governments' responses to other migration issues.

In European media outlets, many voices denounced the double standard in the treatment of the two groups involved, while others justified the difference between European and non-European refugees. In March 2022, a journalist of the Belgian magazine *Moustique* asked, "Why are Ukrainians welcomed better than other refugees?"[III], while during the same month the Dutch newspaper *Handelsblad* stated that "since the outbreak of the war in Ukraine, the Danish newspapers are currently discussing the issue of the double standard even more fiercely than in the Netherlands". Lay citizens began talking about the labelling of displaced people in social media, and non-profit organisations started campaigning for equal treatment towards all migrants. The slogan "*All* refugees welcome"[IV], which calls for equal reception of refugees no matter the country they come from, appeared on stickers all over the European capital, echoing the one that had circulated after the Syrian war "Refugees welcome". While non-profit organisations welcomed the European stance as an "historical event" and "a positive step towards migration justice", they also deplored "the variable application of international law according to geopolitical interests"[V], claiming that the 2001 European directive could have been activated earlier for refugees fleeing the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, Libya and Afghanistan. The controversial statements of politicians in the media

I   See, for instance, the parliamentary debates and decisions about the humanitarian aid to Ukraine, Retrieved at: <https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/press-room/20220516IPR29637/ukraine-debates-on-infrastructure-food-security-culture-and-humanitarian-aid> Accessed on 14/1/2023.
II   Council Directive 2001/55/EC of the 20th of July 2001 on the minimum standards for giving temporary protection in the event of a mass influx of displaced persons, and on the measures for promoting a balance of efforts between Member States in receiving such persons and bearing the consequences thereof, Retrieved at: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32001L0055> Accessed on 14/2/2022.
III   All examples are translated into English.
IV   Citizen Platform Facebook Event -BelRefugees- Burgerplatform, Bloc #AllRefugeesWelcome à la Manifestation contre le Racisme, Retrieved at: <https://www.facebook.com/events/4837832019586732/?active_tab=about> Accessed on 14/4/2022.
V   In an opinion piece signed by twelve of the main Belgian non-profit organisations published on March 3 2022, Retrieved at: <https://www.amnesty.be/infos/actualites/article/directive-europeenne-protection-temporaire-activee> Accessed on 1/5/2022.

also fueled the discussion, such as when Kiril Petkov, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, said: "These are not the refugees we are used to [but] Europeans. They are intelligent, they are educated"[VI]. In the institutional field, Josep Borrell, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, stated that the right word for displaced Ukrainians was not "migrant" but "exiled". As he said, "We can expect 5 million migrants. Not migrants. We cannot call them migrants. They are exiled, those people are fleeing war" (the original statement in French)[VII]. As we show in this article, the comparison between the current war and the migratory exodus of 2015 shaped the social conversation in the first weeks after the invasion.

This discussion echoed another debate that had taken place at the acme of the reception crisis in 2015, which had revolved around the lexicon of migration (d'Haenens, Joris & Heinderyckx, 2019; Calabrese & Veniard, 2018; Krzyzanowski, Triandafyllidou & Wodak 2018). Driven by a press article published by Al Jazeera in 2015[VIII], many social actors advocated for the use of "refugees" instead of "migrants", instating the idea that the first label was more positively connoted than the latter, which referred mainly to people who made the choice of leaving their countries in search for better working conditions. As a social event, the migration crisis proved to be extremely reliant on discourse. The debates about language were a full-fledged component of the discussion, in so much as labels were seen as having an impact on social representations. Lay discourses about the labelling of Ukrainian refugees echoed the ones held seven years before, but they displayed a novel feature i.e., the debate was not lexical because a large consensus emerged on how to name Ukrainians; it revolved, instead, around the consensus *per se*.

Among the many arenas where the social conversation about Ukrainian refugees took place, we chose to work on a media corpus because the media represents all kinds of social discourse while also structuring social debates, putting on the agenda the topics we should discuss as a society and providing political, expert and layman input on the matter (McCombs & Shaw, 1972). The goal of this article is twofold: first, to objectify the initial intuition that Ukrainians were unanimously considered as deserving refugees; second, to examine the explicit and implicit arguments that underlaid this dominant framing. To achieve this goal, a large multilingual corpus of European media (French, Belgian and Dutch) was collected and analysed through Corpus Linguistics.

Before delving into the analysis of the corpus, section 1 contextualises the debate by explaining the subtleties of the legal and institutional categorisation of refugees in order to understand that most of the conversation revolved around a lay conception of categories. After explaining the corpus collection and the methodology in section 2, section 3 tackles the denominations used to name displaced Ukrainians compared to other migrants. Section 4 explores the arguments given by social actors to justify their own categorisation of displaced people compared to previous migratory episodes.

VI   Maya E., Réfugiés: d'Ukraine ou du Moyen-Orient, un double traitement médiatique et politique ?, **TV5 Monde**, 3 March 2022, Retrieved at: < https://information.tv5monde.com/info/refugies-d-ukraine-ou-du- moyen-orient-un-double-traitement-mediatique-et-politique-44706> Accessed on 2/6/2022.
VII   Twitter page of the European External Action Service, 7 March 2022, Retrieved at: <https://twitter.com/eu_eeas/status/1500781024929796103> Accessed on 2/6/2022.
VIII   Barry, M. Why Al Jazeera will not say Mediterranean 'migrants', 20 August 2015, **Al Jazeera**, Retrieved at: <https://www.aljazeera.com/features/2015/8/20/why-al-jazeera-will-not-say-mediterranean-migrants> Accessed on 2/6/2022.

Do words really matter?

Adopted by the EU in the context of the former Yugoslavia war in 2001, the temporary protection measures had never been activated before the Ukrainian war. Although the implementation of the directive was discussed in 2015 to protect Syrians, no consensus was reached among the European states (Gakis, 2022). In 2022, the activation was decided unanimously only a few days after the beginning of the Russian invasion. The rapidity at which the member states of the European Union came to an agreement contrasts with the lack of joint decisions taken in 2015.

This mechanism is an emergency procedure that provides immediate and temporary protection "to alleviate pressure on national asylum systems and to allow displaced persons to enjoy harmonised rights across the EU"[IX]. This temporary protection is valid for one year and can be automatically extended up to three years. Potential beneficiaries can apply for international protection at any time.

Contrary to the classic procedure set up to obtain international protection (refugee status or subsidiary protection), this emergency procedure provides collective protection without going through the complex administrative process of individual applications. Even though the procedure provides a lower degree of protection than refugee status or subsidiary protection (Gakis, 2022), it guarantees rapid access to rights including residence, access to the labour market and housing, medical assistance, and education for children.

Compared to asylum seekers, beneficiaries of temporary protection have two important additional rights. On the one hand, they have an automatic right to work in the host Member State; on the other hand, they have the right to move freely within the Union. On this basis, they can choose the Member State in which they want to enjoy the rights attached to temporary protection. From the point of view of the receiving countries, such a "solidarity mechanism"[X] allows the efforts to be balanced between Member States.

Based on these facts, many social scientists have observed that there was a difference in the treatment of Ukrainians in regard to other refugees (Corneloup, 2022; Vertongen & Costa Santos, 2022; Rodier, 2022; Van Neste-Gottignies, 2022). These differences concerned the nature of the protection (immediate, collective, and automatic), the extensive rights attached (free movement, free choice of the host state and direct access to the labour market), and the way in which this solidarity mechanism between Member States was set up (quickly and by unanimous vote). However, this does not necessarily mean that Ukrainians will be favoured when their temporary protection ends because unlike refugee protection, this procedure is intended to be temporary.

Under the temporary protection regime, Ukrainians are not recognised as refugees but rather as "displaced persons". Nevertheless, they were broadly labelled *refugees* in the media and in political discourse, which sparked controversy when compared to other people on the move. This discursive moment is intertextually linked with the previous debate on how to name Syrian migrants (Calabrese,

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IX   Council of the EU, Press release: Ukraine: Council unanimously introduces temporary protection for persons fleeing the war, 4 March 2022, Retrieved at: <https://www.consilium.europa.eu/en/press/press-releases/2022/03/04/ukraine-council-introduces-temporary-protection-for-persons-fleeing-the-war/> Accessed on 4/11/2022.
X   *Ibidem.*

2018), which revealed that for most speakers (journalists, politicians, civil servants and common people) the labels used to qualify displaced people are crucial in that they are seen as accurately conveying the status they have or should have. In the lexical field of migration, all categories contain the idea of movement, but they also convey the idea of forced or chosen migration and, in the end, the idea of legitimate or illegitimate movement (the economic migrant versus the political refugee). This is a discursive effect rather than a semantic one. If the words *refugee* or *exiled* were deemed more precise than *migrant* to label Ukrainians, it is because their discursive meaning projects more positive representations. Whereas *refugee* has a legal meaning related to the Geneva Convention of 1951, it is also used as a common language denomination as it conveys the meaning of inevitability and a lack of choice. Contrarily, the word *migrant* captures the meaning of a South-North transfer for economic reasons (Mistiaen, 2023; Akoka, 2020; Holmes & Castañeda, 2016). While nowadays the UNHCR talks about "mixed migration" to convey the difficulty of these categories[XI], the idea remains that the label "refugee" has a more positive connotation (Vallée, 2022).

A copious amount of literature in linguistics has clearly stated that there is no right word to name social actors or phenomena (Krieg-Planque, 2018; Longhi 2015; Mondada, 1995). However, speakers do use linguistic categorisation to take a stance, particularly in the field of migrations, where politicians benefit from fuzzy meanings and polysemy to promote their agendas (Mistiaen, Calabrese & De Cleen, 2023 forthcoming). In this context, categorising people on the move becomes an effective way to make a rapid argumentation. Studying the categorization of people on the move allows to observe how social actors try to influence collective representations as well as local policies, through naming and using the linguistic repertoire at their disposal and/or by expanding it.

Corpus and methodology

The corpus is composed of newspapers articles published in three European countries, France, Belgium and The Netherlands, in two different languages, French and Dutch. As three of the six founding members of the EU, these countries host various European institutions and share a collective memory. The broadsheets selected show the largest circulation in their respective country or linguistic community. The corpus was collected in the GoPress database[XII] using the keyword *Ukraine* from February 28, 2022, four days after the beginning of the Russian invasion in Ukraine, until March 21, 2022.

The corpus contains 6,464 articles and 5,061,026 words. It has been partitioned by language and by country. The Dutch-language corpus (DLC) is a bit larger in terms of articles and in terms of words than the French-language corpus (FLC). *De Volkskrant* has the most articles and *NRC Handelsblad* the least. Nevertheless, the partition by country (Belgium is split into Flemish and Francophone media) shows a similar distribution in terms of words and articles (see Table 1).

XI   UNHCR, Asylum and Migration, 2022, Retrieved at: <https://www.unhcr.org/asylum-and-migration.html > Accessed on 4/11/2022.
XII   https://www.gopress.be/info/fr.

Newspaper	Country	Number of words	Number of articles
Le Figaro – FI	FR	612,363	795
Le Monde – LM	FR	729,311	675
Total France		*1,341,674*	*1470*
Le Soir – LS	BE	652,573	916
La Libre Belgique – LB	BE	328,095	515
Total Francophone Belgium		*980,669*	*1431*
TOTAL French-language corpus		**2,322,343**	**2901**
De Morgen – DM	BE	589,956	914
De Standaard – DS	BE	845,762	970
Total Flemish Belgium		*1,435,718*	*1884*
NRC Handelsblad – NRC	NL	408,811	473
De Volkskrant – DV	NL	894,154	1206
Total The Nederland		*1,302,965*	*1679*
TOTAL Dutch-language corpus		**2,738,683**	**3563**
TOTAL		**5,061,026**	**6464**

Table 1. Corpus description

Once the corpus was cleaned, tagged and uploaded into the TXM software[XIII,] we used Corpus Linguistics (mainly the concordance and co-occurrents tools) to identify and statistically quantify the denominations used to name people fleeing Ukraine. Corpus Linguistics allows us to zoom in and out from the lexical item (in the present case, the denominations) to the co-text, the paragraph, the article and the whole corpus. As a result, it facilitates the back and forth between quantitative and qualitative analysis (Baker *et al.*, 2008, p. 284-285; Gabrielatos & Baker, 2008, p. 7).

First, the lexical tables were examined in order to extract all the words used to refer to people on the move, such as *refugee*, *migrant*, *asylum seeker*, etc. Second, these lexical items were checked in context (in the concordance tool) to make sure they were used to designate people on the move and not, for instance, institutional proper nouns, such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Third, this first list of occurrences was filtered according to whether they referred to Ukrainians or not, thus allowing us to confirm that many denominations featured in the corpus are not used to label Ukrainian migrants but instead people with a different nationality.

Finally, the co-occurrents of these denominations were analysed to circumscribe their discursive meaning. The concordance tool was used to analyse the denominations in their own context and to identify the way different social actors negotiate the meaning of *refugee* to justify the inclusion of Ukrainians in this category. As the corpus is bilingual, all analyses led on TXM were run separately, as recommended by Hermand (2015). All examples have been translated into English and annotated by outlet, country and publication date.

XIII   https://txm.gitpages.huma-num.fr/textometrie/.

Results

In both the FLC and the DLC, the most common denomination used to refer to people on the move is "refugee" (*vluchteling*[XIV], 1945 occurrences in the DLC; *réfugié*, 1156 occurrences in the FLC), followed to a lesser extent by "displaced person" (*personne déplacée* in French, 18 occurrences and *ontheemd* in Dutch, 38 occurrences). The French shortening of "displaced person", *les déplacés* (which is a nominalisation of the adjective "displaced"), is also significantly mentioned in the FLC (38 occurrences).

While most denominations are simple lexical items, the corpus features a few (complex) nominal syntagms, such as *oorlogsvluchteling* ("war refugee") or *demandeur d'asile* ("asylum seeker"). As expected, the denominations "asylum seeker" (*asielzoeker,* 91 occurrences in the DLC; *demandeurs d'asile*, 47 occurrences in the FLC) and "migrant" (61 occurrences in the DLC and 57 in the FLC) are barely used, especially when compared to other media corpora related to previous reception crises (Mistiaen, 2023; Mistiaen, 2021; Berry, Garcia-Blanco & Moore, 2016; Baker *et al.*, 2008; Baker & McEnery, 2005). "Exiled", a term often used to erase the dichotomy between *migrant* and *refugee* (Aprile, 2018, p. 108), is only found in the FLC (25 occurrences).

	TOTAL FR		TOTAL NL	
	Total occurrences	Referring to Ukrainians	Total occurrences	Referring to Ukrainians
Réfugié - Vluchteling ("refugee")	1156	1006	1945	1843
- Réfugié de guerre - Oorlogsvluchteling ("war refugee")	9	8	62	52
- Réfugié de la guerre ("refugee of the war")	7	7	0	0
Déplacé - Ontheemd ("displaced")	110	38	54	38
- Déplacé interne ("internally displaced")	4	4	0	0
- Personne déplacée ("displaced person")	18	18	0	0
Exilé - Banneling ("exile")	46	25	4	0
Nouvel arrivant - Nieuwkomer ("newcomer")	13	12	33	16
Migrant ("migrant")	57	4	61	4
Demandeur d'asile - Asielzoeker ("asylum seeker")	47	3	91	15
Demandeur - Zoeker ("seeker")	61	1	8	0
Immigrant ("immigrant", present participle)	0	0	13	6
Travailleur immigré - Arbeidsmigrant ("work (im)migrant")	2	0	8	4
Émigrant - emigrant ("emigrant", present participle)	2	0	1	1
Kennismigrant ("knowledge migrant")	0	0	4	1
Bootvluchteling ("boat refugee")	0	0	2	0
Immigré ("immigrant", past participle)	15	0	0	0

XIV   Italics are used to indicate terms in the original language in the corpus, in French or Dutch. The English translation of the terms are mentioned in inverted commas.

Émigré ("emigrant", past participle)	10	0	0	0
Gelukzoeker ("fortune seeker")	0	0	31	0
Kandidaat-asielzoeker ("candidate asylum-seeker")	0	0	6	0

Table 2. Most mentioned denominations used to name people fleeing Ukraine in the DLC and the FLC, in absolute frequencies

As shown in Table 2, other denominations mentioned less often, but still linked to migration, are found in the corpus. As a matter of fact, these denominations, such as "fortune seeker" (*gelukzoeker*), "work migrant" (*travailleur immigré/arbeidsmigrant*), "immigrant" (*immigré*), "emigrant" (*émigré*), "knowledge migrant" (*kennismigrant*) or "boat refugee" (*bootvluchteling*), do not refer to Ukrainians.

In the following subsections, the co-occurrents of denominations used to refer to people on the move are analysed to circumscribe their discursive meaning, focussing first on denominations referring to Ukrainians (3.1.) then on other denominations (3.2).

3.1. Ukrainians are first and foremost refugees

The fact that "refugee" (*vluchteling* and *réfugié*) is by far the most frequent denomination used to refer to Ukrainians fleeing their country shows that they are unanimously labelled as such. As already stated, the special status they benefit from is different from the refugee status. Thus, most occurrences of the word "refugee" in this context do not refer to the legal meaning of the term, but rather to a broad understanding of who deserves the protection from the State.

In the Dutch- and French-language corpora, the most frequent co-occurrent of "refugee" is the adjective "Ukrainian", followed by a range of words belonging to the lexical field of reception: "reception" (*opvang, accueil*) and its derivatives, the numeral adjective "thousand", the nouns "million" (*million*) and "influx" (*afflux*) in the FLC. Even though numeral adjectives appear frequently in the context of migration and have been denounced as fearmongering by non-profits as well as academics (Reisigl & Wodak, 2000), numbers are also polysemous. In fact, they can be understood as either provoking fear or raising awareness, as is the case in the following example:

> (1) "More than one and a half million Ukrainians have fled the country in ten days. This is the fastest growing refugee crisis in Europe since World War II", said United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees Filippo Grandi (*De Volkskrant*, NL, 2838)

The quote from UNHR head officer Filippo Grandi, which appears several times in the corpus in both languages, stresses the exceptional nature of this migration wave and justifies the measures taken to welcome displaced persons.

In the FLC, the term "protection" has a score of 19 in co-occurrence with *réfugié*. It is used in the following nominal syntagms: the official status "temporary protection" (*protection temporaire*), "automatic protection" (*protection automatique*) and "special protection" (*protection spéciale*). This shows that the term "refugee" is mostly used as a hypernym to refer to people who have obtained protection

from the host state or who deserve to obtain it. In the DLC, the words *Polen* ("Poland") and *grens* ("border") also score relatively high in co-occurrence with *vluchteling*, explaining that many refugees cross the border to shelter in Poland.

In both corpora, Ukrainian refugees are subject to a great deal of solidarity, with co-occurrents such as *solidarité/solidariteit, hulp*.

Cooccurrent	Frequency	CoFrequency	Score ∨	Mean d
Oekraïense	4150	404	176	
opvang	374	123	120	
opvangen	110	62	79	
vangen	182	66	68	
uit	8542	353	53	
Polen	1065	100	43	
Syrische	148	40	35	
miljoen	1378	103	35	
vluchtelingen	1728	103	27	
hulp	652	62	27	
opgevangen	102	29	27	
voor	18972	513	26	
tijdelijke	181	35	26	
Afghaanse	36	20	26	
duizend	464	51	25	
opvangplekken	52	22	25	
bieden	370	45	24	
grens	955	70	24	
Filippo	15	14	23	
onderdak	114	27	22	
DiCaprio	12	12	21	
gastgezinnen	54	19	19	
Nederland	1374	78	19	
VN	241	33	19	
snelst	34	16	19	
2015	217	31	19	
Poolse	529	46	19	
solidariteit	283	33	17	
UNHCR	44	16	17	
gezinnen	207	28	16	
Naties	174	26	16	
Grandi	32	14	16	

Query [word = "réfugié.*"]

Cooccurrent	Frequency	CoFrequency	Score ∨	Mean distance
ukrainiens	837	200	209	.1
accueil	375	102	113	2.1
accueillir	253	70	78	1.9
Haut-Commissariat	33	29	54	2.7
millions	1096	86	48	3.2
000	1396	88	42	2.2
des	31501	542	37	2.5
aux	5135	156	34	1.8
HCR	37	20	30	2.5
les	34992	549	27	2.5
milliers	339	38	27	2.7
unies	192	30	26	2.5
afflux	73	22	26	1.6
Nations	201	30	25	3.0
million	202	28	23	3.2
fuyant	100	21	21	1.1
Haut	20	13	21	2.5
accueille	67	18	20	3.7
Pologne	693	42	19	4.9
protection	382	32	19	4.1
syriens	44	15	19	.1
centaines	264	27	18	3.1
statut	297	28	18	3.0
Commissariat	12	10	18	1.1
arrivés	141	20	16	1.5
arrivent	111	18	16	.7
solidarité	323	25	14	4.6
apatrides	7	7	14	2.0
arrivée	312	24	14	2.7
Kihl	12	8	13	4.2
Lorraine	27	10	13	4.5
pour	15957	248	12	3.7
Grandi	9	7	12	2.0
déjà	2012	56	11	3.9
accueillis	43	10	11	1.8

t pivot 1133, v cooc 570, t cooc 8117, T corpus 2322343

Figure 1. Strong co-occurrents of *refugee* in the DLC (score higher than or equal to 15 – left side) and in the FLC (score higher than or equal to 11 – right side)

To sum up, most occurrences of "refugee" refer, in both corpora, to the reception of a large number of Ukrainians who either crossed the Polish border to find safe harbour or arrived in the destination country.

The co-occurrents table also reveals a pervasive contrast between the 2015 crisis and the current war. As the corpus was collected with the keyword "Ukraine" during the first three weeks after the invasion, the mention of "Syrian" and "Afghan" refugees as well as "2015" was not expected and, thus, confirms that the comparison between the two events has structured this discursive moment:

> (2) (…) interior ministers opened the door wide to all refugees (possibly millions) from Ukraine. They receive a temporary residence status and with it the right to shelter, pocket money and care and education for the children. Afghan and Syrian refugees have received a considerably less warm welcome in recent years (*De Morgen*, BE, 01/03/2022).

> (3) This is like the Syrian refugee influx to Greece in 2015/2016 but multiplied by a

factor of 10 (*De Volkskrant*, NL, 11/03/2022)·

As shown in these examples, the comparison with the 2015 migration crisis serves two different purposes. It is used to either denounce the double standard in the reception of refugees (example 2) or to emphasise the fact that the present migration event is far worse than the previous one (example 3).

When we replicated the analysis of the co-occurrents of "refugee" according to the country, we found the exact same results: "reception", numerical adjectives and "Poland". The other co-occurrents of "refugee" specifically refer to proper names (politicians) and local places.

The co-occurrents of the noun *Ukrainians* are divided into two lexical fields. Not surprisingly, the first one refers to the lexical field of "refugee" (various forms of the verbs "to flee" and "to welcome", *protection*, *temporaire*, *solidarité*), while the second one is the lexical field of "heroism" (*résistance*, *courage*, *vechten*, *verdediging*, *grens*), referring to Ukrainians who stayed in Ukraine to defend/protect/fight for their country. This second observation shows the agentivity of the Ukrainians and differs from the passivity of the frame of victimhood that prevailed during the Syrian exodus (Chouliaraki & Zaborowski, 2017).

Query [word = "Oekraïner.*"]

Cooccurrent	Frequency	CoFrequency	Score	Mean distance
Russen	2712	152	46	4.0
hun	5537	225	44	3.5
verzet	403	50	31	3.0
vechten	596	56	28	2.7
de	119859	2053	26	3.4
Syriërs	108	25	22	4.6
miljoen	1378	75	22	1.0
land	3171	121	22	4.4
gevluchte	56	19	21	.0
vlucht	333	34	18	3.3
ontvlucht	78	19	18	2.9
Afghanen	79	19	17	6.3
verdedigen	298	31	17	4.7
vangen	182	25	17	3.0
reizen	148	22	15	4.2
miljoenen	272	28	15	1.2
natie	114	19	14	4.9
bloed	167	21	13	2.4
Burg	66	14	12	5.1
verblijfsvergunning	56	13	12	3.5
kunnen	4683	127	12	4.0
Polen	1065	48	11	4.2
komst	106	16	11	2.9
veel	3697	106	11	2.1
Apel	20	9	11	3.4
bieden	370	27	11	3.4
Iraki	14	8	11	3.5
weerstand	113	16	11	3.5
hebben	6450	157	11	3.9
terechtkunnen	16	8	10	5.0
komen	1960	67	10	4.3
bewuste	34	10	10	3.4
gevlucht	168	18	10	2.5
vluchten	322	24	10	3.7
zich	6040	147	10	4.0
rood-zwarte	7	6	10	4.3
zouden	1474	55	10	3.8
volk	432	27	10	3.6
willen	1641	58	9	3.6
voor	18972	361	9	3.8
grens	955	41	9	3.8
honderdduizenden	73	12	9	.0
nu	5725	137	9	3.6
alleen	2212	69	9	3.4
blindheid	9	6	9	5.0
zelf	1620	56	9	2.6
vluchtende	46	10	9	.0
vluchtelingen	1728	58	9	5.2
hier	1508	53	9	4.5

t pivot 1876, v cooc 1231, t cooc 16736, T corpus 2738683

Query [word = "Ukrainien.*"]

Cooccurrent	Frequency	CoFrequency	Score	Mean distance
les	34992	911	90	2.2
aux	5135	212	48	1.5
leur	3735	170	44	4.9
Russes	1247	92	40	2.8
des	31501	651	33	2.9
sont	6464	193	26	2.7
résistance	346	40	25	2.0
aider	391	39	22	3.7
fuyant	100	23	21	.8
protection	382	38	21	5.1
Les	5118	151	20	1.9
solidarité	323	33	19	4.4
accueil	375	35	19	3.2
ont	7011	181	18	2.5
arrivés	141	22	17	.8
millions	1096	53	15	3.6
courage	122	19	14	3.6
temporaire	179	22	14	4.4
000	1396	55	12	1.7
pays	4953	124	11	5.2
se	8505	185	11	3.5
séjour	82	14	11	4.3
fuient	67	13	11	1.5
LAMQUIN	54	12	11	4.9
réellement	55	12	11	3.8
visa	70	13	11	4.5
que	16775	314	11	3.6
fui	195	19	11	2.9
Calais	36	10	10	3.0
exil	96	14	10	5.2
Pologne	693	34	10	5.9
centaines	264	21	10	2.6
accueillir	253	20	9	2.0
battre	204	18	9	2.9
originaire	61	11	9	.8
asile	186	17	9	5.9
résidents	24	8	9	5.0

t pivot 1460, v cooc 576, t cooc 8202, T corpus 2322343

Figure 2. Strong co-occurrents of Ukrainian in the DLC (score higher than or equal to 9 – left side) and in the FLC (score higher than or equal to 9 – right side)

Aside from the denomination "refugee", other lexical items are used to refer to Ukrainians: "displaced person", a few occurrences of "exile" (only in the FLC) and "newcomer". In the FLC, *déplacé* and *personne déplacée* either refers to internally displaced persons in Ukraine or to Ukrainians fleeing their country. In both corpora, "displaced person" shows strong co-occurrences with words of quantity (such as "million", "influx" and "flow"), "Ukrainian" and "refugee" (score 6 in the DLC and score 3 in the FLC). Even though they do not have the same meaning, "displaced person", "exile" and "newcomers" are used as co-referents. While "displaced persons" focusses on the arrival or the journey rather than on the reception process, "exiled" has a romantic connotation referring to the heroic fleeing of war (Aprile, 2018, p. 108-111). As for "newcomer", it is an administrative label used in The Netherlands and in Dutch-speaking Belgium to refer to the integration track of migrants or refugees (Mistiaen, 2021).

We can conclude that Ukrainians are mainly labelled "refugees" by politicians and media actors, even though they have benefitted from a temporary protection rather than the refugee status. Moreover, other denominations are used as co-referents as long as they have the same positive connotations.

3.2. Migrants and asylum seekers are not Ukrainians

This section tackles the denominations related to migration that are not specifically used to refer to Ukrainians, mainly "migrant" and "asylum seeker".

In the corpus, out of the 118 occurrences of "migrant" (61 in the DLC and 57 in the FLC), only 14 (4 in the DLC and 10 in the FLC) refer to "Ukrainians".

Query	[word = "migrant.*"]			
Cooccurrent	Frequency	CoFrequency	Score ⌄	Mean distance
kapen	10	4	11	.8
verveelvoudiging	3	3	10	4.0
terugduwen	4	3	9	2.0
grens	955	9	9	3.4
vluchtelingen	1728	10	7	3.1
duwen	60	4	7	3.0
vliegtuig	74	4	7	2.2
vecht	97	4	6	6.0
Duidelijker	2	2	6	2.5
gerapporteerde	2	2	6	.0
heenvluchtten	2	2	6	3.5
invulden	2	2	6	2.0
iennen	2	2	6	2.0
Jodenbreestraat	2	2	6	3.5
ontworteld	2	2	6	.5
Oorlogsvluchtelingen	2	2	6	4.5
poetsvrouwen	2	2	6	3.5
schrijversdroom	2	2	6	3.0
Sefardische	2	2	6	1.5
thuisvoelden	2	2	6	2.5
vreemdelingenhaat	2	2	6	1.5
biologen	3	2	6	4.0
Afghaanse	36	3	6	.0
uit	8542	17	6	3.8
Turkse	145	4	6	.0
derdelanders	4	2	5	4.0
hardvochtig	4	2	5	2.5
niet-Oekraïense	4	2	5	2.5
aangehouden	47	3	5	.0
ernstiger	5	2	5	2.5
getraceerd	5	2	5	3.5
Illegale	5	2	5	.0
Tijdelijke	5	2	5	3.0
gelukzoekers	6	2	5	.5
rubberboot	6	2	5	4.5
spirit	6	2	5	2.0
vondst	6	2	5	2.5
uitgestorven	7	2	5	1.5
Enschede	8	2	5	1.0
Ponelle	8	2	5	3.0
papieren	75	3	5	1.3
omdat	2078	8	5	3.8
bouwvakkers	10	2	5	4.0
deinst	10	2	5	4.0

t pivot 64, v cooc 155, t cooc 459, T corpus 2738683

Query	[word = "migrant.*"]			
Cooccurrent	Frequency	CoFrequency	Score ⌄	Mean distance
des	31501	45	9	2.1
Béziers	12	3	7	3.7
accueillir	253	5	6	3.0
djihad	2	2	6	3.0
ressemblera	3	2	6	4.0
réfugiés	1035	7	6	3.4
Robinson	4	2	5	3.0
mettez	7	2	5	3.5
emprunté	8	2	5	1.5
2015	250	4	5	5.0
traversées	11	2	4	.5
instrumentalisation	12	2	4	.5
03	13	2	4	3.0
01	15	2	4	2.0
pressent	20	2	4	1.5
entiers	22	2	4	2.5
nationalités	22	2	4	1.0
loué	23	2	4	2.5
BMW	28	2	4	1.5
asile	186	3	3	4.7
hongrois	39	2	3	4.0
Méditerranée	42	2	3	.5
particulièrement	235	3	3	.7
moderne	47	2	3	2.5
réfugié	48	2	3	1.0
véhicule	50	2	3	1.0
montrant	57	2	3	1.5
répartition	59	2	3	.5
terres	63	2	3	2.5
avaient	740	4	3	2.0
les	34992	32	3	4.1
drame	73	2	3	1.5
vaste	81	2	3	1.0
Moyen-Orient	82	2	3	4.0
interview	89	2	3	4.5

t pivot 57, v cooc 55, t cooc 218, T corpus 2322343

Figure 3. Co-occurrents of migrant in the DLC (score higher than or equal to 5 – on the left) and in the FLC (score

higher than or equal to 3 – on the right)

In both corpora, the co-occurrents tables of "migrant" display the words contributing to build their discursive meaning. In the DLC, "migrant" is clearly used to refer either to non-Ukrainian citizens living in Ukraine at the beginning of the war, to historical Ukranian migration during the Soviet era, or to other nationalities ("third country nationals", *derdelanders;* "non Ukrainian", *niet-Oekraïense*).

In the FLC, "migrant" appears in a rather systematic structure: *migrants Africains* ("African migrants"), *migrants Syriens en 2015* ("Syrian migrants in 2015"), *migrants en Méditerrannée* ("migrants in the Mediterranean"), *migrants du Moyen-Orient* ("migrants from the Middle East"), *migrants venus d'Afrique ou du monde arabe* ("migrants from Africa or the Arab world"), *migrants économiques* ("economic migrants"). In this context, in which Ukrainians are not labelled "migrants", diverse voices wonder where the differences between those former groups and Ukrainians lies. In example (4), a journalist from the right-wing French newspaper *Le Figaro* constrasts the current war with the migrant crisis of 2015, showing again the prevalence of the comparison between those two events:

> (4) We are far, far away from the attitudes of 2015-2016 marked by the closure of borders and the categorical refusal of Poland, Hungary or Romania to welcome any Syrian refugee or migrant. We are also far from the reluctance to open the ports to NGO ships and the few hundred migrants, often sub-Saharan, who boarded them (*Le Figaro*, FR, 12/03/22).

Similarly, *immigrant* occurs 6 times out of 13 occurrences to name Ukrainians in the DLC, whereas its equivalent in the FLC *immigré* has 15 occurrences, and none of them refer to Ukrainians. Both words have been specialised to refer to contemporary economic migration in European countries. Example (5) condemns the differential treatment through a denunciation of the lexical equivalence refugee=deserving/migrant=undeserving. What is more, in this excerpt, the journalist quotes a former refugee in France who explains the situation through racial lenses:

> (5) However, it is the refugee issue that most crystallises the feeling of double standards. "The West is much more welcoming to Ukrainian refugees", Aref says. Europe, Germany in particular, welcomed more than a million Syrian refugees between 2015 and 2016. Since then, the doors have almost closed again, as Europeans consider Syrians to be more "migrants" than "refugees". "We are Arabs and Muslims, therefore rejected; Ukrainians are white and Christian, therefore accepted. We are perceived as terrorists; they are perceived as resistance fighters" (*Le Figaro*, FR, 08/03/2022).

While "asylum seeker" occurs 91 times in the DLC (*asielzoeker*) and 47 times in the FLC (*demandeur d'asile*), it barely refers to people fleeing Ukraine, as confirmed by the analysis of the co-occurrents. As a matter of fact, Ukrainians are explicitly said "not to be asylum seekers":

> (6) Ukrainians are not asylum seekers; State Secretary Erik van der Burg (Asylum) stressed last Friday after the council of ministers. Unlike war refugees from Syria, for

example, they - courtesy of the association treaty the country signed with the EU in 2017- are allowed to travel freely across Europe. That also means that Ukrainians, provided they have passports, can stay in the Netherlands for the first 90 days without a visa (*De Volkskrant*, NL, 01/03/2022).

(7) Officially, Ukrainians are not asylum seekers. The Temporary Protection Directive, which was activated for the first time, automatically gives them a series of rights: a one-year stay; to look for a job; to access the integration income of the PCSW... (*La Libre Belgique*, BE, 14/03/2022).

In these examples, politicians and journalists use "asylum seeker" according to its legal meaning, to argue in favour of their facilitated entry into the EU and the absence of a long and heavy administrative process. Contrary to the word "refugee", which is used in its common acceptation, the speaker here needs to appeal to the legal meaning to legitimise European immigration policies.

So far, the analysis of the denominations and their co-occurrents have shown that Ukrainians are unanimously (and almost exclusively) labelled "refugees". It has also illustrated that the comparison between the current migration event with the 2015 migration crisis has structured political and media discourse, whether it is to pinpoint the difference in treatment between Ukrainian and Syrian refugees, to denounce the better treatment of Ukrainians, or to justify the policies in place. On the other hand, other labels are dedicated to different groups of people on the move, mainly "asylum seekers" and "migrants". While the former is used in its legal sense, the latter is a common label with no legal definition that mostly refers to economic migration. What we want to explore now is the underlying representations and narratives supporting this lexical choice.

Who is a deserving refugee?

The motive of the double standard forces social actors to justify the label "refugee" or the deservingness of Ukrainians. In that sense, the comparison has an argumentative nature, as it serves the purpose of replying to the accusation.

It is extremely difficult to identify discursive patterns other than lexical in a large corpus, e.g., textual segments that featured a dialogical commentary justifying the deservingness of Ukrainian refugees. Therefore, we used the results yielded by the co-occurrents of "refugee" to identify phrases involving a comparison. More specifically, we targeted segments where the word "refugee" was collocated to "Syrian", "Afghan", "2015", "migrants" and "asylum seeker". We obtained 77 textual segments[XV] featuring, as we expected, a comparison systematically used to justify a differential treatment, to denounce a double standard or to just stress the difference. The textual segments were then coded into an analysis grid and classified according to the dominant argument. The subsequent qualitative analysis focusses on the dialogical arguments legitimising the deservingness of Ukrainians that are either promoted or denounced in the social conversation.

XV   Because some articles are published in different journalistic sections, some of these textual segments appear several times, for a total amount of 118 textual segments. Besides, other comparisons are also implicitly found or mentioned with other words and, thus, do not appear in these 77 segments.

In the corpora, one of the most pervasive arguments is that of proximity, whether it is based on culture (example 8), values (9) or geography (10). This category of arguments is found across the full gamut of the political spectrum and stem from different social actors, mainly politicians (9), but also high-ranking civil servants and journalists (10).

(8) "They are Europeans by culture, they are very close to us, very neighbourly" (*Le Monde*, FR, 2022-03-09).

(9) "The Ukrainians are the true defenders of our European and democratic values", he insists (Clément Beaune, the Secretary of State for European Affairs) (*Le Figaro*, FR, 08/03/2022).

(10) "The war is right at the border. We are the first host country, it's [a] humanitarian [endeavour]", explains Laszlo Breznovics, president of an association of Hungarians from Ukraine close to Mr Orban's party, to justify this difference in treatment with refugees arriving from Syria or Afghanistan (*Le Monde*, FR, 28/02/2022).

(11) "Temporary Ukrainian refugees: yes. Illegal migrants and fortune seekers: no. Vlaams Belang could not make its position clearer on the posters the party is spreading on social media these days" (*De Morgen*, BE, 05/03/22).

(12) "I am shocked that some journalists are debating whether Ukrainians are closer to us than Syrians and Afghans. Are there really special categories of refugees based on the colour of their eyes and skin, and does one deserve more help than the other? That is appalling" (*De Morgen*, BE, 12/03/22)

The dialogical nature of the argument is less visible in example (8) but becomes more apparent in (9) where the speaker mentions "the true defenders of European values" (referring implicitly to those who are not), in (11) where the far-right Flemish political party expresses their hostility to previous migratory policies ("illegal migrants and fortune seekers: no"), and in (12), where a journalist quotes previous discourses featuring the comparison.

While cultural and geographical proximity is justified for some, as is the case of a Dutch journalist (13), it is denounced by others (14):

(13) What the question deeply revolves around: is it wrong and reprehensible to care more about people who are close to you - geographically, linguistically, culturally, religiously - than about people with whom you feel less kinship? [...] Perfectly human and nothing wrong with that, as long as skin colour is not a factor. [...] (*NRC Handelsblad*, NL, 03/03/2022).

(14) Selective empathy

Finally, the Ukrainians are European. The media were quick to report on politicians and journalists describing this refugee population as unusual because they are "educated" and come from "civilised" regions, signs of selective empathy that is sometimes based on dubious biases (*Le Soir*, BE, 09/03/2022).

When we look deep into the argument of cultural and geographical proximity, we can see that it reveals a common experience of war recorded in the collective memory, which is particularly visible in the FLC. Indeed, the word "Europe" often collocates with "war" (co-occurrence score of 30) and, more interestingly, with "gates" (score 13) and "borders" (score 6), reflecting the metaphor "at the gates of Europe"/"close to the border".

text_id	Contexte gauche	Pivot	Contexte droit
0763	moment où la guerre retentit à nouveau en	[Europe], à nos portes	. " Je revis douloureusement tout cela, nous dit -il,
1841	un président en exercice et cette guerre en	[Europe], à nos portes	. Pour ces deux raisons, le président n'est pas un
2254	par la population. » Les gouvernements d'	[Europe] centrale ont l...	aux réfugiés en se souvenant de certains épisodes de leur propre histoire
2424	faisant valoir la primauté des intérêts de l'	[Europe] face à l'agres...	. Si cette décision a un sens pour la France, elle
1217	peut qu'empirer. Autre sursaut de l'	[Europe] provoqué pa...	, la défense commune revient au centre des priorités. La Commission
1220	peut qu'empirer. Autre sursaut de l'	[Europe] provoqué pa...	, la défense commune revient au centre des priorités. La Commission
2085	bout. Depuis le 24 février, l'	[Europe] vit au rythme...	. Elle vibre, même. Spontanément solidaires des Ukrainiens, dont
1358	l'État ukrainien et maintenir une pression aux	portes de l'[Europe]	. En mer, le rapport de force entre Russes et Ukrainiens
1742	Européens voient se profiler une crise migratoire aux	portes de l'[Europe]	et une catastrophe humanitaire en Ukraine. « Je pense que nous
1762	ceux qui sont persuadés que la guerre aux	portes de l'[Europe]	l'oblige à rester président « jusqu'au dernier quart d'heure
2155	guerre est une réalité en Ukraine, aux	portes de la Roumani...	. Nous pouvons être fiers de la réactivité dont nous avons collectivement
0134	500 à 2. 000 soldats russes aux	portes de l'[Europe]	. Ils sont nombreux, les experts et expertes en géopolitique,
0326	distancie des actes belliqueux qui se jouent aux	portes de l'[Europe]	. « Je l'ai déjà exprimé mais je le répète :
1819	physiquement le fait que la guerre est aux	portes de l'[Europe]	. Vous vous sentez plus proches des pays de l'Est.
1923	taxe » Dans un contexte de guerre aux	portes de l'[Europe]	et d'inflation potentiellement importante, notamment des prix de l'énergie
1973	proches d'une guerre qui a lieu aux	portes de l'[Europe]	». Du côté des associations mobilisées pour organiser l'accueil des
1974	avec les réfugiés ». La guerre aux	portes de l'[Europe]	a changé les manières de voir et les politiques dans bien des
1998	discours macronien. Finalement, la guerre aux	portes de l'[Europe]	représente un porte-voix bien plus puissant. C'est « l'Europe
2181	se termine dans un contexte de guerre aux	portes de l'[Europe]	. Après la crise sociale des « gilets jaunes » et la
2222	« Prime au sortant » Une guerre aux	portes de l'[Europe]	, une pandémie qui n'est pas encore finie … Le contexte
2257	ont germé. Acculé par la guerre aux	portes de l'[Europe]	, le locataire de l'Elysée a été contraint d'attendre le
2351	atmosphère retardée en raison de la guerre aux	portes de l'[Europe]	. Lundi, M. Macron a encore multiplié les échanges diplomatiques
2369	On ne peut pas avoir une guerre aux	portes de l'[Europe]	sans conséquences sur l'économie. Le rôle de l'Etat,
2577	500 à 2. 000 soldats russes aux	portes de l'[Europe]	. Ils sont nombreux, les experts et expertes en géopolitique,
2769	distancie des actes belliqueux qui se jouent aux	portes de l'[Europe]	. « Je l'ai déjà exprimé mais je le répète :

Figure 4. Concordances of the repeated segments formed with Europe, gates and/or borders

The comparison with the Second World War has an important place in the corpus, with some examples featuring an analogy with Hitlers' annexation of Eastern European territories (the proper name *Hitler* occurs 281 times). In example (15), the comparison is made by the former Belgian State Secretary for Asylum and Migration Sami Mahdi, while in examples (16) and (17), a journalist from *De Standaard* and *Le Monde* unfolds the analogy:

(15) Mahdi wants "emergency villages" to accommodate Ukrainian refugees [...] Mahdi realises that the current approach, in which cities, municipalities and parties host Ukrainians, will not suffice. He makes a comparison with the refugee problem during World War II. "I am concerned, which is why I want to switch to a federal phase". The secretary of state is thinking aloud about building emergency villages in different provinces to collectively house the flow of war refugees, including a lot of families (*De Standaard*, BE, 09/03/22).

(16) Our leaders also fear the mistakes of World War II. The appeasement policy of the 1930s was blind to Hitler's agenda and tolerated the remilitarization of the Rhineland, the annexation of Austria to Nazi Germany and the annexation of the Czechoslovak Sudetenland to avoid war. Wasn't the West equally naive with the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014? The Warsaw Uprising against the Nazis failed due to the lack of support from the Allies. Will Kiev face a similar fate? Shouldn't we adopt clear positions now so as not to be judged by historians later? (*De Standaard*, BE, 04/03/2022).

(17) And now Ukrainians, victims of a war of aggression the likes of which the continent has not seen since 1945, are resurrecting the typically European figure of the post-Second World War "refugee", a victim of Nazi barbarism or Soviet oppression.

> [...] Fortress Europe suddenly opens its doors wide. To do this, a directive conceived in Brussels in 2001, in the aftermath of the wars in ex-Yugoslavia, to deal with a "massive influx of displaced persons from third countries", was exhumed. This text, which was never applied due to the lack of a majority vote by the States, was activated unanimously this time (*Le Monde*, FR, 14/03/2022).

The reference to another historical conflict strengthens the proximity logic between Ukrainian and European populations: The Cold War (118 occurrences in FLC, 284 in DLC). Beyond the reference, some articles even refer to the war in Ukraine as the "New" Cold War:

> (18) Unacceptable conditions in Washington, and increasingly in Europe, in a climate of a new Cold War, which is becoming more pronounced as Russian missiles fall on Kiev (*Le Figaro*, FR, 10/03/2022).

> (19) If Putin remains in power in Moscow, a new Cold War between the West and Russia threatens, with economic contacts kept to a minimum (*De Volkskrant*, NL, 15/03/2022).

By referring to the logic of the blocs, the figure of the common enemy is reactivated, i.e., Putin's Russia. In the DLC, the war in Ukraine is referred to as "Putin's war" (95 occurrences) or "the Russian war in/against Ukraine" (36 occurrences).

As we have seen, arguments justifying the deservingness of Ukrainian refugees are very diverse and unfold in a continuum from the racialist statements of far-right politicians to culturalist remarks, to an overall sentiment of proximity (regional, cultural, historical) and finally to a shared experience of war, a common enemy and a historical memory. At the opposite end of the continuum, the universalist argument pleads for a broader understanding of refugee protection and hopes for a shift in the European migration model:

> (20) To state the difference in treatment between Syrians and Ukrainians should not prevent us from welcoming the step that has just been taken in the European history of asylum. The reasons why the fate of Ukrainians specifically moves Europeans cannot be summed up in an affinity of skin colour or religion. The proximity is not only geographical. The progress of international refugee protection is first and foremost a European story (*Le Monde*, FR, 14/03/2022).

> (21) Let's show solidarity with "those other" refugees too […] (*De Morgen*, BE, 18/03/2022).

> (22) In 2015, Syrian refugees were also initially welcomed with flowers and teddy bears. It is to be hoped that the direct confrontation with war on our own continent will lead to a more generous attitude towards refugees elsewhere in the world. Europe can contribute more generously to reception in Asia, Africa and the Middle East, and take in more recognised refugees from United Nations camps. Hopefully, this new refugee crisis will also lead to an impetus for a better European migration policy, distributing refugees across the continent (*De Volkskrant*, NL, 03/03/2022).

Conclusion

The goal of this article was to study the discursive moment of the war in Ukraine, with a focus on the comparison between the reception of Ukrainians and the migrant crisis in 2015. We chose to study this debate in a large corpus of media discourse covering two languages (French and Dutch) and three neighbouring European countries (Belgium, France and The Netherlands). Even though the social conversation unfolded in very different arenas, the media were chosen because they organise collective debates, by giving the floor to a variety of speakers and arguments while setting the agenda on topics that matter. The corpus, covering the first three weeks after the invasion of Ukraine and collected using the name of the country as a keyword, yielded the following results.

First of all, we confirmed the intuition that there was a consensus for categorising Ukrainians as refugees instead of migrants or asylum seekers. Most occurrences of the word *refugee* in this context do not refer to the legal meaning of the term, but rather to a broad understanding of who deserves the protection from the State. In this context, the discursive meaning of the term is that of people in neighbouring countries fleeing war to find safe harbour. These refugees are framed as heroes who deserve the great deal of solidarity they are offered.

Second, we show that the whole episode of the Ukrainian war was framed within other historical events that have affected Europe: WWII, the Cold War and the 2015 migration crisis. The analogy with these events clearly structured the social conversation about the Ukrainian war. It serves, therefore, a discursive purpose, that of either justifying an exclusive or, on the contrary, an inclusive view of reception policy. The interdiscourse of European history (WWII and the Cold War) is quite present and visible through numerous evocations of the past and, in particular, the reference to a common enemy. This activates a common historical memory and shared representations that make this group of displaced persons closer to Europeans. The experience of these events was an interpretative framework for the war in Ukraine which could explain the consensual reaction of European countries.

Regarding the comparison with the migration crisis of 2015, which is very present in the collective memory, it provided the lexicon of the deserving and the undeserving refugee. Contrary to 2015, when the social debate revolved around the "right terms" to name people on the move, here the discussion focuses on a comparison between the statuses granted to migrants during the two crises (international protection *versus* temporary protection). In this discursive frame, the denunciation of a double standard was followed by a series of arguments to justify the exceptional protection granted to Ukrainians, which unfolded in an ideological continuum. They went from culturalist statements to arguments of cultural proximity. Nevertheless, if we consider the academic literature concerning the crisis of 2015, the Syrian refugees were considered the prototypical deserving refugee among other migrants, for which a different standard was applied in the eyes of the policy makers and mainstream media (Akoka, 2020; De Cleen *et al.*, 2017). Despite this, in 2022, Syrians were presented as those who, at the time, were considered undesirable. We might wonder what purpose this trope serves in social discourse, and hypothesise that its goal was to denounce the numerous divides in contemporary societies in terms of class, race and North-South fracture, rather than specifically addressing the treatment of Syrian refugees.

Finally, apart from some country-specific differences (the names of politicians, places, specific organisations, etc.), a common discourse runs through European media. We can conclude that the way of naming Ukrainians fleeing the war, the debates around the double standard, the arguments underlying this conversation and the references to past wars participate in the construction of a common European discourse.

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