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MA Thesis

FRAMING REFUGEE NEWS IN THE ELECTORATE CYCLE: THE CASE OF ITALY

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ABSTRACT

The current European refugee crisis affects many EU countries, including Italy, which due to its strategic location in the Mediterranean area, has become one of the main destinations for the migratory flows coming from Africa, the Balkans, and the Middle East. As for other European countries, the wave of discontent caused by the complexity of the refuge allocation system, the overall European far-right rising, and the national financial crisis, has brought to a governmental shifting towards extreme-right and populism in Italy. As confirmed by the outcome of the last general election held on the 4th of March 2018, Italy has turned out an anti-establishment government led by Northern League and the Five Star Movement. In this scenario, considering the overall call for answers and resolution raised from the public opinion, the Italian press often contributes to frame refugees with negative frames, especially during the election. Therefore, this study investigates refugee framing under the electoral cycle in Italy, applying some of the most discussed theories on news framing and agenda-setting theories and analyzing the main frames related to refugees in the Italian newspapers. Following the assumption before the election Italian news framed refugees with more salience and negativity, the main goal of this study is to explain in which ways the elections affect the framing of refugee in the Italian news. In order to resolve this research puzzle, this study gathers refugee news in two different time spans, before and after the election day, from four major Italian newspapers: La Repubblica, Il Corriere della Sera, Il Messaggero, Il Resto del Carlino. These four newspapers are inspected based on their diverse political alignment (liberalism and centrism-conservatism) and their news articles are evaluated through a framing analysis, underlying trends and similarities and finally, driving wider conclusions on the Italian press. As main findings of this study, before the election the Italian press publishes more news about refugees and they overall represent negative topics linked to them. Moreover, there is a distinction in terms of refugee framing in news between liberal and centralist-conservative leaning outlets: the liberal-leaning outlets frame integration and solidarity, whereas centralist-conservative leaning outlets release violence and racism as their main frames.

Keywords: Refugee framing, electorate cycle, framing analysis, Italian press

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BACKGROUND SCENARIO AND INTRODUCTION

“Italian ports are no longer at the disposal of traffickers. Open the Maltese ports! Open the French ports! They will only see Italy on a postcard!”

(Matteo Salvini, 2018, June 22) (Retrieved from: <https://ind.pn/2Palo2Z>)

“Words matter”, as observed by Melissa Fleming, spokesperson for the UN’s High Commissioner for Refugees, when talking about media and migration and media coverage of the refugee crisis during a thematic debate organized by UNESCO’s International program for the Development of Communication (IPDC) in Paris on the 18th of March 2018 (Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2DPFT3f>). Indeed, her point well summarizes the general attitude in reporting relevant information and narrating the refugee crisis. Specifically, as she underlines, usually journalists misinterpret terms such as “refugee”, “asylum-seekers” and “migrants” or focus on certain discourses, covering the issue only from certain prospective, with far-reaching outcomes in the audience who perceive refugee news.

On that note, Aidan White, director of the “Ethical Journalism Network” claims that media are often manipulated by political leaders in terms of migration media coverage, since the refugee crisis is a crucial turning point in European politics, which split the public opinion and the governments (Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2U1r7Mf>). European politics have been urged by public opinion to discussions over security, border control, fears and humanitarian aids. In this scenario, media often represent the rhetoric of alarm, security, violence and support. The ongoing refugee crisis represents an unprecedented emergency which have caused overall in Europe populist reactions and sometimes racism.

Across Europe, extreme-right and populist parties are generally gaining substantial support, prompted by the wave of discontent and financial crisis. Surely this is the case of Italy, hit by economic crisis since 2008 and where the last election held on the 4th of March 2018 brought to an anti-establishment government directed by the populist *Five*

Star Movement and the right-wing *Northern League*. Due to its strategic location in the Mediterranean Sea, close to North Africa and the Balkans, Italy received 130.119 refugee applications and delivered 42.700 rejections to migrants mostly coming from Nigeria, Bangladesh but also from Syria and Afghanistan in 2017 (Retrieved from: <http://bit.ly/2pzBgnd>). Considering these numbers and the call for answers and resolution from the public opinion, the Italian media often contribute to share in the audience an image of discomfort and disorder.

Given these pretenses, this study recognizes the role of media in captivating the audience under certain sensitive topics, thus influencing the electors under the pressure of political parties and electorate campaign. In this extent, this work considers the relevance of the electorate cycle and it aims at informing about refugee framing under the election, applying some of the most discussed theories on news framing, agenda-setting and media coverage.

By drawing on prior studies on framing refugees in Italian press and considering the electorate cycle as scenario for the investigation, this research aims to describe the main frames presenting refugees in the Italian press, under the electorate cycle. More specifically, this study attempts to answer the research question: **how is refugee framing in Italian news affected by the electorate cycle?** Therefore, this study assumes that **before the election, Italian news framed refugees with more salience and negativity.** In order to unveil this research puzzle, this study collect evidence (news articles) from four major Italian newspapers: *La Repubblica*, *Il Corriere della Sera*, *Il Messaggero*, *Il Resto del Carlino*. Those sources have been chosen according to their different political alignment, and easy access to their news database and online version. All these factors contribute to share an impartial overlook and provide a wider prospective on media and political discourses, encouraging broader considerations.

Thus, practically speaking, the first section of this study devoted to the literature review, relies on summarizing previous scholars' investigations into refugee framing analysis in European and Italian press, in public discourse, and in the electorate cycle. The literature review insists on overpassing the gap between refugee framing and electorate cycle, showing that only a minority of studies explore the linkages between those fields.

The second section applies to the theoretical framework of this study, which define the concept of “refugee framing”, linking it to the news framing and the electorate cycle, and therefore presenting the main communication theories of this research: “framing theory”, “agenda-setting theory” and “meta-coverage”. The theoretical framework outlines the basis of the research theories, focusing specifically on framing in journalism and political debate and discussing in which terms the electorate cycle influences the refugee framing.

The third section discusses the methodologies of this research, which consists in a frame analysis of news articles, conducted in two different timespans: before and after the last Italian general election. The methodology framework assesses the framing analysis approach, the data sample choice, and the sources.

The fourth section represents the actual refugee news analysis. The analysis displays data as numbers and percentages of news framing refugees, and how they change from the first to the second time span. This section analyzes the main frame upon refugees, presented two weeks before and two weeks after the vote, discussing the articles underlining trends and similarities of the main frames, taking into account the political alignment of each newspaper (liberalism or centrism-conservatism).

The fifth section is dedicated to the discussion: it drives wider conclusion and interpretations on the refugee framing before and after the electorate cycle and it confirms the coherence of the research puzzle in the light of the analysis. This section summarizes the main frames acknowledged by this study upon refugee framing, interpreting in a broader perspective the general message behind the refugee framing in the Italian press and sharing some findings on the Italian case. The study believes that these findings could eventually encourage further studies upon refugee framing in the electorate cycle in other countries and with other sources. Moreover, this study admits its limits in terms of the restriction of sources, time, and countries analyzed, however comprehends the high complexity of the refugee crisis as a phenomenon and consequently its reflection in media, society and politics, thus it provides coherent arguments for all choices.

Finally, the very last section is dedicated to the conclusion, which outlines all the major findings of this study, straightening out the research puzzle and confirming the initial hypothesis for the research question.

1 LITERATURE REVIEW

This literature review will give an overview of the most recent studies on refugee framing in a cross-European perspective, and afterwards focusing on Italy as the main case of this study thus justifying this choice. Moreover, this review will refer to the refugee and electorate cycle in order to bridge the existing gap between those fields. In fact, while many scholars have discussed the refugee framing in the press, only few of them relate the salience of this issue to the electorate cycle.

1.1 FRAMING REFUGEE IN EUROPE

This section summarizes several studies on mediacoverage of the refugee crisis presenting an overview on Europe, comparing tendencies and diversities. This part of the literature contributes to perceive how refugees are framed overall in many European countries and by some of the major European newspapers, providing a general scenario of discussion, before evaluating the main case of this research.

The first study is an overview paper by Georgiou et al. (2017), published for the Council of Europe in the framework of the CoE reports of 2017. The report discusses the media coverage, the press coverage and the challenges and recommendations of media practices of eight Member States of the Council of Europe: Czech Republic, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Serbia and the United Kingdom. The main focus of the report is 2015, since during this year according to *Frontex*, circa one million of migrants landed in Europe, as a consequence of the Syrian conflict escalation. Therefore, the media reported daily news and stories about the refugee crisis, calling for action and attention from European institutions and national governments. The paper aims to highlight the journalistic practice of covering the refugee/migration crisis, the level of discrimination towards migrants found in the European press, and the way media frame the refugee news. Indeed, the authors examined 1200 articles in total, focusing on three specific events to set the timespan for the investigation: the construction of the Hungarian wall at the Serbian border, the release of Alan Kurdi's iconic photo and the Paris terror attack of November 2015. From the analysis of all articles, 66% of them clearly referred to negative consequences related to refugee arrivals in Europe (Georgiou et al. 2017: 9). As a matter of fact, most stories and news about refugees acknowledged a relationship

between the rising of refugees in Europe with many disadvantages, producing anxiety and fear among the audience. More specifically, the report gives a glance on each country analyzed and comparing the level of intolerance towards refugee arrivals. In this scenario, the geographical proximity to the Mediterranean and south-eastern area represents a crucial factor analyzing the stage of acceptance. Aiming attention at each national press, the results shows that the Hungarian press is the most concerned about economic and security measures related to the high migration wave, whereas the level of acceptance of the Greek and Serbian press is among the highest compared to the average. Indeed, the Greek and Serbian newspapers emphasized the geopolitical reasons behind the migration and described the migrants giving them a voice and a personal story (Georgiou et al. 2017). Further, France, Czech Republic, the UK, and Ireland stressed on defensive actions, such as closing borders and implementing a military presence instead of solidarity measures. As for the German press, it focused the most on humanitarian initiatives and defensive strategies at the same time. The news released by western countries portrayed the majority of narrative upon security, militarization and defensive measures while the “eastern” countries of this study sample targeted more cooperation and assisting measures to help the refugees. Therefore, according to the authors, the media have a crucial role in unpacking and presenting to the audience complicated issues and measures, which should carry a large responsibility in terms of reporting fairness and impartiality. The main recommendation provided by the authors consists in a strategy to implement inclusiveness of the media in covering the refugee crisis, including diverse voices, and supporting and disseminating refugee media and communication practices (Georgiou et al. 2017: 16-17).

The second overview paper is a study carried out by Berry et al. (2015) within the framework of the UNHCR report and consists in the content analysis of refugee press from five European countries: Spain, Sweden, Italy, UK and Germany. As the previous one, this report focuses on thousands of articles from 2014-15, recognizing this timespan as the most intense of refugee news coverage due to the peak of arrivals in Europe. The researchers identified a significative difference among the investigated outlets, in sharing perspectives and responses upon refugee crisis. Most importantly, the main differences appeared investigating difference countries, diverse sources, and analyzing linguistic and societal contexts. In fact, the use of labels to identify refugees varies per country; for

instance, Germany and Sweden used in prevalence the term “refugee” or “asylum seeker”, while Italy, Spain and UK adopted the word “migrant” more frequently (Berry et al. 2015: 8). Another relevant difference concerns the predominance of themes found in the different countries press coverage. Indeed, the humanitarian themes were more present in the Italian coverage (50.6%) and less present in Spanish coverage (32.5%) (Berry et al. 2015:7-9). Other themes such as economic and cultural threats related to refugees, were again the most prevalent in Italy, followed by Spain and Britain. As overall findings, the author claimed that at that time the Swedish coverage shared the most positive approach towards refugees, whereas the UK appeared as the most negative and polarized, especially analyzing the British right-wing media, whose attitude was the most aggressive and anti-migrant. According to the authors, the general rising hostility towards the refugee crisis was partly generated by the rising of the arrivals themselves, by the 2008 global financial crisis, and by the consequent feeling of economic and social insecurity. Within this scenario of instability, in many countries, mainly in Greece, France and Sweden the financial and national security concerns boosted the development of far-right parties, anti-immigrant stances and many related movements. Among the main findings, this study found that the Spanish, Italian and Swedish newspapers, were covering the refugee crisis in the most “homogenous” way (Berry et al. 2015:81). Indeed, the press of these countries reported events and frame refugees using the same themes, explanations and the same labels. Additionally, German press was one of the most critical towards the EU, blaming the refugee allocation system, while Swedish press claimed that the European institutions and their bureaucracy were responsible of all the deaths in the Mediterranean Sea. Another remarkable point is the rise of far-right and the level of its representation in each analyzed country. For instance, according to the authors, German far-right had no representative in parliament at that time, whereas it had a prominent voice in Sweden or UK. Therefore, in countries like UK or Sweden, the rise of far-right parties allowed more representation of a far-right stance in the media system and consequently caused the spreading of certain narratives related to restriction and anti-immigration in the press. Commenting on the overall data sample of this study, only a few articles released by Swedish and German press discussed the benefits of hosting refugees in Europe, whereas all the other countries reported issues and threats (Berry et al. 2015:170-175).

1.2 FRAMING REFUGEE IN THE ITALIAN NEWS

Numerous academics investigated the main discourses on refugees in European press, measuring similarities and diversities among the major European newspapers, analyzing some of the most crucial moments of the ongoing refugee crisis. However, this study selected Italy as main case for its investigation, due to several factors that makes Italian news coverage worth to check thoroughly: its high level of polarization in the news media, its strategic location in the Mediterranean area, being a key entry point for migrants, and one of the European countries that receives the highest number of migrants and refugees.

Many researchers inspected the Italian press, finding some common ground in the representation of negative themes, instrumentalization and political parties influence, referred to refugee framing. Among these scholars, Bruno (2016: 45) holds that the Italian press frames refugee as a phenomenon often related to threatened security, crime issues, negative emotions, fears of invasion and degradation. According to the scholar, the refugee representation in news falls into three main frames: a) “other-as-a threat”, b) maritime (Mediterranean Sea) frame and c) internal borders (cultural and religious gaps) frame. Those dimensions contribute to creating an image of desperation, chaos and lawless in the public imagination. In his work, Bruno (2016: 48) analyzed hundreds of headlines related to refugees in Italy, finding recurring words such as “emergency”, “invasion”, “clandestine” and “assault” accompanied by iconic pictures portraying boats full of migrants in Lampedusa. The scholar believes that not only did the content and terminology used to frame refugee depict a negative perception in the readers, but also the visual component contributes to strengthening this adverse interpretation. Moreover, he claims that this representation is influenced by the Italian public discourse and its agenda setting. Hence, the negative perception of refugees, deriving from crimes and threats reported in most of the news, is a mechanism of “social control towards immigrants”, an attempt to move the political discussion from internal conflicts to external ones.

Similarly, the study carried out by Dixon (2018) and other scholars investigating the perception of immigration and refugees in Italy, reached similar conclusions. According to the scholars, only one out of three Italians can identify with the refugees and migrants, while the majority perceive them as “other”, an “out group” able to

undermine the overall safety, especially when they belong to the Muslim faith (Dixon et al. 2018: 78). This study suggests that media and social media are partly responsible of sharing anti-migrant messages through some political narratives and political debates. Indeed, parties such as the Northern League claim that migrants are not only a threat, but they also receive more benefits than “native-Italians” such as housing and welfare. In fact, this report reveals how the Italian general attitude towards migrants and confidence in the government is evolving due to the rising of extremism and nationalism. In this scenario, as those scholars assume, the only group supporting the refugees or those in needs, are Catholic and cosmopolitan Italians as a result of their principles and vision of the world (Dixon et al. 2018: 80-90).

Analyzing migrants and media in the Italian case, Campani (2013) compares the current refugee crisis with the one which occurred in the 1990’s from the Balkans. The scholar claims that the migration phenomenon in Italy has always been related to power, economy and political parties. In fact, after the Albanian crisis and the Yugoslav Wars, the Italian government implemented new laws and humanitarian aids and permits, to welcome the first wave of Albanian refugees. However, according to Campani, this solidarity was just a strategy to generate a general approval for the government engagement in the war. The media as well contributed to obtaining popular support, but after the second wave of Albanian migrants, they quickly started to show hostility and racism especially towards people from the former Yugoslavia and the Roma community. In fact, it became clear that since the Balkans were shattered by war and ethnic cleansing, flows of refugees would land in the Italian coasts, either legally or not. Thus, the press began to interpret migration as a threat or to “blame” the migrants for living in poor accommodation or to downgrade some districts - generally, they linked immigration with the rise of criminal acts (Campani 2013: 38-45). This scenario appears similar to the current one and help us to understand some political approach and strategies related to migration and their ongoing representation in media. Moreover, what emerges as relevant from Campani’ study is her consideration of the Italian newspapers and their political affiliation. Indeed, she underlines that in order to understand the role of the media within the framework of political strategies and agenda setting, we should keep in mind that Italian press doesn’t always follow the so-called “autonomous journalism” since the four national newspapers with the largest circulation – *Il Corriere della Sera*, *La Repubblica*,

La Stampa and Il Giornale – are all funded by industrial and political groups, which influences negatively the quality and neutrality of the press (Campani 2013: 40-41).

As for the current refugee crisis, another study examines refugee representation in Italian media finding that acceptance rates of asylum seekers decrease in response to media negative connotation of the migration phenomenon. Koch and other scholars (2018) inspected the relationship between press and asylum acceptance rates in 20 countries, including Italy, during the years 2002 to 2016. Specifically, their cross-country analysis involved more than 728 million news articles relating to refugees, finding that a negative tone in mass media influences asylum seeker acceptance. As for the previous studies mentioned in this review, this one acknowledges as well that refugee press coverage and media tone derive from a political standpoint and that it is a complex and intricate mechanism to understand (Koch et al. 2018: 10). Likewise, this study identifies “societal security”, “the other-as-a-threat” and economic concerns as main discourses related to the refugees. Similar discourses are usually presented in extremist parties’ rhetoric that associates the presence of asylum seekers inside a country to the burdening of state’s resources and/or delinquency.

Another interesting example of a study on Italian newspapers and migrant reporting is the one conducted by Viera (2016), who recorded the number of news related to Mediterranean refugees on the websites of two Italian newspaper “La Repubblica” and “Il Corriere della Sera”, during the timespan 2000-2015. What emerged as relevant from this analysis is that especially during the years 2012-2014, press coverage on the issue has steadily grown in both newspapers, reaching its peak in 2015. Indeed, during 2015, the migration flow in the Mediterranean Sea was continuous and topped 1 million arrivals (Viera 2016: 7). Viera researched the critical events and focus topics reported in both online journals, finding that the main discourses about the refugee crisis were: refugee relocation, refugees’ resettlement in EU countries and refugees smuggling. Moreover, she found that the two researched Italian newspapers presented refugees as a “social group” and described the refugee crisis in political and social terms, focusing on disasters, death, religious and civil society initiatives. According to the author, starting from 2015, the refugee issue became more relevant in the Italian press, since it produced a “moralizing effect” (Viera 2016: 15) in the readers and developed into a priority for the political agenda setting.

Furthermore, another work by Gianfreda (2017) investigates refugee framing and political debate in Italy from 2015 to 2016. The author developed a comparison between Italy and UK, justifying this timespan because of two main events: the drowning of over 800 people in the Mediterranean in April 2015, and the “Brexit” referendum occurred in June 2016 (Gianfreda 2017: 5). More specifically, Gianfreda examined Italian center-left and center-right parties’ discourses in European Parliament and how they differ in terms of problem framing and policy proposals upon the refugee crisis. Her main findings show that center-left parties represent refugee crisis as a threat, as an “uncontrolled phenomenon” (Gianfreda 2017: 25), emphasizing the need to regulations, national sovereignty and borders control. On the contrary, center-right parties represent refugee crisis as a “huge humanitarian crisis” (Gianfreda 2017: 26), focusing on providing long-term strategies to overcome further tragedies. Moreover, according to Gianfreda, Italian center-right and right parties highly politicize the refugee crisis mentioning them to criticize the ruling government (at that time). Indeed, she pointed out that Northern League links the issue with criminalization and that Five Star Movement assume that the government speculate on illegal migration.

1.3 FRAMING REFUGEE IN THE ELECTORATE CYCLE

Finally, other research activities have investigated refugee migration and the electorate cycle in Europe. This section gathers several studies which discuss the refugee migration and the electoral outcomes, investigating different European countries and afterwards, reporting the case of Italy.

Among these studies, Dustmann et al. (2016) focused on the link between the Danish refugee allocation system and the voting outcomes, analyzing a 13-year period (1986–1998) of Denmark’s refugee dispersal policy. This study contributes to a clearer understanding of the rise of populist parties in Denmark, basing on the results of past immigration and settlement policies, providing evidence that refugee allocation may lead to different responses comparing rural and urban areas. Indeed, the results shows that a significant increase of refugee arrivals affected the rise of anti-immigration parties’ vote only in rural areas, but not in the biggest urban municipalities (Dustmann et al. 2016: 31-32). However, the study doesn’t explain why the anti-immigration rhetoric wasn’t persuading the urban voters in the past elections but has important implications for the

current debate on refugee allocation in Europe. Indeed, Dustamann confirms the link between refugee arrivals and the rise of populist/anti-immigration parties, suggesting that refugee allocation and electorate victory of anti-immigrant's parties are not strictly related, but there are different responses in cities and countryside.

A similar case was conducted by Sengoku (2018), who researched in 2015 the outcome of Polish parliamentary and presidential elections, when the national-conservative party "Law and Justice" became the leading party and obtained an absolute majority in parliament (Sengoku 2018: 35). Sengoku (2018) discussed the linkages between the victory of "Law and Justice" with some external factors such as the overall European refugee crisis, the refusal of the refugee quota assigned by the EU and some domestic factors such as the national discontent with the liberal-conservative leading party "Civic Platform". This study aims at a better understanding of the governmental trends and changes occurred in Poland during 2015, one of the most sensitive during the refugee crisis. As main findings from his investigations and surveys, Sengoku (2018) highlighted that the victory of "Law and Justice" was not primarily caused by an anti-immigrant stance, but by the disapproval towards the previous government lead by the "Civic Platform". In fact, through his surveys, the academic found that the refugee crisis was one of the main, but not the major factor, for the victory of the national-conservative party and that overall, the acceptance towards migrants significantly decreased after the Paris terrorist attack of November 2015.

Steinmayr (2017) have also theorized that refugee crisis has affected the far-right parties in the electorate outcome. Indeed, in 2015 he investigated the case of Upper-Austria, one of the nine federal states of Austria. As a matter of fact, this state was part of the so-called "western Balkan route" of refugees moving from middle-east and heading to Germany. As for many other European countries, Steinmayr (2017) relates the number of refugee arrivals with the share of support towards far-right wing over time. Thus, he claims that a high exposure to refugees led the population to different reactions, such as voting more for far-right parties or to an interaction between locals and refugees, whenever NGOs and municipalities facilitate their integration.

Reviewing the Italian studies, Bratti and other scholars focused on how people's voting behavior in 2016 constitutional referendum was influenced by anti-immigration

stance (Bratti et al. 2017). More specifically, their work claim that during that election voters were biased by right parties' anti-immigration attitude to vote against the approval of the constitutional reform. In fact, that vote has been generally interpreted as a disapproval to the prime minister ruling at that time, Matteo Renzi and to his government. Additionally, the scholars found empirical proof that voters located in proximity of refugee reception centers showed an increase of turnouts and antigovernment votes (Bratti et al. 2017: 3). These findings are relevant to comprehend how refugee crisis is exploited by many political parties whose propaganda increased fear and hostility and in this particular case, the discontent with the government.

Palm (2018) drives similar conclusion in her study upon the refugee crisis and the rising of far-right parties in Italy. She relates the electoral manifestos of the right-wing Northern League party "Italians first" or "stop the invasion" with their success in 2018 general election. Her analysis shows some example of their "xenophobic" and anti-migratory rhetoric aimed at blocking the migratory flows in the Mediterranean while forcing migrants' returns in their homelands. As a result, she linked this "zero landings" propaganda to numerous tensions and violent episodes towards migrants or among them (Palm 2018:3).

The above-mentioned studies cover refugee framing hinting on the connection between refugee crisis, party politics and electoral outcomes in the European scenario. However, it is evident that there is a gap in research on the topic of the influence of the electoral cycle on the refugee framing. In the next chapter this study intends to outline the theoretical framework necessary for engagement with these two concepts.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

As seen from the literature review of this study, defining and assessing concepts such as “refugees’ framing in news” and “refugees’ framing in the electorate cycle” can be ambiguous. However, as previous studies emphasized, very often journalists represent concepts and frame facts, choosing words and images to influence the audience, under the external pressure of political groups, policy makers or ideological orientation of the newspaper. Thus, before digging into the methodological section, the “framing theory”, together with “news framing theory” and “meta-coverage”, can provide a theoretical framework to this study.

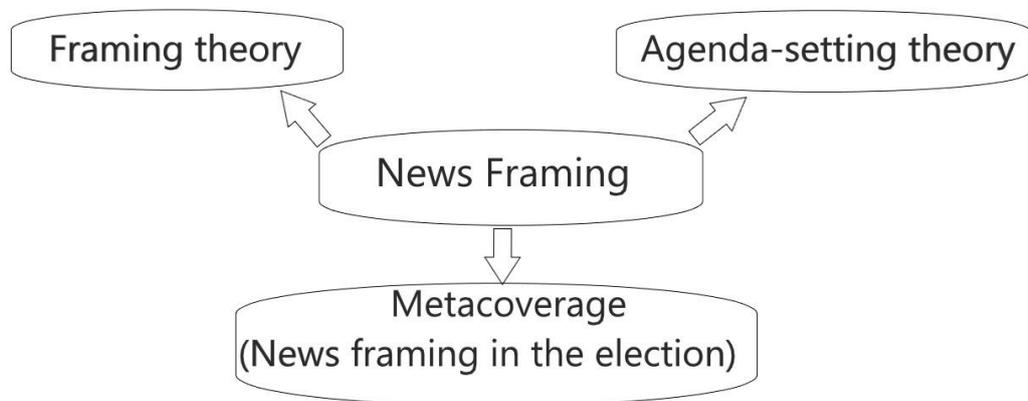


Figure 1 Theoretical Framework

2.1 THEORY ON NEWS FRAMING: THE FRAMING THEORY AND AGENDA SETTING

The theoretical background of this study relies on the so-called *Framing theory*, as well as the *Agenda-setting theory*. These communication theories illustrate why and how mass media target certain events instead of others, placing them within a specific context.

The framing theory was firstly developed by Goffman (1974:21), who defined “frames” such as “schemata of interpretation” used by people to construct and comprehend their everyday life, giving a meaning to relevant events. Framing represent a transdisciplinary

method which involves sociology, psychology and mass media studies. According to Goffman's theory, frames are abstraction and they are inevitable in communication, since all human beings provide their own frame when they communicate. Thus, frames are mostly found in the way media and news dispatch a piece of information, influencing the perception of that news by the audience (Goffman 1974:24-25).

According to Fiske and Taylor (1991) a frame provides salience to some information or subject, increasing meaning and chances that receivers will pick that information. In fact, the way a news is "framed" and presented to the audience, can consequently influence people's choices about how to interpret that fact. Indeed, according to Entman (1993:52), framing means reporting news and adding a definition, interpretation or recommendation. As Entman (1993:51-58) states, framing means giving power to a communicating text, influencing people "by the transfer of information" from a certain speech or report. Therefore, a single sentence can provide moral judgment, predict a problem, or suggest a remedy.

Some other theories and studies on framing focus specifically on framing in journalism and political debate, which is a compelling aspect of this thesis. Indeed, Gitlin (1980) describes frames as a journalist "device" to arrange huge amounts of facts and allocate them to their readers. Similarly, Kahneman and Tversky (1984: 354), claim that journalists frame aspects on purpose in order to drive the reader's attention on certain items, while overlooking other elements.

Journalists play a major role in depicting their reality: they frame news and subjects with techniques such as narrating a topic in a dramatic and catchy way, or using slogans, assessing positive or negative judgment, presenting cultural artifacts or portraying contrasts (Fairhurst and Sarr 1996). Hence, according to Entman and Riker (1989) politicians asking for consensus, "compete" with journalists over news frames. Indeed, framing is the expression of political power and represents the link between politicians and public, through media and nowadays, through social media as well.

In regards to journalism and politicians, another important point to this thesis is to underline how close are politicians and press and that some newspapers endorses political parties. That being so, journalistic objectivity becomes a vague concept. According to

Jacoby (2000: 751), politicians often use communication frames to influence voters, directing them to think about their policies under their guidance.

Additionally, another interesting definition come from Polletta and Ho (2006) that define framing as a political strategy to gather people's consensus around interpretations of a problem. This strategy can be accomplished by drawing the audience attention to certain aspects of their political program such as morals and values. There isn't a standard procedure on how to outline and describe a news frame. And that is because news frames are chosen and constructed every time for a specific audience, and when talking about journals, for a specific target of readers (Chong 1996).

Nevertheless, some theorists suggested a list of criteria that a frame must encounter. Indeed, according to Cappella and Jamieson (1997: 47, 89) a news frame must have familiar language and concept, it must be commonly adopted in journalism, and it must be reliable and valid. Besides from those criteria, Chong and Druckman (2007:109) outline how news framing occur in newspapers. The researchers assess as the first step identifying an initial set of frames, which emphasize certain themes. Afterwards, the analysis conveys on the selection for content analysis, which means analyzing media sources such as major newspapers, broadcasts and magazines.

Another relevant communication theory worthy of mention for this study is the so-called "agenda-setting theory". This theory was introduced by McCombs and Shaw (1972) during the 1968 US presidential election. According to their theory, media played an important role in representing the political reality with their news. Consequently, according to them, media conveys its influence via displaying a certain issue as a part of a public agenda.

Indeed, Littlejohn and Foss (2009) established a connection between the reaction of the audience to certain issue, to the way that issue is emphasized in the media. Hence, when the audience read about a certain threat, it also understands how much that threat is relevant from the amount of information showed in a news story and its position.

In regards to who is responsible for setting the mass media agenda, researchers emphasize the role of politicians and the public debate (Roberts & McCombs: 1994; Walgrave & Aelst: 2006). According to these researchers, the government is responsible in promoting

policies and propaganda via agenda setting of media. In this scenario, with the occurrence of a political campaign, media set the “agenda of the campaign” assessing candidates’ discourses and giving more or less salience to their words (Walgrave, Soroka & Nuytemans: 2008; Rogers and Dearing: 1988).

2.2 FRAMING THEORY IN THE ELECTION: METACOVERAGE

The literature review of this thesis has already acknowledged the gap between refugee framing in the press and the electoral campaign. Nevertheless, this section aims at clarifying some concepts and methods related to framing news under the electorate cycle.

Firstly, an important explanation on why the electorate cycle has an influence on framing news comes from Entman (2004: 23-24), who states that a frame can be defined only when it relates to a specific circumstance, such as a political campaign or another significative occurrence.

Afterwards, many scholars added that media has a specific role during the election period, since they broadcast “strategy-oriented coverage” or “meta-coverage” (Esser and D’Angelo 2006:45). Esser and Spanier (2005) describe the meta-coverage as an outcome of media politics because it is one of the main actors in political campaign and expresses the logic of media system during this time frame. This type of coverage reveals the linkages between political parties and newspapers and the purposes behind why certain news are framed with more positive or negative insights under the elections.

Additionally, Vreese and Elenbaas (2008) suggest that meta-coverage is more expressed in quality news outlets and newspapers since this type of coverage attract an well-educated audience interested in politics .

Considering that the media frames news aiming at influencing the audience under some circumstances such as an affiliation to political groups, ideology, or electoral campaign, this research aims to investigate **how refugee news framing is affected by the electorate cycle in the Italian case**. This thesis’ target is to analyze the period before and after the last general Italian election in order to verify if, as the literature and theory suggest, **refugee news framing are more numerous and negative before the election day, rather than after**. Finally, a comparison and analysis of the main frames that

occurred in the sample provides a shared perspective on refugee news framing, since the collected data come from the media with diverse political standpoints.

3 METHODOLOGY

The methodological section of this work outlines the data sample unit, the timespan and the overall analysis process, providing explanations and definition based on previous studies on framing analysis.

As for the data sample unit of this thesis, they consist in online news articles retrieved via key word searches in data bases. More specifically, data is collected from the online version of four different Italian newspapers, assessed as being national quality newspaper oriented to different political alignment and owned by different editor groups or industrialists. The articles selected for analysis are news pieces about refugees, precisely the ones containing terms such as “refugee/s” and “asylum seeker/s”. Indeed, this study focuses on these two concepts since they are broad and interchangeably used to describe migrants, who have left their countries, have crossed borders having the right of international protection¹.

¹ The keywords being used in this research in Italian language are: “rifugiato” and “richiedente asilo” as well as “migrante” and “profugo”, whenever those two terms were clearly used as synonyms or as a category of refugee or asylum seeker. Indeed, “migrante” in Italian has the same meaning of its English translation “migrant”, however as pointed by *Accademia della Crusca*, it is often adopted in common or formal language to classify in a general way, people fleeing war and destruction, persecution and torture, people in danger of life and in search of protection, who are no longer just migrants, but refugees seeking asylum. As for the other terms, only “rifugiato” and “richiedente asilo” find correspondence in other European languages (refugee, asylum seeker) and refers to a status recognized by international law. On the contrary “profugo” doesn’t have any precise equivalence in English, however it indicates a person fleeing or expelled from the country of origin or residence for political, religious, racial reasons or for war or for natural disasters. Thus, when in one article the word “profugo” appeared to identify an expelled person seeking asylum, it was considered as a synonym for asylum seeker. Very often the Italian media provide an inappropriate or misleading use of all those labels. Other times in the same article a refugee was label as “migrante” and then as “profugo”. Setti, R., *Migranti, profughi e rifugiati. Anche le parole delle migrazioni sono sempre in viaggio*, (2017, May 12), *Accademia della Crusca*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2pME5Ou>). Nevertheless, what is crucial to comprehend for the reader, is that this analysis took under consideration only “migrante” and “profugo” who applied for asylum status or who are refugees recognized by international law in Italy. Obviously, all the plurals such as “refugees” or “asylum seekers” were investigated.

As for the sources, the newspapers were paired for convenience of analysis, in two groups, depending on their alignment and on their belonging to different financiers: *La Repubblica* together with *Il Corriere della Sera*, because they share the same liberal political stance, and *Il Messaggero* together with *Il Resto del Carlino* because they share similar conservative/centralist political standpoints, plus they both belong to holding companies. Additionally, the analysis section will address the first group as “liberal-leaning outlets” and the second group as “centralist-conservative leaning outlets”. These four newspapers were chosen due to their similarities such as the common use of Italian language², their intuitive online format, their daily published version, and their wide circulation. Moreover, the variety of their political standpoints and their affiliation to business and media groups, provide a wider and more interesting scenario in terms of refugee framing.

Outlining each newspaper according to the latest data³, *Il Corriere della Sera* has the widest circulation in Italy, consisting of 288.830 copies. Together with *Il Messaggero* and *Il Resto del Carlino*, is one of the oldest Italian daily newspaper established in Milan, dating back to 1876. As for its foundation, *Il Corriere* belongs to RCS MediaGroup S.p.A. which is one of the major international multimedia publishing groups (retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2FFNp35>) of Italy and Spain, linked to leading brands and numerous daily and periodical publishing. Further, the group is also quoted on the Italian Stock Exchange with a turnover generated for more than 30% by foreign operations (retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2FFNp35>). Besides, as already pointed, *Il Corriere della Sera* share a liberal political alignment (retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2r3dTl0>).

After *Il Corriere*, *La Repubblica* is the second daily Italian newspaper, with a circulation of 224.004 copies (retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2OYZsYJ>). The newspaper was founded in 1976 in Rome by GEDI Gruppo Editoriale, which is one of Italy’s leading publishing groups in press, radio, advertising and digital. As for the founder of *Il Corriere*, GEDI is listed on the Milan Stock Exchange and it publishes 3 national daily journals, 13 local

² All translations of paraphrased or quoted expressions, were transposed into English by the author of this thesis.

³ Data were retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2OYZsYJ>. Specifically, those data are updated to the last June 2018 and they refer to paper and digital circulation.

daily journals, and many weekly journals and magazines. Further, the group owns three national radio stations and a few TV channels (retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2Qi7mB6>). Overall, La Repubblica is considered a liberal newspaper (retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2r3dTl0>)

Il Messaggero has a circulation of 100.180 copies (retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2OYZsYJ>), being the 7th daily newspaper per circulation. It was founded in 1878 in Rome and is linked to Caltagirone Editore S.p.A, which releases the press of 6 national and 32 local daily newspaper. This holding company has interests in real estate, finance and publishing, and its president, Francesco Gaetano Caltagirone, is one of the richest Italian entrepreneurs (<https://bit.ly/2zmIkHo>). The political standpoint of Il Messaggero is centrism.

Il Resto del Carlino's circulation is 95.257 and was founded in 1885 in Bologna. Il Resto del Carlino is linked with Il Quotidiano Nazionale (or QN), a publishing media group that controls other two historical newspapers such as La Nazione and Il Giorno. This media group belongs to Monrifgroup-Poligrafici Editoriale (retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2KyrAl3>) which is the fifth Italian publishing group operating also in advertising, new media, hospitality and printing. The group deals with 6 national newspaper and 2 magazines. As for the business group of Il Messaggero, the holding company behind Il Resto del Carlino, has wealthy entrepreneurial roots and many investors (retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2KyrAl3>).

| Newspaper | Foundation | Circulation | Ownership | Political alignment |
|-------------------------------|-------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| <i>La Repubblica</i> | 1976 | 288.830 | GEDI Gruppo Editoriale | Liberal |
| <i>Il Corriere della Sera</i> | 1876 | 224.004 | RCS MediaGroupS.p.A. | Liberal |
| <i>Il Messaggero</i> | 1878 | 100.180 | Caltagirone Editore S.p.A | Centralist |
| <i>Il Resto del Carlino</i> | 1885 | 95.257 | Monrifgroup-Poligrafici Editoriale | Conservative |

Figure 2 The four major newspapers, sources of the analysis, divided per general features

Assessing the time framework of data collecting, as already mention before, the analysis is framed into two different periods: the period before and after the last general Italian election, held on the 4th of March 2018. The timeframes selected for the data collection include the days between 17th February-3rd March and the days between 5th-19th March 2018, specifically two weeks before and two weeks after the election date. The main reason to choose this timeframe to be the “specific periods of time relating to important discursive events” (Sriwimon 2017: 138) which relies on the fact that two weeks nearby an election day is very intense in terms of publishing. Indeed, two weeks before the voting day, media usually predict whose candidate or party holds a clear lead in the polls, and two weeks after the discussion is still passionate due to the aftermath of the electorate campaign.

Describing the process of analysis, the main method of this research is framing analysis. According to Van Gorp (2010) the advantage of framing analysis in media is its relevance to news construction and to audience reception. Indeed, frame analysis explains the choices and interpretations of journalists when framing a news, and consequently helps understanding the audience interpretations of issues and threats (Van Gorp 2010). As specified by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000), frame analysis can be conducted either in an inductive or deductive way. As for the inductive approaches, according to Entman (1991), Esser and D’Angelo (2003), those methods focus on language analysis and require an in-depth interpretation of text and context. This approach operates with a qualitative coding of texts, using computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software such as CAQDAS, MAXQDA or ATLAS.ti, to assist with the coding. As for the deductive approaches, they rely on pre-assessed framing categories, when analyzing the news articles. In fact, following this method, the researcher operates a content analysis and assesses the frequency of a certain frame and the topics related to it. One of the main examples of deductive framing analysis was presented by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) who analyzed 2601 news articles and 1522 television news, discovering the prevalence of five news frames, already identified in previous studies on framing effects: “conflict”, “morality”, “human interest”, “attribution of responsibility” and “economic consequences”. In their study, the two academics measure the frequency of each framing with questions and coding. Another example on how to conduct a deductive framing

analysis, is provided by Snow et al. (1988), who identified four frames, researching on religious and peace movements: “bridging”, “amplification”, “extension and transformation”. Furthermore, a similar case found in the literature review of this study, is the one conducted by Bruno (2016) who, applying frame analysis of news articles referred to refugees, recognized three main frames: “landing emergency”, “crime” and “cultural-religious dimension”. What is remarkable about this study is its own innovative set of frames, built by the researcher on prior studies and adjusted to the Italian case.

In order to estimate the main frames for the analysis of this research on refugee news, following Matthes and Kohring (2008) frames are interpreted as “clusters of frame elements”. Indeed, Matthes and Kohring presented an alternative procedure to all the previous methods of content analysis of media frames, such as the hermeneutic approach, the linguistic approach, the manual holistic approach, the computer assisted approach and the deductive approach. Following their method, the academics claim that we comprehend a frame as a certain “pattern” in each text, which is composed by other elements such as topics or actors. Therefore, they suggest splitting up the frame in their separate topics and to code them in a content analysis. Thus, the results of their analysis evaluating the framing of biotechnology in *The New York Times*, revealed among the frames: “problem definition”, “casual attribution”, “moral evaluation” and “treatment” and among the topics linked to those, “research”, “business”, “health” and “moral”.

The analysis approach of this research applies on some of the beforehand mentioned methodologies, presenting an original and adapted set of frames linked to broader topics coded among the data sample unit (Semetko et. al. 2000). These predefined frames are introduced and well explained in the next chapter devoted to framing analysis. All data sample are coded manually, without any data-analysis software, inserted in an excel graph where they are aligned to a certain frame of the set and divided between pre-election and post-election period. Coding each news article, each of the frame are assessed in terms of keywords, themes, metaphor etc. (Touri 2014). Indeed, Frames should evoke an underling message to the audience through “reasoning devices” such as lexical choices, actors, images and symbols (Gamson 1995). Moreover, according to Reese et al. (2001), it is crucial to narrow the number of frames in order to avoid complexity and to improve the reliability of the coding itself therefore, this study will consider only three frames.

4 REFUGEE NEWS ANALYSIS

By analyzing the refugee news of the four allocated Italian press, this section aims to compare how data are determined based on research in two specific timeframes per newspapers. The analysis points out the numbers and percentages of articles dealing with the issue and the shift of those data during the time. In the light of the framing analysis of the Italian press, this chapter drives wider conclusion on how refugees are framed in liberal and centralist-conservative leaning outlets, while selecting three frames: violence, racism, and integration and analyzing them in the pre- and post-election scenario.

4.1 FRAMING REFUGEE: DISPLAYING DATA

This study examines articles collected from the four designated newspapers, *La Repubblica* and *Il Corriere della Sera* (liberal-leaning outlets), *Il Resto del Carlino* and *Il Messaggero* (centralist-conservative leaning outlets) in their available online version: <https://www.corriere.it/>, <https://www.repubblica.it/>, <https://www.ilmessaggero.it/> and <https://www.ilrestodelcarlino.it/>. The four websites come up with diverse interface and layout as well as a diverse “search” section. For instance, *La Repubblica* allows a more in-depth consult due to its advance research tools such as timeframe, sections and author of the article whereas the other sites cannot restrict by data range or sort by relevance. Hence, exploring *Il Messaggero*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *Il Resto del Carlino* require extensive time. Besides, *Il Resto del Carlino* among the four journals is the only one available without any restriction of read articles on payment, whereas the other three websites require a 0,50-1,00 €/weekly fee.

As already clarified in the previous chapters, the articles selected for analysis are refugee news, precisely the ones containing terms such as refugee and asylum seeker.

To specify, the data did not cover the newspaper supplements, the letters to the editor, international news, or any news referring to events occurred in other countries. Besides, the newspapers’ audiovisual material and communication in social media were not inspected in this study. Finally, the analysis didn’t contemplate articles coming from different newspapers and featuring the same news without any variation or any additional figure.

As displayed by the table and chart below, the result of the inquiry dwells on 91 articles, 53 sorted by pre-election and 38 sorted by post-election range. Hence, the

predicted decrease of refugee news during the post-election time-frame, is a first remarkable observation.

| Newspaper | Pre-election | Post-election |
|-------------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|
| <i>La Repubblica</i> | 15 | 11 |
| <i>Il Corriere della Sera</i> | 11 | 8 |
| <i>Il Messaggero</i> | 17 | 14 |
| <i>Il Resto del Carlino</i> | 10 | 5 |
| Total (percentage) | 53 (58.2%) | 38 (41.7%) |

Figure 3 Numbers and percentages calculated on a sample of 91 refugee news released by each newspaper in the two periods

4.2 FRAMING REFUGEE BEFORE THE ELECTORATE CYCLE

The analysis has been divided in two different level, relying upon the two different timeframes (pre-election and post-election scenario) and considering the two distinct newspapers standpoints (liberal and centralist-conservative) that frame refugees.

In this study, refugee framing has been analyzed due to a more in-depth inquiry of some of the main frame linked to the issue and selected by the author: *violence*, *racism*, and *integration*. The necessity of restricting the analysis upon three main frames derives from the general complexity of refugee discourse. Indeed, this subject is often framed in its political, cultural, social and linguistic dimension, thus it would be ineffective for this work not to narrow the topics into their main frames. Moreover, as already specified in the methodology section, it is relevant to restrict the number of frames in order to obtain a more reliable coding (Reese et al. 2001).

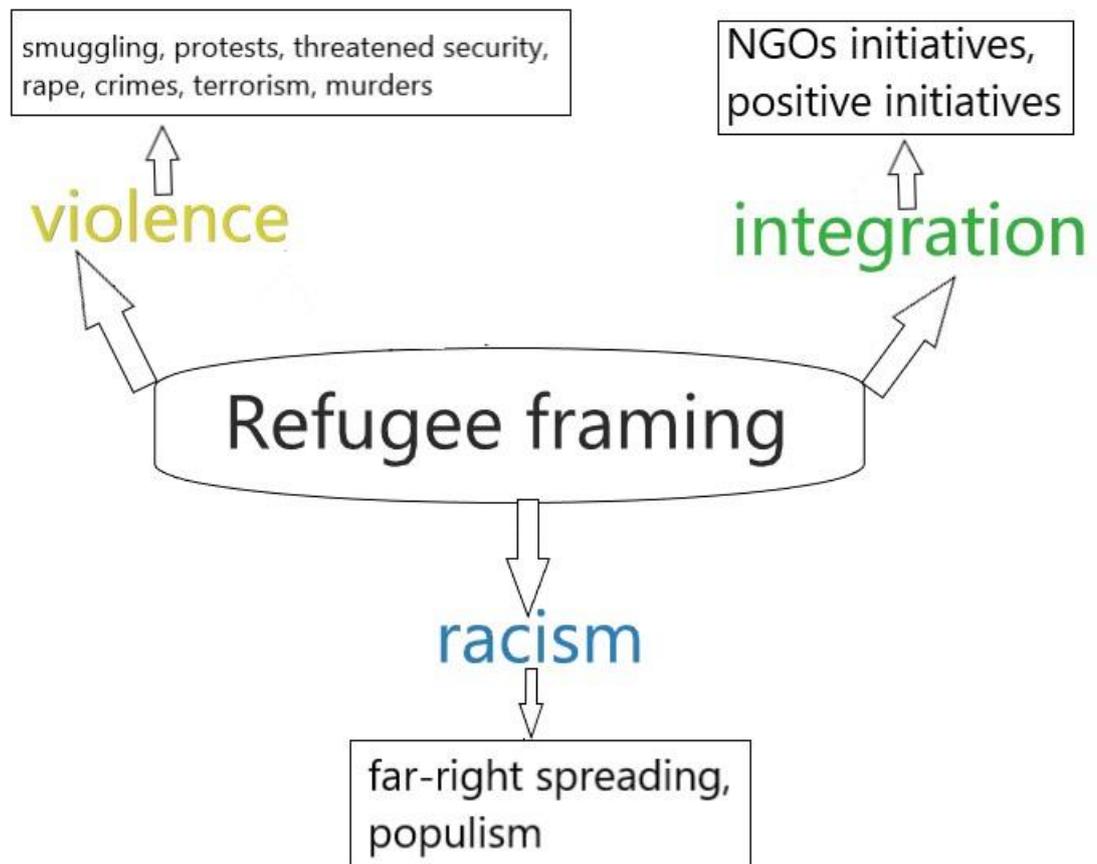


Figure 4 Main frames linked to their main topics/author selected by the author

Therefore, violence, racism and integration were selected as main frames since they are acknowledged as “clusters of frame elements” (Matthes and Kohring 2008) by the author and they are common for each newspaper. Indeed, violence, racism and integration cover a wide range of broader migration topics and actors such as far-right parties spreading, populism, protests, smuggling, crime, threatened security, rape, terrorism and NGOs initiatives.

As for the remaining articles that do not fit in any of the three main frames, but still engage with refugee and asylum seekers, they fall into the category of “unclear framing”, since they do not frame refugees in any positive or negative way. Even though this is beyond the scope of this study, the other articles were divided into “negative” or

“positive” depending on the way they frame the news, either with adverse or favorable insights.

| Negative framing | Positive framing | Unclear framing |
|------------------|------------------|-----------------|
| 39 | 24 | 28 |

Figure 5 Numbers of refugee news divided into negative, positive and unclear, based on their framing insights

The following column chart shows how the frames are presented in the four different journals, revealing different trends and similarities.

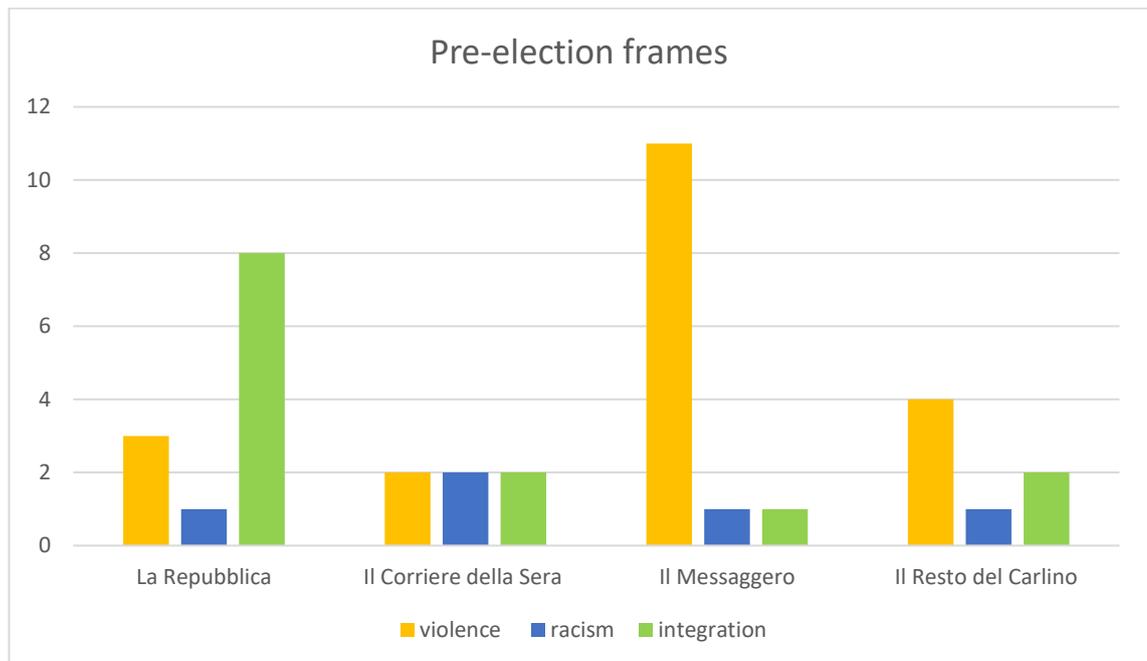


Figure 6 Refugee news divided per each newspaper and according to framing analysis

As represented, the main frame related to refugee is Violence, portrayed in 20 articles, while integration is represented in 13 articles and racism in 5 articles.

Looking more specifically at the three selected frames of this analysis, this study outlines the most relevant facts upon violence (physical and psychological), racism and integration, driving wider conclusion on the liberal and centralist-conservative leaning

press. Moreover, in some of the news, refugee happen to be subject of violence, when they are described as rapists, criminals and murderers. On the contrary, other news report refugee as objects of violence and crime, when they are exploited or manipulated by Italians.

a) **Violence frame**

The liberal-oriented newspapers cover violence referring to aggressions and tensions caused by migrants or by far-right/fascist groups. Specifically, these articles focus on rebellions and uprisings carried out by migrants in order to accomplish rights or justice.

Indeed, La Repubblica presents the case of aggressions against the leader of the neo-Nazi party of Forza Nuova in Palermo caused by his anti-immigrant stance and his former aggression to migrants. In this case, the violence towards migrants is associated with neo-fascist and anti-fascist organizations. The newspaper commented: “The aggression against the provincial secretary of the neo-fascist organization Forza Nuova in Palermo shows that the Italian politics underestimates the resurgence of fascist and racist phenomena, which has to be fought with culture and resistance” (Marceca, R. (2018, February 20), Palermo, aggressione a segretario provinciale di Forza Nuova: legato e pestato. *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2AMwWpf>).

Likewise, Il Corriere della Sera examines another aggression that occurred in a refugee village of Turin against local security forces. The case involves a number of refugees staying at the former Olympic village of Turin, which from 2013 has been occupied by approximately 400 migrants. According to the article, those refugees were asked to abandon the center in order to be relocated in a more appropriate facility, within the framework of an integration project. However, the refugees protested to their relocation and some of them destroyed windows and furniture. Some of them were even arrested for assaulting police officers and project coordinators (Torino, proteste negli uffici del progetto Moi: arrestati tre profughi, (2018, February 27), *Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2PfAycf>). The newspaper features another violent episode occurred in one asylum center of Rome. As covered, about 200 refugees hosted in the community, gathered in the courtyard to protest about the non-payment of their daily pocket money designed for top-up cards. As a rebellion, the migrants locked themselves up and when the police broke in, they calmed down, starting a negotiation with the

security forces and the civilian coordinators. Additionally, among the nearby neighborhood, local residents protested as well, claiming that nobody warned them about the establishment of a refugee center. (Frignani, R. and Iossa, M., Roma, Pocket money mancato: migranti si barricano nel centro d'accoglienza. Blitz di Salvini, (2018, February 22), *Il Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2DoHvBk>).

The centralist-conservative leaning outlet report facts of violence as physical aggression: bloodshed reports among migrants, often connected with the extreme right parties. Moreover, some articles refer to criminality and refugee exploitation.

Among these newspapers, *Il Messaggero* covers many articles linked to violence. The first one covers the murder of the eighteen-year-old Pamela occurred in Macerata in January 2018. The article explains that the assassination modus operandi reminded some tribal crimes widespread in the Nigerian villages. Indeed, the suspected are four Nigerian refugees. Linked to this case, the article brings up the shootout perpetrated against a group of African migrants by Luca Traini, a member of Forza Nuova, as a sort of payback for Pamela's life. An interesting detail is that when he was arrested, the man pulled the Italian flag on his shoulder (Emiliozzi, R. Pamela, la pista che porta ai crimini rituali nigeriani, (2018, February 19), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2Pe78ve>). Another report, again covers Massimiliano Ursini aggression, adding as a new element that before his detention, he kidnapped two Bangladeshi migrants. Additionally, *Il Messaggero* covers the case of a rape committed by a refugee against a homeless woman in the hearth of Rome. As a matter of fact, a 75-year-old German woman was raped during the night by a Senegalese refugee. The man assaulted elderly homeless women in one of the most central area of the capital and he was arrested for his second sexual violence (Allegri, M. and Carta, M. Roma, violentata a Piazza Vittorio: è caccia ad un altro stupratore, (2018, February 19), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2P8XNot>). A further case of violence occurred near Frosinone, in one asylum center. Indeed, in response to a vivid discussion between migrants, one Nigerian man was stabbed and another arrested (Caramadre, V. Cassino, coltellate tra migranti un arresto per tentato omicidio, (2018, February 20), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2z1Hwrt>). A different news relates to crime and law infringement. During the month of February, police investigated a wide range of tourist accommodation, hotel, and private apartments for rent in the city center. According to security forces, hundreds of migrants were living in those facilities

without any permission and violating hygiene and administrative laws. (The police reported 120 unauthorized apartments where migrants were sharing a room in more than 10 Roma, oltre 120 posti letto abusivi per clandestini: blitz all'Esquilino, (2018, February 24), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2SOGE1i>). A similar case of criminal activity took place in Sicily, where the coordinators of a welcoming center in Ragusa stole money designated to migrants to cover private life insurance policies and to purchase a farmhouse. In fact, according to the police: “the directors who succeeded in the office, belonging to the same family, falsified the company books, used invoices for non-existent transactions, and concealed most of the accounting entries”. The criminals were arrested for money laundering since they used millions of euros funds allocated for grocery, clothing and schooling (Ragusa, titolari coop centro di accoglienza intascavano contributi destinati ai migranti, chiesto processo per dieci, (2018, March 1), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2qtLy75>). Finally, *Il Messaggero* covers the same migrant protest happened in Rome, already mentioned by *Il Corriere della Sera*. However, *Il Messaggero* specifies that the refugees didn't receive the whole pocket money which consisted of 2 euros per day. (Roma, 200 immigrati si barricano nel centro di accoglienza: «Non ci caricano la scheda telefonica», (2018, February 22), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2OsDDQT>).

Il Resto del Carlino, covers other two facts of violence regarding refugees. The first episode, is about a brawl which included bottles that occurred in Perugia. According to the article, the fight stumbled near the station among two diverse ethnic group of refugees who faced each other with broken bottles and knives in the middle of the road, until the police showed up arresting them. (Rissa a bottigliate: Perugia, torna la paura alla stazione, (2018, February 20), *Il Resto del Carlino*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2PbDzKI>). The second news is about illegal residence permits provided by Forlì municipality to 26 asylum seekers. The illegal action was carried out by four Italian citizens who were handling their residence permit procedure providing the municipality with fake addresses, in exchange for 100 euro per dossier. The lawbreakers were all caught and reported for their crimes against immigration legislation (Bertaccini, L. Forlì, finto domicilio per immigrati. Denunciati quattro italiani, (2018, February 13), *Il Resto del Carlino*, Retrieved by: <https://bit.ly/2Rzw7FW>). Then, the journal covers the migrant protest which happened at the welcoming center “Villa Aldini” in Bologna on the 1st of March.

The article states that hundreds of refugees hosted in the building locked themselves up as a protest because they were not receiving any pocket money. Moreover, the migrants expressed their disappointment towards the residence permit procedure, which they claim to be unacceptably long (Degliespositi, C. Migranti a Bologna, rivolta e occupazione a Villa Aldini, *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2yR4z8g>).

a) Racism frame

Racism emerge in the liberal-leaning press as a direct consequence of a discriminatory propaganda persisted by the far-right coalition parties with spreading of hatred speech on social media and fake news.

More in depth, racism is outlined by *La Repubblica* in a report compiled by the NGO Amnesty International, which estimates that from 2014, racism and xenophobia have increased in Italy. Indeed, the study claims that from 2014 to nowadays the hostility towards migrants is an increasing phenomenon in Italy, as well as in other countries such as Hungary, United States, the Philippines, Myanmar and Egypt. According to the article, Italian citizens tend to demonize NGOs and their work at sea and believe in the equation “immigration equals insecurity”. As Amnesty states: “there is a wave of hate towards refugees and towards those who help them. Now it is us against them, but also against you who are with them. And that 'you' are the Italians who, alone, with associations or other forms of volunteer work, practice solidarity, welcome and sharing”. Amnesty International also monitored the spread of hate speech tracking the political campaign, finding that the most discriminatory stereotypes are widespread by the three parties of the center-right coalition: Lega Nord (50% of incidents), Fratelli d’Italia (27%) and Forza Italia (27%). As a matter of fact, the organization referred to slogans such as “Italian first” or “ethnic substitutions”, including sharing these sayings on social networks (Cadalano, G. Rapporto Amnesty International: In Italia crescono razzismo e xenofobia, (2018, February 22), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2ySaJVs>).

Il Corriere della Sera features this frame, covering the episode, afterwards reported as fake news, of a refugee who was caught without a ticket on a train headed to Milan. According to this, an Italian man shared on his Facebook profile a story which became

viral, about a refugee who was sitting next to him on the train. In the man's version, the refugee was travelling without a valid ticket, but he was holding a pricey mobile phone, meaning that he could have afforded his journey. However, he wrote on his post that when the African was caught without the valid ticket was totally forgiven just because of his being a refugee. Apparently, the Italian man claimed this episode as totally unacceptable and discriminatory towards all the Italian passengers who legitimately paid for their tickets. The Italian train operator "Trenitalia", in turn, labelled this fact as fake news, ensuring that what happened was just a misunderstanding with the refugee, due to his poor Italian language and that he owned the right ticket. However, the racist post of the man who shared his side of the story in Facebook, received 120.000 likes, 70.000 shares and thousands of racist comments, demonstrating once again that an anti-immigrant stance was widespread in the country (Pennisi, M. La storia del rifugiato sul Frecciarossa senza biglietto è una fake news (i commenti razzisti no), (2018, February 23), *Il Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2ztHJ5P>). Likewise, the second article upon racism covers an episode spread on Facebook. Indeed, an adoptive mother of two African children addressed his post to Matteo Salvini stating that, since he was running for the elections and spreading discriminatory messages, her children were often discriminated, include being called with extremely racist words due to their skin color. The woman's post achieved thousands of views and comments, either racist or supportive. Among those people who shared their opinions, Salvini himself replied: "I will work to provide faster and cheaper procedure to adoptions. Since we both live in Milan, I would be happy to offer you a coffee at the park, while our children play together (Salvi, L. Milano, la mamma adottiva a Salvini: «I miei figli vivono nel terrore». Lui: «Sbaglia, lo dico con affetto», (2018, February 26), *Il Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2zqW7vM>).

Similarly to the liberal-leaning outlets, what arises from the centralist-conservative sources is a presumed accuse of racism towards the national-conservative party Fratelli d'Italia, whose representants are the main characters of a couple of xenophobic episodes.

As for *Il Messaggero*, there is one mention to racism in an article referring to a refugee case in Terracina, near Latina. In fact, the Social-Democratic Party PD together with the environmental NGO "WWF" presented for action a "Sprar project" to host a group of refugees that arrived in Terracina. The case led to a dispute between the PD and

the populist party Fratelli d'Italia since the PD deputies accused the mayor of Terracina, a member of Fratelli d'Italia, of racism when he opposed to this project. In his defense, the mayor claimed to be aware of the migrant emergency, but also appeared to be more concerned about the Italian residents (Specchia, R. Caso migranti a Terracina, il Wwf: «Attuare lo Sprar». Il Pd invita la Lega ad abbassare i toni, (2018, March 2), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2qvWzES>).

Il Resto del Carlino features racism presenting a fact happened in Avio, near Trento. Indeed, the refugee residents in this small province of the northern Italy, reported the habitual behavior of a bus driver, who was not willing to stop the bus whenever black migrants were standing by the legitimate bus stop. The bus driver, Moreno Salvetti, happened to be a member of Fratelli d'Italia and a municipal councillor in the town. After some complaints, he was accused of racism and for sharing discriminatory posts on his social media (Trentino, l'autista del bus lascia a terra i profughi, (2018, March 1), *Il Resto del Carlino*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2yVxAPZ>).

b) Integration frame

As narrated before the election, integration is set out in most of the news from the liberal-leaning journals, reporting impressive and curious initiatives aimed at raising awareness towards refugees. Indeed, the reports address artistic and sportive events arranged by citizens and municipality for refugees (or by refugees themselves) or NGOs actions.

In *La Repubblica*, several articles connect this positive connotation to the refugee framing, covering the atypical story of a 93-year-old lady from Vicenza. The old lady, who dedicated her life to refugee and orphans, decided to fly to Kenya as a volunteer. The story became viral after the lady's niece shared her story on her Facebook account: "My grandmother has always loved life and she has dedicated her life to the family and to the one in needs, she is a great example to me" (Zagaria, C. Nonna vicentina a 93 anni parte volontaria per il Kenya: "Serve un pizzico di incoscienza per vivere", (2018, February 22), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2ztFAHr>). Another positive initiative is brought up by a news mentioning an art exposition in one art gallery of Bologna. Indeed, seven former asylum seekers from Belgrade, Poland, Ukraine and

Serbia presented their pieces upon “the dramatic alteration of memories and identity triggered by forced departures”. The artists, portrayed their past as refugees through installations, photographs and videos. However, since they were not able to count on actual family photos, they reconstructed their memories by adapting and editing photographs recovered in flea markets (Naldi, P. Ricostruirsi un'identità lontano da casa: "I lied in a Visa center", artisti migrant, (2018, March 3), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2DoDjIh>). Further, *La Repubblica* covers the news related to 23 retired head doctors – former cardiologists, dermatologists, radiologists, urologists, and nephrologists – who founded the no-profit organization “Auser” to treat refugees and unemployed people, free of charge. According to the organization, the former doctors are able to provide 17 different specialists in their clinic (Borgomanero, 23 primari in pensione visitano gratis le persone in difficoltà, (2018, February 27), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2JGdUE2>). One more article covers the story of Bouyagui Konate, a young Malian chef in Naples. As his story tells, when the man arrived in Italy as a refugee was welcomed by the NGO “Less Onlus” in Naples and studied to become a cook. Afterwards, he founded his own international cuisine cooperative named “Kikana”. His popularity led him to the international culinary talent show “Masterchef Italia” where Bouyagui, together with other six asylum seekers, had to assemble a typical dish of his homeland. The article points out that food is a powerful universal language, which able to establish a dialogue with a foreign country (Dal Mali a Napoli con la cucina nel sangue: così Bouyagui conquista “Masterchef”, (2018, February 23), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2Qr9LXe>). Another integration initiative is covered by an article, reporting the half marathon run in Barletta on the 25th of February, open to all kind of migrants and entitled to Pietro Mennea, who was a worldwide famous Italian sprinter and politician (Guerra, L. Barletta, la mezza maratona nel segno di Pietro Mennea, (2018, February 25), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2AO1G9v>). Furthermore, there is the story of Mustafa, a refugee native of Marrakech and unemployed, who grows vegetable and flower patches, on a sidewalk in Naples. Mustafa doesn't sell his products, as he gives them away to acquaintances and friends and is known and appreciated by the whole neighborhood (Cozzi, T. Mustafa, agricoltore in via Marina: “Il mio orto urbano in mezzo al caos”, (2018, February 24), Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2D8167U>). Another article informs about an NGO humanitarian action in Rome. Indeed, the international non-

governmental refugee organization UNHCR coordinated on the 27th of February the acceptance of 114 refugees arriving from Libya. Those refugees were then allocated by several NGOs and Catholic organizations, who provided the migrants with basic commodities, groceries and clothing (Ziniti, A. Profughi, dal Corno d'Africa a Roma corridoio umanitario per 114 persone, (2018, February 27), *La Repubblica*, <https://bit.ly/2qs9pnG>). A similar fact was covered in the article from the 25th of February, portraying the initiative carried out by UNICEF in Bari municipality. The fact involves 50 kids born in Italy to refugees originally from Albania, China, Peru, Senegal, Morocco, Tunisia and Somalia who were conferred Italian honorary citizenship, and enjoying all the privileges with it. The local bishop, who attended the ceremony, claimed that such initiatives are crucial to acquire the migrant integration within the community (Cittadinanza onoraria italiana per 50 figli di immigrati, così Acquaviva supera la "lacuna Ius soli", (2018, February 25), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2OtP8Ym>).

Digging in *Il Corriere della Sera*, integration is covered in two articles. The first one reports that hundreds of asylum seekers voluntarily worked all day to snowplow the sidewalks of schools, gardens and bus stops in Turin. They started before dawn and assured that the cold was severe but was also emotional since was the first time for many of them to see the snow. Indeed, on the 1st of March, Turin was covered with a couple of centimeters of snow, which was enough to trigger the municipality's snow plan. Hence, the initiative of a group of refugees originally from Senegal, Gambia, Nigeria and Mali, hosted by the "Ariel Island organization", which was crucial to clean up the immobilized city (Coccorese, P. A Torino i rifugiati s'improvvisano spazzaneve: così ripuliamo la città, (2018, March 2), *Il Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2SLSU2C>). Another message of integration was encouraged by the well-known Italian footballer Mario Balotelli, who visited the "Pampuri" refugee center in Brescia. The footballer spontaneously agreed on having dinner, taking photos with refugees, and listening to their stories. He also posted some pictures from the dinner on his Instagram account, stating that "sport wins against all discrimination" (Brescia, Balotelli cena con i profughi al centro Pampuri: «Lo sport vince contro ogni discriminazione», (2018, February 26), *Il Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2E3Bp9V>).

As for the centralist-conservative leaning outlets, they display far less articles regarding integration, but are still captivating.

Il Messaggero presents integration in one article from the 24th of February, referring to a Syrian pharmacist living in Rieti. Zaid Ameen fled Syria in 2013 and was hosted as asylum seeker in Rieti, under the “Sprar project”. The refugee has two degrees in medicine and radiology and crossed many countries before disembarking in the Sicilian island of Lampedusa, together with other 455 migrants. His asylum application was rejected by Germany, so there is he stayed in Italy where he met Giovanna Manca, owner of a pharmacy in Rieti, who being touched by his story, provided him with an internship and afterwards an employment contract (Melone, D. Rieti, il farmacista siriano fuggito dalla guerra che ha trovato lavoro in una farmacia della città, (2018, February 24), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2F76oU9>).

Il Resto del Carlino covers a project of integration involving 15 migrants in Ferrara who voluntarily gardened some public green areas of the city. The project coordinated by the organization “Asp” and “Your Ferrara”, engaged refugees from Ghana and Nigeria who tutored by the organizations, cleaned for one month the green areas surrounding the old town and the city center (Migranti giardinieri al lavoro nelle aree Verdi, (2018, February 23), *Il Resto del Carlino*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2F5VpKB>). The second article refers to a singing initiative by Pippo Pollina an Italian singer, mostly famous in Switzerland and Germany. The songwriter wrote a song upon the refugee crisis after his meeting with a Syrian couple. The song addresses the journey of this couple but apply also to all migrants who are forced to flee their homes and risk their lives in the sea (Pippo Pollina: cantare i rifugiati, duetto fra sacro e profano, (2018, March 3), *Il Resto del Carlino*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2QlzoIG>).

4.3 FRAMING REFUGEE AFTER THE ELECTORATE CYCLE

As described before, the second level of analysis involves articles collected in the post-election period. Also previously stated, during the second period, refugee news dropped by 16.5%.

Digging deeper in each newspaper and looking at the discourses related to refugee, this second-level analysis proceeded likewise the first-level one. Thus, the following column chart represents the trend of violence, racism and integration, portrayed after the elections by each newspaper, giving a broad idea of the two political standpoints.

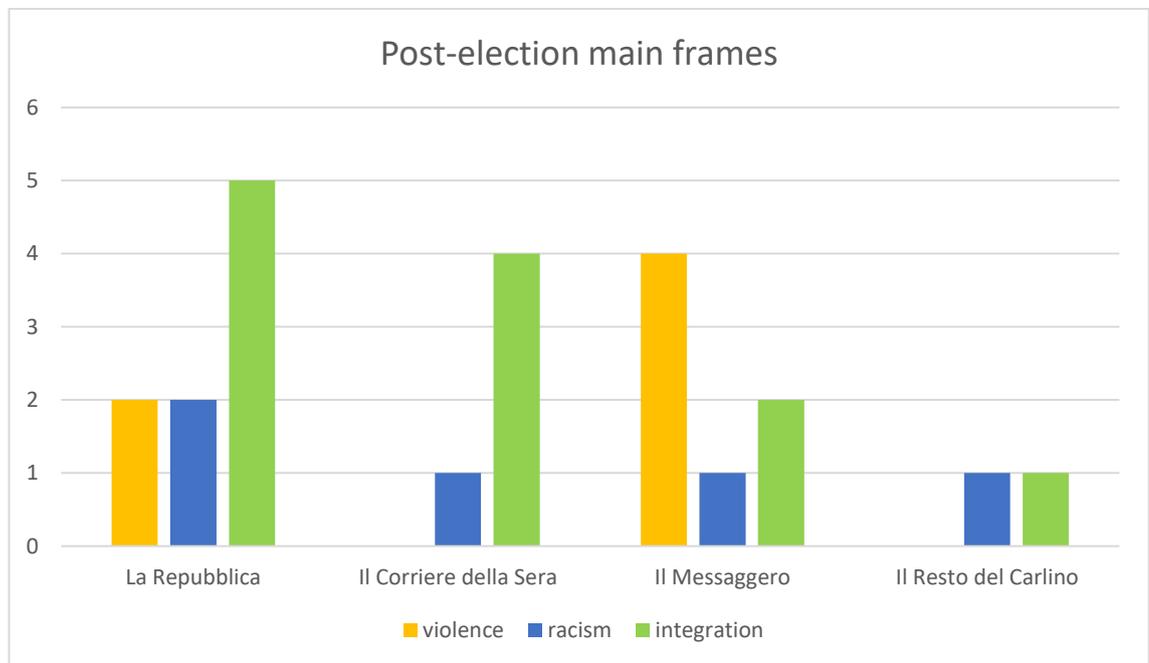


Figure 7 Refugee news divided per each newspaper and according to framing analysis

As showed, the main frame of the post-election scenario related to refugee is integration. Indeed, integration is discussed in 11 articles, whereas violence and racism are respectively narrated in 7 and 5 articles.

a) Violence frame

In the post-election period, violence is not as widespread in liberal-leaning outlets. In fact, there were few articles related to migrant murders and protests.

Basing on the news articles retrieved from La Repubblica, violence is covered in two articles. The first, reports the protest march of the Senegalese community of Florence against the murder of Idy Diene, a Senegalese hawker, killed by an Italian pensioner on the election day. During the protest, hundreds of Senegalese blocked the bridge where the tragedy occurred and then headed to the police headquarters to ask for clarification on the death of their compatriot. Along their way through the city center, they destroyed the anti-terror concrete barriers, sowing panic among tourists and citizens. Afterwards, they argued with the welfare councilor of Florence and their imam Izzedine Elzir. The Senegalese community representant expressed his sorrow for the uprisings justifying his fellows for their panic after the murder. The Senegalese community believed that this murder had racist purposes and it is not a case if it occurred the same day of the election (Spara e uccide passante a Firenze. La rabbia dei senegalesi: divelte fioriere, paura in centro, (2018, March 5), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2QndIw2>). Further, the second article selected for this newspaper features another murder against a migrant occurred in Brindisi. According to the article, a young Nigerian man was found dead after a dispute with his girlfriend. The woman was originally from Nigeria and she stabbed the man during the night in their apartment (Brindisi, indagata la compagna del migrante 24enne ucciso in casa: lo avrebbe accoltellato, (2018, March 13), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2SLAtet>).

As for the centralist-conservative leaning sources, they address the highest number of articles linked to the matter. The main issues involve acts of sexual assaults or kidnapping, as well as psychological violence such as terrorism and threats made against refugee supporters. Almost all the facts reported from both right and left-leaning press depict a negative picture of refugees associating them with cruelty and disorder.

More in depth, Il Messaggero features the highest number of articles in regards to violence. The first one reports a case of kidnapping perpetrated by a Nigerian man, near Florence. The man was hosted in a welcoming center as an asylum seeker and kidnapped a two-year-old girl as a retaliation against some compatriots who reported him for sexual

harassment. As payback, the man took the baby away from the host center and brought her on the riverbed of the Sieve river, where he threatened to kill her by throwing her into the water. Finally, after a scuffle with the police he was arrested (Firenze, rapisce bimba di 2 anni e minaccia di gettarla nel fiume, (2018, March 18), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2IBhhee>). Another article covers the same episode found in La Repubblica regarding the Senegalese murder and protest. However, *Il Messaggero* shows significant differences in the description. Indeed, the author states that the Senegalese protesting were 300, while according to La Repubblica they were circa 100. Additionally, *Il Messaggero* underlines that the Senegalese together with some extremist from the left coalitions, shoved the mayor and spit on him, forcing him to leave the demonstration (Firenze, tensione al sit-in per il senegalese ucciso: spinte e sputi al sindaco Nardella, (2018, March 6), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2DmoRdz>). Further, an article depicts intimidation against Marco Omizzolo, a sociologist from Latina, who denounced the migrants' illegal employment and exploitation in southern Italy. The man condemned for years the harassment of migrants exploited in the tomato fields or the working conditions of the Sikh Indians community, such as organizing strikes and protests. However, due to his fight against migrants' injustice, he was threatened and his car was damaged on the night of the 8th of March. One NGO commented: "we feel close to Marco, who carries on his battle against harassment and mafias in a place where many others prefer to turn their backs" (Latina: intimidazione al sociologo che denuncia il caporalato nell'Agro pontino, (2018, March 10), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2ANII2Y>). The fourth article about violence concerns a case of alleged terrorism. A 41-year-old Tunisian citizen, already residing in Monza, was expelled from the national territory for reasons of state security. The foreigner, already expelled in 2015, was identified while trying to return to Italy by boat and was blocked in Sicily. He was first arrested for theft, drug smuggling and for his contacts with jihadists in Tunisia, then was expelled. Indeed, from the beginning of 2015, 263 refugees were expelled because of religious extremism and for contacts with fellow terrorists abroad (Monza, terrorismo, espulso tunisino: «Era pronto a gesto eclatante», (2018, March 6), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2Doyj02>).

Il Resto del Carlino represents violence in one article about a sexual harassment. The journal depicts a rape committed towards an underage girl in Ascoli by two Nigerian

young men. According to the facts, the Nigerian men caught the 13-year-old at the bus stop and forced her to follow them in a park nearby where they committed the crime (Ercoli, P. Ascoli, minorenne violentata, sarà sentita da giudice e pm, (2018, March 16), *Il Resto del Carlino*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2RyDqh2>).

b) Racism frame

Racism is covered in more article than before the election. As for the liberal-leaning newspapers, cases of discrimination, vandalism and unfairness against refugees are well illustrated in both La Repubblica and Il Corriere della Sera.

As for La Repubblica, it relates to racism in two articles. The first one outlines the case of discrimination towards the refugee community of Novara. Indeed, the municipality had first approved and after the next day denied a swimming course for refugees held in the local swimming pool. The aim of the course was teaching basic swimming to refugees since some had drowned in the Ticino River. The sport councilor, related to Lega Nord, claimed that the swimming center could not provide any extra courses, but migrants are welcomed to visit the pool. Additionally, he added “I am against the initiatives dedicated only to migrants, as even the Italians drown”. The regional minister for equality commented that Novara is showing a negative model of tolerance, especially during the anti-racist week of 19th-25th of March (Giacosa, M. Novara, piscina comunale negata al corso per i rifugiati. La Regione avvia procedimento per discriminazione, (2018, March 17), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2zubcga>). The second article outlines a case of racism and vandalism happened in a state natural reserve near Palermo. An unknown individual wrote rude anti-refugee slogans and draw some swastikas on the rocks. Some visitors took pictures of the act of vandalism and posted it on social media where they went viral (Brunetto, C. Palermo, riserva di Capo Gallo imbrattata con scritte razziste e svastiche, (2018, March 19), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2RBlvGv>).

Il Corriere della Sera features racism in one article related to the same case of the bus driver who left the migrants at the bus stop in Trento, which was featured by Il Resto del Carlino during the pre-election period. However, Il Corriere reveals some more details about the involvement of Lega Nord in the matter. Indeed, the far-right party took the bus driver side, claiming that firing him would improve the anti-immigration stance among

the citizens. Further, Lega Nord, in its defense, underlines: “In recent times, the profession of bus driver has become risky in itself and for the passengers, as showed by some recent assaults and intimidations” (Selaunich, G. Lascia a piedi i profughi: autista di bus rischia il licenziamento, ma la Lega lo difende, (2018, March 11), Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2OskIpk>).

The centralist-conservative outlets display racism as discontent among citizens who disagree on refugee centers nearby their houses and hotel owners who oppose to host refugees in their tourist accommodations.

Il Messaggero covers racism in one article whereas the mayor of Gallarate, near Varese, who was involved in a case of some refugees evicted from a host center. As a matter of fact, the controversy started when some migrants whose asylum application was rejected in Varese, had to move to another center in Milano but not all of them were accepted, for unclear reasons. Thus, mayor Andrea Cassani settled to transfer them anyway to Milan, paying for the train tickets himself, even if any host center would have accepted them. The mayor decision sowed discontent among Milan municipality residents, who declared the behavior unacceptable and that there would be consequences (Il sindaco di Gallarate paga il treno ai migranti per mandarli via: scoppia la bufera, (2018, March 12), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2ANOWje>).

Il Resto del Carlino presents one case related to racism and refugees that occurred in Rimini. A hotel manager who provided his accommodation to host refugees, was threatened by other hotel owner nearby who didn't approve this pro-migrant stance and were afraid to lose clients. Among the hotels of Rimini, some proposed a strike until all migrants are removed from the neighboring tourist accommodations (Gradara, M. Rimini, sicurezza e immigrazione. “Se ospiti i profughi ti boicottiamo”, (2018, March 19), *Il Resto del Carlino*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2Pe9Ocg>).

c) Integration frame

Integration is the most discussed theme of the liberal-oriented journals in the second timeframe. La Repubblica and Il Corriere link the theme with NGOs initiatives and rescues at the sea. Additionally, other municipality actions allocate tutors to

unaccompanied minors or coordinated some Italian language course or music projects for refugees.

The first article from La Repubblica refers again to the Senegalese murdered in Florence, but this time it tells about a peace march organized in the city center. In fact, the demonstration is described as non-partisan and apolitical, as a great event of peace and brotherhood, which included families and children and all citizens, civil society organizations, trade unions, religious organizations of Florence were invited to remember the victim Idy Diene. Moreover, a similar event was held in 2011 after the death of another Senegalese man killed in Florence by an extreme right-wing sympathizer (Omicidio Diene, sabato la manifestazione a Firenze, (2018, March 9), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2PJvU5U/>). Indeed, a further article published after the demonstration, confirmed that about 200 people, including Italians, foreigners and the Senegalese Immigrant Union, took part in the parade, which was bloodless and smooth (Senegalese ucciso, duecento persone in piazza a Genova, (2018, March 10), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2qvZayw>). The third article addresses to the letter written by the Turin archbishop aimed at encouraging more tolerance towards refugees and Roma community living in the area. According to the archbishop: “It would be a wrong approach to judge refugees as the worst case scenario in our cities, forgetting other problematic situations such as corruption, drug dealing, poverty, indifference to those in needs”. Indeed, he believes that the urban decline and the illegality are caused not only by migrants and Roma communities, but also by Italian citizens (Di Blasi, E. Torino, il vescovo Nosiglia: I nomadi non sono il peggio della città, (2018, March 18), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2yS1qVo>). Another article refers to a Spanish NGO who saved in the Sicilian channel a drowning raft with 4 migrants. The NGO “Proactiva Open Arms” described in their Twitter account the fact as “a story of love and true heroes”. Indeed, the 3 migrants were fleeing from Libya with 200 liters of gasoline, to provide some medical aid to their younger brother Allah affected by leukemia. According to the NGO, Europe was responsible for the bloodshed in Libya which is the reason why a sick child must escape to the sea to have a chance to survive (Ruta, G. Palermo, fuga in gommone per curare il fratello malato: tre migranti salvati da una Ong, (2018, March 10), *La Repubblica*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2JlyxiE>).

Furthermore, according to the last article, the situation in Genova was becoming critical due to an increasing poverty and a political indifference, arising especially from the left parties. According to La Repubblica's article, some citizens are as poor as refugees and share the same destiny of alienation and misery. The political institutions, especially the left-wing parties, were indifferent, whereas the voluntary service and NGOs were carrying out some integration initiatives aimed at overcoming anti-immigration stance, fears, anti-Europeanism and xenophobia in the region (Borzani, L. Nuove povertà: politica indifferente e istituzioni che si affidano al volontariato, (2018, March 17), Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2Rw2yF6>).

Il Corriere della Sera features integration and migration in five articles as well as the other liberal newspaper. The first one outlines the integration procedure of 23 unaccompanied minors who were relocated in families, acceptance centers or with tutors in Brescia. From 2017, the Lombardian region relocated circa 94 unaccompanied minors originally from Africa and Albania. According to the procedures, tutors, free of charge, were required to guide the minors, promote their psycho-physical wellbeing, monitor their integration and education, and to avoid that some of them escape to France or Germany (Golia, L. Bimbi profughi, pronti 23 tutori: già accolti 94 minori senza famiglia, (2018, March 10), *Il Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2yTdaqN>). The second article refers to a pleasant initiative promoted by some high schoolers of Monza. In fact, some students of the linguistic institute "Mose Bianchi" organized Italian language courses for 50 African refugees within the framework of an integration and migration project. The students, coordinated by their teachers, arranged the classes and a final school trip for the asylum seekers who were amused by the hospitality (Rosa, R. Studenti di Monza fanno i prof. Lezioni d'italiano ai profughi africani, (2018, March 13), *Il Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2PaRCjz>). One more article about integration tells about a music project developed by the percussionist and composer Luigi Morleo, in Bari. The musician produced a music album called "Migrants 2.0", where the African voices of refugees combine with Italian musicians. Obviously, the project intended to build integration through the music dialogue, combining traditional melodies from Burkina Faso to Nigeria, retracing the memories and journeys of those migrants in five tracks (Versienti, F. Il discografo: «Migranti 2.0», il nuovo progetto di Luigi Morleo, (2018, March 13), *Il Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2yTzpx0>). The last article

of the newspaper involves again the Spanish NGO “Proactiva Open Arms” involved in the rescue mission of 200 migrants who fled from Libya. While heading to north, the Spanish boat was attacked by Libyan patrol boats and was asked to hand back all the women and children. However, the NGO continued its journey and obtained a green light from the Italian interior ministry and coast guard to land in Sicily (Sarzanini, F. Il Viminale: «Può andare a Pozzallo la nave con 200 migranti a bordo», (2018, March 18), *Il Corriere della Sera*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2SLB2VD>).

The centralist-conservative leaning outlets release a message of integration reporting what the Catholic Church expressed in some speech given by the pope or some bishops. Indeed, the Catholic Church did encourage all Christians to accept and integrate among the society refugees and migrants.

More specifically, *Il Messaggero* assesses integration to the refugee discourse in two articles, both related to the Catholic Church and to Pope Francis. The first article summarizes the Pope’s speech at the International Catholic Migration Commission (ICMC). The key points of his discourse were to encourage the reception of migrants and to enforce the refugee agreements. According to the head of Catholic Church: “together we must encourage States to agree on more adequate and effective responses to the challenges posed by migratory phenomena; we can do so on the basis of the fundamental principles of the social doctrine of the Church”. The pope encourages all Christians to offer valid contributions to the matter and all the local Churches to work for people who have been forced to leave their homeland, becoming too often victims of deception, violence and abuse of all kinds (Giansoldati, F. Papa Francesco traccia la road map per i migranti: «Gli Stati li accolgano rispettando gli accordi», (2018, March 8), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2JFNHW4>). The second article outlines another speech given by Pope Francis during the 50th anniversary of the Christian community of Sant’Egidio in Rome. The pontiff urged all Christians not to focus all their fears on migrants just because they are different and poorer. On the contrary, people should embrace the differences and walk as a community together with the church towards the integration (Giansoldati, F. Papa Francesco va da Sant’Egidio e bacchetta quei cristiani che non aprono le porte ai migranti, (2018, March 11), *Il Messaggero*, Retrieved from: <https://bit.ly/2Os15QK>).

5 ASSESSING THE REFUGEE FRAMING BEFORE AND AFTER THE ELECTION

From the framing analysis of refugee news released by four major quality Italian newspaper, this study can assess overall findings upon refugee framing, before and after the election.

As initial consideration, the analysis confirms that before the election, refugee news are more salient than after the election. In fact, as predicted by the hypothesis of this study, regardless of the political standpoint of the investigated outlet, the electorate cycle affects the post-elections in terms of decrease in refugee news.

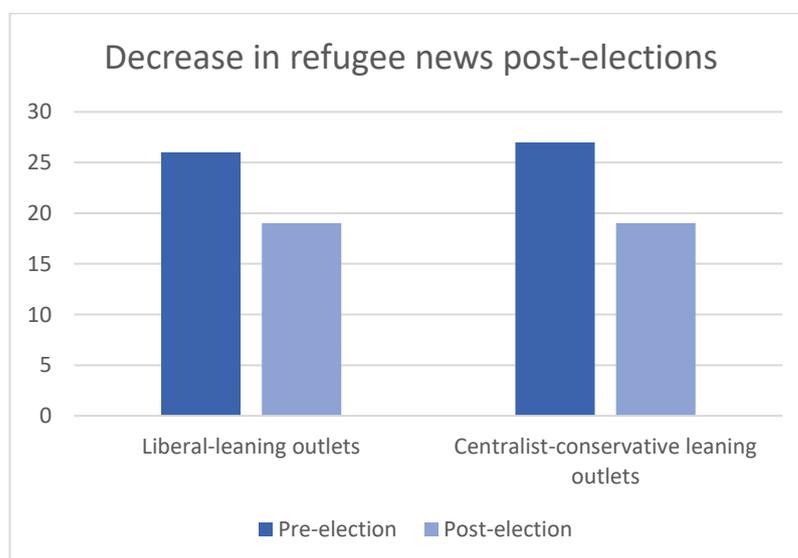


Figure 8 The decrease showed by the comparison between liberal-leaning outlets and centralist-conservative leaning outlets in representing refugees, before and after the election

Moreover, another relevant finding predicted by this study's research puzzle shows that before the election news frame refugee with more negativity. Indeed, comparing trends and similarities of the pre/post-election main frames, most of the news related to refugees in the pre-election scenario depict acts of physical violence, aggression and criminality.

Furthermore, the interdisciplinary approach of the framing analysis of this study allowed a deeper understanding of the media discourse from multiple perspectives and

considering different specific frameworks, including time and linguistic framework aiming at uncovering the major narratives on refugees in the Italian press.

Additionally, the framing analysis approach of this study well represents media narratives like violence, racism and integration, covering a broader spectrum of topics frequently linked with refugee in media (right-wing parties' propaganda, crime, security, terrorism, NGOs actions) showing the overall attitude toward migrants: either acceptance or concern.

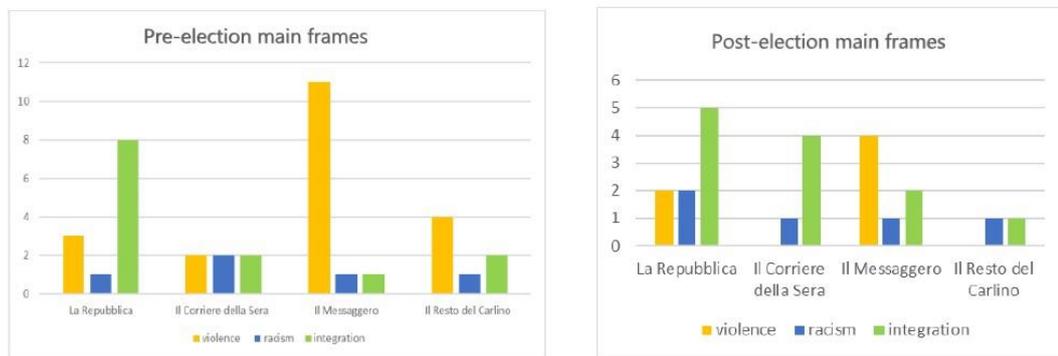


Figure 9 Assessing refugee framing: main frames of pre- and post-election (figures taken from the previous chapter as a recap)

Assessing the refugee framing before the elections, the first main frame acknowledged by this study is **violence**. According to the pre-election scenario, refugees are often framed in terms of aggressions and tensions caused by themselves or by some external attempt to threaten them. Regardless of the political orientation of the newspaper, all the outlets report events of physical and verbal violence, exploitation and criminality. However, in the post-election scenario, the picture is changing: the liberal-leaning outlets relate to just a few cases of violence, whereas the centralist-conservative ones depict acts of sexual harassment, terrorism, cruelty, and disorder.

As for **integration**, both before and after the election represent most news released by the liberal-leaning journals. In this context, refugees are framed with positive implications, emotional stories, and important events, aimed at spreading acceptance and consent

towards them. As for the centralist-conservative leaning outlets, they bring out only few positive news, always related to Catholic doctrine of equality and solidarity.

Evaluating **racism** in refugee news, before and after the election, main events appear as a reaction to far-right propaganda, fake news on social media, and to the overall prejudice against migrants. The most related topic of all the newspaper are extreme-right speeches, xenophobic episodes, discrimination, and vandalism.

To interpret those frames and focus on the general message delivered by the Italian press, the way news frame refugee especially before the election, affect the audience choice about how to interpret facts. Thus, it can be argued that the audience is impressed by refugee news, and that readers are led to believe on negative framing on refugees when news is framed and published within certain narratives. One sentence, one moral judgement, one event, could bias and influence voters or provoke empathy.

This study contributes to provide a shared perspective on the negative framing of refugees in the press before the electorate period. Indeed, especially the political features allow a broader prospective in the research, showing that while newspapers have different strategies in their representations due to their political standpoints, in some important ways, they all contribute to a similar framing of the issue. The electorate cycle appears as a crucial factor in this scenario since, especially before the election day, all political parties running their campaigns, direct on gathering consensus among voters and a “hot topic” such as refugee offers a powerful instrument to gather votes and consensus. As a matter of fact, framing refugees, either in a positive or negative way, can gather general agreement from a more radical/anti-immigration stance, to a more open/pro-immigration position, hence liberal parties or conservative parties instrumentalize refugee frames, to gain popularity, eventually, aiming at gaining votes. Obviously, media well reflects this attitude, since all the Italian major newspapers have a clear political orientation, or they are property of influent holding companies. Once again, regardless of the political alignment of the newspaper, this work suggests that refugees are usually framed as a subject of crime, rather than an object, or they are almost never given speech or a name, they are often depicted in the usual rhetoric of “the-other-as-a-threat”. Even though, there are attempts to spread integration, this analysis shows that refugees are always framed as

a monolithic group, without a clear personality, and never in a singular perspective, causing more distance and less empathy in the audience.

5.1 LIMITATIONS

The main limitations of this study in assessing the refugee framing before and after the election period derives from the main target of just four major newspapers, on its limited two week-framework (before and after the voting day), and obviously on its focus on the Italian case. The necessity of restricting the analysis upon limited sources, time span, and country, is a result of the complexities related to the refugees. Indeed, refugee framing is shaped and analyzed in a multidimensional framework, thus this study reveals only one perspective. These findings and interpretation of framing theory and framing analysis require a further discussion with a view to future governmental law on immigration and broader interpretations and studies. Nevertheless, the existing literature's gap between refugee framing in the press and the electoral campaign indicates that this study can encourage future discussion and other research in one of the multifaceted features involved in the actual refugee crisis.

CONCLUSION

Despite all the limitations already estimated in the previous section, this study discusses how refugee framing is affected by the electorate cycle in terms of salience and negativity in the Italian case. The main frames that refugee framing is interpreted as by this study are violence and racism, since they cover a broader range of topics often related to refugee such as crime, protests, rape, murders, far-right spreading and populism. Another frame acknowledged by this study is integration, which covers topics such as NGOs' initiatives and solidarity. What arises from this research within the electorate cycle is that before the election, Italian press published more news about refugees and they overall depicted negative topics linked to them. There is a distinction in terms of refugee framing in news between liberal and centralist-conservative leaning outlets. As predictable, the liberal-leaning outlets frame integration and solidarity, whereas centralist-conservative leaning outlets release violence and racism as their main frames. However, overall speaking, most frames of the pre-election scenario, regardless the political alignment of the source, are more numerous and violent. Given these findings, this study could argue that Italian newspapers frame refugees with more salience and negativity in the pre-election period, since such a sensitive topic can gather consensus among all voters, especially in Italy where refugee crisis is particularly tangible, media are highly polarized and because of the national financial crisis. As a recommendation, further studies can focus on digging deeper in the correlation between electorate consensus, political agenda and the instrumentalization of refugee narrative since the literature on this topic is not wide-ranging.

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