



The Framing of the EU Visa Liberalization with Ukraine

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Abstract. This article presents a qualitative study aimed at investigating the framing of political discourse associated with the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine. This study seeks to address the framing of the EU visa liberalization process in Ukrainian political discourse published online by several leading high-quality Internet news resources, e.g. 112ua, Censor.Net, or UNIAN. The corpus of the study is comprised of 34 articles that have been analysed from the vantage point of framing methodology developed by Entman (2004) and Dahl (2015). The results of the qualitative investigation reveal that Ukrainian political discourse associated with the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine is framed by means of such frames as the Building, the Divorce, the European Integration, the Game, the Home, the Hostage, and the Journey. These findings are further presented and discussed in the article.

Keywords: framing, political discourse, EU, Ukraine, visa liberalization

1. Introduction

The topic of this article is set against a wide context of political discourse associated with border crossing and visas. The European Commission emphasizes that “The border-free Schengen Area cannot function efficiently without a common visa policy which facilitates the entry of legal visitors into the EU, while strengthening internal security” (The European Commission 2017). According to the European Commission, the EU has a list of visa-exempt countries, whose citizens are exempt from the visa requirement (The European Commission 2017). These countries are listed in Regulation No 539/2001 (*ibid.*). It is inferred from previous research that being listed on the EU White List of visa-exempt countries is considered a desirable privilege (Aydın-Düzgüt 2016). Whilst visa-free travel to the Schengen Area is enjoyed by a set of countries referred to in Regulation No 539/2001, the number of people entering the EU and Schengen

illegally has grown considerably in recent years (Abid et al. 2017). The issue of illegal migration to the EU has attracted a substantial volume of research in linguistics (Abid et al. 2017, Charteris-Black 2006, Sciortino-Colombo 2004). At the same time, the issues of legal border crossing, legal visitors with Schengen visas, and visa liberalization with the EU are less numerous in linguistics, and, in particular, discourse studies (Đurović-Silaški 2012, Jansen 2009, Kostovicova 2014, Özdemir-Ayata 2017).

This article seeks to extend previous research associated with the EU visa liberalization by means of elucidating how the issue of the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine is framed in Ukrainian political discourse. The aim of the study is to identify and examine frames employed in Ukrainian political discourse within the period of time from 17 November 2016 (the official start of the negotiations between the European Commission and the European Parliament concerning visa liberalization for Ukrainian citizens) until 22 May 2017 (the date when the regulations involving visa exemptions for Ukrainian passport holders were published in the Official Journal of the European Union). The corpus of the study is comprised of online articles published by the following Ukrainian Internet news resources: Censor.Net (en.censor.net.ua), 112UA (112.international), and UNIAN (www.unian.info). These high-quality Internet news outlets have been selected for the purposes of the investigation based upon the criteria of Ukraine-wide readership, non-government affiliation, and regular news updates in both English and Ukrainian.

Political discourse associated with visa liberalization has been addressed in research literature in linguistics and political discourse (Aydın-Düzgit 2016, Baysan 2013, Đurović-Silaški 2012, Happ-Bruns 2017, Jansen 2009, Kortenska et al. 2016, Kostovicova 2014, Özdemir-Ayata 2017, Scott 2017, Vieira 2016). Previous studies indicate that the issue of visa liberalization with the EU has dominated political discourse in a number of European non-EU countries, for instance, in Serbia (Đurović-Silaški 2012, Jansen 2009, Kortenska et al. 2016, Kostovicova 2014), Turkey (Aydın-Düzgit 2016, Batalla-Adam 2017, Baysan 2013, Tsarouhas 2018), and Ukraine (Burlyuk-Shapovalova 2017, Chaban et al. 2017, Kleinschnitger-Knodt 2018, Scott 2017, Vieira 2016). In particular, the EU visa liberalization is thought to be “an example of EU conditionality that triggered rapid reforms in the Western Balkans and Serbia” (Kortenska et al. 2016: 9). Visa liberalization with the EU is one of the foci of political discourse in Turkey, where visa-free access is currently seen through the lenses of the refugee crisis associated with Syria (Aydın-Düzgit 2016, Batalla-Adam 2017). Whilst Serbia was granted Schengen visa exemptions by the EU in 2010, Turkey, in contrast, is in the process of a visa liberalization dialogue with the EU in return for the readmission agreement (Aydın-Düzgit 2016). In 2018, Turkish citizens have to obtain visas prior to travelling to the EU. Currently, visa liberalization

negotiations between the EU and Turkey “have reached a stalemate over five outstanding benchmarks contained in its visa liberalization roadmap” (Batalla-Adam 2017) such as the anti-terror laws and the readmission agreement in the wake of the crisis in Syria (Abid et al. 2017).

Just like in Serbia and Turkey, political discourse in Ukraine regards the issue of visa-free travel to the EU as an effort aimed at integration, cooperation, and intensification of its relations with the EU (Happ-Bruns 2017: 97). In contrast to Serbia and Turkey, however, Ukraine’s visa-free dialogue with the EU is marked by a complex background of its statehood building and the search for its identity as a sovereign state (Burlyuk-Shapovalova 2017, Kleinschnitger-Knodd 2018). In this regard, previous research is suggestive of the interrelatedness of the visa-free travel to the EU with other issues, in particular, with Ukraine’s nation-building project that cannot be understood in isolation from the competing (supranational) geopolitical projects of the European Union and Eurasian Union, though. One cannot overlook, for example, the effects of the EU discourse on boundedness, one that frames strong state borders as the *sine qua non* of European integration (Fournier 2017: 24).

Another significant aspect of the strong borders with the EU was that Schengen visa regulations created obstacles for Ukrainian passport holders when they applied for the EU visas (Scott 2017: 34). However, the EU–Ukraine visa dialogue intensified following the ratification of the EU–Ukraine Association Agreement including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) by the European and Ukrainian Parliaments. On 18 December 2015, the European Commission published its positive assessment of Ukraine’s visa liberalization road map, and on 17 November 2016 the EU Council started the negotiations with the European Parliament concerning visa-free travel for the Ukrainian citizens. The negotiations culminated in visa-free travel for Ukrainian biometric passport holders effective from 11 June 2017 (The Official Journal of the European Union, 2017).

Whilst political discourse associated with visa liberalization has been amply elucidated in the cases of Serbia and Turkey (Aydin-Düzgit 2016, Baysan 2013, Đurović–Silaški 2012, Jansen 2009, Kostovicova 2014), there are insufficient studies involving the issue of visa-free movement by Ukrainian citizens to the EU. The present qualitative investigation seeks to address this gap by means of identifying and analysing the framing of the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine. This article is structured as follows: First, an overview of previous studies on the framing of political discourse associated with the EU visa liberalization will be outlined. Second, the present qualitative study will be introduced and discussed. Third, conclusions and implications of the present study will be summarized.

1.1. The framing of political discourse associated with the EU visa liberalization

Prior to proceeding to an overview of previous studies associated with the EU visa liberalization, it seems logical to expand upon the notion of framing. Framing is an important concept in discourse studies, in particular, in political discourse (Boeynaems et al. 2017, Burgers et al. 2016, Kapranov 2016, Snow et al. 1986). Typically, discourse is regarded as a group of statements that i) represent a particular kind of knowledge about a topic and ii) constitute a discursive space in which some statements and depictions have greater value than others (Aydın-Düzgit 2016, Fairclough 1992). Quoting Foucault (1972), Luke (1995: 8) points to the constructing character of discourse that “defines, constructs, and positions human subjects”.

Foucault’s (1972) seminal ideas are reflected in the view of framing that involves “a combination of the cognitive, constructivist, and critical perspectives” (Reese 2007: 149). A cognitive perspective on framing suggests that frames are conceptual construals that elaborate particular aspects of a conceptual domain (Lakoff 1996, 2014). Subsequently, it can be argued that domains include or consist of frames (Kövecses 2017). From the cognitive perspective, frames are a system of categories invoked by words, whose structure is rooted in some motivating cultural context (Fillmore 1975: 124). In other words, frames are mental structures that shape the way we see the world. As a result, they shape the goals we seek, the plans we make, the way we act, and what counts as a good or bad outcome of our actions. In politics, our frames shape our social policies and the institutions we form to carry out the policies (Lakoff 2014: 11–12).

From a constructivist perspective, framing is regarded as an act of communication (Brugman et al. 2017, Nerlich 2010) that is operationalized as *linguo-cognitive* devices for efficiently presenting relatively complex issues to make them accessible to lay audiences (Arrese–Vara-Miguel 2016: 135). In political discourse, framing involves linguistic and conceptual content about the issue under discussion (Burgers et al. 2016). Frames structure discursive situations in understandable format as well as validate some viewpoints whilst discrediting others (Cornelissen et al. 2011, Entman 2004). Framing in political discourse is employed in order to affect people’s perceptions of political issues and people’s endorsement of those issues (Meadows 2007: 2, Thibodeau–Boroditsky 2011). The constructivist view of framing can be argued to converge with a critical discourse perspective on framing, where it is seen as “the processes by which actors influence the interpretations of reality among various audiences” (Fiss–Hirsch 2005: 30). To further illustrate framing as an amalgamation of cognitive, constructivist, and critical perspectives, Reese (2001) posits that frames are “organizing principles that are socially shared and persistent over time, that work symbolically to meaningfully structure the social world” (Reese 2001: 11).

Guided by the afore-mentioned views (Lakoff 2014, Reese 2001), it appears plausible to apply the notion of framing to the issue of visa liberalization. Arguably, the investigation of the discourse referring to the EU visa liberalization provides a perspective on the construction of new policies by the EU as well by the EU candidate countries, such as Serbia and Turkey, and by those countries that aspire to the EU candidate status such as Ukraine. The framing of the EU visa liberalization has been profoundly elucidated (Đurović–Silaški 2012, Finotelli–Sciortino 2013, Kortenska et al. 2016, Özdemir–Ayata 2017). The issue of the EU visa liberalization process with Serbia is investigated by Đurović and Silaški (2012) by means of identifying conceptual construals, in particular, metaphors in the framing of Serbian political discourse associated with the visa-free movement of Serbian citizens. Đurović–Silaški (2012) have identified two metaphoric frames which seem to be pervasive in Serbian political discourse on the issue of the EU visa liberalization. These frames are the Movement and the Journey. Đurović–Silaški (2012) suggest that these frames highlight the construal of Serbia's road towards the EU, where Serbia's process of reaching visa-free travel to the EU is framed as the Journey.

Prior research literature indicates that Serbian public discourse is characterized by a positive framing of the visa-free movement with the EU for the purposes of work and education (Antonijević 2015, Kortenska et al. 2016: 29). In turn, the positive discursive framing of the EU–Serbia visa policies maps onto a growing support for Serbian accession (Kortenska et al. 2016). In Serbia, visa liberalization with the EU signifies an essential measure “to keep the ‘wheels’ of European integration going ...as the first and clear step towards European integration as well as the signal that confirms Serbia's European future” (Kostovicova 2014: 74). The framing of visa-free movement between Serbia and the EU is seen in previous research as a series of steps towards visa liberalization (Antonijević 2015). One of the important steps involves the adoption of key legal acts, e.g. Gender Equality Law and Law on the Prohibition of Discrimination as the preconditions to award Serbia the non-visa regime to the Schengen agreement countries (Antonijević 2015: 402–403).

Finotelli and Sciortino (2013) indicate that the EU visa policies are framed as the frame Fortress Europe. Specifically, Finotelli and Sciortino (2013: 80) posit that the EU's visa policies towards non-EU countries on the visa-mandatory list are evocative of “the powerful icon (...) of ‘Fortress Europe’, a space where the free mobility of insiders is matched by an ever-increasing closure towards outsiders”. The frame Fortress is echoed in a research paper by Özdemir and Ayata (2017), who examine the dynamics of exclusion and everyday bordering through Schengen visas. It is suggested by Özdemir and Ayata (2017) that the frame Fortress is reflective of the otherness and non-Europeaness of Turkey. The Fortress appears to reiterate and reinforce the image of exclusion of those passport holders who live outside of the metaphoric Fortress Europe (Özdemir–Ayata 2017). Within the context of the EU–Turkey relations, the challenges of the

visa liberalization dialogue have instantiated a metaphoric construal of Turkey as neither a friend nor a foe but a ‘frenemy’ (Haferlach et al. 2017), a borderline open-ended zone outside of the Fortress Europe, whose inhabitants need a Schengen visa to get access to the Fortress (ibid.). It should be perhaps mentioned that the framing of the EU-Turkey visa liberalization dialogue appears to be increasingly marked by the issues of securitization and migration, especially in the wake of the Syrian crisis (Özerim 2018). Hence, it can be summarized that the current EU-Turkey visa liberalization discourse is framed by the frames Syrian Crisis and Illegal Migration (Özerim 2018).

As evident from the above-mentioned studies, previous research on the EU-Serbia and EU-Turkey visa liberalization discourse appears to be abundant; however, there are insufficient data concerning the framing of EU-Ukraine visa-free discourse. The present article fills this gap by focusing on the framing of the EU-Ukraine visa liberalization discourse within the period of 17 November 2016–22 May 2017.

2. The framing of the EU-Ukraine visa liberalization: hypothesis and specific research aims

As previously mentioned, political discourse associated with the EU visa liberalization in several non-EU countries, such as Serbia and Turkey, is construed by means of such frames as the Fortress, the Journey, and the Movement. Presumably, similar frames associated with the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine would be present in Ukrainian political discourse. Based upon previous research (Đurović–Silaški 2012), it is assumed in the present *hypothesis* that Ukrainian political discourse on the issue of the EU visa liberalization would be characterized by a number of frames – for instance, the Fortress, the Journey, and the Movement. Hence, *specific research aims* of the study are formulated as follows:

- i) to identify frames in Ukrainian political discourse involving the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine;
- ii) to juxtapose the to-be-identified frames with the frames associated with the EU visa liberalization with Serbia and Turkey. Presumably, the juxtaposition would reveal whether or not a Ukrainian political discourse associated with the EU visa liberalization would involve frames similar or different from those of Serbia and Turkey.

The comparison of the Ukrainian political discourse with that of Serbia and Turkey in terms of the EU visa liberalization is motivated by the following premises, which enable the comparison:

i) Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine are non-EU countries that share similar aspirations of joining the EU in the future (Đurović–Silaški 2012, Happ–Bruns 2017, Jansen 2009, Scott 2017) and

ii) in Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine the issue of the visa liberalization with the EU has been and is still topical (Đurović–Silaški 2012, Scott 2017).

2.1. The corpus of the study

The corpus of the study consisted of online articles published by the following Ukrainian Internet news resources: Censor.Net (en.censor.net.ua), 112UA (112.international), and UNIAN (www.unian.info). In this study, the articles published in the English language by the English versions of the afore-mentioned Internet news resources were examined. The afore-mentioned websites were searched electronically for the key words *EU-Ukraine*, *visa free*, *visa-free*, *visa free regime*, *EU visa liberalization*, and *EU visa waiver*. The computer search yielded 34 articles that constituted the corpus of the study. The total number of words in the corpus was calculated at 13 525 words.

2.2. Methods

The study followed the methodological framework proposed by Entman (2004: 5), who defined framing as “selecting and highlighting some facets of events or issue, and making connections among them so as to promote a particular interpretation, evaluation, and/or solution”. Within this framework, the methodology of framing analysis was based upon the guidelines developed by Dahl (2015). In accordance with Dahl (2015), the framing analysis in this research involved the following steps: first, the texts in the corpus were examined for the presence of keywords, recurrent phrases, stereotyped expressions, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clustering. Second, the texts were examined for the presence of appraisal elements associated with attitudes, feelings, and values used to construe attitudes, engagement, and intensity. The coding was done by the author of the article. The coding of the labels in the framing analysis was based upon the presence of keywords and recurrent phrases in the given stretch of discourse. The coding was double-checked by a linguist with a PhD in discourse studies, who confirmed the coding.

2.3. Results and discussion

The results of the qualitative data analysis are summarized in *Table 1* below.

Table 1. *The framing of the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine*

N	Frame	Date and source of publication
1	The Building	26 April 2017, UNIAN
2	The Divorce	28 April 2017, UNIAN 11 May 2017, Censor.net 12 May 2017, UNIAN
3	The European Integration	7 April 2017, Censor.net 8 April 2017, UNIAN 17 May 2017, Censor.net
4	The Game	29 November 2017, 112UA 15 December 2016, Censor.net
5	The Home	11 May 2017, Censor.net 12 May 2017, UNIAN
6	The Hostage	23 November 2016, UNIAN 9 December 2017, Censor.net
7	The Journey	17 November 2016, Censor.net 17 November 2016, UNIAN 18 November 2016, 112UA 19 November 2016, UNIAN 28 November 2016, Censor.net 28 November 2016, 112UA 7 December 2016, Censor.net 18 February 2017, Censor.net 3 March 2017, 112UA 5 April 2017, Censor.net 5 April 2017, 112UA 6 April 2017, Censor.net 7 April 2017, 112UA 14 May 2017, UNIAN

As mentioned in the introductory section of this article, the present investigation is set against a wide context of political discourse associated with border crossing and the EU visa policy. Judging from the findings summarized in *Table 1*, political discourse in Ukraine within the period of 17 November 2016–22 May 2017 does not frame the issue of the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine by means of the frames that involve migration, illegal migration, and border security. Specifically, the data analysis has revealed no instances of the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine that are associated with the migration risks and illegal migration. In contrast to Turkish political discourse involving the EU visa liberalization, the frames the Fortress, Syrian Crisis, and Illegal Migration are absent in the corpus. Instead, the issue of the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine appears to be framed in Ukrainian political discourse as the frames called the Building, the Divorce, the European Integration, the Game, the Home, the Hostage, and the Journey.

It has been assumed in the hypothesis that the framing of Ukrainian political discourse on the EU visa liberalization would be similar to that of Serbia and Turkey. In particular, it has been hypothesized that Ukrainian discourse on the EU visa liberalization would involve such frames as the Journey and the Movement that are amply used in Serbian and Turkish political discourse associated with the EU visa politics (Đurović 2010, Đurović–Silaški 2012). The frame Journey has been identified in the present corpus. This frame appears to be frequently employed by Ukrainian Internet news resources that report about the issue of the EU visa liberalization. In this sense, it can be claimed that the hypothesis is supported by the present data. The frame Journey has been previously identified in Serbian political discourse (Đurović–Silaški 2012), where it has been found to be one of the primary framing devices due to its ubiquitous use. The qualitative analysis of the present corpus seems to support the findings by Đurović and Silaški (2012) in terms of the ample usage of the Journey in the EU visa liberalization discourse. Additionally, the present findings appear to support the frame Journey in its relation to the EU visa liberalization with Turkey, where Turkey is seen on the path towards the visa-free movement with the EU (Batalla-Adam 2017). Whilst in Serbian and Ukrainian political discourse the frame Journey is associated with the clear and feasible goal that has been already achieved, i.e. visa-free travel to the EU, in Turkish political discourse, the frame Journey is represented as a laborious path that is yet to reach its final destination (Tsarouhas 2018).

In the present corpus, the frame Journey is instantiated by heterogeneous concepts: for instance, i) the traffic lights: “The E.U. ambassadors gave green light to the E.U. Council to start negotiations with the European Parliament and the European Commission concerning the visa waiver program introduction for Ukrainian citizens” (Censor.net, 2016a); ii) the way: “...the EU institutions will reach agreement on a mechanism of suspension of visa-free regime in the near future, paving the way for the final visa abolition for Ukrainians” (112UA, 2016a); iii) the road: “Ukraine should go this multiannual visa road, because the abolition of visas is not the main point; the point is the reform – strategic, structural – of the country” (112UA, 2016b); iv) steps: “One more step is left before visa-free travel between Ukraine and the EU is finally approved – a decision of the EU Council” (Censor.net, 2017a). The qualitative analysis suggests that the concept “step” appears to be foregrounded in the frame Journey, as evident from excerpts (1) and (2):

(1) “I am confident that we are speaking of an event of deeper symbolic meaning. It is a giant step towards Europe, towards the assertion of human freedom and independence of our state”, the President said... (UNIAN 2017a)

(2) This week in Strasbourg, the European Parliament is going to vote on the abolition of visa requirements for travellers from Ukraine. This decision would be another important step of Ukraine on its visa-free path (112UA 2017b).

The findings illustrated in (1) and (2) seem to indicate that the Journey in the context of the EU visa-free regime for Ukraine tends to involve a series of steps, e.g. “another important step” (112UA 2017b). In (2), the step is taken on the visa-free path. This observation is supported by previous research, which argues that the frame Journey is commonly used in political discourse, where it is characterized by a variety of concepts, e.g. steps, road, and traffic (Đurović–Silaški 2012, Kapranov 2016).

Other than the frame Journey, this qualitative investigation has revealed that the issue of the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine is framed by several frames that are qualitatively different from those of Serbian and Turkish visa discourse (see *Introduction*). As evident from *Table 1*, one of those qualitatively different frames is the frame Building. In this frame, the EU is conceptualized as a building with doors. Once the visa-free access to Ukrainian passport holders is granted by the EU, the EU building opens its doors, as seen in *Excerpt (3)*:

(3) “The Committee of Permanent Representatives of the EU member states (COREPER) has just approved a historic decision to grant Ukraine a visa-free travel. The doors to Europe are open to Ukraine”, Poroshenko said... (UNIAN 2017b)

The framing of the EU by means of the Building is not novel (Musolff 2000). Notably, in a number of previous studies, the Building is often referred to as the frame Castle, or the Fortress (Finotelli–Sciortino 2013). Whilst in Turkish political discourse the EU visa policies are framed as the Fortress Europe (Özdemir–Ayata 2017), political discourse in Ukraine seems to foreground the notion of the EU as a building or a dwelling with the doors that are now open for Ukraine. Presumably, the framing of the EU as the Building is reflective of a friendlier image of the EU in Ukrainian political discourse compared to that of Turkey, where the EU visas symbolize an unassailable Fortress. It should be noted that neither the Building nor the Fortress have been identified in Serbian political discourse involving the EU visa liberalization (Đurović–Silaški 2012).

The results of the data analysis indicate that the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine is framed as the frame Divorce. The Divorce refers to Ukraine’s drift towards the West and away from Russia. In the coverage by UNIAN, the Divorce is evocative of historical implications, as seen in *Excerpt (4)*:

(4) “Today, Ukraine has finalized its divorce with the Russian Empire. We should perceive this philosophically. This is a way out of a more than a 300-year history that began with the Pereyaslav Rada, and today Ukraine is returning home”, he said (UNIAN 2017c).

Describing the positive decision of the EU to grant Ukraine a visa-free regime, Ukraine’s President Poroshenko sees it as “an extremely important decision for our country, it’s a rubicon for us to move away from the Russian Empire...” (UNIAN 2017d). Similarly, Censor.Net reports that “upon being granted the visa-free travel, Ukraine finally left Russia and returned home in Europe” (Censor.

net 2017b). In *Excerpt (4)*, the Divorce is suggestive of the Pereyaslav Union between Russia and Ukraine, which lasted 300 years. The Divorce emblemizes the end of the Pereyaslav Union with Russia and Ukraine's return to Europe. Set against the background of the Russia–Ukraine conflict, the EU is framed as Ukraine's home (Chaban et al. 2017: 494). After the metaphoric divorce from Russia, Ukraine appears to return home to Europe. This symbolic return home is associated with the newly granted visa-free regime. It should be reiterated that the frame Divorce is not reported in Serbian and Turkish political discourse on visa-free movement with the EU. As previously mentioned in the introduction, prior research literature is indicative of the interrelatedness of Ukraine's visa-free regime with the EU with Ukraine's nation-building project (Fournier 2017: 24) that differs historically from such well-established states as Serbia and Turkey. The EU visa-free discourse in these two countries is not embedded into the frame Divorce, which is the case of Ukraine. Whilst both Serbia and Turkey enjoy a long period of statehood, Ukraine's nation-building is fairly recent and is reflective of its distancing from the former ruler, Russia.

As seen in *Excerpt (4)*, the Divorce is concurrent with the frame Home, and so as Ukraine metaphorically gets a divorce from Russia, it returns back to Europe, which is framed as Ukraine's home. The simultaneous usage of the frames the Divorce and the Home can be assumed to constitute a cluster. In this regard, Kimmel (2010: 97) posits that framing in journalism and political discourse often occurs in clusters. Presumably, the clustering of the Divorce and the Home in one stretch of discourse facilitates the creation of a dramatic effect of leaving one entity (the divorce from the Russian Empire) and joining another entity (the EU). Arguably, the dyad of the Divorce and the Home is suggestive of the frame Family that is implicitly present. The frame Family is reported to be widely used in political discourse involving the EU and its Member States, regarded as a family of nations (Musolff 2010). According to Lakoff (1996), the conceptual construal "Nation as a Family Member" plays a fundamental role in political thought (Lakoff 1996). In particular, in Ukrainian political discourse, the implicit frame the Family is instantiated as divorce from the Russian family to be followed by a return to the EU home in an attempt to start a new family there, a family with the EU.

Data analysis indicates that the EU visa liberalization is framed as the frame European Integration. In other words, the framing of the EU visa liberalization is conceived in Ukrainian political discourse as part of the process of Ukraine's joining the EU. In this regard, Ukraine's President Poroshenko emphasizes that the EU visa liberalization emblemizes Ukraine's strategic choice of joining the EU and a clear signal of Ukraine being part of Europe, as seen in *Excerpt (5)*:

(5) "It is evidence of strategic rightness of our European choice, success and irreversibly of our course toward the integration into Europe", Petro Poroshenko said (Censor.net 2017c).

Poroshenko is echoed by the deputy minister of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine, who indicates that after Ukraine has been given the visa-free access to the EU, it should focus on the goal of the EU integration, e.g.:

(6) We must go beyond this, because we still have many objectives in terms of European integration, since the goal of integration into the EU remains. We are entering EU's internal market not by means of an abstract integration but a realistic, sectoral one carried out through the Association Agreement. We are gradually integrating into the EU's area of freedom, security, and justice through the signing of documents on visa-free travel... (Censor.net 2017d)

As evident from excerpts (5) and (6), Ukraine's political establishment uses the EU visa liberalization as a means of gradual integration into the EU. This finding is evocative of the observation made by Scott (2017: 28), who posits that Ukraine's choice to align itself with Europe signals a sustained effort to keep prospects of a long-term agenda of the EU membership. In this regard, the EU visa liberalization for Ukrainian passport holders can be treated as one of the multiple steps on Ukraine's road to the EU membership at some point in the future. Additionally, the presence of the frame European Integration in this corpus lends support to previous research (Antonijević 2015, Kortenska et al. 2016: 29) that points to the importance of the EU visa-free regime to a European non-EU country, for instance, Serbia, on its accession path to the EU (Kortenska et al. 2016).

However, the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine is framed not only via frames with positive connotations such as the Home and the European Integration. The results of the data analysis indicate that the framing of the EU visa liberalization is associated with negative connotations expressed by the frame Game. Specifically, the Game involves negativity in the context of the promised yet delayed visa-free regime, as evident from *Excerpt (7)*:

(7) This whole game around visa-free regime with Ukraine was in the bureaucratic line; there was a struggle between the institutions: the Parliament, the Council, and the Commission. And it is not over yet. But then the politics of the states intruded in this game. (112UA 2016c)

The Game is instantiated by the reference to a political game played by several EU countries to postpone the EU visa waiver for Ukraine due to the internal dynamics in those EU Member States. In particular, France has been reported to have apprehensions of the visa-free regime with Ukraine in the light of the 2017 French presidential elections. Reportedly, an early introduction of the visa-free regime might give additional arguments in favour of the anti-EU presidential candidates. Hence, the frame Game associated with the start of the visa-free regime for Ukraine is suggestive of the delay with the visa waiver. The delay with the visa-free regime is referred to in Ukrainian political discourse as a historical mistake. For instance, high-ranking Ukrainian politicians equate the delay with the introduction of visa-free regime with a historical mistake which

entails significant consequences, e.g. “delaying visa-free travel for Ukraine is a huge historical mistake” (Censor.net 2016b).

Another aspect of the negative connotation involved in Ukrainian political discourse on the EU visa liberalization is evident from the frame Hostage. In this framing, Ukraine is framed as being taken hostage by the EU-internal procedures, e.g.:

(8) Ukraine remains hostage to the internal document approval process in the EU. “To some extent, we remain hostage to their internal process of harmonization of the internal documents, which have no direct and immediate relationship to us.” (UNIAN 2016).

(9) In its visa liberalization process, Ukraine is hostage of EU fighting for power, – Klimkin. Ukraine’s Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin believes that Ukraine and its visa liberalization became hostages in fighting for power between the European Parliament and the EU Council (Censor.net 2016c).

Arguably, the Hostage involves personification, where Ukraine is conceived of as a passive actor, a hostage. Such framing is suggestive of the discursive focus on the active actor (the EU) that sets the agenda of visa liberalization and, subsequently, is at liberty of taking a country hostage if the need and occasion arise. Interestingly, the frames Game and Hostage have not been observed in Serbian and Turkish political discourse on the EU visa-free movement even though prior research reports dramatic developments in Turkish political discourse, where the EU’s “promise of visa-free travel for Turkish nationals has been a major cause of dispute” (Batalla-Adam 2017: 51).

Conclusions

This article presents a qualitative study of how the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine is framed in political discourse reported by the leading independent Ukrainian Internet resources Censor.net, 112UA, and UNIAN. The results of the qualitative data analysis indicate that the issue of the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine is construed in Ukrainian political discourse by the following frames: the Building, the Divorce, the European Integration, the Game, the Home, the Hostage, and the Journey. These findings support previous research (Đurović–Silaški 2012) that emphasizes the role of the frame Journey in the EU visa liberalization. This frame has been found to be amply represented in the present corpus. Its ubiquity in Ukrainian political discourse is indicative of the EU visa liberalization as a process that requires time, effort, and resources. The present findings lend support to prior research by Kostovicova (2014), who argues that the EU visa liberalization is quite often seen as a token of a country’s European integration. It should be emphasized that the frame European Integration reflects

the EU visa waiver for Serbia (Kostovicova 2014) and Ukraine as a step towards their European future. The findings discussed in this article reveal no framing of the EU visa liberalization discourse as the frame Fortress that is typical in Turkish political discourse (Özdemir– Ayata 2017) associated with the EU visa policies. Additionally, the results of this qualitative investigation do not indicate the presence of the frames associated with illegal border crossings.

Thus, it can be concluded that Ukrainian political discourse in the period between 17 November 2016 and 22 May 2017 does not frame the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine by the frames associated with illegal border crossings, migration, and border security. Instead, the issue of the EU visa liberalization with Ukraine appears to be framed in Ukrainian political discourse as the Building, the Divorce, the European Integration, the Game, the Home, the Hostage, and the Journey. Presumably, these findings would facilitate discourse analysis of those EU neighbours that are in the process of obtaining visa-free travel to the EU. It is also hoped that the present findings would serve as a benchmark for further studies that would involve a more substantial period of time in diachrony and a more significant number of sources to be analysed. Another avenue of future research could involve a more detailed investigation of the discursive differences among the Serbian, Turkish, and Ukrainian frames by means of revealing the differences of the meanings within the same frames.

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