MEDIA FRAMING AND STEREOTYPE TRANSFORMATION: ANALYZING POLISH GENDER DISCOURSE AND ANTI-GERMAN SENTIMENTS (2015–2023)

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_Abstract

This _Article analyzes the interplay between media framing and stereotypes in Polish online media from 2015 to 2023, focusing on anti-German and anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. Through framing theory, particularly David A. Snow's mechanisms of frame bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation, the study explores how Polish media shape and manipulate stereotypes about Germans and LGBTQ+ individuals to reinforce ideological narratives. The analysis reveals that conservative media often recast traditional anti-German sentiments, portraying German support for LGBTQ+ rights as a cultural threat, aligning with conservative agendas that oppose progressive values. This framing sustains polarized attitudes, significantly influencing public perceptions, policies, and societal cohesion. The study emphasizes the role of media in using historical stereotypes within contemporary sociopolitical contexts, contributing to ongoing discourse on gender and nationality in Poland.

1_Introduction: Framing, Stereotypes, and Anti-Gender/Anti-LGBTQ+ Discourse in Polish Media—Why 2015–2023 Matters[1]

This _Article examines the complex processes of framing within anti-gender discourse, particularly focusing on how anti-German stereotypes are reinterpreted within the Polish political landscape. The study explores how these deeply rooted stereotypes are transformed to fit into influential and emergent frames within anti-gender movements. In this paper, anti-gender is used as an umbrella term encompassing opposition to LGBTQ+ rights, acknowledging that LGBTQ+ issues are often considered integral to the wider anti-gender movement in Polish media. Though not all sources differentiate between LGBTQ+ and other gender topics, this approach reflects the common conflation seen in media representations. This approach reflects the complexity of the discourse, where specific anti-LGBTQ+ narratives frequently operate within and are shaped by wider anti-gender frames.[2] Polish media discourse frequently conflates LGBTQ+ and gender issues under a larger anti-gender framework. This study recognizes this conflation as a common trend, particularly in conservative media, where opposition to LGBTQ+ rights merges with resistance to broader gender equality issues. Although this approach may obscure certain distinctions, it captures how media outlets create a unified narrative that addresses both topics under one ideological frame. Stereotypes and framing work in tandem to influence public discourse and shape collective perceptions. According to framing theory, media frames—interpretive

structures that organize how information is presented—have a powerful impact on how audiences interpret issues. By emphasizing certain aspects of a topic, these frames steer public understanding and responses.

This study employs framing as an analytical tool to investigate how Polish media actively shape, rather than merely reflect, societal attitudes. By intensifying or downplaying specific stereotypes, media frames allow well-known images—such as those of Germans and LGBTQ+ groups—to align with present ideological narratives. This method highlights frames as adaptable lenses that not only shape discourse but also perpetuate cultural narratives, responding flexibly to shifting social dynamics. Through selective emphasis on elements like conflict, morality, or responsibility, media frames shape public perception by simplifying complex issues, thereby influencing audience interpretation.[3] In this context, the study examines how Polish media represent stereotypes surrounding Germans and the LGBTQ+ community, frequently adapting these narratives to advance ideological goals. By applying framing mechanisms such as bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation,[4] this research uncovers how media shape public perceptions and steer cultural discourse.

Stereotypes function within media frames as cognitive shortcuts, reinforcing social beliefs by presenting recognizable but often simplified narratives. Frames, in turn, provide adaptable structures that organize and present these stereotypes in ways that resonate with current issues.[5] In this study stereotypes act as fixed, culturally embedded narratives—such as the depiction of Germans as authoritarian or morally ambiguous—while frames offer the flexible structures needed to contextualize these stereotypes within modern ideological narratives. For instance, the persistent stereotype of Germans as militaristic might be reframed to depict German support for LGBTQ+ rights as a form of 'cultural invasion.'

While stereotypes offer familiar reference points, frames adjust these narratives to serve contemporary sociopolitical agendas, adding layers of relevance to longstanding images. Unlike stereotypes, frames are dynamic interpretative structures that emphasize certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others, shaping audience perception. Stereotypes provide a consistent, stable context, but frames adapt and update these perceptions, connecting them to current events and issues. In this study stereotypes act as foundational reference points within the flexible framework of media frames, enabling familiar images to adapt to changing contexts. Rooted in cultural

memory, stereotypes remain fixed, while frames serve as interpretive lenses that reshape these narratives to reflect contemporary ideological concerns, guiding how certain elements are emphasized or minimized.

According to Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, media frames often rely on stereotypes to construct narratives that resonate with audience expectations and cultural norms. For example, when reporting on social issues or political events, journalists may frame stories in ways that conform to existing stereotypes about certain groups. This can have the effect of reinforcing prejudices and perpetuating unequal power dynamics in society.[6] Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow extend this idea, suggesting that frames not only reflect but shape social movements by mobilizing public support. Frames that are consistent with stereotypes can galvanize collective action by portraying certain groups as deserving or undeserving of sympathy or support, thus playing a crucial role in influencing policy outcomes and public perceptions of marginalized communities.[7] In addition, Baldwin Van Gorp notes that frame construction involves selectively emphasizing certain aspects of an issue while downplaying others, often influenced by prevailing stereotypes. This selective emphasis can reinforce stereotypes and distort public understanding of complex social issues, contributing to social divisions and inequalities.[8] Ethical considerations in framing, highlighted by Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki underline the importance of responsible journalism and media practices.[9] By critically examining how stereotypes are used within frames, media professionals can mitigate bias and promote more balanced representations that challenge rather than perpetuate stereotypes.

Understanding the role of stereotypes in the framing process is essential for media literacy, policy-making and social justice advocacy. By critically analyzing how stereotypes influence framing decisions and advocating for ethical and inclusive representations, media professionals and scholars can contribute to a more informed and just public discourse. A compelling example of this is the incorporation of anti-German stereotypes into Polish anti-gender political discourse in the media, demonstrating the use of long-standing stereotypes in new and unexpected contexts.

By analyzing how stereotypes transcend their traditional boundaries, this study contributes to the broader scholarship on anti-gender discourse in Eastern Europe.[10] Specifically, it explores how anti-gender discourse adopts pre-existing social

anxieties—such as anti-German sentiment—and redirects them to serve new ideological purposes. This process reveals the fluidity of stereotypes, which are recontextualized to support contemporary political agendas, and highlights the adaptability of anti-gender discourse to local socio-political contexts.[11] In the context of this research, the focus is on Polish online media as the primary source of analysis. With the increasing dominance of digital platforms over traditional media, online news portals play a significant role in shaping public opinion and discourse in Poland. Accordingly, this study analyzes content from a range of digital media outlets—representing a spectrum of political ideologies—from conservative sites like wpolityce.pl, sieciprawdy.pl, and dorzeczy.pl to more progressive outlets like wyborcza.pl, onet.pl, and oko.press. By examining these varied sources, this _*Article* aims to provide a comprehensive view of how digital media influence public perceptions of gender and anti-German sentiments in Poland.

To accomplish this task, I will begin with an overview of historical Polish stereotypes about Germans. Next, I will examine contemporary Polish socio-political media discourse on gender, focusing on the period from 2015 to 2023. This period is significant due to the political climate shaped by the Law and Justice (PiS) party, which held power across two parliamentary terms from 2015 onward. Key political events during this time include the 2015 and 2019 parliamentary elections, the 2019 European Parliament election, and the 2015 and 2020 presidential elections, all of which reinforced conservative views within Polish society.

2_Polish Stereotype of Germans

Building on this theoretical framework, the following section examines the historical evolution of Polish stereotypes about Germans, providing essential context for their contemporary framing in media. Additionally, I will present materials such as historical drawings from old Polish newspapers to illustrate the persistence of the functions of this stereotype over time. Rather than isolating a historical overview, this section integrates past stereotypes directly into the contemporary media analysis. Polish stereotypes of Germans, shaped by geopolitical conflicts and cultural clashes, continue to be recontextualized in modern discourse. During the partitions of Poland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the perception of the Germans shifted to emphasize their authoritarian and militaristic tendencies. Prussia's military discipline

and expansionist policies were seen as a direct threat to Polish sovereignty. Historical analogies to the Teutonic Knights, who waged war against Poland and Lithuania in the Middle Ages, and the Brandenburg Margraves, who sought territorial gains at Poland's expense, underscored these fears.[12]

Fig. 1: The stereotype of Germans as authoritarian and aggressive conquerors[13]

After the November and January Uprisings (1830–1831 and 1863–1864), Polish intellectuals criticized German society for its moral decline and rigid feudal governance. This criticism drew parallels with the medieval Germanic tribal confederations, which were seen as chaotic and brutal in conquests. The unification of Germany under Prussian leadership in the nineteenth century reinforced this view, portraying Germans as unethical and driven by nationalist ambitions.[14]
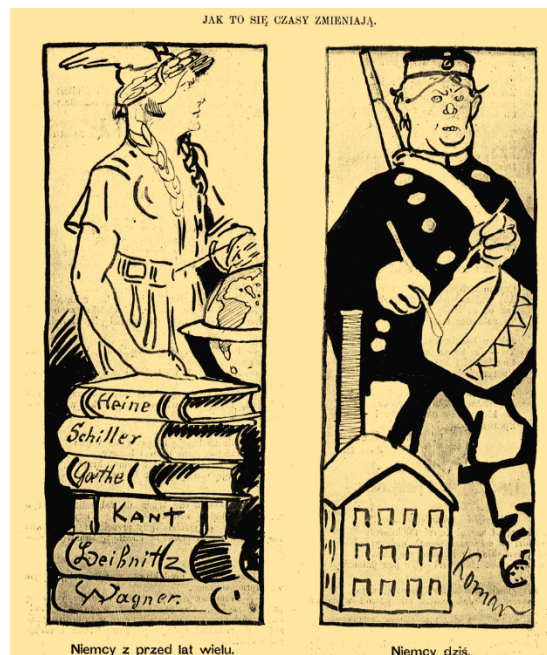
Fig. 2: The stereotype of Germans as representatives of moral decline and military rule[15]

The unification of Germany and subsequent military victories under Prussian leadership strengthened the perception of Germans as militaristic nationalists. The disciplined yet morally questionable nature of the German military called to mind the expansionist ambitions of the Teutonic Order. This image was intensified after the First World War, when Germans were viewed as vengeful and aggressive, underscoring the sense that they posed a threat to Polish and European stability. Additionally, German educational policies and social values were criticized for promoting conformity and stifling Polish cultural identity.[16]

Orzeł pruski i figa polska.

Fig. 3: The stereotype of Germans as militaristic nationalists[17]

The interwar period and the Second World War cemented negative perceptions of Germans as resentful and vengeful adversaries. The atrocities committed by the Nazi regime created a deeply negative image of Germans among the Polish population, who had endured terror and widespread massacres of civilians. During the years of Nazi occupation, the Polish people's hostility and resentment towards the Germans intensified. Many Poles began to perceive all Germans as malevolent and enemies of the Polish nation, seeing every German as a tormentor and a Nazi.[18]
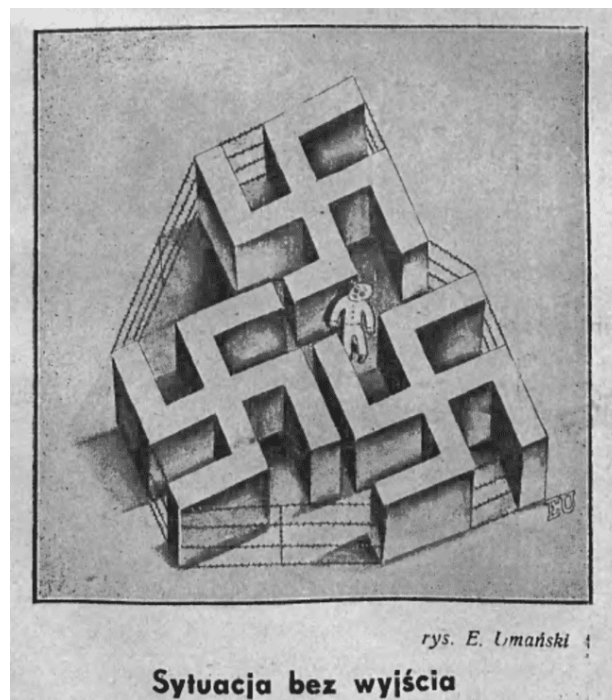
rys. E. Umański

Sytuacja bez wyjścia

Fig. 4: The stereotype of Germans as Nazis and tormentors[19]

In Polish cultural and political discourse, historical stereotypes of Germans—as authoritarian, militaristic, morally compromised, and aggressive—have been deeply embedded and remain influential across generations. These stereotypes, shaped by centuries of conflict, are reflected in Polish literature, film, education, and public commemorations. One powerful example is Henryk Sienkiewicz's novel *Krzyżacy* [The Teutonic Knights], first serialized in 1897, which quickly became a cornerstone of Polish national identity. Set against the Polish-Teutonic conflict, the novel portrays the Teutonic Knights as cruel, arrogant, and deceitful. This portrayal resonated deeply with Polish readers at a time when Poland was subject to intense Germanization policies. Critic Stefan Papée described the novel as a "manifesto of war" against German influence.[20] Sienkiewicz omits any civilizational contributions of the Teutonic Order, instead casting them solely as oppressors against a morally superior Polish knighthood. Characters like Jurand of Spychów, who seeks revenge on the Order for the death of his wife and daughter, embody a Polish spirit of resilience and righteous anger.

This theme of resistance is also prevalent in Polish cinema, particularly in WWII films. *Westerplatte* (1967), directed by Stanisław Różewicz, dramatizes the Polish defense against the German invasion of 1939. Although Różewicz aimed to present a

balanced portrayal of command and sacrifice, the film was widely interpreted as a tribute to Polish unity against German aggression, reflecting ongoing tensions in Polish-German relations in the 1960s.[21] More recently, political rhetoric has similarly invoked German hostility to frame contemporary issues, especially regarding EU relations, while educational materials emphasize narratives of Polish endurance against German invasions, from the Teutonic Knights to the Nazi regime.[22] Public commemorations, such as the Warsaw Uprising Memorial, continue to honor Poland's resistance to German forces, reinforcing these historical narratives.[23] Finally, Polish satirical media has used caricatures to portray Germans as militaristic and rigid, as seen in early twentieth-century publications like *Mucha*, *Szpilki* and *Djabeł* (see Figures 1–4)*.* Through literature, film, education, and public memory, these stereotypes—rooted in historical experiences and reinforced by cultural works like *Krzyżacy*—continue to shape Polish perspectives on Germany to this day.

3_Polish Media Landscape and the Contemporary German Stereotype

In examining these historical and contemporary stereotypes, it is crucial to consider the broader media landscape in Poland, particularly how political shifts have influenced media content and public perceptions. A cornerstone of democratic societies is the right to independent public media. In November 2015, the conservative and populist party Prawo i Sprawiedliwość, PiS [Law and Justice] came to power in Poland and would govern until the end of 2023. This gradual politicisation of the media, especially after the so-called Act Amending the Broadcasting and Television of 30 December 2015, led to noticeable changes in Polish public discourse.[24] During its tenure, PiS significantly influenced Polish media and public discourse, particularly in framing issues related to national sovereignty, gender, and European integration.

As a result, the political orientation of individual media in Poland can be provisionally classified into four categories: 1) right-wing conservative media, 2) center-right media, 3) center-left media, and 4) left-wing media. This division reflects the polarized nature of Polish society and significantly influences public perceptions of Germans, gender issues, and LGBTQ+ rights. Traditional stereotypes of Germans as authoritarian and militaristic have evolved within these media contexts to reflect new political realities. For instance, in conservative media, Germany is often portrayed as an overly dominant force within the EU, infringing on Polish sovereignty, while left-

leaning media emphasize Germany's progressive social policies–particularly its stance on gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights—casting it as a model of social reform.

Furthermore, the historical stereotype of German 'moral decline,' once focused on militarism and ethical issues, has been recontextualized in conservative media to underscore cultural differences surrounding gender and family values. Here, Germany is depicted as a liberal country whose values threaten traditional Polish principles, especially through its influence on EU policies. By contrast, center-left and left-wing media often present Germany as an inclusive, progressive society, situating Polish conservatism in opposition to this model.

This _Article examines the extent to which Polish media have adapted and responded to these evolving frames, using framing analysis as the central research method to explore cognitive frames and modifications of stereotypes across various media platforms. Through this analysis, the study aims to uncover how these stereotypes are not only preserved but also reshaped to align with contemporary ideological goals and political narratives in Poland.

4_Analyzed Material

The research focuses on online news portals for two main reasons. First, the digital revolution has significantly expanded the role and reach of digital media. Second, online platforms have become more prevalent than traditional media, establishing themselves as primary sources of information. Studies in media and political science indicate that Polish media often align with specific political ideologies, which is evident in their content.

Table 1 presents data from both the online versions of established print media and exclusively digital news portals. The selection covers a broad spectrum of Polish political perspectives, including wpolityce.pl, sieciprawdy.pl, dorzeczy.pl, wyborcza.pl, onet.pl, and oko.press. The database comprises texts published since 2015, identified through keywords like "LGBT" and its variants, along with "gender."

Portals Outlet	Profile	Number of articles found from 2015 to 2023 based on a keyword	
		LGBTQ+ / LGBTQ / LGBTQ+	Gender
oko.press	Left-wing news portal	1180	648
onet.pl	Center-left news portal	4720	1090
wyborcza.pl	Center-left online daily	5712	1498
dorzeczy.pl	Center-right online weekly	4087	1148
wpolityce.pl	Right-wing news portal	6860	2000
sieciprawdy.pl	Right-wing online weekly	72	108

Tab. 1: Number of articles found per keyword from 2015 to 2023. Source: own illustration.

The high number of search results suggests a notable interest in LGBTQ+ and gender topics across these outlets. However, as illustrated in Figure 5, this interest fluctuates over time. For example, in 2015 approximately 12% of all published texts from the analyzed media contained references to gender, indicating a relatively lower level of focus on this topic. In contrast, nearly 78% of LGBT-related texts and 55% of gender-related texts were published between 2019 and 2022, likely reflecting shifts in social and political dynamics during this period. This intensified coverage corresponds with significant events in Poland, such as the 'anti-LGBTQ+ campaign' and changes in legislation, which are explored in detail in the following section on the contexts shaping these discussions.
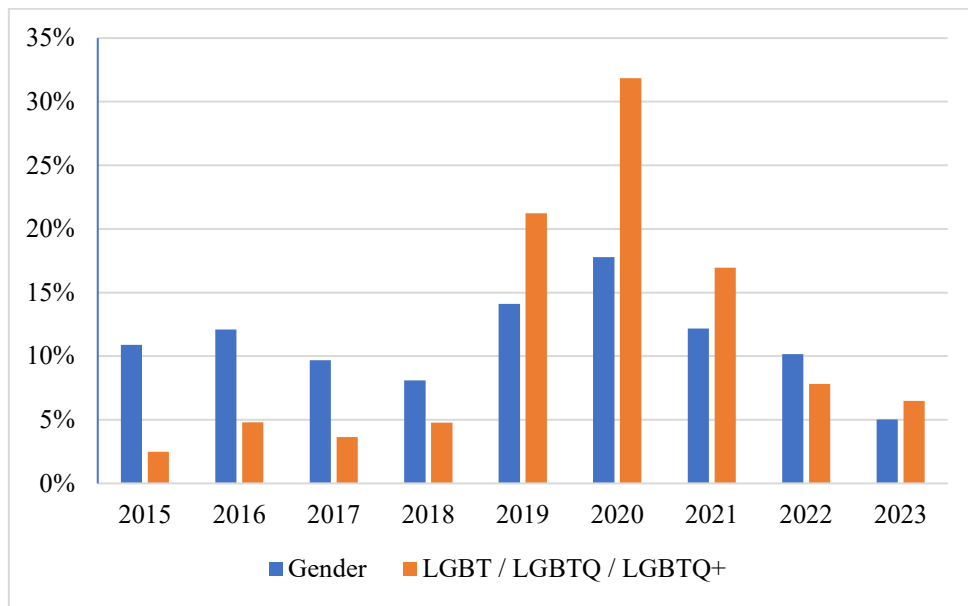
Fig. 5: Percentage distribution of texts by search terms and by years. Source: own illustration.

4.1_Socio-Political Context of Polish Gender Discourses (2015–2023)

In 2019, several Polish local governments-often influenced by conservative groups like Ordo Iuris-began passing resolutions declaring themselves free "from LGBT ideology."[25] These declarations, though not legally binding, signaled official opposition to LGBT rights and quickly drew criticism from human rights organizations and the European Union. In response, the European Parliament passed a resolution in 2021 condemning these so-called "LGBT-free zones" and affirming support for LGBT rights across Europe.

Amid this controversy, activist Bart Staszewski launched a photo project to draw attention to the issue. He photographed town entrance signs with a homemade "LGBT-free zone" sign attached, highlighting the exclusion felt by LGBT people in these areas. The project received widespread attention in Polish and international media, sparking debate and raising awareness. However, it also led to lawsuits against Staszewski by Ordo Iuris and some municipalities, who claimed he misrepresented their resolutions.

These events marked a significant moment in Poland's ongoing debate over LGBT rights, bringing the issue to the forefront both nationally and internationally. The 'anti-LGBTQ+ campaign,' led by PiS during the 2019 parliamentary election campaign and the 2020 presidential election included widely and intensely debated statements by political elites, such as: "They try to tell us that these are people, but it is simply an ideology. If anyone doubts it, they should look at history and see how this movement

was built" (Polish President Andrzej Duda on LGBTQ+ people at a 2020 campaign event);[26] "Let's protect the family from this kind of corruption, depravity and absolutely immoral behaviour. Let us defend ourselves against LGBTQ+ ideology and let's stop listening to this idiocy about human rights or equality. These people are not equal to normal people" (Minister of Science and Higher Education Przemysław Czarnek on TVP Info in 2020);[27] "Poland without LGBTQ+ is the most beautiful" (a post by the former Minister of the Interior, Joachim Brudzinski on Twitter in June 2020);[28] or the similarly striking slogans on campaign posters: "We have freedom and democracy. We don't want a dictatorship of rainbow perverts," "The Polish state should protect children from rainbow LGBT, gender and sodomite propaganda" (Law and Justice senator Waldemar Bonkowski's 2019 campaign in Bytów).[29]

From 2019 to 2022, there were increasing demonstrations by the pro-life movement (a foundation associated with Kaja Godek) and the right-to-life movement (a foundation responsible for the so-called homophobic action), in which LGBTQ+ people were directly or indirectly compared to pedophiles and sex education was equated with sexual crimes. During this period, legislation was repeatedly introduced on Godek's initiative.[30] These years were thus marked by mass protests against the tightening of abortion laws (mass women's protests against the tightening of abortion laws in 2020 to 2021),[31] demonstrations against the intensification of anti-LGBTQ+ policies, activist actions such as those of the group "Stop Bzdurom" [Stop the Nonsense], and the arrest and prolonged detention without charge of activist Margot in August 2020. This led to a series of nationwide "Murem za Margot" [Wall for Margot] demonstrations. Equality marches and numerous counter-demonstrations also dominated media coverage.[32] In 2020, Przemysław Czarnek, who makes no secret of his contempt for LGBTQ+ people, took over the Ministry of Science and Education. He then made three attempts to amend the Education Act in order to ban sex education from schools and impose prison sentences for teaching it.[33] The question now is where the stereotype of the German finds its place in the public discourse on these events. Although the stereotypes of Germans from the Polish perspective and Poles from the German perspective have been extensively studied from various disciplines and perspectives (historical, political, cultural, linguistic), the emerging gender issues remain an unexplored area.

The gender discourse articles collected here (see Table 1) show that the topic requires closer examination. They refer to the image of Germans, Germany or German-Polish relations to varyingdegrees. As shown in Figure 6, the percentage of articles referring to Germans, Germany, or German-Polish relations varies significantly across media outlets, with notable differences depending on political orientation. While references to Germany in right-leaning media outlets like wpolityce.pl and dorzeczy.pl are often framed critically, portraying Germany as a dominant or destabilizing force in the EU that challenges Polish sovereignty or values, these references are not exclusively negative. In left-leaning and center-left outlets, such as oko.press and wyborcza.pl, references to Germany tend to be more neutral or even positive, highlighting Germany's progressive policies on issues like gender equality and LGBTQ+ rights. These outlets sometimes present Germany as a model of social reform, contrasting it with conservative Polish positions. This portrayal draws on the historical stereotype of Germans as authoritarian and invasive, linking contemporary anxieties around LGBTQ advocacy with the concept of foreign intrusion. By reframing historical aggressors as contemporary ideological threats, these media recycle old stereotypes to support current ideological aims. This variation underscores that while critical portrayals are more common in right-leaning media, references to Germany are not uniformly negative; they reflect each outlet's broader ideological stance, with left-leaning media offering more nuanced or favorable perspectives.
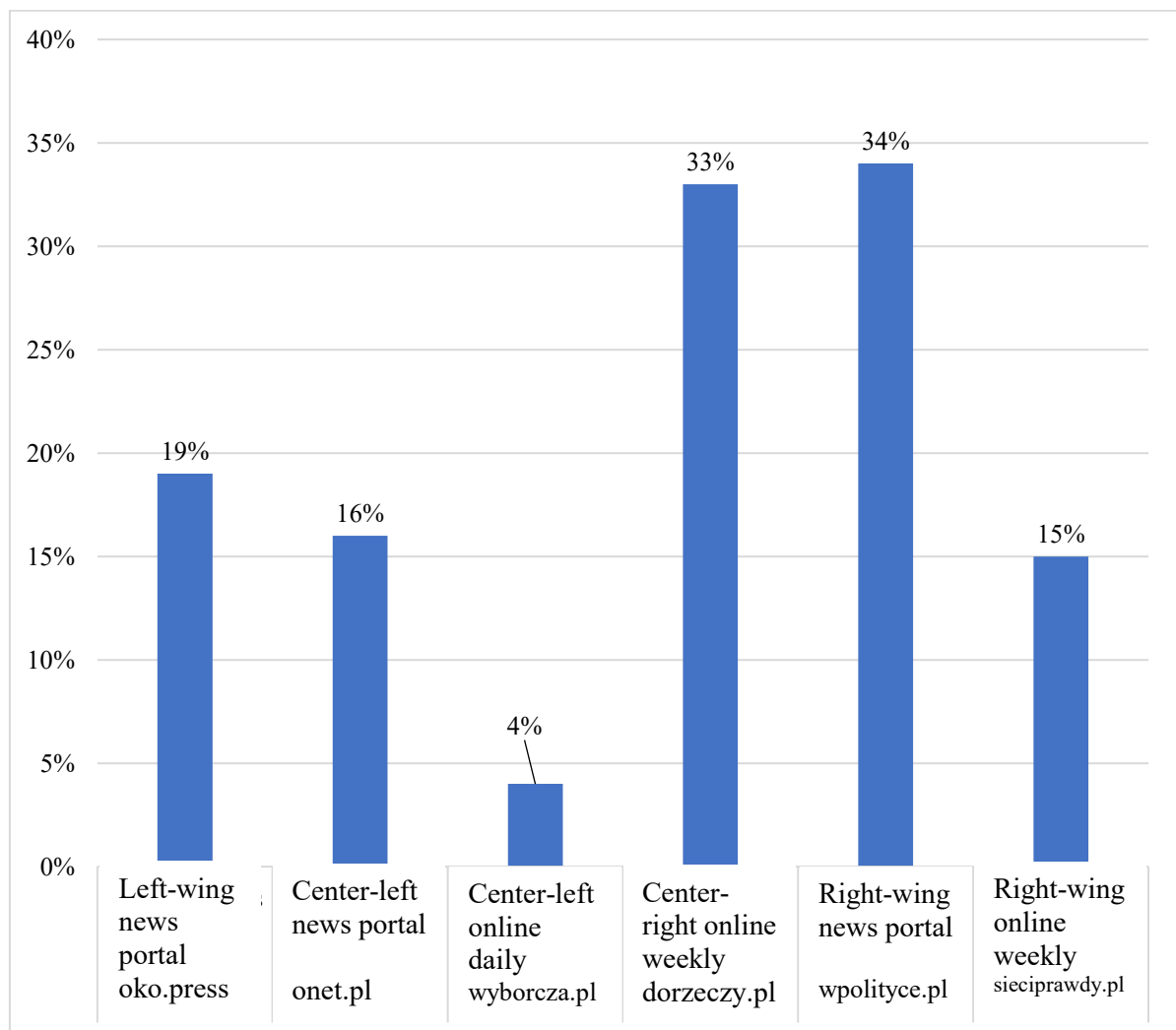
Fig. 6: Percentage of found texts referring to Germans, Germany and German-Polish relations. Source: own illustration.

In right-wing media, discourses on gender and German influence are frequently intertwined, often reinforcing each other to construct a dual adversarial narrative. In these outlets, anti-gender rhetoric and anti-German sentiment mutually support each other, portraying Germany and LGBTQ+ advocacy as interconnected threats to Polish sovereignty and traditional values. For instance, as seen in wpolityce.pl (Fig. 7), German funding aimed at aiding Ukraine is criticized for allegedly ending up with LGBTQ+ artists involved in controversial art projects. This coverage implicitly links German financial influence to perceived cultural degradation. Similarly, siecjprawdy.pl underscores this connection by framing gender ideology as a form of tyranny, reminiscent of historical oppressors like Hitler and Stalin, thereby merging anti-

German and anti-LGBTQ+ discourses into a cohesive message about external threats to Polish identity (Fig. 8).

In dorzeczy.pl (Fig. 9), another conservative outlet, the portrayal of LGBTQ+ rights as an ideological invasion from Germany mirrors traditional anti-German stereotypes, now adapted to fit contemporary cultural conflicts. Articles in this publication warn of a "German-led LGBTQ+ revolution," likening it to past authoritarian regimes, thus framing Germany's progressive social policies as a form of ideological colonization.

By contrast, left-leaning media such as oko.press adopt a more neutral or supportive stance on gender issues and Germany's influence, often highlighting Germany's progressive policies as examples that Poland might consider emulating. For instance, in an article on LGBTQ+ Pride Month during Euro 2020 (Fig. 10), oko.press underscored Germany's visible support for LGBTQ+ rights within the broader European context, subtly positioning Poland's conservative stance as an outlier rather than a moral high ground. This example illustrates that, while anti-German and anti-gender discourses are prominent in right-leaning media, left-leaning outlets like oko.press tend to emphasize inclusive narratives, viewing Germany as a positive influence that aligns with broader European values.

This divergence in media perspectives highlights how conservative outlets frame Germany as a source of ideological threat—especially through its stance on gender-related issues—while liberal outlets often portray Germany as a model of progressive values, challenging Poland's conservative narratives. This ideological split across media types underscores the role of framing in shaping polarized public perceptions: conservative media draw on historical stereotypes to fuel contemporary discourse, whereas progressive media present a counter-narrative that emphasizes inclusivity and alignment with European ideals.

Fig. 7: Headline of an article on wpolityce.pl, "German aid money for Ukraine ended up in the account of LGBTQ+ 'artists.' A film about vaginas and pornography: 'The Vagina is My Republic'"[34]

Fig. 8: Headline of an article on sieciprawdy.pl, "'I am ready for prison.' // Convicted for the truth. // Goran Andrijanić speaks with Father Dariusz Oko, who was convicted in Germany for publishing an article about sexual crimes in the Church. // 'Just as everyone had to kneel

before Hitler and Stalin, everyone must now kneel before gender ideology. Those who do not comply must be eliminated.'"[35]

Fig. 9: Headline and excerpt from an article on dorzeczy.pl: "Will the LGBTQ+ revolution be stopped?" // "Although we instinctively associate communism with Russia and the Bolsheviks, we must remember where this ideology originated, developed and is now triumphantly flourishing… in Germany. The replacement of red flags with rainbow flags (sometimes the two go hand in hand) has not diminished the supremacy of our neighbour across the Oder," Jakub Zgierski claims in his article "The Supremacy of the German Revolution."[36]

Fig. 10: Headline and subtitle of an article on oko.press: "LGBTQ+ at Euro 2020. Why does the German captain wear a rainbow armband, and what is the conflict with Hungary?" // "Before the match against Hungary, Germany wanted to light up the Munich stadium in rainbow colors, but UEFA did not allow it. Among 129,000 professional male football

players, there is still a need to find an openly gay player. Women's football has long addressed this. Will men follow suit?"[37]

5_Methodology and Frame Analysis: Findings on the German Stereotype in Polish Gender Discourse

This section examines how historical German stereotypes are re-contextualized in Polish media to align with current social and political issues. It shows that while historical stereotypes of Germans as authoritarian or morally compromised are deeply rooted, they are now being adapted to anti-LGBTQ+ frames, enabling Polish media to evoke past narratives of German oppression and moral threat. These stereotypes thus gain renewed relevance within contemporary contexts. The relationship between framing and stereotypes is central to this analysis, particularly in how familiar stereotypes of Germans anchor new narratives within a recognizable historical context. In framing LGBTQ+ advocacy as a contemporary threat, Polish media leverage these stereotypes. This dynamic aligns with Baldwin van Gorp's notion that stereotypes, alongside metaphors, lexical choices, and visual representations, serve as crucial framing tools in shaping narratives and public perceptions. Two primary research questions emerge in exploring this topic:

1. Within which frames is the representation of Germans utilized in Polish gender discourse, and what impact does this have on the portrayal of both Germans and LGBTQ+ individuals?

2. How does the integration of German representations in Polish gender discourse contribute to the development and adaptation of the German stereotype?

To answer these questions, it is necessary to focus on the frameworks and methods through which the stereotype of Germans is modified in gender discourse. David A. Snow, Burke E. Rochford, Steven K. Worden, and Robert D. Benfrod describe mechanisms for the sustainability and modification of frames, including a) frame bridging: connecting two or more frames that were previously disconnected; b) frame amplification: revealing or updating taboo, forgotten or marginalised features; c) frame extension: using an existing frame to address new issues; d) frame transformation: a new understanding of old issues, often transforming something perceived as natural into something problematic and in need of repair. All these actions are aimed at effectively changing existing frames.[38] Each of these mechanisms plays a role in adjusting the perception of the 'German' stereotype in Polish gender discourse.

An analysis of Polish political rhetoric and media content shows that associations between Germans and LGBTQ+ individuals often arise from statements by Polish politicians and church representatives. These statements, frequently controversial, are widely circulated in the media, where journalists add interpretive layers. This interplay between political rhetoric and journalistic framing is critical to understanding how these associations resonate within Polish society.

Based on an in-depth analysis of media content, four core frames emerged, each informed by specific stereotypes about Germans:

a. War threat (retraumatization): this frame draws on historical trauma related to German aggression, portraying Germans as a constant, looming threat.

b. Ideological threat (retraumatization): in this frame, Germany is depicted as promoting progressive (often seen as 'neo-Marxist') ideologies that threaten Polish traditional values.

c. Sexual threat (retraumatization): here, Germans are associated with a perceived moral decline, often linked to liberal attitudes towards sexuality, which are framed as dangerous influences.

d. German-Polish relations: this frame centers on the complex historical and contemporary interactions between Poland and Germany, highlighting a sense of Polish victimhood and resistance.

The 'German-Polish Relations' frame, though it could be viewed as a categorical term, functions here as a framing device that goes beyond categorization. It offers a lens for interpreting Polish-German interactions within broader socio-political and historical contexts, casting Germany as a cultural and ideological counterpoint to Polish conservatism.

The selection of these frames and mechanisms links directly to the main thesis of this _Article by illustrating how Polish media and political discourse not only rely on historical stereotypes of Germans but also actively reshape these stereotypes to address contemporary issues. By re-narrativizing past traumas stemming from wars with Germany and juxtaposing them with LGBTQ+ discourse, conservative Polish media and political figures construct a powerful, emotionally charged narrative that resonates with existing societal anxieties. This study thus contributes to a deeper understanding of the interplay between historical trauma, media framing, and the evolution of stereotypes in a polarized socio-political landscape.

A_Frame Bridging

Frame bridging combines different stereotypes into a single, unified threat, making narratives more cohesive and emotionally resonant. Conservative Polish media, for instance, connect historical German aggression with perceived threats from LGBTQ+ advocacy, suggesting both as dangers to Polish values. This connection is established through juxtapositions, comparisons, and analogies that rely on constructed similarities or emphasized contrasts. This framing builds on historical portrayals of Germans as aggressors, as discussed in section 2. By linking the stereotype of Germans as wartime oppressors to contemporary anxieties around LGBTQ+ advocacy, conservative Polish media create a narrative that reframes past German oppression as an ideological and cultural threat today.

Within this framework, conservative Polish discourse presents two different 'victims' depending on perspective: either conservative politicians or LGBTQ+ individuals. This 'gender accusation' refers to the portrayal by conservative figures, particularly those in the PiS, of themselves as defenders against an alleged LGBTQ+ or 'gender ideology' threat. By framing conservative figures as victims of progressive ideologies, they position themselves as defenders of traditional Polish values, which they argue are under attack by foreign political actors—specifically a Germany perceived as morally decadent or overly permissive. For example, Starost Gębski, a PiS representative, claims that there is no discrimination in Poland against LGBTQ+ people, emphasizing that LGBTQ+ individuals can freely access public services such as shops, buses, and hospitals. In a rhetorical maneuver, Gębski compares this supposed openness in Poland with the restrictive practices of Nazi Germany, where only Germans were allowed on certain buses during World War II. His point is twofold: he asserts Poland's moral superiority over Germany by highlighting Polish tolerance, and he uses historical German oppression to dismiss current claims of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people as unfounded. By juxtaposing Polish values of tolerance against historical German exclusion, Gębski reframes contemporary Polish tolerance as a national virtue, using this contrast to dismiss current claims of discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals as unfounded (see Example 1).

Ex. 1: PiS Politicians as victims:

> Starost Gębski repeated several times that we do not discriminate against anyone in the Kielce district. He even gave an example: LGBTQ+ people can use shops, buses, hospitals and streets.

> —You will not find a sign saying that people of a different religion or sexual orientation are not allowed to use them—said Gębski, explaining the lack of discrimination. He spoke of history, but also warned of what was happening on the streets of Western Europe. – Now Germany and France want to teach us about democracy?—he said indignantly—During the Second World War there were only buses for Germans. We have tolerance, democracy and freedom, Gębski proclaimed, ending his speech with the words: "Long live Poland!"[39]

In this way, Gębski reframes historical German oppression as a parallel to contemporary LGBTQ+ discourse, suggesting that claims of discrimination against LGBTQ+ people are as unjustified as if Germans had claimed they were discriminated against during their occupation of Poland. Thus, he implies that any accusation of Polish discrimination is invalid by association with past German aggression. This maneuver positions conservative politicians as upholding true Polish values in contrast to the so-called degeneracy of German influence.

In another version of this bridge-building, LGBTQ+ people are portrayed as victims compared to Poles under Nazi oppression, underscoring the duplicity of German influence. This time, conservative discourse implies that while Germany appears outwardly supportive of progressive rights, it might be perpetuating a new form of exclusion and control (see Example 2).

Ex 2: LGBTQ+ people as victims:

> We cannot accept that the freedom of our state is being violated for anyone. This is a shameful action, which I would compare to the trams that ran during the occupation with signs saying "For Germans only" and no Poles were allowed on them. Now they are trying to exclude LGBTQ+ people.[40]

In example 2, LGBTQ+ people are equated with victims of Nazi-era German policies. Here, the historical trauma of Polish exclusion by Germans is applied to current exclusionary practices of LGBTQ+ individuals, effectively bridging the war threat with the sexual threat by casting both as analogous forms of oppression.

The ideological threat frame, meanwhile, brings a different layer, linking German influence with 'neo-Marxist' ideologies. This frame draws on cultural memories from the post-war Communist era in Poland, wherein Germany is seen not merely as a foreign power but as a conduit for harmful, anti-traditional ideologies. In the context of anti-gender discourse, Germany becomes a symbolic promoter of secularization,

laicism, and anti-Christianity—traits that conservative Polish rhetoric links with threats to Polish values. Neo-Marxism, as given in this frame, represents secular ideologies that are purportedly embraced by Germany and imposed on Poland, directly aligning LGBTQ+ advocacy with a broader leftist agenda that conservatives fear will erode Poland's social fabric (see example 3).

> Ex. 3: LGBTQ+ people as Neo-Marxist left-wing ideologues:
>
>> Let's defend ourselves against the LGBTQ+ ideology and stop listening to these idiocies about human rights or equality. These people are not equal to normal people and we should stop this discussion. There is no doubt that this whole LGBTQ+ ideology, which comes from neo-Marxism, comes from the same root as Hitler's German National Socialism, which is responsible for all the evils of the Second World War, the destruction of Warsaw and the murder of resistance fighters.
>>
>> (Przemysław Czarnek, quoted on LGBTQ+ in wyborcza.pl)[41]

B_Frame Amplification

Section 2 introduced the stereotype of Germans as morally corrupt, pointing out that it was rooted in historical concerns about German influence and cultural decline. For instance, early portrayals of Germans as militaristic and domineering were deeply intertwined with Poland's history of conflict and resistance. Today, conservative media have reframed this stereotype, presenting German influence on LGBTQ+ rights as a form of cultural dominance that challenges Polish values. Section 5 shows the evolution of this stereotype in Polish media to depict LGBTQ+ rights as an extension of German-led moral decay, rebranded as a 'gender ideology,' that threatens Polish society. This rebranding amplifies anxieties about German cultural dominance, portraying it as an ideological threat. Through this adaptive process, old stereotypes persist by being reshaped to fit contemporary ideological narratives.

Media outlets amplify this narrative by portraying LGBTQ+ advocates as 'gender colonizers,' framing Germany's progressive values as a cultural imposition that endangers traditional Polish morality. This aligns with the historical image of Germans as moral corrupters and cultural invaders, highlighting a continuity of ideological subversion attributed to German influence.

Rather than a direct comparison, this amplification projects the stereotype of the German onto LGBTQ+ advocates, casting them as 'gender colonizers' who undermine Polish values. Thus, the historical image of Germans as morally compromised resurfaces, now reimagined within the context of contemporary social issues.

As example 4 shows, the Education Minister, Przemysław Czarnek describes LGBTQ+ advocates as "neo-Marxist ideologues from Germany" who undermine Polish morality and Christian values.

Ex. 4: LGBTQ+ people as gender colonizers:

> The neo-Marxist ideologues from Germany, who are meticulously trying to turn Germans away from Christianity and morality, hope the same will happen in Poland."
>
> (Przemysław Czarnek quoted on LGBTQ+ in oko.press)[42]

Here, LGBTQ+ individuals are not only depicted as morally corrupt but also as agents of a larger German agenda, reinforcing the stereotype of Germans as forces of cultural and moral decline that now manifests through progressive sexual politics.

Moreover, in Examples 5 and 6, LGBTQ+ individuals are portrayed as morally corrupt and sexually deviant, which aligns with the stereotype of German duplicity. The "LGBTQ+ ideology" is described as totalitarian, with proponents supposedly hiding their real motives behind a guise of rights and equality. This framing portrays LGBTQ+ advocacy as insidious, a hidden threat to Polish values rooted in Germany's supposedly morally degraded culture.

Ex. 5: LGBTQ+ people as sexually perverted:

> The totalitarianism of LGBTQ+ ideology and pederasty, the so-called homosexual lifestyle, should be the revolutionary battering ram paving the way for a new Germany.
>
> (Grzegorz Kucharczyk quoted in dorzeczy.pl)[43]

In Example 6, Grzegorz Wierzchowski, a school inspector, warns of an "LGBTQ+ virus" affecting youth and attributes this "infection" to liberal policies in Germany, which he claims promote sexual deviance. Wierzchowski argues that Germany's sex education policies lead to the moral corruption of children, equating LGBTQ+ education with a "virus" that contaminates Polish youth.

Ex. 6: LGBTQ+ people as sexually perverted:

> —It is a virus of dehumanisation of society, dehumanisation of young people and deprivation of their values. The only value is to show that there are no principles and values—he continued and explained—We are in the phase of the LGBTQ+ virus. These actions are not random; it is not accidental that these actions target young people. If anyone doubts this, and I have no doubt, just look at what is happening beyond our western borders, for example in Germany, where there is already compulsory, liberal sex education, where school textbooks include exercises, I am sorry for this example, but it is real, where children, students have to design a brothel and their role in this brothel, either as the person who runs the

brothel or as someone who works in such a brothel. Is this how we want to educate young people? Is this how we want to reduce humanity to sexual desire?[44]

In examples 5 and 6, the stereotype of Germans as proponents of moral corruption is clearly projected onto LGBTQ+ individuals, with German-influenced LGBTQ+ ideology cast as a vector of sexual deviance and cultural decay in Poland.

To understand the dynamics in the following examples, it is useful to consider the political background of Robert Bąkiewicz and the Independence March, both of which have become central symbols in Poland's nationalist media landscape.

Robert Bąkiewicz is a prominent figure in Poland's far-right nationalist movement and served as the president of the Independence March Association, which organizes the annual Independence March in Warsaw. This event, held on November 11th to commemorate Polish independence, has increasingly become a platform for nationalist rhetoric and symbolic political messaging. Under Bąkiewicz's leadership, the march has featured themes opposing the European Union, liberal values, and LGBTQ+ rights—often linking them to foreign threats, especially German influence. His speeches and visual displays frequently invoke historical traumas, particularly those related to World War II and Nazi occupation, to frame contemporary issues as existential threats to Polish identity. Understanding Bąkiewicz's political role and symbolic strategies sheds light on how nationalist rhetoric reactivates collective memory to frame current social movements as cultural invasions.

In example 7, a different type of frame amplification occurs. Here, Robert Bąkiewicz, former president of the Independence March Association, warns that Germans aim to strip Poles of their "cultural and gender identity," equating LGBTQ+ advocacy with foreign ideological occupation. This rhetoric borrows from the stereotype of Germans as aggressive nationalists, adapting it to depict LGBTQ+ people as cultural invaders who threaten Polish traditions and identity, much like the German oppressors of the past.

Ex. 7: Germans as extreme nationalists: Polish nationalist groups

> At this year's Independence March, Robert Bąkiewicz sounded the alarm about Germans wanting to take away Poles' "cultural and even gender identity."

> (About Robert Bąkiewicz's Independence March in wyborcza.pl)[45]

In this example, Bąkiewicz's rhetoric positions LGBTQ+ advocacy as an extension of German influence, describing it as an attempt to enforce ideological conformity and

undermine Polish values. Although the journalist does not endorse Bąkiewicz's views, the reported statements illustrate how nationalist figures apply the stereotype of German fascism to current social issues, amplifying the perceived cultural threat of LGBTQ+ influence by invoking historical trauma.

Frame amplification in Polish media links LGBTQ+ individuals to long-standing German stereotypes of moral decline, anti-Christian sentiment, and cultural aggression. By projecting these historical stereotypes onto LGBTQ+ advocates, this mechanism reinforces negative perceptions, framing them as agents of German influence threatening Poland's social and moral fabric. This strategy serves to mobilize resistance against both perceived German ideological threats and LGBTQ+ rights advocacy in Poland. As outlined in Section 2, the stereotype of Germans as morally corrupt has deep historical roots. In Polish media, this stereotype is now adapted to depict LGBTQ+ rights as a form of 'gender ideology,' an extension of German-led moral decay infiltrating Polish culture.

C_Frame Extension

The mechanism of frame extension operates by introducing symbols from past narratives into new contexts, lending familiar connotations to contemporary issues. For instance, conservative media frame German-led LGBTQ+ advocacy as a form of 'cultural invasion,' drawing parallels to historical German attempts to impose foreign values on Poland. By associating LGBTQ+ rights with German influence, the media bolster a narrative where modern social movements are portrayed as veiled threats to Polish traditions, echoing past concerns of cultural domination. Frame extension adapts historical fears of German cultural dominance to contemporary anxieties around gender and sexuality. In this case, German support for LGBTQ+ initiatives is presented as an invasive ideology, reminiscent of past German invasions. By drawing this connection, right-wing media outlets extend traditional stereotypes of German oppression into the realm of cultural values, recasting historical fears as a present-day warning about moral and cultural decline.

In example 8, the frame of war threat is expanded to include a cultural threat associated with LGBTQ+ rights. During an Independence March, Robert Bąkiewicz displays a banner that reads "Stop Totalitarianism," featuring symbols associated with oppressive regimes—such as the swastika and hammer and sickle—as well as, notably,

the rainbow flag. By including the rainbow flag, Bąkiewicz frames LGBTQ+ advocacy as part of a totalitarian agenda that deceptively promotes 'freedom' while supposedly threatening national integrity. The inclusion of the rainbow flag alongside fascist and communist symbols subtly suggests that LGBTQ+ rights, like the German-led threats of the past, are merely veils hiding an insidious agenda.

Ex. 8: Germans as occupiers, LGBTQ+ people as occupiers:

> In his opening speech, Robert Bąkiewicz said: "No one will convince us that the insurgents fought against the Nazis." The main attraction was a banner reading "Stop Totalitarianism," with a crossed out hammer and sickle, and a swastika, but also a rainbow and a picture of Rafał Trzaskowski.
>
> (About Robert Bąkiewicz's Independence March in oko.press)[46]

In example 9, Polish state media depict "German LGBTQ+ activists" as an invasive force, characterizing them as a hidden threat much like a wartime invasion. Building on the historical view of Germans as invaders, presented in Section 2, conservative media frame LGBTQ+ rights advocacy as a symbolic invasion, associating it with past German attempts to impose values on Poland. This recontextualization intensifies the perception of Germany as a continuous cultural threat. The frame extension mechanism continues in how Polish state-controlled media depict LGBTQ+ advocacy as a symbolic invasion—one that recalls the trauma of World War II. These portrayals often invoke historical German aggression to describe modern social movements, blending fears of moral decline with collective memories of wartime occupation.

Ex. 9: LGBTQ+ people as wartime invasion:

> Even today, state-controlled media often threaten an invasion by "German LGBTQ+ activists" and show pictures of disguised participants in equality parades in the West. In 2019, for example, TVP Info threatened that activists would attack the vulnerable Slavic city of Szczecin after the Berlin parade. In July 2021, there was a wave of outrage in pro-government media after the author of numerous homophobic publications, Professor Dariusz Oko, was convicted by a German court of "inciting hatred" against LGBTQ+ people. "SS men without conviction, but they convict me," Father Oko complained on the online TV channel wPolsce at the time.[47]

This example demonstrates how state-controlled media frame LGBTQ+ people using the metaphor of wartime, specifically by linking them to German invaders. This mechanism of frame extension combines the historical trauma and fear associated with German occupation during World War II with contemporary anxieties about LGBTQ+ rights and activism.

D_Frame Transformation

As discussed in Section 2, Polish perceptions of Germans have historically centered on militaristic aggression and moral decline. Section 5 shows how these stereotypes evolve to fit contemporary ideological narratives, where German support for LGBTQ+ rights is framed not as a direct military threat but as a subtler, ideological invasion. Echoing past aggression, this transformation suggests that Germany poses a cultural and moral threat to Polish values and sovereignty. Frame transformation reinterprets the historical image of German militarism to align with modern cultural conflicts, enabling conservative media to present Germany's progressive stance as part of an ongoing cultural challenge to Polish traditions. This transformation suggests that the stereotype of the German is both resilient and adaptable, able to shift in response to contemporary concerns. Thus, in example 10, Polish conservative discourse contrasts Polish traditionalism with what is portrayed as German moral decline. Ryszard Legutko describes Germans as morally self-righteous yet ultimately self-serving, suggesting that Germany's concern for 'European values' and LGBTQ+ rights is merely a guise for advancing its own interests. This framing builds on the stereotype of German duplicity, positioning Poland as morally superior and resistant to foreign influence, thus reinforcing a narrative of Polish resilience against perceived ideological threats from Germany.

> Ex. 10: German =swindler, Pole =good:
>
>> At the moment, the Germans feel morally responsible; they see themselves as a moral superpower, as a certain German politician sharply put it. So they have a lot to say about it. Of course, this is followed by the ugly politics of promoting their own interests at the expense of the weaker ones. As he explained, the EU elites are "people of rather modest intellectual capacity," which is why they have carved out a few "safe havens" for themselves. These include LGBTQ+ issues, abortion and the centralization of the EU. And that's about all they have, so anyone who gets in their way is immediately declared an enemy.[48]

In example 11, Ela Lachman builds on the theme of German duplicity by portraying Germans as naive or even complicit in allowing dangerous ideologies to infiltrate their educational systems. She suggests that Germans have blindly accepted ideologies that are morally corrosive, seducing children in schools while their parents fail to protest. This characterization emphasizes the stereotype of the German as naive or gullible yet complicit in spreading harmful values under a superficial banner of progressivism. Lachman's remarks imply that while Germans might outwardly embrace progress, they

unwittingly or even deliberately facilitate cultural decay—values from which Poland, in her view, should remain distinct and vigilant.

Ex. 11: German = naive and stupid; Pole = wise:

> On Radio Poznan, [Ela] Lachman said that Poles should learn from the mistakes of the Germans. "How is it that certain ideologies that are dangerous for families are gaining ground in schools, seducing children, and yet parents do not protest?" she wondered.[49]

Through this framing, Lachman reinforces the stereotype of the German as morally duplicitous or blindly complicit, contrasting it with Polish wisdom and prudence. She implies that Poland's adherence to traditional values shields it from the moral and social decline supposedly infecting German society.

If the narrative were reversed, the German's tolerance and progressive stance would morally outshine the Polish commitment to traditional values—illustrated in example 12, where a German perspective might view tolerance as a mark of moral advancement over perceived Polish intolerance.

Ex. 12: German = culturally tolerant: Pole = culturally intolerant

> Daniel Michalski, also known as Charlotte Drag Queen: "I'm taking part in the march because I have close ties to Szczecin. I was born here, my adventure with LGBTQ+ activism began here, and I met many wonderful people here who supported me from the beginning when I discovered my homosexuality. Szczecin deserves a march because it is the gateway to the West. An hour away from the city is Germany, where LGBTQ+ rights are the norm, not something exclusive."[50]

This contrast highlights the polarized narratives around German-Polish relations within Polish discourse, where the German figure is alternately framed as a duplicitous or naive moral risk to Polish values, or, from a progressive view, as a figure of tolerance whose openness Poland might aspire to. These transformations of the German stereotype illustrate the adaptability of historical images to contemporary debates, shaping public perceptions around moral and cultural identity in Poland.

The kind of framing described above contributes to the emergence of new qualities of understanding reality. On the one hand, such framing is of a re-traumatising nature; in this case, the aim is to maintain and enforce the experience of past traumas and to interpret reality from a victim's perspective: the 'here and now' is as threatened as the 'then.' On the other hand, the framing is of a traumatising nature; in this case, it speaks of new threats (LGBTQ+ communities), and the resulting traumatic crises that have not yet occurred but are surely imminent. An important question remains: to what extent

framing, in this case of LGBTQ+ people or Germans, has real effects on interpersonal relationships.

The abstracted examples (1–12) associated with the image of the German are not equally represented in the outlet studied.
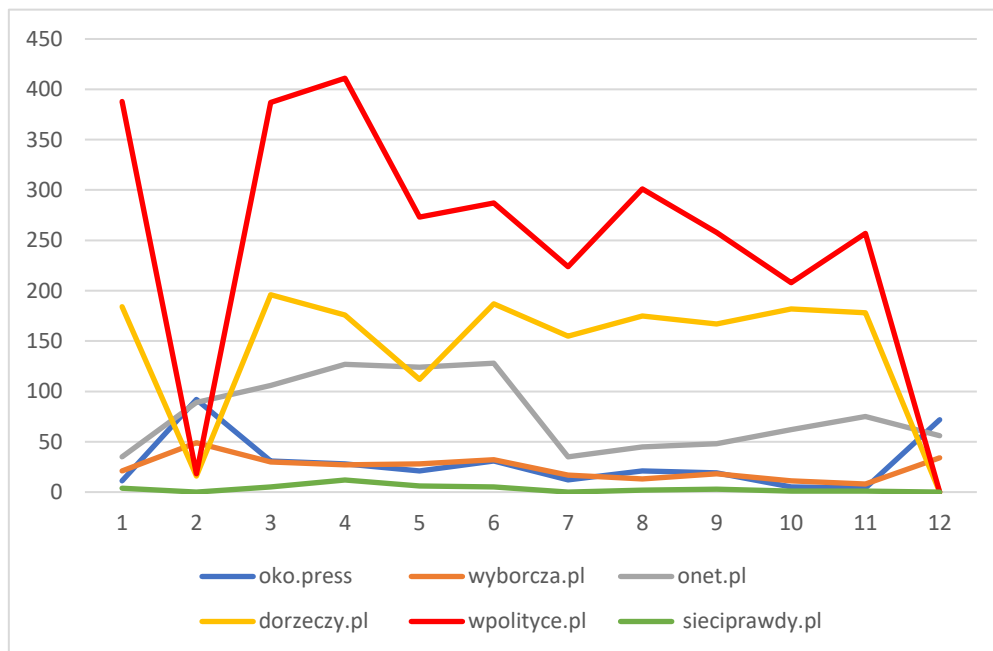

Fig. 11: The number of examples and the analyzed outlets. The number of articles analyzed is 5820, from which I extracted individual samples assigned to examples (1–12) (N = 6344). In exceptional cases, an article was assigned to more than one variable (1–12). The data for each group are distributed as follows: oko.press = 347, wyborcza.pl = 288, onet.pl = 930, dorzeczy.pl = 1728, wpolityce.pl = 3012, sieciprawdy.pl = 39. Source: own illustration.

In example 2, where LGBTQ+ people are portrayed as victims (compared to the stereotype of a German war criminal), and 12, in which Germans are portrayed as representatives of a culture of tolerance (compared to Poles as representatives of a culture of intolerance), are generally more frequent in media classified as left-wing and left-liberal (oko.press, wyborcza.pl, onet.pl). Conversely, in media classified as conservative-liberal and conservative (dorzeczy.pl, wpolityce.pl, sieciprawdy.pl), examples 2 and 12 appear sporadically in relation to the overall data (in the case of example 2) or not at all, as in the case of the positive portrayal of Germans (example 12).

It makes sense to return synthetically to the research questions posed. The discussions show that the stereotype and figure of the German, associated with a specific set of characteristics, are part of framing mechanisms. Depending on one's

political orientation, these 'German' characteristics can be attributed to, compared with, projected onto, negated or replaced by the characteristics of LGBTQ+ people or representatives of the authorities. We also observed that in Polish gender discourse the figure of the German is used in the context of threat framing and Polish-German relations. Furthermore, the examples show that a positive understanding of the figure of the German appears only in liberal texts and relates to the framing of Polish-German relations. On the contrary, the stereotype of the German oppressor and torturer is readily invoked, regardless of the accepted worldview. Depending on the narrative presented, its characteristics are transferred either to the government's camp or to LGBTQ+ individuals. The stereotype of the German– as a fundamentally mean and duplicitous person—is often described in the literature. Its origins are closely linked to the time of the Kulturkampf in the Prussian partition territories.

While this study focuses on anti-German narratives in Poland, it is important to acknowledge that historical stereotypes have existed in both directions. Hubert Orłowski, in his work *Polnische Wirtschaft: Zum deutschen Polendiskurs der Neuzeit*, explores how German discourse has historically constructed anti-Polish stereotypes, depicting Poland as economically backward and culturally inferior.[51] This reciprocal process of stereotyping highlights the broader dynamics of national identity formation through media and public discourse. Recognizing both perspectives provides a more nuanced understanding of the role of framing in shaping cross-border perceptions.

6_Conclusions

The analysis of framing and stereotypes within Polish gender discourse, specifically concerning the representation of Germans and LGBTQ+ people, illuminates complex mechanisms of sociopolitical narrative construction. By employing the framing mechanisms identified by Snow et al., such as frame bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation, the discourse effectively manipulates historical and cultural references to evoke specific emotional responses and reinforce ideological positions. The juxtaposition of German wartime oppression with current political and social conflicts serves to retraumatize collective memory, thereby strengthening existing stereotypes and framing new societal groups (e.g., LGBTQ+ people) as contemporary threats. This manipulation is evident in the examples provided, where politicians and

media figures equate LGBTQ+ rights with historical German aggression, thus invoking a potent and emotionally charged narrative.

Additionally, the amplification of perceived threats and the extension of war-related frames into sexual and ideological domains demonstrate the adaptability and resilience of these stereotypes. Such framing not only influences public perception but also shapes policy and societal attitudes toward marginalized groups. This research highlights the need to understand framing strategies within political discourse, as they play a crucial role in sustaining and altering societal narratives and stereotypes. Further exploration of the interactions between media representation, political rhetoric, and public perception is essential to fully grasp the implications of these framing practices on social cohesion and intergroup relations.

As discussed in section 2, historical stereotypes cast Germans as authoritarian and morally compromised, traits historically linked to fears of militaristic and ideological oppression. In section 5, this stereotype has evolved, with contemporary conservative media positioning German support for LGBTQ+ rights as a cultural threat. This reframing reinterprets Germany's role as an ideological force, perceived not merely as a past military threat but as a present-day cultural challenger to Polish values. By adapting these stereotypes to fit modern issues, conservative media create a narrative that aligns with longstanding cultural anxieties while addressing contemporary ideological conflicts.

Key conclusions are as follows:

1. Integration of stereotypes into frames: the representation of Germans within Polish gender discourse is intricately woven into frames that simultaneously address national trauma and current socio-political issues. This results in a dynamic where historical stereotypes are repurposed to frame contemporary discussions about LGBTQ+ individuals.

2. Mechanisms of frame modification: the mechanisms described by Snow et al. (frame bridging, frame amplification, frame extension, and frame transformation) effectively illustrate how stereotypes are sustained and adapted. For instance, frame bridging links the war threat to the sexual threat, creating a narrative that juxtaposes past German oppression with present-day LGBTQ+ issues.

3. Impact on public perception: these framing strategies significantly impact the public perception of both Germans and LGBTQ+ individuals. By equating LGBTQ+ rights with historical German oppression, these frames foster polarized attitudes that affect not only public opinion but also policy decisions and social cohesion.

4. Role of political and public discourse: politicians and media play a crucial role in perpetuating and modifying these frames. Statements from public figures often initiate or reinforce the association between Germans and LGBTQ+ people, which are then amplified through media commentary and coverage.

5. Identification of basic frames: four primary frames were identified, each deeply influenced by stereotypes about Germans: war threat, ideological threat, sexual threat, and German-Polish relations. These frames are subject to continuous adaptation and reinforcement, which perpetuates their relevance in public discourse.

The study of framing mechanisms sheds light on the role of media in sustaining cultural divisions. Understanding these framing strategies allows both consumers of media content and policymakers to recognize the impact of historical narratives on present-day discourse. Further research on the influence of media framing on public opinion and policy decisions could contribute to a more balanced, inclusive public discourse in the future.

_Appendix

Modifications, Frames and Presented Examples:

This appendix summarizes the analytical framework used in the article by mapping each example to one of Snow et al.'s key framing mechanisms: frame bridging, amplification, extension, and transformation. It is designed to offer readers a clear and concise reference for how each case study fits into the broader theoretical structure. By organizing the material in this way, the appendix supports the transparency of the analysis and helps readers trace how different rhetorical strategies are used to construct stereotypes around German influence and LGBTQ+ identities in Polish media and political discourse.

A. Frame Bridging

Frame: Threat of War (Re-traumatization) + Frame: Sexual Threat (Traumatization)

1. Victim: Politicians of Law and Justice

2. Victim: LGBTQ+ People

Frame: Ideological Threat (Re-traumatization) + Frame: Sexual Threat (Traumatization)

3. Neo-Marxist left-wing Ideologues: LGBTQ+ people

B. Frame Amplification

Frame: Sexual Threat (Traumatization) + Frame: Threat of War (Re-traumatization) /

Frame: Ideological Threat (Re-traumatization)

4. Gender Colonizers: LGBTQ+ people

5. Sexually Perverted Homosexuals: LGBTQ+ people

6. Sexually Perverted People: LGBTQ+ people

7. Germans as Extreme Nationalists: Polish Nationalist Groups

C. Frame Extension

Frame: Threat of War (Re-traumatization) → Frame: Sexual Threat (Traumatization)

8. German as Occupier: LGBTQ+ people as Occupiers

9. Wartime occupation: LGBTQ+ occupation

D. Frame Transformation

Frame: German-Polish Relations ← Frame: Sexual Threat (Traumatization)

11. German = Naive and Stupid: Pole = Wise

12. German = Representative of a Culture of Tolerance: Pole =Representative of a Culture of Intolerance

_Endnotes

[1] The analyses presented in this paper were carried out with the support of the Deutsches-Polen Institut scholarship in 2023.

[2] Agnieszka Graff and Elżbieta Korolczuk, *Anti-Gender Politics in the Populist Moment* (London: Routledge, 2021), 45–47. Doi: 10.4324/9781003133520.

[3] Robert M. Entman, "Framing: Toward Clarification of a Fractured Paradigm," *Journal of Communication* 43, no. 4 (1993): 51–58. Doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x.

[4] Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow, "Framing Processes and Social Movements: An Overview and Assessment," *Annual Review of Sociology*, no. 26 (2000): 611–639.

[5] Entman, "Framing."

[6] Dennis Chong and James N. Druckman, "A Theory of Framing and Opinion Formation in Competitive Elite Environments," *Journal of Communication* 57 (2007): 99–118. Doi: 10.1111/j.1460-2466.2006.00331.x.

7   Benford and Snow, "Framing Processes"

8   Baldwin Van Gorp, "The Constructionist Approach to Framing: Bringing Culture Back In," *Journal of Communication* 57 (2006): 60–78. Doi: 10.1111/j.0021-9916.2007.00329.x.

9   Robert M. Entman and Andrew Rojecki, "Freezing Out the Public: Elite and Media Framing of the U.S. Anti-Nuclear Movement," *Political Communication* 10 (1993): 155–173. Doi: 10.1080/10584609.1993.9962973.

10   Elżbieta Korolczuk and Agnieszka Graff, "Gender as *Ebola from Brussels*: The Anti-Colonial Frame and the Rise of Illiberal Populism," *Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 43, no. 4 (2018): 797–821; David Paternotte and Roman Kuhar, *Anti-Gender Campaigns in Europe: Mobilizing Against Equality* (London: Rowman & Littlefield, 2017).

11   Sabine Hark and Paula-Irene Villa, *Anti-Genderismus: Sexualität und Geschlecht als Schauplätze aktueller politischer Auseinandersetzungen* (Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag, 2015), 122–123.

12   Janusz Tazbir, "Die 'Kreuzritter'—kurze Geschichte und lange Legende," in *Deutsche und Polen: 100 Schlüsselbegriffe*, eds. Ewa Kobylińska, Andreas Lawaty and Stephan Rüdigem (München/Zürich: Serie PIEPER, 1992), 28–34, here: 30.

13   Drawing from a satirical magazine, 1907. The German Eastern Marches Society (H-K-T), armed with the sword [that looked like Teutonic Knights—E.W.W.] rushes through the Polish bed against the 'scarecrow'. // "But as they tried to get through the mud, they got themselves into it;" *Djabeł*, December 15, 1907, 4. The image satirically depicts the German Eastern Marches Society (H-K-T) as misguided and ineffective in its attempts to assert control over Polish lands. In the left panel, a figure resembling a Teutonic Knight, symbolizing German militarism, rides a pig—a humorous choice that mocks the dignity and seriousness of their mission. Charging toward a scarecrow, this knight embodies the futility of their aggression. In the right panel, the same figure is stuck in the mud, symbolizing the self-defeating nature of German expansionist ambitions. The caricature thus portrays Germans as authoritarian conquerors whose aggressive efforts ultimately end in ridicule and failure. This critique reflects Polish views of Germanization policies as outdated and impractical, with the pig and mud underscoring the foolishness of these imperialistic endeavors.

14   Wojciech Wrzesiński, *Sąsiad czy wróg? Ze studiów nad kształtowaniem się obrazu Niemca w Polsce w latach 1795–1933* (Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2007), 42–44.

15   Drawing from a satirical magazine, 1902. "How times change. // Germans once // Germans today"; *Mucha*, August 29, 1902, 1. The image illustrates the contrast between two stereotypical representations of German society: one emphasizing a historical association with intellectual and cultural achievements, and the other focusing on militarism and industrialism. In the left panel, "Germans of many years ago" are represented by a figure surrounded by books bearing the names of influential German writers and philosophers like Heine, Schiller, Goethe, Kant, and Leibniz. This portrayal suggests a time when German society was associated with intellectual and cultural accomplishments.

16   Stanisław Stomma, *Czy fatalizm wrogości? Refleksje o stosunkach polsko-niemieckich 1871–1933* (Kraków: Oficyna Wydawnicza ATUT, 2005), 27–31.

17   Drawing from a satirical magazine, 1919. "Prussian Eagle and Polish Hand Fig"; *Mucha*, February 21, 1919, 3. The image portrays the Prussian eagle, a traditional symbol of German militarism and nationalism, juxtaposed with a defiant Polish fist. The eagle wears a spiked helmet, associated with Prussian and German military authority, representing the aggressive and authoritarian nature stereotypically attributed to Germans by Polish society. The eagle looms over a map of Central and Eastern Europe, with its presence symbolizing Germany's imperialistic ambitions to dominate the

region. The Polish hand, making a 'fig' gesture—a thumb between two fingers—represents a popular and defiant Polish symbol of resistance, roughly equivalent to a rude gesture or a refusal to submit. This hand confronts the Prussian eagle directly, symbolizing Poland's resistance against German attempts at control and its rejection of German militarism and nationalism.

18   Ingo Loose, "Feindbild Preußen—Deutschland? Inklusions- und Exklusions-prozesse in den Anfangsjahren der Zweiten Polnischen Republik am Beispiel der Region Wielkopolska, 1918–1925," in *Die Destruktion des Dialogs: Zur innenpolitischen Instrumentalisierung negativer Fremdbilder und Feindbilder. Polen, Tschechien, Deutschland und die Niederlande im Vergleich 1900 bis heute*, ed. Dieter Bingen (Wiesbaden: Herrasowitz, 2007), 49–65, here: 52.

19   Drawing from a satirical magazine, 1937, "Deadlock"; *Szpilki*, February 14, 1937, 5. The image titled "Sytuacja bez wyjścia" [deadlock], drawn by E. Umański in 1937, uses a maze of interconnected swastikas to symbolize the stereotype of Nazi Germany as an inescapable and oppressive force. The lone, trapped figure illustrates the perceived helplessness of individuals under Nazi rule, reinforcing the notion of Germany as wholly dominated by a dangerous and authoritarian ideology. Created in a period marked by Nazi expansion and aggression, this satirical piece reflects a Polish perspective that equates Germany with the oppressive Nazi regime, portraying all Germans as trapped within—or complicit in—this ideological 'deadlock.' This visual metaphor underscores the stereotype of Germans as dangerous Nazis, highlighting the sense of entrapment and totalitarian control associated with Nazi Germany in the late 1930s.

20   Stefan Papée, *Henryk Sienkiewicz i jego dzieło* (Warsaw: Państwowy Instytut Wydawniczy, 1960), 78.

21   Piotr Zwierzchowski, "Westerplatte w kinie nowej pamięci: Ideologia, heroizm i rozterki dowództwa," in *Historia w Filmie Polskim*, ed. Marek Hendrykowski (Poznań: Wydawnictwo Naukowe UAM, 2009): 45–62.

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24   See Dz.U. 2016 poz. 25 (Official Journal of the Republic of Poland 2016, Position 25), January 7, 2016, <https://isap.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU20160000025>.

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