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Borders in Flux: The Changing Conceptualization of Borders from a Cross-Temporal and Cross-Cultural Perspective

1. Introduction

The present study investigates border representation in official discourses at times of crisis. More specifically, our focus here is on parliamentary debates concerning borders that took place in 2015 and 2022 in four European countries: two Central European, i.e., Austria and Poland, and two Western, i.e., France and the UK. Our

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objective is to explore variation in the representation of borders across these different cultures, across time, and across political affiliations. The present study links to the concept of this special issue of Slavia Meridionalis in two ways: it addresses the question of how political actors, in our case members of parliament, communicate when doing politics, and how the key concept of European politics, i.e., border(s), is conceptualized and reconceptualized relative to the time, country and political party a given MP represents. In the following part of the introduction, we address the Schengen Agreement and provide a succinct overview of the literature about the conceptualization of borders within social and political sciences.

The Schengen area finds its origins in the Schengen Agreement of June 1985, an intergovernmental convention aimed at lifting border controls, initially signed by Belgium, France, (West) Germany, Luxembourg and the Netherlands (Carrera et al., 2023). As a result, "with […] the delegation of power and sovereignty from the national to the European level, both the concept and the reality of the border have evolved" (Schurmans, 2015, pp. 132, 134). On a similar note, Balibar (2002, p. 74) claims "that the notions of interiority and exteriority, which form the basis of the representation of the border, are undergoing a veritable earthquake".

Borders are a source of tension and violence, a place of suffering (Schurmans, 2015), a place where "the confrontation with the foreigner happens" (Balibar, 2002, p. 71), but they are also a place of well-being (if only for a few), "a place of inventiveness, of resistance to barriers set by domestic state authorities, and […] a potential site for alternative economic activities and multiple opportunities" (Schurmans, 2015, p. 137). Particularly in the global North, there has been a shift in the perception of borders: from mere dividing lines between countries and markers of national independence to "a demarcation between the legally acknowledged citizen and the officially non-existent subject." Borders reinforce both the exclusion of those uninvited and the preoccupation with security on the part of those within (Bauman, 2004, 2007, as cited in Schurmans, 2015, pp. 139–140); they are a reification of the borderline between the legal and the illegal.

The Schengen Agreement, effectively erasing physical borders, has unfortunately also blurred the "virtual boundaries regarding crime, terrorism, and illicit flows of migrants" (Kacowicz et al., 2021, p. 148). This kind of anxious discourse, as Simmons and Shaffer (2023, p. 663) observe, is a particularly useful tool in the strategy of persuasion aimed at advancing desired agendas and securing legislative votes. Thus, the issue of borders, which symbolize "the state's power, control, legitimacy, and permanence" (Simmons & Shaffer, 2023, p. 663), is not

infrequently the go-to device, instrumental in othering, exacerbating polarizing and biasing addressees towards border securitization. The European migration crisis of 2015 and tensions at the EU's eastern flank, namely the border between Poland and Belarus, resulted in 6 EU members unlawfully reintroducing internal border controls (Carrera et al., 2023). The questions we are asking are, therefore, as follows: (1) Did the said migration crisis and the tensions at Poland's eastern border, including the Russian aggression against Ukraine, cause a shift in the conceptualization of BORDER between 2015 and 2022? (2) Is this shift pan-European or nation specific? (3) Does it depend on the party affiliation of the speaker? In this respect, the present study responds to Vollmer's (2017) call for research on how the concept of BORDER is represented in national policy domains.

2. Method and data

2.1. Method

The present study employs the analytical framework of Critical Discourse Analysis, which is approached from the perspective of corpus-based methodology. More particularly, a large sample of utterances representing political discourse was analyzed qualitatively, and the complex metadata thus obtained were then modeled quantitatively. The former stage of this analysis involved close reading of the broadly contextualized examples and their annotation for a set of discursive features relevant to the research questions addressed in the study. This was followed by statistical analyses of the annotated data with a view to establishing multifactorial patterns in the representation of borders in parliamentary debates. Such a combination of qualitative and quantitative data analysis is typical of the Behavioral Profile Approach, as developed in Cognitive Linguistics (e.g., Divjak, 2010; Geeraerts et al., 1994; Glynn, 2009; Glynn & Robinson, 2014; Gries, 2003; Gries & Divjak, 2009). The central advantage of combining qualitative and quantitative analysis is that this latter step allows us to reveal statistical tendencies in complex metadata. What is more, it also enables us to test hypotheses empirically and ultimately extrapolate beyond our sample to make generalizations about the population under analysis. It should be noted that the hypotheses in the present study are formulated on the basis of the exploratory results obtained through multiple correspondence analysis (see Section 4, Figures 1–3).

2.2. Data

The data for the present study come from a subsection of the latest (4.1) version of the ParlaMint corpus, namely ParlaMint-GB (124,744,599 words), ParlaMint-FR (48,841,818), ParlaMint-AT (59,172,148) and ParlaMint-PL (35,327,340). ParlaMint 4.1. is a set of twenty-nine uniformly encoded, comparable, multilingual corpora of parliamentary proceedings, rich in metadata and linguistically annotated (Erjavec et al., 2023). Transcriptions of the included debates typically offer from three to eight years' worth of data, marked not only for the term, session and meeting, but also for the speaker's name, gender, status and party affiliation (Erjavec et al., 2024).

Of the four selected corpora, only two (GB, PL) contain records of both the lower and upper chambers. Consequently, to ensure maximum comparability, when the transcripts were being concordanced, the "parliamentary body" parameter was set to "lower house". The search was further narrowed to speeches delivered by MPs during the plenary sittings of the respective parliaments in 2015 and 2022, both witnesses to mass population displacement caused by the Syrian Civil War and the Russian Federation's aggression against Ukraine. The seven resultant datasets are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Keywords: Observed frequencies.

Language	Keyword	Dates	Nº of hits
English	*border(s)*	22/07–22/12/2015	567
		22/02–18/07/2022	663
German	*Grenze(n)*	14/01–10/12/2015	447
		23/02–12/10/2022	174
French	*frontière(s)*	03/01–29/06/2022	76
Polish	*granica*[1]	12/11–31/12/2015	139
		23/02–30/06/2022	429

[1] different paradigmatic forms

From each dataset, approximately one hundred concordance lines were selected, and care was taken that a given speaker featured once per debate. Each line was then carefully checked for relevance of the keyword. In this process, any semantically irrelevant uses were removed, particularly including contexts in which the keyword served as a modifier (e.g., *border control*). As a result of this inspection, the number of utterances retained in the dataset were narrowed down to a sample of 602 examples. The general summary of the data with respect to keyword and year is presented in Table 2.

Table 2. Data summary.

Year / keyword	*border*	*frontière*	*granica*	*Grenze*	**Total**
2015	99	-	50	89	**238**
2022	130	77	100	57	**364**
Total	**229**	**77**	**150**	**146**	**602**

The data were then analyzed qualitatively for a number of relevant variables and their corresponding features, as discussed and exemplified in Section 3.

3. Qualitative data analysis

The first step in the preparation of the coding schema consisted in a critical review of literature about immigration and discourses of immigration from law, sociology, political science and discourse studies. The aim was to create a list of possible features used to describe borders that could be a starting point for the present analysis. One of the recurring themes was the materiality of borders in the security reports, as contrasted with the abstract notion of borders and their definitions in sociology and political science. Yet, examples which referred to the physical barriers in our data were scarce, therefore the border materiality variable could not be used for the quantitative analyses. Similarly, much attention was devoted in the literature to the function of borders as a barrier for immigrants in their attempt to reach the safety and prosperity of the host country, and their function as protection of the host

country's population from the unknown. We were hoping to be able to determine which of the two functions is referred to in the parliamentary debates. Unfortunately, this category turned out to be ambiguous as borders were simultaneously described as providing safety for the host country's citizens and an obstacle for immigrants. While purely qualitative analysis could look in detail at a selected number of such examples and dwell on this ambiguity, the combination of qualitative and quantitative methods required us to abandon this category as well.

The review of Baker et al. (2008) and Joris and De Cock (2019) led to the formulation of a number of possible topics of discourse that could be used for data coding. Some of them turned out to appear frequently in our corpus (e.g., economic issues, security issues, immigration figures), while others did not appear in the discussion of borders (aid supplies, transit, civil society response). This does not mean that these themes did not appear in the debates at all: they just did not appear in the vicinity of the keyword, i.e., *border*(*s*). The topics identified during our literature review were further elaborated through iterative close-reading analysis. Regular training sessions for the three coders (authors of the article), including the discussions of potential new coding categories emerging bottom up, lasted from February to May 2024 and ended with the final list of variables that could be identified in our data, and features they could be divided into.

In the final round of coding, the data were annotated for a set of variables and their corresponding features presented in Table 3. The first three variables were assigned automatically based on the information extracted from the corpora, whereas the remaining four variables required close reading of the contextualized examples. This was particularly true in the case of topic of discourse, whether broad or narrow, and semantic prosody.

In the remainder of this section, we zoom in on a number of examples from our dataset that provide a clear illustration of some of the features presented in Table 3. For the sake of simplicity and brevity, our discussion is organized around semantic prosody, starting with positive prosody, which is followed by neutral and, finally, negatively valenced utterances for a variety of topics of discourse.

The three features of semantic prosody were assigned based on the axiological value associated with the lexical context surrounding the keyword for BORDER in the four languages. If the immediate co-text was clearly positive, the semantic prosody of a given utterance concerning border representation was tagged as positive,

as is exemplified in (1a)–(1e). Likewise, if the context surrounding the keywords was clearly negative, semantic prosody was annotated accordingly, as illustrated in (2a)–(2e). Finally, in utterances devoid of explicitly positive or negative valence, semantic prosody was annotated as neutral, as is shown in (3a)–(3d). For both positive and negative semantic prosody, the relevant contextual cues that served as the basis of annotation are underlined. With regard to topics of discourse, two levels of granularity were introduced, with broader and more general topics on the one hand, and more specific and detailed ones on the other.

Table 3. Qualitative analysis: Variables and features.

Variable	Feature
Temporal frame	2015, 2022
Source country	UK, Austria, Poland, France
Party orientation (simplified)	Center, Center Right, Center Left, Left, Right
Border location	Country external borders, Country internal borders, EU-external, EU-internal, General, Specific other – EU, Specific other – Non-EU, Syria – Iraq – Türkiye, Ukraine – Russia – Belarus
Topic of discourse (broad)	Administrative issues, Brexit, Crime, Emigration, Environment, EU-internal, Immigration, Internal politics, International politics, Migration, Symbolic representation, Terrorism, Trade, War
Topic of discourse (narrow)	Branding, Economic issues & Trade, Freedom of movement, Healthcare, Humanitarian crisis, Human trafficking, Immigration figures, Legislative issues, Natural disasters, Police negligence, Political issues, Pollution & energy, Remembrance, Security issues, Transportation
Semantic prosody	Positive, Negative, Neutral

1. **Positive semantic prosody**

a. *I understand we have to work together on renewables, but we are setting such a good example with Hinkley Point, on the* ***border*** *with my constituency, which is a low-carbon energy commitment that will generate 25,000 jobs, which will be terrific …*
(UK 2015, Centre, ToD: Pollution & Energy)

b. *ustawa ma na celu rozszerzenie oferty nauczania języka polskiego – co jest bardzo ważne za **granicą** – przez wprowadzenie możliwości organizowania w szkołach polskich oddziałów dziecięcych dla dzieci w wieku 3–6 lat.*
'the bill aims to expand the offer of Polish language teaching – which is very important abroad – by introducing the possibility of organizing classes in Polish schools for children aged 3–6.'
(Poland 2022, Right, ToD: Social issues)

c. *We are looking to a single trade window by the end of 2023, which will lower the barriers to trade from around the world and improve the fluidity of our **borders**. Why? Because that benefits our economy, even if we do it unilaterally, and that is fundamentally important.*
(UK 2022, Centre, ToD: Economic issues)

d. *Dass es gelungen ist, diese Grenze zu öffnen, das verdanken wir nicht diesen Nationalisten, sondern das verdanken wir der europäischen Einigung …*
'We do not owe the fact that we succeeded in opening this border to these nationalists, but to European unification.'
(Austria 2022, Centre, ToD: Freedom of movement)

e. *Je me réjouis que le Gouvernement ait identifié comme axe prioritaire de la présidence française du Conseil de l'Union européenne celui d'une Europe souveraine, capable de maîtriser ses **frontiers** extérieures et de relever le défi migratoire, en redéfinissant une organisation politique qui nous permette de défendre nos valeurs de fraternité et de solidarité, notre tradition d'accueil et le droit d'asile inventé jadis sur le continent européen …*
'I am delighted that the Government has identified as a priority focus of the French presidency of the Council of the European Union that of a sovereign Europe, capable of controlling its external borders and addressing the migration challenge, by redefining a political organization which enables us to defend our values of fraternity and solidarity, our tradition of hospitality, and the right of asylum invented long ago on the European continent.'
(France 2022, Centre, ToD: Humanitarian crisis)

2. Negative semantic prosody

a. *The decision by some Governments in Europe to close borders has severely impacted their neighbours, thus exacerbating the humanitarian crisis.*
(UK 2015, Centre, ToD: Humanitarian crisis)

b. *Niestety chorzy z Polski są często zmuszani do samodzielnego organizowania zbiórek i wyjazdów za granicę w celu kontynuowania leczenia, którego koszt wynosi nawet 87 tys. zł miesięcznie.*
'Unfortunately, patients from Poland are often forced to raise funds and travel abroad on their own in order to continue treatment, the cost of which is up to 87,000 PLN per month.'
(Poland 2022, Left, ToD: Healthcare)

c. *there were only three choices: land border, sea border or some form of all-UK alignment. The Prime Minister made his choice. He negotiated a sea border. He knew that it involved checks, and then he lied to the Unionist community about it.*
(UK 2022, Centre, ToD: Political issues)

d. *Da wird ein Beispiel aus der Slowakei gebracht – schade, dass die bürgerliche Vernunft an unseren Grenzen irgendwie versickern muss, das ist sehr eigenartig –, in dem gezeigt wird, dass dieser Weg nicht zwangsläufig ist …*
'An example from Slovakia is given – it's a shame that bourgeois common sense somehow has to disappear at our borders; that's very strange – which shows that this path is not inevitable.'
(Austria, 2015, Right, ToD: Political issues)

e. *Souvenons-nous à cet instant, … , du nombre des conflits de **frontiers** qui s'expriment encore d'une façon ou d'une autre sur le sol du vieux continent.*
'Let us remember at this moment, …, the number of border conflicts which are still expressed in one way or another on the soil of the old continent.'
(France 2022, Left, ToD: Political issues)

3. Neutral semantic prosody

a. *aplikacja mObywatel będzie traktowana w polskim państwie na równi z dowodem osobistym, wyłączając kwestie przekraczania granic.*
'The mObywatel application will be treated in the Polish state on an equal footing with an ID card, excluding border crossing issues.'
(Poland 2022, Right, ToD: Legislative issues)

b. *Od 10 maja na polsko-ukraińskiej granicy obserwujemy trend, w ramach którego więcej osób wyjeżdża z Polski, niż do Polski przyjeżdża.*
'Since May 10, we have been observing a trend on the Polish-Ukrainian border, in which more people are leaving Poland than coming to Poland.'
(Poland 2022, Right, ToD: Immigration Figures)

c. *Sie haben auch den heutigen Gipfel angesprochen, wo es darum ging, durch geordnete Lenkung an der Grenze in Spielfeld eine Lösung zu finden.*
'You also mentioned today's summit, which was about finding a solution through orderly management at the border in Spielfeld.'
(Austria 2015, Centre, ToD: Security issues)

d. *… un test de dépistage à l'issue de leur quarantaine, ce qui constitue une mesure de renforcement sanitaire aux **frontières**. Le projet de loi comprend également un article 3, qui n'est pas lié à la crise sanitaire …*
'… a screening test at the end of their quarantine, which constitutes a health reinforcement measure at the borders. The bill also includes an article 3, which is not linked to the health crisis …'
(France 2022, Centre, ToD: Healthcare)

For a variety of reasons, neither the category of semantic prosody nor that of topic of discourse, irrespective of the degree of specificity of the latter, were straightforward in their annotation. Most importantly, it was not uncommon that multiple topics of discourse were touched upon in a single utterance, or that both positively and negatively valenced language was used to talk about borders by one and the same speaker. In such situations, it was the lexical cues that were closest to the keyword that guided our decision-making process. In addition, it should be repeated here that we had several training sessions in the course of the qualitative data analysis, and any cases that remained unclear were consulted. Examples for which no consensus could be reached were removed from the dataset.

4. Results and discussion

This section presents the quantitative results of our analysis and is structured around our three research questions. In each case, we start with an exploratory analysis in the form of correspondence analysis and then turn to a confirmatory technique, which is logistic regression analysis for research questions 1 and 2, and loglinear analysis with mosaic plot visualization for research question 3. Correspondence analysis (see, e.g., Glynn, 2014) is a statistical technique used to represent the patterns in a multidimensional data set in the form of a two-dimensional plot. This representation allows us to observe multivariate tendencies in the data sample on the basis of relative distances among the datapoints. More specifically, the greater the proximity among datapoints, the greater their degree of association. It should be noted, however, that the distances are only relative since this technique reduces the multidimensional space of interactions among the datapoints to just two dimensions. While this method makes possible the exploration of complex datasets in search of frequency-based multivariate associations of contextual features of usage, it has one limitation: it is not informative of the statistical significance of the patterns thus revealed, therefore it does not permit any predictions or generalization beyond the sample. Logistic regression, on the other hand, allows us to identify statistically significant correlations in a data set and to create a predictive model. Finally, loglinear analysis can be easily used for sets of data in which the dependent variable has more than two levels, simultaneously accounting for possible interactions among variables. Similarly to logistic regression analysis, this technique can be used for hypothesis testing and data modeling. Using these three methods of statistical analysis, we can

formulate hypotheses through the analysis of correspondence analysis plots and then test them with logistic regression or loglinear analysis.

4.1. Variation in BORDER representation across time

Our first research question concerns variation in BORDER representation between the critical events that occurred in 2015 and 2022. To address this question, we first conducted a correspondence analysis to identify associations between the two years for which political debates were analyzed and three other variables in our data, i.e., border location, topic of discourse, and semantic prosody. The results of this analysis are presented in Figure 1.

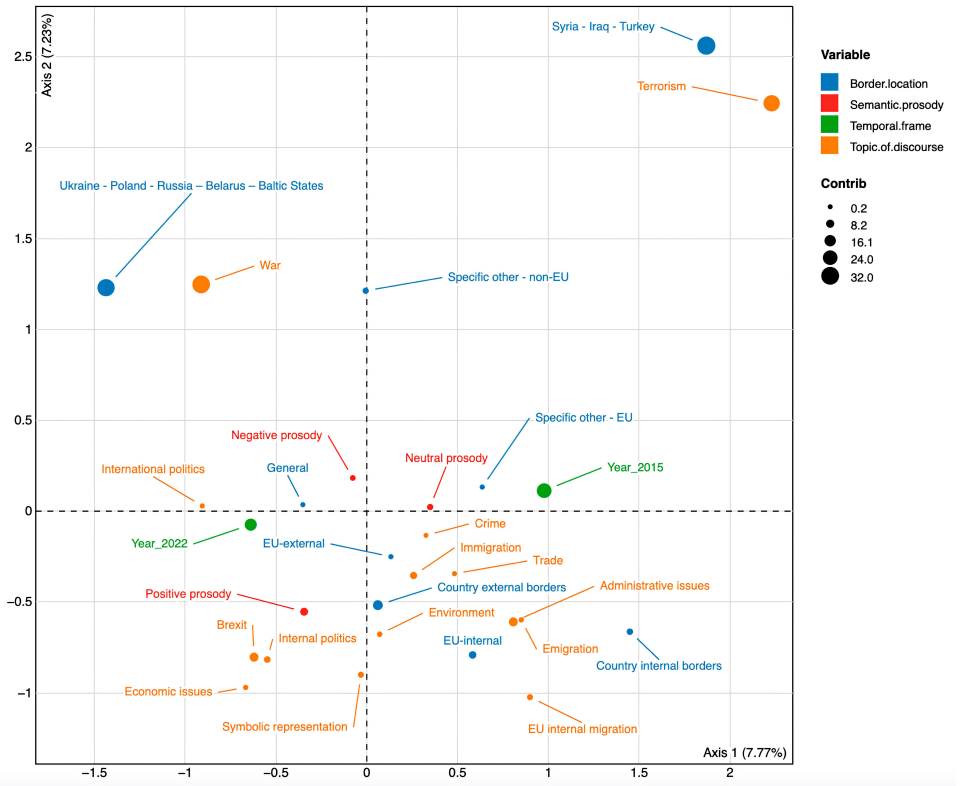


Figure 1. Correspondence analysis for variation in BORDER representation with respect to year.

A general observation that can be made based on the visualization in Figure 1 is that the two years form distinct clusters of features and, given the size of their respective datapoints, they themselves constitute important variables contributing to the distribution of the data in the plot. Let us discuss the two clusters in turn.

Generally speaking, in our data the 2015 political discourse is associated with the features located in the right-hand half of the plot. A particularly close association here is that with debates concerning terrorism in the context of the borders of Syria, Iraq, and Türkiye, which, admittedly, does not come as a surprise given the events of 2015. Other topics of discourse found in relatively close proximity of the datapoint for 2015 include a variety of migration-related matters (immigration, emigration, EU-internal migration), crime, trade, and administrative issues. With regard to border locations, the political debates in 2015 were associated with both internal and external state borders, as well as specific EU borders other than those of the four countries under scrutiny in the present study. Interestingly, this cluster is most closely linked to neutral semantic prosody. It should be pointed out, however, that the datapoints for both neutral and negative prosody are located near the intersection of the two axes, which means that their associations should not be perceived as particularly distinct.

Turning now to the cluster for 2022 revealed in Figure 1, we can see one particularly strong and easily foreseeable association with the topic of discourse of war discussed in the parliamentary debates with respect to the borders of Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Belarus or the Baltic states. In the same left-hand upper quadrant, we observe an association between the 2022 political discourse and negative semantic prosody and international politics, the latter discussed especially in the context of borders in general, rather than any specific state ones. As we proceed to the left-hand bottom quadrant of the plot, we see the datapoint for positive semantic prosody, which was found in the vicinity of topics of discourse such as symbolic representation, Brexit, internal politics or economic issues.

The above results allow us to formulate specific hypotheses regarding topics of discourse, semantic prosody and border location. Starting with topics of discourse, the year 2015 is expected to be associated in a statistically significant manner with parliamentary debates concerning terrorism, migration, administrative issues, and trade (note that the datapoints of these topics of discourse are more prominent). The political discourse in 2022, on the other hand, is hypothesized to be primarily focused on internal and international

politics, Brexit, and war. In addition, we can also expect the semantic prosody of the debates in 2022 to be more polarized, with the specific valence of the discussions being further determined by particular topics of discourse. Finally, with regard to the border location, it is hypothesized that while 2015 should be linked to the borders of Syria, Iraq and Türkiye, the main point of interest in the year 2022 should be the borders of Ukraine and adjacent territories.

To test these hypotheses and to establish whether any of the patterns observed in Figure 1 are generalizable, let us turn to the results of a logistic regression analysis, as presented in Table 4. As we should see, a number of the associations observed in Figure 1 turn out to be statistically significant. For brevity, the model in Table 4 only includes the statistically significant associations between the year of the parliamentary debates and the coefficients (also known as predictors or independent variables), as listed in column one. In the output of a binary logistic regression analysis, negative values of the estimates (see column two) would be indicative of patterns predicted for the alphabetically first level of the dependent variable, whereas positive values predict the other level. Since all the values of the estimates given in column two are positive, the associations observed in Table 4 are all identified for the year 2022.

Table 4. Logistic regression analysis for variation in BORDER representation wrt. year.

Coefficients	**Estimate**	**Std. Error**	**z value**	**Pr (>|z|)**	
ToD: Brexit	3.66	0.67	5.43	< 0.001	***
ToD: Environment	1.42	0.59	2.41	0.010	*
ToD: Internal politics	2.49	0.69	3.60	< 0.00	***
ToD: War	2.53	0.50	5.00	< 0.001	***
Semantic prosody: Negative	0.62	0.24	-2.52	0.01	*
Semantic prosody: Positive	1.06	0.32	3.30	0.0009	***
Border location: Ukr. – Poland – Russia	1.80	0.53	3.39	< 0.001	***
Border location: EU-internal	0.78	0.42	1.86	0.06	.
Model statistics: C score: 0.85					

Significance codes: *** *p*-value < 0.001; ** *p*-value <0.01; * *p*-value < 0.05; . *p*-value <0.1

Since the estimates can be used to rank the predictors in terms of their importance, it becomes clear that it is the topic of discourse variable that is most helpful when it comes to discriminating between BORDER representation in public discourse in 2015 and 2022. More specifically, 2022 is particularly strongly predicted by topics concerning Brexit, war, and internal politics, as has been hypothesized above. Another strong association that also comes to the fore for 2022 is that with positive semantic prosody. Interestingly, negative prosody is also found to be statistically significant here, which further supports the patterns observed in Figure 1. It would be revealing to conduct a logistic regression analysis with semantic prosody and topic of discourse considered in interaction, but this has not been done for reasons of data sparsity.

4.2. Variation in BORDER representation across countries

The second research question addressed in the present study concerns variation in BORDER representation across countries. Similarly to Section 4.1, our discussion starts with the results of a correspondence analysis and then turns to a logistic regression analysis. Figure 2 visualizes the association among the four countries whose parliamentary debates are considered here and three other variables, i.e., border location, topic of discourse, and semantic prosody. In this analysis, we disregard the temporal variable. Looking at the visualization, we can immediately notice that there are three main clusters: one for Poland, located in the left-hand top quadrant; one shared between Austria and France, found in the left-hand bottom quadrant; and one for the UK, in the right-hand bottom quadrant.

The Polish parliamentary debates about borders focus on topics of discourse related to war, trade, international politics, emigration, and symbolic representation. In this cluster, the variable with the greatest weight when it comes to contribution to the distribution of datapoints concerns border location, more specifically the borders of Ukraine, Poland, Russia, Belarus, and the Baltic states. This finding, as well as the association with the topic of war, are a natural consequence of Poland's geopolitical situation. What does come as more of a surprise is the apparent lack of association between Poland and Austria, since we originally expected that the political concerns of these two central European countries would be most aligned.

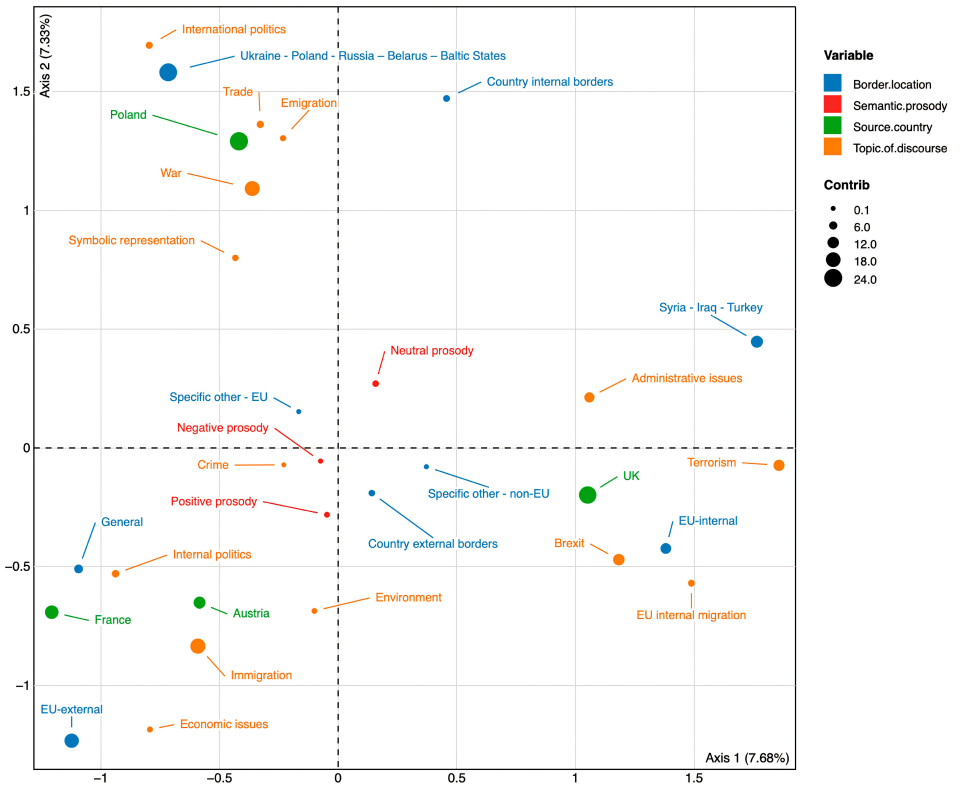


Figure 2. Correspondence analysis for variation in BORDER representation with respect to country.

Turning now to the cluster of features found in the left-hand bottom quadrant, associated with Austria and France, we can see that the most important datapoints in terms of contribution are the topic of discourse concerning immigration and EU-external borders. The political discourse surrounding borders in these two cultural settings is also attracted to topics of discourse such as environment, economic issues, and internal politics, the latter particularly in the context of borders considered in general rather than specific terms. It is in this quadrant of the visualization that we find both positive and negative semantic prosody, but their location near the center of the plot may well indicate that they do not manifest particularly close associative tendencies in our data.

Finally, the cluster located in the right-hand bottom quadrant for public discourse among UK parliamentarians is attracted to topics concerning

Brexit, terrorism, and EU internal migration. These issues are debated particularly in the context of EU-internal borders, country-external borders, as well as specific non-EU borders. This cluster is also associated with two features that can be found close to the *x*-axis in the right-hand top quadrant, i.e., administrative issues and the Syria–Iraq–Türkiye border. Overall, these associations form a consistent image of a community gaining the status of an outsider and increasingly focusing primarily on its own immediate interests.

Given the results presented in Figure 2, we can formulate three hypotheses. Firstly, the political debates in Poland are highly likely to focus on issues concerning war, international politics, trade and emigration. The topics of discourse most commonly broached in the UK are expected to concern Brexit, terrorism and administrative issues. Finally, Austria and France are most closely related through their mutual interest in such areas as immigration, internal politics or economic issues.

To test these hypotheses and establish whether any of the patterns discussed above should be statistically significant, we conducted a multinomial logistic regression analysis with country as the dependent variable and the other three variables as independent. Four separate models were fitted, each with a different country as the reference point. For the sake of simplicity, we will only present the results of one of these models, namely the one where the UK was set as the reference point. As we have observed in Figure 2, this country is quite distinct and might well constitute the best reference point for comparing and contrasting the three EU states. In addition, the dataset for the UK political debates is the most substantial. The results of this analysis are presented in Table 5. Only statistically significant associations and disassociations are shown for each of the three countries. The values provided in brackets are the estimates, with positive values (in blue) representing associations, and negative ones (in red) representing disassociations between a given country and a given feature.

Upon closer inspection, it becomes clear that despite what we have observed in Figure 2, when the UK is the reference point of comparison, Austria and Poland are closely related to each other with regard to the topics that were the focus of their political debates, i.e., EU internal migration, internal politics, and war. The public discourse in these two countries also emerges as clearly disassociated from discussions involving EU-internal borders. What Poland and France have in common, in turn, is their respective parliamentarians'

interest in the Ukrainian borders. We can also see that relative to the UK, Poland is disassociated from positive semantic prosody, while France is not linked to neutral prosody.

Table 5. Results of LRA for country with the UK as the reference point.

Austria	France	Poland
Semantic prosody: ––––––––––	**Semantic prosody:** Neutral prosody (-1.04, *)	**Semantic prosody:** Positive prosody (-1.00, *)
Border location: EU-internal borders (-4.18, ***)	**Border location:** General borders (2.91, ***) EU-external borders (2.20, ***) Specific non-EU borders (1.95, *) UA - PL - RU borders (1.71, **)	**Border location:** EU-internal borders (-3.68, **) UA - PL - RU borders (1.43, **)
Topics of discourse: Environment (2.13, **) EU internal migration (4.69, **) Internal politics (2.99, *) War (2.07, ***)	**Topics of discourse:** ––––––––––	**Topics of discourse:** Crime (1.83, *) EU internal migration (3.05, .) Internal politics (4.07, ***) War (1.72, **)
Model statistics: McFadden R^2: 0.46		

4.3. Variation in BORDER representation across political parties

Our final research question concerns variation in border representation across different political affiliations. In the case of this research question, we did have certain hypotheses. Namely, we expected that the left- and right-wing parties would be easily distinguishable, particularly based on the topics of discourse that were debated in the periods under analysis. It was also assumed that the overall semantic prosody associated with BORDER-oriented discourse would be more positive for the left-wing parliamentarians. To better understand our data and test our hypotheses, we conducted two analyses, starting with an exploratory visualization, whose results are presented in Figure 3.

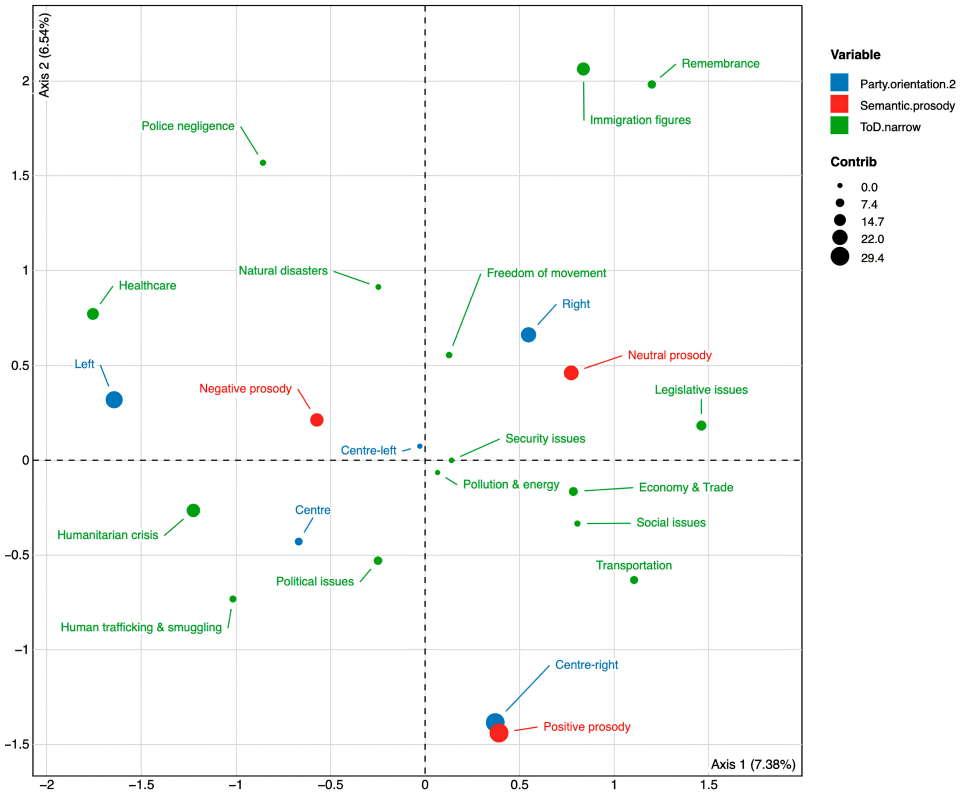


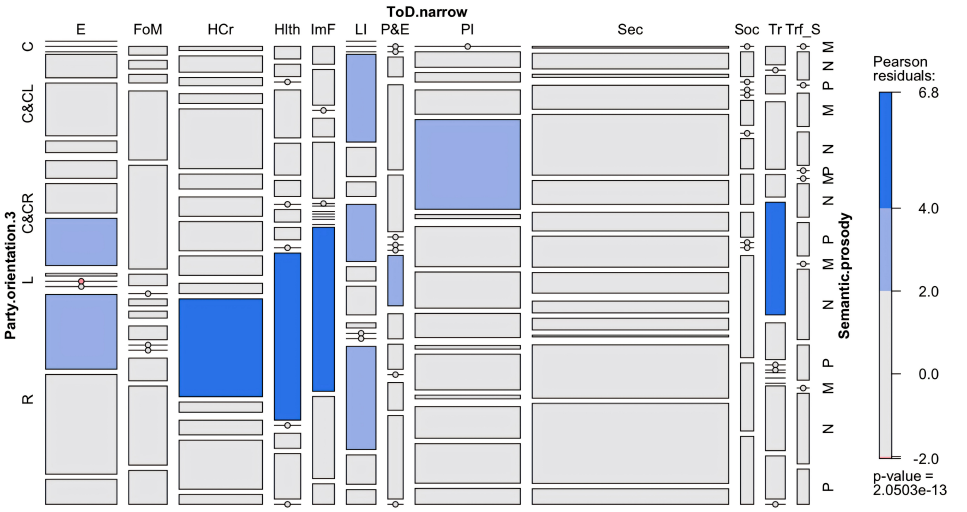
Figure 3. Correspondence analysis for variation in BORDER representation with respect to political party.

The correspondence analysis in Figure 3 reveals four clear clusters, with the right- and left-wing parties indeed clearly distinct. The centrist parties form a relatively dispersed grouping, with the center and center-right, in particular, appearing as sets of their own. In the left-hand top quadrant, we can see a set of features associated with the left-wing parties, particularly healthcare issues and negligence on the part of the police. In this part of the plot, we also find the datapoint for negative semantic prosody, a feature which is simultaneously attracted to the cluster found in the left-hand bottom quadrant for centrist parties. As Figure 3 shows, among parliamentarians representing this political affiliation, topics of discourse such as political issues, humanitarian crisis or human trafficking and smuggling were

particularly common. Turning now to the right-hand half of the plot, we find clusters for center-right and right-wing parties. In the case of the former, located in the bottom quadrant of the plot, a strong association can be observed for positive prosody. Right-wing parties, on the other hand, found in the top quadrant of the visualization, are associated with neutral prosody and topics of discourse concerning immigration figures and remembrance. A range of issues appear to have featured equally frequently in the political debates typical of these two affiliations, including social issues, economy/trade, legislative issues, and transportation. As should be noted, this latter topic, given its position in the plot, appears to have been of greater interest to center-right parties. Freedom of movement, in turn, located close to the *y*-axis in the top part of Figure 3, seems to be a subject broached by both right-wing and left-wing parliamentarians. The same is true of the topic of discourse focusing on natural disasters, whose datapoint can be found in the left-hand top quadrant of the plot near the *y*-axis.

Having inspected the associations observed in Figure 3, we can formulate three specific hypotheses to be tested below. Firstly, right-wing parties are most likely to be attracted in their debates to topics of discourse such as immigration figures, remembrance, economy/trade, and legislative issues. Centrist parties, on the other hand, are expected to pay particular attention in their discourse to political issues, humanitarian crisis, and trafficking or smuggling. Finally, left-wing parties are hypothesized to be drawn to such topics of discourse as healthcare or negligence on the part of the authorities. With regard to the semantic prosody of the debates, it appears to be defined by specific topics of discourse discussed in relation to borders rather than political affiliation alone.

For the purposes of a confirmatory analysis, which will enable us to test the above hypotheses, we modelled our data through a log-linear analysis with mosaic plot visualization, as presented in Figure 4. In this plot, the blue color of the boxes is indicative of statistically significant associations among the three variables, with a darker shade showing greater importance (as reflected in the values of the Pearson residuals given in the right-hand bar), and with the size corresponding to the number of occurrences of a given association in the data (cf. Levshina, 2015, p. 219). Importantly, what this method of analysis makes possible is not only the capturing of statistically significant associations, but, while doing so, also accounting for the simultaneous interactions among three or four variables.



Political orientation: R: Right, L: Left, C&CR: Center & Center-Left, C&CL: Center & Center-Left

Topics of discourse: E: economy & trade, FoM: freedom of movement, HCr: humanitarian crisis, ImF: immigration figures, LI: legislative issues, P&E: pollution & energy, PI: political issues, Sec: security, Soc: Social issues, Tr: transportation, Trf_S: human trafficking and smuggling

Semantic prosody: P: positive, N: negative, M: neutral

Figure 4. Mosaic plot visualization for variation in BORDER representation with respect to political party.

It should be pointed out that for the purposes of this analysis, the labels of the features needed to be shortened so as to ensure legibility of the resultant plot, as explained in the legend underneath the plot. The strongest associations exist between the left-wing parties and a negative prosody combined with the topic of humanitarian crisis in the context of border-oriented discourse. Another important association observed for the same political affiliation concerns healthcare, which is also discussed with negative prosody. In the case of this latter association, the mosaic plot sheds some new light on our interpretation of the correspondence analysis in plot 3, where we erroneously associated the topic of discourse devoted to humanitarian crisis exclusively with centrist parties. Admittedly, the position of this datapoint in Figure 3 is found in the same quadrant of the plot as the datapoint for the center of the political arena, but it is also located close to the *x*-axis, thus indicating its simultaneous attraction to the left-hand top quadrant for left-wing parties.

Returning to Figure 4, we can see that the border-oriented debates of right-wing parliamentarians focused on issues related to either legislation or economy and trade, both from a prosodically neutral perspective. This corroborates our observations gained through the correspondence analysis in Figure 3, while also deepening our understanding of what our data reveal with regard to the topic of discourse addressing economy & trade, whose position in Figure 3 is also ambiguous, being relatively close to the *x*-axis. Economy and legislative issues are also found to have been of immediate interest to politicians affiliated with center and center-right parties, having been approached in a positive and neutral manner, respectively. Given their affiliation, it is perhaps unsurprising that the center-right politicians should share their concerns with those on the right of the political spectrum. The perspective we gain through the mosaic plot is that in the correspondence analysis it was semantic prosody, not so much the political party, which determined the location of the datapoints for legislative issues and economy-and-trade.

The last set of associations that the mosaic plot in Figure 4 identifies as statistically significant concern center and center-left parties and have to do with legislative issues, political issues and transportation, considered in a neutral, negative, and positive manner, respectively. This latter finding, which correlates this political affiliation with interest in transportation across borders, represents an important association, given the color shading of the box. In this case too, the mosaic plot helps us gain a better insight into why the datapoint for center-right parties should be located so close to the intersection of the two axes in Figure 3. Rather than being relatively non-distinct, it was simply drawn to a number of topics, each debated with a different prosody.

5. Conclusion

This study aimed to address the following three research questions:

(1) Did the migration crisis and the tensions at Poland's eastern border, including the Russian aggression against Ukraine, cause a shift in the conceptualization of BORDER between 2015 and 2022?
(2) Is this shift pan-European or nation specific?
(3) Does it depend on the party-affiliation of the speaker?

The results provide supporting evidence for statistically significant differences in border representations within cross-temporal, cross-country and cross-party

dimensions. Examples of the use of the word *border* in English and its translational equivalents in Polish, (Austrian) German and French from the ParlaMint Corpus were annotated for a number of variables relevant to our research questions, i.e., temporal frame, source country, party affiliation of the speaker, border location, topic of discourse, and semantic prosody. Following the qualitative data analysis, statistical modeling was conducted in two steps. First, correspondence analysis was used to search for any frequency-based patterns of co-occurrence among the features of our analyzed variables in the data. The results of this exploratory stage served as the basis to build hypotheses for further testing with confirmatory techniques: logistic regression and loglinear analysis.

With respect to our first research question regarding the time frame, our results show that compared to 2015, the year 2022 is significantly associated with (i) topics of discourse focusing on Brexit, environment, war and internal politics; (ii) both positive and negative prosody in political debates about borders; (iii) EU-internal and Ukrainian–Polish–Russian borders. This means that, when discussing borders in 2022, the parliaments under investigation (UK, Poland, Austria and France) did so in the context of Brexit, environment, the war in Ukraine and internal politics. These debates encouraged strong positive or negative polarization of language used by members of parliament.

When the data were investigated with respect to our second research question related to cross-cultural differences in BORDER representation, the UK (which had the richest data set) was chosen as the baseline for our analysis. Relative to the UK, the Austrian parliament debated environmental issues, EU internal migration, internal politics and war more often than did the UK Parliament. Also, in Austria, EU-internal borders were mentioned significantly less often than in the UK. In France, in comparison to the UK, border locations such as EU-borders, specific non-EU borders, Ukrainian–Polish–Russian borders and borders as a general concept were mentioned significantly more often. Neutral prosody was used in France less often than in the UK. When we compare Poland with the UK, the Polish parliament was less likely to refer to EU-internal borders or to employ neutral semantic prosody in its debates. On the other hand, the Polish parliament was much more likely to broach such topics as crime, EU-internal migration, internal politics or war, particularly in relation to the Ukrainian–Polish–Russian border.

Finally, when it comes to the third research question, the analysis of the political affiliation of the Members of Parliament has shown clear tendencies in the semantic prosody employed by the speakers in debates concerning borders, with the specific valence being directly linked to specific topics of discourse. While left-wing

politicians tended to use negative prosody when talking about the humanitarian crisis and healthcare, right-wing parliamentarians were found to use positive prosody in the context of legislative, economic and trade-related issues. Centrist speakers, in turn, used neutral prosody to discuss legislative issues, negative prosody when referring to political issues, and positive prosody when addressing the issue of transportation.

The analyzed discourse of the parliamentary debates falls within the second area of interest of this special issue of Slavia Meridionalis, i.e., *how political actors communicate while doing politics*. Our results contribute to a better understanding of how key political concepts, in this case BORDER, are conceptualized and re-conceptualized within the political debate in a nation-specific way. We have shown that there are certain political concerns (here operationalized as topics of discourse) that are characteristic of Central European countries like Poland and Austria (e.g., EU-internal migration, internal politics, and war), and some (Ukrainian borders) which are more intensely discussed by Central European (Poland) and Western European countries (France). The UK, now outside the EU, seems to be drifting apart and strengthening its insular position with a slightly different focus of interest (Brexit, EU-internal borders). One of the limitations of the present study is the relative scarcity of data in the French and Austrian corpus. As the ParlaMint database expands, similar analyses of various themes discussed in European parliaments will become more statistically viable.

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Płynność granic. Zmienność konceptualizacji granic w perspektywie temporalnej i kulturowej

W artykule zostały podjęte dwie kwestie: (1) w jaki sposób aktorzy polityczni komunikują się podczas uprawiania polityki oraz (2) w jaki sposób analiza języka może rzucić światło na konceptualizację i rekonceptualizację kluczowego pojęcia polityki europejskiej, tj. GRANICY. Naszym celem jest analiza i modelowanie zmienności w konceptualizacji GRANICY w odniesieniu do trzech wymiarów: (1) czasu (2015, 2022), (2) kraju (Austria, Francja, Polska, Wielka Brytania) i (3) przynależności politycznej (prawica, centrum-prawica, centrum, centrum-lewica, lewica). W tym celu wykorzystujemy transkrypcje debat parlamentarnych dostępne w korpusie Parla-Mint. Nasze wyniki pokazują statystycznie istotne różnice w reprezentacji GRANICY we wszystkich trzech wymiarach.

Słowa kluczowe: GRANICA; krytyczna analiza dyskursu; badanie korpusowe; podejście oparte na Profilach Behawioralnych; konceptualizacja pojęć

Borders in flux: The changing conceptualization of borders from a cross-temporal and cross-cultural perspective

This study addresses two concerns: (1) how political actors communicate while doing politics, and (2) how language analysis can shed light on the conceptualization and re-conceptualization of a key concept of European politics, i.e., BORDER. Our aim is to analyze and model the variation in the conceptualization of BORDER with respect to three dimensions: (1) time (2015, 2022), (2) country (Austria, France, Poland, UK), and (3) political affiliation (Right, Centre-Right, Centre, Centre-Left, Left). To this end, we use transcripts of parliamentary debates available in the Parla-Mint corpus. Our results show statistically significant differences in the representation of BORDER across all three dimensions.

Keywords: BORDER; Critical Discourse Studies; corpus-based research; Behavioral Profile Approach; conceptualization

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