



The Power of Political Communication: Mobilizing for a European Version of AI

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Abstract

Political communication is a powerful tool for influencing public opinion on Artificial Intelligence. In light of international competition and dangers related to AI, the European Commission aims to develop and mobilize for a European version of AI that is in line with European values. Accordingly, this thesis asks, how the Commission communicates a European version of AI to the broader European public. Employing a content and frame analysis, this thesis provides an in-depth understanding of the Commission's communication practices in the context of their AI program that address citizens' concerns towards AI and frame it as particularly European. It was expected that they do so by employing European identity frames to generate legitimacy and AI uptake. The study generates insights on how the Commission struggles to reconcile AI and European values and instead tries to legitimize European AI through beneficial outputs. It finds that via framing the Commission tries to foster European integration. Finally, this thesis concludes that the Commission's communication efforts are inconsistent and might not be sufficient to generate trust among European citizens.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------------------------|
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| EPSC | European Political Strategy Center |
| EI | European Identity |
| EU | European Union |
| EWoLp | European Way of Life program |
| JRC | Joint Research Center |
| OECD | Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development |
| The Commission | The European Commission |

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Language in politics matters. Politicians can direct society's attention, can mobilize citizens and influence how we perceive a topic despite facts and data, but via frames that resonate with cognitive paradigms such as identities (Druckman, 2014; Wehling, 2020). The linguist Elisabeth Wehling has just recently dedicated a book aiming at breaking societies naivety towards the importance and impact of language and specifically framing in politics (Wehling, 2020). Politics faces global challenges that will impact the way we live in the future – prominently, the AI technological revolution that will shape entire societies. Among citizens, there is still a lot of uncertainty whether AI is a blessing or a curse – especially as prominent tech and science figures such as Elon Musk or Stephan Hawking are warning about the negative consequences of handling AI without foresight and regulation (EPSC, 2018; Gibbs, 2014): In the hand of autocrats AI can be used as a tool for surveillance and control (Donahoe & Metzger, 2019). Scientists argue that the embeddedness and fit of a technology into societal value and belief systems is vital for its acceptance and that framing is a useful tool for generating this resonance (Druckman & Bolsen, 2011; Geels & Verhees, 2011; Lempialä et al., 2019). This should sensitize our gaze for critically observing how the AI transition is accompanied through political communication; which narratives are presented by impactful policy makers. Critically observing political communication and its underlying assumptions is a necessity for being able to understand and discuss AI decision-making processes. This thesis contributes to that.

In the EU, the most influential policy maker on AI is the European Commission. In 2018 they published an AI program announcing AI as one of their major policy priorities for the legislative period of 2019-2024 (European Commission, n.d.–b) also releasing an updated Communication in 2021 alongside. Accordingly, they have an interest in promoting their AI program and presenting it as fit for society: The Commission believes that in order “[to] address the opportunities and challenges of AI, the EU must act as one and define its own way, based on European values, to promote the development and deployment of AI” (European Commission, 2020g); they aim to establish an AI program that is in line with what the Commission considers as values from a shared EI, differentiating a European version of AI from counter frameworks, such as those of the US or China, that hold threats to these values.

Through framing, the Commission can present AI in a matter that is in line with EI to enhance its salience among the public (Hänggli, 2012). This is a challenge. Gaining understanding into which role political communication, and particularly framing plays in this endeavour is the aim of this thesis: Which framing do they adopt? How does a European version of AI counter AI threats and what makes this specifically European in regards to competing AI frameworks? Which conclusions can be drawn from that?

1.1 Scientific & Social Relevance

The scientific relevance of European government's AI programs on shaping reality has been recognized by scholars: The framing of AI has been analyzed in national policy frameworks and newspaper discourse (Garvey & Maskal, 2020; Köstler & Ossewaarde, 2021; Ossewaarde & Gulenc, 2020; Sun et al., 2020). This shows a scientific interest in how policy actors and media influence public opinion on the issue of AI. However, there are no studies so far analysing how the European institutions try to do so. Others have addressed the content of EU AI policy documents (Vesnic-Alujevic et al., 2020), recognizing the impact of European involvement on AI development. There is an immediate scientific relevance on examining how the Commission as major European political actor frames AI for the broader European public. So far no study does so. In research on EI, studies have focused more on the identity-building processes on the level of European citizens (Dalton, 2021; Luhmann, 2017; Scalise, 2015; Westle & Buchheim, 2016), reflecting a lack of research on the Commission's EI understanding.

The insights generated by filling this scientific gap are of societal relevance. The communication of the European AI program has to address the concerns of citizens regarding AI. The Commission hopes to generate citizens' trust by presenting an AI program in line with European values (European Commission, 2020g). Gaining more insights into what a connection of EI and AI entails, will give societal actors a deeper understanding of what they can expect from a European version of AI. This will also constitute the framework, the societal contract, to which the public will hold AI policy makers and companies accountable. Examining how the Commission frames a European version of AI will contribute to discussing whether it can be successful.

1.2 Research Question

This thesis is interested in finding out how the Commission, in light of AI threats and international competition presents a specifically European version of AI that resonates with societal identities. The main **research question is:**

In light of AI threats and the international competition on AI, how does the European Commission communicate a European version of AI to the broader European public?

Because it is not clear what the Commission considers as ‘European’ the Commission’s understanding of a collective EI in the context of AI needs to be extracted. Thus, as first approach, this thesis asks interpretatively:

a) *What understanding of a collective European identity is present in the European Commission’s AI program and communication thereof?*

This is crucial because there is a scientific gap regarding the Commission’s perception of a collective EI. This thesis examines the underlying narratives and predispositions that are connected to AI and how these contribute to soothing citizens’ concerns. Hence, the next interpretative sub-question is:

b) *How does the European Commission communicate a European version of AI using European identity frames in their AI program to address AI threats?*

This focuses on understanding how the Commission reconciles EI with AI in their political communication through framing. Answering this will enable a reflection on the purpose of EI-frames. That is important to assess the fit of these frames to counter AI threats in line with European values and beliefs and to distinguish a European version of AI by asking:

c) *According to the Commission’s European identity frames what is distinct about a European version of AI?*

This is of relevance to discuss whether the EI-elements are specifically European and, thus, make the European version of AI an eligible alternative to international competitors. This is especially important because the Commission claims that their version counters threats while others’ do not. This will help to answer the main research question because the Europeanness of AI can be assessed further, enabling a reflection on whether the image of a European version of AI that the Commission seeks to communicate to the public is convincing.

1.3 Research Approach

For this purpose, an interpretative research design has been developed. To build the foundation for the analysis, first, the theoretical framework is provided: The background for developing a European version of AI is explained (2.1), followed by an introduction to the main concepts of European identity (2.2.) and framing (2.3). These sub-chapters explain how political communication can reconcile AI and EI. In the methods section, the research design is presented (3.1.), an explanation and justification of the case (3.2.), data (3.3.), and a clear outline of the method of analysis are given for which a coding scheme is presented (3.4.). Thereby, the theoretical concepts are joined. Content analysis go beyond the text to provide a deeper understanding of it – in this case of the Commission’s EI understanding in a first step, and secondly, of the frames deployed to communicate a European version of AI. The fourth chapter is the core of this thesis in which the data is analysed and interpreted. It is structured along the three sub-questions: Firstly, the Commission’s EI understanding will be illustrated, giving further insights on AI as a threat to EI. Secondly, the EI frames are discussed. Finally, the analysis will address what the prior findings signify regarding a distinct European version of AI. The conclusion will answer the main research question (5.1.), discuss limitations and ideas for further research (5.2.) and practical implications for society (5.3).

2. Theory

The following chapter aims at developing the theoretical framework for analysing the communication on the European version of AI. First, the international background in which a European version of AI is presented is explained (2.1). Accordingly, the relevance of analyzing how AI is communicated will be specified. After that, the concept of EI is introduced being the first necessary tool for the analysis of EI-frames. This also functions to justify the use of EI as a concept connected to AI (2.2). Finally, framing as means of reconciling AI and EI and frame analysis as a tool are presented. Special attention will be paid to the relevance of framing in the context of emerging technologies such as AI (2.3). Finally, different hypotheses are inferred that represent the expectations towards the subsequent analysis chapter.

2.1 A European Version of AI

AI is an emerging technology that comes with a diffuse set of implications and theoretical complexity. Just recently professional AI applications are experiencing a rapid uptake in different sectors of life like the transport or healthcare sectors (OECD, 2019). However, it has been emphasized that AI applications are characterized by a fundamental ambiguity, posing chances and challenges for their societal uptake – such as making decision-making processes more efficient, on the one hand, and having the potential of reproducing biases on the other (Filgueiras, 2021). In the context of these considerations, many supranational bodies, such as the OECD and the EU, emphasize the importance of ensuring trustworthy AI systems: “[...] an EU strategic framework based on fundamental values will give citizens the confidence to accept AI-based solutions, while encouraging businesses to develop them” (European Commission, nd). In 2018, there have been 21 countries that launched or were preparing national AI strategies to approach AI chances and challenges (Craglia et al., 2018), including the current global leaders in AI technology China and the US.

However, when it comes to developing an AI framework, these nations follow different approaches which have the potential to clash with the European vision of safe and trustworthy AI in line with European values. In the US, the government plays a comparably weak role in shaping policy and investment in AI. Instead, leading Silicon Valley firms dominate in the development of AI and already hold power on large quantities of data (Craglia et al., 2018). In China, significant economic and social changes, centred in the areas of security, healthcare, commerce and transportation, have already started to take place. China aims to become the

global leader in AI by 2030 (EPSC, 2018). Different to other approaches, however, the AI program entails using AI-related technologies to maintain social harmony and control such as through the so-called 'social credit system'. This AI system collects user behavioural data in physical and virtual daily life, providing a rating of citizens' reputations (Craglia et al., 2018).

According to a report by the Commission's JRC, these strategic outlines are striking regarding the limited role awarded to critical views of AI in China. The absence of criticism undermines the process of developing trustworthy systems that ensure the inclusion of moral responsibilities, transparency and accountability as perceived by the EU and US (Craglia et al., 2018). Correspondingly, there is evidence to believe that not all approaches to AI are in line with the standards and values of the EU but conflict with those. Strategic actors, such as the EPSC, emphasize that pursuing a Chinese model, that gives little constraints to the development of AI because there is little regulation centred around the protection of privacy and personal data, is neither "possible nor desirable" (EPSC, 2018, p. 5). These developments gain relevance in scale when considering global observations on the decline of democracy. In the past years, authoritarian regimes have expanded their reach and engaged in reshaping international norms and institutions to serve their interests (Freedom House, 2021).

Considering these observations, the EU has recognized the need for developing a European version of AI that reflects its own identity. This way, the EU aims to build a certain image in the world that presents them as a high standard-setter in technologies based on European values and moral leadership (Craglia et al., 2019; EPSC, 2018). But what does this self-image look like? What constitutes a European identity to which other global approaches towards AI are dissonant and to which a European version of AI must resonate? The next sub-chapter will present the evolution of the concept of EI as well as the elements that form an EI.

2.2 The European Commission's Approach to European Identity

The concept of EI has been a constant in the European discourse since the establishment of the European Community (Stråth, 2002): It was introduced at the Copenhagen summit in 1973, in the context of the Cold War functioning as an instrument to consolidate Europe's place in the international order in between two clashing power players (Stråth, 2002). Since then, policymakers have focused on linking the multiple levels of the European framework, bringing notions of EI closer to the people (Bruter, 2003). An example of this is the introduction of European symbols, such as a shared anthem and a shared flag in the 1980s, a European driver's license or European Citizenship (Bruter, 2003; Stråth, 2002). While research projects

established by the Commission give insight on which processes they support to enhance a sense of community among Europeans (Schunz, 2012), they do not give a real understanding of how the Commission substantively envisions an EI. The Commission's 'European Way of Life' program (EWoLp) is linked to this enquiry, but remains vague and is not particularly connected to AI but rather to migration (European Parliament, 2020).

While researchers recognize the importance and existence of EI itself and attribute a highly ideological character (Stråth, 2002), the precise meaning, definition and content of the concept is contested (Kaina & Karolweski, 2013; Stråth, 2002). To arrive at an understanding of the Commission's understanding of EI some elements need to be theoretically discussed (Kaina & Karolewski, 2013). This thesis examines how the Commission communicates AI to the broader society. Accordingly, EI will be regarded as a collective identity.

Othering

A collective EI is something exclusive because you define a community by attributing shared characteristics based on dissimilarities with others (Bruter, 2003; Caporaso & Kim, 2009; Westle & Buchheim, 2016). By assigning elements, such as shared values, history or purpose, a 'we-group' and a 'them-group' are defined, giving the members of a group reasons to identify with it and enabling outsiders to recognize it as such (Kaina & Karolweski, 2013). According to Stråth (2002) in the context of European history and the European integration process, 'Othering' to demarcate Europe from others, has been the central idea behind defining an EI – from Christianity and Enlightenment to human rights and democracy. Today, EI can be used to meaningfully distinguish the EU from other actors, such as the USA, China, or the UK after Brexit. This can be done, for example, in the context of political and economic goals or political practices (Lichtenstein and Eilders, 2019; Stråth, 2002).

But what constitutes these elements and categories that are part of a collective EI?

Elements of a European Identity

Bruter (2003) classifies EI as a concept with two dimensions – a civic EI and a cultural EI. The former determines the degree to which one feels as part of the political system with the European institutions as actors whose policy actions influence one's daily life while the latter refers to the identification with a human community. These entities are shaped by notions of:

- a) A common history or traditions

b) and political/constitutive or moral values (Bruter, 2003).

Values represent the set of rules and the normative content to which members of the group commit and create expectations and recognition towards members of the group (Abdelal et al., 2006).

When a social or political community is defined,

c) a purpose

needs to be attached to it (Abedelal et al., 2006) or specifically, a description of what kind of community it is (Lichtenstein & Eilders, 2019). According to Lichtenstein and Eilders (2019), for the EU examples of this have been the purpose of peace in Europe or the economic advantages of the shared market. These narrative purposes entail a simplified idea of the EU's history, current ambitions and future goals (Lichtenstein & Eilders, 2019).

Following the Commission's European Way of Life program (EWoLp), a collective EI is built around the values of solidarity, equality, and fairness; the purpose of the Union is to provide safety and social security, to foster inclusion and to build. These elements are linked to the fight against discrimination and for gender equality, as well as consumer protection resilience (European Commission, 2020). More generally, documents such as the Constitutional Treaty draft and the Copenhagen Criteria consider democracy, human rights and rule of law as fundamental values of the EU (Abdelal et al. 2006) to which also the EWoLp refers. These characteristics of the EWoLp represent a starting point from which the Commission's understanding of EI the context of AI can be extracted. However, it remains unclear how this EI can be reconciled with AI, how does the Commission enact notions of EI in their AI program and communication? And if so, what is the effect? This depends on how AI is framed.

2.3 Framing: Reconciling AI and European Identity

Framing is based on the idea that sense-making of the world is not only based on facts and analysis of information but that our sense-making is also based on predispositions, such as culture, values and beliefs (Druckmann & Bolson, 2011; Wehling, 2016). To frame is "to actively construct the meaning of the reality in question" (Hänggeli & Kriesi, 2010, p. 142) by leading the attention of an audience to certain aspects, perspectives and interpretations of an issue (Hänggeli & Kriesi, 2010). Frames do consciously or unconsciously reflect the

predispositions of the communicator and are likely to be successful if these resonate with those of the audience (Benford & Snow, 2000). Therefore, it is interesting to analyse frames to grasp what other messages are conveyed via a communicating text.

Analysing Frames

Frames can be analysed by studying the communicative output of an actor of which a textual analysis is a classical form. Communicative texts contain frames showing through the presence or absence of certain cues, metaphors or sentences that generate substantively reinforcing clusters of facts or judgements (Entman, 1993). According to Entman (1993), framing can be defined as “[to]select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text [...]” (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Salience can be achieved if certain aspects are continuously repeated, and especially, if the content of a frame resonates with existing cognitive structures (Benford and Snow, 2000): Resonance is the centrality of the value or belief to the audience, considerations on whether this frame is congruent with the everyday experience of the target audience, or whether the frame resonates with the audiences’ cultural narrations such as myths (Benford and Snow, 2000). In this thesis, EI-frames function to reflect these aspects of resonance, being based on cultural narrations and shared values and ideas. Therefore, by using EI-frames, the Commission can influence the perception of and narrative around a complex, new and ambiguous technology such as AI.

Framing AI

Ervin Goffman (1974) assumed that individuals cannot make sense of the world fully, which is why they actively order and interpret their life experiences and the world around them. This is particularly true for complex topics such as AI: Studies on emerging technologies have emphasized the importance of framing for influencing how a technology is envisioned (Druckman & Bolson, 2011; Geels & Verhees, 2011; Lempiälä et al. 2019). Frames can be used to strategically connect a novel technology to the existing societal structure of values and beliefs (Druckman & Bolson, 2011; Geels & Verhees, 2011). Accordingly, framing influences what other meanings are connected to AI, independent from technological facts or policy propositions. That is why it functions as a concept to analyse how AI and EI are reconciled in the Commission’s AI program and communication thereof. Lichtenstein and Eilders (2019) emphasize that frames can equip the EU as a normative project with a collective EI. Such EI-frames based on references to group belonging and self-understanding and with attributions to certain values and historic moments are important for the legitimization of political authority

(Bruter, 2003). This means that EI-frames can be a powerful tool for the Commission in the context of presenting and promoting their AI program and legitimizing their role as a supranational institution.

2.4 Conclusion

To sum up, this thesis first presented the global context in which the Commission's endeavour of developing a European version of AI needs to be considered. After this followed the centrality of the collective EI understanding to which AI needs to resonate and which conflicts with other AI programs presented by nations who aim for global leadership. Keeping this in mind, the concept of EI was introduced, focusing on the question of what forms EI. Framing was presented as communicative means of reconciling AI and EI in the Commission's AI program. It was concluded that EI-frames can be a powerful tool in promoting an emerging technology and can function to legitimize authority.

From this theoretical discussion, it is hypothesized that:

H1: The European Commission uses EI-frames to present a European version of AI in their AI Program.

- a) They will do so by attributing elements of an EI (history or traditions, values and purpose) to AI
- b) and by framing these elements as distinctively European through 'othering'.

H2: It is further expected that the EI-frames will function

- a) to promote the Commission's AI program and
- b) to legitimize their political authority.

3. Data & Method

This chapter aims to provide the methodological foundation and justification for the content analysis and frame analysis conducted for answering the research question. Firstly, an explanation of the overall research design is presented. Thereby, it will be explained why it is used for examining EI frames in the Commission's AI program. Secondly, it will be justified why the case of the Commission's AI program has been chosen, providing more insights on the relevance of AI. Thirdly, this chapter explains which kind of data will be used to conduct the analysis and how these documents have been selected. Finally, it will be described and justified in which order and with which method the research questions will be answered and specifically what the content analysis and frame analysis will entail.

3.1. Research Design

This research is an interpretative study that aims at gaining insights into the Commission's political communication of AI and specifically how they use EI-frames to construct and promote a European version of AI. It is a premise of this thesis that societal reality is constructed and that political actors such as the Commission have a strong interest in shaping this reality according to their beliefs. Because the purpose of interpretative research is to provide greater understanding, meaning and subjective interpretation of what is central to one's beliefs and motivations (Corona Lisboa, 2018; Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2012), it is suitable to analyse the Commission's EI understanding. Doing so demands to look for underlying meaning within the AI program for which content analysis is a suitable method because it allows an in-depth examination and interpretation of textual data. The same applies to framing – as Goffman (1974) emphasized, frames influence how individuals make sense of the world. They are tools with which consciously and unconsciously a favoured reality can be constructed and reinforced (Goffman, 1974). In line with the interpretative research design, a frame analysis enables the researcher to structurally analyse the content of large amounts of textual data and to interpret the underlying meaning of it. For content analysis, to remain valid and reproducible, the critical step is the creation of a coding scheme that ensures transparency in the process of extracting the meaning of a text (Abdelal et al., 2006).

3.2. Case Selection

Public debates revolve around the potential goods, risks and negative impacts of AI (Berendt, 2018). In light of this transformation, it will depend on the AI rules and regulations, as well as

their communication, to what extent the society will develop trust towards AI technologies (European Commission, 2020g). The Commission is a powerful actor in many policy areas that are likely to be influenced by AI, such as consumer protection or climate change mitigation. It signifies the scope and relevance that policies related to AI have and the reason why the EU's AI strategy adds an interesting new case to the study of frames. Even more relevance is drawn to the case of the Commission because of the EU's explicit goal to become a global leader in 'safe artificial intelligence' (European Commission, 2020g). This shows that the programmatic approach chosen by the Commission does not only affect its member states but might in the future also extend its scope internationally. The analysis will focus on the Commission's program starting from 24th April 2018 because from then on, AI was considered a policy priority, the first Communication on AI was published and sufficient data can be gathered. In the time frame of this thesis, the data collection was closed on 3rd May 2021.

3.3. Method of Data Collection

This thesis will analyse all documents that directly concern the substantive presentation and communication of the Commission's AI program. This will provide the method of content analysis with the necessary data, aiming to gain an understanding of how the Commission communicates a European version of AI. Therefore, the first pillar of Commission documents are strategy documents from the 2019-2024 policy priorities of 'Excellence and trust in artificial intelligence', such as a White Paper and six 'Communications from the Commission to the European Parliament, the European Council, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions'. A Communication is usually issued by the Commission when it faces a new policy challenge and functions as an aspirational document, similar to a memorandum, a proposal for a policy approach or a strategy paper (Figueira, 2017). These papers constitute the basis of future EU decision-making. In total, this thesis analysed eight framework documents. The second pillar of documents represents the political communication of the AI program. These are press releases which address the topic of AI at least once and speeches by the leading figures of the Commission which are the President and Vice-Presidents, as well as the Commissioners. Speeches are particularly relevant because frames have proven to be more influential and credible if they have been introduced by prominent institutional speakers (Benford & Snow, 2000; Hänggeli & Kriesi, 2010). The total amount of data analysed consisted of 547 pages from 146 documents.

The documents were selected in three ways. Firstly, a search on publications was done via AI watch. AI watch is a knowledge base established by the Commission to enable the monitoring of “development, uptake and impact of Artificial Intelligence for Europe” (European Commission, n.d.–a) Thus, this offers an eligible starting point for the document selection. Results before April 2018 were excluded to remain in the scope of the AI program. Documents by third parties, such as by the JRC or member states were excluded because this thesis is explicitly interested in the Commission’s position and their communication. Furthermore, concentrating on the strategic outline of AI policies and remaining within the scope of this thesis, the analysis does not focus on legal documents such as regulations but includes only documents with the identifier ‘COM’ which are communications, recommendations, reports, white papers, green papers and proposals (EUR-lex, n.d.) Secondly, this list was completed with the publications that are listed on the website dedicated to AI as part of the Commission’s “A Europe fit for the digital Age” policy priority. Lastly, press releases and speeches were collected that contain the keyword ‘artificial intelligence’ and the same time frame via the Commission’s press corner. While analysing, documents were excluded that showed no clear relation to the AI program.

3.4. Method of Analysis and Operationalisation

The analysis will follow three analytical steps based on the sub-questions posed in the introduction. The first sub-question will be answered by content analysis, based on the principles of structuring a content analysis developed by Mayring (Mayring & Fenzl, 2014). The advantage of this type of content analysis is the usage of a coding scheme. Setting up a coding scheme a priori is important to mitigate the potential of bias in the context of interpretative content and frame analysis because it creates a transparent structure along which lines other researchers could repeat the analysis (Lawlor & Tolley, 2017). This is especially important in the context of the concept of EI because its precise conceptualization is contested (Kaina & Karolewski, 2013). Following Mayring (2014), this coding scheme includes categories and uses keywords to structure the analysis for which the theory section on EI provides the foundation. Regarding the research question, the content analysis aims to extract keywords and cues reflecting the understanding of EI present in the AI program that builds the basis for the second and third analytical steps. To begin with, the coding also includes the values and purposes mentioned in the EWoLp which are provided in *Figure 1* as an example of how identity-elements were categorized. However, because the content of collective

identities is extremely variable and AI is a specific topic, it is impossible to merely use keywords and cues derived from existing literature with various thematic backgrounds, to include them in a coding scheme on EI (Abdelal et al. 2019). Therefore, the specific content of the categories was extracted from the data through in-depth reading and examining of the text, searching for elements of the categories.

The categories reflect those of the EI conceptualization in the theory section: shared values and history or traditions as well as political, social or ideational purposes. Values in the political dimension, for example, refer to democracy, market economy, human rights and the rule of law as entry criteria for the membership in the political community European Union (Abdelal et al., 2006). Coding units were not limited to keywords, but included sentences or paragraphs with identity reference, because purposes and history can be elaborated not only in one keyword but arrive from the meaning of a paragraph.

Figure 1: Coding Scheme to analyse the Commission’s approach to European identity following categories

| Concept | Dimension | Categories | Cues & Keywords |
|----------|-------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Identity | Cultural identity | Values | Solidarity, equality, fairness |
| | | History/Traditions | |
| | | Purpose | |
| | Civic identity | Political Values | Fundamental Rights, Democracy, Rule of Law |
| | | History/Traditions | |
| | | Purpose | Safety, Social Security, Inclusion, Resilience, Consumer Protection |

To answer the second sub-question, the sentences and paragraphs, in which a reference to EI and AI was found, were analysed regarding the Commission’s framing to understand how AI

and EI are reconciled. Frames are indicated by statements on general objectives, values and/or historic/traditional aspects of the EU in the context of AI (Lichtenstein & Eilders, 2019). It was analysed how the different EI keywords and cues of the first sub-question centre around different lines of statement and argument and are, thus, clustered to form a specific frame. These EI-AI-constructs reflect the frames used to communicate a European version of AI in line with an EI. Accordingly, the unit of analysis was frames that could be as long as one sentence or multiple paragraphs. For the third sub-question, the insights generated by the second sub-question were considered. In the coding process, specific attention was drawn to the activity of ‘othering’ as means of distinguishing a European version of AI. This way, the Commission’s claims towards the Europeanness of the AI program should be uncovered because othering makes elements of a shared identity explicit.

3.5. Conclusion

Answering the research question is three-fold: Firstly, the identity concept is used to extract the Commission’s understanding of EI in the context of AI through a content analysis, using a coding scheme based on EI. To answer the second sub-question, a frame analysis is conducted focusing on EI frames as means of reconciling AI and EI, addressing and discussing more explicitly frames as means of political communication of the AI program. This will give first insights into the overall research question. The thesis will do so by building on the keywords for the EI extracted in the first step, analysing how they are connected to the information on AI and which framing narratives are built around them. Thirdly, this thesis addresses more in detail what the Commission frames as distinct for a European version of AI, concentrating and discussing the use of ‘othering’ as means of distinguishing the European AI program from competing programs.

4. Analysis

This chapter will provide an in-depth understanding of the framing that the Commission adopts to communicate a European version of AI. To do so, the analysis follows three steps that extensively use the data that communicates the AI program: The analysis will address the relationship of AI and EI, explaining the relevance of EI in the debate on AI. This part of the analysis aims at extracting the Commission's understanding of EI, to analyse how elements of EI are used to frame a European version of AI. Additionally, it will be discussed, what the use of these EI-frames signifies focusing on their function for the communication of the AI program. Finally, it will be analysed how within this framing, the European version of AI is presented in relation to the international competition on AI and in distinction to other approaches to AI.

4.1. European AI: A Challenge for Political Communication

A European version of AI must be in line with a collective EI. Scholars of social science in recent years have emphasized the ambiguity of the phenomenon of AI, chance and challenge, life saver or social Armageddon (cf. Kissinger, 2018). AI can be a chance for EI, but also an existential threat that needs to be overcome. In the following, both AI as a threat to and as a necessity for EI will be explained. Taking into account the goal of this research - to understand how the Commission communicates a European version of AI – this is relevant because it shows the challenge that will most significantly influence the particular framing that they adopt.

AI as a Threat to European Identity

The Commission acknowledges that if not handled responsibly and carefully, AI violates the core values inherent in their understanding of EI: “The use of AI can affect the values on which the EU is founded and lead to breaches of fundamental rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, human dignity, non-discrimination [...] protection of personal data and private life, or the right to an effective judicial remedy and a fair trial, as well as consumer protection.” (European Commission, 2020g, p. 11) They emphasize the European commitment to the rule of law and other European values, such as equality, pluralism, inclusion, fairness, solidarity, tolerance and the commitment to ethical guidelines (European Commission, 2019b). In this context, the commitment to fundamental rights becomes an

important part of the Commission's EI understanding. Thus, the mere possibility of a threat towards fundamental rights leads the Commission to communicate AI as a phenomenon that might interfere with the EU as 'Werteunion' and, thereby, to the legitimacy of their political authority that is based on these rights. This is in line with Hypothesis 2b).

AI also has the potential to counteract the purposes with which the Commission identifies and legitimizes their authority: to enhance societies' wellbeing and to provide safety and security for European citizens. The Commission illustrates this with the case of the job market in which inequalities are expected to increase due to the AI transformation (European Commission, 2018c). The EU emerged as a project to generate peace and prosperity among their member states (European Commission, 2019e), whereas AI has the potential to jeopardize this fundamental endeavour. Thus, for the Commission, which has the task to maintain this fundamental purpose of the EU, AI again turns into a threat. The Commission communicates this as a dangerous condition from which the imperative of developing a European version of AI is inferred.

AI as a Necessity for the European Identity

Nonetheless, the Commission also suggests that introducing and developing a European version of AI is fundamental for safeguarding European values (European Commission, 2018b), can be crucial in maintaining European traditions or historical conditions (European Commission, 2018e, 2019f, 2021f) and fulfilling the EU's purposes that are a major part of the Europeans' collective identities (European Commission, 2019e, 2020d, 2020g, 2020h).

The Commission emphasises the potential of AI to address global challenges like climate change, making AI an important tool for the Commission to deliver on the promises inherent in a civic EI: "AI is also key for us when we want to reach our goal to be climate neutral in 2050." (European Commission, 2020c, p. 1) The same applies to the value of economic strength and, accordingly, the EU's purpose of providing overall market competitiveness and a functioning single market for large companies, start-ups and small and middle-sized enterprises (SMEs) (European Commission, 2020p). In their latest Communication, they state that "[an] accelerated development and deployment of advanced and trustworthy AI in Europe is a pre-condition for Europe's future competitiveness and prosperity" (European Commission, 2021a, p. 9). Hence, the European economy can only maintain its strength and level of success if AI is developed in the EU (European Commission, 2018c, 2018e). Additionally, the Commission seeks global leadership based on the urge for

independence and European sovereignty which is highly valued to ‘defend’ the European Way of Life (European Commission, 2020j). Following this narrative, European AI is a prerequisite for EI. Without innovative European AI solutions and a favourable legislative, societal and economic framework for AI, the EU loses economic and technological strength, diminishes the chance of solving universal crisis and sovereignty, thus, risking the prosperity and safety that are inherent in its identity.

The Commission also sees a necessity for a European version of AI which is rooted in its history: “Historically, industrial revolutions have spread from Europe to the rest of the world” (European Commission, 2018c, p. 1), as Commissioner Mariya Gabriel remarked in 2018. This means regardless of European values or purposes, the Commission frames European technological leadership as natural law and, thus, despite AI ambiguity, European AI’s uptake is non-negotiable (European Commission, 2018c). Gabriel continues: “This time, however, Europe is not at the centre of the digital revolution” (European Commission, 2018c, p. 1). The confession that the EU is already lacking behind China and the US in AI technologies, not being the source of technological revolutions and thus, the most powerful actor in influencing the specific uptake of the revolution conflicts with the historical self-image of the Commission. It is a violation of the collective EI itself and, thus, in the self-understanding of the Commission, must be acted upon (European Commission, 2018c, 2020g).

In sum, it is peculiar that the Commission both emphasizes the potential threat of AI towards EI and to the EU’s legitimacy, but also, considering elements from their EI sees a necessity in developing a European version of AI. This version of AI is presented as a safeguard of European values, continuum of successful history and catalyst of European objectives and EU purposes. To this point, this step of the analysis provided an insight on the answer to the first sub-question outlining the elements of an EI present in the data. This is, of course, limited to the case of the AI program and does not claim totality. Predominantly, it stresses a commitment to fundamental human rights manifested in the Charta, economic strength, sovereignty, privacy protection, a democratic process and international cooperation. The Commission aims at providing purposes, such as social security, sovereignty, market competitiveness or enhancing society’s wellbeing. These can be combined with a historical claim of European technological leadership and excellence. All in all, these observations are the basis for the frame analysis in the following because it exposes the difficulty and necessity

to overcome this conflict between AI and EI in a European version of AI. It also signifies that EI-frames are a valuable tool to do so.

4.2. Framing a European Version of AI

For the Commission's AI program to be resonant for European society and a valid international alternative, they need to overcome the conflict outlined above by reconciling AI with their understanding of EI. This would politically legitimize a European version of AI. In the following, the used frames are analyzed and interpreted regarding their role in this endeavour. This shall answer the second sub-question providing insights on how the Commission communicates this European version of AI addressing AI threats through EI-frames. This sub-chapter aims to answer Hypotheses 1a) and 2a) and b).

Trustworthy and Human-Centric AI

To overcome the ambiguity of AI that arises from its character as a threat to and necessity for EI, the Commission tries to communicate a European version of AI that is in line with European values. "By striving towards human-centric AI based on trust, we safeguard the respect for our core societal values and carve out a distinctive trademark for Europe and its industry as a leader in cutting-edge AI that can be trusted throughout the world." (European Commission, 2019b, p. 9) Accordingly, the goal of upholding European values shall be achieved through a version of AI that is both 'trustworthy' and 'human-centric'. Both keywords are mentioned extremely frequently but are rarely defined in the context of values and function rather as stand-alone keywords.

Despite an unspecific over-deployment of the keyword 'trust', in some parts, the conditions for trustworthiness are defined specifically. The Commission explains that trust is only possible where AI is attached to a commitment to the rule of law, ethical guidelines, transparency and accountability so that people can understand how AI makes decisions and who is responsible (European Commission, 2018g, 2019b, 2020g). A liability framework safeguarding consumers in case of errors needs to be established and human autonomy and agency need to prevail so that the accordance with European values or norms such as fundamental rights can be maintained (European Commission, 2019a, 2020e, 2021e, 2021f, 2021f). Here, the connection to European values functions as a prerequisite for trustworthy AI. However, in most of the data, 'trust' was not extensively defined and functioned more as a reassuring and repetitive claim that European AI will be trustworthy. Peculiarly, in connection

with trust, there are not specific values singled out to generate it, but it is rather presented as a commitment to European values in general. This adds to the vagueness of the concept. Thus, the Commission did use a narrative of trustworthy AI in their communication as means of entrenching a frame in citizens' minds that European AI and the EU are indeed trustworthy and in line with European values. Because in their rhetoric, they, as a rule of nature, mention European AI mostly only in connection with trust.

The concept 'human-centric AI' remains very unspecific regarding its Europeanness. In general, the Commission suggests that people must be at the centre of the AI development and AI, first and foremost, must be understood as a tool to serve the people and increase human well-being and not economic advantages (European Commission, 2018a, 2018e, 2019b, 2019f, 2021d), but it is not mentioned why 'human-centric' AI should be necessarily European. Instead, it is mentioned in the context of European values but without a clear relationship to it and rather with a focus on EU purposes. An illustrative example of this is the purpose of enhancing society's wellbeing. The Commission states that: "The European AI strategy and the coordinated plan make clear that trust is a prerequisite to ensure a human-centric approach to AI: AI is not an end in itself, but a tool that has to serve people with the ultimate aim of increasing human well-being." (European Commission, 2019b, p. 1) Here, they claim that trust and human-centric equals serving the people and enhancing their well-being. It suggests that human-wellbeing is the effect of human-centred AI and, thus, well-being is communicated as an indicator that the European version of AI is in line with values from an EI. But, this must be not necessarily the case when considering that a society can also be perceived as prosperous and achieving high levels of well-being without for example a strong commitment to democracy or freedom, such as in Saudi Arabia or the United Arab Emirates (Helliwell et al., 2019). Democracy and freedom are not mentioned very frequently when human-centric AI is exemplified but, are broadly referred to via a commitment to (fundamental) human rights.

To sum up, it is surprising that a detailed explanation of these concepts happens only sporadically, mostly remains rather vague and, if illustrated more in detail, addresses different areas of concern which does not generate more understanding but appears arbitrary. Through immense repetition, the Commission suggest that human-centric and trustworthy AI are distinctively European, but they do not base this argument profoundly on an elaborate connection to specific core societal values. Thereby, trustworthy and human-centric are used as shiny keywords or even hollow "plastic words" (Bourne, 2019, p. 115) which are positively

connotated and suggest an imperative of cultural resonance and trustworthiness but actually remain superficial, not being connected to something particularly European. This is not to say that values such as non-discrimination, transparency, or equality are not important, but the main argument here is that there are haphazardly consulted to support an imperative of trustworthiness and human-centrism. This confirms hypothesis 1a), but not in a way that was expected because the focus is not directed towards specifically European values but to trustworthiness and human-centric as flexible subsidies. What became apparent is that European purposes play an important role and are even prioritized to substantively frame a European version of AI. The EU's purposes inherent in their EI are used to make the benefits of AI salient while overshadowing the ambiguity of AI. This is illustrated through the 'AI for Good'-frame in the following.

European AI for Good

The meta-narrative adopted by the Commission that fuels the idea behind trustworthy and human-centric AI is the idea of using AI for good, for making people's lives better in Europe and around the globe. This universal commitment to and promise of AI benefits is illustrated to solve universal challenges such as health care or the fulfilment of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (European Commission, 2020g). This highlights the international impact that the Commission seeks with its European version of AI (European Commission, 2021a). The European Commission draws an immediate connection between AI and the fulfilment of the purposes and objectives civic EI projects on the European institutions – those purposes generating legitimacy. By emphasizing this relationship through an 'AI for Good'-frame, the Commission claims that Europeans need AI to solve global challenges, to strengthen their economy, to maintain their living standards, to enhance their well-being and that of future generations. This is a powerful frame because it is connected to the lived reality of citizens, resonating with perceptions of hopes and challenges whereas values and norms remain more abstract.

A very vivid example is the highly universal and emotional case of cancer diagnosis in which the Commission's representatives repeatedly emphasize that "As we speak [AI] is saving lives [...]" (European Commission, 2021f, p. 1) (European Commission, 2020n, 2020o). This frame tells the audience that AI is an opportunity to prevent fundamental indiscriminately suffering and loss. For von der Leyen this is a universal concern with which anybody can empathize: "For me, and for so many of you, this is personal" (European Commission, 2020a,

p. 1). Thereby, the Commission states that European AI does not only help Europeans to overcome a shared global challenge, which is part of many people's daily life but that by not adopting AI, they would spare a chance for saving lives of friends and family. This would go against the collective EI and specifically fundamental rights such as human dignity.

While this is a case in which AI has proven to be beneficial, it is striking that the Commission does not address in detail that different purposes might be conflicting. Today, it is obvious that past industrial revolutions were grounded on immense human suffering and exploitation – that striving for technological advancement, economic success and productivity were not aligned with well-being. While the Commission uses references from a shared history of technological success and advancement as evidence for European success and presents AI leadership as a continuum of this history (European Commission, 2020c, 2020f, 2020g), they do not discuss the ambiguity of technological revolutions. Instead, when presenting their European version of AI, they diminish controversies and conflicts of interests in society and represent European AI as a universal source of good, framing an image of the best of both worlds: economic success and technological innovation that leads to global leadership and market competitiveness, on the one hand, and a human-centric, trustworthy European version of AI, first and foremost, serving the European citizens, provides safety and security, resilience and democracy, on the other hand.

This frame is very well exemplified in a speech by Commissioner Věra Jourová: “What makes AI special is that it can improve all sectors of our economy and our everyday life, just like electricity or automation did.” (European Commission, 2019f, p. 3) This draws attention to the merits of the second industrial revolution but diminishes the negative societal consequences and individual suffering such as disastrous working conditions or that automation was connected to an immense loss of jobs. With the foundation of the European Economic Community in 1957, economic strength and purposes such as strengthening the single market have been emphasized whereas today, the EU has still limited competencies in social matters and struggles to ensure compliance with the rule of law and fundamental rights in their member states. Hence, it is not given that all elements of an EI in the context of AI are mutually reinforcing and non-conflicting.

Accordingly, when presenting a European version of AI, the Commission emphasizes the chances of AI for the benefit of European citizens. This highlights the potential of AI for fulfilling European purposes and overshadows the threats connected to AI. In comparison to

EI-frames based on values, this targets directly at real concerns of citizen's daily lives making this frame potentially highly resonant and salient. Significantly, this frame focuses on reconciling AI and an EI also by disregarding the conflicts of interests between different European purposes, as well as the ambiguity of past technological revolutions. Framing a 'best of both worlds' approach is a balancing act for which the Commission alternates between exclaiming that the AI's legal framework must minimize burdens for economic actors to remain innovation-friendly and competitive while emphasizing that the ultimate goal must be to enhance citizen's wellbeing. This might signify that the Commission is well aware of the ambiguity inherent in technological revolutions such as the AI revolution and also within collective EIs – especially when it comes to which purposes to prioritize and whom the EU should serve. Disregarding these conflicts is a means of promoting a European version of AI because it is presented as uncontroversial which is in line with hypothesis 2a). Nonetheless, this uncovers potential weaknesses in the Commission's communication strategy because it is logically attackable.

AI demands Unity

The Commission emphasizes communicating the heavy burden and severity of the task of implementing and ensuring a European version of AI in line with European values and promoting this approach internationally (European Commission, 2018b, 2020g). To accomplish this task, the Commission calls for coordinated action suggesting that the AI phenomenon requires the whole of European society to work together and to unite instead of following national initiatives: "The introduction of national initiatives risks to endanger legal certainty, to weaken citizens' trust and to prevent the emergence of a dynamic European industry." (European Commission, 2020g, p. 2) This framing is multifaceted and while predominantly built on the constituting value of European unity, uses other elements of EI to generate the logical narrative around the necessity of unity.

The Commission argues with the fragmentation of the single market and implies that this could create obstacles for companies (European Commission, 2020g). This argument addresses specifically industry and market stakeholders that have a strong interest in a consistent legal framework on AI, but who also have the resources to boost the investment levels in AI technology. AI's uptake depends on them: The Commission announces the requirement of public-private cooperation because they provide sufficient investment levels that go beyond what public investments alone can administer (European Commission, 2019c,

2020g, 2020l). This is significant because it illustrates, using the example of the private sector economy, that the Commission frames European AI as impactful for all of society (European Commission, 2020k). Similarly, the Commission claims that they want to make the process of developing a European version of AI inclusive and democratic through seeking dialogue, feedback and criticism of different stakeholders and citizens (European Commission, 2018b, 2018d, 2019a, 2019f), because, “[l]ike any other technology, AI is not just imposed on society” (European Commission, 2018e, p. 12). This ensures that all citizens benefit from AI, are equipped to use AI technologies and able to understand and reflect on the societal change accruing through AI (European Commission, 2018b, 2018e, 2018e, 2021c, 2021e).

Accordingly, via the ‘AI demands unity’-frame AI is communicated as a societal phenomenon that needs the input of everybody and shall benefit all of society. In the communication of the Commission, this framing is very dominant. It is based on a set of European values, prominently unity, solidarity, democracy and inclusion. This framing suggests the importance of the European level to coordinate the development and regulation of a European version of AI and, thereby, legitimizes the authority of the EU, confirming Hypothesis 2b). It can be interpreted that this frame not only serves to enable the EU to mobilize society for an AI uptake (Hypothesis 2a)) to seize the benefits of AI, to remain sovereign and to safeguard EI in the face of fierce international competition, but that the AI technological revolution offers a chance for the Commission to foster European integration through communication.

To answer the second sub-question of this thesis: The European Commission frames a European version of AI as a widespread societal phenomenon that shall bring benefits to all of its citizens being developed based on shared European values. For this, the Commission entrenches a frame that emphasizes the trustworthiness of European AI and its commitment to human-centrism. This shall safeguard European values but mainly shifts the focus predominantly to the fulfilment of European purposes for the benefit of society. The ‘AI for Good’-frame draws attention away from conflicts within EI elements, AI threats and dangers of technological revolutions. To seize the advantages of AI, and to counter the threats that AI can pose to this endeavour, the Commission claims that European society and European member states need to unite, work together and engage in a dialogue, expertise and education. Thereby, solidarity among European citizens from different member states and backgrounds is fostered and the importance and legitimacy of the European level increased.

4.3. A distinct European AI?

The EI-frames adopted by the Commission analysed above are especially relevant for the internal AI mobilization of EU citizens. As discussed in the theory section, such EI-frames are also of external relevance because they distinguish a European version of AI from other nations' AI programs. Here, this is especially significant because the AI program and all communication efforts connected to it are framed as part of a rapid and existential race for global leadership on AI (European Commission, 2018e, 2019a, 2020k). In the following, this analysis will give insights on the role of 'othering' in the Commission's AI program and communication thereof (Hypothesis 1b)). This will be embedded in an examination of the adopted frame of the global race and competition for AI that introduces this step of the analysis.

The global Race for AI

As the previous frames illustrate, by using EI-frames in their AI program, the Commission seeks to promote their European version of AI, mobilizing Europeans for AI's uptake. This mobilization does not occur in a vacuum out of the basic endeavour to seize the benefits of AI technology for society but is strongly connected to the EU's endeavour of being a competitive party in the global race for AI leadership.

The Commission stresses the need to aim for AI leadership because, otherwise, they lose the economic and technological strength necessary for market competitiveness in the EU (European Commission, 2018a, 2020i). This is also based on the historical understanding of the EU as a global technological leader and AI as the natural continuum of this leadership. Without AI leadership the EU will risk losing (technological) sovereignty and autonomy by becoming dependent on the applications by competitors (European Commission, 2020f, 2021b) and, thereby, also risk threats towards their social and democratic model (European Commission, 2020b, 2020o). The Commission endeavours to expand its value system globally through international cooperation, allyship and leadership (European Commission, 2018f, 2020m, 2021b). This way global leadership and value expansion become a purpose inherent in the EI understanding itself. The frame 'AI demands Unity' also needs to be regarded as a prerequisite for the international competition, because only a united EU stands a chance in the global race for AI (European Commission, 2018f, 2020g).

Is there an 'Other'?

In the context of this race-framing, it appears logical that the Commission emphasizes the unique character of the European version of AI in contrast to their immediate competitors China and the US. Therefore, it is surprising that this is not extensively the case. While China and the US are mentioned a few times as competitors, who are right now at the forefront of AI investment and technology, a distinction remains rather vague and indirect. When addressing the cooperation between the US and the EU in the technological revolution directly, the EU exclaims that there are two camps globally: one, to which the EU belongs that is “people-friendly” (European Commission, 2019d, p. 2) sharing the view that all players have to respect limitations when it comes to the fundamental rights of citizens, such as privacy rights and another one that disregards citizens’ wellbeing in the name of business and government interests (European Commission, 2019d). Nevertheless, they ask the US to join their camp and emphasize that they are both founded on the same values, countering a distinction (European Commission, 2019d). Towards China, a distinction is made more specific when the Commission emphasizes that: “What sets Europe apart from competitors is the fact that our values come first. Human beings come first.” (European Commission, 2019d, p. 1) This puts again emphasis on the concept of human-centric AI and a commitment to European values that are here named as distinctively European.

Instead of specific othering, the Commission emphasizes that they are focusing on their Europeanness and are open for cooperation with whoever wants to commit to their values: “European technological sovereignty is not defined against anyone else, but by focusing on the needs of Europeans and of the European social model.” (European Commission, 2020f, p. 3) This reflects an inconsistency in their communication efforts because they mutually claim singularity with their human-centric and trustworthy approach based on European values, and emphasize and seek international allyships based on these shared values. Accordingly, the Commission suggests that a European version of AI is more an inward-oriented endeavour and that it serves the main purpose of enhancing European citizens’ wellbeing. It shall not prove their competitiveness or their distinction in front of other international actors. It rather reduces the complex and diverse interests of a supranational actor such as the EU to the fundamental purpose of serving their citizens. If this framing is taken up by the audience, it has the potential of legitimizing political authority and mobilizing for AI’s uptake alike, however, it is also showing weakness because of its inconsistency.

To sum up, it appears as if the European approach may be distinct from a Chinese approach, but it is not exclusively European. Externally, the Commission seeks cooperation with actors such as Japan, Canada or Australia – who share similar values towards AI adoption. They do not communicate ‘us Europeans are particularly different to you’, but to build AI alliances, they emphasize shared values and an openness to collaborate on this basis such as towards the US reflecting an inconsistency in their communication. Instead, it appears as if the EI-frames are directed towards a sceptical European society that needs to be united and mobilized for AI’s uptake. Through persistent and eager repetition of the claim that ‘trustworthy’ and ‘human-centric’ European AI will be based on European values, is a continuum of European history and will serve European purposes, resonance with a collective EI shall be generated. Europeans are reminded of the importance of the European level and their shared values, historical success and today’s benefits. In light of this inward focus, this might ultimately rather have the purpose of strengthening European integration instead of distinguishing themselves in an international environment. The AI revolution might be an opportunity for the Commission to not only expand values, strengths and partnerships worldwide, but expand and maintain their relevance from within in times of Brexit and Euroscepticism. To conclude, Hypothesis 1b) on the use of othering to distinguish a European version of AI could not be confirmed.

4.4. Concluding Remarks

This analysis showed that there is a strong connection between the phenomena of AI and EI characterized by an ambiguity of conflict and mutual dependence. It gave insights into the Commission’s EI understanding. The Commission uses EI-frames on a large scale to frame a European version of AI. According to the Commission, this is a version of AI that respects fundamental rights in line with European values, that enables the EU to do good by fulfilling its purposes and, thereby, directly improving people’s lives. It is a continuum of European technological success and remains uncontroversial to internal conflicts of interests and purposes representing the best of both worlds. The EI-frames function to overshadow AI ambiguity and, thereby, have a mobilizing and unifying effect because ‘AI demands Unity’. From this observation, one can conclude that the EI-frames are predominantly inward-oriented. They can be interpreted as means to enhance the European bond, foster the legitimacy of the EU as a supranational institution and have the potential to work as catalysts for further European integration. The adopted framing as a race for global leadership was very present but

only to a small extent connected to othering. The concepts of trustworthy and human-centric AI are framed as distinctively European even though this is not the case.

5. Conclusion

5.1. Answer to the Research Question

The goal of this thesis is to understand how the European Commission communicates a European version of AI to the broader European public. In this context, it was hypothesized that they will do so by using EI-frames. This general assumption could be confirmed and the analysis provided an in-depth understanding of the narratives the Commission adopted in this context.

To begin with, this thesis argues that in the context of the global race towards AI leadership, the Commission has identified a potential threat of AI to the values, such as fundamental rights, on which the EU is founded and that are inherent in an EI. This is the starting point from which all action and communication need to be considered. This thesis argues that the Commission presents their European version of AI as a necessity to overcome threats inherent in AI and that their communication efforts are directed to overshadow the conflicts that arise from reconciling AI with an EI. A European version of AI is communicated not as a threat to EI but as a necessity to safeguard European values and to fulfil historical and political expectations inherent in an EI. The analysis showed that they did so by employing three dominant identity frames: ‘Trustworthy and Human-Centric AI’, ‘AI for Good’ and ‘AI demands Unity’.

Firstly, through excessive repetition of the claim that European AI will be trustworthy and human-centric, in their AI program and communication thereof they try to soothe the concerns of Europeans towards a complex and disruptive technology. They connect these keywords to European values, however, it became apparent that not the specific values were significant for a European version of AI but the imperative of trustworthiness and human-centrism. It was significant that for a European version of AI, the Commission prioritized highlighting the positive outcomes and benefits it could deliver for Europeans. Thus, European values were rather a means to fulfil the purposes and expectations inherent in the EI, such as enhancing society’s well-being, providing market competitiveness or solving the climate crisis. Secondly, this signifies that a European version of AI was communicated as directly beneficial for citizens’ lives which might have a stronger mobilizing effect than the commitment to values on paper. Whether this might be connected to the fact that the Commission has been struggling in the past to safeguard the commitment to fundamental rights, such as the rule of law or non-discrimination, could be the concern of further research on the issue. The main argument here

is that through the use of EI-frames a European version of AI was communicated as a source of good, such as for prosperity or sovereignty. It was framed as uncontroversial, ignoring the ambiguous character of technological revolutions in the past and presenting a European version of AI as means of achieving the best of both worlds: societal wellbeing and economic uptake. Lastly, EI-frames were used to communicate the European version of AI as a societal phenomenon that shall be developed and is beneficial for all. Thereby, this European AI was framed as inclusive and fair towards all different nationalities, socio-demographic backgrounds, economic sizes and interests.

While other nations played a role in the Commission's communication to reach out for the international competition on AI and to stress the urgency to act, competing frameworks were not used as means to further elaborate a unique character of a European AI. Instead, the EI-frames focused on promoting the Commission's AI program, functioning to mobilize the European society from within by addressing topics that are relevant and present in citizens' daily lives. According to this, a European AI shall reflect the self and not of the other; giving the impression that it is the European citizens that shall be at the centre of interest and not other nations' approaches. From an analytical perspective this observation shows an inconsistency in their communication efforts: While European values and human-centric and trustworthy AI are framed as specifically European, they externally emphasize how they seek allyships based on shared values.

5.2 Scientific Discussion & Limitations

These results have generated new insights into the Commission's understanding of EI for which the coding scheme dividing the concept into values/norms, purpose and history has proved to be very useful enabling the researcher to reflect on the different aspects of an identity. This gave interesting insights on the potential of EI for understanding the Commission's political goals. In comparison, the analysis of European national AI discourses by Ossewaarde and Gülenc (Ossewaarde & Gulenc, 2020) showed that the governments' strategies reflect political ambitions resonating with historic notions of nation-building, such as imperialist ambitions and welfare promises. To some extent, EI-frames can be regarded as the European equivalent to these observations: the EU aims to expand their values on a global scale, seeks to foster unity and European integration and grounds these goals on promised benefits of AI, particularly society's well-being and economic strength. In light of Euroscepticism, Brexit or the failed Constitutional Treaty, these findings make possible a new perspective on the EU's struggle for

generating political legitimacy and top-down identity formation that is focused on the Commission's political communication.

In its political communication, the Commission overshadows the difficulty of guaranteeing compliance with values and fundamental rights by making the objectives or purposes of the EU that generate output legitimacy salient via framing. However, this might not be enough, considering that according to Schmidt (Schmidt, 2013) output legitimacy specifically demands resonance with societal values. This thesis can be seen as an addition to research on the EU's output legitimacy from a political communication angle, identifying shortcomings. To assess whether this communication strategy is or is not successful, more elaborate research must be conducted on frame building, using the studies by (Hänggli & Kriesi, 2010; Rodelo & Muñiz, 2019) as examples who both analyze the time-lagged influence of frames introduced by strategic political communication on media coverage of the issue through time-series analysis. Such a more holistic and integrative approach to frame analysis (Matthes, 2012) would be necessary to assess the resonance and salience of EI frames in the Commission's AI program and also to check whether the Commission's understanding of EI is shared collectively among Europeans. In general, the EI understanding used here to extract the frames is the strongest limitation to this study. It is the foundation for the more substantial frame analysis, but the coding and extraction were done by only one coder, demanding further research to confirm the validity of the results. This is why the researcher recommends assigning multiple independent coders to the task to increase the validity of follow-up research.

5.3 Practical Implications

The insights of this thesis show also, how in a highly complex, technological topic, cultural belief systems, values and expectations play an influential role in constructing the reality around facts and data. This is relevant for all of society: Policymakers in the Commission, like Margrethe Vestager who is responsible for implementing 'A Europe Fit for the Digital Age', need to consider values and transparency which is the focus of Commissioner Věra Jourová. The same call for interdisciplinary work applies to national governments. The connection of AI and EI signifies that the body of a message, or better – the topic – is mutable because frames and underlying narratives can be attributed to very different contexts. Accordingly, if an actor such as the Commission wants to foster EI and, thereby, strengthen their legitimacy, there is a huge array of topics and occasions to do so. Accordingly, citizens should reflect on the way AI in particular and innovations, in general, are presented to them and which other meanings and

predispositions are connected to them via frames. Is the Commission's AI program trustworthy because they repeatedly say so or do reasoning and action points behind this statement convince? This thesis argues that the Commission tries to generate trust via framing, suggesting a European version of AI in line with values, but that this strategy is not water-proof. It seems as if they struggle to reconcile AI with EI which should raise awareness among citizens. It should sharpen our critical gaze to the frames and messages with which we are confronted. In the case of AI – that much is clear now – a lot will depend on how well the European society is mobilized for this approach to a European version of AI; how successful their efforts have been proven towards economic actors, stakeholders, international partners and citizens. It is the task of governing institutions to prove their sincerity and credibility for safeguarding EI, not only on paper via strategic framing, but, also through their actions.

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Appendix

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