

Getting Away With Hate:

The Use of Hateful Narratives Eluding Regulation on X by Geert Wilders and Viktor Orbán

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Abstract

Both online hate speech and borderline content, which does not explicitly meet the definition of hate speech but perpetuates similarly harmful narratives, are severe issues in modern online discourse. Right-wing populist actors have been shown to spread disproportionate amounts of hateful content to their often vast audience; however, the specific frames they use when spreading harmful narratives, the tactics they may use to circumvent relevant hate speech regulation on the platform, and what affordances online platforms have that allow harmful messages like these to be spread, are in need of a more nuanced understanding. To investigate these topics, this research employed a manual, qualitative content analysis of 172 relevant posts made by right-wing populist politicians Geert Wilders and Viktor Orbán on X during three month periods surrounding their respective elections. Results show that Wilders and Orbán use a mix of frames, including those that highlight criminality, cultural incompatibility, political infiltration, and occasionally economic costs, to depict migrants, Muslims, and LGBTIQ+ people. By being vague and implicit, misrepresenting groups, targeting individuals, and criticizing ideologies instead of people, these politicians are able to create harmful narratives which elude hate speech regulation. The affordances which allow for these posts to be spread are identified, and relations to and implications for X's current hate speech policies are discussed.

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Introduction

Online hate speech presents a critical challenge in modern societies (United Nations, n.d.), and, despite its many negative consequences, is still frequently used in political discourse (Feldman, 2023). As regulation exists to prevent hate speech in the EU (e.g., European Commission, 2025), politicians wanting to use similar debasing rhetoric have begun to share content which, while not necessarily illegal, still targets minority groups to perpetuate similarly harmful narratives (Schoorl, 2026). This content, known as “borderline content” (p. 3), may serve as a substitute to explicit online hate speech, allowing politicians to perpetuate damaging and exclusionary narratives while simultaneously evading accountability. However, by learning how politicians depict and degrade minority groups despite this regulation, as well as which specific features of an online platform like X allow this nature of content to be posted, potential vulnerabilities in the platform’s regulation can be identified.

The current study investigates the posts of two right-wing populist politicians in the EU, Geert Wilders and Viktor Orbán, on the platform X, as populists have been demonstrated to frequently use online hate speech, and X has been found to contain high levels of toxic content (Schoorl & Nijenhuis, 2026). These politicians were selected due to their popularity and Wilders’ (Hameleers, 2023) and Orbán’s (e.g., The Associated Press, 2022) history of using debasing and offensive rhetoric, which, for Wilders, resulted in being convicted of group insult (Corder, 2020). With these goals and politicians in mind, this research aims to answer the following questions:

RQ₁: How do European radical right-wing populist leaders Geert Wilders and Viktor Orbán negatively depict minority groups on X?

RQ₂: In which ways do these leaders’ depictions of minority groups elude hate speech regulation on X, and which affordances of the platform do these reveal?

X's Hate Speech Rules and Policies

While hate speech lacks a universal definition (International Network Against Cyber Hate, n.d.), X's (2023) rules and policies say the platform prohibits, among other things:

“inciting behavior that targets individuals or groups of people belonging to protected categories. This includes: inciting fear or spreading fearful stereotypes about a protected category, including asserting that members of a protected category are more likely to take part in dangerous or illegal activities.... [and] inciting others to harass members of a protected category on or off platform.”

As a signatory of the The Code of Conduct on Countering Illegal Hate Speech Online + , X has agreed that when a post has been flagged by a user as potentially being hate speech, they:

“will review it in a timely, diligent, non-arbitrary and objective manner and act expeditiously to remove or to disable access to the reported content if it is in violation of the Signatories policies, and/or on the basis of the applicable law” (European Commission, 2025, Section 2.2)

X has an obligation to assess a majority of review of content reported as potentially being hate speech, and to remove content it deems in violation of the definition laid out in its policy. Therefore, this research also serves the purpose of assessing if X would be adequately fulfilling this obligation, under the assumption that Wilders and Orbán's highly visible posts have been reported and assessed at least once.

Theoretical Framework

Framing Theory and Depictions of Minority Groups

Framing theory argues that making specific aspects of reality more salient in communication can influence how people interpret reality, and the event, phenomenon, or item

being described (Entman, 1993). Frames can influence how people understand, evaluate, and act in relation to these phenomena, and thus can be intentionally selected by communicators to advance their objectives. Identifying frames can help one understand a communicator's goals or bias, while also suggesting likely interpretations that the audience may have (Volkmer, 2009). Frames are then used by people and audiences as lenses to help them to "interpret and reconstruct reality" (p. 407).

Framing theory has been used in recent research to investigate how politicians and political parties depict minority groups. Teklay et al. (2025) draw on existing research (e.g., Drewski & Gerhards, 2025; Ekman, 2022; Lindstrom, 2016) to highlight four frames used by politicians and the media to depict immigrants, which the present research follows. The criminality/security frame portrays "immigration as a threat to national security, state sovereignty, or public order" and "migrants as both a physical danger and a challenge to the national community and identity" (Teklay et al. 2025, p. 8). The cultural incompatibility frame depicts migrants as "culturally distant or as undermining traditional norms and customs," threatening "a homogeneous national identity and core societal values", while the economic burden frame is used to depict migrants as "as a strain on public finances, employment, and welfare systems" (p. 9). The political infiltration frame involves depicting migrants as attempting "to replace the European demographic majority," using a variety of methods to instill "existential fears within native populations" of migrants or Muslims predominating them (pp. 9-10). Teklay et al. (2025) demonstrated that all of these frames are used in the comments of the German Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) party's social media posts, and that the AfD used all frames except the political infiltration frame themselves. These frames will serve a guiding function in the analysis, and will allow an examination of if and how they are used by Wilders and Orbán.

This will not only allow these frames to be assessed in new country contexts, but also to see if they or similar frames are used for groups other than migrants.

Affordance Theory and Elusion of Hate Speech Regulation

Affordance theory states that technology can be viewed in terms of its *affordances*, which “constrain the ways that they can possibly be ‘written’ [i.e., configured] and ‘read’ [i.e., interpreted]” (Hutchby, 2001, p. 447); in other words, the different ways, both intended and unintended, in which technology can be utilized. Understanding technology in terms of its affordances allows for statements about what the technology itself practically allows for, but also considers the important aspects of how humans make use of them. In the present case, X can be viewed in terms of its affordances, which reflect what X allows to be posted, and provide insight into the multiple and subversive ways people can use it to spread hateful narratives. Importantly, while the messages on X provide evidence of *potential* tactics which politicians may be using to spread hateful narratives, these are difficult to prove as being intentionally used, as many of them are implied (Schoorl, 2026). However, even if a poster does not intend to imply a hateful meaning in their message, it can still highlight ways in which the platform would allow for a similar message that is ill-intentioned to be spread. This represents potential vulnerabilities of X, and ways in which these vulnerabilities can be exploited. Indeed, investigating affordances of digital media through the messages on them has been fruitful in determining tactics people can use to mislead their audiences (Tripodi et al., 2024). Therefore, after potential tactics used to elude hate speech regulation are identified, they are connected to the affordances of X which allow them to be posted.

Methods

Overview

A qualitative content analysis, using the technique of thematic analysis, was performed on a sample of manually collected X posts written by Geert Wilders and Viktor Orbán. A content analysis was selected to study these politicians' social media posts *in situ*, assessing the actual depictions these politicians post and their audiences view on X, as well as what posts X allows for and how these politicians navigate this platform's rules. A qualitative analysis allows for a nuanced understanding of the frames and narratives used across these politicians' many posts, and allows for an understanding of posts which may fall in the grey area of not technically being classified as explicitly hate speech, but nevertheless convey a hateful narrative.

Sample

Initially, all posts made by Geert Wilders between September 1 and November 30, 2025 and by Viktor Orbán, between February 1 and April 30, 2026, on X were manually gathered. These date ranges were selected because each politician participated in their national elections within these ranges (on October 29, 2025 in the Netherlands and on April 12, 2026 in Hungary), with these being the most recent national elections in these countries at the time of data collection (between March 1 and May 1, 2026). Election periods were chosen because people generally consume more political news on social media in these times, increasing politicians' visibility (Haugsgjerd & Karlsen, 2024). Similarly, politicians are incentivized to mobilize voters to vote, which can be done, for example, by using hate speech or borderline content (Schoorl & Nijenhuis, 2026).

Firstly, all available posts (368 posts from Wilders and 162 posts from Orbán, including reposts) in the politicians' respective time periods were manually collected from X. Here, as

most of Wilders' posts were in Dutch, they were translated to English using DeepL (April 2026 Version) and checked for accuracy by a bilingual speaker. Most posts of Wilders analyzed and quoted in this paper are therefore English translations of originally Dutch writing. Orbán posted in English. The complete text of the posts were gathered, as well as text in images that appeared to be original, were collected. Images that were clearly not original (e.g., a picture of a newspaper headline) and reposts of other users' content were not included in the analysis, but were still described to provide context for the posts' main text. Videos were not included.

From here, posts were sorted for inclusion in the analysis. Posts that referenced minority groups (e.g., "immigrants"), individual members of minority groups referred to by their group status (e.g., "a Syrian man"), a shared ideology of the group (e.g., Islam), or the topics of migration, asylum, and gender identity (which may be used to indirectly reference migrants, asylum-seekers, or LGBTIQ+ people) were included. Implicit mentions to these people or groups, such as when vague language was used to refer to an out-group, were also included in the analysis, with ambiguous posts being included to reduce the likelihood of overlooking important content. This resulted in 140 posts by Wilders and 32 posts by Orbán being included in the main analysis.

Analysis Plan

A thematic analysis, following Braun & Clarke (2006, 2019), was conducted on the data. After becoming familiar with the posts in the data collection process, an initial round of open codes for Wilders' posts were created manually by the researcher. Coding and theme generation was centred around answering the research questions. Initial codes were formed based on the data and the frames identified in the theoretical framework, and a mix of in-vivo and researcher generated codes were used. Codes were compared and merged, and posts were revisited to add or

alter codes. After all posts by Wilders' were coded, patterns in the data were identified, themes were constructed, integrated, and then checked with the data in an iterative process. These steps were then performed for Orbán's posts, using similar codes to those used for Wilders' when possible. At the end of the analysis, after merging similar and overlapping codes, a total of 74 unique codes were applied to Wilders' posts and 33 unique codes were applied to Orbán's posts, with individual codes occurring in as few as 1 post and in as many as 70 posts overall. Lastly, themes were compared between politicians and overarching patterns were identified.

A critical qualitative analysis as performed here involves looking for meanings beyond what is explicitly written, and necessarily involves a level of subjectivity when selecting quotes and interpreting data. However, a great effort has been taken to provide a balanced interpretation of the data, remain as politically neutral as possible when evaluating their potential meanings, and ultimately ground the analysis in the data.

Results: Depictions of Minority Groups

Geert Wilders on Migrants

Criminality/Security Frame

Wilders frequently targeted both migrants with negative depictions, using all four frames identified in the theoretical framework. Firstly, Wilders used a criminality/security frame to depict migrants as a safety risk to the Netherlands. This was sometimes done at the aggregate level, and often led to statements suggesting what measures should be taken as a result of this. Wilders made posts such as:

“50% of all suspects in sexual offences are immigrants. Only the PVV will kick that criminal scum out of the country and immediately impose a ban on asylum.”

“Sexual offences: half of suspects are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Assault: more than half are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Threats and stalking: more than half are immigrants.”

Wilders also depicted migrants as a threat to other vulnerable groups, which he conveyed clearly when he wrote:

“We are losing our country. To criminals and immigrants – again, not all of them – who couldn’t care less about our standards and values. And who are making life unsafe for our daughters, gay people, Christians and others. This calls for a tough package of measures!”

However, Wilders much more frequently depicted migrants as a safety risk by sharing individual examples of migrants committing crimes, often accompanying a news story about the incident he reposted. Notably, these incidents also portray migrants as both a general safety threat and a threat to other vulnerable groups, as Wilders frequently selects cases which include violence against women, children, and Jews. Examples of posts include:

“Somali man suspected of kidnapping and abusing a 14-year-old girl. This scum should also be chemically castrated as punishment.”

“Asylum seeker stabs woman. It’s getting worse every day. Make the #PVV bigger than ever on 29 October, otherwise it will never stop”

“Syrian man who stayed in an asylum centre despite an entry ban commits femicide. Misogyny/oppression and Islam go hand in hand.”

Sometimes, crime is portrayed as a natural consequence of immigration, for example, when Wilders posted:

“Even Nijmegen’s far-left city council gets to enjoy the open-borders policy they so adore; the troublemaking Syrian thugs haven’t spared Bruls.”

However, on occasion, Wilders did not write posts himself, but simply amplified this perspective by repeating quotes from an accompanying news article, such as:

““A young man turned a corner and was then attacked by about 20 men from the asylum seekers’ centre in Uithuizen! They kicked him and hit him on the head with the back of a knife; they also used shovels. He was robbed of his scooter, phone and ID card!””

The individual examples of violent or criminal migrants were often used to suggest that there was a general issue regarding migrants, and that broad measures should be taken in response to this:

“They even harass our women abroad. This time it was an Afghan. Europe is being completely ruined by open borders. We don’t have a men’s problem, but an asylum problem, an immigration problem and an Islam problem.”

“What good does that do all those women? Don’t let those people into our country, then they won’t have to put up with all that misery.”

“Palestinian asylum seeker Mahmoud A. head-butted a man during an anti-Semitic attack in Amsterdam. Why are we letting that scum into our country? The Netherlands needs an #asylumban!”

“ONLY THE PVV WANTS TO STOP ASYLUM AND KICK ALL THE SCUM OUT!”
[in response to a news story about criminals who were Syrian].

Perpetrators’ country of origin were frequently provided, even when they weren’t relevant to the case, supporting the notion that highlighting both their migrant status and their

threat to others safety was a main reason why Wilders shared these instances. For example, Wilders simply posted “Walid K. from Algeria.” alongside a reposted news story about Walid, a convicted rapist. Similarly, Wilders posted “The perpetrator of the Islamic terrorist attack in Manchester is Syrian.” In a different post, Wilders restates a line from a news story, which highlights that criminals “spoke Arabic amongst themselves” during a crime, making it clear to his audience that this is a focal point of the incident to him.

Economic Burden Frame

Wilders also portrayed migrants and asylum seekers as an economic burden, taking away valued resources (e.g., money, housing), from the native Dutch population:

“Free healthcare with no excess, free weekly allowance, free accommodation, free food – so asylum seekers have enough money left over to buy fatbikes en masse. Meanwhile, millions of Dutch people can barely afford their groceries. The Netherlands is in a dire state.”

“Refugees have been given priority for housing for far too long – now it’s time to put Dutch people first!”

Wilders wrote that “the Netherlands is buckling under the strain of migration,” and even when resources were given to Dutch citizens, he implied this is possible because the money is not being spent on asylum seekers. He wrote: “We’re spending the money on our own people again – from healthcare to pensions to lower taxes – and not on asylum.”

Cultural Incompatibility and Political Infiltration Frames

Wilders made it clear that he believes the beliefs of many migrants are inherently incompatible with Dutch values when, for example, he wrote:

“We are losing our country. To criminals and immigrants – again, not all of them – who couldn’t care less about our standards and values.”

“There is a great deal of discontent in the Netherlands. Particularly regarding asylum and crime. People are fed up to the back teeth. They are losing their own country”

Wilders wrote that “the Netherlands is in a dire state,” and called the Netherlands “one big asylum centre” multiple times. Here, Wilders used a political infiltration frame, as his messages which describe migrants taking over or damaging the social harmony may evoke feelings of an existential threat in readers. Specifically, he wrote:

“The Netherlands is full. And we say: enough is enough! No more asylum centres – close them down. Because this is your country!”

“The Netherlands can’t cope any longer. The influx of asylum seekers. Crime. The misery.”

“We’re done giving away our country.”

These descriptors of the Netherlands sometimes relate to a loss of identity as well, such as when Wilders wrote “The Netherlands is no longer the Netherlands. Help me reclaim the Netherlands and vote PVV!” He further implied the Netherlands had been taken away from him and his supporters when he wrote “I Want My Country Back!” in response to a National Geographic cover discussing immigration to Europe. He also frequently used rhetoric which stated that Dutch people “feel like strangers in their own neighbourhood, village or town” or “have become strangers, tourists, in their own neighbourhood.” This rhetoric is also used to blame his opposition for this alleged situation, who he wrote “will further undermine the Netherlands and hand our homes over to foreigners.”

Wilders then used this reasoning to justify his attempts to shut down asylum centres,

writing that he “will not rest until they have all disappeared.” His stance is summed up when he wrote: “We’re going to do things differently. A total ban on asylum, Syrians back to Syria, and all criminal foreigners out of the country immediately! The time for half-measures is over!”

Geert Wilders on Muslims and Islam

Criminality/Security Frame

Wilders depicted Islam and Muslims as a threat to the Netherlands’ safety using a criminality/security frame. On a broad level, he portrayed Islam as an inherently violent religion which poses a threat to women and children. Wilders stated:

“Islam is the sword the left is using to slit the throat of Europe.”

“Misogyny/oppression and Islam go hand in hand.”

“We are in favour of banning Islamic schools: children should not be exposed to hatred and oppression.”

“Indeed Ataturk was a true leader, Erdogan a dangerous Islamist. Turkey deserves another #Ataturk and freedom and separation of church and state instead of more Islamism and violence to women.”

“If we no longer dare to criticise – or joke about – Islam, then we are capitulating to an ideology of oppression, hatred and violence. I will never capitulate. Fear is a poor guide.

Freedom comes at a price.”

When Wilders referred to an Islamic terrorist attack as “Islam at work,” he implied that Islam is inherently violent, and violence is a natural consequence of practicing Islam. Indeed, Wilders warned of what he called “the threat of Islam” in one post.

However, similar to his depictions of migrants, Wilders also posts many specific examples of individual Muslims who are terrorists, and frequently references Islamic extremism

and terrorism, in order to suggest a need for change or a rejection of Islam overall. These posts also include references to historical events. Together, Wilders used these posts as justification his stance on Islam:

“Islamic terrorism knows no bounds. Only blind hatred and deadly violence. We love life; they love death.”

“24 years ago today, nineteen muslim terrorists attacked the free world. Let us never forget the true face of evil and protect our freedom!”

“Today, I am thinking of the 130 victims and their loved ones of the barbaric IS attack carried out by Muslim terrorists on 13 November 2015 – exactly ten years ago today in Paris. So that we never forget and continue to fight against this existential threat.”

“Exactly 21 years ago today, Theo van Gogh was murdered by a Muslim terrorist. Our freedom deserves daily defense, now more than ever. That's why I will intensify the fight against Islamic terror more than ever. Islam does not belong in the Netherlands!”

Wilders’ also explicitly links the increase of Muslims and Muslim extremists, as well as the consequences he ascribes to them, to increased immigration:

“Open borders mean maximum misery. Radical Muslims are walking into our country with a spring in their step.”

“The Christmas market in Brussels has turned into an Islamic hell. Elsewhere in Europe, Christmas markets are under extra security. This is the result of decades of open borders.”

“We’ve had enough of open borders and Islamisation!”

Cultural Incompatibility and Political Infiltration Frames

Portrayals of Islam as an inherently violent or misogynistic religion in themselves may make Islam appear to be incompatible with many people's values of peace and gender equality. When Wilders referred to the Netherlands as a "multicultural hell" in response to fears of shootings, he ties notions of criminality and cultural incompatibility together by both expressing a distaste of multiculturalism in the Netherlands while seemingly attributing violence to this diversity of cultures. However, Wilders also more explicitly deemed Muslims a threat to Christianity and Dutch culture, beyond accusations of criminality. He wrote: "Goodbye to our Christian holidays. Surrendering to Islam. Cultural suicide." Here, Wilders also implied that Islam is not only incompatible with Christian culture, but overtaking and inhibiting it.

This latter idea is clearly expressed when Wilders referred to "Islamisation" as a threat, sharing the sentiment that the Netherlands is becoming more Islamic and that this must be stopped. Wilders wrote:

"We must stop the Islamisation of the West. Freedom instead of terror. Islam does not belong here."

"The Netherlands is becoming more Islamic by the day and we must do everything in our power to stop it!"

"We've had enough of open borders and Islamisation!"

This perspective is found in posts combined with beliefs that Islam is overtaking Dutch and Christian values in the Netherlands, to the detriment of the native Dutch population. This, and the term "Islamisation," reflect the use of a political infiltration frame.

Wilders reinforced these ideas in many remarks, in which he wrote that "Islam does not belong in the Netherlands," and that "The Netherlands is not an Islamic country and must never

become one!” Worries that the Netherlands is in a dire state and feelings that the native Dutch population are being ostracized in their home due to migrants are also sometimes discussed in conjunction with Islam (see discussion and examples above). Sometimes, however, the source of these feelings is left vague, allowing readers the possibility to ascribe this threat to migrants, Muslims, or whoever else they blame for their current state.

Viktor Orbán on Migrants

Criminality/Security and Cultural Incompatibility Frames

While Wilders targeted migrants and Muslims, Orbán targeted migrants and members of the LGBTIQ+ community. Similar to Wilders, Orbán used criminality/security framing, portraying migrants as a safety threat to Hungarians. For example, he wrote: “Terrorism, gang violence, chaos - not in Hungary. Only those we allow and who respect our laws may enter. ... Hungary is secure, Hungary is sovereign, Hungary decides.” In one post, Orbán shared the *Appeal to the Peoples of Europe: The Patriots’ Budapest Proclamation*, which was written by the Patriots.EU party, of which he and Wilders are both members. Here, the proclamation refers to mass migration as a threat to both security and culture: “We are committed to protecting the cultural sovereignty of our nations. We cherish their diversity, their history, and their traditions rooted in Europe’s Judeo-Christian heritage. We reject mass migration that undermines the security, cohesion, and identity of our societies.”

Orbán did not post about migration as a threat to explicitly safety or culture to the same extent that Wilders did; however, he frequently referred to migration as a general threat that Hungary needs protection against. For example, he wrote, “Hungary’s migration policy is clear and firm: we will not allow illegal migration to take hold here. With a patriotic government, we will continue to protect our borders.”

Political Infiltration Frame

Orbán frequently used language which implied migration is an urgent and existential threat with irreversible consequences, invoking a political infiltration frame. In order to describe how bad war is, he compared it to migration, implying migration is an irreversible threat, and associating the danger and financial burden of war with migration. He wrote

“War is like migration. Once you step in, there is no stepping out. European leaders now find themselves trapped in an endless conflict while 9,000 people die each week. By spending €90 billion over the next two years, Europe is financing nothing more than 800,000 dead or permanently crippled. This needs to end NOW.”

Orbán built a narrative depicting an irreversible threat of migration to Hungarian culture using a proverb:

“‘You can make fish soup from fish, but you cannot make fish from fish soup.’ A simple truth. Once mass migration begins and migrants mix with the local population, it’s only a matter of time before everything changes. It becomes irreversible.”

Orbán also analogizes migration to “waves” or “surges” which threaten to infiltrate Hungary. He warns of the possibility of “waves of mass migration” which could start “flowing” to the Hungarian border, writing “these are testing times. Hungary must prepare and make sure the dam holds.” When he wrote that he “will not allow illegal migration to *take hold here*” [italics added], he depicted migration as a threat that can establish a presence in Hungary as opposed to the lived experiences of individuals. These analogies depict migration as a threat that is urgent, severe, and warrants action. Orbán expressed this simply: “If migration surges, borders must be closed. No delays, no bouquets, no teddy bears, just fences and the will to stop them.” In

sum, Orbán depicted migration as a severe threat, of which migrants were both a cause and manifestation.

Viktor Orbán on the LGBTIQ+ Community

Criminality/Security Frame

Orbán also depicted the LGBTIQ+ community, and what he referred to as “gender activists,” as a threat to children’s well-being, thus depicting these groups using a security frame. While these groups were not necessarily depicted as a physical safety threat, Orbán referred to their conducting “ideological experiments” on children. Here, the term “experiment” implies serious uncertainty and risk for the children. Orbán also referred to his protecting of “children from aggressive LGBTQ propaganda,” which portrayed this community as a threat to their well-being. Orbán wrote:

“No gender, no confusion. Children need clarity, not to be turned into subjects of ideological experiments. ... Gender propaganda stays out of our schools.”

“Family is a sacred value. Here, parents decide how to raise their children. We will not allow gender activists to treat schools as their playground for ideological experiments. Hungary defends its families. ”

“The Brusselian steamroller is already in motion. Our patriotic government protected Hungarian children from aggressive LGBTQ propaganda. Now the Brusselian empire strikes back. We will not give up the fight for the soul of Europe!”

Here, phrases like “Hungary defends its families” also clearly imply a threat that needs to be defended against.

Cultural Incompatibility Frame

By depicting LGBTIQ+ people as not only a threat to children's well-being, but also as a threat to Hungarian culture and what Orbán calls "the soul of Europe," Orbán used a cultural incompatibility frame. He laid his stance out plainly when he indicated that he does not view families with parents of the same-gender as legitimate or imperative to the nation's future by writing:

"Families = 1 man + 1 woman + their children. That is how a nation is sustained and how its future is secured. Other forms of coexistence are free to exist, but they do not serve the same purpose. Let us not confuse the two."

When Orbán, in other posts, wrote "we can stand up for families & our way of life" and that Hungary "values traditional, family-based societies," it is now clear who he will (and will not) stand up for, and who he values.

Discussion: Depictions of Minority Groups

Overall, Wilders used criminality/security, cultural incompatibility, and political infiltration frames frequently to depict migrants and Muslims, and occasionally depicted migrants as an economic burden. He depicted migrants as violent criminals who do not respect Dutch "standards and values," cost the Dutch resources, and are the source of the "dire state" he alleges the Netherlands is in; Islam as inherently oppressive and incompatible with Dutch culture; and Muslims as dangerous extremists who pose an existential threat to the Netherlands. This allowed Wilders to create harmful narratives which support his exclusionary perspectives and policy against migrants and Muslims. This finding aligns with and expands upon existing research which finds these frames are used by Wilders and the Dutch public in online discourse, and also that harmful narratives can be constructed using borderline content (Schoorl, 2026;

Schoorl & Nijenhuis, 2026). Similarly, Orbán used criminality/security, cultural incompatibility, and especially political infiltration frames to depict migrants, while also using security and cultural incompatibility frames to depict the LGBTIQ+ community. This expands the application of these frames to a new context, while elucidating similarities in rhetoric that transcend borders and targeted groups. The finding that Wilders in particular, and Orbán as a populist, continue to use debasing and exclusionist language on X provides updated support for Hameleers' (2023) findings that populist leaders frequently use this style of language. The continuous depiction of minorities as the source of a broad and urgent crisis found here also supports Moffitt's (2015) description of how populists "perform crisis" (p. 189) to advance a simplified and divisive worldview, highlighting how these depictions may be motivated by political strategy. Nevertheless, the harmful nature of these depictions spread on X raises the questions: how do these posts elude hate speech regulation, and which affordances allow for this?

Results: Elusion of Hate Speech Regulation

Vague and Implicit Messages

A common tactic which appears to be used to target members of the targeted minority groups is to use vague phrasing or to imply certain meanings without writing them out explicitly. This provides the poster the ability to claim they did not intend to convey a hateful message, and the ambiguity of the message leaves this a possibility, as intentionality behind vague messages is difficult to prove. Similarly, if a viewer of the message were to interpret it as legitimizing hateful views of violence, the poster retains plausible deniability, as they did not explicitly condone this. While the posters' true intentions often remain impossible to ascertain, this does not preclude the posts from inciting hatred, and may even be an intentional tactic to do. A clear example of being intentionally vague comes from one of Wilders' oft repeated slogans: "This is your country!"

While this could refer to all people in the Netherlands, regardless of their country of origin, religion, or any other trait, this statement would then be almost too obvious to write, while being unnecessarily vague. Instead, it is likely that this statement is still meaningful, as it implies more than is said, but must remain vague to imply something that cannot be said outright (Grice, 1975). This interpretation, and particularly that Wilders means the country is for non-migrant and non-Muslim people, gains support from Wilders' posts:

“No more asylum centres – close them down. Because this is your country!”

“The Netherlands is your country. Not an Islamic country, but your country.”

“Our own people ALWAYS come first!”

Thus, when Wilders repeats “this is your country” in other posts, a very plausible interpretation is that the Netherlands is for non-migrant and non-Muslim Dutch, and that migrants and Muslims are not welcome due to their country of origin or religion.

Similarly, when Wilders makes generalizations about groups of people, he sometimes implies who he is making statements about by using pronouns which are non-specific. For example, when Wilders wrote “ONLY THE PVV WANTS TO STOP ASYLUM AND KICK ALL THE SCUM OUT!” in response to a post about immigrants who are criminals, he leaves it unclear if the “scum” are only the immigrants who are criminals or are all immigrants. While the context of individual criminals may suggest the former, his reference to a complete asylum stop implies it may be *all* immigrants who are the “scum” he wants to kick out. Posts like “Don’t let *those* people into our country, then they [women] won’t have to put up with all that misery” [emphasis added] also remain vague. When Wilders wrote, “Let us never forget the true face of evil and protect our freedom!” in response to Muslim terrorists, he leaves it ambiguous as to whether only terrorists, or Muslims in general, are the “true face of evil.” When combined with

his other posts, which refer to Islam being used to “slit the throat of Europe,” the later interpretation becomes quite plausible.

Orbán also implies associations without writing them directly. In writing “terrorism, gang violence, chaos - not in Hungary. Only those we allow and who respect our laws may enter,” a clear interpretation implied is that migrants are the cause of the issues mentioned; however, this is still not explicitly written. Similarly, when he wrote “war is like migration” to convey that both are irreversible commitments, war is implied to share its many negative consequences with migration. When writing that the Hungarian government “protected Hungarian children from aggressive LGBTQ propaganda. ... We will not give up the fight for the soul of Europe,” the term “aggressive LGBTQ propaganda” remains vague and undefined, and could be interpreted as referring to notions that the LGBTIQ+ community deserve to be protected against discrimination. Indeed, Orbán’s statement was made while reposting an article by the BBC which stated that the European Court of Justice’s ruled that “Hungarian law interfered with rights such as a ban on discrimination based on sex and sexual orientation, respect for private and family life and freedom of expression and information” and that Hungarian law “stigmatised and marginalised people who were transgender or not heterosexual and associated them with people convicted of paedophilia” (Kirby, 2026). However, the vagueness of the term “aggressive LGBTQ propaganda” allows Orbán to attack this ruling without directly making a discriminatory statement. The strategy of being vague and implying certain meanings without explicitly writing them also plays a facilitating role in the other strategies used by these politicians, discussed below.

Targeting an Ideology and a Process

A commonly used way to target a group of people is to target their shared ideology, without explicitly targeting the group itself. This is most evident in Wilders' criticism of Islam, where he mentions "Islam" and related words (e.g., Islamic, Islamist) 29 times, but "Muslim" or "Muslims" only 5 times. References to Muslims only mention specific individuals or groups, specifically "Muslim terrorist," "Muslim terrorists," and "radical Muslims." While this overwhelmingly negative depiction is likely harmful in itself, more general and substantive criticisms of Muslims are reserved for "Islam." By depicting an ideology as inherently violent or oppressive, as Wilders does with Islam, a statement is indirectly made about the followers of that religion; misrepresenting both the ideology and the vast majority of its followers. Other statements by Wilders and Orbán which target migration, such as that it "undermines the security, cohesion, and identity of our societies," may also be more socially acceptable than similar statements targeting migrants explicitly, despite carrying a near identical meaning.

Using a Shared Ideology or Experience as a Euphemism and Giving Them Agency

However, beyond criticizing an ideology, Wilders may also be using "Islam" as a euphemism to mean "Muslims." Wilders wrote "Islam does not belong in the Netherlands!" Given that Islam is a faith, the presence of Islam within the country can be taken to mean the number of people who follow this faith, who Wilders here implies do not belong in the Netherlands. Similarly, the statement "The Netherlands is becoming more Islamic by the day and we must do everything in our power to stop it" implies that people must prevent a greater share of Muslims from entering the country (or to reduce the amount of Muslims already in the country, or the degree to which they express their faith). While Wilders could mean that Muslims simply need to express their faith to a lesser extent, or their expressions need to be less impactful

on society, it is hard to imagine a way in which Wilders could wish to achieve this that is not intrinsically discriminatory.

Wilders also gives agency to the faith “Islam” by writing “Islam at work” in response to a terrorist attack. In reality it is not “Islam” which committed the attack, but an individual Muslim. Following from this, Wilders’ statement could be interpreted as “Muslims at work,” a statement which is now much more directly offensive, and could motivate hate against this group. Wilders also wrote that “Europe is being completely ruined by open borders” and there is “an immigration problem” after referring to an individual migrant who is a criminal. Here, terms “open borders” and “immigration” could instead be interpreted as “migrant(s),” given that “open borders” do not have any agency themselves and that the process of immigration did not commit the crime, but rather an individual migrant. However, if these terms are substituted for “migrant(s),” as Wilders may have intended, the resultant phrase, “migrant problem,” is more directly offensive than the original phrase, “immigration problem.”

Criticizing Individual Group Members

A common strategy used by Wilders in particular is to highlight and criticize individual group members who fit a desired narrative or frame. Specifically, as discussed in detail above, Wilders highlights individual migrants and Muslims who are violent, criminals, or extremists, and then uses these examples to justify what he calls “a tough package of measures.” While twice he used aggregate statistics from a report, more frequently he depicted an instance of an individual or small group of migrants or Muslims who are criminals, and from here generalized to a general state of the Netherlands or a need for countermeasures (see Criminality/Security Frame sections for examples). This allows him to skip over the stage of reasoning where he would need to make a generalized statement about a minority group acting in a violent or

criminal way *because* of their group status, which would likely be considered hate speech or group insult due to its defamatory nature. Instead, he merely *implies* this stage of reasoning by describing individuals who fit a narrative of criminality, and then the response which would be necessary *if* this was a general tendency of the group, without actually writing that it *is* a general tendency of the group. For Muslims, he is able to make somewhat of a general statement by criticizing Islam after depicting individual Muslims, instead of criticizing Muslims as a group explicitly. This is likely to avoid making statements which could be classified as group insult.

Discussion: Elusion of Hate Speech Regulation and Corresponding Affordances

Each of the potential tactics described above reflect an affordance of X which allowed these posts to be made. X allows for a vague statement which *could* imply something hateful to be made, because the hate is not explicitly stated, and the poster could claim they intended a different interpretation, however unlikely that interpretation may be. People are allowed to criticize an ideology, even if this criticism is inaccurate, as this does not target a person or group. The argument that ideologies or a shared experience serve as euphemisms can be dismissed by saying they are figures of speech, or are not explicit enough to qualify as hate speech. Highlighting traits, such as criminality, of specific individuals who are also part of a minority group, and then demeaning individuals for their personal traits which are unrelated to their minority group status, is allowed. Similarly, highlighting an individual's minority group status, while criticizing them for other unrelated traits, is also allowed by X, even if this results in systematically depicting this group as something it is not. A commonality among all of these potential tactics, as well as among the frames identified, is that they involve, or have a high likelihood of leading to, the misrepresentation of minority groups. However, this systematic misrepresentation of vulnerable groups also appears to be allowed on X, as it is often done

implicitly or using the other tactics described here. These varied affordances of hate speech regulation on X therefore appear to have allowed, to different extents, the harmful narratives surrounding minority groups identified in this paper to be perpetuated.

General Discussion

From this analysis, it is clear that Wilder and Orbán convey harmful narratives using a variety of frames, and that a number of potential tactics reflect X's affordances in terms of what it permits in relation to harmful narratives. However, recalling that X (2023) prohibits “inciting fear or spreading fearful stereotypes about a protected category” in its rules and policies, the reality of what X permits on its platform seems to stand at odds with what it claims to allow. The continuous, yet often implicit, narratives that these politicians depict seem to be designed to incite fear and negative stereotypes about protected groups, suggesting that perhaps stricter enforcement by X is needed to follow their existing policies. However, even if X deems the individual posts constituting these narratives as not explicitly harmful enough, more specific guidelines describing this assessment process are clearly desirable.

Beyond this, the finding that harmful narratives are frequently spread by these politicians, yet are also difficult to combat, supports the notion that a number of actions need to be taken, such as those recommended by Schoorl & Nijenhuis (2026). The specific affordances identified presently can also support avenues for addressing harmful narratives. For example, platforms should clearly delineate what constitutes harmful speech and how to approach implicit meanings, especially those that appear to be the dominant interpretation of the text. Normative statements relating to ideologies, such as when Wilders states that “Islam does not belong in the Netherlands,” could also be scrutinized for what behaviours against minority groups would be required to fulfill this, as these may serve as examples of language that could incite

discriminatory behaviours. Similarly, systematically misrepresenting minorities as violent or possessing other fear-inducing traits may be classified as “spreading fearful stereotypes about a protected category.” Ultimately, how posts are assessed in content moderation requires further elucidation and developments from regulators and platforms.

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

As with all research, this study has limitations. Firstly, the scope of the data analyzed was necessarily limited. Only the text from the posts and images which appeared to be original were analyzed, excluding any videos from the analysis. Video is a richer medium than text, allowing more information and cues to be conveyed, and may thus be especially influential when conveying information compared to text (e.g., Maity et al., 2018). Videos of politicians may also contain systematically different narratives than textual posts, as they can convey, for instance, visual depictions of minorities or politicians’ speeches in government. Thus, these videos warrant future analysis. Similarly, posts deemed hate speech and removed by X, if any, were not analyzed due to the manual data collection procedure, but also deserve attention due to their ability to shed light on these politicians’ intended narratives, and the ways X constrains politicians’ posting patterns. Automated data collection could help identify posts that are removed by X’s content moderation early on.

When analyzing posts, it is nearly impossible to prove the author’s intended meanings and tactics behind the messages, especially when posts are vague, and this research can therefore only describe *potential* interpretations of messages, as well as what X as a platform affords. Additionally, the translation of Dutch posts to English, and the researcher’s non-Dutch, non-Hungarian background, represents potential areas where cultural nuance may have been lost.

However, to address these limitations, future research investigating how the actual audiences of these messages interpret them would be valuable, as this represents the important practical outcomes of this type of speech, which also persists regardless of the author's intentionality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, by using an in-depth, qualitative analysis of 172 X posts by Geert Wilders and Viktor Orbán, the present research examined the frames and possible tactics used by these politicians to negatively depict minorities, as well as the platform's affordances which enable this. While regulation prevents these politicians' use of explicit hate speech, this research shows it still plays a key role in shaping the form that harmful narratives take when they are disseminated online.

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