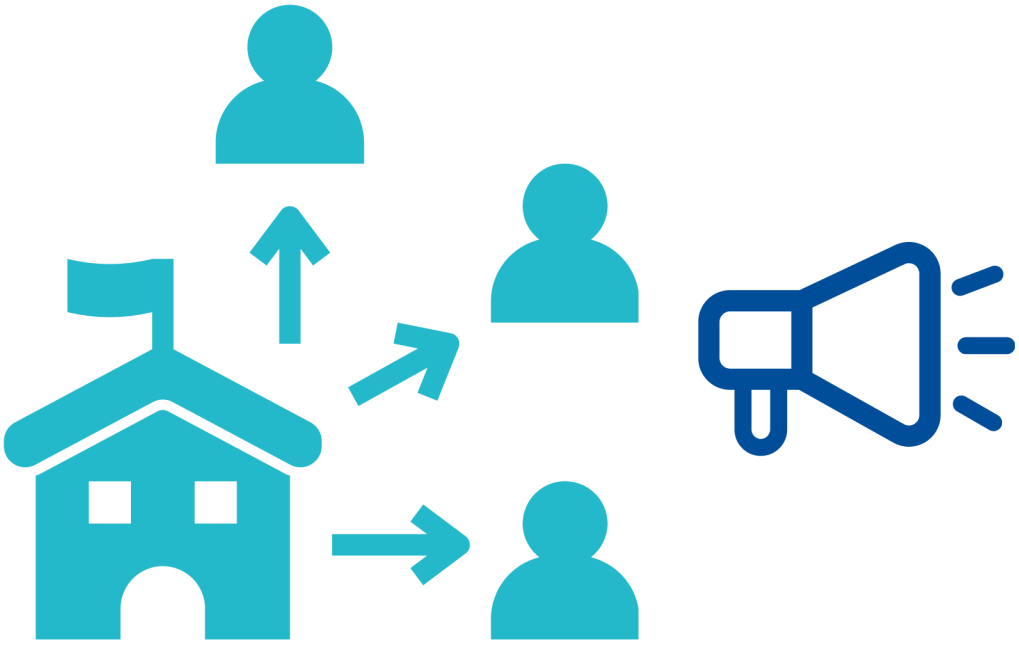
FAiR
Finding Agreement in Return

Migration Discourses and Enforced Return Policies

Perspectives from the Global South and Diaspora Communities



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Executive Summary

This working paper, part of the Horizon Europe FAiR research project, delves into the multifaceted migration discourses and enforced return policies from the perspectives of the Global South and their diaspora communities in Europe. It seeks to address the predominant Eurocentric narrative and brings to light the often-overlooked viewpoints and experiences from countries such as Nigeria, Georgia, Türkiye, and Iraq, as well as their respective diaspora communities in Germany, Italy, and Switzerland. The research methodology combines in-depth analysis of media texts, and semi-structured interviews, providing a robust framework for understanding the diverse migration experiences.

Migration discourses in the Global North typically emphasize themes such as security, economic impacts, and cultural assimilation. These narratives, heavily influenced by Global North interests, often overshadow the humanitarian, developmental, and historical dimensions of migration originating from the Global South. The research underscores the importance of integrating these Southern perspectives to foster a comprehensive understanding of global migration dynamics and to develop more effective, humane, and equitable migration policies.

The study highlights how migration patterns and compliance with immigration policies are significantly shaped by the legitimacy perceived by migrants and other relevant actors (e.g. source country authorities), which salient migration discourses co-determine. This understanding is crucial for explaining the persistence of irregular migration and the challenges in promoting enforced return policies. By focusing on migration discourses in selected Global South countries and among their diaspora, the research provides insights into the complex interplay of historical, socio-economic, and political factors that drive migration and influence perceptions of return policies. This paper serves as a foundational step towards integrating Global South perspectives into mainstream migration discourse, ultimately aiming to promote more balanced and fair migration policies globally.

Key findings reveal that different diaspora and Global South discourses exist on (irregular) migration and enforced return. These include humanitarian discourses, migration and development discourses, post-colonial discourses, securitization discourses, and civic discourses. Global South are deeply embedded in local contexts, often viewing migration as a necessity driven by poverty, conflict, and lack of opportunities. These narratives contrast to some extent with those in the diaspora, where a blend of host country and home country perspectives creates unique hybrid narratives. Various discourses identified also do not seem to differ fundamentally from dominant Global North discourses, highlighting the hegemonial nature of dominant discourses. However, in the Global South countries and diaspora communities selected, securitization discourses seem less salient than in the Global North and internationally, while migration and development and, less so, post-colonial discourses are arguably more central.

The study also explores the roles of social media and traditional media in shaping and disseminating these discourses, offering a nuanced understanding of the strategies migrants use to resist and navigate enforced return policies. The findings contribute to a more inclusive migration policy framework that recognizes and respects the rights and dignity of all migrants, while also addressing perceived security concerns and economic benefits associated with migration.

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Introduction

Migration discourses that predominate in the Global North center on themes like security, economic impacts, and cultural assimilation (Smith, 2015; Jones, 2020). They also exert considerable influence on migration discourses that predominate internationally – e.g., that are reflected by organizations such UNHCR or IOM (cf. Chimni, 1998, Andrijasevic and Walters, 2010) –, typically overshadowing the intricate and personal migration narratives and discourses originating from the Global South, which often highlight the humanitarian, developmental, and historical dimensions of migration.

Recognizing and integrating the latter perspectives in academic and policy discussions is nonetheless crucial for a comprehensive understanding of global migration dynamics (Rodriguez, 2018; Hammond, 2021), and for developing more effective, humane, and equitable migration policies that resonate with the realities of all stakeholders involved (Adamson, 2016; Cham & Adam, 2023). For example, paying attention to Global South perspectives can help explain why migrants and source country authorities are often hesitant to comply with, or collaborate on, restrictive immigration policies, and why irregular migration persists despite increased governmental efforts to reduce it, such as by promoting enforced migrant return (Gibney, 2008) Contemporary migration patterns partly depend on how migrants and other relevant actors perceive the legitimacy of migration policies (see for example Ryo, 2013; Leerkes & Kox, 2017), and obtaining a better understanding of legitimizing and delegitimizing discourses can thus help to shed more light on these patterns. Such discourses also inform the decisions of other relevant actors, including those made by bureaucrats from Global South countries. Bureaucrats from states seeking to enforce migrant return, for instance, often seek to justify their efforts to their colleagues who are supposed to readmit migrants (cf. Leerkes et al. 2023), and their 'legitimation work' may or may not resonate among the latter depending on how they construct the social world. Previous Horizon-funded policy research projects, such as the H2020 Bridges initiative, while paying attention to Global South perspectives (focusing on The Gambia), primarily analysed mainstream European discourses.

This study seeks to address the imbalances mentioned by bringing to the forefront the migration discourses that exist in four Global South countries in Africa and the Asia *and* among selected diaspora originating from these countries in Europe, focusing on the narratives surrounding the enforced return of irregular migrants from EU+ countries (EU Member States, plus associated countries like Switzerland). For two main reasons, source country and diasporic perspectives are both included and analysed separately. First, source country and diasporic perspectives can be expected to differ. Migration discourses in Global South countries are deeply embedded in local socio-economic and political contexts, often highlighting the historical and structural factors driving migration, such as poverty, conflict, and lack of opportunities, and are more likely to frame migration as a necessity rather than a choice (Rodriguez, 2018; Hammond, 2021). Here, migration is often viewed through a developmental lens, where remittances and the potential for improved livelihoods abroad are seen as vital for economic survival (Gibney, 2008), and discourses on return migration often center on the challenges of reintegration and the socio-economic costs of return, possibly emphasizing the failures of return policies to address the underlying causes of migration and the inadequacy of support systems for returnees (Black & Gent, 2006; Hernandez-Carretero & Carling, 2012). Studies have shown that returnees indeed often face stigmatization, lack of employment opportunities, and difficulties in re-establishing themselves in their communities, which can perpetuate cycles of irregular migration (Cassarino, 2004).

Diaspora perspectives, by contrast, often reflect a blend of the host country's perspectives and those from their countries of origin, possibly leading to unique, hybrid narratives that can significantly differ from salient source country discourses (Brubaker, 2005; Vertovec, 2009; Baser & Swain, 2011). A study on Nigeria confirms that source country and diasporic perspectives indeed differ: while discourse on return migration in Nigeria is heavily influenced by the economic hardships and social stigmatization faced by returnees, diaspora communities are often more optimistic (Adepoju, 2004).

A second reason for also including diaspora discourses, is that such discourses may significantly influence the decisions among source country authorities and potential migrants, despite diaspora communities typically being smaller than the corresponding source country populations. By sending remittances and providing support in international forums, diaspora communities have considerable leverage on source country authorities (Adamson, 2016), who may be eager to maintain good diasporic relationships. Furthermore, by providing "migration feedback" to potential migrants about destination country conditions and enforced return policies, diaspora communities – basing themselves on certain migration discourses –co-determine migration decisions (cf. Bakewell, Kubal, and Pereira, 2016).

Against this backdrop, we ask: *What are the prevailing discourses and narratives in selected Global South countries and their diaspora groups in Europe regarding enforced return policies, and how may these discourses and narratives shape (non-)collaboration on Europe's immigration control policies?*

The non-EU^{+} countries included in the analysis are Nigeria, Georgia, Türkiye, and Iraq. Additionally, we conducted research among diaspora groups from these countries in Germany (in case of Georgia and Türkiye), Italy (Nigeria), and Switzerland (Iraq). The fieldwork was done as part of a larger, ongoing Horizon Europe research project on Europe's return and alternatives to return policies called Finding Agreement in Return (FAiR). For this project, the four non-EU+ focal countries were selected because they are important source countries of irregular migration to Europe. Furthermore, they represent a mix of different 'types' of irregular migration, ranging from a stronger emphasis on asylum migration (Iraq) to a stronger emphasis on economically motivated irregular migration (Georgia), and, comparably, more 'mixed' flows (Nigeria, Türkiye). An additional reason for selecting Türkiye is that it also is an important *host country* of irregular migration.

Germany, Switzerland, and Italy were selected as focal countries because their return policies differ to some extent, with the most elaborate, and strict, return policies existing in Switzerland, followed by Germany, followed by Italy (cf. Leerkes, and Van Houte, 2020). The multiple case design enables a comparative analysis across diverse migration experiences and policy contexts, enriching the study's findings.

The analysis is based on in-depth analysis of relevant texts for the period 2021-23, and semi-structured interviews among diaspora representatives, which took place in 2023 and 2024. The texts studied are mostly social and traditional media texts, but for the non-EU+ countries, we conducted a broader corpus analysis that also included a selection of policy documents, laws and treaties, administrative statements, documents by social movements, and documents on social interactions (more details are given in the other working paper). The research thus focused on, but was not limited to, discourses and narratives that can be identified in traditional and social media.

An important reason for including social media in the analysis is that digital platforms potentially provide communities with a space for expressing and constructing counter-discourses that challenge mainstream media portrayals of migrants and return policies (Chadwick, 2009; Papacharissi, 2010), allowing communities to share their experiences and mobilize support across borders (Brinkerhoff, 2009). Researchers acknowledge that social media influence contemporary migration decisions, but have mostly argued that the effects occur because social media are a new source of information and social capital that also is available to migrants lacking ties in the country of destination (see for example Dekker and Engbersen, 2014). The present analysis can provide indications that social media shape migration decisions by promoting forms of seeing and talking about migration and migration control, which may help justify opposition against such control – also compare Scott (1990) on 'hidden transcripts' and 'everyday resistance' – and/or set normative and cognitive limits to such resistance. While existing studies have provided insights into how traditional media and social media shape migration narratives (Chouliaraki, 2010; Georgiou, 2013), there is a significant research gap concerning the specific strategies that traditional and digital communities use to navigate and resist enforced return policies. Finally, by including diaspora social media in the analysis, we may obtain more insights into how social media are reshaping diaspora, giving more prominence to "digital diaspora" (see Brinkerhoff, 2009).

In this working paper, we report preliminary research findings. So far, the analyses were conducted separately for the diaspora and for non-EU+ countries to ensure that findings emerged inductively and independently. Further analyses are planned for the remainder of the FAiR project, when we can also incorporate insights from ongoing fieldwork in other work packages (e.g., the work package on negotiation processes between EU+ and non-EU+ countries, the work package on the operation of international bureaucracies in the implementation of return decisions, and the work package on human rights monitoring of enforced return and post-return outcomes). Additionally, we plan to make use of insights from focus groups conducted in the non-EU+ countries in 2023 and 2024 (over 325 people participated in these focus groups), supplementing the corpus analysis reported here. The results for the non-EU+ countries are reported in a more concise manner in this working paper than the results on the diaspora, as the former results are presented in more detail in a separate, more comprehensive working paper (see Majidi et al, 2024).

The next section discusses the main concepts that informed the analysis: hegemonial and non-hegemonial discourse and narratives, Global North/Global South, diasporas, and resistance.

Analytical Framework

Migration Discourses and Power Dynamics

Central to the present investigation is the concept of discourse, which refers to the ways in which language is used, either consciously or more unconsciously, to construct and convey meaning within social and political contexts (Foucault, 1980; Gramsci, 1971; Hall, 1997). Discourse encompasses various narratives, ideologies, and power dynamics that also shape how topics like migration are discussed and understood. While discourses and narratives are thus conceptually interrelated, discourses are more encompassing, abstract, and structured than

narratives, and are more difficult to observe empirically - analysing narratives can help to reconstruct the underlying discourses. In the realm of migration studies, discourse analysis examines how different interpretations of, and narratives about, migration are constructed and the impact these interpretations and narratives have on public opinion and policymaking.

Power dynamics can be expected to play a crucial role in shaping these interpretations and narratives, and how they impact the field of international migration. Michel Foucault's (1980) notion of power as a pervasive element within societal structures provides a lens for viewing migration policy enforcement. In this view, power is productive, creating realities and producing domains of objects and rituals of truth. Barnett and Duvall (2005) expand on this by introducing a taxonomy of power that includes "productive power," defined as the production, in and through social relations, of effects that shape the capacities of actors to determine their circumstances and fate. This form of power helps in understanding how global outcomes are produced and how actors are differentially enabled and constrained. For example, European agreements with North African states to manage migration flows exemplify how such power is exerted extraterritorially, influencing sovereign policies through economic incentives but also diplomatic pressures (Andersson, 2016) or 'soft power' (Nye, 1990). According to Guild (2016), the dominant discourse surrounding the 'Dublin Regulation' within the EU also showcases how legal frameworks can become hegemonic tools that normalize the return of asylum seekers to their first point of entry in Europe, often disregarding their safety or the burden on peripheral EU states.

Other scholars similarly highlight the dominance of certain discourses. David Harvey's (2005), for example, has critiqued neoliberalism that prioritize dominant market-driven ideologies over humanitarian concerns. Here, the implementation of detention and deportation policies in the United States under recent administrations is seen as reflecting a neoliberal approach, emphasizing cost-efficiency and deterrence over migrants' rights and welfare (Golash-Boza, 2015). In Australia, political discourse often frames enforced return and offshore processing as necessary measures to protect national identity and security, leveraging fears of the 'other' to gain electoral support (Every & Augoustinos, 2008). In a similar vein, research by Walia (2020) explores how neoliberal policies have intensified border securitization and the criminalization of migration, further entrenching inequalities.

Media representations are both an expression and source of such discourses, and significantly influence public perceptions of migrants as well as public policy. Stuart Hall's theories on representation and the encoding/decoding model demonstrate how media shape and are shaped by public perceptions of migrants (Hall, 1997). Media coverage, such as in Italy, often depicts migrant boat arrivals with crisis and invasion narratives, influencing public opinion and justifying stringent return and detention policies (Musarò, 2017). Similarly, Robert Entman's framing theory elucidates how specific aspects of migration stories are selected and emphasized in German newspapers, influencing public support for either restrictive or welcoming asylum policies (Entman, 1993; Hafez, 2019). Greussing and Boomgaarden (2017), too, argue that media framing significantly affects public attitudes towards refugees and migrants, particularly during the European migration crisis. Media coverage often uses crisis and invasion narratives to depict migrant arrivals, influencing perceptions and justifying stringent policies, including return and detention policies (Musarò, 2017).

Research on discourses in the Global South, while relatively scarce, also provides critical insights into migration control, including return policies. Adamson and Tsourapas (2020) explore how states in the Global South employ migration management strategies that

are influenced by both domestic politics and international relations. They highlight that these states often leverage migration as a political tool, balancing between cooperation with Global North countries and addressing domestic socio-economic concerns. Cham and Adam (2023) explore the "justification frames" that state actors in West Africa, focusing on The Gambia, use to collaborate on, or resist, deportation policies, distinguishing moral, utilitarian and identity-related justification frames, including the post-colonial resistance frame, that justified non-cooperation with deportation on the ground of European-African colonial legacies that, it is argued, persist into the present day. Moral frames focus on human rights, opposing deportation to protect dignity, family life, privacy, and freedom from torture. Utilitarian frames consider economic interests, balancing national economic benefits like remittances with international economic interests such as development aid.

'Hidden' Resistance Narratives and Social Media

Nancy Fraser's notion of "counterpublics" provides a useful framework for understanding how marginalized groups create parallel discursive arenas that contest dominant narratives and influence public debates (Fraser, 1990). Similarly, James Scott's (1990) concept of "hidden transcripts" highlights how subordinate groups often manage to resist domination through subtle, covert acts that challenge the status quo. This form of hidden everyday resistance is evident among migrant communities who employ underground networks, safe houses, and clandestine information-sharing to evade detection and deportation. For instance, the use of encrypted messaging apps among migrant networks facilitates the covert exchange of legal advice and support strategies, circumventing state surveillance and control (Bernal, 2014). De Genova (2002), too, highlights how the daily practices of "illegality" and deportability, which shape the lived experiences of undocumented migrants, meet different forms of resistance. These include evading law enforcement, securing informal employment, and engaging in civil disobedience to resist deportation orders. Such acts of resistance, while often individual and fragmented, collectively challenge the dominant narratives that criminalize and marginalize migrants. Nicholls (2013), too, underscores how undocumented youth, strategically partnering with other (counter)publics, successfully challenged restrictive immigration policies in the United States, reshaping public discourse on migration. This movement exemplifies how expressive resistance—through storytelling, public protests, and cultural performances—can shift societal attitudes and influence policy change. Recent studies by Perolini (2022) confirm the power of grassroots activism in countering negative stereotypes and fostering both discursive and non-discursive forms of resistance.

Individual acts of resistance might include undocumented immigrants evading law enforcement, overstaying visas, or engaging in civil disobedience by refusing to comply with deportation orders. These acts are often driven by personal survival strategies rather than coordinated efforts (Menjívar, 2006). *Organized resistance* involves collective efforts to oppose or mitigate the impacts of immigration and deportation policies. This can include legal advocacy groups challenging immigration laws in court, coalitions providing resources and support to immigrants, and activist networks organizing protests and public campaigns. Organized resistance is characterized by its strategic, collective approach to achieving broader goals of policy change or societal acceptance (Yoshikawa, Suárez-Orozco, & Gonzales, 2017). *Instrumental resistance* focuses on achieving concrete, tangible goals, such as blocking a deportation order or changing an immigration law. It is action-oriented and often involves legal challenges, lobbying efforts, and policy advocacy (Tilly, 2008). *Expressive resistance* prioritizes the articulation of identities and experiences that challenge dominant narratives

about immigration. It seeks to raise awareness about the human costs of deportation policies and foster empathy for immigrants. Examples include public protests, cultural performances, and storytelling initiatives (Scott, 1990).

The growing prominence of digital media reshapes how relevant communities engage with migration issues. Social media allow communities, including diaspora communities, to transcend geographical limitations, fostering stronger connections and collective action (Madianou & Miller, 2012). Digital platforms serve as catalysts for "digital activism," where marginalized groups leverage low-entry barriers to counteract dominant narratives and initiate social change (Boykoff & Smith, 2010). Through digital activism, these communities can challenge dominant narratives and promote their own stories and perspectives (Papacharissi, 2010). Ekman (2019) underscores how social media is used to mobilize refugee solidarity movements, stressing the potential of digital platforms to support migrant rights activism. Casas-Cortes (2016) shows how migrant advocacy groups in Spain utilize social media to challenge mainstream narratives about migration, promoting stories that highlight the successful integration and positive contributions of migrants. Brinkerhoff (2009), too, highlights how digital media can become a platform for marginalized groups.

In summary, the resistance narratives and digital media framing highlight the agency of migrants and their communities in challenging dominant power structures. Based on the literature, it can therefore be expected that migrants employ various strategies, from covert networks and legal evasion to public protests and digital activism, to counteract dominant narratives and advocate for more humane migration policies. However, it can also be expected that dominant discourses on migration and immigration control set certain cultural-cognitive limits to such acts of resistance.

Data and Methodology

Social media data among diaspora in EU+ countries

A targeted content analysis of diaspora social media platforms was conducted to examine how diaspora groups communicate about enforced return policies, and on immigration control and return more generally. For a combination of reasons, it focused on Georgians in Germany. First, the principal researcher, who conducted most of the fieldwork on diaspora communities, is a multilingual Georgian with good research access in Germany. Second, we reasoned that the Georgian diaspora would be an interesting case. Georgia is often seen as a relatively collaborative country when it comes to allowing enforced return from EU+ countries, making it is interesting to see if social media, which provide more space for counter-discourses, corroborate this idea, or include more critical narratives. Additionally, after Germany declared Georgia a “safe country” of origin in January 2023, the rate of deportations of Georgian asylum seekers increased significantly (Agenda.ge, 2023; Asylum Information Database, 2023). Consequently, posts asking how to avoid deportation dramatically increased since that date, reflecting the heightened anxiety and urgency within the Georgian digital diaspora.

At the beginning of the study, the researcher, who speaks Turkish, also explored social media posts created by Turkish diaspora groups in Germany. However, it was decided to not analyse the latter in more detail as it turned out that there was little discussion on immigration control and enforced return on these ‘Turkish’ platforms, possibly because deportations to

Türkiye from Germany are rare. (Irregular migrants from Türkiye are known to be well incorporated in relatively well-organized Turkish minority groups, which reduces individuals' exposure to apprehension and deportation, see for example Leerkes, Varsayi and Engbersen, 2011). Subsequently, another researcher from the University of Milan conducted interviews with Kurdish and Alevite diasporic associations; the Kurds in particular are more exposed to German return policies.

Specific Georgian diaspora groups using relevant social media were identified based on their active engagement on this topic. The criteria for selecting these groups included the number of members, the level of activity, the number of posts shared each day, and accessibility (public vs. private groups). For ethical reasons, we only included social media platforms that were public. Data collection focused on posts, comments, and shared articles from December 2023 to April 2024. Relevant posts were identified by first using a narrow search, followed by a broader search. The narrow search was done using the search term "deportation", and with relevant Georgian and German emic equivalents. The broader search was done in two steps. First, we used etic terms like "return", "IOM", "asylum", "migration policies", followed by a search where we used relevant emic terms that we learned about during earlier steps, which included terms like Heimm, Duldung, and Negativ. The sampling strategy resulted in approximately 3,000 posts scraped from social media. All posts were anonymized to protect users' identities.

Analysed texts in non-EU+ countries

In non-EU+ countries, social and traditional media texts were collected and analysed as part of the corpus analysis. National researchers in each non-EU+ countries collected sources for each category of the documents, whose main metadata were coded in a sources inventory matrix. The matrix contained information on the type of document, author and publication, category (mainstream/official or alternative), date, place, main narrative, policy stance, mention of return, mention of the dyad (Georgia-Germany; Nigeria-Italy; Iraq-Switzerland; Turkiye-Germany and Switzerland). Documents were then selected based on the following prioritisation criteria: (1) mention of return, (2) mention of the dyad, (3) place of publication in the non-EU+ country, (4) diversity of publication outlets, (5) diversity of narratives, (6) diversity of policy stance.

Through this methodology, 43 sources were selected in Nigeria (21 multimedia documents) and Iraq (23 multimedia documents), 33 sources were selected in Turkiye (20 multimedia), and 31 sources were selected in Georgia (10 multimedia). The national researcher in Georgia, as well as media specialists interviewed, indicated that the media landscape in Georgia does not speak much about return, which explains the reduced number of sources identified in the country. Among the 75 multimedia documents identified across countries, 53 were published or posted after 2020; 16 between 2015 and 2019; 4 between 2010 and 2014 and 1 between 2000 and 2009. Once the corpuses finalised, they were translated from the language of origin to English for the analysis.

Interviews with diaspora representatives

For the diaspora, it turned out to be challenging to discern discourses based on social media texts alone. Therefore, we decided to conduct a somewhat larger number of semi-structured, mostly face-to-face interviews—19 interviews were conducted instead of the initially planned 10. Between December 2023 and May 2024, these interviews were conducted with

representatives of (1) Geogian (N=5), Nigerian diaspora communities in Italy (N=8), and Iraqi diaspora communities in Switzerland (N=3). and Türkiye-related (N=3) diaspora communities residing in Germany (mostly through Kurdish and Alevi diaspora organisations). The engagement with mostly Kurdish and Alevi diaspora organisations in Germany, rather than other Turkish diaspora groups, may have influenced our findings. These groups, although they are from Turkey, are notably marginalized and underrepresented in both Germany and Turkey, often facing systemic discrimination and exclusion from broader national narratives (White, 1999; Koçan & Öncü, 2004). By focusing on Kurdish and Alevi organisations, our research captures the perspectives of communities that are frequently silenced or overlooked in mainstream discourses.

Part of the participants were from formal and well-established diaspora organizations, others were involved in more informal diaspora groups (e.g. who use WhatsApp groups to communicate about migration issues). The interviews with Georgian and Iraqi diaspora representatives were conducted by a researcher from Erasmus University, a Georgian national who has lived and worked in Türkiye and Germany in the past. A researcher from the University of Milan, who is a Turkish national who lives and works in Italy, conducted the interviews with Turkish diapora representatives in Germany. A trained research assistant from Erasmus University, an Irish national who has lived in Türkiye and Italy in the past, conducted the interviews in Italy. All interviewers were mindful of their positionality and committed to creating a safe, respectful interview environment, assuring participants of the confidentiality and anonymity of their data. Although the positionality of the interviewers may have significantly affected both access to participants and the information provided during the interviews. The interviewers' backgrounds, nationalities, and prior experiences in the countries of interest played a crucial role in establishing trust and rapport with the participants. For instance, the Georgian and Turkish interviewer likely established a deeper connection and understanding with groups originating from Georgia, Turkey and Iraq due to shared cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Berger, 2015).

However, it is important to note that Turkish researchers often face trust issues among Kurdish and Alevi diaspora communities due to historical and ongoing political tensions (Kacen & Chaitin, 2006). This mistrust was evident as the Turkish researcher was allowed to take notes but not record the interviews, except in one case (Kacen & Chaitin, 2006). Similarly, the Irish researcher's background may have influenced the nature of the interactions and the depth of information shared, especially given her status as an outsider, although it was not noticed by him.

The interviews were conducted in Georgian, English, and Turkish, and were all audio recorded except for the two interviews conducted in Germany, as requested by the participants; notes were taken during the latter interviews. The interviews required a meticulous transcription and translation process to handle the linguistic diversity. All recorded interviews in Turkish, English and Arabic were transcribed using Amberscript for its high accuracy. The interviews in Georgian were manually transcribed due to the lack of reliable automated transcription software. Subsequently, all transcripts were translated using DeepL for its superior performance in maintaining contextual integrity. They translations were manually reviewed and corrected by native speakers or proficient bilingual researchers to ensure accuracy, and underwent multiple rounds of review to cross-check and rectify discrepancies.

Analytical strategy

For the diaspora sub-study both the social media posts and interviews were analyzed by the principal researcher from Erasmus University and the trained research assistant, both under the supervision of FAiR's principal investigator. This involved systematically categorising the interviews transcripts and posts into key thematic areas to uncover prevalent patterns and insights. The primary themes in relation to the discourse identified included 'perceived right to immigrate', 'perceived threat', 'perceived institutional sources of authority', and various 'strategies of resistance' against enforced return policies and stringent migration systems, and the provision of practical assistance within diaspora communities. This thematic approach allowed for a rigorous examination of the discursive practices and interactions that characterise digital diaspora engagement.

For the non-EU+ countries the corpus analysis, which included social and traditional media, was conducted by two researchers at Samuel Hall in two steps. First, a semantic analysis was conducted with the software Sonal, to thematically code the documents based on the narratives pre-identified in collaboration with the national researchers; and analyse the vocabulary used per type of document and per theme. This analysis provided key data on the representation of narratives and sub narratives, the most used word and their meaning for each narrative, and the use of vocabulary related to return. Then, the researchers conducted a contextual text coding consisting in filling in a matrix with data and metadata about each document of the corpus in the following categories: Context of production; Returnees' voices; Narratives on return; Conditions of return; Type of returnees; Assistance; References to other texts; Presence and type of visual representations; and Policies. This was followed by an analysis of correlations to identify what factors impact narratives and better identify the media discourses and their characteristics. For the non-EU+ countries we thus used somewhat more quantitative techniques than for the diaspora sub-study.

Validity and Limitations

To enhance the validity of our findings, we implemented several strategies. Firstly, we used methodological triangulation as findings from social and traditional media could be corroborated with interviews (for the diaspora sub-study) and, for the non-EU+ countries, with data from other relevant documents. Such triangulation also provided an additional layer of context to the media findings, offering insights into broader public discourses in the selected Global South countries. Secondly, we aimed for theoretical saturation by continuously comparing new data with our theoretical framework until no new themes emerged. However, due to limitations regarding the number of diaspora groups that could be covered, and participants that could be interviewed, we cannot claim full saturation. Thirdly, to ensure a comprehensive understanding, the analysis for the diaspora and non-EU+ countries was done in parallel, with findings from non-EU countries and diaspora communities in EU+ countries being examined relatively independently from each other. This approach allowed us to inductively derive insights from both contexts. Further discussions are planned to integrate these findings more cohesively in future analysis, when we can also incorporate insights from other working packages, and from the focus groups that were conducted in the non-EU+ countries.

A main limitation of the analysis is that we cannot make quantitative claims about the prevalence or salience of different discourses among non-EU+ countries, and among diaspora groups. While the analysis of the data on non-EU+ countries was partially done with quantitative analytical techniques, the main aim of the analysis for both the diaspora and non-EU+ countries was to provide qualitative insights into the types of discourses that exist, and explore the adaptation and resistance strategies that can be identified (with a focus on social media and Georgian diaspora in Germany).

In the next section we present the key findings from the study. We will first discuss the discourses prevalent among the diaspora groups, illustrating each discourse with quotes from interviews and social media posts. Following this, we present the narratives that emerge on social media used by Georgians in Germany, highlighting the everyday resistance strategies that migrants use to navigate and counter restrictive migration policies. Finally, we summarize our findings from non-EU+ countries in a concise manner; a more profound and detailed exploration of these findings is provided in a separate working paper (see Majidi et al., 2024).

Key findings

Diaspora discourses and narratives

Among the diaspora, five key discourses were identified, which are summarized in Table 1: universal humanitarian, post-colonial, migration and development, nativist securitization, and civic integration. In what follows, we describe these discourses in more detail, illustrating them with relevant empirical material. In the table, we added probable institutional sources of authority for each discourse. It should be emphasized that these sources are, to some extent, speculative; the respondents usually did not mention these institutions explicitly.

Table 1 Identified diaspora discourses, characteristics and finding places

Discourse	Summary	View on Right to Stay in Host Country	View on Return Process	Institutional Sources of Authority	Finding Places
Universal Humanitarianism	Alleviate suffering, regardless of nationality or origin	Right to stay for those who suffer	Minimize suffering during and after enforced return	International human rights regime; universal religions; science	Iraqi diaspora CH, Turkiye diaspora DE, Nigerian diaspora IT
Migration and Development	Migration promotes development for migrants and countries	Right to stay if contributing to development	Return must benefit development, come with assistance	Intergovernmental institutions (e.g. ILO); employers	Nigerian diaspora IT, Georgian diaspora DE
Post-colonialist	Migration caused by colonial conditions / exploitation	Right to stay if conditions caused by colonizers	Enforced return generally unacceptable	Non-hegemonial, less institutionalized	Older Nigerian diaspora IT, Georgians DE
Nativist Securitization	(Irregular) migration is a symbolic threat	No right to stay unless benefiting established residents	Enforced return, incl. deportation, acceptable	National citizenship	Established Georgians DE, established Iraqi Kurds CH
Civic Integration	Ties host country create right to stay	Right to stay when ‘integrated’ in host country	Enforced return, incl. deportation, can be acceptable for newcomers	Civic understandings citizenship; international human rights regime	Georgian diaspora DE, Kurdish diaspora CH, Turkiye diaspora DE

The *universal humanitarianism discourse* is centered on the moral imperative to alleviate human suffering and protect the inherent dignity and rights of all individuals. This perspective emphasizes the right to stay in the host country for those experiencing suffering or fleeing persecution, and it argues that the return process should be managed to minimize suffering. For example, an Iraqi diaspora representative encapsulates the humanitarian perspective by stating, *"Some people have fled war and persecution; sending them back without ensuring their safety is inhumane."* This quote stresses the moral responsibility to protect those escaping war and persecution. This position is also shared by the Kurdish and Alevi diaspora in Germany, who stress the responsibility of democratic countries to offer asylum to persecuted people.

Certain members of the Georgian diaspora in Germany also echoed this humanitarian sentiment, especially also in relation to other groups than Georgians, emphasizing the importance of supporting those who are 'genuinely' in danger: "*Now after the Taliban* [took over power again], *for example, they* [Germany] *don't let the refugee women go; they don't send them back, and the Iranians don't even have a chance to let you go* [to be deported] *because they* [the German authorities] *know that you will surely die. But the Georgians lie; …. I cannot protest for Georgians, but I can for an Afghan or an Iranian".* However, a Georgian diaspora member did use the discourse to argue for the protection of Georgian women, also hinting at the responsibility of the state of Georgia in this respect: *"As I told you, there are really a few men and many women who deserve to get asylum here because their lives may be in danger, but also they are deported..which is not fair, For example, there are very frequent cases of femicide in Georgia, and the state should protect these women. We should fight for equal rights, and our state should protect these women because it is officially written in the laws that they should be protected*."

The humanitarian discourse, which resembles the moral justification frame identified by Cham and Adam (2023), was also recognizable among Nigerian diaspora representatives, sometimes highlighting the suffering among female migrants including the plight of trafficked women, *"But the problem was we discovered that many girls were calling our numbers. 'Please', with a very low voice. 'Please help me. Please help me. My madam doesn't want to leave me'*. Participant 2 reflects on the harsh conditions faced by migrants, including migrant men, highlighting how the discourse tends to also be critical about enforced return in the form of deportation, *"I think my experience in deportation camp was not just a Nigerian story, but I think [it was] one of the experiences I had that I may not forget in life. I think that place is not meant for human beings to stay."* Another Nigerian participant underscores the dire conditions in deportation camps, "*I think that place is not meant for human beings to stay. It's just to suffer. People make people to suffer. And, um. And they make them to be psychologically unstable."*

The *migration and development discourse* is more utilitarian in nature, emphasizing the positive contributions of migration to both host and, in some variants, home countries, portraying migrants as agents of development whose skills and labour significantly enhance economic growth. Migrants are viewed as vital contributors to local economies, filling labour shortages, and bringing diverse skills. Within this discourse, there is strong support for the right to stay in the host country for those migrants who contribute to its development. Furthermore, it advocates that the return process should be managed in a way that it benefits both the migrants and their home countries. Intergovernmental institutions and employers often champion this discourse, highlighting the economic rationale behind migration policies.

For example, one participant from Georgia highlighted the challenges and potential benefits of legal employment for migrants: *"I don't know what German laws are in relation to other countries, but in relation to Georgia it is the most difficult. Many people around me had applied to come and work legally, but none of us could take it. Germany has a very big bureaucracy and it's almost impossible to work legally, that's why many people work illegally. I don't know why they don't do it, it's harmful for them, because those who work illegally and don't pay taxes, and it harms the state."* This quote underscores the bureaucratic hurdles that prevent legal employment and suggests that facilitating legal work could benefit both migrants and the host country by increasing tax revenues and reducing illegal labor.

Another participant elaborated on the potential for a more flexible migration framework within the EU, which could reduce the need for permanent migration: "*To become a member of the European Union, this is the most important thing we need to return, this is the main key to return, that people have the right to go where they want to work and come back again. ... If we don't have the desire and compulsion, then it will be a matter for us where we will be and of course we will want to stay in our homeland ... For example, I would work here in Germany for 10 months or a year, then I would return to normal, like all EU citizens,...We will pay taxes to Germany now I do not because I work illegally in a Turkish family, which do not pay half of it then the regular caretakers are paid, I will pay taxes and also invest in my country more, it will be win-win for both parts."* This statement reinforces the argument that providing legal pathways for employment not only ensures tax compliance but also enables migrants to invest in their home countries, creating a symbiotic relationship between the host and home countries.

A participant from Nigeria illustrates how the belief that migration contributes to development can result in certain expectations regarding the return and reintegration process, highlighting the value of assistance provided for incentivized returns, stating, *"The voluntary returns of Nigerians back home by the World Immigration Organisation [the International Organization for Migration] was a very beautiful, soft landing to most of the migrants. It is structured that by the time you go back home, you voluntarily deport yourself back home. They give you €2,000 to start a small business. Most of them that I accompanied back home through this scheme called me, and they said they are far better than what they were in Italy."*

The *post-colonialist discourse*, which resembles the post-colonial resistance framework identified by Cham and Adam (2023), views migration through the lens of historical injustices and economic dependencies created by colonialism. It argues that migration from former colonies to former colonizing countries is a direct consequence of these historical injustices, which continue into the presence, thereby granting migrants the right to leave and stay abroad. This discourse is critical of enforced return policies, deeming them generally unacceptable. It is typically supported by non-hegemonic and less institutionalized entities, such as advocacy groups and post-colonial states, although seldom mentioned overtly.

For example, a participant from Nigeria criticizes Western exploitation, *"The Europeans, America. They have failed woefully and they don't have the capacity to protect Africa. What they have interest in is to exploit the resources in Africa and give dangerous weapons to bandits and terrorists to destabilize those countries so that they can continue taking it from them by force."* Another Nigerian participant elaborates on how Western governments allegedly reinforce international corruption, stating, *"If the governments, these governments now, if they really want to help Africa, then they need to really deal with international corruption... Like, instead of collaborating with the corrupt politicians back in Africa to destroy some of the nations in Africa and to steal the natural resources. If they put an end to that, if*

they really want to put an end to immigration, then they need to put an end to those current practices of the international bodies collaborating with criminals, with corrupt politicians back in Africa."

Although Georgia has not been formally colonized by Europe, one participant with a Georgian migration background articulated a perceived neo-colonial relationship between the EU and Georgia, stating, *"If Georgia chooses the Kremlin's and Putin's course, then more attention will be paid to who enters [if Georgia choses a different political course it will decrease pathways to migration to the EU+ countries, and may increase deportations]. Europe treats Georgia like a good student or a bad student, as I said. It is a very discriminating and very colonial approach, but that is the fact and reality."* This quote highlights the participant's view that Europe's treatment of Georgia mirrors the hierarchical and paternalistic dynamics characteristic of colonial relationships, thus framing the migration and policy discourse in a post-colonial context.

The *nativist securitization discourse* perceives migration as a threat to national security and cultural identity. This perspective holds that migrants do not have a right to stay unless they provide tangible benefits to established residents, and it justifies enforced return as a necessary measure to reduce perceived threats and maintain national security. National citizenship institutions are the primary advocates of this discourse, emphasizing the protection of national borders and cultural integrity.

One participant, a 'high-skilled' Georgian immigrant, expresses a common nativist sentiment, stating, *"They are parasites (new arrivals) and they should be deported. They do not do anything in Georgia and come here and eat German taxpayers' money.. Some of them have been living here for years. They don't know one or two words of German."* Another old-generation diaspora member adds: *"In my area where I live, Georgians have a pretty bad name. That's why I avoid myself [them] when I see them. I don't greet them, I don't express that I am Georgian. Georgians were involved in some car trafficking in this area and a lot of car thefts happened the police also have a very bad idea about Georgians ….such people spoil the name of Georgia and Georgians that's why everyone considers the law related to return and deportation to the diaspora of the most newcomers to be completely valid and fair"*.. These quotes illustrate several key points within the Nativist Securitization discourse. Firstly, they highlight a clear segregation between established diaspora members and the newer arrivals. The older generation distances itself from the new arrivals due to negative reputation and criminal activities associated with some newcomers. This segregation is evident in the deliberate avoidance of interaction and the reluctance to express a shared identity. Secondly, these statements exemplify the view of migrants as economic burdens and threats to the welfare state, justifying their deportation. The description of new arrivals as "parasites" who "eat German taxpayers' money" reinforces the perception that migrants do not contribute economically and instead strain public resources. This sentiment aligns with the broader securitization narrative that frames migrants as threats that need to be managed through strict immigration and deportation policies. The reference to criminal activities, such as car trafficking and theft, further intensifies the negative perception of migrants and supports the argument for their deportation. By linking migrants to crime, the narrative strengthens the justification for enforced return as a means of protecting public safety and maintaining social order. In this case, the narratives about the crime involvement of new arrivals, real or perceived, also seem to indicate perceived symbolic threat in the form of negative "status contagion" (cf. Ridgeway and Balkwell, 1997). The desire among 'established' to preserve status hierarchies by negatively stereotyping newly arriving 'outsiders', is a well-documented sociological

phenomenon (cf. Elias and Scotson, 1965), although it is usually related to residents without a migration background.

The *civic integration discourse* similarly highlights migrants' statuses and social ties in the host country, but stresses that these statuses and ties are not given and static; they can change over time, thus creating new forms of membership in the host country, while forms of membership in the country may disappear more into the background (also see the section on non-EU+ discourses). This perspective supports the right to stay for migrants who have built meaningful ties to the host country, arguing that enforced return should be acceptable only for those lacking such ties. National citizenship institutions – especially those that represent civic rather than ethnic understandings of citizenship – are likely to give authority to this discourse, advocating for policies that promote integration and community building that include relative newcomers. While the nativist discourse emphasizes protection and security, and tends to essentialize and 'freeze' the distinction between citizens, including old-generation immigrants, and irregular newcomers, the civic integration discourse highlights the importance of continuous integration and community building efforts for a more inclusive society.

For example, a participant claimed that integration gives a right to stay, highlighting the role of "community" in integration, *"Integration into the community should be a key factor in deciding whether someone can stay."* An Iraqi participant adds: *"Because they [the Arabs in Switzerland] also have their own [ethnic] community, which is quite big. And you can live very well by staying in this bubble in your community. You have your shops, your hairdresser, your I don't know everything. But now they opened a bit more and. Yeah. Yeah. So it takes time as well. Maybe, maybe with the Arabs it's the same in 20 years [as with more established groups]. It's different. I don't know, it just takes time."* Like in the nativist discourse, some participants who echoed the civic integration discourse also pointed at the perceived complexities of cultural integration in particular. For example, another Iraqi diaspora representative noted, *"There are different opinions. Some people say, 'Oh no, this is religious freedom' [you do not have to integrate culturally in that respect]. In general, I don't care about appearances—whether someone wears a hijab or not. It's more about mental openness and respect for others. And sometimes, it feels disrespectful when newcomers don't try to integrate or understand others' opinions."*

We also found that the discourses described in the above are not rigidly compartmentalized; they often overlap, reflecting the complex realities faced by migrants. For example, one participant explained: *"These people are not given residence permits; their residence permits are not extended, and they are renewed for 1 year. Citizenship* [becoming German] *is absolutely impossible (...) With Duldung* [the German toleration system that suspends the deportation for certain categories of irregular migrants, giving them some rights but not a residence permit], *Germany does not allow these people to make a life here either. Duldung holders have to live within certain administrative boundaries* [within a certain region]. *They cannot go outside that border (...) What I see there is this: you're locked in a neighborhood, and you have to go to the police regularly and sign in. You can't get a job because nobody wants to employ a person with Duldung".* This quote exemplifies the intricate overlap of different migration discourses, illustrating how securitization measures can hinder civic integration, raise humanitarian concerns, while possibly also reflecting broader post-colonialist power dynamics. Recognizing these overlaps is crucial for developing more nuanced and effective migration policies that address the multifaceted challenges faced by migrants.

Social media narratives

It turned out to be difficult to identify migration and enforced return discourses based on social media texts, which led us to put more emphasis on the interviews. However, the social media texts – here, we focused on social media used by Georgians in Germany – did reveal various *narratives of everyday resistance* that deserve to be reported. These show how irregular migrants use social media to "counter" restrictive immigration policies. The prevalence of the narratives suggest that discourses that are critical about immigration enforcement – four of the five discourses described in the above – resonate the most with irregular migrants.

In what follows, we delve into specific examples extracted from social media posts, categorizing them into different forms of everyday resistance, the often covert and rapidly adaptive forms of resistance that do not fundamentally challenge dominant power structures but are driven by the immediate need for survival in a frequently restrictive environment.

One prevalent form of resistance evident in the social media posts is the use of *legal loopholes and strategies to avoid detection*. These posts demonstrate how migrants share information on evading border controls and exploiting gaps in legal systems. For example, one user asks, *"Hello! How can I avoid deportation? Thanks in advance!"* This query reflects a common concern among migrants and prompts responses that suggest practical advice for avoiding deportation. For example, one reply states, *"Write stop,*[1]*"* which implies to abort the asylum procedure, a tactic to delay or confuse authorities by hiding or changing the country after unregistering (absconding) as an asylum seeker.

The post below includes dates illustrating this very recent severe process: *[July 2024] Hello, I'm in a very difficult situation, I'm threatened with deportation every day, so I'm thinking of writing "stop", but not going to Georgia and asking for asylum all over again in 1 month. Is such a thing possible? I am with my family, the children start school in September, so I think I won't show up until the holidays.* Another post adds: "[July *2024] And they won't deport you after school? I know that if one member of the family is not at home, they will not deport them, men are hiding here and they cannot be deported, but I don't know how long it will last.* And a similar post:[July 2024*] This is my opinion and take it into account if you want. It is a sin for children to come to school and still be deported. It is stressful for a child to come to school and then be in an uncertain situation. It is better to return to Georgia or to a country where you will have more chances to stay. As for Dublin* [the Dublin regulation], *I think the lawyers are solving it. You should take a lawyer wherever you go. good luck*

A more explicit form of resistance, *bribing officials*, is also recommended in certain posts: *"Take a bus to Bulgaria and in Bulgaria bribe the border guards and they will let you in."* Still other posts recommend making use of *foot dragging and exploiting bureaucratic weaknesses*, such as changing one's identities to re-enter a country of deportation: "My relative

[1] Asylum seekers in Germany do have the right to withdraw their asylum application at any stage of the procedure. This can be done by informing the Federal Office for Migration and Refugees (BAMF) of their decision to discontinue the process. However, withdrawing an asylum application can have significant consequences, such as losing the right to remain in Germany and potentially facing immediate deportation, especially if they are from a country considered safe by German authorities(https://www.bamf.de/EN/Themen/AsylFluechtlingsschutz/asylfluechtlingsschutz-node.html).

was deported. After changing the surname, from which country is it better to enter. Or how safe it is. Please, those who are competent in this case, share your opinion with us."

The practice of foot dragging, which involves slow compliance or subtle forms of resistance, is evident in posts where migrants discuss tactics to delay or complicate deportation processes. For instance, one user shares their experience, *"I keep appealing every decision they make; it buys me more time."* Another post reflects attempts to benefit from bureaucratic uncertainties: *"Does anyone in Georgia know how to find out if I have a deportation order or not? I was deported on October 5, and I don't have deportation marked in my passport."* This indicates a potential weakness in record-keeping that migrants might exploit to avoid detection.

The social media posts also show how migrants use online platforms to share collective knowledge and support each other in resisting deportation. One post, for example, provided the following explanation about deportation: *"If you don't have deportation to any country and you just have to cross, then you can go without deportation [if you have never been deported you do not get an entry ban and can still cross the border]"* exemplifies how migrants disseminate critical information about their rights and strategies to migrate, including in irregular ways. Various posts also highlight the digital community's role in providing legal advice and support networks to navigate complex legal landscapes: *"I have a contract with one of the companies in Germany, and if I somehow enter Germany (secretly), will I be able to work officially?".*

While most posts indicate more instrumental forms of resistance that are aimed at reducing the chances of deportation and/or increasing the chances of re-immigration after deportation, some posts indicate more expressive forms of resistance. By sharing personal narratives about migrants, even if their stories ended in a “victory” of the authorities, they articulate their struggles and willingness to oppose the authorities, and seek empathy and support from the community. For example, one user shared their repeated experiences with deportation: "*Hello, last year in Germany I was arrested 3 times with a fake document and all three times they let me go, the fourth time it was fake again and this time I was deported.*"

Non-EU+ discourses and narratives

In this section, we summarize our findings from non-EU countries. We report these findings in a concise manner as a more profound and detailed exploration of the results is provided in a separate working paper (Majidi et al., 2024). In the analysis of media and policy discourses surrounding return migration in non-EU+ countries, eight distinct discourses were identified. These discourses reflect the multifaceted nature of return migration and highlight varying perspectives on the process and its implications. The discourses, and their main characteristics and finding places are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2. Non-EU+ discourses and narratives

Discourse	Characteristics	Associated Narratives	Representation
Humanitarian Discourse	Focus on assistance	Assistance is necessary	Mainstream NGOs, policymakers, media
Solidarity Discourse	Support returnees, emphasize difficulties	Return is difficult, Migration is dangerous	Media, activists, community
Advocacy or Opposition Discourse	Highlight injustices, oppose forced return	Forced return is not fair	Media, activists, policymakers
Development-Transnational Discourse	Returnees and diaspora as development agents	Return is beneficial, Return is desirable, Nation extends to diaspora	Alternative media, researchers, policymakers
Governmental Accountability Discourse	Focus on government's role in RRR policies and development	Government is responsible, Assistance is not enough, Context impacts return	Media, activists, policymakers
Dissuasion Discourse	Discourage irregular migration, highlight harm	Return is difficult, Migration is dangerous	Media, policymakers
Crisis Discourse	Returnees as numbers, frame return as fair	Returnees are numbers, Forced return is fair	Mainstream media, policymakers
Exclusion-Differentiation Discourse	Differentiate returnees from society, emphasize exclusion due to experiences abroad	Return is not acceptable, Returns create issues locally	Limited mainstream media, individuals

The *humanitarian discourse* emphasizes the necessity of assistance for returnees, often portraying returnees in a positive light and focusing on their needs. This narrative is prevalent among mainstream NGOs, policymakers, and the media. For instance, in Nigeria, traditional and social media extensively share information about assistance programs, thereby humanizing returnees by highlighting their experiences and the government's initiatives for professional training. Conversely, in Georgia, the narrative is more dehumanized, focusing on the logistics of assistance without much representation of returnees' voices.

The *solidarity discourse* highlights the difficulties of return and the dangers of migration, advocating for support to returnees. This narrative is prominent among individuals, media, and activists, particularly in Nigeria, Iraq, and Georgia. It often humanizes returnees by focusing on their personal experiences and the hardships they face. For example, in Georgia,

this discourse is associated with stories of trafficking and irregular migration, while in Nigeria, it includes a significant representation of individual returnees' stories, often advocating for better assistance and policies.

The *advocacy or opposition discourse* focuses on the injustices and violations associated with forced return, advocating against such policies. It is prevalent in Turkey, Iraq, and Nigeria, often highlighting returnees' negative experiences and advocating for their rights. In Turkey, for instance, the narrative is legal-oriented, focusing on agreements and deportation laws, whereas in Iraq, it emphasizes the human aspect, sharing returnees' stories of disappointment and community perceptions towards returnees. Arguably, the humanitarian, solidarity and advocacy discourses are variants within the universal humanitarian discourse reported for the diaspora.

The *development-transnational discourse*, which resembles the migration and development discourse reported in the above, views returnees and the diaspora as key agents of development. This narrative is represented in alternative media, research circles, and among policymakers. In Iraq, for example, returnees are often seen as contributing to the nation's development, with an emphasis on their agency and the diasporic connection. In Nigeria, this narrative focuses on the desirability of return, often portraying returnees positively and linking return to economic and social benefits for the country.

The *governmental accountability discourse,* which was not found among the diaspora, examines the role of the government in return, reintegration, and reinvestment (RRR) policies, emphasizing that assistance is not enough and that the broader context impacts return. It is represented across media, activists, and policymakers, with a notable presence in Turkey and Georgia. In Iraq, this discourse often involves mixed perceptions of policies and a focus on the broader social and economic context impacting returnees.

The *dissuasion discourse* aims to discourage irregular migration by highlighting the difficulties and dangers associated with it. This narrative is common in Nigeria and Iraq, where media and policymakers often share stories of the harms of migration and the challenges faced by returnees. In Nigeria, for instance, traditional and social media are used to dissuade migration by showcasing the dangers and promoting national development.

The *crisis discourse* represents returnees as mere numbers and often justifies forced return. It is predominantly seen in mainstream media and among policymakers, particularly in Turkey, Nigeria, and Georgia. This narrative tends to dehumanize returnees, focusing on legal frameworks and the logistics of deportation, often portraying returnees negatively and emphasizing the legitimacy of forced return. Arguably, the crisis discourse is a variant of the securitization discourse reported for the diaspora, but introduces a stronger country of origin perspective. This is also true for the dissuasion discourse, which also has elements of the humanitarian discourse by highlighting the dangers of irregular migration for migrants.

The *exclusion-differentiation discourse* differentiates returnees from the rest of society, emphasizing their exclusion due to experiences abroad. It is less represented in mainstream media but is present in individual narratives, particularly in Iraq and Nigeria. This narrative often portrays returnees' experiences negatively, highlighting issues of acceptance and integration within their home communities. This discourse mirrors the civic integration discourse described for the diaspora from the perspective of country of *emigration.*

Conclusion

This study offers a thorough examination of the various discussions related to migration and policies that force people to return to their home countries. It emphasizes the intricate nature of migration experiences and the wide range of methods used by migrants and their communities to resist and adapt to these policies.

The *Universal Humanitarianism discourse* advocates for ethical principles that promote compassionate policies aimed at safeguarding the dignity and rights of marginalized and vulnerable groups. This viewpoint underscores the importance of protecting individuals who are escaping persecution and violence, emphasizing the ethical obligation to reduce suffering and guarantee compassionate treatment, including in return procedures. The *Migration and Development discourse*, too, undermines restrictive migration policies by highlighting the beneficial contributions that migrants make to both the countries they migrate to and their countries of origin. Migrants are depicted as catalysts of progress, actively contributing to the expansion of the economy and the overall welfare of society. As a result, there is a call for policies that promote legal migration and voluntary repatriation programs. The *Post-colonialist discourse* offers a critical historical viewpoint, contending that migration is a result of colonial injustices, advocating for the rights of migrants as a means of making amends. This discussion necessitates addressing the underlying factors that lead to migration and opposing policies that mandate the return of migrants, which are generally considered unacceptable.

Two diasporic discourses are more supportive of enforced return policies. The *Nativist Securitization discourse* advocates for strict immigration regulations, motivated by apprehensions and preconceived notions that depict (irregular) migrants as potential risks to national security and cultural heritage, while seeking to preserve existing status hierarchies in which established, old-generation immigrants maintain a higher position than recent arrivals, fearing to be equated with the latter. This viewpoint rationalizes the implementation of forced repatriation as essential for safeguarding national borders and maintaining societal equilibrium. The *Civic Integration discourse* highlights the significance of social connections and community involvement in upholding the migrants' right to remain in the country. The discourse is critical about return policies for those who have blended into host country communities – and encourages policies to promote such blending –, it is more supportive of policies that seek to return (irregular) newcomers.

The analysis of social media posts provides concrete evidence of the various strategies employed by migrants to resist deportation and navigate through strict migration policies. These digital communications highlight the significance of social media as a platform for sharing crucial information, offering assistance, and promoting unity among migrants. Such forms of "everyday resistance", which encompasses clandestine acts of rebellion and nuanced forms of opposition, showcases the tenacity and autonomy of migrants in confronting structural obstacles and oppressive systems.

A diversity of discourses is also observed for the non-EU+ countries, with not all discourses being equally critical about enforced return. The Governmental Accountability discourse emphasizes the necessity of implementing efficient policies for return, reintegration, and development. It underscores the responsibility of governments in establishing favorable conditions that support sustainable return. The Dissuasion discourse seeks to dissuade irregular migration by emphasizing its perils, whereas the Crisis discourse dehumanizes migrants by portraying them as mere statistics or felons. The discourse on Exclusion and Differentiation

highlights the cultural and social obstacles that returnees encounter when trying to reintegrate successfully. It emphasizes the necessity of implementing policies that specifically target these challenges.

All in all, it strikes the eye that both the diasporic and non-EU+ discourses are, for the most part, not fundamentally different from discourses that predominate in the Global North, and internationally. We similarly find discourses that justify migration, including irregular migration, on moral grounds (e.g. universal humanitarianism), utilitarian grounds (e.g., migration and development) or both (civic integration), while other discourses predominantly construct migration as a threat (the diasporic nativist securitization discourse, but also the dissuasion and crisis discourse that are observed in the non-EU+ countries). The latter discourses nonetheless seem to be less salient among the diaspora and in the non-EU+ countries than in the Global North more generally, while the migration and development, and post-colonial discourse in particular are arguably more salient.). Some of the discourses (e.g. the post-colonial discourse) also clearly resemble the 'justification frames' reported for The Gambia (Cham and Adam, 2023). It nonetheless strikes the eye that the post-colonial resistance frame did not transpire clearly in the corpus analysis for the non-EU+ countries, and was not widespread among all diaspora groups, suggesting that the discourse is "non-hegemonial", and is not so often expressed in official policy documents and traditional media.

Another important preliminary conclusion is that the diasporic and non-EU+ discourses seem to differ to some extent only, suggesting that it will be useful to integrate them more in future work. Some discourses are nonetheless relatively specific to the experiences and interests of diaspora groups (e.g. adoption of elements the nativist securitization discourse and the civic integration discourse) or, by contrast, to sending country interests and perspectives (e.g. the Dissuasion and Exclusion and Differentiation discourse)

The study is an important step to address the Global North biases in migration discourses described in the first section, and provides starting points for a more comprehensive and inclusive narrative by incorporating viewpoints from the Global South and relevant diaspora communities. Furthermore, it fills the void in established migration theories by integrating the dynamics between the state and society, as well as the influence of social media on shaping current migration trends. Comprehending the processes of legitimizing and delegitimizing discourses offers valuable understanding of how perceptions of migration policies impact migration outcomes.

One major drawback of the study is its emphasis on qualitative observations instead of quantifying the frequency or importance of different discourses. Future work could explore whether newly emerging quantitative analysis (e.g. by using natural language processing) can be used and/or whether certain questions on migration discourse can be added to large surveys that are conducted worldwide, including in Global South countries, such as the World Values Study. Future qualitative work could expand the present analysis to other diaspora groups and countries with a view to reaching theoretical saturation. While several diaspora groups and countries are included in the present analysis, we obviously cannot claim to have identified all relevant discourses.

Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of adopting a comprehensive approach to migration policy that considers both security concerns and humanitarian interests, as well as the economic advantages and historical injustices associated with migration. It also highlights the significance of integrating migrants while respecting their rights and dignity. Policymakers can develop migration policies that foster social cohesion and uphold human rights by

recognizing and dealing with the various narratives and resistance strategies of migrants and their communities. The knowledge acquired from this research can influence public policy and contribute to a fairer and more balanced management of migration, ultimately promoting a more inclusive and compassionate approach to migration.

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