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From Crisis-Exploitation to Sticky Narratives:

A Research Agenda for the Comparative Study of Policy Crises and Illiberal Policy Frames

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Policy Crises

Events perceived as urgent threats to core community values (Boin et al., 2019) ...

...triggered by:

- External shocks exposing systemic failures
- Internal contestation of policy principles or values

Since the 2008 financial crisis, advanced nations face recurring **policy crises** and societal polarization ("polycrisis")

Leaders like Trump, Orbán, and Modi exploit crises to maintain power through **illiberal** strategies

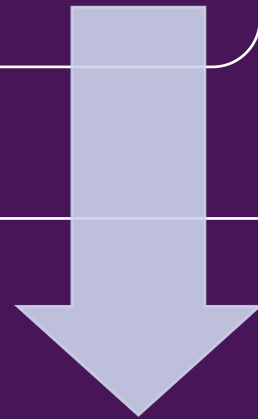
Illiberalism

An reaction against liberalism (cultural, political, economic) – a rejection of pluralism, promotion of political polarisation, disregard for the rule of law

Illiberalism □ □ Populism

Policy Frames

Sense-making
process □
coherent stories



Illiberal Policy Frames (IPFs)

Political communication that frames
policy problems and solutions in an
illiberal light

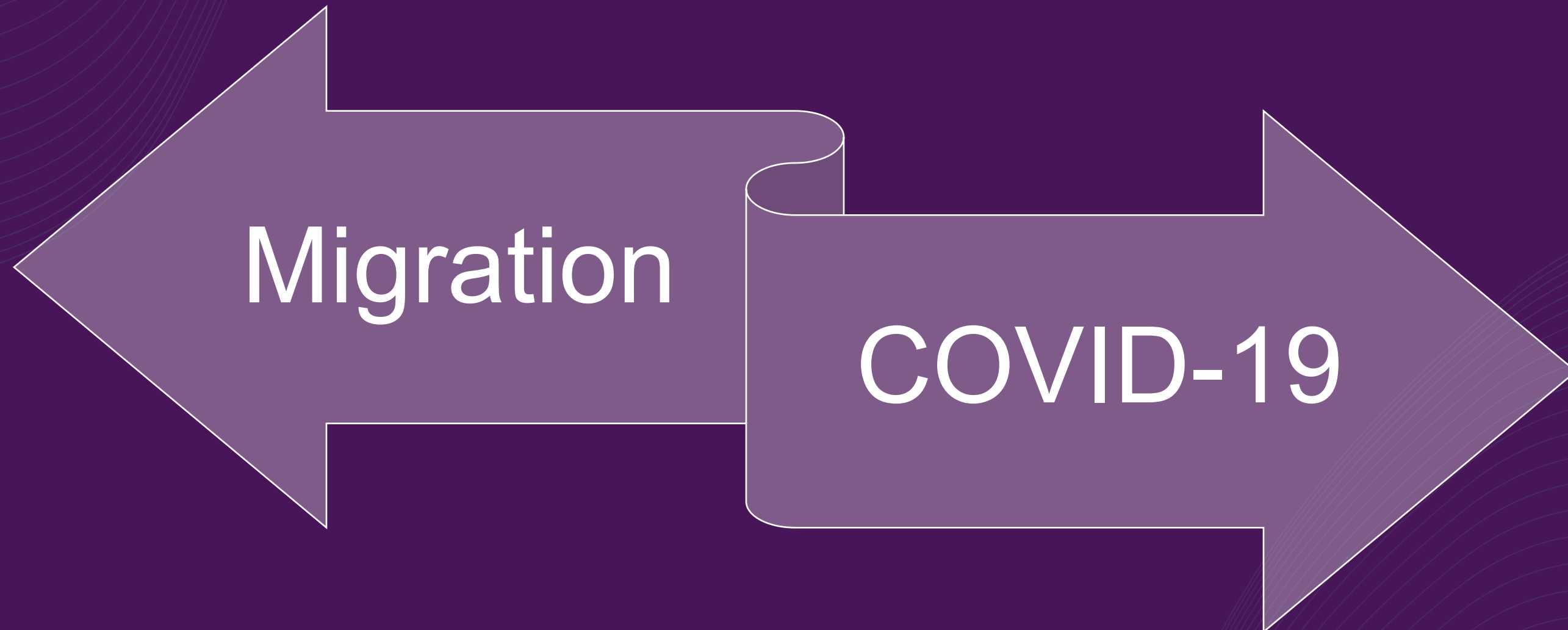
Key Concepts

**Exploitation
thesis**

**Decisions of the
elite**

Fear-mongering

Case selection



Data and descriptive statistics

Overview of the data – Parliamentary speeches

Domain	Time Frame	Chief executive			
		<i>Austria</i>	<i>Germany</i>	<i>Hungary</i>	<i>United States</i>
<i>Migration</i>	2014-2017	Faymann, Kern	Merkel	Orbán	-
<i>COVID-19</i>	3/2020 - 11/2021	-	-	Orbán	Trump, Biden

Country	House of Parliament	Source	Migration	COVID-19
Austria	Nationalrat	PLS	7 069	-
Germany	Bundestag	PLS	10 383	-
Hungary	Országgyűlés	PLS	5 997	2 972
United States	House of Representatives	GAINS/APP	-	7 077

Units of observation: **sentences**

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The ILLFRAMES Codebook

poltextLAB

SHIFT



ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
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Migration

Illiberal frame	Code	Example
enemy	900	For this reason, the government's efforts to curb the harmful functioning of migration support organisations active in Hungary as part of the Soros network are of particular public interest.
problem	901	We must stop this industry, the asylum industry, and stop this asylum disorder.
security threat	910	It is no secret that in the course of irregular migration radical Islamists and criminals also come to us.
crisis	911	The migrant situation, the immigration pressure or the wave of refugees that has reached Europe has indeed put Hungary to a very serious test.
illegality	920	We are against illegal immigration under the title of asylum.
repellent state	921	I therefore call on the Federal Government, if this commitment continues, to finally create the opportunity to bring migrants who have been taken up in the Mediterranean back to Africa.
sovereignty threat	922	What is most important, however, is that we must at least partially make migration a national competence to stop migration from the competence of the European Union.
economic nationalism	930	Asylum seekers who are pushing into the labour market: the next problem that will be in our home now.
administrative burden	931	Administrative courts are completely overburdened by the increase in asylum procedures.
welfare chauvinism	932	As can be seen from the European news, Western European countries also reduce the scope and amount of benefits that migrants can receive, because there is a strong tendency for immigrants to apply for asylum in countries where they can obtain greater financial means.
socio-cultural change	940	We could even think about fundamental stories and values together, such as these: we are now having a debate on refugees, the new culture, the cultural change that is coming to us.
social tension	941	Another issue is the cohesion of our society against the background of indisputable internal divisions, but also the decade-long task of integrating immigrants and refugees, for which education, jobs and, above all, housing are probably the key.

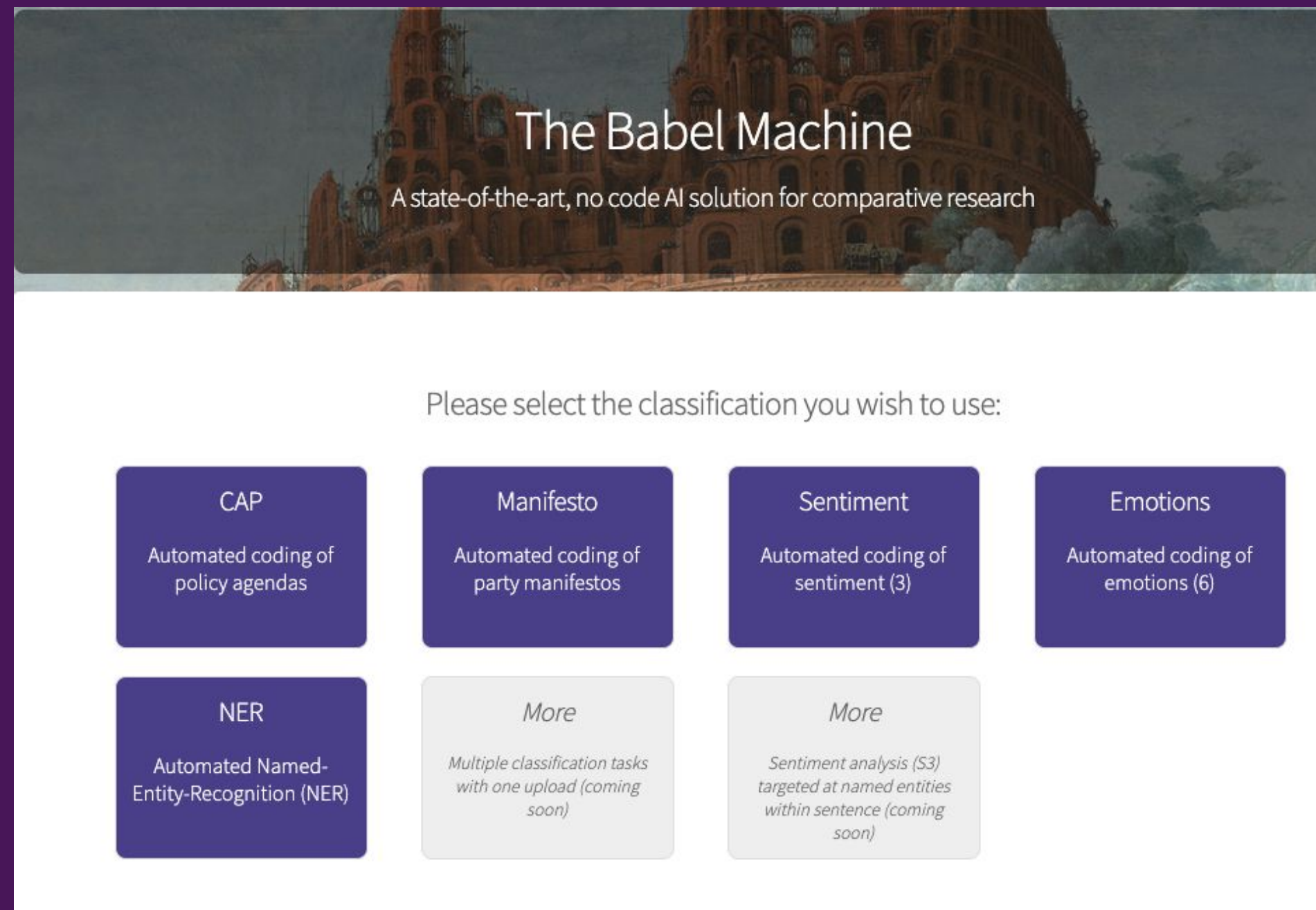
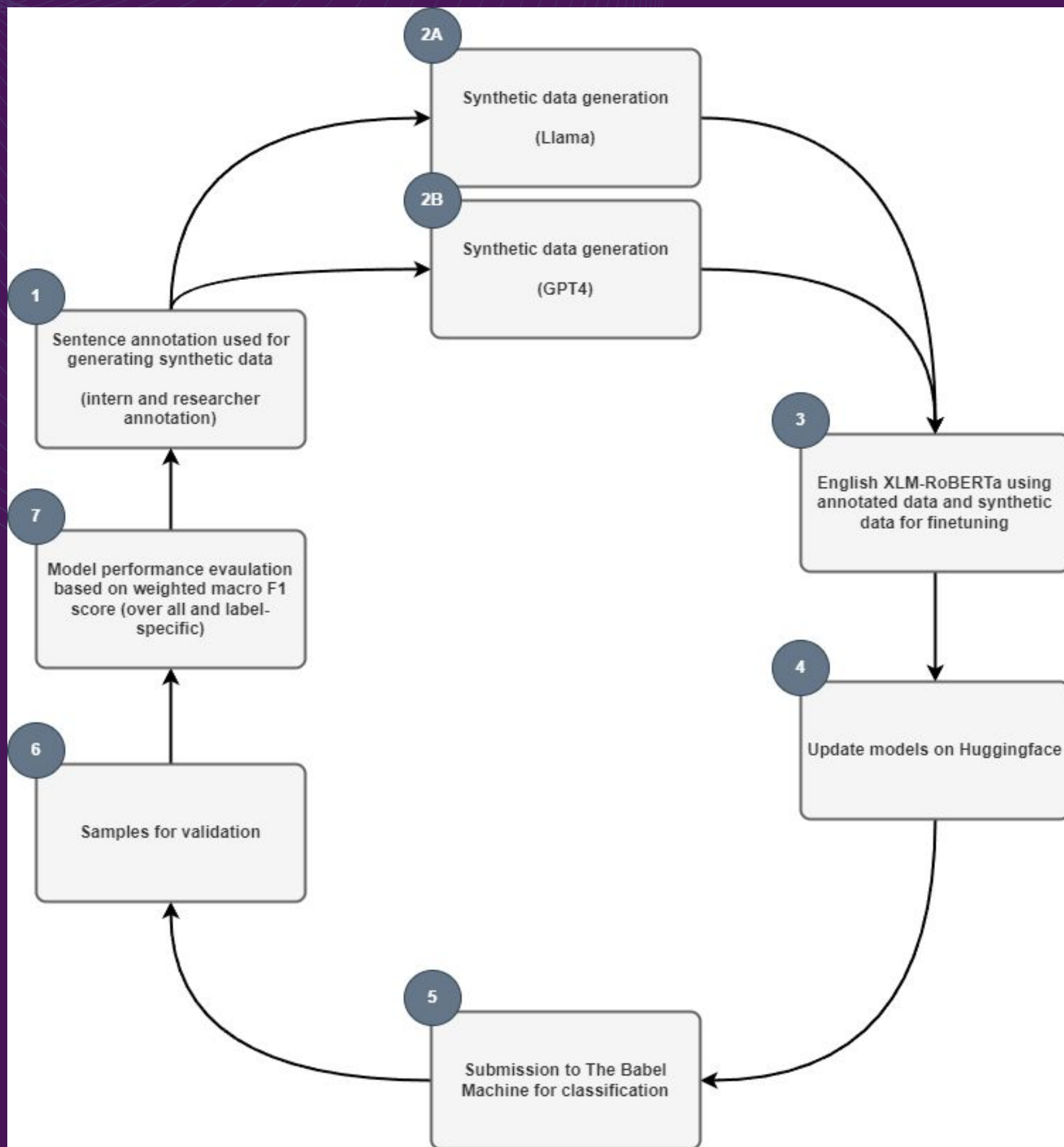
Illiberal frame	Code	Example
Threat scepticism	310	Corona is not exactly the Haiti earthquake that it is being sold as.
Elite control	311	I am sure we could have found a bipartisan response to this, but instead they chose, because they have the majority now, to ram through their list of liberal priorities in a massive expansion of the entitlement system under the guise of COVID relief.
Undermining the economy	312	Perhaps, unfortunately, it was the Covid epidemic that proved most of all how sensitive the Hungarian economy is, how vulnerable we are to such external influences.
Medical choice	313	They have the right to live their lives on their own terms, not with lockdowns and mandates--on their terms.
Truth	314	Let us not forget that the press continues to fight hard to ensure that anti-vaccination sounds undermine the confidence in vaccines.
Great reset	315	And Communist China's latest weapon of choice is the coronavirus.
Threatening way of life	316	And I am quite sure, ladies and gentlemen, that those schoolchildren who have been forced to spend the last year under such conditions will be called the Covid generation, and the proportion of mental illness among them will be much higher than in other generations.



Quantitative methodology

Artificial intelligence-powered natural language processing

Workflow



<https://babel.poltextlab.com>

translation to English was automated using **EasyNMT**, a tool covering 150+ languages, validated by research as comparable to paid services

Synthetic data generation used for augmentation due to limited hand-coded examples, with models **Llama 3.1 (8B) and GPT-4o**

classification task: large version of **XLM-RoBERTa** with hyperparameters set heuristically (batch size of 8, learning rate of 5e-6, max token length 512)

migration

Manually annotated (1550)
+ llama zero-shot (1200) + gpt few-shot (1200)

Weighted F1:
0.70

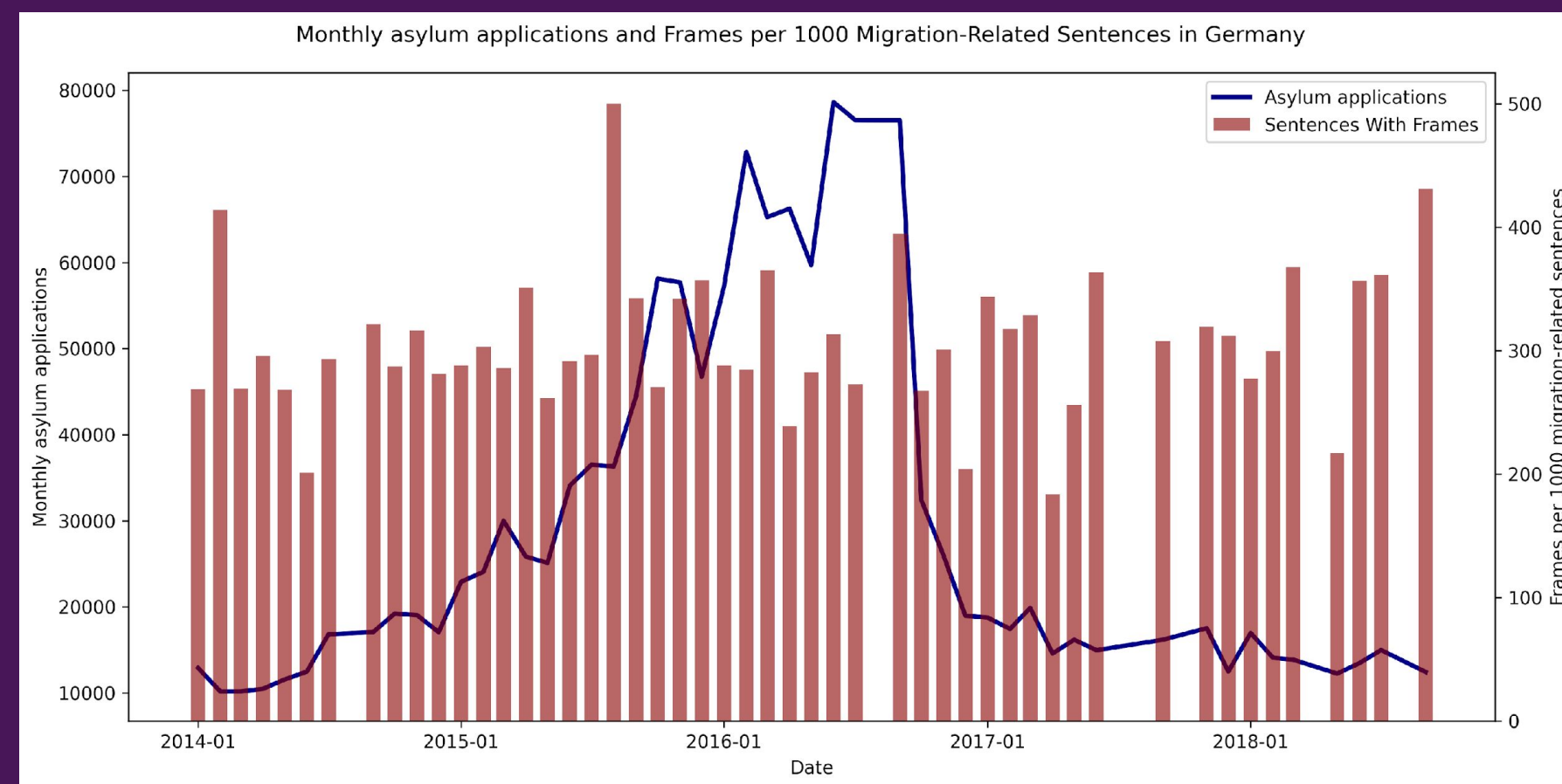
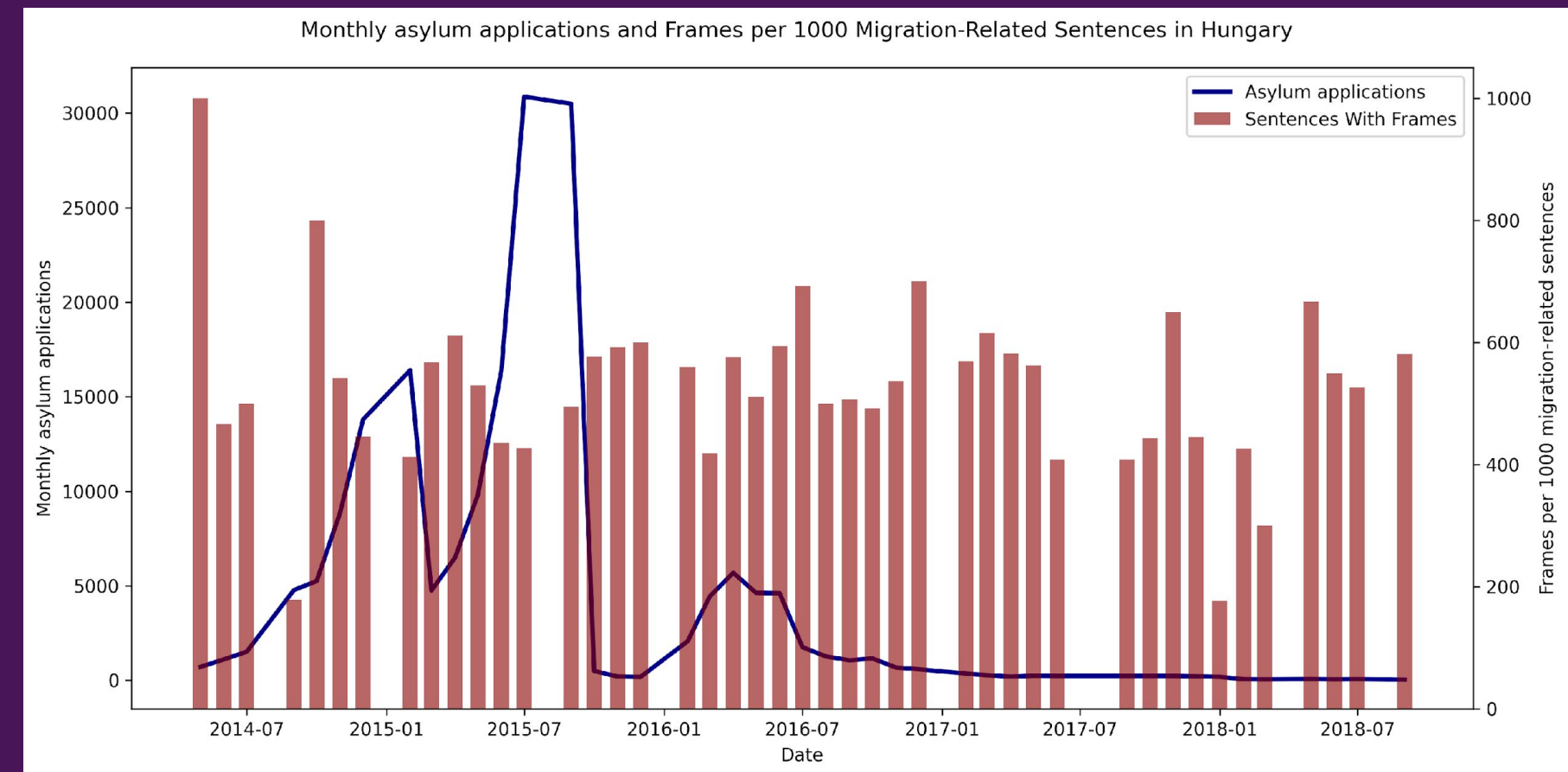
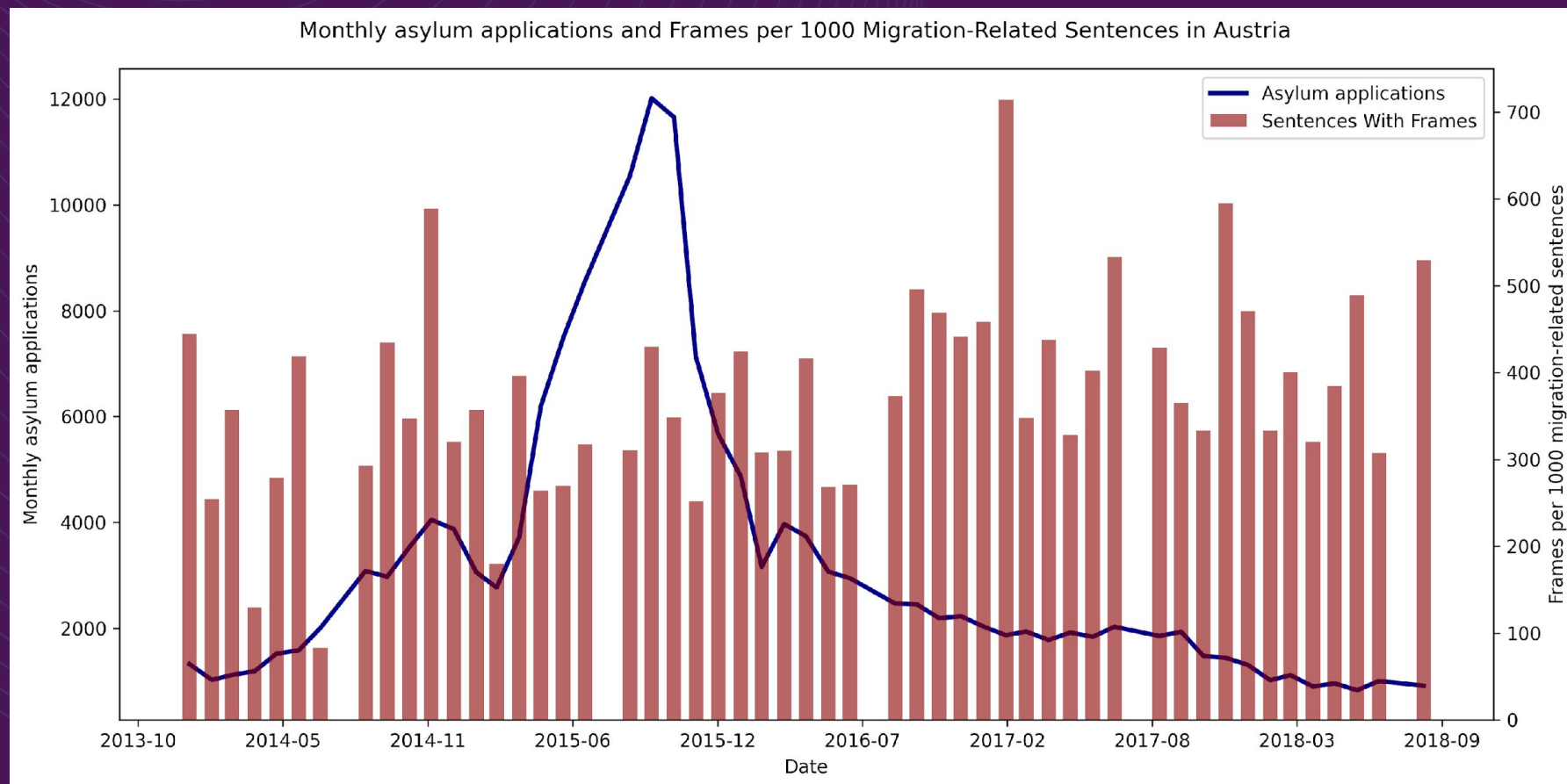
COVID-19

Manually annotated (1962)
+ llama zero-shot (800) + gpt few-shot (700)

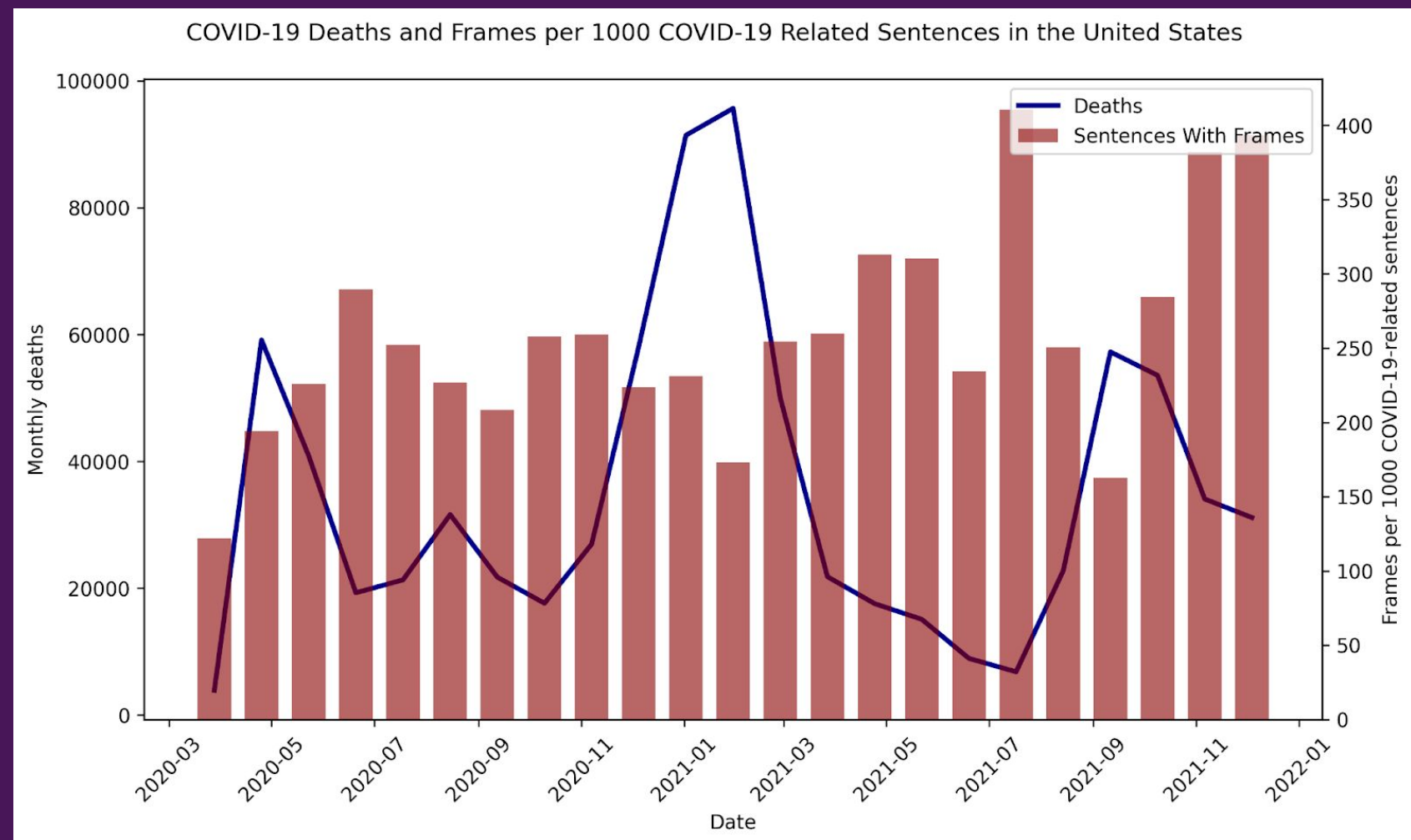
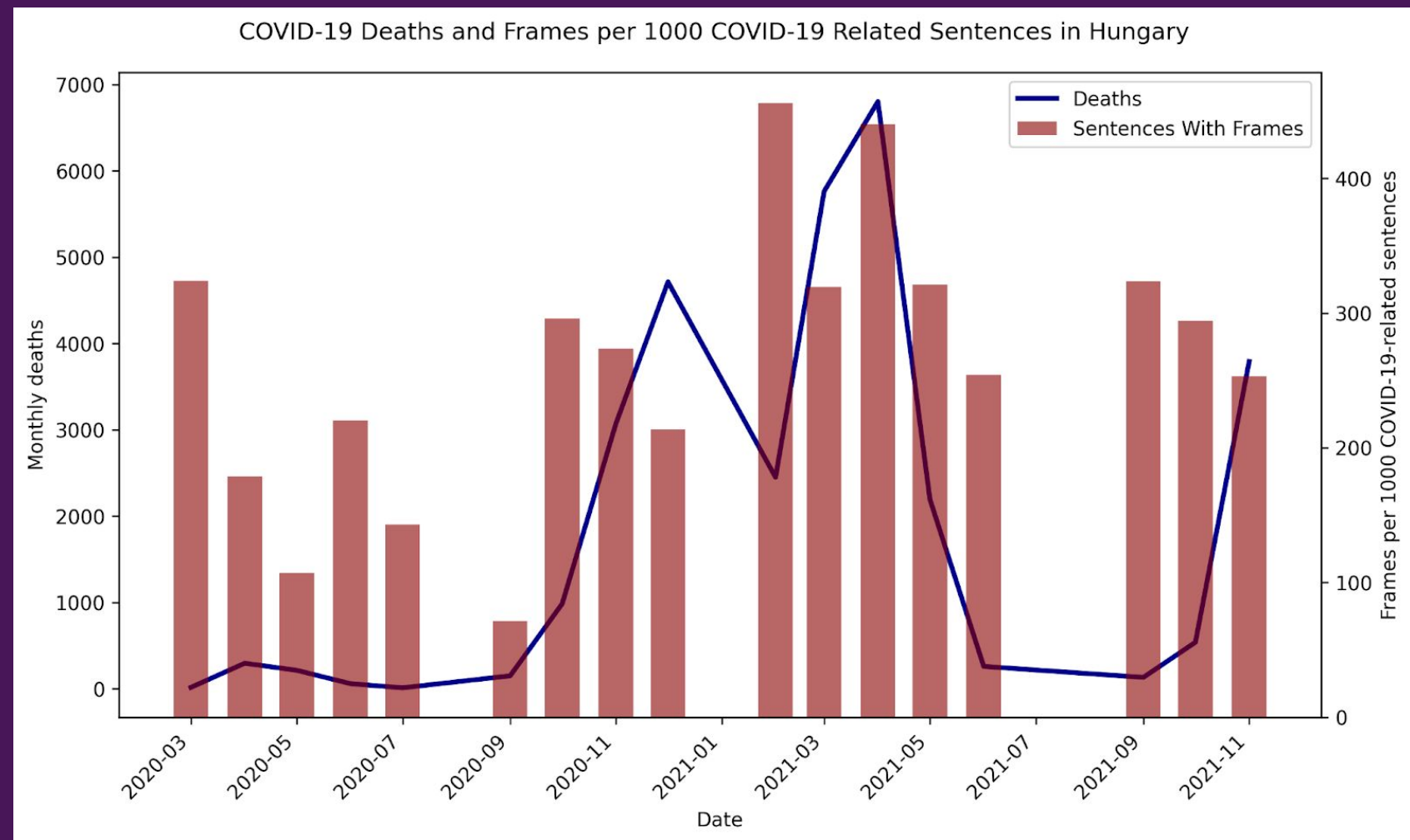
Weighted F1:
0.79

Empirical results

Migration



COVID-19



1

**Preliminary results show
no direct linkage
between IPFs and crises**

3

**Improving model results
(data, codebook,
modelling)**

2

**Sticky narratives
(beyond crisis periods?)**

4

**Adding new themes
(LGBTQ,
Russian-Ukraine war)**

Conclusions

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Thank you for your attention!

Try the Babel Machine at: <https://babel.poltextlab.com>

	Version	Data	Train	Test	Val	Weighted F1 (without NA)
migration	v1	Manually annotated (700)				-
	v2	Manually annotated (1550)	774	619	155	0.00
	v3	Manually annotated (1550) + llama zero-shot (1200)	1009	619	155	0.60
	v4	Manually annotated (1550) + gpt few-shot (1200)	1974	619	155	0.56
	v5	Manually annotated (1550) + llama zero-shot (1200) + gpt few-shot (1200)	3174	619	155	0.70
	v6	Manually annotated (1550) + llama few-shot (1163)	1937	619	155	0.53
	v7	Manually annotated (1550) + llama zero-shot (1200) + llama few-shot (1163) + gpt few-shot (1200)	4337	619	155	0.66
	v8	Manually annotated (1550) + llama few-shot (1161)	3135	-	155	0.64
	v9	Manually annotated (1550) + llama zero-shot (1200) + gpt few-shot (120000)	122742	-	-	0.64

	Version	Data	Train	Test	Val	Weighted F1 (without NA)
covid	v1	Manually annotated (420)	210	168	42	0.23
	v2	Manually annotated (1147) + llama zero-shot (800) + gpt few-shot (700)	2531	-	115	0.56
	v3	Manually annotated (1646) + llama zero-shot (800) + gpt few-shot (700)	2981	-	115	0.73
	v4	Manually annotated (1962) + llama zero-shot (800) + gpt few-shot (700)	3265	-	197	0.79
	v5	Manually annotated (2604) + llama zero-shot (800) + gpt few-shot (700)	3843	-	261	0.73
	v6	Manually annotated (3106) + llama zero-shot (800) + gpt few-shot (70000)	75901	-	-	0.66

