

Media, Politics and Power in the Representation of the Refugee and Migration Crisis in Europe

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Abstract : This thesis answers the question whether the media representations and reporting in 2015-2016 - especially, after the image of the drowned three-year-old Syrian boy in the Mediterranean Sea which made global headlines in the beginning of September 2015 -, the European Commission regulatory sources material and related reporting, have the power to challenge the conceptualization of humanitarianism or even redefine it. The theoretical foundations of the thesis are based on humanitarianism and its core definitions, the power of media representations and the relative portrayal of migrants, refugees and/or asylum seekers, as well as the dominant migration discourse and EU migration governance. Using content analysis for the media portrayal of migrants (436 newspaper articles) and qualitative content analysis for the European Commission Communication documents from May 2015 until June 2016 that required various depths of interpretation, this thesis allowed us to revise the concept of humanitarianism, realizing that the current crisis may seem to be a turning point for Europe but is not enough to overcome the past hostile media discourses and suppress the historical perspective of security and control-oriented EU migration policies. In particular, the crisis helped to shift the intensity of hostility and the persistence in the state-centric, border-oriented securitization in Europe into a narration of victimization rather than threat where mercy and charity dynamics are dominated and into operational mechanisms, noting the emergency of immediate management of the massive migrations flows, respectively. Although, the understanding of a rights-based response to the ongoing migration crisis, is being followed discursively in both political and media stage, the nexus described, points out that the binary between 'us' and 'them' still exists, with only difference that the 'invaders' are now 'pathetic' but still 'invaders'. In this context, the migration crisis challenges the concept of humanitarianism because rights dignify migrants as individuals only in a discursive or secondary level while the humanitarian work is mostly related with the geopolitical and economic interests of the 'savior' states.

Keywords : European Union politics, humanitarianism, immigration, media representation, policy-making, refugees, security studies

Conference Title : ICPSIR 2017 : International Conference on Political Science and International Relations

Conference Location : Copenhagen, Denmark

Conference Dates : June 11-12, 2017