

**How has it become possible to represent migrants in Europe as a security threat and migrant deaths as a humanitarian concern?**

Ella Gage

17062950@brookes.ac.uk

# Context

## Militants, migrants and the Med: Europe's Libya problem

BBC News

© 24 February 2015



The Italian authorities have been struggling to cope with the migrant surge

(BBC, 2015a)

## Alan Kurdi death: A Syrian Kurdish family forced to flee

BBC News

© 4 September 2015



Europe migrant crisis



Abdullah Kurdi lost both his sons, Alan and Ghalib, in the waters off Turkey

(BBC, 2015b)

‘Textual mechanisms...  
produce a “world” by  
providing positions for various  
kinds of subjects and  
endowing them with  
particular attributes’

Doty, 1993, pp.306-307



# Background

‘Security is being **imagined and enacted in different ways** in different situations’ (Walters, 2010, p.222)

‘Securitization is the process through which an issue becomes a security one, not necessarily because of the nature or the objective importance if a threat, but **because the issue is presented as such**’ (Karyotis, 2007, p.3)

## Pickering-

3 predominant discourses ‘the invading deviant, the racialized deviant; and the diseased deviant’ (2001, p.170)

## Steimel-

‘human interest frame describes the news in terms that personalise, dramatize and emotionalise’ (2010, p.220)



(BBC, 2015d)

# Methodology

Initial search of BBC news articles of 2015  
Searching for the terms:  
'migrant'  
'refugee'  
'asylum seeker'

**232 articles**

Brief thematic analysis, establishing relevance and the key themes  
Key themes:  
- death  
- human story- focus on the migrant/ individuals

**25 articles**

Categorisation of the 25 articles, based on the key themes:  
- Death (5 articles)  
- Human story (5 articles)  
- Combination of both themes (5 articles)  
- Neither key theme predominant within text (10 articles)

Discourse analysis of the articles- using the language, images and deconstructive analysis

**Language-** '[discourse analysis] considers the relationships between language and the social and cultural contexts in which it is used' (Paltridge, 2006, p.21)

**Images-** 'images shape what can and cannot be seen and, indirectly, what can and cannot be thought' (Beiker *et al.*, 2013, p.400)

# Results

‘restrict the flow’

(BBC, 2015d)

‘some 3,400 have died or gone missing’

(BBC, 2015f)

‘steady stream of migrants’ (BBC, 2015h)

‘forced to migrate’ (BBC, 2015j)

‘human cost of the crisis’ (BBC, 2015k)

need for ‘burden-sharing’ amongst countries

(BBC, 2015h)

‘protect the EU’s external borders’

(BBC, 2015g)

‘no other option’ (BBC, 2015k)

‘doing what it takes to survive’ (BBC, 2015L)



BBC, 2015e

‘Croatia forcing Hungary to take migrants’ (BBC, 2015i)



BBC, 2015d



‘some 3,440 have died or gone missing’

‘29 died after spending several hours in the water’

‘human cost of the crisis’

References: Image- BBC, 2015k, Top- BBC, 2015g, Centre- BBC, 2015m, Bottom- BBC, 2015k

AP

## Discussion

‘Media messages not only **reflect** [public] fears [of migration], they **channel and strengthen them and transform them** into a powerful message/discourse for authorities’

(Buonfino,

2004, p.30)



# Conclusion

- Humanitarian discourses were more prevalent when there was a focus on the individual
- Both discourses were used throughout the reporting of the 2015/16 migrant crisis, however that of security was more prevalent, and the lack of the humanitarian discourse strengthened the security discourse
- There can be issues with using either a humanitarian or security discourse in the construction of migrants; therefore it is necessary to be aware of and denaturalise these discourses

# References I

- Bleiker, R., Campbell, D., Hutchison, E. and Nicholson, X. (2013) 'The visual dehumanisation of refugees', *Australian Journal of Political Science*, 48(4), pp.398-416. doi:10.1080/10361146.2013.840769.
- Buonfino, A. (2004) 'Between unity and plurality: the politicization and securitization of the discourse of immigration in Europe', *New Political Science*, 26(1), pp.23-49. doi:10.1080/0739314042000185111.
- Doty, R.L. (1993) 'Foreign Policy as Social Construction: A Post-Positivist Analysis of U.S. Counterinsurgency Policy in the Philippines', *International Studies Quarterly*, 37, pp.297-320.
- Karyotis, G. (2007) 'European Migration Policy in the Aftermath of September 11', *Innovation: The European Journal of Social Science Research*, 20(1), pp.1-17. doi:10.1080/13511610701197783.
- Paltridge, B. (2006) *Discourse Analysis*. London: Continuum.
- Pickering, S. (2001) 'Common Sense and Original Deviancy: News Discourses and Asylum Seekers in Australia', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 14(2), pp.169-186.
- Steimel, S. (2010) 'Refugees as People: The Portrayal of Refugees in American Human Interest Stories', *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 23(2), pp.219-237. doi:10.1093/jrs/feq019.
- Walters, W. (2010) 'Migration and Security', in Burgess, J.P. (ed.) *The Handbook of New Security Studies*, London: Routledge, pp.217-228.

# References II

BBC articles:

BBC (2015a) 'Militants, migrants and the Med: Europe's Libya problem, BBC News, 24 February. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-31584236> (Accessed: 10 December 2020).

BBC (2015b) 'Alan Kurdi death: A Syrian Kurdish family forced to flee', BBC News, 4 September. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34141716> (Accessed: 10 December 2020).

BBC (2015c) 'Migrants arrive in Austria after Hungary provides buses', BBC News, 5 September. Available at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34161109> (Accessed: 10 December 2020).

BBC (2015d) Viewpoint: Munich migrant welcome shames Europe', BBC News, 5 September. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34173091](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34173091) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).

BBC (2015e) 'Serbian PM "shocked" at Hungary's plan for migrant fence', BBC News, 18 June. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-33168125](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-33168125) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).

BBC (2015f) 'Migrant crisis: More drown as EU leaders meet in Malta', BBC News, 11 November. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34784829](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34784829) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).

BBC (2015g) 'Migrant crisis: EU border security becomes new mantra', BBC News, 19 December. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35140794](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-35140794) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).

# References III

- BBC (2015h) 'Migrant Crisis: Germany starts temporary border controls', BBC News, 14 September. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34239674](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34239674) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).
- BBC (2015i) 'Croatia "forcing" Hungary to take migrants', BBC News, 19 September. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34302285](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34302285) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).
- BBC (2015j) 'Syrians in Turkey: "We just want a normal life"', BBC News, 9 October. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-3447288434345845](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-3447288434345845) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).
- BBC (2015k) 'Migrant crisis: Photo of drowned boy sparks outcry', BBC News, 3 September. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34133210](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34133210) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).
- BBC (2015L) 'Exploited and abandoned: A child's journey to Europe', BBC News, 17 September. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34286458](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-34286458) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).
- BBC (2015m) 'Hundreds of migrants killed in new Mediterranean tragedy, says UN', BBC News, 11 February. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-31414009](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-europe-31414009) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).
- BBC (2015n) 'Migrant bodies on Turkish beach "routine", Welsh man says', BBC News, 3 September. Available at: [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-34136820](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-wales-34136820) (Accessed: 10 December 2020).

**How has it become possible to represent migrants in Europe as a security threat and migrant deaths as a humanitarian concern?**

Ella Gage

17062950