

# Mass Migration and the Media: Convergence and Divergence of Global Media Narratives Towards a Working Model

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The size and scope of the Syrian refugee crisis has made it a salient humanitarian crisis for the international community that has given rise to fears among European and U.S. populations and leaders, altered the demographic landscape of the Middle East and Europe, and exposed a generation of youth to lives as exiles. Our quantitative, inductive content analysis analyzed news media coverage of refugees from Arabic, Russian, and American media news sources in an attempt to understand how the crisis has been packaged and presented to citizens across the globe in order to give insight to the motives and potential actions to be taken by the global community concerning the crisis. The study was conducted using the M3S media monitoring system at Texas A&M University. The M3S technology allows researchers to evaluate foreign language news broadcast and media websites in the original context with validated English language translations.

The authors evaluated *Al Jazeera* (Arabic), *Rossiya 24* (Russian), and *The New York Times* (U.S) as sources for analysis. The research was conducted within the timeframe of August 5 to 21, 2016, as that time spanned the 2016 Olympics in Rio, Brazil, in which the creation of the Olympic Refugee team caused a spike in media discussion of the refugee crisis. A total of 193 articles were coded across the three news sources using the keyword "Refugee." Researchers developed a coding scheme of ten categories designed to give insight into presentation of refugees in media [see table1.]. The coded data was then evaluated for statistical significance between the news sources.

The findings showed the three media outlets to be apathetic towards refugees, with no attempt at humanizing those affected by the crisis. Little discussion was given to physical, educational, and/or psychological harm being done to refugees. The media outlets also gave very few opportunities for the refugees to speak in their own voice, and instead crafted stories around them as a mass entity. Media outlets were more likely to place blame on other governments for the crisis, rather than calling for or seeking an international political solution; none of the media outlets discussed solutions to the crisis as urgently needed. A few mentions of successful assimilation were given, typically in reference to the refugee athletes in the Olympics.

*Rossiya 24* gave no mention of a political solution for the crisis and had the highest number of stories dehumanizing refugees; specifically relating refugees to acts of terrorism, crime, and an overall threat to Russian culture. Of particular note, the Russian media source was most likely

to call for humanitarian aid from other nations to address the crisis.

*Al Jazeera* mentioned the mistreatment of refugees, discussed the crisis as a political event, and made calls for a solution in Syria more than any other source. Most often these stories focused on the impact refugees had on neighboring countries, researchers speculate this focus is due to the proximity of the crisis compared to the other media sources.

*The New York Times* focused on the crisis as a “foreign” event with little threat to U.S. culture. These stories typically made calls for US citizens to be accepting of refugees and had the highest number of stories with a humanizing component for refugees. *The New York Times* had the least number of stories calling for humanitarian aid or mention of refugee mistreatment.

While the findings were limited by the selected news outlets studied and narrow time frame, the snapshot of coverage offers insight toward the refugee crisis and demonstrates the ability of new technology that allow social scientist to monitor media message movements through global media. Such applications can allow for the modeling of global media and pave the way for new media theories. The lead author may be reached at [emilybelledamm@gmail.com](mailto:emilybelledamm@gmail.com) .

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