

Abstract

While there have been numerous studies focusing on the discourse used when discussing migration by both the media and political elites, the visual framing of migration as communicated by political parties has not garnered the same attention. As such the present study sets out to analyse the visual and written political communication relating to migration policy in the 2019 European Parliament election campaigns. The aim is to understand how the issue of migration was visually framed on social media by official parties during the 2019 European Parliament elections in the United Kingdom, and will thereby draw on securitisation and visual theory to examine whether migration was securitised during the campaign (and if so whether this securitisation differs to traditional understandings of this process). By developing and applying a visual securitisation framework to guide the qualitative visual analysis, the study focuses on how each political party visually represented their migration policy through official online social media accounts. The study also focuses on 'image-text entanglements' in online activity and how visual representations replicate or diverge from the framing of migration in the political party's manifesto (textual) framing. The results show that while certain pro-Brexit parties continued to replicate their framing of migration as a security problem, others have shifted from blatant and crude securitisation of migration and instead rely on party members or candidates from migrant backgrounds as voices of authority and legitimacy on migration policy which disrupts the previous anti-immigration reputation. Rather than only frame migration as a security issue, the study also finds that securitisation is only one of several frames used to visual and textually represent migration.

Key Words: Migration, visual political communication, securitisation, online campaigning