

Abstract

This dissertation explores the extent to which the EU upholds its foundational values of human rights, human dignity, equality, solidarity, and the rule of law, in the context of migration and asylum. By comparing the EU's response to the peaks of two major migrant influxes, Syrian (2014-2016) and Ukrainian (2022-2023), the research reveals significant disparities in both discourse and policy on the displaced population that suggests a conditional approach to humanitarianism.

Employing Securitisation Theory and Framing Theory, the study analyses how Members of the European Parliament (MEPs) constructed each group of individuals by identifying different frames and recurrent arguments, and how this rhetoric influenced and legitimised EU actions. Those fleeing Syria were often linked to security concerns. Their differences to the in-group and negative repercussions of their acceptance and inclusion were frequently emphasised. In contrast, those fleeing Ukraine were framed in more sympathetic terms, demonstrating they were largely perceived as part of the in-group.

Consequently, restrictive and deterrence-driven measures such as externalisation and limited access to protection, were applied to deal with Syrians, while responses to do so with were swift and generous for Ukrainians.

Therefore, the findings of this study include that racial, cultural, gendered assumptions, and geopolitical considerations influence who is granted or rejected protection and up to which standards. The inconsistencies due to this reveal a gap between the EU's proclaimed values and the reality of its asylum practices, which directly compromises its credibility and the universality of its commitments.

This research contributes to ongoing debates about the EU's identity as a normative power and underscores the need for a more coherent implementation of the asylum system.