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The humanized refugee: Representations and Rights

A discourse analysis of media's representation of refugees between 2015
and 2022

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Sammanfattning

Titel: Den humaniserade flyktingen: Representationer och Rättigheter - En diskursanalys av medias representation av flyktingar mellan 2015 och 2022 [översatt titel].

Denna studie undersöker hur syriska och ukrainska flyktingar är representerade i svensk media. Frågorna som ställs är hur medias representation av flyktingar 2015 och 2022 skiljer sig åt, och i vilken utsträckning de representeras som individer med mänskliga rättigheter. Studien använder sig av tryckta nyhetsartiklar publicerade av den svenska nyhetstidningen Aftonbladet under de två tidsperioderna. Det teoretiska ramverket som implementerats är Hannah Arendts teori om den statslösa och rättslösa flyktingen, som tillämpas på resultaten av de lokaliserade representationerna. Metoden som används på det empiriska materialet är diskursanalys, närmare bestämt Carol Bacchis metod "What's the problem represented to be". Tidigare forskning tyder på att olika medierepresentationer existerar från flyktingkrisen 2015, men eftersom den ukrainska flyktingkrisen 2022 fortfarande pågår är tidigare forskning begränsad. Denna studiens resultat visar att representation från 2022 och 2015 skiljer sig åt, där ukrainare i högre grad representeras som humaniserade offer än syrier, som istället i större utsträckning representeras som ekonomiska och administrativa påfrestningar såväl som ekonomiska resurser. Denna studie visar på att artiklar från 2022 i högre grad implicit representerar flyktingar som individer med mänskliga rättigheter i form av skydd och stöd än flyktingar representerade i artiklar från 2015.

Nyckelord: flyktingar, mänskliga rättigheter, representationer, Ukraina, Syrien, Hannah Arendt, Carol Bacchi.

Abstract

This study examines the ways Syrian and Ukrainian refugees are represented in Swedish media. The questions posed are how media's representation of refugees in 2015 and 2022 differentiate, and to what extent they are represented as subjects of human rights. The study makes use of printed news articles published by the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet during the two time periods. The theoretical framework implemented is Hannah Arendt's theory on the stateless and rightless refugee, which is applied on the results of the located representations. The method applied on the empirical material is discourse analysis, more specifically, Carol Bacchi's "What's the problem represented to be"-approach. Previous research suggests varied media representations exist from the refugee crisis 2015, but as the Ukrainian refugee crisis 2022 is on-going, past literature is limited. This study's results showed that representation from 2022 and 2015 differentiate, with Ukrainians represented more extensively as humanized victims than the latter, who instead are represented more extensively as economical and administrative burdens, but also economical resources. Additionally, the study concludes that articles from 2022 implicitly represented refugees more extensively as subjects of human rights - construed as varied forms of protection and support - than refugees represented in articles from 2015.

Keywords: refugees, subject of human rights, representations, Ukraine, Syria, Hannah Arendt, Carol Bacchi.

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1. Introduction

As Russia's invasion into Ukraine commenced on the 24th of February 2022, Ukrainians began fleeing across the border, first into neighboring countries, and then to the rest of Europe.¹ The European Union's response to the crisis consisted of overwhelming support to Ukrainian refugees, who quickly provided various sorts of aid. The Temporary Protection Directive was activated, meaning "persons from Ukraine will be offered immediate and temporary residence and work permits in EU Member states".² Other forms of support consisted of the easier visa requirements into countries, free public services, and the simplification of border controls.³ The measures taken by the EU can subsequently be seen as effective, and oftentimes well coordinated in order to support refugees compared to the previous severe response to the refugee crisis in 2015. The same country's supportive reception of Ukrainians would - in light of its treatment of migrants and refugees primarily from Syria - serve as a stark reminder of the sometimes selective treatment of refugees.⁴ The distinctions between refugees were also reflected in media channels, as one journalist for example stated "these are not obviously refugees trying to get away from areas in the Middle East [...] They look like any European family that you would live next door to".⁵ This distinction is noteworthy, and raises the question whether media's representation of refugees from 2015 and 2022 differentiate, and if so, whether they are represented as subjects of human rights.

¹ Rachael Reilly and Michael Flynn. The Ukraine crisis double standards: Has Europe's Response to Refugees Changed? Globaldetentionproject. 2022-03-2. <https://www.globaldetentionproject.org/the-ukraine-crisis-double-standards-has-europes-response-to-refugees-changed>. p. 1.

² Migrationsverket. The EU has activated the Temporary Protection Directive. 2022-03-15. <https://www.migrationsverket.se/English/About-the-Migration-Agency/For-press/News-archive/News-archive-2022/2022-03-15-The-EU-has-activated-the-Temporary-Protection-Directive.html>.

³ Reilly and Flynn, *The Ukraine crisis double standards: Has Europe's Response to Refugees Changed?*, p. 1-2.

⁴ Ibid. p. 2-3.

⁵ Renata Brito. Europe welcomes Ukrainian refugees - others, less so. AP NEWS. 2022-02-28. <https://apnews.com/article/russia-ukraine-war-refugees-diversity-230b0cc790820b9bf8883f918fc8e313>

1.1. Aim and research questions

The overarching aim of the research paper is to comparatively examine Swedish news media's discourse and subsequent representation of two different groups of refugees during two different time periods. News coverage of the Syrian refugee crisis and the Ukrainian refugee crisis are utilized to make such an examination. Additionally, the study aims to examine whether, and if so, how they are represented from a human rights perspective. The two research questions are stated below.

1. How does Swedish media's representation of refugees from 2015 and 2022 differentiate?
2. To what extent are refugees from 2015 and 2022 represented as subjects of human rights?

1.2. Ethical considerations

As the study aims to examine media representations of refugees, it becomes necessary to reflect whether the author is a part of said representations. Eldén - writing of research ethics - argues the position of the researcher is one inherently subjective, as the social background of our lives matter and shapes our research.⁶ Ethical questions of both the author's own position related to the research questions and subject matter and subsequent decisions on selected material and emphasized parts are then vital considerations when composing the study.⁷ Followingly, representations and portrayals in media could potentially have influenced decisions when shaping the study. The author has both extensively studied and researched the EU-Turkey deal, and been involved in humanitarian aid organizations in Lebanon, facilitating community centers for, and working directly with Syrian refugees. These positions may impact the study, as directly experiencing individuals suffering and struggles may predisposition the author to emphasize Syrian refugees as unfairly treated in media representations

⁶ Sara Eldén. *Forskningsetik: vägval i samhällsvetenskapliga studier*. 1st. ed. Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2020. p. 70.

⁷ Ibid. p. 70.

comparatively to Ukrainians. The author intends - with this aforementioned knowledge - to the best of his ability remain continually critical and reflective over his position.

1.3. Key terms

In the working process of this research paper, inadequate definitions of the terms “immigrant” and “refugee” were discovered, particularly when reviewing and selecting past literature - seemingly using them haphazardly and oftentimes not drawing a distinction between the two. Accordingly, this study defines both terms in hope of mitigating uncertainty regarding the terms through the research paper. It should be noted the term “asylum seeker” is mentioned in one article of the literature review, but interchangeably with both “refugees” and “immigrants”. Subsequently, because of its infrequent usage, the study does not consider it relevant to define.

1.3.1. Definition of Refugee

The study makes use of the Swedish Code of Statutes official definition of the term “refugee”, declared in the “Aliens Act (2005:716)”⁸ in order to specify the use of the term throughout the research paper:

In this Act ‘refugee’ means an alien who

- is outside the country of the alien’s nationality, because he or she feels a well-founded fear of persecution on grounds of race, nationality, religious or political belief, or on grounds of gender, sexual orientation or other membership of a particular social group and

- is unable, or because of his or her fear is unwilling, to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country.

This applies irrespective of whether it is the authorities of the country that are responsible for the alien being subjected to persecution or these authorities cannot be assumed to offer protection against persecution by private individuals.

A stateless alien shall also be considered a refugee if he or she

- is, for the same reasons that are specified in the first paragraph, outside the country in which he or she has previously had his or her usual place of residence and

- is unable or, because of fear, unwilling to return there.

⁸ SFS Aliens Act (2005:716).

<https://www.government.se/government-policy/migration-and-asylum/aliens-act/>.

1.3.2. Definition of Immigrant

The study makes use of The International Organization for Migration's (IMO) definition of the term "immigrant", which they adapted from the Statistics Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs⁹ (UN DESA). Their definition relates to "long-term migrants" - staying in the country of destination exceeding 12 months, but also encapsulates a "short-term migrant" staying between 3-12 months.¹⁰

*From the perspective of the country of arrival, a person who moves into a country other than that of his or her nationality or usual residence, so that the country of destination effectively becomes his or her new country of usual residence.*¹¹

It is important to note that these definitions are primarily intended to clarify the outset position of the research paper - when utilizing the terms and examining the selected material. As the study will examine representations of refugees, the material does not necessarily subscribe to these definitions and may vary depending on the author of the article in question. However, the study considers these definitions essential in order to interpret the material and also provides a base for understanding and discussing Hannah Arendt's theoretical framework for what a refugee as a subject of rights is.

It should also be noted the study uses the word immigrant and migrant interchangeably, although technically the terms are slightly different. Migrant is instead, according to IMO - an individual who "moves away from his or her place of usual residence, whether within a country or across an international border, temporarily or permanently" and but does not emphasize, as the definition of an immigrant stated above, a long term residence.¹²

⁹ United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, *Recommendations on Statistics of International Migration*, Revision 1 (1998) p. 10.

¹⁰ IMO. (n.d.). Key migration terms. International Organization for Migration. <https://www.iom.int/key-migration-terms>. (Retrieved May 1, 2023).

¹¹ IMO, *Key migration terms*.

¹² IMO, *Key migration terms*.

2. Literature review

The aim of this section is to review and understand the research already produced on the specific subject matter. By examining diverse positions and perspectives, the intention is to reveal potential gaps and subsequently locate ways to contribute to furthering research and comprehension. As mentioned in the definition section, the distinction of the terms refugee, migrant and asylum-seeker are oftentimes not made in the articles. The study assumes in such cases that the articles refer to primarily refugees if not defined otherwise, as all articles examine the refugee crisis.

2.1. Framing of immigrants and refugees

In his article “*Media framing of immigrants in Central Europe in the period surrounding the refugee crisis: Security, negativity and political sources*” Jan Kovář examines different framings that immigrants and refugees are subjected to in media coverage. The author implemented a comparative quantitative content analysis to “investigate the prominence of immigration-related frames” in Czechia and Slovakia between 2013-2016 in relation to the refugee crisis.¹³ The study utilized a combination of both printed and audio-visual media material.¹⁴ Kovář defines framing as “schemes of interpretation,[...] selection, [...] organization, [...] presentation and highlighting of particular aspects of reality”.¹⁵ An interpretative element is therefore innately existing to frame something in a particular way, which subsequently creates a certain way of defining and interpreting something, such as immigration, as a “problem.”¹⁶ The author emphasizes the media’s power in defining and deciding what is constituting an issue, and how this framing may subsequently “link specific characteristics to certain groups of people”.¹⁷ These frames are subsequently representations of immigrants which the author emphasizes are recurring internationally. The study utilizes four

¹³ Jan Kovář. Media framing of immigrants in Central Europe in the period surrounding the refugee crisis: Security, negativity, and political sources. *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*. Vol. 48, nr, 1, 2023: 5–27. doi:10.1515/commun-2020-0087. p. 12-13.

¹⁴ Ibid. p. 7.

¹⁵ Ibid. p. 7.

¹⁶ Ibid. p. 7.

¹⁷ Ibid. p. 23.

primary “master frames” regarding media’s coverage of immigration that has been established by extensive past research on the subject matter. Kovář states that these are (1) The “human-interest/victimization frame”, where immigrants are humanized and portrayed in such a way that warrants empathy and support. (2) The “cultural/identity frame” and “security frame”, where immigrants are represented as a threat against the nation and its peoples and (3) The “economic frame” that portrays immigrants either as a resource that the host community can utilize, or as a threat towards the economy.¹⁸ The study found that these “master frames” were prevalent through the media material in both Czechia and Slovakia, and was moreover consistent with previous research done on the subject matter in Western Europe.¹⁹ Additionally, the research established another frame that proved prevalent - the “administrative frame” - connected to portraying the increase of immigrants as a bureaucratic burden which subsequently must be dealt with.²⁰

Both countries’ media coverage framing immigrants during the refugee crisis were primarily based on the security and cultural sphere. The first portrayed immigrants as a challenge and security risk to society with categorizations such as terrorists and criminals being prevalent in the discourse.²¹ The former described immigrants as having starkly contrasting cultures to the host-society, subsequently rendering integration difficult.²² The economic and administrative frame was also prevalent - perceiving immigrants as problematic juxtaposed to the host-society’s capacity and resources, whereas the victimization frame subsequently became less apparent in the material.²³ Kovář concludes the article by suggesting further research examining how effects of media framing manifests in society - and how “framing varies regarding different categories of immigrants”.²⁴

¹⁸ Ibid. p. 8.

¹⁹ Ibid. p. 21.

²⁰ Ibid. p. 9.

²¹ Ibid. p. 22.

²² Ibid. p. 22.

²³ Ibid. p. 23.

²⁴ Ibid. p. 24.

2.2. Deservingness and difference

Seth M. Holmes and Heide Castañeda discuss, in their article *“Representing the ‘European refugee crisis’ in Germany and beyond: Deservingness and difference, life and death”* discursive media frames that categorize refugees as eligible and deserving juxtaposed to migrants as “the Other” and undeserving.²⁵ Examining media coverage of the refugee crisis in 2015 from a comparative ethnographic point of view, the authors draw on Foucault to understand these representations as reflections of “regimes of power as well as fears and imaginations”.²⁶ Representations of the refugee crisis are portrayed as dynamics of difference, with the authors emphasizing “cultural, ethnic and religious” as grounds for contestation, resulting in individuals as deserving of rights - or categorized as threats and dangers to the host society.²⁷ The categorization of the position of refugee and migrant provides an important demarcation according to Holmes and Castañeda.²⁸ It establishes the former as an involuntary position, forced onto the subject such as war and famine - enabling the empathy and care from the recipient society - and the latter as a voluntary position, where the subject is seen rather as an “economic opportunist” - non-legitimate of the state’s protection.²⁹ Additionally, the prioritization of certain refugees and immigrants above others, such as Middle-Eastern above African in 2015 - implicates a connection between ethnicity and an “hierarchy of deservingness” in which individuals will be legitimate, or not.³⁰

Metaphors and discourse produced by media also draws parallels to nature, such as to “drown” (in refugee arrivals), a “flood” and “flow”, contributing to portraying the crisis as unmanageable and an existential threat. These narratives subsequently implicate subject positions related to human movement as “problematic”.³¹ Conclusively, the authors emphasize the necessity of further research on the refugee crisis - related to

²⁵ Seth M. Holmes and Heide Castañeda. Representing the “European Refugee Crisis” in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 43, nr 2, 2016: 12–24. doi:10.1111/amet.12259. p. 20.

²⁶ Ibid. p. 20.

²⁷ Ibid. p. 13.

²⁸ Ibid. p. 17-18.

²⁹ Ibid. p. 17-18.

³⁰ Ibid. p. 19.

³¹ Ibid. p. 19.

understanding what implicates and makes refugees perceived as deserving and undeserving.³²

2.3. Scandinavian and Swedish representation

“The Syrian refugee crisis in Scandinavian newspapers” - written by Jan Fredrik Hovden, Hilmar Mjelde and Jostein Gripsrud - is an article examining variations of refugee, immigrant and asylum seeker representations in media coverage between three different periods during the refugee crisis 2015. The study investigates - through a comparative quantitative analysis of media coverage in Scandinavia - the “frequency of hero, victim and threat frames”.³³ Additionally they examine “to what degree the refugees themselves were given a voice in the coverage”.³⁴ Past findings on the subject were consistently showing the general use of mentioned frames - oftentimes represented in a negative light - as the US study who found media coverage implicating immigrants as “invaders”, “infestations” and “destructive flood waters”.³⁵

The study’s analysis revealed that Scandinavian news coverage during the time produced different dimensions of representation. Articles emphasized portrayals that humanized refugees with a range of emotions, but oftentimes refrained from including the refugee’s own voice and opinion.³⁶ Additionally, the authors found both negative and positive portrayals present in the material analyzed. Common themes of negative representations consisted of “economic, geopolitical (e.g., fear of terrorism), and cultural (e.g., population strain in host countries)”.³⁷ Positive portrayals consisted of “recognition of a responsibility to help when others are suffering”, which Hovden et al termed “moral arguments”.³⁸ The study’s results suggests that these moral arguments were more present in Swedish news coverage than other Scandinavian countries,³⁹ (e.g.,

³² Ibid. p. 21.

³³ Jan F. Hovden et al. The Syrian refugee crisis in Scandinavian newspapers. *Communications*. Vol. 43, nr, 3, 2018: 325-356. doi:10.1515/commun-2018-0013. p. 326.

³⁴ Ibid. p. 326.

³⁵ Ibid. p. 328.

³⁶ Ibid. p. 336.

³⁷ Ibid. p. 337.

³⁸ Ibid. p. 337.

³⁹ Ibid. p. 339.

Aftonbladet) - that demonstrated a “relative lack of discussion of negative consequences of migration”.⁴⁰ However, the findings aligned with past research related to immigration showing news coverage discourse that represented refugees in a positive light dissipated over the time-period - with discourse instead emphasizing national security in the end of 2015 - consistent with many other European countries.⁴¹ The authors allocated differences in frames and attitudes of news media in Scandinavia, and emphasized that further research into the subject matter, especially regarding the Scandinavian context, is necessary to understand why mentioned differences are present.⁴²

2.4. Framing the “Others” in natural disaster metaphors

Kara E. Dempsey and Sara McDowell’s paper “*Disaster depictions and geopolitical representations in Europe’s migration ‘crisis’*” explores - through a critical discourse analysis of media - diverse representations and portrayals in media discourse of the migration crisis 2015-2016.⁴³ Through the analysis, three themes of representation became apparent,⁴⁴ whereas one is of particular interest for the purpose of this study - “Human migration depicted as natural disasters”. Here, the authors argue that connotations of natural disasters and phenomena, such as “floods”, “swarms” and “tides” are juxtaposed to migrants. These characteristics “dehumanize” migrants - cultivating and fostering an idea of migrants as “objects or forces of nature instead of human beings”⁴⁵ - perceived as something unstoppable and uncontrollable that is arriving in Europe. Such a perception - argues Dempsey and McDowell - subsequently results in categorizing migrants as the “Other”, producing a “‘us’ versus ‘them’ dichotomy between the migrants and non-migrants in Europe along perceived cultural and national lines”.⁴⁶ The dichotomy which is manifested by representations of

⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 342.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 345.

⁴² Ibid. p. 346.

⁴³ Kara E. Dempsey and Sara McDowell. Disaster depictions and geopolitical representations in Europe’s migration “Crisis”. *Geoforum*. Vol. 98, 2019: 153–160. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2018.11.008. p. 155.

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 155.

⁴⁵ Ibid. p. 154.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 154.

migrants may become - through the media's influence on public opinion - perceptions of truth that subsequently dictate individuals behavior.⁴⁷ Consequently, the categorization of migrants constitutes "an action laden with hierarchical power".⁴⁸ Comparing portrayals of immigration movement and thus the human beings in them with movements of natural forces such as floods and tides cultivates what Dempsey and McDowell names "mythical narratives".⁴⁹ These are discursive representations that particularly Muslims are subjected to which feed into the perception of viewing Muslims as the "savage" - in contrast to ideas of a "European identity".⁵⁰ Additionally, the mythical narratives of "savage" and media's discourse juxtaposing notions of natural disasters to the migration crisis which "upholds a Eurocentric world vision that is overwhelmingly White and predominantly Christian".⁵¹ Dempsey and McDowell conclude by stating the necessity for further research - specifically the "role that complex geographies within Europe" has when examining the diverse representations migrants are subjected to.⁵²

Through Liudmila Arcimaviciene and Sercan Baglama's article "*Migration, Metaphor and Myth in Media Representations: The Ideological Dichotomy of 'Them' and 'Us'*" these concepts can be expanded further. Examining media's portrayal of the migration and refugee "crisis" between 2015-2016 - utilizing an analysis of emerging ideological metaphors in the discourse - the authors identify two central "metaphorical representations".⁵³ It should be noted that both representations serve to delegitimize migrants as the "Other" while simultaneously legitimizing a sense of "Us". First, the "myth of dehumanization" which relates to metaphors representing migrants as both commodities and objects.⁵⁴ These metaphorical narratives cultivate a perception of migrants and refugees no longer as human beings - but as "inanimate objects" that

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 155.

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 155.

⁴⁹ Ibid. p. 157.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 157.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 159.

⁵² Ibid. p. 159.

⁵³ Liudmila Arcimaviciene and Sercan H. Baglama. Migration, Metaphor and Myth in Media Representations: The Ideological Dichotomy of "Them" and "Us". *SAGE Open*. Vol. 8, nr. 2, 2018. doi: 10.1177/2158244018768657. p. 1.

⁵⁴ Ibid. p. 5-6.

nation-states utilize as a resource and trade for its own interest.⁵⁵ Secondly, “the myth of moral authority” manifested through metaphors representing migrants as “Natural phenomena”, “Crime” and “Terrorism”.⁵⁶ The authors emphasize - similarly to Dempsey and McDowell - the prevalent use of nature-related phenomena when describing migrant and refugee movements which cultivates a sense of insecurity.⁵⁷ Notably, Arcimaviciene and Baglama differentiated from the former authors by viewing medias’ discourse juxtaposing migrants to natural phenomena - not as “objects or forces of nature instead of human beings” - but as “living but dangerous to other people’s life”.⁵⁸ The myth of moral authority subsequently humanizes migrants and refugees, but categorizes them as forces of nature that threaten life.⁵⁹ It also produces an idea of moral superiority - constructed by the dichotomy between “us” as legitimate and “them” as subsequently illegitimate.⁶⁰

2.5. Summary of literature review

The articles presented display comparable findings of representations and framings of refugees and immigrants. Similar and divergent themes are identified between the authors which strengthen this study’s reliability. Both Holmes and Castañeda’s article and Kovář’s perceive representations as fluid and contested - with the capacity to change depending on the situation and characteristics of the group represented. Both also implicate the notion of power as innately coinciding with such categorizations of individuals. Categorizations which Dempsey and McDowell would describe as “an action laden with hierarchical power”.⁶¹ As this study’s focus is on whether refugees are represented as subjects of rights, it finds these implications particularly important to consider. Holmes and Castañeda’s findings, suggesting a connection between different representations depending on ethnicity and an “hierarchy of deservingness” of rights

⁵⁵ Ibid. p. 5-6.

⁵⁶ Ibid. p. 8.

⁵⁷ Ibid. p. 8.

⁵⁸ Ibid. p. 9.

⁵⁹ Ibid. p. 9.

⁶⁰ Ibid. p. 11.

⁶¹ Dempsey and McDowell, *Disaster depictions and geopolitical representations in Europe’s migration “Crisis”*, p. 155.

based on categorizations of the “Other” address this question to a degree. The other literature revealed a notable gap discussing representations from a rights perspective, which the study hopes to address. Additionally, it revealed gaps regarding the concrete effects of representations depending on different categories of immigrants and refugees - both in Europe and Scandinavia, suggesting further research is necessary.

Both Kovář and Hovden et al’s findings of negative media representation of refugees and immigrants centering on the security and cultural sphere, and the “victim” frame warranting empathy and support are of importance. Significantly, these two articles differentiate themselves from the other literature by recognizing the positive effect of media’s framing - although all authors agree to some degree of the overall negative inclination of representations. These findings raise the question whether Ukrainians are framed in the same manner, which this study intends to contribute with.

3. Theory, method and material

This section introduces the study's theoretical framework, the selected material intended to be examined and the analytical approach used for examining it. In accordance with the emergent gaps in the literature review, the study utilizes the "What's the problem represented to be"- approach to comparatively examine news media's representations of refugees from 2015 and 2022. Additionally, the study adopts Hannah Arendt's theory on the stateless and rightless refugees in order to understand whether and, if so, how they are represented as subjects of human rights, in combination with past literature on the subject matter.

3.1. Differential rights of refugees

In accordance with the emergent gaps in the literature review and the study's research question of whether refugees become represented as subjects of human rights, the study utilizes Hannah Arendt's book "The Origin of Totalitarianism". It should be noted Arendt does not explicitly define "subjects of human rights". However, in her well-known chapter "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man", Arendt states the acquisition of a person's human rights directly coincides with an individual's involvement in the public realm.⁶² By this, she means we become subjects of rights as we partake as participants of the nation-state, and our "human rights [...] has been achieved so far only through the restoration or the establishment of national rights".⁶³ This becomes the paradoxical and oftentimes conflicting position which "rightless" refugees are situated in, compared to the idealistic dream of the "inalienable" human rights.⁶⁴ By inalienable, Arendt references the French Declaration of the Rights of Man⁶⁵ - constituting absolute rights "irreducible to and undeducible from other rights" - by existing as a human being.⁶⁶ The detrimental flaw - Arendt

⁶²Arendt, Hannah. *The origins of totalitarianism*. New ed. with added prefaces. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973. p. 302.

⁶³ Ibid. p. 300.

⁶⁴ Ibid. p. 279.

⁶⁵ Ibid. p. 272.

⁶⁶ Ibid. p. 291.

argues - being the interconnected relation it had to the manifestation of national sovereignty, rendering “people without their own national government [...] deprived of human rights.”⁶⁷

Herein lies the paradox - does the Rights of Man exist independently, constituting values such as “equality before the law” and “liberty”⁶⁸ if the human being which it is supposed to encapsulate “seemed to exist nowhere” without the nation-state and subsequent sovereignty to ensure it?⁶⁹ Accordingly, the connection between the stateless and the rightless refugee emerges. The consequential severity of depriving one of home - of “no territory where they could found a new community of their own” is that by nature of the expulsion, it would inevitably signify the exclusion of every other nation.⁷⁰ The exclusion would also signify the end of safety and legal protection that the government provides, and followingly all legal protection of every nation⁷¹ - rendering the refugee very vulnerable.

As “the world found nothing sacred in the abstract nakedness of being human”⁷² - the refugee manifests in the private sphere - which Arendt describes as the sphere of “mere existence”, which innately conflicts with the public’s sphere of organizational, legal and political life the nation-state has participated in constructing for the individual.⁷³ The danger of the paradoxical nature of this dilemma is necessary to consider. Arendt argues that “the loss of human rights [...] coincides” with the deprivation of life connected to the nation-states affairs, be it a “profession, [...] a citizenship” or “different in general”.⁷⁴ She continues stating the “public sphere is [...] based on the law of equality” and the “private sphere [...] on the law of universal difference and differentiation”.⁷⁵ The notion of the private constituting difference is significant. Difference in the nation-state implicates incompatibility with the very essence of its public sphere - rendering

⁶⁷ Ibid. p. 272.

⁶⁸ Ibid. p. 295.

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 291.

⁷⁰ Ibid. p. 294.

⁷¹ Ibid. p. 294.

⁷² Ibid. p. 300.

⁷³ Ibid. p. 301.

⁷⁴ Ibid. p. 302.

⁷⁵ Ibid. p. 301.

difference an existential threat.⁷⁶ Arendt draws a clear parallel between the nation-states' perception of difference as a threat, to its urgency of "ethnic homogeneity".⁷⁷ The stateless and subsequently rightless refugee or "alien" becomes juxtaposed to this difference⁷⁸ of mere existence - not of the public sphere - but the nakedness of being human which the nation-state will not acknowledge or reconcile with.

The study's theoretical framework will depart from Arendt's views on the stateless refugee. Particularly the notion of difference as constituting the perception of an alien or outsider is of importance when answering the study's research question examining whether refugees are represented as subjects of human rights in the material.

It should be noted that Arendt does not refer to particular representations of refugees, but rather whether the stateless refugee is a subject of rights. The state of the world post World War 2 provides the contextual basis for Arendt's theoretical framework, which undoubtedly is a significantly different world compared to now. The notion of the stateless and followingly rightless - with the loss of all legal protection of every nation - can technically now be refuted with the development of both international conventions and of nation-states' own legal obligations when receiving refugees. Because of the development of rights in these areas, the different historical context Arendt formulated her ideas in can be considered a limitation of utilizing her theoretical framework. Moreover, her ideas on the rights of refugees and the nation-state are not directly related to representations of refugees and how these implicate a subject of rights, which can be considered a weakness. Nevertheless, Arendt's ideas continue to capture an inherent paradox in refugees rights which remains relevant related to the nation-states inherent sovereignty and choice whether to provide those rights to a refugee. The nation perceiving the "mere existence" of an individual as a threat to its homogeneity when viewed as different, which subsequently coincides with the loss of human rights - can implicate why and to which extent refugees are represented as subjects of human rights. That is to say, when examining

⁷⁶ Ibid. p. 301.

⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 301.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 301.

how the representations differentiate, Arendt's theory can provide insights into how these representations may emphasize notions of rights to one refugee, but not the other.

3.2. Material

The study examines the media's representation of refugees from 2015 (predominantly Syrian) and Ukrainian refugees in 2022. Through an examination of the selected material, it seeks to understand if the Swedish public debate has changed during these two time periods. The material consists of a selection of news articles from the Swedish newspaper Aftonbladet that includes opinion pieces, news reportage and letters to the editor. The newspaper has 350.000 active readers of its printed articles and is considered one of the largest in Sweden,⁷⁹ which becomes significant in order to provide an understanding of the general Swedish debate happening at the time. There are apparent weaknesses of only utilizing one newspaper in order to draw conclusions of a general debate, but the study's usage of one of the largest newspapers hopes to mitigate this limitation. As the study's subject matter relates to media, the usage of the term "the media" will be utilized in general - but should not be understood as encompassing all media's opinion as there are many diverse opinions in news media coverage. The material has been collected through Retrievors Media Archive - the largest Nordic news archive for print and digital media. The archive was incapable of automatically incorporating all criteria selected for the study for retrieving material. Subsequently, the criteria are divided into two sections: (1) Criteria possible to be administered automatically by Media archive, and (2) Criteria where the author manually excluded material the archive was unable to. The selected criteria are:

(1)

1. Articles selected are exclusively in print form. This ensures that additional changes have not been made to the material.

⁷⁹ Kantar Sifo. Räckviddsrapport ORVEST konsument (2022:2). 2022.
https://www.kantarsifo.se/sites/default/files/reports/documents/rackviddsrapport_orvesto_konsument_2022_2.pdf.

2. Articles have been collected over two time periods. October 2015 and March 2022 - both months the number of refugees seeking asylum in Sweden were at their peaks and subsequently the most intensive debate occurred regarding the refugee crisis in Aftonbladet.⁸⁰ Articles selected have been limited to a time span consisting of fourteen days - as to ensure credibility and reproducibility of the selection of material. The time span also ensures an amount of material appropriate to analyze within the scope of a bachelor's thesis. The time periods are 2015/10/14 until 2015/10/27 and 2022/03/14 until 2022-03-27.
3. The keyword "flykting*" was utilized for finding the selection of articles for both 2015 and 2022. The asterisk provides a broader scope of articles that include searches such as "flyktingkris", "flyktingboende", "flyktingmottagande" and "flyktingkatastrofen" - as a means to include articles that could potentially be of importance to answering the study's research questions.

(2)

1. Articles from 2022 not directly related to Ukrainian refugees are manually excluded by the author, because the study's purpose is to compare specifically the representation of Ukrainian refugees with (predominantly Syrian) refugees.

⁸⁰ SCB. Statistikmyndigheten. Det stora antalet asylsökande under 2015 ökade inte flyktinginvandringen nämnvärt. 2016-03-18.

<https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/statistik-efter-amne/befolkning/befolkningens-sammansattning/befolkningsstatistik/pong/statistiknyhet/asylsokande-grund-for-bosattning-utlandsk-bakgrund-medborgarska-psbyten-adoptioner-hushallsstatistik-och-medellivslangder-2015/>; SCB, Statistikmyndigheten.

Migrationen från Ukraina höjde BNP marginellt. 2022-06-16.

https://www.scb.se/hitta-statistik/temaomraden/sveriges-ekonomi/fordjupningsartiklar_Sveriges_ekonomi/migrationen-fran-ukraina-hojde-bnp-marginellt/.

2. Pictures related to the articles are excluded as to put emphasis on the textual discourse - which the study finds more relevant in relation to WPR-approach implemented.
3. Articles dealing mainly with international relations are excluded from the study, motivated by the study's focus on representation within a Swedish context.
4. The study excludes articles that only mention refugees briefly, and where the subject matter of the discourse revolves around something primarily different.
5. If articles closely resemble each other, the most relevant for answering the research question is selected.

Between the time period of 2015/10/14 until 2015/10/27 there were 121 articles in total. After excluding articles based on the criteria stated above, 62 are included in the study. Between the period of 2022/03/14 until 2022-03-27, there were 44 articles in total - with 17 included in the study. The unequal number of articles per time period found and selected for analysis is a limitation for the study, as the higher number of material for 2015 provides additional data and subsequently a greater depth of examination compared to 2022. Therefore, the study's choice of implementing a discourse analysis which does not rely entirely on an even number of articles to be effectively compared - instead opting to emphasize particular examples in the analysis - hopes to mitigate this limitation. Moreover, the higher number of articles for 2015 than 2022 is itself an interesting discovery.

The length of time between the two time periods examined is considered a limitation of the material. Evolving situations such as geopolitical relations, war and domestic policies can influence a particular representation of refugees - which could be accounted for to receive a more exhaustive picture of why the differentiation is present in the material. The study considers the inclusion of the many evolving events between

the two time periods beyond the scope of the bachelor's thesis, but should be considered important in order to further understand the material.

3.3. Analytical approach: What's the problem represented to be?

The study implements Carol Bacchi's approach to a discourse analysis "What's the problem represented to be" as an instrument for analyzing the selected material. The WPR-approach originated as a method to deconstruct discourse related to policies but has later proved efficient as a tool for analyzing and deconstructing media material.⁸¹ It applies a number of analytical questions to the material to "make visible the problem representations and subject positions".⁸² The approach emphasizes language to be understood as a perpetual process of constructing and interpreting knowledge.⁸³ The WPR-approach applies a framework where the problem itself is not the locus of the analysis, but rather investigates how it is problematized and what shapes of representations may be discerned from it.⁸⁴ The approach provides a bridge to deduce the causality between discourse and the "concrete effects that discourse may risk having".⁸⁵

As such, the approach draws influence from a Foucauldian view of knowledge juxtaposed with power in discourse - constituting a "perspective of the world" in continual movement - with certain knowledge recognized as truthful or not.⁸⁶ Relating to knowledge as such produces a dynamic which leads to "individuals being controlled or organized" according to these discourses. Power then manifests as "limitations for some, and possibilities for others".⁸⁷ WPR's strength of discerning this causality between discourse and mentioned limitations and possibilities constitutes an

⁸¹ Kristina Boréus and Göran Bergström (ed.). *Textens mening och makt: metodbok i samhällsvetenskaplig text- och diskursanalys*. 4th. ed. Lund: *Studentlitteratur*, 2018. p. 271. (Everything from this source has been translated by the author - Jonathan Dahl Hill unless mentioned otherwise).

⁸² Ibid. p. 272.

⁸³ Ibid. p. 255.

⁸⁴ Ibid. p. 272.

⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 272.

⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 255.

⁸⁷ Ibid. p. 258.

important interconnected relationship between the idea of power and the WPR-approach.

The study draws on discourse theory and especially on Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's notion of focusing on "broad and encompassing social discourses" to examine the "domination of a particular sphere".⁸⁸ In addition, the study also makes use of Laclau and Mouffe's approach of viewing subjects primarily as the "product of discourses", rather than "both producers of, and the production of discourses", which for example discursive psychologists favor.⁸⁹ Being a producer of discourse assumes the individual's possibility and opportunity of choosing varied "perspectives of the world".⁹⁰ It consequently places the individual - the producer of knowledge - in focus of the analysis, emphasizing the different motives and ambitions of the actor.⁹¹ That would move the method towards an ideological and conceptual historical perspective, which the study does not intend to implement. Instead, it emphasizes the discourse theory's strength of analyzing discourses "constituting force"⁹² rather than the "role" of the individual, as in discursive psychology.⁹³

The study also intends to examine whether subject positions are present in the material. The term "subject" in discourse analysis corresponds - according to Boréus and Bergström - to "subject positions". The authors emphasize that "subjects do not exist independently from the prevailing discourse and that the perception of who we are is shaped from the subject positions that those prevailing discourses produce".⁹⁴ As diverse and competing discourses exist simultaneously, they also - similarly to WPR's idea of language as a perpetual process - emphasize subject positions in continuous movement, providing us with "a variety [...] of subject positions to be identified with".⁹⁵ These identities according to Boréus and Bergström - similarly to what has been mentioned above - emphasize the notion of identity being constantly

⁸⁸ Ibid. p. 266-267.

⁸⁹ Ibid. p. 267.

⁹⁰ Ibid. p. 267.

⁹¹ Ibid. p. 257.

⁹² Ibid. p. 257.

⁹³ Ibid. p. 257.

⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 264.

⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 264.

reformulated through discourse - rather than being “materially-based” and stagnated.⁹⁶ The social identities of individuals being affected by subject positions and subsequently their real “subjectification effects” makes these two concepts interconnected. Specific discourse produces “specific social relations” which in turn shape our understanding of both ourselves and others.⁹⁷ Through these diverse positions we perceive our reality, creating the “filter we see the world through”.⁹⁸ Discursive psychologists emphasize that “discourses in themselves cannot decide these subject positions”, and as mentioned above places the subject in focus of deciding, negotiating or even actively opposing their positions.⁹⁹ The study’s locus of interest is analyzing representations of produced discourse, and not the subjects ability to negotiate that aforementioned discourse, and subsequently distances itself away from a discursive psychologists interpretation of subject positions, but rather favors “subject positions that those prevailing discourses produce”.¹⁰⁰

Boréus and Bergström state that such a position has been met with critique, as observers have argued that WPR’s interest in the construction of collective identities and representations may limit the recognition of the singular individual. Critique of emphasizing discourses constituting power has also been voiced by for instance philosopher Nancy Fracer, who argues that social problems of more concrete and material nature - such as economic inequality - are excluded when favoring a post-structuralist view of diverse representations.¹⁰¹ The study acknowledges these weaknesses in the approach, but agrees with Carol Bacchi’s response that it is precisely the [...] representations, not the problematic conditions themselves that indicate how we should meet a specific problematic condition, which is why representations or problematizations become the central object of study”.¹⁰² The study argues that a combination of (1) the localization of subject positions, (2) a WPR-approach to

⁹⁶ Ibid. p. 256.

⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 274-275.

⁹⁸ Ibid. p. 264.

⁹⁹ Ibid. p. 269.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid. p. 264.

¹⁰¹ Ibid. p. 293.

¹⁰² Ibid. p. 292.

analyze the selected material will provide adequate analytical tools for answering the question statements.

3.4. Operationalization

The analysis will approach the selected material “backwards” in accordance with Bacchi’s suggestion that understanding how a specific condition is fundamentally perceived begins with examining how someone shapes and reforms the condition.¹⁰³ The WPR-approach contains six analytical questions - although all do not necessarily need to be included.¹⁰⁴ This study makes use of four questions the approach provides (number 1-3 and 5 below) which are then adjusted to answer the specific research questions. Additionally, the study constructs one question (number 4) asked to the material to examine possible subject positions that may emerge from the discourse analyzed. My final questions are these:

1. What’s the problem represented to be with refugees?

The question intends to “make visible” the problem, and how it fundamentally is understood, represented and categorized in the specific material analyzed.¹⁰⁵

2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of refugees?

The question emphasizes an examination of the rationality and assumptions of the problem representations in the material. The purpose is obtaining an understanding of the underlying reasons for a given representation, and examine it from a critical point of view.¹⁰⁶

3. What is left unproblematic in this representation of refugees? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be thought about differently?

¹⁰³ Ibid. p. 272-273.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. p. 273. (for all six questions, see Carol Bacchi’s “Analysing policy: What’s the problem represented to be”).

¹⁰⁵ Ibid. p. 273.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid. p. 273.

The question intends to reveal what problem representations are *not* made visible, by focusing on what lies outside of its “borders” and not considered necessary to “change or reformulate”.¹⁰⁷

4. Which subject positions are refugees given in Aftonbladet?

The question is added to localize subject positions in the empirical material in order to provide a base for later discussion of whether refugees are represented as subjects of human rights - and make comparisons with both past literature and the study’s theoretical framework.

5. What effects are produced by this representation of refugees?

How the problem is perceived - and the subject positions constructed by that perception - implicates particular repercussions, which Bacchi names the “subjectifying” effects.¹⁰⁸ These “problem representations uphold a certain understanding of what is problematic [...] some reforms or courses of action will be perceived as more or less reasonable and desired”.¹⁰⁹ The question subsequently attempts to examine the outcomes that may ensue from a given problem representation.¹¹⁰

The study makes a distinction between question 4 and 5, although they are closely related. As mentioned above, Boréus and Bergström emphasize the connection of subject positions and their real “subjectification effects” - making these two concepts interconnected. Question 4 will thus serve both to examine the subject positions from a purely empirical standpoint, and lay the foundation for answering question number 5 whether these subject positions and subsequent subjectifying effects implicate refugees as subjects of human rights.

The structure of the analysis consists of two separate sections, outlined below:

¹⁰⁷ Ibid. p. 274.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. p. 274.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. p. 274.

¹¹⁰ Ibid. p. 274.

1. *Questions 1-4* will be posed to the empirical data by and of itself, as these questions provide an adequate examination of how refugees are represented in Aftonbladet.
2. *Question 5* will be answered by integrating the study's theoretical viewpoints and past research and later constitute a segment of the study's discussion section - based on the results that the first section of the analysis provides in order to answer the study's research question. The study argues that an incorporation of the theoretical viewpoint and past research are necessary at this point in order to examine the effects of representations in greater depth - providing an understanding for the underlying logic producing specific problem representations.

4. Analysis

This section's purpose is to examine the study's material. The articles from 2015 are first addressed, whereafter the articles from 2022 are presented. The aim is to acquire an understanding of representations of both time periods, which will later be comparatively discussed in order to answer the study's research questions.

4.1. Representations of refugees from 2015

1. What's the problem represented to be with refugees?

In the articles, two main divergent themes became apparent regarding the problem represented with refugees. First, the representation of refugees as a burden, both economically and administratively for Sweden and its population. Secondly, the state's incapacity to manage the crisis and deliver sufficient aid to refugees.

Regarding the first theme - the representation of refugees as an economical burden was primarily emphasized, whereas the administrative burden was less present in the material but still relevant. The refugee was primarily positioned in direct contrast to budgets of other sections of the Swedish welfare system, as illustrated below.

The increase of costs is then 70 billion *kronor* in two years. That corresponds to the whole state's expenses for school, higher education and research during one year. Or the national defense for around 1,5 years.¹¹¹

Accordingly, the position of the refugee is in opposition to Swedish welfare, suggesting the refugee as an obstacle to the domestic population's ability to receive benefits.

The refugee represented as aggravating Sweden's already strained economy is prevalent in the material.

¹¹¹ Lena Mellin. Vi har aldrig stått inför en liknande situation. Aftonbladet, 2015-10-23. p. 25. (Everything from the newspaper articles has been translated by the author - Jonathan Dahl Hill unless mentioned otherwise).

Our country is in a very vulnerable position regarding migration to Sweden, education and health care. The focus is mainly on the refugees, while the healthcare staff do not receive the same attention at all.¹¹²

As illustrated above, the representation implicates the refugee as an obstacle, drawing attention away from matters such as health care. Emphasizing Sweden's already vulnerable position - similarly to the national defense stated above - the refugee as threats and problems to the country's welfare.

Refugees were often described as an administrative burden - emphasizing the country as already overexerted, with municipalities struggling to adequately receive the refugees. The municipalities often demanded restrictions of the amount of individuals arriving, and simplifications of directives that would enable - according to the municipalities - an appropriate reception.

"She believes that the situation in the city is now so "strained" that the Swedish Migration Agency does not have time to receive and register everyone who comes. Several new school classes with children have to be taken care of every week, while the municipality has difficulty recruiting staff for its operations.¹¹³

Similarly, a sense of desperation from the government and municipalities are recurring in the material, suggesting the refugee as a challenge that must be dealt with and taken under control.

The refugee situation has become so urgent that tent camps will be set up in Sweden. It is unacceptable, but unfortunately only the beginning of the challenges we face.¹¹⁴

The quote above illustrates the representation of a deteriorating situation, having to establish camping tents in order to be able to receive the high number of refugees and stressing the refugee as a challenge that is only in "the beginning".

The second theme, of the state's incapacity to manage the crisis and deliver sufficient aid to refugees, the problem representation was of the refugees inadequate support by the state and Swedish population. The quote below illustrates the point of improving

¹¹² Bertil Stenberg. Ta en time out från blockpolitiken och lös problemen. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-22. p. 6.

¹¹³ Pär Karlsson et al. Vi hinner inte med alla som kommer. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-23. p. 30.

¹¹⁴ Patric Åberg. S och M måste lösa migrationskrisen. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-15. p. 11.

the governmental process, and the representation of the problem of the refugee consisting of inadequate reception.

Ultimately, it is the people who come here, fleeing war and poverty, who will suffer if our politicians do not get their act together. The situation is extraordinary and then party egoism and empty symbolic politics will not do.¹¹⁵

The representation shows both empathy for the refugee's situation, and stresses the necessity for governmental action in order to accommodate them. The article continues by emphasizing the spectrum of suggestions and ambitions politicians have related to appropriately welcoming and integrating refugees, such as,

M means that new arrivals should be able to get apprenticeships and FP supports the idea of forcing municipalities to accept refugees. V has sensible views on how housing allowance for asylum seekers, and Swedish for immigrants, SFI, should be made better.¹¹⁶

The quotes above suggest methods of cooperation between political parties, and developing solutions to integrate and support refugees, suggesting it is the responsibility of the state to facilitate solutions to the problem. This representation positions the refugee away from an unmanageable situation, instead emphasizing the capacity, or incapacity of the state to deliver support.

Many articles also described the recurring arson attacks on different asylum facilities around Sweden occurring 2015, condemning the attacks such as,

15 arson attacks against refugee facilities so far this year. Will people have died before these heinous crimes end?¹¹⁷

and,

Now we have to take seriously that there are dark forces that want to take advantage of the desperate situation that many of our fellow humans find themselves in [...] A hatred directed at those that right now need protection and human warmth more than ever.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ Daniel Swedin. Vår integration är bäst i världen. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-17. p. 2.

¹¹⁶ Ibid. p. 2.

¹¹⁷ Oisín Cantwell. En tävling - i minst empati för folk som har flytt sina liv. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-21. p. 9.

¹¹⁸ Mona Sahlin. Vi måste höja våra röster mot rasismen. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-24. p. 6.

Both quotes illustrate the problem representation being the offender which created these arsons, while simultaneously showing solidarity with the refugees. Similarly as above, these representations implicate the responsibility of the state, and not the refugees.

2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of refugees?

The study found the assumptions underlying the given representations connected to the two problem representations illustrated above. Many articles assumed the incapability of refugees related to their lacking economical contribution to the state. In others, the same underlying assumption resulted in discourse describing the necessity of enabling refugees as a potential economic resource which the state may benefit from. Other articles assumed the refugees as victims deserving support and aid, and subsequently the importance of the state's role to receive refugees adequately.

An emphasis regarding what the refugee has to offer society implies the assumption of considering the refugee as dependent on, or potentially unfairly benefiting from the country's social welfare. For example,

It is important that the individual makes himself employable and is active in his job search. If we are to seriously be able to break dependency on benefits, to get more people into work faster, we must also have a policy that facilitates this.¹¹⁹

The notion of an employable individual, and the need for action in order to break benefit dependencies of the state emphasizes the underlying representation of the refugee as an economic burden, which assumes they will take the country's welfare if policies are not constructed that facilitates another option.

This is further illustrated below, where the articles question the legitimacy of the refugee status, connected to the welfare system.

We have a crisis situation and refugees who are not granted asylum should not receive contributions from Swedish taxpayers.¹²⁰

and,

¹¹⁹ Pär Karlsson. - Finns ett starkt stöd för vår linje. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-16. p. 14.

¹²⁰ Björn Berglund. Björck: Har längtat länge efter det här. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-19. p. 8-9.

Today, there are many who come to Sweden who are not refugees. They are looking for a better future, completely understandable, but which does not meet our humane reasons for asylum.¹²¹

The statements above assume some refugees as not potentially fulfilling the requirements for asylum, instead searching for improving their life-circumstances. This perception then becomes interconnected to the idea of an eligible refugee, deserving social welfare from Swedish taxpayers, or not. The underlying assumption presumes individuals from worse economic circumstances intend to enter Sweden and exploit its system under the banner of a refugee status.

Perceiving the refugee as an economic burden also resulted in the assumption of the refugee as potentially beneficial for the state. For example,

They must now quickly become taxpayers [...] For both human and financial reasons, these people must work as soon as possible. Otherwise, both they and the government's finances will suffer.¹²²

and,

Magdalena Andersson has said that the new Swedes are investments rather than costs. And so it certainly is. But almost no investments bring profit right from the start. In the beginning they cost.¹²³

Both quotes assume the refugees perceived threat to welfare can be mitigated by utilizing them as potential “investments rather than costs”, becoming “taxpayers”, that provide for the betterment of Sweden. Such representations also result in the underlying perception of the refugee not of a human, but as a commodity and object related to economic costs and investments.

The underlying assumption of the articles suggesting adequate support and reception of refugees assumed the countries of origin and Sweden's government as responsible - moving away from centering on the refugees themselves, which has been insinuated so far. It should be noted that these were in the minority. For example,

They come from countries with ongoing conflicts that are expected to be long-lasting. Deteriorating the conditions and rights of people who will need protection for many years to come is not only inhumane, it is also negative for the development of society in Sweden.¹²⁴

and when speaking of refugee children arriving from Afghanistan,

¹²¹ Erik Melin. ‘Svara på min fråga!’. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-19. p. 9.

¹²² Lena Mellin. Det är vår tids största kris - nu krävs idéer. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-25. p. 32.

¹²³ Lena Mellin. Nu erkänner man att flyktingkrisen kommer att kosta. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-27. p. 11.

¹²⁴ Philip Botström et al. Sämre villkor löser inte flyktingkrisen. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-22. p. 6.

This will only continue, unless the international community ensures that children and youth in Afghanistan have a better future.¹²⁵

The quotes illustrated above considers the underlying problem representation of the refugee as an individual in need of protection and care, which the nation-state is assumed responsible for. Noticeable, rights-related discourse was included in the statement above, which was not often present in the material otherwise.

3. What is left unproblematic in this representation of refugees? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be thought about differently?

From the representations illustrated, there are noticeable silences present in the material. Often, when the responsibility of the crisis was that of the refugees as an economical and administrative burden, it resulted in lacking perspectives involving other actor’s past or present involvement in the countries of origin who potentially have contributed to the problem of the crisis. Few articles mentioned the deteriorating situation in the countries of origin which led to the refugees fleeing or relocating to Sweden in the first place, subsequently aggravating the idea of refugees as primarily responsible, mitigating potential Western countries’ responsibility. Followingly, historical and contextual perspectives were primarily silent in the material.

Another representation left unproblematic in the overall majority of articles was the considerable absence of the refugees’ own voice over their situation. This was illustrated both in articles which primarily labeled the refugee as an economical and administrative burden, and the articles assuming the role of the state as central in order to receive refugees adequately. The absence of the refugee’s voice solidifies the position of the nation-state as the victim instead of refugees, as the voice of an individual would have humanized the refugee with emotions and experiences. Moreover, framing the refugee as a commodity and resource - as has been seen in the analysis - affirms the representation of something non-human. Followingly, the lack of humanization was prevalent in the material.

4. Which subject positions are refugees given in Aftonbladet?

Five subject positions of refugees were located in the material. (1) The refugee as an economical burden, (2) The refugee as an administrative burden, (3) The refugee as an

¹²⁵ Joachim Kerpner. Räkna med 30 000 barn till Sverige. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-22. p. 30.

economic resource, (4) The refugee as a victim, (5) The refugee as a force of nature. These positions are presented below.

- (1) The subject position of the refugee as an economical burden was prevalent in many articles. One article described the number of refugees as something which “may rupture the state and municipal budgets”.¹²⁶ Another stating the new prognosis of the Swedish Migration Agency “means that Sweden is facing a situation we have never had before” where the refugee crisis coincides with lesser budgets of other Swedish welfare.¹²⁷ Similarly, one emphasizes the problematic situation which would occur if the refugee crisis would be too expensive saying “if we end up in a situation where the costs of migration push out welfare, support for our open society will quickly erode”.¹²⁸ These articles assert the position of refugee as an economical burden, which oftentimes is compared to other parts of Swedish welfare, placing the refugees in opposition to it.
- (2) The subject position of the refugee as an administrative burden was emphasized in many of the articles examined, stressing the detrimental effect refugees arriving in Sweden had on institutions and municipalities. For example, one article described the refugee situation as so “’strained’ the Swedish Migration Agency does not have time to receive and register everyone who comes”.¹²⁹ Another one discusses the challenge which the Swedish state will have accommodating the arriving refugees, and where the situation is so “urgent that tent camps will be set up in Sweden”.¹³⁰
- (3) The subject position of the refugee as a resource was emphasized in many articles. For example an article which stated “the biggest savings would [...] be a conscious investment to get new arrivals into the housing and labor market”.¹³¹

¹²⁶ TT-Aftonbladet. Migrationsverkets prognos spräcks: 160 000 flyktingar till Sverige i år. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-22. p. 10.

¹²⁷ Mellin, *Vi har aldrig stått inför en liknande situation*, p. 25.

¹²⁸ Åberg, *S och M måste lösa migrationskrisen*, p. 11.

¹²⁹ Karlsson et al. *Vi hinner inte med alla som kommer*. p. 30.

¹³⁰ Åberg, *S och M måste lösa migrationskrisen*, p. 11.

¹³¹ Karlsson, - *Finns ett starkt stöd för vår linje*, p. 14.

The position implicated the refugee as an economic resource which the state will benefit from. When discussing the necessity for new migration, an article stated that “the proportion of elderly people is increasing rapidly, and more taxpayers are needed to cover their health care”.¹³²

(4) The subject position of the refugee as a victim was prevalent in many articles. One article described the refugees arriving in Sweden as having “difficult traumas” after their experiences, also stating “those who have seen family members blown to death or drowned in the Mediterranean must be able to get relief”.¹³³ Another article exemplifying the victim position said refugees were “vulnerable people”, and “their teary eyes plead for help and the image of their faces is etched on my retinas”.¹³⁴ This subject position also serves to humanize the refugee with their own emotions and experiences.

(5) The subject position of the refugee described as a force of nature was mentioned in few of the articles. Four descriptions were located in the articles analyzed. (1) The refugee “catastrophe”,¹³⁵ a term often seen in descriptions of environmental disasters or ecological accidents. (2) The refugee “stream”,¹³⁶ (3) The refugee “wave”,¹³⁷ (4) The refugee “gush”.¹³⁸ It should be noted that the term “crisis” is prevalent in the majority of the articles, which could encompass this subject position. The study takes it into consideration, but argues it is so

¹³² Lena Mellin. Detta bäddar för fler samarbeten. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-24. p. 25.

¹³³ Eva Franchell. Familjen tvingades simma bland döda. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-16. p. 2.

¹³⁴ Christina O. Burträsk. Vi måste hjälpa - annars blir historiens dom hård. Aftonbladet. 26-10-2015. p. 6.

¹³⁵ Linnea Järkstig. Tar 84 000 för att ge 1 flyktingbarn hem. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-14. p. 23; Mellin, *Det är vår tids största kris - nu krävs idéer*, p. 32; Mellin, *Nu erkänner man att flyktingkrisen kommer att kosta*, p. 11; Mellin, *Detta bäddar för fler samarbeten*, p. 25; Julia Skott. 650 000 tack för att ni hjälpte oss att hjälpa människor på flykt. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-22. p. 11; Åberg, *S och M måste lösa migrationskrisen*, p. 11; Mellin, *Vi har aldrig stått inför en liknande situation*, p. 25; Lena Mellin. Därför måste de komma överens i flyktingfrågan. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-18. p. 7; Anette Holmqvist and Pär Karlsson. Kravet på Löfven: Gör dig av med V. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-16. p. 12; Anette Holmqvist et al. Löfven (S) läxade upp Åkesson (SD) i talarstolen: Det kallas empati, slå upp det ordet. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-15. p. 8-9.

¹³⁶ Mellin, *Detta bäddar för fler samarbeten*, p. 25; Mellin, *Nu erkänner man att flyktingkrisen kommer att kosta*, p.11; Mellin, *Därför måste de komma överens i flyktingfrågan*. p. 7.

¹³⁷ Mellin, *Nu erkänner man att flyktingkrisen kommer att kosta*, p. 11.

¹³⁸ Mellin, *Vi har aldrig stått inför en liknande situation*, p. 25.

normalized and prevalent in discourse on the subject, it falls outside of the framework of the study's subject matter.

4.1.1. Outcomes of representation from 2015

5. What effects are produced by this representation of refugees?

Perceiving the refugee as an economic and administrative burden may produce different effects. Arcimaviciene and Baglama argue this representation construes the “myth of dehumanization” - perceiving individuals as both commodities and objects,¹³⁹ which aligns with the allocated findings in the analysis and the refugees subject positions. Kovář argues such a representation produces the idea of the refugee as a resource the host community can utilize, or as a threat towards society.¹⁴⁰ Holmes and Castañeda argue these categorizations make refugees eligible and deserving or illegible and undeserving of rights, manifested by dynamics of difference,¹⁴¹ which Arendt then argues the nation-state inevitably perceives as a threat.¹⁴² One outcome representing the refugee as a burden and subsequent threat may then result in the effect of inadequate protection and support from the host state and tension between Sweden and its population, and refugees. Many quotes presented above related to this representation also implicate the threat refugees are to the state's social welfare, and the loss the country's population would suffer in regards to their own care for the benefit of the refugees. The portrayal of a threat is also exacerbated by the subject position of a force of nature located in the analysis, which according to Dempsey and McDowell constructs the perception of an unstoppable force or disaster, further dehumanizing the individual.¹⁴³

The effect of the representation of the state's lack of capacity to protect and manage the refugee crisis and refugees produce other outcomes. This representation aligns with the

¹³⁹ Arcimaviciene and Baglama, *Migration, Metaphor and Myth in Media Representations: The Ideological Dichotomy of “Them” and “Us”*, p. 5-6.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. p. 5-6.

¹⁴¹ Holmes and Castañeda, *Representing the “European Refugee Crisis” in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death*, p. 19.

¹⁴² Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 301.

¹⁴³ Dempsey and McDowell, *Disaster depictions and geopolitical representations in Europe's migration “Crisis”*, p. 154.

study's located subject position of the victim, which according to Kovář serves to humanize the refugee - warranting empathy and support from the state and population.¹⁴⁴ Similarly - according to Holmes and Castañeda - empathy and care becomes enabled when the subject position of the victim is perceived as an involuntary position forced onto the subject, which subsequently legitimizes the protection of the state.¹⁴⁵

4.2. Representations of refugees from 2022

1. What's the problem represented to be with refugees?

Two main themes were identified in the material examined from 2022. The first problem representation was that of the vulnerable refugee, in need of support. The second problem representation was of Russia's invasion into Ukraine and subsequent impact on the Ukrainian population. A small number of articles were concentrated on the Ukrainians as an economic burden to the Swedish state.¹⁴⁶ Few others emphasized the inadequate capacity of the Swedish state to receive the refugees,¹⁴⁷ and another small amount described the problematic nature of the difference in support the Swedish state provided for the refugee crisis in 2015 compared to 2022.¹⁴⁸ However, the mentioned were in scarcity whereas the main two themes were prevalent to a greater degree.

The first problem representation - where the problem consisted of the vulnerable refugee - is present in the majority of articles. The discourse surrounding the articles constituted the perception of the refugee as potentially traumatized, vulnerable for

¹⁴⁴ Kovář, *Media framing of immigrants in Central Europe in the period surrounding the refugee crisis: Security, negativity, and political sources*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁵ Holmes and Castañeda, Representing the "European Refugee Crisis" in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death, p. 17-18.

¹⁴⁶ For example, Anna Tibblin et al. Miljontals drabbas om vi minskar vårt bistånd. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-22. p. 6; Ingvar Persson. Krigets offer måste mötas med hänsyn. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-15. p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ For example, Zina A. Dewany. Lösningen på kriget är inte Bert Karlsson. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-16. p. 6.

¹⁴⁸ For example, Andreas Magnusson. Verkligheten trasar sönder populismen. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-14. p. 6; Eric Rosén. Det finns bara ett ord: rasism. Aftonbladet. 2022-10-20. p. 4-5; Zina A. Dewany. SD hittar på lögn om krigsflyktingar. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-18. p. 2.

trafficking organizations and other continued violations outside of Ukraine. For example,

Every [...] child is at risk of physical and mental harm through the hardships of war and flight, the Queen said.¹⁴⁹

and,

Several of the aid organizations that spoke during the day testified that organized leagues wait at border crossings to lure women and children to come along. But instead of help and housing, they are forced into trafficking.¹⁵⁰

and,

That women and children on the run are particularly vulnerable is nothing new, but no less serious. It is often people who are in a very vulnerable situation who are exploited through trafficking and prostitution.¹⁵¹

The quotes above illustrate the representation of the refugee as the victim, and the problem being the consequences of the refugee being situated in a vulnerable position - fleeing from war. The notion of women and children being present in the article is also significant, as it insinuates an even more vulnerable position - particularly related to exploitation and trafficking. This position is repeated in many of the articles, implicating organized crime and Russia being the primary problem representation.

The second problem representation - being Russia's invasion into Ukraine and subsequent impact on the Ukrainian population - was prevalent in the material. In this representation, the refugees are seen as victims of Russia's invasion into Ukraine. For example,

Children are forcibly deported to Russia and Russian troops bomb hospitals, including the country's largest children's hospital.¹⁵²

and,

¹⁴⁹ Jenny Alexandersson. 'Varje sekund blir ett barn flykting'. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-26. p. 12.

¹⁵⁰ Alexandersson, 'Varje sekund blir ett barn flykting', p. 12.

¹⁵¹ Sofia Jarl. Flyktingarna riskerar bli offer för sexhandel. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-24. p. 6.

¹⁵² Alexandersson, 'Varje sekund blir ett barn flykting', p. 12.

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has led to a massive wave of refugees. [...] The inhabitants fled the country in large numbers.¹⁵³

and,

Russia has launched a full-scale war [...] Horrific images of pregnant women being carried out of bombed hospitals, a lone cat cage next to two dead people who tried to escape failed. Russia's appalling attack on Ukraine has sparked outrage around the world.¹⁵⁴

Again, representation of women and children are prevalent in the discourse, closely associated with the acts committed by the Russian government. The descriptions of bombing children's hospitals and pregnant women being "carried out of bombed hospitals" are significant, as portrayals of particularly vulnerable individuals in the articles affirm the atrociousness of the violations committed by Russia. This subsequently solidifies the representation of the problem being the Russian government and military, moving the responsibility away from the refugees themselves.

2. What presuppositions or assumptions underlie this representation of refugees?

The study found the assumptions underlying the problem representations closely related to the themes above. The representation of the vulnerable refugee assumed the refugee as a victim, worthy of aid and support of diverse actors in society. The representation of Russia's invasion into Ukraine and subsequent impact on the Ukrainian population - assumed the refugee as a victim, and Russia an out of control aggressor. In the first assumption, the study found much discourse emphasizing the vulnerability of the refugees position - particularly but not limited to centering on women and children as presented above - constituted the assumption of the refugee. This subsequently implicated the support of the Swedish state, its population and different humanitarian organizations, including the Swedish church. For example,

We are in a situation that involves many difficult consequences. One such is the situation that now prevails, where several women and children are at risk of becoming victims of sex trafficking. It is our

¹⁵³ Anna Shimoda and Hans Shimoda. När hon hoppade ur bilen så kramades vi. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-16. p. 28.

¹⁵⁴ Anna Tenje et al. Flyktingkrisen dumpas på kommunerna - igen. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-16. p. 6.

duty to act! If the government is serious about its ambitions to take men's violence against women seriously, then it is up to the evidence now.¹⁵⁵

The same article suggests different ways to better administratively accommodate the refugees and create a safe environment, saying,

Transnational cooperation is required to protect the vulnerable [...] The government must ensure that: The Migration Agency's resources are immediately strengthened and expanded [...] Municipalities that receive children who have moved here alone must receive special support and guidance [...]
Municipalities must be supported in securing safe accommodation. Women's emergency rooms are supported in being available to women who have been victims of prostitution.¹⁵⁶

The mention of transnational cooperation in order to provide safety measures, and improving administrative directives within Swedish institutions and municipalities are established on the presupposition that women and children are suffering, in need of care and support.

Illustrated below, another article describes the Swedish church's contribution to support the refugees, stating,

This time, unlike the refugee crisis in 2015-2016, it is mainly women and children who have come to Sweden.¹⁵⁷

And when interviewing a priest in the same article, the priest states,

If we in the Church of Sweden can help people to help, I think it makes them feel less frustrated and powerless over what happens.¹⁵⁸

The quotes illustrate both a comparison made of the refugee crisis 2015-2016 and 2022 between the categories of individuals coming to Sweden and the emphasis of the Swedish church's participation in the latter crisis. This participation is further solidified in another article describing the warm reception Ukrainian refugees receive in Sweden.

¹⁵⁵ Jarl, *Flyktingarna riskerar bli offer för sexhandel*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁶ Jarl, *Flyktingarna riskerar bli offer för sexhandel*, p. 6.

¹⁵⁷ Jonna Sima. Min familj är här, men på kvällarna gråter jag. *Aftonbladet*. 2022-03-22. p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.* p. 2.

The article interviews a Ukrainian woman, who had fled Ukraine with her five-year-old child, stating,

She wants to communicate how grateful she is for all the help she has received, not least from the volunteers outside the Migration Agency. Along the sidewalk are several aid organizations from churches and associations.¹⁵⁹

The quotes above emphasize the diverse actors support, ranging from associations, to individual actors, to humanitarian aid organizations and the Swedish church, based on the underlying assumption of women and children being the primary refugee.

Another article interviewing a family that is taking care of a Ukrainian mother and her two children fleeing the war states,

We are going [...] to [...] the Migration Agency [...] so they can get a residence permit according to the EU's mass migration directive.¹⁶⁰

The quote above illustrates the correlation between support and aid from the Swedish population subsequently leading to the provisions of rights and continued care, this being from the EU's mass migration directive. It should be noted that discourse related to refugees rights - particularly the migration directive - were not prevalent in the majority of the material.

The problem representation of Russia's invasion into Ukraine and subsequent impact on the Ukrainian population is prevalent. This represents the refugee as a victim - and significantly - Russia as an out of control aggressor against an innocent country and people. This is illustrated below by an article saying,

They don't want to die. Don't starve for help and don't be abused by an aggressive attacker.¹⁶¹

and,

Russia's appalling attack on Ukraine has sparked outrage around the world.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ Angelica Öhagen. Delar ut pizza - i kön till Migrationsverket. Aftonbladet. 2022-03-27. p. 16.

¹⁶⁰ Shimoda and Shimoda, 'När hon hoppade ur bilen så kramades vi', p. 28.

¹⁶¹ Rosén, *Det finns bara ett ord: rasism*, p. 4-5.

¹⁶² Tenje et al, *Flyktningkrisen dumpas på kommunerna - igen*, p. 6.

and,

Anger at Putin's massacres in Ukraine is great. He is stupid and seems crazy.¹⁶³

Here, the discourse revolves around terms such as “appalling”, “outrage”, “abused by an aggressive attacker”, “massacres”, and labeling Putin as “stupid” and “crazy” are significant. The underlying assumption implicates both the government and its leaders as standing in clear polarity to the rest of the world, constituting the offender, and Ukraine in the position of a clear victim of an unprovoked attack. The assumption subsequently stems from the perception of Russia being in the wrong, viewed as deranged and untrustworthy, with countries “around the world” standing in unification against the aggressor.

3. What is left unproblematic in this representation of refugees? Where are the silences? Can the “problem” be thought about differently?

From the representations illustrated above, several silences are identified in the material. In the majority of articles from 2022, refugees were neither represented as burdens economically or administratively. Moreover, as representations were centered on Ukrainians as victims, portrayals of them as resources or commodities to the Swedish state were absent in the material - resulting in the otherwise competitive position of sharing resources between the refugees and Swedish state and population was mitigated in the majority of representations. Followingly, this became a significant silence in the material.

A few articles also raised the problematic nature of the unequal aid and support which was provided to refugees in 2022 compared to 2015. For example, one article stated,

Sweden has opened its heart with offers of free trains, free buses and free metro to anyone with Ukrainian papers. Free travel across the Öresund Bridge, even free entry to Leo's Playground. Discount on flights, free accommodation. Private clinics promise Ukrainian passport holders both free medical care and free dental care [...] It's almost as if the refugees suddenly matter, as if they now have human value. A need for protection that counts.¹⁶⁴

¹⁶³ Sima, *Min familj är här, men på kvällarna gråter jag*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁴ Rosén, *Det finns bara ett ord: rasism*, p. 4-5.

As illustrated above, the quote raises the question regarding the privileges which refugees from 2022 received from diverse actors. Articles raising these questions were nevertheless in the minority of the articles analyzed, instead emphasizing Swedish solidarity from a number of organizations, churches, private individuals and the state.

4. Which subject positions are refugees given in Aftonbladet?

Five subject positions of refugees were located in the material. (1) The humanized refugee (2) The refugee as a victim (3) The refugee as a woman or child (2) The refugee as a subject of rights (5) The refugee as a force of nature. These positions are presented below.

(1) The humanized refugee was prevalent in many of the articles. This often meant giving refugees their own voice by conducting interviews, where they could share their emotions and experiences or by discourse describing very emotional encounters between the Swedish population and Ukrainian refugees, subsequently construing a feeling of similarity and empathy between the groups. One article for example describes a Swedish woman's encounter with a Ukrainian mother and her children saying "when she jumped out of the car, we hugged for a long time [...] It was as if we had always known each other."¹⁶⁵ In another, a Ukrainian refugee says "My family is here [...] but in the evenings, I cry".¹⁶⁶

(2) The refugee as a victim was also prevalent in the material. For example, one article stating "what we see here is the result of the worst thing man can do, the worst thing, that people are forced to flee".¹⁶⁷ Another article is appalled by the "horrific images of pregnant women being carried out of bombed hospitals".¹⁶⁸ Such a position also emphasizes the role of Russia as the offender, and the refugees as victims of the invasion.

(3) The refugee as a woman and child is prevalent in the material. For example, one article described the need of one mother to protect her daughter from the "many

¹⁶⁵ Shimoda and Shimoda, *När hon hoppade ur bilen så kramades vi*, p. 28.

¹⁶⁶ Sima, *Min familj är här, men på kvällarna gråter jag*, p. 2.

¹⁶⁷ Öhagen, *Delar ut pizza - i kön till Migrationsverket*, p. 16.

¹⁶⁸ Tenje et al, *Flyktningkrisen dumpas på kommunerna - igen*, p. 6.

bombs and missiles” that were falling over Ukraine.¹⁶⁹ Another described the perilous journey of a mother and her family escaping from the country after having sought refuge in a bomb shelter.¹⁷⁰

(4) The refugee as a subject of rights was present in few articles. When described as such, it was often related to the employment of the EU's mass migration directive. One article emphasizes it will provide “people from Ukraine the right to protection, housing and work permits”.¹⁷¹

(5) The subject position of the refugee as a force of nature was present in a few articles. Three descriptions were located. The refugee “catastrophe”,¹⁷² the refugee “wave”,¹⁷³ and the refugee “streams”.¹⁷⁴

4.2.1. Outcomes of representation from 2022

5. What effects are produced by this representation of refugees?

The effect of the representation of the vulnerable refugee, in need of support - produces effects similar to that of the state's lack of capacity to protect the refugees, described above in WPR-question 5 of the representation from 2015. It portrays the refugee as a victim, which according to Kovář warrants empathy and support from the state and population¹⁷⁵ - with the position forcibly placed onto the refugee which further legitimizes care and aid.¹⁷⁶ Significantly, the strong subject positions located in articles from 2022 related to this, such as the humanized, the victim, and of the woman and child all may serve to categorize the refugees as particularly vulnerable, strengthening the effect of protection the state and host-population provides Ukrainian refugees, as they are considered more eligible, deserving and subsequently

¹⁶⁹ Öhagen, *Delar ut pizza - i kön till Migrationsverket*, p. 16.

¹⁷⁰ Sima, *Min familj är här, men på kvällarna gråter jag*, p. 2.

¹⁷¹ Persson, *Krigets offer måste mötas med hänsyn*, p. 2.

¹⁷² Jarl, *Flyktingarna riskerar bli offer för sexhandel*, p. 6.

¹⁷³ Shimoda and Shimoda, *När hon hoppade ur bilen så kramades vi*, p. 28.

¹⁷⁴ Dewany, *SD bittar på lögn om krigsflyktingar*, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ Kovář, *Media framing of immigrants in Central Europe in the period surrounding the refugee crisis: Security, negativity, and political sources*, p. 8.

¹⁷⁶ Holmes and Castañeda, *Representing the “European Refugee Crisis” in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death*, p. 17-18.

higher on the hierarchy of deservingness, according to Holmes and Castañeda.¹⁷⁷ Such a portrayal constructs what Hovden et al terms “moral arguments”, where the “responsibility to help when others are suffering” is more present.¹⁷⁸

The second problem representation effects - being Russia’s invasion into Ukraine and subsequent impact on the Ukrainian population - also support potential outcomes which may favor increased protection from the state for the same reasons as above, as the problem and responsibility lies with the aggressor and not the refugees. The subject position which humanizes the refugee with an own voice and experiences has the effect of portraying a sense of belonging and connection between the host-society and refugees. This would make the refugee viewed as similar and subsequently more eligible for protection according to Holmes and Castañeda¹⁷⁹ - not something different and alien - which according to Arendt would make the state view the refugee as a threat and alienable.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. p. 19.

¹⁷⁸ Hovden et al, *The Syrian refugee crisis in Scandinavian newspapers*, p. 337.

¹⁷⁹ Holmes and Castañeda, *Representing the “European Refugee Crisis” in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death*, p. 19.

¹⁸⁰ Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 301.

5. Results and discussion

The overarching aim of the research paper has been to comparatively examine media representations between two categories of refugees during two different time periods by implementing Carol Bacchi's WPR-approach on the selected material. The result section aims to summarize the results emerging from the analysis, and answer the first research question of how Swedish media's representation of refugees from 2015 and 2022 differentiate in the material. This will then be discussed and compared to the past literature in the discussion section. The aim has also been to understand whether, and if so how, refugees are represented as subjects of rights. This will be answered in the discussion section first by the study's theoretical framework and then discussed by the past literature.

5.1. Divergent representations

Differentiations between representations of refugees from 2015 and 2022 in Swedish media emerged from the analysis. Two major themes of the problem representation became apparent in both time periods. In articles from 2015, refugees were represented as an economic and administrative burden, often positioned as an unmanageable situation in opposition to the state's resources, such as social welfare and Swedish institutions. The other theme emphasized the inadequate measures taken by the state, where refugees instead warranted empathy and protection. In articles from 2022, the problem representations construed refugees as victims, in need of support and protection, particularly as women and children constituted the perception of the refugee. Additionally, the refugee as a victim was affirmed when the problem represented was Russia's invasion into Ukraine.

Two themes of underlying assumptions emerged from the material. The first assumption in articles from 2015 was their incapability to contribute to the Swedish economy, resulting in the perception of the refugee as a commodity related to economic costs and investments. The other assumed the refugee as a victim deserving protection and support - being Sweden's responsibility to accommodate and

adequately support them. This assumption exhibited similarities to the underlying assumptions in articles from 2022, where refugees were assumed the victim worthy of protection and support. Nevertheless, the underlying assumptions for providing the protection were unlike. The assumption for Syrian refugees emphasized the responsibility of the state to adequately support them. Ukrainian refugees were instead both assumed victims because of the atrocities committed by the Russian invasion, and because the refugee was a woman and child, initiating the efforts of a multitude of organizations and institutions such as the Swedish state, churches, humanitarian aid organizations and private individuals.

Silences appeared in both time periods. For 2015, perspectives of other countries and organizations involvement in the conflict in Syria was absent in the material. Additionally, mentions of Asad's regime and the Syrian government were not present in the majority of articles either, whereas articles from 2022 mentioning the Russian government's involvement in Ukraine were prevalent. The analysis showed that the voice and experience of Syrian refugees, by for example conducting interviews, was absent in the majority of articles, whereas interviews, emotional encounters and the humanization in articles of Ukrainians was widespread. Moreover, articles from 2022 did not represent refugees as either economic and administrative burdens or as resources or investments. which to a greater degree articles from 2015 were in the material. Explicit rights-related discourse was absent in the majority of the material for both time periods.

Five subject positions for each period were located in the material. The refuge as a victim was located in both time periods, but was more prevalent in discourse from 2022. The particularly vulnerable position of the refugee, such as the "humanized", and "woman and child" - which emphasized the refugees own voice and evoking feelings of belonging and similarities between them and the Swedish population were located in articles from 2022, but not present in 2015. Instead, they were positioned as an economical burden - competing with other parts of Swedish welfare, as an administrative burden which suggested institutions incapability to handle the arriving numbers of refugees, and as a resource, implicating the refugee as an investment to the

state. Representations of refugees as explicit subject of rights related to EU's mass migration directive were present in articles from 2022, but should be noted these were in minority. The refugee as a force of nature, comparing them to catastrophes, waves, streams, and gush which were also in a minority of articles from both time periods.

Differences in the possible effects produced by representations were located. Both time periods represented the refugee as a victim, which served to humanize the refugee - warranting the protection and aid by the state - particularly when the position is perceived as having been forced onto the subject involuntarily.¹⁸¹ This was more emphasized in articles from 2022 as the subject positions of the woman, child and humanized refugee would potentially position the refugee as more deserving and eligible for protection by the state and various organizations. Descriptions of Russia's invasion into Ukraine and subsequent impact on its population could possibly also position the refugee more eligible as a victim, which is humanized and allowed to relay their experiences fleeing the aggressor - subsequently portraying a sense of belonging and connection between the Ukrainian and Swedish population. This would position the refugee away from something alien, which would make the state more accommodating related to rights and protection.

Such descriptions were not often mentioned in articles of 2015, instead perceiving the refugee as burdens or resources, which may result in dehumanizing Syrian refugees as commodities, or threats towards society. These categorizations subsequently render the refugee as eligible and deserving or illegible and undeserving of rights,¹⁸² based on difference, which the nation-state inevitably perceives as threats.¹⁸³ Comparatively to representations of Ukrainian refugees, portrayed with a sense of belonging and companionship with the Swedish population, Syrians, instead perceived as a burden and a threat may then result in the effect of inadequate protection and support from host-society, and subsequent tensions between Sweden and its population, and the refugees.

¹⁸¹ Holmes and Castañeda, *Representing the "European Refugee Crisis" in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death*, p. 17-18.

¹⁸² *Ibid.* p. 20.

¹⁸³ Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 301.

5.1.2. Comparative portrayals

Representations located in the material from 2015 showed similar findings as other authors presented in the study, but showed comparatively considerable inconsistencies with findings from 2022. Hovden et al's both negative portrayal - which emphasized the refugees economic strain on Sweden, and positive portrayal which suggested responsibility to help refugees,¹⁸⁴ being particularly prevalent in Aftonbladet from 2015¹⁸⁵ was visible in the study's material. The varied and sometimes divergent representations from 2015 shows the subject is still up for debate with differences in opinion. This is also reaffirmed in the results of the analysis by the divergent subject positions from 2015 between a resource and victim which co-exist with the burden representation, which might be an indicator that Swedish mainstream discourse is still divided with different opinions and debates on the issue. However, as Ukrainian refugees were not represented as either burdens, nor resources, significant inconsistencies with such portrayals were shown in 2022. Additionally, Hovden et al presented findings which humanized Syrian refugees,¹⁸⁶ showing consistencies with the results from 2015, as well the notion that articles refrained from including the refugees own voice. Comparatively, articles from 2022 substantially portrayed and humanized refugees, where problem representations and subject positions implicated Ukrainians as victims, and their voices, experiences and emotions were significantly more present in the material.

The study found representations from 2015 consistent with Kovář's findings of the victimization, economic and administrative frame of refugees from 2015 - portraying refugees either as humans with emotions and experiences, as economic and administrative burdens, or economic resources.¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Arcimaviciene and Baglama's myth of dehumanization - cultivating a perception of refugees as "inanimate objects" the nation state utilizes as a resource,¹⁸⁸ were similar to results from 2015, but

¹⁸⁴ Hovden et al, *The Syrian refugee crisis in Scandinavian newspapers*, p. 337.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. p. 342.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. p. 336.

¹⁸⁷ Kovář, *Media framing of immigrants in Central Europe in the period surrounding the refugee crisis: Security, negativity, and political sources*, p. 8.

¹⁸⁸ Arcimaviciene and Baglama, *Migration, Metaphor and Myth in Media Representations: The Ideological Dichotomy of "Them" and "Us"*, p. 5-6.

both showed inconsistencies with articles of refugees from 2022. Notably, Kovář's prevalent security and cultural portrayal - categorizing refugees' as criminals in opposition to the host-country's culture¹⁸⁹ - was not visible in the study's findings, indicating Sweden's mainstream discourse as less hostile towards Syrian refugees than Czechia and Slovakian. Natural phenomena were not prevalent in the media of either time period, which in the conception of the study was considered central as several of the authors emphasized these portrayals. The results did make visible several mentions of refugees as forces of nature, but were still considered in the minority of both time periods, showing a similar number of articles between Syrian and Ukrainian articles.

To reflect over the discrepancies between the two time periods, it is vital to understand who was primarily portrayed responsible for the crisis. The overwhelming emphasis on Syrian refugees as a contributor to the crisis in Sweden and subsequent burden to society, instead of the responsibility of Asad's regime or other actor's involvement in Syria is substantial. Perceiving it as such could contribute to understanding the rejection of Syrian refugees' own voices, whereas Ukrainians were so prevalent in the material - possibly because of the emphasis of Russia's responsibility as an hostile invader, and Ukrainians as victims of war.

How exactly representation and discourse are portrayed in Aftonbladet is important to bear in mind, and so is the way Aftonbladet provides a platform for the opinions of numerous individuals, political parties and writers. By doing so, Aftonbladet is also responsible for the content and representations published on their platform. During the analysis, the necessity for diligent research in the selected material of how to interpret Aftonbladets real representation was required, as the opinions in the news articles and the subject matter at hand often merged together, or were presented as opposite opinions.

To conclude, the study aims to answer the first research question, which is,

1. How does Swedish media's representation of refugees from 2015 and 2022 differentiate?

¹⁸⁹ Kovář, *Media framing of immigrants in Central Europe in the period surrounding the refugee crisis: Security, negativity, and political sources*, p. 22.

Swedish media representation of refugees differentiated substantially between 2015 and 2022. Similarities were identified of refugees represented as victims, in need of support and protection, but were notably more represented as such in 2022 than 2015.

Additionally, Syrian refugees were represented as both economical and administrative burdens and economical resources to society, implicating Syrians as commodities and investments, or as threats to Swedish society. Comparatively, Ukrainian refugees were primarily represented as victims of Russia's invasion into Ukraine, in need of support and protection.

5.2.1. The Arendtian perspective

The analysis showed that discourse described refugees from 2015 differently than 2022. Syrians - through media's representations - were subjected to a position construing them more implicitly alike the refugee Arendt described in "The Decline of the Nation-State and the End of the Rights of Man", that is to say - stateless and rightless. Arendt argues nation-states perceive difference as threats, with a fundamental urgency of ethnic homogeneity, and by belonging to the state, individuals may benefit by the provision of rights.¹⁹⁰ The humanized refugee then, is of particular importance when understanding how Ukrainian refugees are implicitly being represented more as subjects of human rights. Discourse related to 2022 showed prevalent representation of Ukrainians portrayed as vulnerable human beings with their own voices. Articles requested the necessity for protection of refugees, for example from exploitation and trafficking by organized leagues waiting outside of the Ukrainian border. Similar discourse referred to the need for transnational cooperation, the strengthening and expansion of the Swedish migration agency, safe accommodation, safeguarding by Swedish municipalities and the availability of women's emergency rooms. Additionally, numerous humanitarian organizations from both churches and associations were represented in the discourse. Free medical and dental care and free trains across the Öresunds Bridge into Sweden were provided. It is important to emphasize that the representation of a humanized victim does not explicitly mean one is represented as a subject of human rights, but much of the protection and support stated above can be

¹⁹⁰ Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 301.

perceived as considerable rights manifested, even though they were not explicitly expressed.

This protection was not as extensively shown in articles from 2015, where representations were divergent between Syrians as victims, burdens and resources. As such, Syrians were less portrayed as humans, and instead in opposition to the state's resources and welfare. Perceiving it from an Arendtian perspective, we may discern the sense of belonging to the state as of particular importance. Representations from 2022 were prevalent with such notions, for example the Swedish woman's encounter with a Ukrainian mother and her powerful assertion stating "We hugged for a long time [...] It was as if we had always known each other".¹⁹¹ Such representations were not frequent in articles from 2015. Representations of kinship between populations, a sense of belonging and additionally the inclusion of Ukrainians own voices suggested they were allowed to partake in what Arendt names the "public sphere of organizational, legal and political life"¹⁹² more extensively than Syrians, as Arendt argues the "acquisition of a person's human rights directly coincides with an individual's involvement in the public realm."¹⁹³

5.2.2. The protection and rights of refugees

Holmes and Castañeda and Kovář's findings suggested refugees as humans and victims inherently implicated greater degrees of protection, which is also suggested through the Arendtian perspective. Representations of an involuntary position, forced onto Ukrainians by an invader would - according to Holmes and Castañeda enable the protection of the recipient society to a greater extent.¹⁹⁴ Similarly, according to Kovář, humanizing refugees creates empathy and warrants support.¹⁹⁵ The study's result showed these were prevalent in articles from 2022, portraying them as particularly vulnerable victims, women and children, and as humans with emotions and fears. They were interviewed and their accounts of their experiences described, and

¹⁹¹ Shimoda and Shimoda, 'När hon hoppade ur bilen så kramades vi', p. 28.

¹⁹² Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 301.

¹⁹³ Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 302.

¹⁹⁴ Holmes and Castañeda, *Representing the "European Refugee Crisis" in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death*, p. 17-18.

¹⁹⁵ Kovář, *Media framing of immigrants in Central Europe in the period surrounding the refugee crisis: Security, negativity, and political sources*, p. 8.

numerous humanitarian aid organizations, churches and private individuals contributed and showed their support. Holmes and Castañeda state representations on “cultural, ethnic and religious” grounds results in perceptions of individuals deserving of rights or perceived as a threat by the state.¹⁹⁶ The authors mean this manifests as an “hierarchy of deservingness” of rights, particularly on ethnic reasons.¹⁹⁷

Based on these findings, it could be interpreted that Ukrainian and Syrian refugees are more or less deserving of rights by ethnic or religious reasons. It should be noted the results showed no explicit descriptions or signs of such a claim, but could be taken into consideration as one possible reason for why representations implicitly represented Ukrainians as greater subject of human rights than Syrians. Arendt’s notion that the private sphere is based “on the law of universal difference and differentiation”,¹⁹⁸ where refugees become perceived as a threat and incompatible with the public sphere, which it has been discerned Ukrainians to a greater degree is part of is also important to consider. The nation-states urgency of “ethnic homogeneity”,¹⁹⁹ may implicate the notion of Syrian refugees subjected to a position where they are perceived as less deserving than Ukrainians.

To conclude, the study aims to answer the second research question, which is,

2. To what extent are refugees from 2015 and 2022 represented as subjects of human rights?

Refugees from 2022 were to a greater extent implicitly represented as subjects of human rights than 2015. Explicit rights were not often expressed in the empirical data, but discourse referred to the necessity for providing aid and protection from both the Swedish state, organizations, associations and private individuals. Ukrainians were humanized and allowed to partake in the public sphere of the nation which subsequently coincided with the acquisition of a person’s human rights. Comparatively, such representations were not as extensively shown in articles from

¹⁹⁶ Holmes and Castañeda, *Representing the “European Refugee Crisis” in Germany and Beyond: Deservingness and Difference, Life and Death*, p. 13.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid. p. 19.

¹⁹⁸ Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 301.

¹⁹⁹ Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism*, p. 301.

2015, as divergent opinions in the debate also represented Syrians as burdens to society, which did not humanize them.

5.3. Further research

The research paper revealed inconsistencies in media representations of refugees. This suggests further research on the subject matter - especially of how representations differentiate between various groups. As the Ukrainian refugee crisis is on-going, research on specifically the crisis, the reception of refugees in other countries and how they are implicated as subjects of human rights is not extensively investigated, suggesting further examination.

6. Summary

The overarching aim of the research was to comparatively examine Swedish news media's discourse and representations of two groups of refugees during two different time periods, and whether, and if so, how they are represented from a human rights perspective. The research questions proposed were (1) How does Swedish media's representation of refugees from 2015 and 2022 differentiate? and (2) To what extent are refugees from 2015 and 2022 represented as subjects of human rights?

The study applied Carol Bacchi's "What's the problem represented to be?"-approach by asking five questions to the material, after which Hannah Arendt's theoretical perspective on the stateless and rightless refugee was applied on the emerging representations received from the method, together with the past literature presented on the subject matter.

The results of the analysis showed several differentiations in representations from 2015 compared to 2022. The study's findings showed similarities to previous research made on the subject matter related to the refugee crisis 2015, but showed significant differences in 2022. In both time periods, refugees were represented as victims in need of support, but extensively more so in 2022, where discourse also humanized refugees.. Comparatively, refugees in 2015 were to a higher degree represented as both economic and administrative burdens and subsequent threats to Swedish society, but also as economic resources and commodities compared to refugees from 2022. Additionally, the study concluded refugees from 2022 to a greater extent implicitly were represented as subjects of human rights than 2015, as Ukrainian refugees were more humanized and perceived as belonging to the nation-state's affairs compared to Syrians, who instead more extensively were represented as burdens to society.

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8. Appendix

All articles retrieved from Aftonbladet are enclosed in the appendices, starting from the oldest to the newest in chronological order.

8.1. Appendix A: Articles from Aftonbladet 2015

Holmqvist, Anette and Karlsson Pär. Alla har tackat ja till mötet om flyktingkrisen: Ett exceptionellt läge nu. Aftonbladet. 2015-10-14.

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