European Union Responses to the Migration Crisis

Márcia Alexandra de Moura Rosa

Mestrado em Estudos Internacionais

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Sumário

A chegada de um considerável número de imigrantes e requerentes de asilo aos países da União Europeia (UE) expôs as muitas contradições existentes no coração das políticas Europeias, internacionais e nacionais, incluindo a enorme lacuna entre a tão aclamada promessa de fornecer asilo e a prática real de asilo da UE.

Apesar dos seus esforços para conter a onda descontrolada de requerentes de asilo e migrantes, a UE não conseguiu responder ao incontável número de pessoas que chegavam diariamente às suas fronteiras por via marítima. No total, estima-se que mais de 800.000 pessoas tenham feito pedidos de ajuda e asilo ou tentado entrar na UE.

Na presente dissertação pretendia-se analisar a crise de migrantes e refugiados testemunhada pela União Europeia entre 2015 e 2016, procurando responder à questão: *Em que medida a ação da UE durante a crise migratória / de refugiados no Mediterrâneo correspondeu ao seu discurso oficial, no período de 2015 a 2016?*. Sentiu-se a necessidade de olhar para a dimensão discursiva da securitização da área das migrações e ajuda humanitária, uma vez que esta tem sido negligenciada na literatura em prol de uma análise às medidas concretas de segurança implementadas.

Concluiu-se através de uma análise comparativa entre discurso – centrada em documentos oficiais e discursos oficiais proferidos por atores políticos – e ação, contando também com o suporte de artigos científicos, que o conjunto de esforços aplicados pela UE não foi suficiente para dar resposta ao fluxo de migrantes e requerentes de asilo vivido entre 2015 e 2016.

Palavras-chave: crise de refugiados; União Europeia; Europa; refugiado; migrante; asilo; refugiados; resiliência; políticas.

Abstract

The arrival of a considerable number of immigrants and asylum seekers in European Union (EU) countries has exposed the many contradictions at the heart of European, international and national policies, including the significant gap between the so-called promise to provide asylum and the actual practice of asylum of the EU.

Despite its efforts to contain the uncontrolled wave of asylum seekers and migrants, the EU has failed to respond to the large numbers of people who arrived daily to its borders by sea. All in all, it is estimated that more than 800,000 people have made requests for help and asylum or attempted to enter the EU.

The following dissertation intended to analyze the migrant and refugee crisis witnessed by the European Union between 2015 and 2016, seeking to answer the research question: *To what extent did the EU's action during the migratory / refugee crisis in the Mediterranean correspond to its official discourse, in the period from 2015 to 2016 ?*. There was a need to look at the discursive dimension of securitization in the field of migration and humanitarian aid, since this has been neglected in the literature in favor of an analysis of the concrete security measures implemented. It was concluded, through a comparative analysis between discourse – focusing on official documents and official speeches by political actors – and action, with the support of scientific articles, that the set of efforts applied by the EU were not enough to face the flow of migrants and asylum seekers experienced between 2015 and 2016.

Keywords: refugee crisis; European Union; Europe; refugee; migrant; asylum; refugee; resilience; policies

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ACRONYM GLOSSARY

UNHCR: United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

EU: European Union

EC: European Commission

FRONTEX: European Border and Coast Guard Agency

NAVFORMED: European Union Naval Force Mediterranean

CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION

In 2015 and 2016, the European Union (EU) has experienced an unprecedented influx of refugees and migrants. More than one million people have arrived in the European Union, in most cases, escaping from war and terror in Syria and elsewhere (European Commission, 2017).

The following dissertation seeks to analyse the European Union (EU)'s response to the Mediterranean Migratory/Refugee Crisis from 2015 to 2016, focusing on the nexus between discourse and action. We will seek to answer the following research question: *To what extent did the EU's action during the Mediterranean Migratory / Refugee Crisis correspond to its official discourse, in the period from 2015 to 2016?,* by addressing topics such as securitization, "otherization" of refugees and applicants for asylum, development policies, and eligibility criteria.

Analysing the relationship between action and discourse is important not only to better understand both EU actions and the general spectrum of the "crisis", but also to enhance the understanding of the measures taken and their impact (not only on the EU, but also on migrants and asylum seekers).

Ever since World War II, Europe had not been faced with such an intense flow of migration like the one in 2015. The migratory crisis also commonly referred to as the Mediterranean Migratory/Refugee Crisis, reached critical levels both in 2015 and 2016, vastly surpassing the reception capacity of the countries of destination, primarily Greece and Italy, with hundreds of thousands of people trying to enter the EU and applying for asylum. It is important to underline that by Mediterranean Migratory/Refugee Crisis we mean the mass movement of forcibly displaced people (including asylum seekers and economic or other types of migrants) around the Mediterranean, mainly from the South to the Northern Mediterranean, from 2015 to 2016. In this context, we will focus on their arrival in the European Union and on the EU's institutional response to that arrival with a focus on the link between the EU's discourse and practice.

Situations of war and vulnerability, violations of human rights, religious intolerance, starvation, violence, and oppression are just a few of the motivations that have led hundreds of thousands of people to flee their countries of origin (Menéndez,

2016). The European Commission, alongside other EU institutions and the political and humanitarian bodies of each Member State, is responsible for maintaining asylum and reception policies in a joint effort to ensure their plain functioning. However, it is important to note that, despite the European Union's efforts to contain the unrestrained wave of asylum seekers and migrants, it was unable to respond to the large numbers of people who were reaching its borders on a regular basis, mostly by sea (Kostas, 2017).

Asylum and reception policies have proved too weak and limiting, which has further contributed to the increasing proportions of this situation, as the EU did not have an effective and fair control system (Ibid.). Between the limits of the asymmetric integration proposed by the EU (Menéndez, 2016), and the tightening of the joint decision (ibid.), many scholars harshly criticize the role that the European Institutions have been playing and which they claim is based on a constant inconsistency between inaction, the taking of inappropriate measures and the taking of emergency measures (Kostas, 2017; Menéndez, 2016, Alkopher, 2018, Favili, 2018, Cusumano, 2018, among others). This complex situation has come to challenge the EU's resilience by testing its ability to deal with extreme situations such as this, something that has been discussed lengthily (ibid.).

1.1 - Contextualization and literature review

The literature review has a fundamental role in research work, because it is through it that we contextualize the work within the large research area of which it is part. A literature review allows us to identify the state of the art on the subject, as well as to justify the objectives and methodology to be followed. Following the literature review we will outline a theoretical framework that will support the development of our research. Therefore, a brief literature review will allow us to contextualize and deepen our knowledge of the general situation experienced between 2015 and 2016 within the EU and the concepts associated with this event.

1.1.1. The Securitization of the EU's response to asylum seekers

One of the many purposes of International Law is to ensure the protection of refugees while at the same time allowing each state to retain control of their own borders; however, many claim that the EU was not able to give asylum seekers the support they needed, because of the sharp divisions between national governments (Favilli, 2018; Menéndez, 2016; Ferreira, 2016), or because the European Neighbourhood Policy revision of 2015, whose main goal was ensuring the EU's security while promoting stability and prosperity, has proven itself not so 'neighbourly' (Stevens and Dimitriadi, 2018).

The 1948 United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights clearly states that every human being has the right to move freely within their own territory (Börzel and Risse, 2017); however, when it comes to international borders there is a tighter control and a whole set of regulations in action, which applies to both economic migrants, and refugees and asylum seekers. Nevertheless, the "status" that each person carries while crossing an international border determines the kind of process that they must go through in order to be allowed to cross that same border. Most refugees and asylum seekers have to go through very complex and violent filtering before any type of decision is made regarding their stay in the country which shows an unfavourable position of the EU in this regard (ibid.).

The emergency measures that were applied by the EU failed to meet expectations (Menéndez, 2016). Despite the efforts initially shown, the wave of migrants and asylum seekers was simply too strong to be contained or halted, with thousands of people wanting to enter the EU daily. In addition to those thousands, many more lost their lives. Amongst the emergency measures taken by the EU is the use of the Dublin Regulation as a planning and containment tool, which, in addition to not being initially designed to deal with extreme situations such as the one lived during the "refugee crisis" period, it only helped to reinforce the existing gaps in the Common European Asylum System (Selanec, 2015) and the sharp divisions between the member states' national governments. The Dublin Regulation determines, by and large, that anyone seeking asylum is to receive it from the first EU country they set foot in, establishing "(...) the Member State responsible for the examination of the asylum application" (European Commission, 2016: 5). However, the practicalities of this regulatory system proved to be too fragile, unable to keep up with the migratory flow that was beginning to be felt (Menéndez, 2016).

Despite lack of success, the EU opted for securitization over international protection, which presumes the protection at the international level of anyone who, within their legal framework, fulfils the requirements for a certain type of protection (stateless, refugee or in distress). According to Directive 2011/95/EU, "international protection" means the recognition by an EU State of a non-EU national or a stateless person as a refugee or a person eligible for subsidiary protection (European Commission, 2016a).

The EU tried to securitize the area of migration, but has it succeeded in doing so? The intense flow of migration that took place was seen as a security crisis and not as a humanitarian crisis, which led the EU to apply exceptional restrictive measures. But this categorization contributed to the marginalization of migrants and asylum seekers.

The concept of securitization examines how an issue is transformed by an actor into a security issue in order to allow the use of extraordinary measures (Buzan, et al., 1998). The success of securitisation does not necessarily depend on the existence of a real threat but on the discursive ability to persuade the audience: "Usually, the securitizing actors designate existential threats to a referent object by issuing a statement, making a speech or giving an interview" (Stivas, 2019: 43).

Despite the set of laws that were created within the EU's common legal framework, both to recall the importance of collective action and as a response to this crisis, to provide an essential protection for refugees and asylum seekers, not all of them got to "enjoy" the promised protection (Chalkia and Giouzepas, 2018).

Although emergency measures implemented by the European Union included naval operations to rescue refugees arriving by sea – while detaining piracy, when previous cuts had been made to operations such as *Mare Nostrum* – the relocation of refugees from Greece and Italy to other member states and the deployment of groups of European agencies (such as FRONTEX) in these two countries to assist national administrations (and thus implement a new registration, identification and classification system), this initial set of measures proved itself not only insufficient but also late, since the greatest damage had already been felt (Menéndez, 2016).

1.1.2. Eligibility Criteria and Development Policies

> An estimated 362.000 refugees and migrants risked their lives crossing the Mediterranean Sea in 2016, with 181.400 arriving in Italy and 173.450 in Greece. In the first half of 2017, over 150.000 refugees and migrants entered Europe (UNHCR, 2017: 2).

Even though the focus of our dissertation is the period of 2015-2016, it is important to mention that figures for 2017 show that, although the peak of the crisis was reached in the previous year, the arrival of migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers continued to increase, and, by 2018, it is estimated that "almost 70.8 million individuals were forcibly displaced worldwide as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, or human rights violations" (UNHCR, 2019: 3). It is important, however, to establish the differences between refugee, asylum seeker, and migrant, as not only the situations they face come from different backgrounds, but these nomenclatures also refer to different legal statuses.

According to the UN's 1951 Refugee Status Convention, an asylum seeker is someone who, because of a well-founded fear of persecution, has been forced to flee his or her home country. Among the reasons that may lead a refugee to flee from his own country are race, religious beliefs, nationality, public opinion, or belonging to a particular social group (UNHCR, 1951). Unlike a refugee, a migrant is an individual who leaves his or her country of residence in search of better living conditions, regardless of their financial status. They are not entitled to any kind of international protection, as their situation is not considered to be a dangerous one (ibid.). In turn, an asylum seeker is an individual who flees from his or her home country to another country and applies for asylum. A person is not a refugee as their asylum claim has not yet been granted (hence the term "seeker"), and they are not a migrant either, as their decision to leave their home country was not economically motivated but forced due to extreme conditions of insecurity (Amnesty International, 2019).

The sheer size of the sudden migration and asylum seeker flow has forced the European Union to take emergency measures, as pre-existing measures have proven insufficient to control the arrival of exponentially increasing aid requests. In addition, constitutional obstacles have proven to be too many, with the lack of specific legal action defining and regulating the entry of asylum seekers into a specific country (Menéndez, 2016).

The EU became a key actor in matters of categorization of border crossing processes with the implementation of a new, stricter system to verify the correct application of Schengen rules. The European Border Surveillance System (EUROSUR) alongside FRONTEX (European Border and Coast Guard Agency) has been upgraded to ensure more effective border control action not only on land, but also on external sea borders. EU NAVFORMED Sophia was as well one of the resources used by the European Union as an aid to FRONTEX's action, whose aim was rescuing vessels and asylum seekers and, at the same time, controlling irregular migration, thus ensuring a reinforcement of maritime safety, prioritizing border control and anti-smuggling tasks (Cusumano, 2018). However, the economic and geopolitical developments that the EU achieved during this migration and asylum seeker wave affected the already established normative categories, such as the centralized asylum policy, which presumes that each Member State still retains the ultimate formal authority on external borders (even though with imposed limits by the European authorities) (Menéndez, 2016), leading to a reduction in regulatory effectiveness (Pastore, 2015).

Despite all the measures taken by the European Commission to ensure full control of irregular migration and build confidence in the effectiveness of the EU's migration management system, the absence of centralized institutions and the lack of solidarity shown by some member states, such as Germany, led the EU to fail to ensure that the fundamental rights of migrants were respected. In 2016, Germany opened its borders for two weeks but quickly placed controls on the Austrian border, leading more member states to follow its example, and leading, in turn, to an internal borderless area becoming an area with "walls" and limitations (Menéndez, 2016). This raises the question of whether the crisis is integral to a cyclical process of EU integration rather than occasional events caused by external shocks (Scipioni, 2018).

1.1.3. Academic Debate vs. Political Discourse

The scale of the migration crisis that has struck the Mediterranean and, with particular relevance for our study, the EU, has led the way to a substantial political and academic

debate. The debate has proven to be a controversial one, with a wide range of opinions and three primary sources feeding the discussion: the political sphere, the academic sphere, and the public sphere.

Both the academic and the public spheres, whose discourse is largely shaped by social media for disseminating information, argue that the member states are the victims of refugees and asylum seekers and not the other way around. According to Munro (2017), the public sphere largely defends that the movement of migrants and asylum seekers, which is categorized as vulnerable "them", threatens the essence of 'Western' society in various areas (health, politics, economics, education, employability). According to Said (1978), the West created a distorted view of the East as the "Other", "non-European" in an attempt of differentiation that served the primary interests of colonialism. The perception of this group of migrants, refugees and asylum seekers as vulnerable, and psychologically weaker, reinforces Said's theory that this group, coming from the South and East for help, is not seen as an equal but rather as a lower group.

The political sphere is divided into opposite poles with the centre-left parties in favour of the European Union and the measures taken therein, viewing this as a humanitarian crisis requiring urgent action by the EU and the Member States; and the centre-right parties, constantly oscillating between Italy and the United Kingdom, focusing on themselves and upholding the premise that severe measures must be taken to decentralize Europe, in order to diminish the powers of the EU institutions over policy making (Gianfreda, 2017).

Taking Hungary, part of the Visegrad group, as an example, once the roots of communism were banished from the country to allow room for democracy, a multi-party system was implemented. However, after the fall of communism the right-wing nationalist parties gained more electoral and parliamentary weight, starting to exploit the refugee crisis as a way to foster anti-establishment claims. The radical right populist parties argue in favour of restoring the national sovereignty and secure external borders (Ferreira, 2016). The issue of migration accentuated challenges that already existed in party identities, which has shaken political alliances due to differences of opinion (Gianfreda, 2017).

One of the factors that also contributed to the discussion about EU migration and action is the political sphere, which legitimizes immigration policy with populist

politicization and the use of new online modes of political communication (Krzyzanowski, 2017). And while, on the one hand, political discourse focuses more on the economic and political issue, on the other hand, the academic debate focuses mainly on the humanitarian issue, showing a greater and deeper understanding of the situation.

The widespread academic debate focuses on the protection of refugees and asylum seekers, accusing the EU not only of stepping back and delaying their action but also of creating too many barriers to aid as too much policy is involved (Menéndez, 2016). However, there is still a considerable portion of academics (Triandafyllidou, 2014; Wodak, 2015; Menéndez, 2016; Gianfreda, 2018; Kryzanowski, 2017; Stivas, 2019; among others) who argue that the whole apparatus around this situation is unnecessary and exaggerated, as terms such as 'refugee/migrant' or 'migrant crisis' create a false analogy that in turn leads to an uncontrollable hysteria about this "crisis" (Munro, 2017).

It is important to recognize that language is a very powerful part of discourse. But more important than the content of discourses or the way they are produced is the role that each discourse plays in the ordering of the world. The dominant discourse is not committed to an absolute (social) truth, on the contrary, it is the one who *produces* the ideas acquiesced as the truth (Foucault, 1977) and, as such, it is important to understand that the discourse produced about the Mediterranean Migratory / Refugee Crisis is crucial for the development of opinions as well as public policy and therefore for the way this specific group is perceived.

In the next chapter we will explain the analysis process that we conducted during the making of the dissertation, in order to answer the main question, presenting the methodology used, as well as the main question to which we intend to answer. Following the applied methodology, there will be two focuses of analysis that we consider essential not only to understand the position taken by the EU, both in terms of discourse and action, but also to understand the way the refugee and asylum seeker is perceived in the public sphere. After the analysis, the closing chapter will follow with the final comments and obtained conclusions.

CHAPTER 2 - METHODOLOGY

The goal of this dissertation is to answer the research question: *To what extent did the EU's action during the Mediterranean Migratory/Refugee crisis correspond to its official discourse, in the period from 2015 to 2016?* The academic debate shows different perspectives that, combined, provide a myriad of analyses of the situation within the EU, while at the same time providing a historical context on the crisis. The methodology followed in this dissertation aims to establish an analysis of the EU's discourse on the migrant crisis compared to its actions between 2015 and 2016, during which time there was a greater influx of EU entries. For this purpose, we will carry out discourse analysis, since this methodology considers how language, written or spoken, gives life to social and cultural perspectives and identities (Gee, 2011).

The type of discourse analysis to be elaborated follows the premises of the MDA (Mediated Discourse Analysis) model, since it focuses on how discourse influences action because it "(...) begins with the social action and only takes up the analysis of language (discourse, texts) when those are understood to be significant mediational means for the mediated actions under analysis" (Wodak and Meyer, 2001: 145).

We know that the viability of the sources and their variety contribute to a more solid analysis of the central subject to this dissertation. For this same reason, all documents and speeches analysed in this dissertation, with the support of scientific articles, were carefully evaluated prior to their analysis, also taking into account their relevance to the subjects covered.

Initially, a general search was conducted that led to a high number of results, from which we reduced our search criteria, until we reached a viable number of sources. After this process, we proceeded to a careful analysis of all discursive instances in order to establish comparisons, extract the most relevant information and understand the relationship between discourse and action in the context of the EU and the refugee / migratory crisis between 2015/2016, supported by relevant scientific articles.

In this sense, our analysis of the EU's responses to the crisis will focus on the nexus between actions and discourse and will include a triangulation between official EU documents – including the Treaty of Lisbon (2009), the European Union Global Strategy (2016), and the European Migration Agenda (2015) – and speeches by relevant political

actors, but also news articles and statistical data related to this matter, as a way to better understand the situation within the identified context as well as scientific articles. The analytical focus will fall on the relationship between the EU's actions as a response to the crisis and its collective public official discourse. In order to assess how the EU articulates between what it said and what it indeed did, it is essential to trace the discursive patterns associated with the EU's identity while at the same time analysing how the discursive fabrics are being woven by the policy and opinion elite (Carta, 2015; Diez, 2001; Jorgensen, 2013).

The research will also take into account the existing statistics regarding the migration flows and asylum seekers, available in the official websites of the European Commission and European Union. Numbers are a valuable asset to elaborate conclusions and to question the effectiveness of the current asylum measures. Official statistical data also help to assign a more rigorous character to the research, since it contains vital information for the analysis of the current situation, but also for the analysis of the previous and subsequent periods of the 'migrant / asylum seeker crisis'.

We will begin by mapping out the EU's responses following a chronological order, and simultaneously analysing the convergences and discrepancies between these actions and the EU's discourse. The chosen time frame will go from 2015 to 2016, which constitutes a peak of the crisis (UNHCR, 2019). We have decided to limit our research to this specific period to narrow down the results and focus on the results from the research, and also because this period comprises the highest number of arrivals by sea on a monthly basis since the intensification of the flow in 2014. This allows for a better look at the tendency of these migration and asylum seeker flows and how they have been contributing to the political and legislative changes in the EU, while at the same time allowing us to explore these policies' appropriateness in light of these crises, as well as how assertive the EU's speech has been in relation to its actions.

CHAPTER 3 - A MEDIATED DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF THE EU'S ROLE IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REFUGEE CRISIS

3.1. Refugees as "The Others" in the Public Debate

During the Mediterranean migration and refugee crisis between 2015 and 2016, many migrants and asylum seekers who left their countries of origin behind due to adverse human life conditions faced obstacles to their entry into the EU. These obstacles stemmed from the narrowing of legal channels through which they could have safe passage (e.g. asylum requests at foreign embassies), or due to EU penalties for transport companies that allow passengers without proper documentation (Trilling, 2018).

Although initial EU reactions demonstrated a humanitarian nature, perceptions and reactions changed from framing these people as victims and asylum seekers to framing them as a threat to the normal functioning of the host countries that had been willing to receive them. The peak of migration experienced in 2015 gave rise to a securitization of the Schengen space by the main institutional actors (the Council, the Commission, and the Parliament) as well as – and primarily – some of the most affected Member States. The aim was to provide "internal" order to member states' action on asylum, reception and migration policies. However, the securitisation movement did not achieve its goal as it only gave emphasis to the priority the EU had given to internal security over and above the plight of the 'othered' migrants and asylum seekers (Ceccorulli, 2018).

These have come to be discursively framed not as a risk group in general, but specifically as a group that poses risks to national society, not only because they are perceived as "terrorist infiltrators" but also because they are considered to be a threat to the natural course of society. This change in the perception of migrants has thus begun to put pressure on public services and welfare (Rzepnikowska, 2018). This idea of "othering" refugees, migrants and asylum seekers, has been proliferating in political discourse and, consequently, in academic research. Many authors and scholars share the belief that the general opinion formed about refugees is the result of 'half-truths', which, in turn, leads to the construction of lies that misrepresent reality (Menéndez, 2016).

In the context of the dominant discourse of securitization of humanitarian assistance in the EU, the news that has been spread may reflect the linguistic tension

inherent in the refugee, representing the latter as simultaneously a victim and a threat. It is important to understand how the journalistic selection is made and how the ordering strategies are applied, since they reflect a transparent hierarchy in relation to those who have a voice, highlighting the European political spheres, which place the role of the refugee at the base of the basic principles of silencing (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017). In turn, this demarcated voice hierarchy leads to a three-phase recognition of refugees and migrants as political, social, and historical actors, leading to a "marginalization" that keeps them firmly out of "our" (i.e. European) communities of belonging (ibid.).

With this type of discourse, the general feelings of uncertainty about the presence of these "outsiders" in the European Union are further accentuated, creating a general wave of instability and intolerance within the EU (ibid.), thus dehumanizing them. There is a collectivization around the image of the refugee and asylum seeker, which in turn leads to labelling of these people as vulnerable "sub-citizens", delegitimizing them as referent objects (Lams, 2018).

The way in which discourse is constructed on the most diverse information platforms has a very important weight in the way the global population perceives not only the general situation of the refugees but also the refugee itself (Arcimaviciene and Baglama, 2018). At the same time, these tactics used by the media transform the "refugee role" in an image of a collective group, almost dehumanizing the seriousness of the situation, reducing the role of the individual to act as a collective (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017): "the effect, all too often, was to frame these newly arrived people as others; people from 'over there', who had little to do with Europe itself and were strangers, antagonistic even, to its traditions and culture" (Trilling, 2019).

The importance of news journalism in the crisis lies, therefore, not simply in its informational value but also in its political value as an instrument for the formation of European publics as moral communities (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017: 614).

Although the European Commission itself affirms the importance of journalistic value (European Commission, 2011), news and the media in general are sometimes lacking in the truth of what is really happening with refugees: "Refugees were hardly represented as civilians fleeing from death zones in the conflicts in Syria, Afghanistan or Iraq, while the consequences of their arrival in Europe were almost exclusively discussed in negative terms" (Ibid.: 627-628).

What happens, in most cases, is that the making of news gives the world a misrepresentation of reality, full of fallacies and false assumptions about the crisis itself and of refugees and migrants, which is a serious problem that negatively affects the view the rest of the world has about this risk group. Mayer (2017) states that many were the actors and non-actors in refugee reception and border control who saw the "city" - as a physical space and as a community - as a key place to address closure policy and to build an open European Union. While some invoke the ancient European traditions that allow us to recognize that the integration of foreigners occurs in the urban network (Menéndez, 2016; Mayer, 2017; Carta, 2015), many point to the power of cities as places of encounter and integration (Junkos, 2017; Jogersen, 2013; Kostas, 2017).

Referring to the German case specifically, Mayer (Ibid.) explores the key actors and institutions within this urban policy arena and analyses how their collaborative/competitive interactions face the challenges of receiving numerous newcomers, shaped by supralocal factors as well as contingent and political factors. In cities and towns across Germany, the broad and diverse spectrum of help and solidarity sprang up, triggered by widespread encounters of, and media reports about, catastrophic and degrading situations at the borders, in trains and buses, as well as at the reception centres and processing facilities that appeared to be completely overburdened with registering and taking care of the new arrivals. The estimates at the time were of over a million refugees arriving in Germany in 2015; more than 80,000 came to Berlin alone (Ibid.:5). These figures reveal the ineffectiveness of the methods used by the European Union and its host country, as the control of asylum seekers' entry and accounting are estimates rather than actual numbers - figures that can be quite superior. Mayer also states that, in cities such as Berlin or Munich, the presence of refugees who were not registered by state agencies was too high, and this made it impossible to organize asylum procedures.

Overall, the general opinion that has been formulated and mediated about refugees is the result of half-truths that lead, consequently, to the formation of misrepresentations of reality. One of the arguments most often used as a justification for the marginalization of refugees is the fear that they will "steal" the jobs of citizens and permanent residents in the communities in which they live. However, empirical evidence shows that the perception that refugees affect residents' employability or profit levels is more imagined than real (Menéndez, 2016). This "crisis", most often consisting of overreaction and panic, fuelled by a series of misconceptions about who the migrants and refugees are, why they come and what it means for the EU, has an impact on the kind of solidarity, social integration, cultural identity, civility and public order that is promoted in the community (Huysmans, 2000). People associate immigrants and refugees with crime, terrorism, and social unrest, but "rather than seeing European racism as a thing of the past, the recognition of its persistence is essential if we are to understand the refugee crisis and some of the responses to it" (Trilling, 2018).

In a speech addressed to the Commission and the entire European Union on September 9th, 2015, European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker used the narrative "More Europe" as a way to appeal to a sense of "More Union", implying that the EU could only have success if all countries acted together. The EU, to be triumphant, 'must mark its solid position' on the world map and ensure that it acts as a whole, setting aside any internal differences that may exist. In fact, in a thorough analysis of Juncker's speech, Radu (2016) stresses the emphasis placed on triumph and traumatic morality, used to demonstrate that the European Union's historical past has allowed it to accumulate several lessons and that they should serve as a basis for the present. At a time when the EU was faced with a situation of great tension, aggravated by the image of a young Syrian, Aylan Kurdi, whose body hit the shore on a Turkish beach after a failed attempt to reach Greece (Spindler, 2015), Juncker called for collective solidarity by saying

> (...) when, generations from now, people read about this moment in Europe's history books, let it read that we stood together in demonstrating compassion and opened our homes to those in need of our protection (Juncker, 2015).

In October of the same year, German Chancellor Angela Merkel also delivered a speech addressed to the European Union, in which she emphasized the importance of solidarity and union that the EU must reinforce, arguing that only with these two items combined would the EU be able to give an effective response to the crisis:

> The entire European Union is called upon to address these challenges. In the refugee crisis we must not give in to the temptation to fall back on national government action. On the contrary, what we need now is more Europe (Merkel, 2015).

In a discursive analysis of the two speeches, Radu (2016) highlights a very interesting feature: the predominance of narratives alluding to Europeanization as a common factor. Both EU leaders believe that the refugee and migrant crisis has ignited the flame of European integration, leading politicians to publicly defend their beliefs about the supranational scope of the European project. It is clear, however, that there is a marked contradiction between the 'Brussels' speech and the speech adopted by certain national politicians, which leads to a contrast between the supranational position that defends the EU as a shared but still united identity (Ibid.), and the increase in populism, the result of divergences between the member states, which in turn pose several obstacles to the construction of a global and coherent policy (Ferreira, 2016).

When analysing speeches by EU officials and diplomats from different Member States, it becomes clear that the pronominal selection carries a process of constant change in the definition and redefinition of "groupness" (Carta, 2016). The "we" used in several speeches, always assumes a unilateral sense, although it undertakes a sense of political belonging (Ibid.). There is a clear inconsistency in identity as an institutional group between the "we" (the joint identity of the European Union and the member states) and the "we" (which becomes "them" - individualistic vision, used for their benefit by each member state) (Ibid.). The greater the gap and the lack of coherence between the EU and the member states, the greater the likelihood that citizens will rely on national opinions, which may or may not favour the reception and support of refugees and asylum seekers. However, there is a strong notion by the EU that there are gaps within itself and that these same gaps prevent the full functioning of its organs/states in times of crisis and that,

therefore, "(…) the world needs a strong European Union like never before" (European Commission, 2016: 3).

Despite all of the EU's efforts to foster a relationship of solidarity, unity, and mutual assistance between the member states, the existing gaps make it harder to achieve coherent decision-making, which in turn emphasizes the instability experienced within the European Union. Consequently, this lack of coherence fuels the insecurities of national citizens, at the same time that it makes it difficult for them to take a position on the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers in their countries.

3.2. The nexus between the EU's action and discourse

Discourse itself is a linguistic construction linked to the social context in which the text is developed. In other words, the ideologies present in a discourse are directly determined by the political-social context in which the creator lives (Foucault, 1977). A discourse is an explanation and representation of the world, the verbalization of a reality, in which we are inserted. Discourse enables the materialization of ideologies and, for this very reason, it is a powerful tool in the transmission of information, since it can be understood, interpreted, and reorganized (Young, 1981).

Discourse analysis is based on the premise that discourse is a social construction that reflects a view of the world linked to others and to the society in which they live and that can only be analysed taking into account its historical context and the conditions under which it was created (Willig, 2014). Therefore, discourse analysis is as important as the discourse itself, as it allows a deeper understanding of how the use of language is involved in the construction of versions of events (Ibid.). As such, the analysis of the discourse used by the European Union, as well as by all European bodies and member states, during the Mediterranean Migratory / Refugee Crisis, is very relevant to understand whether the actions taken by the EU correspond to what has been said and / or recorded in speeches and official documents.

Since its beginning, the EU has promoted values centred on human rights, promoting peace, security, freedom, and justice, as well as the well-being of its citizens. Solidarity, alongside equal rights, is one of the pillars that make up the European integration project and that has characterized its action over more than 70 years. These

values, as well as some of its objectives, are reflected in the Treaty of Lisbon. The European Union took another step in its integration process in 2009, with the entry into force of the Treaty of Lisbon. Among other characteristics, this Treaty sought to improve the EU's capacity as an external political actor – mainly in the area of security, with the sharing of responsibilities and expenses – recreating the figure of High Representative for security policy, creating the figure of President of the Council European Parliament, and giving the EU legal personality (Barroso, 2007).

One of the focuses of this treaty was also related to the fair treatment of asylum seekers and immigrants and the prevention of irregular migratory flows – immigration and asylum policies are directly related to the protection of the fundamental human rights of refugees and migrants and, according to the EU, there should be no differentiation in treatment – in addition to shedding new light on the importance of combating human trafficking:

> (…) the free movement of persons is ensured in conjunction with appropriate measures with respect to external border controls, asylum, immigration and the prevention and combating of crime (Treaty of Lisbon, 2009, Art.3: 13).

This treaty would give way the Stockholm Programme, a new version based on the original treaty, but with more firm and ambitious objectives. However, as was seen during the 2015/2016 crisis, the measures created were not enough to contain the number of refugees and irregular migrants seeking asylum within the EU's limits (Kostas, 2017). The Lisbon Treaty was only responsible for initiating and strengthening the EU's political identity, as it regulates and coordinates relations between member states. Still, "(...) the International political identity of the Union can only be initiated by the Lisbon Treaty and cannot be constituted by it" (Ilik and Adamczyk, 2017: 23), since it is a treaty and not a constitution.

The notions of responsibility and solidarity are crucial for the development of a coherent immigration and asylum policy. Also present in the discourse embedded in the European Union's 2016 Global Strategy, there is an awareness that "a fragile world calls for a more confident and responsible European Union" (European Union, 2016: 3). Throughout the document, emphasis is placed on the protection of human lives and peace

building, through the application of security measures in matters of conflict. The EU's explicit intention is to fill existing gaps in its integrated approach to conflicts and crises, based on preventive peace – that is, to ensure peace and to work on a solution that allows to deal with possible conflicts, before they happen – conflict resolution and an economy peace policy (Ibid.). However, despite the EU's effort to find a balance in the sharing of responsibilities with the member states in the management of these matters, the lack of coherence in action and decision-making marked this specific period, as the contradictory preferences of member states have affected European solidarity. Migration management is constantly compromised by the national interest of each member state, which compromises the achievement of a common objective (Ferreira, 2016).

The emergency measures applied by the EU proved to be insufficient to fill the gaps in pre-existing policies on asylum and international protection (Menéndez, 2016), not only because they focused on a medium / short period, but also because they focused more on control borders and not on the humanitarian side of the matter (Ferreira, 2016). Expressed in the European Agenda on Migration, there is a clear notion on the part of the EU, that the first set of measures applied were far from enough, in addition to not having the necessary rigor to face the situation that the EU was going through. There was a clear need for a "(...) new, more European approach" (European Commission, 2015: 1). In this sense, a set of concrete measures for immediate action was included in the Agenda. These measures, along with a coherent and clear common policy which, according to the European Commission, are fundamental, would be the first step to deal with the issue of irregular migration (Ibid.). Focused not only on the crisis itself but also on migration management in general, this document encompasses strategies related to asylum, regular and irregular migration, human trafficking, and border management,

> bring[ing] together the different steps the European Union should take now, and in the coming years, to build up a coherent and comprehensive approach to reap the benefits and address the challenges deriving from migration (Ibid.: 3).

The Agenda comprises two main focuses of action, the first being an immediate response to the crisis and the second defining four pillars of migration management. The express intention of the EU, with this Agenda, would be to not only address the shortcomings that

had so far been experienced in crisis management but also to be a model for responding to future crises by building a common immigration policy based on four points: irregular migration, border management, common policy, and legal migration. The Agenda also comprises the acceptance and implementation of the Common European Asylum System; a consolidation of Union standard for border management; combating criminal networks and human trafficking, thus ensuring cooperation with third world countries; as well as a new systematic monitoring process to ensure control of irregular migration (Ibid).

Joint Frontex operations "Triton" and "Poseidon" had their budget tripled to allow for an extension of their capabilities and geographic scope, while providing operational border support to member states under pressure, helping to save lives. The EU also gave its immediate support to eventual Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) operations, in a joint effort to dismantle criminal networks related to the smuggling of migrants – thus emphasising the security dimension of the EU's response. Among the key points for action, there is also the creation of a system of temporary distribution of people with an evident need for international protection in order to guarantee an equitable and balanced participation of all member states in this common effort (Ibid.). The Agenda also includes a proposal for a common EU permanent system to provide protection to displaced persons in need of protection, with an additional 50 million euros allocated in the 2015/2016 EU budget. EASO, Frontex and Europol are also mentioned to work on the ground with frontline Member States for rapid identification, registration and fingerprinting of migrants. The EU also intended to work in partnership with third countries to manage irregular migration, through work associated with more general political initiatives to promote stability (European Commission, 2015: 3-6).

Despite the EU's intentions expressed in the document, this agenda does not address key topics such as violence, poverty, and political breakdown. The value of discursive omission is almost as high as the value of speech, as it has practical implications for the EU's self-positioning in the face of the challenge presented by the migration crisis. The lack of a set of measures dealing not only with conflict management but also with the post-conflict period is noteworthy. There needs to be a plan of crisis aftermath control, namely social and political disaggregation in neighbouring countries, as well as the violence and endemic poverty in many African countries (Ferreira, 2016). Thus, the lack of agreement between member states undermines the entire migration agenda and the construction of a comprehensive and coherent policy (Ibid.). A deeper

analysis of the European Migration Agenda (2015) and the European Union's Global Strategy (2016) reveals significant tensions between a pragmatic and principled foreign policy, as well as instability within the EU (Juncos, 2017). The European Union's Global Strategy refers to building state and societal resilience in its neighbourhood as one of the key strategic priorities of the EU (Ibid), which highlights the inconsistency in cooperation between the EU and member states.

Within these two official documents, there is an illusion that migratory currents can be controlled without the need to investigate their structural causes (Menéndez, 2016), when in fact, it is necessary to go to the root of the problem in order to be able to have control over this situation. The European Union has taken positive steps towards this irregular migration crisis by moving forward with naval operations to save and rescue refugees while catching smugglers, relocating more than 40,000 refugees from Greece and Italy to other member states (European Commission, 2015), and also by deploying groups of European agencies to Greece and Italy to assist national administrations, while implementing a new registration, identification and classification system (Ibid.). These measures, put into action after the worsening of the migratory situation, helped to alleviate the tension felt throughout the European Union - member states included - showing a clear willingness to return to the *status quo* prior to the refugee crisis through the search for countries that accept responsibility sharing with the EU (Ibid.).

However, as was seen later, in cities such as Berlin or Munich, the presence of refugees who were not registered by state agencies was too high, and this situation made it impossible to organize compliance with asylum procedures (Mayer, 2017). It is estimated that, at this specific time, there were "(...) over a million refugees arriving in Germany in 2015; more than 80,000 came to Berlin alone" (Ibid.: 5). These are numbers that reveal, once again, the ineffectiveness of the methods used by the European Union and its member states, since the control of the entry of asylum seekers and their counting are estimates rather than real numbers. The presence of asylum seekers who were not registered by state agencies was higher than expected, a situation that made it impractical to organize compliance with asylum procedures.

The management of migratory flows was called into question. The EU was finding it difficult to find a coherent response and the emergency measures taken worked only in the short / medium term, focusing mostly on border control and not on the humanitarian side (Ferreira, 2016). With the adoption of increasingly restrictive measures to contain

flows and access limitations, member states' responses condition the entire EU crisis management strategy (Ibid.). The refugee redistribution policy, subsequently proposed by the EU, was also a failure. The plan proposed by the Commission (European Commission, 2015), stipulated that each state would have to accept a given number of asylum seekers proportionate to the size of its economy, unemployment rate, and population mass (Robert et. all, 2015). The imposition of sanctions on states that refused to receive refugees, or only agreed to receive fewer than previously agreed upon, generated criticism on behalf of certain member states, which criticized the imposition of fines. In addition, many did not accept the proposed redistribution of migrants/asylum seekers.

The tension between the countries of arrival and the host countries is notorious (Ferreira, 2016), as the EU negotiations are lacking in cooperation and solidarity with each other. A greater spirit of unity and community between the member states is necessary for the common interest to prevail over national interests (Ibid.). As the EU witnessed an intensification of the migratory flow, Germany unilaterally suspended the Dublin Regulation in 2016, which allowed the application for asylum in the country, even though this was not the country of entry (Ibid.). This measure generated an intense flow of asylum seekers, higher than what the country could bear, and in September of the same year, Germany took a step back and closed the railway line that communicates with Austria. Consequently, the neighbouring countries felt immediate effects, such as the Czech Republic which immediately tightened border controls, followed by Hungary, Austria, and Slovakia (Menéndez, 2016).

Although in the first moment of the crisis, Austria followed the example of Germany, adopting an open-door policy in relation to asylum and reception of migrants, months later, a policy of containing flows was implemented, just like the countries of the Balkans route had done previously (Ferreira, 2016). Austria also strengthened the border perimeter with Slovenia, passed a law that restricts the right to asylum, and started to accept a very small number of asylum applications (Huggler, 2016).

The Nordic countries were also a major destination for refugees and migrants, such as Sweden, which, despite its liberal view on asylum policy, made several concessions and initiated a series of adjustments to refugee policy (Ibid.), introducing changes such as the non-assignment of permanent asylum, creation of a temporary residence permit for refugees and imposed as well the need to present a valid identity document to apply for asylum (Ferreira, 2016).

Countries in the Balkan region (namely Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia) as well as Hungary, in turn, adopted a set of emergency measures to reduce the flow of migrants, managing to drastically reduce the number of refugees entering the Balkan route (Ibid.). After this decision, the search for common solutions was thus compromised by the attitude of these countries, since the attempt to close a route leads to the opening of new channels of irregular immigration (Ferreira, 2016; Huggler, 2016).

In the meantime, the EU's inability to deal with the scale of the crisis led to an agreement with Turkey being adopted (European Commission, 2015). The agreement with Turkey would turn out to be the turning point for irregular migration in 2016. The agreement was based on four key-points, which would benefit both Turkey and the European Union in a supposed joint effort to combat irregular migration flows. The agreement understands that all "irregular migrants" crossing Turkey's border with Greece would be "returned" and each arrival would be subject to an individual assessment by the Greek authorities. In addition, the EU would allocate 6 billion euros to help manage this problem by 2018 (European Council, 2016). In short, Turkey became a key element in managing the EU's migration/asylum seeker crisis and regulating irregular migration flows, committing itself to a set of efficient measures to combat the creation of new immigration routes. Nonetheless, according to Ferreira (2016) this agreement did nothing but "(...) mov[e] the problem to a neighbour country by outsourcing the European border" (ibid.: 100).

Member states have offered responses focused on the adoption of increasingly restrictive policies, many of which include closing and strengthening borders as a way of curbing migratory flows, as well as reviewing national asylum policies (Ibid.:101). As a support measure for border control and migration management, the European Union has put forward a new proposal for the creation of a Coast Guard, similar to, and stemming from FRONTEX, which would be responsible for the management of the EU's external borders and which would have power to act in the event of a migratory flow, although with imposed limitations by the European authorities (Menéndez, 2016). Nevertheless, despite all the efforts of the European Union to reconcile the requests of the Member States with the creation of coherent measures and solutions to control the crisis, the constant tensions within the EU have proven to be substantial, rendering the cooperation between the EU and its Member States in this regard difficult, leading to a questioning of the European identity and the idea of a truly united European Union.

CONCLUSION

This dissertation aimed to answer the research question: To what extent did the EU's action during the Mediterranean Migratory / Refugee Crisis correspond to its official discourse, in the period from 2015 to 2016?, through a comparative analysis between speeches and official documents, and the actions taken by the EU, supported by journalistic texts and scientific literature.

We conclude that, despite the foundations of the European Union having their roots in neutrality, impartiality, humanism, and independence, and despite the countless efforts and resources made available to support refugees and irregular migrants, its capacity has proved unable to respond the dimension that this issue presented, particularly in light of normative disagreements between EU institutions and different member states.

Altogether, it is estimated that more than 800,000 people have applied for help and asylum or tried to enter Europe between the period 2015 and 2016 (Chouliaraki and Zaborowski, 2017). The European Commission, along with the other European Union institutions and the political and humanitarian organizations of each Member State involved, is responsible for maintaining asylum and reception policies, in a joint effort to ensure their smooth functioning. However, it is important to note that, despite efforts by the European Union to contain the uncontrolled wave of refugees and migrants, it has not been able to respond to the high numbers of people who, daily, were arriving at the borders, mostly by sea. Asylum and reception policies proved to be too weak and restrictive, which further contributed to the increase in the proportions of this situation since the EU did not have an effective and fair control system.

Furthermore, the lack of coherence within the EU, fuels the insecurities of the national citizen and makes it more difficult to make decisions regarding the arrival of refugees and asylum seekers, while contributing to an environment of distrust for refugees (Menéndez, 2016). The perception of this risk group came to change as the number of requests for help increased, as these refugees and asylum seekers became victims of the threat to the normal functioning of countries. This perception gives a categorization of "other" to the refugee, which is emphasized in the discourse constructed by the media - which ascribes the status of victim and threat to them, simultaneously – as well as by some Member States.

Even with the strengthening of securitization, the set of measures implemented by the EU only emphasized its high priority, international security.

In the official documents and speeches analysed in the context of this dissertation, we highlight the repetitive appeal to solidarity and a feeling of mutual help (European Commission, 2015). The use of words like "solidarity", "cohesion" and "unity", can be seen as a way to create an image of the EU community, and the need to protect that same image (Radu, 2016). This use of rhetoric, in turn, creates the dichotomic image of a 'we' and 'them', reinforcing the idea of a European Union that needs more unity in opposition to an exogenous phenomenon.

In addition to these measures, the protection of human rights is also a fundamental issue and must be treated with the importance it deserves, since until now only the interests of the intervening countries have been weighed instead of the rights of each asylum seeker, migrant, or refugee. From the example of Germany, it is easy to understand that, although the EU and national policy frameworks have reinforced immigration and reception rules, have monitored rigorously and in detail the state of immigration, and have created acceleration mechanisms in the case of deportations, this system maintaining integration programs is too formal for newcomers who intend to stay in the EU, which makes civic involvement at the local level.

Likewise, the practice of policies that have been developed and applied is also one of the central focuses, since they have proven to be ineffective and inefficient in their practice of organizing and integrating the hundreds of thousands of refugees into national societies. The European Union's human resources and humanitarian aid policy has shown to lack resources and flexible tactic adaptability to each situation, based on their size, character, and urgency (European Commission, 2016).

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