

# ***The Influence of Media Coverage on UK Refugee Policy from the Perspective of Multiple Sources Theory***

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**Abstract:** At this time in history, there have never been as many people displaced. How the problem has developed and expanded, as well as how media portrays refugees, are actively shaped by journalists, giving nations a unique cognitive platform to handle refugee issues and introduce policies in line with those needs. An important tool for dissecting the policy process and its policy implications, the multi-source theory analytical framework can provide new explanatory perspectives to explain the relationship between media coverage and the development of refugee policy in the UK. The paper assesses the driving role of media feedback mechanisms in the development of UK refugee policy using the issue, policy, and political source streams of the multi-source stream theory framework, using UK media coverage of the refugee Olympic delegation since 2016 as a vehicle. The issue stream, which uses media feedback as a cognitive mechanism, is not the main driver of the UK refugee policy agenda; the political and policy streams are more critical drivers in the government's policy development.

**Keywords:** UK refugee policy, media coverage, multiple streams

## **1. Introduction**

A person who has crossed a border in pursuit of safety in a nearby country out of fear of persecution, involvement in a war, or exposure to violence or other breaches of human rights is by definition a refugee. With 82.4 million individuals forcibly displaced from their homes by the end of 2020, the number of refugees in the world will be at its highest level since World War II [1]. By the end of 2020, it was predicted that 82.4 million people would have been forcibly uprooted from their homes, making this the greatest number of displaced individuals since World War II [2].

Additionally, the media has a significant impact on how the world refugee issue is portrayed in the media. The legitimacy of refugees and asylum seekers in the public eye is shaped by images in the media, which determines the frames that either demean or humanize this demographic [3]. This affects how countries respond and react to the global refugee problem.

This paper will analyze the British media coverage related to the refugee Olympic delegation at the 2016 Rio Olympics and examine the impact of media coverage framing on refugee policy in the UK.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. Data Collection

To examine the representation of refugee-related issues in the UK media, this paper chose the time period during the 2016 Summer Olympics in Rio. At the 2015 United Nations General Assembly, Thomas Bach, President of the International Olympic Committee (IOC), announced the establishment of the "Refugee Olympic Team" (also known as EOR) for the Rio 2016 Summer Olympics. According to the International Olympic Committee (IOC), The EOR team was created to spread a message of inclusiveness and hope to millions of refugees worldwide and to uplift people everywhere with their tenacity of spirit [4]. Ten months later, 11,000 athletes joined athletes at the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro, igniting a media frenzy over the refugee crisis.

The dataset was collected from British newspapers over a six-week period of the 2016 Summer Olympics. For broader media coverage, this encompassed the two weeks of the Games as well as the two weeks prior to and following Olympics. Searching "refugee Olympic delegation\*" or "refugee Olympians\*" in the online database Nexis Uni (a directory of over 15,000 international news PAs) led to the media sources used for this investigation. A collection of articles on topics related to refugee athletes and refugee delegations (i.e., news stories, opinion pieces, articles published by government or community organizations). Letters to the editor, advertisements, book reviews, photography, and artwork were not included in the data set. Images were not analyzed as part of this study because they were not available through the online newspaper database. In addition, instead of presenting the results proportionally for print and online content, they are presented in a collection. This presentation is believed to be appropriate because the current reality of the news media is that news content presented as online content is just as valid as content presented in print. Based on these criteria, after removing duplicate content, this paper selected a total of 44 full-text articles for analysis, which were organized and labeled for ease of reference and analysis.

### 2.2. Data Analysis

#### 2.2.1. Context Analysis

This paper employed qualitative content analysis to undertake an in-depth analysis of the issues used in British newspapers' coverage of refugee delegations and athletes, in order to ascertain the representation of refugees and the public's perspective of refugee concerns in the media. Before conducting a more thorough content study of the perceptions of refugee images in media frames under each subject, including three dimensions of competence, emotional attitude, and personality, 44 media pieces were initially grouped into positive, neutral, and negative themes. The overall framing of the British media's coverage of the refugee Olympic delegation was the final area of emphasis.

#### 2.2.2. Multiple Streams Model

In 1984, Kingdon published *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policy*. Kingdon discusses a thought whose time has come in the book. A basic truth about an unstoppable trend that is reshaping our politics and society is reflected in it, overshadowing anything that might get in the way [5]. Kingdon revised Cohen et al.'s "garbage can model" of organizational decision making and proposed a multi-stream theory in this book, which transforms four streams into three streams - issue streams, policy streams, and political streams.

Issue streams refer to the process by which governments focus on floating public issues, which can be sudden, concentrated events or reflected by changes in an important indicator, negative feedback, etc. There are three mechanisms by which issues can be brought to the attention of policymakers.

Indicators like data and reports, as well as events like disasters and symbols, are the first two ways that issues can be brought to the attention of policymakers. Lastly, there are additional avenues for feedback, including the media and public discourse [6].

The policy stream refers to the policy proposals and programs that the policy community, such as policy entrepreneurs, academics, and politicians, puts forward around a social issue

The political stream refers to the political factors that drive policy formation, including the country's policy guidelines, government changes, national sentiment, and pressure activities of interest groups.

The policy community must bring the three streams together in order to attract the attention of decision-makers and create favorable choice opportunities, which Kingdon refers to as "policy windows". Each stream, whether it be the political stream, the issue stream, or the policy stream, operates according to its own set of rules and will not in any way intersect. In this case "who are willing to invest resources of various kinds in hopes of a future return in the form of policies they favor" [7].

To date, researchers in various countries have used the theory to analyze the policy making process and how to further improve the relevant policies in more than 300 cases, for example, policies to combat drug crime in the United States, the promotion of policies to address childhood obesity in Arkansas, and social public issues in Canada [8-10]. The paper that follows uses John W. Kingdon's model to analyze the actual driving reason behind British media coverage of changes to British refugee policy as part of the topic streams that make up the study's example.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Table

Media news framing may have an impact on how the general public perceives the worldwide refugee issue. Positive media attitudes were most frequently found in this paper's examination of EOR news items. Overall, the media showed positive affective attitudes 27 times, neutral affective attitudes 15 times, and negative affective attitudes 1 time out of 44 articles (See Table 1). All statements are from the 44 selected news articles.

Table1: Media reports show positive, neutral and negative emotional attitudes towards EOR in different frequencies.

Concept	Original statement	Frequency
Negative	<i>It's unfortunate that We are unable to feel compassion towards immigrants. who aren't going to be Olympic athletes. Whether we accept teens with PTSD and shrapnel wounds or eight-year-olds who could defeat Andy Murray in singles should be irrelevant. This is not an audition for Britain's Got Talent; this is a humanitarian disaster.</i>	1
Neutral	<i>If his sponsors allow him, Pele will appear in the Olympics opening ceremony with Judi Dench. The Brazilian football legend's "brand name" is owned by a US business, but he expects to be permitted to attend the event in the stadium where he scored his 1,000th goal.</i>	15
Positive	<i>YEP, Community Forum: What we love about the Games</i>	27

### 3.2. Figure

Figure 1 were compiled from 44 selected news articles. After analyzing the content of the media reports about the image of EOR, this paper found that "hard work", "pride", and "athletic talent" appeared most frequently in the media reports about the image of EOR.

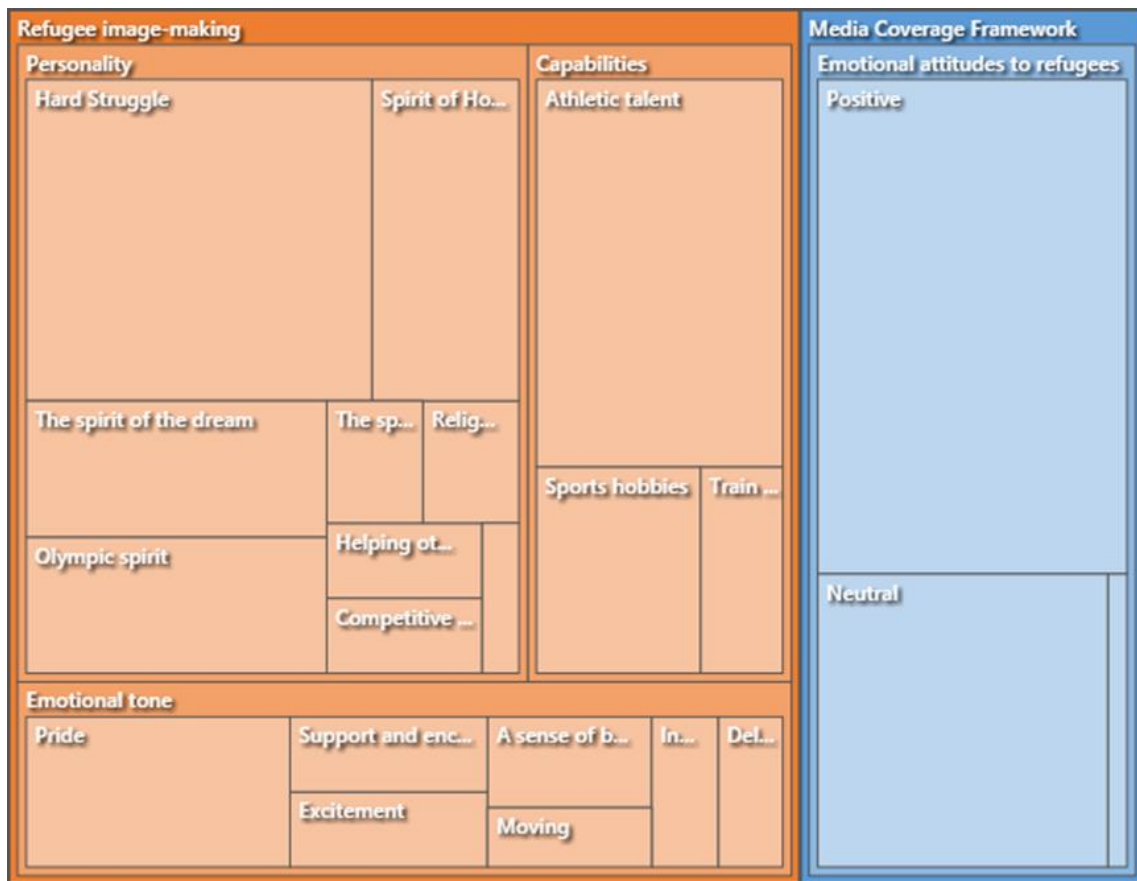


Figure 1: EOR is portrayed as hard-working, dreamy and full of athletic talent.

The image of refugee delegations was widely portrayed as "talented, hardworking, and dreamy" moral images. At the same time media coverage used a large number of personal narrative frames to demonstrate humanitarian forms.

#### Subject 1

*He said: "I can show to my fellow refugees that they have a chance and a IN THE SWIM: hope in life." Biel's journey from his home town of Nasir to the Kakuma Camp in Kenya, which he completed on his own in 2005, was reminiscent of that made by the Lost Boys of Sudan.*

Within the framework of personal narratives, refugee Olympic delegations are simultaneously represented as celebrity representatives in the situation of the worldwide refugee issue. The media presents the refugee Olympic delegation as a particular representation of the global refugee crisis, portraying it as an object that needs to be supported and accommodated.

#### Subject 2

*He will be one often refugee to march under the Olympic flag at the opening ceremony. He said: "My dream is to get good results at the Olympics and also to help people. Because been supported by I also want to support someone."*

#### Subject 3

*Yusra Mardini is the 18-year-old Syrian swimmer whose prowess saved lives on a hazardous crossing from Turkey to Lesbos; in Rio, she was a member of the 10-strong refugee team that competed in the Olympics. A Czech Radio/BBC co-production, this portrait of her life promises to be inspirational.*

## 4. Discussion

### 4.1. Media Perception and Actual Policy

In kingdon's framework, issue flow refers to the process by which governments focus on floating public issues, and the media, as a feedback channel, is one of the mechanisms by which issues can come to the attention of policy makers. A review of the UK media coverage described above reveals a more broadly positive attitude in the UK media's coverage of the Olympic refugee delegation, with refugees being portrayed as worthy of support and in need of enabling. However, despite the optimistic media representation, the UK's refugee policy has shown a continued tightening of changes since 2016." Having only promised to relocate a few Syrian refugees, the "Immigration Act 2016" implemented further limitations and regulations as a restrictive response to the 2015 immigration crisis. The Immigration Acts of 2014 and 2016 also included provisions that strengthened the government's ability to track down and deport undocumented immigrants, facilitated their removal, limited people's ability to appeal decisions and obtain bail, placed restrictions on getting a driver's license, opening a bank account, or accessing health care or renting a home, and reduced aid for asylum seekers [8]. Their goal is to make life for unauthorized visitors so challenging that they depart freely and never try to enter the UK again by fostering a "hostile environment."

### 4.2. Political and Policy stream

According to kingdon's model analysis, political streams and policy streams show stronger driving forces in the development and implementation of refugee policy in the UK.

According to kingdon's model, when a social problem is identified and concerned by a group of people, the group will put forward a series of proposals and suggestions around the solution of the problem, and the collection of these proposals and suggestions will form a policy stream. This group then spontaneously forms a policy network consisting of "officials, academics, entrepreneurs, and think tanks" that share a common focus on the same area of concern. The ideology of the ruling party, the philosophy of political leaders, national sentiment, competition among interest groups, and election results are the main factors of the political stream.

Immigration became the public's top concern in 2010 as the country entered the current Conservative-led era. The progressive restrictions and criminalizing intent put in place over the previous 20 years are what led to the asylum policy adopted by UK governments in the 2010s, in keeping with the general direction of UK immigration policy as stated in the Immigration Act 2017. And for that reason it has been dubbed an era of "open hostility" [11]. And the UK has followed a similar course with its immigration policy in recent years, concentrating on lowering the number of foreign entrants. Net migration limitations and the creation of an atmosphere unfriendly to undocumented immigrants have become standard methods of achieving the goal. The "Hostile Environment Working Group" was founded in 2012 to develop new forms of hostility in order to make this hostile environment as extensive and widespread as possible. It was later renamed the "Interagency Immigration Benefits and Human Services Working Group." Ministers from several departments are part of the Hostile Environment Working Group to guarantee the initiative's universality. While reiterating its commitment to lowering the net migration objective, the 2016 Act, which was approved by a freshly elected parliament with a solid Conservative majority, portrayed it as a "ambition" rather than a pledge [12].

The outcome of the Brexit referendum in 2016 also gave adherents of restrictive policies more motivation. In light of the promise of one day "taking back control," the referendum result confirmed the growing significance of immigration in the eyes of the electorate. Immigration was a key issue in the Leave campaign (including border control). The 2016 referendum was won by anti-EU activists thanks to their ongoing promotion of the idea of unchecked immigration and austerity measures.

Theresa May, the country's then-home secretary, stated in a 2016 speech that When they are not authorized to do so and have the authority to control their borders, all countries are required to commit to allowing the return of their citizens. This speaks to how regaining full control over the nation's borders became a goal in and of itself.

## 5. Conclusions

The main purpose of this paper is to assess the impact of the UK media as an issue stream feedback mechanism on UK refugee policy in a multiple streams perspective. The setting of the refugee policy agenda in the UK is closely related to the problem stream, policy stream and source stream of the multiple streams theory. However, according to the review, media feedback mechanisms are not prominent in the issue source stream of refugee policy. The development and implementation of refugee policy in the UK is mainly driven by political and policy streams. The policy source streams of refugee policy in the UK include the government's attempts at policy networks. The ideology of the ruling party, the new governing theory, and national sentiment, on the other hand, constitute the political source stream of refugee policy in the UK.

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