Discourses of War: A Multimodal Analysis of the UNHCR's Visual Representations of Refuges

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Abstract:

The present study explores the photographs of Ukrainian refuges on the website of UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency) to examine the visual grammar of the images, and to analyze the discursive representations and construction of refuges as a social actor, which conveys multiple meanings and ideologies to the masses. It also inquires the representational styles and regimes of visibilities dominant in the humanitarian aid discourses, in this case UNHCR, through the theoretical framework of multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) by Machin (2007), along with insights from the cultural theory by Chouliaraki (2010, 2017). The analysis was conducted through observing the connotations, settings, poses, participants, social actors' representation and modality of the selected visuals through purposive sampling. The social semiotic analysis of the data showed that constructed images were highly contextualized to portray a realistic coverage of the crisis. The refuges were infantilized and individualized to engage the viewers emotionally. Majority of the images exhibited "positive style" representation and the "visibilities of empathy" to summon viewers' empathetic feelings, which ultimately encourage them towards more relief related activities.

Keywords: Visual representations, Refugees, Multimodal Analysis, Social actors.

1-Introduction

The current Ukrainian refugee emergency escalated after Russian invasion in Ukraine on 22 February 2022.It has resulted in the exodus of approximately 14 million refuges according to latest stats of UN, which is the largest refugee crisis in Europe and worldwide after World War 11. More than six million have left for neighboring countries in Europe like Poland, Romania, Hungry etc whereas more than eight million are internally displaced. UNHCR has declared Ukrainian crisis as a level 3 emergency-the highest level of emergency. One-quarter of the country's population has left among which majority are women and children. Europe has never seen such emergency before which makes it one of its kind and the largest refugee crisis of the 21st century. The crisis of this magnitude has brought immense international humanitarian intervention, relief assistance and political response.

 Since the inception of this crisis, media is actively involved in presenting the realistic situation of Ukrainian refuges by widely circulating Refugee photos along with the coverage of relief programs .Media holds a prestigious position as a socially embedded influence which have a decisive power of constituting news and how their news are undermined (Caldas-Coulhard, 2003).Therefore massive media representation of Ukrainian refugees through different mediums, makes it a relevant and critical topic of speculation and research to lay bare not only the role of media in spreading awareness about the realistic portrayal of refugees in the wake of war ,but to also study to effects of these visuals on the masses , their attitudes and general perception regarding this refugees crisis. Media moves the masses for financial, moral and other kinds of humanitarian aids and assistance on the ground of humanity and empathy. Mass Media exhibits a crucial role in sketching the public agenda and cognitive response towards refugee groups (Patel & Mahtani, 2007)

1.1- **UNHCR (United Nations Refugee Agency)**

International aid bodies and agencies have always played a crucial role in managing such conflicts and among these the largest governing body -UN has a great power and reach to not only help refugee worldwide but to also accumulate vast relief funds from people all over the world. UNHCR-the UN Refugee Agency is one branch of UN that works globally with its aims of saving the lives, protecting rights and building a better future of refugees all over the world. Its primary purpose is to safeguard the rights of people who have been forced to flee due to war or any conflict and to ensure that everyone finds a safe refuge either in asylum or any other country. UNHCR workers are working on ground in Ukraine and other conflict-ridden areas to protect and assist all the people forced to flee along with providing and delivering basic relief items like blankets, clothes, emergency shelter etc. The protection of the vulnerable groups i.e women, children and old age people is also among its top priorities .The website of UNHCR plays a crucial role in updating the masses on the latest situation on refuges through providing regularly updated statistical data and photos. The media coverage impacts the willingness of the host communities to allow immigrants into their communities (Lopes-Rodriguez & Zagefka, 2015).

1-2- **Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA)**

Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA) is a social semiotic approach, derived from the semiotic theory of kress and Leeuvan (2006) named *Grammar of visual analysis*, which provides a comprehensive framework for analyzing visual compositions like photographs, advertisements etc. Kress and Leeuvan (1996) used the term *multimodality* to explain the idea that communication is not done by single mode of communication i.e., language rather it a combination (multi-modality) of various modes of communication like language, visual and sounds. This approach allows the study of visuals by breaking down into their basic components and then defining how these components work together with in a certain context to create and convey meanings through images. According to Multimodality, signs never carry fixed meaning rather have "potential" meanings which are always realized within a system of visual grammar rather than in isolation. The signs convey meanings through their relationship with other signs within a certain context. Machin (2007) defines multimodality as, "Multimodality therefore describes the grammar of visual communication that is used by image designers. It is an analysis of the rules and principles that allows viewers to understand the meaning potential of relative placement of elements, framing, salience, proximity, color, saturations, style of typeface, etc." Multimodal analysis doesn't merely discover the connotations or the meaning of visual images rather it looks for their communicative functions like how do they create certain impressions, moods or attitudes, or convey certain ideas just like the linguistic devices in texts. Machin (2007) and Kress and Leeuvan (2006) theoretical inspirations for multimodality are derived from Michael Halliday's (1985) systemic functional grammar approach, where he described three meta functions of language i.e- ideational, interpersonal and textual. Kress and Leeuvan (2006) extended the same Meta functions to the study of images, to explain that how images perform communications through different patterns just like language.

1.3-Social Semiotic

Multimodality considers all semiotic systems as "social semiotic systems", which helps in understanding the governing social and power relationships. The meanings of semiotics are always constructed through purposeful choices with certain interests and they are never neutral. Our relationship within society with certain groups or people and the power dynamics between groups define our choices and interest, hence images are never created without inherent interest, therefore they have to be decoded within certain social contexts. Just like language, visual communications are always ideological with embedded power relations. Foucault (1980) defines discourses as a site where meanings are legitimized, made normalized, get acceptance as reality and are observed as social relations. Within Multimodal discourse analysis, the concepts of discourse and social practice are interrelated, hence semiotic communication is also the site where meanings are legitimized or normalized, and are constructed according to social practices. For example, the representation of Refugees in western society would be made according to their societal expectations and rules of institutional practices that have been established in that society. For instance, the image of

"terrorist" in western media is always highly ideological and constructed through certain patterns unlike other signs related to the idea of evil or threat. MCDA endeavors to reveal semiotic discourses, to lay bare the kind of social practices that are part of these discourses and the ideologies that they intend to propagate.

1.4-Photographic Messages / Photojournalism

Media photography has increasingly become relevant in today's age of social media as it continuously shapes the general perceptions of the masses regarding current geo-political realities. The study explores the visual representation of Ukrainian refuges, in the recent Russia-Ukraine conflict, present on the website of UNHCR. These visuals of migrants or refuges are structured on the implicit rules of visual language. The visual discourses just like textual representations employ mental and cognitive processes based on the visual grammar. The photographic projections of refugees invoke the cognitive and inferencing abilities of the viewers in order to engage them in meaning-making process. Therefore, the photographic image forces the viewer to read image "not as an image but as a text" (Clark, 1997). The image readers thus generate "photographic discourse" in their minds, having contradictory and ambiguous meanings and inherent its own grammar, lexicon and syntax (Burgin, 1928). Therefore, in order to read and construct meaningful notions of the Ukrainian refugee crisis in the photographs taken as data sets, it is essential to explore the implicit visual ideology as they are 'messages from the refugee's themselves' represented in the images (Szörényi, 2006).

2- Literature Review

Bellander (2021) studied the world's refugee situation on the website of MSF Sweden that is a humanitarian organization in order to discern the discourses and representation such sites draw on. They analyzed the refugee situation as worthy of support through semiotic analysis integrating with the cultured theories. Their findings showed that websites visitors are invited to become part of refugees' lives and they draw on the discourses of morality, solidarity and ethical equality. Hussein and Fattah (2020) studied the images of UNHCR to evaluate the representation of Iraqi refugees by utilizing Multimodal critical discourse analysis (Leuvan, 2006). Their study evaluated different visual modes and found that interactional structures were more dominant and conceptual processes displayed higher frequency. Khan and Anwal (2019) studied the Image schemes in Diasporic visual discourse to see the representation of Afghan refugees. They studied the meta-functions and discursive constructions of these images. Their study showed that, photographs dominatingly showed mental processes and agentive representation of Afghan refugees. They projected Afghan photographic discourses as marginalized in the face of Pakistan's Refugee policies. Aarssen (2017) examined the photo-narratives of Syrian refugees in 2015 on social media by using multimodal critical discourse analysis. Her study results suggested that such platforms subtlety reinforces the aspects of Orientalism and Neo-orientalism while representing Syrian and Muslim refugees. The present research seeks to analyze the visual representation of Ukrainian refuges 2022, since it has evolved recently and is still burgeoning with each pass day. No significant research in the field of semiotics and discourse has been done on this yet.

3-Methodology

The present research is qualitative in nature which intends to study the discursive construction and representation of Ukrainian refugees as social actors through the semiotics of UNHCR (United Nations Refugee agency) website's data. It also aims to discern as what semiotic discourses humanitarian aid communication draws upon to reframe the current refugee crisis (Ukraine) as being worthy of support and assistance as such representations shape people's perceptions related to general condition of refuges. For this, the study employs Multimodal Critical discourse Analysis (Machin, 2007) integrated with the insights from the cultural theory by Chouliaraki (2010, 2017), who studied the framing of refugees in humanitarian aid communication discourses.

3.1- Significance

The massive media representation of Ukrainian refugees' crisis 2022 through different mediums, makes it a relevant and critical topic of speculation to lay bare not only the role of media in spreading awareness about the realistic portrayal of refugees in the wake of war, but to also study to effects of these visuals on the masses, their attitudes and general cognition regarding this refugee's crisis. Media visuals play an immense role in moving the masses for financial, moral and other kinds of humanitarian aids and assistance on the grounds of humanity and empathy. UNHCR has a distinctive role in spreading the awareness about the current reality of refugees to create desired understanding around refugees. Their photojournalism influences the refugee's situation around the whole and the visitors of their site are always expected to behave or perform in certain way based on the message and ideas they spread through their website.

3.2-Research Question

The following research questions have been answered through the analysis of the selected data by employing the devised research methodology

Q1. How have Ukrainian refuges been represented discursively as social actors through the semiotic discourses of UNHCR's website data?

Q2. What styles and visibilities does the discourses of humanitarian aid communications (UNHCR data) adopt to represent the refuges and to shape viewers perceptions?

3.3- Conceptual Framework

MCDA reveals social semiotic discourses to show the kind of practices that are involved in them to represent social actors and that how certain ideologies are propagated through these discourses. It studies the covert choices within the semiotic discourses that journalists or media employ to project certain ideas or realities. For the present study the following tools from the Multimodal Critical discourse analysis (Machin 2007) have been selected. The selected tools of MCDA help in breaking down the visual communication into its components with the aim to identify different levels of meanings inherent in images along with hidden social realities .The selected categories for analyzing data are as follows:

1. **Connotation:** Barthes (1977) says that there never innocent images free of connotations. This is thus the second layer of meaning in an image.

Carriers of Connotation:

   i.   *Poses:* According to Barthes, our mind holds a dictionary of poses with each of it having a meaning potential. For instance, the concept of "women and freedom" in images is shown by jumping postures which show lack of restrain and physical freedom

   ii. *Objects:* Objects in the images are also carriers of connotation. Machin (2007) draws on the examples of war photography in which most of images show the faces of starving children and mothers which might distract the viewers from the actual political conflict and, photographers deliberatively select and edit objects in their images to transport certain meanings to the viewers.

   iii. *Setting:* Settings also help in conveying the intended ideas in advertisements and photography. Many images are decontextualized to remove the certain aspects of reality which otherwise would be unreal. Machin (2007) gives the example of decontextualized, violence free images from the Iraq war to show peacekeeping as they remove the actual context and details to impart the abstract message of "fight against the freedom enemies"

   iv. *Participants:* Participants are crucial in conveying meanings. Children in images always show innocence and vulnerability and mothers show common humanity and kind of a universal value.

2. **Representation of Social Actors in Images**

The representation of social actors deals with the idea of depiction of people in visual communication. Machin (2007) has outlined three criteria for studying the representation of social actors in the images;

   1. Positioning of the viewers in relation to the participants in the image:
      In this section Machin (2007) has given tools to study the alignment of the viewer with respect to participants through observing the "gaze", "angle of interaction" and "distance".

      i.   Gaze: is studied to analyze the symbolic contact and interaction between the viewer and the depicted people. The study of gaze helps in identifying whether the represented social actors/participants are offering information or demand something from the viewer.

      ii. Angle of Representation: the angle through which viewers sees the photos define the relationship between the viewer and the participants. Horizontal and Oblique images reduce the involvement of the viewer and increases detachment. Vertical angles create the relation of power or superiority/inferiority.

      iii. Distance: Distance signifies social relationship and intimacy. In visual distance is observed through the size of frame or close, long, medium shots.

Close shorts for instance show individuality and reveal emotions and feelings of the participants.

2.1- Kinds of Participants: This deals with studying of semitic resources selected for the depiction of different participants and their kinds. It tells us what kinds of people are represented.

   i. Individuals and Groups: Images represent people either as individuals or as groups. Individuality draws the images close to specific people and brings humanizing effect. It is often realized through single close-up shots. Collectivization in images is realized by depicting crowds or groups. It brings the effect of anonymity. The images of groups homogenize them and put more focus on the generic features of the groups.

   ii. Categorization: people are often categorized in images both through individual and collective shots. Categorization could be biological, cultural or combination of both.

   iii. Non representation: In images some agents or actors find no representation even in the actions or settings where they are present. For instance, in war images perpetrators are absent and victims are present.

3- Agency and Action: Agency and action analyze the social actors in terms of who does what (agency) and what's get done (action). Halliday used the terms "actor', "goals", "process" and "circumstance". He further distinguished between different kinds of processes as actors are not necessarily always the active agents trying to achieve goal. These processes are

   i. Material: actions having material consequences, "The soldier killed the terrorist"

   ii. Behavioral: any behavioral act without material consequence, "The girl jumped".

   iii. Mental: thinking, sensing and evaluative actions.

   iv. Verbal: actions involving talking, "He talked about war"

   v. Relational: actions in which people are compared or discussed in relation with other, "The boy was taller".

   vi. Existential: representation of people in state of existing.

4- **Modality:** Machin (2007) defines modality as "the term modality refers to the way we communicate as how true it as how real a representation should be taken i.e. not how true or how real it really is". Images that are truthful representation of events have "high modality" whereas images that have been manipulated through focus or angle to offer certain version of reality have low modality. This allows us to analyze the ideology behind representation.

4- Humanitarian Communication

The current study also employs the methodological insights from the theory of cultural studies

presented by Chouliaraki (2010, 2017). Her works studied the semiotics of Humanitarian discourses related to refugee's representation in European media. Chouliaraki & Stolic (2017) studied the news images of 2015 Syrian refugee crisis to analyze the representations and visibilities of refugee in the European media, how such visibilities frame refugee in media and elicit desired responses from the viewers. She studied the conceptions regarding refuges that are produced through visuals and how do these "visual regimes" or representation shape collective imagination of viewers regarding refugee crisis. Chouliaraki (2017) presented the idea of "*regimes of visibilities*" and identified five predominant types of visibilities in the discourses related to humanitarian communication. "Regimes of visibilities" refer to the concept, that visuals on refugees in media, situates refugees within certain visibilities in order to derive certain type of responses from the viewers. The current study will be looking at the two types of visibilities out of five, for the study of selected data on Ukrainian Refugees.

i.   **Visibility as a Biological Life**: These are the images which depict "mass of unfortunates" in refugee camps or other settings and situate "refugees within a visual regime of biological life-a field of representation that reduces their life to corporal existence and the needs of body" (Boltanski, 1999). In these imageries refugees are reduced to the concept of "human bodies" that need urgent humanitarian support from the west. These images are the characteristic of foreign news, like UN camps or dinghies shown at the sea, like in case of Syrian refugees. It also creates a distance between the represented human bodies and the viewers and thus asking the viewer for a monitory response.

ii. **Visibility as Empathy:** The regimes of empathy focus on the individualized or intimate shots to show a close-up perspective and offers a more "Humanized perspective of refugees". For example, images of crying child, a mother and a baby or a rescue worker. The type of images arouses the emotions of empathy in the viewers. The imagery of a child is the manifestation of the "innocent vulnerability" against a malevolence of adults. This individualization of suffering or by "Infantilizing Refugees" depicts them as powerless and distressed. Infantilization, therefore aim at eliciting empathy and refers towards the idea of "our common humanity". Portrayal of refugees as children shows their voicelessness and power.

Chouliaraki (2010) in her work "post-humanitarianism: humanitarian communication beyond a politics of pity" has explored the rhetorical practices in "humanitarian communication" that help in mobilizing action on human suffering, by engaging in universal ethical claims. She has criticized and portrayed that how western political discourse on "humanitarian communication" establishes, emotional connection between spectator and the sufferer by using special imageries. To dominant and effective styles of appealing to masses in the context of suffering are 'Shock effect' and 'Positive Image' appeals are the most dominant style of humanitarian communication.

i. "Shock effect" Approach

It is related to the classic imagery of "ideal victim". These images show suffering in a realistic way. These photos relics on raw realism depict human suffering such as imageries of "Starvation". They lack individualization, and "victim-oriented" – focus on the distant sufferer – social distance produces a moralizing force through logic of complicity. The viewers witness the horror of suffering and feel guilt-sham emotion or personal inaction. "The logic of complicity" is a primary source of emotion in 'shock effect' communication. They shock effect appeal seeks to transform the grand emotions of the viewers into an action.

ii. "Positive-Image" Appeal

The technique also relies on photorealism to witness the horror of suffering. However, they don't show sufferer as a victim rather focuses on sufferer's agency. It personalizes and individualizes the sufferers by focuses on the distinct person (such as aid workers).It singularizes donors by addressing on a personal level to make concrete contribution to improve sufferer's condition. (E.g., through child sponsorship).It summons the emotional regimes of empathy and kindness. The imagery of suffering in, positive style appeal provides a subtle evidence of the benefactor's (Imagined) empathy and help and for alleviating sufferer pain. E.g., smiling photos of children

3.4- Data Collection

The data for the present study was collected from the website of UNHCR (https://www.unhcr.org/). The search option on the website was used to collect all the relevant images by using the key word "Ukrainian Refuges 2022". All the images depicting Ukrainian refugees, shown after filtered search, from the months of March 2022 and April 2022 were selected. The data was delimited to the months of March and April because the Russian-Ukraine war escalated in these months after the initial invasion in late February and the Ukrainian Refugee crisis greatly exacerbated in these two months.

3.5.1-Data Sampling

All the images were thematically analyzed first. Total 40 images were collected from UNHCR website from the month of March 2022 to April 2022. Out of 40 Images 4 images were selected through purposive sampling for the detailed analysis.

4-Data Analysis

The current section would give a detailed analysis of four images selected through purposive sampling to decipher the representation of Ukrainian Refuges as social actors in the media.

Image 1:

The first visual denotes the image of a mother with her children fleeing to Poland through train. Such type of visuals is typical of war photography where participants are shown to evoke feelings of empathy and common human values. Children's imageries depict aspect of human vulnerability, innocence against the evilness of adults. Motherhood is a universal human value therefore it used to gain the attention of viewers through the feelings of love and empathy. The

images of children in war imagery also connotes with powerlessness of the sufferers.

Image 1.

A mother waits with her family before boarding a train from Lviv, in western Ukraine, to Poland on 10 March. They fled their home in Kharkiv two days earlier, after their electricity and water were cut off. © UNHCR/Valerio Muscella

The setting of the photo shows an underground dark railway station which is a contextualized image, presenting authentic situation of refuges, and simultaneously reminding the viewer that such instances is happening in real. It shows their state of homelessness, and the state of waiting with an element of temporariness. However, the darkness and underground shot has an associative meaning as they give a reflection of their plight, and the overall misery. It indicates the state of waiting and fleeing, which further reflects the idea that they are waiting for and demanding humanitarian assistance from the viewers. The Modality is low to medium as it does show the original details; however, the degree articulation of the background shows darkness and blurred participants. The darkness of the background on one hand brings personal angle to an image as it draws more attention on the three front participants, and on the other hand shows obscurity and uncertainty residing over their fates during this deadly war. There is an element of visual individualization in this shot as the focus has been maintained on mother-child through a close-shot against the backdrop of blurred refugees. This is a vertical shot as the position of a child is lowered compared to the viewer. Such vertical shots depict the powerless position of a participants and gives power to the viewer. The child is looking up to the viewer therefore asking questioningly to the viewer. Such close-shots also called

"demand images". The direct gaze of the child reduces the distance with the participant and the viewer, which give personalization to the image and demands something from the viewer. In this case the demand is being forwarder to international peace keepers and to public in general of relief and end to war. On the level of Agency and Action, the participants are involved in existential and mental processes. The state of waiting represents their existential crisis in the wake of war where they have no power to rectify their condition and they are just the victims of circumstances. The suffering and distressed pose of a mother shows her behavioral process. Similarly, the shots of fleeing refugee showing child poses also reflect upon their mental processes where look demandingly to their viewer asking for assistance and peacekeeping to bring some order and peace in their lives. UNHCR has also portrayed such kind of images to match their cause, through which they can ask the viewers for more assistance by invoking the feelings of humanity and empathy.

From the perspective of framing and visibilities in Humanitarian aid discourses, this image shows the "visibility of empathy". The intended purpose behind showing the images of refugees through shots of children is primarily to evoke feelings of empathy in the viewers and to infantilize refuges. Through such feeling viewers associate more with the participants' suffering which leads to an action. Secondly, it is a "Positive style" appeal which has individualized and humanized the participant with a direct eye contact with the viewer. Such appeals try to develop a relationship between viewer and a victim through the emotions of empathy and put the responsibility of helping the sufferer on the viewer.

Image 2:

The current image is a horizontal shot of refugees' donations. It is a broader shot which is contextualized to represent the realistic situation to the viewer. Usually, horizontal shots are interpreted as distancing the viewer from the depicted, however here it involves and invites the viewer into the reality of the refugees which in turn encourages them emotionally to engage more in relief related activities. Such shots draw on the discourses of morality to involve the viewer. The back postures of refugees also suggest that the image wants to involve the viewer into their reality as an observer or as a participant. The viewer is involved from a position behind the social actors. The setting also presents a realistic open-air setup showing fast-paced and efficient relief activities, which coincides with the roles of agency along with updating knowledge and molding perceptivity of the masses regarding refugee situation. The Modality of the image is also high. Since, it is long shot which focuses on all the details without any modulation or blurring. Everything is visible to the viewer through maximum articulation of depth, illumination and light, tone and color. Such visibility of the shots reflects honest portrayal with a desire to create maximum awareness among the readers or site visitors.

It is a non-individualized shot using massification against individualization, which "homogenize" the groups. The represented social actors in a homogenized group would have same kind of clothing, poses and same actions with same identities and ethnicities, which depicts the collectivized view of the refugees' activities. It also represents the 'Cultural Categorization" of the refuges as they all possess similar features and common patterns

indicating their mutual cultural orientations. Machin (2007) has called all semiotics as "social semiotic" because images are truly interpreted only in their cultural contexts. Therefore, this image of refuge group reflects the cultural standards of the western through represented social actors along with the level of standards the UN agency adheres to. This gives cultural similarity and unification of the Ukrainians with the rest of European cultural.

Image :2

1st March: Donations from Polish residents are offered to refugees close to the Medyka border crossing. © UNHCR/Chris Mel.

It can be seen that all refuges are well kept and well fed with appropriate clothing and living facilities in the cold temperatures. Although, they are homeless and war-stricken but in these conditions no standards have been compromised in terms of their comfort. Maximum relief goods by agencies and people from all over the Europe have been made available for their consumption. Such images demonstrate the cultural and political ideologies and standards of Europe generally and in the wake of emergency. It conveys the message to the viewer that human life is precious and the safety of refuges is their first priority which starkly contrasts with the images of refuges form middle-eastern and African regions. The deep introspection of the visual would enable the viewer to identify the embedded categorization and dichotomy between east and west. The actors in this image have no agency and they are simply involved in the behavioral process of suffering, fleeing and being homeless. They are rather the "Goals"

here of the Russian oppression and the "victims of circumstances" during war. This reflects on their powerlessness. It is also important to look for the "non-Represented actors" as non-represented actor actually do participate in the events but their presence is not included. In this case the Russian invaders, who attacked the innocent civilians and made them homeless, have backgrounded which indicates the neutral stance of the agency in this refugee crisis as they are only concerned with the representations of the refuges and have no political agendas for showing the perpetrators. This photo would be considered within the "Visibilities of empathy" which humanitarian aid discourse employees. Such visibilities present a humanized view of refuges so that a viewer can relate on a more personal level. These visibilities invoke the empathetic sentiments in the viewer encouraging them to do more action towards alleviating their suffering at the same time giving the viewer an internal satisfaction of helping others. Similarly, it is a "Positive Style" imagery which by showing donations is asking the viewer on a personal level to make concrete contribution to lessen the sufferer's pain. It calls for the emotional regimes of empathy and kindness and also makes subtle hints towards sufferer's gratitude for the imagined help by the benefactor (viewer).

Image 3:

The third figure again represents a war photojournalism's strategy to use the imageries of children and motherhood with the inherent purpose of forming emotional associations among viewers. The vulnerability of a child and a love of a mother evokes an empathetic schema in the minds of viewers, hence urges them to not only acknowledge the suffering of a war victims to but to also act towards their relief assistance programs. The participants and their poses depict the common humanity and the love of a mother, irrespective of culture, borders and ethnicities, along with their suffering and powerlessness in the war. It calls for the need of action on the part of the peaceful world. It is an oblique shot and an "offer image" with no direct eye contact between the participants and a viewer. The focus of the shot is on capturing the bond of a mother and a son to offer information and to make them simply observe the condition of refuges. The viewers are invited to associate with the feelings of a helpless and homeless mother, worried about her child's safety. The close-up shot individualizes the

Image 3

29 March: A refugee from Ukraine hugs her son in a reception centre set up in the sports hall of a school in the Polish border town of Medyka. © UNHCR/Valerio Muscella.

sufferers and narrows down the distance between the viewer and the sufferer. Such shots have humanizing effect against the massification in the photos showing groups of refuges. The setting of images shows a reception center set up for refuges by UNHCR bodies. The setting aligns with the mission and objectives of the UNHCR to provide relief, comfort and shelter to the fleeing refugees. It reflects the western standards of peacekeeping and refuges' protocol in war afflicted areas. However, such setting may also misguide the viewer at times that everything has already been taken care of (Machin, 2007). This setting also denotes temporariness. Such standard measures in terms of clothing and shelter contrasts against the refugees of the developing world where shelters are usually in the form of open-air tents or huts. Such standardized measures indicate towards the notion of western ideologies in general and their humanitarian peacekeeping initiatives for their European masses. The modality of the picture is from medium to high as the articulation of the background has been blurred to put more focus on the participants on the front. Such articulation is altered on purpose to shift the focus of images. On the level of Agency and Action, the participants have no power but

are involved in behavioral process. It reflects the mental agony and suffering of a mother concerned for a wellbeing and existence of her child. They have no power to change their position and are simply at the mercy of relief forces. This image would fall under the visibility of empathy as it is infantilizing the refuges to infuse feeling of empathy and to evoke grand emotions of mother's love. It has allotted the individualized and humanized perspective to the refugee. The child imagery also depicts their voicelessness therefore calls for an action on

behalf of a viewer. Secondly, it is a "positive style" image as it simply shows the bond between a parent and a child, summoning for empathy, at the same time granting viewer with a satisfaction that their help could save a life of a child in the face of an adversity. It allots power to a viewer.

Image 4:

Image 4.

15 MARCH: Staff from UNHCR are on hand throughout the journey to offer information and support to refugees going to Romania. © UNHCR/Mihai Eremia

This image again draws on the discourse of morality and empathy to show the destitute state of Ukrainian refugees through infantilizing refugee. The usage of child imagery is depicted to show the vulnerability and powerlessness of the vulnerable refugees. The participants' pose and gestures reflect the disheveled state of the mother out in the open, concerned for the safety and wellbeing of her children. The objects i.e. blankets and suitcases associate with the extremities of the situation and depict the state of waiting. It is a horizontal to medium shot which doesn't individualizes the participants however still portrays the refugee situation by focusing on this one family. The participants are not directly gazing at the viewer and don't involve the viewer directly rather they are just offering an information to the viewer. The "offer Images" just allow the viewer to associate with their feelings rather than their actions. "Off frame" looking participants represent the world of inner thoughts and feelings which in this case shows the agony of a mother, carrying her child in extreme cold weather and looking for a safe shelter. The UN agency participants' presence in the picture are

promoting their active status on ground in neighboring countries around Ukraine for efficient relief works and also promoting their trustworthy status for reaching to all refuges and especially vulnerable groups. Such images on one hand offers information and shape audience perceptions on current happenings, on the other hand have a promotional element to them so that people rely more on them for aids and assistance. On the level of modality, it is a maximum modality with maximum articulation of the background, depth, light and tone to give complete and realistic coverage to the setting and environment. The participants also portray the "Cultural categorization" through their dressing and similar homogenized resemblance whereas the relief workers represent the western ideologies of humanity and empathy through their relief actions. Image shows mixed agency and actions, children and mother have no agency and they are just involved in existential and behavioral processes. The homeless state of a mother describes his existential state and her mental agony with no power to rectify her situation. She is totally at the mercy of relief workers for assistance. They are just the victims of circumstances. However, the aid workers are involved in material actions with the goal of managing and assisting refuges and they do hold power.

Such image would also come under "positive style" humanitarian communication where the sufferer is inviting the viewer to acknowledge their desperate state by donating more in the assistance drive. This image also individualizes the mother and children by making them the center of workers' attention which also have an effect of singularizes the donor to address him/her on a more personal level. Along with positive style, it employs discourses of morality and empathy by showing the "visibility of empathy". Such type of regimes again summons the viewers on an emotional level by invoking grand emotions of motherhood.

5- Discussion and Findings

The detailed analysis of the Ukrainian refugee images available on the website of UNHCR has helped to understand the methods of representations in the media and processes of semiotic constructions to disseminate particular ideologies and perceptions among the masses. This study remained focused on the depiction of refuges as social actors through evaluating the humanitarian aid discourses. Firstly, majority of the images showed the visuals of vulnerable groups like children of all ages, women as mothers and old age people. They majorly relied on the strategy of Infantilizing refuges to show their vulnerability, innocence and powerlessness in the wake of war. Such practice greatly helps in evoke grand humanitarian emotions among viewers. 28 out of 40 images represented children, women and old age people. Majority of the images tried to involve the viewer in the lives of the refuges through individualizing the participants, close shots, direct gaze and reducing the distance. The settings were highly contextualized and maximum modality of all the images reflected the naturalistic setting without any exaggerated modulation to give complete overview of the refugee's situation. Refugees were mainly shown as powerless against the Russian attackers through only showing them as being involved in behavioral, mental and existential processes. Most of the images showed them in the state of waiting, fleeing, agonizing and worrying with no power and agency to change their situation. Their existence is solely relying on the relief and assistance of

humanitarian aid workers and the donation by the masses. However, the actual culprits i.e. Russian forces were non-represented in all the images which points towards the non-political and neutral stance of UNHCR towards the humanitarian crisis. The cultural categorization was evident from the relief facilities and management of the UNHCR workers showing the standards of the agency and also the civilized image of west. The disciplined and up to dated measures on their part gives an idea of their uncompromised standards based on common western ideals. However, it also created a cultural categorization when compared with the refuge images from the Middle Eastern and African regions which depict the destitute existence of refugees despite the presence of same UN teams there. Lastly, all the images were identified to be visibilities of empathy and positive style images as all employed discourses of morality and empathy to address the viewer on the personal level. Such visibilities and styles are typical of any humanitarian communication trying to involve the viewer emotionally and to encourage them towards more concrete actions of charity. These images also provide the viewer with the subtle hints of a sufferer's gratitude for the viewer's imagined help and consideration towards the war victims.

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