

Regulating Migration in Europe: A Discursive Problem

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Abstract

In my talk I will argue that the *Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a common system for the return of third-country nationals staying illegally in the Union* (2025) constructs irregular migration as a problem to advance exclusionary policies. Bacchi's (2009) WPR framework, combined with Critical Discourse Analysis (Fairclough, 1995; Van Dijk, 2008; Reisigl & Wodak, 2001; Krzyżanowski & Wodak, 2009; Van Leeuwen, 2007), underpins my analysis and exposes the Proposal's argumentative structure and linguistic strategies, with particular attention to what is left implicit in the discourse. My findings reveal a pervasive discourse of securitisation, strongly reminiscent of Foucauldian (2007) disciplinary logics, yet sustained by flawed causal reasoning, prejudiced predication, and hasty presuppositions. The complexity of migration is reduced to a simplified problem-solution model through the adoption of a managerial register that privileges efficiency and speed over human rights concerns. OHCHR's *Principles and Guidelines, supported by practical guidance, on the human rights protection of migrants in vulnerable situations* (2018) were used as references to identify many of the Proposal's blind spots. Despite pooling its intertextual references from humanitarian sources, the Proposal fails to demonstrate a genuine commitment to protecting migrants in vulnerable situations. Safeguards against arbitrary detention, the integration of gender-sensitive migration responses, and the provision of unconditional assistance are undermined by stigma rooted in presumed violence and social disorder attributed to these groups. Ultimately, Europe must do more to demystify migration and meaningfully uphold the very principles it claims to promote.

Keywords

Irregular migration, problem representation, critical discourse analysis (CDA), EU policymaking, human rights protection, migrant vulnerability.