Actions speak louder than words

The Concepts of Securitization and Desecuritization Explored in the Context of Syrian Refugees in Egypt
I hereby declare that this thesis, "Actions speak louder than words: The Concepts of Securitization and Desecuritization Explored in the Context of Syrian Refugees in Egypt ", is my own work and my own effort and that it has not been accepted anywhere else for the award of any other degree or diploma. Where sources of information have been used, they have been acknowledged.
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social and scientific significance</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Research design and methodology</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theoretical framework</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Refugees and security studies</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Copenhagen School and securitization theory</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securitization</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sectors and referent objects</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Level of analysis and regional security complexes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Critiques and further development of (de)securitization theory</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Embedded securitization</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>From embedded discourse to practice - the Paris School</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securitization theory in a non-democratic setting</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desecuritization</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalization of the theoretical framework</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalization of the concept of securitization</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operationalization of the concept of desecuritization</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of securitization of refugees in Egypt: context for desecuritization</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Background on the urban refugee environment in Egypt before the arrival of Syrian refugees</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legal and institutional framework regarding refugees up to 2010</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Changing political context - revolution</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>President Mohamed Morsi’s sympathetic stance towards Syrians in Egypt</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securitizing discourse and practices</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securitizing discourse</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securitizing practices</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Closing the borders to Syrians</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arbitrary arrests and detentions</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deportation</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securitizing speech and practice?</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Analysis of desecuritization of Syrian refugees in Egypt</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR and the global refugee regime</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Section</td>
<td>Page</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR in Egypt and its relationship with the Egyptian government</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR's policy and practice</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy towards Egyptian government</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protection Advocacy</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advocacy for livelihoods</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Combined advocacy strategy</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNHCR a desecuritizing actor through advocacy?</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Securitization theory useful concept for this study?</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference List</td>
<td>89</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Introduction

This thesis aims to explore the concepts of securitization and desecuritization by studying the environment for Syrian refugees in the Arab Republic of Egypt (Egypt). Both concepts are part of Securitization Theory as originally laid down by the Copenhagen School of Security Studies. Securitization refers to the process of presenting an issue in international relations as an existential threat to a referent object. Through a ‘speech act’ an issue is taken out of the realm of normal politics and placed on the security agenda, which can justify a response with exceptional measures.¹ Interpretations of this concept by the Paris School of Security Studies move towards an analysis of practices and institutional settings that place or keep issues in the security arena.² Desecuritization refers to the process aimed at returning an issue from this emergency and securitized state to ‘normal’ politics.³

With this analysis, I aim to, on the one hand, provide insight into the securitization of refugees in Egypt since the coming to power of the current President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi. On the other hand, I aim to explore desecuritization efforts by one of the most influential actors regarding this issue, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The case study of this research will centre around policy, practice and discourse regarding Syrian refugees in urban areas in Egypt. My hypothesis is that securitization theory will provide valuable insights into these security dynamics.

Therefore, the case study of this research will center around policy, practice and discourse regarding Syrian refugees in urban areas in Egypt. A theoretical framework, built on the basis of Securitization Theory, will provide handles to study the processes of securitization and desecuritization of the presence of this group of refugees in Egypt. The aim of this study is to, on a theoretical level, add to the literature on (de)securitization theory and explore if the concepts form an effective theoretical framework to explain security dynamics in the social sphere in a non-democratic setting. On the empirical level, this research aims to give insight into securitizing and desecuritizing efforts surrounding Syrian refugees in Egypt, through an analysis of

---
³ Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, *Security*. 
discourse, policy, and practice affecting them. Overall, the central research question is: How can the environment for Syrian refugees in Egypt be explained by securitization theory?

**Social and scientific significance**

The social significance of this research question firstly relates to the fact that refugees that experience a harsh social and political climate in many places worldwide, including Egypt. António Guterres, The High Commissioner for Refugees, emphasized during multiple speeches that the protection climate for refugees is diminishing worldwide.\(^4\) Secondly it relates to the social significance of examining the policies and actions of the actors governing this group of people.

In Europe, refugees and asylum seekers are more and more linked to crime, terrorism and fear. The securitization can be observed in the public discourse as well as in the analysis policing and border protection measures in the European Union.\(^5\) But also in the global South refugees are securitized, as can be illustrated by violent police actions against migrants and refugees in urban areas in for example Kenya, Lebanon, Morocco and Egypt.\(^6\) There, refugees often face these perceptions plus the fear of instability and conflict.\(^7\) These perceptions have harmed the protection climate for refugees worldwide, resulting sometimes in military responses, refoulements and violent border protection mechanisms.

The war in Syria has brought about a total of 4 million people currently seeking refuge and safety, predominantly in neighboring countries Turkey, Lebanon, Jordan, Iraq and Egypt. Increasingly, Syrian refugees embark on the journey to find safe haven in European countries. It is within this setting that my attention was drawn to a dramatic shift in the attitudes towards Syrian refugees. Up to the summer of 2013, Syrian refugees were welcomed in Egypt and provided with housing, education, health care and other necessary assistance by government programs, civil society in cooperation with UNHCR and other UN bodies. Along with the ousting of former president Mohammed Morsi this welcoming atmosphere changed dramatically, with Syrians more and more risking the

---


dangerous journey across the Mediterranean sea to avoid arbitrary arrest, detention and harassment in Egypt. With European news channels full of images of Syrian refugees on rubber boats making the dangerous journey towards the European shores, I wished to study the setting they were escaping. For these reasons it appears of social significance to dig deeper into the complex security dynamics that lie underneath the management and policies targeted towards refugees by international and national actors.

Secondly, it always remains necessary to question main humanitarian organizations, state actors, and bureaucracies. They hold the knowledge and power to formulate policy, categories and take action. These actions are never neutral and have a direct effect on those being governed, in this case Syrian refugees and Egyptian host communities. The Egyptian government, army and bureaucracy are clearly actors that should be questioned, since they hold the obvious position of state power. As for UNHCR, it is broadly accepted that the organization is a deeply political body, since one of its main goals is to influence states and the international public to adopt certain values and ideas based on refugee and human rights law in order to expand space for humanitarian action.¹⁸ UNHCR is in a position to influence policy and practice concerning refugees in Egypt in multiple ways, which directly impacts the lives of this group of people. There is therefore of social relevance to study the policy, practice, and discourse of UNHCR and the Egyptian state and try to unravel the underlying power relations and security dynamics at play.⁹

This research is scientifically relevant firstly as a possible contribution to the development of securitization theory. Secondly it is relevant as a case study to provide insight into the environment for Syrian refugees in Egypt. Securitization theory, and especially the further developments of the theory such as from the Paris School, has not been as often applied in non-Western context as it has been in European contexts. In addition, whereas the securitization of societal issues in Europe has developed into a separate field of study, there has been less research into desecuritization processes in this field. Far more attention, in the form of scholarly debate as well as in the policy

---

¹⁸ Hammerstad, The Rise and Decline of a Global Security Actor, 6-7.
world, has gone to securitization and its effects, whereas desecuritization has been left relatively under-theorized and especially not much applied to specific case studies.\textsuperscript{10} By applying the concepts of securitization and desecuritization to this case study, this research aims to contribute to the development of this less explored concept of securitization theory. Buzan and Waever, the main authors within the Copenhagen School, state that the aim of the theoretical project is not only to provide explanations for a given case, but also to develop the framework further when trying to explain cases using the concepts of securitization.\textsuperscript{11} It is thus an ongoing research project that benefits from more explorations of security dynamics worldwide. With the proposed theoretical framework I will sketch in a later stage as well as the application of this framework, I aim to contribute to this research project.

Next to the aim to contribute to the theoretical development of the concepts of securitization and desecuritization, the research aims to add to academic literature on the urban refugee environment in Egypt. The study of refugees in urban areas outside the West is a fairly recent field within refugee studies, since it has only developed into a distinct field since the early 2000s.\textsuperscript{12} There have been many reports by NGOs, think thanks and international organizations in the field on the situation for urban refugees in Egypt exploring their needs and the effects of national and international policies. Moreover, there has been some academic literature focusing on different elements of urban refugee policy in Egypt, mainly concerning livelihoods of urban refugees. By taking a securitization approach, this thesis aims to contribute to this body of literature from a different perspective.

**Research design and methodology**

This research is structured on the basis of a theoretical framework, its operationalization, and application of this framework in two analyses. The subsequent section will consist of a literature overview of securitization theory. The concepts securitization and desecuritization will be elaborated upon, as well as the theoretical development of these concepts towards a more embedded understanding that incorporate the study of policy, behavior and institutionalized practices alongside


\textsuperscript{12} Dryden-Peterson, “I find myself as Someone Who is in the Forest’: Urban Refugees as Agents of Social Change in Kampala, Uganda” *Journal of Refugee Studies* 19, no. 3 (2006): 382.
discourse. Flowing from the abovementioned section, a framework for operationalization shall be sketched for both analyzing the case of the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt as well as the desecuritizing moves in these dynamics. The actor that will be central in this last part of the analysis is UNHCR.

Having discussed the theoretical underpinnings and laid down the operationalization, the main analysis will follow in two parts. The first part contains an analysis of the process of the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt. The part of the research will be structured chronologically, in order to provide a process oriented image. The time frame that is central in the analysis is from the end of 2011, the arrival of Syrian refugees in Egypt, up to the end of 2014. Although this part is an analysis by itself, it can also been seen as providing essential context to understanding the analysis of desecuritization moves. The next part of the research, the analysis will move to UNHCR’s advocacy strategy in Egypt. It will be researched to what extent this practice and its accompanying discourse can be seen as a desecuritizing move. The structure will thus shift from process-oriented to actor-oriented, centered around UNHCR.

The sources this research is based on range from academic literature and official policy documents to newspaper articles. The literature review will consist of academic literature, mainly in the field of security studies. Literature from the Copenhagen School and Paris School of Security Studies will form the focal points of this section. For the analysis of the process of securitization in Egypt, academic literature is scarce, since it relates to a process that surfaced in the summer of 2013. The main documents that will be used to analyze the situation are research reports and commentaries from academics, think thanks, civil society organizations, and newspapers. In researching UNHCR’s advocacy strategy towards the Egyptian government, sources used are mainly official policy documents and strategic plans. Also, scholarly interpretations, research by think tanks and newspaper articles provide sources of information.

Methodologically, this thesis will follow an operationalization model based on the concepts of securitization and desecuritization. It will contain a combination of analyzing policy, practices and discourse, with an emphasis of placing these actions in their relational and institutional context.
Theoretical framework

With this literature review I aim to provide an oversight of literature that will function as the lens through which the case will be analyzed. I will firstly position the theoretical framework of securitization within the broader international relations and international security debate. This discussion will explain the rationale behind studying refugee issues from a perspective that finds its roots in security studies. Secondly, I will explain the theory of securitization, originally framed by the Copenhagen School. Hereafter, I will go into the further developments of this theory in light of the post-structuralist critiques, the applicability of the theory in non-Western settings, and different conceptions of desecuritization in literature. This section will contain the theoretical basis for the analysis. Fourthly, as a step towards the main analysis, I aim to structure the debate in a way that it will result a delineated theoretical framework for analyzing the case study.

Refugees and security studies

Security studies has developed as a distinct academic field along with the field of international relations and has long been dominated by a rational choice and neoclassical perspective. The traditional outlook on security long remained state-centered and focused on issues such as military threat, zero-sum games and nuclear power. After the Cold War these approaches were contested and supplemented by Peace Research, Feminism, Post-structuralism and Critical Theory. Security studies was hereby extensively widened in its scope and agenda and deepened in its ontological and epistemological understanding. This trend within academia both influenced and was influenced by the security perceptions of states, which had notably changed to include new security threats. Migrants, refugees and asylum seekers were placed on national security agendas in many states, especially in the global North.

In the decades after World War II the perception of refugees changed dramatically. Firstly, they were perceived as individuals fearing persecution because of their beliefs and behaviors, thus not posing a particular security risk. By the late 1990s however, with an entirely different make-up of refugee movements from different parts of the world, refugees were more and more seen as threatening to international order, the economy, welfare states, personal security and more. The perception of refugees

14 Hammerstad, The Rise and Decline of a Global Security Actor, 1.
essentially changed from ‘victims’ to ‘burdens.’\textsuperscript{15} Not only were refugees discussed as a consequence of insecurity, but also as a cause of insecurity from host states and even the international community. Refugee movements were the prominently present in United Nations Security Council (UNSC) resolutions and were seen as possible justification for armed interventions under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.\textsuperscript{16}

As refugees emerged on the security agenda, these developments were increasingly studied from security perspectives. An example is the concept of Human Security, developed by the UNDP and later adopted in academia to study issues that were previously not included on the security agenda and were related to the security of individuals, as well as societies and states.\textsuperscript{17} Within other paradigms, refugees have also been linked to conflict and security studies, with publications bringing up the concept of refugee fighters and linking refugees with terrorism or armed conflict. These studies have researched for example the militarization of refugee camps. There is also a strand of literature exploring the manipulation of refugee groups in conflicts and the challenges refugees pose to host governments, both in developed and developing countries.\textsuperscript{18} With societal issues, such as refugees, appearing on the security agenda, security studies developed from a field of study focused on military and nuclear power to a widened field that included health, environment and societal security. It is within this widening and deepening of the field of security studies that securitization theory can be positioned.

**The Copenhagen School and securitization theory**

Securitization Theory, developed by the Copenhagen School in the 1980s, can be considered as one of the most influential widening and deepening approaches within the field of security studies after the end of the Cold War. The core members of this school are Barry Buzan and Ole Waever, who worked from the institutional setting of the Copenhagen Peace Research Institute (COPRI).\textsuperscript{19} The main aim of the school was to develop a comprehensive study of security, which sails between the traditionalist

---


\textsuperscript{17} Loescher, “Security and Forced Migration,” 11.

\textsuperscript{18} Hammerstad, *The Rise and Decline of a Global Security Actor*, 53.

security agenda and a more critical approach.\textsuperscript{20} To paraphrase the idea of Carr, sailing between realism and reflectionism is the most effective way for policy and research.\textsuperscript{21} Key works that lay down the theoretical framework are \textit{Security: A New Framework For Analysis} written by Barry Buzan, Ole Waever and Jaap de Wilde in 1998 and \textit{Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security} by Buzan and Waever in 2003. On the basis of these and subsequent works as well as the many critiques and debates that followed, the Copenhagen School developed into a comprehensive framework in the field of security studies. Applications of the framework can be found in the many case studies as well as the influence on policy, mainly in Scandinavia and North-Western Europe. Especially the concepts of securitization and societal security have contributed to a large amount of research.\textsuperscript{22}

At the heart of the Copenhagen School’s approach to security lie three concepts. Firstly, the widened security agenda to include societal, economic and environmental sectors into the security debate, besides political and military sectors which had been studied by traditional strategic studies.\textsuperscript{23} Secondly, the concept of regional security complexes has been incorporated into the school’s theoretical framework. Thirdly, securitization theory, which consists of the concepts securitization and desecuritization, is at the basis of the School’s theoretical thinking. This third concept will be the focus of this theoretical section, although the three elements can best be understood together.\textsuperscript{24} In combination, these concepts can provide an insightful mapping of the security dynamics of a particular case according to the School.

\textit{Securitization}

Security, according to the Copenhagen School, is not an objective condition but rather a process marked by the intersubjective establishment of an existential threat with sufficient saliency to have political effects.\textsuperscript{25} In other words, what makes an issue a security issue in international relations is when it is presented as an existential threat to a referent object. Securitization in turn, is the process of presenting and issue as a security concern, through ‘speech act’. A successful case of securitization brings the

\textsuperscript{22} Buzan and Hansen, \textit{The Evolution of International Security Studies}, 212.
\textsuperscript{24} C.A.S.E. Collective, “Critical Approaches to Security in Europe,” 452.
issue to the level of an urgent threat which needs to be acted upon outside the framework of normal action. A successful securitization thus allows for the employment of techniques that would have been otherwise subject to procedures and rules of normal political contestation.\textsuperscript{26} Furthermore, for an issue to be successfully securitized, the audience has to accept it as such. When the audience does not accept the portraying of an issue as an existential threat that justifies extraordinary measures, the discourse is called a \textit{securitizing move} and it cannot be viewed as completely securitized.\textsuperscript{27} An important element to add is that of scale. A securitization is deemed important by the actors if it affects the inter-unit relations by breaking free of the rules that apply to these relations.\textsuperscript{28}

In summary, securitization is present when something is presented by a security actor as an existential threat that needs exceptional measures and an audience that accepts it as such. Securitization is thus an intersubjective process that is based on a ‘speech act’. Facilitating conditions are conditions under which a speech act becomes a successful case of securitization. Buzan, Waever and de Wilde name three facilitating conditions: (1) the speech act follows the grammar of security, (2) the position of power and authority of the securitizing actor vis à vis the audience, (3) material features of the presented threat. The outcome of a securitizing move is thus influenced by the form of the speech act and how well the threat is placed in the security sphere. In addition, the relation of power between the security actor and the audience influences the outcome to a great extent. When the actor is not taken seriously or does not speak and act from a position of authority, the speech act has less of a chance of succeeding. Lastly, the issue itself that is presented by the actor can influence the outcome. An example would be that tanks pull up at a border, a lake becomes heavily polluted, or violent attacks occur. The presence or lack of these material factors can influence the outcome of a securitizing move.\textsuperscript{29}

\textit{Sectors and referent objects}

According to the Copenhagen School, something can be labeled a security issue in international relations when it is presented as posing an existential threat to the

\textsuperscript{26} Buzan and Hansen, \textit{The Evolution of International Security Studies}, 214.
\textsuperscript{27} Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, \textit{Security}, 25.
\textsuperscript{28} Ibid., 26.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid., 33.
referent object. The presented extraordinary nature of the threat can justify the use of measures that go beyond the ‘normal’ political arena. This broad definition of a security issue can thus apply for security analyses outside the traditional field of military affairs. For different sectors different existential threats, emergency measures, and therewith securitization processes occur. These dynamics depend on the character of the referent object. The Copenhagen School identifies five sectors where securitization of issues can take place in international relations, namely the military, political, economic, societal, and environmental sector. It is important to note that these sectors are in no way separate and only exist in relation to the complex whole. However, they cover distinguishable security dynamics which can be studied separately to facilitate analysis, since they reduce the number of variables. Therefore, in order to regain the complete picture of security dynamics it would be necessary to reassemble the sectors.

Furthermore, since this ‘whole’ is not defined, these sectors are chosen as places where securitization discourses take place, but they are not set in stone. It is possible that security discourses gain prominence in another, yet to be defined, sector. Some authors, for example, argue in favor of adding the humanitarian sector as a separate sector of analysis.

Referent objects, securitizing actors, and threats differ per sector. The military sector is defined as concerning relationships of forceful coercion, and the ability of actors to fight wars. In this sector the referent object is usually the state, although it could also in some circumstances be armed forces themselves. The political sector is regarding relationships of authority, governing status and recognition. In this sector, existential threats are usually defined as threatening the core principle of the unit, such as the sovereignty or legitimacy of a governing unit, or situations that undermine the norms, rules or institutions of an international regime or international society. In the societal sector, an existential threat can be anything that threatens collective identity. It is hard to draw a boundary where this threat can be viewed as an existential threat to

---

31 Ibid., 8.
identity since identity is such a fluent and debated concept.\textsuperscript{38} The economic sector consists of relationships of trade, finance and production and, lastly, the environmental sector is about the relationship between human activity and the support system of the planetary biosphere for all human activity.\textsuperscript{39}

For this study the security logic of the political and societal sector are of significance. Although the securitization of refugees in Europe is mainly seen as a societal issue, in Egypt the political sector should be part of the analysis. As Ayoob argues, in post-colonial states the political complex is always present and should be a filter through which we view the security issue at stake.\textsuperscript{40} This argument will be elaborated upon in the section on securitization theory in non-Western settings.

\textit{Level of analysis and regional security complexes}

The level of analysis in an important aspect of dealing with security and with the concept of (de)securitization in particular. It can provide a framework to analyze within, since the level can be seen as an ontological referent to where things happen.\textsuperscript{41} The most common levels of analysis that are used in International Relations are the international system level, international subsystem level, unit level, subunit, and individual level. Threats might for instance be articulated as stemming from the global level, such as terrorism or global warming, and be voiced towards a local audience. However, to really understand the dynamics of the securitization, one needs to study these levels in conjunction with the regional subsystem level. Regional security complexes (RSC) form a large part of the Copenhagen school and are deemed important in understanding security dynamics. The definition of a RSC is ‘a set of units whose major processes of securitization, desecuritisation, or both are so interlinked that their security problems cannot reasonably be analysed or resolved apart from one another’.\textsuperscript{42} Buzan and Waever claim that regions form subsystems where most of the security issues arise internally. Furthermore, they make the strong claim that the relevant strategic setting for most states does not happen on the global level, in the form of some sort of Huntington-like

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{38} Ibid., 23.
\item \textsuperscript{39} Albert and Buzan, “Securitization, Sectors and Functional Differentiation,” 418.
\item \textsuperscript{40} Mohammed Ayoob, \textit{The Third World Security Predicament: State Making, Regional Conflict, and the International System} (London: Lynne Rienner, 1995): 8.
\item \textsuperscript{41} Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, \textit{Security}, 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 201.
\end{itemize}
Clash of Civilizations, but plays out in the region.\textsuperscript{43} Security dynamics are inherently regional, so one cannot study a states’ security dynamics in isolation.\textsuperscript{44} The patterns of amity and enmity can usually be understood by analyzing security discourses of actors on the regional level then moving on to the global and domestic influences.\textsuperscript{45} For this study, the analysis on national level will be supplemented by regional dynamics affecting the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt.

\textbf{Critiques and further development of (de)securitization theory}

Having discussed the main elements of classic securitization theory, this section will present four lines of critique and further development of the theory. It is upon these interpretations of securitization theory that the theoretical framework of this research will be primarily based. The first critique, presented by Strizel and Balzacq proposes a more embedded form of securitization, emphasizing the importance of embedding a speech act in its external context and researching the field. The second strand of critique, voiced by scholars such as Bigo and Huysmans, moves further away from the focus on speech acts and instead moves the focus to practices. This school of authors, the Paris School, aims to show those security issues that securitization theory fails to grasp by its focus on elite discourse, namely the development of security issues by bureaucracies, through actions or practices and not exclusively speech acts.\textsuperscript{46} Both groups of authors have awarded more relevance to external context, audience, bureaucratic processes, and the power/knowledge nexus of actors in the security habitus or field.\textsuperscript{47} The third strand of critique aims to make securitization theory more applicable, by redefining its elements or extend its explanatory power to different settings, for example non-democratic countries. The fourth strand of authors have focused on the process of desecuritization and the normative aspects that go hand in hand with this relatively less studied element of the theory.

The critiques voiced by the Paris School and those on the application of the theory in non-Western contexts, propose additions and alterations to securitization theory that follow the same logic. They downplay the role of discourse analysis and argue for a more context oriented approach were both practices and authority of actors

\textsuperscript{43} Buzan and Waever, \textit{Regions and Powers}, 41.
\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 43.
\textsuperscript{45} Ibid., 47-48.
\textsuperscript{47} Watson, "The ‘Human as Referent Object?’" 4.
have a prominent role, next to the embeddedness of discourse in a field or habitus of broader security discourse and context. It is thus worth going into these theoretical developments more in depth in order to gain insight into studying a non-democratic setting such as Egypt. The insights provided by the Paris School might also prove relevant for studying the process of desecuritization. This proposed interpretation of securitization will inform the theoretical framework of the case study analysis of this research.

Firstly, the deepening of the concept of securitization by Strizel and Balzacq will be discussed. Secondly, the Paris School strand of securitization, moving beyond speech acts and focusing on practices and institutionalized securitizations will be presented. Thirdly, the applicability of this theoretical framework to the Egyptian case, a non-Western setting, will be discussed. Fourthly, it will be argued that these theoretical developments can be useful not only to study securitization processes, but desecuritization moves as well. A theoretical discussion regarding the concept of desecuritization will mark the end of the theoretical section, which will conclude with a concrete framework of analysis for the case study.

**Embedded securitization**

Strizel and Balzacq have developed a more embedded version of securitization, which takes context more into account in the analysis. Stritzel points out that securitization theory inherently struggles with the concepts of speech act and its embeddedness in a social context. He claims one can identify two centers of gravity that cause this internal dynamic in the theory, namely the internalist and externalist understanding of securitization. Waever represents the internalist, more poststructuralist side of the spectrum, which focuses on speech act as an indicative force and pays less attention to the position of the actor and context. The authority to speak is derived from the performative power of the speech itself.\(^{48}\) The externalist position, on the other hand, theorizes securitization more as a process which is embedded in its context. Stritzel characterizes this position as the more constructivist side of the spectrum. It finds its roots in the elements of ‘facilitating conditions’, ‘authority of the speaker’ and ‘structured field’ that can be found in the work of Buzan and Waever, although insufficiently worked out according to the author.

---

Stritzel proposes to incorporate these externalist elements into a comprehensive theory of securitization. He argues that security discourses need to be seen in a broader linguistic context where the actor and the discursive action gain their power.\textsuperscript{49} He proposes a framework of analysis with three layers: the performative force of the articulated threat texts, their embeddedness in existing discourses and the positional power of actors who influence the process of defining meaning.\textsuperscript{50} Balzacq, in turn, has complemented securitization theory with a richer understanding of the relationship between securitizing actor, speech act and audiences. He has thus further developed the intersubjective relationship between actor and audience, a central element of securitization, in order to better study the degree of success of securitization moves.\textsuperscript{51}

Both these approaches have developed the facilitating conditions of the securitization theory and given them more prominence. However, this embedded approach is still primarily focused on speech acts. As Strizel maintains, Bigo and Huysmans can be seen as proposing an even more embedded approach, which in addition to discourse also examines practice and policy, the role of bureaucracies, and governmentality.\textsuperscript{52} I will now turn to this more Foucauldian interpretation of securitization theory, which will provide the basis of the understanding of securitization in this research.

\textit{From embedded discourse to practice - the Paris School}

The Paris School of security studies, which is closely connected to the Copenhagen School, has a slightly different understanding of securitization. It sees it as the capacity to control borders, manage threats, define endangered identities and delineate present states of order. This School sees security in Foucauldian terms as a sort of governmentality, a technique of government. This understanding of security leads to an analytical focus on the effects of power operations that go hand in hand with security practices.\textsuperscript{53} A brief detour into the Foucauldian understanding of power and governmentality is in place. Although Foucault’s view on power was never crystallized, he did give valuable insight into the processes of the development of power positions and their effects. He emphasized modes of governance and rule and focused on liberal

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 360.  
\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 370.  
\textsuperscript{51} Salter, “Securitization and Desecuritization,” 326.  
\textsuperscript{52} Stritzel, “Towards a Theory of Securitization,” 376.  
governmentality in his research. Modern political power, according to Foucault, takes it upon itself to administer life and populations, to regulate and administer them. Since operations of power are directly linked to knowledge, this knowledge is never neutral. In his famous debate with Naom Chomsky in 1971, Foucault argued that we should always question seemingly neutral, independent and bureaucratic bodies that have expertise, create categories and shape political actions. Although they fall outside of the political side of government, they are very much political and govern our world.

Following the Foucauldian approach to power, the Paris School shifts the emphasis from speech acts towards the practices, contexts, and audiences that keep in place and keep in check different forms of governmentality. An important element of this view on security is Bordieu's concept of field, which Bigo uses to map the field of security. All securitizations, according to Bigo, are connected to ‘a field of security constituted by groups and institutions that authorize themselves and that are authorized to state what security is’. The focus of the analysis thus lies with the networks of professionals of (in)security, the effects of their power and the systems of meaning that they form. To study a field, one studies the relations between different security actors, their role, status, behavior and institutional settings. This provides a better understanding of the context in which these actors act and speak. Bigo also emphasizes the importance of authority of the securitizing actor. The success of securitizing moves of actors depends on their knowledge and power as authorities to speak or act on a certain matter. In short, to understand the effects of certain discourses and practices one needs to study the entire field. It is therefore not only relevant to study the discourse of these powerful actors, but also their actions, policy, and behavior in relation to the broader relational context. The power/knowledge nexus can help to better understand the position of actors involved in securitization and desecuritization practices.

55 Ibid., 271.
59 Ibid., 458.
When discussing the securitization of migration in Europe, Bigo shifts the attention from elite discourses on security towards the management side, the institutionalized, bureaucratic processes of managing insecurity and in his words ‘unease’ in society. Exceptional security practices are in this way normalized and routinized. This move away from discourse towards studying institutionalized practices is the red thread of his research. The effects and institutionalization of political discourses are seen by Bigo as an integral part of the securitization process. Securitization theory by Buzan and Waever offers good insight into how and in what way actors declare something to be an exceptional threat that requires exceptional measures. Bigo in turn argues that this view is too focused on elite discourse and fails to grasp the normalization of exceptions through bureaucratic and technocratic governing techniques. The exception can thus be better understood as embedded in a process of normalization and routinization.61 This institutionalized and management side, perpetuating securitization through securitizing practices, shows a more complete image of the securitization.62 The definition of a securitizing practice would, taking this logic, entail activities that convey the idea, directly or indirectly, that the issue they are tackling is a security threat.63

When laying bare securitizing practices and institutionalized securitization, it becomes easier to understand why desecuritizing narratives that go against securitizing speech acts have so little effect.64 When an issue has become institutionalized, and does not need constant rearticulation of the speech act in order to stay securitized, this is a particular challenge for desecuritizing efforts. Institutionalizations of securitizations might rely on the use of repression and force or a continued acceptance of the audience. It is thus possible to see actions of seemingly neutral bureaucratic institutions without seeing the actual political speech act or green light for this action, but it can still be a securitization. This acceptance might have happened before.65 A desecuritization move would have to bring the issue back to public policy, which would require a move out of secrecy, involvement of more actors, and resource allocation and decisions by the

---

65 Hansen, "Reconstructing Desecuritization," 532.
Moreover, a desecuritization move might also be aimed at transforming the identities and interests of the actors away from friend-enemy dichotomies.67

It was argued in this section that in order to reveal securitization processes, a shift from discourse to practice can prove to be insightful. It might reveal bureaucratic, institutional practices that contribute to the securitization of a certain issue, without reaching the public discourse. Also, institutionalized practices, that might have given green light by a successful speech act at an earlier point in time, can reveal the effects of securitization more in depth. Discourse and practice might not always coincide, and in the absence of discourse, there might still be a securitized field of practices and intuitional dynamics at play. In the next section, it will be argued, with the help of critiques on the Western bias of the theory, that these insights might be applicable to the setting in Egypt.

_Securitization theory in a non-democratic setting_

Having explored more embedded and institutionalized forms of securitization theory, I will now move on to the arguments introduced towards the Copenhagen School regarding the applicability of the theory in non-Western contexts. Securitization theory was developed as a framework with general explanatory value, mostly developed based on analyses in Europe, but also security dynamics in South Asia.68 Critiques and developments of securitization theory on this issue are most prominently voiced by Wilkinson and Vuori. Touzari Greenwood and Waever have taken into account and responded to these arguments in their recent article studying the Egyptian revolution, therewith exploring how postcolonial and non-Western characteristics in Egypt affect the applicability of the theory.69 These arguments will build the case for applying a more practice-based analysis to the study of the security dynamics concerning Syrian refugees in Egypt. The discussion below aims to result in points to take into account when analyzing this specific context.

The first line of arguments levied against the applicability of securitization theory in non-Western context usually points to the differences in security dynamics and concepts such as state, society, and identity. These differences have been extensively studied by

66 Ibid., 531.
67 Ibid., 533.
69 Ibid.
Ayoob, a leading scholar in Third World Security. He argues that generally primary threats to security in a non-Western setting are to be found in the military or political sector. Developments in other sectors can, however, be of great importance once they are perceived as threatening to state boundaries, political institutions or governing regimes and thus enter the political arena.\textsuperscript{70} He refers to refugee movements as possibly falling in this category.\textsuperscript{71} Elites, as the main security actors, are primarily concerned with security at regime and state level.\textsuperscript{72} Autocratic regimes often try to portray threat to the regime as threats to the state, which makes it harder to detangle the blurred lines between elite, regime, and state.\textsuperscript{73} He explains this by arguing that Third World states often deal with the almost impossible job to build a successful and modern state quickly under much political pressure. This results in many insecurities in which the state is trying maintain and develop its political order, often by force.\textsuperscript{74} The insecurity, in turn, is partly explained by an incomplete legitimacy of ruling elites.\textsuperscript{75} He argues that, in a non-Western setting, the internal dimension of security is the core variable that determines security issues and it is intertwined with the process of state making.\textsuperscript{76} External dimensions play into the security dynamics as challenges to elites and regimes are often dependent for their success upon the support of regional powers and developments.\textsuperscript{77}

With these characteristics of non-democratic settings in mind, the line of critique towards securitization theory goes it would be less applicable to study non-Western contexts since it presupposes liberal democracy as the norm and applies its conceptions of state and society universally. Wilkinson can be considered the strongest advocate of this position.\textsuperscript{78} A related strand of post-colonial critique holds that, in authoritarian contexts, state sectors and state action are less centralized and less coherent than apparent from the outside. In comparison with Western states, there is more informal

\textsuperscript{70} Ayoob, \textit{The Third World Security Predicament}, 8.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 175.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 86.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 42.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 40.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 21.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 55.
\textsuperscript{78} Touzari Greenwood and Waever, "Copenhagen-Cairo on a Roundtrip," 486.
politics and competing sites of state-building and legitimacy. Classical securitization theory, however, tends to emphasize the public discourse.⁷⁹

This argument is presented in more detail by Vuori in his development of a securitization approach to study non-democratic political orders. He argues that for both democratic and non-democratic regimes securitization can have a legitimizing role, although the balance between persuasion and coercion might be different in both contexts.⁸⁰ Also, he draws the link with securitization for different purposes connected to state-building and control taking. Security speech can for example function as legitimizing power and authority positions vis-à-vis protest movements or political opposition.⁸¹ He acknowledges that in authoritarian contexts, it might be more difficult to discover the norm and extraordinary measures, because of the more secret atmosphere surrounding security. It might also be more difficult to establish the relevant audience, since securitizations might be targeting a part of the elite.⁸²

Touzari Greenwood and Waever responded to this critique by reaffirming the position of the Copenhagen School that the norm, the rules and procedures that apply, must be understood in relative terms in every situation. When studying a situation in non-Western contexts, concepts such as legitimacy, authority, politics, and society can therefore be explained differently than in a Western setting. This is especially relevant in a post-colonial setting, where such concepts have developed an entirely different content under the same name.⁸³ In their analysis of the Egyptian revolution, they found for example that political actors, security experts, and issue experts are less tightly knit in non-Western societies. Their relationship should thus be studied more in depth. They do not, however, see theoretical difficulties stemming from specific Arab politics that would undermine the relevance of the theory as such.⁸⁴

They have, however, experienced challenges for studying revolutionary situations using securitization theory, since its conception of politics requires some form of stability in order to distinguish between ‘normal’ and ‘exceptional’ politics. When there is a real possibility that the norm is being overthrown by the exception, which

⁸¹ Ibid.
⁸² Ibid., 71.
⁸³ Touzari Greenwood and Waever, "Copenhagen-Cairo on a Roundtrip," 486.
⁸⁴ Ibid., 500.
would in turn become the norm (as is the case in revolutionary situations), how valuable is securitization theory? As a solution, they bring to the fore the possibility of studying institutionalized securitizations. This would, according to them, be particularly relevant in Egypt because of the prominence of military and police institutions in political life. Securitization theory can give insights into processes of securitization in defense of institutionalization and the development of stability in emerging institutional structures.85

Another element of critique that is discussed by both Vuori and Wilkinson is the focus of the Copenhagen School on speech acts, thereby marginalizing other forms of communication and action, is particularly problematic in a non-Western setting. In authoritarian settings, speech is often not as freely possible as in democratic settings, making other forms of expression more relevant to study as securitizing or desecuritizing actions, such as acts of violence, migration, symbols, or silent protests.86 This logic also extends to acts by governments, security forces, or other authorities. Their speech acts might not extend to the broader public, or they might in another form than they would in Western contexts and more can be read from actions, policies, and legal frameworks. The same goes for media outlets, which have different roles and positions, depending on the setting. Wilkinson herewith argues to take into account other forms of communication next to speech, as well as practices. Action and speech, according to her, do not correlate in the same way in non-democratic settings.87 Where discrepancies in discourse and practices of non-democratic regimes are present, it might thus be wise to place emphasis on practices to unravel processes of securitization.

Even though this is the case, Vuori still argues that, in order to be legitimizing, the securitization has to be somehow made public in for it to have its securitizing effect. One must be able to study it by reading policy publications, legislation or official statements.88 However, to keep studying securitization as a process, Vuori also proposes to embed securitization in a field and emphasize power positions of actors and other facilitating conditions, as well as the role of the audience.89 This strand of critique argues that a more embedded form of securitization would thus be much more relevant in a setting such as in Egypt. In addition, when a threat is reoccurring and the response

85 Ibid., 501.
87 Ibid., 21.
88 Vuori, “Illocutionary Logic and Strands of Securitization,” 71.
89 Ibid., 75.
to this threat becomes institutionalized, the securitization process might be best studied from an even more embedded approach drawing upon the work of the Paris School.90

What can be taken away from this discussion is that securitization theory can very well be applied to a non-democratic setting, and more specifically is very relevant to study the Egyptian situation. There are points that need to be taken into account when applying a securitization approach to this case. The concepts of legitimacy, state, nation, society and identity are differently arranged than in a democratic setting. This discussion underlines the importance of studying the relative power positions of actors in the context of an unstable constellation of power holders and their legitimizing discourses. The non-democratic setting thus calls for a more embedded view of discourse, emphasizing the context in which a certain discourse is presented and placing less emphasis on examining the grammar of speech acts.

Furthermore, discourse in itself has a different position in a non-democratic context and might not always reflect the securitized setting adequately. Because of the differently shaped relationship between the political elite and the public, the process of placing issues on the security agenda is not necessarily done through official discourse or speech acts. The practices that are carried out by those in power can reveal a side of the securitized setting that would be left unidentified when only focusing on discourse. More authoritarian regimes generally have a broader range of security measures to their disposal, which do not always need explicit articulation and acceptance by the general public. Security practices can go without discourse. Actions might thus in specific cases speak louder than words.

Concluding, studying practices as suggested by the Paris School is important to explore securitization in Egypt in two respects. Firstly, since an autocratic regime legitimizes its practices differently towards the public, practices might reveal entirely different dynamics than official discourses. Furthermore, in many cases the securitization is institutionalized and does not need constant affirmation through discourse. Such institutionalized securitizations are best studied by looking into policies and practices, following the Paris School of securitization studies.

---

Desecuritization

The Copenhagen School has not been as explicit about the concept of desecuritization as it has been about securitization. This has left room for other scholars to develop the concept further. Different scholars, among which Huysmans, Oelsner, Aradau, Hansen, Balzacq, McDonald, and Coskun, have interpreted the concept of desecuritization in their work.91 The concept remains, however, less theoretically developed and much less applied in literature than securitization.92 In order to introduce the main theoretical basis of the analysis, it will be discussed what desecuritization is and how it relates to securitization, why to desecuritize, who can be considered a desecuritizing actor, and lastly what different forms of desecuritization can be identified. Concluding the debate, the two main forms of desecuritization categorized by Balzacq, Depauw and Leonard, will be presented as the basis for analyzing the process of desecuritization in Egypt.

The starting point of the debate is with the Copenhagen School’s introduction of the concept. Desecuritization has been described by Buzan and Waever as ‘a process in which a political community downgrades or ceases to treat something as an existential threat to a referent object, and reduces or stops calling for exceptional measures to deal with the threat’.93 While the process of securitization moves an issue into the security sphere, the process of desecuritization works in the opposite direction. It can thus be described as returning back to the normal routine of politics.94 If we extend this logic, an issue that has been securitized cannot simply be desecuritized by managing the threat and responding to the insecurity with security measures. This course of action would maintain the situation in terms of insecurity and security. The threat dynamics remain in place. Desecuritization means removing an issue from these dynamics into a security or non-security. Issues can be brought back to the arena of ‘normal’ politics and be discussed and contested outside the framework of security.95

Desecuritization is, however, unlike classic securitization, not primarily based on a speech act. It can happen partly as a result of speech acts, through an alternative discourse. However, one cannot declare something as unthreatening and thereby
desecuritize an issue.\textsuperscript{96} It is thus more relevant to look into desecuritizing practices, policies and actions, whilst taking into account the general discourse attached to these practices. Also, one must keep in mind that, as mentioned earlier, an institutionalized securitization can be harder to desecuritize since the securitizing practices are routine and thus less present in the political sphere and more in the bureaucratic background. Desecuritization can thus not be seen as a mirroring process of securitization, although the two concepts rely on each other and are connected. But without the securitization of a subject, one cannot actively pursue a strategy of desecuritization.

Most authors working with the framework share the normative stance that desecuritization is the preferred outcome of a securitized situation.\textsuperscript{97} They agree that desecuritization is a long-term ideal that ought to be sought, since it represents an ideal that leaves issues to be debated in the political realm instead of the more secretive and less democratic security realm.\textsuperscript{98} Waever has put this argument to the fore in many of his writings, with the side note that in some cases securitization can be a helpful tool for political actors in order to generate direct action.\textsuperscript{99} An example could be when a state is faced with ruthless violent aggressor.\textsuperscript{100} When it comes to societal issues, however, the widespread belief exists that securitization leads to harmful societal conflict and an overriding of human rights. Arguments in favor of desecuritizing societal issues are primarily found in literature on migration, but also in literature regarding the securitization of health and environmental issues.

Huysmans argued in the context of securitization of migration in the EU, that intensified securitization could lead to a security drama, which might increase the risk of violence between host communities and migrants.\textsuperscript{101} The security dilemma is explained in Hobbesian terms and constitutes a self-sustaining zero sum game that could potentially create radical elements and escalate.\textsuperscript{102} Also with regard to the securitization

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{96} Lene Hansen, "Reconstructing desecuritization: the normative-political in the Copenhagen School and directions for how to apply it," \textit{Review of International Studies} 38 (2012): 530.
\item \textsuperscript{97} Matt McDonald, "Deliberation and Resecuritization: Australia, Asylum-Seekers and the Normative Limits of the Copenhagen School," \textit{Australian Journal of Political Science} 46, no. 2 (June 2011): 283.
\item \textsuperscript{99} Waever, "The EU as a Security Actor," 251.
\item \textsuperscript{100} Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, \textit{Security}, 29.
\item \textsuperscript{102} Ibid., 64.
\end{itemize}
of refugee issues, scholars view securitized practice towards refugees as counterproductive and creating tensions between refugee populations and host communities. Hammerstad has argued that desecuritization is the preferred goal in this arena. By linking refugees to conflict and placing them in these threat dynamics influences policy towards refugees in a negative way. It contributes to reluctance of states to host refugees as well as policies of detention and ‘warehousing’. At the basis of this argument is also the idea that the movement of people is a natural phenomenon and that countering these movements on the basis of fear has counterproductive effects.\textsuperscript{103} The securitization of migration and refugees thus has the possibility to lead to conflict and violence, which can be seen as undesirable. The long-term preference therefore goes to dealing with issues in the normal political sphere, instead of in terms of threat and defense.\textsuperscript{104}

The Copenhagen School has not made explicit who can be a desecuritizing actor. Oelsner suggests that desecuritizing actors might come from political, economic and intellectual elites. These might even be the former securitizing actors.\textsuperscript{105} Aradau, concurring with her preferred from of desecuritization, argues that true desecuritization can either stem from the previously silenced ‘other’, the one that had previously been securitized, or from civil society advocating on their behalf.\textsuperscript{106} De Wilde identifies a third option, relevant for this research, namely that of the functional actor. From their position of authority, they are able oppose certain securitizations.\textsuperscript{107} Different actors might thus employ different forms of desecuritizing strategies, according to their view of the securitization, preferred political outcome, and their position of power in the field.

Before presenting the two forms of desecuritization that will be used as the main categories in this research, namely the \textit{management way} and \textit{transformative way} of desecuritization, I will follow the extensive debate that has forgone this categorization by Balzacq et al. The start of this debate around the possible forms of desecuritization can be found with the basis of the theory. The Copenhagen School originally very broadly describes three possible forms of desecuritization. The first is not use security

\textsuperscript{103} Hammerstad, \textit{The Rise and Decline of a Global Security Actor}, 56.
\textsuperscript{104} Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde, \textit{Security}, 29.
\textsuperscript{106} Aradau, “Security and the Democratic Scene,” 404.
discourse when describing an issue in the first place, thus preventing it from reached the security agenda. The second option is described as trying not to generate security dilemmas once an issue had been securitized. The third option is moving issues back to normal politics, out of the framework of security. Waever argued that this last form of desecuritization can be done in two ways, by managing and normalizing the securitized situation or by transforming a situation and moving it into normal political realm. The focus will be on those forms of desecuritization that require political action by an actor and are targeted towards a specific securitization in order to provide a framework to study different desecuritizing actors in the field. The forms of desecuritization where an issue is replaced or it loses its threatening character will therefore only marginally be touched upon since they are focused more on the overall process.

Huysmans, referring to the securitizations of societal issues, sees desecuritization as the ‘unmaking’ of an institutionalized threatening representation of public problems. This is an active form of desecuritization and requires political action. He distinguishes between three forms of desecuritization that could counter the securitization of migration. The first strategy is the objectivist strategy where the desecuritizing actor tries to convince the audience that the migrant is not a threat to society. The pitfall in this case is that the dichotomy of migrant and host community is left intact, which places the migrant effectively outside society. The second strategy is the constructivist strategy. It sees security as a social construct and tries to lay bare the process of securitization. Through understanding the social process and complexity of the issue, this strategy aims to problematize the securitization and therewith diminish its effect. Furthermore, this strategy moves from this understanding to concrete action to resolve the factors feeding into the securitization process. It is thus a problem solving strategy.

The third and advocated strategy is the deconstructivist strategy, which aims to restructure the social world by telling a new story, questioning existing identities. An example could be an actor telling a story of a refugee that does not fit the dominant narrative; she is not just a refugee, also a student, a mother, or a doctor. This strategy favors the marginalized side of the spectrum. It thus tends to dissolve the false

111 Ibid., 66.
dichotomy that is created between native community and migrants by creating new stories.\textsuperscript{112} A deconstructivist form of desecuritization would de-dramatize, humanize and thereby reformulate the position of migrants in a society and therewith promote the capabilities of society to incorporate them in a political way.\textsuperscript{113}

Aradau formulates a strategy that, in her view, goes further than the deconstructivist strategy proposed by Huysmans, since it goes beyond showing this everydayness of the refugee or migrant, but actually opposes and questions the current status quo. The strategy that she sees as fit to desecuritize the securitized narrative and practice surrounding migrants within a society, is based on the concept of emancipation. The strategy is to adhere to universal rights that are applicable for all in society but are not equally applied in practice to a specific group. Principles of equality in the constitution can for example be the basis of a desecuritizing strategy. This way the dichotomy of migrant and native is not reinforced. For refugees however, that do not belong to the political community, this strategy is not an immediate option.

Aradau refers to emancipatory strategies that can be used when the securitized group is outside the political community where the securitization move is aimed at. She explicitly mentions refugees as falling in this category. Here, invoking of higher principles of citizenship, equal rights, or universal freedom are not in the first place effective since the whole idea of society is based on the inclusion of some and exclusion of others. Before this is possible, she suggests that the appropriate strategy is to create a link with the other or the cause of the other. According to Aradau, members of the political community need to establish a political link with “the other” by challenging the actions of their institutions or state. This strategy works in a way that aims to include the securitized group into society, with the possibility of subsequently adhering to universal rights and recognition. An example of such a strategy can be a popular protest against detention practices of the state towards refugees.\textsuperscript{114}

Hansen’s article summarizes subsequent theorizing on desecuritization and suggests four types of desecuritization processes that, according to her, can be identified in all cases of desecuritization. It is also possible to see a combination of types. The four types of desecuritizations Hansen identifies are as follows. \textit{Change through stabilization}

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid., 67-68.
is when a certain issue is portrayed in other terms than security, but conflict is still looming in the background. With this process of desecuritization, the dominant system is not questioned, but rather stabilized.\textsuperscript{115} The expectation is that with this form of desecuritization, through interaction the image of the issue will slowly change.\textsuperscript{116} Replacement refers to the process when an issue is removed from the security agenda effectively by another issue that is being securitized. It comes down to the issue being pushed to the background, away from urgency.

Rearticulation is a form of desecuritization where an active political solution is being brought to the threats and dangers that caused the issue to become securitized in the first place. Hereby, an issue is removed from the security agenda.\textsuperscript{117} The issue is radically rearticulated and transformed in its meaning by moving out of the friend-enemy distinction and transforming the identity and interests of Selves and Others, which leaves less need for resecuritizations.\textsuperscript{118} By desecuritizing an issue in this way, the ultimate outcome would be to dissolve the conflict all together. However, it is always the question if this is desirable and if the grievances the conflict was grounded upon are really dealt with. Is the conflict resolved?\textsuperscript{119} This form of desecuritization comes close to Huysmans description of the deconstructivist strategy.\textsuperscript{120} The fourth form of desecuritization that Hansen identifies is silencing. This is when an issue is not only desecuritized, but also depoliticized, which could have the effect of marginalizing potentially insecure subjects.\textsuperscript{121}

Having presented the debate on different forms of desecuritization, I will now move to the categorization of the forms of desecuritization that will be used in this study. Balzacq, Depauw and Leonard have drawn a matrix to analyze different types of desecuritization. It integrates Waever’s, Huysmans’, Aradau’s, and Hansen’s efforts to map different sorts of desecuritizations and provides a tool for analysis.\textsuperscript{122} They distinguish two basic forms or ideal types of desecuritization, namely the management way of desecuritizing and the transformative way of desecuritizing. The management way of desecuritizing is aimed at relocating a security issue into a different functional sector.

\footnotesize
\begin{itemize}
\item[115] Hansen, "Reconstructing Desecuritization," 540.
\item[117] Hansen, "Reconstructing Desecuritization," 542.
\item[118] Ibid., 543.
\item[119] Ibid., 544.
\item[121] Hansen, "Reconstructing desecuritization," 529.
\item[122] Balzacq, Depauw, and Léonard, "The Political Limits of Desecuritization.”
\end{itemize}

31
or change its functional status away from security. The transformative way, on the other hand, attempts to overcome the logic of security altogether by unmaking its hegemonic system of meaning. They describe the management way as constructivist, analytical, and instrumental while the transformative way is more deconstructivist, political, and normative. Where the management way has as its principle to regulate the registers of meaning that are present, the transformative way tries to dissolve these systems of meaning. The logic is outside-in vs. inside-out.

Hansen’s categories are placed as follows: stabilization and replacement are mainly management ways of desecuritization whereas silencing is essentially transformative. Rearticulation can be considered both managerial and transformative, depending on the way it takes place. Huysmans’ objectivist and constructivist strategies can be seen as management ways of desecuritizing, whereas his proposed deconstructivist strategy can be seen as essentially transformative. Aradau’s preferred form, emancipation, is also in essence a transformative way of desecuritization. These forms are present in all sorts of forms and combinations; the distinction merely functions as a tool to analyze different activities.123

Coming closer to applying these two forms to the case of desecuritization efforts in Egypt, there are a few elements that need to be taken into account. Firstly, when studying desecuritization there is a distinction between studying the process of desecuritization of an issue in the broader sense and studying specific desecuritizing strategies of actors. For this research, it will be relevant to look at desecuritization as a specific strategy employed by an actor, since the research will focus on UNHCR advocacy effort. Although it would be interesting to place this effort in the broader desecuritizing tendency and measure its effect, this goes beyond the scope of this research. Secondly, having discussed the debate on desecuritization and different possibilities of characterizing certain behavior as desecuritizing, the categorization that I will follow is one of managerial desecuritization and transformative desecuritization. Having described the different forms of desecuritization as presented in the literature, the following section will focus on operationalizing the concepts of securitization and desecuritization in order to study Egyptian security dynamics surrounding Syrian refugees.

Operationalization of the theoretical framework

Following the theoretical debates and developments surrounding securitization theory, this section will contain a structured framework of how this theoretical background will be operationalized to study the case. The main elements of the theoretical discussion that will be relevant to study the environment for Syrian refugees in Egypt will be presented and structured to facilitate the analysis. Moreover, criteria for the identification of the processes of securitization and desecuritization moves will be discussed. The case study can be seen as a field, where the processes of securitization and desecuritization are present simultaneously, performed by different actors. The first part of the analysis will concern the dynamics of securitization, whilst the second part will be limited to a specific desecuritizing effort. Since the analysis will contain two main parts, this section will also contain two separate frameworks of analysis. Together these frameworks will aim to lay bare a part of the field of securitizing and desecuritizing tensions.

Operationalization of the concept of securitization

In the first part of the analysis, the securitization of refugees in Egypt will be studied. In order to make the study as comprehensive as possible, two main strands of securitization theory will be combined, namely that of the Copenhagen School and the Paris School. Also, specific insights from applications of securitization theory in non-Western settings will be incorporated into the framework. As Bigo argued, the securitization of migration emerges from both successful speech acts and the role of administrative practices such as population profiling, risk assessment, category creation and more.124 With regard to the securitization of refugees, an analysis based on this approach would look into discourses on refugees by main actors, but also look into how and by whom policy on refugees is implemented in practice. This two-sided analysis might reveal interesting insights and perhaps even discrepancies in official discourse and day-to-day practices.125 A focus on discourse would not adequately represent the security dynamics. By analyzing both elements it will be attempted to paint a picture of the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt.

Before analyzing discourse and practices, the emphasis placed on context by the more embedded approaches of securitization theory will be taken into account. Legal framework, institutional relations and policy will be sketched to place discourse and practice regarding Syrian refugees in its context. This element of context was originally a small part of securitization theory, but gained prominence through later more embedded versions of the theory as well as in the Paris School approach. Since the political situation in Egypt has seen dramatic changes over the last years, it is important to determine the main actors, securitizing constellations, and power relations between them to assess their relative power position. Furthermore, the Copenhagen School, as has been explained in the theoretical section, emphasizes the importance of regional security constellations. As Ullah argues, this is also the important when studying refugee policy in the MENA region, which is not only dependent on internal policy, but also to a large extent on regional and global dynamics. This argument emphasizes the necessity to study the securitized setting of Egyptian refugees beyond the domestic level alone and place it in the broader global and regional discourse on refugee issues. This will only be done up to a limited extent.

After sketching this general context and power constellations, an analysis of main public securitizing discourses by these actors will be presented. The discourse analysis will have as its red thread the development and articulation of threat perceptions regarding Syrian refugees in Egypt. To determine if the discourse presents a securitization move the criteria as developed by the Copenhagen School will be followed, supplemented by Balzacq and Strizel’s insights to give more emphasis to facilitating conditions. The speech acts concerning Syrian refugees will be analyzed according to containing the following elements: the issue is presented as posing an existential threat to society, state, or regime survival. It has to be kept in mind that perceived threats towards legitimacy or identity are hard to distinguish in the context of revolutionary Egypt. When there is a case of securitization, these perceived threats are used to justify extra-ordinary measures. Measures will be seen as extra-ordinary if they were not used previously for a similar issue or are in a general sense borrowed from measures that fall into the military and security category. The specific articulation of speech acts will be placed in a broader discursive context, meaning other securitizations

and previous discourse surrounding Syrian refugees in Egypt will be taken into account. Linking these facilitating conditions to the previously discussed authority position of the securitizing actor, will aim to place the speech act in its context.

In order to estimate the success of securitization moves by different actors, it is necessary to study the process of acceptance by the targeted audience. Since this study focuses on the public discourse, the understanding of the audience will be limited to the Egyptian public. A more comprehensive study could look into discourses targeted at elite, the makeup of these different audiences, and how they provide formal support to securitizations. In this case, however, the more informal support of the general public will be central. In order to estimate the success of a securitization move, the changes in general atmosphere and reported hospitality levels in Egyptian society towards Syrian refugees will be used. Because of the authoritarian and revolutionary setting, an analysis of the national media landscape would provide a skewed picture of the Egyptian public opinion. I have therefore chosen to rely on reports by national and international NGO's as well as international and translated media in describing the public opinion on Syrian refugees. Indicators of acceptance of securitization moves are reports of cases civilian harassment against Syrian refugees, reported rises in discriminatory practices by civilian actors, and reports on worsened general atmosphere for Syrian refugees. A correlation of general atmosphere and securitizing moves can be shown. A more comprehensive study of the success of securitizing efforts is, however, beyond the scope of this research.

After having studied the securitization moves through speech acts, emphasis will be placed upon the institutionalized securitization of refugees, studying Egyptian policies and practices regarding Syrian refugees. Because of the specific political setting in Egypt, these practices might lay bare securitization dynamics that are not present in the public sphere through official discourse. The legal framework, policies, their implementation and practices will be analyzed to determine whether they can be seen as contributing to the securitization of Syrian refugees. To follow the logic of Léonard, securitizing practices are activities, that, by their very intrinsic qualities, convey the idea to those who observe them, directly or indirectly, that the issue they are tackling is a security threat.127 In the case of Egyptian refugee policy, securitizing practices can be defined as

---

activities that, in themselves, convey the idea that Syrian refugees are a security threat to Egypt.

Criteria to determine these securitizing practices empirically are based on two types of securitizing practices. The first type refers to activities that are usually deployed to deal with issues that are established security threats in the context, such as terrorism or an armed attack. The example Léonard puts forth is using military troops and equipment to tackle an issue, since these measures signal a threat to security and a sense of urgency. The second type of activities are ‘extraordinary’ practices. These exceptional practices suggest that the issue cannot be dealt with ‘normal’ measures. The norm in this case will be the measures that are usually used in to deal with similar issues in the specific political context. This is quite a broad understanding of extraordinary, but it facilitates an understanding of security as a spectrum and not so much a threshold that has to be overcome. Extraordinary measures will thus not necessarily have to be illegal or exceptional, but at least never or rarely applied to tackle similar issues. Also, once a practice becomes institutionalized it can no longer be qualified as extraordinary since it has been normalized. It can, however, still follow the general logic of securitization. Thus, by fulfilling either one of these criteria, not mutually exclusive, a practice can be seen, at least to a certain extent, as a securitizing practice. In the empirical section, it will be explained how these securitizing practices feed into the security dynamics experienced by Syrian refugees.

To summarize, the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt will be studied on the basis of a framework that combines a more embedded form of the Copenhagen School’s concept of securitization focused on elite discourse with a Paris School perspective on securitizing practices. Together these two elements of the concept will be employed to unravel security dynamics of policy, discourse and practices regarding Syrian refugees.

Operationalization of the concept of desecuritization

As can be seen from the theoretical section regarding desecuritization, the debate regarding this concept is more distant from the empirical level than that of securitization. In this section I aim to bridge this distance by building an operationalization of the concept of desecuritization. This operationalization will be

---

128 Ibid., 13.
129 Ibid., 14.
tested by researching practices and discourse of UNHCR’s advocacy effort as a desecuritizing strategy, working against the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt. The framework will be built on literature regarding desecuritization as well as insights from critiques and further development of the concept of securitization. Within the debate on desecuritization, I will rely mainly on the insights of Huysmans and Aradau and the schematic categorization of forms of desecuritization proposed by Balzacq, Depauw, and Léonard. The elements of the securitization debate that will be incorporated in the framework are those of context, field and embeddedness. The focus on practices, as proposed by the Paris School, will be central to the framework, complemented by an analysis of the discourse accompanying the advocacy effort.

In the same way as employed with the analysis of securitizing actors, a field of main desecuritizing actors will be sketched in order to place their discourses and practices in a broader context. However, here the focus will quickly be turned to UNHCR as the main actor. By emphasizing the importance of the relative power position and relationship with other actors in the field, the line of reasoning of the Paris School and more embedded approach of securitization theory is applied to the concept of desecuritization. UNHCR will be placed in the national institutional context, also their position in the regional and global setting will be described. Next, a framework will be presented to evaluate UNHCR’s advocacy effort towards the government of Egypt as a desecuritizing strategy.

I will thus zoom in to UNHCR’s discourse and practices with regard to their advocacy to determine whether and in what way they are desecuritizing. It is therefore important to delineate what constitutes a desecuritizing effort. The understanding of desecuritization as a process in which a political community ceases to treat something as an existential threat to a referent object describes a general desecuritizing trend in society. The four categories of desecuritization that Hansen proposed relate to this overall process of desecuritization. This definition, however, does not provide the most useful way to analyze the role of specific actors in these dynamics. Since the overall aim of this particular research is to focus on the role of different actors in the dynamic, the types of desecuritization that will be researched will be limited to those that require political action.

A related consequence of this actor based analysis will be that the influence of desecuritizing moves on the overall process of desecuritization will be left unstudied.
When placed in analogy to the indicators of a general securitized context, a desecuritization process would be signaled by a more relaxed atmosphere towards Syrian refugees in Egypt. However, it is hard to conclude whether this process would be the direct result of the intervening desecuritizing actions of the actors. It might also be a case of replacement or a fading away of the issue from relevancy, two of the options suggested by Hansen. The success of desecuritizing moves will therefore be placed out of the scope of this research. The focus will remain on the actions themselves, instead of the overall process in the field. Moreover, since the process is still happening as this research is being done, it would be too soon to draw conclusions concerning the overall process of desecuritization.

For the purpose of this analysis, I will maintain two broad categories of desecuritization based on the work of Balzacq, Depauw and Léonard. Desecuritizing policy, practices and corresponding discourses will be analyzed as falling into two possible categories, namely the management way or transformative way of desecuritization. If the policy, discourse, or practice is aimed at stabilizing the situation and bringing the issue back to the political agenda it can be considered a management strategy. If the activity would try to additionally move beyond enemy/friend distinctions and change the nature of the issue itself through a new narrative, this would be classified as transformative way of desecuritization. As these categories are ideal types, both the management way and transformative way of desecuritizing might be present in elements of a certain strategy.¹³⁰

To identity management ways of desecuritization criteria will be distilled from the work of Balzacq et al. and Huysmans. The management way of desecuritization is described as constructivist, analytical, and instrumental. In order to place the securitized issue back on the political agenda, the issue is portrayed in different terms and political solutions for the security dilemma can be suggested. The first criterion for a discourse to be considered managerial desecuritization is that the discourse is based on an understanding of the securitization of refugees and the elements that reinforce the dynamics of securitization. Secondly, the grammar of a desecuritizing discourse should not follow the logic of threat and security. A humanitarian, managerial, or instrumental discourse can be part of a desecuritizing strategy. In addition, the discourse or practice

---

aims to move beyond enemy/friend dichotomies and functions as a basis for action to handle the process.

These criteria to identify a managerial desecuritizing move are broadly defined since they relate mainly to the aim of the discourse than to the actual grammar. Discourse analysis plays a different role in the analysis of desecuritization efforts. As previously discussed, one cannot by declaring an issue ‘not threatening’ and therewith undo securitization. It is a broader form of discourse, most of the time more nuanced than a securitizing speech act. One cannot easily pinpoint to specific desecuritizing sentences. Therefore, general discourse and concepts are relevant to study in this respect. Next to discourse, practice is key in this form of desecuritization. An understanding of securitization merely forms the basis of political action. Desecuritizing practices of the managerial way are any actions that aim to politically find a solution for the issue, based on a knowledge of the securitization of the issue. They can for example be aimed at taking away or resolving some of the issues that cause the security drama to unfold in a given context. It can be seen as a problem solving activity.\footnote{Huysmans, “Migrants as a Security Problem,” 66.}

To identify transformative strategies of desecuritization the insights of Huysmans and Aradau are used. These efforts have been described as deconstructivist, political, and normative. They are focused on changing the nature of the issue by dissolving the registers of meaning that are present. They aim to move beyond the status quo and dissolve the security dilemma altogether. Huysmans’ deconstructivist desecuritization strategy is the basis of a transformative strategy based on discourse. However, for this study, I will apply the line of reasoning to practices accompanied by discourse. Huysmans proposes, as discussed in the theoretical section, to restructure the division between native (included) and refugee (excluded) and fragment their perceived solid identities to show similarities instead of differences. For a discourse to fall in this category, it must show the perspective of the refugee in a way that places the refugee in a more complex dynamic of identities (besides that of a refugee) and in an everydayness of wider economic, social, and political practices.\footnote{Paul Roe, “Securitization and Minority Rights: Conditions of Desecuritization,” Security Dialogue 35, no. 3 (2004): 287.} For this study, policies or practices that aim to achieve this will be considered desecuritizing strategies as well.

Aradau goes one step further, therewith showing another possible way of transformative desecuritization. Aradau proposes the desecuritizing strategy of creating
a link with the securitized group or the cause of this group. According to Aradau, the political link with the other needs to be established by members of the political community that challenge the actions of their institutions or state. This strategy works in a way that aims to include the securitized group into society, with the possibility of subsequently adhering to universal rights and recognition. When discourses and practices follow the logic of breaking dichotomies, fragmenting identities, linking with ‘the other’, or questioning legitimacy of securitizing actors in their practices they can be considered transformative desecuritizations. Examples of desecuritization strategies could be marches showing support and standing up for unequal treatment. Also a lobby strategy aimed at invoking universal rights for a group of people could fall under this category of desecuritization. These actions thus constitute practices, aided with the use of a certain discourse.

This section has attempted to provide a framework to study the desecuritizing efforts of the main actors in the setting of Syrian refugees in Egypt. It has brought together different elements of the theoretical debate and developed criteria to determine what constitutes a desecuritizing discourse or practice. The main thread in the framework is that the practices and accompanying discourses of actors can be characterized as either managerial or transformative, depending on the actor’s interests and role within the field. Together with the framework of operationalization of the concept of securitization, this framework lays the basis for understanding the security dynamics surrounding Syrian refugees in Egypt.
Analysis of securitization of refugees in Egypt: context for desecuritization

The main aim of this section is to analyze the discourse, policy and practices of the current regime in Egypt towards Syrian refugees from the summer of 2013 until the end of 2014. In order to place this period in perspective, this period will be placed in its context and not seen as speech acts and practices detached from a longer institutionalized securitization of refugees as well as the power dynamics of the parties involved. Therefore, before coming to this crucial timeframe, it is firstly necessary to sketch the context and field in which the securitization of Syrian refugees took place. This analysis thus supports the claim made by the Paris School that speech acts alone are merely the top of the iceberg, and that when it comes to securitization, one should look into the system and practices of the main security actors to discover underlying dynamics.

The analysis will be in chronological order, distinguishing periods based on national political developments in Egypt. This structure was chosen in order to show the layered process of securitization and not depict it as a static happening in a set time frame. The fluid and process-oriented nature of securitization is adhered to by the chronological structure. Firstly, the legal and institutional framework for refugees before the revolution will provide a basis upon which the later securitization of Syrian refugees developed. This period will be followed by the Egyptian revolution and subsequent presidential term of Mohamed Morsi. Having discussed the context and setting of the presence of Syrians in Egypt, the securitization of Syrians in Egypt will be analyzed. After discussing a crucial turning point in the summer of 2013, the securitization of refugees during the current regime headed by current president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi will be analyzed up to the year 2014.

Throughout this analysis, domestic and regional political dynamics and securitizations that are of influence on the situation for refugees will be taken into consideration. Power dynamics between different actors will be taken into account, before analyzing speech acts and security practices to provide insight into the current securitized setting regarding Syrian refugees. Discourse and practice regarding Syrian refugees will be analyzed according to the theoretical framework as presented in the previous section. The focus of the analysis will be with securitizing discourse and
practices regarding Syrian refugees in specific. Finally in order to give insight into the
effect of the securitizing effort, the audience, in this case the broader public of Egypt
attitudes towards refugees will be touched upon.

Background on the urban refugee environment in Egypt before the arrival of
Syrian refugees

The securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt did not happen overnight, it is partly
based upon the institutionalized securitization of refugees during the Mubarak regime. A
short interpretation of the refugee environment before the arrival of Syrian refugees to
Egypt will lay the foundation for analyzing subsequent securitization of this group of
refugees since the fall of former president Morsi. This section will thus contain an
overview of the legal framework and policies of the Egyptian government in order to
portray the general dynamics that are at the base of the securitized setting for Syrian
refugees in Egypt.

In 2010, UNHCR reported a total of 109,480 registered refugees, asylum seekers
or stateless persons in Egypt, of which 39,000 had registered with UNHCR. Taking
into account the amount of refugees not registered, the number is estimated to be
double that number or more. Almost all refugees were residing in Cairo, one of the
largest urban refugee populations in the world. Egypt hosted mostly Sudanese,
Somali, Eritrean, Palestinian and Iraqi refugees. Each of these groups has a unique
profile based on its legal rights, socio-economic status, cultural identity, language, and
prospects of durable solutions. The issue of Palestinian refugees, which is again
relevant with the arrival of Palestinians from Syria, is quite a sensitive topic in Egypt,
due to the wider debate on Palestinians in the Middle East. Moreover, the issue of
refugees in Egypt is mostly an urban issue, as there are no designated camps. Refugees
mainly live at the margins of large cities such as Cairo and Alexandria, sharing their
living conditions with the poorer Egyptians.

134 Martin Baldwin-Edwards, "Between a Rock & a Hard Place: North Africa as a Region of Emigration,
135 Elzbieta M. Gozdziak and Alissa Walter, Urban Refugees in Cairo (Georgetown University, Washington
136 Gozdziak and Walter, Urban Refugees in Cairo, 5.
137 Katarzyna Grabska, Who Asked Them Anyway: Rights, Policies and Wellbeing of Refugees in Egypt
(University of Sussex, Falmer, Brighton: Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalisation and
138 Ibid., 14.
Legal and institutional framework regarding refugees up to 2010

In this section the legal framework, policy and general atmosphere for refugees before the revolution in 2011 will be discussed in order to provide a context for the arrival of Syrian refugees in a later stage. The legal arrangements regarding refugees will be presented, as well as the main policies of the Egyptian authorities.

The legal framework concerning refugees currently in place has its roots in the twentieth century, with the signing of the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. Also, Egypt is signatory to the Organization of African Unity’s 1969 Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. In addition, the government of Egypt signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with UNHCR in 1954 that lays the responsibility for registration, documentation, and Refugee Status Determination (RSD) to UNHCR. Although Egypt has signed these international conventions and agreements, there is a lack of national institutional frameworks and national legislation implementing them. Further challenges are stemming from the several reservations that are in place on articles concerning personal status, rationing, access to primary education, public relief and assistance, and labor legislation and social security.\(^\text{139}\) Besides that, different groups of refugees have been allowed into the country by discretionary acts instead of a legal framework, creating uneven situations depending on the state of origin.\(^\text{140}\)

The Department of Refugee Affairs at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Interior are responsible for issues concerning refugees, although the Ministry of International Cooperation is responsible for managing international finds like those available for development and humanitarian aid. Although Egypt has opened its borders to refugees and they are able to reside in the country, there is little room for local integration and access to rights. Resettlement and repatriation were considered the two main policy options, in the meantime refugees are welcomed and can assimilate.\(^\text{141}\) There are no possibilities for refugees to acquire Egyptian citizenship,


\(^{141}\) Grabksa, Who Asked Them Anyway, 18.
since nationality is granted only by descent through the *ius sanguinis* principle. Refugees can thus never fully integrate.\(^{142}\)

This policy is strongly rooted in the idea of the nation state that was organized around the identity of a homogeneous Egyptian society of Arab Muslims, in which religious, ethnic and other minorities as well as refugees and migrants were not included in all aspects.\(^{143}\) Since it is not possible for refugees to obtain citizenship, they remain categorized as an outsider and are often perceived as a foreign body in the country that does not fit to the national interest.\(^{144}\) This is a crucial element of Egyptian policy, which shows the inherent categorization of refugees as ‘outsiders’ in Egyptian society. They are ‘guests’ and can temporarily stay in Egypt, without an outlook on integration as citizens. These dynamics placed refugees in an especially vulnerable position, not having the protection that citizens enjoy and already facing many obstacles in their participation in Egyptian society. This outlook, combined with the reservations made to the 1951 Convention limit the rights of refugees and asylum seekers severely.\(^{145}\)

Regarding the general livelihoods of refugees, their access to work, education and health are central parameters. In Egypt, refugees were placed in a vulnerable position on the labor market. They were either not allow or had difficulties obtaining a work permit and are not granted social security. They were effectively pushed towards unauthorized labor, which, especially in the area of domestic work, brings the risk of exploitation.\(^{146}\) One of the main reasons to limit commercial activity by refugees in urban settings is grounded in the fear the national security might be threatened by their activities.\(^{147}\) Although the Minister of Education granted access to primary schools for refugees in 2000, there were still many obstacles for attending schools for refugee children in practice, mainly due to a lack of information at schools and a general overcrowding of schools. Refugees shared these difficulties with some of the less wealthy Egyptians, however faced extra barriers due to their status, cultural differences and


\(^{144}\) Fabos and Kibreab, "Urban Refugees." 3.


\(^{147}\) Fabos and Kibreab,"Urban Refugees," 5.
discrimination. One of the most difficult challenges for refugees in Egypt was access to quality and affordable health care, which was limited by financial constraints and legal restrictions. The livelihoods of refugees in broader Cairo are very much linked to situation of the larger urban community. They are thus very much depended upon local processes and relationship with host communities. This also means that they share obstacles to employment, health care and education with the Egyptian population, albeit with legal and social constrains.

Treatment of refugees and the rights granted to them should thus be seen in relation to the local conditions of Egyptian citizens. Classified by the World Bank as a lower middle income country, Egypt faces significant pressures on the labor market, with high unemployment rates and educational system with an official illiteracy rate of 72 in 2010. These social and economic constrains limited the ability to fulfill the rights and obligations of refugees. According to government representatives at that time, there was no legal discrimination towards refugees in this respect as they enjoyed access to education on the same legal terms. A common official discourse before the revolution in 2011 was that refugees already receive better treatment than local poor Egyptians, since they are under the protection of UNHCR and have the possibility to go to the West and receive health care from NGOs and so forth.

Having discussed the policies regarding livelihoods, it is also important to see them in combination with security practices towards refugees before the revolution. Sudanese, Eritrean, and Congolese refugees in Cairo faced more harassment by security forces than Egyptian citizens, since they are visibly different and treated as foreigners. Detention and arrest were a constant fear for many rejected refugees. Recognized refugees faced discriminatory treatment as well. Arab nationals, such as Iraqi’s generally report better treatment by both Egyptian by security forces. They didn’t

148 Gozdziak and Walter, Urban Refugees in Cairo, 25.
149 Ibid., 30.
150 Ibid., 22.
151 Ibid., 15.
154 Ibid., 19.
155 Ibid., 40.
experience much discrimination, partly due to the fact that they are not easily distinguishable from Egyptians.\textsuperscript{156}

For over five decades Egypt had a record of adhering to the principle of non-refoulement and respecting UNHCR’s RSD decision. The situation turned for the worse around 2004, after a UNHCR decision to move away from large scale resettlement for mostly Sudanese refugees in Egypt. This led to the refugee protests in 2004 and 2005, leading to many arrest and the death of 27 people by the violent intervention of the Egyptian police. The year 2007 marked another turning point, as Egyptian forces started shooting migrants on the border with Israel in response to the threat of not being able to control its Sinai borders. Many refugees and asylum seekers were arrested during the years of turmoil. Egypt in addition took a less cooperative stance to UNHCR by blocking access to asylum-seekers in detention, especially if they had entered the country illegally. Furthermore, cases of refoulement started to happen more often, with a group of 1200 Eritreans being deported in 2008.\textsuperscript{157} Since refugee rights are by and large upheld and setting aside these events, UNHCR still classified Egypt as having a favorable protection environment in 2011.\textsuperscript{158}

In general, however, it can be said that protection space for refugees in Cairo and broader Egypt had shrunk by 2011 due to the influx of many refugees and the absence of any durable solutions for the majority of them.\textsuperscript{159} Combined with general rise of tensions between the regime of Mubarak on the one hand and citizens and civil society on the other and worsening social-economic conditions for all, refugees found themselves in an increasingly vulnerable position.

\textit{Changing political context - revolution}

During the January 25 revolution in 2011, and the subsequent handing over of power to Egypt’s Supreme Council of the Armed Forces (SCAF), the environment in Egypt was highly politicized and unstable. The power and actions of security actors, army, police, and protesters were highly contested. Polarization peaked through the constellation of securitizations. Within the protest movements, there were many securitization moves

\textsuperscript{156} Gozdziak and Walter, \textit{Urban Refugees in Cairo}, 14.
\textsuperscript{158} UNHCR, \textit{UNHCR Global Report 2011} (Geneva, June 2012): 166.
\textsuperscript{159} Gozdziak and Walter, \textit{Urban Refugees in Cairo}, 10.
towards ‘counter-revolutionary forces’ which created the dichotomy of ‘the people’ and anything that stood against change.\textsuperscript{160} Within more traditional circles, the securitizations focused on the ‘chaos’, lawlessness and economic losses following political instability. In addition, the influence and threat of foreign powers in the revolutionary forces was suggested, which in turn legitimized a strong state in defense of foreign powers. Moreover, the threat of Islamists coming to power was used on a national and international level by hinting at possible instability in the region as a result. Civil society gained influence during the revolution, pushing for a broader conception of security, focused more on the state providing security for its people instead of itself.\textsuperscript{161} In general, new power relations were established nationally and regionally by popular uprisings in neighboring countries.

One can tell from these constellations that not only the state, but also identity was contested. Thus, securitization and desecuritization not only happened in the political, but also the societal context. Sovereignty and identity were both the subject of securitizations. They are deeply intertwined in the Egyptian context and it is hard to distinguish or untangle these processes.\textsuperscript{162} Partly related to that, refugees in urban areas found themselves in a vulnerable position during this uncertain period of the Egyptian revolution. Propaganda by the falling Mubarak regime of foreign powers attacking Egypt from within, coupled with the believe that refugees in Egypt where the result of policies of this same regime, created an atmosphere where refugees were increasingly targeted with hostility, denial of services, threats and violence. There was a rise in xenophobic attitudes reported by refugees during and after the revolution, mostly felt by African refugees.\textsuperscript{163}

There were also numerous cases reported of house evictions by the military. In addition, new forms of policing by the military and civilian groups posed challenges for refugees as there was a lack of knowledge about the validity of their documents as well as the status of refugee.\textsuperscript{164} Although Egyptian citizens faced similar insecurities, like detention, violence, crime, and evictions, refugees were marginalized even further in these dynamics due to legal restraints and xenophobic tendencies. The revolution has

\textsuperscript{160} Touzari Greenwood and Waever, “Copenhagen-Cairo on a Roundtrip,” 494.
\textsuperscript{161} Ibid., 495-496.
\textsuperscript{163} Gozdziak and Walter, Urban Refugees in Cairo, 15.
\textsuperscript{164} Martin Jones, "We Are Not All Egyptian," Forced Migration Review 39 (June 2012): 16.
thus negatively impacted the protection space in the short-term, because of heightened instability.\textsuperscript{165} In addition to this, the UNHCR Office was close during several days of the uprisings.\textsuperscript{166} As a sign of fear within the refugee community, a public protest was staged March 2012 in front of the Cairo UNHCR offices.\textsuperscript{167}

With stability somewhat restored after the security forces wrote out elections, the first Syrian refugees started arriving in Egypt by the end of 2011, seeking safety from the escalating conflict in their home country. They were generally welcomed with open arms due to extensive historic links between Syria and Egypt and shared struggle in their revolutions. Also, refugees from Arab countries generally were not seen as refugees, but more as guests or brothers by Egyptian society.\textsuperscript{168} Because of the relative cultural proximity and socio-economic position, most Syrians reported good circumstances. Besides the circumstances on the ground, being heightened insecurity, there was a general feeling of hope for a more democratic Egypt with more space for plurality. Many expressed this hope and outlook on a window of opportunity to build a more democratic Egypt. This idea also extended to refugee policy, as can be seen from the suggestions and reports made by scholars, NGO’s and even a statements by the High Commissioner António Guterres expressing hope for a change in Egypt’s refugee protection policy.\textsuperscript{169}

\textit{President Mohamed Morsi’s sympathetic stance towards Syrians in Egypt}

During Morsi’s time in office, beginning in June 2012, a constellation of securitizations can be analyzed surrounding three key actors. The secular protesters pronounced the threats towards democracy by the newly installed Muslim Brotherhood government, and warned against the far-reaching powers of the military without civilian oversight. The SCAF warned for continuing conflict and instability as a real threat to the state and future generations. Also, they emphasized involvement of foreign regional powers in the coming to power of the Muslim Brotherhood. President Morsi increasingly warned for ‘deep state’ structures from the military and old guard trying to derail reform. With a regional outlook, Morsi pledged his support to revolutionary movements for democracy in North Africa and the Middle East, especially those following the Turkish, Tunisian or

\textsuperscript{165} Gozdziak and Walter, \textit{Urban Refugees in Cairo}, 10.
\textsuperscript{166} Ibid., 14.
\textsuperscript{167} Jones, "We Are Not All Egyptian," 17.
Egyptian way of Islam and democracy. All major players in the field used rhetoric aimed at each other that contained existential threats as potentially justifying emergency measures. In November 2012 Morsi granted himself far-reaching powers, and in the Constitution of December 2012 SCAF had enshrined extensive authority on security measures, without much civilian oversight.

Throughout the presidency of Morsi, Syrian refugees sought refuge in Egypt with rising numbers in the second half of 2012. They were allowed in to the country and were given an asylum-seeking card, if they chose to register, which was valid for 18 months initially. With this card, Syrians could register at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in order to receive 6 month residence stamps. For the especially vulnerable cases, RSD interviews are held to determine eligibility for resettlement. Official discourse regarding Syrian refugees was predominantly supportive during Morsi’s term in office, due to the foreign policy stance towards Syria. On the 6th of January 2013, Morsi vowed via Twitter to support Syrian refugees until they could go back home “with dignity.” Also, in his oath of office speech on the 30th of June 2012, he showed his support for the Syrian revolution with the words:

“Today, Egypt supports the Palestinian people and also the Syrian people. The shedding of the Syrian people’s blood must stop.”

This is clearly a supportive statement towards those Syrians opposing Bashar Al-Assad and a reassuring message to those seeking refuge in Egypt. At the Non-Aligned Movement summit in Tehran in August 2012 he restated his solidarity with the struggle of the Syrian people and shared his vision for a political and strategic necessity of political transition to democracy in Syria. He emphasized his support for Syrian

171 Ibid.
refugees many times and the government welcomed the Syrian refugees with open arms, providing them with access to healthcare systems, public education and other government services by presidential decree in September 2012. This opposed to the services refugees from for example Somalia or Sudan, who were not granted such privileges.

Because of the general support for the Syrian revolution as well as historic and cultural closeness, refugees from Syria were aided by the Egyptian people and Islamic charities with living spaces and other basic necessities. Regarding the year of 2012, UNHCR notes that the Egyptian government and local communities have welcomed Syrian refugees and protection space has not shrunk. Overall, the situation for Syrian refugees is described as hospitable, safe and protected in the first half of 2013 as well. Most of the Syrians that were questioned by the media, NGOs, and different studies praised the initial friendly and welcoming attitude of the Egyptians when they arrived to the country.

As the number of Syrians grew, however, the strain on resources became pressing. Therefore, regardless of this positive atmosphere, Syrian refugees still faced considerable challenges in Egypt. There was a peak in arrivals in April 2013 due to the dynamics of the conflict in Syria. By the summer 140,000 Syrian refugees were registered with UNHCR, a far higher amount than the sum of other refugees in the country. Taking into consideration those who did not register, the Egyptian government estimates 300,000 Syrian refugees. When Morsi officially suspended all diplomatic relations with the Assad regime of Syria on June 15 of 2013, he made a strong signal of aligning with the Syrian opposition, among which the Syrian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood by stating:

182 Ibid.
183 Ibid.
"the Egyptian people support the struggle of the Syrian people, materially and morally, and Egypt, its nation, leadership ... and army, will not abandon the Syrian people until it achieves its rights and dignity."\textsuperscript{186}

This turned out to be a crucial step in the turn of events of the months to come, with Egyptian opposition severely criticizing Morsi’s stance towards Syria. Some analysts see his speech that day as a turning point to which the army decided to take action.\textsuperscript{187} While other point to the deteriorating security situation in the Sinai as the main impetus for his ouster.\textsuperscript{188}

Having sketched the context in which Syrian refugees arrived in Egypt, the legal framework, policy, and discourse regarding their presence, I will now continue with an analysis of how this environment drastically changed in the summer of 2013. This point will mark the turning point from the context analysis, to the analysis of securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt.

**Securitizing discourse and practices**

Throughout the subsequent analysis, both discourse in the public sphere as well as practices of the new administration will be analyzed according to the framework of securitization as presented in the theoretical section. Firstly, the discourse on Syrian refugees will analyzed and placed in the broader security discourse during July and August of 2013 up to 2014. Hereby, it will be analyzed how an image of Syrian refugees supporting the Muslim Brotherhood was effectively crafted in the media. By association, Syrians in Egypt were thus portrayed as a threat to the stability of Egypt, with large consequences for their well-being. Moving from discourse to practice, the policy and actions of the newly installed and later elected military regime will be analyzed. It will be assessed to what extent the practices of the administration towards Syrian refugees can be seen as securitizing.


Securitizing discourse

The scene dramatically changed during the second transition of Egypt. On the 30th of June 2013 a popular uprising led to the overthrow of Morsi by the military three days later. The general atmosphere during the summer can be described as deeply polarized, extremely violent, and with a large role for the security apparatus.\(^{189}\) During July and August, supporters of former president Morsi denounced the military take-over and took to the streets, organizing street protests and large sit-ins. The military, together with the police and elements of the judiciary led a large scale crack down on the Muslim Brotherhood.\(^{190}\) They arrested hundreds and killed over 1150 in reaction to the protests and sit-ins.\(^{191}\) As violence continued, all parties seemed to get more polarized and securitizing discourses are at their height on all sides.\(^{192}\)

Security speech became a battleground for legitimacy from both sides. The media started raising strong nationalistic attitudes and emphasizing a distinct Egyptian identity based on citizenship. Perceived threats towards territorial integrity were linked with conspiracy theories of foreign involvement.\(^{193}\) Non-Islamist media pronounced the Brotherhood as an extremist, sometimes terrorist, organization backed by foreign powers such as Hamas and Syrian refugees.\(^{194}\) The media discourse built on the allegations that the prison break in 2011 of Morsi and other Muslim Brotherhood members was facilitated by Hamas and Hezbollah. Morsi was portrayed as a Hamas figure and it was underlined that he was not ‘the president of all Egyptians.’ The new interim government and loyal institutions crafted the image of foreign – mainly Palestinian and Syrian – involvement in Egyptian political affairs. The Muslim Brotherhood was with this discourse portrayed as a threat to the nation.\(^{195}\) The Brotherhood, in reaction, denounced the take over as a conspiracy of the ancien regime, foreign actors, the Coptic Church, and apostates.\(^{196}\) These opposing discourses had a strong polarizing effect, marginalizing different voices as violence took over.

---


\(^{190}\) Ibid., 7.


\(^{195}\) Fritzsche, “Egypt’s Others.” Carnegieendowment.org.

Within these general security dynamics, Syrians in Egypt found themselves in a difficult position. Amnesty International describes in its report of October 17, 2013 the changing conditions for Syrian refugees in Egypt after the protests and removal of former president Mohamed Morsi. In July and August of 2013, the situation for them dramatically changed as public figures and part of the mainstream media started directly accusing Syrian refugees of partaking in the pro-Morsi demonstrations. Refugees were accused by the security forces of involvement in the pro-Morsi Rabaa El Adawiya and Al-Nahda sit-ins, of being armed, and of attacking security officials and civilians. In relation to this, at least six Syrians had been detained. A spokesman of the Foreign Ministry, Badr Abdelatty, reaffirmed this. Officials working with Syrian refugees, however, say these statements in the media are exaggerated and that it merely concerns isolated cases.

The newly appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, Nabil Fahmy, expressed that the foreign policy of Egypt towards Syria would be reevaluated and signaled a move away from the military support of the Syrian opposition. He still maintained that Egypt would support the Syrian opposition for a political solution to the Syrian conflict. High level supporters of the new regime have, however, publicly stated their support for Assad’s military. This signaled a clear shift away from Morsi’s foreign policy agenda. Policy regarding Syrians seeking safety in Egypt, changed on the 8th of July with the decision to impose entry requirements, a visa and security check. Foreign Ministry spokesperson Badr Abdel-Atty explained the 9th of July that these measures were temporarily installed because of the “security situation” in the country.

In addition to this shift from official public support for Syrian refugees, to a more cautious stance, many media outlets broadcasted xenophobic messages aimed at Syrian refugees. In July, two famous and influential television commentators, Youssef el-

---

197 Amnesty International, "We Cannot Live Here Anymore": 3.
Husseini and Tawfiq Okasha, publicly warned and threatened Syrians to stay out of Egyptian affairs. El-Housseini threatened with beating in the streets and Okasha said the following on the 15th of July:

“In the name of the Egyptian people, I tell all Syrians living in Egypt, a 48-hour ultimatum, the Egyptian people have the addresses where you live [...] The people will come out to destroy your houses.”

Also, a former member of Parliament called for the execution of Syrians and other foreigners in Egypt. Moreover, there were reports of flyers being passed on the streets with the text: “My Egyptian brother, my Egyptian sister. Fight the Syrian occupation and defend our jobs.” Hate speech targeted at Syrian refugees, in these forms and others, was mostly broadcasted in the media during July and August of 2013 and decreased after that point.

The degree to which these securitizing moves in the media were successful in securitizing Syrian refugees in Egypt can be assessed by looking at the general sentiment and levels of harassment experienced by Syrian refugees. Although praise for the army and slander towards minorities or the Muslim Brotherhood is not a new phenomenon in Egyptian media, it was done in a large scale, combined with crippling policies. It was extendedly reported by different NGOs and media that since this media slander campaign, Syrians and Palestinians have experienced systematic harassment and violence on the street. In addition, many Syrians lost their jobs and have had their businesses and property destroyed in some of the larger cities. These sorts of actions and statements contributed to the general feeling of unsafety for many Syrians in Egypt. They reported to felt less safe due to hostilities and harassment on the streets. This atmosphere was in stark contrast with how Syrian refugees felt they were welcomed before the summer of 2013.

---

208 Amnesty International, 'We Cannot Live Here Anymore': 3.
The discourse and media campaign can clearly be categorized as securitizing discourses since they portray refugees as associated with the Muslim Brotherhood and as such a national security threat to Egypt and a threat to political stability. The discourse calls for extra-ordinary measures to deal with them, namely the new entry requirements for Syrians. This discourse furthermore portrayed and legitimized the army as the protector of the Egyptian state, nation and identity vis-à-vis powers that were undermining the state.\textsuperscript{210} Part of the audience, the general public, accepted the securitization move as can be seen from the change in atmosphere.

Although stability was somewhat restored with Sisi winning the presidential elections June 3th 2014 and the discourse surrounding refugees was less present in the media, the general security situation has been tense in Egypt. Green light had been given for far reaching security measures. The military-led government expanded its policing apparatus successfully by labeling the Muslim Brotherhood, protesters, revolutionaries and Syrian refugees as security threats.\textsuperscript{211} The Muslim Brotherhood was labeled a terrorist organization in December 2013 and by appealing to the ‘Islamist threat’ the military regime has asked the public to be patient with political reforms, human rights failings and the state providing basic necessities for its people.\textsuperscript{212} Furthermore, increased terrorist attacks and threat stemming from the Sinai area have maintained a heightened security setting in Egypt. Combined with the government narrative that the Muslim Brotherhood is behind large terror attacks, this situation is a classic securitizing move legitimizing the suppression of political dissent, seriously affecting Syrian refugees by association. The criteria for a discourse to be securitizing thus have been met. However, this discourse is not officially portrayed by the Egyptian authorities, but by prominent media representatives. The discourse does however, fit into the brother securitizing speech acts aimed at the Muslim Brotherhood by the regime.

\textbf{Securitizing practices}

Moving from discourse to policy and practice, the army legitimized the use of extra security measures and expanding the policing apparatus towards Syrian refugees after

\textsuperscript{210} Ayoub and Shaden Khallaf, "Syrian Refugees in Egypt," 21.
\textsuperscript{211} Norman, “Different Policies, the Same Game,” \textit{Jadaliyya.com}.
labeling them ‘security threats’. The three main practices that coincided and followed upon the media discourse were first of all a closing of the border and imposing a visa requirement. Moreover, there were numerous cases of arbitrary arrest, detention, and even deportation of Syrians and Palestinian Syrians. The practices of the authorities up to the end of 2014 will be analyzed to assess to what extent they can be regarded as securitizing practices.

Closing the borders to Syrians

On July 8 of 2013, the new Egyptian government imposed temporary emergency measures that also affected Syrian refugees. Where up to this point Syrians did not need visa to enter the country, now visa and security clearances were necessary before arrival to Egypt. This security clearance depends on an investigation by the State Security Authorities (Amn Al-Dawla) and the criteria for this investigation are not public. This means that it became nearly impossible for Syrians to enter Egypt and arrivals from Syria nearly stopped. During the summer, planes with people aboard from Syria were not allowed to land and were sent back to their places of departure, including Damascus and Latakia in Syria and neighboring countries. In the first twenty days after the measure went into effect, UNHCR reported 476 Syrians had either been deported or denied entry into Egypt. The tight entry restrictions for Syrians to enter Egypt were said to be temporary measures in light of security during the turmoil over the summer of 2013, however these restrictions had not been lifted up to the present day.

The legitimization provided was that internal security bodies were afraid that Syrians arriving in Egypt might come to support the Muslim Brotherhood. This move categorized Syrians that still arrived in Egypt without the necessary papers as ‘illegal’, which legitimized security action against them by blocking access despite opposite international obligations. The regime thus justified its restrictive entry policy towards Syrian refugees by invoking perceived security threats. The entry requirements convey a threat image of Syrian refugees meddling with Egyptian political affairs and supporting the Muslim Brotherhood.

213 Norman, “Different Policies, the Same Game,” Jadaliyya.com.
215 Amnesty International, 'We Cannot Live Here Anymore': 3.
216 Ibid., 3.
It can be argued that this policy and practice is securitizing, since both criteria of a securitizing practice has been met and the practice follows the overall logic that the entry of Syrians into Egypt would be a threat to its security. Going into the first criterion for a practice to be considered securitizing, this measure comes close to the military sphere. Imposing visa restrictions and can still be considered civilian measures. However, Syrians also need prior permission by the security authorities to enter the country, which involves military actors in its implementation. The first criterion is thus met. The second criterion, assessing the extra-ordinary nature of the measure, is also convincingly met. The practice breaches with earlier practice of Egypt to allow refugees in on the basis of their obligation by international law. Also, this restriction breaks with earlier policy towards Syrians who were since decades able to travel to Egypt without visa restrictions. Moreover, Egypt had a strong tradition of showing hospitality to Arab nationals by a relative open door policy compared to other refugees. This practice is thus a stark break from that tradition and can be marked as extra-ordinary. Having met the two criteria, closing the borders to Syrian refugees can be seen as a securitizing practice.

Arbitrary arrests and detentions
During July and August 2013, around 150 people were held in arbitrary arrest around Cairo, Alexandria, Arish and Ismailia, reportedly out of fear of participation in pro-Morsi demonstrations. The charges were ranging from breaking curfew to not having a valid residence permit. There were also reports of people being pulled of public transport and detained by the police and military. For many arrests no valid reason was given, so they can be considered as arbitrary. Among the arrests, there were also some children. According to Amnesty International, arrests surrounding the main cities had ended after the summer. In 2014, it was reportedly common police practice to not arrest a refugee without residency permit, but release him after a security check and no evidence of a criminal record. In addition to these arrests in cities, detention practices focused on those that attempted to leave Egypt by sea.

---

219 Amnesty International, 'We Cannot Live Here Anymore':3-4.
220 Ayoub and Shaden Khallaf, "Syrian Refugees in Egypt," 23.
This second wave of detentions is related to those refugees who started taking boats to reach Europe, in rising numbers responding to the change in atmosphere in Egypt. In November 2013, Human Rights Watch reported that Egypt had detained over 1500 refugees from Syria, including 400 Palestinian Syrians and 250 children. They had been detained and charged with “illegal migration” from Egypt, according to the Egyptian government. Security officials had acknowledged to keeping the refugees in custody until they would leave the country. \(^{221}\) UNHCR had very limited access to these refugees, even to the ones that were registered with the agency. \(^{222}\) The Egyptian authorities were more open to local NGOs that wished to provide assistance to detainees. Egyptian police generally also allowed volunteer attorneys. In December of 2013, Egyptian practices regarding detention slightly altered course. The remaining Syrian and Palestinian refugees from Syria were released and given temporary resident permits. \(^{223}\) However, in 2014, there were numerous cases of detention of Palestinian refugees from Syria on the basis of ‘illegal migration’ from Egypt, for them it has been harder to regain entry into Egypt. \(^{224}\)

There have also been arrests relating to trafficking victims in the Sinai desert and those on their way from the Sinai to Cairo. Detentions were on the basis of ‘illegal entry’ into Egypt. This issue has been an ongoing concern since 2010. Since that point it has repeatedly been placed on the agenda by international actors. With the military operations in the Sinai by the Egyptian army, circumstances for undocumented migrants have not significantly improved. Apparently, there were still 144 ‘rescued’ migrants held in detention by the end of 2013. \(^{225}\)

These arbitrary arrest and detention practices have to be seen in their context. Emergency law that was mostly present in the country during the last decades, and was reinstalled the 14\(^{th}\) of August 2013 was mainly targeting Egyptian citizens, but foreign nationals can be apprehended under many circumstances as well. Unauthorized migrants can be detained on the basis of their status in Egyptian criminal law. They are


\(^{222}\) Amnesty International, 'We Cannot Live Here Anymore':5.


\(^{224}\) Ayoub and Shaden Khalaf, "Syrian Refugees in Egypt," 24.

often detained in prisons that do not live up to basic human rights standards. Next to
criminal charges, most refugees have been held in administrative detention, which has
no legal maximum length. The arbitrary practices of administrative detention were
particularly noticeable with Syrians, who have sometimes been detained for months,
other released and other pushed to leave the country. There appeared to be no
consistent policy. There is a legal basis in Egyptian law on criminal sanctions for the
breach of immigration law. Rarely, however, are criminal charges pursued in practice.
Usually cases were referred to a decision by the immigration department. The
department would then decide on release, deportation or further detention.226 Another
aspect of the detention of refugees is that there is no separate infrastructure. The places
used to detain migrants and refugees are prisons, police stations, and military camps. In
the fall of 2013, the case of a few hundred Syrian refugees in Alexandria was well
documented. The crowded facilities lacked basic health standards, but treatment
depends from facility to facility.227

In Egypt, detention of refugees is a measure which falls completely under the
Ministry of Interior. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs has requested a change in detention
policy, also after conversations with different embassies. The Ministry of Interior,
however, has not responded with engagement and was is still no clear refugee detention
policy from their side by the end of 2014. This might, however, be the result of the
political turmoil within the Ministries and Security Forces.228

The ongoing practices of arbitrary arrest and detention can be seen as a
securitizing practice. It is clear that refugees are seen as a threat in two respects. During
the chaotic summer months of July and August, security forces detained Syrians on the
suspicion of collaborating with the Muslim Brotherhood. The threat towards political
stability had successfully been claimed by portraying Syrians as aligned with the Muslim
Brotherhood and terrorism. These detention measures flow directly from these
securitizing acts, as they have at their basis that they try to deal with the perceived
threat of Syrians meddling in political affairs in Egypt. The second wave of detentions,
relating to those Syrians that tried to leave Egypt by boat falls into a different although
much related discourse and category. They are part of the longer standing securitization
of human trafficking and refugee flows across the Sinai towards Israel, as well as by sea

226 Ibid.
228 Bidinger et al., Protecting Syrian Refugees,” 88.
to Europe. The movement of people has been criminalized and marked as ‘illegal’ and these practices can be seen as ways to deal with the securitized issue. By virtue of the illegality of this movement, it is seen as a security risk. This security risk in turn legitimizes the violation of basic rights. These detention measures are adding to the security dynamics as they cause a spiraling conflict in the classic Hobbesian way, reinforcing the threat perception by images of detained refugees as security threats.

To go more in depth, the practice of detaining refugees meets both criteria to be classified as a securitization practice. Firstly, detention is a technique that is usually meant for people that pose some sort of security risk. People that are placed in detention, are placed there because of a criminal activity and their possible security threat to the Egyptian people. There are no separate facilities to separate refugees from other offenders. The measure is only up to a certain extent an extra-ordinary tactic, since it is deeply institutionalized in the Egyptian system. Detention and arbitrary arrest has been used in Egypt for different groups of people opposing those in power. It can be argued that it is a form of institutionalized securitization. It has become commonplace to arrest and detain opponents of the regimes in Egypt, journalists, foreigners, activists and protesters have all been tackled with the practice of arbitrary arrest and prolonged detention. Still, Syrian refugees had not been targeted to this extent up to the summer of 2013, so one might see this tactic as somewhat out of the ordinary in this context. With the first criterion met and the second criterion met up to a certain extent, the detention and arbitrary arrest of Syrian refugees in Egypt can be seen as a securitizing practice. Furthermore, it has the intrinsic features of a threat based, institutionalized practice.

**Deportation**

Besides strict entry requirements and detention practices, the third practice by the Egyptian security forces is deportation of refugees. The Global Detention Project and Human Rights Watch estimate the amount of deported refugees up to 1200 by November 2013. These Syrian and Palestinian Syrians were mostly deported to either Lebanon, Turkey or back to Syria. This practice is a clear violation of Egypt’s obligations under international law and the principle of non-refoulement under the 1951 Refugee Convention.\(^{229}\) Also, under the Convention against Torture, Egypt may not return refugees to places where they might face torture or their lives or freedom would be at

---

\(^{229}\) Amnesty International, *'We Cannot Live Here Anymore,'* 6.
risk. According to the Euro-Mediterranean Migreurop Network, refugees are being asked by the authorities to pay for their own deportation ticket or stay in detention indefinitely.\textsuperscript{230}

In a media statement on October 17\textsuperscript{th} 2013, Ambassador Badr Abdel-Attai of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs denied that Egypt had an official policy of deporting 'Syrian brothers';\textsuperscript{231}

"The report is inaccurate. There is no official policy on the forced deportation of our Syrian brothers. Most of them live in peace and there are no refugees camps in the country."

He did, however, acknowledge that some Syrians had been deported because they participated in "armed protest and violent clashes."\textsuperscript{232} During the year 2014 the numbers fell, but still at least 150 refugees from Syria had been deported by the Egyptian authorities to Syria and neighboring countries according to Amnesty International.\textsuperscript{233} Deportation of Palestinians from Syria is especially problematic, since they are not able to get Syrian passports. This leaves them unable to seek refuge in Turkey, leaving the option of Lebanon where they will get two days to return to Syria.\textsuperscript{234}

Deportation of Syrian and Palestinian refugees from Syria can be seen as securitizing, since the measure follows the intrinsic logic that these people are a security threat to Egypt. Moreover, the two main criteria to determine if the practice of deportation of Syrian refugees can be considered securitizing are both met. Deportation is carried out by the security forces, in cooperation with the police. This is not in itself surprising, due to the large role that the security forces play in Egyptian society. It can be seen as an institutionalized situation for the army to deal with refugee matters in the first place. This tactic would normally be used to expel foreigners that pose a direct security threat to Egypt.

\textsuperscript{230} Global Detention Project, "Egypt Detention Profile," Globaldetentionproject.org.
\textsuperscript{231} Human Rights Watch, "Egypt: Syria Refugees Detained, Coerced to Return."
Furthermore, the measure of deportation is very severe and can be classified as out of the ordinary and even illegal in its context, the second criterion to qualify as a securitizing practice. This practice is a grave breach of international refugee regime, of which Egypt is signatory to the most important conventions. Egypt has a long history of adhering to the principle of non-refoulement. Grave breaches of this principle have on the other hand been recorded with regard to Eritrean refugees. A group of 1200 Eritrean men, women and children were returned to Eritrea in 2008 and 188 Eritrean men in 2011.235 Also, indecently foreign journalists and even gay men have been deported from Egypt. Although this practice is not completely new, still, it has only used in extra-ordinary circumstances when compared to the norm of refugee practice in Egypt and considering its obligations under international law. From the practice of deportation of Syrian and Palestinian refugees from Syria, it can be concluded that security forces act upon an extra-ordinary threat towards the security of the integrity of the state by ‘illegal’ immigrants posing a risk to national security.

The practices of the Egyptian regime and Security Forces analyzed in this section provide a picture of the securitized setting for Syrian refugees in Egypt. Although these practices were most frequent at the height of the securitized setting in July and August of 2013, they continued well into 2014. The visa restrictions, arbitrary arrests, detentions, and deportations of Syrian refugees can be seen as securitizing practices, since by their intrinsic qualities, they convey the idea that Syrian refugees are a security threat to the referent object, in this case the Egyptian society and state. In all cases, one of the two criteria that were set was met. The measures could either be considered as measures that would in other cases be deployed when dealing with a traditional security threat, such as war or terrorism, or they could be considered extra-ordinary in the way that they were breaking the norm of how refugees were previously dealt with. Since this norm of extra-ordinary practices is hard to establish in a revolutionary setting and even more so in an institutionalized setting, the practice has to be rarely applied in such instances in the same context. It can thus be said that the practices of the Egyptian authorities feed into the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt.

Securitizing speech and practice?

This chapter has analyzed to what extent Syrian refugees have been successfully securitized in Egypt through discourse, policy and practices. Different time frames have provided a layered background into the institutional dynamics and power relations that form the base for the securitization of Syrian refugees in the period after the summer of 2013. This was done in order to provide a solid context to place later securitizing moves into perspective.

For the period before the 2011 revolution, the limited legal framework and institutional arrangement, in which UNHCR is responsible for most of the refugee issues in Egypt, has resulted in an environment where refugees are restricted in the full enjoyment of their rights. On top of this, socio-economic circumstances, that affect refugees disproportionately more than Egyptians, added to the environment of constrain. Coupled with the lack of durable solutions for integration and the occasional security measures taken against refugees, it has been concluded that protection space had shrunk in the period from 2005 to 2010.

During the 2011 revolution, the political environment in Egypt became highly politicized and unstable, bringing with it a major change in power constellations. This instability affected refugees in urban areas in that they felt less safe since they got caught up in the dynamics. During former president Morsi’s term in office, Syrian refugees arrived and were welcomed with supportive discourse, policy and practices. In speeches, Morsi emphasized his support for the Syrian opposition and extended services in education and health to all Syrians. With the arrival of a large amount of Syrians, more than all previous refugee populations combined, the strain on resources was felt more towards the end of Morsi’s term. His strong support for the Syrians might have triggered the backlash they experienced when power was taken over by General Sisi in the summer of 2013.

With the installment of the military regime, came the securitizing discourse and practices towards Syrian refugees. Concluding from the analysis of several speech acts in the media and their effects in the general atmosphere, it can be said that Syrian refugees had been successfully securitized by a media campaign. The general threat image of Syrian refugees aiding the Muslim Brotherhood and destabilizing Egypt created support for security measures towards them. However, the official discourse of the interim regime was quite neutral regarding this issue. A discourse analysis didn’t bring to the
fore clear securitization moves by the Egyptian government. What is however more interesting, are the practices by the regime.

The practices of arbitrary arrest, detention, visa restriction and deportations were analyzed to determine whether these practices could be considered securitizing. By their intrinsic qualities, these measures convey the idea that Syrians are a threat to the Egyptian state. It was concluded that in all cases at least one of the criteria to classify as a securitizing practice was met. The practice was either a measure that was borrowed from the traditional security sphere, or the practice could be considered extra-ordinary. These practices can thus be seen as contributing to the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt.

Since these practices were not publicly discussed by the regime, and even denied in some cases, one cannot speak of a securitization move from the authorities in the classical sense based on speech acts. However, having analyzed the practices of the Egyptian security forces, they can most definitely be seen as securitizing actors. The green light for these security practices was given through the partial acceptance by the public of the securitization moves in the media. The media thus played a crucial role in providing legitimacy for these practices. These securitizing moves by the media, however, depended highly on the discourse of labelling the Muslim Brotherhood as a terrorist threat by the military regime.
Analysis of desecuritization of Syrian refugees in Egypt

After having concluded that the setting for Syrian refugees in Egypt can be seen as securitized, this section will focus on going against this process. Where the previous section was process oriented, giving an overview of different time frames in order to portray a picture of the gradual securitization process, this section will be more actor-focused and single out a single desecuritization effort. This will be UNHCR’s advocacy towards the Egyptian government. As discussed in the theoretical framework section, this shift can be explained by the difference in dynamics in securitization and desecuritization processes as well as the fact that this is still a very ongoing process. It would in this case be premature to discuss the desecuritization efforts as a broader process, since it would be too early to draw conclusions.

Three main groups of actors can be identified as desecuritizing the issue of Syrian refugees in Egypt. Firstly, UNHCR has a large role in the dynamics due to its international mandate as well as the responsibilities that flow from its agreement with the Egyptian government. Secondly, Egyptian and international civil society organizations can be identified as desecuritizing actors in this context. Thirdly, Syrian refugees themselves play a role in desecuritizing on a lower scale and in cooperation with or amplified by civil society actors and UNHCR.

Due to the limited scope of this research, only one of these three identified possible desecuritizing forces will be explored more in depth. The study will focus on UNHCR as desecuritizing actor, through its advocacy policy aimed at the Egyptian government. Accompanying discourse and practices will be discussed. From the three main groups of desecuritizing forces, UNHCR holds the most interesting position of influence in the current state of affairs in Egypt. With their long standing cooperation the government of Egypt, their globally recognized expertise and status, as well as their practical responsibilities in the Egyptian framework of refugee policy, the Office holds a powerful position to affect the direction of the handling of the Syrian refugee presence in Egypt.

The position of Egyptian civil society has worsened significantly since the crackdown on dissent in the summer of 2013. Many opponents of the regime have been
harassed, threatened, jailed, and even sentenced to death. Furthermore international NGOs, such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International, have seen their influence shrink with the antagonized relationship between the Government of Egypt and their representatives on the ground. With harsh critiques on their reports, being portrayed as lies, and even employees being denied access to the country, their working environment has shrunk significantly. The space for refugees themselves to actively desecuritize their presence has diminished through their effective securitization as described in the previous section of this research. These developments contributed to my choice to focus on UNHCR as an actor.

Despite their difficult political position, the large contributions of civil society or refugees themselves as desecuritizing actors should, however, not be underestimated. They are usually the drivers in these processes, since they are grass-root and can happen on community level, where it matters most. Protests marches, lobbying initiatives, active campaigning through different media channels, and assistance to refugees with legal expertise and basic necessities are vital desecuritizing moves. The study of different desecuritizing actors within the Egyptian and international civil society field would be a good follow-up research. For the scope of this study, I will not go into these efforts.

In this chapter, it will be analyzed to what extent UNHCR’s advocacy practices in Egypt can be seen as desecuritizing moves. Referring to the global level, Hammerstad has argued that, since the mid-2000s, UNHCR has consciously moved away from a security discourse towards a protection focused humanitarian discourse in order to combat the securitization of refugee issues in the international arena. This section will explore more in depth how this is done through its policy, practice and corresponding discourse on Syrian refugees in Egypt. Firstly, it is important to position the agency as an actor in the scene that was sketched in the previous section. The emphasis will be on UNHCR’s relationship with the government of Egypt. This will be followed by an analysis of their main practices regarding advocacy for Syrian refugees in Egypt. The policy documents that will form the basis of this analysis are the Urban Refugee Policy of 2009

---


238 Hammerstad, The Rise and Decline of a Global Security Actor, 300.
and the Syria Response Plan in Egypt of 2013 and 2014. The implementation of these policies through practices and discourse will be analyzed through the lens of the concept of desecuritization, with a strong focus on the advocacy efforts towards the Egyptian government.

**UNHCR and the global refugee regime**

In order to place UNHCR as an actor in the Egyptian setting, this section provides a short background into the development of the organization over the decades. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees was established in 1950, after the large number of refugees that stemmed from the Second World War. The 1950 Statute sets out a clear mandate for UNHCR and defines the scope and role the organization plays. The core mandate consists of two areas. First, the Office is meant to coordinate and cooperate with states in order to the protection of refugees. Second, UNHCR is mandated to find durable solutions for the plight of refugees, by integrating, resettling or repatriation. Besides these two core principles, the agency is also responsible for guarding the international refugee regime, also set up after WWII, of which the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951 is the most important element.

From the start, UNHCR has held a very specific position, on the one hand representing the interests of states and on the other hand persuade them to adhere to their humanitarian obligations regarding refugees. Since the end of the Cold War, and especially since 9/11, this last element of their balancing act has become especially difficult, due to the changing political atmosphere as well as their expanded mandate, including Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) and humanitarian relief. For these activities, UNHCR faces constrains of its limited power being dependent on contributions from government and cooperation of host governments to work within their territories.\(^{239}\) UNHCR’s power position thus has no particular material base, but is more based its role as ‘refugee expert’ as well as a moral and legal guardian of human and refugee rights. The agency has no formal power to enforce international refugee law and its level of power stems from the ability to influence the perceptions and beliefs, and therewith actions, of the other actors in the international refugee field.\(^{240}\)

---


Multiple scholars, such as Adelman and Hammerstad, argued around the end of the Cold War, UNHCR became a security actor within the broader dynamics, by firmly keeping the issue of asylum protection on the security agenda. Protection of refugees, and the modest role UNHCR played in the decades before, had effectively shifted from legal protection to physical protection and UNHCR carved out a prominent role as a security actor.\textsuperscript{241} This can be seen by the increased amount of times that refugees were part of UNSC resolutions as well as the mentioning of security considerations in the speeches of the High Commissioner for Refugees and policy documents of the 1990s.\textsuperscript{242} It became the security of refugees and the security of refugee workers that was being discussed and managed as well as the security threat they posed to host communities. UNHCR thus depended on the on the securitized argument that the insecurity that refugees caused on the international arena needed an urgent solution, which they could provide.

With the global discourse and sentiments towards migration becoming more negative, especially since 9/11, UNHCR rethought its role and sought to explicitly change its perspective in order to diminish the reliance on Western security agendas. They argued that this discourse proved to feed into the anti-immigration sentiments and didn't result in a better handling of refugee issues. Internally, the Director for Protection, called for a de-dramatizing and depoliticizing of the refugee question and to essentially return to the humanitarian nature of the challenge in order to be able to protect refugees better.\textsuperscript{243} Therefore, UNCHR returned to a more modest agenda, carving out protection space by countering xenophobic sentiments and focusing on pragmatic solutions and quiet diplomacy with host states both in the global North and South.\textsuperscript{244}

By now, UNHCR has rejected its previous discourse of framing the refugee problem in security terms. After they investigated their own strategy and the effectiveness in a report in 2004 they decided to alter their approach and opted for a protection focused discourse.\textsuperscript{245} After the arrival of António Guterres in 2005, UNHCR explicitly mentioned as its role to depoliticize and desecuritize displacement through

\textsuperscript{242} Hammerstad, \textit{The Rise and Decline of a Global Security Actor}, 132.
\textsuperscript{243} Ibid., 166.
\textsuperscript{244} Ibid., 251.
their possibilities of nonpolitical and humanitarian mandate. They aim to diffuse threats for states by enlarging the protection space for refugees and reaffirming the humanitarian and protection nature of asylum.\textsuperscript{246} Their discourse, policy and practices have protection and assistance at their basis and try to carve more protection space for refugees in different areas, predominantly urban areas. The 2009 Urban Refugee Policy fits this shirt in approach, since through this document the livelihoods of refugees are directly linked to increasing protection and well-being. Livelihoods are thus seen as a protection strategy for refugees in urban settings.\textsuperscript{247} UNHCR has thus, according to Hammerstad returned to being a desecuritizing actor in the field.\textsuperscript{248}

**UNHCR in Egypt and its relationship with the Egyptian government**

I will now continue by positioning UNHCR as an actor in the Egyptian field, in order to be able to provide context to their desecuritizing strategies. This relationship constitutes the boundaries within which UNHCR can operate and thus the boundaries of the relative effects of its actions and discourse. The relationship between UNHCR and the Egyptian government is shaped by certain factors, such as the political landscape in Egypt, the donor community, and the dynamics of the refugee influx.

In 1954 the MoU with the government of Egypt was signed, where UNHCR assumed responsibility for refugee status determination. This same year, the UNHCR Office in Cairo has been established, which became the Regional Office in 1990. Since the agreement, there have been multiple efforts to shift this responsibility to the Egyptian government. Up to the present point in time, RSD is still firmly placed in the hands of UNHCR.\textsuperscript{249} From the perspective of UNHCR, states are primarily responsible for providing protection and assistance to refugees. In the case that a state is not able to provide it, UNHCR may step in. Government institutions in the MENA region, however, see their role as limited to providing refugees with the necessary paperwork. For further protection, they point to UNHCR and implementing partners.\textsuperscript{250} They provide limited financial assistance, to how far the budget permits them, and basic services to registered refugees.\textsuperscript{251}

\textsuperscript{246} Hammerstad, *The Rise and Decline of a Global Security Actor*, 172.
\textsuperscript{248} Hammerstad, “UNHCR and the Securitization of Forced Migration,” 255-256.
\textsuperscript{250} Ibid., 48.
\textsuperscript{251} Ullah, *Refugee Politics in the Middle East and North Africa*, 100.
During the 1990s the relationship with UNHCR and the Egyptian authorities was beginning to institutionalize. The government respected the principle of non-refoulement and started accepting the identity cards provided by the Office. However, there was still a cautious attitude towards the refugee regime and the issue remained sensitive. As Zaiotti claims, although UNHCR’s role was recognized, they were not always listened to when it came to return of asylum seekers at border areas or arbitrary arrests. With the deteriorating protection space after 9/11, UNHCR could resettle less refugees to third countries, which frustrated relations in Egypt.252

Throughout the 2000s, there were organized protests from the refugee communities towards UNHCR’s policies and the lack of possibilities in Egypt. In 2004, Sudanese refugee protests in front of the UNHCR office ended in a violent confrontation between the Egyptian police and the demonstrators. In 2005, a well-organized sit-in in a park near the Office was run by Sudanese refugees demanded rights and safety. The Egyptian police intervened brutally, killing 28, injuring and detaining many threatening with deportation.253 The period from 2005 to 2011 is described by Kagan as a crisis in the protection of refugees in Egypt. Before 2005, Egypt abided by the principle of non-refoulement for UNHCR registered refugees. However, during this period, there were numerous occasions of refoulement and arbitrary detention. This was combined with heightened tensions between UNHCR and refugees, with repeated protests and occasional violence. This was related to the decision of UNHCR to reduce third country resettlement in 2004.254

Since 2004, there has been a shift in the UNHCR Cairo Office, from care and assistance programs, towards more self-reliance of refugees.255 For this, more cooperation with the Egyptian government was key. However, according to leaked documents from the US Embassy in Cairo, published by the Telegraph through Wikileaks, the relationship between UNHCR and the Government of Egypt had gone from “bad to worse” in 2008 and the beginning of 2009:

“UNHCR Regional Representative Saad Al Attar told us [US Embassy in Cairo] that UNHCR’s relationship with the Government of Egypt (GOE) has worsened in the past year. UNHCR no longer has unfettered access to potential refugees and

252 Zaiotti, “Dealing with non-Palestinian Refugees in the Middle East,” 344.
asylum seekers, and is prohibited from working with Palestinians. UNHCR summarized its operations for 2008, and addressed the major factors that impinge on its ability to assist refugees including budgetary constraints, a sharp increase in irregular transitory movement, and GOE pressure to limit refugee programs.”

Regarding a subsequent meeting of the US Embassy with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Egypt the following was reported:

“Egyptian MFA Refugee Office Director Tarek Maaty told us on February 9 that the disagreement over the UN High Commissioner for Refugees’ call to open the Gaza borders had passed (reftel). He said that a senior UNHCR official will come to Cairo to work on a combined vision for refugees in Egypt … [Maaty] outlined a three-part Egyptian solution to reduce the number of refugees in the country. This includes the return of refugees to either countries of origin or first asylum, low-profile resettlement, and preventing new refugees from illegally entering Egypt by land or sea.”

These reports show that the relations between UNHCR and the Egyptian government had cooled significantly. However, with the Egyptian revolution of 2011, the change of administration gave hope to UNHCR for a renewed cooperation. This was expressed by António Guterres in the Egyptian press:

“This is a new beginning in our relations and for refugee protection in Egypt. I hope the UNHCR will be able to enhance its assistance program, in cooperation with the Egyptian government, and increase the number of resettlement places for refugees in Egypt.”

During Morsi’s presidency, the cooperation with UNHCR improved, especially in relation to the Syrian refugee influx. However, with current administration under Sisi, cooperation with UNHCR has gone downhill, illustrated by the fact that UNHCR was

denied access to detained refugees and those that were facing deportation threats. These practices have been described earlier on in this research. Now, I will go into the reaction of UNHCR in order to influence this situation. It must be added that the coordinated response plan for Syrian refugees in Egypt has been only funded with 28 million USD, where the appeal was for 190 million USD for 2014. The coordinated UN response is thus chronically underfunded to deal with this crisis. To sketch the context, I will first go into detail about the seven main practices of UNHCR in Egypt.

**UNHCR’s policy and practice**

Before discussing the advocacy effort, it is worth going into the broader spectrum of policies and activities of UNHCR in Egypt. The main policies of UNHCR regarding refugees from Syria will be extracted from two policy documents, namely the 2009 urban refugee policy and the 2014 Syria Response Plan for Egypt. UNHCR’s Urban Refugee Policy rests on two principal objectives; (1) “to ensure that cities are recognized as legitimate places for refugees to reside and exercise the rights to which they are entitled and (2) to maximize the protection space available to urban refugees and the humanitarian organizations that support them.” The focus of the Syrian Response Plan is on the one hand focused on protection, including protection from refoulement, and on the other hand ensuring that basic needs of the refugees flying from Syria are met.

From these documents, the main activities, besides advocacy towards the Egyptian government, are formulated that relate to the desecuritization of the presence of Syrian refugees in Egypt. These can be broadly structured in seven interrelated categories. Firstly, UNHCR registers the influx of refugees. In order to fulfill its mandate and manage the presence of Syrian refugees in Egypt, UNHCR has expanded its registration system in Egypt. The organization is expanding its presence at borders and detention centers and cooperates more with legal aid partners throughout the country. Expanding registration capacity and providing refugees with UNHCR documents eases their access to services and helps in their advocacy effort with the

---

260 UNHCR, *UNHCR Policy on Refugee Protection and Solutions in Urban Areas*.
government, according to UNHCR.\textsuperscript{263} Also, it provides them with a better view on the needs of refugees.

Secondly, UNHCR monitors Egyptian legal arrangements, policies and practices of the Egyptian government regarding Syrian refugees. The information UNHCR gathers might feed into the knowledge of a securitized setting, which could provide the basis for action. This is the case when combining the platform and coordination role UNHCR takes. In that way, one could argue that it provides a basis for action and advocacy. This information is not systematically shared with the broader public for example, only limited amounts of information on government policy are shared in the context of UNHCR’s public advocacy effort.

Thirdly, UNHCR provides protection and legal assistance to refugees, such as detention visits. UNHCR has enhanced its interventions with cases of detentions and possible refoulement in coordination with their partners. Through their coordinated effort, they provide bro bono legal representation for refugees in detention.\textsuperscript{264} UNHCR also emphasizes their enhanced effort in providing this legal counseling through the training of new legal aid partners in different locations.\textsuperscript{265}

Fourthly, a substantial part of UNHCR role in Egypt is to provide material assistance in the form of education grants, housing assistance, cash assistance for the most vulnerable, and secondary and tertiary health care.\textsuperscript{266} These policies and programs are carried out in cooperation with partners within the UN framework, such as the UNDP, UNICEF, UN Habitat and more. Implementation partners are local, regional, and international NGOs such as Save the Children, Islamic Relief Worldwide, Caritas, Terre des Hommes, Plan International, Refugee Egypt, Resala and many more.\textsuperscript{267} The total amount of involved organizations amounts to 26, including UNHCR itself.

Fifthly, they provide trainings to both government and state officials and community workers in the field regarding protection principles and assistance. Training activities that UNHCR provides are directed at government officials, the judiciary, the police and the military. These trainings are regarding the rights of refugees and codes of conduct and are important tools in providing factual information.\textsuperscript{268} Sixthly, UNHCR

\textsuperscript{263} Ibid., 13.
\textsuperscript{264} Ibidinger et al., Protecting Syrian Refugees,” 130.
\textsuperscript{265} UNHCR, 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Egypt, 7.
\textsuperscript{266} Ibid., 4.
\textsuperscript{267} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{268} Ibid., 7.
reaches out to the broader public through media campaigns and community projects. Media interventions are especially aimed to counter xenophobic media broadcasts. Besides media coverage in local and international media outlets, there are also more creative outreach efforts, such as a photography exhibition in December 2014. This exhibition in Cairo showed the normal lives of refugees as part of Egyptian society. It showed refugees as workers, students, mothers, fathers. There was a series of photographs of Syrian workers in a furniture factory. According to Elizabeth Tan, regional representative of UNHCR, the work thus not only portray suffering but “life.” Tan explains:

“this is the message; refugees are now a part of the Egyptian society.”

As a side note, it would be interesting for a further study to look into more of such practices and discourses to see if they could be considered a form of transformative desecuritization, since different identities of Syrian refugees are portrayed in order to break the dichotomies between Egyptians and Syrians.

Lastly, UNHCR set up community outreach projects to foster a good relationship between hosts and refugees. One of the key priorities mid-2014 was set to promote coexistence between Syrian communities and their Egyptian hosts. For this particular goal, there were five community project implemented in and around Cairo and plans are made to expand these efforts to more locations in the country. Also, six additional community centers have been established providing trainings, educational and awareness-raising activities. In addition to these efforts, Quick Impact Projects have been set up in cooperation with local authorities, civil society and refugee and host communities. These projects have been set up to address the existing gaps in services to refugees and host communities and enhance the capacity of these communities. Through these activities, local communities and active organizations can be reached with the aim to improve the relationship between hosts and refugees.

---

269 Ibid., 15.
These activities are very much linked and intertwined and are all aimed at managing the influx and presence of refugees in a good way as well finding solutions for the plight of these refugees. It is aimed at protection and bettering of circumstances. Moving on from these activities, I will go most in depth into UNHCR’s advocacy effort towards the Egyptian government. This strategy is very much depended upon the abovementioned practices of providing assistance, monitoring, registration, training, and community projects. The advocacy strategy lends itself better to study with the lens of desecuritization since it constitutes practices with a certain discourse that can be analyzed in the public sphere.

I aim to analyze the advocacy strategy to reflect upon to what extent this can be considered a desecuritizing move based on the theoretical framework as presented previously. The desecuritization strategy can either be considered managerial or transformative. A practice and corresponding discourse will be seen as managerial way of desecuritization if it is aimed at stabilizing a situation and bringing the issue back to the political arena. It is thus focused on finding a political solution to a certain issue that has been placed on the security agenda earlier. A practice and corresponding discourse can be seen as transformative if the strategy is aimed at moving beyond enemy/friend distinctions and change the nature of the issue itself through a new narrative. A transformative strategy could thus 'fragment' the identity of the ‘Syrian refugee’ and show linkages with the political community in order to move away from the image of threat. Also, the transformative strategy could appeal to universal rights, which links people in a different way but also questions created security dichotomies.

**Advocacy towards Egyptian government**

Advocacy by UNHCR aimed at the Egyptian government is on the one hand regarding protection from arrest, detention and deportation. This advocacy effort, aimed at protecting the fundamental rights of refugees has as its goal to reduce such practices by Egyptian authorities. The second line of advocacy towards the Egyptian government is regarding cooperation on matters of livelihoods of refugees, such as housing, education, health care and employment possibilities. Where the first strategy is aimed at stopping a certain security practice, the second form of advocacy aims to politically find solutions to the plight of refugees. First, I will discuss the form of advocacy focused on protection. Hereafter, I will go into the second strand of advocacy, focused on assistance and
livelihoods. Concluding, the visit of António Guterres to Egypt and the statements he made regarding this visit illustrate how these two pillars of the advocacy effort are linked. Finally, I will analyze to what extent the advocacy efforts towards the Egyptian government can be considered desecuritization strategies.

**Protection Advocacy**

Advocacy with the Egyptian authorities on the arrest, detention, and deportation of Syrians is a key pillar of the regional response plan in Egypt. This advocacy effort extends to those who face charges for ‘illegal migration’ or forging documents. Especially the use of administrative detention and deportation to third countries is of high concern to the agency. There is a special focus on children in these situations and the splitting up of families as a result of these practices. In its advocacy effort they also make use of the report on Guidelines on Detention, published in October of 2012 for this purpose. These guidelines provide alternatives for detention and emphasize that seeking asylum is not ‘illegal’. The document also draws upon the right to liberty in the context of migration. It acknowledges that detention is often an element of refugee or migration systems, but encourages alternative measures and argues that detention should function as a last resort only.

As a second part of protection advocacy, UNHCR advocates for more guidelines on visa and residency requirements to take away fear of deportation when Syrians would ask for renewal of these documents. According to UNHCR these rules and practices have resulted in very few new arrivals as well as a worsening in the position of those Syrian refugees already in Egypt. UNHCR advocates that the Egyptian government adhere to the international agreements on these matters.

In practice, advocacy is mostly done through meetings with government officials and judiciary in Egypt. UNHCR claims to have carried out 67 advocacy interventions with government authorities from January to September of 2014. Also through conferences, trainings, and media outreaches UNHCR emphasizes its viewpoints and reinforces its lobbying efforts. There is thus a broad spectrum of advocacy efforts

---

276 Ibid., 7.
279 Ibid., 3.
ongoing, which is emphasized in the 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan for Egypt.\footnote{UNHCR, 2014 Syria Regional Response Plan: Egypt.} UNHCR is working with partners and civil society in the field to address this issue.\footnote{Ibid., 7.} Furthermore, this advocacy effort is strengthened by the efforts of several embassies, such as the U.S. Embassy strongly lobbying against refoulement of Syrian refugees.\footnote{Bidinger et al., Protecting Syrian Refugees,” 79.} These advocacy efforts in the field of protection will be illustrated firstly by an official public statement addressed to the Egyptian government on the 26\textsuperscript{th} of July and secondly by UNHCR’s presence at an international conference regarding Syrian refugees hosted at the ministry of Foreign Affairs on May 6\textsuperscript{th} 2014.

In reaction to changed practices and policies of the Egyptian government towards Syrian refugees in July of 2013, UNHCR responded with an official media statement on 26\textsuperscript{th} of July. In this statement, published on the official UNHCR website and picked up by different media and NGOs, UNHCR spokeswoman Melissa Flemming stated the following:

> “UNHCR appreciates the Egyptian government’s affirmation that Syrians are welcome in Egypt … We call upon the government to ensure that any precautionary measures in light of the current security situation in the country do not infringe upon fundamental human rights principles and the country’s international responsibilities to provide asylum and protection to refugees.”\footnote{UNHCR, “UNHCR Concerned at Arbitrary Detention of Syrian Refugees in Egypt,” unhcr.org, Geneva, 26 July 2013 http://www.unhcr.org/51f27733540.html (last accessed 10 October 2015).}

In addition Flemming emphasized that UNHCR requested access to the Syrians that were held in detention and pressed for assurances that they would not be deported to Syria:

> “UNHCR has been requesting access to 85 detained Syrians and assurances that they are not returned to Syria, stressing that they should be afforded fair and due process of law in Egypt”\footnote{UNHCR, “UNHCR Concerned at Arbitrary Detention of Syrian Refugees in Egypt,” unhcr.org.}

These statements cite fundamental human rights as a reason not to detain and deport Syrians from Egypt. They speak to the Egyptian government to abide by the international conventions and agreements they signed, which constitutes a rights-based discourse. This suggests that UNHCR aims to bring the issue back to ‘normal politics’,

were legal obligations are followed, opposing Egypt’s security measures taken to deal with the presence of refugees.

The second empirical example of UNHCR’s advocacy effort can be observed at an international conference on May 6th of 2014. The conference was hosted by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Cairo, including possible resettling nations such as Canada, the Netherlands, Australia, Germany, and Sweden. UNHCR was represented by Regional Director Mohamed Dayri. Dayri stated that “there has been a marked decrease in arrests and detention for a lack of visa and related residency issues. Authorities have also been promptly releasing Syrians arrested for attempting irregular departure from the country.” In addition he mentioned that the “authorities have continued to request some Syrians in detention to leave the country, although less frequently last year.” He furthermore stated that advocacy efforts towards the Egyptian government are amongst others aimed to provide more Syrians with residency permits and commit to family reunification.287

Through Dayri’s statements and presence at the meeting, UNHCR pressed for the continued political debate regarding Syrian refugees and emphasized the progress of moving away from security solutions to deal with their presence. This discourse emphasizes the need for permits and family unification as practices that could contribute to a solution, instead of deportation and detention. It can be considered a rights-based discourse, with emphasis on Egypt’s obligations under international law. In this way it moves away from a security centered narrative.

Advocacy for livelihoods

Next to the emphasis placed on legal protection, advocacy is also aimed at enhancing the protection space in a broader sense. This broad interpretation of protection space, stemming for the 2009 Urban Refugee Policy, also includes refugees rights to safe shelter, education, labor and health care. This is the second element of UNHCR’s advocacy strategy. Health care, education and shelter are relatively well addressed by the Egyptian government, whereas the right to work is a very sensitive topic. Mohamed Dayri, regional representative at UNHCR in Cairo, told Al-Monitor in July 2014 that UNHCR was talking to the Egyptian government to expand the rights to work for Syrian

refugees. This effort was launched in 2011, based upon the broader urban refugee policy. The initial focus of the advocacy strategy is to convey to the Egyptian government that self-employment and starting micro-businesses would provide more self-reliance of refugees which would mean less dependence on assistance programs. This approach was chosen as a first step, since directly starting to advocate the right to work is a sensitive topic with the Egyptian government, touching upon matters of integration.

These advocacy activities propose a political solution to the plight of refugees, they are thus aimed at diminishing the security drama from unfolding. By proposing instrumental solutions, such as schooling, health care and more freedom on the labor market, UNHCR aims to take away some of the underlying tensions. By actively managing the presence of Syrian refugees, UNHCR brings the issue in the political sphere. By cooperating with the government within the boundaries of a humanitarian, rights-based program, UNHCR aims to enlarge protection space for refugees. Through its advocacy effort and communication with the Egyptian government, the Office presses for the best possible arrangements for Syrian refugees.

Combined advocacy strategy

This brings us to the third example of an advocacy intervention which brings these two strands of advocacy together and illustrates the discourse regarding protection and livelihoods and how these are interlinked. From the 5th to 7th of September 2014, António Guterres visited the Egyptian authorities and spoke with President Al-Sisi, the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Sameh Shoukry, and the Minister of Social Solidarity, Ghada Wali. They discussed regional conflicts and the refugee movements caused by these conflicts. He said that Egypt plays a “central role” in resolving regional crises, which he saw as crucial in reducing the amount of people that have to flee conflict. Although complimenting Egypt with its contributions despite its own economic challenges he also addressed concerns regarding protection of refugees. He believed that “some improvements can still be made in the access to the territory and in the different aspects

288 Ibid.
of the life of refugees in the country.” 291 In an interview with the newspaper Al-Ahram afterwards he said “there has been great progress in relation to these people in detention, and that should be underlined” and emphasized that:

“[UNHCR] always makes a very strong appeal for people not be sent back to the countries from where they've fled, because they might face prosecution. We have been advocating with the authorities for the people that have been detained to be released, and as a matter of fact this is happening, for the majority.” 292

This statement concurs with the earlier mentioned advocacy discourse taken by Flemming, in that it strongly condemns the use of security measures and aims to encourage Egypt to abide by the international principles of the refugee regime. Guterres further emphasized that Egypt can be a safe haven for refugees while remaining its security and said he discussed “how [they] can work pragmatically together.” 293 By stating that these two interests are not mutually exclusive, he underlines the argument that refugees can be discussed on a political level and moves away from the zero-sum line of reasoning that more refugees would mean less security. The fundamental rights of people and legal obligations of Egypt towards them are emphasized.

With regard to Syrian refugees in the region he commented:

“What we are witnessing is a succession of human tragedies for which there is no humanitarian response. There is never a humanitarian solution for a humanitarian crisis – the solution is always political. And I hope Egypt will be in the very center of finding political solutions for the crises in the region.” 294

This statement clearly shows that Guterres wishes to bring the issue of Syrian refugees to the political agenda, moving away from the security implications of the refugee influx for Egypt. He emphasizes the human tragedy and therewith takes a humanitarian discourse.

292 Ibid.
293 Ibid.
294 Ibid.
As the visit of António Guterres shows, advocacy towards the Egyptian government is very much aimed at finding a political solution to the presence of Syrian refugees in Egypt. On the one hand, protection is high on the agenda, pressing for an open visa regime, and speaking against arbitrary arrest, detention and deportation of Syrians from Egypt. On the other hand, assistance and the socio-economic position of Syrian refugees is discussed and cooperation with the authorities is central. Throughout this effort the security threat that is perceived in Egypt is not underlined by UNHCR, they emphasize the humanitarian nature of the issue and press for political solutions instead of security measures. By not engaging in a security discourse, but staying in the rights-based, humanitarian, and political arena through its grammar and actions, UNHCR distances itself from the idea that refugees pose a threat to the state of Egypt.

UNHCR’s advocacy efforts towards the Egyptian government can thus be seen as a managerial form of desecuritizing. Of the two forms of desecuritization, I argue that it can be categorized as a management way of desecuritization. It is essentially aimed at stabilizing the situation and bringing the issue of Syrian refugees back to the political agenda. It tries to convince the Egyptian government to adhere to the international obligations and resume a state of affairs that was previously present, a dynamic that largely took place on the political domain. This strategy is an example of a managerial desecuritization strategy, which has a broader desecuritizing aim but is based upon concrete solution and management of the issue at hand. It is clear from many of UNHCRs research texts, as well as policy documents, that the organization is well aware of the securitization of refugees in Egypt. They have the explicit goal to enlarge the protection space by bringing political solutions to the table. This follows the general logic of a management desecuritizing move. In addition, the discourse that is presented through the policy documents is one of humanitarianism, not threat and security. It also contains instrumental elements, for example in suggesting biometrics for registration purposes or more registration posts.

For this strategy to be considered transformative, the discourse would have aimed to change and move beyond distinctions of refugees and Egyptians, them and us. The advocacy effort does not have this purpose. It does not dissolve any registers of meaning and thus not question the solid identities of refugees and Egyptian citizens or aims to overcome these categories. Different practices and discourses of UNHCR might
however very well have elements of this form of desecuritization in them. This would be interesting to explore in further research.

UNHCR a desecuritizing actor through advocacy?

This analysis has demonstrated that UNHCR’s advocacy strategy can be considered a managerial desecuritizing strategy. To what extent this contributes to the overall process of desecuritization regarding Syrian refugees in Egypt, however, is a more difficult question to answer. First of all, there can be no causal link drawn with Egyptian government practices and the lobbying effort of UNHCR with regard to these practices. The very least that can be pointed out is a correlation between the heightened advocacy effort of UNHCR and changing practices of the Egyptian government. However, many other factors might influence a change in behavior on the Egyptian side.

To gain an indication of the success of the desecuritizing move, one might combine the performative power of UNHCR with its efforts. Having positioned UNHCR’s presence in Egypt, it became clear that the Office is limited in its capacity to act by constrains of its status, mandate, relationship with the Egyptian government and limited funding and personnel. They are positioned in a balancing act, where they have to take into account the position of the Egyptian government with their actions. UNHCR does however have the position of power because of its UN status and globally recognized expert organization. they are thus in a quite favorable position to press for certain changes in Egyptian policy without necessarily speaking about this in public. The closed door meetings they can arrange are off limits to many of the other desecuritizing actors. They have publicly criticized the Egyptian government for not adhering to international obligations, but this was done in a more diplomatic fashion than compared to the discourse of NGOs.

UNHCR plays its part is the broader security dynamics in trying to relocate the issue of Syrian refugees off the agenda and into the ‘normal’ political arena. If these desecuritization efforts are, however, successful is too soon to tell. Since UNHCR is not the only actor in these dynamics, and its power is limited, as previously described, by its relative position towards securitizing actors. Many other actors have recently started to desecuritize the issue of Syrian refugees, with different tactics. Civil society organizations, refugee communities, and certain online media outlets, are trying to provide an alternative discourse and different practices. Moreover, the advocacy effort is
ongoing, so it’s effects on the entire desecuritization process are difficult to assess. How much UNHCR actually influences the broader process of desecuritizing the issue of refugees in Egypt is, however, beyond the scope of this study.

UNHCR’s policy balances on two lines, on the one hand they aim to manage crisis and try to protect the refugees the best they can in the circumstances, on the other hand they lobby for a better approach with the authorities. The managerial type of desecuritization that is employed, however also raises feasibility problems since it is based on the idea that security issues surrounding refugees can be dissolved when returning to the ‘normal’ state of affairs. However, how normal is a situation in which refugees will maintain second class as opposed to citizens? Is it indeed a durable solution or is UNHCR perpetuating a broken system?

Although it is difficult, perhaps not even possible, to measure the influence UNHCRs policies have on the securitization of refugees in Egypt, it is noticeable that they are a employing desecuritizing tactics to influence the dynamics. The aim of this analysis was not to show the overall desecuritization process of Syrian refugees in Egypt, it merely depicts in what way UNHCR contributes to the desecuritization as an actor. It remains to be seen if the securitization of Syrian refugees will slowly be replaced, silenced, rearticulated or changed through stabilization. Perhaps it will even be securitized to a larger extent or resecuritized at a certain moment in time. Since these processes are ongoing, it would be too early to oversee the direction of the broader process. This continuing process will be interesting to follow and UNHCR will probably re-evaluate its strategy on the basis of the dynamics on the ground.
Securitization theory useful concept for this study?

In this section, some remarks will be made with regard to the usefulness of the employed theoretical framework to study the security dynamics of policy, discourse and practice surrounding Syrian refugees in Egypt. Since the theoretical framework has two, albeit closely related, parts, this section will first reflect on the interpretation of the concept of securitization used for this research and assess in what way this framework has been beneficial for the understanding of the security dynamics in place. Subsequently, the application of the concept of desecuritization will be similarly assessed. Also, suggestions for further theoretical development will be made.

The concept of securitization that was employed in this research has been a broad one. Based upon the original framing of securitization as a ‘speech act’, this application added practices and institutional background to the equation. Relying on criticism by the Paris School and other further developments of the concept, the framework was built to incorporate context and practices as an integral part of the analysis. The reasoning behind this was partly steered by the non-democratic context in which the concept was to be applied. This proved particularly insightful, since the analysis showed discrepancies between speech and practice of the main securitizing actor, the Egyptian regime under president Sisi. The framework, through its embedded approach of emphasizing power positions, context of previous discourses, and institutional background, thus provided an in-depth understanding of the securitized setting in Egypt regarding Syrian refugees.

Elements that could be improved in the theoretical framework of securitization would be the positioning of the actors in the security dynamics. Because of the process-oriented nature of the theory, power constellations tended to be side tracked easier. Although I aimed to incorporate power positions in the analysis, the theoretical framework would have benefited from emphasizing the power dynamics even more, perhaps in some form of field and actor mapping inspired by Bordieux.

Moving towards the concept of desecuritization, the second building block of the theoretical framework, the shift was made from process-oriented to actor-oriented in order to study UNHCR’s advocacy efforts towards the Egyptian government. The broader concept of desecuritization, defined as “a process in which a political community downgrades or ceases to treat something as an existential threat to a referent object, and
reduces or stops calling for exceptional measures to deal with the threat”, proved to be too general.\textsuperscript{295} Since the desecuritization process is still very much ongoing in the context of Egypt, it would be too soon to tell. Also, it didn’t provide room for actor-based analysis. By employing the distinction and matrix provided by Balzacq et al., I was able to categorize desecuritization strategies of actors into managerial or transformative desecuritization efforts. Combining these insights with more of a focus on context, power relations and institutional setting, borrowed from insights of the Paris School, I was able to construct a framework to apply to the case of UNHCR’s advocacy effort.

This endeavor has proved a challenge, since the concept is far less developed than that of securitization. The concept of desecuritization could gain strength from more detailed tool of analysis of actions and discourse, such as provided for the concept of securitization. The criteria for a strategy to be considered desecuritizing, both managerial and transformative are rather vague, especially compared to the criteria developed in literature to determine securitization moves, either through discourse or practices. Furthermore, the concept could be strengthened by exploring the relationship between desecuritizing actors and the larger process of desecuritization. It is not entirely clear how desecuritizing efforts of actors relate to the process of desecuritization. A suggestion for further exploration would be to engage with ways to measure the success of desecuritizing strategies.

Despite the limited scope of the conclusions that could be drawn from analyzing a single desecuritizing effort in the broader security dynamics, I would still argue that the study has proved insightful. It has contributed to understanding UNHCR’s position in the security dynamics and was able to cast a different light on the techniques and strategies that were employed.

\textsuperscript{295} Buzan and Waever, \textit{Regions and Powers}, 489.
Conclusion

The aim of this study was to, on a theoretical level, add to the literature on (de)securitization theory and explore if it is an effective theoretical framework to explain the context for Syrian refugees in Egypt. On the empirical level, this research aimed to give insight into securitizing and desecuritizing processes surrounding Syrian refugees in Egypt. These insights were gathered through an analysis of discourse and practice regarding Syrian refugees in Egypt and a study into UNHCR’s advocacy effort towards the Egyptian government. In these concluding remarks, I will aim to answer the research question: How can the environment for Syrian refugees in Egypt be explained by securitization theory?

In order to answer this question, a theoretical framework was sketched centering around the concepts of securitization and desecuritization. Critical developments of the theory, emphasizing practices over discourse and adding context and power dynamics to the equation, were incorporated to build a theoretical framework that could function as a lens to examine the case study. The framework resulted in two operationalizing schemes, one for the process of securitization and one to analyze desecuritizing actions. The framework of securitization aimed to help assess the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt since the power take-over of General Sisi in 2013. The concept of desecuritization was concretized in order to gain insight into advocacy efforts of UNHCR towards the Egyptian government regarding the plight of Syrian refugees.

The securitization framework that was proposed in this research combines a more embedded form of the Copenhagen School’s concept of securitization focused on elite discourse with a Paris School perspective on securitizing practices. Together these two elements of the concept have been employed to unravel security dynamics of policy, discourse and practices in a non-democratic setting.

From the analysis it could be concluded that Syrians were securitized in the media by linking them to the broader securitization of the Muslim Brotherhood as a threat to the stability of the state of Egypt. Official state discourse did not convey this linkage to Syrians in their speech acts, however, an increase in security measures towards Syrians was visible right away. Acceptance for these security practices was given through the partial acceptance by the public of the securitization moves in the media. The media thus played a key role in providing legitimacy for security measures.
The practices of the authorities that were analyzed were the stricter entry requirements, arbitrary arrest, detentions, and deportation. It has been argued that these practices can be seen as securitizing practices since they are based upon the perception that Syrian refugees pose a threat to the Egyptian state. The criteria for securitization were met as these practices could either be labeled as extra-ordinary or were borrowed from the sphere of security measures used to counter a more traditional security threat. Therefore, these practices can be seen as contributing to the securitization of Syrian refugees in Egypt.

To explore the concept of desecuritization in this securitized context, a framework was built around an interpretation of desecuritization that places action at its center. Moving from a process-oriented framework to an actor-oriented framework, this concept aimed to explore one desecuritizing effort in particular. UNHCR’s advocacy effort was examined to assess to what extent it could be considered a desecuritizing strategy. By positioning UNHCR in the broader institutional field and exploring the relationship with the government of Egypt, its advocacy efforts were placed in their context. From this analysis it was concluded that they could be regarded as following the management way of desecuritization.

The main line of reasoning leading to this conclusion is that the advocacy effort is essentially aimed at stabilizing the situation and bringing the issue of Syrian refugees back to the political agenda. Through a rights-based and humanitarian discourse, UNHCR tries to persuade the Egyptian government to adhere to the international obligations and resume a state of affairs that was previously present, a dynamic that largely took place on the political domain. Furthermore, these advocacy efforts are aided by different practices such as registration and assistance activities that aim to provide a concrete solution and management of the issue at hand.

After drawing conclusions regarding the empirical section of this research, theoretical insights bring the answering of the research question closer. Regarding the concept of securitization, studying practices and policy alongside discourse has proven to be an insightful combination in a non-democratic context such as Egypt. Concerning the concept of desecuritization, this combination has also added to the understanding of UNHCR’s role in Egypt. This particular field, with the central relationship between the Egyptian authorities and UNCHR, lends itself well to a study that moves beyond the emphasis on discourse and explores deeper institutional contexts and practices on the
ground. In conclusion, I can argue that in this particular case actions speak louder than words, although in order to gain a balanced understanding I would suggest to study both. As final remarks, I would like to propose two further research projects that could build upon this research.

Further research on the empirical level could further map the field of desecuritizing forces in Egypt, including civil society actors or refugee groups. In addition, it would be worth exploring to what extent these separate desecuritizing efforts contribute to the broader process of desecuritization of the issue in Egypt. The second suggestion relates to the theoretical level. It would be to construct a solid framework to empirically study desecuritization strategies and the broader process. It would be especially interesting to try to measure the effects of desecuritizing strategies on the process of desecuritization and that of securitization. This would also bring the two concepts closer together. Having summarized the main findings and suggested avenues for further research it is safe to conclude that the conclusions of this research have brought up many more questions, on a theoretical level, empirical level and were the two meet.
Reference List


Jones, Martin. "We Are Not All Egyptian." Forced Migration Review 39 (June 2012): 16-17.


