**The 'politics of representation':
Syrian refugees in the official discourse in Lebanon
(2011-2015)**

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i

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Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

List of Maps

List of Appendices

List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

EU	European Union
ILO	International Labor Organization
ISS	International Institute of Social Studies
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNHCR	United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees
UNOCHA	United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
UNRWA	United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene

Abstract

Using a framework that draws on Stuart Hall's 'politics of representation' approach, this study explores the framing and reframing of Syrian refugees in Lebanon since the onset of the Syrian war in 2011. This study analyzes how governmental speeches and statements are transformed over time, following the politicization of the Syrian refugee issue in Lebanon. The study places official statements in their wider context, in terms of local realities inside Lebanon and the settlement of Syrians in mainly impoverished communities. The method of framing is used to show a process over time that leads to 'securitization' of the Syrian refugee issue in Lebanon. This textual analysis allowed the researcher to identify multiple representations of Syrian refugees. Initially most statements expressed humanitarian framings that emphasized the host country's shared responsibility with the international community, for the Syrian refugees' well-being. Initially it had been expected that, as in Europe, the Syrian refugee issue in Lebanon would be framed as a security issue, given the geopolitical context. What was surprising, however, was that between 2011 and 2013 this did not take place. It took some time for the framings of Syrian refugees in Lebanon to be securitized. The study identified a set of key factors that appeared to change the discourses and framings over time and culminated in 2014 into securitization. This is seen as connected with the feared emergence of sectarian violence in Lebanon as the growing numbers of refugees threatened to offset the fragile confessional balance. Without justifying the closure of borders, the exclusion of refugees and leaving them in legal limbo, a key insight of this study is that only once the threat of domestic sectarian violence emerged, did Lebanese political leaders start to see Syrian refugees in the country as a security threat.

Relevance to Development Studies

Stuart Hall understands representation as 'using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people' (2009:15). With that in mind, this Research Paper focuses on how representations about refugees have an impact in the response to the challenges that refugees bring along to developing countries. This study analyzes the social constructions of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, a country with serious economic and social structural problems. In addition, it addresses how these representations impact refugee communities and the vulnerabilities they are exposed to.

Keywords

Refugees, Syria, Lebanon, Politics of representation, framing, securitization.

Chapter 1

Introduction

The Syrian refugee crisis is weighing heavily on the public debate at the moment and, while the focus has been primarily on what the European role should be, little attention has been paid to the vast movements of people into Lebanon, Syria's next door neighbor. As a substantial part of the regional crisis the researcher felt it was important to focus more effort on the situation in Lebanon as it unfolds, and to reach a better understanding of what is being felt in this area.

This study is concerned with the changing representations of Syrian refugees in Lebanon[1] and, more specifically, in the government discourse. To this end, the researcher has used the approach of 'politics of representation' and performed a framing analysis concerning Syrian refugees in the official discourse, keeping in mind the Lebanese context and its particular historical and cultural conditions. The focus of this study on official discourse is due to the researcher's interest about how meanings are created in a society by specific actors in positions of power, influence policy and determine relations. The researcher has also integrated insights from the International Relations approach of 'securitization', in order to better understand the changes in the modes of representation of Syrian refugees in this particular region.

Given the fact that the framing of Syrian refugees in Lebanese politics has not been the subject of many studies before, it is the aim of the researcher to contribute to the academic field in three aspects. First, through the study of non-Palestinian communities in the Middle East, and more specifically in Lebanon. Second, by introducing a discursive approach to the forced migration-security nexus in the region. Third, by analyzing an example of wider securitization processes in the Middle East, more specifically in this case, in relation to South-South forced migratory movements.

1.1   Locating Syrian refugees in the Lebanese context

Once 'a recipient of large number of migrants and refugees from other Middle Eastern states' (Seeberg 2013: 167), nowadays Syria produces the highest amount of refugees in the region and in the world. In the context of the *Arab Spring*, 'excitement and expectations for political change were palpable throughout a region that for long had been considered immune to mass protests and people's empowerment, thereby giving new hopes for democratization' (Leenders 2014: 2). In the specific case of Syria, what started as a peaceful protest demanding political change and an end to the hegemony of the Baath Party, headed by the Alawi[2] minority represented by the Al-Assad family, rapidly escalated into a civil war.

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[1] This study only focuses on the representation of Syrian nationals as refugees. This research does not take into account the Palestinian refugees that once were located in Syria, given the fact that the representations, policies and legal frameworks are totally different and independent from other Arab communities.
[2] Alawi refers to a minority sect inside the Shia Islam.

The milestone that triggered the onset of the Syrian conflict was the detention and brutal treatment of a group of teenagers who wrote graffiti on their school walls in the city of Daraa, calling for the fall of the regime, which caused hundreds of people to take over the streets in protest (Ismail 2011: 539). These demonstrations spread to other localities until it became 'a nationwide uprising against the regime as a whole' (Ismail 2011: 539). As a consequence, the government 'immediately sent its security forces and troops to clamp down on the protests' (Leenders 2014: 8). And eventually, 'opposition supporters began to take up arms, first to defend themselves and later to expel security forces from their local areas' (BBC 2015). Since then, the world has observed an increase in the spiral of violence in which pro-Assad, anti-Assad, secular and jihadist groups have been fighting for territorial control and political power, and multiple regional and global interest have been taken part of the dynamics of the war. The Geneva Conferences have been a platform for peace talks among the different warring parties, but there have been no successful steps towards ending the conflict (See Appendix 1 for a summary of the conflict).

The Syrian civil war has created an unprecedented humanitarian catastrophe. Since 2011, the conflict has left a total of 12.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, 7.6 million people internally displaced and 4 million people who fled the country (UNOCHA 2015). A report published by Amnesty International states that 'for the first time since World War II, the number of those forcibly displaced has surpassed 50 million; one in every five among them is Syrian' (2014: 2). Nevertheless, the flow of refugees has remained mainly in the border areas of adjacent countries (Awad 2014: 39). Map 1 and Figure 1 illustrate the current distribution of the Syrian refugees located in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA).

Map 1: Syrian refugees in neighboring countries
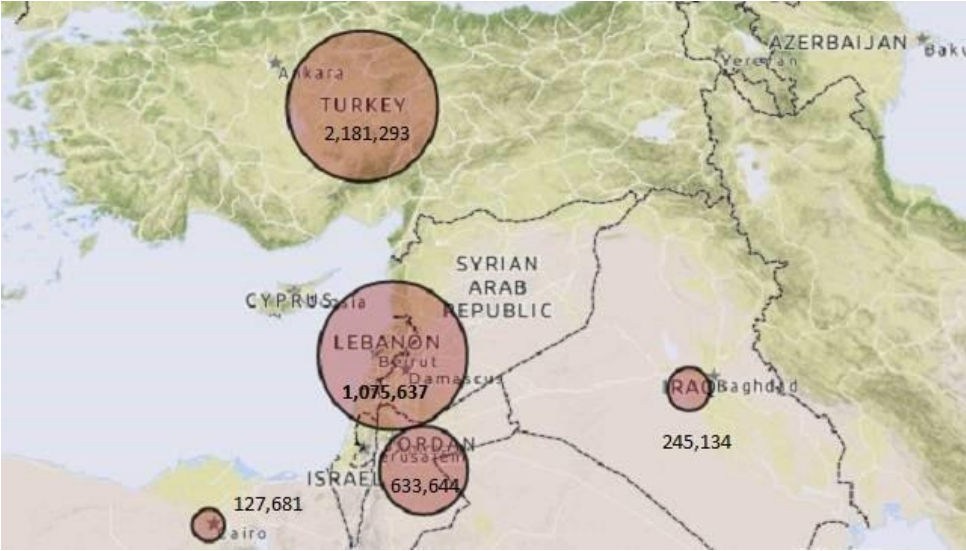
Source: UNHCR 2015a

Figure 1: Distribution of numbers of Syrian refugees in MENA countries[3]
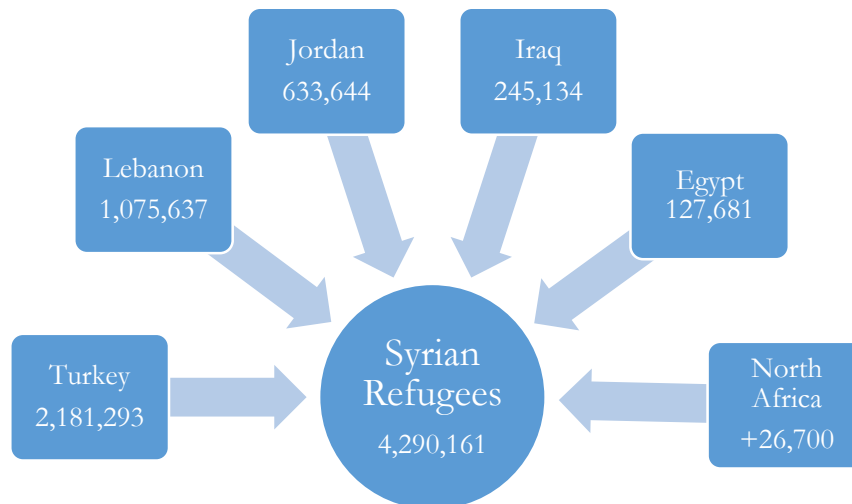
Source: UNHCR 2015a

These five states, Iraq, Jordan, Egypt, Turkey and Lebanon, plus some other North African countries, host 95% of the total number of Syrian refugees globally (Amnesty International 2014: 2). Turkey, Lebanon and Jordan have shouldered most of the responsibility when it comes to hosting the refugees, with the support of the United Nations agencies (Amnesty International 2014: 2). This has imposed economic, social and security challenges for host countries and communities, especially in those places where there is a lack of capability to respond to the crisis. This is the case for a small, vulnerable and post-conflict country such as Lebanon.

By 2014, with over a million refugees among a population of nearly 5 million people, Lebanon became the country with 'the highest per capita concentration of refugees in the world' (UNHCR 2015b: 2). Traditionally, 'Lebanon has experienced mass waves of conflict driven displacement, both as a country of origin and as host country' (van Vliet & Hourani 2012: 13). On top of the number of Syrians, there are 449,957 Palestinians registered with the UNRWA, and 5,986 Iraqis since the US invasion of 2003 (Central Intelligence Agency 2015). These previous experiences with refugees shaped responses towards Syrian refugees coming into the country, as the following sections will explain.

Some regions in the country have been more affected by the arrival of refugees than others. Nonetheless, it is important to take into account that 'the situation in Lebanon is marked by major economic and regional inequalities, accompanied by deep social cleavages and sectarian fault lines that have been exacerbated by the Syrian conflict' (Dahi 2014). As Map 2 and Figure 2 show, most of the refugees are located in the Northern regions and the Bekaa Valley, which are considered 'the poorest regions in Lebanon, [with] the lowest per capita expenditure in the country, along with the highest levels of inequality' (Dahi 2014). Additionally, '86% percent of refugees are concentrated in

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[3] Last updated November 17, 2015

impoverished neighborhoods where a majority of marginalized Lebanese reside. Some areas of Lebanon have also become overpopulated' (Khatib 2014).

Map 2: Syrian refugees in Lebanon[4]

Source: UNHCR 2015a

Figure 2: Distribution of Syrian refugees per governorate in Lebanon

Beka'a Valley 373,124
North Lebanon 262,178
South Lebanon 125,604
Beirut 314,731
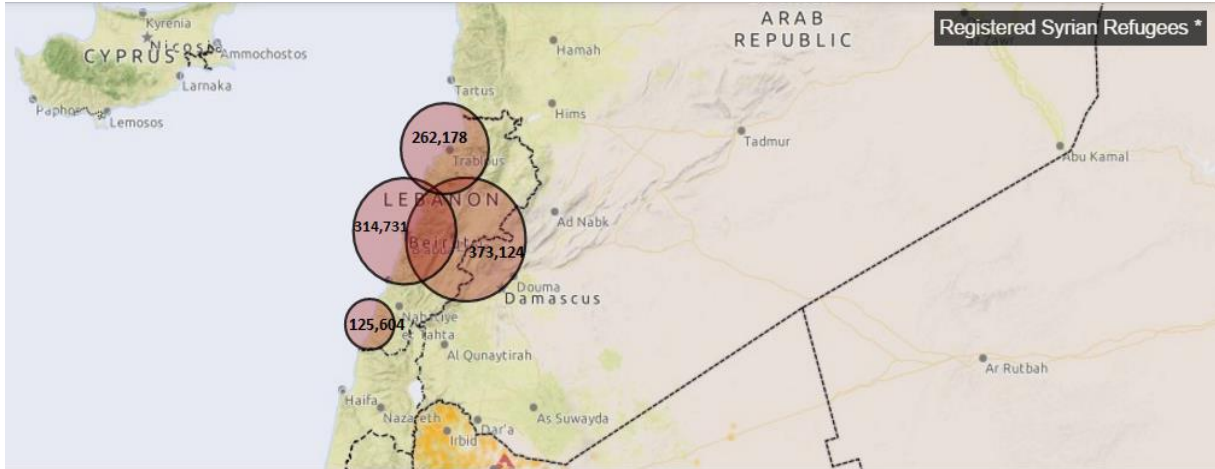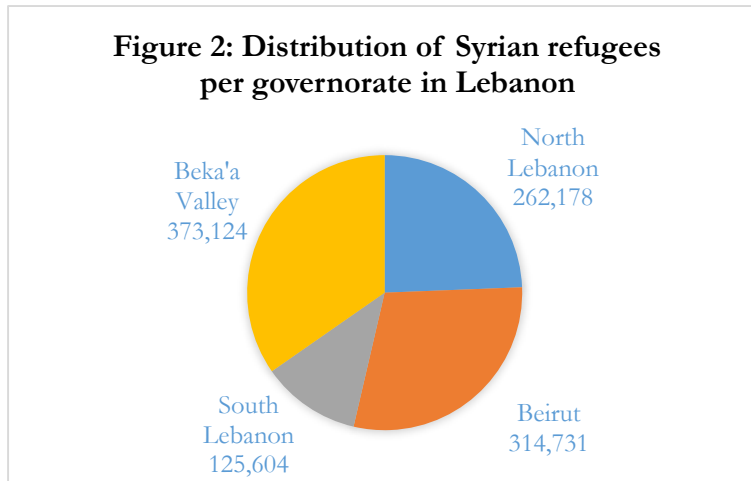
Source: UNHCR 2015a

In these areas both Syrians and Lebanese suffer from some pressing issues. On the one hand, competition over job opportunities, price inflation over rent and basic commodities, overcrowding healthcare and education services, among others have become daily challenges (ILO 2014: 9-10). On the other hand, social tensions between Syrians and host communities are starting to increase,

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[4] Last updated October 31, 2015.

especially in issues related to sectarianism. This is a problematic fact in Lebanon, 'where demographic and political stability are intimately related' (Awad 2014: 25), as will be explained in Chapter 3.

In general, 'the refugees' geographical distribution for the most part has followed a sectarian pattern: Sunnis tend to find shelter in predominantly Sunni regions, whereas Christians and Alawites tend to settle in predominantly Christian and, to a lesser extent, Shiite areas' (International Crisis Group 2013: 3). Nevertheless, there have been clashes in the Lebanese territories that are closest to the Syrian borders. Currently, the Syrian conflict, which has been classified by some academics as sectarian (Ismail 2011; Salamandra 2013; Pierret 2013; Abdo 2013), would appear to be reaching Lebanon.

In that sense, 'the hospitality of countries bordering Syria is at a breaking point. The strain is mostly felt in communities hosting refugees, where [these factors] are leading to increased insecurity, a phenomenon affecting the entire region' (Norwegian Refugee Council & International Rescue Committee 2014: 4). For this reason, the government of Lebanon is under great pressure. Meanwhile, they have to deal with the discontent of the internal public opinion and the lack of responsibility of the international community that 'has fallen far short of what is needed' (Amnesty International 2014: 3) in terms of international aid and effective resettlement. Although Lebanon is not a signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention, nor its 1967 Protocol; which means that Lebanon is not an asylum country but offers temporary protection to asylum seekers; it has taken in more refugees than any European country. One would expect that the members of the European Union (EU), which have all signed the Convention and its Protocol, would have a more humanitarian approach to the current refugee crisis. With the exception of Germany, responses across the board have been hesitant at best and outright hostile at worst.

On account of the fact that Lebanon is having difficulty coping, the government has imposed restrictions to Syrians coming into the country and internal measures to 'control' the problem. Some of them include border restrictions, limitations on access to the labor market, curfews, eviction from informal settlements in urban areas and introducing obstacles to achieving legal status (Amnesty International 2014: 16-18).

These measures went hand in hand with the changing discourse in regard to the Syrian refugees in Lebanon. In the course of this study it will be shown that their representations have been on either side of the spectrum. Despite the initial humanitarian concerns, political leaders and the Lebanese population have been shifting their tones and Syrians went from being represented as victims and brothers in need, to being viewed as a burden and ultimately as a threat to the stability of the country. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that these changes have been gradual and were caused by both internal and external factors, comprising a multifaceted and complex situation to analyze. Contrary to the initial assumptions of the researcher, who thought that since the onset of the crisis refugees were seen as a threat, this study demonstrates that something which started out as a humanitarian issue became a security issue, though not overnight.

1.2   Objective and Research Questions

Objective: To analyze the variations in the representations of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, in relation to securitization processes.

Main Question, in relation to the period since 2011: What are the distinctive features of how the Lebanese government has framed Syrian refugees and tried to justify these frames in their public discourse?

Sub-questions:

- How have the representation of Syrian refugees varied in Lebanese government discourse?
- What has caused the Lebanese government to create specific representations of Syrian refugees?
- What is the relation between the change of representation of Syrian refugees and the transition from a humanitarian approach to the securitization of Syrian refugees in Lebanon?
- In relation to changing representations, what have been some of the policy measures taken in recent years by the Lebanese government in relation to Syrian refugees?

1.3   Methodology

This research is a qualitative study based on secondary data analysis. The data was collected from official websites of the Lebanese government and Lebanese newspapers with a special focus on speeches and declarations of the main political leaders involved in the management of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon. In addition, UNHCR and NGO reports, news articles and academic papers were complementary sources for analysis.

1.3.1   Data collection

As the objective of this research is to analyze representations of Syrian refugees in Lebanon through discourses, the main source of analysis were speeches and declarations made by political leaders in a powerful position and with the capacity to generate policies in the country. Therefore, the official websites, especially of the Council of Ministers in Lebanon that exerts the presidential power in the country, were consulted. Likewise, media articles, especially the ones from The Daily Star Lebanon, with key declarations of government officials, such as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Social Affairs, were taken as sources of analysis. From news articles only official government declarations were taken into account, given that focusing on all media material would be too broad. It was not the aim of this Research Paper, therefore, to analyze the general representations in the Lebanese media. Only English language texts could be used due to constraints of language. As the researcher does not have a knowledge of Arabic and the official websites did not have rich content in English, the researcher had to fall back on other sources of analysis to complement the study. In addition, the latest

plans of response to the Syrian refugees in Lebanon were analyzed, understanding that policies also constitute discourses, as will be explain in Chapter 2.

Finally, Rajin Al-Qallih, a Syrian student from the MA programme on Social Justice Perspectives at the ISS, was interviewed by the researcher. This interview had an informal and unstructured character following O'Leary's (2014) recommendations to do an interview of this type. Then, more than an interview it came to be a casual conversation with the intention of open up lines of communication in an attempt to draw out information and opinions without predetermined questions' (O'Leary 2014: 218). On top of that, her background working with the UNHCR and different NGOs in Syria, and her position as a Syrian victim of the violent developments in direct and indirect ways were key for the researcher. Throughout the conversation it was possible to get to know her perspective on historical ties between Lebanon and Syria, as well as the daily experiences of Syrians in Lebanon nowadays. Although these experiences are not her own, the ones of her acquaintances and friends were relevant for the researcher to understand how different representations of the Lebanese government and perceptions of the population have impacted their lives.

1.3.2   Methods of Analysis

This research is based on the importance of the concept 'politics of representation' and how social meanings are constructed through discourses (Hall 2009). Hence, Framing Theory was the method of analysis selected for the researcher to make sense of these constructions from a specific perspective, that being the government perspective in the representation and creation of labels for Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

This study followed the contribution made by Robert Entman. Despite the fact that his academic work has been in the field of media analysis, the researcher found his method suitable for the objectives of this Research Paper to decipher meanings in a political context. Additionally, this method was found to be a good complement for the analytical tools taken by the researcher. Further explanations for this will be found in section 2.4. According to Entman, 'framing essentially involves *selection* and *salience*. To frame is to select aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text' (1993: 52).

Therefore, framings create meanings and social realities by emphasizing and deemphasizing. Entman established that 'frames, then, *define problems* – determine what a causal agent is doing with what costs and benefits, usually measured in terms of common cultural values; *diagnose causes* – identify the forces creating the problem; *make moral judgments* – evaluate causal agents and their effects; and *suggest remedies* – offer and justify treatments for the problems and predict their likely effects' (Entman 1993: 52). In this sense, frames achieve the function of labeling 'realities', limiting the story to specific perspectives and defining relationships among social actors. In Chapters 3 and 4, it will be further explained how the frames are defined in respect to the Syrian refugee issue by the Lebanese government and how frames played a fundamental role in regulating the interactions among them.

During the analysis the researcher maintained awareness of the fact that in analyzing frames, what is not said is as important as what is said: 'Most frames are defined by what they omit as well as include, and the omissions of potential problem definitions, explanations, evaluations, and recommendations may be as critical as the inclusions in guiding the audience' (Entman 1993: 54).

Subsequently, in the creation of frames four elements were taking into account for the communication process: communicators, text, receivers and culture (Entman 1993: 52-53). In essence, communicators use text, which contains frames 'manifested by the presence or absence of certain keywords, stock phrases, stereotyped images, and sentences that provide thematically reinforcing clusters of facts or judgments' (Entman 1993: 52). These frames are intended to guide the receiver's thinking in the context of a culture which can be described as 'the stock of commonly invoked frames' (Entman 1993:53). These four points elaborate on the argument that frames define relationships among actors as will be explained in the next chapter.

1.4   Paper Structure

This Research Paper will be divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 presented the contextual background, objectives and main questions and the methodology that set up the fundamental premises of this study. In Chapter 2, the theoretical tools of analysis will be outlined. In Chapter 3, initial representations of Syrian refugees will be analyzed, as well as the response to the refugee influx in relation to particular frames. In Chapter 4, shifts in the representations and frames of Syrians will be explored in relation to securitization processes. In Chapter 5, final remarks will be pointed out.

Chapter 2

Analyzing the forced migration-security nexus and representations in the Middle East

This chapter aims to explore the main debates and approaches to the concepts of 'politics of representation' and 'securitization theory'. These analytical tools informed the researcher about how representations are created, and subsequently how these constructions influence state responses facing specific actors or problems. Also, this chapter provides a background on the refugee studies field, paying special attention to the Middle East.

2.1   Politics of Representation

The 'politics of representation' has been a framework mostly used by academics from the fields of cultural and media studies (Holquist 1983; Shapiro 1988; Mehan 1997; Hall 2009). However, this approach was found useful by the researcher, specifically the one offered by Stuart Hall based on some of Foucault's premises, to be able to understand discursive and cultural practices in the context of the Syrian refugee situation in Lebanon.

In its most general sense, representation 'connects meaning and language to culture' (Hall 2009: 15), and more specifically, 'representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people' (Hall 2009: 15). In that sense, representations produce meanings through language in a specific context, therefore these meanings only make sense in a specific culture where its members have a common understanding of the world.

Although 'politics of representation' highlights the importance of language, this element cannot be understood by itself, but in the context of social relations. According to Mehan, 'language has power. The language we use in public political discourse and the way we talk about events and people in everyday life makes a difference in the way we think and the way we act about them' (1997: 250). However, it is important to understand that creation of meanings not only depends on language, but on the agent that produces particular ways to represent the world.

Mehan stated that 'modes of representing events vary according to the perspective from which a representation is constructed' (2000: 276). That implies that there are multiple ways to represent 'realities', but more importantly, there are representations that predominate over others. Dominant representations are embedded in power relations. Therefore, 'it is not accidental in this politics of representation that institutionally grounded representations predominate' (Mehan 2000: 276).

These power relations are better explained through the discursive approach to representation of Michel Foucault. Foucault's definition of representation was a link to 'the production of knowledge (rather than just meaning) through what he called discourse (rather than just language)' (Hall 2009: 42-43). The constructivist understanding of Foucault to representation implies that 'it is social actors who use the conceptual systems of their culture and the linguistics and other representational systems

to construct meaning, to make the world meaningful and to communicate about that world meaningfully to others' (Hall 2009: 25).

Discourse is understood to be a system of representation which provides meaning to language exchanged in a specific historical context (Hall 2009: 44). This definition implies that discourse is not limited to language alone, but entails both semantics and practices. Discourse is pervasive throughout the entire act of meaning-making: 'In Foucault's writings, it is used to describe individual acts of language, or language in action- the ideas and statements that allow us to make sense of and see things' (Schirato et al. 2012: xix-xx). As a result, 'social reality is produced and made real through discourses' (Phillips & Hardy 2002: 3).

The importance of the concept of discourse in Foucault's work is given by the fact that power and knowledge are intertwined by discourses. In his view, 'all political and social forms of thought were inevitably caught up in the interplay of knowledge and power' (Hall 2009: 48). Rather than following in the classical vain, where knowledge was considered instrumental to a powerful class, Foucault saw knowledge and power as instituted, reinforced or marginalized by the discourse, defining the social order. Furthermore, he saw power as having a much broader role, producing knowledge and discourse. In Foucault's own words: '[Power] needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than as a negative instance whose function is repression' (Foucault 1980: 119).

From the relation of power/knowledge inevitably arises the question of 'truth' as a function of this dynamic. According to Foucault, 'truth is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which it induces and which extend it. A regime of truth' (1980: 133). Thus the truth manifests itself through a dynamic relationship with power, both enforcing it and being defined by it at the same time.

To sum up, Stuart Hall and Foucault's approach to representation becomes key for this study due to two main reasons. First, the concept of representation allowed the researcher to understand the construction of meanings in a particular context through language and culture. Second, and more importantly, its discursive approach broke ground to explore the interplay among truth, knowledge and power through discourses in a society. Overall, the concept of 'politics of representation' put in context how Lebanese political leaders have represented Syrian refugees in the government discourse taking into account a specific socio-cultural context.

2.2 The forced migration-security nexus

The study of the migration-security nexus is a recent phenomenon that dates back to the post-Cold War era. In this period, 'security came to be understood to include challenges beyond traditional preoccupations with weapons, war, and military invasion, both by analyst and policy makers' (Hammerstad 2014: 265). Thus, there was a widening of the security agenda and security as a concept

required redefinition. This opened a Pandora's Box where many authors proposed new approaches to understanding security.

One of the most influential of these authors who contributed to this new wave of security studies was Barry Buzan. In his book *People, States & Fear*, he defined security in terms of national security, i.e., 'the ability of the states to maintain their independent identity and their functional integrity' (Buzan 1991: 116). In other words, it is the state's capacity to keep a state free of threats. Buzan recognized that, besides the aforementioned classical factors, other kinds of threats also have the ability to destabilize a state. Therefore, he established five types of threats by sector, as the following table shows.

Table 1: Types of threats by sector

Sectors of Security	Definition	Factors to analyze (Discourse)	Policies (Act)
Military	Military security is related to the protective and armed capabilities of a state, in terms of the perceived intentions from others (Buzan 1991: 116-118).	Military budget/ spending when the crisis began	Border restrictions. Militarization of the borders.
Political	'Political threats are aimed at the organizational stability of the state' (Buzan 1991: 118).	Ideologies.

Syrian Refugees as a determinant topic for the political agenda and stability of the current government. | Legal/Illegal measures to deal with the issue of Syrian Refugees. |
| **Societal** | 'Societal security is about the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, culture and religious and ethnic identity and custom' (Buzan 1991:123) | Dangers and fears of sectarianism.

Social cohesion. | Integration policies |
| **Economic** | Economic security has to do with the physical capacity of the state, which ensures access to resources and the survival of the same (Buzan 1991:123-131). | Macroeconomic impact and social tensions in relation to housing and labor market.

Economic burden. Costs for providing services to Syrian Refugees.

Is humanitarian aid coming from the West enough? | Limits to access to free health attention and to the labor market |
| **Ecological** | Ecological threats are understood as those that put in risk the environment (Buzan 1991:131-134) | Environmental impact in terms of Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) | Restrain of water resources |

Source: Table made by the author based on Buzan 1991

Instead of using this table as a tool to analyze security, the researcher's intention is to identify in which ways threats to security might be perceived in the Lebanese discourse. The first two columns names the five different factors of security and allocates them their own definitions according to Buzan. Next, factors to analyze are described for each one of these types of insecurities, which can essentially be used to identify when certain issues are potentially being securitized. Lastly, policies can be viewed as political acts, the materializations of the discourse.

Being from a constructivist approach, Buzan also acknowledges that the notion of security becomes a social construction and is 'treated not as an objective condition but as the outcome of a specific social process' (Williams 2003: 513). This creates the responsibility for the state to qualify which kinds of issues put in danger their identity and integrity. One of these issues became the rising influx of refugees and asylum seekers, as they 'were proposed as potential threats to all these new types of insecurity' (Hammerstad 2014: 266).

2.2.1 A discursive approach to migration and security studies

In the field of security studies, migration has been studied from traditional and critical perspectives. The former focuses on state-centric and human security approaches to the security-migration nexus (Huysmans & Squire 2009: 2), and the latter 'charts a diverse body of critical work in which security is conceived of as a knowledge, discourse, technology or practice that mediates the relation between the social processes of human mobility and the search for governmental control and steering capacity over them' (Huysmans & Squire 2009: 2).

Hence, the critical perspective of the migration-security nexus constitutes a relevant framework of analysis for this Research Paper, because it allows the researcher to understand 'the analysis of the effects of the political framing of migration as a threat on public perception and opinion formation' (Huysmans & Squire 2009: 8) through discourses. Furthermore, it helps to understand how speeches made by political leaders in relation to migratory movements serve the purpose of justifying extraordinary measures with the aim to face the issue that is recognized as a threat.

2.2.2 Securitization of forced migration

The most common discursive approach to the study of the migration-security nexus is Securitization Theory from the Copenhagen School of thought as set out by Ole Wæver and Barry Buzan. Securitization refers to 'the discursive and political process through which an intersubjective understanding is constructed within a political community to treat something as an existential threat to a valued referent object, and to enable a call for urgent and exceptional measures to deal with the threat' (Buzan & Wæver 2003: 491). In other words, 'securitization focuses on *speech acts*, which define which issues are categorized as security threats to a specific vulnerable entity. Securitized issues and groups are thus placed outside the 'regular' sphere of public political debate and decision-making' (Zarkov & Hintjens 2015: 8). In that sense, securitization acknowledges that threats are socially constructed.

In the context of securitization, a *speech act* is meant to convey to the audience that an issue is, in fact, an existential threat to a chosen referent object (Bourbeau 2011: 39). So, rather than just describe it, a speech act is intended to frame a particular situation in terms of security. However, securitization theory has been under fire for drawing on the concept of speech acts far too much (Hammerstad 2014: 267). By over-using the concept of *speech act* one runs the risk of missing out on (sometimes small) details in an actor's words or actions. Whereas *speech act* is meant to mold the underlying system of what is held to be true in society, the *strategic act* is meant to bring about a material result momentarily (Balzacq 2005: 172). It is important to distinguish between these two types of acts, as one of our objects of study (the effects of discourse: policy) is without exception the result of a strategic act somewhere down the line.

Foucault's embrace of a wider range of analysis lends itself well for this particular reason. Foucault's contribution brings 'a more sociological understanding of securitization (…), which focuses on the role of power relations, bureaucratic politics, and institutional interest in determining who or what becomes securitized, and what sort of security practices are promoted to deal with threats' (Hammerstad 2014: 267). The practices mentioned should be taken up in developing a more in-depth understanding of security.

The power relations mentioned in the previous section evokes a debate on the role of the securitizing actors, the referent object and the audience. The securitizing actors are the ones 'who securitize issues by declaring something as existentially threatened [and the referent object the] things that are seen to be existentially threatened and that have a legitimate claim to survival' (Buzan & Hansen 2009: 214). In Buzan's view, the most common securitizing actors are elites and referent objects middle-range collectivities (Buzan & Hansen 2009: 214).

One important aspect that stays unspecified in Securitization Theory is the role of the audience in the securitization process (Bourbeau 2011: 41). In general terms, it is formulated that 'securitizing agents initiate the securitizing process and audiences terminate the process by either approving or disapproving agents' securitizing attempts' (Bourbeau 2011: 41). In that sense, securitization underestimates the participation of the audience in the process. Its importance is relegated to accept or not the decision taken in the state level. However, this Research Paper includes Thierry Balzacq's approach to the role of the audience in securitization. 'He proposes instead that an effective securitization should be audience-centered and that the securitizing actor is sensitive to two kinds of support, moral and formal' (Balzacq 2005: 184 in Bourbeau 2011: 41). Balzacq sees moral support as conditioning formal backing (2005:184) and can be understood as the kind of support the general population is able to give. Formal support comes necessarily from an institution whose 'attitude has a direct causal connection with the desired goals' (Balzacq 2005: 185).

Starting off at Foucault's idea that power is everywhere (Foucault 1980: 122), the role of the audience cannot be limited to merely validating the securitization process. The effects of the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon have had a direct impact on the poorest areas of the country, as explained before, which changed the mindset of the Lebanese population. Popular concerns about security have a direct

or indirect influence on political leaders in the sense that the latter's position is (in part) dependent on his/her successful or unsuccessful appeal to public demand. At the same time we've seen that political leaders, in the role of securitizing agents, also tend to influence the discourse which is held by the population at large. Thus, we can conclude that there is, in fact, a dynamic relationship between the securitizing actors and the audience, rather than a top-down relationship.

It should be mentioned that securitization and politicization are not the same thing:

> Security frames the issue either as a special kind of politics or as above politics and a spectrum can therefore be defined ranging public issues from the *non-politicized* (the state does not deal with it and it is not in any other way made an issue of public debate and decision), through *politicized* (the issue is part of public policy, requiring government decision and resource allocations or, more rarely, some other form of communal governance) to *securitization* (in which case an issue is no longer debated as a political question, but dealt with at accelerated pace and in ways that may violate normal legal and social rules) (Buzan & Hansen 2009: 214).

It is of special relevance to this thesis to understand the ranging of the issue of Syrian refugees from politicized to securitized by the government of Lebanon. Throughout this Research Paper it will become clear that the issue of forced migration of Syrians in Lebanon has taken on two of these forms in the government discourse.

Lastly, it is acknowledged by the author that Securitization Theory has been a concept developed in a Western context (Zarkov & Hintjens 2015: 8). As a result, most of the literature of Securitization of forced migration has been developed in relation to South-North movements. Nevertheless, it is the aim of the researcher to contribute to the field of security studies analyzing this migratory movements in South-South contexts, with everything that this implies, as will become clear in the following chapters.

2.3   Forced migration and Securitization studies in the Middle East

The origin of the field of refugee studies can be traced back to the 1980's as a when forced migration became a salient topic in the wake of Cold-War proxy wars resulting in a 'growing body of work documenting the causes of refugee flows; emergency assistance programmes for refugees transnational networks to assist refugees; and policy responses of particular states to refugee movements' (Fiddian-Qasmiyeh et al. 2014: 2). Nowadays, with the large movement of refugees around the world, some of them looking for asylum in Europe and North America, scholar work has been around 'government accommodation of populist anti-immigrant sentiments, and manipulation of widespread anxieties over security' (Fábos 2015: 98). This research is placed on this migration-security nexus, where an issue that traditional belonged to humanitarian and political concerns starts to be framed as a threat.

With regards to the Middle East, despite the 'long history of force displacement to, from, and within the MENA' (Hanafi 2014: 585), the academic study of this field in the region has been limited due to a number of reasons. These reasons include 'the difficulty of doing research under conflict conditions,

Arab governments' suspicion of researchers, and the prominence of Palestinian refugee in popular discourse' (Fábos 2015: 99). Furthermore, the tendency of scholarly research has been to cover the plight of non-Palestinian refugees only around humanitarian crises and their integration into national frameworks of law (Fábos 2015: 99).

Like in the rest of the region, the main subject of analysis about refugees in Lebanon has been the Palestinian communities living in the country since 1948. It is important to acknowledge that 'the Palestinian refugee issue in Lebanon is quite different from that in other Arab nations as a result of many significant historical events' (Hanafi et al. 2008 in Tabar 2010: 10) and that has shaped the way academic work has been produced around the topic. Hence, research has focused on 'services for Palestinian refugees and their needs; the political situation of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon; the issue of civil rights; economic conditions; and the demographic characteristics of the Palestinian camps' population' (Chatty & Lewando Hundt 2005: 196).

Processes of securitization in the Middle East have been studied mainly in relation to water resources. Being the region with the lowest amount of fresh water reservoirs, scarcity has been framed as a threat by some states, among them Jordan, Israel and even Syria at a particular time (Fischhendler & Nathan 2015; Harish 2014). Migratory movements have been securitized by these states as a product of water related topics. Even though these studies deal with an aspect of security, it leaves aside the issues of sectarianism, infrastructure, macroeconomic impacts and political instability.

Just one article was found directly in relation to the topic of this Research Paper. The article that is called *Between Local Patronage Relationships and Securitization: The Conflict Context in the Bekaa Region* written by Muzna al-Masri in collaboration with the UNDP (2015), focuses on the local experiences of a Lebanese region in which processes of securitization have taken place, given the conflict situation and the presence of Syrian Refugees in the area. Although this article provided a starting point to analyze how a political issue becomes a security threat in the Lebanese scenario, the securitization argument was not well developed, as the article mainly describes security measures relating to Syrian refugees in governorates, but omits the analysis of *speech-act* in the municipal context.

2.4 Linking Framing Theory to 'Politics of Representation' and Securitization Theory

So far, the selected method of analysis and both analytical tools have demonstrated to deal with similar matters. The most relevant ones are related to the importance of linguistics and discourse, power relations and the role of the audience. In fact, Watson (2012) has explored the similarities of the research programmes of both securitization and framing theory and has called for an integration of the literature on threat construction. Firstly, as well as academics from the field of 'politics of representation', 'both securitization and framing assert that linguistic-grammatical composition is essential to understanding political outcomes. Their shared basic contention is that societal actors construct problems/threats through discursive practices' (Watson 2012: 283). Secondly, representation, framing and securitization processes take place in embedded power relations in which certain political actors have the capacity to create meanings and to avoid opposition through strategic

choices (Watson 2012: 283). Thirdly, according to Buzan et al., 'an issue is securitized only if and when the audience accepts it as such, and securitization is not decided by the securitizer, but by the audience. Similarly, framing scholars show that audiences do not passively accept elite frames and that the presence of a frame in a communicating text does not guarantee that it will influence the audience' (cited in Watson 2012: 284). Although, this study takes the role of the audience a step forward, as explained before. All in all, 'politics of representation' constitute an overall way of justifying frames, which eventually led to the process of securitization.

In consequence, this common ground among theories allowed the researcher to understand the logic behind the politics of naming and labeling realities by the government of Lebanon around the issue of Syrian refugees, limiting them to specific frames. At the same time, it helped the researcher to understand how frames and representations of Syrians in the official discourse have been justified within speeches and statements through political decisions; as well as the role of society reinforcing these political and security processes.

Finally, Entman's approach to framing allowed the researcher to operationalize the postulates of Hall, Foucault and Buzan and Wæver and other academics from the Copenhagen School of thought. The questions formulated by the author in Table 1 guided the analysis regarding 'politics of representation', the establishment of frames and the following steps towards securitization of the issue of Syrian refugees in Lebanon.

Table 2: Operationalization of the method and analytical tools

If…	Questions translated into politics of representation and securitization theory
If frames define problems	Who is the causal agent? What cultural values are challenged by the causal agent?
If frames diagnose causes	What features of the causal agent constitutes a problem or a threat for the society? What kind of problems or threats are imposed by the causal agents?
If frames make moral judgments	What are the effects of the causal agent in society? What is the referent object affected by the causal agent?
If frames suggest remedies	What kind of political or security measures need to be taken to face the problem or threat? In what bases are these measures justified? What are the likely consequences of these measures?

Source: Table made by the author, drawing on selected analytical and methodological tools

Chapter 3

A humanitarian approach to the Syrian refugee crisis in Lebanon

> *'We disassociate ourselves politically, but we don't disassociate from the needs of our Syrian brethren and our humanity'* (Prime Minister Mikati 2012)

The statement above represents the initial stance of the government of Lebanon facing the first movements of Syrian refugees arriving into the country. Although the government had not been directly providing support to the refugees but aimed to cooperate with international organizations to that end, in the public speech Syrians were 'welcomed' and they were considered brothers running away from the conflict. Nonetheless, this representation of Syrians as brothers and victims did not last long. Refugees rapidly started to be represented as a burden and a problem to the Lebanese state and society, according to the governmental discourse. This chapter will analyze the representations of Syrians in Lebanon from 2011 to 2013 and, based on these, explain the identified frames in the different speeches and statements during this period. From this point on, politician's *speech-acts* or statements will be in italics, so that the reader can easily identify the discursive pieces being analyzed. Also, this chapter aims to present how these frames influenced the political responses taken by the Lebanese government in relation to the first influx of Syrians into the country.

3.1   The Humanitarian frame

The ways in which Syrian refugees have been framed by the political discourse in Lebanon tend to change as the refugee crisis evolves, although from 2011 to 2013 the most dominant frame identified throughout was a humanitarian one. Syrians have been portrayed both as brothers in need, deserving of the best intentions, and as a burden that weighs on the Lebanese state and its population. Despite these variations, there has been a constant undertone throughout this period that shows that the Lebanese official position is led by an obligation to come to a solution in a humanitarian way.

The humanitarian approach has not been without criticism or political opposition, which is not to be taken lightly, as the opposing voices represent political players that have a strong foothold in Lebanese society. This will be explained further in the following sections.

3.1.1   Initial representations

The initial representation of Syrian refugees consisted of two main elements. First, a humanitarian approach to the first movement of people arriving from Syria, and second, a complete disassociation from the political events occurring in the neighboring country. Since the onset of the Syrian conflict, Prime Minister Mikati has emphasized the fact that: '*In politics and security, we have disassociated ourselves from what is happening in Syria. But in the humanitarian issue, we are fulfilling all our obligations to help the Syrian refugees and ensure their humanitarian needs*' (Dakroub 2012).

The disassociation in terms of politics and security mentioned here is an important motif that returns in many of the official texts. There are certainly reasons to think that Lebanon would be politically involved with the events within its neighbor's borders, as many of their political parties have intrinsic ties with the Syrian government, especially Hezbollah. The Cedar Revolution was set off in 2005 by the assassination of Rafiq al-Hariri, the main proponent of expulsion of the Syrian presence from Lebanese territory and the removal of their general influence in the political sphere. Syrian forces had been present since the Lebanese civil war and withdrew in 2005 as a result of the Cedar Revolution. When consecutive protests were staged on March 8 and March 14 to both express gratitude and discontent for the Syrian presence respectively, it became clear that 'from 2005, Lebanese politics would come to be defined by conflicts between the 8 March and 14 March coalitions' (Abboud & Muller 2013: 470). Political leaders have tried to end this long standing political divide through the Baabda Declaration, which aims to maintain neutrality in relation to external forces. It's because of this divide and the Baabda Declaration that mentions of political neutrality are prominent in the official discourse around Syrian refugees.

Even Hezbollah, which had a 'welcoming attitude toward Syrians fleeing the conflict' (International Crisis Group 2013:12), on many occasions Hassan Nasrallah and other members of Hezbollah, have expressed agreement with the approach taken by the President and Prime Minister to treat the issue as a humanitarian one without politicizing it. The latter becomes evident in this statement made by Hassan Nasrallah: '*we should deal with the presence of Syrian refugees in a purely humanitarian manner and not politicize it (...) The Syrian families should be taken care of by the Lebanese government, whether they were with the opposition or the regime or in between*' (The Daily Star 2013a). What remains unclear from statements like this, however, is Hezbollah's stance on the disassociation from Syrian politics. Which will eventually end up involved in the crisis.

As for the humanitarian concerns, it has become clear that the Lebanese government is trying to convey that they feel a sense of moral obligation towards the Syrian refugees. At the risk of sounding naive, the researcher is of the opinion, after having explored many elements of the discourse, that there is a sense of moral inclination at the political establishment. Nonetheless, the frequent mentions of the need to avoid politicizing the matter suggests that politicians are aware that there is a danger inherent to the arrival of these refugees, which stems from the balance of Lebanon's current political landscape.

3.1.2 *Between positive and negative representations: from brothers to burden*

This humanitarian frame slowly gives way to the inclusion of new concerns and different views on the situation. After a while, it becomes apparent that Lebanese politicians are starting to see the reality of having to take care of so many refugees, and we see the discourse shift into other directions. The Syrian influx started off slow at first, but quickly sped up, presumably as the war intensified in 2012. The International Crisis Group reported that 'since October 2012, it has been rising at an ominous pace; around 50,000 additional Syrians register every month' (2013: 3). In fact, by December 2013, there were 805,835 Syrians registered with the UNHCR in Lebanon (UNHCR 2015a).

This reality became more and more prominent in the official discourse. For example, Prime Minister Mikati made the statement: '*The Cabinet is committed to its humanitarian duty [toward refugees] but the increasing numbers require a new approach to this issue, taking into consideration the potential period of the refugees' stay in Lebanon*' (The Daily Star 2012a). We can see that, without completely departing from treating the refugees as a humanitarian issue, the discourse starts to describe them as a burden as well. This description becomes more apparent when we look at President Sleiman's speech at the 24th Arab Summit Doha in March 2013: '*The problem of the Syrian Refugees constitutes a pressing additional burden on the general situation in the country, as their numbers have gone up to one fourth of the population of Lebanon*' (President Sleiman 2013a). More and more, the numbers of refugees are stressed in statements made about the situation. This will be further touched upon later in this section. Whether the refugees are represented as brothers or as a burden, they become the causal agent in a narrative that foresees potential instabilities and poses challenges in cultural values.

At this point, it's relevant to explain why so many Syrians choose Lebanon as their destination, in order to understand that these concerns are not unfounded. The large movement of Syrians to Lebanon can be explained in terms of accessibility and historical ties that many Syrians have with Lebanon already. The former was concluded from the conversation with Rajin Al-Qallih. As she explained, Syrians choose to go to Lebanon for considerations of safety, time and financial reasons (2015).

> Going to Lebanon is the cheapest, the quickest (2-3 hours trip by road you can be in Lebanon), and the road to Lebanon is considered one of the safest, even comparing to the Syrian airlines that are going from Damascus to some destinations still … the airport road of Damascus was closed for a long time, not officially but it was not properly functioning because there were clashes on the road to the airport. So that is one of the reasons why [people go to Lebanon]. Lebanon's road has always been safer than the others, of course relatively safe, there is not road that is completely safe in Syria anymore anywhere, but there areas that are better than others (Al-Qallih 2015).

With regards to the historical ties many Syrians have with Lebanon, a lot of Syrians went to Beirut and other parts of the country to work in construction jobs when the Lebanese Civil War had left the country devastated (Seeberg 2013: 170). These Syrians who lived in Lebanon gave shelter to family and friends running away from the conflict.

Going back to the discourse, mentions of numbers are important in a small country with a population of nearly 5 million people and very delicate sectarian balances. The latter is especially at risk of being destabilized, taking into account the history and the specificity of the political system, referring in particular to the sectarian composition of the country, the foundations of the Lebanese political system, the civil war that waged from 1975 to 1990 and the participation of the Palestinians in it. Keeping into account the historic factors are key to understanding what the different judgments in the political discourse are based on, as knowledge is contextually and historically situated.

As a product of the Lebanese colonial history, 'Greater Lebanon became a composite of several large religious communities (and several small ones), but with no one sect and absolute majority' (Crow 1962: 490). This sectarian composition had an influence on various aspects of society after the independence of the country from France, one of them was the political system. As a result, Lebanon has and has always had (since its formation within its present borders in 1920) confessional proportional representation (Suleiman 1967: 691). The division of power was based on the relative population of each sect as in the 1932 census, which had the Christians at 52% of the total population and the Muslims at 48%. These same proportions were to be observed throughout all levels of the country's administration. In addition, the President is Christian and the Prime Minister was to be a Sunni Muslim; the Speaker of the Chamber, a Shia Muslim with the remaining positions divided amongst the other sects (Rigby 2000: 169). Hence, Christians have found themselves favored by this political system due to their larger numbers.

Likewise, in a region where Islam is clearly predominant, it became important for Christians to maintain its identity separate from this fact. For that reason, by the time of independence in 1943, it was agreed 'the Christians would recognize Lebanon as an Arab state which would coordinate its policies with its sister Arab states, as a result of which they could be assured of the allegiance and support of the Muslim communities to an independent Lebanon' (Crow 1962: 490-491). The Arab factor was the common element to stick the society together, but at the same time recognizing Lebanon as a country of several confessions.

However, in the 60's, the demographic composition of the country did not reflect the one from the 1932 census as a consequence of differences in population growth and the arrival of thousands of Palestinians after the establishment of the State of Israel (Rigby 2000: 172-173). In that sense, the demographic balance favoring Christian factions was challenged. Moreover, Muslim populations, and more specifically the Shia faction saw themselves relegated to a secondary role in the power-sharing arrangement. Hence, 'from Muslims in general, but from Shias in particular, the demands to reform the system grew ever more strident' (Rigby 2000: 173). All of this, and regional trends such as pan Arabism, are some of the causes that lead to the civil war which exploded in 1975. In fact, Palestinian phalanges in Lebanon allied with the Lebanese Muslim forces and fought a war that lasted 15 years, and aimed to change the political balance of the system. The peace came with the Taif Agreements in 1989-1990, and no substantial changes were made to the original political organization of the country.

Back to current times, the majority of Syrians arriving in Lebanon are Muslims: 'Sunnis account for 95% of those registered with the UNHCR' (International Crisis Group 2013: 3). The arrival of Muslims in large numbers reintroduces the concerns that flow from Lebanon's sectarian history. This is not a concern particular to Christians alone, but one that is felt by the political establishment and society at large as the political system has been largely unstable, including after the Taif Agreements. This brings us back to the importance of political dissociation. To everyone in Lebanon, this equates political instability and the fear of spillover of the conflict in Syria.

3.1.3 Repercussions of the refugee crisis according to the Lebanese discourse

These representations of Syrian refugees as a burden and a problem are linked to negative repercussions of the Syrian crisis on several levels, according to the official discourse. It has been claimed that '*this intensive displacement movement has begun to leave its marks and repercussions on the composition of the Lebanese society, particularly at the economic, social and security levels, especially that a large portion of the displaced are living in the poorest regions*' (President Sleiman 2013b). As can be seen, Syrian refugees, as causal agents, are seen as producing adverse effects on different aspects of society.

In general, speeches put emphasis on Syrians as a burden imposed on the Lebanese economy and infrastructure. Lebanon, like many other countries around the world, has been experiencing a fiscal downturn starting from 2008-2009 when foreign investment decreased because of the economic crisis. Furthermore, the Arab Spring uprisings worsened this even more as it was no longer seen as safe to invest in the region and made trade in general very difficult. And finally, tourism, one of the most important sectors of the Lebanese economy, has dropped significantly as one would expect under the regional circumstances (ILO 2014:34). As a consequence, and combined with the fact that government spending has risen to keep up with the demands on public services, the already large fiscal deficit has widened considerably (ILO 2014:34). With the situation as it is, the addition of nearly a million refugees is framed as a massive strain on their economy.

In relation to the increasing strain on public services, the hospitals come to mind as a very obvious example. Mikati expressed that '*There are no beds in Lebanese hospitals to admit Lebanese (patients) because most already have Syrians*' (Scott 2013). Here we find that, not only is being said that these essential parts of their infrastructure are being used beyond their capacity, it is also stressed that Lebanese themselves now have no longer access to something that seemingly belongs to them. Hereby, it is important to note that the Lebanese people are being framed as the referent object that's supposedly in danger of being affected by the needs of the Syrian refugees, a claim that could be instrumental to officials to affirm their positions as leaders of the people.

3.1.4 International support and shared responsibilities

The fact that Syrian refugees are represented as a burden and a problem in the Lebanese discourse, has made political leaders consider a series of measures to deal with the so-called refugee crisis. Despite these negative representations, the Lebanese approach to the crisis, as was shown in the political discourse, was humanitarian. Therefore, during this period, Lebanon let its borders open to the refugees, but in the meanwhile, the most common measure to face the burden was calling for international aid and the principle of shared responsibility.

As has been said before, the financial capacity of Lebanon is not sufficient to provide basic needs to Syrian refugees. On many occasions, affirmations of the Prime Minister Mikati such as: '*it is now necessary that Lebanon receives urgent aid so that it can handle the accumulating burden of hosting Syrian refugees*' (The Daily Star 2013b) have been repeated in speeches and declarations. These calls for international

aid intensified as the crisis worsened and the flow of refugees increased over time. For example, Prime Minister Mikati has made statements like the following: '*we are coming to a very critical point (…) we need help. Lebanon is bearing the burden of the events in Syria (…) we ask Arab countries to look supportively and sympathetically at Lebanon, because Lebanon needs these countries right now*' (Scott 2013). Consequently, 'regional and external powers stepped in to provide financial resources to the host countries and to international intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations that assisted in meeting the needs of refugees for shelter, services and livelihoods' (Awad 2014: 25). Nevertheless, the amount of help that came from these organizations and bilateral donors did not meet the required amount according to the UNHCR. The figures that were established by UNHCR will be shown and further discussed in the next chapter.

During all this what becomes obvious is that the Syrian refugees are perceived more and more as a financial liability to the state and a drain on their resources. The object at risk of being compromised is portrayed as the financial well-being of the country and, by extension, the country itself. Financially backed into a corner, the government of Lebanon started to lean towards alternative paths to head down in order to deal with the crisis. This new approach is alluded to by Prime Minister Mikati in statements like the following: '*Lebanon, which is dealing with the case of Syrian refugees as a humanitarian and brotherly case, is now forced to reconsider its approach in accordance with its national interest and financial reality*' (The Daily Star 2013c).

Financial concerns went hand in hand with growing sectarian frictions. As had been discussed before, the dangers of politicizing the issue were well understood from the beginning as the entire political landscape in Lebanon is, in fact, sectarian. As such, President Sleiman did not leave the wider context within which these developing concerns, financial or otherwise, unaddressed: '*This requires a serious quest of ways to solve this aggravating problem in a country with an exiguous geographical area, limited resources and potential, delicate balances, at a time when we are trying to abide by the good democratic practices, revert to the logic of dialogue and avoid the dangers stemming from the growing sectarian tensions*' (2013a).

Even though the issue remained a humanitarian one, the Lebanese leadership gradually admitted to being powerless to help it and the debate as a whole began to show hints of what was to become a process of securitization.

3.1.5 The failure to act

Despite the humanitarian approach to the refugee crisis in the official discourse, the Lebanese government has failed to act effectively or formulate policy regarding the refugees within its borders. It's commendable that Lebanon has received as many refugees as it has, and it cannot be underestimated how this compares to the numbers that, for example, other Arab countries or the European countries have taken on. Nonetheless, Lebanon has stayed quiescent while the situation worsened. When refugees started coming into the country 'the government essentially turned a blind eye, only seriously addressing it once the situation had spiraled out of control' (International Crisis

Group 2013: 5). This 'policy of no-policy' went on for the longest of times as the Lebanese government struggled internally with past experiences and sectarian concerns.

In fact, it was due to the inability or unwillingness to act that the Syrians' legal situation was essentially defined by the general rules that apply to all immigrants, a framework set up in response to the Palestinian situation: 'Refugees and all other foreigners in Lebanon fall under the Law Regulating the Entry, Stay, and Exit from Lebanon passed in 1962. (...) The greatest restrictions imposed upon foreigners relate to their ability to work or own property, which are rigidly and explicitly controlled' (Akram et al. 2014: 35-36).

Essentially, the Syrian refugees were left to their own devices once they made it into Lebanon and were relegated to a legal limbo where they had no choice but to work illegally without oversight or protection from exploitation.

It seems as though we are to believe that the government's inaction should be regarded as a moral act, as they did not attempt to turn the refugees around, but of course inaction cannot be seen as an attempt to improve someone's situation. This is where the heart of the matter lies: the concern for individual lives is conspicuous by its absence from the discourse.

3.2   Security frames

Along with the humanitarian frame, a security frame was also identified during this period of time. On the one hand, security frames were more evident in the Christian sectors in relation to the growing number of refugees and the concern that is felt about refugee camps pertaining to past experiences and the security risks this implies for the country's stability. On the other hand, in the official discourse security concerns are visible when it comes to the spillover of the Syrian conflict within Lebanese borders, taking as a point of reference the current day situation of sectarian clashes.

3.2.1   The Christian factor

The Christian sector in Lebanon has used exclusively negative representations towards the arrival of Syrian refugees. The debate that exists in this particular sector consists of three main topics, which are reiterated time and again in statements made: the large number of refugees coming into Lebanon, the purpose to which international aid should be directed and the perceived equivalence of Syrian refugees as terrorists.

First, Free Patriotic Movement leader Michel Aoun, one of the principal leaders of the Christian sector, demanded that the government clarified the exact number of refugees entering the country given that, since the onset of the crisis, refugees had gone largely unregistered as a consequence of the lax controls: '*This issue has reached a very dangerous level, and I want to object to the performance of the government on the influx of the Syrian refugees (...)* '*It is completely unacceptable to let the situation reach this point ... We call on the government to publish the real numbers of the Syrian refugees in the country*' (The Daily Star 2012b). As was

explained before 'distrust between refugees and citizens in Lebanon is well documented, with many Lebanese citizens (especially Christians Maronites) holding Palestinian refugees responsible for the civil war' (Hanafi 2014: 591). These fears take on the form of accusations as the Christian sector is afraid that what might happen is a further loss of prominence of their sect: *'what is happening in Lebanon is an organized crime perpetrated by some Lebanese and non-Lebanese officials in order to change the demography of the country'* (NOW 2013). Therefore, it is conceivable that the Christian population harbored fears of losing its position in the future as a consequence of the Syrian influx in the country at the moment, a fear that is further amplified by the current sectarian distribution where Muslims make up 54% of the population (Central Intelligence Agency 2015).

Second, the issue of international aid can be summed up by the following statement made by Gebran Bassil, by that time Minister of Energy and also a prominent leader of the Free Patriotic Movement: *'I believe that the Lebanese have more of a right to the aid than Syrians do. We will not accept that any penny be paid to any Syrian refugee, whether [they are] with or against the [Syrian] regime'* (The Daily Star 2012c). And further: *'We need funding to enable us to deport the Syrians in a humanitarian manner and not to improve their situation on Lebanese soil'* (NOW 2013). It's clear from this that the Christian sectors regard the refugee issue with focus on the security risks, nor is it apparent that they will divert from this take on the situation at any point in the future. Bassil was appointed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Emigrants the next year, a ministry that influences the refugee response in the country.

Finally, what is featured prominently in the Christian discourse is the apparently self-evident connection between Syrian refugees and a supposed growth in acts of terrorism inside the Lebanese borders. *'We are importing the most dangerous thing in the Syria crisis not as refugees but those Takfiri[5] and security cells infiltrating [among the refugees]'* Bassil has said (The Daily Star 2013d).

This last point touches on the very real fear of sectarian clashes within Lebanon as a consequence of the conflict's spillover. In 2013, already feeling the spillover from the conflict in Syria, President Sleiman affirmed that *'history has proven that it is impossible for a confessional or sectarian group to prevail over another, and that its lost stability will entail a loss to all, in addition to the risk it will represent for regional security and peace'* (2013a). Indeed, fights between Syrian Muslim extremists and the Lebanese army have already occurred on the porous borders between Lebanon and Syria. With the events of the civil war fresh in memory, the prospect of more conflict imported from outside constitutes a concern that is not to be underestimated.

Therefore, the political disassociation of the Lebanese standpoint with regards to the refugees is not merely a humanitarian consideration, but one that has the future of the entire country hinging on it. We see here that, at odds as they may be at times, the Christian and the official discourse appear to

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[5] 'A takfiri is a Muslim who declares another Muslim as an infidel. This declaration allows for the accused to be killed' (Zelin & Smyth 2014).

hit some common ground. Neither group wants the conflict to cause sectarian instability within the country.

3.2.2 Concerns about refugee camps

Refugee camps remain a hot topic in Lebanon's politics. The official policy is not to create any: '(…) the Lebanese government has refused to erect refugee camps for those Syrians who have crossed into the country, fearing, inter alia, the possibility of another protracted refugee situation becoming entrenched on its territory' (Hanafi 2014: 592-594). Here is being referred to the experiences with refugee camps at the time of the civil war.

While it is important to take into account that '(…) the fact that the refugees are not in camps has created particularly challenging problems as reaching the refugees and serving their needs is even more expensive than it would otherwise be' (Dahi 2014: 12), the Christians have proposed to create buffer zones within the Syrian territory and establish refugee camps there. The main reason to oppose the establishment of camps is that, according to Bassil, '*Unfortunately, such camps will eventually turn into centers for armament (...) a shelter for outlaws and wanted people who have nothing to do with the humanitarian aspect of the Syrian crisis*' (The Daily Star 2013e). Aside from the fact that establishing camps inside the Syrian border being a rather unrealistic prospect, it's clear that the Christians have decided that they want to push the problem away from Lebanon.

3.3   Conclusion: Politicization of the issue of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon

In conclusion, the researcher has found that during the period from 2011 to 2013 the dominant frame in this debate is a humanitarian one, although this has continuously been challenged by traditional security concerns. The causal agent in this story is not so much the Syrians themselves but the quantity of them, which has the potential to bring about a range of issues in the country. Worth to mention are the cultural values being challenged, and affects it could have on the fragile stability of Lebanon's confessional representative political system. The main feature of this causal agent that are relevant to these concerns is that these are mainly Muslims that are entering the country and offsetting the balance upon which Lebanese society is based. According to the Lebanese discourse, problems caused by the causal agent are identified as political instability, economic pressures and insecurity. In that sense, the referent object is the Lebanese state and its political stability. The principal solution has been suggested to rely on international aid with reference to the state's inability to cope with the amount of refugees in terms of financial means or infrastructure. It has been found Lebanon has displayed a lack of ability or willingness to act out of concerns that any kind of act would result in internal strife, and as a consequence all kinds of problems are generated. All this leads to the conclusion that the issue has been politicized in the sense of Buzan's definition of the term. Despite the criticism about the 'policy of no policy' and the fact that the government has not effectively regulated the situation of Syrian refugees in the country, the issue itself has been subject of political debate and government efforts have been discussed. Nevertheless, first hints of securitization can be found in the discourse when referring to the national interest, and when new kinds of approaches are suggested to deal with the

refugee crisis. Still, this is framed as a burden and a problem that can be tolerated. But, as we will see in the next chapter, patience on the part of the Lebanese is wearing thin and this will eventually become securitized by the government of Lebanon.

Chapter 4

Towards securitization of the Syrian refugee issue in Lebanon

'This huge number of displaced people is weighing enormously on the Lebanese infrastructure that is already suffering from structural problems (…) This reality, for us, is national disaster' (President Salam 2014)

We had already seen that first hints towards securitization started surfacing in 2013. Concerns about the growing numbers culminated into feverish rhetoric about the risks this entailed to the already fragile stability of the state and economic weight that seems impossible to bear. Skip to 2014: 'with refugee numbers reaching 1 million, the Government began to more vocally express concerns about the influx' (UNHCR 2015c: 3). According to the UNHCR, 'official rhetoric vis-à-vis the refugee presence has grown considerably more hostile since 2014, most notably by the Minister of Foreign Affairs and to some extent by the Minister of Social Affairs' (UNHCR 2015c: 4). What previously was considered as burden, becomes a threat to the state due to the gravity of the events from 2014 until present day.

This chapter aims to demonstrate the shift towards securitization of the refugee issue in Lebanon by laying out the factors that have led to this process, analyzing the representation of Syrian refugees through the *speech-act* and exploring the measures taken and justified within the discourse. Finally, the role of the audience will be taken into account.

4.1   Causes of the securitization process

The shift towards securitization of the Syrian refugees in Lebanon is driven by two main factors: the lack of international support and European inaction in the face of multiple calls for help from the Lebanese government and the unprecedented number of Syrians arriving into the country. In the following sections, both factors will be taken into consideration.

4.1.1   European inaction

Previous calls for international aid and shared responsibility for the refugee crisis did not have any echo and international aid has proved not to be enough. For instance, Figure 3 shows that UNHCR, which mainly subsist through international donation of the states, has not been able to gather the necessary funding to attend the refugee population in host countries.

Figure 3: UNHCR Funding Requirement for Syrian refugees in Lebanon (2015)
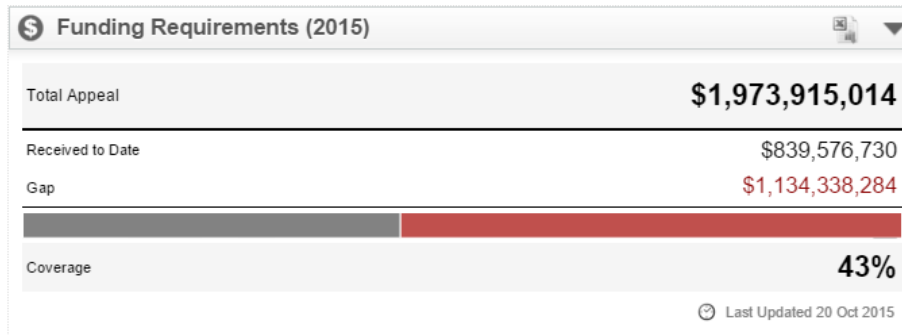
Source: UNHCR 2015a

At the same time, 'European countries are not doing enough to resettle Syrian refugees' (Norwegian Refugee Council & International Rescue Committee 2014: 15). As explained before, Lebanon is not signatory of the 1951 Refugee Convention or its 1967 Protocol. With that in mind, resettlement becomes one of the most urgent issues from Lebanon, 'but internationally the number of resettlement places on offer is shamefully low' (Amnesty International 2014: 3). It is to be expected that country members of the European Union, all signatories of multiple human rights and refugee conventions, have a more effective and humanitarian approach to the current refugee crisis. However, the response has been totally opposed to everything that is preached in official speeches.

For example, 'less than 10% of Syrians who have fled the conflict have sought safety in Europe' (UNHCR 2015a). Among Germany, Sweden and Serbia (including Kosovo), the European countries with the largest number of refugees in their territories, there are only an estimated of 450,000 Syrian refugees (UNHRC 2015a).

These low numbers contradict the European discourse. While the EU asks to MENA countries to continue with a policy of open borders, 'many Syrians were struggling to find protection in Europe, with reports of people being pushed back from a number of borders' (Awad 2014: 33). The EU has been sealing its borders from migrants and although the discourses of the European leaders have an apparent humanitarian tone, the current policy has been to provide humanitarian aid to host countries in the Middle East to keep them away and guarantee security and stability of its own space.

In a press release of the European Commission in January of this year in Brussels, this fact was clear when Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighborhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, declared that

> The EU will keep standing by the Syrian people and by the communities in Lebanon
> and Jordan hosting them who need all the help they can get in this terrible crisis. In
> addition to the humanitarian assistance announced today, I would like to reiterate
> EU's continued commitment to support Lebanon and Jordan in their efforts to deal

with the increasing flow of refugees from Syria and ensuring access to essential services such as health and education. (European Commission 2015).

This response is not surprising as the securitization of migration in Europe has been taking place since the end of the 20th century. Huysmans explains 'how migration has developed into a security issue in Western Europe and how the European integration process is implicated in it. Since the 1980s, the political construction of migration increasingly referred to the destabilizing effect of migration on domestic integration and to the danger for public order it implied' (Huysmans 2000: 751). Hence, Europe has generally decided that it is best if problems in the Arab countries stay in the Arab region, and prefers to dedicate itself to the goal of helping out from a safe distance.

Undoubtedly, there is not one single European action plan to face the current refugee crisis. Despite 'the primary aim of the European response to the refugee crisis has been containment in the countries neighboring Syria and to reinforce Europe's borders' (Orchard & Miller 2014: 7), countries such as Germany and Sweden have received the most part of the refugee influx in Europe. So, while Angela Merkel makes claims about that *'if Europe fails on the question of refugees, it won't be the Europe we wished for'* (The Economist 2015), most European countries have closed their borders to refugees, Hungary being the most representative example of this by building a fence to contain the large movements of people.

It should be taken into consideration that the geopolitical advantages of helping out a country like Lebanon, which has no natural resources to speak of, are few, if any. From the cynical point of view that European countries are primarily interested in helping out countries where there is some kind of pay-off, one would be inclined to say that help should not be expected at all.

4.1.2   Growing numbers and security implications

One of the main concerns found in the political discourse on both the Christian as well as the official side concerns the fact that there are so many of them. Indeed, more than one million people have now sought refuge within the borders of Lebanon, causing a strain on multiple aspects of the country, as we have established in the previous chapter. The purpose of this section is to explain how the large numbers of Syrian refugees pose a threat to the stability of the Lebanese state and which factors of security can be identified as under threat. It's not the aim to make a security diagnose here, but rather to identify elements in the discourse that are related to the different sectors of security as described by Barry Buzan, laid out in more detail in Chapter 2. The previous chapter has demonstrated concerns of security been expressed, but those concerns were more about security in the traditional sense. From 2014 onwards, it becomes clear that in the discourse a broader notion of security introduces itself. As will be noted, politicians' concerns are increasingly related to the perceived impact of Syrians in economic, political, social and military sectors.

Starting with the economy, in Chapter 3 we already saw that the economic state of Lebanon is in dire straits as it is, and that the refugee crisis is turning out to be another issue they are not equipped to deal with. The Lebanese Response Plan 2015-2016, reports: US$ 7.5 billion in economic losses due to

the crisis, 50% more labor force than 2011 and 61% more poor inside Lebanon since 2011 (Government of Lebanon & United Nations 2015: 3-7). Furthermore, unemployment, poverty and economic losses as a result of the regional instability have all gone up significantly as the conflict continues on. As the refugees are spread across the poorest areas they end up adding to the difficulties that were already being felt, competing on a saturated job market, driving up prices and putting pressure on the housing market. These effects are clearly being felt among the people of Lebanon and contribute to social unrest as many Lebanese people start to blame Syrian refugees for their troubles. More on this will be explained in the section 4.4 on the role of the audience.

The political aspect is seen to be under threat in the discourse in the sense that it's a possible source of clashes between the different interests represented in the political debate.[6] It's to be expected that an issue that requires political decisions causes differences of opinion, but the subject in this case could be more explosive than a 'normal' disagreement. The pro-Syria vs anti-Syria spectrum which defines Lebanese politics is a context in which the topic of the Syrian conflict - inextricably linked to the Syrian refugees - could turn into a powder keg. Disagreements on how to deal with the crisis in general can already be seen from the actions of some of the political players in the field. Hezbollah, a group that is aligned with Assad, has been involved in military actions in Syria already, which is starting to generate sectarian clashes near the borders inside Lebanon. Fighting inside the country continues to increase as the conflict is spilling over into different areas of the country and the Lebanese army is getting involved. The resulting tensions will undoubtedly have its repercussions in politics as well, as the refugees are being viewed more and more as a real physical threat and are being equated to terrorists.

4.2   Securitization Frame

In order to determine whether we can speak of a securitization frame in the Lebanese official discourse we need to establish the elements as they were explained in Chapter 2. To recap, a securitization frame includes: a *speech-act* which touches on an existential threat that require extraordinary measures, a need to protect a referent object from this threat, and a securitizing actor that decides which elements are to be securitized.

In a speech addressed by President Sleiman at the end of his presidential tenure he said: *Furthermore, the conclusions acknowledged the necessity to accompany the efforts aimed at facing the* **aggravating problem of Syrian refugees in Lebanon**, *which currently represents the* **major existential challenge** *that should be addressed with* **urgent decisions**, *with an international support that we seek to maintain, and with brave internal decisions that fall within the responsibility of the Lebanese state itself'* (2014). This speech shows how the negative repercussions of the Syrian war and the saturation of Lebanese services due to the

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[6] Regarding the political aspect, it is important to take into account that there had been instability in Lebanon since the resignation of Prime Minister Mikati in 2013 and following the presidential elections in 2014. None of the presidential candidates was able to reach the two thirds majority vote needed and the resulting power vacuum caused a political crisis. Meanwhile, Prime Minister Salam is carrying responsibilities of the Presidential office. (Al-Jazeera 2014)

'unstoppable' number of refugees in the country are represented as a threat, and therefore, it requires extraordinary measures to be able to deal with the crisis.

The conviction that Lebanon now faces an 'aggravating problem' rather than a 'burden', and that the issue has reached its boiling point that preambles the necessity of a security approach, is witnessed also in the statement made by Rashid Derbas, the Minister of Social Affairs: '*Our government is unbearably overloaded. Lebanon cannot support the displaced for a social or economic reason. Suffice it that [Lebanon] is bearing responsibility for displaced persons, who are a third of the Lebanese population, for humanitarian and security reasons*' (al-Mokhtar 2014). Usage of the terms 'unbearably overloaded' clearly signifies that there is no longer room for the Lebanese government to deal with this issue in some kind way that keeps the wellbeing of Syrian refugees in regard, but rather prioritizes the maintenance of the relative stability of the Lebanese government. Perhaps as the most obvious example of the securitization language we find Derbas saying: '*The Syrian presence has begun threatening the Lebanese society's structure and the neighboring societies, as well as international security*' (The Daily Star 2014a).

Prime Minister Mitaki, also at the end of his term, made the following statement: '*We are trying to stay away from the Syrian crisis but its humanitarian repercussions on the Lebanese situation have been immense. The number of refugees in Lebanon is at 1 million which has led to social problems including the rise of crime rates on Lebanese soil*' (The Daily Star 2014b) during a security conference in Germany. He went on to mention that the Syrian population continues to grow while lacking the essential basics for a decent living and warned that '*What awaits them is extremism which usually grows in a poor environment*' (The Daily Star 2014b). This use of language featuring terms like 'immense repercussions', and the implication of looming extremism is indicative of a concern solely with the security of the State and no longer with a humanitarian outcome for the Syrian refugees. What is of top priority now is, within the discourse, is the continued existence of the state's relative security.

For the Christian sector of politics focusing on the existential threat perceived was not a great leap, as this is what they had been doing from the beginning of the crisis. Here we look at the Minister of Foreign affairs' statement on the issue ahead of the Arab Summit: '*Today there are two urgent threats facing Lebanon (...) The first issue is that of Syrian refugees in Lebanon (...) [the second one being terrorism] Lebanon and its people are hostage to blind and hateful terrorism that is sneaking in from Arab states*' (The Daily Star 2014c). Likewise, he has called for a more aggressive approach to face the high influx of refugees. One of the reasons behind this: '*There is a plot to establish military blocs in Lebanon. This threatens the existence of Lebanon as a whole, and is a threat to the whole world (…) The influx of Syrian refugees must be stopped, and they must be redistributed among all Arab countries and they must be returned to their homes as part of a comprehensive political solution*' (Kholaif 2014). For the Christians, the prospect of imported extremism and the establishment of 'military blocks' is a very real part of the context within which they have to consider the issue, as history has done all but rule these possibilities out.

All of this has made the researcher conclude that the issue of Syrian refugees and the repercussions of the conflict is framed as a security issue and has led to a securitization process. First, Syrians are framed as an existential threat for the state's stability. Second, it calls for extraordinary measures, which, in

fact, were taken a few months after. The usual call for international aid was made (diplomatic terms), but taking into account the lack of action of the West (before the refugee crisis of this year) the government understands that actions to deal with the massive influx of refugees will have to come from within, to be able to protect the stability of the country. These measures will be the topic of the next section.

4.3   Security Measures

In accordance with the established frames by the authorities and the Lebanese people of the Syrian refugees as a security issue, security and securitized measures have taken place especially since 2014, when the number of refugees reached a million. In fact, that same year when a new government came into office, 'a Crisis Cell was created to deal with the issue of Syrian refugees' (UNHCR 2015c: 3).

Figure 4: Integrated Response Management in Lebanon
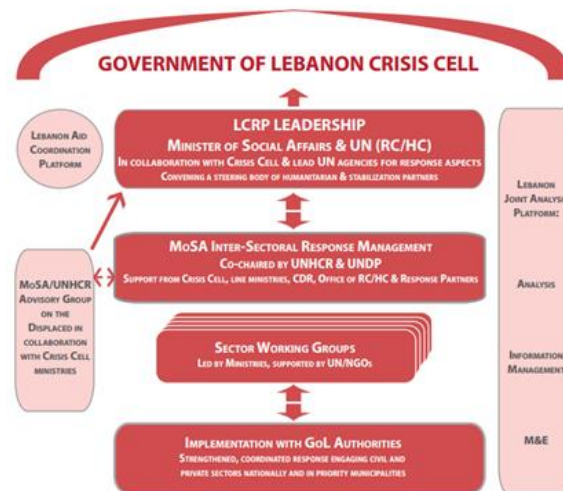
Source: Brochure Lebanese Crisis Response Plan 2015-2016:9

The aim of the Crisis Cell and the new security measures have been to reduce the flow of refugees into the country, under the claim that '(they are) necessary to preserve peace and stability in Lebanon' (UNHCR 2015b: 3). Consequently, border controls and restrictions have increased and new visa requirements were implemented.

The creation of this cell can be regarded as a strategic act in the sense that it is meant to bring about some material change in the circumstances. We can relate this to Prime Minister Mikati's statement that '*the international community did not take steps in accordance with the needs and the limited capabilities of the Lebanese state*' (Amrieh 2013), a reality now firmly cemented in the official discourse.   The new approach and the measures that accompanied it finds its justification in one important realization that becomes pervasive throughout the discourse at this point, and is summarized by Derbas: '*To implement the new security strategy, [we] must organize the entry of Syrians and their exits*' (The Daily Star 2015).

The UNHCR (2015c: 2) reported that in June 2014, the government of Lebanon articulated the following goals in a policy statement: '1) deny access to Syrians coming from areas which are not contiguous to Lebanon; 2) review the status of refugees and remove refugee status from those who are in Lebanon for economic reasons or who have travelled back to Syria since arriving in Lebanon; 3) promote the establishment of camps inside Syria or in the no-man's land between the two countries'.

Furthermore, a refugee policy presented by the Crisis Cell in October 2014 was approved by the central authorities. The policy includes only three points:

> 1. Reduce the numbers of refugees by, among other, stopping refugees' entry into Lebanon (except for unpredicted exceptional humanitarian cases) and encouraging Syrian refugees to return to their country or other countries by all possible means.
> 2. Ensure security through the implementation of security measures including requiring municipalities to keep a census of refugees and the strengthening of municipal policing.
> 3. Ease the burden by preventing Syrians from working unlawfully, ensuring humanitarian assistance benefits refugees and vulnerable host communities equally and securing direct funding to state institutions through the Multi-Donor Trust Fund (MDTF) and through special programs to develop the Lebanese economy. (UNHCR 2015c: 4).

From that moment, the Government of Lebanon decided to tighten border controls. In January 2015, 'Lebanon announced new restrictions on Syrians entering Lebanon, requiring all refugees to apply for visas before entering' (IRIN 2015). It was 'the first time in history that Lebanon required Syrians to obtain a visa to enter or pass through the country' (Ghanem 2015). The Ministry of Social Affairs communicated that the increase of 'its capacity at the border for determining those who will be admitted on humanitarian grounds. These admissions will be made on an exceptional basis' (UNHCR 2015b: 4).

In the same month, new rules for residence renewals were stipulated. For the residence permit to be renewed, Syrians must 'pay a fee of USD 200 and present a UNHCR registration certificate valid for at least six months, a housing commitment signed by the landlord and endorsed by the Mukhtar [or head of a village] and a signed and notarized pledge by the refugee not to work and, in some cases, including a pledge to leave the country upon expiry of their residence permit or when requested to do so by the Government of Lebanon' (UNHCR 2015c: 5).

These last measures were taken based on a decision by the Minister of Interior and the Prime Minister, and was not consulted with the Council of Ministers (Ghanem 2015) as required by law. 'As of 6 May 2015, UNHCR Lebanon has temporarily suspended new registration as per the government of Lebanon's instructions' (UNHCR 2015a). What is being observed here is a new kind of determination that is characteristic of a state of emergency, supported by the widely held belief that Lebanon cannot possibly take one any more refugees. As President Sleiman puts it: '*[Lebanon] cannot endure the arrival of even a few thousand additional refugees. It cannot bear more refugees on its territories. This issue is out of the question*'

(The Daily Star 2014d). As another example, Derbas stated: '*In Lebanon, I don't think that the situation can go on the way it is. In the past, the policy was to neglect and ignore because they thought the number was a couple of thousand. But today, we have a couple of million and they could be here for years*' (The Daily Star 2014e). It is becoming clear that in the mind of politicians, and in the discourse at large, the worse alternative would be not to act.

In the meanwhile, as national politics were struggling to decide on a course of action 'municipalities in Lebanon have adopted unilateral approaches to refugee-related problems' (Khatib 2014). For instance, Human Rights Watch reported that between January 2014 and October of the same year, the number of municipalities across the country that imposed curfews, and were enforced by the local police directed towards Syrians, grew from 25 to 45 (al-Saadi 2014) (Human Rights Watch 2014). Curfews are meant to deal with the social tensions, especially in the Northern regions where the Lebanese army has had confrontations with Syrian extremist groups in bordering areas (Human Rights Watch 2014).

Despite the illegality of the curfews, which 'can only be declared by the Council of Ministers and can only be conducted by the High Military Command' (al-Saadi 2014), the central government has not penalized the local authorities for doing so, given the belief 'that growing insecurity and faltering infrastructure is solely caused or intensified by foreign forces – in this case, the 'Syrians'' (al-Saadi 2014).

This range of measures is intended to discourage Syrians to stay in the country and left them vulnerable to arrest and detention by the Lebanese police. Also, it constitutes a challenge for Syrians in Lebanon that every day have to face new restrictions and, admittedly, unrealistic obligations.

4.4   Lebanese popular perceptions of Syrian refugees

In Chapter 2 it was explained that, rather than relegating the role of the audience to a passive observer that gets be in agreement with securitizing measures or not, the audience should be regarded as an actor who is involved in a dynamic interplay with the securitizing actor. What concerns the population inevitably drives decisions made at the official level and expands or contracts the government's possibility to act by giving or taking away moral support according to Balzacq. Here it becomes necessary to see whether there is a ground for moral support to grow out of the popular perceptions held by the population.

As with the Lebanese government, society's representations in relation to Syrian refugees have been changing as the crisis develops. Although 'receptivity towards refugees in Lebanon was very strong at the outset of the crisis, as the years have progressed, the numbers increased, and the strain deepened, receptivity has waned' (UNHCR 2015b: 3). This is the case especially in the Northern regions where poverty, fragile social balance and weak infrastructure are predominant.

Facing the initial government inaction to deal with the refugee crisis, 'host communities played a significant role in assisting Syrian refugees' (Mackreath 2014). However, local communities, as well as the government, have reached a point of saturation. This combined with resentments as a product of the historical ties with Syria has caused the Lebanese to reject the Syrians coming into the country.

Being under Syrian occupation for 29 years has affected the mindset of the Lebanese population. In the conversation with Rajin, she said that 'because the Syrian government occupied Lebanon, and because soldiers did horrible things to the people, many Lebanese have a rejecting attitude towards Syrians' (Al-Qallih 2015). During the conversation she remembered some experiences of her friends in which Syrians with Syrian number plates were exposed to Lebanese calling them names, even before the onset of the conflict (Al-Qallih 2015). The mentality for some Lebanese is: 'After everything the government has done to us, why do we have to deal with the crisis?' (Al-Qallih 2015).

According to surveys conducted by (Christophersen et al 2013; Lebanese Center for Policy Research & International Alert 2014; Wannis 2014), the Lebanese population identifies Syrian refugees as a security threat in the social, economic and traditional sense.

Firstly, it is viewed that 'Syrian refugees are posing a threat to national security and stability' (Christophersen et al 2013: 6). This concern is related to fears of sectarianism. Syrian refugees from different religious confessions are 'bringing demographic and social change and posing serious hazards to the confessional power sharing system in Lebanon – contributing to the divisions and political tension among the Lebanese themselves' (Lebanese Center for Policy Research 2013).

Secondly, the Syrian refugees are increasingly used as kind of scapegoat to blame for the general economic downturn felt particularly by the lower and middle class parts of society. Some of the contentions are, for example, that Syrian refugees are competitors in the job market which is causing wages to fall below current levels, that cheap Syrian goods are flooding the Lebanese market causing a problem for Lebanese business and that the Syrian people are not contributing to the economy in general (Christophersen et al 2013: 6). Furthermore, particularly in the lower levels of society it is felt that 'the Syrian refugees receive economic assistance to an unfair degree' (Christophersen et al 2013: 6).

And finally, 'security incidents in the North and the Bekaa have caused refugee camps[7] to be regarded as havens for terrorists. With this shift in perception, refugees are no longer seen as victims, but as terrorists' (Khatib 2014). As a result, the Lebanese population considers it as necessary to militarize the border and establish real refugee camps for Syrians (Christophersen et al 2013: 7).

These public perceptions are starting to imply even more difficulties for Syrians in Lebanon. Rejection is felt on a daily basis by Syrians in Lebanon. For example, it was brought forward in the interview with Rajin that the last 2 or 3 years has seen a lot of discontent among the Syrians: 'some of my friends

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[7] What are referred to as refugee camps here are really informal settlements.

say that when I go into a shop I don't speak, I try not to talk, so I just nod or point (...) I have a friend who recently left from Lebanon and he said to me I'll never go back and actually everyone who goes to Lebanon is because you don't have other option…out of necessity' (Al-Qallih 2015).

In conclusion, the researcher has found that there are indeed ample reasons to believe that the popular perception is a basis from which moral support will readily be given towards efforts of securitization.

4.5   Conclusion: from a 'policy of no-policy' to securitization

Lebanon has gone from a 'policy of no-policy' to a completely securitized approach to the subject. We have established that the causes of the securitization process can be found in the lack of response to calls for help from Lebanon by the international community and Europe in particular and in the large numbers of refugees that are weighing on Lebanon's capacity to cope. The Lebanese official discourse now brings forward the understanding that the refugees are a causal agent that inevitably brings about acts of terrorism and other kinds of risks to the national security as the referent object, and that this is affirmed and morally supported by the audience. Foucault's understanding of truth as 'linked in a circular relation with systems of power' is here a paradigm constructed out of a shared realization of a need to maintain the fragile house of cards that is the political, sectarian landscape and the stark reality of Lebanon's ability to persevere. In the national discourse these are the realities that affect and are at the same time carried on by Lebanese officials. The speech acts that are in line with these realities are steadily amplifying what is now almost self-evident for the entire country and we are starting to see the results. There is indeed a very clear securitization frame which allows for strategic acts aimed at bringing about immediate action with regards to the Syrians as a threat to the stability of the state.

Chapter 5

Concluding Remarks

This study has aimed to analyze the variations in the representations of Syrian refugees in Lebanon, in relation to securitization processes. It was expected to find a securitization processes starting from the beginning of the crisis in 2011, as had been the case in Europe, but this was not the case. Instead, the process of securitization of the Syrian refugee issue in Lebanon has developed much later on as the situation in Lebanon worsened in terms of economic conditions and sectarian clashes. Between 2011 and 2015, variations in the framing of Syrians can be observed, which find their causes in the Lebanese context and specific social, historical and economic characteristics. These frames come from multiple voices, those belonging to government actors being the most prominent ones. Even though framings started out as rather well intentional and humanitarian by nature, it didn't take long for the discourse to turn around. Syrian refugees have carried a negative connotation for most of the crisis' duration now, either as a burden or as a threat. Emphasis was placed on the refugees' image as a liability to the political system, specifically in relation to the sectarian character of Lebanon's representational democracy. Also, the implication that Syrian refugee camps would bring about events resembling those that occurred in the past when Lebanon was host to Palestinian refugees fleeing the Israel-Palestine conflict were reiterated in the official discourse as a justification to take increasingly strict measure against the Syrian influx. As knowledge is always situated, what the Lebanese hold to be true is largely constructed by the historical experience, hence these past experiences can hardly be overstated. Current day's policy and *speech-acts* all point towards an increased securitization.

The question as to whether the framings found in this paper are objective or subjective, that is: whether they have a basis in reality or not, is a matter of many different facets when we look at the factors that make up Lebanon's situational reality. Lebanon has real reasons to fear a repetition of a spillover of the conflict in Syria, whether these are based in history, or in current day events. As to the fears pertaining to the economic stability, this does not seem without its justifications either. The Lebanese infrastructure and public services, the job and housing market are under pressure as a consequence of both the large influx of refugees, and the fact that they were largely absorbed into the poorest areas of Lebanon as the government failed to formulate any other plan for these people. Other framings, such as equating the Syrians with terrorist activity, seem to be less based in reality, and rather expressed to shape the discourse by adding to the image of the Syrian refugees as an unabated wave of crime and terrorism.

Nonetheless, what remains undiscussed largely throughout the debate is the matter of individual lives. There are serious implications on dealing with an issue as a security one, instead of a political one. An important matter then is security for whom? The current debates in Lebanon, and in a certain degree in the European Union, are forgetting the situation of millions of Syrians as victims of a war.

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Appendices

Appendix 1: Mapping the conflict in Syria[8]

Mapping the conflict in Syria		
Causes and drivers of conflict	- Little political representation. - Sectarianism: Power in hands of the Alawi's, minority group in Syria. - Poverty, especially in Sunni areas. - Violations of human rights.	

Actors	National	• pro-Asad
		 Syrian Government (Bashar Al-Asad)
		 Syrian Army
		 • anti-Asad groups
		 Secular: Free Syrian Army
		         Syrian National Coalition
		 Jihadist: al-Nusra
		         ISIL

	Regional	• pro-Asad: Hezbollah Iran • anti-Asad Saudi Arabia Qatar Turkey • Neighboring states (dealing with refugees) Lebanon Jordan Turkey Iraq Egypt
	Global	• anti-Asad

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[8] This mapping exercise was taken from a previous essay written by the researcher for the course Securitization of Development: Violence, Humanitarianism and Peace (4227) taught by Dr. Helen Hintjens, under the title *Politicization of humanitarian aid: Is new humanitarianism failing on Syria?*

		"The West", mostly represented by USA • pro-Asad Most actively: Russia.
	Multilateral Organizations	UN Arab League UE
	Aid Organizations	UNOCHA UNHCR Syrian Arab Red Crescent ICRC International and National NGOs Bilateral donors
Dynamics and events	- Social claim for the renewal of the political power in the context of the 'Arab Spring'. - Government repression to the pacific protest. - Formation of rebel groups. - Explosion of civil war: fighting for territorial control. - Elections: Al-Asad still in power. - Use of chemical weapons - Attempts of peace	
Triggers	- Provision of arms, training and financial help from different regional and global powers to the parties in conflict.	
Possible scenarios	- Violence ended through peace talks with the mediation of different powers or the UN and Al-Asad's resignation. - Continuation of the war; division of the country according to the different parts already territorial possessions. - Humanitarian intervention.	

Source: Table made by the author based on the analytical framework of O'Gorman (2011).