

# Iron Domes: Desecuritization in the 2014 Israeli-Palestinian Conflict and the Battle for Identities

by  
Arel Jarus-Hakak

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Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario

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Arel Jarus-Hakak

## **Abstract**

This thesis investigates the Israeli-Palestinian conflict; specifically, the empirical study centers on the 2014 military conflict. The objective of the study was to determine the optimal courses of action actors could take in their desecuritization efforts, within the Jewish Israeli context. This was achieved through the investigation of the intersubjective mechanisms that the Israeli government relied upon during this time, as well as the various strategies used by human rights organizations, Knesset members and other actors in their work to counter the securitization process. Theoretically, this work aims to bridge the gap between existing securitization literature, and critical theory, and further expand on existing literature. This thesis argues that desecuritizing agents should incorporate socio-cultural motifs in their arguments in front of Jewish Israeli audiences, as well as pivot towards international audiences to succeed in desecuritization.

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## **Dedication**

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmother, Malie Jarus, whom I could always depend on for sound advice, a shoulder to lean on, and being shrewd enough to know when I needed her most. Malie passed away two days before I commenced on my research trip. This thesis is also dedicated to my parents, Tal & Avital Jarus-Hakak, who have ingrained politics in me from a young age, and who taught me to agitate, disturb, and dream of a better world.

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This thesis would not have been possible without the support of so many family members, friends and colleagues from around the world. I would especially like to thank my supervisor, Mira Sucharov, for her guidance and dedicated mentorship. To Hans-Martin Jaeger, whose feedback was challenging and always enlightening. My parents, Tal & Avital Jarus-Hakak, for being my support system and for all their help along the way. I would also like to thank my brothers- Yahel and Yuval.

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Last but not least, I would like to thank Physicians for Human Rights-Israel for being my home for three months; special thanks goes to Dana Moss, Andrea Barsony, Mahmoud Abo Arisheh and Abed Shhadeh.

## **Preface**

My scholarly focus on Israeli politics stems from an interest in the nuances of socio-political interactions and identity bolstered by a desire to critically explore my country of origin. I was driven to pursue this research project in the wake of the 2014 conflict, which was by all accounts emotionally charged and socially divisive.<sup>1</sup> It is at this juncture—the intersection between politics and society—that I wanted to frame my argument. I suspected that an analysis of the intersubjective processes of securitization would yield interesting results and insight into the 2014 conflict in general. As my research developed, I chose to concentrate on particular actors as the main points of observation. In turn, I shifted my focus to desecuritizing efforts.

My work is further informed by some of the internal discussions that were prevalent during my time as an intern at Physicians for Human Rights Israel (PHRI). Different approaches to international advocacy, cooperation with other human rights organizations, the Israeli authorities, and varying theories of strategy influenced my positions taken in this thesis. My work in the Israeli human rights organization sector revealed some internal conflict between actors within that sector. This division is largely a product of different approaches to activism, whereby some actors are less interested in cooperating

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<sup>1</sup> The divisive and heated discourse on social media was a frequent subject of discussion, as was the widespread practice of ‘unfollowing’ or ‘unfriending’ friends and relatives due to their political posts. It was so prevalent, that two academic studies were conducted on this phenomenon as a result— one which found that one out of six Jewish Israelis ‘unfollowed’ or ‘unfriended’ someone due to their political opinions on social media (John & Dvir-Gvirsman 2015), (<http://nicholasjohn.huji.ac.il/publications/i-dont-you-any-more-facebook-unfriending-israelis-during-israel-gaza>) and Schwarza & Shan’s study (2016), which looked at the phenomenon as a whole, contextualizing the practice in Facebook’s design and structure.

with Israeli institutions, and seek to act through international advocacy and cooperating with human rights organizations from the West Bank and Gaza. These debates forced me to consider my own views on overall strategy, and the limitations and benefits of working to end Israeli human rights violations within the Israeli context. My research question then became: What are the optimal courses of action that actors wishing to counter the Israeli government's framing in terms of security can take in order to be successful?

The fieldwork component of this thesis took place between December of 2016 and June of 2017. Interviews were conducted in Tel-Aviv/Jaffa, Jerusalem, and Nazareth. During the first three months of my research trip, I interned for Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHRI)—a human rights organization that works to promote the right to health of all people living under Israeli authority. Initially, I was expected to intern for B'Tselem. However, the internship fell through due to the fact that B'Tselem was still searching for an office space as a result of an office fire earlier that year. My would-be supervisor from B'Tselem contacted PHRI and secured a position for me there (perhaps a good indication of how networked Israel's NGO sector is). The internship afforded me the opportunity to interview my co-workers, as well as two B'Tselem employees by virtue of my previously established connections with the organization.

As my position was partly in international advocacy, I was exposed to most of the organization's departments, their discursive practices and varying perspectives on international advocacy, as well as general views on how to bring about change.

Participant observation played a crucial role in how I approach and conceptualize my

main research question. While I do not draw on specifics in regards to my internship per se, the experience has certainly framed my research focus, and topics that I wished to peruse in the interviews.

During my fieldwork, I was also associated with Standing Together<sup>2</sup>—a non-parliamentary grassroots organization that seeks to mobilize Israelis and Arabs in order to build a better, more socially and economically just future. It was through the connections that I fostered in Standing Together, that I was able to interview Uri Weltmann on his role as a community organizer, and the anti-war protest he helped organize during the 2014 conflict, as well as two Knesset members from Hadash; former party leader Mohammad Barakeh and Knesset Member Dov Khenin. Both served as Knesset members during the 2014 conflict.

I found it difficult to recruit participants outside the professional network I had established. As Israeli culture is very much based on personal connections, I was mostly able to recruit interviewees on the ‘left’ side of the political spectrum. Many of my unsolicited emails were unanswered or did not yield an interview.<sup>3</sup> Im Tirtzu was the only actor interviewed for this thesis who supported the securitizing side. While interviewing more ‘right-wing’ actors would have made this research more methodologically robust, the focus is on the ‘left’—actors who wish to desecuritize and challenge Israel’s right-wing government.

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<sup>2</sup> Unrelated to Stand With Us— a non-profit advocacy (Hasbara) organization that works on the opposite side of the political spectrum.

<sup>3</sup> To provide an anecdote, my email to Im Tirtzu’s spokesperson was unanswered; it was only after I was connected to an Im Tirtzu activist through a friend, that I was able to get in contact with Matan Peleg- the organization’s chairman.

Interviews where I had already established a relationship with the subject proved to be the most revealing. Indeed, my role surpassed the position of an outsider; I was an active player—sometimes a colleague, or a friend. Besides knowing me personally, some of the interviewees knew my personal political positions, and likely felt more comfortable sharing their political beliefs. On the other hand, my interview with Matan Peleg—Im Tirtzu’s Chairman, was quite tense. During the recruitment period, while I was attempting to secure an interview with Peleg, he repeatedly probed my family’s decision to emigrate from Israel, and asked me in an accusing manner if I am a “post-Zionist”. I tried to steer the conversation back to his organization’s positions. Peleg highlighted my research topic on the consent form, stating that he does not agree with it, and calling it a “lie”. He wrote on the consent form that he chose to participate in order to help me by virtue of the fact that I am Israeli. In a conversation after the interview, Peleg made it clear that his comments in the consent form must be included in my research; otherwise the consent form is void.

## כיפות ברזל / אלי אליהו Iron Domes/Eli Eliahu

שָׁנְנוּ פְּחָרְבַי לְשׁוֹנְנוּ	We've sharpened our tongues as swords
מְלוֹתֵינוּ כְּלֶהָב טְפִינִים	Our words as knife blades
אֶטְמַנּוּ חֲדָרֵי לִבֵּנוּ	We've sealed the doors of our hearts
כְּפוֹתֵינוּ הָיוּ לְבְרִזָּל	Our domes were formed as iron
לְשָׁמַיִם נִשְׂאָנוּ עֵינֵינוּ	To the heavens we raised our eyes
רָגְלֵינוּ לְמַקְלָטֵי תְּהוֹם	Led our legs to shelters of abyss
רִפְדָּה בְּחֻשְׁשׁוֹת רוּחַנוּ	Padded with worries were our spirits
מִלְאָה נַפְשֵׁנוּ פְּחָדִים	Our souls encompassed with fears
וּמִי יִצִּיל אֶת הַיְלָדִים	And who will save the children
מִפָּנֵינוּ, מִפָּנֵינוּ מִי	From us, from us who will
יִצִּיל אֶת הַיְלָדִים	Save the children

## Chapter 1 Introduction

On July 8 2014, Israel embarked on an extensive military operation dubbed Protective Edge (Tzuk Eitan) in the occupied Gaza Strip<sup>4</sup> following months of effervescing escalation of hostilities, both in terms of violence and discourse, between Israeli and Palestinian authorities in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. By focusing on key players—through an analysis of discourse and practice—I excavate some of the social forces that made public agreement to the conflict<sup>5</sup> possible for the government, and simultaneously constraining for actors who wished to destabilize public agreement.

However, history demonstrates that armed conflict could be a fruitful site for reimagining

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<sup>4</sup> While Israel withdrew its troops and civilian population from the Gaza Strip in 2005, the Gaza Strip is considered occupied due to Israel's control of the Strip's infrastructure, borders and air space (see: The United Nations Independent Commission of Inquiry on the 2014 Gaza Conflict: [http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIGaza/A-HRC-29-52\\_en.doc](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/CoIGaza/A-HRC-29-52_en.doc))

<sup>5</sup> Certain actors—particularly, but not limited to actors—who wished to counter the government's discourse of security, refer to the conflict as 'war'. This is done to 'elevate' the seriousness of the conflict, and conceptualize it in the international and local definition of war. Further, a common critique of the use of term is that the government avoided terming the conflict as war in order to avoid paying reparations to affected businesses. The legal status of the conflict is beyond the scope of this thesis.

of the friend-enemy logic, and an opportunity to dismantle security discourse. My research answers the following question: What are the optimal courses of action that actors wishing to counter the Israeli government's framing in terms of security can take in order to be successful? The answer is entangled with a study of socio-cultural context, audience and heuristic artifacts (metaphors, policy tools, image repertoires, analogies, stereotypes, emotions etc) (Balzacq, 2011, p. 3). After establishing the mechanisms at play, and the underlying socio-cultural conditions, an analysis will be given of how successful dismantling of the security logic can be undertaken. By desecuritization, I simply mean challenging a security move, or a state of securitization, by questioning either the *nature* of threats, or the *means* through which threats are dealt with the objective of moving an issue from 'emergency politics' to 'normal politics'—a framing that will be further problematized in the next chapter. This thesis should not be taken as a complete analysis of the conflict, as the focus of the research is on a potential strategy of desecuritization. The findings of my study suggest a three level approach to successful resistance from an Israeli perspective—a pivot towards the international community's desecuritizing efforts; emphasizing resistance through Jewish-Palestinian cooperation with a prominent reliance on heuristic artifacts that touch on deeply-rooted ethos of the Jewish Israeli hegemonic society.

Eli Eliahu's poem serves as a good entry point. Irrespective of the fact that some of the poem's subtleties get lost in translation, it encapsulates some of the social forces and heuristic artefacts that made public persuasion easy, or for some, more difficult. Let's start from the end—" And who will save the children/ From us, from us who will/ Save

the children”—the theme of children reigns supreme in the Israeli discursive conceptualization of the conflict. The Israeli dominant narrative traces the roots of the conflict to the abduction and killing of three Israeli teenage boys in the West Bank. In an act of revenge, a Palestinian teenage boy was kidnapped and burned alive just two days after the bodies of the three Israelis were discovered. The IDF announced Operation Protective Edge (Tzuk Eitan) less than a week later. Actors who wished to counter the government’s discourse and actions in front of Jewish Israeli audiences brought forth stories of children who were killed in Gaza in order to dismantling the ‘enemy’ construct.

The name of the poem—Iron Dome(s), Israel’s air-defense system—aside from its physical involvement in the conflict—could be seen as a metaphor for Israel’s understanding of the conflict as a defensive endeavour. Eliahu pluralizes the word ‘dome’—imploring us to consider the term outside its prescribed meaning (Iron Dome being a defense system, iron domes being the words ‘iron’ and ‘domes’ placed together); dome (kippah in Hebrew) also refers to the religious garment worn on the heads of religious Jews.<sup>6</sup> As it were, Jewish tropes and identity played an integral role in the discourse surrounding the conflict.<sup>7</sup> While desecuritizing actors largely abstained from

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<sup>6</sup> Another point to consider vis-à-vis translation and military operation conceived as defensive; In Hebrew the operation was named Tzuk Eitan (צוק איתן); literally translating to ‘strong cliff’. In English, the operation was officially called Protective Edge. For the Hebrew audience, the emphasis was on strength and power. For the international audiences, the IDF emphasized that the operation should be construed as defensive.

<sup>7</sup> The poem itself is written in biblical language, and makes several references to the bible. For example “To the heavens we raised our eyes” is a reference to the second Song of Ascents, specifically the first and second verses of chapter 121 in book of Psalms; ‘I shall raise my eyes to the mountains, from where will my help come? My help is from the Lord, the Maker of heaven and earth.’ The word ‘שמים’, similar to English means both ‘sky’ and ‘heavens’. The poem plays on that double meaning; their eyes were raised to the sky in search of rockets, or/and to God. Or alternatively, God has been replaced by our faith in Iron Dome.

using identity to appeal to Jewish Israeli audiences, I argue that it is a strategy that could prove successful. “We’ve sealed the doors of our hearts/ Our domes were formed as iron” evokes a sense of besiegement. This is not just a ‘shutting away’ of empathy, but rather besiegement from the outside world as well. For the actors involved, the international community—capable of empowering or disempowering their positions—is an object of consideration. In chapter 4 I argue that the discursive presence of a ‘besiegement mentality’ in Israel helps constructing the friend/enemy logic through a connection to collective history (Ezrahi 1997; Yair 2014; Zerubavel 1995).

“We’ve sharpened our tongues as swords/ Our words as knife blades”—placing words not just as central to violence, but as a tool through which violence is enacted. Discourse, as a paradigm through which justifications for participating and continuing violence is understood, is the central framework employed in my research. More broadly, it is partly the aim of this thesis to render visible the mechanisms through which Israeli Jewish civil society, the associated hegemonic culture, and the state of Israel reciprocally interact and construct narratives that legitimize and affirm the existing discourse regarding the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I chart the process by which certain matters are depicted as security threats, while also laying out simultaneous desecuritizing efforts- thus painting a more dynamic and intricate picture of the ways in which conflict is accepted by a population as well as resistance to prevailing discourses. I follow Fairclough’s (1992) understanding of discourse, which includes images and other symbolic material. I therefore do not limit my analysis to one of speech acts.

My analysis falls within the framework of securitization, addressing some of the theoretical concerns that have been raised regarding the Copenhagen School's approach. The most fundamental of these is the Copenhagen School's use of speech acts as its main framework of analysis. Instead, I employ a methodological understanding of securitization as a *strategic act*, rather than a *speech act*. A longer definition of securitization will be provided later, but for now securitization will be defined as "a set of interrelated practices, and the processes of their production, diffusion and reception/translation that bring threats into being" (Balzacq, 2011, p. 3). Securitization is viewed as a process, rather than a decision which could be pinpointed to a certain speech act or event (Balzacq 2005; Balzacq and Guzzini 2015; Doty 2007; McDonald 2008; Mcsweeney 1996; Wilkinson 2007; Williams 2003). Further, I argue that the Palestinian threat is already institutionalized in Israel (Abulof 2014; Bar-Tal, Halperin, and Oren 2010; Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005; Jacobson and Bar-Tal 1995), and therefore the government relies on ambiguous statements in order to justify its security agenda, with the assumption that the audience would comprehend the threat without being explicitly told what the threat 'is' (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998; Hansen 2012).

Coming from the perspective that securitization is a process that should not be regarded as a foregone conclusion, I hold that there are always opportunities to desecuritize, even when an issue has already been institutionally securitized. I therefore argue that it is more appropriate to consider the process of securitization in this case study as one of (re)securitization—in which the threat needed to be (re)established. The divide between

securitized and politicized—as framed by the Copenhagen School is therefore reimagined more fluidly as a process of intensification, rather than a decision.

The contributions to the Copenhagen School’s model employed in this thesis largely center around four main points. It is worth noting that these points pertain to securitization theory, and therefore are of concern to the concept of desecuritization as well. First, securitization is context-dependent. As the Copenhagen School views securitization through a speech act model, analysis is largely centered around the *internal* grammatical form of the securitization act. The empirical analysis here, however, focuses on the *external* socio-cultural context of Israeli society, history, and its utilization in constructing and deconstructing security narratives (Balzacq 2005; McDonald 2008; Williams 2017). Collective memory, group identity and ideological currents are argued to play a large role in this process. Secondly, securitization is audience-centered, though the Copenhagen School conceptualizes the process of securitization as being intersubjective—the speech act model impedes an analysis of the audience-securitizing agent relationship. I make an effort in analyzing the intended audience for both desecuritizing and securitizing actors, and demonstrating the audience’s agency. Third, I highlight the notion that securitization is never a foregone conclusion; even in the case of institutionalized securitization, actors must embark on a process of (re)securitizing referent objects, and desecuritizing actors always have openings for potential desecuritization. I study desecuritization efforts using Huysmans’ (1995a) three approaches to de-securitization analysis, as well as Hansen’s (2012) four types of desecuritization—where she firmly plants desecuritization in political theory and empirical studies of desecuritization. As a fourth contribution—based on my empirical

study—I propose an additional type of desecuritization—resistance. I conceptualize this type of desecuritization strategy through a Foucauldian lens, and an intermediary between Aradau’s (2004) concept of emancipation and other forms of desecuritization. I argue that this form of desecuritization has the most potential in dismantling the friend/enemy distinction that security discourse is predicated on.

This thesis is a product of a six-month research trip, during which I interned for Physicians for Human Rights- Israel— a human rights organization that deals with the right to health both in the occupied territories and within Israel’s 1967 borders. Besides my internship, I conducted interviews with various actors who held positions in the Knesset, the ‘third sector’ and a community organizer. My aim was to interview players who both had the ability, and means to participate in the public discourse surrounding the conflict. In total, 10 participants were interviewed for the purposes of this project; Knesset members from Hadash and Meretz<sup>8</sup>; an interviewee who organized a rally against the 2014 conflict in Haifa, and third sector employees from Physicians for Human Rights, B’Tselem, and Im Tirtzu<sup>9</sup>. All but the latter were involved in desecuritization efforts, to a certain degree—Hadash, Meretz, the community organizer and grassroots organizations opposed operation Protective Edge outright, while human rights organizations, for the most part, focused on opposing the exceptional measures utilized by the government. Im Tirtzu both affirmed the need for security measures, and aided in silencing opposition. The research therefore relies on these sources, as well as secondary sources— mostly of Israeli media articles, social media, and transcripts of speeches.

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<sup>8</sup> Hadash and Meretz were the only political parties who opposed operation Protective Edge

<sup>9</sup> For a description of these organizations, see chapter 3

The thesis is outlined as following: First, I very briefly outline the chain of events—conceptualized through the eyes of all involved actors. Chapter 2 introduces the theoretical framework, and some of the internal debates that have shaped the approach taken in this thesis. I discuss speech acts, conceptualizing de/securitization as a process, the link between securitization and desecuritization, as well as the resistance approach previously mentioned. Chapter 3 is divided in two ways; first, a more in-depth description of the actors involved is given, then, I outline conflicting narratives regarding the genesis of the military conflict, and the way in which these narratives frame agents’ understanding of the 2014 conflict. Chapter 4 focuses on the two audiences that the government of Israel addressed in the process of (re)securitization—the Jewish Israeli public and the international community. I argue that government officials used two processes of securitization; ‘strategic self moderation’ when speaking on platforms that international audiences may be watching; and a reliance on the already institutionally securitized issue of the Palestinian population—which is multi-sectorial and pertains to more than one referent object—while addressing the Jewish Israeli public. Finally, chapter 5 deals with desecuritization by identifying three target audiences—the Jewish Israeli public, the government of Israel and the international community. Each actor took a slightly different approach, and focused on different audiences. I showcase some of the difficulties that desecuritizing actors encountered, and argue that desecuritization through resistance, and by appealing to the international community are the most optimal courses of action in countering and dismantling security discourse.

## Chain of Events

The analysis in this thesis is not structured following the chain of events; I would therefore like to briefly outline the time line for the sake of clarity. Where one should begin, however, is a methodological issue within itself; I therefore conceptualize the chain of events through the eyes of the actors themselves. The following time line begins where some desecuritizing agents argue the escalation began, and ends at the end of operation Protective Edge. The Israeli government, and the general Israeli consensus traces the beginning of the conflict to the kidnapping of the three Israeli teenagers. On April 3, 2014—two weeks past the deadline agreed upon during John Kerry’s peace negotiations —Tzipi Livni, who was tasked with peace negotiations with the Palestinians, announced that the fourth allotment of Palestinian prisoners would not be released. On April 23, Hamas and Fatah signed an agreement to enter into a unity government in the upcoming weeks. The following day, on April 24, Israel’s security cabinet announced that it would cease negotiations with the Palestinians. That day, Palestinian Prisoners launched a hunger strike in protest of their indefinite detention and imprisonment conditions.

On June 12, three Israeli teenagers were kidnapped while hitchhiking in Gush Etzion—an Israeli settlement cluster in the West Bank. Though it is unclear whether Hamas gave direct order to carry out the kidnapping, Hamas took responsibility for it, and the assailants were known affiliates (yet independent) of Hamas.<sup>10</sup> The kidnapping was said to have been carried out in support of the hunger strikers, and in order to pressure Israel

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<sup>10</sup> For a more comprehensive discussion, see: <https://forward.com/opinion/205246/kidnap-plotter-indicted-still-looks-like-lone-cel/>

to release the fourth allotment of Palestinian prisoners. Unbeknownst to the Israeli public, the teenagers were killed shortly thereafter. Israel launched operation Brother's Keeper in the West Bank to retrieve them, the operation also sought to crack down on Hamas's military and political network (who was assumed to be behind the kidnapping), and dismantle the Hamas-Fatah coalition government. Several Palestinians were killed during clashes with the Israeli military. During the same time period, the IDF struck specific targets in Gaza. The Islamic Jihad Movement, along with other small terror cells in Gaza, fired rockets into Israel. Prior to operation Protective Edge, rocket fire from Gaza spiked in March and June (The Israel Security Agency, 13/05/2015).

Two major events unfolded on June 30—during the night and early that morning Hamas fired rockets into Israel—for the first time since 2012. That same afternoon, 18 days after the kidnapping, a civilian volunteer found the bodies of the three teenagers not far from where they were first kidnapped. The following day, tension rose in Jerusalem where far-right Israelis reportedly attacked Palestinians in several instances. July 2, a Palestinian teenager from East Jerusalem was kidnapped and killed in retaliation to the killing of the three teenagers—Palestinian riots in East Jerusalem ensued. Rocket fire from Gaza and Israeli air strikes escalated—on July 8 Israel initiated operation Protective Edge, which was first limited to air strikes, artillery fire and fire from the sea. After Hamas operatives managed to infiltrate Israel's territory through tunnels and the beach, Israel announced a ground invasion on the 18<sup>th</sup> of July—the focus of the operation shifted to demolishing Hamas's tunnels that breached Israel's territory. The discovery of the tunnels spreads fear within Israel's population; the operation's backing was thus bolstered. After several short-lasting ceasefires, Egypt brokered a final ceasefire on August 26.



## **Chapter 2 Securitization Theory**

### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter details the main theoretical framework and method used in this thesis. I begin by discussing securitization theory and some of the debates surrounding the Copenhagen School's approach to securitization—with a focus on speech acts, securitization as a decision rather than process, and the centrality of the audience. I then discuss securitization in Israel. Despite securitization usually taking a multi-sectorial form due to Israel's 'deep securitization', I argue that desecuritization is possible—as a state of securitization must always be (re)established, and the use of exceptional measures justified. I then 'bridge the theoretical gap' between securitization and desecuritization; framing the political discussion within both concepts. I then turn to desecuritization, and offer an additional 'type' of desecuritization—resistance. Finally, I discuss the methodology used in this study.

### **2.2 Securitization Theory and Current Debates**

In their effort to challenge the conventional realist and neo-realist approach to security studies in IR, the Copenhagen School integrated social constructivist and realist approaches to security studies in order to create a critical framework that departs from the positivist traditional International Relations paradigm. Thereby, it framed security agendas as being socially constructed, realized by 'speaking' security through speech acts. Securitization is therefore a process in which securitizing actors declare referent objects existentially threatened—a state, community etc. As the securitizing move is accepted by an intended audience, the security issue is subject to being dealt with through

extraordinary measures that transcend ‘normal’ politics. The Copenhagen School aims to provide a conceptual framework through which security issues that go beyond military matters could be studied; first laid out by Buzan et al. (1998) in *Security: A New Framework For Analysis*, this was achieved through the development of non-traditional sectors—previously neglected by realist and neo-realist approaches—economic, societal, and environmental sectors (Buzan et al. 1998, 2).

At the same time, their normative argument generally regards the process of securitization as corrosive to democracy and political accountability. However, Wæver later clarified that in extreme cases, securitization is desirable to ‘block the worst’ (Wæver 2000, 285). The Copenhagen School argues that focusing on individuals’ security further opens up the conception of security, which in theory could be expanded infinitely (Wæver 1995, 48). Wæver argues that widening the referent object scope to individuals takes the concept of ‘security’ at face value, thereby opening up the possibility of creating states of exception in the social sphere, which are then allotted to the state to be resolved—as security matters are within the sphere of state responsibility. Given both the shift in what constitutes ‘insecurity’, and their identified normative considerations, the Copenhagen School sought to provide a more rigorous conceptual framework of differentiating security logics, while avoiding a “‘everything is security’ watering-down of the concept” (Buzan and Wæver 2003, xvi). Or in other words, the Copenhagen School simultaneously argues both for the broadening and narrowing of the security agenda and the analysis thereof (Williams 2003, 513).

Successful securitization moves combine both linguistic and societal factors, which the Copenhagen School refers to as the internal and external conditions of a speech act. Internal conditions include the grammar of security (framing issues in the language of security), framing the issue as posing an existential threat to the referent object, and arguing that the path of exceptional measures is the only viable option (Buzan et al. 1998, 33). Externally, the Copenhagen School identifies two conditions for success; first, a successful securitization move is more likely when the securitizing actor has the social capital to do so—an actor must have a platform through which they could communicate with an audience. Secondly, it helps when the threat is, or could be, perceived as threatening—Buzan et al. give the examples of tanks, polluted water etc. (1998, 33).

Since Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver's first envisaging of securitization, the theoretical trajectory has since splintered and streamed down different epistemological lines. It seems that the Copenhagen School, along with scholars from other theoretical backgrounds, have been occupied with theory development and internal debates regarding securitization ever since its inception. Some theorists (Aradau 2004; Balzacq 2005, 2010, 2015; McDonald 2008; Roe 2008; Stritzel 2007; Wilkinson 2007) have attempted to develop securitization theory by revising key elements of the existing framework; Balzacq's sociological approach, for example, largely draws on Bourdieu and Foucault (Balzacq 2010, 22). Others, such as Hansen (2006, 2011), have instead opted to defend the Copenhagen School's original trajectory, by emphasizing the Copenhagen School's post-structuralist roots. These debates were largely a consequence of the theoretical concerns raised in the past two decades, and an attempt to settle some of them

through the reconceptualization of the theoretical framework. In the following discussion of securitization theory I address some of the issues that have been raised, and follow some of the suggestions that have been offered by numerous authors.

The Copenhagen School is firmly planted in the post-positivist ‘linguistic turn’ in International Relations (Fierke 2003, 75). In the wake of this, securitization theory emerged as one of the most influential linguistic approaches to security studies in the field of International Relations (Huysmans 2011, 371). Scholars belonging to the post-positivist linguistic turn—or Nonfoundationalists, using Debrix’s terminology—understand language as being entangled with action; language affects the social world through its performative effects. Language is seen as an action, in which players act in a framework of rules or logics (Fierke 2003, 76). Truths are therefore not necessarily thought of as exclusively reliant on a reality imagined as objective and external to observation, their interpretation and postulation constitutes them as well—language is no longer merely a tool or a window to reality. Many constructivist theorists understand the power of language in the social sphere through speech act theory, in which speech and action constitute one another in a mutually constitutive relationship: “the speech is act and the act is speech” (ibid, 11). The Copenhagen School then frames security through speech acts; security is self-referential, it is the act of linguistically framing issues using the language of security that constructs issues as ‘security threats’. Speech is an act that constitutes reality, similar to betting, giving a promise, naming a ship (Austin, 1975). As constructivists emphasize action in the social sphere as being both enabled and constrained by norms that exist in different social contexts, their analysis is predicated on

the assumption that language is representative of semantic and grammatical rules—which the actor must adhere to if they wish to be ‘heard’. This informs the Copenhagen School’s internalist perspective whereby successful speech acts follow certain linguistic-grammatical rules that must be sensitive to the context in which the actor ‘speaks’ security (Balzacq 2005); An approach that “condemn[s] [one] to [look] within words for the power of words, that is, looking for it where it is not to be found” (Bourdieu 1991, 107).

Many scholars, however, have questioned the efficacy and value of the speech act model in securitization theory as the sole methodological scope through which securitization and desecuritization could be studied. Williams (2003, 521), Stritzel (2007, 362-364) and Doty (2007, 116) argue that the Copenhagen School’s decision to focus on speech acts limits the scholar’s ability to conceptualize the processes that are involved in securitization. A speech act analysis, by nature, interprets securitization as a political decision, observing political action by identifying static moments in which securitization moves could be observed. Such an analysis is therefore not sensitive to securitization as a process, which takes place over a period of time, through mechanisms that could not necessarily be identified as securitization moves (Williams 2003, 521). Doty (2007) turns our attention to the hidden processes that construct the friend/enemy distinction by non-state actors. As outlined in chapter 3, desecuritizing agents in this case study conceptualize the process of escalation—and thus the legitimization of exceptional measures—as a process that developed by a series of events; some of them hidden from

the public eye. Moreover, the Copenhagen School's focus on the point of 'decision' and the emphasis on the state could be traced to a latent Schmittian bias. Wilkinson observes:

“this latent Eurocentrism contributes to a portrayal of a situation that is by default cast in Western terms and that ‘edits’ the processes of securitization into a linear and simplified version of events owing to the emphasis on outcome – that is, a successful securitization — rather than on the processes involved” (Wilkinson 2007, 8).

Conceptualizing securitization as a process, that sometimes involves hidden practices thus gives us a broader understanding of the processes involved; specifically in an already institutionally securitized environment—where exceptional measures are articulated in practices that are hidden and do not get discussed, but impact the (re)securitization process. Focusing on the process also allows for a concurrent focus on desecuritization—rather than securitization, as the process of desecuritization was not successful.

McDonald (2008, 575) argues that identifying static moments of securitization poses a methodological inconsistency; the moment of securitization could be identified in multiple ways—the moment in which someone ‘speaks’ security, when the audience accepts the designation of threat, or when extraordinary measures are implemented. Viewing securitization as a process thus solves both a methodological issue, and allows us to interpret events that would go unnoticed in an already securitized environment.

The Copenhagen School contends that securitization moves are illocutionary—the proclamation of ‘security’, as discursively self-referential, is in and of itself the *act* that calls a security situation into being, while simultaneously being an intersubjective process. According to Balzacq (2005), a theoretical paradox emerges—how could

security situations both be constructed at the moment of discursive utterance, as well as be contingent on the audience's acceptance of the move? Unintentionally, Balzacq writes, "this position conflates illocutionary—what is done *in* saying the locution— and perlocutionary—what is done *by* saying something—acts" (Balzacq, 2005, 177). The Copenhagen School's conceptualization of security as a speech act is in conflict with its claim that securitization is intersubjective, he argues. Hansen (2011, 360)—approaching the Copenhagen School through post-structuralism—counters by claiming that Balzacq "conflate[s] Buzan and Wæver's ontological conception of security with their epistemological theorization of security as a discursive practice." The ontological conception is that a state of insecurity cannot be studied until it is articulated discursively. Securitization, in turn, could be seen as an intersubjective process as securitizing actors reframe and inject meaning into existing discourse by speaking 'security' (Ibid, 360).

While the schism that Balzacq identifies between self-referentiality and intersubjectivity may not be as evident through a post-structuralist approach, it could be agreed upon, however, that the Copenhagen School favours intersubjectivity as its paradigm of understanding successful securitization; "Successful securitization is not decided by the securitizer but by the audience of the security speech act: Does the audience accept that something is an existential threat to a shared value? Thus security (as with all politics) ultimately rests neither with the objects nor with the subjects but *among* the subjects" (Buzan et al 1998, 31). However, the process of securitization is better understood through an analytical model that is not burdened by speech act theory; which is concerned with the actor's linguistic utterances. Speech act theory detracts from one of

the Copenhagen School's main points, namely that "one can not make the actors of securitization the fixed point of analysis—the practice of securitization is the center of analysis." (Buzan et al 1998, 32 ).

Balzacq (2005, 179) proposes a 'strategic practice' approach—a sociological framework to securitization, as opposed to one based on speech acts; he resituates it within a broader understanding of securitization as strategic acts of discourse that "operate at the level of persuasion and use[s] various artifacts (metaphors, emotions, stereotypes, gestures, silence, and even lies) to reach its goals." The method still gives weight to discourse analysis, while broadening the analytical frame. Privileging speech over other means of operation has been critically and empirically explored by other scholars, most relevantly by: Doty (2007); Hansen (2000); McDonald (2008); Wilkinson (2007); and Williams (2003). The scheme laid out by Balzacq is thus "committed to recover not only 'discourse itself', but also other factors — agents' capabilities, the ontology of their interactions — and the social field in which rhetorical games take place" (Balzacq 2005, 178). The role of the social scientist is therefore, among other things, to uncover "...the target audience, the main opponents or alternative voices within the relevant social field...[and] what media are favored." Certainly with this empirical study, I demonstrate that (de)securitization moves relied on the use of metaphors, physical action, ambiguous references and imagery. I therefore utilize Balzacq's definition of securitization:

"An articulated assemblage of practices whereby heuristic artifacts (metaphors, policy tools, images repertoire, analogies, stereotypes, emotions etc.) are contextually mobilized by a securitizing actor, who works to prompt an audience to build a coherent network of implications (feelings, sensations, thoughts, and intuitions), about the critical vulnerability of a referent object, that concurs with the securitizing actor's reasons for choice of actions, by investing the referent subject with such an aura of unprecedented

threatening completion that a customized policy must be undertaken immediately to block its development” (Balzacq 2010, 3).

The question of the audience has also been flagged as an element in need of further discussion (Hansen 2011, 260). In my empirical work, I have identified two target audiences for securitizing actors—the Jewish Israeli public and international audiences; and three for desecuritizing actors—the Jewish Israeli public, international audiences and the Israeli government. Because my empirical work has focused on the Israeli dimension, any discussion of appealing to international audiences is largely predicated on the Israeli actors themselves—their strategic choices—rather than the psycho-cultural disposition of international audiences. Discussion of the audience, and their psycho-cultural disposition is thus confined to Israeli audiences. An analysis of a given audience is incomplete without discussing the psycho-cultural forces of significance because “political officials also cloak security arguments in the semantic repertoire of the national audience in order to win support” (Balzacq 2005, 185).

In regards to the securitization process that takes place within the state of Israel, the (re)construction of national identity occurs in a multi-directional process between Jewish Israeli identity and the government: the process “simultaneously constructs the identity of the referent object (society, nation) and the agent speaking for that object (governments, bureaucrats, social movements, etc.)” (Huysmans 1998b, 494).<sup>11</sup> Just as it unifies, the process works to exclude the Arab population in Israel—who make up about 20% of the total population—as well as human rights organizations—which have been cast as ‘the

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<sup>11</sup> For a broader discussion on intersubjectivity, securitization as a mechanism of identity construction and the Copenhagen School’s Westphalian bias see: Wilkinson (2007).

enemy from within'. Yet, these processes are always subject to renegotiation, reversal and defiance.

Employing securitization theory as a framework for studying Israel—and this empirical study in particular—serves as an interesting challenge for the framework; a challenge, I believe, that should not dissuade political analysts from pursuing it. In the words of one of my interviewees: "...security in Israel is like the easiest answer to give. Everything is security around you." One may wonder—what use is it to employ a theoretical framework predicated on the process of securitization in a state where the logic of security already exists in society and its institutional structures? In terms of theoretical efficacy, I argue that securitization actors (the Israeli government) must still (re)securitize threats in order for the move to be successful. Though the logic of security in Israel may make acceptance more easily attainable—the fact that securitization remains an intersubjective process lends itself to analysis through securitization theory. Hansen's (2012) description is worth quoting at length:

"Securitisations, which have become institutionalised to such an extent that they no longer are in need of explicit articulations to justify their status, pose a particular challenge for desecuritisation attempts.... Institutionalised securitisations might rely upon repression and violence or they might be the product of repeated audience acceptances atrophying into a set of institutionalised practices. The potential of securitisations to become embodied within unproblematised institutions establishes a complex relationship between what we might call 'institutionally sanctioned practices' and public discourse. The Copenhagen School...sees the political sphere as a dynamic space where actors seek to justify their policies and destabilise those of their opponents. Situations where it looks as if 'administrative agencies may adopt [securitizing] practices without a prior green light from political discourse' are thus to be analysed either as indications of 'prior green light' having been given to such an extent that they are no longer needed. Or, if no light is indeed discernible, such practices are susceptible to being brought to the public attention in which case political actors, who are formally responsible, confront the choice to lend their legitimacy – and political capital – to the securitisations upon which those practices

are based or curtail such practices so that the audience no longer sees them as securitising.”

A study of securitization in the Israeli context is worth exploring in its own right, though, for the purposes of this thesis, institutionalized securitization is explored only as it relates to desecuritization efforts—which poses particular obstacles, but also, somewhat paradoxically, openings for fruitful acts. Exceptional security measures (what exceptional security measures could be more extreme than warfare?) come as potential cost to securitizing actors—namely political capital and the ‘exposure’ that comes with armed conflict. Armed conflict has the potential of allowing for deeply examining the friend/enemy distinction—which is a key component of the desecuritization process (Hansen 2012). During times of relative quiet, desecuritizing actors are less successful in captivating audience attention when it comes to the hidden practices that are conducted through security logic (checkpoints, indefinite detention, an extensive intelligence apparatus). B’Tselem’s Director, Hagai El-Ad, effectively articulated this during a different tense period of time, in which security practices were at the forefront of Israeli public discourse: “I’m glad that this is an opportunity to talk about the occupation. The occupation, most of the time, does not always work in ways that is as aggressive and offensive as can be seen in the video. The occupation works in various mysterious, and banal ways that do not get covered” (Mako News, 26/03/16).<sup>12</sup> The take-away is this: securitization—even when institutionalized—is never a foregone conclusion; securitization must be reaffirmed, and exceptional measures must be justified.

Securitizing actors must expend political capital and risk backlash when taking large-

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<sup>12</sup> The discussion took place in the context of the ‘shooting soldier incident’; in which B’Tselem captured footage of an Israeli soldier shooting an incapacitated Palestinian man suspected of carrying out a terrorist attack in Hebron.

scale measures. There are always cracks and openings in which desecuritizing actors could operate; the cost of using overt exceptional measures could serve as a schism in the intersubjective process of securitization.

### **2.3 Bridging the Gap**

As the following subsection discusses desecuritization, I would like to ‘bridge the gap’ between securitization and desecuritization. Desecuritization—the conceptual twin to securitization—has, in recent years, gained more attention and recognition as an important component in the theoretical framework of securitization theory.

Securitization, according to Hansen, is incomplete without the concept of desecuritization (Hansen 2012, 531). The theoretical ‘roadmap’ that was laid out above also informs my study of desecuritization; the centrality of audience, its psycho-cultural disposition, understanding securitization as power-laden, and a departure from a speech act framework.

First, the institutionalized state of securitization poses a challenge for desecuritizing actors, who struggle with Jewish Israeli audience receptiveness—especially during times of conflict. The audience’s psycho-cultural disposition poses an obstacle for desecuritizing actors, though it has the potential of facilitating successful desecuritization; symbols and narratives that speak to identity could be reshaped to garner audience support. Finally, desecuritizing efforts do not just rely on speech acts, but also on other modes of communication such as physical action, imagery, statements and phrases that have deep symbolic meaning. Moreover, desecuritization cannot be

conceptualized as a self-referential speech act—as the concept of securitization is within the Copenhagen School’s framework; “One cannot desecuritize through speech acts such as, ‘I hereby declare this issue to no longer be a threat’, as this would be invoking the language and logic of security. Desecuritisation happens as a result of speech acts, but there is not, strictly speaking, ‘a’ desecuritized speech act” (Hansen 2012, 530).

Hansen (2012) argues that the Copenhagen School’s framework holds desecuritization as inherently political, and that it should not be seen as a routine or technical procedure—the concept is therefore embedded in the theoretical framework at large. Though a Schmittian conception of the political is present in securitization theory—postulating that a community’s notion of the self is predicated on a friend/enemy distinction—the Copenhagen School relies on the work of Habermas and Arendt as well (Hansen 2012, 530). In short, Schmitt’s concept of the political is associated with the ‘securitized’ realm, while the Copenhagen School’s understanding of the political realm—returning to the Copenhagen School’s politicized/securitized framework<sup>13</sup>—is more informed by Habermas and Arendt (Hansen 2012, 530). That is, for Schmitt, politics takes place in the exception—opposite of the Copenhagen School’s framework (Williams in Balzacq 2011, 217).

This Habermas/Schmitt understanding of the political, or the politicized/securitized stages pose difficulties for this case study on two levels; first, given that securitization is already institutionalized, what degree of agency do desecuritizing actors possess in a state of securitization—Schmitt’s exceptional realm? Conceptualized through this

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<sup>13</sup> It must be added that the Copenhagen school also identifies ‘nonpoliticized’ on the spectrum

dichotomy—very little. Second, in the case of institutionalized securitization—where do overt exceptional measures fit in? Given that this case study is concerned with a military conflict that was initiated in defense of a referent object that was already securitized, with an enemy that was already defined as such, the juxtaposition of overt and tacit exceptional measures is not easily discerned. In an institutionally securitized state, the space between tacit exceptional measures—which could be hidden and get articulated in institutional practices—and, more overt exceptional measures such as military conflict is under-theorized. In other words, it would impel the theoretical framework further to conceive of the process not through the Habermas/Schmitt—politicized/securitized stage framework, but rather, as a process of gradual intensification (albeit in itself a Schmittian notion) which allows us to differentiate between institutionally securitizing practices, and ones that go beyond that (Balzacq 2015, 108; Williams 2011, 217). As it comes to desecuritization—the two different conditions of exceptionality described above pose different challenges, as well as opportunities for desecuritizing actors. My argument is that in the case of Israeli politics, it may be more accurate to conceptualize securitization in terms of a spectrum—on a scale of severity—rather than a dichotomous relationship. It is inaccurate to hold that security logic is ‘above the normal framework of politics’ because the logic of security is already embedded in the Israeli political system.

What I am proposing is not a complete departure from Schmitt. But rather, opening up the conception of the political after securitization has taken place. Doing so ‘makes room’ for desecuritization, and allows us to problematize institutionalized securitization further. Schmitt is also useful for theorizing desecuritization; Schmittian politics allows us to

view desecuritization as performative; the process not only (re)shapes the concept of the enemy, it also (re)constitutes the self (Hansen 2012, 533). However, we must also free ourselves from Schmitt if we wish to conceptualize desecuritization as a process that does not reproduce a friend/enemy distinction in perpetuity. In other words: “For Schmitt, the politics of the enemy are not normative” (Williams 2003, 517); for us, the aim is to embed the concept of the enemy in the normative realm. Hansen’s (2012) ‘four forms of desecuritization’ lays out the empirical applications of desecuritization, some of which are based on Schmittian concepts, while others draw on Arendt, Habermas and Foucault.

## **2.4 Desecuritization**

The Copenhagen School has always held that desecuritization should be pursued—both in terms of theoretical development and in practice—in the interest of fostering a more democratic political climate; Wæver has (in)famously argued that “de-securitizing politics...would be more effective than securitizing problems” (Wæver 1995, 57).<sup>14</sup> Yet, critics have argued that desecuritization has been largely neglected by the Copenhagen School. A number of scholars have attempted to fill the theoretical gap by theorizing different strategies of desecuritization. Huysmans has largely led this effort (Aradau 2004, 389). Others have contributed to the discussion since; namely Aradau (2004), Bourbeau & Vuori (2015), Floyd (2011), Hansen (2011), Jutila (2006), Salter (2008), Taureck (2006), and Roe (2004, 2012). As securitization entails shifting of issues from the political sphere to a mode of emergency, desecuritization entails the opposite—‘shifting out’ of the emergency mode and into the normal process of politics. For Wæver,

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<sup>14</sup> Wæver’s remark that desecuritization would be ‘effective’ has become a contentious point, criticized for its vagueness and lack of engagement with the theoretical framework.

the best way to overcome securitization is to ensure that issues are not being framed as security issues in the first place, reverse this framing when it has succeeded, and to ensure that desecuritization does not generate new security dilemmas (Wæver in Kelstrup & Williams 2000, 253).

Huysmans (1995) puts forth three approaches: the ‘objectivist strategy’; the ‘constructivist strategy’; and the ‘deconstructivist strategy’. These strategies are not just used in terms of praxis—they have different ontological roots through which securitization and desecuritization is conceived. Outlined in chapters 3 and 5, desecuritizing actors used objectivist and constructivist understandings of the security discourse; however, in practice, some actors desecuritized through a deconstructivist framework.

The objectivist strategy essentially puts forth an argument that questions the objective nature of an existential threat. In the case of the threat of Palestinian violence, an objectivist strategy would entail questioning the arguments put forth by the securitizing actor by offering a counter ‘objective’ argument. If, for example, a securitization move portrays rockets fired from Gaza as a security threat, a desecuritizing actor could demonstrate that the number of casualties is minor. An objectivist strategy may also argue that Hamas’s material capabilities arguably pale against those of the Israeli armed forces. As demonstrated in the following chapter, some desecuritizing agents utilized this critical approach to the security discourse propagated by the government. While its value should not be disregarded, the objectivist approach is inherently somewhat

‘schizophrenic’; in that—by attempting to show the negative effects of security discourse—it supposes a ‘distorted’ conception of reality, which could be desecuritized by ‘unearthing’ the truth (Huysmans 2002, 48). It thus holds a conflicting ontological view of language that views security discourse as performative, while *its* account is representational (Huysmans 2002, 49). Secondly, the constructivist strategy deals with the social construction component of securitization, as opposed to whether or not the threat is real. The strategy here is to question the securitization act itself, not its legitimacy. The Copenhagen School achieves its normative goals by way of operating on this rationale. For example, a constructivist desecuritization move would point to the fact that the rationale for going to war is a product of narrative formation; or, as I argue in the next chapter—the construction of threat is also a product of practices that exist ‘on the ground’—the manufacturing of insecurity is conducted by ‘enflaming’ the situation and goading the ‘enemy’.

The deconstructivist strategy is in a way an inversion of the constructivist strategy. It assumes that “...the security drama is not recounted from the outside looking in (constructivist), but from the inside looking out” (Roe 2004, 286). It is an understanding of one’s place in the social world as an active participant, rather than an objective voice looking inwards. Therefore, the deconstructivist strategy is careful not to perpetuate or retell the securitizing narrative. This is indicative of the difference in approach between constructivists and post-structuralists; whereas the role of the constructivist is to reconstruct social phenomena (through for example discourse), the role of the post-structuralist is to deconstruct, i.e. to denaturalize them through a displacement or

recontextualization. A deconstructivist strategy would entail framing Palestinians not as ‘not a security threat’; (objectivist), and not as ‘subjects that have been constructed as security threats’; (constructivist), but rather as ‘mothers/fathers’, ‘children’ ‘students’. For Huysmans, the strategy of deconstruction also aims to dismantle the Schmittian friend/enemy dynamic by representing it as a problem “similar to all problems a political community has to deal with” (Huysmans 1998a, 588). Issues that are constructed as security threats are deconstructed by contextualizing them in what Huysmans calls a sociology of everydayness— where practices take place in the context of larger social, economic and political forces; framing Palestinian violence as a product of Israel’s own military domineering, a lack of economic opportunities, etc.— issues that the audience (the Israeli public) can relate to.

Hansen (2012), contrary to Aradau (2004), argues that desecuritization is deeply embedded in political theory, and has four discernable ontological roots. She lays out four observed forms of desecuritization in empirical analysis—each following a particular theoretical trajectory; change through stabilization, replacement, rearticulating, and silencing. I propose a fifth form; resistance. Contra to Huysmans—whose three approaches to desecuritization focus on the framing of desecuritization arguments—and the normative implications that arise—Hansen’s four forms could instead be used as a framework of understanding the ontological, political positions that underline them, as well as identifying the ‘macro’ trajectory of a given case of desecuritization. Change through stabilization mirrors the politics of détente as the framework of de-escalation which desecuritization was originally built on. In essence, change through stabilization

occurs when an issue moves out of security discourse through a slow fading-away process that still stays true to a ‘system-stabilizing character’ (Hansen 2012, 540).

Replacement theorizes desecuritization as replacing one security issue with another, thus drawing heavily on Schmitt as it assumes that communities cannot exist without a notion of an enemy. This form of desecuritization is compatible with the Copenhagen School’s ontological framework, as the Copenhagen School “is not explicitly saying that a society might exist without (wanting the option of) securitization” (Hansen 2012, 541).

Huysmans’s proposed counter-narrative strategy to securitization —framing the enemy in the politics of everydayness—could be classified as replacement, to a degree; his depiction of desecuritization also leans on a broader move of a politics mediated by a political authority capable of deciding right from wrong:

“The counter-narrative cannot be limited to a deconstruction of the many manifestations of the self/other dichotomy and a celebration of difference, as in some forms of multiculturalism. It has to articulate a concept of the political capable of overcoming the liberal neutralization but without falling into a Schmittian decisionism which puts its hope in a dictatorial leadership and which transcends the split between the masses and the political leadership through a national myth of organic or spiritual unity” (Huysmans 1998, 589)

The replacement form of desecuritization is not as conservative as it may seem. A Welsh/Aberystwyth School form of security narrative comes to mind, or, alternatively, constructing the Other in an inverted fashion as an ambiguous abstract concept; according to Wæver “Europe’s Other is its own past...subscribing to the view that the Others are required to keep communities and political projects together” (Hansen 2012, 541).

Rearticulation is first, conceived as a radical ‘system-wide’ desecuritization involving a direct form of political engagement and exists when ‘no conflict looms in the

background'. Secondly, it marks a departure from the friend/enemy dichotomy, and therefore a transformation of the community's sense of identity. Rearticulation therefore "refers to desecuritisation that removes an issue from the securitized by actively offering a political solution to the threats, dangers, and grievances in question" (Hansen 2012, 542). Rearticulation is understood as ambitious political moves such as a referendum or large political initiatives such as Gorbachev's Murmansk Initiative (Ibid, 543) or arguably an Israeli-Palestinian peace initiative. If desecuritization is successful, new discursive practices may be needed in order to suppress or address new openings for securitization to reemerge. The fourth form of desecuritization is silencing—when a security issue 'disappears' or is indiscernible. This form poses a theoretical conundrum for the Copenhagen School, as silence cannot be detected through a speech act framework. Hansen adds: "securitization might be institutionalized to such an extent that there are no explicit speech acts"; such silent institutionalizations could thus go undetected as well (Hansen 2012, 545).

Finally, I suggest a fifth form—resistance. Resistance refers to desecuritization attempts that take place outside formal political institutions of the state—either in defiance of the political system, due to exclusion, or strategic considerations. In a way, it is a mediation between desecuritization and Aradau's (2004) suggested framework of emancipation. Aradau suggest a strategy of implanting universal norms in an effort to emancipate 'security have-nots' by then "show[ing] a gap or contradiction between these official principles and the actual practice" (Aradau 2004, 403). Behnke (2006) aptly argues that it robs the 'security have-nots' from their ability to define themselves as different. While

deconstructing the friend/enemy distinction is crucial to successful desecuritization, I argue that it does not necessitate a ‘dis-identification’—but rather the exact opposite; a reliance on identity to achieve an emancipatory goal. For the hegemonic society, the ‘gap or contradictions’ that should be pointed to is the gap in the values and practice of their identity. It is true that identity and heuristic artefacts that speak to a society on a cultural level are usually utilized by securitizing agents to convince an audience of the need for exceptional measures. However, a process of “reutilization...of identical formulas for contrary objectives” could be used to ‘speak’ to an audience on a socio-cultural level (Foucault 1978, 100). Resistance attempts to deconstruct the friend/enemy distinction on the grassroots level. Finally, resistance should be practiced together—hegemonic society, and those affected by security discourse—as to not reproduce the same power dynamics, or place hegemonic society in the role of the (only) emancipator. Resistance simultaneously stresses unity and difference.

Conceptualizing desecuritization as resistance could further advance the theoretical framework and assist in escaping—what Wilkinson describes as—the Westphalian straitjacket:

“While securitization theory is well equipped to deal with the official or formal level – indeed, it is ideally suited to an exploration of security discourses and their relative successes – this focus on state-level politics means that the analysis is in danger of obscuring informal politics and their dynamics, which can possess significant influence and legitimacy” (Wilkinson 2007, 13).

First, informal politics pose a challenge to analysis through a framework of speech acts—as their power is embedded in mass mobilization, physical or digital mass presence in conjunction with speech. Though Wilkinson’s (2007) case study examines a process of

securitization rather than desecuritization, the same still holds true; "...the Copenhagen School does not currently possess the theoretical vocabulary to reflect this dynamic whereby 'sufficient action' may replace or supplement the speech-act as the driving logic in the process of securitization" (Wilkinson 2007, 22).

Second, we must generate analytical tools through which desecuritization efforts could be discerned in environments inhospitable to a Western liberal understanding of 'healthy' political deliberation through formal institutions of the state; in which certain actors are completely or partially barred from, or, in cases where certain issues are institutionalized to such a degree that their confrontation through the legislative or judicial branches cannot be fathomed. It emerges as an analytical 'blind-spot' when resistance is a marginal component of desecuritization efforts, and an outright analytical failure when resistance is the main strategic pathway of dismantling security logic. Desecuritization through resistance, I suspect, is more ubiquitous in environments where insecurity is institutionalized.

In the context of this case study, the political climate did not grant much room for formal political deliberation regarding security issues to take place. This is not only true for human rights organizations, but also for desecuritizing actors from within the political system itself; Dov Khenin—a prominent Knesset member from Hadash put it eloquently: "In fact that is the main thing, the main thing was to create resistance- meaningful and wide to this war- in the public. Therefore the main action was not in the Knesset, the main action was in the public... In... [the second protest] even more than 10,000 people

participated. These were actions of resistance and opposition that were very very significant in terms of the public, and they brought forth an articulate, a wide and significant voice of the minority in the Israeli public that thought that the war was a problematic, and dangerous, harmful move that must be opposed.”

While resistance is an attractive option for desecuritization actors wishing to operate in an environment where insecurity is institutionalized, the degree of mediation accessibility through formal institutions fluctuates. Human rights organizations dealing with Israel’s conduct in the occupied territories mainly expose certain practices, advocate for their termination, or serve as mediators between Palestinians affected by such practices and the Israeli authorities. In other words, human rights organizations deal with the exceptional measures that stem from the security logic framing Palestinians as threats. Though some human rights organizations largely ‘shy away’ from resistance—certainly as a main framework of action—their ability to act through formal Israeli institutions depends both on the political climate (for example, armed conflict), and the internal conduct of the institutions themselves. Ran Goldstein, the head of Physicians for Human Rights-Israel explains this point:

“I’ll talk about the current situation where we don’t have full access to the regime. If you asked me about years, even 2006 or [200]7, we had more access to the regime and then the role was really to change, on [the] ground we succeeded to stop things or change...Policy-wise, really by phone call sometimes. Now, our aim in policy change, if we[‘re] talk[ing] about the occupation, [it] is mostly raising awareness and try[ing] to—it’s less dialogue, it’s more kind of [challenging] the policy of the government.”

## **2.5 Methodology: Interviews**

The goal was to recruit participants who had an active role in the discourse surrounding the war, and the symbolic power necessary to captivate an audience. 10 participants were recruited for the purpose of this thesis—segmented into three categories: (1) the NGO sector— six participants in total representing three organizations; Physicians for Human Rights-Israel (PHRI), Bt'selem, Im Tirtzu; (2) the political sector— three participants in total representing two political parties; Meretz and Hadash (Meretz is a social-democratic Zionist party, and Hadash is a socialist Jewish-Arab party). Both parties position themselves on the left-side of the political spectrum.); (3) Community organization— one participant representing non-parliamentary and non-organizational work.

Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured design, approximately 30-60 minutes long. Most interviews were conducted in English, and transcribed thereafter. Interviews that were conducted in Hebrew were later translated into English and transcribed.

Questions were designed on a two-level logic; temporal and general strategy. First, interviewees were asked about their strategy of bringing about the change they desire, the practices they utilize, their intended audience, the messages and arguments they used to convey their message, and the chosen route of information distribution. Participants were then asked about their conduct during the time the securitization move took place, as well as during the military operation. Participants were also asked about the internal dynamics of their organization or political party, as well as general thoughts and feelings, and atmosphere. This was done in order to get a more nuanced perspective of the social forces

that existed during the time period, and of the effect on the participants and their networks.

## **2.6 Archival Material**

Though linguistic text (spoken or written) serves as the bulk of the material used in this thesis, I also rely on symbolic forms of material— such as visual images. Symbolic forms of material will also be regarded as ‘texts’ (Fairclough 1992, 4). This is important as my conceptualization of securitization and desecuritization, as argued previously in this chapter, attempts to move away from speech acts alone (Hansen 2012; McDonald 2008; Williams 2003). To access television broadcasts, I relied on the archival material of major news networks such as Arutz 10, Arutz 2, and the Knesset Channel, which could be found on their websites or other platforms such as YouTube. News articles were sourced from the Internet as well; *Haaretz*, *Calcalist*, *Yedioth Ahronoth (Ynet)* to name a few. For the purposes of this thesis, the media was both regarded as a source for information, as well as an instrument of securitization within itself; the Israeli media functions as a tool of system sustainment when it comes to security issues (Bar-Tal & Teichman 2005). As Ran Goldstein— PHRI’s executive director argued in his interview: “The problem is that the mainstream media, like, 90% of the media or 95% of the media in Israel is very patriotic. And when it goes to IDF issues, they cover it always with glam”. I relied mostly on Hebrew sources, as this thesis mainly focuses on discourse within Israel. I sometimes used The Seventh Eye’s database—a non-partisan organization dedicated to reviewing the Israeli media— to find media sources. International audiences

are referred to in the context of the strategic acts of the actors involved; therefore, news articles written in English are relied upon when applicable.

There is a very vibrant social media culture in Israel; it is not uncommon for politicians to issue statements on Facebook and Twitter. I draw on social media sources in order to contextualize my arguments regarding public perceptions and the intersubjective nature of security discourse. Social media plays a significant role in facilitating public discourse, in general, as well as during the 2014 conflict; indeed, the conflict was nicknamed ‘the first Facebook war’ (The Marker, 10.9.2014). Furthermore, I draw on video footage and manuscripts of political speeches that were given in rallies— these were found both on YouTube, and other publications, including the Communist Party of Israel’s (Maki) publication. Maki’s publication (*Zo Haderech*) was largely used as a source for its political members’ speeches— Dov Khenin and Mohammad Barakeh in particular, who were interviewed for this thesis.

## **2.7 Research Analysis**

The primary method used in this research is discourse analysis. Both the archival material and the interview transcripts are regarded as texts subject to analysis. I take a critical approach to discourse analysis, paying attention to both intratextuality and intertextuality. The former is an enquiry into the performative aspect of the text— the assertions, proposed courses of actions, and purpose of intended by the speaker, the heuristic artefacts employed and the purpose of their utilization (Balzacq 2011, 43); for example, identifying the referent subject in a political speech, or ascertaining the logic

and strategy behind a given desecuritizing move. Secondly, the inter-textual analysis taken in this thesis charts the relationship between one or more texts. Drawing on the post-structuralist tradition, I regard discourse as existing in a state of struggle, a product of different discourses combining and producing new discourse under certain conditions. This method of analysis allows one to discern patterns and changes of discourse, throughout time or in certain situations. This is especially helpful when discussing social forces and narratives such as siege mentality, the threat of the ‘Arabs’ and war of protection; which have changed and developed over time.

## **Chapter 3 Active Players and Conflicting Narratives: Threat Construction and Deconstruction**

### **3.1 Introduction**

In this chapter, I briefly outline the main securitizing and desecuritizing agents, with a focus on desecuritizing agents. I then outline the agents' conflicting narratives regarding the genesis of the military conflict, and the ways in which actors conceptualize the reasons for the escalation, which cascaded into a military conflict. Rather than a single decision, securitization is a *process*—therefore I expand the analytical scope beyond the juncture in which security discourse is first uttered. In other words, I follow the actors and chart a timeline through their perspectives. Because the threat of Palestinian violence was already institutionalized (more on this in the next chapter), it would be analytically insufficient to ignore the immediate circumstances that led to Protective Edge, as securitization could not be isolated to the military operation alone. I hold that desecuritizing agents viewed the unfolding events as a (re)securitization of sorts, both discursively and physically. In terms of time frame, this chapter focuses on the events that were thought to have led to Protective Edge—the securitizing narrative traces the 'spark' that ignited the flame of escalation back to the kidnapping of the three teenage boys, while the desecuritizing narrative traces it to the breakdown of the peace talks, the mass Palestinian prisoners' hunger-strike, and operation Brother's Keeper.

### 3.2 Active Players

I focus on two main groups of players: securitizing and desecuritizing actors. It would be more accurate to refer to the process of securitization as (re)securitizing; as the Palestinian threat already existed and was accepted by Jewish Israeli audiences. (re)securitizing—(re)affirming the threat, and justifying the use of exceptional measures is discussed expansively in chapter four. For the sake of simplicity, actors engaged in (re)securitization are referred to as securitizing agents. On the securitizing side we have the Israeli government, which includes government officials; namely Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and the Security Cabinet. Functional actors include non-governmental organizations such as Im Tirtzu—who mostly target Jewish Israeli audiences, and organizations like Stand With Us—that work on the international front. As the analysis of this thesis centers on audience engagement of desecuritizing and securitizing agents, only functional actors who engaged in propagating the government's security discourse were considered. The media is another important functional actor; “over the years the Palestinians have continued to be presented [by the Israeli media] as a threat to Israel's security and as enemies of the Zionist endeavor. Except for the frame of the Palestinians as victims, which by definition presents the Palestinians in a positive way, the frame of peace and internal affairs were not necessarily positive and the security frame was clearly negative. In general, studies show that Palestinians were consistently negatively stereotyped by the mass media and often delegitimized” (Bar-Tal and Teichman 2005, 145). The point on the Israeli media's general complicity in the

government's security narratives was again reiterated by Bar-Tal in an opinion piece published on Meretz's website near the end of the war, in which he argued that:

“My experience and ample research indicate to me that reporting [by the Israeli media] does not always attempt to convey relevant information, and many times information is tilted to fit a narrative that the Israeli government wants to distribute... There is an interest in mobilizing the populace to support the government's or the military's activities and strengthen the official narrative that is propagated by them... Therefore, Israeli sources—especially during times of war and when security tensions are high—often twist, ignore and distort information” (Bar-Tal, August 2014).

This mirrors the arguments made by a substantial number of interviewees—from Meretz, Hadash and the third sector, who claim that the media generally reinforces the government's security discourse—especially during times of conflict. Knesset Member Barakeh explained why he was reluctant to engage with the Israeli media: “The media is also a part of the war effort. Our opinions were rarely heard. [They were heard] only in order to implicate.”

On the desecuritizing side I identified two main political parties who attempted to engage the Jewish Israeli public: Meretz and Hadash. Meretz is a social-democratic Zionist political party, while Hadash is a Jewish-Arab socialist political party. Ra'am-Ta'al and Balad—the two Arab-Palestinian parties opposed the operation, but engaged with Jewish Israeli audiences to a lesser degree.<sup>15</sup> Due to the fact that this thesis focuses on the Jewish Israeli context, Ra'am-Ta'al and Balad were largely neglected from the analysis—mostly because their engagement with Israeli audiences was minimal and difficult to obtain. I do, however, draw on their arguments and endeavors intermittently. The remaining political parties, both in Netanyahu's government coalition and in the opposition did not explicitly

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<sup>15</sup> Balad, Ra'am, Ta'al and Hadash ran on a joint ticket as The Joint List in the following elections, due to the increase of the electoral threshold from 2% to 3.25% in March of 2014.

oppose and question the use of force, the legitimacy of the operation, nor call for its immediate end. While it is true that a peace process was underway prior the escalation—arguably a desecuritization attempt of the overall Israeli-Palestinian conflict—Knesset members supportive of the initiative did not articulate a call to return to the negotiation table as an alternative to the use of exceptional measures. Meretz, Hadash Ra'am-Ta'al and Balad criticized the exceptional measures, called for a ceasefire and for a diplomatic resolution to the conflict as an alternative.

In addition to the political parties, human rights organizations from the third sector (NGOs) made desecuritization moves by criticizing and calling for an end to the exceptional measures—through the framework of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law—but did not condemn the military operation outright. This is largely due to the fact that the framework of IHL is not designed to evaluate a state's right of engaging in armed conflict, but rather provides a framework through which war should be conducted (International Committee of The Red Cross 2014).

I defend my choice to conceptualize these actors as desecuritizing actors on three levels. Only actors who were active during operation Protective Edge were considered. First, these actors challenged the (exceptional) means that were used by the government in addressing the security agenda; because the issue was already securitized, the use of force was the area that was most negotiable and the subject of debate. Second, actors from the third sector work to desecuritizing the Palestinian threat as a part of their overall efforts—

by attempting to dismantle the friend/enemy logic. The method through which this is done may not seem intuitive, but it is what Huysmans aptly argues "...a narrative which does not want to give inimical forces the privilege of defining the authenticity of the political community, of friendship" (Huysmans 1998a, 588). Instead of engaging with security discourse on the question "Are Palestinians friends or enemies?" desecuritizing agents frame Palestinians in what he terms an 'aesthetic of everydayness', where the very self/other dichotomy is deconstructed by contextualizing Palestinians as individuals subject to social, political and economic forces—their lives are presented as relatable. This may explain the emphasis of desecuritizing agents from the third sector on personal stories in most of their published reports. Finally, desecuritizing actors from the third sector view Israel's military operations in Gaza as systemically violating international law. Therefore, if one were to follow the third sector's interpretation of IHL, a military operation in Gaza would be highly limited—if at all possible. For example, B'Tselem's report 'Black Flag' (2015) argues that attacks on residential buildings "is not a legitimate response" (B'Tselem 2015, 61); which encompasses nearly 50% of the strikes (Amnesty International, The Gaza Platform). In addition to other practices being flagged as illegal forms of conduct, B'Tselem stopped short of outright criticizing the military operation itself, though argued that investigations..."are needed as a deterrent to forestall future actions of this sort [Protective Edge] and to avert further losses" (B'Tselem 2016, 27). I was unable to determine whether outright condemnation is avoided due to strategic, political, legal or other considerations. Condemnation of large-scale government policies would not be unprecedented; a number of human rights organizations—including B'Tselem—outright oppose the occupation of the Palestinian territories, and call on the

Israeli government to end it. Out of the organizations listed below, Adalah was the only organization that outright called on the government of Israel to end operation Protective Edge.

These main human rights organizations are: B'Tselem, Gisha, Association for Civil Rights in Israel (ACRI), Public Committee Against Torture in Israel (PCTI), Amnesty International-Israel, Physicians for Human Rights- Israel (PHRI), Yesh Din, Adalah, Rabbis for Human Rights. B'Tselem is the most influential and well resourced. While each organization has its own designated field of study and operates through different frameworks<sup>16</sup>, human rights organizations from the third sector often publish joint press releases and open letters to military and government officials as well as the general public. In some cases, human rights organizations co-sponsor protests and demonstrations. Organizations in the third sector who work on a grassroots level include: Peace Now, Combatants for Peace, The Parents Circle - Families Forum (PCFF), Coalition of Women for Peace.

### **3.3 Conflicting Narratives**

Two conflicting narratives emerged from my interviews with respect to the background of the 2014 conflict; both trace the roots of the hostilities to different junctures in time,

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<sup>16</sup> All Human Rights organizations rely on human rights law and Israeli law; RHR works through a legal and Jewish values framework; PHRI also relies on medical ethics etc. The use of IHL to assess human rights violations in the occupied territories when there is no military conflict remains a controversial issue. Further, some organizations condemn the occupation outright, while others condemn human rights violations. Grassroots organization generally appeals to morality and values and do not necessarily work through a legal framework.

thus constructing a comprehensible narrative in which the actors responsible for the hostilities, and the reasoning behind their actions are outlined. The application of narratives functions as an interwoven component of securitizing/desecuritizing efforts. Desecuritizing agents offered an alternative narrative to that of the government's during the process of securitization, in an attempt to disrupt the process of concurrence; by arguing that the threat is constructed through the government's own doings, or that insecurity stems from different circumstances. Which narrative an audience accepts, and how the threat is conceptualized, makes certain measures seem reasonable, while framing others as counterproductive. If, for example, the Jewish Israeli audience accepts the broader desecuritizing narrative that claims that Palestinian violence stems from a resistance to the occupation—a policy decision of acting militarily would be understood as ineffective and counter-productive, and therefore support for military action would not take place. The narratives function on two levels; the immediate circumstances that caused the conflict, and the broader context. On the one hand, the immediate narrative that is largely accepted by Israeli hegemonic society—and propagated by the government—traces the escalation of the 2014 conflict to the kidnapping of the three teenage boys. The escalation rests on Hamas's actions; it follows that operation Protective Edge was defensive in nature, and a reaction to a developing threat that must be immediately blocked. Peleg from Im Tirtzu articulated this narrative when I interviewed him:

“Look, Protective Edge—Tzuk Eitan—was an escalation, snowball. Three kids were kidnapped and murdered, and this was in Judea and Samaria<sup>17</sup>. But, almost [at] the same time, two things [happened]: riots in Jerusalem, between Arabs and Jews, Arabs on Jews,

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<sup>17</sup> The West Bank is sometimes referred to by Jewish Israelis as Judea and Samaria—the former named after its geographic position of the Jordan River, the latter after the ancient kingdom of Judea and the kingdom of Samaria.

we didn't do anything to no one—they attacked us. And also Hamas from Gaza started to shoot more and more...missiles on Israel. So remember, that was the timeline. Murdering the children, and then the IDF and all of Israel [were] very...concerned and then...a riot in Jerusalem and then they decided to shoot missiles again. This was the beginning of Protective Edge.”

Peleg's identification of the kidnapping of the three teenage boys as the initial starting point for the 2014 conflict echoes the government's narrative, and the one mostly accepted by the hegemonic Israeli society. The riots Peleg is referring to are mostly likely the riots that ensued from operation Brother's Keeper's—which will be discussed shortly. The second level; the broader context as conceptualized by the securitizing agents and hegemonic society will be further explored in the next chapter.

A different immediate narrative emerged from the desecuritizing side—articulated by two interviewees: Weltmann—the community organizer and Khenin—from Hadash.<sup>18</sup> Zehava Gal-On— Meretz's party leader, articulated an alternative narrative in the media, and most desecuritizing agents voiced their opinions on the events described below. PHRI's written report on the conflict did make note of differing narratives, which will be discussed shortly. Both Khenin and Weltmann cite the breakdown of the 2013-2014 peace talks between Israel and the PLO, which were mediated by Secretary of State John Kerry as the precursor to the conflict. They argue that Israel's decision to halt the release of the fourth allotment of Palestinian political prisoners that were held in Israeli prisoners effectively ended the negotiations. Weltmann explains the Israeli government's *intent* to escalate:

“Some of these political prisoners were released, according to the framework of the negotiations, but a large group were not released. Which is one of the results of why in

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<sup>18</sup> Weltmann was interviewed for his role in organizing anti-war demonstrations in Haifa. However, Weltmann also serves as MK Khenin's parliamentary advisor.

April of 2014 the negotiations collapsed. Around that time there began a hunger strike<sup>19</sup>, mass hunger strike, of Palestinian prisoners inside Israeli jails and also against this backdrop, Palestinians formed a government of national consent including both Fatah and Hamas. So as we approach June, in operation Shuvu Achim [operation Brother's Keeper], the political climate was that the Israeli government was in a tight spot, the talks had collapsed, it was facing blame from the international community for the collapse of the talks. It was facing pressure from the hunger strikers...and it was facing—for the first time in many years, a Palestinian government [that] included both political parties from the West Bank and from Gaza Strip. This was the backdrop in which the escalation began.”

Shuvu Achim—Operation Brother's Keeper<sup>20</sup>—preceded operation Protective Edge; the Israeli security forces launched the West Bank operation in an effort to return the three kidnapped boys. Unbeknownst to the Israeli public, the three boys were killed moments after the kidnapping—whether the government was aware of this fact remains a mystery.<sup>21</sup> Aside from searching for the kidnapped teens, the Israeli security forces used the opportunity to crack down on Hamas’s networks in the West Bank, arrest Palestinians who were released in the Gilad Shalit prisoner exchange, and break the Hamas-Fatah coalition government. The latter three objectives were only officially announced 4 days into the operation.

On June 22 B’Tselem initiated a Facebook campaign dubbed ‘hitchhiking’ (תופסים טרמפ) to expose the government ‘hitchhiking’ on the kidnapping to carry out acts in the

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<sup>19</sup> The prisoners were protesting their conditions and the practice of indefinite detention.

<sup>20</sup> In Hebrew ‘Shuvu Achim’ literally translates to ‘return brothers’—‘Return’ being an imperative. The English name for the operation is a reference to the biblical story of Caine and Able; after Caine kills Able, God questions Caine on the whereabouts of his brother, Caine replies: “I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?” (Genesis 4:9).

<sup>21</sup> A recording of the emergency call the teens had made while they were in the kidnapers’ car leaked on social media on June 1<sup>st</sup>—after the teenagers were found dead. In the recording, two rounds of rapid fire are heard. Government cabinet members and the families of the victims were given permission to hear the emergency call prior to the leak, though the recording was of lower quality, and the gunshots could not be heard clearly. It is unknown if cabinet members were intentionally misled (see: <http://www.nrg.co.il/online/1/ART2/591/835.html>).

occupied territories that are unrelated to the stated goal of the operation, and that infringe on the local population's rights. Namely, increased checkpoints and limiting civilian movement, barring permit holders from entering Israel, canceling family visits for Palestinians held in Israeli prisons, widespread indefinite detentions, and carrying out a home demolition on the family home of an individual accused of carrying out a terrorist attack earlier that year. Khenin argued that the government used the opportunity to "heat the field";

"Israel's decision of starting an operation of arrests of people who were released in the Gilad Shalit deal led to an escalation that cascaded to Gaza. We must add that the socio-economic situation in Gaza worsened, and as we know today, even in the Israeli government there were those who warned that the Palestinians were backed into a corner that there is no escape from; and the result of this situation would be some sort of blow-up."

Some of the desecuritizing actors challenge the narrative that is largely accepted by Israeli hegemonic Jewish society; their narratives draw upon events that had an effect on the Palestinian socio-political arena, calling into question the notion that the guilt rests solely upon the kidnapping of the three teenage boys alone. This could be attributed to Huysmans's objectivist strategy of desecuritization, whereby the assumed objective timeline of the hegemonic narrative is countered by contextualizing the situation within other objective events; the main counter being that Hamas did not act without provocation. PHRI's introductory paragraph of the 2014 report on the conflict employs the objectivist strategy by challenging the dominant narrative, without explicitly calling the government's narrative into question. The report identifies operation Brother's Keeper as the broader context of operation Protective Edge, which is argued to have commenced in response to two events—the kidnapping of the three teenagers, *and* the signaling of a Hamas-Fatah coalition government—"a decision that was received with

hostility by the Israeli government” (PHRI, 2014). The Israeli government never attempted to conceal its goal of subjugating Hamas during Brother’s Keeper; as well as disintegration the Hamas-Fatah coalition, which directly intrudes on the internal Palestinian political process—a measure that is extraneous to the kidnapping, and arguably a violation of the Oslo accords.

The discursive practices of the desecuritizing agents intertwine objectivist and constructivist strategies in their aim of contesting the hegemonic narrative. In Huysmans’s framework of desecuritizing strategies, a constructivist approach emphasizes the social construction of threat; though in this case, the construction of the threat is predicated on an active manipulation of the facts on the ground. Some desecuritizing actors perceive the physical actions of the Israeli military, directed by the government, as forming the circumstances in such a way that “made the masses ripe for persuasion” (Balzacq 2005, 183). Desecuritizing agents conceive the conflict as manufactured by the Israeli government, not necessarily through discursive acts, but by manipulating a delicate political situation in which escalation would surely lead to a response, subject to an even harsher response on the part of the Israeli government.

Framed this way, the desecuritizing agents are doing something similar to what Doty (2007) attempted to achieve in her piece. Though one of Doty’s main arguments is that the process of securitization is sometimes facilitated by non-state actors, long before policy-making decisions take place—still, though the practices described above were carried out by the military—under the direction of the Israeli government—their

invisibility mirrors Doty's observations. She argues "it would be a mistake to ignore these *seemingly* less spectacular happenings, for they can tell us a great deal about exceptionalism and the political. Quite often they have serious consequences for those whose lives are affected by various manifestations of exceptionalism" (Doty 2007, 124).

An interesting comparison is Gal-On's comments just two days after the teenagers were kidnapped:

"Netanyahu's government and the intelligence bodies should have taken into account the escalation in the field following the decision(s): not to implement the fourth tranche—that included the release of prisoners, the hunger strike of 250 prisoners under indefinite detention, and the fact that ten Palestinians were already killed in clashes since the beginning of the year... However, for the Palestinians, *under the surface* [emphasis added], unrest had already begun" (Gal-On, Channel 2, 14/6/2014)

Doty's (2007) piece discusses 'decisions' (such as militia patrol of the U.S. border) made regarding the enemy-friend logic, which go unnoticed *because* they are unspectacular.

Why then—for the Jewish Israel public at least—are indefinite detentions, a mass hunger strike, and the killing of Palestinians *under the surface*? It is a function of the institutionalization of the security logic, which routinizes and forms oppression into practice. The practice of indefinite detentions and mass arrests—which the hunger strikers were protesting—seems to have been a key component of the 2014 conflict; yet, its institutionalization renders it invisible in general Jewish Israeli discourse; indeed, the hunger strike attempted to render some practices *visible*. Other contributing factors to the escalation; limiting prisoner visits, home demolitions and restrictions on freedom of movement go unnoticed by the Israeli public at large because these exceptional measures are already institutionalized into practice. The besiegement of Hebron during Brother's Keeper may have been out of the ordinary—though besieging a small town after a terror

attack is not unheard of, and setting up random checkpoints is a routine practice.<sup>22</sup> In sum, carrying out these ‘seemingly less spectacular’, as well as spectacular conducts could not be have been achieved without existing normalization of the practice within the military apparatus. Though they have grave consequences on Palestinian populations—the invisibility of these exceptional practices render Palestinian retaliation as ‘unwarranted’ for the Jewish Israeli public at large.

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<sup>22</sup> A friend disclosed to me during my research trip that as a soldier his unit would sometimes set up checkpoints ‘because they were bored’. Breaking the Silence publishes soldiers’ testimonies which could be found on their website.

## **Chapter 4 Who Is Your Enemy?**

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the securitization process. Understanding the mechanisms at play will in turn allow us to theorize the optimal route of desecuritization. This chapter identifies the Israeli government's two target audiences in the securitization process; the international community and the Jewish Israeli public. I later argue that the Israeli government's focus on the international community is an indication that disrupting the international community's acquiescence may be a good strategy of desecuritization. Second, I demonstrate how the Israeli government mobilized cultural motifs and other heuristic artifacts; which builds up to my argument that desecuritization efforts should work on that level as well. The (re)securitization process entailed two different enemies; the first, for international audiences, was Hamas. The organization was clearly defined as threatening to Israel's national security—thus framing insecurity existing in the military sector. The second—for the Jewish Israeli audience was more complex; the securitizing actor—the Israeli government—relied on the already established security issue of the Palestinians as a whole, in the process of securitization. Drawing on the notions that the Palestinians pose a demographic and military threat, which mark both Israel's Jewish national identity and national security as existentially threatened—the Jewish Israeli audience was 'invested in an aura of unprecedented threatening complexion'. Further, as a part of Israel's 'regime of truth', the Palestinian threat is contextualized in terms of a broader determinist notion of the eternal enemy. Characteristic of states where securitization is institutionalized, the threat did not have to be 'spelled out' by the

securitizing agents (Buzan et al. 1998, 27). Therefore the government relied on ambiguous speech acts, religious symbolism and references to collective memory in order to garner audience acceptance. The use of religious symbolism and various signifiers of identity demonstrates that the securitization move ‘touched on’ the societal sector, in which (re)construction of national identity (and the exclusion of the Palestinian minority within Israel) took place (Huysmans 1998b, 494); as opposed to the military sector, which would indicate a process of securitization that is exclusively focused on Hamas. First, I discuss the various ways in which Palestinian society is organized through the logic of security (in the West Bank and Gaza), via exceptional measures. Inconsistencies, as well as ideological underpinnings are discussed as well. I then discuss the ‘eternal enemy’. Finally, I demonstrate the discrepancy in discourse for the two audiences temporally; discourse before Protective Edge was more ambiguous and failed to identify Hamas—in particular—as the ‘enemy’ posing a military threat to Israel’s security. During the operation, however, the enemy and referent object were clearly defined—a securitization move aimed at international audience acquiescence—this process is laid chronologically. The ‘enemy’ is redefined once more following the military operation in order to cement a particular narrative into collective memory.

## **4.2 The Palestinian Threat and Exceptional Measures**

My main argument is that the securitizing actors relied on an already securitized issue in order to prompt agreement for Operation Protective Edge; the existing security issue being Palestinian violence, and the threat being the Palestinian people (or more broadly, rationalized as ‘Arabs’ and ‘Muslims’). Palestinians, as an ethnic and national group are

already securitized; that is, the population is both treated and viewed as a security threat by the Israeli government both within the military and societal sectors. Studies that demonstrate the perceived threat of Palestinians by Israeli Jewish society indicate that Palestinians posing an existential threat to the state of Israel, and its Jewish identity have largely been accepted (Bar-Tal, Jacobson 1995; Bar-Tal et al. 2008; Canetti-Nisim et al 2008; Bar-Tal et al 2010). Through the logic that the Palestinian *people* pose a security threat, their lives are largely affected by policies and practices that work to mitigate this perceived threat. In practice, Palestinians living in the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza are heavily surveilled by the Israeli security apparatus, through the logic of exclusion and social control (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2012; Zureik, Lyon, and Abu-Laban 2011). In the West Bank,<sup>23</sup> civilian Palestinian movement is restricted and controlled by checkpoints and roadblocks (B'Tselem July 2007; Ophir, Givoni, and Hanafi 2009), and Palestinians are forbidden from demonstrating and protesting (B'Tselem January 2013). Gazan patients in need of medical care outside of the Gaza strip are systemically denied services by the Israeli security authorities based on their demographics, (PHRI August 2016) and are subjected to interrogations and pressured to collaborate through the process of permit acquisition (ibid). Palestinians living in the occupied territories live under what could be only described as a twisted or 'governmentalized' Schmittian state of exceptionalism, in which the logic of friend and enemy both serves as a technology of ordering Palestinian society and treats Palestinians as the enemy that must be protected against.

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<sup>23</sup> Specifically the areas that the Israeli military has exclusive security control over. These areas— Areas B and C— comprise of 80% of the West Bank (See: B'Tselem October 2013).

### **4.3 Arab Israelis in a State of Struggle and the Jewish Israeli Self**

The ways in which Israeli law and institutions conceptualize Palestinians who are citizens of Israel is a little more complex. I argue that the process of (re)securitization in the 2014 conflict relied on a multi-sectorial approach, which implicated Palestinian citizens of Israel as well. There are discriminatory laws specifically targeting Palestinian citizens of Israel (Shafir & Peled, 2002). These laws branch from a logic of external threats, as well as an existential threat to Israel's internal Jewish state identity; laws operating on this logic have been passed at increasingly higher rates in the wake of the second intifada (Olesker 2014). Further, Israel's Palestinian minority's ethnic association with its kin in the West Bank and Gaza makes "the ethnic majority, which controls the state apparatus, perceive the identity of the minority as a part of a greater, more threatening 'other' (Kachuyevski & Olesker, 2014). Abulof (2014) demonstrates that securitization moves pertaining to the 'internal demographics threat' of the Palestinian minority in Israel are correlated to periods of times where securitization moves increase overall (second Lebanon war, the height of the second intifada). Palestinians living within Israel are therefore caught in the matrix of insecurity—even when the enemy is not Palestinian; internal dissociation is further exacerbated during periods of conflict in general. The discursive differentiation between Israel's Jewish and Palestinian populations bears real implications; I asked Barakeh if he believes that the Israeli police treat Palestinians differently in protests where no Jews are present. His response was: "There is no doubt. There is no need to explain in detail, we can see what happened in Umm al Hiran<sup>24</sup> that is

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<sup>24</sup> Umm al Hiran in Southern Israel was subject to a demolition order, due to illegal construction, and in order to make space for a Jewish Yishuv. A few months prior to my interview with Barakeh, the Israeli police carried out some of the demolition orders (in full riot gear). In the process, a resident was killed by police and said to have been an ISIS operative by the Israeli

within the state of Israel, and what happened in Amona<sup>25</sup> that is in occupied territory—private Palestinian territory—occupied territory that is outside the borders of the state and is under military jurisdiction.”

However, as Olesker (2014) argues, the relationship is more complex than the friend/enemy mentality; a result of Palestinians living in Israel having representation in the Knesset, their grievances and opposition to certain laws and practices can be voiced through political and public platforms, dealt with through the institutional framework that exists. However, demonstrated in the next chapter, during the 2014 conflict—and specifically during Protective Edge—Knesset Members (MKs) from the Palestinian community faced increased delegitimization and were penalized for their stances. Their desecuritizing moves were therefore met with hostility. Palestinians living in the occupied territories are not afforded the opportunity of being a part of the decision making process regarding the practices and policies that dictate their lives. The exceptional measures utilized within Israel as opposed to the West Bank and Gaza differ in scope and severity. This complexity doesn't run counter to my position, but rather an indication that the discourse and practices that aim to conceptualize Palestinians as a security threat exist, to a certain degree, in a state of struggle or discursive instability—a position that sits well with a post-structuralist reading.

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police and government officials. These accusations were later rescinded. (See: Arian & Jarus-Hakak, 2017)

<sup>25</sup> Amona was a Jewish Israeli settlement, subject to a demolition order as it was built on private Palestinian land. Its demolition occurred a few weeks after Umm al Hiran, and therefore the two are frequently compared. Israeli police were dressed in regular uniform, rather than riot gear, and acted in restraint in response to resistance.

Institutional accessibility is one dimension, but one could look to Israel's ideological underpinnings to explain this discursive state of struggle further. Ezrahi (1997) traces a number of orientations to 'communal epics'—narratives—as foundations of Israeli group identity and, by extension, of the Other. Most relevant to this thesis—and the particular time frame of discussion—is what Ezrahi terms 'Darwinian nationalism', "a major element in right-wing Zionist movements" (Ezrahi 1997, 89). Ezrahi characterizes Darwinian nationalists as

“[c]onstantly preoccupied with threats to the survival of the nation...For Darwinian nationalists the state is primarily a tool, a weapon of the group, not a continually created and re-created instrument of the self-government of free individuals...The other side of the tendency of this orientation...is to exclude members of groups whose loyalty is questionable...[Darwinian nationalists] are inclined to extend the war of survival from the battle against outside groups to a struggle against real or imagined internal enemies...leaders of several right-wing parties have very frequently treated Arabs living in the state not as Israeli citizens, but as the internal arm of the external enemy” (Ezrahi 1997, 88-90).

In relation to Palestinian citizens of Israel, the majority group's friend-enemy distinction is thus just as much of an internal identity complex in Jewish Israeli society as it is about how Jewish Israelis view Palestinians. In other words, the convoluted view of Israel's Arab population is a reflection of internal struggles of Jewish Israeli identity. If we view friend and enemy as mutually constituted, a somewhat stark picture emerges. Through a Foucauldian power-knowledge nexus one could see—given that overall insecurity is related to securitization of Israel's Arab population—how the process of (re)securitization works to reconstitute the friend-enemy distinction, and in the process reconstitutes Jewish Israeli identity through specific ideological discourse. If true, it thus gives desecuritizing actors another reason to generally oppose the process of (re)securitization—it further alienates Israel's Palestinian population, and (re)constructs

Jewish Israeli identity through hegemonic discourse. In line with Foucault's conceptualization of subject-constitution, and with the view of discourse always existing in a state of struggle—I am not arguing that this particular Jewish identity, which seems to be reinforced, forms a *single* subject-position. Foucault is clear that “subjects are gradually, progressively, really, and materially constituted through a multiplicity of organisms, forces, energies, materials, desires, thoughts, etc” (Foucault 1980a, 97). In short, a Foucauldian power-knowledge nexus allows us to understand the relationship between subject-constitution and the process of securitization—while also being able to conceptualize resistance.

The overall takeaway from the relationship between Israel and its Palestinian minority described above is threefold; first, the securitization process during the 2014 conflict relied on a multi-sectorial approach in the intersubjective process of insecurity construction in relation to the Jewish Israeli audience—this is a characteristic of a ‘deep securitization’—in which “various security sectors are combined into a synergetic whole” (Abulof 2014, 401). The process thus elevates the level of threat by drawing power from two referent objects that are already securitized—Jewish Israeli identity and state security. While the securitizing agents never outright implicated the Palestinian population within Israel, the link was established previously. Bar-Tal and Jacobson argue, “...the concept "security" is used by the Israeli leadership, media, and public without specifications, on the assumption that there is common representation of the concept” (Bar Tal & Jacobson 1995, 567). Secondly, the process of securitization, due to its multi-sectorial characterization and (re)construction of Jewish Israeli identity, also excludes

Israel's Palestinian population from the democratic process and (re)establishes them as internal enemies. Third, due to the fact that the Palestinian population is largely securitized, paired with an amplified sense of insecurity as it comes to Israel's Palestinian population during times of friction—such as the 2014 conflict—Palestinian desecuritizing agents (such as Palestinian Knesset members) possess less agency in their ability to make desecuritizing moves through state institutions, and are therefore more likely to practice desecuritization through resistance (as outlined in chapter 2) as a strategic choice of activity.

Palestinian violence, or the Arab/Muslim threat, exists—in Foucauldian terminology—as a part of Israel's regime of truth. That is, the conceptualization of threat and enemy is a function of power, which produces and constitutes the discourse as fact; the maintenance of which works through military, political, media, and academic discourse in society. This is not to say that Israel is forever destined, or always has, been motivated by deep determinist angst of insecurity driven by 'Darwinian nationalist' rhetoric. Such a thesis would not fare well with a desecuritization framework, and would be a determinist notion within itself. Rather, it is a function of elites working through and perpetuating the regime of truth. Within Israel, the nationalist and religious-nationalist hold of public institutions since the mid 90s has worked to establish a view of Israel as "'a people dwelling alone' (Numbers 23:9) in a hostile Gentile world driven by anti-Semitism" (Zerubavel 1995, 212). This worldview, also referred to as the 'Masada complex', frames the Israeli-Palestinian conflict not in terms of a nationalist struggle of the Palestinians, but rather as merely one act in a long history of external forces seeking to destroy the

Jewish people. This discourse is embedded in religious and historic symbolism, which ties the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with previous Arab-Israeli wars, to an extended understanding of Jewish history as a history of struggle and persecution. Netanyahu's infamous remark in 2015 is an example of this: "I'm asked if we will forever live by the sword—yes" (Ha'aretz 26/10/15).

This type of discourse was also voiced during the 2014 conflict. Mordechai Kedar—an Israeli professor of Arabic culture—exemplifies this discourse of factuality regarding the threat on the Knesset Channel.<sup>26</sup> His comments, made during the 2014 conflict, expose a discourse of threat and enmity, which is perceived as spanning across hundreds of years:

"I have no ideology. I am an intelligence person, for these purposes. I was an intelligence man for 25 years, where there is no ideology; there, there are facts, texts. You need to read what they tell about you. And we, as Jews, we don't have the privilege of not believing what they write about us and against us... They [Arabs] say: 'we have time', there is a verse in the Quran that states: "Allah is with the patient"... Therefore we will wait 100 years, 200 years, 300 years... They [the Jews] will fall once, and that will be the end of it. Therefore, we have patience. We'll try rockets, doesn't work? We'll blow up buses, doesn't work? We'll try chemical weapons."

Another example is the following statement by Zvi Yehezkeli, the head correspondent of Arab affairs at Israeli News Channel 10 during Protective Edge: "If one [enemy] accepts you, then another one will appear, and not accept you [as well]. If Hamas would be gone, ISIS will come. That one [Hamas] will go, Iran will come. We will always have an enemy" (Globes 12/8/2014). Finally, Netanyahu's remarks during Protective Edge—which are tamer (for reasons described below) also establish a link between the conflict and a historic battle facing the Jewish people:

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<sup>26</sup> The Knesset Channel is a publically owned television channel.

“We are in a war [defending] the home. The current operation is needed for the security of Israel’s citizens... We are working shoulder to shoulder [the government and military] on an organized and meticulous plan in the *current* [emphasis added] battle against terror, which is part of our historic battle against terror that wishes to harm us since the creation of the state... From the genesis of our nation, we know a simple truth—the eternal nation is not afraid of a long path... With the help of god, with their help [the soldiers] we will do and succeed<sup>27</sup>” (Netanyahu 20/7/14).

This discourse thus frames the ‘Darwinian nationalist’ narrative as an objective truth of history, which in turn (re)constructs Jewish Israeli identity along these ideological lines. Following Balzacq’s (2005) call to conceptualize securitization as power-laden, one could see that the struggle for success in the ‘marketplace of ideas’ is a rather unfair one, in which one side’s merchandise is sold as truth, and impregnated with symbolism that speaks to the audience’s identity.

#### **4.4 Securitization: The Jewish Israeli Audience**

The securitizing agents therefore mobilized the existing repertoire of threat, and its associated historical narrative, whereby the Palestinian *people*, by extension of being Muslim (and as the ambiguous threatening Other) are depicted as the enemy. I would like to note, however, that not *all* politicians from Netanyahu’s government alluded to or explicitly identified the Palestinian people as the threat (though, the number who did is staggering). In fact, many rejected the notion outright. My argument, however, is that the Palestinian threat has been previously discursively interlaced into collective memory and discourses of mythology regarding Jewish identity. Drawing on these discourses of existential threat is a strategy frequently utilized by Israeli politicians (Yair 2014). Yair

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<sup>27</sup> “With the help of god, with their help [the soldiers] we will do and succeed” works to make a connection between the state (through the military) and religion—‘with the help of god we will do and succeed’ is a well-known religious phrase.

explains: “PM Netanyahu’s address suggests that he and other Israeli leaders capitalize on this common cultural substratum while utilizing all four facets [the mythological predicament, historical evidence, contemporary threats and future risks]...Netanyahu and state officials are [not]...peculiar in drawing on these cultural resources” (Yair 2014, 358). Politicians, and Netanyahu in particular—mobilize these ‘cultural resources’, which are embedded in the intersubjective process of (re)securitization.

As I will shortly demonstrate, the government of Israel engaged in different discursive practices in front of international audiences; wherein the government solidified the threat into an *organizational* characterization— Hamas—on platforms where international audiences may be watching, especially after operation Protective Edge began. In the process, the securitizing agents reconstructed the Palestinian people as victims (in contradiction to the mechanisms that allowed securitization to take place in front of the Jewish Israeli audience), as the world turned its attention to the conflict. Affected by and drawing from the existing threat repertoire, the Israeli public’s view on the status of Palestinian victimhood is not as clear-cut. In other words, the government drew upon the ambiguous repertoire of threat of the Palestinians in order for Jewish society to accept its exceptional measures, and (re)securitize the Palestinians—both internally and externally. After the government was given a mandate to act militarily by the Israeli public, there was a need to define the enemy in a way that would allow for international acquiescence. Thereafter, the Palestinian people were less likely to be referred to or to be alluded as the enemy by the higher echelons of the government and military; especially by Prime Minister Netanyahu. The notion that the Palestinian people are indeed the enemy,

however, still existed within Israeli society, despite the government's change in discourse.<sup>28</sup> In other words, securitization discourse operates across the military and societal sectors domestically and in the military sector internationally.

There are some blatant examples of government officials (re)securitizing the Palestinian issue:<sup>29</sup> on July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2014 (the day of the funeral of the three teenage boys) Ayelet Shaked of the Jewish Home Party uploaded a Facebook status quoting an article, which states: “The Palestinian nation declared war on us, and we need to respond with war... This is war, and not a war on terror, or a war on extremism, and not even a war against the Palestinian Authority... This is a war between two nations. Who is the enemy? The Palestinian Nation... It includes the mothers of the Shahids (martyrs), who send them to hell with flowers and kisses.”<sup>30</sup> Following the decision of Israel's Palestinian population to strike in protest of operation protective Edge, Avigdor Lieberman- Israel's Defense Minister called on Jewish Israelis to boycott Arab businesses in retaliation (Ha'aretz, 21/7/14). The Prime Minister neither commented on nor condemned Lieberman's call for a boycott (The Marker, 22/7/14).

Further, after the bodies of the three teenage boys were found, Israel's security council discussed possible retaliatory measures—mainly a military operation (which of course

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<sup>28</sup> For example: crowds perceiving the ‘enemy’ as the Palestinians—continuous calls of ‘death to the Arabs’ during counter-protests and signs against ‘Palestinians’ or ‘Arabs’ (Haifa 12/7/2014, 19/7/2014, Tel-Aviv 13/7/2014 etc.).

<sup>29</sup> Though unrelated to this conflict, another blatant example is Netanyahu's comments during the 2015 elections, in which he released a video claiming: “The right-wing government is in danger. Arab voters are heading to the polling stations in droves... With the help of God, we will build a nationalist government that will protect the state of Israel.” Thus invoking fears of the Palestinian minority, mentioning state security and God in the same breath.

<sup>30</sup> This Facebook status created somewhat of a diplomatic controversy, where Turkey's President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan called Shaked “Hitler”. Prime Minister Netanyahu responded to the remarks, and claimed to have discussed the comments with President Obama.

materialized into Protective Edge), approving more settlement construction in the occupied territories, and demolitions of the assailants' family homes (Channel 2, 30/6/14). All measures were subsequently approved. What is worthy of attention is the proposal to expand settlement construction. If the enemy was indeed conceptualized as Hamas, it is unclear why settlement expansion in the *West Bank*—which affects the Palestinian population in a separate area—was considered.

A more subtle example of the process of framing the enemy in ambiguous terms is Netanyahu's remarks during the funeral of the three teenage boys. Earlier, I attempted to express the significance of this event for Israel's Jewish hegemonic society. The funeral was broadcast live on all the major television channels, and was attended by thousands of people—including top government and religious leaders. Invested with symbolic power and set at the peak of a tragic chain of events threaded with national, state and religious symbolism, Netanyahu had this to say to the public:

“A whole nation stood together, and was reminded of who we are, why we are here.... The light that shone from you loomed greater than the horrendous darkness of those who seek our lives.<sup>31</sup> Despicable children hunters, abominable murderers— *whose brothers rejoice as the blood of the pure spills* [emphasis added]. A deep and wide moral chasm separates us from our enemies. They sanctify death, and we [sanctify] life. They sanctify cruelty, and we [sanctify] mercy. This is the secret to our power, and this is the base of our unity. During our history as a people we proved, not once, that even when we faced the events and tragedies that were inflicted upon us, even when facing wells of death and sorrow, the power of life that is within us passes the ambitions of murder and destruction of our enemies.”

Contrary to Netanyahu's comments made in official forums where the international community could scrutinize his words, it is difficult to decipher the enemy that is referred

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<sup>31</sup> There are countless biblical references in Netanyahu's speech. “Those who seek our lives ” (מבקשי נפשנו) is a biblical figure of speech for enemies, usually referred to in the context of revenge (Psalms 35:4, 38:13, 40:15 and Jeremiah 19:7, 21:7, 22:25).

to. It renders the enemy obscure, imploring the audience to connect the dots between history, religious symbols and the present moment. Who is this enemy who sanctifies death, and whose morals are corrupted? Here is an excerpt from Netanyahu's speech to the graduating class of fighter pilots—attended by the higher echelons of the military and Israel's Defense Minister Ya'alon. The speech was given on June 26, amidst operation Brother's Keeper and four days prior to the discovery of the bodies. It is worth noting that the word ' Hamas ' was only mentioned once, though the entire speech was centered on the existing security agenda:

“My friends, these days is a test to the strength of Israeli society and the strength of the IDF—the kidnapping affair of the three teenagers...were kidnapped by a cruel enemy. This case teaches us who we are up against, and what we are struggling with. In front of us stand extreme terrorist forces that have no moral coherency. What motivates them is a pit of hate to the state of Israel—which they seek to wipe off the map. They are not [motivated by] a nationalist liberation, nor are they people that are motivated by despair and frustration. These are people who are fed extreme religious ideological messages...they seek to garner fear and horror within us, strike chasms in our unity and spill our blood. *I seek to emphasize that the determined fight with Hamas who kidnapped the teenagers is merely one component in the overall picture.* Anyone who inspects what is being done in the Middle East sees clearly how violence spreads like fire... Shia and Sunnis fight amongst each other in a murderous fit of rage, and also [fight] anyone who is in the vicinity. These pictures [of violence in the middle east] are reminiscent of dark images in the history of mankind. If someone thinks that these [are issues] of the past—he sees reality with his own eyes. Today it is clear more than ever why I insist on Israel's security to begin at Jordan's line...Our ability to defend ourselves...is not just a corner stone in Zionist thinking, it is a steady existential need that is not dependent on time” (Prime Minister's Office, 26/06/2014)

In any case, Netanyahu ties this event to a long historical memory of conflict between Jews and the ambiguous 'enemy'—in the second quote, evoking the memory of the Holocaust. Returning to the quote from the funeral; even if we were willing to suspend disbelief, and assume that Netanyahu is referring to Hamas, what can we make of the following statement? “Whose [the enemies'] brothers rejoice as the blood of the pure spills”. It is clear that—at the very least—Netanyahu depicts some of the Palestinian

population as rejoicing in the killing, and therefore, he implies, the Palestinians as a whole pose a threat to Jewish Israelis. In the second quote, he clearly identifies Arab violence as a security threat, and makes the connection between the kidnapping and general violence amongst Muslims in other countries. Further, time—according to Netanyahu—is not a factor, Jews will always be under the threat of the ambiguous enemy.

#### **4.5 Securitization: the Eve of the Operation and International Audiences**

The threat that the Israeli government and military were addressing through security measures was clearly defined and articulated by the securitizing agents during the timeframe of Protective Edge— Hamas posed a threat to ‘the home’ (Netanyahu, 7/8/14). In fact, only in a few cases—especially from the higher echelons—did politicians claim that the Palestinian people, rather than Hamas, posed a threat to Israel’s national security. Throughout Protective Edge, however, religious symbolism was still utilized to ensure Jewish Israeli continued support and (re)establishing the need for military action. The reiterated narrative during the operation was as follows—Israel is fighting Hamas and other terrorist groups in the Gaza Strip. The Gazan people are themselves victims of Hamas, because they are used as human shields. Furthermore, Hamas is responsible for the deaths that occur as a result of Israel’s bombings, as Hamas is the belligerent force— Israel is merely protecting itself. Therefore, Hamas is liable for civilian casualties in Gaza. The enemy that Israel is fighting is Hamas, not the civilian population— they are victims. “And I believe they [Hamas and other terrorist groups] are the enemies of the Palestinians themselves” (Netanyahu 20/8/14). Netanyahu used this reasoning on

multiple occasions, the most notable of which transpired in his first official address regarding the beginning of Protective Edge. This message was broadcasted throughout the Israeli media, as well as on Netanyahu's official YouTube page:

"...I therefore ordered a significant expansion of the IDF's actions against the Hamas's terrorists, and against the other terrorist organization in Gaza. I did this only after all efforts to restore calmness were unanswered, and Hamas chose escalation.... The IDF directs its actions against Hamas terrorists, and not against innocent civilians. Hamas intentionally hides behind Palestinian citizens, and therefore, he [Hamas] is the one who bears responsibility when they get hit by accident" (7/8/14).

Other government officials, such as Naftali Bennett—then Economy Minister and a sitting member of the Security Cabinet—made similar arguments, in an interview conducted in English for international audiences, using mostly the same language:

"Effectively, Hamas is killing its own people...Imagine if on London you'd have about 200 rockets falling a day from a terror group, a radical terror group...Hamas is deliberately putting its women and children around these rocket launchers in order for them to die, in order for you to ask me these questions" (Sky News, Unknown date).

The video of Netanyahu's remarks on the eve of the operation serves as a revealing document in its own right; the short speech was translated into English by the Prime Minister's office; however, there are small discrepancies in translation. Most notable of these is Netanyahu's second sentence; "We will not tolerate the firing of missiles on our cities and towns". However, the official English translation reads: "No other country lives under such a threat, and no country would accept such a threat. Israel will not tolerate the firing of rockets on our cities and towns" (Netanyahu, 7/8/14). Netanyahu never uttered these words; yet, they appear in the English translation. The same video serves to address

two audiences; the international community (via English translation) and the Jewish Israeli public (via Hebrew audio). While the securitization moves targeting the Jewish Israeli audiences were already accepted—through mechanisms that were previously discussed—the international community’s acquiescence was still to be decided.

Netanyahu was hyper-aware of the role and significance of the international community, and their ability to limit or impede Israel’s military operation. In every briefing during the operation, Netanyahu reiterated the importance of the international community’s moral and formal acquiescence (7/8/14, 20/7/2014, 20/8/2014 etc.). Hamas posing a military threat to Israel’s national security needed to be clearly defined for international acquiescence and understanding. Tzipi Hotovely, a Knesset Member from Netanyahu’s Likud party, highlights this point: “Unfortunately we’ve seen what this terrorist organization does to innocent children. It is easier for us, in front of the world, during this difficult time that Israel finds itself in front of the international sphere, and therefore, it’s in the interest of the State of Israel that our enemies are clearly identified and declared” (Knesset channel, 9/7/14). Nitzan Chen, Director of the Government Press Office, again reiterated this point:

“The message was: ‘ Hamas is shooting at civilian population and uses its citizenry as human shields.’ That was the message that was determined by the Prime Minister and The National Information Directorate... There is another message that we conveyed: that this isn’t a regional conflict of the Middle East, but rather a part of the world’s struggle against Islamic terrorism. That they are part of the terror, like ISIS or al-Qaeda... In the world [media], Hamas was covered as a murderous terrorist organization... And Israel won in the Hasbara. And then the ground invasion came, and shuffled the cards... Since the ground invasion we are identifying a difficult shift [in framing] and criticism of the operation”

International acquiescence was clearly important for the continuation of the military operation. Further, the Israeli government attempted to make a connection between Hamas and other terrorist organizations that some Western nations are in conflict with, in order to make its case. Here is Netanyahu addressing the international community:

“You asked me a question in English, I want to say something in English. Hamas is like ISIS, ISIS is like Hamas. They are branches of the same tree. And I can say that the entire world has been shocked by the atrocities of ISIS... When we face the same savagery... And when they can, they murder children... Throw people from the 6<sup>th</sup> floor— their own people, and use people as human shields. Hamas is ISIS and ISIS is Hamas, they are the enemies of all civilized countries. And I believe they are the enemies of the Palestinians themselves” (Netanyahu 20/8/14).

In sum, for international audiences Operation Protective edge was framed as a battle against Hamas, which was argued to be one front against a global war on terror. The Palestinian people were framed as victims of Hamas. This stands in contrast to the way the threat was conceptualized in discourse in front of Jewish Israeli audiences, which framed Hamas as an extension of Palestinian/Arab violence—a chapter in an eternal battle of the Jewish people against a hostile world.

#### **4.6 The Cyclical Nature of Abstraction**

This process of distorting the enemy into the abstract, and constructing security issues through an abstracted understanding of the enemy is cyclical in nature, and indeed, this process is already underway as Protective Edge solidifies into collective memory.

Returning to Bennett, who is quoted earlier in this chapter staunchly following the securitizing narrative during the conflict where the enemy was clearly defined as Hamas, his depiction of the enemy post-conflict suddenly changed. Just days after Protective Edge ended: on September 1<sup>st</sup>, Israel announced its decision to appropriate 1,000 acres of

land in the West Bank. Bennett explained, “What we did yesterday was a display of Zionism. *Building is our answer to murder* [of the three teenage boys] [emphasis added]” (The Guardian 1/9/14). This, of course, also works to establish a certain strain of Zionism, in which the settlement project in the occupied territories is a modern articulation of the Zionist project of settling Israel. In reality, the settlement of the occupied territories is not compatible with all forms of Zionism, and indeed many of the desecuritizing actors employ Zionist arguments in their opposition to the occupation and armed conflict. Retribution for the killing was not directed at Hamas, but rather at Palestinians living in the West Bank—purely tied to Hamas by shared national and religious identity.

The image that emerges is more complex than the way securitization is usually conceptualized. First, I have identified two constructed enemies—Hamas and the ambiguous ‘Arab’—framed and conceptualized differently for two different audiences. While the narrative for the international audiences is more clear-cut and well articulated, the narrative intended for the Jewish Israeli audience—before and after the conflict—is ambiguous, and taps into Jewish Israeli collective memory and narratives about the self and the Other. I attempted to show that the security narrative presented in English, and during times and places where international eyes may be watching, government officials engaged in a ‘strategic self-moderation’ effort. Hansen (2012, 533) theorizes that actors may engage in ‘toned down’, less linguistically overt discourse when the audience in question might not accept a certain framing of the enemy. This mirrors Balzacq’s (2005) argument that securitization should be understood as a strategic (pragmatic) practice that

“occurs within, and as part of, a configuration of circumstances, including context, the psycho-cultural disposition of the audience, and the power that both speaker and listener bring to the interaction” (172). The evident strategic moderation of the Israeli government in front of international audiences may be an indication that desecuritization efforts in that arena may be more fruitful—where desecuritizing agents are free from the burden of operating in a ‘deeply-secritized’ state, and where securitizing and desecuritizing moves fare an equal chance in the ‘marketplace of ideas’.

## **Chapter 5 Desecuritization**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The chosen path to desecuritization, and the methods utilized vary from actor to actor—based on their positions, frameworks of operation and strategic choices. Desecuritizing moves targeted three main audiences—the Israeli government, the general Jewish Israeli audience and the international community. Following Hansen’s (2012) conceptualization of desecuritization, some actors engaged in a rearticulation framework whereby their ‘system-wide’ solution to the security issue at hand was a peace initiative. Others chose to practice desecuritization through resistance, where the main audience was the Jewish Israeli public—as opposed to rearticulation in which actors addressed both the government of Israel and the Jewish Israeli public through institutional frameworks. Actors who practiced resistance mainly engaged the public through social media and physical actions such as protests. Resistance entailed a deeper effort of (re)structuring the ‘self’ on the grassroots level. Actors from the third sector did not necessarily offer immediate policy solutions, but rather worked to dismantle the friend/enemy logic and focused their attention on the exceptional measures—mainly collection of data on human rights violations, publishing statements and recommendations; their audiences were the Israeli government, the international community and the Jewish Israeli public. Because the Palestinian threat was already securitized, all actors had worked to desecuritize previously, though desecuritizing moves increased in response to the political atmosphere that was brought about following the kidnapping of the three teenagers. This chapter is divided in the following way: first, I discuss the way in which the security agenda is

reconceptualized by desecuritizing actors. Then I discuss desecuritizing moves for the different audiences; the Jewish Israeli public, the Israeli government, and the international community. I then discuss desecuritization through rearticulation and resistance, and the issues that transpire. Lastly, I return to my research question.

## **5.2 The General Reconceptualization of Conflict: Desecuritization**

In chapter three I discussed the immediate narrative conceptualized by desecuritizing actors, and the ways in which this understanding of the chain of events plays into desecuritizing efforts. Desecuritizing actors generally trace the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—the site of production of the friend/enemy distinction—and hostilities to the Palestinian’s national struggle and as a reaction to Israel’s oppressive practices that stem from the occupation. The hostilities of 2014 are thus framed in the context of the occupation. For example, Dov Khenin’s comments in the Knesset on June 21 during operation Brother’s Keeper, as a part of the party’s non-confidence proposal: “The cycle of death of occupation and terror could, and must be broken—not by escalating the conflict—but as a way of exiting from it” (Zo Haderekh, 2/7/14); Mohammad Barakeh, head of Hadash issued a statement on the day the bodies of the teenagers were found- “the death of Israelis and Palestinians in the last few weeks is an outcome of the collective tragedy that the two nations live in—the tragedy of the ongoing occupation” (Zo Haderekh 9/7/14). During a very tense interview where she defended her choice not to call the kidnappers of the three teenagers ‘terrorists’, Haneen Zoabi, a Palestinian Knesset member from Balad stated that “[t]hey [Jewish Israelis] don’t see the occupation—they don’t see the context [of] struggle” (Channel 2, 21/6/14); Zehava Gal-

On's remarks to the U.N. Secretary-General, Ban Ki-moon- "The Prime Minister should have specified in his remarks in the UN how he is planning to come to a lasting agreement with the Palestinians, which is the real problem that Israel has—the continuation of the occupation" (Meretz Archive, 2.10.13).

From this perspective—and contrary to the beliefs of the securitizing agents—military conflicts cannot be a suitable solution in solving the security issue, and in fact, propagate and worsen Israel's insecurity. The solution offered is thus bringing the issue into the political sphere through peace negotiations with the Palestinians. It relies on the argument that the security issue could be 'fixed' if the occupation could be brought to an end. The occupation, serving as the context through which desecuritizing actors recontextualize Protective Edge, is therefore an indication that—for them—the security agenda did not begin, nor is isolated to the 2014 conflict. Desecuritization efforts have been at the forefront of their work long before the 2014 conflict—which is an articulation, and the result of the occupation.

### **5.3 Jewish Israeli Audience**

Desecuritization moves targeting the Jewish Israeli audience were articulated in three main forms; protests, the media, and social media. This subsection is divided according to this framework. All desecuritizing agents increased their desecuritization efforts in line with the escalation of the conflict. Meretz's initial desecuritization moves—during Brother's Keeper—were made both through the media, social media and in one protest. After Protective Edge began, Meretz concentrated its efforts in addressing the Israeli

government as its target audience, and addressed the Jewish Israeli public through the media—always reiterating and calling on Netanyahu to cease hostilities and move towards a diplomatic, and enduring solution. Though Meretz’s main target audience was the Israeli government, their public messages (excluding the Knesset) are considered in this subsection. Hadash’s engagement with the Jewish Israeli public was mostly done through Dov Khenin, who is the party’s only Jewish member. However, other party members did appear on the Israeli media, and spoke at protests. Hadash generally focused on addressing the Jewish and Arab audiences rather than the Israeli government. Hadash concentrated on protest organization and grassroots initiatives; their presence in the media and social networks was less robust. Organizations from the third sector concentrated on protests (with the exclusion of human rights organizations), and social media.

### **5.3a Protests**

Protests were nearly a daily occurrence during the months of June-August. The messages of the protests are generally agreed upon by participating organizations and political parties; Peace Now protests generally call for a two-state solution, and for a peace initiative. Prior to Protective Edge, center-left political parties such as Labour and Hatnuah were willing to attend such protests. However, only Meretz and Hadash participated in protests during the time frame of Protective Edge; Meretz near the end of Protective Edge. Protests organized by Hadash and other more radical organizations—such as Combatants for Peace, Palestinian Israeli Bereaved Families for Peace, Rabbis for Human Rights, Coalition of Women for Peace etc. focused on Israeli-Palestinian

cooperation, as well as a diplomatic solution. Palestinian-led protests were generally organized by Hadash, the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel and other local Palestinian organizations.<sup>32</sup>

Prior to both Brother's Keeper and Protective Edge, Hadash party members joined protests in support of the Palestinian hunger strike, which were organized by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel and the communist youth group—which is a subsidiary of the communist core within Hadash (Zo Haderekh, 2/7/14). On July 3, after a few incredibly tense days—three days after the bodies of the three teenagers were found, and the day after the Palestinian teenager was killed, Peace Now organized an impromptu protest in Tel-Aviv. The protest called for a peace deal and an end to the violence. Knesset Members from Labour, Meretz Hatnuah and Hadash spoke. Meretz created a poster for the event with the subject lines: 'No to the killing of children; No to revenge; No to the pogroms<sup>33</sup>; No to constructing new settlements; No to the occupation of the territories; Yes to a political solution' (Gal-On Facebook page, 3/7/14). Meretz largely refrained from joining the protests that were held against Protective Edge, with the exception of two very large protests that took place in Tel-Aviv near the end of the operation; and with the exception of the Meretz Haifa chapter joining a protest that took place in July.

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<sup>32</sup> These protests were largely neglected from analysis, unless Jewish-Palestinian attendance was high.

<sup>33</sup> Meretz thus made the connection between extreme-right mob violence against Palestinians in Jerusalem and the waves of mob violence Jews experienced in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries in Eastern Europe and Nazi Germany.

After operation Protective Edge began, smaller Jewish-Arab protests took place in Kafr Qara, Pardes Hanna-Karkur, Jerusalem, Haifa and Tira (Zo Haderekh, 9/7/14, 16/7/14). Slogans from these protests include—‘Jews and Arabs refuse to be enemies’; ‘In Gaza and Sderot<sup>34</sup> little girls want to live’; ‘In Gaza they wreck homes, in Israel they wreck social housing’; ‘Bogie<sup>35</sup>, Bogie—Minister of Defense, how many girls did you murder today?’. Mid to end of July was a breaking point for the protest movement—as they were able to garner momentum; on July 26 the biggest protest since the beginning of the war takes place in Tel-Aviv. Demonstrators repeated the slogans described above, and lit memorial candles for the Palestinians killed. A photography exhibition showcased the destruction of Gaza (Zo Haderekh, 30/7/14).

These slogans and physical actions are an articulation of what Huysmans (1995) terms the deconstructivist strategy, in which “the migrant is not simply a migrant but a complex being in whom many identities are invested: e.g. woman, black, worker, mother etc.—just like the natives are” (Huysmans 1995a, 67). The slogans, first off, stress resemblance—the comparison of Jews/Arabs, Gaza/Sderot, destruction of homes/defunding social housing, likens both sides’ yearning for life, and the mutual objective of peace—‘just like the natives are’. Second, particularly slogans about Gaza—seek to frame Gazans as ‘women, mothers, children’ in order to deconstruct the ‘enemy’—which, as I argued in chapter 4—encompassed Palestinians as a whole, not just Hamas operatives. Further, the candlelight vigil and the photography exhibition worked

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<sup>34</sup> Sderot is an Israeli town close to the Gazan border that was heavily bombarded by rockets during the 2014 conflict—and in other conflict as well. The town serves as a symbol of rocket bombardment in Jewish-Israeli consciousness.

<sup>35</sup> Moshe Ya'alon's nickname is 'Bogie'.

to dismantle the friend/enemy distinction in ways that speech acts cannot conceptualize. The candlelight vigil has some symbolic meaning that pertains to Jewish Israeli ethos; most vivid are the similarities of this vigil, and the candlelight vigils that took place following the assassination of Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995—at the exact same public square where the 2014 protests were held. Rabin’s assassination is symbolically marked as the death of the peace process as well. In short, protests are the site of not just ‘enemy’ deconstruction, but a (re)construction of the self—more on this later.

On August 16, Peace Now, Combatants for Peace, Palestinian Israeli Bereaved Families for Peace, Meretz and Hadash organized a mass protest in Tel-Aviv under the headline ‘Changing the Direction towards Peace—No to the Path of Wars’. The latter part of the sentence was highlighted in red, resembling blood. A photograph of a crowd underlays the poster. The subheading reads: ‘only a diplomatic solution will ensure long-lasting quietness for the residents of the south and the Gaza envelope<sup>36</sup>. Again, one can see that imagery plays an important role in desecuritization attempts. Moreover, the message was in response to Protective Edge’s primary objective—restoring ‘quietness’. The organizers of the protest thus argue that ‘quietness’ could only be reached through a diplomatic solution, rather than military conflict (Meretz Archives, date unknown). Desecuritization is a process that runs parallel to securitization—it pokes at, challenges and attempts to disrupt the process of (re)securitization. Because (re)securitization is never a foregone conclusion, it needs to be reinforced—and desecuritizing agents have the opportunity to

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<sup>36</sup> The term assigned to the Israeli cities and towns in close proximity of Gaza, which suffered the majority of rocket attacks.

challenge the discourse of threat at key points; this is especially clear in attempts to desecuritize through the media.

### **5.3b Media**

Meretz led desecuritizing efforts through media outlets—Hadash and desecuritizing actors from the third sector infrequently appeared on Israeli television and radio. I chose to exclude Hadash from this discussion, mostly because of scarcity of resource material, and because of both Barakeh and Khenin’s admitted reluctance to appear in the media, which is an indication that their desecuritization efforts were concentrated elsewhere. As I argued in chapter 3, the media serves as a functional actor for securitization; dissident voices were frequently policed and delegitimized by pundits and other guests. This is especially true for Palestinians who appeared on television in order to oppose the military action. The difficulties of desecuritization—especially for Palestinians, will be discussed shortly. Meretz’s desecuritization efforts—particularly evident through their media appearances—took the approach of addressing the Israeli public at key junctures of time in order to pressure the government to move towards a ceasefire, and then towards a diplomatic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. During temporary ceasefires, MKs from Meretz called on the government to use the opportunity to start negotiations in their television appearances:

“We can’t stay on this level of a ceasefire again, we’ve been through it before—now we must take a political step, that is the only way to change things in Gaza. If we stay in a state of a ceasefire, we will find ourselves in the same situation a few months down the line” (Nitzan Horowitz, Channel 2, 26/7/14).

At times when the hostilities ensued, Meretz’s strategy was to implore the government, first and foremost, to return to a state of ceasefire. Further, they pleaded with Netanyahu

not to listen to the voices calling for further escalation, while simultaneously offering a desecuritizing strategy, which called for an eventual peace deal:

“Ceasefire now. The government of Israel must immediately and unilaterally declare a ceasefire and call on Hamas to honour the ceasefire...Netanyahu cannot answer Lieberman’s calls ‘to go all the way’ or Lapid’s [to] ‘pulverize Gaza’...The world’s public opinion is turning on Israel and therefore the government must stop the fire and turn to international mediation measures...The government of Israel needs to remember that the solution to the situation in Gaza passes through Ramallah, that we could never overcome terror through the use of force alone.” (Channel 2, 13/7/14).

Here is another example, when ceasefire terms were being negotiated by the United States:

"Whoever calls for the Prime Minister to say no to Obama’s initiative seeks to devastate Israeli’s foreign relations...And I’m not certain that they really do care about the existential threats that Israel faces currently, at this time—in what is occurring in the operation in Gaza.” (Gal on, Channel 2 28/7/14).

Desecuritization actors from the third sector also used the media to relay their messages.

This included mostly media appearances. Most famously was B’Tselem’s attempt to launch a campaign on the radio in which the names of Palestinian children killed during Protective Edge were to be read; a campaign that is in line with human rights

organizations’ main strategy of desecuritizing in front of the public, which takes a deconstructivist approach of depicting the ‘enemy’ not as a unitary unity—but a population that includes mothers, children, workers, etc. who get caught in the crossfire.

The Israel Broadcasting Authority rejected B’Tselem’s advertisement campaign, stating that it does not belong on public radio (B’Tselem, 24/7/14). On their website, B’Tselem

noted that the Israeli Broadcasting Authority allowed other organizations to place ads supporting the military operation (B’Tselem, 29/7/14). B’Tselem’s appeal to the Supreme

Court was also rejected; the court deemed the campaign ‘political’ and ‘manipulative’

(Haaretz, 13/8/14). The video was posted on B'Tselem's social media page instead. Ironically, "the censorship backfired and led it to become viral", according to Yellin.

### **5.3c Online Presence**

Politicians and organizations from the third sector mainly engaged the public through their social media pages. Unlike in the United States, where the platform of choice is Twitter, Israelis use Facebook as their method of public outreach. In contrast to their desecuritizing moves in the media, and similar to desecuritizing through protests, agents rely more heavily on heuristic artifacts that speak to identity and deconstruction of the friend/enemy dichotomy. Meretz, for example, whose arguments in the media stressed political actions, utilized heuristic artifacts on social media platforms; On July 7, just one day before operation Protective Edge was announced, Gal-On uploaded an animated picture of two doves in suits resembling Netanyahu and Abbas, both holding an olive branch in their beaks. In the background, the Palestinian and Israeli flags.<sup>37</sup> The picture is captioned- 'it is peace time' (Gal-On facebook page, 7/7/14). The animation evoked, and was embedded in, Jewish tropes of peace. Meretz—Gal-On in particular—also used their social media platforms to reiterate their general arguments that were voiced in the media as well. For example, Gal-On blamed the 'warmongering' on Netanyahu's political allies to his right— Zehava Gal-On issued this statement on her Facebook page the day after the teenagers were found to be dead:

"Restraint is strength...I call on Prime Minister Netanyahu to be truly strong against terror, breathe deeply, and understand that what we need right now is not to be dragged

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<sup>37</sup> In Judaism, doves are a symbol for peace—from Genesis 8:11 in which Noah sends a dove, and it returns with an olive leaf—a sign that the flood is over.

after those who wish to inflame the area, but rather to instill calm...” (Gal-On Facebook page, 1/7/14).

And finally, the day of the ground invasion she said: “It is too bad that the Prime Minister surrendered to Lieberman and Bennett’s escalation, and is dragging Israel in its entirety to a ground invasion in the blood swamp of Gaza” (Gal-On Facebook page, 17/7/14). Gal-On also addressed the Security Cabinet on her public Facebook page on July 25; following efforts made by John Kerry to broker a ceasefire. Gal-On called on “the Cabinet...to accept Secretary of State John Kerry’s proposal for a ceasefire” (Gal-On Facebook page, 25/7/14). In short, Meretz’s engagement with the public through social media strategically relayed their messages—that were mostly directed at the Israeli government through non-parliamentary public forums—using the Jewish Israeli public as a type of ‘amplifier’.

Hadash, aligned with its strategy described previously, was less concentrated on the Israeli government, and instead focused on change through group action and consciousness; On July 4 Kehnin uploaded a Facebook post in which he said that “all that evil needs to win, is for good people to stand on the side and do nothing.” He quoted the words of a Palestinian woman from Jerusalem, who experienced the Jewish violence that ensued following the discovery of the bodies of the teenagers. Kehnin added that, “It is time to voice a different [narrative]...—Jews and Arabs who refuse to be enemies” (Dov Kehnin Facebook page, 4/7/14). He concluded the post by calling on his readers to attend the demonstration in Haifa—Hadash’s main avenue of operation.

Actors from the third sector also relied on social media in their effort to engage with the public. Though the majority of the work of human rights organizations from the third sector encompasses data collection, reports and public statements—their public engagement seeks to deconstruct the friend/enemy distinction by bringing forth stories of Palestinians contextualized in what Huysmans terms ‘the politics of everydayness’. This is done within their reports as well, as a way to contextualize the data and arguments, and through social media. The combination of the two is a key strategic choice:

“This combination between data analysis and stories is very important because when we talk to diplomats, they are less likely to read the story—they’ll read the data... When you talk to people...—you need the stories more. The combination between the two is very important.” (Anonymous)

PHRI, for example, uploaded photos of some the children who were killed during operation Protective Edge, with their names and ages, sometimes with a short description of the circumstances that led to their deaths. The personal stories are usually contextualized within larger systemic issues, such as the collapse of the Palestinian medical system, or as a criticism of Israel’s actions; PHRI uploaded a photo of two infants on August 3 with their names, ages, and the way in which they were killed. The post noted that the residents of the building were not given prior warning before the airstrike—thus deflating Israel’s claim that civilians were always warned via ‘roof knocking’ (PHRI Facebook page, 3/8/14).

## **5.4 The Israeli Government**

Desecuritization addressed to the Israeli government takes a rearticulation approach, which will shortly be discussed in depth. In essence, positioning the Israeli government

as the main target audience attempts to desecuritize by appealing to the government to change its security agenda. In the context of the discussed conflict, this would entail a restructuring of the friend/enemy distinction through a peace process—brought about by a ceasefire.

Within the Knesset, actors made desecurizing moves on the Knesset floor and in committee hearings. Most notably were the two non-confidence bills<sup>38</sup> that were voted on on July 14—during Protective Edge. The first was titled ‘the dangerous escalation of the situation- the responsibility of the Netanyahu government; ’the bill was put forth by Hadash, Ra’am-Ta’al and Balad (Knesset archives, 14/7/14). The second non-confidence bill will was put forth by Meretz, and was titled ‘the worsening of the state security situation’ (Knesset archives, 14/7/14). Both motions garnered 15 votes in favour by members from the four parties (Knesset archives, 14/7/14). While the non-confidence bill was a statement within itself, it afforded desecurizing agents the opportunity to address their fellow Knesset Members and urge them to favor a diplomatic solution over combat. Mouhammad Barakeh addressed the government in his speech detailing Hadash’s proposed non-confidence bill on June 4;

“On Friday I participated in a protest...to protest the escalation in the [Palestinian] territories. The protest had the necessary permit, and conducted itself according to the police’s directions...After a few minutes—the police started to attack...Two days later, Prime Minister Netanyahu announced that he is planning to make the Islamic Movement illegal...Netanyahu has one agenda; reproduce the conflict in the occupied territories to within Israel...I want to send a message to the Prime Minister and his Ministers: we will not give up our values, and will reject any false attempt of categorizing the Arab

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<sup>38</sup> In Israel, non-confidence bills pass with an absolute majority (61 Knesset Members). Only one government was disbanded via a non-confidence bill—Shamir’s 1990 government. At the time, however, a simple majority was needed to pass a non-confidence bill—a crucial component of its success. Therefore, the non-confidence bills proposed in 2014 were put forth as statements—more than anything else.

population as a population of terrorists, or supporters of terror...The goals that we are fighting for: full equality, righteous peace and real democracy” (Zo Haderekh, 9/7/14).

Barakeh reiterated his previous words during the day of the vote on the non-confidence bill, and urged members of the opposition to join him (Zo Haderekh, 23/7/14).

Human rights organizations from the third sector appeal to the government as well. In recent years, however, the government has been less willing to take human rights organizations’ arguments into consideration—a topic that will be discussed shortly.

Desecuritizing moves were made both with open letters and petitions, as well as private communication. Organizations often issue joint-statements in order for their statements to acquire more impact. Two main joint-statements of that sort were made during Protective Edge. The first, co-signed by 10 third sector organizations on July 21 urged the Attorney General of Israel to investigate instances where International Humanitarian Law may have been violated. The statement urged the Attorney General to establish an external investigatory committee, and clarified that giving prior warnings of air strikes in residential areas does not absolve from responsibility under international law (B’Tselem, 21/7/14). That same day, B’Tselem issued a statement calling on the Israeli government to cease its strikes on residential areas, buildings, and neighborhoods in the Gaza Strip—where the large majority of Israel’s activities took place— implicitly calling on the government to end the operation (B’Tselem, 21/7/14). Two days later—on June 23, 12 organizations petitioned the Israeli Defense Minister to ensure that the infrastructures in Gaza not collapse, and reiterated Israel’s responsibility in the matter—both according to international and Israeli law (B’Tselem, 23/7/24).

## 5.5 International Audiences

Finally, out of all three identified audiences, the international community is the most controversial to appeal to. Political parties focus their efforts internally, while organizations from the third sector both work in the Israeli and international contexts. In recent years, some human rights organizations have directed more resources towards international advocacy.<sup>39</sup> Organizations from the third sector maintain relationships with diplomats and foreign officials. However, no public statements specifically addressing the international community were made—with the exception of Adalah and other Palestinian organizations from Israel who issued a joint-statement to the UN Human Rights Council calling for an “end to the war on Gaza, targeting of civilians and civilian property, the blockade, racial incitement and attacks, and to open investigations into violations of international law” (Adalah, 22/7/14). Because human rights organizations communicate with the diplomatic community as a part of their general work, it could be assumed that closed communication occurred during the hostilities as well. As argued in chapter 4, the Israeli government emphasized international acquiescence, and went to great lengths to continually reestablish it—an indication that desecuritization in front of international audiences may be an effective strategy.

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<sup>39</sup> See for example B’Tselem Director’s 2016 speech in the U.N. where he implored the body “...to take action. Anything short of decisive international action will achieve nothing but ushering in the second half of the first century of the occupation” (B’Tselem, 16/10/16) [https://www.btselem.org/settlements/20161014\\_security\\_council\\_address](https://www.btselem.org/settlements/20161014_security_council_address)

## 5.6 Rearticulation and Resistance

Desecuritization through rearticulation “refers to desecuritizations that remove an issue from the securitized by actively offering a political solution to the threats, dangers, and grievances in question” (Hansen 2012, 542). While all political parties attempted to desecuritize through a political framework—or rather, urge the Israeli government to bring an end to the immediate conflict, and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a whole—Meretz was much more willing to act through official political channels, and engage with the government—urging the Prime Minister to change its security agenda. Human rights organizations from the third sector who specifically call for an end to the occupation or for a peace deal between the Israelis and Palestinians could also be placed in this category. In contrast to Meretz, Hadash was less focused on addressing the Israeli government, and operating through institutional frameworks; Hadash put more emphasis on desecuritization through grassroots, emancipatory work. In chapter 2 I argued that desecuritization through resistance refers to ‘desecuritization attempts that take place outside formal political institutions of the state—either in defiance of the political system, due to exclusion, or strategic considerations’. Resistance transports scrutiny of the friend-enemy distinction to the locus of the street—through grassroots action; as opposed to rearticulation, where the friend-enemy distinction is deconstructed through top-down politics. The contrasting frameworks of desecuritization should not be conceived of through a rigid divide, or as Hansen argues, her four forms of desecuritization are ‘ideal types’, which often do not neatly fit into empirical analysis (Hansen 2012, 539). In other words, both Meretz and Hadash operated through institutional frameworks, as well as participating in grassroots initiatives—to varying degrees. The question is, however,

where their finger is pointed when asked which agent is able to—or ideally should—foster change. Comparing the speeches given at protests by both Zehava Gal-On, the leader of Meretz, and Dov Khenin, the only Jewish member of Hadash—may illuminate the difference in their respective perspectives. Both politicians are worth quoting at length. First, Gal-On’s speech given on August 16:

“Bibi [Netanyahu], you’ve failed! And here at home, under the cover of your pathetic silence...Incitement, racism and hate grows rapidly...I am well aware of the risk you [the crowd] took coming here today...You came, because you are not willing to give up. You came because you are citizens of a state that deserves more! This insanity is possible exclusively and bears the responsibility of the Prime Minister and the state of Israel...Mr. Prime Minister, if you had a minimal amount of courage and national responsibility; you would have already staunchly condemned the calls for murder... [you would have] made sure that all the rabbis would be investigated and have charges pressed against them ...And all those insane right-wing officials, who organize Jewish militias and groups...against leftists, and against human rights organizations such as B’Tselem, or anyone who thinks differently...And you, Minister Lapid and Minister Livni, the coalition partners, who claim to represent a moderate voice and to ‘influence from within’, your disappearance and embarrassing silence gives legitimization...to hate... The fact that you are here [the crowd] in the plaza gives us strength...There is no security without peace, peace is not dead...it is just in the wrong hands. Change is near” (Meretz website, 16/8/14).

Gal-On, in line with the party’s strategy of desecuritization used the platform to address Netanyahu and his coalition government members. The crowd serves as an amplifying voice, a force aiding and reaffirming Meretz’s convictions and criticism of the government. Here is an excerpt from Khenin’s speech on July 17, who conceptualizes desecuritization and its audience differently:

“We are in a crisis...but a crisis of what, exactly? ... Is it a crisis of the peace process? No, because we didn’t have a peace process... This is a crisis, friends, of an insane and impossible status-quo, of a delusional bubble that half the Palestinians will be under the occupation, and half in Gaza in a giant prison; and within Israel, life will go on. This delusion burst. And instead, we must offer—for our two nations—another way. This [alternative] path, firstly, starts with a ceasefire—on terms agreed upon by both sides. I hope that this will happen soon, because every drop of blood is unnecessary. After this ceasefire, we must immediately go the opposite way from that of Netanyahu’s government. I said this two months ago in the Knesset, the Palestinian consensus

coalition is not a threat, it is an opportunity...But I must admit to you that I drove here today [Jerusalem] very willingly, from Tel Aviv...Because out of all the important protests...one kind of protest is close to my heart—and this is where Jews and Arabs stand together...We have the best medication—our mutual [cooperation]. We feel that darkness is threatening to fall on the country... It is better, and more important—instead of cursing the darkness—to turn on the light. And we, Jews and Arabs—who refuse to be enemies—we are that light. We are the light that will lead both our nations in this country to another place, to a different future...We will continue to struggle, we will succeed and we will create a place for us all. (Dov Khenin Facebook page, 21/7/14)

Similar to Gal-On, Khenin calls for an immediate ceasefire and for a peace deal with the newly formed Hamas-Fatah coalition government. His focus, however—both in this speech and in others—is less on Netanyahu and the government. Rather, it is on Jewish-Palestinian cooperation and change through emancipatory means. The audience—Jewish Israelis and Palestinians—*are* the force of change. They are not ‘amplifiers’ of messaging, but the agents through which change is possible. Khenin thus implies that the friend-enemy distinction should be deconstructed on the ground level.

## **5.7 Challenges in Desecuritization**

Desecuritization moves and attempts were generally met with fierce opposition both on the streets and through institutional frameworks. This was especially true for Palestinians who attempted to desecuritize because, as I argued in chapter 4, the process of (re)securitization encompassed Palestinians who were citizens of Israel as well. As demonstrated by Abulof (2014), Palestinians in Israel are further securitized during periods of time where securitization moves increase overall. Jewish Israeli audiences—both within the government and in the general public, are thus less receptive to their messaging. Jewish Israeli organizations and Knesset members encountered difficulties as well—MKs from the left were painted as ‘internal enemies’. Here, for example, is Yariv

Levin, the head of the coalition, and member—and later head— of Foreign Affairs and Defense Committee speaking to the Head of Meretz Gal-On on June 1:

“When will you wake up already? Look what is going on around us. The basis of the problem is that the Palestinian population as a whole supports these murderers... This is the reality, and I’ll add, more than that, it doesn’t happen only there [the Palestinian territories], it exists within us with the same Knesset members from the Arab parties that your party cooperates with day in day out in your work procedures within the Knesset... We have a serious problem with Israeli Arabs and their leadership” (Ynet 1/7/14).

Levin’s words are an extreme example, and Gal-On responds by saying that Levin does not represent the Prime Minister’s views or the public’s; however, similar sentiments were heard from the top echelons of the government—either directly or indirectly, as demonstrated in the previous chapter. The quote is useful in that it demonstrates that both Palestinian MKs and Jewish Israeli MKs from the left are implicated in the matrix of threat. Accusations of ‘internal enemies’ and ‘traitors’ made the task of securitizing agents more difficult—as they were less likely to be accepted by Jewish Israeli audiences at large.

Organizations from the third sector in particular were framed as ‘foreign agents’ working for European interests. These organizations have therefore been subject to securitization moves in recent years. Yellin from B’Tselem told me that they “...are well aware of [their] relative weakness as a human rights organization...that most Israelis think of as enemies”. Actors from the third sector were met with fierce opposition; Institutionally, from the general public, and from non-state actors such as Im Tirtzu. I discuss the institutional difficulties in the next subsection. In terms of the general public, organizations and their employees were harassed and protested against. Here is Yellin describing the difficulties B’Tselem encountered during Protective Edge:

“There was a lot of excitement going on in social networks, including posts that portrayed our executive director wearing Nazi uniforms, there were incidents of violence inside the office in which people broke in, outside the office there were demonstrations taking place, it was really scary. And of course there were threats, everything that mentioned the word B’Tselem whether it’s a conference, or a university, I think back then there was an exhibition that said the word B’Tselem in Petach Tikva museum and there was also a ballet choreographer with an unrelated thing in the work, it was related to B’Tselem archives. All those cultural events and institutions were threatened by the right wing; in certain cases government officials also withdrew their support, their financial support. All that happened during those very intense [times].”

Further, organizations from the third sector encountered increased scrutinization and delegitimization from non-state actors such as Im Tirtzu. In 2015 Im Tirtzu published a report titled ‘Planted’ (שתולים) on organizations from the third sector. The report gives a description of targeted organizations from the third sector, and their funding sources. Organizations from the third sector, the report claims: "Work from within, with foreign government funding...against Israeli society, against IDF soldiers, and against the state's ability to defend itself in the war on terror" (Im Tirtzu, 2015). B’Tselem’s head argued that: “the goal of these attempts of silencing [us] is to disrupt the struggle against the occupation. They are part of maintenance efforts for continuing the occupation” (Channel 1, 15/12/15). Im Tirtzu therefore makes securitizing moves attempting to depict these organizations as ‘planted by foreign governments’, and ‘enemies from within’. The campaign launched in 2015 included a video of a staged terror attack—in which the ‘planted’ organizations were framed as aiding the terrorists, and pictures of foreign passports with the logos of ‘planted’ organizations. Peleg, the head of Im Tirtzu, explained to me that the report came following the events of Protective Edge: “[at] the time of the operation we were focused on sending volunteers [who provide food to soldiers on the front line], after the operation we started to handle the anti-Zionist organizations...After Tzuk Eitan [Protective Edge] we started to go after the anti-

Zionists.” And indeed, operation Protective Edge is the only armed conflict listed in the report throughout.

Im Tirtzu enjoys general recognition and support from political figures on the right; such as Prime Minister Netanyahu, who filmed a video congratulating the organization on its tenth anniversary in 2017 (Im Tirtzu Youtube, 7/11/17). Im Tirtzu’s securitizing moves targeting organizations from the third sector work with securitizing moves through the legislature; in tandem with the publishing of ‘Planted’, an MK for the Likud put forth a proposed bill with the same name, targeting organizations that receive foreign funding (Channel 2, 15/12/15). Similar bills targeting these organizations have been proposed and passed at increasing numbers in recent years.

In short, tense security situations—such as Protective Edge—make desecuritizing efforts more difficult for actors, and indeed have a long-lasting effect even when ‘calmness’ is restored. As a B’Tselem interviewee explained:

“You’re not always in the center of attention. I was very...scared of what [was] happening. And I think that—added to this atmosphere—and obviously in Gaza and specifically for our [situation]...things changed after that, in terms of how people think of human rights organizations in Israel. It exacerbated negatively.”

When I asked the interviewee if they felt Protective Edge was a sort of turning point in that regard, they responded that “it felt that way”. However, though exposure clearly affects actors negatively, it is also an opportunity for large-scale and systemic change.

The difficulties in countering the security discourse could also be observed in the Knesset: On June 7—the day prior to operation Protective Edge, the Knesset voted on a

non-confidence bill put forth by Ra'am-Ta'al, Hadash and Balad: 'the continuation of the occupation is the reason for the escalation of the situation and the risk of eruption in the area' (Knesset archives, 7/7/14). The proposed motion garnered 30 votes in favour, 50 against, 1 abstained and one member did not vote (ibid). Votes in favour came from some party members of Balad, Labour Party, Hadash, United Torah Judaism, Ra'am-Ta'al Shas and Meretz. In comparison to the non-confidence bills previously mentioned—which took place *after* operation Protective Edge commenced—it appears that some members from Labour, United Torah Judaism and Shas were willing to consider an alternative framing to the security discourse, which necessitates solutions that do not involve armed conflict; yet, at the onset of operation Protective Edge, an alternative narrative was only voiced and accepted by the Arab parties (including Hadash) and Meretz.

### **5.7a Challenges in Operating Within Institutional Frameworks in Practice: Protective Edge**

In this subsection I list some of the difficulties desecuritizing agents faced while trying to operate through institutional frameworks. Their work was more limited than in 'non-emergency' circumstances; mirroring securitization theory's basic assumption that following securitization, the security issue gets 'lifted above normal politics' (Buzan et al. 1998, 26). While the threat was already securitized, and dealt with through exceptional measures (checkpoints, siege on Gaza, intelligence apparatus), the (re)securitization and use of overtly exceptional means further 'fortified' the institutional frameworks and the players that operate within them. In the Knesset, desecuritizing actors were extremely

limited in their ability to counter the government's security agenda—especially during operation Protective Edge.

Apart from failed non-confidence bills discussed in this chapter, MKs from the left—particularly Palestinians—encountered institutional hurdles in voicing alternative views. Most notably was the Israel Police's recommendation in investigating MK Haneen Zoabi for her refusal to call the kidnappers of the three teenagers 'terrorists'<sup>40</sup> (Globes, 23/6/14). In addition, Knesset members were frequently removed from the podium, or from committee hearings for their choices of words during operation Protective Edge. On July 9 Deputy Speaker of the Knesset Moshe Feiglin temporarily removed two Ra'am-Ta'al Knesset members from the Knesset stand and floor after they called the actions of IDF troops in the Gaza Strip 'murder'. MK Sarsur attempted to read some of the names of those who were killed in Gaza, but was prevented from speaking once he uttered the word 'murder'. While he was being expelled MK Ibrahim Sarsur called Feiglin a 'fascist' and 'Nazi'; MK Masud Ghnaim called the killing of civilians murder, and was temporarily removed as well. MK Ghnaim retorted: "you are not a neutral chairman". MK Feiglin responded: "of course not, I admit that I am not a neutral chairman. I am certainly not neutral" (The 7th Eye, 4/8/14). The next day, Ahmad Tibi was able to read the names of those killed by Israel, but was removed from the Knesset floor once he called IDF troops 'war criminals' (Ibid). MK Jamal Zahalka from Balad was removed from an Internal Committee hearing on July 15 after telling the head of Israel's police force that he had 'blood on his hands'. The head of the committee, Miri Regev, in turn instructed security

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<sup>40</sup> Zobi condemned the kidnapping, holding that the actions are illegitimate.

guards to remove him from his seat and called Zahalka a ‘terrorist’; ‘go to Syria’—another MK added (Knesset Channel, 14/7/14).

Desecuritizing actors from the third sector encountered difficulties in their work with the Israeli institutional framework on several fronts. Their work has generally involved correspondence with the relevant Israeli authority in order to solve, mitigate and investigate human rights violations and illegal actions. During this general period of time—and especially due to the emergency mode during Protective Edge—cooperation with Israeli authorities was generally futile. Quoting Ran Goldstein again—PHRI’s Executive Director—“[in the] current situation...we don’t have full access to the regime. If you asked me about years, even 2006 or [200]7, we had more access to the regime and then the role was really to change, on [the] ground we succeeded to stop things or change...Policy-wise, really by phone call sometimes.” During Protective Edge, cooperation with Israeli institutions was dire. A striking example was given to me by one of my interviewees:

“We had an emergency phone that we asked people of Gaza to talk to us if they [were] in [an] emergency case—and [we would try] to intervene in front of the army—it didn’t work [the initiative] because the army didn’t take any of our calls seriously. Sometimes we even felt that they used the data that we [gave] them in order to attack...[We] called the army in one of the cases, and told them that there’s a family in a house that is stuck there and they can’t leave the house, and they need treatment, there are injuries. And after [we] called them [the military], the family called [us] and said...[that the] army [was] on [their] roof.”

The Israeli authority’s general disregard and impunity led B’Tselem to cease its correspondence with the military, detailed in their report ‘The Occupation’s Fig Leaf’:

“Now, after a long process of careful consideration, B’Tselem has reached the conclusion that continuing to file complaints to the military law enforcement system does more harm than good. Because B’Tselem has no desire to help the system create a mere semblance

of doing justice, we have decided to stop applying to the military law enforcement system” (B’Tselem, 2016).

### **5.7b Challenges in Taking a Resistance Approach in Practice: Protective Edge**

Desecuritization through resistance involves grassroots work—demonstrations, protests. The objective was to create a momentum that calls for change. Protesters were subject to acts of violence; both from right-wing counter-protesters and, for Palestinian protesters, from police violence. Most notably, the protest that took place in Tel-Aviv on June 12 was widely discussed in the media and considered a significant event in terms of right-wing violence. The counter-protesters chased, beat and prevented left-wing protesters from seeking shelter when the sirens warning of rockets were heard (Mekomit, 13/7/14). Uri Weltmann, the interviewee who organized two major protests in Haifa gave an account of similar counter-protester violence.

Desecuritizing actors faced institutional barriers as well. Weltmann and another plaintiff appealed to the Supreme Court after their request for a protesting permit was denied by the police force. The appeal was denied by Justice Amit, noting in the decision that “as a side note...the writing of this decision was postponed for a few moments due to a ‘code red’ siren alarm, and a few [rocket] hits that were heard in the Jerusalem area” (Weltmann & Za’atara v. Israel Police—Haifa District 2014). Indicating that the state of insecurity was a consideration in the judge’s decision. Protests in Arab towns such as Nazareth and Tira were met with police violence. The protests were organized by the High Follow-Up Committee for Arab Citizens of Israel, other Arab organizations and Hadash. According to Mouhammad Barakeh, the head of Hadash, the police reacted more violently than in times of ‘quietness’, and arrestees were treated more severely by the

courts. To provide an anecdote, Barakeh's eighteen year-old son was in custody for 120 days—an abnormal amount of time: “Usually, after a demonstration, if there were issues, they detain the guys for an hour 2, 3, and afterwards if there it is necessary to press charges— they press charge. They went totally crazy, they forced me to approach the President— Rivlin in order to ask him to intervene.” As discussed in the previous two subsections, desecuritizing actors operated in an institutionally hostile environment. Though acts of resistance afforded actors more agency over their actions, they were still somewhat limited by institutional bodies, and faced the threat of violence both from the police, and counter-protesters who mostly outnumbered them.

## **5.8 To Identity and Beyond**

Desecuritization—parallel to securitization—is a process that did not begin nor end with the events surrounding the 2014 conflict. The picture I painted may seem grim—securitization in Israel, after all, takes a multi-sectorial form due to the existing state of ‘deep securitization’ (Abulof 2014). It is power-laden (Balzacq 2005), and has ‘truth’ on its side. Nevertheless, securitization is a process that must be (re)constructed and (re)established for it to be successful—it is never a foregone conclusion. This presents opportunities and cracks in which desecuritization could take place. I listed the various strategies of desecuritization; both in terms of *how* and *in front of whom*. Revisiting my research question—if we are to think of optimal courses of action in countering security discourse—it appears that desecuritization through international pressure has great potential of being successful. Indeed, it is a direction that human rights organizations increasingly invest more efforts in. I argue that taking a more direct stance against

military operations in the occupied territories may succeed in disrupting the process of acquiescence—which Netanyahu works intensively to establish. Although human rights organizations work through an international humanitarian law framework, an argument that outright opposes military operations in the occupied territories could be made. First, based on previously published work, it is evident that—due to the nature of fighting, and the fact that fighting takes place in residential areas—international humanitarian law will most likely be violated; this could serve as grounds for outright opposition. Second, some human rights organizations directly oppose the existence of the occupation—which is not necessarily illegal under international law. They argue that the occupation infringes on the rights of Palestinians due to its very existence; this is a view that B’Tselem, for example, developed over time. The connection between the occupation and military operations could be expanded upon, and serve as grounds for opposing both as a core stance. The risk, of course, is further internal delegitimization and being labeled as ‘enemies from within’. Conversely, if I am correct in assuming that a stronger stance on the part of human rights organizations would affect the ‘bargaining’ that takes place on the level of the international community, then it stands to reason it is a worthwhile endeavor—precisely to *avoid* delegitimization—as it seems that the process of delegitimization is exacerbated during the process or (re)securitization.

The second promising avenue through which the Israeli government’s framing of security could be challenged is desecuritization in front of Israeli audiences, particularly; through resistance. Desecuritization through resistance is powerful in its ability to reconstitute identities in such a way that could not be found through other approaches.

Desecuritization, first and foremost, requires a “loosing of the friend-enemy distinction possibly to the point of a whole-scale transformation where ‘the enemy’ shreds its identity...it transforms not only who the self and its enemy are, but what they are.

Desecuritisation is not, in other words, a linguistic or political two-step procedure where first ‘we’ have to agree that X is no longer threatening and then, ‘we’ agree to stop speaking security” (Hansen 2012, 533), the process must occur simultaneously.

Resistance explores this relationship on the level of identities in a way that could not be achieved through other approaches. Human rights organizations tackle the identity of the ‘other’, but not the identity of the self. Their deconstructivist framing of Palestinians as women, children etc. does not take that extra step that Khenin takes; and perhaps it shouldn’t. Hadas Ziv articulated this conundrum well:

“I think that we’re very good [at] bringing the human suffering, the price that people pay; civilians in Gaza or in the West Bank...I think there should be a leftist political organization that can say what we cannot deal with, almost. Or maybe we should also say it, find a way to say it; I think that none of the human rights organizations speak about the price that Israelis are paying. And I'm not saying this as oh, we are also victims, but if you want to bring change within the public opinion in Israel... if the human rights organizations don’t put this into the equation when they speak to the Israeli public, we lose something that can be very powerful. But I don’t know how to do it—as a human rights organization. As an Israeli—I know.”

Indeed, conflict is precisely the moment in which identity reconstruction could take place. Schmitt writes: "for only in real combat is revealed the most extreme consequence of the political grouping of friend and enemy" (Schmitt 1985, 15). Armed conflict strips the layers of façade that govern the lives of Palestinians through institutionalized practices, and forces the Israeli public to confront its enemy—but more so, it invites a scrutinization of the friend-enemy distinction itself—the persistence of which has taken many lives; armed conflict may serve as the juncture in which the Jewish Israeli public

deems such a price too much to bear. An irreconcilable divide between national identity—particularly one’s relationship to power—and government security policy has in the past brought wars to an end. Most distinct was the 1982 war in Lebanon; during which public opinion shifted largely due to a group that was started by mothers of soldiers—Four Mothers<sup>41</sup> (Ezrahi 1997; Sucharov 2005). The public failed to view the war as a ‘war of necessity’ (מלחמת אין ברירה), which put Israel’s defense ethos, and notions of self in relation to power in conflict with one another (Ezrahi 1997; Sucharov 2005b). The question is thus not just ‘who is the enemy’— it is also ‘who are we?’ The decision—in a Schmittian sense—must be a reconceptualization of the self, which is intrinsically tied to the conception of the other. As the 1982 war demonstrates, the cultural-symbolic repertoire, which is drawn on in the process of securitizing, may also be utilized in a reverse effect, and may very well be a key component to a deconstruction of the friend/enemy distinction. ‘There is a battle for truth’, Foucault states (Foucault 1980b, 132). As I argued in chapter 4, the friend/enemy distinction exists as a part of Israel’s regime of truth, and is connected to deep ideological epics. However, there is a multiplicity of systems of ‘truth’ that attempt to dismantle the regime of truth, which is linked to systems of power that (re)produce self and Other. The issue is that these systems of truth fail to deeply touch on this relationship, or only touch on one side.

If desecuritization is indeed inseparable from the dismantling of the friend/enemy distinction, how could desecuritization take place without touching on the nerve of identity? If anything, it is clear that counter-hegemonic subject-positions are mostly articulated and have the potential of succeeding through resistance. The symbolic

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<sup>41</sup> A biblical reference to the four matriarchs: Sarah, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel.

significance of a candlelight vigil stringing the death of Rabin—who has come symbolize Israel’s peace-seeking national characteristic—to the death of Gazan children has very real potential for identity reconceptualization. Or, other moments that are symbolically potent, like this excerpt from Dov Khenin’s speech:

“So many images of those killed, injured... And in every image there is a person, *and every person has a name* [crowd cheers]. Every person, and young men and women...who were killed in this war—they have a mother, who raised them...And a father, who worried about them...And many of them have children, who wanted to hug them so very much. (Social TV, 29/7/2014)

*‘Every person has a name’* is a poem that is ingrained in the ethos of Holocaust commemoration, and usually sung in institutional Holocaust commemoration ceremonies. The excerpt from Khenin clearly demonstrates a deconstructivist approach, but at the same time—ties Jews and Palestinians not just through a ‘politics of everydayness’, but also with deeply rooted symbolic tropes of persecution and exile. What is the difference between Khenin’s *‘Every person has a name’* and B’Tselem’s failed radio advertisement that reads the names of Palestinians killed in Gaza? It is the implication of Jewish-Israeli identity, and it is the insistence to draw from the same symbolic repertoire used by securitizing agents; an act of resistance. In other words, using the same discursive tools to achieve ‘reutilizations of identical formulas for contrary objectives’ (Foucault 1978, 100).

Jewish-Palestinian cooperation, as propagated by Hadash, is important not only for the project of (re)constructing the Jewish Israeli self, but as an emancipatory endeavor which allows the ‘enemy’ to be a part of a (re)construction process of self-determination as well; if anything, I have attempted to show that the friend/enemy distinction is not exclusive to the Palestinian other in the occupied territories; it also has resonance in how

Palestinians who are also citizens of Israel are conceptualized. A frequent message that my Palestinian colleagues at PHRI articulated was that the occupation will not end by the Jewish Israeli public—it will be brought to an end by Palestinians. Jewish-Palestinian cooperation allows both equal participation, while striking at the heart of the enemy/friend distinction and the associated identity challenges. What I am proposing is not a strict resistance approach, but rather an understanding of its importance and potency in deconstructing the friend/enemy distinction.

## Conclusion

In line with the Copenhagen School's normative assertions—my case study demonstrates that the process of securitization is damaging to the functioning of a healthy political environment; in which minorities and other groups are further cast as 'the enemies from within'; where the institutional frameworks attempt to quiet dissident voices; where protesters are chased and attacked by angry mobs; where government officials, the military, and the courts were less willing to engage with desecuritizing actors. The erosion of civility in the political sphere is further exacerbated during times of conflict, and should therefore be avoided *a priori*, and countered as the process of securitization—or (re)securitization—takes place.

Desecuritization by appealing to the international community is a path that seems very promising, and one that actors in the third sector have already shifted their focus to. It is evident that securitizing actors put great emphasis on securitization in front of international audiences, and therefore an indication that desecuritization moves in that arena may serve as the path of least resistance for desecuritizing actors, as it occurs in an environment that is not 'deeply' or institutionally securitized. Further, I argued that desecuritization in front of the Israeli government—at least under the current circumstances—appears to be a futile endeavour, and may even be disadvantageous to the desecuritizing actors' objectives and those deemed a security threat.

Conjointly, my clear preference for desecuritization through resistance has been reiterated throughout; with a focus on the Jewish Israeli public as a means for (re)construction of group identity. Armed conflict could also serve as an opportunity to critically engage the friend-enemy distinction through the exposure of the consequences of the friend-enemy distinction to the public—without the layers of institutionalized practices through which security logic works in Israel. Operating in an environment where the state apparatus is uncooperative makes informal politics—through resistance—more attractive, and arguably a more productive choice—at least under the current circumstances. Desecuritization through resistance allows for a rupturing in the state’s monopoly on religious and socio-cultural symbols and narratives through their use in speeches, on protest signs, and by mobilizing their symbolic significance in physical action. Framing the lessons of the Holocaust in humanitarian terms, mobilizing religious symbols, questioning the degree of ‘appropriate use of force’ and Jewish relations to power, the ‘Masada complex’—these are all potential openings for desecuritization in front of Israeli audiences, and potent ones at that. In other words, desecuritizing agents should attempt to (re)construct group identity.

Theoretically, this approach serves as a conceptual addition to the existing desecuritization literature—by envisioning desecuritization as an intermediary between Aradau’s concept of emancipation and the Copenhagen School’s approach to desecuritization, in line with critical theory. Contrary to Aradau, however, desecuritization through resistance does not necessitate dis-identification in the pursuit of

emancipation, but rather a (re)construction of identity in order to achieve emancipatory goals.

As I write these words, in early 2018, a series of Palestinian demonstrations along the Israel-Gaza border are currently taking place, and may serve as an opportunity for the Jewish Israeli public to (re)conceptualize its relationship with the Palestinians, and its own relationship with power and overt use of force. Already, B'Tselem has commenced on campaigns similar to the ones discussed in this thesis. This type of exposure presents an opportunity for national introspection. The images that have emerged from the current situation in Gaza are difficult to swallow—they evoke, in some, questions about the path that Jewish Israeli society is currently on, and whether this path aligns with how Jewish Israelis view themselves. Perhaps, if we could break free from the security discourse that dictates the lives of Palestinians, and in a way, Jewish lives as well; if we could un-seal the doors of our hearts, un-sharpen our tongues—we may raise our eyes to the heavens, not in search of rockets, but in search of a new relationship with the Other, and ourselves. The alternative, surely, should be daunting to all—forever destined to live by the sword, under iron domes.

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