Fear: a risk that must be taken into account

THE SECURITIZATION OF ASYLUM SEEKERS AND REFUGEES IN SWEDEN

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Abstract

Immigration has become one of the most contentious issues in Europe. Following the war in Syria, an unprecedented number of people have crossed the external borders of the European Union (EU) to claim asylum in one of the member states. Sweden is one of the member states that has received the highest number of refugees per capita, and in 2014 and 2015 Sweden received the highest number of refugees since the Balkan wars.

This thesis seeks to argue that there has been a securitization of asylum seekers and refugees, particularly those of Muslim origins, in Sweden the result of which has been that refugees and asylum seekers are increasingly viewed and described in terms of security rather than in humanitarian terms in public discourse. The securitised discourse presents Sweden as being at risk of a system failure and collapse due to the high number of refugees and asylum seekers and the pressure they put on the Swedish society and welfare system.

While characterizing forced migration as a security issue and a potential threat have negative implications for asylum seekers and refugees, as this thesis aims to show there is also a hidden risk of this securitization of refugees and asylum in its impact on the resident population. Lack of security, actual or perceived, can for example lead to anxiety and fear, and to the feeling of being under threat. In relation to the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees, this fear could potentially contribute to a rise in xenophobia, nationalistic tendencies and policies, and perhaps even racism. As such, fear is a risk that must be taken into account.
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1 Introduction

Immigration has become one of the most contentious issues in Europe. Following the war in Syria, an unprecedented number of people have crossed the European Union’s (EU) external borders, most of them to claim asylum, which has shaken the EU cooperation to its core. At the same time as Europe has been faced with one of its most significant crises in terms of arrival of refugees, across Europe, far right extreme and xenophobic parties have gained a momentum feeding off of the public uncertainty and unease, and at the same time also contributing to exacerbate them.

Sweden is one of the member states that have received the highest number of refugees per capita.1 In 2015 in particular Sweden’s asylum system and reception centres were put under significant pressure, and in the media and parts of Swedish society a sense of crisis was felt. Historically, Sweden has had a very liberal and open policy on asylum but in 2015 there was a shift and stricter measures were introduced to curb the number of people seeking asylum hoping that they would instead consider other EU countries. As this paper wants to argue, this was partly due to a securitization of asylum seekers and refugees.

As a direct result of the high number of asylum seekers arriving, the Swedish government announced that in order to control the number people entering Sweden, border controls would be reinstated as a temporary measure. A number of other policy changes were later announced, bringing Sweden down to EU’s minimal acceptable levels with the aim of further curbing immigration flows. Public debate on refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden has hardened. Alongside this there has been an increased hostility towards refugees and asylum seekers, which has manifested itself as suspicion about the motives and genuineness of refugees, but has also lead to more violent manifestations such as increases in hate crimes, assaults and on several occasions buildings housing asylum seekers waiting for their applications to be approved have been set on fire. Behind the hostility is xenophobia and fear of the unknown.

Increasingly, there has been a securitization of refugees and asylum seekers, particularly of those of Muslim origins. Securitization refers to the social and discursive construction of

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1 Migrationsinfo, 2016: http://www.migrationsinfo.se/migration/sverige/#fn-125-1
particular issues as security threats. Refugees and asylum seekers, grouped together in public discourse with immigrants and immigration, have also increasingly been associated with a range of problems including terrorism, social unrest and criminality. In Sweden, the recent shift in the approach to asylum seekers can be attributed, at least partly to a securitization of refugees and asylum.

Although it is possible that refugees and asylum seekers may in fact pose a threat to security, it is important to note that forced migration may

“become over-securitised to the point where it is in danger of creating threats where before there were none, while at the same time undermining the international refugee protection regime in the name of an increasingly amorphous claim to ‘security needs’.”

This paper seeks to investigate the securitization of refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden, and its potential effects on human security of the resident population as well as how it can contribute to rise of xenophobia and racism. While characterizing forced migration as a threat have negative implications for asylum seekers and refugees, there is also a hidden risk of the securitization of asylum in its impact on the resident population.

1.1 Purpose of study

Several studies have already looked at securitization of forced migration in Europe and in Sweden, but research into how the securitization and projection of asylum and refugees as threatening can affect the host population in receiving societies has so far received little attention. More attention should be given to the effects of securitization on individual citizens and their communities.

National security measures are often assumed to be undertaken for the good of the resident population, but fear is also a risk that must be considered. Lack of security, actual or perceived, can lead to fear and the feeling of being under threat. In relation to the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees, this could potentially contribute to a rise in xenophobia, nationalistic tendencies and policies, and perhaps even racism. There is also a question of

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what happens when there is a clash between the national security of the host country and the human security of the refugees and asylum seekers.

1.2 Research question

What are the potential implications of the securitization of asylum seekers and refugees in public discourse, in particular what potential effects can it have on human security in the host country?

1.3 Methodology

This paper will use securitization theory to analyse how asylum seekers and refugees are presented as a security issue in Sweden. Critical discourse analysis will be used to analyse the content and context of written texts and speeches. The securitization will be looked at through a human security lens to analyse the effects it has on the resident population.

The paper is structured as follows; the following section will consist of a brief literature review with the aim of identifying what research have already been done and the gaps that my research is trying to cover.

The second chapter will look at the concept of securitization and its different elements. It will also look at the securitization of immigration with a particular focus on forced migration in the European context. It also briefly, explores the migration-security nexus with its historical discourses of terrorism, immigration and asylum.

The third chapter will present the human security framework and the suitability for use in this particular study. This chapter aims to tie the human security framework together with the ideas raised in the earlier chapter about securitization of asylum seekers and refugees and how we might think of its potential implication for the resident population in a receiving state.

In the fourth chapter, securitization theory will be applied to the Swedish case. This section will begin with an analysis of three different levels of actors, and will concentrate its efforts on the time just before and after the 12 November 2015 when border controls were introduced as a measure to curb the number of people arriving to claim asylum, and subsequent decision on 24 November to introduce further measures aimed at decreasing the number of people applying for asylum in Sweden. The first level includes the political and official discourse, and the analysis will be performed through looking mainly at communications from
governments and statements made by Ministers. The second level will look at the presentation and representations of asylum seekers and refugees in the media. The third level will survey the unofficial discourse propagated by far right elements, including the Sweden Democrats and online forums. Thereafter the potential implications of the securitization of asylum seekers and refugees and the impact on human security of the resident population of Sweden (through the discourses uncovered earlier) will be explored.

1.4 Theoretical framework

1.4.1 Securitization theory

This paper will apply a constructivist logic where security is to be understood as a social and intersubjective construction. In order to analyse the construction of asylum and refugees as a security issue, this paper will apply securitization theory. According to this framework a securitizing actor claims a right to extraordinary measures to ensure the referent object’s survival by stating that a particular referent object, or group, is threatened in its existence. The issue is then moved out of the sphere of normal politics and into the realm of emergency politics. For security this means that it no longer has any pre-existing meaning but that it can be anything a securitizing actor says it is.4

Securitization theory will be used in conjunction with critical discourse analysis (CDA). Discourse analysis is particularly useful when analysing linguistic and discursive elements. CDA aims to uncover hidden meanings, ideologies and discourses in communicative materials. CDA, as presented by Machin and Mayr5 will be used in relation to securitization to uncover meanings and discourses in speeches, press releases and the media’s reporting of events. Because both securitization theory and discourse analysis are interested in linguistic and discursive elements, they are very suitable to use in conjunction. Securitization can uncover how issues are turned into matters of security by examining the construction of threats, but to be able to look at the effects of securitization on people we will be adding an additional layer to the analysis.

4 Taureck, R. 2006, 'Securitisation Theory and Securitisation Studies', p.54
5 Machin, D. and Mayr, A. 2012, How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis, p.77-103
1.4.2 Human security

Human security is a useful approach for examining the impact of securitization on Swedish residents. The concept of human security was introduced to broaden the scope of security to also consider that of the individual and his or her community. By treating individuals and communities as the referent object of security, threats to security are also analysed and understood on the level of the individual. From this also follows that security will be context-specific and have a different meaning for different individuals as this will depend on the social context, geographical location and other similar factors.

Human security as a concept was developed in the setting of the UN, and is understood to consist of the two related notions of “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”. Freedom from fear refers to security from violence and threats, whereas freedom from want cover things such as economic, employment, environment and health security. Because of its broad and inclusive nature, scholars have argued that “freedom from want” can be difficult to conceptualise for researchers. Therefore, this paper aims to apply the human security in the narrow sense, as “freedom from fear” but with a broad understanding of fear and threat.

1.5 Limitations

Time and resources available, as well as the word limit on the assignment has of course limited the possible scope of this research. Notably, it is also limited by what it is not, as it is not only a study of the securitization of forced migration as such. To be able to analyse the potential impact a securitization of asylum seekers and refugees may have on the population in Sweden, the arguments for a securitization of forced migration will not be contested. Further studies might benefit from a fuller exploration into securitization discourses, including motivations behind them.
1.6 Literature review: Securitization of migration, refugees and asylum seekers

The perceived securitization of migration has received a lot of attention in academia, especially in the European context, and there is a vast amount of literature on the subject. For example, Tsoukala (2005) has studied how the migratory threat is socially constructed in Italy and Greece. Chebel D’Appolonia (2012) have also examined the main rationale that has inspired and legitimized the framing of immigration as a security issue and argues that this perception is mainly the result of a historical, social, and political construction. Hammerstad (2008) argues that there is a clear North-South divide in the type of security threats posed by refugee movements. In the North, she argues that although forced migration can have serious security implications, it has become over-securitized to the point where it is in danger of creating threats where before there were none. Fekete (2009) attributes the phenomenon Hammerstad mentions to the politics of fear on which European governments have based their immigration and anti-terrorist legislation, which undermines the so-called European values.

Bigo (2000) and Huysmans (2006) have studied securitization through practice in the European context and have focused particularly on security post-Schengen. In Politics of Insecurity (2006) Huysmans looked at the politicization of migration in the EU and its member states and argued that a securitized discourse is often presented as inevitable policy responses to the challenges of public order and domestic stability that arise from abolishing internal border controls. Following a similar logic, Leonard (2010) looked at how FRONTEX, the EU border control agency, contribute to the securitization of asylum and migration in the EU through security practices such as border control.

In terms of making security statements, Macleod (2005) argues that concepts such of culture and collective identity, in particular national identity, are closely linked and that one therefore has to be very careful about linking culture and security, particularly human security. Practice of security is not a neutral process as it involves making moral decisions with ethical consequences.

Several studies have looked at how asylum seekers and refugees are affected by a securitized discourse. Malloch and Stanley (2015), for example, studied how asylum seekers in Britain were affected by the increased securitization of asylum post 9/11 and argued that political and

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6 Huysmans, J. 2006, The Politics of Insecurity: Fear, Migration and Asylum in the EU, p.68-69
media representations have been infused with language denoting images of danger and risk. As a result, the rights of asylum seekers can be compromised in the name of security.

McDonald (2008) shows that the securitization framework is particularly useful in capturing the importance of discursive interventions in positioning issues as security risks, that is to trace how an issue goes from normal politics to an issue of security.

From this short review follows that the securitization of immigration and refugees in the European context has been widely researched. Efforts have also been made to analyse the experiences of those who have been securitized, asylum seekers and refugees, but not enough attention has been given to the audience, the resident population in terms of immigration and asylum, of securitization and how they may be impacted, intentionally or unintentionally.

2 The Securitization framework

Securitization is very suitable for this study not only because its focus is on the construction of threat, but also because it allows for the designation of a referent object of security. This chapter will present the concept of securitization and then briefly survey how the wider subject of migration and immigration have been securitized in the European context, with a particular focus on forced migration. The chapter will also briefly look at historical discourses of terrorism, immigration and asylum.

2.1 Constructivism and critical security studies

According to a constructivist logic, security is not a given or objective. Instead it is socially constructed through discourse, actions and interactions. Security, and insecurity, is understood to be socially constructed in the sense that rather than fitting an abstract criterion concerning what counts as a security threat, ‘threats’ are brought into being. Security, therefore, is a site of negotiation between actors claiming to speak on behalf of a particular group and members of that group.7

Building on this logic, this chapter aims to explore how security, and insecurity, can be constructed and will focus especially on the process through which 'security' and 'security

7 McDonald, 2008a, ‘Constructivism’ in Williams, P.D et al. Security Studies: An introduction, p. 63-4
threats’ are brought into being, with particular reference to forced migration and asylum. This will be done through the use of the concept of securitization. Securitization theory offers an analytical framework that points to the discursive construction of particular issues as security threats, and is particularly useful when examining non-military threats. It also allows for the designation of a referent object of security. As such, this framework will be particularly useful when it comes to analysing how refugees and asylum-seekers can be presented as security threats.

2.1.1. Securitization and the Copenhagen School

The concept of securitization was first introduced by the Copenhagen School through scholars Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver.\(^8\) While not only introducing an analytical tool to examine the construction of threats, the Copenhagen School also contributed to the broadening of the concept of security to also include non-military threats.

While securitization is dynamic and there are a number of different interpretations, the analytical goal of securitization theory is to offer a tool for practical security analysis\(^9\) and a framework for approaching the construction of security based on ‘speech acts’ designating particular issues, or actors, as existential threats.\(^10\) Important to note is that the speech act do not simply “describe an existing security situation but bring it into being as a security situation by representing it as such”\(^11\). Securitization as such is not always necessarily only negative it can allow one to focus on root causes to insecurity.\(^12\)

In terms of threats, ‘Existential’ is defined differently depending on who, or what, is the referent object of security, but in essence the threat is seen as threatening the referent object’s survival. As Buzan et al. explains, to present an issue as an existential threat is to say that: “If we do not tackle this problem, everything else will be irrelevant (because we will not be here or will not be free to deal with it in our own way)”\(^13\). Therefore, securitization of an issue or object, calls for extraordinary measures beyond the routines and norms of everyday politics.\(^14\)

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\(^9\) Taureck, 2006
\(^10\) McDonald 2008a:59
\(^12\) Hammerstad, 2014a, ‘The Securitization of Forced Migration, in E, Fiddian-Qasmiyeh eds. The Oxford Handbook of Refugee and Forced Migration Studies, p. 273
\(^13\) Buzan et al. 1998:24
\(^14\) Williams 2003:513
Essentially, securitization involves four components. First, there is a securitizing actor, an individual or entity performing the securitizing move (speech act) which declares something to be a security issue. Second, the object or issue that has been identified as potentially harmful, the threat. Third, the referent object, the actors or objects that are being threatened and is in need of protection. Finally, the target of the securitization act, the audience, who needs to be persuaded to accept the issue as a security threat.

When an issue has been successfully securitized it is “presented as an existential threat, requiring emergency measures and justifying actions outside the normal bounds of political procedure”\(^\text{15}\). Successful securitization thus depends on the effective presentation of issues as existential threats. The legitimacy of the securitizing actor but also the audience acceptance of the issue, regardless of the subject matter being a real threat or not, are two conditions for a successful securitization of any issue. Because securitization is an intersubjective process an issue is only securitized when the audience accepts it as such.\(^\text{16}\) One also has to consider the manner and context in which the threat is presented. Essentially, anyone can succeed in constructing something as a security problem through speech acts. The ability to effectively securitize a given subject is, however, highly dependent on both the status of a given actor, and on whether similar issues are generally perceived to be security threats.

In essence, “(...) securitization is a rule-governed practice, the success of which does not necessarily depend on the existence of a real threat, but on the discursive ability to effectively endow a development with such a specific complexion”\(^\text{17}\). Returning to the logic that security, and also threats, are discursively constructed leads us to the notion that “actual threats, as well as being impossible to measure, may not be perceived” whereas “the threats that dominate perception, may not have much substantive reality”\(^\text{18}\).

When dealing with threats, security measures are often perceived to help the resident population, however as Buzan notes: “efforts to achieve security can become self-defeating, even if objectively successful, if their effect is to raise awareness of threats to such a pitch that felt insecurity is greater than before the measures were undertaken”\(^\text{19}\). As Seidman-Zager

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15 Buzan et al. 1998:24
16 Ibid. p.25
18 Buzan, 1991:114-115
19 Ibid. p.37
notes, this indicates that “the ‘over-securitization’ of asylum could also have an impact on the level of security felt by residents in the host country”.20

2.1.2 Non-discursive securitization – Securitization through practice

For the Copenhagen School, the speech act performed turns an issue or object into a security threat. However, authors like Didier Bigo21 and Jeff Huysmans22 have criticised the focus that speech acts are given and argue that there are also non-discursive elements to securitization and securitization through practice. Bigo argues, that it “is possible to securitise certain problems without speech or discourse and the military and the police have known that for a long time. The practical work, discipline and expertise are as important as all forms of discourse.”23 This approach, sometimes referred to as more of a sociological approach, privileges the study of securitizing practices over securitizing ‘speech acts’ in the securitization process.24

A more sociological understanding of securitization would also focus more on the role of power relations and bureaucratic politics. Securitization processes, in this view, are more about controlling populations through bureaucratic procedures, surveillance and risk with the possibility of becoming a tool for strengthening the bonds between insiders. The securitization of identity, in this case, will end up casting migrants and refugees as security threats because they can become an existential threat to the cohesion of the host community.25

From this follows that to securitization can also be achieved implicitly and through practice, and that there does not always have to be an explicit statement made for an issue to become securitized. Buzan et al also notes that in some cases the discourse of securitization has been so entrenched, established and institutionalised so that that the threat does not always have to be present.26

20 Seidman-Zager, J. 2010, The securitization of asylum: Protecting UK residents, p.4
22 Huysmans, 2006
23 Bigo, 2000:194
24 Léonard, S. 2010. ‘EU border security and migration into the European Union: FRONTEX and securitisation through practices’, p. 231
26 Buzan et al, 1998: 257
2.2 Securitization of immigration, asylum and refugees in the European context

This section aims to outline some of the ways that immigration, and particularly forced migration, have been securitized in Europe. To conceptualise what we are talking about when refer to the securitization of migration, or immigration, we will use the working definition of this as being the “extreme politicisation of migration and its presentation as a security threat”27.

Historically, European countries have tended to view international migration, both voluntary and forced, “rather nervously as challenging their territorial, organisational and conceptual boundaries; to their ways of thinking about themselves and others”28. In our era of globalization, border security, and controlling who enters and is allowed to remain within a state’s territory is viewed as one of the last ways for nation-states to exercise control and sovereignty. As such the border enforcement mechanism is one of the primary ways that states have contended with irregular migration. Subsequently, irregular migration “is perceived as an attack on state sovereignty that brings into question the state’s ability to exercise control over its spatial and territorial domain”29. Many states have in recent years “spent immense amounts on border security through the deployment of immigration officers and frontier guards, the construction of barriers and border fences, the interdiction of migrants in transit, and large-scale removals and detention”30.

The transformation of immigration into a threat has been provoking confusion between different categories of immigrants, between voluntary and forced as well between as legal and ‘illegal’.31 Refugees and asylum seekers are often bundled up with other types of migration as there is often a blurring of concepts in both public discourse and the minds of people. As Malloch and Stanley notes, in Europe “the issue of asylum has become enveloped in concerns about economic migrants, illegal immigrants and the spectre of terrorist activities”32. In the literature on the subject, several different categories and terms for the type of migration that may cause security challenges are used. Scholars, policy-makers and media use several similar but discursively different terms like “undocumented migration, unauthorized

27 Léonard, 2010: 231
28 Geddes, A. 2003, Politics of migration and immigration in Europe, p.4
30 Vietti and Scribner, 2013:23
31 Tsoukala, 2005
migration, clandestine migration, illegal migration, and irregular migration”33. Forced migration is usually bundled up with other forms of migration in terms such as ‘irregular migration’. Although the terms are similar in the sense that they refer to those migrants who have not been authorised to enter the destination country, the formulations alter the perception of such migrants.

If we specifically look at refugees and asylum, one can see that it is not a new thing to discuss in terms of security. Historically, refugees were increasingly discussed in terms of their, especially when arriving in large numbers, potential for being “economically or environmentally disruptive, culturally threatening, connected to trans-national crime, or belonging to international terrorist networks”34. Hammerstad notes that since the end of the Cold War there has been an unprecedented securitization of forced migration both in academic literature as well as in public discourse.

There is a perception of migrants, and by association also asylum seekers and refugees, as being “bearers of multiple social threats”35 which rests on rhetoric arguments articulated around three main categories or principles. First is the socio-economic principle which associates immigration with societal problems such as rise in unemployment, the Welfare state crisis and the urban environment degradation. Second, is the securitarian principle which connects immigration with many security problems, “from petty to organised crime and from urban insecurity to fundamentalist terrorism”36. Third, and final, is the identity principle which presents migratory movements as threatening “the demographic balance and the identity of EU societies”37. As such, immigration is set up as “the source, or at least, an aggravating factor of the main contemporary social problems”, which in this way justifies the implementation of any measure introduced “as likely to handle what is currently regarded as a major social problem for years to come”38.

There is a danger for the securitarian discourse to overlook the contribution of asylum seekers and refugee migrants. The social construction of the ‘threatening figure’ of the immigrant is

34 Hammerstad, 2008: 2
35 Tsoukala 2005:163
36 Ibid.
37 Ibid. p.164
38 Ibid.
so strong that it can marginalise any argument pointing in the opposite direction. It can also create a climate of suspicion which aims indistinctly at all foreigners.39

2.2.1 The Migration-security nexus

There is generally an agreement among scholars that since the September 11 2001 attacks there has been increased frequency of representations of immigrants and asylum-seekers as potential security issues.40 After 9/11 the direct link between lax immigration control and international terrorism was intensified. For example, the tightening up of borders, in the aftermath of 9/11, was also seen as an important contribution to the fight against terrorism.41 These processes have also helped to reinforce the security logic of migration, contributing to cement the migration-security nexus. The logic goes that any migrant might be a terrorist, and because so many migrants come ‘illegally’ “any measure restricting illegal immigration would be an effective anti-terrorist measure.”42 As such, national security concerns began to dominate asylum politics across Western societies where the asylum system as such was by some presented as a weak spot which could potentially be exploited by terrorists43 as within groups of asylum seekers there are “conmen” who are “bogus.”44

A securitization of particularly Muslim asylum seekers ensued, and they were increasingly seen as a high-risk group which allowed for exceptional measures to be taken. One example of this is long-term detention of asylum seekers without trial in the United Kingdom made in the name of security.45 Permeating liberal democracies is a depiction of asylum seekers, so those that have or are about to lodge an application for asylum, in terms of liabilities and as a “risky group that needs to be prevented, contained and, preferably, repatriated”46. They are increasingly being controlled and monitored through surveillance, monitoring of applicants and sometimes even containment.

The American think-tank Pew Research Center published in 2016 the results of a survey illustrating that in the minds of many Europeans, the refugee crisis and the threat of terrorism

39 Tsoukala 2005:162
40 See for example McDonald, 2008b
41 Leonard, 2010: 234
42 Chebel d’Appalonia, A. 2012, Frontiers of Fear: Immigration and Insecurity in the United States and Europe, p.1
43 Hammerstad, A. 2014b, The Rise and Decline of a Global Security Actor: UNHCR, p.60
44 Malloch and Stanley 2005:56
45 Hammerstad 2014a: 269
46 Malloch and Stanley, p.54
are very much related to one another. In eight of the ten European countries surveyed half or more believed that incoming refugees were increasing the likelihood of terrorism in their country.\textsuperscript{47} From this there seems to be a danger that forced migration becomes coloured with security language by the company it keeps. What this means is that when one talks about forced migration in the same context as, for example, human trafficking or international terrorism it becomes associated with them although they are not necessarily related\textsuperscript{48}

\subsection*{2.2.2 Threat to European culture and identity}

The Copenhagen School expanded the scope of security and introduced societies, their functioning and identity, as possible referent objects of security through the concept of ‘societal security’. In the societal sector, the referent object is large-scale collective identities that can function independent of the state.\textsuperscript{49} In terms of threats to societal security, the “abilities to maintain a language, a set of behavioural customs, or a conception of ethnic purity can all be cast in terms of survival”\textsuperscript{50}

By definition, migrants are “outsiders aiming to come in and settle among insiders”\textsuperscript{51}, and they can as such become securitized and presented as an existential threat to the identity, cohesion and the way of life of the host community. As such asylum seekers and refugees, particularly those arriving from outside Europe, can be cast as culturally threatening to the ‘European’ culture and identity. Some can even be referred to as a threat due to coming from countries that are significantly different from European countries in that they, for example, do not have a proper democratic system, law and order, and/or are faith based societies. In this way individuals can become implicitly associated with the dangerousness of the regimes that they flee.\textsuperscript{52}

The imagery of ‘otherness’ is often based on behaviour or attributes. This fear of ‘the other’ results in demands for action and efforts to increase protective mechanisms against the risks that ‘they’ pose. The idea is built on the notion that because they are not one of us, they pose a threat to our way of life\textsuperscript{53} Buzan notes that “whether migrants (…) are securitized depends

\begin{thebibliography}{53}
\bibitem{47} Pew Research Center, 2016
\bibitem{48} Hammerstad 2014b:61
\bibitem{49} Buzan et al. 1998:22
\bibitem{50} Ibid. p.23
\bibitem{51} Hammerstad 2014a: 268)
\bibitem{52} Malloch and Stanley, 2005:55
\bibitem{53} Kundnani 2001 in Malloch and Stanley 2005:56
\end{thebibliography}
upon whether the holders of the collective identity take a relatively close-minded or (...) open-minded view of how their identity is constituted and maintained”.54

Furthermore, the transformation of immigration into a threat has provoked confusions between legal and illegal immigrants, and also between foreigners and nationals of ethnic or religious membership other than the one dominant in a given country, having through this in some respects also created a climate of suspicion which aims indistinctively at all "foreigners".55

2.2.3 Demographic principle: threat by numbers

Numbers play a central part in the framing of immigration as a security issue. As asylum seekers are also being viewed as problematic by the fact of their growing number.56 Asylum seekers are thought of as “scroungers and criminals”, and there is a construction of danger. Increasingly the widespread opinion of asylum seekers as mostly ‘bogus’ combined with a fear among citizens of European countries of “uncontrolled ‘flows’ and ‘tides’ of immigrants arriving through asylum channels”57 has in many countries lead to a restriction and a “clampdown on legal ways for asylum seekers to lodge their application”58.

Aquatic terms are often used to designate migratory movements which can be problematic. While words such as “flows”, “waves” and “tides” refer to the image of the perpetual motion of the sea, this association also “evokes an image of a dam subject to pressure of the water and being always likely to yield if this pressure becomes too strong”59. Inevitably this offers a very strong metaphor of how the waves of immigrants will reach the shores, or borders, of developed countries which will risk seeing them “flood their territory and destroy everything in their way”60. The rationale then which follows this logic is that countries need to protect themselves urgently, which corresponds to the logic of securitization and how an existential threat requires immediate and extraordinary responses.

As Mitsilegas notes, the view of migrants as a threat in European countries “is largely based on political and media discourses creating the impression that the country has been, or is in

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54 Buzan et al. 1998:23
55 Tsoukala, 2005
56 Malloch and Stanley, 2005:56
57 Hammerstad 2014b:61
58 Ibid.
59 Tsoukala, 2005:174
60 Tsoukala, 2005:174
the danger of being, invaded by large numbers of migrants who have no right to be in the
territory”61. This ‘rhetoric of invasion’ has been extensively documented, and although it is
not backed by concrete data it is nevertheless used to justify preventative action. Statistics on
illegal immigration is at the centre of a vicious circle and even though numbers can be
overstated they continue to feed security discourse and augment the sense of threat. There are
several limitations to obtaining accurate statistics such as a lack of a clear definition of the
concept of ‘illegal migrant’ and the fact that most data collection methods reflect
administrative procedures rather than migration movements. Despite these limitations
attempting to obtain accurate statistics may serve to dispel myths of states being invaded by
illegal immigrants.

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3 Human Security Framework

This chapter aims to explore the human security framework and tie it together with the ideas raised in the previous chapter about the securitization of asylum seekers and refugees, to try and conceptualise how we might think be able to think of the securitization as problematic for the resident population in the host state.

One could view the securitization of asylum seekers and refugees as a threat to residents of Sweden in the sense that it could stimulate public fears of asylum seekers. In order to analyse this idea, we will through the application of the human security framework examine the way in which those actions that induce fear in a population can be defined as a threat to the individual or that group. While traditional security theories normally treat the state as the referent object of security, human security focuses on “security of the people”62 and their communities.

The human security framework has mostly been used in the context of international development, and in terms of forced migration particularly to analyse the plight of refugees and populations in developing states. However, as this section aims to show, it is also applicable to individuals and populations in developed states.

3.1 History of the concept of human security

Human security has emerged as a conceptually distinct alternative to state-centred models focused on national security, where the understanding of security is based exclusively on military threats. In 1994 the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) released the Human Development Report: New Dimensions to Human Security which emphasised that social and economic insecurity threatened stability.63 This was a seminal text in terms of stressing the need for a broadening of the concept of security and for human security.64

The UNDP report presented human security as consisting of two complementary elements, “freedom from fear” and “freedom from want”65. Freedom from fear refers to, for instance,

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63 Vietti and Scribner, 2013:20
threats from war, conflict, state-sponsored violence, and terrorism, whereas freedom from want refers to such things as health, poverty and economic security, and developmental concerns. The two elements of human security are interlinked and fundamental to human security.\(^{66}\)

In 2000, the independent Commission on Human Security (CHS) was established with the aim to mobilize support and provide a concrete framework for the operationalization of human security. In 2003 CHS produced its final report "Human Security now", which offered a working definition of human security and a number of policy conclusions.\(^{67}\)

The CHS’s definition of human security is:

> "to protect the vital core of all human lives in ways that enhance human freedoms and human fulfilment. Human security means protecting fundamental freedoms—freedoms that are the essence of life. It means protecting people from critical (severe) and pervasive (widespread) threats and situations."\(^{68}\)

The “vital core of life” refers to a set of elementary rights and freedoms every human should enjoy. The report also notes that what people consider to be “vital”, “of the essence of life”, and “crucially important” varies across individuals and society.\(^{69}\) For this reason, the concept of human security must be dynamic, and it is also why the authors of the report refrained from proposing an itemized list of what makes up human security.

Application of the human security framework involves asking questions such as ‘whose security?’, ‘Security of what?’, that is what values are in need of protection, and “Security from what?”, what threats are most relevant at a particular time and place.\(^{70}\)

### 3.2 Elements of human security

One could say that there are three main building blocks within the human security framework. First, it is people-centric; second, it is context-specific; and finally, it has a prevention-oriented focus.\(^{71}\)

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\(^{66}\) Vietti and Scribner, 2013:21  
\(^{67}\) United Nations 2003:10  
\(^{68}\) Commission on Human Security, 2003:4  
\(^{69}\) Ibid.  
\(^{71}\) United Nations 2003:6; Gomes and Gasper 2015:3
Applying a human security framework to the study of security/insecurity means to look at security on a human level using a “‘people-centered’ approach”\(^72\) where the referent object is the individual or community. It moves away from traditional state-centric conceptions of security and focuses the attention on the protection and empowerment of human individuals and their communities worldwide.\(^73\) As such, the “essence of human security is a shift in the referent of the concept of security from the state to the individual”\(^74\). The individual is at the centre of analysis and a broad range of conditions which threaten survival, livelihood and dignity are considered.\(^75\)

Moreover, within the human security framework is also the notion of contextualisation. Human security acknowledges that insecurities vary considerably across different localities and settings. The concept is as such “universally applicable”\(^76\) and should be understood as a broad, flexible and dynamic approach which can be tailored to different countries. Although the concept is predominantly used in an international development setting the concept is also applicable to developed countries. The 1994 UNDP report presented human security as being applicable to people’s daily concerns, no matter where they live geographically\(^77\) and the definition of what constitutes human security is variable according to “region, national and local settings, gaining meaning from the context in which the framework is applied”\(^78\)

Finally, human security is also prevention-oriented by nature. The strategies associated with providing human security include the identification of the threat and working preventatively to stop threats from materializing, mitigation of harmful effects for those that eventuate, and finally to help victims cope.\(^79\)

3.3 The conceptualisation of threats

Human security not only involves a broadening in terms of the referent object of security, but also involves expanding the understanding of “traditional” threats. The UNDP report from 1994 listed seven main categories under which threats to human security can be considered. These include economic security, food security, health security, environmental security,

\(^{72}\) Paris, R. 2004, ‘Still an Inscrutable Concept’, p.370
\(^{73}\) United Nations, 2003:5; Alkire, 2003:3
\(^{74}\) MacFarlane, SN. 2004, ‘A Useful Concept that Risks Losing its Political Salience’, p.368
\(^{75}\) United Nations, 2003
\(^{76}\) Ibid, p.13
\(^{77}\) UNDP, 1994:3
personal security, community security and political security.\textsuperscript{80} Thus, human security draws attention to a multitude of threats cutting across different aspects of human life.\textsuperscript{81}

Threats can also be either direct, as in threat of physical violence, or indirect, for example, such as an overinvestment in one governmental area that might cause an underinvestment in another public area which in turn might lead to a disruption in the provision of public services or even breakdown of the system. Threats to human security are understood to be critical and pervasive. They are critical in the sense that they “threaten to cut into core activities and functions of human lives”\textsuperscript{82}, and pervasive in that the threat is large scale or might come again and again over time. It is also worth to note that what defines a threat as ‘critical’ is its depth rather than its suddenness.

Personal security is in the report taken to mean security from physical violence. Among threats to personal security, the report mentions threats from other groups of people (ethnic tension), as well as "threats from individuals (...) against other individuals (...) crime, street violence"\textsuperscript{83}

In terms of community security, the report notes that "most people derive security from their membership in a group - a family, a community, an organisation, a racial or ethnic group that can provide a cultural identity and a reassuring set of values"\textsuperscript{84} when this group is threatened the human security of the individuals it consists of will be degraded. Community security as described in the UNDP report is similar to societal security, used by the Copenhagen School, which refers to the security of human collectives and “concerns the sustainability, within acceptable conditions for evolution, of traditional patterns of language, culture and religious and national identity or custom”\textsuperscript{85}. As Alkire notes, “the focus on “all human lives” does not require or assume a humanitarian or altruistic motivation”.\textsuperscript{86} Rather, a group’s or nation’s self-interest, narrowly defined, will often justify actions that protect human security, and these will often require this political appeal.

\textsuperscript{80} UNDP, 1994:24-25
\textsuperscript{81} United Nations 2003:6
\textsuperscript{82} Alkire 2003:4
\textsuperscript{83} UNDP, 1994:30
\textsuperscript{84} Ibid. p.31
\textsuperscript{85} Buzan, 1991: 19-20
\textsuperscript{86} Alkire, 2003:4
3.4 Broad versus narrow definition

The concept of human security has been criticised for being broad, and for its “lack of definitional boundaries” as it seems to “encompass everything from substance abuse to genocide” \(^{87}\). This somewhat definitional expansiveness serves a political purpose in that it entices the broadest possible coalition of actors. What is more, different societies would interpret the meaning of human security differently, as what human security and insecurity consists of are “in the eyes of the beholder” \(^{88}\).

In this sense, we need to decide what kind of security we are talking about; the “narrow view” covers protection from violence whereas the “wider scope” also includes things such as rights, governance, development, the environment and health. \(^{89}\) This paper will apply human security in the narrow sense, as “freedom from fear” but with a broad understanding of fear and threat.

3.5 Securitization as a threat to human security

Human security is not only concerned with objective conceptions of security and insecurity, but also subjective notions and perceptions. In the subjective sense, human security is “linked to what people perceive to be security threats”, and how these perceptions, and “the fears and insecurities they generate”, impact their lives. \(^{90}\) From this logic follows that one of the consequences, intended or unintended, that may result from securitization of asylum seekers and refugees is fear, which effectively can have a negative impact on the level of human security both for the resident population and the asylum seekers and refugees themselves.

In terms of community security, irregular migration which includes asylum and refugees can be a source of insecurity. For instance, hostilities towards minority and migrant communities are increasing across Europe, creating insecurity for these populations, as well as challenging the identity and values of the majority population. \(^{91}\)

\(^{87}\) Paris, 2004: 371
\(^{88}\) Commission of Human Security, 2003:7
\(^{89}\) MacFarlane 2004:369
\(^{90}\) Burgess and Tadjbakhsh 2010:450
\(^{91}\) Ibid. pp. 459-460
4. **Analysis:** Potential implications of the securitization of asylum seekers and refugees and the impact on the host country population – The case of Sweden

This chapter aims to analyse the potential implications of the securitization of asylum seekers and refugees in Sweden, and particularly its impact on human security of the resident population. The first part will look at how asylum seekers and refugees have become securitized and the second will analyse the potential implications of this securitization through the human security framework.

The time period for the analysis is the months before, and just after the Swedish government’s decision to temporarily introduce border controls on 12 November 2015 and subsequent decision on 24 November 2015 to introduce further measures aimed at providing a ‘breathing space’ for the Swedish asylum system.

The analysis will be performed on three different levels. The first level aims to look at the political and official discourse, and the analysis will be performed through looking mainly at communications from government, speeches, press releases and statements made by Ministers taken from the official government website. The second level surveyed is the presentation and representations of asylum seekers and refugees in the media. The third level will survey the unofficial discourse propagated by far-right elements, including the Sweden Democrats (SD) party and on online forums. Thereafter the potential implications of the securitization of asylum seekers and refugees and the impact on human security of the resident population of Sweden will be explored with reference to the discourses uncovered, as well as the ways in which fear may develop, or be exacerbated, as a result of the securitization.

4.1 **Background**

In September 2013, the Swedish Migration Board (Migrationsverket) announced that Syrian citizens, or stateless persons who had previously resided in Syria, already possessing temporary residence permits could submit applications to receive permanent residence

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92 SD is a nationalist political party with clear anti-immigration policies, and by some described as far-right. See for example Ellinas, A A. 2010, The Media and the Far Right in Western Europe: Playing the Nationalist Card, pp. 10–11, or Berezin, M. 2013, The Normalization of the Right in Post-Security Europe, p. 255
permits.\textsuperscript{93} This as the conflict in Syria was still perceived as severe and that the circumstances would not change in the foreseeable future.\textsuperscript{94} The decision was met with criticism on many levels in the Swedish society, mainly from SD, a party far to the right on the political spectrum, who called this a reckless decision. The political and public debate ensuing the Migration Board’s announcement encapsulates much of the sentiments in Sweden when it comes to refugees and asylum seekers, and immigration on the whole.

During 2014 and 2015, as a result of the crisis in Syria, a historically high number of people claimed asylum in Sweden. In 2015 alone, 162,877 people claimed asylum which was nearly double the amount of the asylum seekers arriving in 2014. The number of unaccompanied minors also rose and totalled 35,369 in 2015. During the first six months of 2015 as many asylum seekers arrived as during the entire year of 2014. The majority were arriving from Syria, Eritrea, Afghanistan and Somalia.\textsuperscript{95} The graph below illustrates the rise of asylum applications lodged in Sweden during the later months of 2015.

\textit{Graph 1: Number of applications for asylum in Sweden, 2015}

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{asylum_applications_graph}
\caption{Number of asylum applications, 2015}
\end{figure}

\textit{Source: Migration Board, 2016}

\textsuperscript{93} Original notice deleted from the Migration Board’s website but see for example http://www.swedenabroad.com/sv-SE/Ambassader/Kiev/Aktuellt/Nyheter/Om-Migrationsverkets-nya-beslut-gallande-syrier-sys/
\textsuperscript{94} Sveriges Radio (2013) ”Alla Syrier får uppehållstillstånd”
\textsuperscript{95} Migrationsverket, 2016 “Applications for asylum received, 2015”
4.2 Securitization of forced migration in Sweden

This section aims to briefly look at evidence of the securitization of asylum seekers and refugees in Sweden on three levels to try to uncover their respective discourses. The first level will be the political and the official discourse, the second representations in media, and third far right elements and movements. The concepts described in the second chapter of this thesis are helpful in explaining the ways in which asylum seekers and refugees have been securitized in Sweden.

The graph below, based on data from Eurobarometer surveys, shows the level of concern about migration over time, measured as a percentage of those surveyed identifying it as top issue facing their country. In Sweden, the proportion identifying immigration as an important issue is low over time before showing a significant spike in 2015 and 2016 correlating with the timing of the ‘refugee crisis’. The other issue deemed as most important is unemployment which has been high historically, but seems to have decreased in significance as instead immigration has become a major source of concern.

**Graph 2: Most important issues facing Sweden, 2005-2016**

![Graph showing the most important issues facing Sweden from 2005 to 2016, with immigration and unemployment as the two issues tracked.](image)

Source: Eurobarometer, 2016

This shows evidence of the perception among individuals in Sweden of immigration, including forced immigration, as a threat that coincides with the increase of asylum seekers from 2014 onwards after having been relatively steady on a level of around 10% for almost a

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European Commission, 2016
decade. It reached its peak in November 2015 around the time when arrivals were the highest, as illustrated in graph 1. Overall this suggests that the matter has been increasingly securitized

Statics from the Swedish Migration Board shows that the majority of the asylum seeker who have arrived and lodged applications for asylum in Sweden in recent years are from Syria, Afghanistan and Iraq. All three countries are located in the Middle-East and/or South West Asia region, and the majority of their population belongs to the Muslim faith. The fourth and fifth county on the list, Somalia and Iran, also have a majority Muslim population. It is therefore reasonable to assume that much of the anti-asylum seekers and refugee sentiments felt among the Swedish population is also tied to the country of origin and the religion of those arriving, which will be further explored.

4.2.1 Political and official discourse

In 2014 there was a general consensus among all major political parties, with the exception of SD, that Sweden should keep its doors open to those fleeing from war. In a speech delivered during the election campaign in August 2014, the then Prime Minister Fredrik Reinfeldt, who at the time were leading a centre-right coalition government, encouraged the Swedish population to be patient and to open their hearts to the very vulnerable people across the world that were fleeing from conflicts and expected to continue to arrive in Sweden. In his speech, Mr Reinfeldt also warned that this would put a strain on Sweden’s capacity to deliver as a welfare state, but was still adamant that continued open doors and hearts was the way forward. In the September election, Mr Reinfeldt’s government lost the election and support for the anti-immigrant party SD rose significantly. The particular speech has been quoted as one reason as to why this happened

This paper will now focus its analysis on the months prior to and just after the measures taken in November 2015 by the subsequently elected centre-left government to decrease the number of people claiming asylum in Sweden. Initially the new government upheld the policies and continued with much of the same rhetoric as Mr Reinfeldt’s but in November 2015 there was a substantial change, as we will see in the following analysis of official communications, speeches and press statements the Swedish government.

97 Migrationsverket, 2016, Statistics from: www.migrationsverket.se/statistik
Speaking at a manifestation for refugees in the beginning of September 2015, Prime Minister Stefan Löfven stated that Sweden would continue to uphold its responsibilities. In another speech made on the same day, the Minister for Democracy and Culture, Alice Bah Kuhnke, stated that compassion is the core of humanity and that the right to asylum derives from the right to be human. Both of these statements denotes a humanitarian discourse where the focus is on the rights of people to seek asylum and of Sweden as having a responsibility to protect those fleeing from war.

Towards the end of September, as more than double the amount of asylum seekers had arrived than during the previous month, 24307 in total, we can see a change in the language used. On 25 September, the government presented measures to increase housing provisions for new arrivals and at this point the number of arrivals was described as ‘high’, but that the responsible authorities were capable of handling the situation albeit being under pressure. Less than a week later, on 1 October, the tone was different and the language had hardened. During a press conference to present measures in view of the “refugee situation”, Interior Minister Anders Ygeman now presented Sweden as being confronted by a ‘serious situation’. The current situation was presented using words such as serious and extreme. However, Ygeman said that the situation was critical, ‘but mostly critical for the refugees’. The Swedish society, Ygeman said, was handling the critical situation in a good way.

However, by 23 October, the situation had changed. The number of arrivals increased with over 60% from September to October. The situation was now explicitly referred to as the “refugee crisis” rather than the ‘refugee situation’. Describing something as a crisis implies that the situation now has been securitized. Further measures to tackle the arrival of asylum seekers and the crisis were introduced. In a deal struck with all the parties represented in the parliament, except SD, among other things, temporary residence permits were to become the norm rather than permanent as had previously been the case. The measures were introduced to stem the inflow of people as well as to facilitate a more orderly and effective arrival of refugees.
The high level of new arrivals persisted in November. In a communication dated 12 November we can clearly see evidence of a securitization, both as a speech act and non-discursively through practice when the government presented measures to temporary reinstate internal border controls. The reason for this was ‘acute challenges for important functions in society’ and the ‘great strain put on several key functions in society’. These temporary border controls were only meant to be reinstated for 10 days, but have since been prolonged until the end of 2016.\(^{105}\) In terms of security, border controls are very strong security symbols in the sense that they are used to protect what is inside the borders from that which is coming from the outside. As previously mentioned it is also a way for states in our globalised world to assert control. The securitizing language, which was used mainly to justify re-instating the borders, also works to create the appearance of Sweden and Swedish society as being under threat. Important functions, even key functions, in society are presented as facing acute challenges and implicitly their survival is threatened as they are under threat of collapsing. In effect, what needs to be protected is no longer the rights of the refugees, but the Swedish system and the population.

On 24 November, during a press conference the government again announced proposals for measures to create a breathing space, a respite in the Swedish reception of refugees.\(^{106}\) These were described as necessary in the present ‘acute’ situation. Breathing space as a metaphor evokes pictures as a moment of calm in contrast to current situation which is implicitly described as chaotic and out of control. Again, this paints a picture of the Swedish system in need of breathing space from the risk of collapsing. Even though the measures were presented mainly as a way to relieve the burden and encourage asylum seekers to lodge their application elsewhere, it could have been interpreted by those already worried as if Sweden was full and at the brink of collapsing.

### 4.2.2 Media discourses

Several studies have shown that “far from reflecting reality, the media structure” a “reality that ends up influencing, to various degrees, the public opinion”\(^{107}\). In terms of the securitization of forced migration in Sweden, Kara and Kjellgren (2016) conducted a study to see how refugees and asylum seekers were portrayed in Swedish media. The focus of their

\(^{105}\) Regeringskansliet 2015f

\(^{106}\) Regeringskansliet 2015g

\(^{107}\) Tsoukala 2005:173
research was on how the four largest daily newspapers in Sweden, Aftonbladet, Dagens Nyheter (DN), Expressen and Svenska Dagbladet (SvD), were treating and describing refugees\textsuperscript{108} in the two weeks leading up to the decision by the Swedish government to temporarily reinstate border controls in order to give breathing space to the Swedish asylum system on 25 November 2015.

The rationale behind the study was that as mass media have power in terms of choosing what information is reported, and of what, who and how something is examined, they also have significant power over people’s attitudes. In short, our ideas, views of other human beings, as well as our political views, are affected by how media chooses to portrait reality.\textsuperscript{109} Media is often referred to as the fourth estate alongside government, and the way they reflect and portray asylum seekers and refugees, as individuals and as a group, affects the public debate in the broader sense. The choice of words and rhetoric, affects us and shapes peoples’ understandings of things, and can thus create shifts in public opinion.\textsuperscript{110} By applying the framework of securitization, from this also follows that if asylum seekers and refugees are described as a security issue in the media, this will also contribute to exacerbate people’s fears of refugees, political exclusion and also to refugees being seen as criminals.\textsuperscript{111}

The study showed that all four newspapers had focused their news reporting on the issue of refugees, and all overwhelmingly described it as a ‘crisis’. However, the crisis that was referred to was not for those arriving or in their home countries, rather it was a crisis for the receiving country, the Swedish internal crisis resulting from the arrival of asylum seekers. And this constant reporting of a crisis painted the picture of Sweden as being under a sort of threat. Words such as “katastrof” (catastrophe) and “kollaps” (collapse or meltdown) alluded to the Swedish society and welfare system being on the verge of breaking down after accepting too many immigrants.\textsuperscript{112}

Moreover, the way we talk about asylum seekers and refugees, and in what context, determines our attitudes towards them. Presenting the issue as a humanitarian problem induces feelings of compassion and one to view refugees as victims, whereas presenting the

\textsuperscript{108} Although the study is mainly referring to ‘flyktingar’ (refugees), this concept also encapsulates asylum seekers as the majority of those who are fleeing have not have their refugee status confirmed yet. The word ‘flykting’ in Sweden is sometimes used to refer to people who are fleeing, rather than to those who have the legal status of refugee.

\textsuperscript{109} Kara, S. and Kjellgren, T. 2016, Ordval som avgör, p.11

\textsuperscript{110} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{111} Kara and Kjellgren, 2016:1

\textsuperscript{112} Ibid. pp.28–32
problem as a security issue contributes to feelings of unease and fear of asylum seekers. Several times throughout, the surveyed newspapers used de-humanising language in their reporting. Among words used to describe the situation were ‘illegal’, ‘wave’, ‘pressure’ and ‘collapse’. There was also a tendency to use the word “ström”, as in “flyktingström”, which translates to something like wave, stream, or tide, of refugees. It was used so many times that one could no longer associate it to something positive. As mentioned before, using aquatic terms such as wave, stream or tide inevitably offers a strong metaphor describing waves of refugees that will flood the territory unless measures to protect it, which can help justify the measures taken to protect the territory against this.

Refugees were also at times described as migrants in the reporting, which further de-humanised them. Using the word ‘migrants’ can evoke the picture of someone moving out of free will who wants to try his luck in a new country, rather than of people fleeing for their lives. Such a de-humanising language can also be used to justify closed borders and a stricter regime. Below are two examples of sentences that were used in one of the newspapers:

“The stream of refugees about to spend their first night in Sweden never seems to run dry”

“…it will be much worse if the stream of refugees doesn’t subside. It can hardly become more serious than this The Government really has to do something”

The study also found that the word “ström” had been so politicized and securitized that the reader immediately understood that something was urgent and acute. However, it was clear that the politicization had happened during a longer time period, starting long before the time-period surveyed.

As this section has shown, there is great evidence of the use of a securitized language when reporting about refugees and asylum in the Swedish media. Even though there may not be a direct causal link between, for example, fear of asylum seekers and the way asylum seekers are presented in the media, as the public does not solely form opinions this way, “whatever may be the immediate effects of specific media messages on individuals, their influence as

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113 Ibid p.17
114 Ibid, p.30. The words used in Swedish were “illegal”, “våg”, “tryck” and “kollaps”
115 Tsoulaka, 2005
116 Kara and Kjellgren, 2016:32–36
117 Aftonbladet (2015-11-12) in Kara and Kjellgren, 2016:33 ”Strömmen av flyktingar som ska sova sin första natt i Sverige tycks aldrig sina”
regards information, on the structure and on the contents of the social cognition of any social group is considerable”\textsuperscript{119}

4.2.3 Extreme right-wing discourses

In the Swedish general election of 2010, SD gained 5.7 percent of the vote and won twenty seats in parliament. A party with neo-Nazi roots, SD had managed to remodel itself as a respectable anti-immigration party. In the 2014 election, the party made further gains and reached 12.86 percent of the votes and became the third biggest party in parliament.\textsuperscript{120} SD’s rise has taken place as opposition has grown to the arrival, and housing, of asylum seekers as well as unaccompanied asylum-seeking minors.

If not a result of the unprecedented arrival of refugees in 2014 and 2015, parties like SD have undeniably gained support from individuals who are worried about the consequences of a high level of immigration, and in the long run fear for the survival of their way of living and the cohesion of the Swedish society. Even though for many of them, the society that SD is aiming to build might not be a place that they would actually want to live in.

Extreme right wing and xenophobic parties have throughout history used a de-humanising language in their critique of immigration. Nowadays, rather than using a racialized language, extreme right wing parties are often talking about culture and religion. In the Swedish context, this discourse is presented in terms of a ‘cultural invasion’ or ‘Islamisation’ brought about by mass migration\textsuperscript{121} and open borders. Extremist and far right elements in the Swedish society, to which SD belongs, wants to create an atmosphere of “us against them”, cast suspicion on and discredit Muslim, and for Sweden to close its borders, and even expel people. The reasoning behind this new focus on culture is based on the idea that people from Muslim countries, such as in the Middle-East and South West Asia, have a culture, religion and overall way of being that is not compatible with the European culture and identity.\textsuperscript{122}

\textsuperscript{119} Tsoukala, 2005:173
\textsuperscript{120} Valmyndigheten, 2014
\textsuperscript{121} Direct translation of the Swedish term ‘massinvandring’, which is a term with negative connotations used by far-right thinkers to describe the immigration of non-Europeans to Sweden
\textsuperscript{122} Kara and Kjellgren, 2016: 17
4.2.3.1 The Sweden Democrats

Looking at public statements made, shows us the official securitized discourse that the SD propagates. When talking about asylum seekers and refugees it is clear that SD is using a dehumanising language. The word “asylant” is sometimes used to refer to asylum seekers, which is a word that does not exist in the Swedish language. This word was introduced by and is often used in extreme right wing discourses to refer to asylum seekers. “Asylant” is a pejorative term that is linguistically very similar to the word migrant. This language shift from refugee (flykting) to asylant also, in effect, attaches to ‘asylant’ the concept of ‘economic' rather than 'political' refugee. A similar shift in extreme right-wing rhetoric has notably also been carried out in Switzerland. In the Swiss context, the concept is similarly also attached to the idea of the abuse of Switzerland's hospitality and of the Asylant as criminal.

As well as using pejorative terms, SD tends to talk about the refugee crisis and the arrival of asylum seekers as an immigration problem rather than a humanitarian problem. Asylum and immigration is bundled together, which means that easy and quick solutions to the refugee crisis are offered as you can just close the border and prevent people from entering. However, this is of course in complete disregard of the international treaties and agreements that are legally binding on Sweden. In an opinion piece published in early September 2015, Paula Bieler, a member of the Swedish Parliament, referred to the ability for people to “use the asylum system to raise their standard of living rather than to seek protection”. Bieler argued that it is better for refugees to stay in neighbouring countries because it is close to the country of origin, has a ‘near identical culture’ and language, and described asylum seekers leaving refugee camps as those who “want to try their luck in Europe”. These statements paint the picture of asylum seekers as essentially being economic migrants, rather than people fleeing war or persecution, which works both to dehumanise but also to again present the problem as an immigration problem rather than humanitarian.

We can find more evidence of a securitization in other public statements made by SD. During a press conference on 22 October 2015, Mattias Karlsson from SD, said that Sweden stood at ‘the brink of an absolute catastrophe’, which he did not blame on the refugee situation as such

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123 See for example, Aftonbladet 2015. http://www.aftonbladet.se/debatt/article21413827.ab
124 The word migrant also exists in the Swedish language
125 Dowding, K et al. 2001. Challenges to democracy: ideas, involvement, and institutions: the PSA yearbook 2000, p.21
but on the political decisions made in relation to it. The catastrophe Karlsson was referring to was a system breakdown. In light of this situation and the impending ‘absolute catastrophe’ he called for a complete halt (‘asylstopp’) to the admittance of new asylum seekers.\footnote{SvD, 2015a}

Even stronger statements were made on the 11 November, the day before the government introduced border controls in an effort to control and curb the arrival of asylum seekers. An SD representative described the situation in the country as untenable and at risk of degenerating completely if measures to reduce refugee flows into Sweden were not applied promptly. Reference was also made to an ‘impending system collapse’, which again paints the picture of a direct existential threat to the Swedish society. SD stated that other parties now were copying their proposals with regards to the “migration policy” shows that they were right and that their analysis the situation was also true.\footnote{SvD, 2015b}

\subsection*{4.2.3.2 Online forums and extremist discourses}
Katrina Hirvonen did a study on representations of unaccompanied minors on three Swedish more or less extreme right-wing online forums. What she uncovered was a potent mix of Islamophobia and anti-foreigner hate. Reflecting on the relationship between online and offline worlds Hirvonen suggested that “extremist sites provide echo chambers for far-right opinion”\footnote{Hirvonen, K. 2013, “Sweden: When hate becomes the norm”, p.78} and normalise extreme views.

One group of asylum seekers that has received increased negative attention is unaccompanied minors. Often, in far-right discourse, their sincerity is questioned and they are often described as adults posing like children. Hirvonen found that at the very least, unaccompanied minors are depicted as “scroungers – opportunist fortune hunters, social tourists, asylum-tourists in Sweden for an ‘all-inclusive trip’” but more often the words used to describe them are related to criminality. They were also depicted in very derogatory terms as “rapists” whose “presence will ensure a ‘rape’ epidemic”\footnote{Ibid. p 82}

Asylum seekers on the whole are often described as undeserving and as scroungers using the welfare system, as well as being organised in doing so. Their culture is different, they are Muslim, and they do not understand European and Swedish values and norms. In the extreme right wing discourse Muslims are depicted “as part of a conspiracy to Islamicise Europe

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
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\item \footnote{SvD, 2015a}  
\item \footnote{SvD, 2015b}  
\item \footnote{Hirvonen, K. 2013, “Sweden: When hate becomes the norm”, p.78}  
\item \footnote{Ibid. p 82}  
\end{thebibliography}
through immigration”131. Terms such as “lyxflyktingar” (luxury refugees), “bidragsturister”, (welfare/hand-out tourists), “skäggbarn” (beard children), are common among those who look at refugees and asylum seekers with suspicion.132

4.3 Implications of the securitization and the potential impact on the Swedish population

This section will explore the impacts that the discourses of securitization uncovered in the previous section can have on the resident population in Sweden. It will particularly look at the implications of the fear that may be induced by the presentation of asylum seekers as a threat in public discourse in Sweden, and in particular analyse its impact on the human security of individuals and their communities.

Worries, unease and anxiety about immigration on the whole as well as asylum seekers as refugees in particular seems to stem from three main sources with regards to its impact on the host population. First, there is a worry about the pressure immigration puts on the receiving county, including its welfare provisions and public services which may result in the possibility of poorer conditions for the native population. Second, is the fear of a negative cultural impact, where refugees are viewed as culturally different from the native population who might practice unwanted behaviours, fail to integrate and in effect threaten social cohesion. In this regard, SD also tend to stress that national identity and values are under threat. And finally, is a concern about security, where refugees might pose a physical threat such as through acts of terrorism or increase in crime133

4.3.1 A raised level of concern

As the results of the latest Eurobarometer survey shows, the level of concern about migration in EU countries over time, measured as a percentage of those surveyed identifying it as top issue facing their country, has risen.134 In Sweden, the proportion identifying immigration as an important issue is low over time before showing a significant spike in 2015 and 2016 correlating with the timing of the ‘refugee crisis’. The way immigration is covered in national and international media may also impact on the level and nature of concern.135

131 Hirvonen 2013:80
132 Kara & Kjellgren, 2016:17–18
133 Glavey, M. 2016, 'Immigration fears: a vulnerable public in the face of change'
134 European Commission, 2016
135 Ibid
A recent Ipsos survey into attitudes towards immigration and refugees, in light of the ‘refugee crisis’, found that 74% of respondents in Sweden believed that immigration had increased ‘a lot’, and in total 94% of those surveyed said it had increased. A comparison with figures from when the question was asked in 2011 where 66% said levels had increased shows that there has been a significant increase. Very few, only 24%, thought immigration has had a positive impact on Sweden, and 43% agreed to the statement "There are too many immigrants in our country".

In terms of the impact of immigration on public services, 52%, compared to 40% in 2011, believed that immigration has placed too much pressure on public services in Sweden. 48% agreed that priority should be given to immigrants with higher education and qualifications who can fill shortages among certain professions. The number of people agreeing to that statement in 2011 was 38%. These figures relating to attitudes towards immigration and migrants are interesting as it can also tell us something about the way people view refugees and asylum seekers as they are often described in securitized discourses as migrants.

With regards to refugees and the refugee crisis, 47% agreed to the statement: "We must close our borders to refugees entirely - we can't accept any at this time". Since this question was last asked in the 2015 survey, there was an 11% increase in people agreeing to the statement. This suggests that people have accepted the securitization discourse of Sweden being full, at the brink of a system collapse and unable to accept more refugees. Together with the high number of people believing that immigration has a negative impact and places a too high pressure on public services seems to confirm this hypothesis further.

### 4.3.2 Securitization, insecurity and fear

As Seidman-Zager notes "[o]ne of the unfortunate by-products that may result from the securitization of asylum is fear". Fear, according to Warr, "is not a perception of the environment (an awareness or experience of sensory stimuli), but a reaction to the perceived environment". Also, "fear is not itself a belief, attitude or evaluation” but on the contrary "fear is an emotion, a feeling of alarm or dread caused by an awareness or expectation of

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136 Ipsos, 2016, Global Views on Immigration and the Refugee Crisis. Game Changers, p.5
137 Ibid.
138 Ipsos, 2016:18
139 Seidman-Zager, 2010:17
danger". In psychology, the terms fear and anxiety are used "to differentiate reactions to immediate threats (fear) from reactions to future or past events (anxiety). The perceived seriousness of an offense or event affects fear by altering the functional relation between fear and perceived risk, that is the sensitivity to risk. The sensitivity to risk, in turn, will affect fear by determining the 'output' of fear that is produced by a given 'input' of perceived risk. Accordingly, securitization and the accompanying special or extraordinary measures, which in the Swedish case could be the reinstating of border controls, can increase the level of fear felt by exacerbating the perceived risk of an occurrence of a dangerous event. Whilst fear can make individuals avoid danger, it becomes dysfunctional and potentially harmful when it is out of proportion to objective risks.

In terms of the risks of asylum seekers committing terrorist crimes, Seidman-Zager argues that the securitization of asylum seekers may induce a fear of asylum seekers that is disproportionate to the risk that they seem to pose to the personal security of residents. The perceived seriousness of a terrorist attack is extreme as the likely consequence of falling victim to one is death or serious injury. Thus, an increase in the perceived risk of an attack can reasonably be assumed to have a significant effect on the level of fear among residents, but there is lack of evidence regarding the ostensible link between asylum seekers and terrorism. Warr’s findings suggest that in terms of crimes the public is likely to exaggerate the frequency of rare, serious crimes and underestimate the frequency of more common, less serious ones. Psychological distress can be a result of living with a heightened state of alertness and harbouring a fear of the unknown which can ultimately degrade the quality of their human security.

**4.3.3 The Migration-security nexus**

The American think-tank Pew Research Center published in 2016 the results of a survey illustrating that in the minds of many Europeans, the refugee crisis and the threat of terrorism are very much related to one another. In eight of the 10 European countries surveyed half or
more believed that incoming refugees were increasing the likelihood of terrorism in their country. In Sweden 57% believed that refugees "will increase the likelihood of terrorism in our country". This suggests that there are fears linked to refugees and the potential for domestic terrorism. On the subject of crime, 46% agreed to the proposition "refugees in our country are more to blame for crime than other groups". Only 32% believed that "refugees are a burden on our country because they take our jobs and social benefits". These findings suggest that refugees are very much viewed in connection to international terrorism and crime which can lead to people feeling worried about their personal safety. In effect, this worry and the fear that it can produce can be detrimental to the human security of individuals.

Correspondingly, in Ipsos survey a significant number of the respondents, 67%, believed terrorists are pretending to be refugees and 37% percent of respondents said that they had doubts about whether refugees really are refugees. Both of these ideas are pushed for in the extreme right wing discourse, of which SD is one of the major proponents. This suggests that people have been affected by their securitized discourse based on the suspicion of the motives and genuineness of ‘the other’. The media discourse, which at times also describes refugees and asylum seekers as migrants might also have had an effect on the perception of refugees and the belief that not all of them are actually fleeing conflicts but that some of them are in fact economic migrants.

4.3.4 Swedish identity and Muslim refugees

As the Ipsos survey showed, integration of refugees seemed to be a concern for respondents as an overwhelming majority, 65% were not confident about refugees’ future integration into Swedish society. As many as 44% disagreed very much to the statement that most refugees arriving would successfully integrate into society. More research would have to be done into as to why this is, but it seems to suggest that people view the refugees as culturally different which will make their integration into Swedish society difficult. As shown previously, this is a discourse that xenophobic parties have used for a long time and the results from Ipsos study can be an indication that it is becoming more mainstream.

148 Pew Research Center, 2016, ‘Europeans Fear Wave of Refugees Will Mean More Terrorism, Fewer Jobs’
149 Ibid.
150 Ipsos 2016: 19
151 Ibid. p.20
152 Ibid. p.21
Specifically, in terms of Muslim refugees, figures from Pew Research Center’s survey painted a similar picture. 35% of respondents said that there was an unfavourable view of Muslims in their country and 50% said that they thought Muslims in Sweden want to be distinct from larger society. Negative opinions about Muslims are much more common among respondents who place themselves on the right of the ideological spectrum. 42% of those on the right spectrum versus 21% of those on the left. Among the Swedish respondents, 75% of those who declared are favourable toward the anti-immigrant Swedish Democrats are also negative toward Muslims153.

Nonetheless, it is clear that attitudes toward Muslims and refugees are closely linked in public opinion. In all 10 countries surveyed by Pew Research Center, people who have a more negative view of Muslims are also much more concerned about the threat of refugees. In Sweden, 50% of those who have an unfavourable opinion of Muslims say refugees are a major threat to their country. Only 10% of Swedes who have a positive view of Muslims say the same.154

4.3.5 Xenophobia and racism (fear in the extreme)

In dictionaries xenophobia is defined as "[d]islike of or prejudice against people from other countries"155 and as "fear and hatred of strangers or foreigners or of anything that is strange or foreign"156. The literal meaning of the word is fear of the stranger, but it is usually taken to mean enmity towards or hatred of strangers. Xenophobia can be understood as fear in the extreme.

Xenophobia and racism often overlap, but it is worth to note that they are distinct phenomena. Racism usually makes distinctions based on physical characteristic differences, such as skin colour or facial features, whereas xenophobia implies a behaviour that is based on the idea that ‘the other’ is foreign to, and/or originates from outside of the community or nation.157

As seen in section 2.6, migrants are by definition “outsiders aiming to come and settle among insiders”. In particularly those who are seen as culturally or religiously different to the population in the host country can be cast as an existential threat to the identity, cohesion and

153 Pew Research Center, 2016
154 Ibid.
157 UNESCO, 2016, ‘Xenophobia’
the way of life of the host community. As seen in previous sections, this is a rhetoric applied by extreme right wing actors including SD. Thus, asylum seekers and refugees can be seen as socially and culturally threatening to a resident population. Fear that the high number of people entering Sweden will alter the perceived Swedish culture and way of living can therefore induce and exacerbate xenophobia among the host population. The perception of the community security as being under threat, regardless of whether this is true or not, can ultimately lead to fear which will degenerate the level of human security.
5. Conclusion

As this paper has sought to argue, there is evidence of a securitization of refugees and asylum seekers in Sweden. Securitization as explained refers to the social and discursive construction of particular issues as security threats. Different actors on different levels of Swedish society have contributed to this securitization of the issue. This paper looked at evidence of securitization in the political and official discourse, through looking at press releases and speeches published by the government, and saw that although refugees are normally viewed through a humanitarian lens the rapid increase in asylum seekers arriving toward the later months of 2015 switched the focus from humanitarian to security, and so the issue became securitized. A clear example of this was not only found in the change of rhetoric and presentation of the situation as an acute threat to Swedish society and public services, but also through the fact that border controls were reinstated and that the asylum provisions were rapidly lowered to the minimum EU level.

In terms of the securitization of migration in the media, Kara and Kjellgren’s comprehensive study of the four biggest newspapers showed how the media portrayed the refugee crisis as being a crisis for Sweden, rather than a humanitarian crisis for the refugees. By its continuous reporting of the crisis and impending system collapse once could argue that the newspapers helped to contribute to exacerbate fears among the Swedish population which affected their sense of security negatively. Increasingly by also using a dehumanising language, the public opinion can be affected into thinking of refugees simply as migrants. The words used in news reporting are important which is something that the media needs to take into account when reporting.

The greatest example of securitization of asylum seekers and refugees can be found in the extreme right wing discourses. Sweden is described to be under threat by a mass influx of refugees, or immigrants as they are referred to in efforts to further dehumanise them, who threaten to destabilise and ultimately put such a pressure on the system that it will collapse. By talking about refugees as an immigration problem rather than a humanitarian problem, paints the picture of people ‘trying their luck’ and moving because of prospective financial gain rather than fleeing for their lives. The mass migration is also described as a threat in that

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158 Wæver, 2004
refugees, particularly Muslim refugees, are culturally different to the Swedish resident population and as such a threat to values, identity and Swedish culture and society.

In terms of worries and unease, the anxiety related to asylum seekers and refugees and their impact on the resident population seems to be three-fold. Firstly, there is a worry about the pressure immigration puts on the receiving county, including its ability to provide of welfare and public services which may result in the possibility of poorer conditions for the native population which will affect their human security negatively. Secondly, is the fear of a negative cultural impact, where refugees are viewed as culturally different from the native population and may as such practice unwanted behaviours, fail to integrate and in effect threaten social cohesion and identities. In this sense the individual’s or wider community identity is under threat, which can in effect also have a degrading impact on human security. In this regard, SD also stress that national identity is under threat. Finally, and thirdly, there is a concern about security, where refugees might pose a physical threat such as through acts of terrorism. Here the threat is of a physical nature, which would have a direct impact on the human security of the resident population.

When something is presented as a security issue, according to securitization theory, something is presented as an existential threat to the referent object. The implications of the securitization can thus be exacerbated feelings of insecurity and fear. As previously noted, lack of security, actual or perceived, can lead to fear and the feeling of being under threat. In relation to the arrival of asylum seekers and refugees, this could potentially contribute to a rise in xenophobia, nationalistic tendencies and policies, and perhaps even racism.

Although national security measures are often assumed to be undertaken for the good of the resident population, fear is also a risk that must be taken into account. Securitization both through speech act and through practice may have unintended consequences that might reduce not only the security of asylum seekers and refugees, but also those it seeks to protect by exacerbating and blowing threats to identity and public order out of proportion.

This research has tried to point out some of the potential implications that a securitization of asylum seekers and refugees can result in, and how this securitization can affect the resident population in the receiving state. The focus has been on the presentation as asylum seekers and refugees as security issues, and in no way does this paper argue that asylum seekers and refugees are security issues. However, as noted securitization as such is not always

159 Glavey, 2016
necessarily a bad thing as it can allow one to focus on root causes of insecurity. In terms of asylum seekers and refugees’ securitization, can facilitate an understanding of when, why and how forced migration can lead to unease, fear, hostility and even enmity within and among communities\textsuperscript{160}

\textsuperscript{160} Hammerstad, 2014a: 273 - 274
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