Australian Refugee Discourse:
"Case for De-securitization of Refugees"?[1]

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Introduction

The issue of the Australian treatment of refugees and asylum seekers has effectively captured the attention of the media and public discourse[3] , and readily made its way to the academic literature. One of the contributing factors for this upsurge of interest, has undoubtedly been the so-called 'Tampa' incident[4] , thereby Australia demonstrated its firm resolve towards hostile stance on asylum seekers,

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[3] In this regard, the Alternative Press Index electronic search engine was able to enlist over 60 journal articles on this issue for the 2002 year alone. Amnesty International Australia regularly publishes articles and appeals to the public for the support of the more favorable asylum seeker policy in Australia (See their website on: http://www.amnesty.org.au).

[4] On August 26, 2001, around 430 asylum seekers, mainly from Afghanistan, were making their way to Australia. However, 40 kilometers away from the Australian West coast, their boat sank and the distraught passengers were rescued by the Norwegian freighter MV Tampa. Consequently, on their request to land on Australian shores, the government replied with armed troops, which held them hostage in the open sea until they were finally allowed processing in New Zealand and South Pacific island of Nauru respectively (See, Suter Keith, World Today 57, no. 10 (October 2001): 22-23).

and stringent control of its borders. Such actions have sparked the public debate not only within Australia, but immediately placed the issue of the Australian treatment of refugees into the international spotlight. Australian demonstration of force to the people seeking protection triggered widespread condemnation from variety of humanitarian organizations, most notably from the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which criticized it for its inhumane treatment of refugees and breach of its international obligations[5].

The Australian harsh stance on refugees has lead several scholars to argue that refugees and asylum seekers in Australia are regarded as a threat to the national sovereignty and security of the state[6] . Anthony Burke even suggests that Australian security has become premised on the "insecurity and suffering of the other"[7] . However, none of these studies are able to demonstrate how and why the refugees in Australia came to be viewed as a security threat in the current context. As they take the process of the securitization as something given or historically-instituted, they are not able to account for the construction process of refugees into the security agenda. The Copenhagen school (CoS) security framework, on the other hand, provides a powerful insight into the grammar or inner "logic of security" analysis[8]. They adopt an openly constructivist approach to uncover the process of securitization, which enables them to account for the process of construction of threats.

Therefore, this article will use the CoS security framework to uncover the process of securitizing refugees in the Australian political discourse. This article is divided into three main parts. In the first part I will lay the theoretical foundation of the CoS security framework. I will elaborate on the landmark works of Ole Waever, who was the precursor of the CoS

'securitization' or speech act theory. I will further use the constructivist approach to uncover the process of securitization, as advanced by the CoS. In the second part of this article, I will utilize the theoretical foundations of the CoS to the case of the Australian refugee discourse in order to first illustrate how the issue of refugees came to be securitized in the Australian political discourse within the CoS framework. And thirdly, I will utilize human security concept as a possible desecuritizing strategy of the refugee discourse in Australia. Finally, I will summarize the main findings of this article, and articulate on the future research.

The CoS Theoretical Framework: 'Securitization' or 'Speech Act' Theory

In the early 1990's the Copenhagen Conflict and Peace Research Institute (COPRI) oversaw the birth of its now famous[9] and marketable[10] intellectual offspring in the cloak of the Copenhagen school (CoS) security framework. The School's famous co-founding fathers are Barry Buzan and Ole Waever. As the date indicates the conception of this School is intrinsically connected to the end of the Cold War context of security debates, as discussed below, to which it owes its intellectual coherence.

The end of the Cold War saw the strengthening of debates for 'widening' the security agenda to include nonmilitary aspects of security. This move came as a reaction against the strictly military, state-centric approach to security advocated by traditionalists, which seemed no

[9] Michael C. Williams and Johan Eriksson both agree that the CoS framework is amongst the "most prominent" and "quite influential" additions to security studies (See, Michael C. Williams, "Words, Images, Enemies: Securitization and International Politics", International Studies Quarterly 47 (2003): 511 and Johan Eriksson, Book Review: 'Security: A New Framework for Analysis', Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management 9, no. 1 (March 2001): 61. The debates on securitization continue to date with the recent publications of articles by Thierry Balzacq in 2005, Holger Stritzel in 2007 and Matt MacDonald in 2008 in the European Journal of International Relations.

[10] The CoS framework inspired the works of Paul Roe, Jef Huysmans and Graeme P. Herd and Johan Lofgren (See, Paul Roe, "Misperception and Ethnic Conflict: Transylvania's Societal Security Dilemma", Review of International Studies, no 28 (2002), Jef Huysmans, 'Migrants as a Security Problem: Dangers of 'Securitizing' Societal Issues' in Robert Miles and Dietrich Thranhardt Migration and European Integration (London: Pinter Publishers, 1995) and Graeme Herd and Joan Lofgren, "'Societal Security', the Baltic States and EU Integration", Cooperation and Conflict 36, no. 3 (2001)).

longer justified, as the confrontation between the East and West waned[11] . Thus they called for the reorientation of security studies from a strictly military confinement to other areas such as the economic, environmental, cultural[12] and many more challenging human existence. By acknowledging the distortions of the strictly dominant thinking, a notable journal of International Studies Quarterly has devoted its entire 1990 issue to the so-called 'dissident voices', which constituted a marginal paradigm at the time. This move is illustrative of the time; thereby critical writers were finally allowed to openly challenge the dominant realist school.

This opening up of 'thinking space' produced an extensive literature raising awareness about nonmilitary types of threats such as the environmental degradation[13] , resource depletion[14] , domestic challenges to security[15] , to name a few. In justification for the 'broadening' of the security agenda, they point to the limitations of the traditional strategic application of security, which defined security only in the absence of external military threat[16] . As observed by Richard Ullman, "defining national security merely (or even primarily) in military terms conveys a profoundly false image of reality"[17] . In the face of sweeping new changes, these theorists and scholars of international security took a challenge to show the limitations of the realist security agenda, and introduce non-military dimensions to security.

[11] Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis. Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1998: 3, and Barry Buzan, "Rethinking after the Cold War", Cooperation and Conflict 32, no. 1 (1997): 6-9.

[12] Helga Haftendorn, "The Security Puzzle: Theory-Building and Discipline-Building in International Security". International Studies Quarterly 35 (1991): 11 and 16.

[13] As a Vice President of the World Resources Institute, Jessica Tuchman Mathews, extensively elaborated on the environmental aspects of security. She raises awareness about the water scarcity, deforestation, soil erosion, dangers of greenhouse effects, ozone layer depletion (See Jessica Tuchman Mathews, "Redefining Security", Foreign Affairs 68, no. 2 (1989): 166-171).

[14] This is typical of the economic aspects of threats. Richard H. Ullman has reminded about the American dependence on oil as one type of economic security (See Richard Ullman, "Redefining Security", International Security 8, no.1 (1983): 132).

[15] Haftendorn, 5.

[16] Joseph Nye and Sean M. Lynn-Jones, "International Security Studies", International Security 12, no.4 (1988): 5-27.

[17] Ullman, 129.

However, the wideners' attack on the military approach to security has sparked a powerful counter-criticism by the traditionalists. Despite acknowledging the importance of broadening the security agenda, the traditionalists warn against "expanding 'security studies' excessively;… [thereby] issues such as pollution, disease, child abuse, or economic recessions could all be viewed as threats to "security"[18]. They argue that such development would distort security studies' 'intellectual coherence', thereby robbing of its ability to adequately address these issues. By stressing the logic of security, the Copenhagen school (CoS), on the other hand, was able to devise a coherent theoretical framework on security, which avoids making the concept incoherent. They argue that security is a specific discourse, which needs to be carefully examined in order to meaningfully expand its logic to other sectors.

The main theoretical foundation of the CoS stems from the proposition that 'international security' has a distinct meaning within the "traditions of power politics"[19]. Here the practice of security refers to the politics of drama, the urgency[20], where the key issue is the survival of the unit in the system[21]. By naming something as a security issue, the actor or the designated official argues for the necessity to deal with this threat through extraordinary means[22]. Survival takes an absolute priority over all else, thereby it is argued that "if we do not tackle this problem, everything else will be irrelevant (because we will not be here, or not free to deal with these issues in our own way)"[23]. Attaching a security label to a particular issue calls for an emergency action to be taken against a designated threat such as the use of force or "whatever means are necessary to block a threatening development"[24]. Therefore, the "logic of security" or the 'securitizing move' can be found in its practice, where the urgency of the security issue requires breaking the normal rules of the political conduct[25].

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[18] Stephen M. Walt, "The Renaissance of Security Studies", International Studies Quarterly 35 (1991): 213.

[19] Waever et al., 21.

[20] Ole Waever, 'Securitization and Desecuritization' in Ronnie D. Lipschutz (ed.), On Security, New York: Columbia University Press, 1995: 226.

[21] Ole Waever, 'What Is Security? - The Securityness of Security' in Birthe Hansen (ed.), European Security 2000, Copenhagen: Political Studies Press, 1995: 53.

[22] Waever, 'Securitization and Desecuritization' 227.

[23] Waever et al., 24.

[24] Ibid., 21.

[25] Waever, 'Securitization and Desecuritization' 226.

This process of securitization within the CoS security framework is described as a speech act performed by a securitizing agent. A threat is presented in such a manner as to require extraordinary measures to address it. However, calls for emergency action is only part of the story or, in the words of the CoS - a securitizing move[26]. Success of the speech act can only be ensured if the audience accepts such a necessity. Thus the audience is an intrinsic part of the securitization act because security action is usually taken on behalf of or in reference to a particular collectivity[27] which claims a right for survival in the system with other like units, usually in the form of a state or society. Security is a pursuit of freedom from threat, which allows states or societies to function independently by securing their identity, integrity, and existence from a designated threat[28]. Therefore, for a successful securitization to take place it does not matter whether the "real" threat in objective sense[29] exists or not, but rather the threat is only relevant when it is collectively recognized and responded to as such[30]. This finding suggests that in order to trace the process of securitization the analysts need to understand what leads to the collective recognition of threats as such. To determine this process the CoS adopts an openly constructivist approach as discussed below.

By utilizing a constructivist framework, the CoS argues that "securitization…[is] an essentially intersubjective process"[31] thereby the determination of threats is dependent upon the interplay of actors' interaction in the international system[32]. A securitizing agent and an audience have to share a common understanding whether a particular issue is an existential threat warranting emergency measures. This shared

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[26] Waever et al., 25.

[27] Ibid., 36.

[28] Barry Buzan, "New Patterns of Global Security in the Twenty-first Century". International Affairs 67, no. 1 (1991): 432.

[29] In this respect, Arnold Wolfers makes this distinction between objective and subjective sense of security, where, according to him, "security, in an objective sense, measures the absence of threats to acquired values, in a subjective sense, the absence of fear that such values will be attacked (See, Arnold Wolfers, Discord and Collaboration. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1962: 150).

[30] Waever et al., 24, 26.

[31] Ibid., 31.

[32] Ibid., 30-31.

understanding can only be determined in relation to what they collectively hold their identity to be, which would provide a context for legitimate arguments to be advanced as positing existential threats to necessitate survival.

Therefore, in contrast to wideners, the CoS security framework allows it to identify the cases of securitization without losing security's analytical capacity. By stressing the logic of security it is able to recognize the cases of securitization, thereby it avoids making the concept incoherent by placing all the issues that threaten human existence on the security agenda. They argue that security is not a value judgment for what is 'best' for all corners of human life[33] , but rather it is a specific discourse, which requires particular actions to be taken in designation of existential threats. This way, the CoS unlike other wideners were able to successfully extend the notion of security apart from military into four other sectors such as the economic, political, societal and environmental.

On the other hand, they warn, however, against engaging in excessive securitization, thereby all the more issues are placed on the security agenda. The CoS recognizes that securitization is a form of failed politics – it requires breaking of otherwise established rules of political conduct[34] . Therefore, excessive securitization induces the conditions of insecurity rather than security. Huysmans significantly points out that once evoked security practice constitutes, organizes, and orders social relations within a negative framework of 'us' versus 'them'[35] . Therefore, the next section will discuss this negative implication of the security practice, which will further aid in my analysis of the Australian refugee securitization practice.

The Ordering Function of Security: 'Friends and Enemies'
Huysmans powerfully asserts that security has a specific 'performative' function in ordering social relations between friends and enemies[36] . The 'logic' of the international security sustained by the CoS is the Hobbesian

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[33] Waever, 'Securitization and Desecuritization', 222.

[34] Waever et al., 29; Ole Waever, 'What Is Security? - The Securityness of Security' in Birthe Hansen (ed.) European Security 2000. Copenhagen: Political Studies Press, 1995: 54-58.

[35] Huysmans, 'Migrants as a Security Problem: Dangers of 'Securitizing' Societal Issues'.

[36] Jef Huysmans, "Revisiting Copenhagen: Or, On the Creative Development of a Security Studies Agenda in Europe", Review Article: European Journal of International Relations 4, no. 4 (1998): 479-505.

fear "of war of all against all". Once evoked the fear of 'violent death' by enemies[37] becomes the main functioning element in the security discourse. According to Huysmans, this discourse features three things: "[a] threat, the object which is threatened … and the maintenance of this object's identity"[38]. The security narrative thus entails the construction process of an identity that requires protection against a particular threat. This construction process is prominently discussed within a constructivist framework, which is openly adopted by the CoS.

In the constructivist framework, the understanding of the reasons and processes for the establishment of actor's particular identity is paramount to understanding their behavior. Ted Hopf, maintains that actor's identity generates a particular set of preferences and choices, and accounts for their subsequent actions[39] . Here the identity of the actors is not pre-given and a priori as rationalists assert but they are rather a product of mutual interaction between the actors within a specific historical, cultural, political and social background[40] . Once established an actor's identity within a security discourse has "far-reaching consequences," as it "determines how you are treated,…whether you will be seen as an enemy or a friend[41]" . Therefore, the construction of a particular identity is necessary to understand and even predict actor's subsequent actions and behaviors.

Constructivists purport to uncover the construction process of particular set of identities of the actors by interpreting actors' shared collective understandings which influenced this construction process. These collective understandings or the so-called 'intersubjective establishments[42], are vital contributing factors in the construction of the actor's particular identity. Here intersubjective establishments are a 'building block' of actors' relations, as they constitute their social reality by providing them with "a

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[37] Jef Huysmans, "The Question of the Limit: Desecuritization and the Aesthetics of Horror in Political Realism", Millennium 27, no.3: 571.

[38] Huysmans, 'Migrants as a Security Problem: Dangers of 'Securitizing' Societal Issues', 54.

[39] Ted Hopf, "The Promise of Constructivism in International Theory", International Security 23, no.1 (1998): 175.

[40] Ibid., 174.

[41] Marysia Zalewski and Cynthia Enloe, "Questions about Identity in International Relations" in Ken Booth and Steve Smith (eds.), International Relations Theory Today. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995: 281-283.

common understanding" of rules, norms[43] and procedures that govern their behavior. By "prescribing, proscribing, and permitting…[actors'] choice of strategies and behavior"[44] they thus provide them with information on what is 'realizable' and what is not[45].

Moreover, constructivists argue that despite the fact that "[these cognitive] structures…have motivational force in virtue of actors' socialization to and participation in collective knowledge"[46] intersubjective meanings "have structural attributes" that "[persist] beyond the lives of individual social actors" as they constitute and "define their social reality"[47]. This way, intersubjective establishments, in the words of Richard Ashley, are powerful structural settings that "impose interpretations upon events, silence alternative interpretations, structure practices, and orchestrate the collective making of history."[48] This explains the persistence of particular identities, as once constructed they are most importantly constrained within the established norms of understanding[49] and thus forms the basis for the predictable pattern of the actor's behavior[50].

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[42] According to Adler, intersubjective establishments are "not simply the aggregation of the beliefs of individuals who jointly experience and interpret the world. Rather, they exist as collective knowledge that is shared by all who are competent to engage or recognize the appropriate performance of a social practice or range of practices. This knowledge persists beyond the lives of individual social actors, embedded in social routines and practices as they are reproduced by interpreters who participate in their production and workings. Intersubjective meanings have structural attributes that do not merely constrain or empower actors. They also define their social reality" (See, Emanuel Adler, "Seizing the Middle Ground: Constructivism in World Politics", European Journal of International Relations 3, no. 3 (1997):327).

[43] Badredine Arfi, "Ethnic Fear: The Social Construction of Insecurity", Security Studies 8, no. 1 (1998): 155.

[44] Ibid., 169.

[45] Ibid., 157 and 169; Adler, 322.

[46] Alexander Wendt, "Anarchy is What States Make of it: Social Construction of Power Politics", International Organization 46, no. 2 (1992): 399.

[47] Adler, 327.

[48] Richard K. Ashley, "Untying the Sovereign State: A Double Reading of the Anarchy Problematique", Millenium: Journal of International Studies 17, no. 2 (1988): 243.

[49] Arfi, 169 and Wendt, 402.

[50] David Campbell, Writing Security: United States Foreign Policy and the Politics of Identity. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992: 158.

In the security narrative structured within the above constructivist framework, an actor constructs its own identity in opposition to a particular threat. According to Huysmans this entails the 'split between the harmony and disunity[51]. By invoking this fear, an actor thus strives to utilize all the means necessary to ameliorate this threatening development. Such discourse if invoked persistently is likely to induce the conditions of fear and contribute towards the escalation of violence or radicalization[52]. Therefore, the securitization of societal issues such as the migration or refugee flows within the Australian context is likely to induce the conditions of insecurity rather than security, as discussed in the next section.

Australian Refugee Discourse: 'Case for Securitization'?

This section will use the above Copenhagen School (CoS) theoretical framework in order to determine the processes through which the refugees in Australia came to be securitized. Utilizing the CoS security framework, seem first to entail, the establishment of the official argument that portrays refugees as positing existential threats to the survival of collectivity. In this respect, the ultimate decision-making processes and determination of refugees in Australia rests with the state, or more specifically, with the Australian government. This right is vested in its sovereign powers to safeguard and control the movement of people crossing the state border. Consequently, it is the government officials, overseeing the issues of refugees, who are to be held responsible for presenting refugees as security threats. This can be evidenced in assessing the rhetoric of survival, where it is used to justify treating refugees as existential threats. It is thus argued that refugees pose a threat to Australian 'sovereignty' and 'territorial integrity' of the state.[53]

According to William Maley, the securitization discourse of refugees in Australia occurs even to the extent of manipulating the information and 'distorting the character' of refugees[54]. In this respect, the main malice of refugees is premised on the fact of their illegal arrival. However, this attitude distorts the reality of genuine refugees. In fact, Aninia Nadig argues that "someone who is genuinely persecuted [from his/her government] will have to…[obtain] false documentation[55] in order to cross the border of the persecuting state

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[51] Huysmans, 'Migrants as a Security Problem: Dangers of 'Securitizing' Societal Issues', 57.

[52] Ibid., 65.

[53] McMaster, 288.

[54] Maley, 353

.[55] Aninia Nadig, "Human Smuggling, National Security, and Refugee Protection", Journal of Refugee Studies 15, no. 1 (2000): 9.

unnoticed, and embark on the opportunity to seek protection elsewhere. Therefore, while the determination of refugees ultimately rests with the state, as a signatory to the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, Australia is obliged to carry out its humanitarian commitments under the international law.

However, quite the contrary, humanitarian obligations of the state towards refugees are increasingly downplayed for 'national security interests[56]. Thus the rhetoric of the threatened state is used to justify the extreme measures or harsh policies that the state conducts to deal with asylum seekers. Don McMaster asserts that Australian immigration policy included a detention clause since 1901[57]. Currently, Australia pursues a mandatory detention policy towards all unauthorized arrivals, where according to Sections 88, 89 of the 1958 Migration Act, "such non-citizens can be 'detained, and in some circumstances must be detained, while their claims to enter or remain in Australia are determined…and, if their claim is unsuccessful… they must be removed from Australia as soon as practicable[58]. Moreover, according to McMaster, these 'prison-like' conditions with no right for appeal could last up until five years[59]. There are currently seven detention centers in Australia, which are Villawood (Sydney), Maribyrnon, (Melbourne), Port Hedland and Curtin Air Force Base (Western Australia), Baxter and Woomera (South Australia), and Christmas Island detention centers.[60]

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[56] McMaster, 280.

[57] Ibid., 284.

[58] Ibid.

[59] Ibid. It is, however, notable that with the change of the Government in Australia there were significant changes introduced in the refugee policy since 2007. Here notably the two offshore detention centers in Nauru and Papua New Guinea have been permanently closed. On the other hand, the mere existence of such detention centers to imprison genuine refugees (according to the report from the Refugee Council of Australia (see their website: http://www.refugeecouncil.org.au.) around 90% of asylum seekers arriving by boat and 40-45% of those arriving by plane are found to be in need of refugee protection) is appalling for a country that prides itself on being democratic in respect of human rights.

[60] See, Alana Rosenbaum, 'We Too Were Strangers', from Jerusalem Report.com Jerusalem online magazine, Available at http://www.jrep.com/Jewishworld/Article-18.html , and Christine Inglis, 'Detention Center Fires Spark Renewed Debate on Australian Refugee Program', from Migration Information Source website, Available at http://www.migrationinformation.org/Feature/display.cfm?ID=91.

As has been stated earlier, most of the genuine refugees have to flee their countries of persecution through illegal channels, and therefore, the existence of mandatory detention centers for people, who arrive illegally to seek asylum, signifies the culmination of the Australian extreme measures taken to deter refugees[61]. Moreover, refugees are in fact involuntary migrants, who are compelled to leave their country for reasons of safety. Before their arrival to a particular country, they have already experienced substantial psychological trauma, which justifies their claims for asylum[62]. Therefore, the prison-like situation in detention centers only agitate their pain, and, according to Zdenek Volek, "atmosphere of temporariness and uncertainty contribute[s] to the psychological effects of the total 'migration shock'[63]. Such conditions seem to justify little for the need of such extraordinary measures to further suppress already traumatized people.

However, according to the CoS, the construction of threat is not enough to permit extraordinary measures – the audience has to accept such securitizing move to legitimize such action. In this respect, many scholars such as Anthony Burke, Maley and McMaster argue that the Australian discourse of representing refugees as security threats is intrinsically connected with the earlier exclusionary immigration policies of Australia[64]. McMaster neatly sums up this a pproach, by stating that "[this] sense of insecurity…seems to be embedded in the Australian psyche[65]. Thus they quote, 'White Australia' policy, historically documented racial riots between different ethnic groups[66] in support of their argumentation. The CoS framework along with the constructivist approaches, on the other hand, dismisses such objective treatment of the past. They argue that in order to mobilize people for support such historic memories have to be justified in accordance with the present needs.[67]

Indeed, we can witness many instances, where such exclusionary policies were constantly manipulated by the politicians in their bid to

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[61] McMaster, 280.

[62] Maley, 358.

[63] Zdenek Volek, "Changing Characteristics of Refugees as Immigrants to Australia", International Migration 16, no. 2 (1978): 46.

[64] McMaster, 279.

[65] Ibid.

[66] McMaster, 281.

[67] See, for instance, Arfi, 155, 157 and 169, and Adler, 322.

garner support. In this respect, refugees or "illegal migrants" are presented as threats to the Australian society and way of life[68]. Such arguments point to the loss of jobs, health and quarantine risks that refugees or asylum seekers pose to the host country[69]. The success of such policies, to win electoral support for the far right-wing parties and others point, to the support of many for such exclusionary practices in Australia. McMaster argues that, while some question government's extreme measures to deter refugees and asylum seekers, many continue to view them as a threat to national security.[70]

Again the image of refugees as 'illegal immigrants' or 'economic migrants' distorts the true identity of the people seeking protection from persecution. The main difference between the voluntary and involuntary migrants is their motivation to leave their country.[71] Voluntary migrants have time to decide on their destination, and often utilize "assisted migration scheme" to improve their chances for better life for himself/herself and family.[72] Most importantly, they have an opportunity to return, if necessary.[73] Involuntary migrants or refugees, on the other hand, often do not have time to plan for their destination, as the primary concern for him/her is to escape persecution and get to safety. Therefore, where they eventually end up is often unplanned.[75]

Further manipulation and distortion of facts can also be evidenced by the selection and accentuation of particular information. In this respect, McMaster notes that in the 1990's people seeking asylum "were far outweighed by the numbers of illegal immigrants who overstayed their visas[75]. He further quotes statistics that, while asylum seekers between 1989 and 2001 amounted to only 12,000, there were about 50,000 people overstaying their visas at one time. And yet, their punishment is far lighter than those of asylum seekers', and rarely do these illegal migrants enter

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[68] McMaster, 283.

[69] Christine A Stevens, "Asylum Seeking in Australia", International Migration Review 36, no. 3 (Fall 2002): 871.

[70] McMaster, 286.

[71] Volek, 45.

[72] Ibid.

[73] Ibid.

[74] Ibid., 46.

[75] McMaster, 286.

Australian security discourse as constituting a threat to the state.[76] Indeed the number of asylum seekers is too marginal to warrant security threat when each year Australia receives around 10,000 tourists.

Therefore, the construction of refugees in Australia as security threats, requiring emergency measures to treat and deter them, cannot be easily justified. Military, defensive approach undertaken during the Tampa crisis illustrates the escalation of such extraordinary measures taken against people, seeking protection, who hardly posed a security threat in military terms. This exposes the dangers of securitizing societal issues. In fact, the securitization of refugees and attacks against multiculturalism could only contribute to further radicalization and increase insecurity in a threatened society. However, adopting a constructivist approach of the CoS, in contrast, to objective assessment of threats, offers opportunities for change. It allows for the development of alternative strategies for desecuritizing dangerous societal discourses. Therefore, the next section will evaluate desecuritizing strategies within the CoS, and will further suggest and develop 'human security' concept as a viable desecuritizing strategy of the societal discourses.

Human Security: 'As a Desecuritizing Strategy of the Societal Issues'

The earlier theoretical sections of this article revealed that the Copenhagen School (CoS) security framework regarded excessive securitization as a dangerous practice that sought to justify the breaking of the normal political boundaries to handle named security issues with extraordinary measures. They warn against such securitization as it provides leaders with enormous power to handle particular issues outside the normal political boundaries, which could be used to "exploit threats for domestic purposes" and further "silence opposition"[77]. This is a powerful argument, as was illustrated in the empirical case of the Australian securitization of refugees and asylum seekers. As was shown, in the previous section, in presenting refugees as security threats to the state sovereignty and national security interests the state was able to justify extraordinary measures against the refugees and asylum seekers. This was done even to the extent

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[76] Ibid.

[77] Weaver., Security: A New Framework for Analysis, Chapter 2: 'Security Analysis: Conceptual Apparatus', 29.

of manipulating the information, where the state's humanitarian obligations towards the people in distress were neglected for the interests of state sovereignty. Therefore, the CoS argues that desecuritization, or dealing with the issues within the normal political boundaries, not securitization was the "optimal long-range option" that would eventually perpetuate conditions of peace and security.[78]

However, so far the CoS security specialists openly refuse to elaborate on the possible range of desecuritizing strategies. This way, the CoS believes that their ontological premises do not allow room for alternative approaches or radical transformations.[79] They argue that the 'speech act' theory only strives to show how particular issues came to be framed as security threats[80]. Thus they work within the existing structures and the actors in revealing the construction of the securitization processes[81]. However, such approach does not justify the aims of this study, which seeks to understand not only how the refugees and asylum seekers in Australia came to be viewed as security threats, but also suggest possibilities for desecuritizing such dangerous discourses. Therefore, at this point, this study will turn to critical security studies (CSS), which not only offers opportunity for change[82], but suggests means to effectuate such changes.

CSS argues that the present security conditions 'wrongly' privilege the states as the ultimate referent object of security.[83] They thus, as most prominently advocated by Ken Booth, argue that true security can only be achieved by emancipating or "freeing people, as individuals and groups, from the social, physical, economic, political, and other constraints that stop them from carrying out what they would freely choose to do[84]. This way, states are only means to achieve security not ends in themselves; thus

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[78] Ibid.

[79] Ibid., 35.

[80] Ibid.

[81] Ibid.

[82] Keith Krause, "Critical Theory and Security Studies", Cooperation and Conflict 33, no. 3 (1998): 320-322.

[83] Ken Booth, "Security and Emancipation", Review of International Studies, no 17 (1991): 319.

[84] Ibid., also see, Ken Booth, "Security and Self: Reflections of a Fallen Realist" in Keith Krause and Michael C. Williams (eds.) Critical Security Studies: Concepts and Cases (UK: UCL Press, 1997): 110.

the ultimate end concern for security should be the individual human beings[85]. This privileging of individuals as the ultimate referent objects of security was most acutely captured by the development of a so-called 'human security' concept.

Many authors cite United Nations Development Programme's 1994 Human Development Report as the first authoritative source on the development of the human security concept[86]. In defining human security concept, this Report emphasizes that security should be people-oriented and thus "concerned with how people live and breathe in a society, how freely they exercise their many choices, how much access they have to market and social opportunities - and whether they live in conflict or in peace[87]. Further, according to the Report, human security, first, "means safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease and repression. And second - "protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily life[88]. However, in order to make this concept a useful desecuritizing strategy for societal issues, two main obstacles need to be addressed.

Firstly, most scholars argue that human security in its present definition is too broad to be analytically useful[89]. According to Roland Paris, human security, which includes "everything from physical security to psychological well-being", provides little guidance in ordering priorities for analysts and practitioners alike.[90] This argument is reminiscent of the traditionalist's criticism on excessive broadening of the security agenda, thereby they oppose such broadening, as it would make the operationalization of the concept of security incoherent. In this regard, Hugh Dyer and Daniel Deudney, for instance, strongly challenged the broadening of the security

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[85] Booth, "Security and Emancipation", 319.

[86] See, Matt McDonald, "Human Security and the Construction of Security", Global Society 16, no. 3 (2002): 278, Astri Suhrke, "Human Security and the Interests of States", Security Dialogue 30, no. 3 (1999): 269, and T.R., Annick Wibben, "Human Security Toward an Opening". Security Dialogue 39, no.4 (2008).

[87] UNDP, Human Development Report 1994, Chapter 2: 'New Dimensions of Human Security', 23, Available at http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/1994/en/pdf/hdr_1994_ch2.pdf.

[88] Ibid.

[89] See, for instance, Roland Paris, "Human Security: Paradigm Shift of Hot Air?", International Security 26, no. 2 (Fall 2001): 88, and Astri Suhrke, "Human Security and the Interests of States", Security Dialogue 30, no. 3 (1999): 269.

[90] Paris, 88.

agenda to the environmental sector.[91] They argue that the notion of security is structured around 'organized violence[92], and it operates in the mode of 'us vs. them[93]. With this operation in mind, one is hard-pressed to find the aggressor in the case of the environmental degradation. As Dyer argues, the environmental problem is not the aggressor or the challenger to security but it is the activities of the people that harm the environment.[94] This way, the security would be largely ill-equipped to address such problem. They further warn that "if everything that causes a decline in human well-being is labeled a 'security' threat, the term loses any analytical usefulness and becomes a loose synonym of 'bad'[95]. This argument could similarly be extended to the human security agenda, thereby excessive securitization of humanitarian issues would make the concept not only incoherent but also dangerous.

The second difficulty of operationalizing the human security concept as a desecuritizing strategy derives from its treatment of individuals as the referent objects of security. However, as the CoS argues, security practices are made in reference to some form of collectivity. Thus the individualist or minimalist approach to security cannot adequately grasp the field of security practices. Traditionally, in order to avoid the state of total anarchy individuals granted the state with the power to practice security in their name.[96] This way, individual security, which would encompass all their needs and concerns, is devoid of any meaning and practice in the international relations field[97]. This does not mean, however, that state's particular practices of security should not be questioned. Only that, in order to provide any use and means for invoking change, security needs to be understood and constructed within its own practice.

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[91] See, Daniel Deudney, "The Case Against Linking Environmental Degradation and National Security", Millennium 19, no. 3 (1990): 461-476 and Hugh C. Dyer, "Environmental Security and International Relations: The Case for Enclosure", Review of International Studies 27, no. 3 (July 2001): 441-450.

[92] Deudney, 462.

[93] Ibid., 467.

[94] Duyer, 441-450.

[95] Deudney, 464.

[96] Barry Buzan, People, States and Fear: An Agenda for International Security Studies in the post-Cold War Era (Hertfordshire: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991): 39.

[97] Weaver, 'Securitization and Desecuritization', 48.

Thus in order to develop a meaningful desecuritizing strategy of societal issues, this study suggests the reconstruction of the term human security concept to be applied, as an alternative state discourse, that would reveal state's concerns and obligations towards the people in need. This way, the desecuritization of dangerous discourses would entail not only showing how the construction process of particular issues became privileged by those in power, as was illustrated in the previous section. In this respect, the most important task for the analyst is to suggest an alternative perspective from the point of those marginalized[98], in invoking particular discourses that are silenced by power holders. The empirical case study of Australian refugee and asylum seekers revealed that state privileged its sovereignty and national security interests at the expense of its humanitarian obligations towards the people, seeking protection. Thus the desecuritization strategy would entail the accentuation of the humanitarian obligations of the state. In undertaking such task, the philosophical foundations of the human security concept is thus very useful, as seen below.

The moral philosophical grounds of the human security concept make it a very powerful desecuritizing strategy. It privileges ordinary people and is "concerned with human life and dignity[99]. The philosophical traditions of the human security originate from the mandate of humanitarian organizations, where people are involved in "[saving] lives and [reducing] the suffering of individuals during armed conflict[100]. However, in order to make this discourse applicable to states, one needs to address how the humanitarian issues could be framed in reference to collectivity or the people residing within the state. In this respect, the CoS argues that humanitarian issues enter into security practice as ordering principles of states[101]. This way, the humanitarian obligations of states could be accentuated by showing how the ideology of the state is grounded in principles of respect for human rights and equal opportunities for people without discrimination on the basis of their race, nationality, religion, and many more.

Thus without necessarily securitizing all the more issues on the security agenda, human security concept could be reconstructed to show

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[98] Huysmans, 68.

[99] UNDP, Human Development Report 1994, 22.

[100] Suhrke, 269.

[101] Waever, Security: A New Framework for Analysis, Chapter 2: 'Security Analysis: Conceptual Apparatus', 39.

how the ideas and principles of the democratic structures such as those in Australia are based in respect for human and minority rights. However, such approach could only succeed in desecuritization of societal issues if it can be demonstrated how such democratic principles require compassion and responsibility for the plight of the vulnerable such as the refugees. Suhrke, for instance, argues that the category of 'vulnerable' includes the "victims of war and internal conflict"[102]. In this respect, the 1951 UN Convention defines the refugee as someone, who "owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, of political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it[103] Therefore, refugees and asylum seekers, as the category of the vulnerable, clearly represent those deserving protection.

The above approach, however, could be criticized by the CoS security scholars as adopting human security concept not to desecuritize but to securitize all the more issues on the security agenda. This is a powerful argument that needs to be addressed in order to justify the adoption of humanitarian discourses to the plight of refugees, as a useful desecuritizing strategy of the Australian refugee issues. As the empirical study illustrated, the CoS' securitization approach was able to show the process of constructing refugees as threats to the state security concerns. This way, it was established that the privileging of state sovereign and national security interests were invoked to silence the alternative discourses for the plight of people seeking refuge. This situation distorted the real identity of refugees; thus justifying the extreme measures taken against them. This finding would rarely leave any student of international relations uninterested to explore possibilities for desecuritizing such unjust practices. Thus simply ignoring the issue or waiting when and how the issue would be taken out from the security discourse is not a viable option.

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[102] Suhrke, 272.

[103] See, 1951 UN Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees, Chapter 1, Article 1, obtained from Canadian Social Studies Resource web-page Canada Channel at http://207.61.100.164/candiscover/cantext/internat/1951refu.html.

It can be argued that, by adopting the constructivist approach, the CoS itself invokes an opportunity for change, which needs to be further explored. In this respect, this study strived to reconstruct the human security concept to reveal the silenced discourses within the practices of the state. This way, the human security concept was utilized as a state discourse, which acted as a principle of the founding ideology of the state. By revealing the true identity of refugees, this reconstructed concept allowed to reveal state's silenced practices and obligations towards the people in need. This way, the adoption of such desecuritizing strategy does not necessarily lead to further securitization. It can be argued that such practice was consistent with desecuritization logic by allowing the opportunity to view the securitized category of refugees not as people positing threats to state sovereignty but as people in need of protection. By invoking state humanitarian obligations, this desecurization strategy would allow the concerns of the distressed people easily met within the normal political boundaries without the necessity of resorting to emergency measures. This necessity thus simply disappears as the refugees and asylum seekers are no longer viewed as security threats justifying such measures.

Summary and Future Research

This article employed the CoS security framework, which proved a useful methodology in uncovering the process of constructing refugees in the Australian context as security threats. By arguing that the security is a specific practice, this theory proved significant in showing why excessive securitization of societal issues would be a dangerous practice. This methodology further proved practical by allowing the researcher to use the current practices and discourses of the state in order to reveal the construction process of securitizing refugees. Such approach seemed to have substantial support in the empirical case study. However, it also contained significant limitations. The CoS does not propose a desecuritizing strategy; it only argues that securitization is a dangerous discourse, where actors purport to suspend normal political practices against what it presents as a security issue. However, such understanding should be followed by a suggestion of plausible alternative approaches that would help amend dangerous security discourses.

Therefore, in order to find such alternative mechanisms of desecuritization other approaches and methodologies should be consulted. This study so far suggested the reconstruction of the human security concept

to invoke humanitarian obligations of the state, which seemed to have been silenced in the practice of securitizing refugees in Australia. In this regard, critical security studies' (CSS) insights were used to show how the vision of refugees as a security threat could be changed by invoking the voices of the marginalized discourses. In fact, CSS employs a radical revisionist approach to security field viewing the whole practice distorted by the state-centrism. They adopt a people-oriented approach to security, which was useful in developing a desecuritizing strategy to invoke compassion of the state towards people seeking refuge. Further research needs to be done to utilize other novel security concepts or theories of security such as postructuralism to develop alternative methods of desecuritization,

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