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Sectarianism, Proxies & De-sectarianisation

Spatialising Securitisation in the Middle East

Javier Bordón (ed.)

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Introduction

Javier Bordón, Lancaster University

Security and threats are a recurring theme in the study of Middle East politics. From the imaginaries projected by extra-regional actors, through heterogeneous attempts at articulating a regional architecture amidst convoluted security concerns, to transnational and local struggles over authority, belonging and fear, the formation and management of threats figure prominently in the structures and dynamics that traverse politics, society, economy, culture or religion. Beyond decisions made in cabinet meetings and courses of action drawn in situation rooms, a myriad of actors across the social spectrum partake in the (re-)production, dissemination and subjectification of threats. Peoples and communities uphold, negotiate, adapt, and/or rebuff what is threatening for them and what to do about it. In so doing, actors engage in processes where power, legitimacy, and positionality are both consecrated and put to test, often with far-reaching implications for the conduct of social and political life.

As the potential of constructivist approaches to explore the production and actuation of meaning remains relevant, a burgeoning academic literature on securitisation is making inroads into the study of the Middle East. Securitisation has informed research on multiple directionalities and subject matters, highlighting its intersection with questions of environment and energy, gender, sectarianism, or nationalism -amongst others-, feeding from and acting upon contested identities. Researchers have examined links between securitisation, sovereign power, and authoritarianism, but its applicability to the study of contestation against normative claims prescribed 'from above' and the mobilisation of grievances and expectations has not gone unnoticed.

Despite the dual interest in advancing scholarship on the region through new avenues and making securitisation more amenable to 'non-Western' realities and epistemologies, the securitisation-Middle East nexus still needs to probe into an area that has brought benefits to both when they have gone their separate ways: the so-called 'spatial turn' in social sciences and the study of the production of space. A spatial(-ised) understanding of threats interrogates how boundaries, positions and distances organise human groups and their relations, the ways in which the social interacts with the physical, and how political order, power, and identity come to fruition.

If, as Doreen Massey (2005) would claim, the existence of multiplicity cannot be conceived without space; and threats speak to the organisation and regulation of that multiplicity, we find ourselves compelled to ask: how does securitisation inform the production of space?

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How do processes and dynamics of spatialisation inform security conceptions? Who securitises, and why? What relational and behavioural patterns emerge from security articulations? How do threats develop, travel and crystallise across time and space? Who is included and who is excluded? How is (in-)security experienced and lived in and through space?

To answer these questions, our joint report addresses the relationship between security and space through a series of case studies analysing contemporary phenomena situated in the Middle East. Marina Calculli examines the ostracization and most recent re-integration of Syria into the Arab fold against the backdrop of power-laden hierarchies in the international system. Javier Bordón introduces an original framework through the analysis of interlocking securitisation processes targeting the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt. As different processes converge, agents (re-)group in shifting 'ordering assemblages'. Simon Mabon delves into the interplay between transnational and domestic dynamics in Bahrain, where the securitisation of sectarian difference resonates across the region. The use of Pierre Bourdieu's sociology in conjunction with questions around security and space culminates in Jeroen Gunning's and Dima Smaira's focus on everyday practice. By using Beirut's southern suburbs as vantage point, their piece introduces the concept of 'nested security fields' to illustrate how city dwellers in Lebanon make their daily choices when searching for security. Elizabeth Monier demonstrates how securitisation can improve our understanding of nation-building, state power, and majority/minority relations unfolding in different types of space. Drawing from Giorgio Agamben's work on politics and space, the author explores how the Coptic Christian community in Egypt navigates its 'inclusive exclusion' into the national fabric. Maya Breau takes us back to Lebanon, where she employs the concept of affective atmospheres to explain how military checkpoints play multiple (in-)security roles, shape everyday people's behaviour, and institute themselves as part and parcel of political life. Last but not least, Gabriel Garroum Pla unpacks the politics of urban reconstruction in Syria through recourse to International Political Sociology. Interrogating the relationship between securitisation, violence, and space, the paper shows how the Syrian regime uses space for the cultivation of political subjectivities in line with a particular vision of order, and how ordinary Syrians engage with these processes.

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Mirroring (de-)securitization: from stigmatisation to rehabilitation of Syria in the Arab region

Marina Calculli, Leiden University

Reacting to the Syrian regime's violent crackdown on protesters during the 2011 uprising, leading powers in the Arab world –especially Gulf states– spearheaded a coordinated effort to isolate the Asad regime and eventually turn it into a pariah. Today we witness the opposite. What began in 2018 with a decision by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to reopen its embassy in Damascus, followed by Saudi Arabia, has culminated with the formal end of a twelve-year-long suspension of Syria from the League of Arab States (LAS) in 2023. This radical reversal is puzzling because the conditions that prompted Arab countries to ostracise the Syrian regime in 2011 –its failure to stop killing civilians and cooperate with international monitoring institutions– have only worsened –if anything– justifying further intensification of pressure on Syria to change course. Still, this process of rehabilitating the Asad regime is ambivalent. In contrast to the fast diplomatic normalisation, political and economic reintegration of Syria in the Arab region remains stalled (The Syria Report 2023).

To make sense of the stigmatization and subsequent rehabilitation of Syria by Arab regimes, I deploy securitization theory (ST), in a modified version, so as to apply it to the postcolonial world. ST views 'security' as something not objectively definable. It is a 'speech act' by which power elites construct a threat and persuade a 'relevant audience' of the need to adopt exceptional measures to counter it, through a process of *securitization* (Waever 1995, 55). At the opposite end stands *desecuritization*: the discursive removal of an issue from the realm of security and its (re-)location into the 'ordinary public sphere' (Buzan, Wæver, and Wilde 1998, 29).

The securitization and desecuritization of the Asad regime from 2011 and 2023 lend support to the claim that power elites construct or deconstruct security without responding to objective criteria. Yet, Syria also raises questions about *who* the relevant audience of Arab elites' security discourses is. The question of who defines the audience is a contested issue in ST. It remains unclear how power elites select the intended audience (Balzacq 2005; Léonard and Kaunert 2010; Côté 2016). This is even more challenging in authoritarian contexts in which societal agents are often silenced through coercion or co-optation (Dawisha and Zartman 2015), or act 'as if' they believed the fictitious claims of their leaders (Wedeen 2015). Indeed, Arab political elites use 'speech acts' to justify their security policies (Pratt and Rezk 2019). But the question

of *whom they speak to when they speak about security* is key to assess which audience(s) counts –and which do not– in determining what security is and is not.

This is especially relevant because authoritarian regimes are mindful and often paranoid about the hyper-awareness of their citizens vis-à-vis the legitimacy of their power, deep-rooted in the postcolonial nature of the state (Said 2022). At the same time, political spaces have emerged, especially since 2010, in parallel to –not within the framework of– Arab states (Haugbolle and LeVine 2022). Thus, to soothe their paranoia, autocratic leaders often speak to, and seek complicity of, their international allies. This report suggests that 'the West' (Western governments and public opinions) is the relevant audience of Arab regimes' *speech acts* regarding the securitization and desecuritization of the Asad regime. In this vein, it establishes a liaison between ST and the study of international hierarchies.

Mirroring securitization

ST is an elitist theory: it focuses on the discourse of elites –those who have the power to construct the hegemonic scripts (in a Gramscian sense) through which we codify the meaning of security. This is why elites need a relevant audience, as ST distinctively claims: a constituency that inter-subjectively constructs –or deconstructs– the threat, by accepting elites' discourse.

Yet, when we talk about *elites*, we must also assess the role they play in relation to other elites, not simply their own constituencies. This is dependent on global hierarchies and the entangled geographical, material and normative dimensions that are key to the development of contemporary 'international society' (Mattern and Zarakol 2016). These factors are crucial to empower *certain* elites at the expense of others, especially in the Global South, whilst at the same time determining the limits of their agency (including when they speak about security), by virtue of decentralised rules emanating from the Global North (Owens 2015).

This is especially relevant when we analyse the 2011 Arab Spring as a 'global event' (Bayat 2021) –one that results from and in turn generates global dynamics, processes and repercussions. Seen from this perspective, we cannot treat security discourses produced by Western elites and Arab elites as distinct, but we must consider the interplay between them as well as their overall significance in the key junctures in which they are uttered.

Here I embrace a critical understanding of ST, whereby speech acts are constituted and in turn constitutive of material security interests and serve to manage the moral and reputational costs thereof (Calculli 2019). In the context of international hierarchies, *discursive cooperation*

among different elites emerge to either strengthen the impact of, or shift the moral burden of a given security response –in the latter case, especially when a Western policy contradicts the liberal values upon which it is predicated. Hence, I suggest that Arab elites have first constructed and then deconstructed the threat of the Syrian regime for a Western audience, yet not through an inter-subjective process. Rather than persuading them, they have *mirrored* the Western way of thinking about security in Syria –either by strengthening Western verbalisation, or verbalising what Western states cannot afford to verbalise.

The securitization of the Asad regime

Western discourse: When spontaneous protests erupted in Syria in 2011, the Syrian regime responded by shooting and arbitrarily incarcerating protesters, whilst portraying the popular uprising as a 'foreign conspiracy'. The West reacted unequivocally, epitomised by the US State Department mantra 'Asad must go'. At the centre of this policy was the denouncement of the gross violations of human rights committed by the Asad regime and a moral imperative to protect civilian lives. Misguided expectations of an imminent fall of Asad fuelled a race among Western states and Turkey to support the exiled Syrian opposition, portrayed as the 'legitimate Syrian authority'.

Arab discourse: Although destabilised by protest movements across the region, power elites in the Arab world –especially Gulf states– strategically embraced the Western condemnation of the Asad regime. They feared that ambiguity toward Syria could backfire at a moment of high visibility of Arab protesters (Interview 1). Bilaterally, Arab states –except for Iraq, Lebanon, and Oman –recalled their ambassadors from Damascus. Multilaterally, on 12th November 2011, the LAS suspended the Syrian seat and, later, imposed sanctions against Syrian officials.

The decision to suspend Syria, although envisaged by Article 18 of the LAS Charter, was not the most expected outcome. Eager to push forward an 'Arab initiative to resolve the crisis in Syria', on 2nd November 2011 (ten days before the suspension), the LAS adopted Resolution 7436, which formalised an agreement with the Asad regime, entailing halting violence against civilians and granting access to international monitoring institutions (League of Arab States 2011). The LAS had 'welcomed the Syrian government's agreement to the Arab plan' (*idem*). Yet, in the few days following the agreement, confronted with Asad's unwillingness to comply, the LAS escalated to the maximum level of pressure without further delays and formalised the suspension.

The significance of this measure lies not simply in its abrupt severity, but in the enshrinement of the protection of civilians as a norm unprecedently put at the centre of LAS' action. LAS

Resolution 7436 (2011) aimed to 'end the bloodshed and achieve the aspirations of the Syrian people towards the desired reforms' (*idem*). At the same time, key LAS members –especially Gulf monarchies– formally sponsored the Syrian opposition and informally backed rebel groups fighting in Syria against the Asad regime to end its rule.

Reception: The reception of these discursive and symbolic acts –especially by Saudi Arabia and Qatar– varied across the Arab world and the West. Whilst the Arab public welcomed them with satire, mockery, and blatant accusations of hypocrisy from the part of regimes engaged in repressing their own people, the West praised and boosted the role of the LAS internationally. A LAS-sponsored peace plan formed the basis of a UN Security Council resolution on 4th February 2012, which was blocked by the veto of Russia and China. On February 16th, the UN General Assembly passed resolution 66/253, requesting the UN to partner with the LAS in support of a peaceful solution to the Syrian conflict through a political transition. The US coordinated with Gulf regimes to make sure the LAS and the Organisation of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) isolated Syria and issued the most potent call for international action against Asad (Interview 2). Otherwise, the US was eager to use the forefront role of the LAS to shield itself from allegations of imperialism and legitimise Western security policies toward Syria, considering the infamous legacy of the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq. It was nonetheless a curious move by the US and the West to rely on Arab authoritarian regimes who were themselves repressing popular revolts in their respective countries whilst, in the meantime, Syrian protesters repeatedly called for a Western military intervention to stop Asad's bloodshed.

The desecuritization of the Asad regime

The West's tacit normalisation of the Syrian regime: in the aftermath of the Arab Uprisings, as popular protests triggered political volatility and security instability, the West transformed its discourse, shifting the priority of its policy from democratization to counterterrorism. US elites often supported this transformation, by recurring to orientalist tropes, such as sectarianism in the region as an obstacle to democratization and a source of terrorism. In the discourse of Western elites, 'regional stability' replaced 'the people' as referent object in need of protection. The protection of civilians was gradually silenced, obscured and obliterated in Western discourses and media coverage about Syria as early as 2013.

This is when a tacit rehabilitation of the Syrian regime commenced. In response to a chemical attack on Ghouta (Damascus) in August 2013, which the US government officially attributed to the regime, President Obama first prepared but then called back a military attack against Syria. What followed was a formal international reengagement of the Asad regime: in October

2013, Syria was invited to become a State Party to the Chemical Weapons Convention and a Member State of the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW). A joint OPCW-UN mission (October 2013 – September 2014), cooperated with the Syrian government to remove and verify the destruction of all chemical weapons declared by Syria, although the completeness of Syria's declaration remains in question, especially as the regime continued to launch chemical attacks, after allegedly delivering all its chemical weapons to the OPCW.

In a subsequent phase marked by the emergence of the 'Islamic State' group in 2014, Western political elites tacitly aligned their position with Russia and Iran (the major allies of the Asad regime). In Western media and political discourses, the Syrian conflict started being characterised as a source of terrorism and migration, no longer as a massive violation of human rights. Despite keeping sanctions against the Syrian regime in place -especially under the 'Ceasar Syria Civilian Protection Act' (2019)-, Western governments stopped questioning the legitimacy of Asad, *de facto* disinvesting from any political transition plan, whose formal institutional structures –especially, the 'Geneva process' led by the UN Special Envoy for Syria– remain in place as *pro forma* (Interview 3). Since 2015, a number of peace plans led by Russia and Iran have side-lined Western and UN-led (stalled) initiatives on Syria, with the actual aim of sustaining a protracted war (Abboud 2021). The grand narrative of US withdrawal from the Middle East has often been invoked to explain the US inability to stop Asad. Yet, whilst the US has nurtured this narrative, it has silently encroached on the oil-rich north-eastern part of Syria, opening a military base in al-Tanf and supporting counterterrorist groups. All this suggest that, instead of withdrawing, the US has exerted 'leadership by stealth' in the Syrian conflict (Calculli 2018).

Arab de-stigmatization of Asad: The rehabilitation of Asad in the Arab world formally commenced with the reopening of a UAE embassy in Damascus in 2018. The following year, Saudi crown prince Mohammed Bin Salman declared that erasing 'terrorism' was the priority in Syria and Yemen (Reuters 2019). Moreover, the Saudi official position was that Syria could mediate a deal between Iran and Saudi Arabia (*idem*). In March 2023, Saudi Foreign Minister, Prince Faysal bin Farhan, stated that his country's current policy on Syria was 'not sustainable' (The Syria Report 2023). The following month, he visited Damascus and reopened the Saudi embassy. In May 2023, Syria was formally invited to re-join the LAS (Al-Jazeera 2023a).

Reception: The reception of these discourses by Arab people is difficult to trace at this stage. In June 2022, Arab civil society activist and former detainee Omar Alshogre, who had been invited to brief the UN Security Council by the Albanian Presidency, broke the rules of the

Council and directly addressed its members, especially the UAE, screaming 'Shame on you!' for normalising relations with Asad. Yet, the absence of free fora in the Arab region does not allow for a full appreciation of Arab voices, although protests against Arab efforts to normalise relations with Syria have taken place in rebel-held areas of Syria (Al-Jazeera 2023b).

Yet, what is key here is the reception of Arab normalisation efforts in the West. Whereas the official positions of major Western powers, such as the US and France, remain unaltered, cracks in the Western narrative signal complicity rather than divorce between Arab and Western views of the Asad regime. In early March, the US Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs Barbara Leaf claimed: 'our basic message has been [that] if you're going to engage with the regime, get something for that' (Washington Post 2023). At the same time, during a Syria's hearing in the US Congress, former Syria Special Envoy Joel Rayburn stated publicly:

> 'When Arab officials asked how the US might react to this normalization outreach, senior administration officials gave a tacit greenlight and said they preferred that Arab capitals normalize with Assad than for Russia to broker a Damascus-Ankara deal that might lead Turkish attacks against our Syrian Democratic Forces partners' (Alaa Ghanem 2023).

At the same time, under pressure from civil society groups, in May 2023 the US Congress voted in favour of the 'Assad anti-normalisation Act', geared to expand the reach of sanctions already in place against members of the Syrian regime. Yet, whilst this move could be seen as a strong challenge to Arab regimes' normalisation policy, it is nonetheless idiosyncratic vis-à-vis the position of the White House. Commenting on the joint communique of Arab Foreign Ministers regarding the return of Asad to the Arab League, the White House stated that it was 'encouraged to see [it] mention many priorities that we and our partners share' (The National 2023).

This suggests that, whilst Arab regimes have got closer to the traditional Russian and Chinese position on Syria, they have also orchestrated their ambiguous normalisation of Asad with the West, especially the US. From their part, the US seems eager to use its Arab allies as proxies to construct Asad's normalisation as a *fait accompli*, without officially endorsing a position that would entail high reputational costs, yet whilst exploring the possibility of extracting concessions from the Asad regime.

Conclusion

In this report I embraced a critical understanding of ST to highlight mutually reinforcing dynamics between moral discourses and material interests related to security. I suggested that Arab elites' discourses mirrored Western security policies towards Syria, and their transformation from initial (peaceful) to advanced (violent) phases of the Syrian uprising. Their discourses targeted Western audiences, yet not to persuade them but to justify Western security approaches to Syria.

In 2011, Arab regimes stigmatised the Syrian regime because of its disregard for civilian lives: their 'speech acts', blasted as hypocritical by Arab audiences, had the function of shielding their Western allies' policies toward Syria from allegations of imperialism. From 2013 on, however, the West has no longer seen the removal of Asad as a strategic priority, paving the way for a tacit but increasing normalisation of the Syrian regime in the Arab region. It is in this context that we can understand the role of Arab regimes in pioneering normalisation efforts and crafting a novel institutional and political reality that rehabilitates Syrian regime: a politics of *fait accompli* that will be impossible to ignore and difficult to reverse. Yet, Arab regimes have acted in complicity with –not in confrontation of– their Western allies, especially the US. They have verbalised what their allies cannot (yet) afford to verbalise, revealing the enabling and constraining effects of global hierarchies in the international society.

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Saudi Arabia, the Muslim Brotherhood and spatial order: interlocking securitisation processes in Egypt

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Introduction

Threats are not mere objects compelling state agents to enact policy accordingly. Nor are they simply diffused across the sociopolitical fabric and, potentially, circulated from one country to another. Rather, they can have a generative power possessed, mobilised and, crucially, internalised by agents that shapes authority, identity, and social space. In this light, the implications of securitisation go beyond the construction of threats, perpetuating them and, if necessary, recasting them for the sake of protection and survival. Securitisation posits a constitutive process of ordering *in* and *across* social space, and as such fulfils a structuring function that constrains agents' practices, delineates underlying collectivities, and institutes the principles of vision and division that govern sociopolitical life. Spatial order, recognised as a contentious process constituted and ingrained in relations, is about power and domination. But its corollary does not stop there: the spatial ramifications of securitisation articulate meaning around who is included and excluded; who is right and who is wrong; and ultimately, who holds the 'truth'.

Egypt is a theatre where the interplay between threat and order has shaken regional politics over the last decade. Due to a range of factors, it has a unique significance for the struggle over so-called political Islam, and particularly, over the Muslim Brotherhood (MB). This long-lived Islamist movement has come to represent a "site of validation and contestation" (Menshawy and Mabon 2021) for agents to compete over authority, legitimacy and orthodoxy that resonates not only in the region, but across the Muslim world. The 2011 regional uprisings unleashed a host of political transformations, with their own convoluted iteration in Egypt. The MB's rise to the top of Egyptian political life provoked a multi-agential, non-linear domestic securitisation process that mobilised a diverse range of practices, resources, and dispositions that still continues to this day. It also triggered the action of regional players, with the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) being key amongst them. Coping with its own, yet interrelated struggles and dispositions, the Saudi state actuated a parallel securitisation process vis-à-vis the MB. In effect, *interlocking securitisation processes* have shaped the (sociopolitical) spatial order in Egypt.

This piece offers a condensed version of a novel analytical framework to explore two conjoined issues. On the one hand, how the securitisation of the MB built into KSA's external relations interacts with the domestic securitisation process in Egypt to shape the principles of (di-)vision articulating order; an interlocking phenomenon that remains largely understudied. On the other hand, the spatial configurations that emerge and oscillate in the co-implication between transnational and domestic social spaces. By spatial configurations, I mean the classifications, divisions, and hierarchies resulting from the ordering process through securitisation, leading to what I have called *'ordering assemblages'*. Drawing from Securitisation Theory (ST), Bourdieu's sociology and Spatial Theory, I introduce a framework to study securitisation in new ways. It makes possible to analyse interlocking securitisation processes that run in both directions between transnational and domestic social spaces, creating and reproducing ordering assemblages that reflect *shared 'common-sense' ideas* across borders.

The Framework

Bourdieu's concepts of *field*, *capital* and *habitus*, when understood in relational operation to produce *practice*, offer a flexible analytical systematisation that can be extended to ST. *Agents* and *audiences* in securitisation processes are not independent but co-constituted through their involvement. Similarly, relations are constitutive of *social space* (Massey 2005). Relations that are formed through interactions amongst agents, catalysed through practices, and mediated by capital and habitus.

1) *Securitisation practices*: scholars have long warned about the ill-disposed assumptions in analyses centring on the securitising traction of speech (McDonald 2008). Noting this, it is necessary to blur the separation between discursive and non-discursive practice to stress the multiplicity of mediums carrying meaning. Agents securitising the MB may use verbal and textual articulations (e.g., speech), measures and arrangements (e.g., policies), and/or material action (e.g., protest). The reference to the threatening subject (i.e., the MB) may be explicit in a given practice or inferable from context.

2) *Fields and social space(s)*: the field represents the structure of relations of conflict and cooperation around a particular stake (i.e., capital). The positions held by agents operating in a field are reflective of the capital they possess and mobilise at a given time, signifying power asymmetries as well as distance and proximity in how they perceive and approach the field (i.e., habitus). Fields vary depending on the nature of the struggle within them (political, religious, etc.), which confers them relative autonomy but without excluding the potential for influencing one another. Therefore, the principles of (di-)vision that securitisation institutes in

the political field have an ordering effect on what is possible and thinkable (i.e., the 'common sense') in the rest of fields, while the successful imposition in the political field cannot be without the mobilisation of agents' capitals and dispositions in other fields. The totality of fields and their relations constitute the social space. The permeability of territorial borders in the Middle East means this ensemble of struggles is not contained within the state, creating the potential for shared 'common-sense' ideas across borders (Reed-Danahay 2017). The struggle over the MB compels agents to compete "for capital in fields that transcends national boundaries" (Go and Krause, 12). We can distinguish between a *transnational social space* encompassing fields at the same scale and *domestic social spaces* with their corresponding domestic fields. The relationship between both scales is one of *nesting*. The struggles unfolding at separable domestic social spaces are embedded in a broader transnational social space, with each sectioned space retaining relative autonomy but being mutually implicated. In this analysis, I will illustrate three *directionalities* producing the intersection between scales and that go in tandem with the domestic securitisation process in Egypt: a) the operation of Saudi securitising agents in the transnational social space; 2) Saudi agents whose domestic practice becomes transnationalized; 3) Saudi agents directly involved in the Egyptian social space.

3) *Agents and audiences*: the fact that securitisation processes are non-linear and multi-directional has implications for the treatment of agents and audiences. They are expected to be fluid and multiple (Soares 2022). It is likely they will exchange roles at different junctures of the process. Here, I will focus on several Saudi state-sanctioned agents with important pools of capital and a number of Egyptian agents ranging from clear affiliation with the state to non-state agents. Contrary to what is found in state-centric analysis, many Egyptian agents have shaped order in the domestic social space vis-à-vis the MB, the salient role of the military and security forces notwithstanding. Audiences, for their part, are key in bringing securitisation to fruition through their endorsement.

4) *Forms of capital*: they do more than defining the structure of their corresponding field -and of the social space(s). Capital and its forms are the means possessed and mobilised by agents to advance securitisation and concurrently shape order in the political field. Through conversion, different forms of capital (social, religious, juridical, etc.) can coalesce in the accumulation of political capital, which is the one that ultimately speaks to authority and legitimacy for instituting the principles of (di-)vision in and across social space. When political capital is realised, the result is *symbolic power* over those agents and audiences that 'believe' seeing the MB as a threat is the 'common sense'. I identify seven forms of capital (coercive, economic, informational, juridical, social, religious and political), each with different empirical manifestations, but often operating in tandem.

5) *Habitus and context*: the habitus signifies the orientations and dispositions towards the MB and the related concatenation of struggles in the social space. Securitisation cannot succeed without it. Beyond steering the agents' practices in particular, yet undetermined ways, the habitus enables or constrains the audiences' endorsement of the securitisation campaign and the forms of capital that come with it. The habitus is partially shaped by historical trajectories around relations with the MB and other agents participating in the social space (creating the possibility of 'sedimented' securitisation). However, it is also both responsive to context and open to change. Evolving conditions across scales may lead the collective habitus to render support to securitisation or encourage resistance and refusal.

All these elements come together in the formation of *ordering assemblages* through securitisation. *Symbolic power* institutes the MB as a threat at the intersection between transnational and domestic social spaces. This has a (re-)ordering effect across space, realised in the *(re-)making of boundaries* that result in fragmentation, homogenisation and hierarchisation (Lefebvre 2009) amongst agents. Through cumulative practices and ongoing application of different forms of capital, securitisation may lead to the *stabilisation of space-time* (Massey 1994), crystallising the collective habitus in line with a normative 'common sense' and the relations that sustain it.

Interlocking securitisation processes in post-2011 Egypt

A multiplicity of securitising agents, mobilising different forms of capital, became entangled during the year culminating in the MB's ouster in 2013. An anti-MB collective habitus across Egypt's social space converged in the Tamarod ('rebel') movement (Pratt and Rezk 2019). It quickly attracted Egyptians from all walks of life, including political parties joining the National Salvation Front. Amongst them, a key role was played by Hizb al-Nour (the 'Party of Light'), the political arm of al-Dawa al-Salafiyya (the 'Salafi Call'). Competing with the MB over similar strands of religious and political capital, al-Dawa's cooperation with the secular opposition, and later with the re-constituted forces of the old regime, shaped many Egyptians' dispositions against the MB, leading them to "believe that the removal of Morsi and the Brotherhood (…) was not an act against Islam" (Azaola-Piazza and Hernando de Larramendi 2021, 248). The media and its informational capital, with negative messaging circulating domestically and transnationally, kept pouring oil on the process (Ardovini 2022). Agents with divergent positions in the domestic social space charged against the MB over its moves to 'brotherhoodize' the state, suggesting a rapid diffusion of securitisation practices in an expanding collective habitus.

The July 2013 military coup came on the heels of a twenty-million popular demonstration against the MB's government that restored the military forces as the securitising agent *par excellence*. Building upon decades of repressive dispositions towards the MB, the regime formed under Abdel Fattah el-Sisi started positioning its political capital to shape the principles of (di-)vision in Egypt. The re-accumulation of political capital necessitated to be both domestic and transnational. In a symbolic closure, the leaders of Al Azhar, the Coptic Church, al-Nour, the Dostour ('Constitution') Party, and Tamarod stood behind Sisi in his televised announcement of Morsi's deposition (Lacroix 2016). Transnationally, KSA blessed the MB's demise through the mobilisation of political (i.e., diplomatic support), informational (i.e., state-sanctioned media), and economic capital in favour of the new government. $12 billion in financial aid right after the coup solidified the contours of an anti-MB ordering assemblage that, broadly speaking, still exists. A multi-scalar habitus was in motion amongst Egyptian audiences: as the MB headquarters burnt (CNN 2013), banners were raised across Cairo "thanking the Saudis for their 'brotherly assistance'" (Lippman 2019, 80).

The post-2013 regime took over the domestic securitisation process, eager as it was to capture the prerogatives of the state as the main regulator of practices (Bourdieu 1994). Multiple forms of capital started to be deployed in a consistent manner, mutually reinforcing each other to cultivate an anti-MB 'common sense': "mass arrests, mass trials, mass death sentences, various laws banning political parties and charitable organisations associated with the Brotherhood, and the shutting down of all Brotherhood-affiliated television networks" (Elmasry 2015). The bundled use of juridical and coercive capital has become a recursive mechanism. Beyond the deployment of physical violence, security agencies are granted impunity and bolstered with capabilities, additional layers of surveillance are introduced, and citizen participation is enlisted in the "securocratic state" (Abdelrahman 2017), implying the juridico-coercive effort also involves social and economic mobilisation. As before, informational capital is paramount for greasing the bearings of the process, sometimes coming from agents close to dominant positions in the political field (e.g., MEMRI TV 2019) and others where the public/private, subservient/independent separation is obscured (e.g., Al Hekaya 2022). Different versions of religious capital have kept the securitisation rolling. The role of al-Azhar, in its condition as maximum authority in the Sunni Muslim world, has been instrumental in legitimising the crackdown on the MB, both on individual members (Ahram Online 2015) and the movement as a whole (Middle East Monitor 2020). Tellingly, the al-Azhar's fatwa banning the MB coincided with similar moves by homologous religious councils in KSA and UAE, again suggesting a concerted effort across scales.

For the past ten years, Saudi state-sanctioned agents have substantially shaped the struggle over order in the Egyptian social space regarding the MB. The hostile Saudi habitus is usually traced back to the 1990s, when al-Sahwa ('awakening'), a hybrid movement between MB's political activism and Wahhabi theological doctrine, posed a challenge to the regime (Lacroix 2011). Post-2011 developments reactivated the animosity, albeit with fluctuations in practice. The level of hostility towards the MB partially receded in 2015-2016, only to return with full force from 2017 onwards. The struggles at the higher positions of the domestic political field in KSA, resulting in the strong leadership of Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman, reverberated in the regime's dispositions and the ensuing practices vis-à-vis the MB at home and abroad.

In direct involvement, a myriad of Saudi state-sanctioned agents, mobilising various forms of capital, has contributed to relegate the MB to the edges of Egypt's social space and nurture Sisi's domination, from military-to-military engagements, through business ventures, to politico-informational diffusion of ideas. Saudi economic capital has helped almost uninterruptedly to reproduce the securitisation campaign and prevent the anti-MB ordering assemblage from collapsing. According to estimates, Gulf aid to Egypt amounts to $114 billion over the past decade (Abdelaziz 2022). Primarily operating at the transnational level, the role of the International Islamic Council for Dawa and Relief (IICDR) is illustrative. Headed by the Grand Imam of al-Azhar, it is an umbrella council for dozens of religious organisations, including several with ties to KSA, like the Muslim World League. The IICDR mobilises not only religious, but important quantities of economic, informational and social capital. It promotes the so-called 'moderate' Islam (IICDR 2022), the discursive articulation to advance symbolic power that institutes the MB as extremists. In terms of practices in the Saudi domestic social space that become transnationalized, the designation of the MB as a terrorist organisation in 2014 marked a turning point, establishing a solid link between transnational and domestic dispositions within the Saudi habitus. Furthermore, it signalled the convergence of the combined political and juridical capital of the Arab Quartet (KSA, UAE, Egypt, Bahrain) in a regional drive against the MB, with the implication of drawing boundaries placing Qatar and Turkey firmly in the pro-MB camp. But the MB is hardly the only group affected by the Saudi securitisation, reflecting the phenomenon of unintended audiences that may endorse, negotiate or resist the classifications built into ordering assemblages. As bin Salman envisaged the 'return to moderate Islam', the Egyptian al-Dawa started to express concerns about their own fate, while distancing from the MB (al-Najjar 2018).

These interlocking securitisation processes eventually coalesce in the organisation of Egypt's domestic political field. Agents have changed relational positions in the Egyptian social space over the last ten years, but the rejection of the MB as a political project is still instigated

vigorously from the dominant positions in the political field. The coming national dialogue is portrayed by the regime as an opportunity for reconciliation and reform. However, every political group has been invited "except, pointedly, for the Muslim Brotherhood group" (Dawoud 2022).

Shifting ordering assemblages?

The political alignment between the Saudi and Egyptian regimes has never been without problems. Recent disagreements over the conditions of Saudi economic support have led to a brief but intense media war. Now it seems the regimes have instructed their respective informational apparatuses to hold back, who complied and pointed fingers at the MB for the discord (Bakir 2023). The episode captures how both regimes continue to resort to the MB to draw a homogenising and inclusive boundary between them. There is a great deal of symbolic power in centring securitisation around the state, and the ensuing ordering assemblages traverse from the domestic to the transnational to shape the regional political map. The dominant principle of (di-)vision between those who protect the state and those pursuing its disintegration resonates across the Middle East, and there is a strong collective habitus that positions the MB within the 'anti-state' camp.

This creates the potential for processes of fragmentation and homogenisation across political fields that consolidate the assimilation between disparate groups such as the MB, Daesh, al-Qaeda, and more recently, Tablighi Jama'at. The Egyptian al-Dawa/al-Nour seem to be aware of this potential, given the points of convergence between their habitus, capital, and position in the religious field and those of the MB, leading the Salafists to mobilise to avoid the homogenisation.

As boundaries are drawn, they are also erased. The 2021 al-Ula agreement marked the Saudi-led deactivation and tentative re-drawing of boundaries inside the pro-MB camp, with a gradual process that suggests Qatar and Turkey may eventually fall outside of it. The Saudi and Egyptian habituses are not identical, however, hence the relocation of Qatar and Turkey is not harmonious nor granted. For many years, an interrelation between the threats of the MB and Iran has been cultivated both in KSA and Egypt, homogenising them within the 'anti-state' assemblage. The latest developments in Saudi-Iranian relations open a window to reverse this, but much has to be (un-)done. Ordering assemblages advance the constitution of hierarchies and, for now, everything suggests the MB will continue to be relegated to the bottom of the transnational and Egyptian political fields.

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Securitising sect, shaping space: The case of Bahrain

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Situated centrally the Persian Gulf and with a society divided broadly along sectarian lines, Bahrain is regularly viewed as being at the heart of geopolitical machinations. Described as being at the 'epicentre' of sectarian competition and a site of contestation between neighbouring powers Saudi Arabia and Iran, Bahraini society is often adversely affected by regional developments, yet what happens within the Kingdom also resonates regionally.

Scholars of Middle Eastern IR have long grappled with this interplay between regional and domestic dynamics, pointing to a 'levels of analysis' problem at the heart of efforts to understand the ways in which geopolitically charged sectarian identities resonate from the regional to the domestic.

In this essay, I use an approach that brings together the Social Theory of Pierre Bourdieu and the Copenhagen School's Securitization Theory to explore the interplay between developments in Bahrain and developments across the Middle East. In bringing together Securitization Theory and Bourdieu's Social Theory I suggest that in looking at efforts to frame particular groups as threats within and across *fields* we are better equipped to understand the interplay of regional and domestic politics, the salience of transnational identities and how securitizing moves resonate across space.

Bourdieu's Social Theory

For Pierre Bourdieu, a French social theorist, politics –and the social world more broadly– is shaped through a relational struggle over modes of power. Bringing together ideas of *field, habitus* and *capital,* Bourdieu offers an approach to understand the struggle for domination that gives credence to both structure and agency. This struggle to assert *principles of vision* and to shape *habitus* plays out within and across *fields* in an effort to define what is thinkable and what it means to belong. To assert dominance within a *field* actors lay claim to capital which, for Bourdieu, typically takes three forms, economic, social, and cultural, which resonate in different ways across fields.

This contestation plays out within *fields*, understood as social microcosms that are largely autonomous, relational entities forged in contestation through the interplay of relational forces. Fields are fluid through their competitive nature, the limits of which are forged through

interaction. Fields are sites of relational forces, sites of struggle as relational positions seek to transform or preserve the configuration of positions. While interrelated, fields may be differentiated from each other by virtue of the nature of competition and contestation. As Toby Dodge articulates, "competition for dominance within a field shape both the nature of that field and the value of the capital being fought over" (2018, 27). Yet this must not be done *a-historically,* but rather in a way that acknowledges an ongoing relational struggle (Dodge 2018, 29), and a "temporary state of power relations within what is an ongoing struggle for domination" (Emirbayer and Johnson 2008, 6). While fields can take various forms -ranging from the artistic to the religious- of particular interest to our project are the political and transnational fields.

The political field is positioned centrally within a struggle for the state as a consequence of its importance within efforts to amass symbolic capital and impose a principle of vision. Developments across the political field resonate across other fields due to its centrality within the everyday life of people. While this has routinely played out within states where economic, social, and religious fields are influenced by ongoings in the political field- this also plays out regionally due to the presence of a transnational field.

States and their respective political fields are also embedded "in an ensemble of transnational fields" (Krause 2018, 4), meaning that the essence of the domestic political field is "contingent upon its position within and relationship to the transnational field". If this domestic political field is then dominated by actors from outside the state, bringing with them their own logics and visions, the nature of the field is a product not only of the relational struggle of domestic actors but is also conditioned by the dynamics of the transnational field.

Given the presence of shared identities, interests, ideologies and actors -which allow for the demarcation of borders through interaction- it is possible to view regional politics as a form of transnational field, bringing together the domestic and regional in a broader environment of contestation. In this transnational field, actors who are ostensibly located within states deploy capital which resonates across the region. For instance, actors with reserves of religious capital may be able to assert influence on politics beyond the borders of their own state. Similarly, actors with social capital –such as Gamal Abd al-Nasser or Hassan Nasrallah– also have the ability to shape and transform the configuration of positions within a field due to their reserves of capital.

Regional politics as a transnational field

Such ideas can also be seen at the regional level, a point I explore in more detail in my new book *The Struggle for Supremacy in the Middle East: Saudi Arabia and Iran,* published by Cambridge University Press. In the book I suggest that the regional politics can be viewed as a transnational field, the essence of which is shaped through a struggle for dominance and to assert a principle of vision. Much like fields are defined –both in size and character– through the nature of interaction, the interplay of states across the Middle East creates a particular regional political environment which can be understood as a transnational field. Such an approach highlights the interplay of domestic and regional politics, with states serving as actors in a transnational field which also conditions what is possible domestically. The transnational field is thus shaped by the interaction of a range of different actors, playing out horizontally and vertically in multiple directionalities, and in a range of different political forms from collaboration to animosity.

The presence of shared identities and ideologies reinforces the benefits of viewing the Middle East as a transnational field. While Paul Noble famously described the Middle East as a vast "echo chamber" where developments resonate across the region, viewing the region as a transnational field sheds valuable light on the ways in which ideas resonate across borders, and how incidents in one part of the region impact on events elsewhere. For example, increased sectarian tensions in one state can resonate elsewhere, as we saw with rising sectarian violence across Iraq in the mid 2000s playing out across the region. In recent years, sectarian difference has become the dominant ordering principle across the Middle East, a principle of vision which shapes the *habitus* of those living in the region, which aids securitising moves undertaken by those in positions of power against the sectarian other.

In the language of the Copenhagen School, events across the Middle East serve as the *facilitating conditions* for securitising moves. In the years that followed, the transnational field was dominated by an anti-Iranian and, by extension an anti-Shi'a principle of vision which shaped the region's *habitus,* reflecting both the Sunni dominance of Islam and the widespread influence of Sunni Arab states. In such an environment, unrest amongst Shi'a communities was viewed as being a consequence of nefarious Iranian manipulation and Tehran's aspiration to spread the ideological goals of Ruhollah Khomeini.

Khomeini articulated a desire to:

> 'export our experiences to the whole world and present the outcome of our struggles against tyrants to those who are struggling along the path of God, without expecting the slightest reward. The result of this exportation will certainly result in the blooming of the buds of victory and independence and in the implementation of Islamic teachings among the enslaved nations' (New York Times 1987).

As Anoushiravan Ehteshami argues, the revolution "disrupted the regional order", highlighting how domestic affairs can resonate across the transnational field (2002, 284). In the aftermath of the revolution, a war of words broke out between Saudi and Iranian figures, with the Al Saud declared "corrupt and unworthy to be the guardians of Mecca and Medina" (Coughlin 2009, 274) by Khomeini, who later referred to them as "traitors to God" and "evil" (Wehrey et al 2009, 38). In response, King Fahd declared Khomeini and the Iranian regime to be "hypocrites and pretenders who are using Islam to undermine and destabilise other countries" (Wehrey et al 2009, 38).

In the years that followed, this rivalry began to play out within the borders of states across the Middle East, moving from the transnational field to domestic political fields. While the establishment of Hizballah serves as a paradigmatic example of how the transnational and domestic political field intersect due to the Islamic Republic's role in helping establish the Party of God, the case of Bahrain highlights how competition within the transnational field can shape the domestic political field through direct and indirect engagement from regional actors.

Bahrain's Political Field

Across the 20th century Bahrain's political field has been shaped by contestation between actors deploying capital in pursuit of competing principles of vision. Yet Bahrain's geographical location and demographic makeup means that the political field is also shaped by regional actors such as Saudi Arabia and Iran, while Bahrain's geopolitical importance means that what happens locally resonates within the broader transnational field due to the broader concerns of those in Riyadh and Tehran. This is best seen in the immediate aftermath of the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the emergence of fears in the Arab Gulf monarchies that the new regime in Tehran would seek to export its revolutionary goals.

At this time, with the Al Khalifa consolidating their position from the British withdrawal from 'East of Suez', domestic instability was viewed with great trepidation. The imposition of the State Security Law and suspension of the National Assembly highlight the precarious political situation facing the Al Khalifa amidst a majority Shi'a population. Following the establishment of the Islamic Republic in Iran, Khomeini and other officials in Tehran articulated an intention to support the "downtrodden" of the Muslim world, backing marginalised Shi'a groups across the region in their respective struggles. In Bahrain, Iranian support was for the Islamic Front for the Liberation of Bahrain, a group that sought to undertake a *coup d'etat* and topple the Al Khalifa, with support from the elite Revolutionary Guards Corps.

Although the IFLB's efforts were ultimately unsuccessful, the legacy of the *coup* attempt resonated, shaping the *habitus* by fuelling suspicion of nefarious Iranian intentions in Bahrain. The creation and imposition of a principle of vision that framed unrest as a consequence of perfidious Iranian activity was facilitated by the actions of the IFLB and the Islamic Republic's actions across the Middle East, underpinned by securitising moves from regimes in Manama and Riyadh.

Developments across the region continued to resonate in Bahrain in the ensuing years – perhaps best seen in the events across post-invasion Iraq – which reached a zenith in 2011 with the Arab Uprisings. In the early months of 2011 Bahrainis took to the streets expressing frustration at the political, social and economic situation across the country. In response to the growing unrest, on 14th March 2011 a Saudi-led GCC force crossed the King Fahd Causeway into Bahrain to support the embattled regime. Amidst concerns that the protesters were being supported by Iran, the GCC force's role according to Mutlaq bin Salem al-Azima the Commander of the GCC Peninsula Shield Force, was "to secure Bahrain's vital and strategically important military infrastructure from any foreign interference" (Asharq Al Awsat 2011). In what followed, key officials from Bahrain and Saudi Arabia sought to securitise – and sectarianise – the protesters, framing them as 5th columnists doing the bidding of Iran. Writing in the Telegraph, Fawaz bin Mohammad Al Khalifa (2016) decried the "expansionist ambitions of the Persian Shi'a establishment", laying blame for unrest in Bahrain, Lebanon, Kuwait and Yemen at the door of Iran.

In such a climate, with the Al Khalifa and Al Saud seeking to impose principles of vision that were staunchly anti-Shi'a and anti-Iranian, it was hardly surprising that this would resonate across Bahrain's political field, shaping the *habitus* in the process. As one interviewee observed, from an upper floor of Bahrain's *Financial Harbour*, "the Persians are everywhere",[1]

[1]Interview with Bahraini businessman.

highlighting the dominance of the principles of vision articulated by the Al Khalifa and Al Saud. Bahrain's Foreign Minister suggested that the country had been pulled back from a "sectarian abyss" (Reuters 2011), while sectarian difference negatively affecting the country had been imported by Iran and Hizballah (Bahrain News Agency 2011).

The impact of the transnational field on Bahrain's domestic political field at this time is clear to see. The principles of vision imposed on the transnational field by Saudi Arabia and other Arab Gulf monarchies -broadly anti-Shi'a and anti-Iranian– began to resonate more explicitly in Bahrain post 2011, although facets of this exclusionary *habitus* can be traced back to the establishment of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

Conclusions

Events in Bahrain over the past few decades are a product of the interplay of national and regional factors, highlighting the coming together of the domestic political field and the transnational field. The position of Bahrain within the transnational field reflects both its geopolitical importance and the presence of different sectarian communities, allowing actors in the domestic political field to cultivate relationships with actors across the transnational field in an effort to impose their principles of vision. Bahrain's position within the transnational field is contingent upon the relational interplay of actors and the capital that they are able to deploy.

The securitization of Bahrain's Shi'a population as Iranian 5th columnists reflects broader trends in the transnational field where an anti-Shi'a habitus –driven by Riyadh's suspicions at Tehran's regional behaviour– serve as the facilitating conditions. In such a climate, and with Bahrain's own history of sectarian tensions, securitising moves quickly found traction, feeding into a deeply divisive political and social climate.

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Theorising 'nested security fields' from Beirut's Southern Suburbs

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Beirut's Southern Suburbs –or Dahiyeh– are often regarded as poor, violent and notorious for being Hizbullah's stronghold in Lebanon. They began as what was called a 'misery belt' in the 1960s, when impoverished Lebanese, mostly Shia, from the agricultural South and East of Lebanon migrated to Beirut in search of work. Subsequent Israeli invasions and the 1975-1990 war led to further mass migrations. Dahiyeh is now home to an estimated 1 million people, containing both affluent and poor informal areas. For many who live there, the area denotes community, mutual support and security, in spite of the troubles the area faces. In the words of several residents, 'things are controlled' and 'in terms of safety . . . we have security the most in Dahiyeh… there is Hizbullah *and* Haraket Amal [the two main Shia parties]' (Former Ouzai resident 2018; Tour of Tahwitet el-Ghadir I 2019).

How is everyday security negotiated between Dahiyeh's inhabitants and the multiple security actors across the area? Why do people turn to Hizbullah, not the police, in most places? Why are those originally from the Biqa Valley in the East more likely to go to their clan, while Southerners go to Hizbullah or Amal? Dahiyeh epitomises a common urban form of what Sidaway (2003) terms a 'postcolonial sovereigntyscape', where claims to the legitimate use of arms are contested and uneven across space with multiple armed actors, state and nonstate, operating in fluid hybrid security assemblages (Gunning and Smaira 2022). As such, it is a good vantage point for theorising about urban postcolonial orders (Hazbun 2017). By bringing residents' practices into dialogue with Bourdieu's conceptual framework, we develop a spatialised conceptualisation of 'nested security fields' to explain which security actors residents turn to depending on location, type of incident and their social position and conditioning.[2]

Our focus is on everyday practices of (in)security, not on processes of securitisation. Rather than focusing on elite speech acts and conceptualising the security realm as 'exceptional', dominated by state or international actors –as securitisation theory typically does– we focus on vernacular day-to-day practices of (in)security, 'the effects of power that are continuous rather than exceptional' and how these are affected by agents' structural positions (Bigo 2002, 73–74; Jarvis and Lister 2013). This is important for bringing the marginalised yet ubiquitous

[2]This report is based on 'street chats' around the 2016 and 2018 elections, 'driving tours', interviews with state security actors and the Civil Society Knowledge Center conflict database (for more detail, see Gunning and Smaira 2022).

experiences and agency of ordinary people navigating (in)security –typically overlooked by securitization theory– into the study of security. We use 'everyday security' to demarcate what incidents, actors, practices and sites we focus on: what local resident consider routine, mundane incidents (although also involving armed clashes) entangling residents and designated security actors (Bigo 2016; Guillaume and Huysmans 2019; Crawford and Hutchinson 2016). Drawing on practice theory, we conceptualise 'the everyday' as where agency and structure co-constitute each other and 'practice' as both agential and shaped by routines and social structures (Nicolini 2013, 35). As such, the focus is on social and material structures and practices, rather than discourse, rooting the analysis more concretely in space. We conceptualise space through Lefebvre's (1991) triad of material/perceived, imagined/conceived and lived space.

Theoretical framework

Post-colonial states are often characterised as 'weak' or 'failing' for not having a Weberian monopoly on the legitimate use of arms, without sufficient reflection on how (post/neo)colonial dynamics and social structures have affected the process of statebuilding. Lebanon is one such example, with 'the state', embedded in enduring social power relations, having survived multiple crises whilst having to contend with internal armed and external actors. This makes Lebanon an example of Sidaway's 'postcolonial sovereigntyscapes', denoting 'geographical unevenness of sovereignty', with both 'sovereign excesses' –e.g. international actors putting limits on the Lebanese Armed Forces (LAF) to '[maintain] Israel's military edge' (Tholens 2017, 871)– and sovereign 'absences' -e.g. state actors sharing the security field with multiple armed non-state actors. Urban spaces, as Magnusson (2011, 118–19) argues, are furthermore 'not organized on the sovereignty principle, but… on the principle of self-organization,… [implying] a multiplicity of authorities' for whom 'the problem of sovereignty is infinitely deferred'. Claims to sovereignty still shape this urban order but the principle ordering it is ever-changing self-organisation. The focus thus shifts from looking for monopoly to searching for fluid, temporary, place-based dominance. It is this non-Weberian order in Dahiyeh where sovereignty is not just contested but deferred that we want to understand.

Both concepts of 'sovereignty' and 'state' –both central to much of securitisation theory– are problematic because of their Eurocentric/colonialist genealogy (Bhambra and Holmwood 2021, 7) and the assumption of a centralised, hierarchical, formal state with uniform jurisdiction across space. Adjectives such as 'nested', 'informal', 'hybrid', 'partial' reinforce these assumptions by highlighting difference from this 'norm' (cf. Bilgin and Morton 2002). Bourdieusian field theory, conversely, is less genealogically weighted because it offers mid-range concepts and, when decoupled from its Eurocentric moorings, can describe different

forms of legitimate authority and order, whether formal/informal, centralised/decentralised, poly/monocephalous, etc.

In Bourdieusian terms, 'fields' are specialised social domains (political, security, religious, etc.), in which actors occupy different positions based on their 'capital' (social, cultural, economic) and the field's dominant habitus (bodily and mental dispositions) and *doxa* (taken-for-granted beliefs), which are internalisations of the field's 'principles of vision and division of the world' (Bourdieu 2014, 173). Capital is converted into symbolic capital if others in the field believe it gives its holder legitimate authority. Symbolic capital is thus based on credence. High concentrations of symbolic capital allow holders to shape the field's principles of (di)vision –though always in competition with others– defining the field's stakes and rules and how different forms of capital are valued. The closer the match between what Bourdieu calls 'objective structures' and 'internalized structures', the more 'the established… political order is perceived not as arbitrary,… but as a… natural order which goes… unquestioned' (Bourdieu 1977, 165–66). The 'state' emerges out of the accumulation of 'different species of capital' across competing fields, forming a 'meta-field' 'endowed with a meta-capital that enables it to exercise a power over all capital' (Bourdieu 2014, 197–98, 311). On this reading, the 'state' is thus both a meta-field and a site where dominant actors from different fields compete.

Bourdieu assumed a Weberian state, as he focused primarily on European states. But, uncoupled from European teleology, his 'thinking tools' (Bourdieu and Wacquant 1992, 160–67) enable us to think about the 'state' as one site of contest among others (not necessarily the most powerful everywhere in all domains), with different constellations of state and non-state actors across fields and space competing for the power over capital. Non-state actors with sufficient meta-capital in particular places can determine a field's dominant habitus, *doxa* and principles of (di)vision there, if they have the symbolic and coercive capital to establish local/temporal dominance –but not usually a monopoly– of 'legitimate physical and symbolic violence' (Bourdieu 2014, 4). State and non-state actors can also draw on the capital they have in, for instance, the family or economic field. Which actors dominate in a place is furthermore affected by the concentration of objectified (e.g. offices, checkpoints) and institutionalised capital (e.g. organization, bureaucracies) there. Since actors accrue different concentrations of various types of capitals across space, their ability to dominate is uneven, rendering field dynamics uneven across space (Bourdieu did not develop this spatiality) (Gunning and Smaira 2022). Space here is to be understood in a material (objectified and embodied capital), conceived (institutionalised capital, *doxa*) and lived sense (habitus), both as product of, and structuring, agency. It is this ability to capture variations in capital, habitus, and principles of

(di)vision across space and fields that makes Bourdieu's framework so powerful to capture how order is negotiated in urban postcolonial settings.

We start from the everyday security practices of residents of Dahiyeh, bringing them into dialogue with Bourdieu's concepts to develop a more dynamic and spatialised conceptualisation of the everyday security field.

We propose the term 'nested security fields' to describe the way order is shaped by fluid concentrations, hierarchies and entanglements of capital, actors and habitus across space. By 'nested' we mean both the vertical hierarchies that the concept 'nested sovereignty' captures and the 'horizontally woven tapestry of partial sovereignties' that Comaroff and Comaroff (2006, 35) describe – just as twigs in nests are stacked vertically, while also being horizontally entangled. 'Field', unlike 'sovereignty', does not necessarily invoke a Weberian monopoly and our use of 'nested' –as both vertical/horizontal, and uneven, fluctuating across space– differs from the more static statist hierarchy implied by 'nested sovereignty'.

Spatialising capital and habitus

When asked who they turn to for everyday security matters, the majority of our interlocutors named Hizbullah (although Amal or clans were identified in Amal- or clan-dominated areas and only in one area people named the police). Looking at capital and habitus in space, there are two reasons why Hizbullah is the 'natural' security provider for many in Dahiyeh.

First, Hizbullah's capital is spatially more extensive and denser across Dahiyeh than any of the other security actors', and Hizbullah has the highest levels of social and objectified capital. It has divided Dahiyeh into six 'sections', roughly corresponding to municipalities, subdivided into 'factions' made up of 4-5 groups, each representing a neighbourhood with offices, etc. Each faction has reportedly 120-175 members (Daher 2014, 191–92; Harb 2010, 79); only some are security personnel but Hizbullah can draw on this membership for social (and coercive) capital to maintain order. Hizbullah's representatives are typically locally socially embedded. It has a well-honed bureaucracy, which, helps in 'concentrating social capital and transforming quantity (number of members) to quality (organizational effectiveness)' (Siisiäinen 2000). Only the Army has a comparable bureaucracy in the security field; however, Hizbullah's bureaucratic capital is spread across the political, social, religious and security fields.

The police the only state security actor with a permanent presence in Dahiyeh– has seven stations covering Dahiyeh. But, these are mostly positioned along Dahiyeh's rim. Thus, in

terms of objectified capital, the police are distant from most in Dahiyeh. Compounding the problem of absence, the police are grossly under-resourced, with between 70-100 officers *across all of Dahiyeh* (Gunning and Smaira 2022).

Amal, though having a comparable structure to Hizbullah, is concentrated in ‘pockets’, primarily in Dahiyeh’s north, around its physical infrastructure. Its capital has been more spatially confined since Hizbullah gained control over Dahiyeh in the late 1980s. The clans’ capital is primarily concentrated within the neighbourhoods where they historically clustered, mostly in the south-western part (Gunning and Smaira 2022).

Second, the structures which shaped Hizbullah’s capital and habitus are the same that shaped most of Dahiyeh’s inhabitants –more so than any of the other security actors in Dahiyeh. Of all Lebanese parties, Hizbullah operates in the most sectarianly homogeneous areas (Cammett 2014, 103–5), and Hizbullah is primarily a product of the South, the Biqa and Dahiyeh. Further, it has invested extensively in building a pious resistance culture (Harb and Leenders 2005), which specifically values *Hizbullah’s* capital, habitus and *doxa*. People are thus inclined to recognise Hizbullah’s dominance as the ‘natural order’ because of the close fit between ‘objective’ and ‘internalized structures’.[3]

Capital and habitus are also affected by translocal dynamics (Gunning and Smaira 2022). Most Dahiyeh residents (or their parents) have migrated from the South or the Biqa, and continue to have strong links. Many interviewees visited their families every weekend and continuing dependence on family is reinforced by the absence of state structures, the persistence of family neighbourhoods, and by people having to vote by law where their families are registered. Someone originally from a village in the South or the Biqa with little state presence has a translocal habitus that disinclines them to turn to the police in Dahiyeh –although this can be overwritten by new local conditions, as seemed to be the case in parts of Mreijeh, where the police station was particularly active (CSKC n.d.).

That Biqa clan members seek security from their clans, while Southerners go to Hizbullah, is a translocal sediment of those area’s different social structures. The South has long been dominated by a handful of families, who weakened clan structures, and, from the 1970-80s, Amal and Hizbullah became the go-to security providers. Northern Biqa, by contrast, continues to be dominated by clan structures as a result of mountainous geography, continued collective forms of land ownership and no effective alternative structures –state or otherwise– replacing

[3]Although this order has become increasingly questioned, especially since Hizbullah’s entry into the Syrian war.

them. Geography, war, poverty and proximity to Syria, coupled with the absence of a centralised order, have facilitated drugs growing and smuggling, giving rise to armed criminal activity. Southerners thus (are perceived to) bring less social (lower numbers and less tightly knit) and coercive capital and a different habitus to Dahiyeh's security field. As an ISF Officer (II 2019) said: 'If I know that they are from the Biqa, I will… take more force with me… Whereas if it were someone from the South, there is no need…'.

'Nested security fields'

Although Hizbullah has accrued sufficient meta-capital to be the dominant actor shaping the habitus, doxa and principles of (di)vision in Dahiyeh's everyday security field, its dominance is uneven across space and it shares the role of maintaining order with others.

Although Dahiyeh's security field is formally nested within the state's (in terms of law and formal authority), in practice the state's is nested within Dahiyeh's Hizbullah-dominated security field, requiring state security actors to clear any Dahiyeh operations with Hizbullah (Baabda Judge, 06/2019; US Embassy Beirut 2008). However, this field is not uniform, with peaks and troughs for different actors and types of incidents across space. Place-specific habitus do not challenge Hizbullah's overall dominance and principles of (di)vision in Dahiyeh but assume the local dominance of other actors, giving rise to a spatial division of labour under the (local) authority of Hizbullah and the (de jure national) authority of the state. Which actor acts, though, does not depend on a vertical hierarchy between scales but on location, incident type and which capital and habitus are locally dominant. In affluent Bir Hassan, the dominant actor is usually Amal; in informal Laylaki, clans; in large clan clashes, the LAF; for low-level theft, local ISF stations; for drugs trafficking, regional ISF divisions. The principle of sovereignty is thus displaced by the principle of self-organisation (in Magnusson's sense), based on fluid tempo-spatial dominance, not monopoly, and on horizontal entanglements between actors –state and nonstat – based on complementarity (although always embedded in contestation).

Hizbullah's meta-capital is shaped by both fluid vertical and horizontal entanglements. Just as elsewhere in Lebanon, the state dominates the judiciary and penitential fields. Since 2006 and especially since its entry into the war in Syria, low-level crime and drug operations in Dahiyeh are mainly handled by the ISF. The Army deals with clan fights because Hizbullah cannot afford to alienate the clans, whose votes and foot soldiers it needs. Hizbullah also recognises that it lacks the symbolic capital of the Army which is thus better at absorbing anger resulting from arrests. In these instances, state actors dominate the everyday security field, temporarily inverting the hierarchy in a specific location –though with Hizbullah's consent and assistance

(through its local social and informational capital). Thus, temporal variations in hierarchy are complicated by place-based horizontal entanglements shaped by complementarity.

Similarly, Amal's and the clans' place-based dominance is possible because Hizbullah accepts this. Aside from being stretched by the war in Syria, Hizbullah needs Amal's and the clans' support politically. As symbolic capital is based on credence, any interference considered illegitimate by residents and other security actors lessens Hizbullah's symbolic capital. Thus, although designated security actors have coercive capital, their ability to demand authority depends on others' acceptance of their legitimacy.

Unlike 'sovereignty' and 'state', our spatialised conception of 'nested fields' is able to capture these temporal place and incident-based fluctuations in dominance without referring back to a Weberian 'norm'. Order is negotiated between ordinary people and security actors without monopolies, as security hierarchies and entanglements change depending on place, actor and incident.

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The securitisation of religious minorities: implications for the inclusion/exclusion of Christians in Egyptian national spaces

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Introduction

In the Middle East, the evolution of the 'minority question' has unfolded in parallel and in connection with modern nation-state formation. The conceptualisation of minority-majority relations is thereby connected to broader struggles to claim and maintain hegemony over the definition of what is 'national' (cf Haddad, 2020). In the case of Egypt, the minority question is less about collective minority rights (such as electoral quotas, freedom of worship or the right to use and teach a minority language) or the fear of secessionism than about acknowledging that Egyptian Christians experience inequalities in a nation-state that has constructed its nationhood upon a rigid binary of the national unity of Muslim and Christian Egyptians (Yefet 2019). In this discourse, minorities, and the inequalities suggested by such categorisation, cannot exist without threatening the hegemonic construction of the national social fabric (Monier 2023).

Recalling Agamben's logic of "inclusive exclusion" (1998), which complicates the notion of a binary dichotomy of inside/outside, I suggest that Christians are simultaneously included (as citizens) and excluded (as a minority). The speech acts that manage and sustain this simultaneity of inclusion and exclusion normalise practices of spatial securitisation (cf Roe, 2004). Accordingly, I contend that it is not simply the existence of Christians in Egypt that is securitised but rather any suggestion that they experience inequality or violence resulting from a minoritised religious identity in relation to a majority-Muslim identity. This is particularly visible in a regime of both exception and control through (non)access to legal spaces, which is pursued by the state but with the collusion of communal leaders, mainly the Coptic Church leaders. The sovereign power of the state is implemented and protected through the use of extrajudicial means. This compromise enables the state to invisibilise conflict that could support the identification of Christians as a national minority, while incorporating Christians as citizens into the Egyptian social space in ways that confirm and legitimate state sovereignty.

There is evidence that suggests the state has sought alternative means to control conflict by returning the matter of church building to a legal space under the rule of law. However, I conclude that the embeddedness of a connection between sovereignty and the discourse of Muslim-Christian national unity in the Egyptian social space has so far prevented the

successful deconstruction of the "state of exception" (Agamben 2005) experienced by Christians. Physical church spaces continue to act as the central flashpoint for conflict despite the promulgation of a church building law in 2016.

National Minorities as Included 'Other' in Egypt

The vocabulary of national minorities that expanded after World War I entrenched an understanding of the minority as threatening 'other' in the context of the nation-state. According to Heisknanen (2019: 322), "every self-styled nation-state is haunted by national minorities". This conceptual trajectory emerged from the global context of a growing minority rights protection agenda post-World War 1 (Jackson-Preece 1998). In the Middle East, this was compounded with a regional context of tension between nascent states and colonial regimes, in addition to a legacy of tying religious minorities to the struggle to secure the stability and integrity of a nationalizing Ottoman order (Monier 2023). In this climate, boundaries and, crucially, locating non-Muslim citizens within them, were central in securing independent political orders through the formation of unifying nationalist projects. Societal security of these nation-states, and the ability "to live as 'us'" required the incorporation and management of religious diversity into independent, unified nationhood (Wæver 1993, 26).

In Egypt, the question of minorities and their positionality in the nation was immediately problematised in the February 1922 declaration of independence issued by the British. The issue of the protection of minorities was included as part of one of the four reserved points in this declaration. This was an early and critical point in securing Egyptian sovereignty, which was also visible during the constitution drafting process between 1922 and 1923. Fears were expressed about referring to Christians as a minority and most particularly pertaining to the issue of granting special rights for Coptic Christians that would guarantee their representation in the institutions of the state, notably the parliament. Several members of the constitution drafting committee argued that this would be to open the door to potential foreign intervention and divide the national project along religious lines. Consequently, the imperative to reject using the term minority was linked to the security and independence of the Egyptian nation and to societal security based on a particular formulation of collective unity.

A legacy of conceptualizing religious minorities as simultaneously threatening and crucial to the construction and sovereignty of nationalizing political communities is the securitisation of relations between Christians and the state. Rather than being based around minority rights or autonomy, it has been formed around constructing the notion of minorities as an existential threat to societal security. Although officially there is an absence of minority/majority terms in speech about Egyptian Christians, this has not prevented lived experience of insecurity (Tadros

2013). They occupy space in the imagining of nationhood but this entails a set of rules implemented by sovereign act that limits discursive movement within that space. As a result, incidents of conflict between Muslims and Christians are considered to be a matter for the security services, not one to be addressed in public debate or in a court of law (Guirguis 2016). These limits are policed by both state and community actors, in a state of cooperation often described in literature as a church-state pact or entente (Iskander 2012; Tadros 1999).

A distinction must be made that explains the necessity for this highly fortified framework of utterances regarding the place of Copts in the Egyptian nation. Christians are not security threat, but the politicisation of Christians as *minority* is. The division into minority and majority is a threat to the nation because the foundation of Egyptian nationalism is this pact of unity between Muslims and Christians. Violent attacks on Christians contradict this. The rigidity of this pact necessitates the invisibilisation of societal conflict in public and physical spaces, including courts, to ensure that the discursive fabric of the Egyptian nation is enforced. Fear of this unravelling leads to cooperation between community leaders and the state to uphold the regime of sovereignty.

Spatial effects of representing minorities as a threat to the nation

Having set out the historical background and political/ideational implications in the first part of this contribution, this part outlines some of the ways in which the securitisation of the notion of Copts as a minority contributes to spatial and physical practices of exclusion that reflect and affirm the architecture of delimitation constructed in national(ist) discourse. The historiography of Coptic politics of the twentieth century suggests a process of retreat from national to separate particularistic church spaces as a response to the limits placed on Copts in the national space (Hasan 2003). The primary representatives of Copts are the church leaders who usually work with state actors in the management of national discourse, for example through rejecting Coptic movements that draw attention to inequalities and discrimination (Monier 2021, 24-7).

In return, church leaders gain greater authority within particularistic church spaces. The sovereignty of church leaders is nested within state sovereignty, to establish a practice of what Humphrey (2004, 420) describes as localised forms of sovereignty. Such is the power of this interlocking sovereign pact that, as Mina Ibrahim argues (2022, 11), scholarship has "completely overlooked contexts when people declare that they cannot or do not want to join debates about their ascribed Coptic identity and faith". In addition to shaping academic agendas and conceptualisations of Muslim-Christian relations in Egypt, I suggest that the securitisation of Coptic minority-ness has informed spatial practices of exception. Previous scholarship has

applied Agamben's state of exception to Egypt's emergency laws (Ardovini and Mabon 2020). I suggest that this notion of exception can also help to conceptualise the positionality of Egyptian Christians in the sovereign order. I will illustrate this by focusing on legal mechanisms and spaces and how the securitisation of the Coptic minority question results in the routinisation of employing extrajudicial spaces for mediating Muslim-Christian disputes.

Exclusion from Legal Spaces: stepping outside of the courtroom

One example is the reliance on jalasāt 'urfiyya_[reconciliation meetings], which usually bring together the local religious leaders of the community in a non-legal setting. These meetings are often used to resolve conflicts between Muslims and Christians. These meetings focus on mediating the consequences of a dispute, without addressing its root causes. They prioritise short term security over long term justice.

In February 2006, in al-Ayat, Giza, Coptic property was destroyed and burned down. Former patriarch, Pope Shenouda III, intervened to persuade the victims of the violence to drop their court case and instead to agree to reconciliation meetings. As a result, while further local tensions were prevented, the victims received no compensation for their losses, the perpetrators were not brought to justice and neither the causes nor the consequences of the incident were publicly investigated. The legal space, in the physical shape of the courtroom, was closed to the victims while the public space was protected from challenges to the national unity trope.

There have also been a series of cases of what is known as al-tahgīr al-qaṣrī (forced displacement), which is another potential outcome from reconciliation meetings and a clear manifestation of the link between the operation of legal and physical spaces. Disputes have been resolved by forcing the Coptic party to relocate to another part of Egypt. In this practice, not only are inter-communal disputes addressed outside official legal channels, but the solution of forced displacement as a means to avoid societal conflict is in violation of Article 63 of the constitution. If the potential for societal tension between Muslims and Christians was not securitised this practice would be impossible to implement without challenge. At the same time, if the notion of minorities was not securitised as a threat to societal security, this practice would not be necessary.

Church Building Laws and Blurring Inside/Outside Spaces

The building of churches is directly linked to control of physical space and it has been a major flashpoint for contention and violence. A key moment in Muslim-Christian relations in modern

Egypt was the incident of al-Zawiya al-Hamra in 1981. This was the result of an ownership dispute over a piece of land in the al-Zawiya al-Hamra district of Cairo. When Christians began to plan the construction of a church, local residents sought to pre-empt this by building a mosque. The dispute resulted in an outbreak of violence leading to a large number of deaths and damage to Christian homes and property.

Building churches continues to be seen as provocation and contestation over both the territorial and social space of the nation. While the building of mosques is regulated in law, until 2016, the building and repair of churches required the permission of the president, a direct and explicit sovereign decision. The process was long and complex and even with permission, church buildings regularly came under attack from local residents. In fact, witness accounts frequently state that police or other security forces delay attending the scene and allow attacks on churches to proceed, only intervening after the church has been burned down.

After decades of pressure to legislate the matter of church building and in an apparent attempt reduce the potential of this issue to act as evidence of discrimination against Christians, the Egyptian Constitution of 2014 contained a commitment, in Article 235, to issue a law that organised the construction and renovation of churches. While this commitment appeared to be a positive step, it still entrenched the notion that church construction requires a separate process to mosques and that church spaces are set back from public spaces; Article 1 of the law includes the requirement of a wall to be built around any church built on an area of land larger than 300 metres. Since the law was issued multiple episodes of violence related to church building have been recorded, leading to a number of church closures. By failing to challenge this contradiction between inside and outside, or inclusion and exclusion, or to use the legal system to regulate violence related to physical church spaces, the law issued in 2016 has simply underlined the fact that the problem is deeply rooted and goes beyond the matter of having the correct building permits.

Conclusion

Approaching the question of marginalisation of certain communities through the lens of spatial securitisation sheds light on the issues of Coptic politics and inclusion/exclusion. It helps to unpick the dilemma faced by the community in adhering to a homogenous community identity and discourse of national identity. Community leaders have, in general, supported the national unity discourse publicly but rather than this engagement with the state enabling them to challenge inequalities, it has trapped them into fixed notions of national and communal spaces. Christians are included in the discursive space of the nation. However, the limits of this inclusion are embedded as an architecture of ‘red lines’ which are then manifested in physical

and material ways. Obscuring the notion of minorities and conflating it with a threat to the nation and the social fabric of Egypt [al-nasīj al-misrī] have not prevented societal tensions. Rather they have prolonged inequalities that are visible in the indistinction of inclusion/exclusion in legal processes and spaces and invisibility in public debates pertaining to discrimination against Christians or Muslim-Christian tensions.

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The impact of military checkpoints

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Military checkpoints

In modern warfare, military control is not constrained by the presence of individuals in uniform (Woodward 2004, 47). Military landscapes, places, and spaces are re-imagined and attributed with symbolism and meaning beyond their occupancy, such as checkpoint sites (Woodward 2004, 105-121). Military checkpoints are part of everyday life in Lebanon. Checkpoints can be found inside a country's borders, whether to hold traffic, guard entrances, or enforce security. The army, also known as the Lebanese Armed Forces, typically hosts these internal checkpoints. Since its establishment, the Lebanese army's role has been to maintain a neutral status (Barak 2009, 38), with its membership reflecting the country's multi-religious communities (Kechichian 1985, 20). Nevertheless, military checkpoints have shaped the population's perception of security by reflecting on the political sphere and impacting individuals through feelings of in/security when encountering these checkpoints. This study attempts to challenge securitization theory by highlighting the audience's potential beyond the actor-audience relationship (Floyd 2015, 691) in the context of military checkpoints through affective atmospheres.

Checkpoint as space

Checkpoints create spatio-temporal atmospheres that impact individuals' experiences. Spatio-temporal atmospheres can be created by technical objects and can affect individuals within these atmospheres. Affective atmospheres are not solely human-to-human experiences, as they are equally generated and active through non-human and technical objects (Ash 2013, 20-23). In contrast to unilateral motion in the atmosphere, Ahmed (2020, 125-126) claims that the body and affect have a reciprocal arrangement. Affect is not limited solely to the body's impression of others; it extends to others' impressions on the body. Affect is not restricted to the transactional movement of bodies from "in and out" or "out and in," but rather affect is transmitted beyond and between bodies (Leff 2021, 3). Atmospheres do not fixate on a subject or an object, yet can belong to each simultaneously, as they are in constant movement by being a space between spaces. According to Anderson (2009, 79), atmospheres create space where a 're-presented object' is to be perceived and given meaning through emotions and feelings. In the case of checkpoints, the former is not limited to the role of a recipient, yet also extend to that of a contributor. For instance, civilians may feel nervous before arriving at a checkpoint.

This nervousness can affect the body at both the physical and nonphysical levels. This feeling can impact an individual's experience and, potentially, the outcome of the soldier's decision to cross a checkpoint. Nervousness can cause an individual to sweat, speak with difficulty, change tone, and/or shake. By being nervous, civilians are distracted, thus increasing the probability of making mistakes or unfavourable decisions. An individual's reading of the atmosphere affects the future outcomes of how things are handled. In addition, mood cannot be a clear indicator of future events; however, it can drift into subsequent events and impact outcomes (Ahmed 2020, 126). Affective atmospheres can impact individuals on a psychological and biological level (Bissel 2010, 272-273). Consequently, power does not solely vest in soldiers at military checkpoints. Civilians also have the potential to determine outcomes and thus play a pivotal role in security and its practices (Côté 2016, 549). Future securitizing behaviours are influenced by past actor-audience interactions (Côté 2016, 546). Checkpoints are spaces where the focus is on an individual's potential to inhabit a space designated for specific individuals. Soldiers question civilian behaviour that they perceive to be out of the ordinary. Checkpoints, in general, incline citizens to specific behaviors, such as locking eyes with soldiers for identification purposes. At a checkpoint, such behavior is normalized. If the civilian does not act accordingly, the civilian can be perceived as acting in defiance or unscripted (Jones and Clark 2019, 11). Consequently, checkpoints can also encourage active performance among civilians through knowledge of how to facilitate their journey (insider information, fast track) or demands (favors, hush money, bribery) ahead of and during the checkpoint procedure. The checkpoint is a living experience, where performative reality has a direct effect on the lives of civilians, inside and outside the parameters of the site.

Checkpoint as a ritual

Checkpoint experience can be better understood as a ritual by dissecting the experience in stages rather than as a whole. The checkpoint ritual cannot be categorized as a single experience or state of mind from the beginning to the end of the passage, as atmospheres are created and changed simultaneously. The structure of the ritual is not as important as the atmosphere in a sequence of events. The procedure of 'stop, wait, pass, enter, and aggregate' is the same for the collective and the individual (Van Gennep 1909, 38, 193). However, each experience creates an atmosphere that may not include or lead to the anticipated outcomes. Prior to, during, and after the crossing of a checkpoint, an individual's perception of checkpoints is shaped by the atmosphere. There is no prevention of anticipation, yet there is certainty that the power of the atmosphere is unforeseeable, unstructured, and cosmic. Atmospheres are crucial to researching everyday checkpoint practices as they affect how bodies experience the checkpoint as a spatial dispositive. Affective atmospheres take a step further by acknowledging the non-physical (affect, emotions) as well as 'encouraging us to consider more complex forms of

enveloping spatialities so that even bodies and objects might be understood as atmospherically distributed' in a checkpoint setting (Adey 2014, 839). The literature is prudent in recognizing the evolving dynamics of checkpoints, the spaces involved, and their potential. In recent studies, scholars have directed their attention to the role of checkpoints beyond their physical nature through political and psychological perspectives (Kotef and Amir 2011, Lohnert 2019, Schon 2016), affect (McHendry 2016, Martinez and Sirri 2020, Gregory 2019, Griffiths and Repo 2018), and embodiment (Hammami, 2019). Despite these expanded studies, research on checkpoints is limited by the recurring themes of violence, gender, and grassroots organizations. Additionally, most case studies share the common geographical locations of Israel and Palestine. Thus, the concept of affective atmospheres can provide an inclusive analysis of the practical application of atmospheres in security instruments. Consequently, security has become more adapted to the concept of affective atmospheres, given the juxtaposition of affective atmospheres (spaces/uncertainty) and security (secure/certainty) (Adey 2014, 835).

Checkpoint as a rhythm

A checkpoint is a ritual. Within a ritual, there are the underlying elements of preparation and repetition. Deleuze and Guattari's (2004) concept of refrain describes the rhythm that occurs through repetition in performance. The key element is consistency within repeated movements, leading to a level of familiarity and comfort for the body. Rhythms can take various forms, whether physical or non-physical (Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 343). In Lebanon, it is customary for individuals to greet soldiers when they stop at a checkpoint. When stopped at a checkpoint in the evening, actions such as opening the car window and turning dome lights on were complemented by these greetings. This etiquette is part of the security process, hence, the custom of behaving at a checkpoint. Generally, a citizen greets a soldier with a formal salute, such as *yatik el afiye* or *tahiye.* Both expressions show respect for soldiers. A civilian (non-citizen) communicates a simple generic salutation, that is acceptable. The soldier can either give a verbal response of *tfadal* (go ahead) to the civilian as an indication of approval for the crossing, or *al yamine* (to the right), directing the civilian to stop aside the checkpoint crossing lane for further questioning and/or inspection. Both opposing responses from soldiers signify means of direction. These responses are usually accompanied by physical gestures, such as hand waves or head nods. These expressions (physical or verbal gestures) have consistent rhythms familiar to civilians. Visualization of the uniform and repetition of gestures can bring a level of comfort and even reassurance to individuals depending on their experience at the checkpoint site. The same understanding can be applied to decorated checkpoints. Concrete blocks, pilons, boom barriers, and guard booths painted on the national flag and/or armed forces are typical features of checkpoints run by the Lebanese Army. The approaching civilians

can identify the bright red, white, and green paints from a distance. Such a visualization can be an expression of refrain, where the repetition of seeing these colours can bring a feeling of in/security to civilians, regardless of whether they identify with the symbol.

Checkpoint as a symbol

Symbolism influences an individual's perception of checkpoints. Symbolism plays a crucial role at checkpoints, particularly in 'conflict-ridden' societies where feelings of in/security regarding one's own identity can be activated (Lohnert 2019, 374). In the example of Lebanon, checkpoints are generally hosted by the army and characterized by concrete blocks painted with the colours of the Lebanese flag. Individuals can visualize and recognize symbols on concrete blocks before arriving at a checkpoint site. This form of symbolism at a checkpoint can strengthen patriotic sentiments or reflect the opposite, thickening the differences between those inhabiting the social space, particularly in times of conflict. Such symbolism can contribute to emotional and affective intensities, resulting in an embodied response from the individual to avoid the area of the checkpoint, such as by taking an alternative route (Laketa 2018, 190-191). Generally, this is the case for civilians without appropriate documentation.

Anticipation

The recognition of symbols brings comfort in knowing what to expect, and knowing is better than not knowing. Prior to the physical experience at a checkpoint (the stop-and-search procedure), a series of events (Ahmed 2007, 161) activates an individual's creative power. Therefore, the pre-checkpoint stage plays an essential role in influencing an individual's behaviour during an event. By nature, the preparatory stage is a ritual. There is something that occurs before arriving at the physical boundary of the checkpoint site, as has been demonstrated previously (Amoore and Hall 2009, 448). In most cases, preparation is needed on behalf of the individual when they depart from their initial destination and eventually cross a checkpoint throughout their journey. At that moment, an individual's emotions were already triggered by the anticipated event. En route to crossing the checkpoint site, the individual imagines possible scenarios leading to potentially different outcomes. An individual's perspective of a checkpoint is interlaced with emotions due to anticipation (e.g., violence, discrimination, indifference, pride, fear). Such anticipation creates a constructed reality for the individual, and triggers emotions before the body experiences an event. In other words, individuals have already manifested a potential outcome before their physical arrival at a checkpoint. Accordingly, preconceptions are formed even before experiencing checkpoints. A checkpoint is not merely an entry point, yet a passageway from one environment to the next, where standards of conduct

are generally preconditioned, known, and expected. The elements of repetition and anticipation provide a form of predictability and certainty, enforcing the structure of a ritual. That is to say, the 'rituals themselves offer a clue' (Razack 2010, 99). From this perspective, checkpoint rituals are predictable, in which anticipatory forms are offered through atmospheres (Adey 2014, 842). It is through anticipation that we bring the future into the present (Chiffi 2020, 2). However, checkpoints can also represent uncertainty and unknowns regarding where feelings of insecurity emerge, particularly in post-conflict societies. This assumes that anticipation is unpredictable because it is naturally unrevealed.

Conclusion

My contributions rest on raising awareness and illustrating the degree of influence of the checkpoints beyond security studies through atmospheres (Adey 2013, 308). Checkpoints are important because their impact extends beyond their outward appearance and site. Additionally, the checkpoint experience demonstrates how the role of the audience is as crucial as, if not more impactful than, that of the actor. The concept of affective atmospheres best describes the checkpoint experience and is crucial to researching everyday checkpoint practices, as they affect how bodies experience the checkpoint as a spatial dispositive. Affective atmospheres allow us to look beyond the traditional role of military checkpoints, as they affect the way we feel, think, and behave —before, during, and after a checkpoint site. Affective atmospheres push boundaries by providing an alternative perspective on the traditional role of military checkpoints. Therefore, greater attention should be paid to society's perceptions of security regarding checkpoints. The influence of checkpoints is understated, and the potential of atmospheres is even more so. Therefore, I call for additional in-depth research on military checkpoints and their impact on everyday practices.

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Entanglements of (in-)securitisation and violence: exploring Syria's urban reconstruction

Gabriel Garroum Pla

Introduction

This short contribution seeks to explore the dynamics of (in-)securitisation in urban Syria concerning the politics of reconstruction. It argues that the spatialisation of (in-)security and the (in-)securitisation of space –the two faces of the phenomenon– are central in the regime's governmental navigation of Syria's body politic, the socio-material reordering of cities, and the shaping of political subjectivities to entrench political survival. The former points out how spatial imaginaries and cartographies of threats are called up in forming discourses of (in-)security. The latter suggests how imaginaries take place, materially carve local contexts in the form of interventions and reorganisations, disseminating and reinforcing discourses of (in-)security into the experience of everyday life.

First, I take the body of literature known as International Political Sociology (IPS) as a vantage point from which to explore the productive role of space and place in shaping (in)securitisation, mainly through a focus on the 'everyday' and the relationship between (in)security and violence. Second, I unpack some elements of the politics of space in the Syrian Civil War, with a particular emphasis on the dynamics of reconstruction. Finally, the contribution explores some lived, everyday narratives, practices, and experiences of (in)security by Aleppans and Damascenes as they encounter these new socio-spatial orders of a Syria *yet-to-come*.

On space, (in-)securitisation, and violence

Articulated as a double critique of traditional state-centric conceptions of security and the so-called securitisation theory, an International Political Sociology (IPS) approach to (in-)securitisation highlights four crucial elements for this piece (see McCluskey and Bigo 2018, Basaran 2008, Mutlu and Lüleci 2007, Burgess 2007). First, the emphasis is placed on processes, practices, and relations; (in-)security is understood as emergent, with no pre-determined inside/outside, constituted and reconstituted through horizontal lines. Second, IPS highlights complexity, as (in-)security arrangements are always heterogeneous configurations of interrelated discourses, practices, objects, technologies, etc. Third, ethnographically sensitive scholarship within IPS has shown the importance of exploring (in-)security through lived experiences, thus placing the primacy on situated knowledges, narratives, practices, and

affects. Finally, an IPS approach foregrounds socio-historical analyses of (in-)securities, understanding them emerging from specific times and spaces, interwoven with power configurations, and often involving sedimented habits and artefacts.

A spatial lens appears fruitful within such a framework, particularly if we consider the spaces of interaction between the international, the political, and the sociological when it comes to (in-)security. Thinking in these terms has turned attention to the study of the everyday life of (in-)security, as the focus is placed on the negotiations, appropriations, and transgressions of different sociopolitical actors (Guillaume and Huysmans 2019; Nyman 2021; Vaughan-Williams and Stevens 2016). Accounting for everyday experiences and mundane manifestations/practices allows us to understand how international phenomena traverse multiple spatialities. The international is 'implicated in the "everyday" as spatiality of the ordinary', while the everyday is implicated in the international as part of the 'multi-scalar edifice of world politics' (Acuto 2014). In this regard, (in-)security goes beyond the exceptional, understood as space (battlefield) and time (rupture), as these permeate the everyday and impact bodies, memories, spaces, and articulations of subjectivity. As Juliana Ochs (2011, 3) puts it, (in-)securitisation 'assumes social, material, and aesthetic forms in daily life'.

However, centring the analysis around dynamics of (in-)securitisation falls short if we want to unravel how space becomes central to the constitution of political order in the Middle East. Echoing the work of Vivienne Jabri, the focus on the spatial everyday of (in-)securitisation should not obliterate 'the material actuality of violence' (2019) in the postcolonial Middle East, understood here as the productive and destructive force of injury upon bodies, spaces, and (political) subjects. As she argues, we should explore 'what violence does to politics when the postcolonial is rendered a biopolitical terrain of operations, when war is used as a technology in the control of populations, when these become the subject of security practices' (Ibid).

A growing interdisciplinary literature focusing on the urban Middle East unpacks some of these dynamics. It illuminates how governmentality, violence, and (in-)security interrelate *in* and *through* the socio-materiality of urban spaces, shaping political subjectivities and configurations of power in several contexts (Fawaz, Harb, and Gharbieh 2012; Fregonese 2019; Bou Akar 2018; Mabon 2020; Fuccaro 2016). When thought from Beirut, Baghdad, or Aleppo, we see how governmentality operates through both biopolitical and necropolitical logics cutting across the realms of security and sovereignty (Montenegro and Pujol 2017 in Mabon 2020, 21-22). As Achille Mbembe (2003) reminds us, we should ask 'under what practical conditions is the right to kill, to allow to live, or to expose to death exercised? […] How are they inscribed in the order of power?'

The politics of space in the Syrian Civil War: understanding reconstruction

Approaching processes of (in-)securitisation in urban Syria after 2011 through a spatial perspective illuminates our understanding of how competing actors have sought to articulate political order through mobilising, destroying, and altering lived spaces. The unfolding reconstruction of Syria, understood as a socio-material, legal, economic, and political assemblage should be framed within the historical politics of (in-)security and violence operating in Syria, further deepened in wartime.

First, reconstruction must be linked with pre-war planning schemes and patterns of destruction during wartime. A reading of reconstruction as a socio-spatial weapon inscribed within the broader lines of securitisation, violence, and conflict rather than outside of them is pertinent in the Syrian case (Sharp 2016). In Damascus, interventions upon the built environment throughout the war emerged as both weapons of destruction and incipient tools for urban reconstruction, deliberately setting the ground for consolidating a post-war urban order that deepens the pre-existing socio-spatial polarisation. Remarkably, the regime-led securitisation of peripheral informal neighbourhoods had immediate effects, as *redevelopment-through-demolition* has guided the reconstruction efforts in neighbourhoods that saw the activity of rebel forces as early as 2012 (Solvang and Neistat 2014). Although these spatial reconfigurations and the legal measures that enforce them were presented under the technical and biopolitical pretext of organising irregular areas, targeting informal housing, and improving living conditions (SANA 2017), their securitising orientation is evident. Particularly, in enclaves that showed clear opposition to the regime and threatened Damascus' security in critical strategic areas, former working-class residents would be substituted by potentially more affluent, higher-class social strata with deeper embeddedness within patronage networks and more lenient towards regime policies.

The regime understood demolitions as essential to prevent militants from establishing a 'threatening' sociopolitical order, and subsequent legal and organisational measures –most notably Decree 66/2012 in Damascus and Law 10/2018– have sought to reorganise urban peripheries, linking informality with a danger to be eradicated. Indeed, for Jamal al-Youssef, Director of the Zoning and Planning Department at the Damascus Province, Decree 66/2012 should be seen as 'an unprecedented experiment in dealing with informal settlement [since] no one dared to enter a slum area with this force and transfer it to a distinct urban and civilised reality' (Abdul Jalil 2018).

This is connected to a second process: how reconstruction relates to reconciliation, return, and displacement patterns. When considered together, we can better comprehend how spatial arrangements, the process of (in)securitisation and violence shape the production of political subjectivities in Syria. As Samer Abboud (2020) has shown, the bifurcation of the Syrian body politic through notions of regime loyalty and unloyalty is central in remaking Syrian society. Regime security logics, articulated through reconciliation agreements and settlement committees, allows for the differentiation between loyal and disloyal, trusted and untrusted communities. Those identified as trustworthy can return and reintegrate within Syrian society, keeping their right to citizenship, belonging, and property. However, those identified as threatening enemies cannot return and see their properties targeted by a new range of redevelopment and absentee property laws. Thus, the proliferation of legal measures dealing with the arrangement of urban space in Syria highlights the centrality of the relationship between the 'sovereign assertion of control over territory and the mechanisms through which the state organises individual property ownership' (Bhandar 2018).

Finally, the reconstruction process in Syria is both heterogeneous and transcalar. The regime-led (in-)securitisation of urban space is articulated through a conglomerate of new economic and security actors, showing the deep re-articulation of regime structures in wartime and the centrality of (in-)securitisation in governmental logics. This can be seen as severely affecting local populations in key spatial nodes such as checkpoints (European Asylum Support Service 2021), predatory behaviours in rebuilding or rubble removal (Crisis Group 2022; Enab Baladi 2022), or in the demarcation of boundaries and zones of control. For example, in the Damascene neighbourhood of Qaboun, the regime-tied businessman Muhammad Hamsho, in cooperation with the Fourth Division, is involved in preventing the return of civilians and securing land to benefit from redevelopment schemes (The Syrian Observer 2019). Moreover, the intersection between sectarian difference, space, and (in-)security in urban Syria is worth mentioning. In Barzeh and Ish al-Warwar, inhabited mainly by Sunni and Alawite Syrians respectively and having displayed opposite behaviours towards the regime after 2011, the Damascus Governorate uses targeted expropriations, demolition, and rezoning to shape space and demographics to its advantage (Ezzi 2021). While the (in-)securitisation of socio-spatial and sectarian divisions is more salient in Damascus, in Aleppo, the ruination of its eastern quarters has exacerbated the risk of sectarian penetration. The pluralisation of militias in Aleppo, some with connections with Russia or Iran, also shows how some reconstruction efforts are tied to external powers' projection onto Syria, often involving their will to secure influence through the sectarianisation of local spaces (Bassam and Makdesi 2018; The Syrian Observer 2021).

Encountering reconstruction: ownership, violence, and (in)security

The progressive formation of a political geography of loyalty by the regime, where the reorganisation of local space is framed in terms of political security, is productive of violence and insecurity for those affected by wartime violence and material destruction. As Martin Coward (2009) argues, a shared spatiality allows the possibility of political community, and the current reconstruction framework precisely seeks to demarcate the outside of political community. Law 10/2018 reshapes both spaces and political subjectivities by securitising the claim and proof of ownership. The law requires displaced Syrians to submit proof of ownership to keep their property rights. Those outside the country could be seen as disloyal and threatening and thus face enormous risks if they submit their claims personally. Hence, this law effectively acts as a weapon to prevent or disincentivise former residents from returning and belonging to the Syrian polity (Nassar 2021).

Hence, reclaiming home –one could say mapping home– appears as a transversal practice of (in-)security, characterised by the interrelation of local and international struggles, including repositories online and transnational groups, to counter the politics of injury operating in Syria. Illustrative of these struggles and the little everyday processes of (in)security, a former resident of Jobar says:

> ‘Many late nights have passed with my family and their guests drawing plans and maps of what the neighbourhood was like before the war, and trying to set out the borders of the houses and shops and land plots, and name their owners, thinking that the biggest problem they'll face after the end of the war and the beginning of reconstruction is the delineation of these borders' (Salem 2017).

The affective, embodied layer of (in-)security comes to the fore when we pay attention to the narratives of those traversing the spaces of destruction and reconstruction. I have shown elsewhere (Garroum 2021) how spatial destruction and the militarisation/securitisation of space forced a permanent readjustment of urban mental maps, including identifying safe/unsafe spaces, and how different groups navigated fear and anxiety after the collapse of previous spatial boundaries. The process of reconstruction does not dissolve such affects but rather rearticulates them in novel ways. When asked about Marota and Basilia cities, the new development projects to be constructed in the razed Damascene areas of Basateen a-Razi (Abou Zainedin and Fakhani 2020), a former resident argues:

> 'Every time I pass near the al-Mezze Basateen area, I'm anguished by what's happened to us…there are no towers or buildings of any kind yet; there's nothing except piles of earth put there ever since they decided to demolish our homes, still exactly as they were' (Salem 2017).

Concluding Remarks

This short piece has outlined what we might gain if we disentangle Syria's urban reconstruction by exploring how everyday (in)securitisation and violence reorganises local spaces and shapes the possibilities for political subjectivity. Indeed, Syrians' plight for justice against the impunity of injury constitutes a transversal struggle from the microcosm of the street to the realm of the international. Moreover, and beyond questions of justice, the formation of new securitised spatialities, exclusionary property regimes, and loss of the shared urban fabric constitute one of the fundamental processes through which the Syrian regime aims to redraw the boundaries of the Syrian political community.

However, as Henri Lefebvre (1991, 26) suggested, space always 'escapes in part from those who would make use of it'. In fact, reconstruction is also tied to restoration for many; for instance, Aleppan Christians who saw their churches rebuilt, or those who rebuild their houses keeping the traditional stone, a precious element of ontological security. The regime's creation of new spatial frontiers is only one logic of this heterogeneous and non-overarching assemblage that is reconstruction in Syria today. Hence, we need more research on the lived, mundane processes of (in-)securitisation due to reconstruction, particularly everyday practices, affects, and resistances performed by ordinary Syrians.

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